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SHAKESPEAREAN CARNIVALESQUE:
CHALLENGING THE AUTHORITY

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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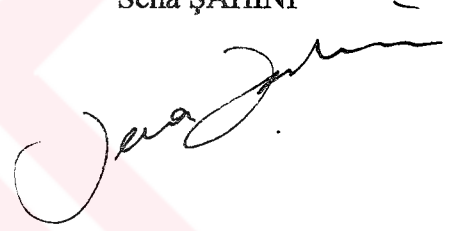
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INTRODUCTION

The studies on William Shakespeare are condemned to remain unfinished, uncompleted and uncovering processes because of his vast and promising sphere. Therefore, the study in question should be narrowed down as much as possible in order to be more specific and direct. The specific objective of this thesis is to investigate the festive comedies of Shakespeare and their subversive quality caused by their carnivalesque atmospheres. Examining the chronology of his plays, one can observe that while Shakespeare wrote his best tragedies and romances during the reign of King James I, he did not produce any festive comedy during this period. Shakespeare furnished his readers with several festive comedies during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and a few “happy ending” plays after the accession of James I; yet these Jacobean comedies are generally categorized as “problem plays”. This sharp difference between two periods in Shakespeare’s career can be explained by the political approaches maintained by the two different monarchs. Therefore, analysing these issues necessitates an examination of the notions of comedy, festivity and subversion of authority.

The undeniable power of comedy functions as a subversive force against the inflexible traditions and humourless authority. Thus, laughter, as the major product of comedy, becomes a challenging weapon in the hands of people. It challenges the stability and strictness of things concerning the problems of mortality. As H. B. Charlton states:

For tragedy, time is the eternal now; for comedy, it is the condition of present existence. Comedy is immersed in time, in the here and now. Its

heroes, to overcome, to end happily and to go on ending happily without end, must be endowed with the temperament and the arts to triumph over the stresses of circumstance. They are not concerned with what man and life might have been. They take it as it is, and seek a way to turn in to their purpose. For them, the world is an oyster. (Charlton 176)

According to Northrop Frye, the mythical foundation of drama in general and comedy in particular, is the cycle of nature which moves from birth to death and back again to rebirth. Tragedy and history plays are close to the first half of this cycle which moves from birth to death, spring to winter. Comedy, however, is based on the second half of this cyclic movement from death to rebirth, winter to spring, and corruption to renewal (Frye 158-162). Therefore comedy celebrates the creative energy and the delight in life.

Respectively, there is a close connection between the comedy and the festivals of popular culture based on the celebration of the rebirth of nature. Anthropologists group these celebrations under the name of "carnival". Richard G. Parker offers one of the most informative definitions of that specific folk festival:

It has been seen as a world of laughter, of madness and play, in which the established order of daily life dissolves in the face of an almost utopian anarchy, in which all hierarchical structures are overturned and the fundamental equality of all human beings is proclaimed. Above all else, it has been understood as a celebration of the flesh in which the

repressions and prohibitions of normal life cease to exist and every form of pleasure is suddenly possible. (qtd. in Sanders 155)

The laughter produced by the pleasures of life is perceived as a destructive force by the authority, and is expelled from Church and the other state institutions, because such laughter is in revolt against everything predetermined. It is also hostile to rules, hierarchies, and anything closing down the life. It pulls worldly power and officialdom down to earth. Such is a degradation and subversion of authority by the festive and carnivalesque elements as “embodiments of primal energies, which extend to the impulse to challenge political and social power structures” (Hillman 17).

Russian literary theorist Mikhail M. Bakhtin’s theory of carnival appears to be the most appropriate approach in order to combine the elements of comedy, laughter, festivity and subversion of authority. Connected with the concepts of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, centripetal and centrifugal forces, Bakhtin offers the model of carnivalesque as an anti-authoritarian force attempting to reverse the hierarchical discourses and attitudes. Carnival, in the theories of Bakhtin, is redefined as a specific literary form, and a special type of communication which is impossible in everyday life. It is a mode of language, an expression of freedom from official norms and values.

Although this carnivalesque method can be applied all types of drama including tragedy, history and romance, the carnivalesque atmosphere is stronger when it is combined with the festive laughter in comedies. In this respect, Renaissance drama appears to be the principal model for the carnivalesque form of literature for its antiauthoritarian, festive and collective principles. Especially Elizabethan drama considers “the forms of collective life and of subjectivity other than those proposed and

legitimated by a hegemonic culture” (Bristol 5). Shakespeare was highly aware and attentive to the importance of folklore, holidays and calendrical allusions to produce a popular festive spirit in his plays. Shakespearean comedy, on which this study focuses, is unique in reflecting the popular festivity and carnivalesque attitudes; and this characteristic is what distinguishes Shakespeare’s comedies in the Renaissance drama.

According to C. L. Barber, the main function of festive elements in Shakespearean drama is to activate an emotional release and help to create an atmosphere of joyful liberation from the archaic moral order and tyranny. According to him, this liberation is to produce a movement of clarification and an awareness of the relation between man and nature (8). With the power of this awareness, people use festive licence as a subversive attitude. In this context, François Laroque argues that the carnivalesque elements in Shakespeare’s plays are gifted with a subversive power to threaten authority and its serious and official vision of the world (“Popular Festivity” 75).

On the other hand, while the Elizabethan comedies of Shakespeare present such an outlook, Jacobean Shakespeare tends to tragedy and romance; a genre quite unlike festive comedies. The pretext under the attitude of distancing from the festive comedy presumably bears a political drive. The possible political reason to abandon a subversive form and manner could be explained by reconciliation with the authority and taking side with it. Bakhtin asserts that, “the carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things” (*Rabelais* 34). If we accept this assertion, then Shakespeare inclines to a conservative attitude with which he authorizes the state power and

officialdom. Thus, after completing the second half of the cycle of nature, Shakespeare returns to beginning and follows the tragic cycle of nature from spring to winter, from life to death and from regeneration to corruption.

Hence, an analysis and a comparison of these two periods, might lead one to trace the causes of the authoritarian stance of Shakespeare. As F. P. Wilson quotes Francis Bacon's observations about the Jacobean age in England, "although the world was in the autumn of its days, to that autumn was appointed the bearing and fructifying of the plant of knowledge" (Wilson 18). Conveniently, the difference of the Jacobean age from the Elizabethan is its more searching and more detailed inquiry into moral and political questions and its interest in the analysis of the mysteries and disruption of the human mind (Wilson 20). All these indications about the seasonal tendency of Jacobean period and James's principles about the "Divine Rights of Kings" give people a clue on the literary, social and cultural differences of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

Bearing these assumptions in mind, in the first chapter of this study, the theories of comedy and laughter will be examined with respect to their subversive and rebellious attitudes toward the established institutions. After giving brief information about the origin of drama and its connection with the rites of Dionysus, the concepts of Apollonian and Dionysian mode of thinking will be surveyed. Relating to this issue, the concept of Dionysian laughter will be associated with the domain of comedy. This line of inquiry inevitably leads one to the birth of comedy and its various types, including the differences of high and low comedy and the function of festive comedy. With a similar motivation, the evolution of the theories of comedy and laughter will be scrutinized; and a close analysis of laughter as a regenerative and subversive social term

will be offered. Finally in this chapter, two of the most important examples of Renaissance humanism and comedy will be examined: *Praise of Folly* by Erasmus, and *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais. These examples are the most significant works of the Renaissance period involving the concept of laughter as a leading philosophy of the popular culture. Particularly the works of Rabelais are the primary subjects of Mikhail M. Bakhtin's theory of carnivalization, and according to Bakhtin, they are the most striking examples of the unofficial culture that use laughter, parody and grotesque realism as a weapon against authorized culture and totalitarian order.

The second chapter will deal with the major theoretical background of this study. In this chapter, Bakhtin's theories will be given in connection with the theories of comedy and laughter. His concepts of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, centripetal and centrifugal forces in a society will also be offered as the basis of the theory of carnivalization. The third chapter consists of the analyses of the works of William Shakespeare in the light of the ideas of Bakhtin. Before the analyses of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as carnivalesque festive comedies in Elizabethan period, the polyphonic quality of Shakespeare's plays and the festive ceremonies in the English calendar will be examined with reference to the common festive features of these plays.

As explained above, the main objective of this study is to examine the carnivalesque festive comedies of Shakespeare by focusing on three examples. This objective inevitably leads one to inquire why Shakespeare produced carnivalesque festive comedies during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and abstained from writing such

plays during the reign of King James I. Hence, these two periods will be compared at the end of this study in order to assess the ways in which Shakespeare revealed his political attitude toward authority.



CHAPTER 1: COMEDY AND THE DIONYSIAN LAUGHTER

1.1. The Origin of Theatre

Theatre is a social institution that emerged from myth and rituals. The theatre of Ancient Greece, as the root of this form of art, evolved from religious ceremonies that date back to 1200 BC, as a part of the cult of Dionysus; the god of vegetation, fertility and wine. Dionysus has multiple and contradictory personalities. He is the god of joy, festivity and ecstasy, and also the “heartless god, savage, brutal” (Hamilton 59). His cheerfulness is a protective mask against the dark and powerful forces of Dionysus. However, his opposing characteristics are quite reasonable since he is the god of wine. The double nature of wine, which warms and cheers men’s hearts besides making them drunk, is associated with Dionysus as both the benefactor and the destroyer of the mankind. As the benefactor, he has taught people how to cultivate grapes for wine; therefore, a whole system of worship has been established in his name. He is also the god who has experienced a terrible death and a rebirth. As Edith Hamilton states; “He was more than the suffering god. He was the tragic god” (62). However, besides his tragedy there was a belief that the life does not end, and the soul lives on forever. The resurrection of the god accompanied with the cycles of nature was a spectacular thing that people could observe. So, in the cult of Dionysus, people have celebrated the rebirth of nature after winter and the renewal of life after death.

The cult of Dionysus spread through the tribes of Greece over six centuries. During this time, Dionysian rites became mainstream and more civilized, and by 600 BC, they were practiced every year throughout Greece. Peisistratus, the tyrant of Athens

in the 6th century, transformed traditional rural festivals in honour of Dionysus into two grand urban festivals: The Great Dionysia (or City Dionysia) and The Lenaea. While Great Dionysia was held in the month of March, the winter festival Lenaea was held at the end of January. There was also a lesser Rural Dionysia, which fell in December (Stobard 171). A. B. Cook states that the union of Zeus and Semele, the begetting of Dionysus, was represented at the Great Dionysia, and the birth of Dionysus was represented at the Lenaea, just ten lunar months afterwards (qtd. in Pickard 209).

All these festivals include singing, drinking and dancing activities, as they are celebrations in honour of the god of wine and fertility. The most important practice of these rites is the uninhibited dancing and emotional displays that create an altered mental state. This altered state was known as *ecstasies*, from which the word *ecstasy* derived. *Ecstasy* was an important concept for the Greeks; in the winter festivals people, especially women, ran wild in orgiastic ecstasy, in hope that the dead world would once again come back to life after winter was over. In spring festivals, people celebrated the renewal of life, dressing in goatskins and wearing phallus headgears as the representation of fertility, imitating satyrs with huge phalluses – mythological half-human, half-goat servants of Dionysus. The festivals organized in honour of Dionysus were the occasions in which people create an atmosphere of ribald fun of the god in whose honour the plays were produced. To create this atmosphere people should enter into the spirit of the rite to honour him (Rose 220).

As the worship of Dionysus spread over Greece, there appeared or developed various forms of performance. One of the most significant types of these forms was the Dithyramb. Dithyrambs were the odes to Dionysus, which were performed by a chorus

of men. Dithyrambic poetry was eventually coupled with a performance by a single actor, giving rise to the basic structure of tragedy. Thespis was the first person to compose tragedy with the idea of having an actor besides the chorus (134). The word tragedy comes from the Greek word *tragoidia*, meaning goat-song. The connection with goats may be a reference to the figures of goat-like satyrs associated with rural festivals, or a goat may have been the prize for a winning play. (Mc Arthur 1049). By the time of the fifth century, drama became the favourite activity for Greek people, and in the festivals of Dionysus poet-playwrights competed for prizes.



1.2. Apollonian-Dionysian Dichotomy

The concept of Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy is derived from Greek Mythology. These two Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus, have many differing spheres of activity and areas of special interests, but they represent a particular contrast when they are taken together. Apollo, in various ways, is a god of higher civilization such as medicine or civilized life. On the other hand, as mentioned above, Dionysus is a god of nature and natural fertility, associated with wine and uncivilized, orgiastic activities. Phoebus Apollo is the bright sun god and the symbol of all brightness, appearance and individual shapes. In the sphere of *individuation*, he is the soothsaying god as well as restraint, beauty and form. However, Dionysian sphere, the *collapse of individuation*, offers a state of intoxication, an individual losing of the self and drunkenness. This drunkenness is a broader form of ecstatic experience with absolute intensity. Dionysian emotions may be aroused by intoxicants, such as wine, and also by the approach of spring, with its hope of the rebirth of natural life and fertility. These emotions have a tendency to find a collective expression with the song, dance and sexual licence in the wild and orgiastic festivities. In the Dionysian state, a man feels that all barriers between himself and others are broken in favour of a universal harmony. There are no limits, forms, conventions or even individuals in this collective gathering (Silk and Stern 64).

Apollo, as an Olympian deity, is the representative of all the Olympian gods. This Apollonian – Olympian – religion is a deification of good and evil. However, beneath the Olympian surface, Greek culture realizes the Dionysian truth about life. This is the basis of their horrifying existence, and the truth about the unchanging contradiction in a

supreme unity: We, helpless individuals, live and suffer from birth to inevitable death. In fact, Dionysus is the alternative of Apollo. Friedrich Nietzsche calls Apollo as “the glorious divine image of the *pricipum individuationis*, whose gestures and expression tell us of all the joy and wisdom of ‘appearance’ together with its beauty” (3). In that case, if Apollo is the representative of masculine beauty, then Dionysus unifies male and female, as a part of the Mother Nature. Moreover Dionysus indicates a “dialectical unity of the great instinctual opposites” (Brown 175), regarding life and death, self and other, as well as male and female. However, the world of Apollo offers a denial of instincts. In the world of Dionysus, life is not kept at a distance, but it overflows its limits. While Apollo represents sublimation of human nature and rational form in thought, Dionysus represents drunkenness and ecstasy; in other words while Apollo is conscious, Dionysus is unconscious. Norman O. Brown argues that, as long as the structure of the ego is Apollonian, Dionysian experience can only be the ego-dissolution (175). Correspondingly, while Apollo is the lawgiver, Dionysus is beyond the law. According to Nietzsche, Dionysian nature is disastrous. He says, “Wherever the Dionysian prevailed, the Apollonian was checked and destroyed” (12). In the same way, reminding that Dionysus is a part of the barbarism and brutality of Mother Nature, Camille Paglia adds; “Dionysus liberates by destroying. He is not pleasure but pleasure-pain, the tormenting bondage of our life in the body” (Paglia 94).

According to Paglia, “tragedy springs from the clash between Apollo and Dionysus” (104). In the first phase of Greek culture (8th century B.C. and the earlier), the Apollonian impulse was dominant. The Apollonian tendency of this phase found its purest expression in the Doric art, sculpture and architecture. However, Dionysian

impulses began to appear spontaneously, and the cult of Dionysus was established throughout Greece. The compromise of both impulses has appeared in the ways of worshipping and the details of these cults. Especially the Dithyramb, as the chief poetry and music for Dionysus with emotional tone, melody and harmony, became an effective force against the Apollonian music with a regular rhythm.

The inner contradiction of Greek drama is that, it leaves its audience with the feeling that despite all changes, life is joyful and powerful. In their Dionysian ecstasies, the audience have to look at the painful side of life. The compromise of sublime and ridiculous is found together on stage; the horror of life is made magnificent, while the disgusting absurdities turn into comic. Paglia additionally expounds; “Greek tragedy is a conceptual cage in which Dionysus, founder of theatre, is caught. . . Greek tragedy is an Apollonian prayer, stifling nature’s amoral appetite. It works when only while society coheres. When the center does not hold, tragedy disintegrates. Dionysus is the mist slipping through society’s cracks” (101). On the other hand, Dionysus finds his liberty in Comedy. Comedy is a *memento mori*, which reminding our mortality, declares the continuity of life. It crosses all the borders with a Dionysian laughter and unites humanity in one idea, the idea of collective ecstasy.

1.3. The Birth of Comedy

There are certain views about the birth of comedy. A. W. Pickard says that “There *may* once have been an undifferentiated performance involving both serious and grotesque elements out of which both tragedy and comedy could be evolved, but there is no sufficient proof of it” (106). Euanthius suggests that, the word comedy comes from the word *komai*, meaning “villages” (qtd. in Galbraith 8). The villagers would come in to the city by night, and sing certain accusing songs in front of the houses of the people who had done them some injustice. In another view, comedy was named after the word *komoidia*, songs of a group named *komoidos*, in the procession of spring festivals. The word *komos* means merry-making or revel, and as H. J. Rose puts it:

Both literary and archaeological evidence show that it was a custom in early times at Athens and the smaller towns and villages of Attica to engage a performance known as *komos*, or band of revelling dancers and singers, who often wore grotesque disguises, including masks, representing beasts or birds. It was not mere merry-making, rather was a religious ceremony of a joyous type honouring Dionysus. It was the opinion of Aristotle that Comedy originated from the leaders of these processions or dances, which he calls *phallika*, because they regularly carried large images of the male organ of reproduction, the phallus.

(215)

During these revels, people carrying the phallus, select members of the audience for vulgar, verbal teasing.

It is known that the Great Dionysia included phallic rites, and it is mostly believed that comedy originated from those ceremonies. It was therefore thought that, comedy originated at the spring festival of Great Dionysia while tragedy originated at the winter festival of Lenaea (Pickard 209). As Northrop Frye discusses in *Anatomy of Criticism*, the seasonal rites that celebrate the yearly cycle of birth, death, and rebirth are the basis for the plots of comedy, romance, tragedy and irony and satire. These four genres prefigure the fates of a hero and his society. In comedy, representing the season of spring, the hero faces with obstructions and succeeds to get what he wants. While tragedy describes his passion and death, in comedy the hero is born anew (163-180).

Greek comedy has three stages; Old Comedy represented by Aristophanes, Middle Comedy that served as a bridge between Old and New Comedy, and New Comedy represented by Menander. The Old Comedy, as a combination of political satire and fantasy, was written to make a parody of the well-known figures of the day. Stobart additionally states that:

There are elements in the Old Comedy of Athens, which rest largely upon a basis of venomous personal slander and libel without self-restraint, without even common decency. There are strong elements of obscenity, belonged to the very origins of Comedy and its connections with fecundity. This element and the ruthless abuse are a useful corrective to too idealizing a picture of the Athenians. (172)

Frye explains that, “There is a catharsis of the corresponding comic emotions, which are sympathy and ridicule, in Old Comedy. The comic hero will get his triumph

whether what he has done is sensible or silly, honest or rascally” (43). On the other hand, the New Comedy:

presents an erotic intrigue between a young man and a young woman which is blocked by some kind of opposition, usually paternal, and resolved by a twist in the plot which is the comic form of Aristotle’s ‘discovery’, and is more manipulated than its tragic counterpart. (Frye 44)

According to Frye, “comedy is a vision of *dianoia*, a significance which is ultimately social significance, the establishing of a desirable society”, and the ideal comedy is “the vision not of the way of the world, but of what you will, life as you like it” (286). Robert Gittings explains the phenomenon in a similar vein: “Comedy is just as serious as tragedy, if by ‘serious’ we mean concerned with the actual experience of life as we live it” (85). In addition, one of the important steps of the comedy is the social comedy whose “vision moves toward an integration of society in a form . . . of the dialectic festivity, which . . . is the controlling force of that holds society together” (Frye 286). On the other hand, Friedrich Nietzsche states in *The Birth of Tragedy* that, “In song and in dance, man expresses himself as a member of a higher community” (4). The classic conception of comedy admits that man is a social being, not a private person. Comic artist, with a corrective attitude, holds a mirror up to society to reflect its follies and vices, in hope that they will be mended. For Robert Corrigan, beyond its social spirit:

All comedy celebrates humankind’s capacity to endure. . . It reveals the unquenchable vitality of our impulse to survive. . . The spirit of comedy

is the spirit of resurrection, and the joy that attends our experience of the comic is the joy that comes from the realization that despite all our individual defeats, life does nonetheless continue on its merry way. (8)

In a broader sense, comedy can be categorized into two distinct groups: High Comedy and Low Comedy. High comedy relies heavily on intellectual issues, standpoints, and the incongruities between those issues to produce comic effect. It evokes an intellectual, thoughtful laughter from the audience, and it tends to emphasize humanity's weaknesses without appealing emotions. The main form of High comedy is Comedy of Manners. It usually deals with the complex, artificial and sophisticated lifestyle in an aristocratic or high society. The plots of the comedy of manners revolve around intrigues of lust and greed; and rather than punishing the immoralities, it tends to reward the corruptness of characters. The comic effect relies chiefly upon a verbal wit and repartee – rapid and witty response in conversation that turns an insult back on its originator (Baldick 187). Comedy of manners flourished in England as the dominant form of Restoration comedy by the works of Etherege, Wycherly, and Congreve.

The middle class reaction against the immoralities of society and the courtly dialogues in the Restoration comedy resulted in the Sentimental comedy of the 18th century. Sentimental comedies depict middle class characters to engage the sympathy and tears of the audience. They present virtuous characters who triumph over the evil or corruption in the society with their virtue. On the other hand, Romantic comedies are concerned with the love affairs of young couples who overcome all the difficulties to end in a happy union. Northrop Frye calls Romantic comedy as the “drama of the green world” (Frye 182). Particularly in the Romantic comedies of the Elizabethan Period, the

action begins in a normal daily environment, and moves into the green world in which the comic resolution is achieved, and then returns to the normal world. According to Frye, this phenomenon and the festive endings of the plays are the evidences that the comedy reflects myth and rituals celebrating the victory of spring over winter (182-3).

The second group of comedy, the Low comedy makes no intellectual appeal but simply aims to arouse laughter by jokes, gags and slapstick humour. Slapstick humour relies on physical action such as quarrels and sudden falls to provoke loud laughter from the audience. It includes rowdy, clownish physical activities, and absurd characters to accomplish this aim. One of the forms of Low comedy is burlesque. This is an imitation of a literary work or the style of an author, but it makes the imitation amusing by a ridiculous distortion and exaggeration. Generally, it is written to entertain but more commonly, burlesque is an instrument of satire. Some critics claim that there is a distinction between high and low burlesque, thus both parody and travesty are embraced in this sub genre. While parody usually ridicules or criticizes the literary work or the style of the author, travesty treats a dignified subject in a grotesquely, undignified way. On the other hand, another form of Low comedy, farce, depends on improbable situations, eccentric characters, grotesque language and imagery to provoke continual laughter. It employs ridiculous situations and confusions through slapstick and horseplay and its crude, even bawdy language. E. K. Chambers explains farce as “a comedy of the ruder vices and the more robust virtues, a comedy in which fisticuffs, literal and verbal, take the place of rapier-play” (27). Hence, it is a comedy converted from the speech and manners of a cultivated society into the speech and manners of the

bourgeois. The distinction of farce in the comedy genre arises from its brutal or cynical outlook upon life rather than sympathetic.

In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, C. L. Barber notes that "Much comedy is festive – all comedy, if the word festive is pressed far enough" (3). As mentioned before, comedy originally celebrates the joyful side of life with a festival atmosphere. Particularly festive comedies are ritualistic, celebratory comedies associated with the celebrations of the carnival-like holidays and popular festivals. According to Michael Long, due to the festive comedies; "The unpredictable and the uncontrollable in life will thus be happily acknowledged and the audience will leave, we hope, with an enhanced capacity for the acceptance of 'nature' to take with them into the workaday world" (Long 1). He additionally states that the festive comedies, ". . . celebrate the adaptability of culture and of cultured men, the capacity of human structures to bend and not break under pressure from nature" (4). In other words, these comedies produce an awareness of the relation between man and nature – the nature celebrated on holiday (Barber 8). Therefore, with this awareness, a saturnalian energy of celebration and mirth is released, and by the power of this hilarity order can be restored after disasters; calamities are prevented, marriages are settled and disruptive characters are punished at the end. According to Naomi C. Liebler, "these similar plot arrangements mark the occasions for comic festivity, for celebrating individual and communal survival over those mishaps, disasters, mismatches and disruptions" (3). However, beside the plot of the play the other significant instrument, the comic character, the clown or the victim of joke, who causes laughter, should not be forgotten. Barber elucidates the importance of the comic character as follows; "Behind the laughter at the butts there is always a sense of

solidarity about pleasure, a communion embracing the merry-makers in the play and the audience, who have gone on holiday in going to a comedy” (Barber 8-9). The qualities of the comic character are completely different from those of the tragic character. These differences were determined by the primary theorist of literature to distinguish these two major forms of drama. Aristotle puts the distinctions between tragedy and comedy in terms of their leading characters.



1.4. The Theories of Comedy and Laughter

One of the classical sources for the theory of comedy is Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle describes comedy as "an imitation of inferior people" (9), however, this inferiority does not come from any kind of fault; it is only ridiculous or laughable. He goes on to specify that the laughable does not involve pain or destruction since it is simply disgraceful. This statement implies that, inferiority is regarded as both a moral and a social term. If "the laughable is an error or disgrace" (9) then, according to Aristotle, comic lower characters, even those of high status, will tend to behave ignobly because comedy aims to evoke laughter.

Although Aristotle declares that, in terms of physiology, among animals only man can laugh, the constitutional feature of laughter is always opposed, and the comic and laughter is seen as potentially dangerous. Firstly, Aristotle himself attracts attention to the dangers of the laughter and suggests a middle state in dealing with the humorous in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. He also suggests to avoid the excesses of "vulgar buffoons, striving after humour at all costs" (qtd. in Galbraith 6). In *Poetics*, Aristotle makes a comparison between comedy and lampoon, the older style of comedy. In the form of lampoon, Aristotle sees a series of jokes and comic routines with no probable connection between them. Therefore, if comedy links its jokes and comic routines into a connected sequence, it would be better (Heath lxiii). In other words, jokes and comic routines can be accepted if only they were systematized by the force of the classical authorities in art.

The classical medical tradition, especially tradition of Galen assumes that "the predisposition to laugh stemmed from an imbalance of the humours, the four elements

whose combination shaped the human personality” (qtd. in Galbraith 5). Meletius, a fourth century doctor, states in his treatise *On Human Nature* that;

Laughter is called *gelos* by the Greeks, and *gelos* comes from *hele*, which means heat. For those who are hot, are considered to be very inclined to laugh. And elsewhere *haema* (which signifies blood), said to be from *aetho* which means ‘I am burning’. For it is the hottest of all the humours made in our body; and those in whom blood abounds, their mind is more joyous. (qtd. in Galbraith 5)

On the other hand, Barry Sanders states that laughter is a product of air, or the breath that fills and exhausts our lungs; this breath has also a divine quality in terms of the Biblical creation process:

Breath is the basic miracle of life. Circulating throughout the body, it has been called many things – *prahna*, *spiritus*, *ruach*, *afflatus*, *pneuma*, *anima* – but whatever the name, it has always been regarded as sacred stuff. The whole of civilization rises out of thin air, every creation made possible by this most unsubstantial, invisible gas that fills our lungs. Without air, of course, there is no laughter. (2)

According to him, through laughter the *anima* (the inner self) becomes animated and the act of laughing marks the person’s spiritual journey. Concurrently, he quotes another important classical source for the theory of comedy, Cicero, and expounds that Cicero had an argument whether the soul was composed of fire or air. With the idea of that the soul’s essence is divine and desires to return to its heavenly home, Cicero argues: “No sort of speed can match the speed of the soul. . . When the soul has passed this tract and

reaches to and recognizes a substance resembling its own, it stops amongst the fires which are formed of rarified air and the modified glow of the sun and ceases to make higher ascent” (qtd. in Sanders 4-5).

Cicero’s discussion of laughter and the comic in the second book of his *De Oratore* is another source for the subject. In this dialogue on the question of the ideal orator, he divides the topic of laughter into five sections: “first, its nature; second, its source; third, whether willingness to produce it becomes an orator; fourth, the limits of his license; fifth, the classification of things laughable” (qtd. in Galbraith 7). Then Cicero explores both the appropriate limits of humour for the orator, and the varieties of wit. According to him, an orator must be cautious in provoking laughter. Neither wretchedness, nor wickedness, which could involve crime, is assailed by ridicule. The orator must also avoid buffoonery or mimicking in his use of laughter. Therefore, the orator must be a restrained man. Cicero emphasizes that, the things easily ridiculed neither involve strong disgust nor deep sympathy. All laughing matters are found among those limits (7-8).

Medieval cosmology divides the world into three parts – heaven, hell and the middle earth. Barry Sanders explains that the two extremes, heaven and hell can be characterized in terms of their two opposing emotional responses; laughing and weeping. On the earthly level the Church controls the emotions and takes a faint view of laughter. According to the Church, a Christian; “ought not to indulge in jesting; he ought not to laugh nor even to suffer laugh-makers” (128). Moreover, as it is said by Hugh of Saint Victor, an influential medieval theologian whose ideas has affected the development of Scholasticism, the goodness of joy depends on its source; it may be

good or evil but laughter is completely evil (129). Besides, according to the medieval mystic idea people would experience a kind of inner joy but they do not need anything as crude and deliberate as bodily laughter. The church claims that if this world is confined by seriousness and sobriety, therefore laughter makes a mockery of heaven. It suggests that heaven can be lived anywhere and anytime. This subversive attitude is controlled by the words of God, rewarding the hard work of living on earth with joyful laughter in heaven: "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6: 21); however, "Woe to you who laugh now, you shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6: 25). In the middle ages, the medieval seriousness which was articulated by the Church achieved its effectiveness, "through a threat of perdition and pain, of suffering and sorrow" (Sanders 150). Still, medieval laughter promises liberation because it frees itself from authority's approval.

Hence, laughter can appear to be low and commonplace, socially and intellectually. It can be considered as negative or useless, unless it is combined with a corrective attitude. In this respect, laughter is considered as a response to inconvenient and deformed deviances in an ordered social life. On the other hand, mockery of deformity, deviance and inferior status, as well as self-ridicule and self-abjection has been accepted in the popular culture. Even though the laughter is approved by the norms of social conduct, self-ridicule reveals the social uneasiness expressed through laughter (Bristol 127-8).

Sir Philip Sidney theorizes his own view of laughter by criticizing the decorum of early Elizabethan plays in *An Apology for Poetry*. His analysis of laughter begins with his belief that the major aim of poetic or theatrical representation is to teach by

delighting. Therefore, there must be careful discriminations of responses, to be exact; there must not be a confused meaning of sorrow and joy. Sidney's philosophy of laughter differentiates a moderated and intellectual laughter and an arbitrary laughter, which is found in the plays of his contemporaries. He believes that the former is proper to literary drama, and it should be inward rather than outward. His observation regarding the connection between delight and laughter is as follows:

But our comedians think there is no delight without laughter; which is very wrong, for though laughter may come with delight, yet cometh it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter; but well may one thing breed both together. Nay, rather in themselves they have, as it were, a kind of contrariety: for delight we scarcely do but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves or to the general nature: laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present. Laughter hath only a scornful tickling. (Sidney 174)

Sidney is obsessed with courtesy toward every individual in a society. According to him, social life demands careful attention to the courtly response to every situation. Therefore, he recoils from laughter, which is accepted as scornful and inferior (Bristol 128). He states that, "We are ravished with delight to see a fair woman, and yet are far from being moved to laughter. We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chances, we laugh at mischances" (Sidney 174). Therefore, rejecting an inaesthetic laughter, which is an expression of arrogance, he suggests that a delightful laughter needs a teaching of delightfulness.

Sidney strongly believes that laughter is social. It is a shared pleasure in which the participants experience feelings of intimacy and solidarity. However, despite its capacity of unification and social correction, Sidney thinks that laughter is corrosive. He explains that, there is a further danger that the derisive and hostile laughter of social superiority will return upon those in positions of privilege. It destroys the distances and creates a mingling of high and low, noble and ignoble, master and servant (Bristol 129).

Another Renaissance theorist who has written on laughter is Laurent Joubert. He published the *Treatise on Laughter* in 1579. The original and interesting title of this work was: "A Treatise on Laughter, Containing Its Essence, Causes and Wondrous Effects Curiously Studied, Discussed and Observed by M. Laurent Joubert". Joubert was a French physician and he established his work on a physiological basis. He thinks that laughter is one of the most amazing actions of man, which subverts old age, because it both heals and regenerates, or recreates. It is also common to all humanity. He declares that laughter is an aspect of the individual's relationship to other people (Bristol 134). According to Joubert, laughter is encouraged by objects, which are ugly, deformed and indecent. These ugly objects constitute the domain of the ridiculous, and certain parts of the body, when suddenly revealed in public, are accepted as laughing matter. Joubert explains this aspect as follows:

. . . if perchance one uncovers the shameful parts which by nature or public decency we are accustomed to keeping hidden, since this is ugly yet unworthy of pity, it moves the onlookers to laughter. . . It is equally unfitting to show one's arse, and when there is no harm forcing us to sympathize we are unable to contain our laughter. But if another

suddenly puts a red-hot iron to him, laughter gives way to compassion unless the harm done seems light and small, for that reinforces the laughter. (qtd. in Bristol 135)

These objects of laughter, especially human genitals and buttocks are the objects that Bakhtin has called as “bodily lower stratum” (*Rabelais* 23). They are both out of place in social situation, and the objects of desire in the common knowledge. The “lowering” of a person, especially the sudden downward movements are also recognized as universal laughing matters. Furthermore, the greater the fall, the more sincere and powerful is the laughter. Hence, Joubert claims that laughter is an exterior, social manifestation of a physical and affective reaction, rather than an intellectual one (Bristol 135-136). Joubert also states that laughter is a healthy way of expressing emotions, because;

Everybody sees clearly that in laughter the face is moving, the eyes sparkle and tear, the cheeks redden, the breast heaves, the voice becomes interrupted; and when it goes on for a long time the veins in the throat become enlarged, the arms shake, and the legs dance about, the belly pulls in and feels considerable pain; we cough, perspire, piss, and besmirch ourselves. (qtd. in Bristol 136)

Like Dionysus, the god of wine, laughter has multiple characteristics. “We laugh in delight, but also in hysteria. We laugh because we are depressed, and we laugh to overcome depression. We laugh to make someone comfortable or to make someone miserable” (Grawe 4). We preserve our sanity by laughing at absurdities of life. Conversely, laughter turns to bitterness, and ridicule is directed towards the deeper

irrationalities of evil and death. Therefore, the comedy that provokes laughter becomes a subversive power, which has a specific relationship with the world's realities. As Mikhail Bakhtin states in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

Laughter is a specific aesthetic relationship to reality, but not one that can be translated into a logical language; that is, it is a specific means for artistically visualizing and comprehending reality and, consequently, a specific means for structuring an artistic image, plot, or genre. Enormous creative, and therefore genre-shaping, power was possessed by ambivalent carnival laughter. (164)



1.5. Erasmus: *Praise of Folly*

Laughter is the primary philosophy expressed throughout Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Praise of Folly*. It is the best-known work of the Renaissance humanism, which was written in 1509. This book is a fantasy that starts as a frivolity but turns into an ironic eulogy. The main purpose of *Praise of Folly* is to recover the prestige of laughter as a philosophy. Erasmus plays with the name of his correspondent, Thomas More, whose name is the pun of the word *Moriae*, meaning *Folly* in Latin. "Thus the Latin title, *Encomium Moriae* becomes a kind of global equivocation in which the praise of foolishness is at the same time the praise of a wise man" (Bristol 130). As Walter Kaiser states in *Praisers of Folly*, even the title of the book is a "semantic labyrinth" (36). He explains this issue as follows:

For the praise of folly, being a *mock* praise, is in fact the censure of folly; but if Folly is thus censuring folly, Wisdom would presumably praise folly. Or. . . if the praise of folly is. . . actually the praise of wisdom, then Wisdom would presumably censure wisdom. . . To praise folly is fooling – that is Folly is foolish and Folly is praising folly, then the foolish is fooling – that is, wisdom is being praised. (36)

It can be seen that Erasmus intends to confuse his readers with an insoluble dilemma. By writing a mock encomium, he paradoxically mocks the mocking.

In *Praise of Folly*, Folly considers herself as the main source of life; "What can be sweeter or more precious than life itself? And to whom it is generally agreed life owes its beginning if not to me?" (Erasmus 74-75). She praises herself as the absolute necessity of merry gatherings by saying, "No party is any fun unless seasoned with

folly” (89), and adds; “What was the point of loading the stomach with all those delicacies, fancy dishes and titbits if the eyes and ears and the whole mind can’t be fed as well on laughter, jokes and wit?” (90). Personified Folly describes her birth in those words:

Born as I was amidst these delights I didn’t start life crying, but smiled sweetly at my mother straight away. And I certainly don’t envy the ‘mighty son of Kronos’ his she-goat nurse, for two charming nymphs fed me at their breasts. Drunkenness, daughter of Bacchus, and Ignorance, daughter of Pan. You can see them both here along with the rest of my attendants and followers. (72-73)

Her followers are self-love, flattery, forgetfulness, idleness, pleasure, madness, sensuality, revelry and sound sleep. Here Folly places herself in direct opposition to commonly accepted opinions implying that these opinions are foolish, and insists upon the intelligence, uniqueness, popularity and superiority of her. While she curses mankind and glorifies their frailties as if they were desired achievements, she also honours the vices of her companions as if they were virtues. She takes us to a world of luxury, drunkenness, idleness and irresponsibility by laughter, mocking, coaxing as well as bullying (Kaiser 41-51).

Erasmus theorizes laughter in Folly’s account on Dionysus:

Why is Bacchus always a boy with long flowing hair? Surely because he’s irresponsible and drunk, and spends all his life at banquets and dances, singing and revelling, and never has any dealings with Pallas. . . ‘Stupid god’, they would say, ‘just the sort to be born from a thigh!’

Yet who wouldn't choose to be this light-hearted fool who is always young and merry and brings pleasure and gaiety to all. . . (83)

While dealing with the Greek Pantheon, Erasmus creates a lively picture of the magnificent gods. The feasts of gods are such merry gatherings in which divine fools entertain the others:

The half-goat satyrs play Atellan farces, Pan makes everyone laugh with his hopeless efforts at singing, and the gods would rather listen to him than to the Muses themselves, especially when the nectar has started to flow freely. But I needn't say here what the gods are up to when they've drunk well and the banquet's over – absurdities like these often make me feel I can't stop laughing myself. (85-86)

As the embodiment of fallacy and unreason, Folly founds her authority throughout the social and intellectual domain. The celebration of this unreason however is not threatening; on the contrary, it is relieving. The laughter evoked by Folly is a scorn transformed to a self-derision and self-acceptance. Erasmus's main argument is the universality of folly as the fundamental truth about the world. Laughter is indiscriminate and it is also a saving response, because it places everything in a down-to-earth perspective. It is also an antidote to fear and intimidation (Bristol 133). Like the other Renaissance theorists, Erasmus accepts laughter as a universal philosophical principle that heals and regenerates. Therefore, *Praise of Folly* is a kind of literature that systematizes the grotesque laughter of popular festive form, identical to *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais, which is the main source of the theory of carnivalization of Mikhail M. Bakhtin.

1.6. François Rabelais: *Gargantua and Pantagruel*

François Rabelais has a special place not only in the movement of Renaissance humanism but also in the history of literary criticism. Russian theorist of literature Mikhail M. Bakhtin based his term “Carnavalesque” on Rabelais’s famous work, *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, to describe the forms of unofficial culture that use laughter, parody and grotesque realism as a weapon against official culture and totalitarian order. Bakhtin’s book was translated into English in 1968 with the title of *Rabelais and His World*, but the original title of the book was *François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Bakhtin suggests that without the knowledge of folk culture a modern reader might misinterpret the significance of many events, imagery, idiom and symbols incorporated into Rabelais’s works.

According to Walter Kaiser, François Rabelais was the most comic and devotedly Erasmian among his contemporary Renaissance humanists. Although they had never met, Erasmus was familiar with him and they shared a spiritual friendship and a devotion to humanist literature. One of the letters of Rabelais to Erasmus reveals a deep respect to him as not only a father but also a mother, at whose “chaste breasts [he has] suckled [his] divine learning” (Kaiser 104). In this respect, Kaiser additionally states that Panurge, the character of Rabelais, is a brother to Folly of Erasmus.

Rabelais was a Franciscan monk, a physician and a humanist, whose books were banned by the Catholic Church and later placed in the list of the Forbidden Books. He studied Greek, Latin, law, astronomy and ancient Greek medical texts in monastery. After leaving the monastery, he started to study medicine, and in 1530 he became Bachelor of Medicine. He published his famous work *Pantagruel* in 1532 under the pen

name “Alcofribas Nasier” – an anagram of “François Rabelais”. This work was followed by *Gargantua* and other three books in this series. His heroes, Gargantua and his son Pantagruel are huge and rude giants travelling in a world full of greed, stupidity, violence and jokes. Rabelais mixes different narrative forms in these works, such as chronicle, farce, dialogue and commentary, and blends them with popular humour. He forms his stories with an epic journey mixed with fantastic notions, and besides he resembles Erasmus in his use of parody, travesty, burlesque and all other techniques of mock epic (McLoughlin 11). He creates stories using folklore themes familiar to his readers, but he changes the well-known stories by using comic literary strategies and offers them in a festive mode. With the outrageous ideas and tales, Rabelais emphasizes the physical joys of life – food, drink, sex, and bodily functions connected to them. By stressing these activities, he mocks asceticism and oppressive religious and political forces in his time. In Book One, Chapter Three he introduces the parents of Gargantua:

Grandgousier was a good jester in his time, with as great love of tossing off a glass as any man then in the world. He had also quite a liking for salt meat. For this reason he generally kept a good store of Mayence and Bayonne hams, plenty of smoked ox-tongues, an abundance of chitterlings in their season and beef pickled in mustard, a supply of botargos, and a provision of sausages; though not of Bologna sausages, for he feared Lombard concoctions – but of those from Bigorre, Longaulnay, La Brenne, and Le Rouergue. In the prime of his years he married Gargamelle, daughter of the king of the Butterflies, a fine, good-looking piece, and the pair of them often played the two-backed

beast, joyfully rubbing their bacon together, to such effect that she became pregnant of a fine boy and carried him into the eleventh month. For so long and even longer women can carry a child, especially when he is some masterpiece of nature, a personage destined in his time to perform great deeds. (Rabelais 46)

In Chapter Six, Gargamelle, the mother of Gargantua, gives childbirth in a “very strange manner”. While she was eating and drinking in a party, she begins to feel disturbed in her “lower parts”. Thinking that these are birth pangs, everybody expects the baby; but instead of giving childbirth, she defecates. “By this misfortune the cotyledons of the matrix were loosened at the top, and the child leapt up through them to enter the hollow vein. Then, climbing through the diaphragm to a point above the shoulders where this vein divides in two, he took the left fork and came out by the left ear” (52).

Rabelais’s comic style combines history and fiction with folklore in a seriocomic manner. His methods are called *serio ludere* since they present what appeared to be comic stories but this comedy contains serious ideas (McLoughlin 144). In the prologue of the first book of his novel *Gargantua*, he points out the hidden meaning of his work: “Here you will find a novel savour, a most abstruse doctrine; here you will learn the deepest mysteries, the most agonizing problems of our religion, our body politic, our economic life” (Rabelais 38). Relating to the seriousness in Rabelais’s comedy, Bakhtin remarks that laughter does not reject, but on the contrary, completes and purifies seriousness; and he continues as follows:

Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified;
it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation,

from didacticism, naiveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality. Laughter does not permit seriousness to atrophy and to be torn away from the one being, forever incomplete. It restores this ambivalent wholeness. Such is the function of laughter in the historical development of culture and literature. (*Rabelais* 123)

With reference to the unification of seriousness and comic in Rabelais's works, J. M. Cohen, the translator of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, comments on Rabelais's other uniting characteristics as follows:

He was a man intoxicated by every sort of learning and theory, who had at the same time the earthy commonsense of a peasant. His mind would reach out in pursuit of the wildest fancies, and when he had captured them he would relate them only to the three constants of this life: birth, copulation, and death, which he saw in their crudest physical terms. There was in the mind of this loose-living monk no twentieth century conflict between the two sides of his nature, the scholar's and the peasant's. They played into one another's hands. Nor was he conscious of any inconsistency between his professed beliefs and the often pagan workings of his imagination. François Rabelais was a whole figure, chock-full of human contradictions, which he attempted neither to reconcile nor to apologize for. (Cohen 17)

Rabelaisian laughter is linked to time and time's successive changes. His Dionysian laughter "unites the death of the old and the birth of the new. The contradictory world of

becoming is presented, is represented as all of a piece. The positive and negative poles of becoming (death/birth) are not opposed to one another but united” (McLoughlin 73).

Rabelais was also a man who was understood and loved by his contemporaries. Moreover, he left deep and numerous marks in the literature of his time and influenced many writers. One of his contemporaries, Etienne Pasquier comments on Rabelais’s policy: “Among us there is no one who does not know how much Rabelais, clowning wisely in his *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* gained the love of the people” (qtd. in *Rabelais* 60). This commentary reveals that, his contemporaries have understood the complexity and ambivalence of his seriocomic clowning.

The clowning and the other components of Rabelais’s works are strongly related with the concept of laughter. Bakhtin emphasizes this relation as follows: “The four-hundred-year history of the understanding, influence, and interpretation of Rabelais is closely linked with the history of laughter” (59). According to Bakhtin, Rabelais reflects the true Renaissance conception of laughter, because in his world:

Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning; it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint. Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter. (*Rabelais* 66)

However, the subsequent opposite view of the seventeenth century considers laughter as not a universal or a philosophical concept, but an individual one. Thus, if the sphere of

comic is narrow and private, then the important or essential cannot be comical. As a result, the place of laughter in literature belongs to the low genres, showing the life of individuals and the inferior social levels. It is a light amusement or a beneficial social punishment of corrupt and low persons. On the contrary, in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” Bakhtin emphasizes that, “[L]aughter not as a biological or psycho-physiological act, but rather laughter conceived as an objectivized, sociohistorical cultural phenomenon, which is most often present in verbal expression” (*Dialogic* 236).

Another Rabelais scholar L. E. Pinsky, in his essay named “The Laughter of Rabelais”, considers laughter as the basic organizing principle in Rabelais’s works. He does not separate laughter from the ideological context of the novels; however, he refuses Rabelais as a mere satirist saying that the novels do not express indignation toward evil or vices of society. Pinsky discloses the element of knowledge in Rabelais’s laughter and its link with the truth. He states that; “Laughter in *Pantagruel* is at the same time a theme and an argumentation. The reader must regain the gift that sorrow has deprived him of, the gift of laughter. He must return to the normal condition of human nature, so that truth may be disclosed to him” (qtd. in *Rabelais* 141). Pinsky additionally states that;

For Rabelais, man of the Renaissance, laughter was precisely a liberation of the emotions that dim the knowledge of life. Laughter proves the existence of clear spiritual vision and bestows it. Awareness of the comic and reason are the two attributes of human nature. Truth

reveals itself with a smile when man abides in a nonanxious, joyful, comic mood. (141)

According to Pinsky, the importance of Rabelais's laughter lies in its multiplicity of meaning and complex configuration. In Rabelais's laughter, "Frank mockery and praise, uncrowning and exaltation, irony and dithyramb" (*Rabelais* 142) are combined. He declares that in Rabelais's comic status there is the feeling of the general relativity of, "great and small, exalted and lowly, of the fantastic and the real, the physical and the spiritual; the feeling of rising, growing, flowering and fading, of the transformation of nature eternally alive" (142).

As it is emphasized before, Renaissance attitude to laughter was related with the positive and favourable sides of it. The antique tradition has an essential meaning for Renaissance, which offered a defence of the literary tradition of laughter and brought it into the sphere of humanist ideas. Bakhtin states that, the aesthetic practice of Renaissance laughter is determined by the traditions of medieval culture of folk humour. In the Middle Ages, folk humour existed and developed outside the official ideology and literature, but because of this unofficial existence it was marked as radicalism, freedom and ruthlessness. While it was forbidden in all official spheres, it was privileged in the marketplace, festival days and in the festive literature. Therefore, the radical, universal and gay form of laughter emerged from the folk culture, and, in the Renaissance, with its popular and vulgar language it entered the field of great literature and high ideology, as for example with the works of Boccaccio, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. (*Rabelais* 71-72).

CHAPTER 2: BAKHTINIAN APPROACH

The concept of *carnival* was offered by Mikhail M. Bakhtin in regard to the works of François Rabelais, but the theory of carnival is strongly related with his concepts of dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia. Bakhtin's theories owe much to neo-Kantianism. Neo-Kantianism is a philosophical position which goes back to Kant, partly as a reaction against the nineteenth century positivism and empiricism. In this way of thinking, "consciousness cannot be explained as a mere reflection of the external world, for the mind is not a blank sheet on which the objects of the external world are impressed. On the contrary, consciousness brings its own independent forms to apprehending and explaining the world outside itself" (Dentith 11). Bakhtin adapted this neo-Kantian way of thinking into a concept about the relationship between self and other. Later, this relationship was transformed into the concept of "dialogism".

Bakhtin was not exactly a Marxist but his language theories were identical with of Althusser's. Like Althusser, he accepts language as an ideological and material concept. His language theory focuses primarily on the concept of dialogue. According to this theory, language is always a dialogue and a product of the interactions between at least two people. Bakhtin explains this idea as follows:

Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole – there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. (*Dialogic* 426)

People of different generations, classes, places, professions have their own dialects or idiolects. These dialects contain certain implications or traces of values, perspectives and experiences. Hence, the arguments of dialects become the arguments of these values. According to Bakhtin, the language of a class, social position or generation constructs its own set of understandings and values, so the people who belong to this class cannot surpass these limits. He believes that one can think only what one's language allows one to think, and in this case every word or discourse betrays the ideology of its speaker (*Dialogic* 429). Bakhtin calls this phenomenon as *monoglossia* and opposes it with *heteroglossia*. He claims that;

Language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new typifying "languages". (291)

As Ronald Knowles states in *Shakespeare and Carnival*, monologism is the character of a language which is supported by a hierarchic society, but forms of comedy, from Aristophanes to the Tudor interludes, encourage the internal dialogic essence of language (10).

In his theories about literary genres, Bakhtin foregrounds the novel as the privileged genre because of its polyphonic quality. According to him, the polyphonic novel contains multiple and various consciousnesses or discourses rather than a single,

authoritative consciousness or discourse. Polyphonic novel repositions the author of the novel alongside the characters as one of the consciousnesses. He/she is both the creator of the characters and their equal. Thus, in the polyphonic novel, there is not an authorial voice dominating and directing the relations and dialogues between characters, but there is a world in which all characters, even the narrator himself/herself, possess individual discourses interacting with other discourses. For Bakhtin, polyphonic novel is no longer a direct expression of the author's truth but an active creation of the truth in the perceptions of the author, the characters and the reader in which all participate as equals (Morson and Emerson 234-259). This truth is a unified one that requires a plurality of perceptions. Bakhtin, as a great believer of pluralism of thought and culture, emphasizes the "unfinalizability – the open-endedness of things – as if all forms of life [are] part of a huge ongoing dialogue" (Knowles 3).

On the other hand, heteroglossia is a broader concept than polyphony. This Russian term which can be translated into English as "multispeechedness", can be seen as "the multiplicity of actual 'languages' which are at any time spoken by the speakers of any 'language'. These are the languages of social groups and classes, of professional groups, of generations, the different languages for different occasions that speakers adopt even within these broader distinctions" (Dentith 35). In other words, *heteroglossia* is the complex mixture of the languages and world views that is always dialogized. This dialogization of languages creates a complex unity, because language resides meanings neither in the intention of the speaker, nor in the text, but at a point between the speaker or the author, and the listener or the reader (Morson and Emerson 284-90).

According to Bakhtin, the monoglot or the unitary language constitutes an expression of a linguistic unification and centralization, in other words an expression of the *centripetal* forces of language. These are the forces that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world (*Dialogic* 270). Bakhtin underlines the conflict between *centripetal* and *centrifugal* forces as follows; “Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward” (*Dialogic* 272). He explains that, centripetal and centrifugal forces promote the continual evolution of languages. Centrifugal forces within heteroglossia change the official language of a culture over time by introducing diverse unofficial forms of language into official forms by means of various discourses, speeches and dialects. While traditional disciplines emphasize the centripetal forces, Bakhtin highlights the centrifugal forces that produce a complex mixture of languages, attitudes, or points of view about the world. He also stresses that these are not always linguistic forces. Dentith explains this as follows:

The conception of language as dynamically pulled between centre and periphery, between unitary national forces and heteroglossia, at once describes the tensions that are holding together and pulling apart a language at any one time, and also the same forces which, in given social, economic, political, artistic and educational histories, are producing the multiple changes that constitute the history of a language. These dynamic forces are not simply linguistic ones; they are produced

by historical forces that are external to language but which act partly in language. (Dentith 35)

While centripetal forces intend to establish a totalitarian order, centrifugal forces try to break their bonds from this totalitarianism. Bakhtin claims that official culture is one of the centripetal forces in a society. Official culture serves for the state and searches for a unification in order to idealize the reality (Aksoy 52). However, Bakhtin opposes the official culture with the popular folk culture as a centrifugal force in a society. According to him, various forms of ritual based on laughter are sharply distinct from the serious official and political forms of ceremonials. These popular forms offer;

a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they [build] a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people [participate] more or less, in which they [live] during a given time of the year. (*Rabelais* 6)

Bakhtin suggests *carnival* as the most important and powerful form of these popular rituals in Medieval age and Renaissance. He states that the other forms of amusement faded away and, “their popular character was reduced because of their connection with . . . political rituals. Carnival became the symbol and incarnation of the true folk festival, completely independent of Church and State but tolerated by them” (*Rabelais* 220). He also emphasizes the unofficial and universal condition of carnival in which people live;

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. (7)

The carnivalesque language, best characterized as a form of laughter, is an expression of freedom from official norms and it stands in a binary opposition to the authority of church and state. This language of laughter, for Bakhtin;

builds its own world versus the official world, its own church versus the official church, its own state versus the official state. Laughter celebrates its masses, professes its faith, celebrates its marriages and funerals, writes its epitaphs, elects kings and bishops. Even the smallest medieval parody is always built as part of a whole comic world.

(Rabelais 88)

Moreover, according to Bakhtin, the concept of parody is the key component in the lives of ancient and medieval people. It is a joyous, chaotic, subversive and energetic attitude against the dominant language forms and dominant ideologies. Parody is also an intentional, intra-linguistic hybrid which is dialogized. Bakhtin explains this issue as follows:

Parodic-travesty forms . . . liberated the object from the power of language in which it had become entangled as if in a net; they destroyed the homogenizing power of myth over language; they freed consciousness from the power of direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own discourse, within its own language. *(Dialogic 60)*

The parodic-travesty forms are oriented toward not only the object but also another's word. Parodying artist begins to look at language from outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of a different language and style. As a dialogized hybrid and a deliberate subversion of the ideological constraints of the system, parody is the clearest way to achieve heteroglossia in terms of both artistic and social expression. Therefore an unofficial language is built on a parodic refusal of the higher languages; on the other hand, parody is bilingual because it speaks with and against that which is parodied. As Morson and Emerson state, parodic forms enable us to distance ourselves from words, to be outside any given utterance. Thus, "the parodic words we use are important not because they can change reality but because they increase our freedom of interpretive choice by providing new perspectives" (Morson and Emerson 435). In addition, carnival becomes a parody of "extracarnival life" (*Rabelais* 11), but more specifically it becomes a parody of the official order.

As Arthur Lindley states, *Rabelais and His World* is not only a commentary on late-medieval literature and culture, but also a work which subverts Stalinism (17). Bakhtin lived in "interesting" times (Dentith 4). He was a young man during the Russian Revolution, and then he saw the Civil War following it. He lived through the excitements of the 1920's, the nuisance of Stalinism, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the cultural freeze of the Cold War, the Khrushchev thaw, and the stagnation of the Brezhnev years. His writings were affected by this history; however they could not be published between 1929 and 1960's. The major intellectual force in early twentieth century Russia was Marxism. As mentioned before, Bakhtin's involvement with this official philosophy is unclear. Marxism was not only the major orthodoxy that was to

become under Stalin, but it was also a complex political and social philosophy capable of different emphases (13). From this viewpoint, it inspired Bakhtin to foreground his cultural theories; as for example, his theory of carnival is dependent on a notion of the social division of society.

Arthur Lindley emphasizes the subversion of Stalinism in Bakhtin's work and clarifies this concept as follows; "Bakhtin's [*Rabelais and His World*] notoriously creates a market from which all the unpleasantnesses of commerce have been banished along with the cruel and exclusionary aspects of folk humor. It imagines an oppressive establishment that also licenses rebellion" (17). Carnival, for Bakhtin; "is an embodiment of the liberated communality of the people in perennially renewed rebellion against the social and spiritual restrictions of the official order" (Lindley 17). Moreover, carnival has been understood, "as a celebration of the flesh in which the repressions and prohibitions of normal life cease to exist and every form of pleasure is suddenly possible" (Sanders 155).

During carnival, the most significant property is the suspension of all hierarchical priorities. Bakhtin emphasizes this issue as follows:

Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (*Rabelais* 10)

At this point, Lindley argues that the concept of carnival is both suppressed by the official culture and triumphs over it. While carnival represents positive, relative, and

liberating side of life, official culture signifies negative, absolute, and enslaving side of it. Therefore, while carnival is the Dionysian, official culture stands for the Apollonian (Lindley 18). As mentioned before, carnival is the second, unofficial life of people. While Bakhtin clarifies the official life as “monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence, and piety”, he summarizes the unofficial life as; “free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both these lives were legitimate, but separated by strict temporal boundaries” (*Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 130). However, Lindley claims that official order tolerates carnival because carnival is tolerable, and it is also dependent on the authority. He explains this issue by focusing on their relation; “The proper relation of the two orders is not oppositional but dialectical, each supplying forms to the other” (Lindley 20).

Although it is tolerated by the authority, carnival is not an official celebration offered by state, church or any other authority; because it is based on older forms of rituals as for example the Greek Dionysia and the Roman Saturnalia. Saturnalia was the major festival in the imperial period of Roman republic and it was held in honour of Saturn, the god who brought fertility to Italy in the golden age by teaching the art of agriculture. David Wiles explains: “There was no war in the age of Saturn, and most importantly no class distinctions. The inversion of master and slave at the Saturnalia is seen as a means of honouring the god who symbolizes this uncorrupted, egalitarian past” (62). As it is known, Saturn is associated with the Greek titan Cronus, who symbolizes time and the orderly progress of seasons. There are also negative aspects of

Cronus; he was the titan who has used his sickle to castrate his father Uranus, and he was also the father who has devoured his children. Consequently, Bakhtin foregrounds the importance of Saturnalia in the medieval period of Europe: “The tradition of the Saturnalias remained unbroken and alive in the medieval carnival, which expressed this universal renewal and was vividly felt as an escape from the usual official way of life” (*Rabelais* 8). In the medieval period, the Saturnalia remained important in its new guise as the twelve days of Christmas, however the focus of communal celebration in Europe shifted to Mardi Gras, or a type of “‘carnival’ in the strict sense of ‘farewell to flesh’, flesh in dual form of sexual intercourse and eating meat” (Wiles 63), because, the word *carnival* comes from the Latin *carnis* meaning “flesh” and *vale* meaning “farewell”.

According to a popular view, carnival is accepted as a safety-valve. This idea suggests that, people who are oppressed or constrained by an unwelcome social discipline are permitted to release their resentments, so that they may be reincorporated within the repressive regime (Bristol 27). In other words, if people are able to break the rules on one day of the year, thereby they are able to vent their anxieties and frustrations, “and so will be more likely to behave themselves for the rest of the year” (Humphrey 11). In terms of safety-valve idea, carnival is accepted as an authorized transgression. Terry Eagleton emphasizes this issue as follows; “Carnival, after all, is a *licensed* affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art” (qtd. in Humphrey 33). On the other hand, Michael D. Bristol declares that, this safety-valve idea is too limited for the carnival type of festivity, because the meaning of carnival is ancient and it has always been a powerful mechanism in the “archaic survival” (28).

Additionally, the participants of a carnival experience “a clarification, a heightened awareness of the relation between man and nature” (Bristol 31). C. L. Barber explains this awareness as the one which includes, “mockery of what is merely natural, a humor which puts holiday in perspective with life as a whole” (8). Besides, the conflict of life and death is in the heart of Bakhtin’s idea of carnival. So, the resolution of this conflict in the cyclic renewal of life “which subsumes death into the larger constants of regenerative becoming made manifest in the seasons and human gestation. . . . Hence the importance of the festive feast or banquet is linking natural harvest and bodily sustenance in the organic cycle of time” (Knowles 4-5).

The feasting or the banquet imagery has a significant place in the theory of carnival. According to Bakhtin, eating, drinking and swallowing actions are closely linked with the popular festive celebrations. The feasting imagery is a primary form of human culture and it is always related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural, cosmic cycle, or to biological or historic timelessness. They were also linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man. These are seasonal changes representing preliminary times or transitional movements when structures are fluid; these moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always lead to a festive perception of the world (*Rabelais* 9). Furthermore, according to Bakhtin, the feasting imagery symbolizes the entire labour process. Labour and food represent the struggle of man against the world, ending in triumph. They both are collective, and they are not biological but social events. The essential relation of feasting imagery to life, death, struggle, triumph and regeneration is a universal concept (281-282). However, Bakhtin stresses the difference between the feasting imagery and

the private eating or private gluttony and drunkenness. At this point there is no longer the “banquet for all the world” (302), in which all take part. The private eating and drinking is the exaggerated picture of gluttony, not an expression of social gathering.

Bakhtin says that, the act of eating signifies the triumph of the body over its enemy; the world. It celebrates its victory; therefore no meal can be sad. It is the triumph of life over death. This is the reason why the feast fulfils the function of completion as a triumphal celebration. As for example there is always a feast following a wedding or a funeral. The feast shows the potency of a new beginning, instead of an abstract ending. In such a feast, people celebrate the Dionysian power of life and rebirth even after a funeral, for the death is not an actual end. Besides, Bakhtin claims that, there is not any mysticism or abstract idealistic sublimation in the image of feast, because “the victory over the world in the act of eating [is] concrete, tangible, bodily” (*Rabelais* 285). Opposing to the official feast, “the carnival celebrates the temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (*Rabelais* 10). The festive occasion also suggests looking into better days to come. During the meal, people forget their present misfortunes and they are inspired with the hope of a happy future. Another significant aspect of the feasting imagery is its relation with the underworld. The word “to die” has various connotations such as “being swallowed” or “eaten up”. In connection with this, underworld or the earth is accepted as a topographical lower stratum, which represents hell, and devours or swallows the body after its death.

However, most importantly, eating and drinking are one of the most significant manifestations of the *grotesque body*. Bakhtin's notion of carnival includes grotesque realism, which centres on the grotesque body. The typical characteristic of this body is its open and unfinished nature, and its interaction with the world. According to Bakhtin, the grotesque body;

transgresses its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense. The encounter of man with the world, which takes place inside the open, biting, rending, chewing mouth, is one of the most ancient and most important objects of human thought and imagery. Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself. . . Man's encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant; he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself. The limits between man and the world are erased, to man's advantage. (*Rabelais* 281)

Bakhtin explains that, exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness are the fundamental attributes of the grotesque style. The basic nature of the grotesque is the exaggeration of the inappropriate to incredible and monstrous dimensions. Therefore, according to him, "the grotesque is always satire" (*Rabelais* 306). Essentially, satire and parody, alongside the other forms of grotesque realism, degrade their subjects while they are exaggerating them. The fundamental principle of degradation is the lowering of all that is high, abstract, ideal or sacred. It is the debasement, bringing down to earth, or the transfer to the material level. But, this degradation is not a negative process. First of all, as mentioned before, it is a celebration of temporary liberation from the prevailing

truth and from the established order. Then, it is a reminder that “we are all creatures of flesh and thus of food and faeces also” (Dentith 67). It is also an affirmation of regeneration and renewal, and lastly it declares that, “excrement is gay matter” (*Rabelais* 175). At this point, Bakhtin claims that the primary reflex of the grotesque body is to laugh, and “the people’s laughter which characterized all the forms of grotesque realism from immemorial times was linked with the bodily lower stratum. Laughter degrades and materializes” (20). According to him, degradation means coming down to earth or the contact with the earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, “the life of the belly and the reproductive organs: it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth” (21).

Dentith says that the aesthetic focus of grotesque realism is the grotesque body. However, in contrast with the grotesque body, there is a classical body, which Laura Kipnis refers as the one “refined, orificeless” and has a “laminated surface” (Kipnis 376). It is also monumental, static, closed and sleek body, whereas the grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended body of becoming, process and change. Kipnis elucidates as follows: “The very highness of high culture is structured through the obsessive banishment of the low, and through the labour of suppressing the grotesque body (which is, in fact, simply the material body, gross as that can be) in favour of what Bakhtin refers to as ‘the classical body’” (Kipnis 376). While the classical body is a completed thing, rounded and finished with perfection, the unfinished grotesque body celebrated by Bakhtin, “is a body in which becoming and rather than completion is evident, a body whose openness to the world and the future is emphatically symbolized

by the consuming maws, pregnant stomachs, evident phalluses and gargantuan evacuations that make it up” (Dentith 68). The body copulates, defecates, overeats, and the speeches is swamped with defecations, urine, disease, noses, mouths, and dismembered parts. It also protrudes bulges, sprouts and branches off (*Rabelais* 319-321).

Bakhtin states that the grotesque forms of “cosmic and universal” body predominate the unofficial life of European people. As for example, the theme of mockery and abuse is entirely bodily and grotesque. Actually abuses, curses, profanities and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech. These elements of familiar or impertinent speech were legalized in the marketplace, and were adopted by the festive genres. As Bakhtin states; “the marketplace was the center of all that is unofficial; it enjoyed a certain extraterritoriality in a world of official order and official ideology, it always remained ‘with the people’” (*Rabelais* 154). Especially the combination of praise and abuse is the characteristic of folk culture. Bakhtin says they are the two sides of the same coin. In familiar billingsgate talk, abusive indecent words are used in the complimentary sense, in other words they are blessing and humiliating at the same time. Then the dual image combining praise and abuse “seeks to grasp the very moment of this change, the transfer from the old to the new, from death to life. Such an image crowns and uncrowns at the same moment” (166).

On the other hand, this dual image is closely linked to laughter because the positive and negative poles of becoming are closely linked with fertility. As for example the images of excrement and urine is preserved the essential link with birth, fertility, renewal and welfare. These positive images are also the debasing elements in grotesque

realism and they are the references to “the bodily lower stratum, the zone of genital organs” (*Rabelais* 148). In all languages there are a great number of expressions related to genital organs, the anus and buttocks, the belly, the mouth and the nose. These parts of the body play the leading role in the grotesque style. Whenever people laugh and curse, their speech is filled with bodily images. All the verbal images of these organs are part of the carnival as a whole, and especially apparent on feast days, introducing “one single logic of imagery”: “This is the drama of laughter presenting at the same time the death of the old and the birth of the new world. Each image is subject to the meaning of the whole; each reflects a single concept of contradictory world of becoming, even though the image may be separately presented” (149). Moreover, abuses, curses and the other elements of unofficial speech are also the elements of freedom refusing to conform to conventions, etiquette, civility and respectability. Bakhtin emphasizes that;

These elements of freedom, if present in sufficient numbers and with a precise intention, exercise a strong influence on the entire contents of speech, transferring it to another sphere beyond the limits of conventional language. Such speech forms, liberated from norms, hierarchies, and prohibitions of established idiom, become themselves a peculiar argot and create a special collectivity, a group of people initiated in familiar intercourse, who are frank and free in expressing themselves verbally. The marketplace crowd was such a collectivity, especially the festive, carnivalesque crowd at the fair. (*Rabelais* 187-188)

Furthermore, Morson and Emerson declare that, carnival sense of world “involves mockery of all serious, ‘closed’ attitudes about the world, and it also celebrates ‘discrowning’, that is inverting top and bottom in any given structure. Discrowning points symbolically to the unstable and temporary nature of any hierarchy” (443). Carnival turns the world upside down. All hierarchies are reversed and suspended. In the topsy-turvy world, comic crowning and uncrownings take place. Fools become kings, kings become clowns and are mocked by all the people. The abuse and the thrashing that are equivalent to a change of costume, appear as the symbolic actions directed at something on a higher level, as for example at the king. At this point, abuse reveals the other, true face of abused, “it tears off his disguise and mask. It is the king’s discrowning” (*Rabelais* 197). Bakhtin describes this abuse with uncrowning as the truth about the old authority, about the dying world, and connects it with the ancient tradition of Saturnalia with its rituals of travesties, uncrownings and thrashings (198).

One of the significant common elements of carnival activities is the inversion of world order. In travesties men dress as women or animals, or women dress as men. Reversal of gender or sexual freedom is a part of these inversions. These reversals constitute carnival’s spirit of true liberation. They also signal revolutionary acts, “through their creations of bizarre worlds, pitting their fantasies against the dreary, disabling, and deadening routines of the world” (Sanders 156). Every carnival celebration gains its strength from juxtaposing contrary images. The major opposition in carnival takes place at the critical moment in the Christian calendar. It is the transition from Shrove (Fat) Tuesday to Ash Wednesday, in other words, from Mardi Gras to Lent. Mardi Gras or Carnival rejects dietary restrictions and all sorts of taboos. It is the

time of abundance and liberations. On the other hand, Lent imposes the strictness of abstinence, enforcing a specific time to avoid not only eating meat and eggs but also refrain from sex, play-going and the other forms of amusement. Lent means “lean time” and it is represented as a thin old woman. In contrast to this, Carnival looks young, fat, cheerful, sexy, a great eater and drinker, a tireless sexual giant – a Gargantuan figure. The battle between Carnival and Lent is a, “dialogue, a joking but serious contest in which there can be no victor, because the combat itself is of crucial importance. That combat produces a space that illuminates for an instant the true nature of institutions – a kind of consciousness” (Sanders 163). Moreover, Carnival needs Lent because it is meaningful only as part of that dialogic, dialectical relationship (Lindley 135).

The other significant theme in the theory of carnival is the theme of mask which reveals the essence of grotesque. Bakhtin describes this theme as the “most complex theme of folk culture” (*Rabelais* 39). According to him, the mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation. It is related to “transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles.” (40). A mask always hides something, keeps a secret and deceives. With this facility, it becomes something very popular in the nature of carnival. Also the carnival mask loses its Romantic solemn bond from its origins and acquires a grotesque manner in which it conceals an “inexhaustible and many-colored life” (*Rabelais* 40).

CHAPTER 3: SHAKESPEAREAN CARNIVALESQUE

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bakhtin foregrounds the novel as the privileged literary genre. According to him, the novel – if it has a polyphonic quality – creates the plurality of voices and perceptions; therefore it is heteroglossic. However;

Drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony; drama may be multi-levelled, but it cannot contain multiple worlds; it permits only one, and not several, systems of management. . . In essence each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero, while polyphony presumes a plurality of fully valid voices within the limits of a single work – for only then may polyphonic principles be applied to the construction of the whole. (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 34)

In a discussion about Shakespeare and the polyphonic quality of his plays, Bakhtin disagrees with Lunacharsky who claims that Shakespeare is extremely polyphonic. Bakhtin believes that it is impossible to speak of a fully formed and deliberate polyphonic quality in Shakespeare's plays. He also states that; “the voices in Shakespeare are not points of view on the world to the degree they are in Dostoevsky; Shakespearean characters are not ideologists in the full sense of the word” (34). Nevertheless, Bakhtin's first objection is not toward the specific plays of Shakespeare, but toward the very nature of drama which cannot be polyphonic.

On the other hand, the dramatic structure of the Elizabethan theatre depends on the clashes of opposing values; as for example noble and ignoble, courtly life and the life of commons, and the different languages of high and low cultures. As Cevat Çapan

states, the versification of Shakespeare presents these conflicts successfully. Shakespeare uses language in order to show the diverse quality of his characters and their mental, social and physical states. He also displays their status by their language and speaking styles. One of the most important methods that he exercises in his dramas is the usage of prose. Prose is a necessary element in giving voice of complex and lively scenery of characters. According to Çapan, the most important function of prose is to designate the social classes of the characters. While the noble people use verse in the plays, the ignoble use prose, for prose is the language of daily life, ordinary details and rough realities. However, verse reflects traditional values, intense emotions and high ideals (34-37). Still, Shakespeare's male or female protagonists, whether noble or ignoble, frequently change their speaking styles and shift from verse to prose or vice versa throughout the plays.

Besides, as Bradbrook states, the speeches of Shakespeare's characters are based on the diction of common life. They spring from the special conditions of the Elizabethan public theatre, and are designed to appeal in a variety of ways to the widest audience (5). Therefore the language of Elizabethan drama is highly rich in depicting a variety of speeches, values and perspectives of people from different classes or professions, and this creates polyphony in terms of Bakhtin's theory. The quotation taken from *As You Like It* can be a convenient example for this claim. When Corin asks Touchstone, "And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?" Touchstone answers;

TOUCHSTONE. Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it

is a very vile life. Now in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach. Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?

(III. ii. 13-22)

Kiernan Ryan argues that the phrase “in respect that” summarizes the continuous dynamic of dramatic polyphony, whose aim is to situate and qualify everything it touches. He additionally exposes that Shakespeare has waged a war on conventional uses and ideals of language. Especially his comedies and romances shake our trust in the stability of familiar words and discourses by disrupting their fixity and severing their correspondence to settled meanings and assured realities (Ryan 116-118). The most effective verbal devices used by Shakespeare for this purpose are, “rapid-fire punning, wilful misprisions and compulsive riddling supremely deployed by those linguistic terrorists” (118) like Touchstone in *As You Like It*, the Fool in *King Lear* and Feste in the *Twelfth Night* along with female protagonists and clown-like figures like Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Moreover, Bakhtin expounds; “Dramatic dialogue is determined by a collision between individuals who exist within the limits of a single world and a single unitary language. To a certain extent comedy is an exception to this” (*Dialogic* 405). As mentioned before, hierarchic society supports the monologic literature, but forms of comedy within that society encourage the internal dialogic essence of language (Knowles 10). In addition to this, Bakhtin suggests that Shakespeare’s drama, even though it is not polyphonic, has carnivalesque elements:

The logic of crownings and uncrownings, in direct or in indirect form, organizes the serious elements also. And first of all this “belief in the possibility of a complete exit from the present order of this life” determines Shakespeare’s fearless, sober (yet not cynical) realism and absence of dogmatism. This pathos of radical changes and renewals is the essence of Shakespeare’s world consciousness . . . Shakespeare’s drama has many outward carnivalesque aspects: images of the material bodily lower stratum, of ambivalent obscenities, and of popular banquet scenes. (*Rabelais* 275)

Bakhtin also states that Shakespeare has been rediscovered in the study of Romantic grotesque. According to him romantic grotesque was an important manifestation of world literature. It was a reaction against the elements of classicism and cold rationalism. It was also against official, formalistic and logical authoritarianism. Lastly; “it was a rejection of that which is finished and completed, of the didactic and utilitarian spirit of the Enlighteners with their narrow and artificial optimism” (*Rabelais* 37). He expounds that the essential aspects of grotesque are the monstrous, and the comic. With these aspects grotesque becomes a means of contrasting the sublime; so the unity of these aspects is fully achieved in Shakespeare’s works (43).

According to M. C. Bradbrook, comedy has received comparatively little attention from critics in the sixteenth century, perhaps because its components are more varied and its lines of development less obvious than those of the forms of tragedy and history. However, comedies outnumbered tragedies on the Elizabethan stage by nearly three to one (Bradbrook 3). There were two main divisions for comedy in England:

Shakespearean and Jonsonian comedies. Characteristically, while the first one can be called Elizabethan, the second one is Jacobean. This is quite natural because Shakespeare has not written any comedy after 1603 – the accession of King James I. In Jacobean period, although his certain plays can be considered as having a “happy end”, they mostly are accepted as “problem plays” or “bitter comedies”. There cannot be found any festive, light-hearted, optimistic attributes in these plays.

As A. L. Rowse states, the drama in Elizabethan period was an expression of the society rather than an art form. The drama as a type of literature was a secondary matter because life itself had a dramatic quality in reflecting people’s attitudes toward each other and also toward the ruling class. Therefore playwrights displayed little interest in publishing their plays (*Cultural* 13-14). The drama was concise and at the same time expressionistic. According to Elizabethan worldview, it was natural to express the emotions; they were not to be repressed. Hence, the response of the audience was the main target of the theatres. As for example theatres were accepted as the places to make assignations because of the excitement which was created by the love-making scenes on stage. Moreover, as Çapan states, the theatre is a constant dialogue between the stage and the audience. The basis of drama depends on this dialectic relationship. As long as the audience represents the whole society, theatre becomes a popular art – not an art form of a minority or a class. He says that in Elizabethan period theatre was such a public activity reflecting the varieties of social life (Çapan 22).

The plays written in the last decade of Elizabeth’s and the first decade of James’s reigns were dependent on the popular and learned traditions. Elizabethan and Jacobean comedies reflected the way of life and of speech of these eras. As Bradbrook states;

“The reflection of the time’s form and pressure in Elizabethan and Jacobean comedy is the origin of its success and the guarantee of its continuing life” (9), because this comedy depended upon social relationships and the representation of man in society. Also for the entire sixteenth century, comedy was defined not in terms of its form and structure but in terms of its effect upon the audience. Therefore the laughter and the pleasure that it creates became the ultimate aims of comedy. For this end, filthiness, deformity, improbability, mockery, parody and bawdy humour were the convenient means of it, and Shakespeare was one of the most important architects of this type.

According to Ivor Brown, there are seven ages of Shakespeare’s literary career. He calls the first age as *Johannes Factotum* period which he dates from 1587 to 1592. The works generally attributed to this period are *Henry VI Parts 1, 2, 3*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard III* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The second age is the *Lyrical* period between the years of 1592 and 1596, and the plays of this period are *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venus* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. After the *Lyrical* period the *Historical* period comes. The plays of this third age, *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV Part 1 and 2*, and *Henry V*, were written in the years between 1596-1599. The fourth age between the years of 1598 and 1600 is the *High-Fantastical* period which contains *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. The following age of *Dark Vision* covers another age of *Bitter Comedies* which were written between the years of 1603-1604. According to Brown, after the *Bitter Comedies* period involving *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*, there was no comedy until a renewed and fresh search for

romantic escape at the end of Shakespeare's literary life (Brown 165). The bitter comedies are the products of the seventeenth century which is accepted as the period of King James I in England. The sixth age of Shakespeare is called as *Dark Vision* in which "Comedy becomes impossible and only the blackest tragedy will suffice" (167) for Shakespeare. This phase begins with *Julius Caesar* (1599) as a transition play and continues with *Hamlet* (1600-1601). After 1603, Shakespeare wrote *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. The last phase, which is called by Brown as *Fancy Free*, yielded from 1608-1611 with *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*.

Taming of the Shrew, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are Shakespeare's successful examples of festive and high spirited comedies in the Elizabethan period. However, the Jacobean "happy ending" plays, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure* are, "unpleasant plays, the utterances of a puzzled and disturbed spirit, full of questionings, sceptical of its own ideals, looking with new misgivings into the ambiguous shadows of a world over which a cloud has passed and made a goblin of the sun" (Chambers 210). In this chapter, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* will be analysed as examples of carnivalesque comedies in the light of Mikhail M. Bakhtin's theories.

The first and perhaps the most important common characteristic of these three plays is that all of them were written for a particular celebration in English popular festive life. Generally Renaissance and particularly Elizabethan age were linked with a notion of periodic celebration and rejoicing that everyone took part. François Laroque

expounds that festivals once worked within the rhythm of an agricultural calendar. However, in Shakespeare's day, the calendar was established by the Church, and the year was divided into two halves: the winter or sacred half, ranging from Christmas to June 24 – Midsummer; and the summer half with its agrarian feasts, local and occasional celebrations, which went from June 25 to Christmas (“Popular Festivity” 64).

Although it is not a seasonal holiday, the season of revels in winter used to begin on November 17, to celebrate the anniversary of Queen's accession to the throne. January 6 is called Twelfth Night because it is the twelfth night from the Christmas. It has been a great festival marking the end of Christmas season which was celebrated with various entertainments including plays organized by the Master of the Revels, a Court officer, who supervised the productions and financing of Court entertainments. However, there was a peasant character who did the same work in popular public activities: Lord of Misrule. The crowning of the Lord of Misrule is a tradition extending back into ancient Roman Saturnalia; and in Renaissance all the Christmas revelries were generally placed under the clownish authority of him (*Festive World* 151). According to Laroque, the term ‘misrule’ “was used to refer both to the anarchy and disorder that resulted from tyrannical and arbitrary government and also to the joyful pandemonium that ensued when the world was turned upside-down and festive confusion reigned” (26). Wearing a paper crown and various colourful cloths, Lord of Misrule was given full licence to enjoy whatever pleasures he desired, and to lead the other people to a way of delight and flirting. After the Twelfth Night the Carnival season starts.

The day February 2 was the feast of Candlemas which, in Catholic liturgy marked the date of the Purification of the Virgin. It was one of the great cross-quarter days, which forms the circle of the year. It falls the midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Shrove Tuesday, the last day of Carnival, traditionally situated on the first Tuesday after the first new moon in February, and it dictated the dates of all the other moveable feasts on the calendar. It was the day of celebration as the last chance to feast before the Lent. As well as the images of disorder and violence in it, it was also the day renowned for its abundance and gaiety. Shrove Tuesday was the occasion for heavy eating, drinking and merrymaking in anticipation of the long Lenten period of self-discipline (*Festive World* 101). Shrove Tuesday was followed by Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. As Laroque states; “In accordance with the pendulum rhythm that marked the festive calendar, which oscillated between two poles (abundance and deprivation, joy and sadness, etc.), Ash Wednesday was the day that ushered in a return to penitence and abstinence” (103). According to the calendar Easter falls forty days after the beginning of Lent.

The other important date in the calendar is Saint Valentine’s Day on February 14. It was originated from Lupercalia – a Roman love festival – which was held on February 15 in honour of Faunus (Pan in Greek mythology), the god of flocks and fertility. It was an erotic celebration in which the choice of the sexual partner was left to the chance of a lottery. In an attempt to control this kind of erotic pagan festivities, the Christian clergy encouraged celebrators to substitute the names of saints. Since Valentinus had been martyred on February 14, the Church changed the annual celebration of Lupercalia to Saint Valentine’s Day, and a feast of flesh has been turned

into a ritual of romance. As David Wiles explains, the rituals of Saint Valentine's Day imply a sexual equality in which women seem to have been free to approach men (75). However, in Renaissance it was believed that all living nature, especially the birds inclines to couple on the Eve of February 14.

The next important celebration on the English calendar is Saint George's Day on April 23. Saint George is the patron saint of England, and his day has been celebrated with jollifications and parades in the towns. Festivals of Saint George which were celebrated by bonfires were officially abolished by Queen Elizabeth I in 1567; however the elements of Saint George's Day reappeared in the May Day games and parades (*Festive World* 110). On Saint George's Day glittering festivities was organized at Windsor, where Elizabeth received the knights of the Order of the Garter. Order of the Garter was founded by the King Edward III in 1348, and it remains one of the most exclusive and renowned chivalric orders in the world. Membership of the knights in the Order was limited to twenty-five. Although the member knights took part in the process of nominating new members and voted on candidates, the Queen made the final decision (Erickson 126).

One of the principle popular festivals of the calendar was the May Day – the first of May. In contrast to Saint George's Day, the May Day festival preserved all its appeal and prestige in the Elizabethan period. It originated from the ancient Beltane festival, in honour of the Celtic sun god, as a holy day celebrating the first spring planting. It was an evening of games and feasting celebrating the end of winter and return of the sun and fertility of the soil. In the May festivals people moved from the town to the woods; they spent the whole night in the green world and then came back. These amusements were

appreciated by the young people since they made it possible for lovers to meet or to renew their relationships. Like Saint Valentine's Day, May Day was famous with an atmosphere of erotic licence and made exciting by its games (*Festive World* 111-114). May Day often celebrated by crowning a young girl as the Queen of May and a young man as the King of May. Beside the queen and the king representing the life of the fields, there was a Green Man or Robin Goodfellow, who represents the hunting traditions of the woods. He is a kind of Lord of Misrule, responsible to lead all the celebrations and activities.

The chief feature of the celebrations of May Day was the dance around the Maypole. The pole was erected like a phallic symbol, and decorated with flowers and streamers. Male and female dancers held the loose ends of ribbons and encircled the pole weaving intricate patterns as they pass each other in the dance. However, as C. L. Barber notices, the May Day need not necessarily be the first of May. People went maying at different times because the point was not the date but the spirit and the holiday occasion (Barber 120).

The last important date of the winter calendar was the night of June 24 – Midsummer Eve. This is the shortest night of the year, when the earth begins to incline the northern hemisphere back towards winter. Anca Vlasopolos claims that the Christian importance of the holy day of June 24 – Midsummer, cannot be minimized because Saint John's Day, the Christian counterpart of the summer solstice celebration is inseparable from the pagan Midsummer night. Besides, the day of Saint John the Baptist is distinct in that it is the only holy day celebrating the birth rather than the death of a saint, which makes it similar to Christmas (Vlasopolos 23-24).

The celebrations of this night are connected with the ancient times linked to the summer solstice. People believed that plants had miraculous healing powers and picked them on this night. There were also bonfires lit to protect themselves from the evil spirits. In the Midsummer festival grand parades occurred at nightfall and it took the form of torch-light processions. It was a season which became synonymous with confusion and mental distortion. As Laroque states; “In the ritualistic half of the year from Christmas to Saint John’s or Midsummer Day, most festive behaviour and traditions seem to have been connected with starting off symbolic systems that involved either the elements and forces of nature or else the major phases of the cycle of birth, death and resurrection” (*Festive World* 82-83). As many of the elements in the celebrations also appeared in the May Day, an inevitable confusion arose between the rites of May and Midsummer Eve (141).

3.1. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

According to one idea, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for the second marriage of the widowed mother of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, to Thomas Heneage on May 2, 1594 and presented on the ceremonies of the May Day. However David Wiles states that it was written for another wedding, a part of another aristocratic celebration. According to him, Shakespeare wrote the play for the marriage of Elizabeth Carey, the daughter of George Carey, who was his company's patron, and later commissioned *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The play was staged on February 19, 1596, which took place five days later Saint Valentine's Day (Wiles 67-68). In any case, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a festive play for a nuptial celebration.

Since Shakespeare did not give a specific date for the time of the play, the night of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* could be situated any time between Saint Valentine's Day and Midsummer. Saint Valentine's Day is only mentioned once, at the moment when the lovers return from the blurred world of their dream to the courtly world of Theseus:

THESEUS. Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.

Begin these wood birds but to couple now?

(IV. i. 138-9)

The other reference of Saint Valentine's Day comes after the transformation of Bottom, with a song sung by him. The tradition of courting birds establishes a Valentine context for this song:

BOTTOM. The ousel cock so black of hue,

With orange-tawny bill;

The throstle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill.

(III. ii. 118-121)

According to Wiles, the birds in this first stanza are masculine and phallic (69). In the second stanza, Bottom continues listing the birds with a finch, sparrow, lark and a cuckoo. With the last bird he identifies himself a cuckoo but the name of the bird sounds like “cuckold”, and the song ends with the appearance of Titania. Therefore the bird motif binds the love of Bottom and Titania to the Saint Valentine tradition. There is another Valentine feature in the play which is about the choice of the partner. It seems that there is an accidental process which governs the pairing of the Athenian young lovers. Actually, the choices of Helena and Hermia appear no other than arbitrary. These choices remind the lottery process in Saint Valentine’s Day festivities. Also, the sexual equality on the choice of the partner is declared by Helena:

HELENA. Run when you will. The story shall be changed:

Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase.

(II. i. 230-231)

As mentioned before, in a carnivalesque atmosphere everything is turned upside down and roles of society are reversed; servants behave like masters, women behave like men, men behave like women, and Helena pursues Demetrius while he runs from her in the dreamy forest.

The other important festival day of the play is the May Day. In the scene, when Theseus and Hippolyta enter with the rising sun, they discover the four lovers, and Theseus says:

THESEUS. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.

(IV.i.131-32)

Essentially, May games constitute the pattern of the whole action in the play. As mentioned before, the journey of the lovers into the green world before dawn is associated with May Day. Oberon, the prince of fairies living in the forest represents the May King, while his wife Titania represents the Queen of May. Naturally, Puck as the jester of the King appears to be Robin Goodfellow who is the master manipulator of the action of the play. As the Lord of Misrule, he organizes and applies the tricks on the “fool mortals”. But, although Theseus’s expression of “the rite of May” describes a joyous overflow of pleasure with music, games and plays in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, those lines need not mean that the play’s action happens precisely on May Day – the first of May. C. L. Barber explains that, people went Maying at various times because the point is not the date but the holiday occasion (120). Therefore, the date of the play can be the Midsummer Eve in accordance with its title.

As it is believed, plants had miraculous healing powers on the Midsummer night. According to Vlasopolos, during the Midsummer festival, when the plant’s power reaches its peak, a garland of mugwort (a kind of wormwood) worn by a person or held before one’s eye while gazing at the bonfires insures healthy eyesight for the coming year (Vlasopolos 26). Accordingly, there are two magic plants in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which have different powers and effects. The first one is “love-in-idleness” or “Cupid’s flower” whose juice, applied to a sleeper’s eyes, would make the person fall in love with whoever he or she sees first upon awakening. The other herb, “Dian’s bud” would undo the effects of the previous magical plant. The mugwort’s additional power to dispel the effects of previous drugs or spells and to cure the eyes matches precisely the magical role of “Dian’s bud” in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

David Wiles claims that Shakespeare has created an image of midsummer night through the medium of stage iconography (76). While Hermia is short and dark – a “minimus” (III.ii.330) and an “Ethiope” (III.ii.257) – Helena is tall and fair like a “painted maypole” (III.ii.297). As a pair, Hermia and Helena represent a symbol of midsummer when the day is very long but the night is very short. The quarrel between them reflects the battle of day and night which reaches its climax at the Midsummer Day. Also, as a ritual, Midsummer represents a time of change in which people attempt to adjust to and maintain in harmony with nature. So within the framework of the play, the fertility rite of Midsummer provides an impulse toward production. The young lovers, whose function is production, escape from the constraints of the city into the woods. Therefore, they act out the pagan rite of fertility in the middle of the darkness, confusion and manipulations of the forces which rule the nature.

At this point, Shakespeare associates the popular May Day festivals with a disordering of the senses; and he plays on the similarity between the festivities of May Day and Midsummer, deliberately confusing them as if they were more or less equivalent. Shakespeare successfully combines the journey to the green world with the full moon of Midsummer lunacy, when the spirits of nature, whether good or evil, might be around. As Laroque argues, Shakespeare seems to have wanted to synthesize all these popular traditions, turning them into a single major festival, the Midsummer, which marked the transition into the pastoral period of summer (*Festive World* 217). Consequently, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, whose structure parallels the solstice ritual, affirms the continuation of life at a time of hardship and confusion. Also, as a

true festive comedy, it declares the triumph of the productive needs of the natural world over the social barriers.

Regarding its plot construction and sources, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be called as a hybrid play. It is an unusual one among Shakespeare's plays in lacking a single written source for its plot. The plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Shakespeare's own invention, but its components derive from several sources, and Shakespeare has used the works of various writers combining them successfully in a new fairy tale. Firstly, Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* may have provided him the courtship and wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. However, their transformation into Duke Theseus and Queen Hippolyta derives from Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*. The influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is evident both in the unifying theme of transformation and in the introduction of the Pyramus and Thisbe story. Also, Bottom's transformation may have been inspired by *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, a Latin romance of the second century A.D. Lastly, Oberon had appeared in the translation of an old French romance *Huon de Bordeaux*. Although Shakespeare takes a number of authors, translations and texts from European literature as parts of his material, a whole range of non-literary sources taken from popular culture and tradition, such as Greek, English or Celtic mythologies are equally important. So, the plot of the play appears as a mixture of the stories of various people from different ranges of a society.

The most probable comradeship which can be established with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is with *The Praise of Folly* of Erasmus. Like *The Praise of Folly*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes "folly" as its subject. Similarly, Puck offers an ironic

view of human nature with an irrational and a nonhuman perception like Folly – the protagonist of Erasmus. The words of Puck which calls the central theme of the play: “Lord, what fools these mortals be!” (III.ii.115), provide both the subject and the extraordinary perspective for the play. In *The Praise of Folly*, Folly lays particular claim to revels, youth and mirth. Likewise, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* occupies a territory identical to Folly's realm with youthful revels, May Games, Midsummer festivities and dreams. Other common elements of these works are the conventional foolishness of asses, the foolishness of lovers and the connection between the lovers and the madmen:

THESEUS. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

(V. i. 4-6)

As A. K. Chambers argues, love is a certain lunacy in the brain of youth;

Not an integral part of life, but a disturbing element in it. The lover is a being of strange caprices and strange infidelities, beyond the control of the reason, and swayed with every gust of passion. He is at odds for the time with all the established order of things, a rebel against the authority of parents, a rebel against friendship, a rebel against his own vows. (80)

Subsequently, both works offer ironic hints of short-lived, non-rational modes of perception which give the fool a perfect moment of victory within a comic context.

As a hybrid comedy, it is also a suitable example for Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphony. As mentioned before, people of different generations, classes, places, professions have their own dialects or discourses. According to the concept, these

dialects contain certain implications or traces of values, perspectives and experiences. Characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the people from various places: Athenian lovers, a mythological couple – Theseus and Hippolyta, forest fairies and lastly the Elizabethan craftsmen or “hardhanded men that work in Athens” (V.i.72) who make rehearsal of a play for the wedding celebration in the forest. The readers of the play hear different discourses and, accordingly, different values and perceptions through the interactions of these characters in the text. They create a polyphonic, even heteroglossic entity as a whole. In *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, Jan Kott describes this entity as a ball or an “impromptu masking” in the forest. According to him, the characters of different plots wear different costumes in this masquerade: Athenian lovers wear Greek tunics, while craftsmen most probably wear daily Elizabethan clothes. Lastly the fairy crew has wings and they all appear to be the carnival costumes appropriate for the atmosphere (*Shakespeare* 222).

Among the various characters of the play, Bottom’s company of craftsmen are extremely contemporary in contrast to the images of Theseus and Hippolyta. They represent plebeian crafts from Elizabethan society: Peter Quince the carpenter, Francis Flute the bellows mender, Tom Snout the tinker, Snug the joiner, Robin Starveling the tailor and Nick Bottom the weaver. With the existence of these characters, the world of productive life and the language of streets, business and the marketplace are revealed in the text. According to Michael D. Bristol;

The language of Bottom and his friends is strongly contrasted to the ennobled language of the court, not only in its sound and diction, but also in its orientation to the space and time of the audience. The

mundane practicality of everyday, collective decision-making is undertaken here by a group of blundering clowns and represents a parodic image of everyday social life. (174)

Moreover, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be accepted as a “parodic” play in Bakhtin’s terms. There is a burlesque parody of a high literature – “Pyramus and Thisbe” from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* – presented as in oxymoronic titles: “The Most Lamentable Comedy, and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby” or “A Tedious Brief Scene of Young Pyramus and his Love Thisbe, Very Tragical Mirth”. The parodic “Pyramus and Thisbe” appears as an interlude to be offered to the Duke Theseus and Lady Hippolyta by Bottom and his friends. Another parody in the play is of a religious chapter taken from Bible. When Bottom wakes up from his dream and returns to human shape he tries to describe his experience:

BOTTOM. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. . . The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.

(IV. i. 204-212)

The source of these lines is from 1 Corinthians: “‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’. But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (2:9-10). However, as Jan Kott indicates, in Tyndale (1534) and Geneva New Testament (1557) the last sentence is as follows: “the Spirite searcheth all things, ye the botome of Goddes secretes”. Probably, Athenian Nick Bottom inherited his name from this old version of Bible (*Bottom Translation* 31).

The discrepancy between the deep secrets of God and the secrets of “Bottom’s Dream” which has no bottom creates a parodic-travesty approach to the Christian worldview by the help of a carnival.

Beside the forms of parody and travesty, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there is another tradition of *serio ludere* in Bakhtin’s terms. As a carnival attitude, *serio ludere* can be described as presenting serious ideas in a contemporary and comic manner, and the most famous example of this tradition is François Rabelais’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Concerning this issue, Bakhtin argues that;

The object of a *serious* (though at the same time comical) representation is presented without epical or tragical distance, presented not in the absolute past of myth and legend, but on the contemporary level, in direct and even crudely familiar contact with living contemporaries. . . For [the serio-comical genres] multiplicity of tone in a story and a mixture of the high and low, the serious and the comic, are typical: they made wide use . . . of parodically reconstructed quotations. In some of these genres the mixture of prose and poetic speech is observed, living dialects and slang are introduced, and various authorial masks appear. (*Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 88-89)

The love story of Cupid and Psyche in Greek/Roman mythology is accepted as the oldest version of the fable of “Beauty and the Beast”. The existence of this myth and the fable are evident in the love affair of Bottom and Titania. Envied by Venus, Psyche – like Titania – is cursed to fall in love with the most miserable and ugly creature in the world. According to Kott, in *serio ludere*, the top is only mythos; the bottom is the

human condition (*Bottom Translation* 38). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the serio-comic human condition which is read below the myth creates the clash of high and low, heaven and earth, Apollonian and Dionysian.

As Jan Kott states, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the most erotic of Shakespeare's plays, and this eroticism is expressed brutally (*Shakespeare* 218):

LYSANDER. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr; vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA. Why are you grown so rude? What change is this? Sweet
love?

LYSANDER. Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out;
Out, loathed medicine; O hated potion, hence.

(III. ii. 261-265)

Throughout the play the animal eroticism and symbolism is reflected consistently and almost obsessively. The violent sexual imagery, brutal and masochistic metaphors differs from the Petrarchan idealization of love and offers a grotesque realism:

HELENA. I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love –
And yet a place of high respect with me –
Than to be used as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit;
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

(II. i. 203-212)

Kott additionally argues that the main theme which joins together all separate plots running parallel in the play is this animal erotic symbolism (*Shakespeare* 225). As known, the first plot is about the marriage preparation of Duke Theseus and Queen Hippolyta. The second one is the story of Athenian young couples while the third one is about the “hardhanded men” who make rehearsal of a play for the wedding celebration in the forest. And the last plot is the story of fairies. Oberon, the king of the fairies, quarrels with his wife Titania and by the help of Puck, puts a spell on her with a magic flower. This flower’s juice, applied to a sleeper’s eyes, will make the person fall in love with whoever he or she sees first upon awakening. As a punishment Oberon wishes Titania would sleep with a beast. The selection of these animals is very interesting.

OBERON. Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair, (II. ii. 36-37)

According to Kott, all these animals represent powerful sexual potency; even some of them play an important part in sexual demonology (*Shakespeare* 227). However Titania’s mate is an ass. Because of a trick of Puck, the head of Nick Bottom the weaver is transformed into an ass. From Saturnalia to the medieval festivals, the ass with its braying is the central protagonist in processions, comic rituals and holiday revels. In Elizabethan times, the male donkey was proverbial for his powerful sexual endowment, and among all quadrupeds was supposed to have the longest and hardest phallus. For Bakhtin the ass is the symbol of debasement and humility, as well as regeneration (*Rabelais* 199). The icon of an ass, which is the most ancient and lasting symbol of the material bodily lower stratum, is the ritualistic and carnivalesque mediator between heaven and earth, which transforms the signs of the “top” into the

signs of “bottom”. Bakhtin also states; “the ‘feast of fools’ and the ‘feast of the ass’ are specific celebrations in which laughter plays the leading role. In this sense they are similar to their close relatives: carnival and charivari” (78). Therefore, the mating of Bottom and Titania which offers a climactic scene of the night and forest revelry is rich in grotesque and carnivalesque attributions.

According to Sevda Şener; “grotesque combines the animal side and the exalted soul of the human beings. Since the grotesque contains both ridicule and the sublime it is horrifying, and at the same time it is one of the supreme beauties of life” (Şener 156, my translation). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom's ass head is the most appropriate representative of the grotesque image of the body. The changing of the head into an ass suggests humiliation or degradation which means coming down to earth or the contact with the earth. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body. According to Bakhtin, the most important part of the grotesque body is the whole face of the human. The head, nose, mouth, and ears also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt an animal form. The grotesque body is in an act of becoming and changing: it is continually built and created (*Rabelais* 316-317). Hence, Bottom's transformation is an act of grotesque body in terms of the concept of the changing process.

The love scenes between Titania and Bottom are generated for laughter in the theatre, but the humour in this scene is cruel, even disgusting and dark. Titania's tender love for Bottom is also the strongest element which celebrates the grotesque, protruding and bizarre body in the play. She holds him in her arms, sings songs and picks up beautiful flowers to embellish his forehead. According to Kott, Titania is the only

character who fully enters the dark sphere of sex, “where there is no more beauty and ugliness; there is only infatuation and liberation” (*Shakespeare* 228).

TITANIA. I pray thee gentle mortal, sing again.
 Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note;
 So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
 And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
 On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.
 (III. i. 130-134)

TITANIA. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
 And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.
 (IV. i. 1-4)

On the other hand, the name of Bottom has another meaning: buttocks or ass which is also a pun on the beast that Bottom's head is turned into and also the most important representative of the material bodily lower stratum. As a master of punning, Shakespeare could see the amusing potential of Bottom's transformation into an ass. When Snout exclaims: “O Bottom, thou art changed. What do I see on thee?” Bottom replies: “What do you see? You see an ass-head on your own, do you?” (III.i.109-111). It appears that, the dialogue is clearly funnier with an “ass” than with “ounce, or cat or bear” because of this pun.

Another carnivalesque figure of the play is the naughty fairy Puck. As Kott writes, he is a devil who can multiply himself. While Bottom is experiencing his changing body, Puck is also totally in revolt of stability. He acts like a quick-change artist and a prestidigitator (*Shakespeare* 216); while he can change his complexion he takes different forms:

ROBIN. Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
 A hog, a headless bear; sometime a fire,
 And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
 Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

(III. i. 101-106)

Puck is the trickster of the play as well as the Lord of Misrule. Kott describes the character of a trickster as follows:

The trickster is the most invariable, universal and constant mythic character in the folklore of all peoples. As a mediator between the gods and men – the bottom and the top – the trickster is a special broker: he both deceives the gods and cheats men. The trickster is the personification of mobility and changeability and transcends all boundaries, overthrowing all hierarchies. He turns everything upside-down. Within this world gone mad a new order emerges from chaos, and life's continuity is renewed. (*Bottom Translation* 49)

Puck is also the one who binds the lower class and the upper class of the play to each other. He brings the binaries together, he makes it possible to reach the “Bakhtinian paradigm of them-and-us, officialdom and the folk” (Wiles 67). He is both responsible and representative of the chaos that such a binding can cause. Moreover, as Bakhtin expounds, carnival is a temporary liberation from the existing truth and from the established order. During the carnival, the participants experience a suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Therefore, carnival is the only place where the distinctions break up, where a queen can make love to a commoner and fall in love with a donkey. For that reason, as the organizer of the chaos, Puck is the

leading figure of the carnival unruliness and non-rational celebrations in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Puck is the polar opposite of Bottom. Terry Eagleton claims that Bottom as a grotesquely bad actor, is unable to transcend the limits of his own dull identity to perform anyone but himself. On the other hand, Puck cannot be simply one thing, while Bottom can be no more than one. Bottom is too bodily to go beyond himself, but Puck is pure transgression (Eagleton 25). He liberates instincts and puts the mechanism of this carnival world in motion. He also mocks everything at the same time. He mocks the love affairs of mortals;

ROBIN. Lord, what fools these mortals be! (III. ii. 115)

. . . And those things do best please me
That befall prepost'rously. (III. ii. 120)

He mocks Bottom and his friends:

ROBIN. And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy –
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky –
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly,
And at our stamp here o'er and o'er one falls.
He 'Murder' cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.

(III. ii. 19-28)

As the master manipulator of the play, he creates this chaotic and irrational atmosphere and takes pleasure. He “misleads night travellers” and laughs at their harm. There is always a violence or harsh attitude to ordinary people, but the only thing that is felt is

pleasure. The battle between Titania and Oberon also damages nature and the other people, but they do not care because all the bitter jokes are for pleasure, and they also use violence to give pleasure. While the amateur players were performing their play “Pyramus and Thisbe” on stage in the revelry, the audience takes pleasure as long as they interrupt or humiliate the effort of the actors. This humiliation which is the most necessary element for a carnival, gives pleasure.

The beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* coincides with the end of a struggle in which Duke Theseus has been victorious over the Amazon warrior Hippolyta:

THESEUS. Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,
 And won thy love doing thee injuries.
 But I will wed thee in another key –
 With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

(I. i. 16-19)

Although these lines can be read as a summary of a personal combat on a battlefield, the words “wooed” and “won thy love” draw another picture when “sword” and “injuries” are read with their sexual connotations. Shakespeare’s ambiguous sexual/martial combat ends with a wedding ceremony and this wedding feast provides a narrative framework for the action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Theseus invites all the Athenian society to join the celebrations for his marriage, which would be a time of carnival and of social liberty, “in which mirth will reign, melancholy will be banished and conflict will resolve into harmony” (Bristol 172).

As the Lord and the Lady of Athenian society, Theseus and Hippolyta create an authoritative discourse that matches the language of the constituted authority in Elizabethan society. This authority also assigns the fixed identities in this realm.

Therefore, social and individual comfort depends on the obedience to that discourse (Bristol 174). At the very beginning of the play, the existing authority of the father is under question. As Louis Montrose states; “all forms of public and domestic authority in Elizabethan England were vested in men: in fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, lords. It was inevitable that the rule of a woman who was unmastered by any man would generate peculiar tensions within such a ‘patriarchal’ society” (112). Hermia, at the cost of going against her father Egeus’s will, wants to be free to choose her own husband. However, according to the norms of society, Hermia belongs to her father and should be obedient to him. While Egeus blames Lysander for the disobedience of his daughter, he also declares the law:

EGEUS. With cunning hast thou filched my daughter’s heart,
 Turned her obedience which is due to me
 To stubborn hashness. . .
 As she is mine, I may dispose her
 Which shall be either to this gentleman
 Or to her death, according to our law
 Immediately provided in that case.

(I. i. 36-38, 42-45)

As the official mouthpiece of the ideology of Athenian society, Theseus orders Hermia to obey her father’s commands because to her; “[her] father should be as a god” (I.i.47).

The father is also;

THESEUS. One that composed your beauties, yes, and one
 To whom you are but as a form in wax,
 By him imprinted, and within his power
 To leave the figure or disfigure it. (I.i.48-51)

At this point, law seems to serve the will of the father and for the disobedient daughter:

THESEUS. Fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
 To fit your fancies to your father's will,
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up –
 Which by no means we may extenuate –
 To death or to a vow of single life.

(I i.117-121)

However, according to Bakhtin, carnivalesque violations can occur under the patriarchal pressures, because carnival is a means of describing certain material practices of the body which tries to liberate itself from the established and strict rules of authority. Marriages of the Elizabethan England were done not as an act of love, but as a means of gaining benefit out of it, either because marriage obtains a title or fortune for one party or both. Hermia, by rejecting to marry Demetrius, the man his father proposes, resists the very essence of the marriage of the time. She also challenges established norms by suggesting that she has a claim to property in herself:

HERMIA. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
 Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
 Unto his lordship whose unwished yoke
 My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

(I.i.79-82)

She and her lover Lysander escape from the laws of Athens to the forest, to live their love independently. It can be supposed that the forest represents the marginal, antiauthoritarian domain which has its own rules and own dynamics. The forest appears to be a realm of carnival, a world outside officialdom free from time and space. As Bakhtin argues, “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” (*Rabelais* 7). So, not only the young couples who search for their independent love, but also the Athenian amateur players and the fairies live a dreamy night away from hierarchical ranks, official norms and prohibitions. They experience a Dionysian freedom and lunacy against Apollonian order of the city.

As Leonard Tennenhouse claims; “the figures of festival operate to break down the hierarchical distinctions organising Elizabethan society, only – in the end – to be taken within the social order where they authorize a new form of political authority” (“Strategies” 111). This new form of authority is created by the carnival unruliness as an authority of misrule. François Laroque also indicates that, popular festivals such as May Day and Midsummer used in comedies, contributed to the expression of opposition and to the simultaneous presence of multiple voices in a written text. The existence of a popular festival in a comedy provides especially the young characters a possibility to reach a kind of freedom from patriarchy and to express their own desires against the disturbing or castrating nature of the “law of the father”. Therefore, as Laroque states, carnival provides the occasion of transgression for the young people and allows them to escape from the pressure in an atmosphere of revelry. Accordingly, festival atmosphere and carnival grotesqueness in Shakespeare’s comedies are empowered with a subversive power and with a desire to destabilize authority and its serious, official, one-sided, vertical vision of the world (“Popular Festivity” 75).

At the end of the play Theseus identifies the young lovers as revellers not rebellious couples. By doing so he legalizes their transgression of the law. Leonard Tennenhouse argues that, the inclusion of filial disobedience within a sphere of acceptable misdeeds, changes the construction of political authority. What had been a

violation of the father's law becomes a scene of harmony ("Strategies" 112). What enhances the sense of harmony is the celebration of the triple marriages at the end of the play. The cheerful wedding feast and the parodic interlude – A Tedious Brief Scene of Young Pyramus and His Love Thisbe, Very Tragical Mirth – which is performed by Bottom and his friends are the dominant characteristics of a carnivalesque ending of a comedy. "The cheerful death and immediate resurrections of the comic lovers in the interlude reformulate the passionate sentiments of infatuated youth as seen from the bottom of the social order. Bottom's comedy is an obscene parody of that infatuation" (Bristol 177).

The inversions of gender, status and even species are the popular part of the carnival unruliness; men in animal complexion, men dressed like women, comical misrepresentations of classical literature and popular legend are all common carnival devices. With these activities, at the end of a seasonal celebration, the nature and the man create a cyclic harmony binding the concepts of birth, production and death. With the negotiations established among the extreme parties, the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* celebrates this harmony between man and nature, high and low, young and old. To conclude, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in many ways, is a carnivalesque play especially in indicating the grotesque realism and the grotesque image of the body. It celebrates the non-rational side of humanity, unruliness and anti-authoritarian spirit of the festivals of Renaissance. It represents the renewal and the revival of life on earth in the Midsummer. Just like the carnival is a time outside the time, the characters enter a timeless realm of freedom, equality and abundance and everything appears to be a Dionysian dream in this realm.

3. 2. *Twelfth Night or What You Will*

It is mostly believed that *Twelfth Night or What You Will* was written by Shakespeare in 1601. Both the editor of Shakespeare's *The Complete Works*, Stanley Wells and C. L. Barber assert that the play was performed firstly on February 2, 1602, for the festive occasion of the Candlemas day. An eyewitness of that first performance, a law student John Manningham noted that the play was much like *The Comedy of Errors* (Barber 241). However Shakespeare seems to have consulted an Italian play from 1530's entitled *Gl'Ingannati*. He also seems to have used an English play entitled *Apollonius and Silla* by Barnabe Riche written in 1581. On the other hand, the characters which constitute the comic subplot of *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby, Maria, Feste and Malvolio seem to have sprung largely from Shakespeare's own imagination.

Although the title of the play is *Twelfth Night*, it is not certain that the play takes place on the twelfth day after Christmas. There are certain references to Christmas within the play, as Sir Toby drunkenly attempts to sing something sounds like a Christmas song: "O' the twelfth day of December" (II.iii.81). Thematically, there are links to this period of time, which was a time of feasting and revelry; the revelling, mischief and merriment within the play resemble those activities that are characteristics of Twelfth Night, which was the conclusion of the Christmas season. The joyful occasion of Twelfth Night is full of masquerades as well as amusements like music, dancing, feasting and bursting like fireworks. Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* conveys the general atmosphere of this period of misrule, characterized by the ambiguity and the intrigues of love and festivity.

The general atmosphere and theme of “madness” is evident throughout the play. Olivia calls it “midsummer madness” (III.iv.54) when she encounters her steward Malvolio dressed up in cross-gartered yellow stockings with a big smile on his face. She suggests that Malvolio has been “moon-struck” and behaves like a lunatic or like in one of the fantastic midsummer dreams. However she thinks that she is; “as mad as he/ if sad and merry madness equal be” (III.iv.14-15). According to Olivia it is “a most extracting frenzy of [her] own” (V.i.279). C. L. Barber claims that, madness is the key word in *Twelfth Night*; “People are caught up by delusions or misapprehensions which take them out of themselves, bringing out what they would keep hidden or did not know was there” (242). In this context, Malvolio tries to convince himself by saying; “I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me” (II.v.158-159), before having been put “in such a dream that when the image of it leaves him, he must run mad” (II.v.186-187). On the other hand, Sir Toby Belch, the kinsman of Olivia is also a man who “speaks nothing but madman” (I.v.102). Moreover, Sebastian can be right to ask that “Are all the people mad?” (IV.i.26) in the play. On the other hand, the plan about the last humiliation of Malvolio is extremely cruel:

SIR TOBY. Come, we'll have him in a dark room and bound. My niece is already in the belief that he's mad. We may carry it thus for our pleasure and his penance till our very pastime, tired out of breath, prompt us to have mercy on him, at which time we will bring the device to the bar and crown thee for a finder of madmen. But see, but see.

(III.iv.133-139)

The response of Fabian to this offer is appropriate for the spirit of the play. He says that this trick is; “More matter for a May morning” (III.iv.140). Shakespeare, by mingling

three different festival activities – Twelfth Night, Midsummer and May Day – in a single plot, enhances the festive and carnivalesque atmosphere of the play and creates a realm of madness, reversal, jollity and folly.

Kiernan Ryan states that, as the title of *Twelfth Night* declares;

We are entering a licensed temporal period, a liminal dream-time, during which we may expect the reverse of what officially passes for normal to prevail. Hierarchies of social and sexual power may be turned upside-down or levelled, sexual identities transformed and confused, and all fixed positions and settled assumptions destabilized and laid open to dispute. (Ryan 112)

As mentioned before, Twelfth Night was celebrated as a festival in which everything was turned topsy-turvy, with traditional social roles and behaviours temporarily suspended. One could argue that normal situations are turned upside down in the land of Illyria of *Twelfth Night* in several ways. Initially, the themes and images connected with the idea of reversal are important to the play. The significant one is Feste's image of the glove turned inside-out, which provides one of the keys to the play. Feste, who describes himself not as the fool of his lady but a "corrupter of words" (III.i.35), speaks to Viola:

FESTE. A sentence is but a cheverel glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward.

(III.i.11-13)

The theme of inversion here is closely connected with the twins – Viola and Sebastian. As Laroque expounds, the image of the glove turned inside-out suggests that in a period of misrule the world is a "hall of mirrors" (*Festive World* 227). Sexes just like identities

can be switched with disguises and misunderstandings, and the gender roles become ambiguous. In *Twelfth Night*, the central character Viola takes on the disguise of a young man named Cesario after she arrives on Illyrian shores. Thus, this reversal leads to a confusing love life, in which she loves a man and being loved by a woman who does not realize that she is a woman. Viola, like Dionysus, unifies male and female attributions in one body and is loved by two different sexes.

It is important to remember that in Shakespeare's day, all of the parts in the plays were acted by men; so Viola would actually have been a male pretending to be a female pretending to be a male. Except the second scene of the first act, Viola acts like a young eunuch in service of Olivia, and this disguise or varying of shapes helps the boy actor to act comfortably in his own costume throughout the play. However, in *Twelfth Night*, this situation creates a sexual chaos. Viola, who secretly loves Orsino, cannot reveal her love, because he thinks she is a man. Meanwhile Olivia, with whom Orsino is in love, feels affection for Viola in her male disguise. There is a clear homoerotic implication here: Olivia is in love with a woman, thinking that he/she is a man. On the other hand, Orsino often comments on Cesario's beauty, suggesting that he is fascinated by Viola even before her male disguise is removed:

ORSINO. Diana's lip
 Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
 Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
 And all is semblative a woman's part.

(I. iv. 31-34)

Even at the end of the play, the relationship of Orsino and Viola is left ambiguous. Orsino's affectionate addressing to Viola suggests that he enjoys extending the role of Viola's masculinity. Even after he knows that Viola is a woman, Orsino says to her:

ANTONIO. I could not stay behind you. My desire,
 More sharp than filed steel, did spur me forth,
 And not all love to see you – though so much
 As might have drawn one to a longer voyage –

 My willing love
 The rather by these arguments of fear
 Set forth in your pursuit.

(III.iii.4-13)

In the course of the play, a restless erotic hunt can be seen on stage; Viola chases Orsino who chases Olivia who chases both Viola and Sebastian who is chased by Antonio. This frantic scene looks like a scene of orgy in a Dionysian rite. Although there is not any real orgy, as Logan states; “the marriages at the end of the play do not convince us that sexuality is ever ordered and controlled with regard to the individual in society” (233). Sexual confusions of Shakespearean comedy suggest that sexual identity is more plural, discontinuous and unstable than the official definitions and approved models acknowledge. As Kiernan Ryan argues, Shakespearean comedy disrupts the system of differences on which sexual stereotyping depends. By questioning the terms of masculine and feminine, man and woman, it strikes at the very basis of patriarchy, unfixing the assumptions and categories which legitimate it (Ryan 118).

On the other hand, while the characters of the romantic plot involve an erotic chaos, the characters of the comic subplot are in a different pastime. As the spokesman and the protector of the merry world in Illyria, Sir Toby plays the Lord of Misrule in *Twelfth Night*. He is also the personification of Carnival misrule which comes after the Twelfth Night in the English festive calendar. At this point, when Sir Toby and his companions contend with the Lenten figure Malvolio, the battle of Carnival and Lent is

being considered. Shrove Tuesday and its successor Ash Wednesday are the representatives of the battle between the Carnival and Lent in the calendar. While people enjoy their last day of Carnival in Shrove Tuesday, they also try to be prepared for the self-discipline and fasting of Lent. Sir Toby is a rowdy figure with practical jokes, heavy drinking and late-night merrymaking. In opposition, Malvolio is stiff, sullen, arrogant, and priggish puritan who is; “sick of self-love” (I.v.86) and “taste with a distempered appetite” (I.v.87). While Sir Toby is a praiser of holiday, Malvolio is hostile to it. As Eagleton states, “Sir Toby, like Falstaff, is a rampant hedonist, complacently anchored in his own body, falling at once ‘beyond’ the symbolic order of society in his verbal anarchy, and ‘below’ it in his carnivalesque refusal to submit his body to social control” (32). When Maria warns him to confine himself “within the modest limits of order” (I.iii.7-8) he exclaims:

SIR TOBY. Confine? I'll confine myself no finer than I am.
These clothes are good enough to drink in, and so be these boots too;
an they be not, let them hang themselves in their own straps.

(I. iii. 9-12)

The confrontation between the Carnavalesque and Lenten principles is represented in the drinking scene where Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste, and Maria gather to enjoy with laughter, drinking, and singing at night. According to these revellers the man's life consists of only eating and drinking rather than the four elements. The abundance of the material principle is celebrated with drinking, songs, and jokes until the intervention of Malvolio.

MALVOLIO. My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an alehouse of my lady's house, that ye

squeak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?

(II.iii.83-89)

Irrespective of person, place and time, the answer offered by Sir Toby is appropriate to the Carnival spirit:

SIR TOBY. Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?

(II iii.110-111)

Sir Toby's understanding of Carnival time is also beyond the limits of our ordinary world. As the carnivalesque and grotesque body figure, his drunken illusion of defeating time is a kind of manifesto of immortality; "But I will never die" (II.iii.102) sings Sir Toby, and Feste replies; "Sir Toby, there you lie" (II.iii.103).

The humiliation and confinement of Malvolio is extremely pitiless as much as ludicrous. Maria, Sir Toby and the other members of the gang come together and organize the trick. Then, Malvolio finds a false love letter – actually written by Maria – and is convinced that his mistress Olivia loves him. The reading of the letter by Malvolio creates a comic situation on stage:

MALVOLIO. By my life, this is my lady's hand. These be her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's.

(II.v.84-87)

"Her great P's" is a joke about the vision of woman urinating. By reading the false letter, Malvolio also reveals his unconscious by the help of the references to urination of a woman. However this obscene pun is strengthened by the other letters of C, U, and T. According to Keir Elam, the letters C. U. T can be interpreted as castrating letters that point to "a desire unattainable on a stage that can only impersonate sexual difference" (148). If one remembers the disguise of Viola as a eunuch (castrated man),

dismemberment gains importance as one of the features of the grotesque body in *Twelfth Night*.

The persecution of Malvolio continues with the dark room imprisonment. He is teased mercilessly by Feste, in disguise of a false priest, who tries to convince him that Malvolio is insane. Then Feste lets Malvolio to write a letter announcing his sanity. However, at the end of the play Malvolio learns the trick played on him and leaves the stage spitefully: "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you" (V.i.374). The battle of fiery Carnival and sullen, vindictive Lent is not concluded in the world of Illyria in *Twelfth Night*, nor is it concluded in the offstage world. This ongoing combat is an important part of the cyclic movement of nature in which all take part.

Malvolio's trick is not the play's only degradation because Sir Toby and his followers are continuously despising people around them. As Albert C. Labriola explains, this is a kind of festive abuse which is, "derived from, and adds to, the atmosphere of revelry and holiday in the underplot of the play. In particular, this atmosphere is characterized by extremely witty dialogue, bawdy, wine-drinking and dancing" (6). The other victim of this abuse is Sir Andrew Aguecheek – one of the suitors of Olivia. While Sir Toby introduces Sir Andrew to Maria he ridicules Sir Andrew's pretensions to knighthood by a mock-serious tone. Yet he poses as Sir Andrew's defender against the others.

SIR TOBY. He's as tall a man as any's in Illyria.

MARIA. What's that to th'purpose?

SIR TOBY. Why, he has three thousand ducats a year.

MARIA. Ay, but he'll have but a year in all these ducats. He's a very fool, and prodigal.

SIR TOBY. Fie that you'll say so! He plays o'th' viol-de-gamboys, and speaks three or four languages word for word without book, and hath all the good gifts of nature.

MARIA. He hath indeed, almost natural, for besides that he's a fool, he's a great quarreller, and but that he hath the gift of a coward to allay the gust he hath in quarrelling, 'tis thought among the prudent he would quickly have the gift of grave.

(I.iii.18-31)

In this context, "tall" refers to "sturdy" or "valiant" which is an essential characteristic of a knightly conduct. But Sir Andrew, as Maria comments, is a coward who becomes fearful during the quarrel with Cesario in the Third Act. He is of course a tall man but his height does not signify his strength. Sir Toby mentions that Sir Andrew plays "viol-de-gamboys". Labriola explains that this musical instrument is an element of the courting process. It suggests an invitation to courtship and an effort to arouse women's desires (7). Sir Toby also praises his linguistic ability; however Sir Andrew does not know the meanings of "pourquoi" and "accost". Sir Andrew's ignorance at the meaning of "accost" shows his inability to woo any woman, particularly Maria, and naturally the lack of ability to play the viol-de-gamboys as a wooing lover. Lastly, Sir Toby remarks; "An thou let part so, Sir Andrew, would thou mightst never draw sword again" (I.iii.58-59). Here he depreciates Sir Andrew both as a knight and as a lover, because the phallic connotations of "drawing one's sword" in this sentence suggest the sexual impotence of Sir Andrew.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the forms of grotesque realism degrade their subjects while they exaggerate them. The fundamental principle of degradation is the lowering the high, or ideal. This debasement is a kind of taking the subject to a

material level. Accordingly, the abuse, degradation or exaggerated humiliation in *Twelfth Night* is a part of the grotesque realism which the carnivalesque principle demands. Therefore, while Sir Toby, Maria, Fabian and Feste are the elements who work for the carnival spirit, Malvolio and Sir Andrew are the victims of this grotesque degradation. Their hardship and pains are the necessary part of the Dionysian process of the play; because, sometimes festivity turns out to be filled with complications and dangers. It should not be forgotten that Dionysus is a god of pain as well as pleasure. In the comic subplot of *Twelfth Night*, riot and drunkenness lead people to violence and cruelty just like Dionysian rites. In addition, this play is one of the two comedies of Shakespeare in which there is literally blood on the stage¹:

SIR ANDREW. If a bloody coxcomb be a hurt you have hurt me. I
think you set nothing by a bloody coxcomb.

(V.i.88-89)

In *Twelfth Night*, the themes of revelry and eroticism are closely linked with violence and pleasure as the different faces of carnivalesque experience.

On the other hand, Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, appears to be the representative of the political power in the play. However this representation remains only in the title. From his first speech it becomes clear that he is not going to symbolize the law, order, and self-control in the world of *Twelfth Night*. Olivia, as an unmarried woman, might be an authoritative figure in the play, since she refuses to marry and tries to remain the single authority in the house. But, she is also unable to carry on her permanence after meeting Cesario/Viola. On the other hand, because there is not any parent in the play, the social order and the entire wealth, and power seem to be in the hands of youth.

¹ The other play is *As You Like It*.

Although Sir Toby Belch is the uncle of Olivia, he is unable to symbolize any elder dignity because of his grotesque hilarity and drunkenness. As Logan claims, Malvolio becomes a parent figure in this comic world lack of parents, since he performs some characteristics of parental role (226). As for example, he is the one who warns the revellers to be quiet and go to bed at night. However, he is extremely ineffective and powerless figure to control Sir Toby, Feste, and Maria. As a result, the figure who stands for order and authority in the play is mocked and made the object of practical jokes. Moreover, Malvolio is an ineffective authoritative figure because of his being a servant in the house of Olivia. Since he has no real authority, no one is legally forced to obey Malvolio.

Meanwhile, *Twelfth Night* also depicts attempts to alter the established systems of class and authority. Malvolio dreams of marrying Olivia and gaining authority over his social superiors, such as Sir Toby. He dreams of escaping the rigid class system that makes him a servant, but in contrast he is a model of respectability and proper behaviour. The servants, whom Malvolio command, get authority over Malvolio by mocking him among the society and locking him in a dark room as a madman. Meanwhile, Maria succeeds marrying Sir Toby and so rising from her common birth to a noble rank. Finally, all these events take place within a setting in which madness and anarchy are all over: Sir Toby's drunkenness and disruptive behaviour, Malvolio's supposed insanity, Sir Andrew's artificial manners, general confusion caused by the likeness of Viola and Sebastian, and Feste's clowning whose name closely associate him with the festive atmosphere of the play. Like Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Feste is the one who appears as the link between different sets of characters, moving

from higher group to lower. Finally, *Twelfth Night* places great emphasis on carnivalesque principles like singing, gaiety, drunkenness, madness, and degradation to challenge social restrictions which seek to limit the expressions of carnivalesque spirit of the youth. Additionally, *Twelfth Night* declares the triumph of festivity over authority.



3.3. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

According to theatre historians, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was probably commissioned by George Carey, the patron of Shakespeare's company – Lord Chamberlain's Men – to be performed in 1597 on Saint George's Day at the feast of honouring Queen Elizabeth and her Garter knights (Katz 77). Although the play has various sources such as an Italian play named *Il Pecorone* by Giovanni Fiorentino, and Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, as A. L. Bennett strongly argues (431), the most important resource of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is Shakespeare's former play *Henry IV* Part One. Thanks to *Henry IV*, the comic character Falstaff becomes a distinctive individual in the imagination of a popular audience. As T. W. Craik states in Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Queen Elizabeth "was so well pleased with that admirable character of Falstaff in two parts of *Henry IV*, that she commanded [Shakespeare] to continue it for one play more, and to shew him in love" (qtd. in Katz 78). However this assertion is quite questionable because, as is known, the second part of *Henry IV* was written one year later, in 1598. Still, just like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is another "occasional" play, and to work for a holiday, Shakespeare performs a restaging of Falstaff.

Before examining the carnivalesque elements of the play, the festive atmosphere of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* should be analysed. First, the play was written for the court celebrations of the Order of the Garter – a chivalric feast on April 23, Saint George's Day. There are certain allusions to these particular court festivities which are of a mostly historical rather than a cyclic or popular nature. However, these celebrations

are harmonized by references to the rites of the spring festivals; and Shakespeare attaches certain holiday elements into the dramatic structure of the play to create a multilayered festive atmosphere. As the allusions of the Garter ceremony, first Garter Inn and its farcical Host can be mentioned. This is the place of Falstaff and his followers in the town; and the Host of the inn is a man who makes fun of the broken and accented languages of Welsh parson Sir Hugh Evans and French Doctor Caius. They eventually decide to play a trick on him, and this plan results in the loss of three horses of the Host. The other allusion of the Order is in the dialogue between Mistress Ford and Mistress Page:

MISTRESS FORD. If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment
or so, I could be knighted.

MISTRESS PAGE. What? Thou liest! Sir Alice Ford? These
knights will hack, and so thou shouldst not alter the article of thy
gentry.

(II.i.46-50)

Another allusion is at the end of the play where, in the Windsor forest, Falstaff is surrounded by disguised elves and ghosts and is terrified in the middle of the night. Mistress Quickly, playing a fairy queen, gives orders to her attendants:

MISTRESS QUICKLY.

About, about!

Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.

.....

The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm and every precious flower
Each fair instalment, coat, and sev'ral crest
With royal blazon evermore be blessed;

And nightly, meadow-fairies, look you sing,
 Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring.
 Th'expressure that it bears, green let it be,
 More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;
 And '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*' write

(V.v.54-55, 60-68)

The Latin statement is the Garter motto written on the Order's primary emblem of a Garter which means "Shame on him who thinks ill of it" or "Evil be to him who evil thinks". According to Leslie S. Katz, the Queen's Garter ceremony was created on the occasion to assemble the English nobility as well as foreign kings and dukes who had been honoured by the inclusion in Elizabeth's royal Order, and the Garter emblem signifies knights' oaths to defend the virtue and glory of the Queen (78).

Katz states that, according to the historical reports, the Queen drops her garter on the way to lodgings and Edward III orders it to be brought to him and declares to make all men reverence it. At the time of Elizabeth I, she undertakes two roles in this ceremony: she is both Edward, the royal host of the Order, and the Queen, whose virtue is revered. Katz additionally expounds that Falstaff, like Elizabeth, bears two roles in the Garter holiday: Acting as a master over Bardolph, Pistol and Nim, he parallels Elizabeth's role of a patron. However he is also the foil of himself by becoming an image of anti-patron by being mocked by the wives and other citizens (79).

Except the Garter feast, other important festive references occur during the punishments of Falstaff where he is made a victim of the people. In his first punishment, he is carried in a buck-basket full of dirty linen and thrown into the water. As a part of the carnival degradation, this cleansing act with water suggests Falstaff's fatness and filthiness with a domestic symbol.

SIR JOHN. Have I lived to be carried in a basket like barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown to in the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I'll have my brains ta'ken out and buttered, and give them to a dog for a New Year's gift. . . And you may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking. If the bottom were as deep as hell, I should down. I had been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and shallow – a death that I abhor, for the water swells a man, and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled? By the Lord, a mountain of mummy!

(III.v.4-17)

In the second punishment he is dressed in the clothes of an old woman, supposedly a witch, and he is insulted, beaten out of the house and chased through the streets. This woman is Mother Prat, also known as the fat or the old woman of Brainford. Here Shakespeare's one of the clever puns is at work. The pun on the name of the woman – Brainford – and the name of Master Ford creates a comic effect especially when Mistress Page utters these words: "Yes, by all means, if it be but to scrape the figures out of your husband's brains" (IV.ii.201-202). J. A. Bryant quotes James Frazer about Falstaff disguises as a woman that it is suggestive of a mid-Lent ceremony in parts of Silesia. In this ceremony, young girls and young men dress up a straw figure with woman's clothes and carry it out of the village. At the boundary they strip it of its clothes, tear it in pieces, and scatter the fragments about the fields. This ceremony is called "Burying Death" (Bryant 298). Here in this second punishment of Falstaff, there are both traces of the ancient popular ceremonies and a popular carnivalesque element of transvestism or gender change. This action suggests the inversion of the world order during the carnival process with the changing clothes.

EVANS. By Jeshu, I think the 'oman is a witch indeed. I like not when
a 'oman has a great peard. I spy a great peard under his muffler.

(IV.ii.179-181)

The third punishment takes place in the Act V, at the end of the play. As Northrop Frye argues in *Anatomy of Criticism*, “The tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society” (165). At the final scene the braggart must be exposed, ridiculed, swindled, and beaten. When Falstaff is invited to the Windsor forest to meet Mistress Ford and Mistress Page – which offers a green world setting, and symbolizes the victory of summer over winter – the fundamental principle of comedy becomes evident. However, Falstaff has to disguise as Herne the hunter with “huge horns on his head” (IV.iv.42). Herne is the character of a superstitious old tale, who walks around an oak tree blasting the tree, taking the cattle, and shaking the chain “in a most hideous and dreadful manner” (IV.iv.33). Wives and their husbands plan to meet Falstaff at the oak, and punish him disguised as fairies, beasts, and ghosts as in the superstitious stories. In this final mocking scene in the forest, one experiences certain Saint George’s Day entertainments such as Mummers’s play and some popular May Game activities. François Laroque states that, generally in Carnival festivities, there is a mystical bestiary consisting certain categories of animals. One of them is about the horned animals, such as the stag, and the ox. The Mummers, or the pantomimers, enact grotesque behaviours of these animals with the aid of masks, and these dances, masquerades and music are expected to trigger the reawakening of natural human and animal forces (*Festive World* 48).

With the entrance of Falstaff on stage he identifies himself as the heir of Jove – Zeus in Greek Mythology – in sexual capacity as well as the imitator in animal

disguises in Zeus's love stories. He calls himself "a Windsor stag, and the fattest, I think, in the forest" (V.v.12-13). Also Mistress Ford addresses him as, "Art thou there, my deer, my male deer?" (V.v.16-17), and Falstaff replies her passionately, "My doe with the black scut!" (V.v.18). According to Quarto stage direction of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as Jeanne Addison Roberts notes, Falstaff should appear not only with horns but "wearing a buck's head", like Bottom in his ass head in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (11). In relation to this, after sensing the ploy he mutters, "I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass" (V.v.118), and Ford replies him, "Ay, and an ox, too. Both the proofs are extant" (V.v.119). While the horns propose the cuckoldry, they also suggest the sexual virility. But, his sexual powers become insignificant when he is frightened, pinched, beaten and burnt in the forest. After this mockery and disgrace, he describes himself as a "Jack-a-Lent" (V.v.126), the little scarecrow or puppet which symbolizes Lent. Laroque explains that it is set up on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, and is used as a target for missiles during the six weeks of Lent (*Festive World* 103).

The last humiliation and the people's participation in this punishment suggest the ancient scolding of the scapegoat whereby an animal or a man dressed as an animal was made the victim for suffering the sins of a whole community (Bryant 289). As a social nuisance who deserves a punishment, and an almost-innocent victim entrapped by the scheming wives, Falstaff is both villain and scapegoat of the Windsor community. His punishment at the end, serves to draw the social group together and to create a new harmony vividly felt.

As people insult him, he is a "hodge-pudding, a bag of flax" (V.v.150), "old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails" (V.v.152), as in Evans's comic summary:

EVANS. And given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack, and wine, and metheglins; and to drinkings, and swearings, and starings, pribbles and prabbles? (V.v.156-158)

His name is also a pun suggesting a false-staff. As Neil Rhodes argues; “The coalescence in Falstaff of wit and gross physicality makes him the supreme dramatic embodiment of the Elizabethan grotesque” (104). His brain and his stomach are united, and his body becomes the focus of comedy. However, his famous wit in *Henry IV* plays is lost in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and he becomes a victim of practical jokes on his fatness, filthiness and sexuality. His flesh now becomes a burden and the means of his degradation. As Rhodes states, his body is filled with raw materials and liquid components such as wine and grease (125). To Mistress Ford he is “this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly” (II.i.61-62), and “this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpkin” (III.iii.37-38). The images of whale and pumpkin, the formless containers of oil and water, are taken from the animal and vegetable worlds and they offer a grotesque and carnivalesque body figure with the large picture of Sir John Falstaff.

Beside as a mess of fat and grease, he is also a grotesque body which celebrates his bodily actions: “Come, let me pour in some sack to the Thames’ water, for my belly’s as cold as if I had swallowed snowballs for pills to cool the reins” (III.v.19-21), “Like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease. Think of that – a man of my kidney – think of that – that am as subject to heat as butter, a man of continual dissolution and thaw” (III.v.104-108), “I have been transformed, and how my transformation hath been washed and cudgelled, they would melt me out of my fat,

drop by drop" (IV.v.89-92). As Bakhtin mentions, the grotesque body of Falstaff is an unfinished body experiencing a continuous changing process. It copulates, defecates, overeats, and the speeches is flooded with defecations, urine, and dismembered parts. It also protrudes bulges, sprouts and branches off (*Rabelais* 319-321).

In punishment, Falstaff's greasiness is an image of the materiality of the body. But, grease has also sexual connotations, as for example Mistress Page calls him as "the greasy knight" with a sexual allusion. While he awaits the rendezvous with the wives, Falstaff uses the image of himself in erotic terms: "Send me a cool rut-time, Jove, or who can blame me to piss my tallow?" (V.v.13-14). When he sees the two wives together in the forest, he greedily offers himself to the wives: "Divide me like a bribed buck, each a haunch. I will keep my sides to myself, my shoulders for the fellow of this walk, and my horns I bequeath your husbands" (V.v.23-25). "I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that's in me should set hell on fire" (V.v.33-34). By creating a character like Falstaff, Shakespeare comes as close as possible to Rabelais's particular style of comedy which centres on the body and the belly together with the life of tavern and the carnivalesque celebration of life.

Apart from the other plays, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is the most middle class play of Shakespeare in setting, subject matter, and outlook; and it is an example of farce using physical gags and linguistic jokes to establish a comic tone. As E. K. Chambers points out, "Farce is comedy translated from the speech and manners of a cultivated society into the speech and manners of the bourgeois" (27). According to him, farce primarily is not a drama of incident and intrigue, but a drama of the outlook upon life;

therefore it can be called as the comedy of the market place or the bourgeois comedy.

However;

Comedy is differentiated from farce, not merely by the more temperate gusts of laughter which it awakes, but also by the fact that it calls the brain to its assistance, and finds material for its diversion, less in the underlying inadequacies and inconsistencies of motive and ideal which a subtle psychological analysis lays bare. In the portrayal of Falstaff the moods of comedy and of farce are curiously interwoven. The comic spirit is busiest with him when he is aroused to an uneasy consciousness that his earthy mode of life requires some sort of justification. This justification generally takes the form of depreciation of other persons on whom he chooses to lay the responsibility for his degradation (Chambers 123).

The play also contains various types of speeches from different parts of English community. The broken and accented languages of Welsh and French characters become the object of mocking of the citizens. Especially Welsh parson Sir Hugh Evans is teased as being a “mountain-foreigner” or a “latten bilbo” (I.i.147):

EVANS. Seese is not good to give putter; your belly is all putter.

SIR JOHN. “Seese” and “putter”? Have I lived to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English?

(V.v.139-142)

EVANS. Pauca verba, Sir John, good worts.

SIR JOHN. Good worts? Good cabbage!

(I.i.113-114)

French Doctor Caius has another problem:

HOST. A word Monsieur Mockwater.

CAIUS. Mockwater? Vat is dat?

HOST. Mockwater, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

CAIUS. By Gar, then I have as much mockwater as de Englishman.

Scurvy jack-dog priest! By Gar, me vill cut his ears.

HOST. He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully.

CAIUS. Clapper-de-claw? Vat is dat?

HOST. That is, he will make thee amends.

(II.iii.52-61)

These jokes and mockery make the play funnier in the eyes of English audience and also create a polyphonic atmosphere by the help of various speaking styles.

Moreover, the play depicts a whole community with its nobles like knights, gentlemen and priests, and the commons like servants, innkeepers and pages. But this community is not a static one. Apparently everyone seems to be plotting against someone else. Different groups try to humiliate and make fun of the others, while men of higher class try to take advantage of middle class women. Different suitors try to win the love of a young girl, while the girl plans to escape with her true love. At this point, the story of forbidden love affair occurs again repeating the story of Hermia and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Anne Page, against the will of her parents' different choices, wants to marry Master Fenton, a young gentleman. While her mother wants her to marry Doctor Caius, her father offers her another gentleman, Abraham Slender. According to their plan, Anne Page deceives everyone and she escapes with Fenton using the chaos of disguised citizens in the forest at midnight. Host of the Garter

Inn helps them to find a vicar to marry them at that night. At the final scene, as Mistress Page says, “every one go home, and laugh this sport o’er by a country fire, Sir John and all” (V.v.232-234). As Laroque states in his article “Popular Festivity”, the festive comedies provide young people a freedom from patriarchy, and the carnival occasion allow them to get away from the pressure in an atmosphere of revelry (75).

Another subversive achievement in the play is those of the “merry” wives of Windsor. The leading women of the play, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, create a powerful female bond against the seduction of Sir John Falstaff and also against their husbands (particularly Master Ford) who suspect their fidelity. Here it is possible to talk about a female dominance which controls the sexual politics of the community. The power of women is presented as a challenge to conventional, patriarchal sexual dominancy of the Elizabethan society. The seduction of Falstaff forces Mistress Ford to say: “Why, I’ll exhibit a bill in the Parliament for the putting down of men” (II.i.26-27). The domination of women is emphasized by the concept of Order of the Garter, for this chivalric ceremony reminds audience the female authority of Queen Elizabeth. Therefore, as Peter Erickson states, there can be established “a connection between the wives and Queen Elizabeth: female-controlled plotting within the play parallels the Queen dominated court politics and arouses a similar male uneasiness” (118-119).

The wives’ marriages do not dispatch them to subordinate roles. On the contrary, they make themselves exceptions in the traditional conception of gender. Trusting their purity and reliability, they use the motif of courtship as a weapon against Falstaff, and they show their husbands that the women are unapproachable when they are powerful.

They also use love as a political device to shape, control and reject male desire as in the speech of Master Ford:

FORD. I have long loved her, and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her, followed her with a doting observance, engrossed opportunities to meet her, fee'd every slight occasion that could but niggardly give me sight of her; not only bought many presents to give her, but have given largely to many to know what she would have given. Briefly, I have pursued her as love hath pursued me, which hath been on the wing of all occasions. But, whatsoever I have merited, either in my mind or in my means, meed I am sure I have received none, unless experience be a jewel.

(II.ii.189-199)

This passage also gives expression to the disappointment that men may feel when they experience love as a game controlled by women.

The play's class dynamics can be represented as the victory of a bourgeois commonality over the aristocratic court. This situation is suggested by the wives' recurring triumph over Falstaff "in which rural bourgeois values defeat the corrupted court, symbolized by Falstaff's ill-earned knighthood" (Erickson 124). Hence, at the final scene the audience sense the intensification and conclusion of the power of bourgeois and particularly of women. The authority that the wives wield makes them the "ministers" (IV.ii.205) of the Order of the Garter, and although a certain male discontent is perceived because of the husbands' wrong suppositions, the whole community enjoy the marriage of the young couple and their triumph over the braggart and villain, namely Sir John Falstaff.

CONCLUSION

Queen Elizabeth ruled England forty five years and she died in 1603 giving the name of James IV of Scotland as her successor. James came to the throne as James I of England. The contrast between the two monarchs is particularly sharp because the transition from Elizabeth to James was also a transition from a woman ruler to a man, from a Tudor to a Stuart and from a “charismatic performer” to a more “aloof public personality” (Perry 1). The sharp distinction between two reigns can be seen in the literary career of William Shakespeare. As is known, Shakespeare has not written any festive comedy during the Jacobean period. This is quite noteworthy for a playwright who is famous with his Elizabethan comedies such as *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Taming of the Shrew* and the three plays which are analyzed in this study. After the accession of James, Shakespeare tends to write mostly tragedies and several romances as his last plays. The Jacobean comedies, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure* cannot be classified as festive comedies, because, as Tillyard states, they are the problem comedies of Shakespeare like the problem child of a family (1). They are neither comedy, nor tragedy or history. These Jacobean plays have a serious, sombre tone full of unpleasant characters toward whom the audience could not feel sympathy.

Elizabeth’s broad intellectual interests ranging from history, philosophy and science to literature and art, and her tastes in fashion set the standards for the aristocracy and the rest of the society. Her Court was the centre of the intellectual and cultural activities. Naturally, the tone of the Court was set by the personality of the monarch. At

this moment, F. P. Wilson calls our attention to the gaiety of the Court of Elizabeth and the corrupt humours of the Court of James; and thus the optimism of Elizabethans and the pessimism of Jacobeans (Wilson 17). The Court of Elizabeth was a place of worldly enjoyments with music and dancing, plays, games, feasts and ceremonies, in all of which the Queen was the centre. These Court activities as the main source of merriment in the whole society, gave the impression that royal festivals provided the general impulse and rhythm for all sorts of rites and celebrations. In other words, as Laroque notices, Queen Elizabeth was regarded as the centre of all types of merrymaking and festivity (“Popular Festivity” 65).

On the other hand, as Laroque adds, perhaps because he never enjoyed the popular acclaim as Elizabeth, James I seemed to have been more partial to the private luxury of the Masque – courtly masquerades – than to the public spectacles (*Festive World* 67). As Bruce King notes, both Elizabeth and James supported the drama and the theatre companies, however their focus were different. Under the reign of James, “the Court masque became a costly high art, using recent Italian innovations in moveable scenery and perspective staging” (4). The major difference between the masque and the professional theatre was their audience. The Court entertainments were performed for the King and the nobility who usually take part in the play. As Bruce King states, “often the King and Queen had roles and the masque celebrated the heroic ideals which formed part of the ideology of the aristocracy. The masque allegorically or symbolically celebrated the King and ended in dancing and revels, which included both the masqueraders and the spectators” (14). These expensive, elaborate and ritualistic masques symbolized the power and the authority of James, and his physical presence as

the focal point of the entertainment reinforced that power further. Unlike Ben Jonson, Shakespeare did not write any court masque, but the effect of the masque on the imagery and style of his last plays, especially on his romances, is obvious (Bradbrook 222).

Against the attacks of Puritans in the late 1580s, the theatres had powerful supporters. More importantly, Queen Elizabeth and her Privy Council were determined that the theatres should remain open. During both reigns, the Court was the main source of patronage for theatres. While Elizabeth were supporting theatres and encouraging playwrights to produce and perform more plays, James took Shakespeare's company, Lord Chamberlain's Men under his patronage, and named them as the King's Men. Shakespeare produced his most famous and significant tragedies under the name of the King with a risk to represent monarch on the stage. F. E. Halliday explains that King James "was to prove a far better patron to players than Elizabeth had been" (214). In her reign an average of seven plays had been given during the season of the holidays, but James had increased this number to nearly twenty performances. However, as Halliday accounts, James did not always see the plays, and preferred to be interested in his horses (214), or to take part in the elaborate Court masques.

As the major difference between two periods, the middle class started to diminish during the reign of James I. In Jacobean period, the disintegration between the aristocracy and middle class, the taste of imposing entertainments of the Court, and its alienation to the essential problems of society demolished the common values of the theatre. Subsequently, unlike Elizabethan period, theatre ceased to be a public activity

which represents the varieties of social life and started to reflect the corruption of the Court (Çapan 27).

During the Tudor and Stuart periods the monarchy confronted different forms of political oppositions. All through these oppositions, literature, particularly drama as the major and extensive genre of both periods, had to take a side, or assume an attitude in this setting. As Leonard Tennenhouse asserts, since literature had to employ a discontinuous political strategy for idealising political authority, there were different sets of genres which support and challenge the political power (“Strategies” 110). While there were Court masques which idealise the authority in the reign of James, there were festive comedies that challenge authority.

As Tennenhouse states:

Various forms of carnival, particularly those associated with May Day festivities, became increasingly controversial during Elizabeth’s reign. These were evidently viewed as recalcitrant practices . . . and were considered to be sacrilegious by certain radical Protestant factions. These reformers bolstered their theological arguments with economic and political ones, claiming that festival pastimes and May Games interrupted the work week, distracted apprentices, interfered with economic productivity, and mocked established forms of order. Certainly Elizabeth’s government felt some threat in the figures of inversion and boundary dissolution. (“Strategies” 115)

Interestingly, Elizabeth was cautious not to arouse disagreement to the central direction, and she chose a midway either by actively supporting traditional festival celebrations, or by enforcing rules that would suppress them (115).

In contrast to Elizabeth, James formed a royal policy to seek control over the theatre and to advocate the celebration of festivals and the practice of various sports. He supported popular festivity by publishing his *Book of Sports* in 1618; and as the final authority, he revealed his place in this debate. In the Jacobean period, the figures of festival were no longer the materials of subversion, or the forms of resistance. As Tennenhouse asserts, "With James, these materials have already been appropriated as an instrument of state authority. Festival is now conceived as a framework for the containment rather than for the release of forces inherently opposed to the patriarchal principle" ("Family Rites" 201). However, making the festivities legal celebrations, James concurrently destroyed their carnivalesque atmosphere. He converted the anti-authoritarian attitude of carnival to a legitimized amusement. On the contrary, according to Bakhtin, carnival cannot be an official celebration offered by state, church or any other authority. In nature, carnival is based on ancient forms of rituals and is closely connected with the cycles of nature. To make it an authorized transgression or a licensed affair means to disrupt its essence and to reject its connection with human being's archaic survival. As mentioned in the second chapter, "safety valve" theories stress the individual's adaptation to the status-quo; but according to Bakhtin, carnivalesque imagines a better system for society to be organized and offer a more dynamic view of popular culture (Wiles 79).

Arthur Lindley argues that the carnivalesque property of any literary work functions as a figure for the parodic subversion of social identity, as a political, psychological, and religious phenomenon. The participation in a carnival breaks down the distinctions between the self and other and it also subverts hierarchy by direct parody (23). Therefore festive comedies which emphasize the communal revelries and suggest the anti-authoritarian spirit of the temporal merriments appeared to be the subversive plays during the Elizabethan period; on the other hand the comedies of Jacobean period were mostly the city comedies which were associated with the life of city and its suburbs. As Tennenhouse claims, “Jacobean city comedies create a framework sorely in need of patriarchal authority” (“Family Rites” 200).

The legalizing effort of festival activities seems quite convenient for James because of his absolutist state ideas, and his belief in the “Divine Rights of Kings”. As James writes in *Basilicon Doron* (1599), the king is a model for his subjects “‘whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly do behold’. Any ‘dissolute’ behaviour on his part breeds contempt in his subjects and contempt is ‘the mother of rebellion and disorder’” (Dollimore 51). Apparently James was strongly against the form of parody and any form of burlesque as the important components of carnivalesque principle. At any rate, absolutist state idea is in opposition to not only parody but also for criticizing or questioning the monarch. Alan Sinfield states that in the absolutist state idea, “power became centralized in the figure of monarch, the exclusive source of legitimacy” (168). According to James’s ideology the state of monarch is the most supreme in the world. The king has a divine power which makes him equal to God. Tennenhouse states that just like the fathers in the families, kings

have the power to reward, to question, or to punish. The king's authority is not an abstract idea but a social fact, therefore it can be applied to each individual ("Strategies" 117-118).

Elizabeth's power was unquestioned too, but more importantly, she presented herself to the nation as both a man and a woman, the Queen and the King, and the virgin mother of England. She became an emblem of England by fashioning herself with various versions, and as Kimberly Anne Coles asserts, she tried to situate herself beyond known female categories (31). As for example, throughout her reign, she resisted against Parliament to protect her symbolic identity as a "Virgin Queen". In opposition to parliamentary pressure to marry, Elizabeth held the control of her body and created a self representation founded upon self restraint. As Coles argues; "she was aware that whoever laid claim to her body through matrimony would also exert some partial claim upon the polity that went with it" (37). Therefore she used her preferred virginity as a diplomatic weapon to provide a politically safer state.

Unlike the autumn in the reign of James I, Elizabeth was made the representation of spring by the famous poets of her age. In *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), Edmund Spenser depicts Queen Elizabeth's purity and virginity as a fruitful condition by likening her to the month of April. Coles illustrates that the representation of her virginity was now her most fertile product with the poetry of Spenser (44). Elizabeth's representation created a sharp difference between the atmosphere of the reign of James; and Shakespeare's attitude toward these different representations was portrayed in his comedies.

With regards to the Bakhtinian theory of carnival, Queen Elizabeth appears to be a carnivalesque figure and a Dionysian body. She combines male and female in one body, and two different personalities in a single character. She considers herself; “as a devout daughter of God, a virgin bride to her subjects, and a mother of her country” (Coles 38). However, she is also a masculine figure because of her virginity and childlessness. In addition to this, she has to undertake a role of a man; a King of her country. Thus she wears a mask to cover her femininity, and she uses this mask for her and her country’s benefit. Just like the reversal of gender during the carnival festivities, Elizabeth acts like a man and conceals her female body with exaggerated heavy make-up and magnificent costumes. By doing this, she intends to leave the body aside and foreground the “image”.

Elizabeth, as the supreme ruler of England is also a “father” of her country; yet the father is at the same time the “mother” Queen. When the father of a country is absent then the mother becomes the head of the family; the father. It is possible that she does not marry to remain the “father” and the only authority of the country. However she manages to create a harmonious order by uniting her oppositions. Apparently this harmony is adopted by the whole society, and the drama of the Elizabethan period reflects the world picture of the Renaissance England. According to this picture, Elizabethan theatre, particularly comedy subverts the humourless, strict authority with the continuation of festive activities, laughter, reversals and carnivalesque atmosphere, and creates a universal harmony.

Consequently, Shakespeare’s festive comedies originate from this atmosphere and he writes for this picture of the world to celebrate the harmonious society. By

challenging the authority, he seeks for a humorous, regenerative world order and liberation from the established certainties. However by contrast, Shakespeare does not prefer to use festive, thus subversive comedies as a weapon against the authority of James I. He abandons the subversive festive form and produces darker, deeper and bitter dramas in the Jacobean period as the more convenient style for the King James I. In the second part of his literary career, he tries to establish reconciliation with the absolute ruler of the country and chooses a way to take him to the dark end of the natural cycle: to the winter of tragedy.



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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

1968 yılında Kayseri’de doğdum. 1985 yılında Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü’nde lisans öğrenimine başladım. 1988 yılında bıraktığım bölüme 2000 yılında yeniden kaydoldum ve 2002 yılında mezun oldum. Aynı yıl Ege Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı’nda yüksek lisans öğrenimine hak kazandım. Haziran 2004 tarihinden beri Ege Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü’nde Öğretim Görevlisi olarak görev yapmaktayım.



TEZİN YAZILDIĞI DİL : İngilizce

TEZİN SAYFA SAYISI : 133

TEZİN KONUSU (KONULARI) : William Shakespeare, Festival tarzı komedi, Karnavalesk.

TÜRKÇE ANAHTAR KELİMELER :

- 1- Shakespeare
- 2- Komedi
- 3- Karnavalesk
- 4- Rönesans
- 5-

Başka vereceğiniz anahtar kelimeler varsa lütfen yazınız.

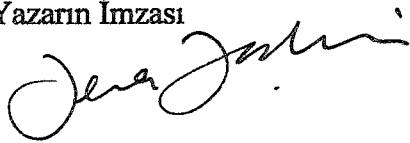
İNGİLİZCE ANAHTAR KELİMELER:(Konunuzla ilgili yabancı indeks, abstrakt ve thesaurus'ları kullanınız.)

- 1- Shakespeare
- 2- Comedy
- 3- Carnivalesque
- 4- Renaissance
- 5-

Başka vereceğiniz anahtar kelimeler varsa lütfen yazınız.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1-Tezimden Fotokopi Yapılmasına izin veriyorum | [x] |
| 2-Tezimden dipnot gösterilmek şartıyla bir bölümünün fotokopisi alınabilir | [] |
| 3-Kaynak göstermek şartıyla tezimin tamamının fotokopisi alınabilir | [] |

Yazarın İmzası



Tarih :

18.08.2005

TÜRKÇE ABSTRAKT :

Bu çalışmada William Shakespeare'in sırasıyla *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night or What You Will* ve *The Merry Wives of Windsor* adlı oyunları festival tarzı komediler olmaları bakımından incelenmiş ve bu oyunlarda Rus teorisyen Mikhail M. Bakhtin'in ortaya attığı "karnavalesk" kavramı araştırılmıştır.

Bakhtin'in de iddia ettiği gibi, karnaval Orta Çağ ve Rönesans dönemlerinde halk kültürünün önemli bir parçasıdır, ve toplum düzeninin gayri resmi, din dışı ve çok sesli yönünü simgeler. Karnaval, resmi olmayan güçlerin yarattığı bir eğlence şekli olduğundan, halkı yerleşik inanç ve yaşama biçimlerinden uzaklaştırarak, sınıf, meslek, yaş ve cinsiyet ayrımlarıyla birbirlerinden uzaklaşan insanları geçici bir süreliğine bir araya getirip eşitler. Böylece resmi kültür, bir festival havası içinde tahtından indirilir.

Shakespeare festival tarzı "karnavalesk" komedilerini yazım hayatının ilk dönemine denk gelen Kraliçe I. Elizabeth devrinde üretmiş, ancak 1603'te tahta geçen I. James'in hükümdarlığı sırasında neredeyse hiç komedi yazmamıştır. Bu çalışma, her iki hükümdarın farklı politik tavırlarını ve buna dayanarak Shakespeare'in komedi yazma eğiliminin olası politik sebeplerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır.

İNGİLİZCE ABSTRAKT :

In this study, William Shakespeare's three plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night or What You Will* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* will be analysed focusing on their festive and carnivalesque characteristics, based on the notion of Russian literary theorist Mikhail M. Bakhtin.

According to Bakhtin, carnival is one of the most important elements of popular culture in Medieval Age and the Renaissance. It represents the anti-authoritarian, secular and multivoiced sides of society, and symbolizes the rebellion against the restrictions of official order. Since carnival is a festival celebrated by the unofficial forces, it liberates people from the established beliefs and norms. It also temporarily equates people who are separated by class, profession, age and gender distinctions. Hence, it subverts the official culture in a festive atmosphere.

Shakespeare wrote his festive/carnivalesque comedies during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, however, he did not produce any festive comedies during the reign of King James I. This study inquires why Shakespeare produced carnivalesque festive comedies during the reign of Elizabeth, and abstained from writing such plays during the reign of James. Therefore, these two periods are compared in order to assess the ways in which Shakespeare revealed his political attitude toward authority.