TURKISH ACADEMIC RESEARCH REVIEW
Türk Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi

e-ISSN: 2602-2923 **Yıl/Year: 2022** **Cilt/Volume: 7** **Sayı/Issue: 3**

An Ecocentric Reconsideration of Bakhtin's Grotesque Realism in *Sexing the Cherry*

Vişnenin Cinsiyeti Romanında Bahtin'in Grotesk Gerçekçiliğinin Ekosantrik Açıdan Yeniden İncelenmesi

Ayşe ŞENSOY – Meryem AYAN

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Osmaniye Korkut Ata Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı/Assist. Prof. Dr., Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, aysesensoy@osmaniye.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1792-2381

Prof. Dr., Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı/Prof. Dr., Manisa Celal Bayar University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, meryem.ayan@cbu.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3138-1523

Makale Bilgisi	Article Information
Makale Türü – Article Type	Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Geliş Tarihi – Date Received	19 Mayıs / May 2022
Kabul Tarihi – Date Accepted	26 Eylül / September 2022
Yayın Tarihi – Date Published	30 Eylül / September 2022
Yayın Sezonu - Pub Date Season	Eylül / September

***Atıf / Cite as*:** Şensoy, A. – Ayan, M. (2022), An Ecocentric Reconsideration of Bakhtin's Grotesque Realism in *Sexing the Cherry/Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* Romanında Bahtin'in Grotesk Gerçekçiliğinin Ekosantrik Açıdan Yeniden İncelenmesi. Turkish Academic Research Review, 7 (3), 861-888. Retrieved https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tarr/issue/72766/1118701

İntihal / Plagiarism: Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelenmiş ve intihal içermediği teyit edilmiştir. / This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and confirmed to include no plagiarism. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tarr

TURKISH ACADEMIC RESEARCH REVIEW
Türk Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi

e-ISSN: 2602-2923 **Yıl/Year: 2022** **Cilt/Volume: 7** **Sayı/Issue: 3**

An Ecocentric Reconsideration of Bakhtin's Grotesque Realism in *Sexing the Cherry*[1]

Ayşe ŞENSOY – Meryem AYAN

Abstract
Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), which is regarded as one of the best examples in the postmodern fiction, offers a new space for re-considering genders, identities and environmental problems by effacing the boundaries of story/history, self/other, male/female, reality/fantasy, material/immaterial, nature/culture, natural/unnatural, and human/nonhuman. Questioning the monologic discourses of anthropocentrism and androcentrism, the novel deals with social restrictions, political upheavals, religious conflicts, authoritative inequalities, gender issues, and environmental destruction in multiple contexts. Winterson's novel presents the voice, subjectivity and agency of the monstrous, the most feared, the ignored, the muted and the oppressed, including all human beings regardless of their gender and nonhuman life forms. To achieve this aim, the author retells some events in English history in a detailed way through the voices and perspectives of larger-than-life characters. In doing so, Winterson seeks to deconstruct the officialdom, authoritarian power relations, political hierarchies and social inequalities. She also attempts to eliminate the patriarchal and anthropocentric biases and norms for ecological justice. In this sense, the novel suggests a carnivalesque space with a multiplicity of self and voice and offers a dialogic world with infinite possible ways of existence, fluidity and interdependence of beings. Within this framework, this article seeks to explore *Sexing the Cherry* in the light of Bakhtinian grotesque realism within the ecocentric view to discuss the effects of the authoritarian, hierarchical and patriarchal attitudes of the human on human and nonhuman communities. In her novel, the author tries to revive the agency of the nonhuman to oppose Cartesian binary oppositions that keep humans away from their physical environment and lead to an anthropocentric tendency that reduces both nature and all its nonhuman inhabitants to objects. Therefore, the article aims to show grotesque responses and challenges demonstrated by the main characters to the environmental problems depicted in the novel. Consequently, Winterson, in accordance with Bakhtin's grotesque realism, imagines a world of optimism and equality and focuses on the union and harmony of the human with the nonhuman.
Keywords: *Sexing the Cherry*, Jeanette Winterson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Grotesque Realism, Ecocentrism

Vişnenin Cinsiyeti Romanında Bahtin'in Grotesk Gerçekçiliğinin Ekosantrik Açıdan Yeniden İncelenmesi

Öz
Postmodern kurgunun en iyi örneklerinden biri olarak değerlendirilen Jeanette Winterson'ın *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* (1989) romanı öykü/tarih, ben/öteki, erkek/kadın, gerçeklik/fantezi, maddesel/maddesel olmayan, doğa/kültür, doğal/doğal olmayan ve

[1] This article is produced from a part of Şensoy's doctoral dissertation, and it includes the literary and theoretical analyses explored within the scope of her doctoral study.

insan/insan olmayan arasındaki sınırları ortadan kaldırarak cinsiyet, kimlik ve çevre sorunlarının yeniden ele alınması için yeni bir ortam sunmaktadır. İnsanmerkezciliğin ve erkekmerkezciliğin monolojik söylemlerini sorgulayan roman sosyal kısıtlamaları, siyasî karışıklıkları, dinî çatışmaları, otoriter eşitsizlikleri, cinsiyet sorunlarını ve çevresel yıkımı pek çok bağlamda ele almaktadır. Romanda cinsiyeti ne olursa olsun insanlar ve insan olmayan canlılar alemindeki canavarın, en korkulanın, göz ardı edilenin, susturulanın ve ezilenin sesi, öznelliği ve eyleyiciliği betimlenmektedir. Bu amaca ulaşmak için yazar, romanında İngiltere tarihinde on yedinci ve yirminci yüzyıllarda yaşanmış bazı olayları gerçeküstü karakterlerin sesleri ve bakış açıları aracılığıyla ayrıntılı bir şekilde yeniden anlatmaktadır. Bunu yaparken yazar, romandaki otoriter güç ilişkilerini, siyasî hiyerarşileri ve toplumsal eşitsizlikleri yapıbozuma uğratmaya çalışmaktadır. Yazar aynı zamanda ekolojik adalet için ataerkil ve insanmerkezci önyargıları ve normları ortadan kaldırmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu anlamda, roman benlik ve ses çokluğu ile karnavalesk bir alan sunarken sonsuz olası varoluş biçimleri, akışkanlık ve varlıkların karşılıklı bağımlılığı ile diyalojik bir dünya ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çerçevede, bu makale Winterson'un *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* romanını Bahtinci grotesk gerçekçilik ışığında ekosantrik bir bakış açısıyla insanın otoriter, hiyerarşik ve ataerkil tutumlarının insan ve insan olmayan topluluklar üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yazar, romanında insanı fiziksel çevresiyle içkinliğinden koparan ve hem doğayı hem onun insan olmayan tüm sakinlerini nesnelere indirgemeye yönelik insanmerkezci bir eğilime yol açan Kartezyen ikili zıtlıklarına karşı çıkmak için insan dışı etkileri canlandırmaya çalışmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu makale aynı zamanda romanda tasvir edilen çevre sorunlarına ana karakterlerin sergilediği grotesk tepkileri ve meydan okumaları açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bahtin'in grotesk gerçekçiliğine uygun olarak yazar bir iyimserlik ve eşitlik dünyası tasavvur ederek insanın insan olmayanla birlik ve uyumuna odaklanmaktadır.
Anahtar kelimeler: *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti*, Jeanette Winterson, Mihail Bahtin, Grotesk Gerçekçilik, Ekosantrizm

Structured Abstract
Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) is considered to be one of the most popular novels in the postmodern historical fiction. The novel vividly describes social restrictions, political and religious conflicts, authoritative inequalities, gender issues, and environmental destruction. It retells some events in English history during the periods between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries in which religious, monarchical, political, social and environmental conflicts of England are narrated through the perspectives of Jordan, Dog Woman, Nicholas Jordan, and the unnamed environmentalist woman. It begins in the middle of the political and social upheavals of England in the seventeenth century with the execution of King Charles I and extends to the political and environmental troubles of England in the twentieth century.
The novel deals with genders, identities and environmental problems by effacing the boundaries of story/history, self/other, male/female, reality/fantasy, material/immaterial, nature/culture, natural/unnatural, and human/nonhuman. It questions the monologic discourses of anthropocentrism and androcentrism. It presents the voice, subjectivity and agency of the monstrous, the most feared, the ignored, the muted and the oppressed, including all human beings regardless of their gender and nonhuman life forms. In doing so, the novel degrades officialdom, authoritarian power relations and hierarchies and opposes patriarchal and anthropocentric norms. Within this framework, this article aims to explore *Sexing the Cherry* in the light of Bakhtinian grotesque realism within the ecocentric view to discuss the effects of the authoritarian, hierarchical and patriarchal attitudes of the human on human and nonhuman communities and to show grotesque responses and

challenges demonstrated by the main characters to the environmental problems depicted in the novel.

This article intends to expand Bakhtin's grotesque realism from festivity of folk culture and the principles of material bodily lower stratum towards ecocentrism. Grotesque realism, a Bakhtinian term associated with the theory of the carnival, blends realism with folk culture and reveals some carnival features. Grotesque realism shows exaggerated images of the body related to ugliness, monstrosity, hideousness, death, rebirth, growth, fertility, dismemberment and decay. It displays two opposing elements in a single body or two bodies in one in the way that one element grows or develops while the other decays in the body, or one body gives birth and dies while the other is conceived and born, generating another body. Simply ridiculing anything that should not happen or exist, grotesque realism stands up to the separation from the materiality and corporeal roots of the world. Bakhtin pointed out that bodies do not exist only for themselves but are part of a material corporeal whole. For this reason, the grotesque body is integrated into the rest of the world with its opposing, incomplete, outgrowing and transgressive characteristics through its open parts like the mouth, nose, breasts, potbelly, anus, genital organs and the phallus. These convexities or orifices function as bridges between the human body and the nonhuman world. In this way, the material bodily principles manifest human beings' awareness of their materiality and their bodily nature, which are all about the life of the earth, the awareness which is achieved during the carnival. This carnivalesque awareness demands consciousness of the earthly and historic eternity and of the constant revival and growth as in the cycle in the natural world. This carnival atmosphere helps human beings recognize that they are inseparable part of the world of nature from which everything on earth emerges and that they are also a member of all existing entities. In such atmosphere, human beings transgress their bodily boundaries going beyond their skins towards other bodies to revive and develop, which enables humans to become conscious of the earth, the sky and everything in the universe. Grotesque realism makes the world a more carnivalesque space, rendering humans inhabiting in it freer, franker, gayer, more ecological, less fearful and less destructive.

Winterson carnivalizes grand narratives in the novel through historiographic metafiction, which includes the postmodern techniques of parody, intertextuality, pastiche, fragmentation, frame breaks, self-reflexivity and rewriting of history, and degrades hierarchical ideology by negating the closure, authority, boundary and giving value to the instability, fluidity, transgression and revival in order to undermine anthropocentric and androcentric discourses. The author creates a carnivalesque space that disturbs hierarchical and patriarchal structures for freedom, egalitarianism, mutual relationship, communality and ecological justice. To challenge Cartesian dualism that has alienated the human mind from the effects of the entities of the external world, which has given rise to the anthropocentric tendency towards reducing the natural world and all its nonhuman inhabitants to knowable objects, Winterson tries to revive these nonhuman effects on human body and mind by degrading authoritarian social norms and hierarchical laws of the universe while elevating nonhuman subjectivity and agency. In accordance with the grotesque realism, she liberates her characters from class, age, gender status and hierarchy, imagines a world of optimism and equality, and concentrates on the union and harmony of the human with the nonhuman.

Introduction

In the novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), Jeanette Winterson vividly describes social restrictions, political and religious conflicts, authoritative inequalities, gender issues, and environmental destruction in multiple contexts. The novel questions the master constructions of story/history, self/other, male/female, reality/fantasy,

material/immaterial, nature/culture, natural/unnatural, and human/nonhuman. In this way, Winterson leads the reader into questioning the monologic discourses of anthropocentrism and androcentrism. In the novel, the author gives voice to the monstrous, the most feared, the ignored, the muted and to the oppressed, including all human beings regardless of their gender and nonhuman life forms, to deconstruct authoritarian power relations and hierarchies to reject patriarchal and anthropocentric prejudices. *Sexing the Cherry* is viable to be examined under the lens of Bakhtinian grotesque realism within the ecocentric view to create ecological discourse since the novel can be regarded as an attempt to disable Cartesian nature-culture dualism as well as authoritarian power relations of patriarchy, hierarchy and religious dogmatism. This article brings *Sexing the Cherry* into new dialogue with Bakhtin's grotesque realism in aspects of complex relationships between human and nonhuman beings, natural and unnatural entities, material and immaterial selves, beautiful and monstrous bodies, time and space, mother and son, and man and woman. Depicting the effects of the authoritarian, hierarchical and patriarchal attitudes of the humans on human and nonhuman communities, the novel focuses on expressing environmental messages with its satiric and polyphonic voice and grotesque and carnivalesque tendency.

Discovering Bakhtin's Grotesque Realism for Ecocentrism

Bakhtin sought to "interpret the world for his society" in his works, though "not limited […] in a particular time and place" with his theoretical suggestions (Holquist, 1984, p. xiv). He was deeply interested in the Renaissance "because he saw in it an age similar to his own in its revolutionary consequences and its acute sense of one world's death and another world's being born" (p. xv). To him, the age of Renaissance was an era of great transformations since verbal and ideological authoritarianism of the Middle Ages was destructed; mathematical, astronomical and geographical discoveries of great significance were made; the finiteness and restricted quality of the old universe was destroyed then (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 415). In *Rabelais and His World* (1965/1984),[2] Bakhtin, having been inspired by Rabelais in his attempt

[2] *Rabelais and His World* politically discusses the Soviet intellectuality in the 1930s in that all authors, despite their philosophy or style, were urged to take part in the Union of Writers in 1932, an institutional unity having compelled the authors to write only Socialist Realist novels in 1934 (Holquist, 1984, p. xvii). For Bakhtin, however, the novel genre celebrates the linguistic and stylistic variety instead of the strict authoritative prescriptions established by the Soviet regime. For this reason, Bakhtin formed grotesque realism to criticise the literary style of the Soviet government (p. xvii). According to Holquist, Bakhtin's *Rabelais* book strives to reveal how the Russian revolution had lost contact with its origin in the people and how the folk

to annihilate the immobility of ideological hierarchy through the parody of the novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532-1564), examined the connection between a counterpoise enforced from above and an inclination for transformation from below, between the official and the unofficial, between the old and the new (Holquist, 1984, p. xvi). Bakhtin explained that Rabelaisian images reject dogmatism, authoritarianism, intolerance and hostility since Rabelais supported open-endedness while opposing finalisability, arrogance and prosaicness in life (1984, p. 3). Rabelais's world is alive with vast humorous forms and signs that debunk the official and grave atmosphere of the medieval religious and feudal system. Those humorous forms and indications, which involve "the comic rites and cults, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody", characterize the folk carnival humour (p. 4).

Bakhtin proposed that there are three forms of folk humour, including "*[r]itual spectacles*: carnival pageants, comic shows of the marketplace, *[c]omic verbal compositions*: parodies both oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular, and *[v]arious genres of billingsgate*: curses, oaths, popular blazons", all of which are interrelated (1984, p. 5; emphasis in original). Those forms of folk humour provided "nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations", which consequently created "a second world and a second life outside officialdom" based on laughter and governed by "a special type of relationship, a free, familiar, marketplace relationship" (pp. 6, 154). Whereas "the palaces, churches, institutions, and private homes were [officially] dominated by hierarchy and etiquette", the marketplace had its own unofficial territory (p. 154). This second world parodies the official by turning it "inside out" on the grounds that the carnival demands "a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings" (p. 11). That is why the carnival marketplace merges different genres and forms within the unofficial spirit.

According to Bakhtin, folk culture brings humankind closer to the world and "establishe[s] a link through the body and bodily life" (1984, p. 39). Grotesque realism, a Bakhtinian term related to the theory of the carnival, combines realism with folk culture and exhibits some carnival features. Bakhtin wrote that "images of the

laughter could be brought back into life. In this sense, Bakhtin's work carnivalizes the existing Soviet regime for a hope for a non-Soviet future (p. xxii). Similarly, ecocritical theory reveals how and why human beings have also lost touch with their roots in nature in the Anthropocene and, thus, carnivalizes the existing structural literary theories for an ecocentric stance.

human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life", which are described as the 'material bodily principle', play a significant role in Rabelais's work (p. 18). Characterised by hyperbolism of the negative and improper through festive laughter, these images are represented in extreme forms reflecting carnivalesque and utopian characteristics. For instance, defecation connotes generating power and prolificacy as excrement is conceived as gay matter in the festivity owing to its function as an intermediary between the body and the earth as well as between the living body and dead substance that is turned into earth again in the form of dung and fertilizer. That is, "the living body returns to the earth its excrement, which fertilizes the earth as does the body of the dead" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 175). These images of grotesque realism concentrate on the "gay and gracious" wholeness of the "cosmic, social, and bodily elements" (p. 19). The material bodily principle is universal embracing all the living beings. Simply ridiculing anything that should not happen or exist, grotesque realism stands up to the separation from the materiality and corporeal roots of the world. In grotesque realism, "the body and bodily life have […] a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character" because the material bodily principle does not represent the biological individuality, or the bourgeois ego, but the people as a whole who are constantly developing and renewed (p. 19). Bakhtin emphasized that bodies do not exist only for themselves but are part of a material corporeal whole.[3]

The exaggerated images of the human body have positive significance as they suggest fertility, growth and abundance in the form of a "banquet for all the world" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 19). Grotesque realism, through exaggeration, degrades "all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer [of every high ceremonial gesture or ritual] to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (p. 19). Degradation here has a topographical significance in the way that 'downward' relates to earth while 'upward' to heaven. While the upper part corresponds to the face or the head, the lower part refers to the genital organs, the belly and the buttocks (p. 21). Bakhtin explained that degradation indicates "coming

[3] Bakhtin was always preoccupied with the body of the subject and with the subject of the individual's connection to the world, a world which is real and tangible in philosophical and aesthetic aspects. On constructing his theory, it is believed that Bakhtin was strongly influenced by Bergson's concept of the body in the latter's work *Matter and Memory* (1896) in terms of Bakhtin's differentiation between the 'inner' and 'outer' body. Bergson's effort to consider the materiality of the human corporeality as a philosophical problem inspired Bakhtin in his endeavour to deal with Cartesian dualism through dialogism. Moreover, Bergson's recognition that the body is simply an object among numerous objects refers to Bakhtin's concept of the body as a growing or degrading object in relation to other surrounding objects (Holquist, 1990, p. xxxiii).

down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time" (p. 21). In this sense, to degrade, which stands for interest in "the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs" that are represented by the "acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth", means "to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better" (p. 21). Grotesque realism celebrates the fertility of the earth and the womb. Therefore, grotesque images suggest "biocosmic circle of cyclic changes, the phases of nature's and man's reproductive life" as well as the cycle of "social and historic phenomena" (p. 25).

In contrast to the finished and ready-made images, grotesque images are "ugly, monstrous, hideous", signifying dismemberment, old age, death, birth, growth, pregnancy and copulation (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 26). In other words, life in grotesque realism is manifested "in its twofold contradictory process" in which the boundaries separating the body from the external world, that is, culture from nature, are not defined clearly (p. 26). That is why the grotesque body is integrated into the rest of the world with its incomplete, outgrowing and transgressive characteristic. To put it in different words, the grotesque body is part of life on the whole. The parts of the grotesque body is "open to the outside world" so that "the world enters the body or emerges from it" on the one hand, and "the body itself goes out to meet the world" on the other hand (p. 26).[4] Bakhtin listed these parts as the open mouth, nose, breasts, potbelly, anus, genital organs and the phallus. It is clearly seen that all these bodily organs are either convexities or orifices which serve as bridges between the human body and the nonhuman world. A more vivid extract about Bakhtin's ideas on the connection of the body to the external world is as follows:

[4] Bakhtin suffered from osteomyelitis, an inflammatory disease of bones that "usually causes pain in the long bones in the legs" during his adult life (National Health Service [NHS], 2020, n.p.). Due to his worsening health condition, his leg had to be amputated in 1938, the year around which Bakhtin began to study Rabelais (Dentith, 1995, p. 5). Suggesting a concrete connection between Bakhtin's health and his theory, Peter Hitchcock, in his article "The Grotesque of the Body Electric" (1998), pointed out that Bakhtin's disease had a crucial role in his theorisation of the concept of the grotesque and his writing on the culture of the body with the chronic and excessive pain he suffered and the manifest absence of his leg transforming his own body into a carnivalized and grotesque body (p. 78). That is why Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque body reflects the image of what was amputated from his own body, which, in a way, manifests a desire for the complete body that will not be achieved. As Hitchcock wrote, "[w]hen Bakhtin writes of the grotesque open character of the body he is not just reading a wild sixteenth-century narrative: he is articulating the coordinates of his own experience of the liminality of flesh" (1998, p. 88).

> [T]he grotesque body is cosmic and universal. It stresses elements common to the entire cosmos: earth, water, fire, air; it is directly related to the sun, to the stars. It contains the signs of the zodiac. It reflects the cosmic hierarchy. This body can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents. It can fill the entire universe. (1984, p. 318)

Denying the impervious sphere that blocks and isolates the body as a distinct and finished occurrence, the grotesque imagery displays two bodies in one in the way that one body gives birth and dies while the other is conceived and born, which means one body generates another body. As Bakhtin wrote,

> the unfinished and open body (dying, bringing forth and being born) is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects. It is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements. It is an incarnation of this world at the absolute lower stratum, as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom, as a field which has been sown and in which new shoots are preparing to sprout. (1984, p. 27)

To make it clear, Bakhtin gave the example of the death of one-cell organisms by writing that "when the single cell divides into two other organisms, it dies in a sense but also reproduces; there is no departure from life into death" (1984, p. 52). This double-faced becoming, that is, the clash between life and death in an isolated body becomes the grotesque body "in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (p. 317).

Bakhtin also pointed out that the grotesque is related to "the aesthetics of the monstrous" (1984, p. 43). In other words, all that is terrifying in ordinary life becomes pleasing and ridiculous monstrosities in festivity. The grotesque denotes "the positive hyperbolism of the material bodily principle" in Bakhtinian terms (p. 45). For this reason, the grotesque releases the world from all that is dark and fearsome, removing all horrors and presenting joy and light with "a festival of spring, of sunrise, of morning" because a true freedom is maintained in an utter fearless environment (p. 41). Laughter overcomes the fear of the godly and human power, of authoritarian orders, of earthly prohibitions and restrictions, and of death. Laughter emerged as a reaction to the feudal and theocratic order of the medieval times, which is thus

acknowledged as "the second nature of man" (p. 75).[5] By means of the carnival spirit and the regenerating feature of laughter, the grotesque emancipates human beings, their consciousness, worldview and imagination from inhuman demands that predominantly govern the world for the sake of unlimited and gay potentialities. Festive laughter is associated with "the change of seasons", "the phases of the sun and moon", "the death and renewal of vegetation", and "the succession of agricultural seasons" (p. 81), all of which, grasping a broader and deeper meaning, stand for hope for a better and happier future, for a fairer social, economic and political order and for a more ecological life as exemplified by Bakhtin with the grotesque and two-edged image of the womb that has both regenerative and intimidating connotations:

> All unearthly objects were transformed into earth, the mother which swallows up in order to give birth to something larger that has been improved. There can be nothing terrifying on earth, just as there can be nothing frightening in a mother's body, with the nipples that are made to suckle, with the genital organ and the warm blood. The earthly element of terror is the womb, the bodily grave, but it flowers with delight and a new life. (1984, pp. 91-92)

It is pertinent at this point to utter that laughter and the grotesque are interconnected in that grotesque imagery defies all that is glorified and finished as laughter destroys the completedness.

The material bodily principles manifest human beings' awareness of their materiality and their bodily nature, which are all about the life of the earth, the awareness which is achieved during the carnival. That is why all the people in the feast are protagonists of the carnival, who are "the absolutely merry hosts of the earth flooded with light, because they know that death is pregnant with new life, because they are familiar with the gay image of becoming and of time" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 250). This carnivalesque awareness demands, instead of subjective consciousness, collective consciousness of earthly and historic eternity and of constant revival and growth as in the cycle in the natural world. Therefore, the carnival "transgresses all limited objectives. Neither can it be separated from bodily life, from the earth, nature, and the cosmos. The sun shines in the festive sky, and there is such a thing as 'feast-day' weather" (p. 276).[6]

[5] Secularisation and dissolution of feudalism in the Middle Ages effaced the borderlines between the official and nonofficial.

[6] Bakhtin was influenced from Goethe's view of nature, an eco-conscious view that renders humankind an integral part of nature which is achieved by carnivalesque elements. In Goethe's

Humankind's intrinsic integration into nature that constitutes wholeness manifests Bakhtin's view of the incompletedness. This carnival atmosphere helps human beings recognize that they are inseparable part of the world of nature from which everything on earth emerges and that they are also a member of all existing entities. In such atmosphere, human beings transgress their bodily boundaries going beyond their skins towards other bodies to revive and develop, which enable human beings to become conscious of the earth, of the sky and of everything in the universe. As Bakhtin himself wrote, "[n]ow this many-headed, many-minded, fickle, blundering monster suddenly sees itself united as one noble assembly, welded into one mass, a single body animated by a single spirit" (1984, p. 255). The human body in the carnival environment enters the constant flow within time, a kind of historic endlessness. It is grasped by the continuous process of becoming and growth and by the constant transformation of death and rebirth.

Bodily elements of the lower stratum such as dung, urine and fart help human beings overcome their fear of the world of nature since they provide links between the earth, sea and sky, by means of which cosmic terror is turned into a gay carnival amusement. It, thus, implies that fear cannot exist without joy and vice versa since fear and joy have some intrinsic relation to each other. Cosmic terror here refers to "the fear of the immeasurable, the infinitely powerful" as well as "the starry sky, the gigantic material masses of the mountains, the sea, the cosmic upheavals, elemental catastrophes" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 335). This cosmic terror hidden in the ancestral human body implies that human beings cannot deal with the forces of the vast nature through their limited scientific, technological, mystical and cultural forces, which actually reveals humankind's impotence before nature since the very ancient times. Nevertheless, to Bakhtin, this cosmic terror, which actually emerges when an integral part is removed from the whole, is overcome "through laughter, through lending a bodily substance to nature and the cosmos" in folk culture (p. 336). The grotesque imagery, thanks to the material bodily principle, encourages human beings to absorb the cosmic elements – water, earth, fire and air – within themselves. This renewed body becomes "the cosmos' own flesh and blood, possessing the same elemental force but better organized" than before (p. 341).[7] In this way, natural forces and death are

poem in prose, which is entitled "Nature" (1782), it is seen that the world of nature has a profound carnival spirit.

[7] The medieval universe was ordained according to Aristotelian principle of the four elements, including earth, water, fire and air, each of which was ranked in the cosmos vertically. The rank of each element was established by its position in connection with the centre of the universe, which was the earth. The nearer the element to the centre, the purer and more complete was this element's quality. The principle was based on the fact that all cosmological events of earthly

not feared any longer. The world of nature also gains bodily characteristics during this transference reciprocally just as humankind is revived by cosmic elements. Furthermore, there is a kind of material similarity of humankind to the natural landscape in that "[e]ach geographical part of the earth and each land corresponds to a definite part of the body" (p. 357). Therefore, the idea of the human body as microcosm of the world and that of the earth as a giant human body expose the affinity between the topography of the earth and the anatomy of the body. Parenthetically, all images of the material bodily lower stratum "throw down, debase, swallow, condemn, deny (topographically), kill, bury, send down to the underworld, abuse, curse; and at the same time they all conceive anew, fertilize, sow, rejuvenate, regenerate, praise, and glorify" (p. 435).

Bakhtin also expounded that the grotesque language points to the world and to all universal phenomena in that "the passing from night to morning, from winter to spring, from the old to the new, from death to birth" all reflect incomplete transformations (1984, p. 165). These incomplete transformations and the grotesque elements of travesty, degradation and materialisation all make the world a more carnivalesque space, which render humans inhabiting in it freer, franker, gayer, more ecological, less fearful and less destructive. Grotesque images in the carnivalesque atmosphere also reflect changes in history, society and time and suggest that all established norms and authorities are relative and alterable. In this sense, environmental catastrophes lead to a kind of belated human awareness as well, and, thus, to the questioning of the pre-established social, cultural, political and religious norms. Human beings are already immortal in the carnival thanks to the material bodily lower stratum, which is why there is no need for destructive attitudes for the sake of growth and of a more comfortable future as the material bodily principle provides a gay future. As Bakhtin clearly indicated, the true grotesque depends on the "notion of time, of change and crisis, that is, of all that happens to the sun, to the earth, to man, to human society" (p. 48).

---

things, creative or destructive, are constituted by the transformation of one element into the element closest to it, which thus means that "fire is transformed into air, air into water, water into earth" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 363). However, this medieval hierarchical cosmos was destructed during the Renaissance for a horizontal order because vertical hierarchical cosmos prevented human beings from the process of becoming (p. 363). In this relative cosmos, humankind grows and regenerates in itself, becoming animal, plant, rock and the other way round. That is why the vertical line of the cosmos is an anthropocentric order while the horizontal line is an ecocentric order. This idea suggests that the world is humankind's home and, thus, there is no reason for human beings to fear nature, and that the entire universe with all its elements and forces penetrates in the human body with its higher and lower strata.

Grotesque Responses to Environmental Problems in *Sexing the Cherry*

Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* relates the events during the periods between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries in which religious, monarchical, political, social and environmental conflicts of England are narrated through the perspectives of Jordan, Dog Woman, Nicholas Jordan, and the unnamed environmentalist woman. Focusing on the relativity of history to every person in reality, or to any character in the novel, Winterson rewrites history by offering alternative narratives that leap from one reality to another, one view to another, one voice to another, and one time period to another. The novel consists of three parts: the past that goes back to the seventeenth century, the present which is a short twentieth-century interval portraying the doubles of the seventeenth-century characters, and the tale which draws on the fairy tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" who have now become eleven since one of them has escaped and appears at some points in the novel. All these three parts are interconnected because each event is defined by what it connects to and where it heads owing to their inherent dialogical dynamism. Each part crosses with the others at changing points of time, place, gender and atmosphere. Time flows backwards and forwards, and the multitude of genres including history, fairy tale, philosophical meditation, numbered aphorisms, didactic sermons, numbered paintings and fruit images intervene in the novel breaking the main narrative and temporospatial unity.

The first part of the novel, which is the story of the past, is the main frame of the novel and focuses on Dog Woman, her adopted son Jordan and the traveller and naturalist John Tradescant. They all live in London in the seventeenth century, experiencing the political and social upheavals between the faithful and ardent monarchists and pleasure and luxury-denying Puritans, and witnessing the trial and execution of King Charles I, the civil war, the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. The story is alternately narrated from two internal points of view, two involving narrators who are given at the beginning of each section with the fruit image of a banana for Dog Woman and a pineapple for Jordan. Dog Woman tells accounts of historical events and everyday life of the period in comic and self-ridiculing tones while Jordan tells his fantastic voyages to unmapped lands in dreamy and more poetic tones. While Dog Woman describes the reality and possesses more masculine qualities, Jordan describes the fantastic and utopian and has more feminine qualities, which manifests a kind of reversal of sexual and gender identities. While Jordan lives a fantastic life during his journeys by transgressing time and space in quest for identity and meaning of life, Dog Woman remains in a real society struggling to overthrow authority and hierarchy in human and nonhuman communities. Jordan questions the

fixity and linearity of time and space through his fantastical wanderings while Dog Woman questions stability of the body. That is why Jordan is described by time and space whereas Dog Woman is described by her grotesque body.

The second part is the present which is a short contemporary interval portraying the doubles of the seventeenth-century characters. It begins with the portrayal of an unknown artist, standing for the royal gardener John Rose, presenting the pineapple to King Charles II, the very same fruit that Jordan had presented to the new king after his return from Barbados.[8] This part is centred on the young sailor Nicholas Jordan (Jordan's double), who joins the Navy, and the unnamed environmentalist woman (Dog Woman's double), who carries out a research about the contamination of a river in the twentieth century. The narratives of these two twentieth-century versions of Jordan and Dog Woman are given at the beginning of each section with the fruit image of a banana for the unnamed environmentalist woman and a pineapple for Nicholas Jordan, but these fruits are sliced into two halves this time. Through the history books under Nicholas Jordan's bed, the present, in which the future of the past is handled, moves back to the past without informing the reader but with the re-appearance of the fruit images of banana and pineapple as a whole.

The third and last part is the tale section in which the story of the twelfth dancing princess Fortunata's search for Artemis is told. Fortunata is a dance teacher and teaches her students to become points of light, which is a theme given in one of the epigraphs of the novel about the nature of light, time and space.[9] Fortunata is the woman whom Jordan has been searching for in all his travels and imagining to be reunited with in the end. At the end of this part, multiple identities of Fortunata and Artemis, who are one and many dancers, one and twelve, and one and the other at the same time, are imbricated on each other. Winterson rewrites the fairy tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" to signify her rejection of patriarchal expectations and exploitation. Unlike the traditional tale, Winterson's tale represents the princesses emancipating themselves from their husbands' authority. They gather under the roof of a female community rather than yield to the tradition of living happily ever after. The silver city where the twelve dancing princesses inhabit is a carnivalesque space

[8] Winterson explained in an interview that she was inspired for the novel by a painting, by some unknown Dutch artist, who pictures the presentation of the first pineapple in England to King Charles II (Selway, 1992, p. 45).

[9] "Matter, that thing the most solid and the well-known, which you are holding in your hands and which makes up your body, is now known to be mostly empty space. Empty space and points of light. What does this say about the reality of the world?" (Winterson, 1990, p. v).

since it is depicted as an ideal place in which the inhabitants' only occupation is to dance and since it liberates women from patriarchal bounds. All these temporospatial dimensions are connected to each other through different variations of the main characters, who are Jordan/Nicholas Jordan, Dog Woman/the unnamed environmentalist woman, and Fortunata/Artemis. Characters are dialogic in the novel as they are constantly engaged in a relationship with each other and the outer world intertemporally and interspatially.

The novel has dual narrators, including a 'masculine' female narrator, Dog Woman, characterised by her grotesque features and a 'feminine' male narrator, Jordan, whom Winterson uses to deconstruct the concepts of gender identity and to suggest fluidity of borders between female/male and nature/culture. These two narrators, together with their twentieth-century correspondences Nicholas Jordan and the unnamed environmentalist woman, reveal how identity transgresses temporal and spatial boundaries through the time-shift between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Jordan and Dog Woman are the characters of the seventeenth century, and each has a twentieth-century alter ego that shows similar qualities and attitudes. While Dog Woman of the seventeenth century is portrayed as an angry attacker on the Puritans who execute King Charles I, the unnamed woman in the twentieth century is presented as an environmental activist who fights against the contamination of a river with mercury by big business corporations and the government. Both Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman can be read as positive and assertive characters, signifying female empowerment and agency.

The twentieth-century unnamed environmentalist woman shares Dog Woman's fantasies, behaviour and sense of self. Just as Dog Woman fights the Puritan hypocrites for social and political reasons, with sometimes grotesque results such as the mutilation of two of them in a brothel, the twentieth-century woman also fights modern Puritans, politicians and businessmen for environmental reasons. The latter woman envisions destroying the World Bank, reconstructing the Pentagon and kidnapping world leaders, which she recalls having similar memories and feelings about the year 1649. While Dog Woman threatens the hypocrisy of the Puritan society with her unearthly form of existence, the unnamed environmentalist woman threatens the anthropocentric society with her unattainable otherness. As Paulina Palmer emphasized, however, "[b]oth women are ridiculed as 'monsters' – Dog Woman on account of her exceptional size and strength, which are regarded as unfeminine, and the present-day figure on account of her radical views and commitment to a politics of direct action" (1993, p. 103). In other words, both Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman share their aggression against the official and authoritarian

order of society in that the former challenges phallocentric oppression for a more egalitarian community while the latter is hostile to phallocentric authority, dreaming about compelling men to change their views about the natural world and teaching those men the principles of feminism and ecology so that human/nonhuman beings and female/male sexes could live in harmonious collaboration. That is why it is pertinent to say that Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman have "the strength to change self and world" (Rosemergy, 2000, p. 258).

Besides, Dog Woman's body extends in the unnamed environmentalist woman's body, though not grotesquely. She imagines herself to be Dog Woman. As she uttered, "[w]hen the weight had gone I found out something strange: that the weight persisted in my mind. I had an alter ego who was huge and powerful, a woman whose only morality was her own and whose loyalties were fierce and strong" (Winterson, 1990, p. 142). Dog Woman's filthy and grotesque body becomes beautiful and politically powerful in her twentieth-century manifestation. Through Dog Woman and her twentieth-century correspondence, Winterson introduces the grotesque body into the political realm to show "how the relation between the symbolic and cultural constructs of femininity and Womanness, and the experience of *women* […] might be brought together towards a dynamic model of a new social subjectivity" (Russo, 1995, p. 54; emphasis in original). The author, thus, introduces the unnamed environmentalist woman into the same realm to reveal how the relation between the symbolic and the cultural constructs of nature and ecology/greenness, and experience in/with nature might be brought together towards a dynamic model of a new social and ecological subjectivity.

Jordan is Dog Woman's adopted son, and he is portrayed as an apprentice who sails with John Tradescant, the historical botanist and plant collector, for early modern geographical exploration and scientific discovery. Jordan brings exotic fruits from his voyages to England. Dog Woman finds Jordan floating on River Thames, "[tying him] between her breasts whose nipples stood out like walnuts" (1990, p. 3). Jordan's name, thus, comes from the river since he was found in a river: "I wanted to give him a river name, a name not bound to anything, just as the waters aren't bound to anything. When a woman gives birth her waters break and she pours out the child and the child runs free" (p. 4). While Jordan in the seventeenth century searches for Fortunata, Nicholas Jordan in the twentieth century, a modern sailor who has the same passion for boats and sailing as Jordan has, also pursues a woman who has aroused his interest due to her environmentally activist protests against the pollution of a river with high mercury. Both Jordan and Nicholas Jordan share a striking resemblance in that they are interested in becoming a hero, which they can never attain. Jordan cannot

fulfil the heroic ideals of masculinity as he is overwhelmed by his grotesque mother who acts more resolutely. By the same token, Nicholas Jordan cannot perform heroic acts despite his upbringing with the *Boys Book of Heroes* as he is overshadowed by the unnamed environmentalist woman who possesses more heroic qualities in her defence of the mercury-contaminated river against the government and corporates. Additionally, Jordan admires his mother while Nicholas Jordan admires the unnamed environmentalist woman.

In the novel, there happens trans-corporeality between human bodies by travesty and temporal correspondence. All these four carnivalesque and dialogic narrators become a trans-corporeal site of non-officialdom, non-hierarchy and freedom as they are not stable, fixed and hierarchical bodies, but rather free, fluid, changing, developing, non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian bodies interacting and intra-acting with the physical and social environments. Dog Woman and Jordan represent the possibility of unfixed, fluid and free selves and gender identities with their twentieth-century reincarnations. The connections of Nicholas Jordan and the unnamed environmentalist woman of the twentieth century with their seventeenth-century counterparts deconstruct linear history of progress and displaces identities into diverse fragmented selves. Winterson opposes the notions of monologic voice and of singular, self-determining, fixed and finished selves by insisting on dialogism, multiplicity, fluid and changing bodies and minds. By depicting twentieth-century incarnations of Dog Woman and Jordan, Winterson refuses to limit their existence and location in single time and space.

Set in the periods between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, *Sexing the Cherry* questions the nature of history and the history of nature with a focus on the relation of fact to fiction. Although the novel has mostly been studied through theories of the postmodern, queer, psychoanalysis and historiography, this article examines the novel through ecocritical theory within the framework of Bakhtinian grotesque realism. The novel begins in the middle of the political and social turmoils of England in the seventeenth century with the execution of King Charles I and extends to the political and environmental turmoils of England in the twentieth century. Winterson carnivalizes grand narratives in the novel through historiographic metafiction, which includes postmodern techniques of parody, intertextuality, pastiche, fragmentation, frame breaks, self-reflexivity and rewriting of history, and degrades hierarchical ideology by negating closure, authority, boundary and giving value to instability, fluidity, transgression and revival so as to oppose and undermine anthropocentric and androcentric discourses.

McLeish finds the novel as culturally wide-ranging and considers it to be representative of the carnivalesque (1989, p. G7). The intertextuality of history, fairy tale, myth[10] and fantasy, multiple discourses of narrators of both sexes in two separate time periods, and thematic and formal structures of both pairing and counterparting are carnivalesque elements that convey multiple truths rather than a single absolute one. Winterson creates a carnivalesque space that disturbs hierarchical and patriarchal structures in order for freedom, egalitarianism, mutual relationship and communality. Throughout the novel two different times occupy the same space, one of which is the historical time in which proper names and discoveries of men are given while the other is the fabulous time in which nameless female characters and their carnivalesque attitudes and grotesque actions as well as male characters' carnivalized worlds are given. That is why the novel is a hybrid of historical events and fantastic elements that challenge the anthropocentric, androcentric and hierarchical version of history. Winterson's employment of metafiction in the novel accomplishes two goals of environmentalist concern, the first of which is to raise the awareness of the reader about the existence of (an)other world(s) outside the given time-space dimension while the second of which is to bring out the connections and relationships between two worlds. Winterson's idea of two-world systems, which refers to a well-running ecosystem, reflects Bakhtin's carnivalesque as these two worlds of the real and the fictional do not contend but cooperate, providing the text with multiple and intertwined stories that recount many worlds, lives and life forms interacting and evolving.

Winterson deals with the concepts of time, matter, history and reality through her interest in Einstein's relativity theory. Winterson negates the traditional concept of time by exploring it as imaginatively-constructed carnivalesque dimension in which past, present and future can exist at the same time, which can be exemplified by the distinction between philosophical and experiential aspects of time. For instance, Jordan experiences absolute time and space, which is Newtonian linear time, yet thinks about simultaneousness of time and space, which is Einsteinian relative time, because time cannot be stopped. The novel challenges the traditional concept of linear time and distinctions between the past, present and future to emphasise different simultaneous presents so that Dog Woman and Jordan can exist both in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries at the same time. In the novel, human history

[10] Winterson refers to the myths of Lotis and Priapus, Diana and Actaeon, and Sappho, which are all about metamorphoses concerned with the grotesque feature of death and birth at the same time: "Those who seem dead, who are already returning to the earth, can be restored to life, quickened again by one who is warm" (Winterson, 1990, p. 39).

repeats itself but differently, which thus connects the past and present to do something better about the future. The novel's discussion of Newtonian physics and seemingly absolute truths allows for carnivalesque deconstruction that suggests Einsteinian relativity and alternative temporospatial dimensions. As Lee pointed out, "[i]f there is a field in which time and space exist together, as Winterson suggests, then readers are as much part of that as the fiction we are reading" (1994, p. 228). That is, Winterson wants her readers to participate in the novel actively to track the narrative shifts and interweaving polyphonies so that readers can look for logical and thematic connections underneath the surface, which provides ecocentric tendency for the reader to recognise ecosystemic relations, which are not apparent all the time, in the real world of human and nonhuman beings:

> So what the universe doesn't contain is as significant to us as what it does. There will be a moment (though of course it won't be a moment) when we will know (though knowing will no longer be separate from being) that we are a part of all we have met and that all we have met was already a part of us. (1990, p. 102).

Winterson employs gender-bending motif in her characters and, thus, has trans-corporeal attitude in her representations of the human and nonhuman. She produces the monstrous at the border between the male and female and between the human and nonhuman. She parodies stereotypes and traditional heroines to challenge boundaries. For instance, Dog Woman, the most outstanding grotesque character in the novel, is both heroine and ugly and has female anatomy and masculine power at the same time. Therefore, Winterson's grotesque view of the female suggests a positive and powerful image of womanhood and offers a kind of natural connection between the female body and the earth in terms of porosity. With her flat nose and heavy eyebrows, a few black and broken teeth, caves in her face that are home to fleas, and "fine blue eyes that see in the dark", Dog Woman is protective and destructive as well as nurturing and overpowering at the same time (Winterson, 1990, p. 19). Dog Woman is an "incarnation of this world at the absolute lower stratum, as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom, as a field which has been sown and in which new shoots are preparing to sprout" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 27). Having a sort of symbiotic life with fleas on her face and with dogs she feeds, Dog Woman is closer to nonhuman than human beings and to nature than culture. Dog Woman herself associates nature with nurturing when she expresses her grotesque bond with Jordan and nature: "I nourished him as a hill of dung nourishes

a fly, and when he had eaten his fill he left me" (Winterson, 1990, p. 4). Furthermore, Susana Onega points out Dog Woman's connection with nature, with the earth in particular, by explaining that "her love for Jordan and her mountainous shape clearly identify her with the earth, with its connotations of maternity, cyclical renewal and cosmic regeneration" (2006, p. 81).

Dog Woman is integrated into the world with her outgrowing and transgressive qualities. She recognises that "London is a foul place, full of pestilence and rot", referring to the corruption, pollution and waste in the city (Winterson, 1990, p. 6). When Dog Woman warns men against their carelessness in terms of their phallocentric tendency by saying that "[i]t seems a great mistake on the part of nature, since men are so careless with their members and will put them anywhere without thinking", Winterson actually seeks to warn them against their thoughtless androcentric intervention in nature (p. 120). Male characters in the novel are mostly portrayed as an intervention in the process of nature. What lies beneath men's desire of domination, taming and exploitation of nature is their fear of the unexpectedness or cosmic terror in Bakhtin's words. Winterson attempts to eliminate such cosmic terror in all human beings through the grotesque images.

Dog Woman is "'thick' with the materiality of the bodily present" (Pearce, 1994, p. 178). The reader is constantly reminded of her size, form, strength and filth. Her body cannot be separated from her identity because "it is hard to know where Dog-Woman's body ends and her personality begins, since she expresses herself by virtue of her bodily excesses" (Russell, 2000, p. 188). Dog Woman, who is called so as she keeps many dogs, does not want to be defined by a name, but she rather wants herself to be explored through her body which provides a transgressive space. The term Dog Woman, in this sense, implies a grotesque hybrid being who challenges conventional characteristics of womanhood. Winterson intermingles human and nonhuman body parts in intricate and fantastical designs in Dog Woman. She is inseparable from the rest of the world as she is "blended with the world, with animals, with objects" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 27). She is depicted not to have been born but to have been released by a woman from a bottle like a genie. Her not having been born in natural ways can be associated with the subversive power of the cyborgs who are interested not in where they come from but in how they can survive (Haraway, 1991). That is why Dog Woman's grotesque body "is part of her ability to survive" (Russell, 2000, p. 188). In this way, Winterson rewrites the cultural myths of origins, motherhood and beautification by scatologically boasting the grotesque, ugly and the abject.

Living up to her own morality, Dog Woman is ambivalent in that she "debases, brings down to earth, lends a bodily substance to things, and destroys" but she also protects and nurtures (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 240). However, Dog Woman's degradations and destructions bring joy instead of fearful debasement to the society since she seeks to cleanse the city of hypocrisy. By invoking the grotesque in her novel, Winterson attempts to exorcise the world of its evilness imaginatively (Kayser, 1957, p. 185). To cite an example, Winterson carnivalizes the Great Fire of London in 1666 by presenting in the novel that it is Dog Woman who burns the city to cleanse it of the Puritans, plague and corruption. Dog Woman, in this way, seeks to destroy the patriarchal society and hierarchical order in favour of more egalitarian and heterarchical community. By the same token, the unnamed environmentalist woman, along with Nicholas Jordan, burns the mercury factory to prevent it from polluting the river, which thus conveys that both men and women should work together to preserve nature and better the world because "the world [should] always be here, strong and certain, at the end of a day, at the end of a journey" with "[b]rown fields and a yellow moon" as depicted in the painting *The Sower* by Van Gogh (Winterson, 1990, p. 166). Nicholas Jordan emphasises that all roads lead to the nonhuman environment, to the wilderness, after all because all journeys are internal, down in humankind's "time tunnels and deep into the realms of inner space" that houses human's ecological self and provides ecological connection to the physical world (p. 138).

To challenge Cartesian dualism that has alienated the human mind from the effects of the entities of the external world, which has given rise to anthropocentric tendency towards reducing the natural world and all its nonhuman inhabitants to knowable objects, Winterson tries to revive these nonhuman effects on human body and mind by degrading authoritarian social norms and hierarchical laws of the universe while elevating nonhuman subjectivity and agency. Both Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman refuse to be indifferent to the devastation of natural resources and environment and to the exploitation and oppression of the poor and nonhuman. Dog Woman frequently mentions the pollution of River Thames, depicting the rubbish, dark mass and mud in the river: "The smells were the same, the river was filthy, the dredgers still bobbed about up to their necks in rubbish" (Winterson, 1990, p. 69). She also warns future generations about environmental problems because she believes that human beings are transforming nature against their welfare: "Now the future is wild and waits for us as a beast in a lair" (p. 93). Dog Woman's twentieth-century reincarnation strengthens her relationship with nature through her more explicit protests for the environment. She is presented as the renewed body of Dog Woman, possessing the same force but better organised. For

instance, she envisions herself visiting the Pentagon and the World Bank, putting its members into large sacks, going "on foot to the butter mountains and wine lakes and grain silos and deserts and cracked earth and starving children and arms dealers in guarded palaces", forcing "all the fat ones to go on a diet" and compelling "all the men line up for compulsory training in feminism and ecology" to better the world and overthrow power and hierarchy for co-operation, symbiosis and equality, which are all fantasies about getting rid of hierarchy, patriarchy and anthropocentrism (p. 141). The unnamed environmentalist woman also ridicules the biblical (official) creation of the world and suggests that they "have a party at the wine lake" on the seventh day after they change the world, and "make pancakes with the butter mountain and the peoples of the earth keep coming in waves and being fed and being clean and being well. And when the rivers sparkle, it's not with mercury…" (Winterson, 1990, pp. 141-142). Protesting the post-industrial and capitalist state she lives in, the unnamed environmentalist woman tries to find the meaning of life in her pursuit of making the world ecologically better. Considered grotesque, not physically but spiritually, by the government and corporates, she seeks to make the ignored and the overlooked noticeable since she is also ignored and overlooked due to her activist campaigns:

> Stupid women's camping by some tiny river in the middle of nowhere and moaning on about the mercury levels. What does she want? Does she think industry can just pack up and go home? They've got to put it somewhere. It's not as though they're chucking it in the Thames. (p. 159).

Dwelling in a hut by the river just like Dog Woman who has also lived in a hut she built herself, the unnamed environmentalist woman lives closer to nature as well. She liberates herself from the conventionally accepted space for housing, offering an alternative way of living. The image of river is also significant in that it signifies alternative temporospatial coordinates, or illustrates a new spatio-temporal consciousness, and describes the nature of time. That "[t]he river runs from one country to another without stopping" implies that time is a flow and there are no borders in the world because "even the most solid of things and the most real, the best-loved and the well-known, are only hand-shadows on the wall" (Winterson, 1990, p. 169). In addition, Dog Woman finds Jordan floating on River Thames, Jordan leaves her mother on the bank of black Thames, and the unnamed environmentalist woman sits by the same river contemplating her body, self and identity.

Jordan is also a mentally and spiritually grotesque character with his sea voyages of the real and the magical real. According to Dog Woman, "[h]is head [is] stuffed with stories of other continents where men have their faces in their chests and some hop on one foot defying the weight of nature" (Winterson, 1990, p. 33). He lives a fantastic life during his journeys by transgressing time and space in quest for identity and meaning. Jordan's voyages disturb traditional views of colonisation, categorisation and wealth since he travels not to colonise or exploit but to find his true self and identity, not to categorise or limit but to blur the boundaries and graft diverse and complex lives onto each other since "every mapped-out journey contains another journey hidden in its lines" (p. 19). Winterson criticises colonisation of untouched lands through Jordan's journeys to uncharted lands because journeys are done when human beings "[swarm] over the earth with [their] tiny insect bodies and [put] up flags and [build] houses" (p. 90). During his journey, Jordan sails to the unmapped routes to reach his self, but every time he tries to narrow down his intent he expands it, and straits and canals still lead him to the open sea, and then he realizes how the matter of mind and self is vast. He is astonished by "the shining water and the size of the world" (p. 117). Voyages of discovery of both Jordan and Nicholas Jordan become their internal journey of discovery since real geographical places are described in accordance with psychic travels, which means that time, space and consciousness are interporous and flexible: "Every journey conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle" (p. 2). In this sense, these voyages offer multiplicity of form and voices and overturn Western patriarchal norms and anthropocentric subjectivity: "The inward life tells us that we are multiple not single, and that our one existence is really countless existences holding hands like those cut-out paper dolls, but unlike the dolls never coming to an end" (p. 102).

Winterson believes that all human and nonhuman bodies are grotesque because all "physical bodies have a natural decay span" (1990, p. 102). She degrades the traditional body of the official culture that is "monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical, and sleek" by portraying the grotesque body of the non-official culture that is "open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing" (Russo, 1995, p. 8). The four main characters in the novel want to escape the human limits of the body and space enforced by the official culture. Their desires, which nearly find expression in their own carnivalesque space, thus, imply unattained possible futures and spaces. The author presents bodies and spaces without a beginning or an end as they transgress their own bodies, time and space. Struggles of Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman as well as voyages of Jordan and Nicholas Jordan show that all these four characters seek to reach the ecological

self through different ways, either by their grotesque behaviour, cross-dressing, journeys to uncharted lands, protests and activism or by questioning time, space, future and gender issues. They are representatives of the ecological challenge that supports acknowledgement and admiration for differences in the world in which human beings live and that teaches humans to live with (an)other life form(s). They all recognize that they are inseparable parts of other nonhuman bodies in the physical environment – they are parts of a mountain, the sea, a plant and an insect sustaining their life.

Another grotesque imagery in the novel is the fruit imagery. Winterson overturns the binaries of nature/culture and female/male by means of the fruit metaphor, which she uses to affiliate each character with some fruit against traditional expectations. In doing so, the author carnivalizes the established Freudian symbolism by turning inside out the fruit images of pineapple and banana to underline the instability of matter and transience. She aligns Jordan and Nicholas Jordan with the pineapple, a fruit conventionally attributed to the female, while Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman with banana, a fruit traditionally attributed to the male. The reversal of the preluding fruits means overthrowing the authoritarian assumptions about femininity/masculinity and nature/culture. Besides, each character in the seventeenth century is identified with the entire fruit whereas the twentieth-century characters are identified with the fruit sliced or split in two (Doan, 1994, p. 150). The sliced fruit denotes a transition between Jordan/Nicholas Jordan and Dog Woman/the unnamed environmentalist woman. If the fruit is split, then self-identity and gender identity are also split and not fixed. In reference to Bakhtin's concepts of the observer and the outsideness, it can be here pointed out that Winterson argues that no subject or agent can be viewed entirely because each observer, which means each participant in the world ecosystem, sees that subject or agent in different circumstances and from different perspectives.

The metaphor of plant grafting is also a grotesque imagery. The title of the novel draws on the sexing of a cherry tree onto which Jordan practices the act of grafting after bringing exotic seeds and pods with him from the Bermudas. Jordan performs "the grafting of Polstead black cherry on to a Morello cherry stock, the resulting hybrid being a female" (Makinen, 2005, p. 82). Winterson has preferred the cherry fruit because it represents the cycle of life as well as death and rebirth (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1996, p. 187). According to Jordan, grafting is "the means whereby a plant […] is fused into a hardier member of its strain, and so the two take advantage of each other and produce a third kind, without seed or parent" (Winterson, 1990, p. 84). This third kind is a hybrid being that represents diversity, complexity

and possible identities, which becomes a grotesque challenge to anthropocentric categorisation of species and identities hierarchically and structurally. Jordan is very attracted to the idea of plant grafting since he wants to "become someone else in time, grafted on to something better and stronger" (p. 87). As Jordan believes that his body limits him, he longs to go beyond his body, that is, to abandon his male body in order to "be free of the burdens of [his] gender" (p. 28), and give himself the slip (p. 2). While Winterson uses the image of grafting to challenge binaries of fixed categories, to upset the hegemonic order of authority and patriarchy, and to suggest new possibilities and fluid alternatives in terms of plants, gender identities and dialogic relations on the one hand, she also uses it to ridicule the anthropocentric and androcentric attitude of sexing the fruits in order to stress subversively humans' non-ecological intervention in the natural world and exemplify humankind's unnatural practice on the other hand. Sexing the fruit is a source of grotesque laughter because both black cherry (Prunus serotina) and Morello cherry (Prunus cerasus austera)—and most cherry fruits—are hermaphrodites, which means they have both male and female organs and are pollinated by insects and bees respectively (Plants for a Future, n.d., n.p.). Considering the grafted female-sexed cherry as grotesque and monstrous, Dog Woman consequently opposes the idea of plant grafting and believes that "the world [should] mate of its own accord […] or not at all" (Winterson, 1990, p. 87).

The concept of naming is another grotesque element in the novel. Like Dog Woman, the unnamed environmentalist woman also refuses to be named and she wants to be described not by a single quality but by multiple qualities: "If I have a spirit, a soul, any name will do, then it won't be single, it will be multiple. Its dimension will not be one of confinement but one of space. It may inhabit numerous changing decaying bodies in the future and in the past" (Winterson, 1990, p. 144). Dog Woman and the environmentalist woman voluntarily refuse to be named because naming categorises and limits them in authoritarian and patriarchal norms. Refusals of Dog Woman and the unnamed environmentalist woman to be defined mean anomaly for the official society as they are considered to threaten the so-called integrity of anthropocentric and androcentric culture. However, they are microcosms mirroring a broader system – ecosystem. Their grotesque sides show their resistance to the hierarchical and phallocentric views and reveal their consciousness of the natural elements of fire, earth, water and air within them (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 318).

Winterson points out her environmental intention in writing the novel towards the end when she stated that "[t]he earth is being murdered and hardly anyone wants to believe it" (1990, p. 145). She stresses that Earth is the only world and "the rest is rich imaginings. Either way it doesn't matter" because humans "have to protect

both possibilities. They seem to be interdependent" (p. 148). Winterson slips through the past to find out where characters in particular and humans in general have made a mistake and, thus, to recover what has been lost, which are love and respect for human and nonhuman beings. Liberating her characters from class, age, gender status and hierarchy, Winterson imagines a world of optimism and equality and concentrates on the union and harmony of the human with the nonhuman world that may be achieved by grotesque realism. Bakhtin's view of the grotesque is, in some ways, nostalgic for a socially and ecologically circulative context which has been lost, but which is possibly more significantly expressive of a future social and ecological horizon that may deliver new potentialities or chances of diverse speeches and social awareness for the natural environment and nonhuman beings.

Winterson reflects her ecological stance in her narration style as well. The novel's chronology reflects the narrators' cycling motion. The narrators direct their ways through diverse spatiotemporal pathways, telling the same story, or narrating the same event, from different perspectives to reject anthropocentric and phallocentric grand narratives and to provide for other characters in the novel and readers in the reality with an ethical compass for ecology. The end of the novel turns out to be its beginning in that Jordan walks in the fog at the beginning of the novel while he touches a face in the fog after the Great Fire at the end of the novel:

> I began to walk with my hands stretched out in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of my own face opposite me. (Winterson, 1990, pp. 1-2)
> For a second the fog cleared, and he saw that the stranger was himself. (Winterson, 1990, p. 168)

Throughout her novel, Winterson criticises the dominant social order, hierarchy, organised religion and pre-established morality through her grotesque representations, including the distortion of natural size and shape, the suspension of category of entities and the deconstruction of the historical order and normative identities. As Winterson wrote in the introduction to her book, the novel "is a challenge to the solid world of objects" (1990, p. x). That is why the size, monstrosity, travesty, or natures of the characters in the novel cannot be judged in traditional ways. Retelling some events about English history in a detailed way through the voices and perspectives of larger-than-life characters, the novel diminishes authoritarian and hierarchical norms. In this way, Winterson seeks to create a carnivalesque space with multiplicity of self and voice and a dialogic world with infinite possible ways of

existence, fluidity and interdependence of beings. The author focuses on the desire for a more ecological change, the endeavour to create a new life out of its ashes and the insistence to celebrate all kind of existences without regard to norms and hierarchies.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to expand Bakhtin's grotesque realism from the festivity of folk culture and the principles of material bodily lower stratum towards ecocentrism. *Sexing the Cherry* provides an ecocritical reading in a Bakhtinian sense for the article's argument through its non-apocalyptic yet environmentally problematic, grotesque and satiric content. The novel carnivalizes dominant discourses of religious dogmatism, Puritanism, monarchism, anthropocentrism and androcentrism, which all have greater effects on the negative transformation of nature. The ecocentric view in the novel challenges the fixed categories of mind/body, male/female, material/immaterial, culture/nature, and human/nonhuman. Winterson's ecological imagination that encourages the fluidity of borders between these dualities contributes to the merging of Bakhtin's grotesque realism with ecocriticism. In this way, the grotesque ecological imagination brings forth the ignored, alienated and silenced human and nonhuman beings, explains their presence and subjectivity, and reveals their voice and agency.

References

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

---- (1984). *Rabelais and His World*. Helene Iswolsky (Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (Original work published in 1965)

Chevalier, Jean and Gheerbrant, Alain (1996). *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*. J. Buchanan-Brown (Trans.). London: Penguin Books.

Dentith, Simon (1995). *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Doan, Laura L. (1994). "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern". *The Lesbian Postmodern*. Ed. Laura L. Doan. New York: Columbia University Press. 137-155.

Haraway, Donna J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs and Woman: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.

Hitchcock, Peter (1998). "The Grotesque of the Body Electric". *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences: No Last Words*. Eds. Michael Gardiner and Michael M. Bell. London: Sage Publications. 78-94.

Holquist, Michael (1984). "Prologue". *Rabelais and His World* by Mikhail M. Bakhtin. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. xiii-xxiii.

---- (1990). "Introduction: The Architectonics of Answerability". *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Vadim Liapunov (Trans.). Eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press. ix-xlix.

Kayser, Wolfgang J. (1957). *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*. Ulrich Weisstein (Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Lee, Alison (1994). "Bending the Arrow of Time: The Continuing Postmodern Present". *Historicité et Metafiction dans le Roman Contemporain des Îles Britanniques*. Ed. Max Duperray. Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence. 217-229.

Makinen, Merja (2005). *The Novels of Jeanette Winterson*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

McLeish, Kenneth (1989). "Larger than Life: Review of *Sexing the Cherry*". *Sunday Times.* G7.

National Health Service. (2020, October 26). *Osteomyelitis*. Retrieved May 16, 2022, from https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteomyelitis/

Onega, Susana (2006). *Jeanette Winterson*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Palmer, Paulina (1993). *Contemporary Lesbian Writing: Dreams, Desire, Difference*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Pearce, Lynne (1994). "Dialogism and Gender: Gendering the Chronotope: Readings of Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *Reading Dialogics*. London: Edward Arnold. 173-196.

Plants for a Future. (n.d.). *Prunus cerasus austera*. Retrieved December 20, 2019, from https://pfaf.org/USER/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Prunus+cerasus+austera

---- (n.d.). *Prunus serotina*. Retrieved December 20, 2019, from https://pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Prunus+serotina

Rosemergy, Jan (2000). "Navigating the Interior Journey: The Fiction of Jeanette Winterson". *British Women Writing Fiction*. Ed. Abby H.P. Werlock. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press. 248-269.

Russell, Lorena (2000). "Dog-Woman and She-Devils: The Queering Field of Monstrous Women". *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, *5*(2), 177-193. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010128813369

Russo, Mary (1995). *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*. Oxford: Routledge.

Selway, Jennifer (1992). "Tasting the Sweet Fruits of Success". *Observer*. 45.

Winterson, Jeanette (1990). *Sexing the Cherry*. London: Vintage. (Original work published in 1989)

Beyan ve Açıklamalar (Disclosure Statements)

Araştırmacıların katkı oranı beyanı / Contribution rate statement of researchers:

1. Yazar/First author %50

2. Yazar/Second author %50

Yazarlar tarafından herhangi bir çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir. (No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors).