

THE APPEARANCE OF GROTESQUE FORMS IN *CRYSTAL MANOR TALES*

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Abstract: The term “grotesque”, derived from the Italian word “grotto” for underground caves, refers to the ornamental art in which human, animal, and plant motifs are intertwined on the walls of Nero’s Golden House (Domus Aurea), discovered during the Roman excavations in 1480. However, over time, it has abandoned its decorative meaning and become a form of expression in art and literature, which is sometimes associated with the humorous and sometimes with the tragic. Adjectives such as “absurd”, “outrageous”, “strange”, and “incompatible” characterize the grotesque, which is intended to surprise, frighten, and disgust an audience as well as make them laugh. More importantly, the grotesque exists across the folk mythology and pre-classical works of many cultures as a significant means of expression that takes and presents the ugly and formless from within an exciting life. The present study examines *Crystal Manor Tales* through the lens of the grotesque theory, which Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin conceptualized in his work *Rabelais and His World* (2005 [1965])¹ by associating it with medieval and Renaissance carnivals. Therefore, it has been determined that the tales aim to expose society’s flaws through the grotesque images they convey, as well as to establish a healthier order by excluding undesirable behaviors.

Keywords: Bakhtin, *Crystal Manor Tales*, folklore, grotesque, metamorphosis, Turkish folklore

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to analyze *Crystal Manor Tales* (original heading *Billur Köşk Masalları*), the first Turkish collection of fairy tales, in the context of the grotesque theory. In the first part of the article, information about *Crystal Manor Tales* is given and the important place of this work, which consists of fourteen tales, in the history of Turkish fairy tales is mentioned. Furthermore, a general

literature review on the subject was conducted and it was determined that *Crystal Manor Tales* had not been analyzed in the context of the grotesque theory before. In the second part of the article, the definition of the grotesque is attempted to be made and the effective presence of this concept in *Crystal Manor Tales* is emphasized. In the third section, examples of the grotesque in *Crystal Manor Tales* are evaluated under three headings: “Disharmony”, “Fear”, and “Exaggeration”. (1) In the section titled “Disharmony”, the dual nature of the grotesque is emphasized, and it is found out that this disharmony manifests itself either in the form of metamorphoses experienced by the fairy tale protagonist on the physical plane, or ambivalence, where opposing concepts meet at the same point. (2) In the section titled “Fear”, it is concluded that uncanny places such as caves and wells belonging to the underworld or otherworldly daemonic forces such as monsters, giants, witches, and dragons are the embodiment of the fears of society. (3) In the section entitled “Exaggeration”, the rebellious content of this principle, which represents transgression and constitutes a violation of the sovereign order, is mentioned.

The grotesque is a combination of carnival laughter and fear, which turns all kinds of reality upside down. This dual nature of the grotesque, which means the management of the uncanny by the comic or the minimization of fear by the act of laughter, treats disturbing and fear-inducing thoughts with humorous language. Through its rich grotesque imagery, *Crystal Manor Tales* appeals to the vestigial primitiveness within human beings and helps to cure the fears of universal consciousness as well.

This article examines the meaning and importance of grotesque images in folk literature and suggests a method for reading literary texts in terms of the grotesque. Furthermore, the grotesque, which modern literature – as in the case of Gregor Samsa – uses to describe the alienation of the individual who has moved away from religion and myth and which it describes as a “mad invention” (Thomson 1972: 64), is not only an aesthetic device of the twentieth century or of modern civilization. This study, which analyzes *Crystal Manor Tales* in terms of the grotesque, has shown that this aesthetic device, which is as old as human history, has its roots in the literature of the people.

CRYSTAL MANOR TALES

Crystal Manor Tales is a work of art that has been read with interest by Turkish people for almost 150 years. The earliest known publication of this work dates back to 1876; however, the author is unknown. *Crystal Manor Tales* contains fourteen fairy tales: “Billur Köşk ile Elmas Gemi” (Crystal Manor

and the Diamond Ship), “Helvacı Güzeli” (The Halva Lady), “Kahveci Güzeli” (The Coffee Lady), “Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva” (The Crying Pomegranate and the Laughing Quince), “Muradına Eren Dilber” (The Lady Who Attains Her Desires), “Muradına Ermeyen Dilber” (The Lady Who Doesn’t Attain Her Desires), “Tasa Kuşu” (The Simurgh), “Zümrüdüanka Kuşu” (The Phoenix), “İğci Baba” (İğci Father), “Hırsız ile Yankesici” (Thieves and Pickpockets), “Sefa ile Cefa” (Sefa and Cefa), “Ali Cengiz Oyunu” (Dirty Trick), “Saka Güzeli” (The Goldfinch Lady), and “Karayılan” (Black Snake). These tales are based on the values that comprise society and have a didactic quality, both at the local and universal level, due to their insights into the formation and growth of humanity. Despite differences in language, style, and narrative, a uniform structure emerges when these amazing stories are categorized according to 31 functions (Propp 1985: 30–31) based on human activities as described in Vladimir Propp’s famous work *Morfologia Skazki* (Morphology of the Folktale) (1928). This uniformity indicates that *Crystal Manor Tales* not only represents the lifestyle and cultural traits of the culture to which it belongs but also transmits its message to the entire world through a universal language.

Georg Jacob (1862–1937), an Oriental studies expert, was the first to reference *Billur Köşk* (Crystal Manor) in the field of Turkish fairy tale studies. Jacob mentioned a copy of *Crystal Manor* acquired in 1899, which has no printing date (Alangu 2018: 329). He explored *Crystal Manor* in-depth in his book *Türkische Volksliteratur*, emphasizing that these fourteen tales are “genuine folk productions” (Jacob 1901: 5). In the same year, Hungarian Turcologist Ignac Kúnos (1860–1945) selected 25 folktales for publishing in the eighth book of Wilhelm Radloff’s (1837–1918) ten-volume study *Proben: der Volksliteratur der Türkischen Stämme*. Among these were nine from *Crystal Manor Tales*, which he said were chosen specifically because they resembled European folk tales. The most serious flaw in Kúnos’s work was that he favored the same language used during compilation and did not investigate its degree of correctness (Radloff & Kúnos 1998 [1866]: 4). Kúnos was challenged in this regard by Theodor Menzel (1878–1939), who conducted another major study on *Crystal Manor* and claimed that the tales deserved a more decent translation (Saluk 2018: 47). Menzel’s work *Billur Köschk* (1923) is significant in that it is the first translation of *Crystal Manor Tales* into a foreign language. Also included at the end of Menzel’s book is Jacob’s classification study of the tales’ sources and motifs.

In 1953, Turkish folklorist Pertev Naili Boratav (1907–1998) collaborated with Wolfram Eberhard to create the first tale catalog, *Typen Türkischer Volksmärchen* (Types of Turkish Folk Tales), in which he made extensive use of *Crystal Manor Tales* (Ertizman 2020: 41).

Tahir Alangu (1915–1973) is another significant figure involved in the creation of *Crystal Manor Tales*, a volume which is vital to Turkish and Middle Eastern culture. Alangu noted in his review of *Crystal Manor Tales*, which was conducted by transposing from the Arabic to Latin alphabet in 1961, that the tale “Hırsız ile Yankesici” originated from the tale “One Thousand and One Nights”, and that the others were adapted from Indian fairy tale collections. He also drew attention to the fact that the fairy tale “Helvacı Güzeli” is a relic of the “halva talks” that were widespread in Istanbul during the Tulip Era (1718–1730) and were held with affection among the people (Alangu 2018: 331). “Halva talks” are conversations organized in the Ottoman Empire for halva, which was specially cooked during festival and victory celebrations, or during Ramadan. According to Mehmet Tevfik, this event, which developed during the reign of Damat İbrahim Pasha, the grand vizier of the Tulip Era, and which was occasionally attended by the sultan of the time, Ahmet III, was a very common tradition in villages and towns as well as around the palace. These conversations became quite colorful on long winter nights with fairy tales, *meddah* (storyteller) stories, puppetry, and Karagöz activities³ (as cited in Saluk 2018: 48).

Alangu’s significance is recognized once more in this study, which for the first time assesses *Crystal Manor Tales* in terms of the grotesque because it was he who drew attention to the presence of the grotesque in Turkish folk literature in 1967. However, Alangu limited this connection to improvisational theater and Keloğlan typography while it in fact has a considerably broader scope than is commonly assumed. Thus, *Crystal Manor Tales* as one of the most significant genres of oral folk literature gives vital information for comprehending the extent of this scope. Before evaluating the *Crystal Manor Tales* with the grotesque theory, the term is explained in the next section.

THE GROTESQUE

The term grotesque, derived from the Italian word *grotto*, was first used to describe ornamental art in which human, animal, and plant motifs are intertwined (Kayser 1963: 19). It has abandoned its decorative definition and undergone an indefinite expansion of meaning over time. In the seventeenth century, genres such as theater and caricature arose to describe the vulgar and humorous exaggeration, presenting the strange, ridiculous, ugly, and misshapen. The grotesque, which aims to surprise, frighten, and disgust the audience as well as make them laugh, pushes the boundaries of classical literature and is thrust out of the realm of official art as it disrupts social order. On the other hand, it also

becomes a crucial aesthetic tool that determines the form of expression in all art forms that draw their inspiration from the public (Alangu 1990 [1967]: 173).

The grotesque can be found in the folk mythology and pre-classical works of all cultures (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 58) and tends to be present in the form of masks employed as the basis of humorous characters, as well as in old carnivals, folk theater, and improvisational plays. The extravagancy, absurdity, excessiveness, incongruity, and frightening nature of the grotesque are clearly visible in these masks, which serve the function of achieving hybrid body representations by adding animal features to the human. The beak-like noses, pointed and sharp jaws, asymmetrical and misshapen heads, which are specific to masks, draw attention as important indicators that exceed the limits of the classical body (Kayser 1963: 39). According to Bakhtin (2005 [1965]), in *Rabelais and His World*, the grotesque represents a unique crisis of division. The downward movement of these binary oppositions, such as body/mind and life/death, emphasizes grotesque realism by demeaning the sublime and noble. On the other hand, grotesque realism marks the lower parts of the body with a downward orientation. Everything physical – such as eating, drinking, defecating, childbearing – becomes exaggerated and unmeasurable. All these examples demonstrate that *Crystal Manor Tales*³ is an important work due to the abundance of grotesque elements it contains.

According to Alangu, the earliest known copy of *Crystal Manor Tales* dates from 1876. He notes that these tales, which contain intensely national values unique to Turkish society in terms of source and motif, are the first compilation of this type in Turkey, and that the fourteen tales in the book were not compiled from the vernacular; rather, the vernacular was influenced by the book. Because of this circumstance, the stories were able to reach the present day with their motifs intact. In fact, when phrases from oral tradition within *Crystal Manor* are examined, it can be seen that the tales of each region are reshaped in accordance with their own tastes and feelings, and vulgar places, humor, and sexual circumstances are removed from the narrative (Alangu 2018: 330–333). Alangu employs censorship in a similar manner. He claims that, while reconsidering which stories to include in his version of the book, which was targeted at child readers, he left out the story “Kahveci Güzeli” due to its obscene and vulgar features. However, the grotesque appears in the rough, disgusting, frightening, and dark areas of the unconscious universe that the public consciously conceals and Alangu excludes. As a result, “Kahveci Güzeli” was incorporated into this study and evaluated in the context of the grotesque along with the other tales.⁴ As Jung put it: “Outwardly people are more or less civilized, but inwardly they are still primitives” (1973: 149). The grotesque, which embodies many taboo subjects and suppressed desires, particularly sexuality, is an extremely

important aesthetic tool that brings society's unconscious to the present in its darkest and most untainted form and confronts people with the primitive side that has been forgotten or ignored.

The presence of the grotesque as an aesthetic tool is evident in *Crystal Manor Tales*. The grotesque plays a critical role in conveying the metaphorical meaning within these tales and is revealed through masked identities, metamorphosed bodies, seven-headed giants, hybrid bodies that shed pearls when they cry or grow plants from their cheeks when they laugh, men who feed on human flesh, severed limbs, body disgust, and fear-inducing excesses. A great deal of material that the tales avoid or conceal reveals much about the universe, the world, life, and nature through these physical beings, which can only be discovered through the analysis of grotesque images.

The next section presents the analysis of the *Crystal Manor Tales* in detail, with the grotesque theory and the explanation of the messages behind the grotesque images.

THE GROTESQUE IN CRYSTAL MANOR TALES

As mentioned above, *Crystal Manor Tales* contains rich grotesque images. However, the lack of a universal model on how to read a literary text in terms of the grotesque makes it difficult to set these images within a certain framework. In this article, which deals with *Crystal Manor Tales* for the first time in terms of the grotesque, I evaluate the grotesque examples I have identified under three headings: "Disharmony", "Fear", and "Exaggeration". In this way, I attempt both to make the grotesque visible in *Crystal Manor Tales* and to suggest a methodology for similar future studies on the fairy tale.

Disharmony

Transformation/Metamorphosis

The grotesque's greatest distinguishing quality, which is both contradictory and at odds with reality, is its disharmony. This contradiction first appears on the formal plane, particularly in corporeal alterations. The most crucial indicator that the grotesque image depicts as reality in transformation is metamorphosis, which goes from birth to death, from development to becoming, and incorporates a kind of "incomplete" message (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 52). This grotesque image is also manifested in *Crystal Manor Tales* in the form of evolution from

animal to human, human to animal or another object, as well as the same body undergoing gender change. The grotesque's opposition to the notion that the body should be static (Zhonga 2021: 3) is clearly seen in the fairy tale "Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva" about a boy who "shrugged off as a dove and turned into a handsome young man when water poured over him, entering the golden basin, fluttering, shaking himself, and changing again into a pigeon's form" (Alangu 2018: 69–70), or in the gender transformation of Tebdil Gezen Sultan after the giants' curse, saying, "if you are a man, be a woman; if you are a woman, be a brave man!": "Suddenly, the girl realizes she has changed; she has transformed from a girl to a boy, her mustache has grown, her beard is sweaty, and her chin is hairy" (ibid.: 76). The curse also depicts a grotesque view of the lower parts of the body, including the genitals (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 193). This situation lends credence to the notion that gender change in the fairy tale is the result of a curse. This transformation, however, saves the young girl from her predicament, as evidenced by the words, "This was my only wish, thank God" (Alangu 2018: 77). The goodness or badness of the fairy tale hero determines the reward or punishment function of the metamorphosis.

The function of the curse, and occasionally the role of internal cosmic elements such as fire, water, and earth, draw emphasis on the bodily transformations of fairy tale heroes who metamorphose for various causes such as reward or punishment. Bakhtin emphasizes the positive, regenerative, and transformative value of acts like insults and curses (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 56). For example, the fairy tale "Tasa Kuşu" tells the tale of a young man who is cursed and transforms into a bird. This lad, "disguised as a Simurgh because of his mother's curse", (Alangu 2018: 139) "dives into a marble pool, shakes himself, transforms into a young man with a pretty face", and continues his life as a human after the evil magic on him is broken. The phrases "Oh, fellow mate, this is a well-known temple and a must-see. Whoever comes here and prays earnestly and pours a bowl of water becomes a man if one were a woman and a woman if one were a man" (ibid.: 228) in the fairy tale "Sefa ile Cefa" once more demonstrate the transformational power of water. The words of Eliade (1991: 108), who indicated that contact with water always entails a revival, imply that the hero, who has been transformed by the act of water running down his head or by getting into the water in the pool, has begun a new existence in his new body. Roux (2005: 234), who claims that the bodily shift occurs as a result of "flapping, neighing, and twisting of the body", practically points to the usual symptoms of grotesque existence as transformation markers such as trembling, yawning, sneezing, growling, and shaking are vital indicators that new birth is about to occur (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 338).

Transformations in fairy tales might occur without warning at times. This bodily transformation, which occasionally saves the hero from hazards during a perilous voyage and assures survival, becomes the core storyline, particularly in the “Alicengiz Oyunu”. To avoid Dervish Father’s cruelty, a young palace servant disguises himself as a horse and later as a ram on his way to learn a dirty trick to please the bored monarch. Furthermore, he undergoes these transformations of his own volition and without difficulty, as evidenced by the phrases “Tomorrow I shall disguise myself as a horse”, or “Tomorrow I will likewise disguise myself as a huge ram” (Alangu 2018: 224). When Dervish Father tries to catch him as a ram, he transforms into an apple, then into a kernel of corn. Dervish Father, with whom he is in dispute, transforms into a hawk when he is a bird, a “dervish with a large beard and a cloak on his back” when he is an apple, and a chicken when he is a corn kernel. The corn kernels then cluster in one place, form a ball, and “come down on the neck of the chicken and strangle it, transforming into a marten” (ibid.: 246). This final transformation underscores the importance of violent monstrous acts in fairy tales for the hero to successfully complete his quest because the marten, which is violent and ruthless, is a hideous animal that represents man’s defective nature prior to socialization (Hervouet-Farrar 2014: 4).

A similar occurrence is depicted in the tale “Kara Yılan”, which tells the story of a young man who is stripped of his snake body and transformed into a gorgeous man. The snake, which represents transformation with its molting feature, death with its venomous nature, and primitivism with its reptilian nature, is at least as hideous as the marten. In this tale, fire is the most effective tool for metamorphosis because it transforms everything it touches, destroys and purifies material dirt (Bachelard 1995: 94):

He gradually begins to undress from his head, and when he removes the sheath that he has stripped down to his tail, the girl snatches the skin of the black cohosh and throws it into the fiery stove. The lad rolls and writhes on the ground, screaming and wailing in anguish, till his skin burns. When all the skin is burned to ashes, the snake awakens to reveal himself to be a handsome young man with a pretty face. (Alangu 2018: 276–277)

According to Harpham (1976: 462), nocturnal animals like owls, frogs, snakes, spiders, and especially bats are favored animals in the grotesque. He also incorporates things such as robots and masks. This viewpoint reminds us that in fairy tales, bodily transformations are sometimes experienced in the form of disguise because disguise corresponds to the mask, the most complicated theme

in folk literature, and the grotesque's desire to animalize the human is abundantly visible in these masks (Alangu 1990 [1967]: 174). In certain ways, the fairy tale hero masks himself by disguising himself. This motif, which joyously rejects self-resemblance, is associated with transformation, derision, and the crossing of traditional limits. This transformation, the result of a preoccupation with the nature of human identity, reveals the grotesque's essence. Although a human has a vibrant and endless life behind it, with his regenerating and renewing aspect, he conceals something, hides a secret, and deceives (Bahtin 2005: 68). In the fairy tale "Billur Köşk ile Elmas Gemi", for example, the lovely daughter of Istanbul's Sultan deceives everyone by disguising herself as a "captain" (Alangu 2018: 17). Tebdil Gezen Sultan becomes invisible "because he has a magic cone on his head" in the fairy tale "Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva" (ibid.: 81). In the fairy tale "İğci Baba", the witch disguises herself as a beggar in order to take vengeance on a young couple who escapes from her (ibid.: 197). In the fairy tale "Sefa ile Cefa", the childless Sultan disguises himself as a dervish (ibid.: 213, 265), while Cefa dresses in a wedding gown and disguises himself as a woman (ibid.: 225). In the fairy tale "Zümrüdüanka Kuşu" the prince transforms into Keloğlan by wearing a piece of leather he got from a butcher as a skullcap (ibid.: 164–165). The prince in this story is the trickster Keloğlan (Stefanova 2012: 78), as he lacks, both symbolically and physically, the traits of Keloğlan. He hails from a noble family, but he must conceal his identity for compelling reasons like fear and menace, and he works in jobs that are inappropriate for his status (Şimşek 2017: 44). As a result, when he asks to be a gardener's apprentice, he is told, "You don't look well with flowers with your bald head and dirty disguise" (Alangu 2018: 165), and when he asks to be a jeweler's apprentice, he is told, "Jewelry is a delicate craft, what good would you do?" (ibid.: 168). In terms of conveying laughter paired with bitterness, the ridicule and sarcasm shown to Keloğlan are included in the grotesque realm (Marander-Eklund 2008: 97). According to Alangu, who identified the presence of the grotesque in the personality of the hard-hearted Keloğlan,⁵ this aesthetic aspect, which derives from folk art, consists of the juxtaposition of the amusing and silly with the formless, ugly, and horrifying (Alangu 1990 [1967]: 174–175). This ambivalence consists of an image that embraces the old and the new, the reciprocal relationship between death and birth. The two poles, the beginning and end of the transformation, are intertwined (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 52). In fairy tales, these dichotomies, where opposing concepts meet at the same point, reflect the incompatibility feature, which is the second branch of the ambivalence principle of the grotesque.

Ambivalence

The universe, like the human body, is in a cosmic cycle. This continuous state of metamorphosis from night to day, winter to spring, old to new, death to birth (Bahtin 2005: 192) emphasizes the incomplete and developing human being. In terms of highlighting the behaviors of sobbing and laughing at the same time, “Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva” is the tale in *Crystal Manor Tales* that most clearly reflects the ambivalence principle of the grotesque. In this fairy tale, Tebdil Gezen Sultan wishes to obtain the giants’ mirror from the cave at the top of the mountain in order to meet the sultan cloaked in red. “You look covertly through the door, if their eyes are closed, they are awake, if their eyes are open, they are sleeping”, says the white horse, offering him a clue regarding the giants (Alangu 2018: 71). This is a strong grotesque expression that is quite ambiguous. This two-layered contradiction emerges in the context of openness/closedness and sleep/wakefulness when Tebdil Gezen Sultan tries to uproot the tree in the fairy sultan’s garden: “He uproots the tree with all his might by holding it. The pomegranates on the tree start sobbing, and the quinces start giggling” (ibid.: 82). A similar situation can be seen in the words of the prince who was hung in the well in the fairy tale “Zümürdüanka Kuşu”: “Oh, I’m burning! Oh, I’m freezing!” (ibid.: 148), or in the fairy tale “Karayılan”: “A bride in a veil enters the palace from the front door every evening, and her body comes out in a coffin from the back door” (ibid.: 273). This ambivalence, based on the mismatch of burning/freezing, birth/death, and wedding/funeral, is a clear and persistent contrast. As a result, in the tale “Tasa Kuşu”, the executioner takes pity on the girl he was supposed to execute and instead executes a puppy (ibid.: 132). His job is to kill, but he has a tender heart. As a result, ambivalence in fairy tales comprises ugly visuals that allow for carnivalesque equalization. What makes all these examples ambiguous is the juxtaposition of dualities, while the insecure space between dualities corresponds to the fear/alienation principle of the grotesque.

Fear/Alienation

The grotesque, which blends “being scared” and “laughing” deeds, represents the uneasy zone between two emotions. This insecure area corresponds to caves, wells, and cemeteries, all of which are significant stops on journeys to the underworld realm. *Crystal Manor Tales* are filled with gloomy and uncanny settings where fairy tale characters feel they do not belong. In order to keep his daughter alive, the sultan in the fairy tale “Billur Köşk ile Elmas Gemi” has

a “cave under the ground where the sun never shines, hidden from the world” (Alangu 2018: 9). The cave at the top of the mountain in the fairy tale “İğci Baba”, the walls of which are full of “man carcasses” placed on hooks, evokes sentiments of contempt and disgust, as well as fear. After seeing the bodies in the cave, the young girl who trusted İğci Baba and set out with him “would faint from nausea and heart palpitations” (ibid.: 187).

Her heart squeaks and tears out when she sees her own brother, cut from head to toe in the center and hanging on the side wall. She is crushed by her nausea, heart palpitations, and her sister’s anguish, but her terror overwhelms them all. (ibid.: 189)

Evidently, the fairy tale figures approach the uncanny space as they exit the space in which they exist and move away from the space to which they belong. Fear, which is a natural effect of being removed from the familiar environment in some way, emerges in this uncanny space. In the fairy tale “Tasa Kuşu”, for example, Miss Sultan “reaches terrible spots that cause a tremble” as she continues her journey into the mountains from where the executioner left (ibid.: 132). The young man who sets off in the “Alicengiz Oyunu” arrives at the home of the dervish he is following, which is “in the middle of nowhere” (ibid.: 240). The “quiet, secluded, shivering” coffin (ibid.: 279) in the fairy tale “Karayılan” deeply conveys the terror and horror induced by the feeling of alienation that rises as a consequence of being removed from the familiar area.

Dark, narrow, echoing caves blend well with the grotesque, which is defined by terms like bizarre, incongruous, frightening, shocking, and unpleasant. Given that the word grotesque is derived from the Italian word for cave (grotta) (Kaysers 1963: 19), this is quite natural because grotesque images are constantly in a truly iconographic interaction with one another. The well is another site that is as grotesque as the cave, with its weird and uncanny atmosphere. The well, like the cave, is dark, echoey, deserted, and frightening. In the story “Alicengiz Oyunu”, for example, the well where Dervish Father resides is “full to the brim with human carcasses” (Alangu 2018: 241), which is horrible both in its smell and sight. In the fairy tale “Zümrüdüanka Kuşu”, the three princes arrive at the well: “when viewed from above, the bottom is invisible ...; whistling from above comes the sound of rumbling...; a quite dark place with no bottom visible from the top; a horrible, frightening place with a rumbling sound, where wolves and birds scatter out of fear; it is a dreadful, terrible” place (ibid.: 147). The connection between these terrible locations and the underworld is directly tied to the lower body of the terrified and suffering protagonist of the fairy tale. In the same tale, for example, the grotesque realism through discrediting, in

which the sacred and majestic are horribly degraded, and dread is lessened by the act of laughter, is particularly amazing. The primary artistic premise of grotesque realism, according to Bakhtin (2005 [1965]: 402), is the denigration of everything sacred and its sublimation to the level of material, corporeal sub-regions. The direction of movement in this oscillation that connects the sky and the earth is always downwards, not upwards. In this tale, the eldest of the Sultan's three adult sons asks his father's permission to kill the giant who eats the apples on the tree in the palace's private garden that only bears fruit once a year, saying, "Unless people of descent do not lead the way, the servants cannot follow" (Alangu 2018: 141); however, when confronted with the seven-headed giant, this noble prince wets his pants with fear. Upon this failure, the middle prince asks to tackle the mission that his brother was unable to complete. When confronted with the giant, he, too, "wets his pants out of fright, throws up his arms in horror, and points his arrow"⁶ (ibid.: 143). When the sultan asks the prince, "Did you do it, son, did you manage to kill the giant and pluck the apples?" (ibid.), the prince returns to his senses and falls at his father's feet, saying:

Oh, my father, my sultan, he came with such a creak and moan that neither his voice nor his odor could be endured; his mouth was like an oven, and it was such a fire that I could not oppose this devilish grandeur. I could not manage to draw a bow and shoot arrows. My lip burst wide in horror, and I soiled my shalwar. (ibid.: 143–144)

According to Bakhtin (2005 [1965]: 48), the lower parts of the body are always amusing, and laughter has the potential to resist even the fear of death. The trickster Keloğlan's smile while "holding his groin" as he informed the jeweler, who was about to die because he could not fulfill the Sultan's demands within forty days, that he would easily meet these demands, and the jeweler's comments, "Oh, look at Keloğlan! He makes the dead laugh, slur, and crackle so he may get the murderer off the rope" (Alangu 2018: 171) confirms Bakhtin's supposition. Just as the image of wetting, where the tragic meets the funny, contains a grotesque discrediting, in which the noble fairy tale figure is lowered to the physical level in a nasty way, the prince's disguise and taking on the derided Keloğlan contains a similar discrediting.

The image of defecation from fear or wetting one's pants is often used to mock people whom the social order considers sacrosanct, such as kings, sultans, or priests, or to degrade something high. It also suggests an intellectual and moral metamorphosis. This exuberant carnival, in which the ruling and the ruled swap places, the official order is turned upside down, and people take

center stage, is known as a “joyful funeral” (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 178). As a result, even if the prince appears before his father with “wet pants and a cleft lip”, “when the day awakens, the servants, watchmen, gardeners, and all the people of the palace ... immediately fill the square and engage in such a clamor that anyone who sees them thinks they have not slept all night and fought against the giant” (Alangu 2018: 144). This carnival atmosphere exemplifies how the bizarre emerges when the established order is disrupted. The grotesque body’s behaviors give an antidote to authority. As the classical body’s normal bounds are exceeded by bulging eyes, parched lips, or bodily fluids (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 347), hegemonic forces, and thus the sublime classical literature, are also challenged.

As can be seen, the carnival, which liberates the power of the people and their literature, momentarily removes the rules of the hierarchical order as a form of expression of rebirth and secures the continuity of the social order in a healthier manner than before. The celebrations at the end of *Crystal Manor Tales*, where the drums are played for forty days and forty nights, people feel liberated, the hungry are fed and the poor are clothed, orphans are cheered, and meals are distributed even to passers-by, provide a carnivalesque atmosphere where everyone is temporarily equal (Alangu 2018: 118, 199). The amount of food consumed by the fairy tale heroes in grotesque exaggeration festivities is enormous, and all fears vanish in the face of the bodily festival principle, in which the act of eating and drinking is regarded as gluttony (Bakhtin 2005: 121). While this ending in tales that puts an end to class division, dissolves worry and liberates people shows the potential transmission power of a new beginning, it also inspires a sense of rebellion.

Bakhtin (2005 [1965]: 200) interprets the image of wetting or defecating out of dread as a diminution of both the coward and the fear object. It is also a diminution of fear itself. That is, every civilization invents its own monsters based on its own fears, desires, worries, and dreams. Unearthly demonic forces, such as alien-shaped creatures, predators or monsters, giants, witches, and dragons that consume people living or dead, are invariably embodied by the grotesque (Kayser 1963: 109). As a result, it exemplifies the grotesque imaginary terror and makes it visible. In *Crystal Manor Tales*, the seven-headed giant with his filthy body (Alangu 2018: 140), the birds that feed on human flesh (ibid.: 120), the forests that host predators and monsters (ibid.: 126), the caves where the giants live (ibid.: 71), the executioners (ibid.: 130), and the dragons spewing fire from their mouths (ibid.: 156) are the embodiments of fictional fear. Referring to the fact that people in the medieval Christian world really believed in the existence of evil forces, Schulz (1991: 7–9) defines the half-human and half-animal sculptures, which are indicative of this belief, as symbols of fear. The

grotesque, which manifests itself predominantly in visual arts such as sculpture and painting, becomes the embodiment of fears constructed as discourse in literary texts. Therefore, the people, who both produce grotesque figures or spaces that cause disgust and horror and pass them on to the next generations through tales, confront their sins through fear and experience a catharsis.

Extravagance/Exaggeration

Another characteristic of the grotesque is its transgression. The grotesque's breach and violation of the sovereign order are depicted in *Crystal Manor Tales* as extravagance and exaggeration. This property is most evident in the descriptions of body and food (Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 333). Excess bodily waste or secretions such as defecating, sweating, blowing, sneezing, or sexual behaviors such as mating, pregnancy, or giving birth concentrate on the "open" areas of the body where the world enters, or the body meets the world and exits. The grotesque, which assigns significant meanings to portions of the lower body as well as limbs, such as the mouth, nose, and ears, depicts the excess with the image of a "hole" (ibid.: 347–348). *Crystal Manor Tales* contains filthiness in all its grotesque images. Under the influence of the hardening norms of the language at the end of the sixteenth century and the canon of polite speech that became dominant in the seventeenth century, the grotesque is found to be contradictory and absurd and is thrust from the field of classical art on the grounds that it disrupts the social order. The earliest response to this comes from Montaigne (1533–1592), who criticized the constraints with his essays at the end of the century. His comment, "What harm did the sexual act, which is so natural, necessary, and legal, do to humanity, that we do not dare to talk of it without shame" (as cited in Bakhtin 2005 [1965]: 350) allows the grotesque to find a wider area of use in literature. Specific obscenities, discrediting parodies, insults and curses, and limbs severed from the body pervade practically every aspect of oral culture in this sense (ibid.: 385). As a result, the grotesque not only pushes the boundaries of classical literature with its outrageous, ugly, and discordant features derived from the art of the people but also challenges them. On the other hand, the grotesque focuses solely on the body's protrusions and holes. Objects are also used to symbolize these open sections that penetrate deep into the body (ibid.: 348). For example, Tebdil Gezen Sultan's successful conclusion of his difficult adventure in the fairy tale "Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva" is due to knowledge provided by the "keyhole":

When night falls and everything is deserted, one by one, the servants and handmaids curl up into the corners, ... Tebdil Gezen Sultan glides cautiously to the door of the Red-dressed Sultan at this time, listening and watching through the keyhole. (Alangu 2018: 69)

On the other hand, “Kahveci Güzeli” is a truly grotesque narrative in which excess is processed on the bodily plane and the entire story is erotically predicated on the image of the “hole”. In the story, a young man who began working as an apprentice with a poor coffee shop keeper is visited by three dervishes three days in a row, and the story of their redemption from poverty is told through their three wishes. The first wish is for there to be no shortage of coffee and sugar in the box, the second one is that customers flock at the coffee shop like ants, and the third one is “Let this valiant man make all the holes talk” (Radloff & Kúnos 1998 [1866]: 258). After making his master wealthy and returning to his hometown, the young man’s third wish causes his three marriages to end in divorce because when the lovely young man asks, “Hole, who touched you” (ibid.: 259) on the wedding night, all the holes reveal the truth. When the women cover the holes with cloth so that the holes in the lower part of their bodies do not speak, the “ear” starts speaking:

Leaning on the woman’s ear:

‘Tell me, hole, why don’t the holes down answer me?’

The hole:

‘Sire, how can they answer, they are both stuffed up.’ (ibid.: 261)

When it comes to concepts such as mating and reproduction, sexuality, and childbirth, *Crystal Manor Tales* employs this principle of grotesque extremity. Bodily secretions including saliva, blood, and sweat are prominently featured in grotesque images. In addition to the visible limbs, the disgust generated by these images includes the interior components of the body, such as the blood, liver, and the uterus. For instance, the giant in the fairy tale “Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva” comes and devours the sultan’s liver every six years (Alangu 2018: 65). As depicted in the fairy tale “Zümrüdüanka Kuşu”, a dragon stands by the town’s only fountain and eats the body of the young girl who was brought to him as a distraction. The townsfolk drink the water “yellow as urine, filled with worms” (ibid.: 154), fill their jugs with distaste throughout the year. In the fairy tale “İğci Baba”, the protagonist, who lives in a cave and hangs the bodies of men on walls of the cave before cooking them in a cauldron and eating

them, “pulls the large bowl full of human flesh in front of him, grabs with both hands while the smoke is steaming from above, starts to bite, bite, lick and devour, till a pile of bones grows next to the table in a short time” (ibid.: 187). Getting frustrated that the young girl whose finger he cut off and offered to her refuses to eat human flesh, “regardless of her wailing and pleading, seizes her by one ear, hits her in the head with an assault knife, slices her in half, takes the trembling meat, and hangs her on the wall” (ibid.: 188).



Figure 1. *İğci Baba as a grotesque body example (Alangu 2018: 245).*

The separation of the body into its limbs is one of the most essential characteristics of the grotesque, in which physiological waste and bodily fluids are commonly stressed within the purview of the concept of exaggeration and excess. There are several examples of this imagery throughout the compilation: in “Helvacı Güzeli”, when the father, believing his daughter to be immoral, orders his son, “When you get home, cut off my daughter’s head immediately. Soak her blood in your shirt and bring it to me”; in “Ağlayan Nar ile Gülen Ayva” when Tebdil Gezen Sultan “cut off one ear of the giant and put it in his pocket” (ibid.: 66); in “Muradına Eren Dilber” when the young girl tied to the tails of forty mules is cut into dozens of pieces. This imagery of disintegration, which inspires a type of hatred for the subject, puts an end to the old by expunging immoral spirits and assisting in the creation of the new (Bahtin 2005: 233).

Another example of grotesque imagery in *Crystal Manor Tales* is the revived fairy tale figures. These miraculous resurrections happen as a result of trembling, shaking, or sneezing. One example of this comes from the tale “Muradına Ermeyen Dilber”, in which a young lifeless girl “rises up and comes to life by sneezing” (Alangu 2018: 117). When the bottle on his bed shatters, the young man in the fairy tale “İğci Baba” “trembles, sneezes” (ibid.: 199) and awakens from his death slumber. In the fairy tale “Karayılan”, a man lying in a coffin “sneezes, trembles and stands up” (ibid.: 279). Actions such as trembling, shaking, sneezing, and coughing are, as previously stated, the most essential life signs of the grotesque body, and representations of rebirth (Bahtin 2005: 238).

Protrusions are the most noticeable features of the grotesque body. Surface-specific protrusions such as a pointed chin, a large nose, a hump on the back, and even a tail (Fig. 1) attempt to attract attention to the animalistic characteristics of humans. Several examples of this can be found in the fairy tale “Zümürdüanka Kuşu”: “the cringe crone with slumped stance, and wrinkled face” (Alangu 2018: 153); “gross seven-headed dragon” (ibid.: 159) killed by the prince; “a long yellow snake with a mace head, forked tongue, and filthy body crawling and embracing the tree, rustling it by causing the grass to lie down” (ibid.: 161). In addition, in the fairy tale “Sefa ile Cefa” one character is described as a “cringe crone with straggly hair, wrinkled face, messy clothes, no teeth in her mouth, floppy chin and sniffing” (ibid.: 220). These examples of grotesque bodies demonstrate that they are far from understanding the ideal body. These bodies are unattractive in proportion to their evilness. A further example can be seen in the fairy tale “Saka Güzeli”, in which the sultan’s daughter, whose heart is filled with bitterness and jealousy, “has a dark face like her heart” (ibid.: 249). Creatures such as snakes, dragons, giants, or figures devoid of goodness, whose appearances are exaggerated in fairy tales, are used in these tales as embodiments of moral defects and character problems (Stallybrass & White

1986: 129). Addressing the psychic fears of the modern individual through the concept of “body”, the grotesque attempts to eliminate the hierarchy of body/soul, human/animal, and nature/culture by including the ugly in art. This emphasis on the existence of the “other” enables people to confront the tendencies that they have repressed, but which continue to live within them as a primitive and low-quality force. This process, which archetypically resembles meeting one’s shadow, opens the doors to the realm of inner light and provides catharsis. These grotesque images in the world of fairy tales aim to change the existing world and destroy it again in order to renew it. Bakhtin describes this destruction with a carnivalesque joy as “the world’s death and another world’s being born” (2005 [1965]: 78). Just as the world is dying and another world is being born, the human being discovers the “other” in himself and realizes that he lives in an integrated cosmos, “in God’s world, in an eternity where everything is already born and everything has already died” (Jung 1965 [1961]: 67).

Good-hearted and good-natured characters in fairy tales, on the other hand, are shown with closed, holeless, entire, and faultless bodies. Young girls described in the fairy tales “Muradına Ermeyen Dilber” and “Zümrüdianka Kuşu” by the words “first-class beauty; small nose, dove sound, distinguished tone” (Alangu 2018: 99) and “such a beauty resembling the sun. Tall, with red cheeks and a cheering face. The one who sees her is astonished, their eyes are dazzled” (ibid.: 149), are “anti-grotesque” bodies that are symmetrical, independent, monumental, and transcendent. Despite the weird, discordant, ugly, open, projecting, variable, and secretive structure of the grotesque body, anti-grotesque beings are artificial and too perfect to be real. Rather, as expressions of society’s greatest hopes and desires, they serve to celebrate good morality and therefore discipline society.

CONCLUSION

Although its original compiler and publication date are unknown, *Crystal Manor Tales*, a series of tales beloved by the Turkish public for approximately 150 years, is an important work that reflects the impressions of the universe, life, nature, and human beings with its repertoire of fourteen tales and offers insights not only into children but also into adults. Derived from folk art, the grotesque is one method of relaying the messages of these stories and it appears in the rough, disgusting, frightening, and dark area of the social unconscious, revealing its place in *Crystal Manor Tales* through its various appearances in which the dead are resurrected, the living transform into other objects or beings, and the body deteriorates and disintegrates.

According to the findings of this study, Bakhtin's three principles of the grotesque, namely, disharmony, fear, and extravagance, are clearly mirrored in *Crystal Manor Tales*. While the principle of disharmony, manifested in metamorphoses, hybrid bodies hidden behind masks, or dualities where opposite concepts meet at the same point, reminds readers of their forgotten or ignored primitive aspects, it also draws attention to the close bond between culture and nature, and man with animals and plants. This principle effectively conveys the seemingly contradictory, but in fact complementary, double-sided integrity of life based on the hierarchy of human/animal, nature/culture, and male/female. Fear is another facet of the grotesque in *Crystal Manor Tales* and functions as a coping mechanism for society's aspirations and concerns through managing and revealing evil elements in the world as endless universal worries emerge from their fictional form and evolve into fairy tale characters such as monsters, dragons, and giants. As a statement of plenty and rejuvenation, bodily extravagances that defy classical limitations attempt to create a healthier order than before. Thus, it is evident that the grotesque serves as an extremely effective method of catharsis in *Crystal Manor Tales*. Furthermore, as bedtime stories of the collective consciousness, these tales transcend the limitations of their genre as they are passed down through generations. *Tehlikeli Masallar* (Dangerous Tales), written in the postmodernist style, is based on the fairy tale "Karayılan", and becomes a rich source utilized by modern literature in the context of intertextuality. In this regard, *Crystal Manor Tales* offers the messages it wishes to convey to society through grotesque images in a variety of methods.

NOTES

- ¹ Original heading: Творчество Франсуа Рабле и народная культура средневековья и Ренессанса (Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'ia i Renessansa).
- ² Types of traditional Turkish theater.
- ³ The 18th edition of the copy compiled by Tahir Alangu in 1961 under the title *Crystal Manor Tales* and published by YKY in 2018 was used in this study.
- ⁴ The work *Proben: der Volksliteratur der Türkischen Stämme VIII*, prepared by Radloff and Kúnos (1998 [1866]), was used for the text of the tale “Kahveci Güzeli”, which Alangu did not include in the compilation because he found it obscene.
- ⁵ For the first time, Wolfram Eberhard and Pertev Naili Boratav mentioned that the protagonist of Keloğlan tales had bad and even immoral qualities in the preface of the catalog they prepared together, *Typen türkischen Volksmärchen* (Eberhard & Boratav 1953: 13–15). Later on, Alangu added these negative qualities of Keloğlan to the end of his book of Keloğlan tales, which he compiled in 1967 under the title *Keloğlan Masalları: Mitostan Kurtuluş – Gerçeğe Yöneliş* (Keloğlan Tales: Liberation from Myth – Turning towards Reality). Alangu draws attention to his grotesque characteristics with the words “Keloğlan is almost always able to end his adventures successfully with harsh, merciless, rude-grotesque methods” (Alangu 1990: 170).
- ⁶ A Turkish idiom meaning to be doubled over with fear, not able to stand upright.

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