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## Jeanette Winterson as the Trickster-Artist in Weight *Atlas'ın Yükü Adlı Eserinde Hileci Yazar Jeanette Winterson\**

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### Abstract

The trickster is one of the outstanding examples of the concept of archetype introduced by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung and is described as the collection of whole inferior features in the individuals' characters. However, in contemporary literature, the trickster archetype is described as a cunning figure, a truth-teller, a storyteller, and a transformer who plays with the laws of the universe. The trickster figure rejects accepting the truth blindly; defends demolition of outdated mentality when needed. Despite his/her destructive attitude, he/she is respected for the contribution to the design of cultures. Jeanette Winterson's *Weight*, the retelling of Atlas and Heracles' myth, was published in 2005 within the project of The Canongate Myth Series, which commissioned prominent authors to rewrite the myths of different cultures. Winterson, one of the preeminent authors of British literature, in her meticulously written hybrid fiction, deconstructs epic traditions through various literary devices and offers a blend of different genres. In her multi-layered work, the author tells her story through the mythological hero Atlas, with whom she identifies herself. This study aims to highlight the trickster-artist facet of Jeanette Winterson as a cunning and wise transformer and storyteller in the process of rewriting the ancient myth.

**Keywords:** Jeanette Winterson, *Weight*, the trickster-artist, myths, story-telling.

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## Öz

Hileci, İsviçreli psikiyatr Carl Gustav Jung tarafından ilk kez ortaya atılan arketip kavramının önde gelen örneklerinden biridir ve genel olarak bireylerin karakterlerindeki bayağı özellikler olarak tanımlanır. Bununla birlikte çağdaş edebiyatta hileci arketipi; kurnaz, doğruyu söyleyen, hikâye anlatıcısı ve evrenin yasalarıyla oynayan bir dönüştürücü olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Hileci figür, gerçeği körü körüne kabul etmeyi reddeder; modası geçmiş zihniyetin yeri geldiğinde yıkılması gerektiği görüşünü savunur. Yıkıcı tutumuna rağmen kültürlerin tasarımına katkısından dolayı saygı duyulur. Jeanette Winterson'ın *Atlas ve Herakles* mitini tekrar kaleme aldığı *Weight* (Atlas'ın Yüğü) adlı eseri, 2005 yılında farklı kültürlerle ait mitleri tanınmış yazarlara yeniden yazdıran Canongate Myth Series projesi kapsamında yayınlandı. İngiliz edebiyatının önde gelen yazarlarından biri olan Winterson; titizlikle yazdığı hibrit kurgusunda, epik gelenekleri çeşitli edebi araçlar ve farklı türlerin karışımı ile yapı bozuma uğrattır. Yazar, çok katmanlı eserinde gerçekte kendisini özdeşleştirdiği mitolojik kahraman Atlas üzerinden hikâyesini anlatır. Bu çalışma, eski miti yeniden kaleme alma sürecinde, kurnaz ve bilge bir dönüştürücü ve öykü anlatıcısı olarak Jeanette Winterson'ın hileci-sanatçı yönüne dikkat çekmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Jeanette Winterson, *Atlas'ın Yüğü*, hileci yazar, mitler, hikâye anlatma.

## Introduction

The trickster, one of the prominent archetype examples of Jung, is briefly defined as "a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals" (Jung, 1980: 250-1). However, in virtue of its double-edged feature involving both good and evil natures, in contemporary literature, the trickster archetype is depicted as a cunning figure, a truth-teller, a storyteller, and a transformer who appears in different variations. Accordingly, the trickster figure not only opposes authority but also plays with the laws of the universe. Moreover, he/she is the character who reveals that in the new world order, outdated ways of thinking require being demolished and replaced when needed. This archetype usually questions the conception of accepting truths blindly; and hence, typically struggles against powerful opponents. English cultural critic Lewis Hyde who is known for his major contribution to the study of the trickster archetype with his book titled *Trickster Makes This World*, states, in furtherance the argument above: "In spite of all their disruptive behavior, tricksters are regularly honoured as the creators of culture" (1998: 8). Within this scope, it is quite apparent that the trickster figure plays an essential role in the construction of cultures and civilizations

in line with the double-sided nature of the character and Hyde's argument.

Jeanette Winterson, born in England in 1959 and adopted by a firmly religious couple aspiring to raise her as a missionary, left home due to her rebellious personality and lifestyle that are totally at odds with her family; and she studied English at Oxford University. Winterson, currently a writer, journalist, and a lecturer at Manchester University, has penned highly remarkable works in a large spectrum of genres, comprising fiction, children fiction, and science fiction. The author who constructs her novels with a perspective that completely rejects the traditional understanding of gender creates her language "which defies the conventional, pre-existing discourse, transcending language as a manifestation of social convention, thus allowing for an exploration of individual description and experience of the different perspectives which can be put on reality" (Jorgensen, 2005:13). Known as a brave and gifted author, she employs in her works an unconventional dimension of reality by combining piquant characters with postmodern self-consciousness. Winterson, one of the contemporary women writers, blends modernist and postmodernist techniques in her works, explores the ambiguous nature of reality; and uses allegory, myth, symbolism, fairy tales, mysticism, history, and autobiography. The author has written numerous works, including *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) that made her excellent reputation throughout her authorship career.

Winterson's novel *Weight*, in which she rewrites the myth of Atlas and Heracles, was published in 2005 within the project of the Canongate Myth Series, including the acclaimed authors from different countries such as Chinua Achebe, Ali Smith, and Michel Faber. In her ingeniously written hybrid work through the supporting components as scientific discourse and autobiography, the acknowledged English author declares that she wants to examine "loneliness, isolation, responsibility, burden, and freedom too" (2005: xviii). Winterson identifying herself with her protagonist Atlas who represents suffering, isolation, and the struggle of humankind to overcome his/her fate "obliterates the boundaries between reality and fiction, past and present myth and autobiography" (Janković, 2008:201). The writer, elaborating on the classical myth aptly and cunningly as a trickster -artist, not only makes Atlas her protagonist, who is in the shadow of Heracles in the original ancient myth but also creates a new fiction with different combinations of narration and genre. The provocative author accomplishedly adapts the classical myth to the contemporary

understanding of life by deconstructing the literary genre and narrative traditions through various techniques. Trickster artist frees the myth from its monological narrative and traditional theme and cunningly transforms it into a postmodern work that can be interpreted from an entirely different perspective.

In the ancient myth, Atlas, the son of the earth and Poseidon, is punished with carrying the world forever due to his rebellion against the Olympian gods. On the other hand, Heracles, born to Zeus and a mortal mother, Alcmena, is asked to bring three apples from the Garden of Hesperides, in one of his labours in which he is punished with servitude to Eurystheus. In her work, Winterson presents the encounter of these two mythological heroes punished by the gods from a contemporary perspective that is open to different interpretations. The modern version of the classical myth, *Weight*, has been analyzed in a wide range of criticism within this scope, ranging from existentialism to parody and from autobiography to feminism. Accordingly, by utilizing various literary instruments and combining different genres, the author adopts the classical myth to contemporary literature from a new view that questions the facts accepted as absolute truth via her trickster artist facets as a cunning transformer storyteller.

### **Jeanette Winterson the Trickster-Artist in *Weight***

Winterson begins her multi-layered work by drawing a subtle analogy affirming her trickster role as an exceptionally wise and cunning storyteller as follows: "The strata of sedimentary rock are like the pages of a book, each with a record of contemporary life written on it. Unfortunately the record is far from complete" (2005: ix). In addition to the quotation given above, the author also states from the very beginning that she will retell an already existing story by using "I want to tell the story again" (2005: xvi) as the recurring language motif in *Weight*. On the very first pages of her novel, Winterson hints she will lay bare the stories compressed between the strata mentioned above and, as a matter of fact, her own through them. The stories squeezed into these layers include the burden and regret of Atlas, the fear and "whys" of Heracles, the desperation and vulnerability of the dog Laika thrown into space in a capsule, and the perturbation of Zeus as Atlas and Heracles begin to contemplate on the burdens laid on them. On the other hand, in the rest of the novel, the author evokes admiration due to blending her adroitness and experience in various disciplines such as philosophy, science, politics, and religion with her writing skills. Within this framework, Hyde's account of the trickster figure in the ancient myths stating that "[...] the origins, liveliness, and durability of

cultures require that there be a space for figures whose function is to uncover and disrupt the very things that cultures are based on" (1998:9), is virtually used to refer to prominent figures in literature like Jeanette Winterson who displays a transformative and questioning approach to the ancient myths on which cultures are built. In the light of Hyde's argument given above, it is clear that Jeanette Winterson incarnates the trickster-artist role properly as a cunning story-teller of the ancient myth in her novel titled *Weight*. The author goes beyond the limits of genres and establishes a combination of genre traditions of fantasy, epic tale, and autobiography through a revisionist practice. The first thing Winterson does is to set her work free from the third-person narrative constraint of the myth tradition. Transferring the narration to the first-person viewpoint- to Atlas and Heracles strengthens the author's hand to establish an account based on a free imagination. Hence, the author delegates account to these mythological characters, and she takes them out of the epic's lofty world by degrading them into ordinary mortals' real world. These two anthropomorphized heroes of bone and flesh, with their sound and evil features, including desires, boundaries, and trepidations, express themselves in a fiction wholly relieved of the monologic narrative style of the epic convention.

Atlas, the prominent of the two main characters that Winterson builds her story on, has been regarded as a minor character as one of the titans of "inferior generation" or even a "villain" in the ancient myth, and not taken as the subject to literary adaptations and theoretical studies due to the shortage of his action and character. However, the author transforms this minor character of the ancient myth as the protagonist of her work, *Weight*, and uses him as a medium to tell her own story. The protagonist Atlas starts the novel by telling his story, desperately acknowledges his fate and utters from an existentialist perspective that: "My name is Atlas – it means 'the long suffering one'" (2005:22). Atlas's situation, caught between "desires and boundaries" and "choice and fate," completely overlaps man's entity from Sartre's existentialist vision. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the founder of modern existentialism, clarifies the existence of man as below: "First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterward, defines himself. [...] he himself will have made what he will be" (1993:35). In this framework, Sartre argues that man is born into a world that he describes as a kind of "void" or "mud." He learns to pull himself out of the mud in this miserable world where he was born "condemned to be free" thanks to the awareness he gained as the consequence of living in constant anguish. Thus, the man who has come to exist can make sense of existence and the universe by using the power

of choice. By reshaping the canonical myth through her ideology and attitude towards life and using it as a tool for what she wants to tell, the author also presents an existentialist perspective through her protagonist Atlas with whom she identifies herself. Winterson, associating the burden of Atlas with that of her own, makes the following confession: "When I was born my mother gave me away to a stranger [...] It was her decision, my fate. Later my adopted mother rejected me too. [...] Having no one to carry me, I carried myself. My girlfriend says I have an Atlas complex" (2005:97). As the writer declares, her burden arises both from the enigma of biological lineage and being deprived of family intimacy where she can take shelter, feel safe, and relieve her burden. Stating that she has no information about her biological parents, Winterson ironically claims that "They live on a lost continent of DNA" (2005:140). The writer refers to both mythology and then to the Atlantis Ocean, named after the rebellious titan Atlas. While indicating that all the information about her family is lost in the depths of Atlantis and consists of assumptions, she, so to speak, dances with the words through the skilfully used metaphors. Winterson, the trickster storyteller, attributes all these to her own obscurity. Moreover, within the existentialist point of view, the author evaluates being parentless as a chance since, according to Winterson, to pursue believing in the parents' fiction prevents individuals from building their own stories. Furthermore, she adds: "I could not allow my parents to be the facts of my life. Their version of the story was one I could read but not write. I had to tell the story again" (2005:139). Additionally, the author identifies her burden with that of Atlas and draws attention to the overwhelming burden of freedom that embraces the existentialist view of Sartre, pointing out that freedom is a sort of condemnation of man, making him responsible for everything he does. The feeling of belonging nowhere paradoxically provides the author with both infinite freedom and unbearable anguish. She bears the burden of coming from an uncertainty yet taking it as a chance for self-realizing; and associates Atlas' awareness of his real burden that what he carries is not the cosmos but, in reality, is himself moving between "boundaries and desire."

Hence, just as rebellious Atlas, the provocative author Winterson questions her fate and seeks a way out. The writer, whose childhood coincides with a difficult period after the Second World War, grows up with fear and dreams in a family that cannot erase the war's weary traces from their lives. Her passion for Atlas begins at that time when she tries to dispel her fears through her dreams, "looking at the glowing globe" (2005:139). Within this framework, Winterson

examines the hero's psychology crushed by a hegemonic power by infiltrating into Atlas's inner world. During a conversation between Atlas and Heracles where they claim to be the strongest, Atlas desperately reveals that though they are strong yet not free and says: "There is no such thing as freedom, [...] Freedom is a country that does not exist" (2005:51). As is known from the ancient myth, Atlas is sentenced to carry the world eternally, though, according to Winterson's incisive detection, "His punishment was a clever one—it engaged his vanity" (2005:70). Atlas also realizes that what he, in reality, carries is himself rather than the world. Trickster artist Winterson highlights the self-awareness of Atlas in her wisely fictionalized novel through a metaphorical approach. The author confirms her literary talent with the word games she uses through the double meaning of the word "Atlas," which points to both the world and the character himself. Known for his strength and rebellion against the Olympian gods in the classical myth, Atlas ironically indicates his desperation in the face of the hegemonic order in Winterson's *Weight* when he states: "There is no why. There is only the will of the gods and a man's fate" (2005:50-51). Winterson leaves Atlas with his introspection, where he accounts for his past. After a long time, Atlas goes back to his garden Hesperides, the garden that Winterson calls heaven, where he once has spent the prime of his life with his daughters, finds the garden in ruins. Thereupon, he evaluates his mistakes in the past and confesses his regrets to himself as follows: "Why had he fought against the gods? He already had more than enough. [...] what had the war achieved? [...] Why had he not recognised the boundaries of his life, and if he had recognised them, why did he hate them so much?" (2005:70) In reality, Atlas's self-confession emphasizes the idea of being content with what one has in the face of the meaninglessness of life from an existentialist perspective, in line with the feelings and thoughts of Winterson. Within this scope, as a cunning and wise storyteller, the author encourages the reader to ponder on the ambiguous questions about the *raison d'être* of humankind in her work via an amalgamation of an existentialist perspective with autobiography.

As one of the most important heroes of the mythological canon, the half-god Heracles also plays a central role in Winterson's novel. However, the writer attaches more human traits to his immense strength than the ancient myth. Heracles, who is praised to the skies for his strength and heroism in the ancient myth, is mentally degraded to an extremely weak status in Winterson's work. The author depicts him as "a joke or a god" (2005:35) - a comic male figure who is devoid of morality, intelligence, and sentiment; Winterson also draws attention

to his bodily strength, vanity, and addiction to sexuality. Briefly stated, Heracles, presented as Atlas's antagonist and the embodiment of hegemony in Winterson's novel is essentially a cowardly hero at heart blinded by his arrogance and driven by his desires. The third-person narrator portrays him as a rapacious character who constructs his life on precisely human desires of "A wife, a mistress, plenty of children, plenty of wine, a reputation [...]" (2005:116). Furthermore, the following point confirming how Heracles is far from being wise enough to contemplate on a subject or even ask a logical question is quite remarkable: "it's the first question that Heracles has ever asked, other than Which way? and Are you married?" (2005:116). Additionally, Winterson's discrediting of Heracles, the most powerful hero of the myth tradition with great mastery and cunningness, also leaves him with the overwhelming fear of starting to ponder on the question why as the quotation given as follows: "[...] he felt an emotion he hardly recognized. He did not dare to name it. Heracles, his strength bound without motion, was having a panic attack. His only company was the hornet buzzing outside of his head, the thought-wasp, buzzing. Why? Why? Why? (2005: 66-67)". Heracles in the ancient myth stands out only in his power and fulfilling the commandments of the gods. Winterson isolates Heracles from his mythological immunity for a while and leaves him with human feelings. These emotions are those that the strong hero is not used to and, ironically, is afraid to face. Gigantesque Heracles, who has overcome all sorts of troubles, is confronted with his own internal conflict for a moment through the writer's cunning wisdom. Thus Winterson creates a coward character who challenges the hero archetype figure. She foregrounds an unmasked version of Heracles by highlighting the shadow archetype.

On the other hand, upon Heracles' beginning to question his situation, and asking Atlas why they have to do god's orders, Zeus becomes anxious. Because according to Zeus and the hegemonic order, he represents real heroes do not think and question. On the contrary, they are responsible for fulfilling the tasks assigned to them with great loyalty without question. Hence this is what is expected of Heracles as well. However, Heracles, captured by a strange feeling of shame and concern, often thinks of Atlas, who has cheated and pulled the world down on his shoulders. He never thinks of self-inquiry; on the contrary, he "Blame[s] Hera. Blame[s] the gods for setting him impossible tasks; tasks that any other man would have failed" (2005:109). The provocative writer Winterson, through the thoughts and attitudes of Heracles and Zeus, not only challenges the authority but also assumes a sceptical approach to the universal laws existing since the beginning

of humankind with a complete trickster writer's agility. One of the most significant things the author does in her work is to lead the reader to overturn the order that she thinks should have already changed by amazingly transforming Atlas and Heracles's classical epic, one of the representatives of ancient traditions with great intellect and skill. In reality, what Winterson does is raising awareness. The last but not the least, Winterson literally deserves her title of trickster artist and succeeds in bringing the great Heracles and Zeus, the hegemonic power they represent in her work, *Weight* back to the agenda with a questioning and open-ended interpretation from a completely different frame.

Another skill of the author that attracts attention is her creativity, breaking the rules and pushing the boundaries in the process of transformation of the classical myth in the light of Hyde's explanation regarding the trickster archetype reads as follows: "the best way to describe trickster is to say simply that the boundary is where he will be found—sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, sometimes erasing or moving it, but always there, the god of the threshold in all its forms" (1998:7-8). In parallel with Hyde's argument, the author drags up the unquestionable truths in the epic world through mythologizing and de-mythologizing devices, interprets the canonical text, and challenges its traditions. Within this context, as aforementioned, Atlas and Heracles- two acquiescing characters are transformed into those who question their life and the duties imposed by the gods. Even comic Hercules, in the version of Winterson, who has spent his life killing, raping, and fulfilling the labours given by the gods, now begins to ponder on the question "why." The obedient hero knows what to do and, in reality, fulfils the duties assigned to him by the gods. However, he inwardly starts to question out why he is doing gods' bidding and falls into a dilemma for the first time. While the author preserves the myth's magical atmosphere, she sprinkles the stories and messages she wants to tell by mythologizing. In this regard, Hera's encounter with Atlas in the Hesperides garden, where Atlas fetches apples for Heracles, is worth considering. The third-person narrator, Winterson, with the wisdom she possesses, reaffirms the trickster figure, intervenes, and states:"Earth is ancient now, but all knowledge is stored up in her. She keeps a record of everything that has happened since time began. Of time before time, she says little, and in a language that no one has yet understood. Through time, her secret codes have gradually been broken. Her mud and lava is a message from the past. Of time to come, she says much, but who listens?" (2005:72-73)

As may be deduced from the quote above, the author attributes new meanings to the classical myth and gives messages with the blend of the first and third-person accounts. Hera's wisely uttered words may be given as another example from the novel, which is pullulated with the author's messages. "Humankind continues in ignorance because knowledge destroys them. Everything that man invents he soon turns to his own destruction (2005:73)." Hera's claims above about how humankind turns knowledge into a weapon against himself are highly ironic and thought-provoking. Hera, one of the other outstanding characters in Winterson's work, appears as the goddess with her magnificent beauty along with her vengeful and envious features yet, more importantly, as the mentor of Atlas and Heracles enabling them to face themselves. She is Winterson's backbone facilitating her work in this sense. Hera is aware of what will happen to Heracles with the female foresight and wisdom, and she holds a mirror to him so that he could see the facts. The wise woman Hera perceives that Heracles will bring his own end and warns him about it. Because she wises up that Heracles' strength is, in reality, a tool he uses to conceal his cowardice. Eventually, Hera's prophesy is confirmed when Heracles's jealous wife hopes to secure his loyalty by magical instruments and accidentally causes his death. Within this scope, Hera, the wise goddess with the heightened awareness, ironically smiles as it was something that she has already known.

Winterson's associating the encounter of Atlas and Heracles in the ancient myth with the Adam and Eve case, one of the fundamental narratives of the Christian faith, and then with her ideology is an example of another situation confirming her provocative and cunning author characteristic. The author ironically correlates The Garden of the Hesperides in her work to Eve's Garden of Eden. The Garden of the Hesperides, which Atlas claims having "a golden apple tree" given by his Mother Earth to the goddess Hera for "her wedding day," is tended by him, till Hera learns that his daughters have eaten the apples. Therefore, both Atlas and his daughters have been expelled, and the dreadful serpent Ladon begins guarding the garden. However, Atlas's reaction to his daughters eating sacred golden apples is different from the manner of the Christian sphere upon the expulsion of Eve from The Garden of Eden. He ironically accounts for this situation and says: "Who could blame them, the tree, sweet-scented and heavy and the grass underneath it wet with evening dew? Their feet were bare and their mouths were eager. They are girls after all. I did not see the harm myself, but the gods are jealous of their belongings" (2005:18). Atlas's statement is just one of the various examples that may be given from

the work that reflects the distance the author has placed against religion and, therefore, Christianity parallel with her ideology. Most importantly, Winterson parallels the forbidden fruit to the existentialist view as "a symbol of the desire to overcome the limits of your own existence" (Janković: 2008, 206). She also uses the following expressions when referring to her stepmother, from an existentialist and religious perspective oscillating between the notions of "choice" and "fate": "My mother said we all have our cross to bear. She paraded hers like a medieval martyr, notched, gouged, bleeding. She believed in Christ, but not in his crossbearing qualities. She seemed to forget that he had borne the cross so that we don't have to. Is life a gift or a burden?" (2005:140). Within this scope, such notions as "boundaries" and "desire" recurrently appear to represent Atlas' and Winterson's inner contradictions about their choices and the realities that they call their fates.

Another feature that makes the British author Winterson a trickster artist in rewriting the ancient myth is that she meticulously deploys parody, one of the indispensable transformative devices of postmodern literature. Linda Hutcheon defines parody as "repetition with critical difference" (1985: 32) and draws attention to power of irony. Within this framework, Winterson's *Weight* is an affirmation of Hutcheon's special assessment of parody. Because, embracing Hutcheon's account while adapting the old myth to the new world order, she pushes the boundaries of the myth's narrative and establishes stances open to new ideologies in a highly cunning way. Moreover, Winterson's choice of using parody "results in a multi-generic text-an ingeniously woven web of contemporary and classical intertexts and discursive types- with which the authors bring about semantic and stylistic innovation." (Staels, 2009:116). Benefiting from all the advantages offered by parody, the author, through irony and ridicule, deconstructs the sublime text not only in subject level and characters but also the language and the style.

Heracles, who was parodied in Athenian comedies as early as the fifth century in terms of the convenience of his character traits, correlated with the classicist scholar Dana Sutton's assessment as "The Greeks were always fond of stories of intelligent rascality, and their national heritage of mythology is replete with tales of roguery and tricksters" (1980:150) also gets his share of parody in this work of Winterson. The third-person narrator comments about Heracles, "Wily Heracles had no brains but plenty of cunning" (2005:83), or degrading him to a clownish hero ridiculously as follows when Heracles goes to kill the two-hundred-headed Ladon serpent; "There he goes, the hero of

the world, thick-cut as his olive-club. Is he a joke or a god? [...] One or the other will be the death of him. Which is it?" (2005:35). In the same chapter of the novel, Heracles draws an ironic analogy between the Hydra and the marriage, saying, "The Hydra, now she was a worm. Chop off one head, and straight away there'd be another glaring at you. Like marriage really" (2005:35). Furthermore, Atlas' use of wordplays and exciting metaphors when talking about his mother and father is quite remarkable in that Winterson deploys the tactics involving subtle wit that reaffirms her trickster role. Atlas compares the relationship of his parents to the tectonic movements of the earth, saying: "When my mother threw a plate across the room, the whole world felt the crash. [...] until her rage fissured and crumpled entire cities or forced human kind into lava-like submission" (2005:12).

In the process of retelling the ancient myth, as revealed through the examples above, Winterson abstracts the epic from its flowery language and lofty narrative; and uses a straightforward and, at times, vulgar language in her work. From numerous instances showing how the author deconstructs the language of the ancient myth, "He was a simple boy. Women, like wood, were for splitting and for keeping him warm" (2005:60) may be given. At this juncture, the carnivalesque theory coined by Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin comes into play. Bakhtin clarifies it as follows: "Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides [...]" (1981:23). Winterson's embracing Bakhtin's theory of carnivalesque facilitates annihilating the distance between "high" and "low" and degrading the lofty text to a low one self-reflexivity and self-discovery of both Winterson's characters and herself. In line with the Russian theorist's argument above, the author overturns all the epic world's hierarchical boundaries. Moreover, eliminating all the rules, prohibitions, and inequalities in the epic tradition, she takes advantage of the novel's polyphonic structure and freely conveys her messages to the reader. In the interest of brevity, the trickster author Winterson by both ridiculing and ironizing the canonical myth of Atlas and Heracles, deconstructs the sacred text thoroughly, correlated with both carnivalesque and Hutcheon's assessment that parody subverts or in her words, "de-detoxifies" all accepted beliefs and ideologies. The Canadian theorist's analogy between irony and the use of quotation marks that emphasizes "doubleness" in the meaning is what Winterson does in *Weight*-when saying something to put a quotation mark around what is said, is one of the most outstanding features of postmodernism.

Finally, the other attention-grabbing point about Winterson is that the author combines the myth with science and technology and frees her new story from temporal and spatial boundaries. While telling the world's formation in one part of her story, the author appears to possess a sound knowledge of science as if she is writing a documentary about geology. Her expertise in this field, accompanying her superior literary skill, brings about the excellent literary work *Weight*. To quote: "Earth had bacterial life, but no oxygen, and oxygen was a deadly poison. Then, in a quiet revolution as explosive in its own way as a star, a new kind of bacteria, cyanobacteria started to photosynthesise – and a bi-product of photosynthesis is oxygen. [...] The rest is history. (2005:4) Furthermore, the author's equation of the world to a grand experiment continues as follows; "Make a list. Look around you. Rock, sand, soil, fruit trees, roses, spiders, snails, frogs, fish, cattle, horses, rainfall, sunshine, you and me. This is the grand experiment called life. What could be more unexpected" (2005:6). Accordingly, the trickster author who enriches Atlas and Heracles' myth with scientific discourse whimsically matches Atlas with the dog Laika sent to space in the Russian spaceship Sputnik in 1957. While hanging in the vacuum of space suffering from their burdens, they both realize that peace and happiness could only be reached by getting rid of their boundaries. After his encounter with Laika, Atlas no longer feels the weight of the burden he carries. Because he carries what he is happy about and does not weigh him down. Eventually, he decides to get rid of the burden - the world on his shoulders he has been suffering for a long time. Through the third-person narrator, Winterson expresses Atlas's enlightenment and self-discovery with the following statements; "Why not put this down?" (2005:149). As soon as Atlas realizes the burden he has been questioning thanks to the dog Laika, he decides to get rid of it, that is, to put the globe down. Thus, rejecting the role assigned to him by the gods, the hero realizes that it is time for a change. Atlas's self-realization and self-awareness reflect the awareness of almost all the characters in work, especially the author's. The cunning and wise storyteller Winterson reconstructs the ancient myth by tackling many issues while transforming it. She touches on many vital issues regarding the reason and meaning of human existence, from the sceptical approach to the concept of absolute truth to the uneasiness within which the hegemonic order lives. Achieving this requires some high merits that only trickster artists like Winterson can possess: knowledge, experience, awareness, and research alongside outstanding writing ability.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, one of the preeminent names of contemporary English literature, writer, journalist, and academic Jeanette Winterson, in her work titled *Weight*, retells the myth of Atlas and Heracles, and takes an approach embodying all features of the trickster artist. The most outstanding characteristics of modern tricksters are they are cunning storytellers and transformers. Within this scope, Winterson use of "I want to tell the story again"(2005: xvi) as her recurring language motif, hints that there is another purpose of retelling the story which is hidden between the lines. The main reason why the author chooses the myth of Atlas and Heracles mainly seems to be that this myth is favourable in the sense that it mediates what she wants to tell. Because the story she wants to retell is not just the story of these two mythological heroes. First and foremost, the author wants to tell her own story, that she states lineage of which is based on a missing DNA continent; then she respectively handles many more issues involving the anguish of humankind as an entity between "boundaries" and "desire," the hegemonic order she thinks should be changed, rituals of the Christian faith to which she does not belong, and the fact how humanity turns every new invention and progress against itself. The author conveys all these by transforming the ancient myth through further thought and interpretation from a wide range of perspectives, from parody to existentialism and mysticism to feminism. Moreover, the writer who blends the magical world of myth with different genres as autobiography, fantasy, and science-fiction reaffirms the transformer and cunning trickster artist properties. Known as a provocative author Winterson dislodges the conventional understanding of archetypes while deconstructing ancient myth facts through parody and carnival accompanied by mythologizing and de-mythologizing techniques. Accordingly, Winterson, who rewrites the ancient myth through both thematic and stylistic deconstruction and by employing irony and ridicule, constructs her work on a multi-layered account far from the epic's monologic tradition, and prioritizes self-reflectivity by yielding the floor for her characters. By combining her knowledge of science with her authorial skills, Winterson appears as a trickster artist, making significant contributions to the creation of a culture in which generations of thinking, analyzing, and questioning will grow.

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### Ek Beyan

Yazarlar çalışmaya eşit oranda katkı sağlamıştır.

