



## A STUDY OF THE CARNIVALESQUE REBELLION OF EVE THROUGH BAKHTIN'S NOTIONS OF THE CARNIVAL AND THE GROTESQUE BODY

Bakhtin'in Karnaval ve Grotesk Beden Kavramları Işığında Havva'nın Karnavalesk İsyancılığı Üzerine Bir Çalışma

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the grotesque mode of representing the female body and bodily life in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, especially in Book IX, which is regarded to be the key book of the poem: the book of Man's Fall. My main purpose is to display from a Bakhtinian perspective how the grotesque concept of the female body operates as a considerable way of representing the "monstrous-feminine." That is, the female, in the character of Eve and in some places, of Sin, in relation to their femininity/maternity, deviates from the norm established by patriarchal male ideology and poses a constant threat to the male order. Predicating upon Bakhtin's notion of the carnival in its alliance with the grotesque image of the body, I argue that although for Bakhtin, the "bodily element" of the carnival and grotesque realism dwells upon bodies in general and not upon bodies as determined by gender, the grotesque images can be associated with the feminine, particularly with those females who revolt against male domination. Thus, in this particular study, the body of the nonconformist female who stands for a fearful and threatening form of sexuality, will be discussed as "grotesque." I also contend that in *Paradise Lost*, Eve, as well as Adam, by tasting the forbidden fruit, embraces a world turned upside down in which the marginalized and suppressed overthrow the order represented by God.

**Keywords:** Adam and Eve, *Paradise Lost*, Bakhtin, carnival, grotesque body representations.

### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, 17. yüzyıl İngiliz Edebiyatı yazarlarından John Milton'ın *Paradise Lost* (Yitirilmiş Cennet) şiirini özellikle, insan ırkıının düşüşünü ve bu düşüşün nedenlerini ele alan ve şiirin kilit noktası olarak düşünülen IX. Kitap'taki, Havva karakterini, Rus edebiyat ve kültür kuramcisısı ve dil felsefecisi Mikhail Bakhtin'in karnaval kavramını ve karnaval ile ilişkili grotesk tanımını göz önüne alarak incelemektir.

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Bakhtin, *Rabelais ve Dünyası* adlı eserinde, grotesk gerçekçilikte, bedensel unsurun son derece olumlu olduğunu vurgular. Bu, hayatın diğer alanlarından kopuk ve mahrem olarak değil, tüm halkı temsil eden evrensel bir şey olarak sunulur. Bu makalede, Milton'ın, erkek egemen ideolojinin yaratmış olduğu düzenden sapan kadını, Havva'yı, grotesk kavramını olumsuzlaştırarak ve eserde sadece bir iki kitapta bahsi geçen, Şeytan'ın kızı ve sevgilisi olan Günah'ı, kadınlık/annelik çerçevesinde Havva ile ilişkilendirerek, canavarımsı bir kadın olarak nasıl ve neden sunduğu ele alınmaktadır. Aslında, karnaval ruhu ve grotesk gerçekçilik, kadın-erkek cinsiyet farkı ile belirlenmiş bedenleri değil de, genel anlamda bedenleri içerdiği halde; benim bu incelemedeki amacım, grotesk imgelerin, kadınla ve özellikle ataerkil ideolojinin belirlediği normlardan sapan ve erkek egemen düzene bir tehlike oluşturduğu düşünenler kadınlarla bağlantılı olarak kullanıldığını göstermektir. Bu durumda, Havva, başkaldırıcı tavrı ile bir karnaval karakteridir diyebiliriz, çünkü Baba Tanrı tarafından temsil edilen düzeni, Adem'i de kandırarak, karnavalımsı bir atmosfer içinde yerle bir eder.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Adem ve Havva, Yitirilmiş Cennet, Bakhtin, karnaval, grotesk beden temsili.

## Introduction

The Russian literary and cultural critic Bakhtin, in his *Rabelais and His World*<sup>1</sup>, which he completed in the 1930s but could not get it published until 1965 owing to the political situation in Russia<sup>2</sup>, claims that the bourgeois notion of the grotesque generated the division of the mental and the bodily as well as the spiritual and the material concepts of being (Bakhtin, 1984b: 22). The division of the upper and lower strata of the body finds its expression in the classical concept of the body which refers to the upper strata, and the grotesque “female body”, which points to the lower strata.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Future references to this book will be identified as *RW*.

<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin experienced the horrors of the totalitarian political systems, especially that of Stalin, and the two World Wars that had devastating consequences for mankind. This explains why, in this specific context, Bakhtin considers the grotesque and the classical from a socio-political perspective in order to condemn the mechanisms of power that he himself had witnessed. In order to do so, he distinguishes the grotesque from its opposite, the classical, in terms of class rather than gender. It is the writer of this particular paper, however, who uses the grotesque and the classical in relation to gender because of their particular definitions given by Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, moreover, the literary genre of “grotesque realism” makes use of parody and any other form of discourse which “bring[s] down to earth” (Bakhtin, 1984b: 20) anything ineffable or authoritarian, which is achieved mainly through mockery. As such, the concept of grotesque realism functions as a major way of defying authority (Danow, 1995: 25).

<sup>3</sup> For Bakhtin the “bodily element” of carnival and grotesque realism is concerned with bodies in general and not with bodies as distinguished by gender (Vice, 1997: 155-156). However, if we

Bakhtin's view, the area of the genital organs which he calls "the material bodily lower stratum" (p. 21) is the fertilizing and generating space and they are closely associated with "birth, fertility, renewal, welfare" (p. 148). For him, female genitalia are not/should not be linked to fear and revulsion, the feelings that males have in regard to the feminine and reproduction. Peter Stallybrass, in his essay, called "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed", has taken this splitting and used it with respect to the divisions of the Renaissance women. The Renaissance was a time of social and cultural upheavals surrounding women's bodies. Stallybrass further argues that the assumption that "[a] woman's body, unlike the [man's] is naturally grotesque indicates how these tensions ran" (1986: 126). Within this framework, it can be noted that references, especially to the genitals of the female figure, as in the case of Sin in Book II of *Paradise Lost*, are all endowed with negative implications since Milton displays female sexuality as being carried to the lower stratum of the body because of the anxiety and disgust attached to female sexuality in the crippling discourses of an entire culture. The females who evoke a sense of monstrosity and thereby threaten hegemonic patriarchal ideology, represent the carnival spirit. To put it differently, they subvert everything that is regarded as solid and orderly into the level of degradation which is manifested through the hints indicating the downward movement and concerning the components of the grotesque: excrement and sexual organs which pertain to the lower bodily stratum for Bakhtin. In other words, Bakhtin overturns the negative connotations of excessive femininity and in this way, the woman becomes the "incarnation of this stratum that degrades and regenerates simultaneously" (p. 240). Accordingly, similar to grotesque realism that implies the fruitful earth and the womb, the female is the principal that gives birth.

### **Eve and Sin and Their Monstrous/Grotesque Representations in the Poem**

Interestingly, the association of the grotesque with the feminine finds its support in its etymological explanations. According to Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, the word "grotesque" comes from Italian *grotte*

make a binary opposition between what Bakhtin terms "upward" and "downward" in grotesque realism, we notice that they look like strictly gender-related ones. "Downward" is earth and, earth and the reproductive body are almost always associated with the feminine; "upward" is heaven and heaven and the rational body are associated with the masculine. Bakhtin contends, "Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 21).

'caves', whose adjective is *grottesco*; the noun being *la grottesca*. In French we find *crottesque* in the sixteenth century being used for the first time; and this form was being utilized in English until it was replaced by "grotesque" in the seventeenth century (Cuddon, 1977: 295-296). Its correct technical sense has little to do with its normal usage. The term in time came to be applied to paintings, which delineated the coexistence of human, animal, and vegetable forms. The extension of the word to a literary context occurred in France in the sixteenth century. Rabelais, for instance, employed it to refer to parts of the body. In the Age of Reason and Neo-classicism, the term began to be used in a literary context to connote what is ridiculous, freakish, and unnatural.

Significantly enough, the etymological explanations of the word grotesque and their relations to the grotto-esque or cave-like, draw attention to an identification of the grotto with the womb, and as such with the woman as mother. A cave, according to Freud, is a "female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred" (Freud, 1991: 413), thus the allusions of the female to the hidden, dark, earthly, and material are quite clear here. From Mary Russo's point of view, on the other hand, as a bodily metaphor, "the grotesque cave tends to look like the cavernous anatomical female body" (Russo, 1995: 1). Furthermore, if grotesque images are linked with the changes of time and the reproductive and generating power of the earth and of the body: and "copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 25), then they appear to be closer to the feminine than to the masculine. Bakhtin comments that, from the angle of the classical, the womb, itself a metaphorical cave (grotto), is perceived as "the earthly element of terror", while the grotesque sees in it simply "new life" (p. 21). Kristeva, on the other hand, states that "[w]e are envious of the renascent mirth of Rabelais who gives himself up, trustfully, to the pleasures of a palate where mankind becomes intoxicated, thinking it has found guiltless flesh, mother, and body" (Kristeva, 1982: 205). Kristeva first starts to maintain that the womb (the maternal function, woman's social and maternal role as reproducer of children) and the maternal are stigmatized as horrifying, and tries to explain why it is so. This attitude is also indicative of the male fear and revulsion towards the feminine and the process of reproduction. The inside of the mother's body, the womb, the cavern, is considered to be a dangerous place whose terrors are presented by the fantasy of the *vagina dentata*. The womb is imagined by men to be a devouring mouth with very big teeth and

this image, evidently, results in a sense of disgust and a haunting fear of castration as far as men are concerned. Likewise, in *Paradise Lost*, Sin functions as the exteriorised emblem of this fear. What is evil, perverse, destructive, and dangerous in terms of mothering and reproductive functions are objectified and projected onto this monstrous<sup>4</sup> mother figure. Milton creates the body of Sin as a portrait for the way in which women accomplish their sin, by being seductively beautiful and serpent-like in their compliance with Satan. Sin is half-woman, half-serpent. She is described as “seemed woman to the waist and fair, / But ended in many a scaly fold” (Book II, 650–651). Animal-like and distorted, these emblems evoke a sense of loathing. That is, moreover, the discourse, which brings the idea of femininity very close to the site of the abject: in other words, the woman becomes the embodiment of the dirty, devouring body against which man can build himself as a clean, pure reason.

Sin’s appearance is reminiscent of Eve in the way that Eve similarly appears beautiful yet deep down, she is portrayed as evil and deviant by Milton. Actually, Sin’s physical malformation is placed against Eve’s moral deformity. Eve is created “in outward show/ Elaborate, and inward less exact” (Book VIII, 538–539). It is this pattern of feminine evil that is beautiful on the outside but corrupt within, which has played a pivotal role for ages in patriarchal discourses about woman’s evil nature. Eve is mostly excluded

<sup>4</sup> *The Webster’s Dictionary* defines a “monster” as “compounded from elements of two or more animal forms” or as an “animal of huge size” (*Webster’s Dictionary*, 1966: 1465). Significantly, in terms of linking these forms with art and representation, a “grotesque” is defined as a “decorative painting or sculpture in which portions of human and animal forms are fantastically interwoven with foliage and flowers” (*Webster’s*, 29. 1002). Moreover, if we reflect on the etymology of the word itself, we see that “monster” stems from the Latin word “monstrare” which means “to show,” “to describe and explain by help of specimens or by experiment” (*Webster’s*, 1966: 1466). The idea of teaching or guiding is therefore present in the etymology, with the English word “demonstrate” turning out to have an alliance with “monster” in that the Latin “demonstratum” is a past participle of “demonstrate”, which means “to point out, indicate, show or prove” (URL-1). “Demonstrate” is defined further by the appeal to rational knowledge: “To show or make evident by reasoning.” Experiments, specimens, and reasoning connote the natural sciences and these are indeed made manifest by other definitional associations such as “monstrous” as “deviating from the natural order” (URL-1). Hence a monster is something to be shown, pointed at, and exhibited in order to be a counterpart for the so-called “normative.” Monstrosity further refers to something inhuman, unnatural, abnormal, and freakish (Cavanagh, 1994: 43). We also know that those who do terrifying, evil deeds are designated as monsters. In this respect, perhaps the most common form of monster to appear in myth and legend has been the “serpent” in a variety of different guises. For instance, he is the talking snake in the Garden of Eden.

from God's sight and, at crucial moments in the Garden of Eden, thrown into a state of invisibility. Her nature is revealed when she surrenders to Satan's seduction and tempts Adam to fall with her because he cannot resist her beauty. Adam yields to her, saying he is "fondly overcome with female charm" (Book IX, 999). Notwithstanding the fact that Adam has free choice when he sins, it is Eve whom Milton represents as the most sinful, implicating that women are naturally inclined to sin. This comes actually as no surprise that in labelling woman and serpent evil, Judaic writers dismantled an important earlier tradition, which had allied the woman and the serpent with wisdom<sup>5</sup> and fertility. The snake<sup>6</sup> which offers the forbidden fruit to Eve in Genesis, causing the fall of humanity, is the elemental symbol of the female religion, once honoured and admired before the patriarchal dominance defeated the matrilineal cultures. While Adam's curse is to work in the "sweat of [his] brow," (Genesis, 3: 19) namely, the labour the male relates to civilization, the punishment inflicted upon the woman and the serpent isolates the woman from her long-time ally, the serpent. In addition, the snake's being the symbol of the fertility Goddess necessitates the condition for the establishment of monotheism which epitomizes "the historic moment of the death of the Mother Goddess and her replacement by God the Father and the metaphorical Mother under patriarchy" (Lerner, 1986: 198). Thus, all positive implications, such as fertility and rebirth that had constructed an affinity between the serpent and the woman and which early Goddess-worshipping cultures had considered to be divine and powerful for the generation, became filthy, threatening, and evil under patriarchal supremacy. Similar to Satan who loses his place as an angel in the hierarchical great chain of being and becomes a dreadful serpent, Eve is also reduced from a beautiful angelic being to a monstrous and serpentine creature after she falls and experiences the outcomes of this fateful event in the spirit of the carnival: Adam shouts at her,

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that some ancient languages conceptualise the word for wisdom as being feminine, as in the Hebrew word *Hokma* and the Greek *Sophia* (URL-2), as well as myths such as those relating to the Roman goddess, Pallas Athena, the daughter of Metis who was the goddess of wisdom.

<sup>6</sup> An old synonym for snake is serpent which comes from Old French, and ultimately from present participle of *serpere-*, "to creep" (*Webster's Dictionary*, p. 2074). In modern usage, this usually refers to a mythic or symbolic snake. However, with the story of the fall, a divine serpent representing the female creative nature from pre-Judaic polytheistic traditions was juxtaposed with the created order of a male-dominated deity. As such, the fertility of the goddess was transformed and rendered negative.

Out of my sight, thou serpent; that name best  
Befits thee with him leagued, thyself as false  
And hateful: nothing wants, but that thy shape  
Like his, and colour serpentine, may show  
Thy inward fraud (Book X, 867–871).

On another occasion, Satan describes Adam and Eve in Book IV while he lies in ambush and observes their marital joy from a distance. As he describes them, he is intrigued by how their hair looks like. Adam's hair is “manly hung / Clustering”, like bunches of grapes. Eve's longer hair in “wanton ringlets,” like the ancillary “tendrils” (Book IV, 302–306), is meant to imply her [s]ubjection (308). However, most important of all, Eve's golden tresses waving in wanton, elicit a sinister potential. The portrayal of the woman as devouring, serpentine, and all-powerful is conveyed through the concept of embracing hair so as to indicate the male fear of being engulfed by the female. Therefore, it is possible to assume that men create negative representations of femininity by either externalising or objectifying women in order to be able to assert their power and overcome the fear and contempt they feel towards them.

What is more, Sin and Eve have similar encounters with Satan that end in similar results. The poet persona sets the scene for our intended condemnation and dislike of Eve much earlier. Milton brings Satan and Sin together in Book II for the purpose of creating an analogy that intertwines the actions and characteristics of Sin with those of Eve. With the use of this analogy, he prepares the reader's mind for a connection of femininity/maternity with evil and repulsiveness. After Eve falls, she is condemned to the torment of maternity by God. In the poem, Eve is not seen as bearing children. Sin, however, is the reader's only figure of motherhood and this is not the most promising. She is associated with the processes of breeding and feeding, which are all viewed and displayed by Milton as loathing and terrifying. Birthing innumerable hell-hounds, Sin is endlessly devoured by her children that continually emerge from and return to her womb, where they bark unseen. The suckling of these horrible creatures prognosticates the exhaustion that leads to death. Death is, in effect, their brother as well as the father who has raped his mother, Sin, who creates Death, just like Eve who also brings agony and death into the world as a result of her rebellion. Woman's maternal function is constructed as abject because her ability to give birth links her directly to the “animal world and to the great cycle of birth, decay and death” (Creed, 1993: 47). Milton's Sin represents the image

of the fecund female and her babies bring forth the uncontrollable, and thereby unsubdued, unpredictable nature of femininity, engendering male fear of the reproductive function of the female. And this leads ultimately and inevitably to the representation of the female as monstrous or grotesque.

A slightly different way to look at the grotesque is that of Julia Kristeva's "abjection". Kristeva's essay on Bakhtin's intertextuality and dialogism, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", is dated 1966, a year after *Rabelais and His World* was published. In this essay, Kristeva does not discuss carnival in depth, but seems to assume that her view of its "underlying unconscious" structure of "sexuality and death" (Kristeva, 1980: 78) is shared by Bakhtin. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva dwells on Rabelais and carnival briefly, but her concept of abjection could be read as a psychoanalytically fashioned development of Bakhtin's grotesque (Kristeva, 1982: 138, 205). Kristeva offers a different way of considering the same phenomena Bakhtin argues and her theory, rather than contradicting Bakhtin's theory, can be interpreted as an extension of his. While for Bakhtin the lower strata of the body, food, and death have positive connotations, Kristeva tries to explain why the phenomena associated with each of these might seem to us "coarse and cynical" (*Powers*, p. 2), disgusting, or obscene. Against the male fantasy of the idealized female body, the abject presents everything about female bodily functions which turn upside down the frozen and aestheticized female image. In a larger sense, as Lynda Nead suggests in her *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* in connection with the representations of the female body in art, all portrayals of the female nude are endeavours by male artists and critics to try to "understand" the irrationality and chaos of the body—particularly the female body:

It begins to speak of a deep-seated fear and disgust of the female body and of femininity within patriarchal culture and of a construction of masculinity around the related fear of the contamination and dissolution of the male ego (Nead, 1992: 17–18).

Nead's arguments work in tandem with what Bakhtin has to say about the notion of the grotesque in its obvious allusions to the female body. Unlike Bakhtin's appraisal of the "grotesque," the term is also used to mean what is ugly, what makes us look away. It goes without saying that the term is closer to its dictionary definition of "hideous," "monstrous," "de-formed," because the grotesque image of the female body is undisciplined and out of

control; it should be excluded from the proper, from what is incompatible with everything that is desirable and welcome in a female.

Mary Russo, on the other hand, suggests that Kristeva concentrates on the idea of abjection in terms of the psyche, and her concept of abjection stems from an amalgamation of Lacanian psychoanalysis with the Bakhtinian grotesque (Russo, 1995: 10). Incorporating Kristeva's insights into her own evaluation, Judith Butler, on the other hand, relates the concept of the "abject" to the way in which the conventional defines itself by creating what we can term an excluded "other." For Butler "the 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'other'" (Butler, 1990: 133). In the light of this view, it is possible to assume that female bodily functions are "abjected" by a male-oriented social order because the abject covers all the bodily functions or aspects of the body that are deemed impure or inappropriate for public display or discussion. In this sense, the abject has to do with "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Butler, 1990: 4).

Closely connected with the grotesque body is the idea of carnival and its characteristics that are intimately associated with the grotesque. A full examination of this theory is outside the scope of my study; I propose to draw mainly on Bakhtin's discussion of the carnival<sup>7</sup> in relation to his view of the grotesque. In both *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin tries to introduce his idea of the carnival. In the first place, he discusses earlier critiques of a particular writer's work. Secondly, he uses

<sup>7</sup> Robert Stam claims that most scholars failed to understand the link of Rabelais's work with popular culture and popular festivities such as carnival. They, moreover, did not grasp the literary modes associated with carnival: parody, laughter, and grotesque realism (Stam, 1989: 85), which are the concepts that allude to the reversal of the official authority. To see the importance of the individual in the carnival we have to look to "the rogue, clown, and fool" (Hirschkop, 1999: 284). The Fool symbolizes the power of the individual to trespass societal norms by converting anything that is regarded as absolute or stable into the jovial extent of popular festive degeneration. Popular-festive culture is therefore a world "[in which] everyone is a clown and fool, where there is no distinction between art and life" (Hirschkop, 1999: 284). Hence, the Fool is emblematic of this utopian ideal embodied in the individual. The idea of ambivalence is connected with the most important aspect of carnival, which is laughter. Carnival laughter cannot be tied to the forms it assumes in modern consciousness. It is not simply ironical or satirical but something more than that since it stands for a defiance against the instruments of power. This laughter has a philosophical basis, and embraces death as well as life. Carnival laughter has no object. It is equivocal. Bakhtin remarks, however, that with the modern era, laughter has been reduced to one of the "low genres" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 18).

his own theory to demonstrate, as he says, what each writer is about. In the case of Rabelais, Bakhtin underscores the long-forgotten tradition of “popular humour”, and, as far as Dostoevsky is concerned, Bakhtin discerns polyphony’s roots in a similar, although more distant carnival past. Rabelais’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel* becomes Bakhtin’s main point of reference to the historical phenomenon of carnival. During the medieval period (and through subsequent centuries), the notion of carnival allowed a sense of liberation from normal rules and proprieties: “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” (Bakhtin, 1984b: 10). Such liberation, according to Bakhtin, was conceptual as well as behavioural. In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*,<sup>8</sup> he says,

All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with insignificant, the wise with the stupid (Bakhtin, 1984a: 123).

Indeed, if we look at the etymology of the word “carnival” we see that it originally means a time of festive activity before Lent. The derivation of the word can be traced to “the medieval Latin *carnem levare* or *carnelevarium* in the sense of ‘to take away meat’ or ‘to remove meat,’” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1959: 894) a concept which relates to the fact that, in the Christian context, carnival is the final festivity before the beginning of forty-days of Lent during which abstinence from meat should be observed. Hence, as an event, carnival is the time which is not connected to the ordinary flow of events, but a time when unusual freedom and license prevail. As such, an “acceptable” outlet for rebellious energy is allowed. Bakhtin points out that, “the official feasts of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic, feudal, or sponsored by the state, did not lead the people out of the existing world order and created no second life. On the contrary, they sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it” (Bakhtin, 1984b: 9).

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<sup>8</sup> This particular book first appeared in 1929. Bakhtin incorporated many of his later ideas on carnival into the much-expanded 1963 version of this book – which is the version available in English translation.

The subversive nature of the carnival spirit which permits a celebration of the grotesque and a temporary reversal of the established order of things, also includes the artworks of the carnival that utilize grotesque distortions of “classical” perfection, that is, the parts of the body, which vary in size and refuse to be pressed into harmonious proportions (Lechte, 1994: 10–11). Heads, noses, mouths, feet, genitals, and especially bellies are extremely exaggerated. The classical harmony of a perfect, symmetrical face is made unclassical and asymmetrical because grotesque realism is a concept for a range of art not regulated by the demands of classical proportion (Lechte, 1994: 12). Therefore, the classical standards of beauty (or Apollonian Order) are destroyed. Alton Whites and Peter Stallybrass, in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, state that Bakhtin was amazed by the difference between the human body as represented in popular festivity and the body as represented in classical statuary in the Renaissance (Whites & Stallybrass, 1986: 87). The concept of the body in grotesque realism is opposed to the literary and artistic canon of antiquity, which set up the cornerstone of Renaissance aesthetics. During the classic period, the grotesque did not die but was displaced from the territory of official art to live in certain “low” non-classic areas. The Renaissance saw the body in quite a different light from the Middle Ages. For this canon, the body was, in the first place, a completed, finished product. Furthermore, it was isolated from all other bodies. The unfinished nature of the body was hidden: conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and death were almost never shown. The attention was drawn to the completed, self-sufficient individuality of the body. Therefore, for the inclinations of the classic canon, the body of the grotesque realism was hideous and formless. As an example of the representation of the classical body which is Apollonian in essence, Michelangelo’s *David*<sup>9</sup> can be presented here. According to Camille Paglia, this Renaissance statue is “an apotheosis of the male body as Apollonian perfection” (Paglia, 1990: 158).

In relation to the distinction of the classical and grotesque conceptions of the body, another binary opposition emerges: Apollonian and Dionysian. Apollonian and Dionysian are the two terms used by Nietzsche in *The Birth*

<sup>9</sup> Michelangelo’s *David* which illustrates the biblical David at the very moment when he decides to fight with Goliath, can be read as an expression of Florentine public ideals. Michelangelo utilized classical style in order to depict a confident young man at the climax of physical fitness, thereby representing the bravery of the Florentine republic in resisting oppressors and endorsing ideals of justice.

of Tragedy to designate the two central principles in Greek culture. Nietzsche believed that both forces were present in Greek tragedy, and that the true tragedy could only be produced by the tension between them. The Apollonian, which corresponds to Schopenhauer's *principium individuationis* ("principle of individuation"), is the foundation of all analytic distinctions (*The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 34). According to Webster's Dictionary, Apollonian is what is "harmonious, measured, ordered, or balanced in character of an irrational or nomothetic nature fundamentally temperate, restrained, or meditative contrasted with Dionysian [which signifies what is] unbounded, lawless, or irrational in nature" (Webster's Dictionary, pp. 101, 636). Everything that is part of the individuality of man or thing is Apollonian in character; all types of form or structure are Apollonian, since form serves to define or individualize that which is shaped; thus, sculpture is the most Apollonian of the arts, because it relies on form for its effect. Rational thought is also Apollonian since it is structured and makes classifications. The Dionysian, which corresponds roughly to Schopenhauer's conception of Will (*Birth*, p.35), is strongly contrasted with the Apollonian. Drunkenness and madness can be considered to be two Dionysian conditions because they break down a man's individual character; all forms of enthusiasm and ecstasy are Dionysian. Music is the most Dionysian of the arts, since it appeals to man's emotions; it is not related to his reasoning mind. For Camille Paglia while "Apollo is the integrity and unity of western personality, a firm-outlined shape of sculptural definitiveness" (Paglia, 1990: 73), "Dionysus, [on the other hand], is energy, ecstasy, hysteria, promiscuity, emotionalism" (Paglia, 1990: 96).

From the arguments as regards the striking differences between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, it is possible to note that Eve does a carnivalesque uncrowning and demeaning of the authority by turning things "upside down." It is a time of liberation governed by what Bakhtin terms the "grotesque body" – the aspects of corporeal existence like eating, drinking, fornicating which the mind ignores or represses. Similar to one of the celebrants in Dionysian festivities in which the Bacchantes swirl, yell, and become heavily drunk, Eve, in this scene of ecstasy, reveals herself with unlimited freedom and deconstructs everything that is spiritually exalted. Moreover, by disregarding God' decree and eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve distrust His Goodness, challenge His authority, and undermine all forms of norms since as Robert Stam relates, "carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from

conventional rules and restrictions" (Stam, 1989: 85). This argument is further suggested by Adam and Eve's rebellion against the official system characterised by the authority of God, which points to a "carnivalesque" reversal and excess, a world evading prevalent restrictions.

### **The Rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Spirit of the Carnival**

In the light of the preceding quotation, it can be stated that the subversive mode of carnival is best illustrated in *Paradise Lost*, specifically, in Book IX, when Eve returns to Adam after she eats the forbidden fruit and makes her apology for being late in words "with countenance blithe" (Book IX, 886). She changes as soon as she eats the fruit, showing her respect to the tree in drunken worship, "heightened as with wine", since reason is gone (793), and telling her story to Adam. Eve's "distemper", (887) or disturbance, even her intoxication, is clearly discernible as a pleasant glow on her cheek and supports her "blithe" (886) manner. After Adam eats the forbidden fruit he, too, becomes intoxicated "as with new wine" (1008) and he and Eve are aroused with carnal lust which they proceed to satisfy. As a consequence, the eating of the fruit removes their perceptiveness, rationality, and consciousness; it leads to their intoxication and to the complete disintegration of their personality. This situation, furthermore, constitutes an outlet for their suppressed feelings and contributes to the subversion and loosening of all the barriers that "[their] great Forbidder" (815) had set up for them. Eve, for instance, promises the tree her worship each morning, which should be given to God; and she deals a further blow when she alludes to God in a pagan way as "gods" (804). In this sense, Bakhtin's concept of the carnival is well exemplified in the couple's behaviour. Their eating of the forbidden fruit serves as a force disruptive of order and of clear oppositions established by God, the ultimate patriarch. Adam and Eve are released from all their inhibitions and are now able to reveal themselves with a stark and unlimited freedom which is reflected in their speech and manners towards each other. However, it should also be noted that this freedom from the prevailing truth and the established order is temporary and after the fall, Adam and Eve undergo a transformation. After Eve eats the fruit of the forbidden tree, she acquires the ultimate knowledge of mortality. Eve tells Adam that he should eat the fruit to acquire transcendental knowledge. Nonetheless, it is not for man to strive to imitate God and expect to take part in creation. When the individual forces the restrictions imposed upon him, the result is chaos. This situation is symbolically depicted by the roses in the garland Adam has made for Eve which dry up when she

goes to him after she eats the fruit. Moreover, the passion involved in their coupling is placed against the innocent lovemaking of Book IV: their love-making before the fall is characterised in pastoral terms: there is a “cool Zephyr”, the meal is vegetarian, and Adam and Eve are linked in “happy nuptial league” (Book IV, 329–39). Nevertheless, shame and lustfulness accompany postlapsarian sex and distinguish it from the “Love unlibidinous”, that is, innocent sexuality of the Garden before the fall. After their first sexual intercourse following the fall, the bodily change is reflected in both Adam and Eve. They behave as though they are on drugs in a carnival-like ambience. This change is undoubtedly related to the pre-eminence of the notion of sensuality:

Their inward state of mind, calm region once  
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:  
For understanding ruled not, and the will  
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now  
To sensual appetite, who from beneath  
Usurping over sovereign reason, claimed  
Superior sway (Book IX, 1125–1131).

It is also after the fall that Adam and Eve first feel their nakedness and that they desperately try to cover themselves with fig leaves: “O how unlike / To that first naked glory,” the poet persona says (Book IX, 1114–1115). Satan’s promise to Eve that her eyes will be opened if she tastes the fruit is projected on the shame in their bodies; but of course instead of the knowledge to which Eve aspires, the shameful knowledge of fallen sexuality occurs. In *Paradise Lost*, then, the fall into the Original Sin is a rebellion against patriarchal hierarchies. Eve’s revolt against God’s injunction in Book IX places human will above divine will; the feminine is placed above the masculine, and passion dominates reason, just like the conspicuous oppositions between The Apollonian and the Dionysian mentioned earlier in this study. What Eve does, gives her the power to subvert the order of God. Accordingly, Milton presents femininity as a danger: the ability of a woman to overthrow the hierarchy that puts the Creator above the created, and man above woman. When the serpent begins speaking, he addresses Eve “Sovran Mistress,” and calls her, “Queen of this Universe” ... “Empress of this fair world.” He appeals to the woman who is deeply fascinated by her image that she sees for the first time in the pool. She is the woman who is aware of the impact her beauty has on Adam. The serpent persuades Eve to eat the fruit not simply because it is tasty but because it has created a “Strange

alteration” (Book IX, 599) in him, since he is now capable of speaking and rationalizing. Satan goes on to make promises to Eve by saying that if this “sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving Plant,” has brought those changes in him, it will absolutely make Eve, a human being, “as Gods,” in speech as well as in other powers (Book IX, 599–600, 679). Eve’s exceeding the bounds of male order in a Faustian attempt for knowledge positions her on the side of the “unnatural”; she wishes to actualize the Faustian desire in order to see what knowledge will provide her with: power. Similar to Faustus who sells his soul to Mephistopheles in exchange for knowledge and power, and thereby transcends the constraints imposed by God, Eve’s suggested affinity with Satan is, likewise, indicative of the infringement of the “natural”. Adam and Eve commit a sin against God which results in exclusion and misery. But it also culminates in the knowledge of human reality and of what it means to be human.

### **Conclusion**

As opposed to the sense of authority that bases itself on the definition of a subject/object dichotomy and on an opposition between male/female, and expects women to comply with the traditional gender roles and cultural expectations, the carnival spirit, which is marked by a “temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life,” (Bakhtin, 1984b: 15) turns things upside down and, most important of all, reverses the upper strata with the lower parts of the body that transgress and threaten our sense of cleanliness and propriety because those lower parts are the sexual organs and their related functions. In the light of this argument, it can be inferred that the so-called monstrous females of *Paradise Lost* nullify the male-oriented society controlled by a set of rules which are established in favour of male authority. Arguing that the grotesque representations of the female body find their place in *Paradise Lost*, this study has explored the ways in which the elements and features of the female body cause disgust and fear from a male point of view since they constitute the reflections of male anxiety and ambivalence about female sexuality.

The object of this study has been to explore the female body from the point of view of Bakhtin’s discussions of the characteristics and functions of the grotesque body, which for him carry positive connotations. The grotesque and monstrous-feminine view has been applied in order to trace the ways in which the feminine, in the representations of the female characters, such as Sin and Eve, are portrayed as a threat. Eve, “the mother of all who

live” (Genesis 3:20) is also analysed since she is believed to be the basic source of human tragedy as a result of her eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil and giving it to Adam, the first man, who falls because of his excess of love for Eve. The specific claim I elucidate in this study of John Milton’s epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (Book IX), is that the female characters are exhibited as grotesque or monstrous by their author because they do not conform to the norms established by patriarchy and in doing so, they pose a constant threat to the patriarchal male order.

Like his antecedents from pre and post-Christian periods, Milton uses negative body images for women. As such he constitutes a masculine way of fashioning the female body. To represent the figure of the woman, or to imply an identification of the woman with the grotesque body, is emblematic of the body represented by the symbolic order on which male authority is grounded. The images applied to describe Sin and Eve function to stigmatize them as monstrous, deformed, or abnormal and as such rendering them unable to fit within the limits of the “normal”. Sin and Eve are marked by female ambition or erotic energy which makes them to be defined within the confines of monstrous and grotesque images constructed by crippling hegemonic discourses.

Throughout this study, I have tried to show that the concept of the “grotesque” is a crucial part of the way the body, particularly the female body, is conceived of and represented. I have cited the difference between the grotesque and the classical in terms of the human body in order to underscore that two types of the body are manifest aspects for Bakhtin, particularly in social terms. While contrasting the grotesque and the classic canon, the purpose has been to denote their basic differences; the superiority of the one over the other has not been asserted. Yet, the concept of the grotesque has been, of course, foremost in my study, since it determines the images of the female body that have been discussed. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin does not make an explicit distinction between the grotesque body alluding to the feminine or the classical to the masculine. In the context of this study, however, the term the “grotesque body” has been used in its relation to the female body which deviates from the norm and my main interest has lied in the grotesque body which is associated with the feminine because of its features drawn by Bakhtin. In the representation of the body in art and literature, the “classical body” always exists in a dialectical way with the “grotesque body.” The images of the grotesque body are severed from the bodily precepts of classical aesthetics since they allude to

degradation, filth, and death. The classical body is closed, static, and self-contained; it is also identified with rationalism. The grotesque body, on the other hand, is open, irregular, multiple, and changing; most important of all, it is identified with the carnivalesque.

All that is evil, perverse, destructive, and dangerous about female sexuality are projected onto Eve and Sin in Milton's *Paradise Lost* so that these negative qualities can be given a conspicuous representation to be punished and destroyed. In this manner, what is governed is otherness as sexual difference and as evil's presence in life in the form of the negative characteristics and aspects that are traditionally attributed to these female figures. Woman is seen as deficient, lacking, or threatening to the prevailing system which is regarded as a prerequisite for the so-called patriarchal life. Also worthy of discussion is the way in which a line of demarcation needs to be formed over the site of the monstrous female body, between such opposing concepts as the self and "other" as well as good and evil. The idea that women are an innately unruly, carnivalesque element in society is grounded in a similar perception of the female body as inherently grotesque.

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