SITUATING THE SELF : A STUDY OF SELECT NOVELS OF JEANETTE WINTERSON

V. L. RINAWMI

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirement of the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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DECLARATION

Mizoram University

December 2010.

I, V. L. Rinawmi, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

(Candidate)

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that "Situating the Self: A Study of Select Novels of Jeanette Winterson" written by V. L. Rinawmi has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. The thesis is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted to any other University for any research degree.

(Dr. MARGARET L.PACHUAU)

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(V. L. RINAWMI)

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CHAPTER I

SITUATING JEANETTE WINTERSON WITHIN THE REALMS OF QUEER THEORY

Jeanette Winterson is one of Britain's renowned alternative literary figures and an inventive postmodern author. She was born on 27th August, 1959 in Manchester, England to unknown biological parents about whom she claims to feel no curiosity. Her fiction explores the nature and varieties of erotic love within the dynamics of queer theory. She is often described as one of the most controversial yet innovative fiction writers in contemporary English literature and although her fiction has entered the realms of the literary canon it still resists categorization. Winterson sees herself as a solitary literary prophet, much as the result of her own upbringing and her declared intentions are to create an ongoing body of work which challenges what she sees as the conventions within contemporary literature. This thesis attempts to examine aspects related to queer theory and its thematic centrality in Jeanette Winterson's texts, with especial references to the manner in which queer theory initiates the construction of the self in five of her novels: Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985), The Passion (1987), Sexing the Cherry (1989), Written on the Body (1992), and Art and Lies (1994). She blends many genres into her writings and these include fable, fairytale, fantasy, history, philosophy, lesbian writing, science fiction, magic realism and scientific studies.

Through a constantly evolving fictive structure and form which can be seen in her works, she willingly challenges literary convention on all fronts through her audacious and outspoken actions. She was adopted at the age of six weeks by Pentecostal parents who brought her up in the mill-town of Accrington. Her father John William Winterson was a passive and weak spirited person, while her mother Constance Winterson was a fervent evangelical Elim Pentecostal Christian. Hemmed in by her mother's devoutly religious worldview, she learned to read from the book of Deuteronomy[1], and was taught

to read and channelize her energy into preaching. She was raised to believe that she belonged to God and had been chosen by God, and because God was empowering her, she could do anything. Her mother who was described as a resolute, domineering woman, called herself "a missionary on the home front" [2] while constantly grooming Winterson to become a missionary. By the time she was eight she began writing and delivering sermons, impressing parents and peers alike with her precocious mastery of language. A zealous evangelist, her mother kept a tight reign upon her daughter's education, while restricting her experience of literature to the Bible.

Winterson had a difficult childhood, but that brought her to a legacy of self-confidence. In her house there were only six books, including the Bible and Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments. The fourth was The House at Pooh Corner. The fifth, The Chatterbox Annual 1923. Strangely enough, the sixth was Malory's Morte d'Arthur and it was this that started her life quest of reading and writing. She states, "I wake and sleep language. It has always been so. I had been brought up to memorize very long Bible passages." [3] Whenever she read her books, she felt "relief and exuberance, not hardship and exhaustion." [4] She would hide her books so that her mother would not find them. One day her mother noticed her collection and burned "everything".

Winterson writes:

> Not everything. I had started to shift my hoard to a friend's house and I still have some of those early books, faithfully bound in plastic, none of their spines broken. [5]

Winterson claims to have grown up in a home where there were no books, no paintings, and no records of classical music. Apart from learning at home, she also

attended Accrington Girls'Grammer School. She went through a difficult process of growing up in an ecclesiastical environment, and it resulted in a rediscovery, in terms of an awareness of her own perceptions about her notions on sexuality. It also culminated in the rejection of all social and moral values, viewed as such by her family and the church. This phase also became a rejection of uninteresting and compulsory heterosexuality and the world of religious dogma. During her teenage years, she discovered the wider worlds of literature and history in the public library, and became a fervent and devoted reader and it was at this time that she also realized her sexual orientation towards women. When she came out as a lesbian, her relationship fell out spectacularly with both her mother and the church and subsequently she left home at the age of sixteen. Deprived of all forms of love and abandoned by her adopted mother, she initiated a furious escape from social mediocrity, religious fundamentalism and sexual false pretences. In 1981, Winterson graduated in English from St Catherine's college under Oxford University. She supported herself through a string of unusual jobs that included working in a funeral home and serving as a domestic help in a mental hospital. Of her early experience with fundamental Christianity, she declares that although she no longer subscribes to any organized religion the spiritual influence in some way continues to inform her writing. She affirms however, that God was booted out and art burst in. She remains infused with the passion of the true believer, as one who believes in the redemptive power of stories and love.

She has gradually earned herself a reputation not only as a talented writer but also for her often hostile attitude towards critics regarding her lesbian love life. Her debut in 1985 thus aroused much enthusiasm. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, her first novel was published when she was twenty three by Pandora Press. It is a semi-autobiographical

novel that tells the story of an adopted orphan who struggles with her love for God and her love for women and it is a unique coming-of-age story. Her work was considered highly original. She became especially well known when the novel was made into a television drama series for her screenplay in 1990. This novel won the Whitbread Novel Award in 1985, and she also won the British Academy of Film and Television Arts award (BAFTA) for best drama in 1990 and Prix d'Argent award for best script at the Cannes Film Festival in 1991. She has been a full time writer since 1987. In 1985, following Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit; she published a comic novel entitled Boating for Beginners which received little attention. She received the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize for The Passion (1987), the E.M. Forster award from the Academy of Arts and Letters for Sexing the Cherry (1989) and in 2006, Winterson was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to literature. In 1999, she received the International Fiction Prize for Experimental Literature (Italy), and in 2005, the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book). She was chosen as one of the 20 "Best of Young British Writers" published by Granta. [6] All these novels as well as her later works, explore themes that are related to feminism, fantasy, sexuality, history, and myth with lyrical and imaginative prose. One of her later works, entitled The PowerBook (2000), also debates upon aspects that are related to cyberspace and virtual reality.

Predominantly due to her own life experience, themes related to religious, familial, and sexual betrayal find a salient place in her novels. Winterson herself states that she has often been involved with women who were married, because to her anything outside marriage seems like freedom and excitement and this has been reflected especially in her works such as Written on the Body and The Passion. Her writings have

become a coherent reflection of her ideology in terms of the narrator's tone, the outcome of the book and metafictional passages. Her novels have progressively de-emphasized plot and character; they examine the nature of love, time, art, sexuality, self-discovery, and the evocative power of language and storytelling. Her texts denote varying emotions as well as insistent poetic passages that are interrupted by encyclopedic quotations, newly molded fairy tales and myths, time travel and meta-narrativity, parody as well as the grotesque. The purpose of her writing, as she herself declares, is mainly to make people see things imaginatively and transformatively.

Libby Brooks comments that Winterson:

> divides like Moses and the Red Sea. Phoning round for context before I met her, I had never encountered such definitive: a sociopath, a seducer, fiercely loyal, impossibly demanding, a bitch, a blessing. For so many certainties, she must be a mystery. I was warned: she'll flirt, she'll charm, she'll give you what you want. So who did I meet? A brilliant child, compelling and easily bored, who one is moved to protect. A woman for whom self is absolute, keen and knowingly dissembling, who has found her place of safety behind the words. No comfort, no coward. She must be a bugger to love. [7]

Winterson is also the author of the experimental novels <u>Written on the Body</u> (1992), <u>Art and Lies</u> (1994), <u>Gut Symmetries</u> (1997), <u>The Powerbook</u> (2000), <u>Lighthousekeeping</u> (2005), as well as a collection of essays, entitled <u>Art Objects</u> (1995). Her works have been translated into more than sixteen languages and she has been published in twenty eight countries. She lives both in London and Cotswold.

Much of her writing deals with the themes and problematic of history, arts, body, sexual identity, and how bodies and identities are connected to queer, and how monstrosity is also connected to it. A major concern on her texts focuses upon how the self is represented in contemporary writing at both a national and an individual level. This aspect thereby is engaged with different social and cultural contexts that shape the subject in various texts and it investigates the complex dynamic that informs the process of either creating or writing aspects related to the self. She was embraced by queer theorists and feminist scholars in terms of her postmodern interpretations of contemporary life. For her, modernism is a revolution of the word. To a large extent, Art Objects (1995) is Winterson's attempt to situate herself in relation to the tradition of modernism. She herself points out her partiality for the modernists, and a great deal of her allusions is to the heroes of modernism. She often invokes Virginia Woolf, and at the same time, she also incorporates T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and Gertrude Stein in her works. Her works both intertextually and stylistically are associated with James Joyce in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985); with T.S. Eliot in Sexing the Cherry (1989) (with its clearest intertextual references to Eliot's Four Quartets); with Virginia Woolf in Written on the Body (1992) and The Passion (1987); and with the poet, Hilda Doolittle in Art and Lies (1994). She wrote in Art Objects (1995) "I was in a bookshop recently and a young man came up to me and said 'Is Sexing the Cherry a reading of Four Quartets?' 'Yes,' I said, and he kissed me". [8] She not only denotes references to these writers in her works, but consciously undertakes to work collaboratively with them while creating her own body of work.

Winterson mentions the names of various poets and writers in her works. There is mention of William Blake, Swinburne, W.B Yeats and Christina Rossetti as literary figures. [9] Others are only alluded to, through popular phrases from the given author. For instance, she revels in having a "room of my own" [10], an obvious reference to Virginia Woolf, and she spontaneously utters "The importance of being earnest" [11] while alluding to Oscar Wilde.

She insists upon the discreteness and integrity of the artistic realm of the modernists while she associates postmodernism with the mass media, towards which she is ambivalent. "You are a slave to advertising, to fashion, to habit and to the media", [12] she charges the reader in Art and Lies. The way out of such slavery, for Winterson, is to return to real ideas which are to be found in books. Her writing in her own essay, "A Work of My Own", echoes not only Virginia Woolf's essay title, "A Room of One's Own", but also T.S.Eliot's concept of the artist as inheritor of an artistic tradition by working within a contemporary present. She states:

> I have to respect my ancestors and not try to part company before we know each other well. A writer uninterested in her lineage is a writer who has no lineage. The slow gestations and transformations of language are my proper study and there can be no limit on that study. I cannot do work without known work. Major writers and minor writers alike are vital. The only criterion is that they be true; that they had something a little different to say and a way of saying it that was entirely their own. To live along such writers is to live within a complete literary tradition. [13]

Lyn Pykett has called Winterson's work "post-modernist", she says:

> Winterson's postmodernism is post-modernist not in the sense of constituting a break with modernism or superseding it, but rather as a collaborative dialogue with modernism which continues what Winterson sees as a postmodernist project. [14]

Postmodernist techniques, modernist tradition, meta-fiction, and magical realism are, however, mere instruments that she deftly combines with a strong political commitment aimed at subverting socio-cultural power structures and, ultimately, at appropriating traditionally male-defined concepts for her lesbian politics.

Linda Hutcheon describes the postmodern self which Winterson also adhered to in her writing as:

> something in process, never as fixed and never as autonomous, outside history. It is always a gendered subjectivity, rooted also in class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. And it is usually textual self-reflexivity that paradoxically calls these worldly particularities to our attention by foregrounding the doxa, the unacknowledged politics, behind the dominant representations of the self and the other - in visual images or in narratives. [15]

Consequently, twentieth-century women and queer writers have sought for new systems of (re)presentation of female, gay, and lesbian identities, which rest not so much on the notion of subjectivity but rather on positional and performance. Winterson presents herself as an open text not only in her writings of fiction but also in her public performances. On the one hand, Winterson insists upon the fact that none of her novels are autobiographical and on the other hand, she also maintains in several interviews that

there is as much of her and her life in every one of her books as there would be in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. She explains that she was reinventing herself and remaking herself which was to her a conscious act and a creative act. Through aspects of autobiography, Winterson guides the readers through the facets of her life and in the process is also engaged in a search for the origins of the self, tracking the subject through the process of writing itself, by intermixing fact with fiction. She also chooses to render her life story in a narrative mode which straddles the generic divide between fiction and autobiography, in the production of a semi-autobiographical fiction, with an accompanying alter ego, "Jeanette" in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. The novel has been widely understood as semi-autobiographical as it narrates the story of an adopted girl, significantly called Jeanette, who grows up a lesbian inside a strict religious community. The novel is both the most obvious example of her realist impulse and her first conscious attempt at deconstructing reality. Jeanette (Winterson's alter ego) talks about her adoption and the path chosen for her, the plan that was laid out to her by her adopted mother in this manner:

> My mother [...] would get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the
> Lord:
>
> a missionary child,
>
> a servant of God,
>
> a blessing.
>
> And so it was on a particular day, some time later, he followed a star until it came to settle above an orphanage, and in that place was a crib, and in

> that crib, a child.[...] She said, 'This child is mine from the Lord.'[...] Her flesh now, sprung from her head. [16]

A lot of pressure was put upon Jeanette by her mother, in order that the latter's dreams be fulfilled:

> We stood on the hill and my mother said, 'This world is full of
>
> We stood on the hill and my mother said, 'You can change the
>
> world.' [17]

Jeanette discovered that everything in the natural world was a symbol of the Great Struggle between good and evil. [18] The novel chronicles the struggles of a young girl against a domineering mother and the strictures of religion. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit elucidates upon the story of Jeanette's quest for subjectivity and (homo)sexuality but rejects the traditional appropriation of the aspect of the self by the masculine. It emphasizes instead upon the mother-daughter bonding as a counter-narrative of conventional masculine bondage that highlights female specificity and gender difference. Similarly in all her writing her characters have the desire to go beyond what is already known along with the passion to go beyond what is common. In that way, they embrace uncertainty and the beauty they hope to find and achieve there demands a letting go, an escape from old values and traditions, and an openness, that is coupled with an alternative thinking and a passionate determination.

Winterson's works reveal that the category "woman" has been dissolved into a splintered mass of possibilities. Her writings continue to follow aspects that are related to the movement known as "lesbian-feminism" which emerged in the 1970s. This

movement was much more than just a group of lesbians who also happened to be feminists. As such lesbian writing has significantly aroused an unprecedented degree of interest. The most basic tenet of the lesbian-feminist movement was that lesbianism was "a choice women make in response to society," as Rose Weitz put it in her article from the 1984 lesbian-feminist anthology "Women-Identified Women". In the article she advocates within the framework of this movement that lesbians have not always identified themselves with women, nor have they seen themselves as dissidents. Lesbians have, for centuries, existed peacefully within romantic friendships, bisexual arrangements, or closet marriages and sometimes even take risks in terms of cross-dressing and living as men. The revolutionary moment of feminism asserted that women did not have to cross-dress, be an invert, be different, or be born dyke. A lesbian was they felt, the rage of all women condensed, to the point of explosion.[19] Such women were explosively angry at the way they were treated and they demanded freedom to create their own selves. As such the term woman is no longer a fixed point of closure, but rather, a dynamic process. The "new world" created by the Lesbian Feminist Movement was to bring about major changes in attitude towards lesbianism and the expectations of women in terms of what lesbian identification implies. Lesbian-feminists promoted lesbianism as a choice that all women can and should make in order to resist patriarchy and prevent in as much as is possible their private love lives from being directly controlled by patriarchal power. The relationship between feminist and gender criticism is, in fact, complex; the two approaches are certainly not polar opposites but, rather, they exist along a continuum of attitudes toward sex, sexuality, gender, and language. As such, Simone De Beauvoir had even suggested in The Second Sex (1973) that "one is not born a

woman, but, rather, becomes one." [20] For Beauvoir, gender is "constructed," but implied in her formulation is an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principal, take on some other gender. Lesbian texts tend to be valued by mainstream critics not for their lesbian content but for "universal" features such as an understanding of human experience and portrayal of character. [21]

Winterson's corpus also reveals in very seminal ways that feminist and queer movements are inherently different from one another. A brief overview upon lesbian and queer identities has been denoted within this chapter. The development of lesbian theory has revolved on the whole around two contemporary poles namely: woman identification and lesbian libertarianism, giving rise to definitions of the lesbian signs and assumptions about the lesbian way of life which, according to Paulina Palmer, are radically different. Women influenced by these poles question the concept of a unitary lesbian identity and a homogeneous lesbian community and culture. With the gradual separation of lesbianism from women and inevitably, lesbian from woman, lesbian has become a part of a single corporate entity: giving a new firm LESBIAN 'n' GAY, [22] or subsumed into the new product, QUEER. They are a predominantly post-feminist generation who used to regard feminism as their mother politics but that politics is gradually, more like a redundant patriarchy. Cherry Smyth observes:

> The attraction of queer for some lesbians is flavored by a rebellion against a perspective feminism that had led them to feel disenfranchised by the lesbian feminist movement ... the importance of identifying politically as a lesbian had obscured lesbianism as a sexual identity. [23]

There has gradually been a break with feminism. Queer theory ultimately displaces patriarchal gender hierarchy in favor of heterosexuality as the primary regulatory system. [24] It is vitally important for feminism to see heterosexuality as a gendered hierarchy and not just as a normative construction of cross-sex desire. By participating in queer politics and forging alliances with gay men, lesbians also challenge the concept of "separatism" and "women's space", and these are integral to lesbian feminist thought. Hence, some women who identify as lesbian have joined "Queer Nation", a New York direct-action group that was formed in the late 1980s with the aim of responding to the AIDS crisis and stemming the tide of violence against lesbians and gays. The recuperation of the term queer is originally a term of abuse which is aimed at homosexuals, but it has been reclaimed to them to announce their pride in their identity as gays and lesbians. It also allows for a focus on different sexual identifications such as bisexual, transsexual and heterosexual. The term queer has marked a shift in the study of sexuality from a focus on supposedly essential categories as gay and lesbian to more fluid or queer notions of sexual identity. Yet queer is a category still in the process of formation. The word "queer" represents:

> among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a monitorizing logic of toleration or simple political interest representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal. ... For both academics and activists, "queer" gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business in the academy.[25]

Queer theory is different from feminism and racial and ethnic studies in having been from the beginning, less invested in identity categories as the standpoint from which one might perform scholarly or political work. Although many people believe that queer theory is only about homosexual representations in literature, it is also significant to note that it also explores the categories of gender, as well as sexuality, that is, the contestations of the categorization of gender and sexuality. Theorists claim that identities are not fixed, they cannot be categorized and labeled because identities consist of many varied components and that to categorize by one characteristic is wrong. Queer is an attitude, a look, a style and also calls attention to itself because it is cheeky, provocative and subversive. Queer demonstrations include kiss-ins, leaflet and manifesto distributions, and other "in your face" displays of same-sex affection in public to make their well-known overall point slogan: "We're here, we're queer, get used to it!" [26] Winterson was already part of a new generation of queer writers. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is not so much a coming-out novel as a portrait of the artist as a young lesbian. This was a significant political shift as Ducker writes:

> I want to reflect on Winterson's writing within the wider perspective of the feminist and lesbian writing, both theoretical and imaginative, which precedes her work. The early feminism of the late 1960s and 1970s, created both the context and the audience for her work. Winterson transforms, extends and subverts many themes that were common to the writing which wasn't shy of labels, or of slogan, the writing which proclaimed itself radical, feminist, lesbian. [27]

Her lesbian politics coincide with but are not subsumed by the feminist, philosophical or historical interests in her work. Tracing back its history, in the 1970s, a feminist cultural anthropologist, Gayle Rubin, first introduced this concept of sex/gender system. It was system which problematized the naturalized relationship between the two concepts. By analyzing the anthropological theories of Claude Levi-Strauss and psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, Rubin in her essay entitled "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy of Sex'" (1975) argues that sex/gender system is:

> the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied.[28]

Queer theory in itself is a pairing of words coined by Teresa de Lauretis during a working conference on theorizing lesbian and gay sexualities that was held at the University of California, Santa Cruz in February 1990. In the feminist journal Differences 3.2 (1991), a collection of essays drawn from this academic conference, she writes, "[T]he term 'queer,' juxtaposed to the 'lesbian and gay' of the subtitle, is intended to mark a certain critical distance from the latter, by now established and often convenient formula."[29] By tracing some of the different usage of terms such as "homosexual," "gay," and "lesbian," de Lauretis returns briefly to the utility of the catch-all phrase, "queer theory".

According to Teresa de Lauretis, "[T]he term 'Queer Theory' was arrived at in the effort to avoid all these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any

of these terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead both to transgress and to transcend them or at the very least problematize them."[30]

In the first essay of the journal, a more sustained case for the term "queer theory" was made by performance theorist Sue-Ellen Case. She argued:

> Queer theory, unlike lesbian theory or gay male theory, is not gender specific. In fact, like the term 'homosexual,' queer foreground same sex desire without designating which sex is desiring.[31]

Case also argues that queer theory works "not at the site of gender, but at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself." She further suggested that "queer revels constitute a kind of activism that attacks the dominant notion of the natural. The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny."[32]

Queer theory, therefore, is both an academic and political tool which aimed at deconstructing a heterosexual society's view of "the natural" and remains an inherently new branch of study or theoretical speculation. It has been named as an area only since about 1991. According to queer theorists, the double assumptions of queer are that sexuality is at work in all human endeavors, and that the sexual practices are neither static nor easily mapped in a moralistic world view. "Queer" has been often used as slang for homosexual or as an offensive homophobic abuse. Queer theory emerges from theorists such as Teresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, David Halperin and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. As Sedgwick eloquently connotes, "Queer is a continuing movement, motive - recurrent, eddying, troublant. ... Keenly, it is relational, and strange."[33] Queer is often seen by many critics as something connected with the categories of "lesbian" and "gay" in order to variant sexualities and genders. Many believe that the framework of gay and lesbian

studies comprise such topics as hermaphrodites, transgender, cross-dressing and even gender ambiguity and gender corrective surgery. In general, "queer" is a term used to describe identities and practices that can highlight the instability in the supposedly stable and casual relationship between anatomical sex, gender, and sexuality. The identities and practices have the potential of unveiling this relationship as an ideological fiction of normalized heterosexuality. [34]

Immensely influenced by the works of Michel Foucault, namely History of Sexuality: Volume 1 (1990) and Power/Knowledge (1980), queer theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self. It also encapsulates arenas which include gay/lesbian studies, and a close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities. Whereas gay/lesbian studies focus its inquiries into "natural" and "unnatural" behavior with respect to homosexual behavior, queer theory expands its focus to encompass any kind of sexual activity or identity that falls into normative and deviant categories. Foucault argues that the assumptions about sexual orientation; sexual interests and sexual classification of an individual should not be merely based on social constraints. In his work Foucault and Queer Theory (1999), he defines queer theory as the theory of sex and gender within the larger field of queer studies. This shift in influence can also be seen in feminism and postcolonial theory. Based upon Foucault's theory on the formation of identity, queer theory is a post-modern line of thought that counters the normative discourse of identity. Rejecting defined categories of male/female, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, queer theory deconstructs the hegemonic heteronormative discourse which dictates the intelligible sexes and permitted identities [35] and states that "queer politics attempts to translate the

deconstruction of heteronormative categories into pragmatic steps to change the general social conceptions and performances of sex, gender, sexuality and sociality." [36] As Foucault suggests, queer theory is a unique attempt to deconstruct not just these hegemonic social discourses but also the very categories which are responsible for the creation of identification with these structures and ideologies. The categories of sex, gender and sexuality are proven to be socially and historically constructed, devised through the power of discourse, historical social relations, and repetitive acts of performativity. Queer theory and its agenda denaturalize and deconstruct the understandings of these categories. From Foucault onward, scholars of sexuality have had to contend with the fact that homosexuality and heterosexuality entered history and discourse together, and in that moment near the end of the nineteenth century "queer" acquired a sexual valence which it had lacked in nearly four hundred years of usage. It is noteworthy to mention that queer theory is a field of study which does not assume itself as a better version of gay and lesbian, or a conspiracy against the accomplishments they have influenced. Queer theory follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the idea that sexuality is essential. Sexuality can be understood as a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact, to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment. In Jagose's view, queer's main achievement is to pay attention to the assumptions and naturalizations inherent in any identity category, and also in queer. [37]

According to William B. Turner, "the investigation of foundational, apparently unquestionable, concepts is central to queer theory." [38] It is the trend of queer theorists to deconstruct binaries, such as, mind/body, man/woman, and heterosexual/homosexual, in

order to destabilize them, and make them seem queer. As Sullivan suggests, instead of reversing, undermining or destroying the relationship of these binary categories altogether, queer deconstruction could, however, "highlight the inherent instability of the terms, as well as enabling an analysis of the culturally and historically specific ways in which the terms and the relation between them have developed, and the effects they have produced". [39] Queer theory is thus a very specific subset of gay and lesbian studies which are based upon the idea that identities are not fixed and do not determine who we are. Winterson, too, follows this concept which states that a person's identity is not fixed but is in transition. She embraces "queer theory" and was in turn embraced by queer theorists and feminist scholars who praised her postmodern interpretations on contemporary life. For Simone de Beauvoir and Monique Wittig, the identification of women with "sex," is a conflation of the category of women with the ostensibly sexualized features of their bodies and, hence, a refusal to grant freedom and autonomy to women as it is purportedly enjoyed by men. This statement is clearly reflected in the novels of Winterson with characters such as Jeanette in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Villanelle in Art and Lies and Dog Woman in Sexing the Cherry. The aftermath, that is, the destruction of the category of sex would be the destruction of an attribute, sex that has, through a misogynist gesture of synecdoche, come to take the place of the person, the self-determining cogito. In other words, only men are "persons," and there is no gender but the feminine. Wittig observes:

> Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes. Gender is used here in the singular because indeed there are not two

> genders. There is only one: the feminine, the "masculine" not being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine, but the general. [40]

In this way, Wittig calls for the destruction of "sex" so that women can assume the status of a universal subject. And in this way toward that destruction, "women must assume both a particular and a universal point of view". [41] In addition to gestures and acts, as well as speech, clothing, virtually all gendered behaviour and expressions can be considered performative. Esther Newton writes about drag:

> At its most complex, [drag] is a double inversion that says, "appearance is an illusion." Drag says [Newton's curious personification] "my 'outside' appearance is feminine, but my essence 'inside' [the body] is masculine." At the same time it symbolizes the opposite inversion; my appearance 'outside' [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence 'inside' [myself] is feminine. [42]

Winterson shares Newton's argument, if we take, for instance, in The Passion with Villanelle's character and physical appearance. Villanelle is a bisexual woman who cross-dresses as a man for money and for fun and who, in the story, shares with Venetian boatmen one of their exclusive male features, their webbed feet. In her, the binary opposition between man and woman is dissolved. Patricia Duncker labels Winterson's writing as "queer" which by her definition "calls attention to itself." [43]

Nikki Sullivan summarizes that queer theory is often constructed "as a sort of vague and indefinable set of practices and (political) positions that has the potential to challenge normative knowledge and identities."[44] Besides questioning the nature, performance, the stability as well as gender identities as earlier indicated, queer theorists

consider the intersections of sexuality and gender in relation to other constructed identity categories such as race and class. Queer theorists like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick mark that queer reaches out to dimensions that cannot be incorporated under gender and sexuality and she opines that such identity categories like "race", ethnicity, postcolonial nationality, gender, sexuality, and other identity-constituting and identity-fracturing discourses are crisscrossing with each other. She states that many:

> are using the leverage of 'queer' to do a new kind of justice to the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration, state. [45]

According to Teresa de Lauretis, queer is "another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual." [46] Many feminists in the 1980s had assumed that lesbianism met feminism in lesbian-feminism. Winterson does not consecrate femininity or signal a gynocentric world alone just because she herself is a lesbian. Queer theory uses the marginal – what has been regarded as perverse, "the other" to analyse the cultural construction of the centre: heterosexual normality. Widely regarded as Britain's most talented and provocative contemporary writer Winterson's novels are often humorous, but have serious reconsiderations of gender and sexual identity – particularly what it means to be a lesbian, as well as to the relativity of existence, desire and time. To Winterson, lesbianism is not mainly the erotic consummation of a set of political beliefs. In an interview in 1992, Winterson had made it clear that while she herself was a lesbian feminist, her work should not be seen under that definition. [47] Like many writers before her and the present, she is aware of the conflation of the book and the writer, of sexuality and textuality. In a rather scathing anecdote in an essay entitled "The Semiotics of Sex", Winterson tells of a young female student who approached her in a bookshop, informing

her that she was writing a comparative essay on her work and that of Radclyffe Hall, and asking Winterson if she could help. Her rather cutting reply, "Yes. Our work has nothing in common", provoked puzzlement in the student who responded with "[but] I thought you were a lesbian."[48] She later commented thus on the encounter:

> I have become aware that the chosen sexual[ity] . . . of one writer is, in itself, thought sufficient to bind her in semiotic sisterhood with any other writer, also lesbian, dead or alive. I am, after all, a pervert, so I will not mind sharing a bed with a dead body. This bed in the shape of a book, this book in the shape of a bed, must accommodate us every one, because, whatever our style, philosophy, class, age, preoccupations and talent, we are lesbians and isn't that the golden key to the single door of our work? [49]

What Winterson so vehemently objects to here, are the delimiting (binding) effects of the production of meaning and identity as singular; the fact that "women", "women writers", and the "sexual" are all deemed to be determinable concepts, and that all "women writers" who have "sexual relations" with other "women" are condemned to inhabit the malignant domain of the same, of homogeneity. In <u>'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading</u> (1998), Lynne Pearce comments that Winterson has often expressed an animosity towards being labeled, that is, being labeled as a lesbian author. She is "a writer who happens to love women" and "not a lesbian who happens to write."[50] As a writer who happens to be a lesbian, she has commented that the straight world is wilful in its pursuit of queers and to her it seems that to continually ask someone about their homosexuality is harassment by the back door. This is highlighted by Sappho[51] in <u>Art and Lies</u> (1994): "After loss of identity, the most potent modern terror,

is loss of sexuality, or, as Descartes didn't say, 'I fuck therefore I am.' Why do you ask me about my lovers, one, two, twenty?" [52] She has even attacked the "negative" use of the word lesbian in newspapers. She complained that tabloids have tended to emphasize the sexual orientation of gay or lesbian criminals. She has also emphasized that she would feel better if the tabloids weren't so anti-gay in their general outlook and especially if they would stop using "lesbian" as a negative adjective. She also denotes that she was considering upon getting the press council onto this because she had been collecting headlines from the tabloids and overwhelmingly, "lesbian" or "gay" were used negatively, as though once the sexuality is identified, the rest of the horror story including benefit fraud, underage sex, battering would naturally follows. She has also stated that even as there are some rotten no-good lesbians and some rotten no-good gay men, there exist rotten no-good heterosexuals too. She declared that sexuality need not be used a potential yardstick to justify one's actions. As a lesbian author, she wants to live in a world where the gender of one's lover is the least interesting thing about them. [53] She further argues that one must not "judge the work by the writer"; rather, one must "judge the writer by the work". [54] Winterson states that she does not want to read only books by women or only books by queers, rather she would read books so long as they are genuine because she finds that choosing reading matter according to the sex and/or sexuality of the writer is a dismal way to read. She comments thus:

> For lesbians and gay men it has been vital to create our own counter-culture but that does not mean that there is nothing in straight culture that we can use. We are more sophisticated than that and it is worth remembering that the conventional mind is its own prison. ... Literature,

> whether made by heterosexuals or homosexuals, whether to do with lives gay or straight, packs its supplies of energy and emotion that all of us need.[55]

Winterson goes on to state that:

> It is true that a number of gay and lesbian writers have attracted an audience simply because they are queer. Lesbians and gays do need their own culture, as any subgroup does, including the sub-group of heterosexuality, but the problem starts when we assume that the fact of our queerness bestows on us special powers. It might make for certain advantages (it is helpful for a woman artist not to have a husband) but it cannot, of itself, guarantee art. Lesbians and gay men, who have to examine so much of what the straight world takes for granted, must keep on examining their own standards in all things, and especially the standards we set for our own work.[56]

These elements have been predominant markers, which are central to the primary texts by Winterson. She remarks that the man who won't read Virginia Woolf, as well as the lesbian who won't touch T. S. Eliot, "are both putting subjective concerns in between themselves and the work".[57] It must also be realized that heterosexuality is the political system within which we are all born, and within which we all live-whether we call ourselves women, wives, mothers, feminists, straights, queers or dykes. Adrienne Rich states that heterosexuality is a political system, a compulsory political institution which affects us all differently.[58] She continues to denote that some of us are privileged within it, financially protected by the hetero-patriarchal state; but some of us are caged,

controlled, destroyed; and some of us are marginal to the structures of the institution. Predominantly, there is a difference between heterosexuality as an institution and as lived experience and she has denoted her own concept on that matter in terms of her narratives.

Queer theoreticians have worked only to make sense of an early deeply enriched set of questionings and abrasions of normality. For Annamarie Jagose, queer theory has been criticized for encouraging apolitical quietism when deconstructing identity categories and that to some critics might seem that queer might devalue analyses elaborated by lesbian and gay critics on homophobia and heterocentricism. [59] Jagose believes that lesbian and gay investing in authenticity and political efficacy of identity categories and the queer's tendency to problematize those very categories enthuse each other and open up "the ambivalent reassurance of an unimaginable future." [60] According to Rosellen Brown, Winterson's own attempt to insert lesbian desire and thereby profoundly upset and unsettle heterosexual hegemony is political. She laments that Winterson's stories feel like pretexts, for her vengeful hostility to men and marriage, her fascination with androgyny, and her compensatory vision of women as the stronger, more sane, and even physically dominating sex. [61] However, Brown's reading may be less than acute in drawing out the subtleties of Winterson's complex handling of issues relating to sexual politics and gender construction, but she nevertheless discerns that Winterson pursues her own peculiar vision of a lesbian feminist political agenda. The main focus of the reception of Winterson's novels has been two fold, these are related to the discussion in relation to her as a lesbian writer and in relation to her as a postmodern writer. Winterson's portrayals remain, nevertheless, intrinsically philosophical and generally in

keeping with the wider cultural concerns of the literary postmodern. She pursues her political agenda through a postmodern writing practice. [62]

Surveying Winterson's first three novels namely Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, The Passion, and Sexing the Cherry, Lynne Pearce explains that the popularity of Winterson's novels is linked to how the novels could be read as universalizing lesbian love and states that:

> This is an ambivalence that centers on the tension between the perception of romantic love as a non-gendered, a-historic, 'cultural universal', and as an 'ideology' which the specificities of gender and sexual orientation constantly challenge and undermine. By attending to the 'universalizing' discourses in Winterson's work the (heterosexual) 'general reader' can see the texts as transcending the particulars of sexual orientation; regard the fact that s/he is reading about lovers of the same sex as incidental and, consequently, a-political. Indeed, the fact that in her later fiction Winterson has shown many different combinations of love-relationship (homosexual and heterosexual) has, perhaps, contributed to the reader's impression of (great) 'Love' as being transcendent of history, culture, and gender. [63]

Michele Roberts viewed that though readers perceive Winterson as a lone genius, she is an unashamed intellectual, who has been nourished by queer theory, which declared that even gender was a costume. She herself has declared that for a while she had relationships with men as well as women. She has also viewed that heterosexuality and homosexuality are a kind of psychosis, and that the truth is somewhere in the middle.

To her, the homosexual is not an imitation of a heterosexual; the lesbian is not an inferior version of a man. [64] As mentioned earlier, Winterson says that it is helpful for a woman artist not to have a husband [65] and that she herself never wanted children, because having children would place work as secondary. She declared that she never wanted to be a part-time writer because work had to come first, which is selfish and self-directed. She affirms that she is glad to be part of changing attitudes, and with gay pride, the community needed people who were known and would stand up. She declares that she dislikes the word lesbian because it tells us nothing as its only purpose is to inflame. She writes mainly to bring about a change in consciousness and her fictions provides a valuable insight into what the postmodernists writers value; the creation of the “alienation generation” who are disillusioned with their own perception of the world with the subject (which suggests the human subject) and our concept of what it means to be called, or to name oneself, “a woman” or “a man”. Linked with this is the notion of a collective subject, which is, “women” and this becomes intrinsic to the parameters that Winterson has set for herself within the framework of her texts. Her fiction often concerns the vicissitudes of romantic love in her novels and the readers often liken their relationship with her novels to a love affair. Winterson argues that:

> If queer culture is now working against assumptions of identity as sexuality, art gets there first, by implicitly or explicitly creating emotion around the forbidden. Some of the early feminist arguments surrounding the wrongfulness of men painting provocative female nudes seem to me to have overlooked the possibility or the fact of another female as the viewer.

> Why should she identify with the nude? What deep taboos make her unable to desire the nude? [66]

Winterson's concerns in her first novel Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit echo those of early feminism, in terms of the relationship between mother and daughter. The mother/daughter dyad was a key subject for theory and fiction. [67] Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is both the most obvious example of her realist impulse and her first conscious attempt at deconstructing the opposition reality/fiction. In this semi-autobiographical novel, the protagonist Jeanette who was adopted as a child is left hopelessly sitting in the wake of her mother's electronic evangelism at the end of the novel:

> I stared into the fire, waiting for her to come home. Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of dismissing my own; she had tied a thread around my button, to tug when she pleased. [68]

Winterson's concern with the mother/daughter bond and its indissoluble passionate oppressiveness addresses an issue that is central to feminism as well as to queer. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is thus a significant example of lesbian fiction. It consists of the two genres that writers focusing on lesbian feminist themes in the 1970s most frequently employed the Bildungsromane and the Coming Out novel. She conveys a description of the naive but intelligent protagonist, Jeanette, who feels crampled by the narrow confines of her provincial surroundings, and her discovery of her lesbian orientation through a first love affair. It also denotes her subsequent betrayal of her lover who reverts to heterosexuality, and the punitive treatment meted out to her by her family and the community. It rejects a unitary model of subjectivity in favour of a delineation of

fantasy identities and multiple selves, also, in true postmodernist spirit. It envisages and depicts subjectivity itself in terms of narrativity. Jeanette, instead of uncovering a single, static identity, constructs for herself a series of shifting, fluid selves by means of the acts of storytelling and fabulation in which she engages. The focus which the novel places on woman-identified involvements reflects lesbian feminist attitudes, but its emphasis on the sexual aspect of lesbianism has more in common with the perspectives of the lesbian sexual radicals. While the network of female relationships which comprises Jeanette's life recalls Rich's theory of lesbian continuum, these relationships are not idealized or described uncritically. Her representation of passionate love, sexual, homosexual and otherwise are also drawn along the same lines and are reflected in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit where the concept of love has been defined by Winterson through Jeanette:

> I want someone who is fierce and will love me until death and know that love is as strong as death, and be on my side for ever and ever. I want someone who will destroy and be destroyed by me. There are many forms of love and affection, some people can spend their whole lives together without knowing each other's names ... Romantic love has been diluted into paperback form and has sold thousands and millions of copies. Somewhere it is still in the original, written on tablets of stone. [69]

In the presence of love, hearth and quest become one. Winterson also defines love through the unnamed ungendered narrator in Written on the Body: "No-one can legislate love; it cannot be given orders or cajoled into service. Love belongs to itself, deaf to pleading and unmoved by violence. Love is not something you can negotiate. Love is the only one thing stronger than desire and the only proper reason to resist temptation." [70]

Like art, love is liberating and it is also a form of self-transcendence. Winterson's commitment to an exploration of love in terms of agapeic tradition, with its sacrificial shedding of the erotic body, have made it more difficult than before for critics to sustain the idea of a lesbian feminist. In The Passion where Villanelle's heart is being imprisoned by the Queen of Spades as well as the Sappho sections of Art and Lies, she exposes the damage done to another group of abjected persons - women who love women - and the silencing of this damaged self. The wrong involved becomes the damaging and erasure of gendering, or the soft-voiced violence of sex. Winterson's narratives of romantic love and sexual passion seek in a different form, the experience of perfect union with another as demonstrated in the ecstatic practices of charismatic Christianity. She has consistently drawn on Biblical language and religious experience to produce her own exalted discourse of passion. She denotes that she grew up not knowing that language was for everyday purposes. She grew up with the Word and the Word was God. She had felt that language was something holy. [71]

The Dog Woman in Sexing the Cherry also talks about love in the most frustrating manner. She comments, "I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains. I wonder about love because the parson says that only God can truly love us and the rest is lust and selfishness." [72] The Dog Woman fell in love once, and it made her ponder "…if love could be that cruelty which takes us straight to the gates of paradise, if only to remind us they are closed forever." [73]

The Passion is a fiction of stories which recounts a sequence of events set in the past, but it does so with an eye on their relevance to the present. In The Passion, too,

Winterson destabilizes gender. Maria del Mar Asensio points out the gender ambiguities of both the narrators: “Henri’s androgynous features are as obvious as he displays traits which are conventionally regarded as ‘feminine.’” This includes sensitivity and distaste for killing, and he is ridiculed by his fellow soldiers for being unmanly. When Henri envisions his married life with Villanelle, he sees himself as “impersonating the traditionally passive, resigned, impotent fate of wives rather than the authoritarian destiny of husbands.” [74]

In Winterson’s opinion, the binary opposition between man and woman; heterosexual and homosexual; and mind/body are dissolved. These binary challenging bodies are, moreover connected with the construction of identities. On this aspect, Patricia Duncker, too, labels Winterson’s writing as “queer” which by her definition:

> ...calls attention to the instability of gender. Queer undermines fixed, settled, heterosexual discourses. The binary opposition between masculinity and femininity is fluid and unstable. [...]. Gender is performance. The body becomes ambiguous. Therefore, power and knowledge cannot be so easily allocated to the masculine in queer discourses. Queer is a gender game. Direct action rather than lobbying is characteristic of queer politics, just as within the revolutionary moment of feminism. Queer is an attitude, a look, a style. Queer calls attention to itself. Queer is cheeky, provocative, subversive. So far, so good. [75]

The best of queer emotion is pure, undiluted rage. Winterson’s fifth novel Art and Lies is a polemic book. It is an angry book which is not delicate, playful or self-indulgently vain. The definition of queer seems to go well with her general attitude and

her oeuvre. As such, in her texts, characters change gender "...either actually (Marlene in Boating for Beginners), or temporarily (Villanelle in [The Passion]), or their gender remains ambiguous (Lothario in Written on the Body)." [76] Another feature in Winterson's texts that destabilizes gender is her monstrous women. Villanelle is one of them with her webbed feet, but this is not the most monstrous of women in her oeuvre: The Dog Woman in Sexing the Cherry seems to supersede in her monstrosity. Here the uncanny appears to take precedence over the realistic, which also could be said for Villanelle, but in Villanelle's case there is at least a partial explanation to her monstrosity, which was that, her mother had made a mistake in a traditional ritual performed during her pregnancy. But Dog Woman is not explainable. Jana L. French states that "Dog Woman [...] defies sex and gender stereotyping not only because of her size and physical appearance, but also because of her independence from men." [77]

Another more language-concerned aspect is pointed out by Ute Kauer, which is that when gender becomes ambivalent and uncertain, trust in the narration is deconstructed. [78] The Dog Woman of the seventeenth century figure and her twentieth century double or counterparts are ridiculed by the general public as "monster". The Dog Woman was ridiculed on account of her appearance, exceptional size and strength, which are regarded as unfeminine. She was also ridiculed on account of her radical views and commitment to a politics of direct action. Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. As credible bearers of those attributes, however, genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically incredible. [79] In this case, gender is created by "action," and by the condition one enacts, one becomes a man or a woman by repeated acts which depend on social conventions, habitual ways of doing

something in a culture. [80] Hence, Dog Woman operates as the shifter in an in-between zone, between the binary of femininity and masculinity, showing that "[S]exuality and desire, then, are not fantasies, wishes, hopes, aspirations (although no doubt these are some of their components), but there are energies, excitation, impulses, actions, movements, practices, moments, pulses of feeling." [81] Laura Doan finds that Sexing the Cherry is Winterson's most successful example of lesbian postmodernism. She refers to its use of the strategies of both technique and ideology to illustrate its postmodernism. Doan reads the grafting of the cherry, with the outcome always being female, as a clear lesbian symbol. [82] While Lisa Moore considers the protagonist of Written on the Body as the best example of a "virtual lesbian." [83]

The relevance of Sexing the Cherry to the topic of lesbianism is more indirect as compared to her other writings. Lesbianism does not enjoy a privileged status but is represented, in a manner resembling the approach adopted by the lesbian sexual radicals and the supporters of Queer Politics, as one of a variety of sexual identifications and positions which include homosexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality, sadomasochism and celibacy. As Palmer puts it, "some episodes either refer to it directly or treat themes and motifs which play a central part in the lesbian cultural tradition". [84] For instance, in Winterson's innovative version of the story of the Twelve Dancing Princess[85] lesbian and woman-identified relationships take on political significance, denoting female courage, perseverance and resistance to patriarchal power. In Sexing the Cherry, Dog-Woman's huge stature and Jordan's ability to travel through time and space let her question gender and sexual identity, along with the limits and subjectivity of history, and the artificiality of narrative. As Winterson rewrites the fairy tale, she portrays the princesses as liberating

themselves, in some cases by violent means, from their husbands' dominance and control. Instead of the conventional having happy endings in marital bliss, as indicated by social conventions, they set up home together in a female community. She highlights the female characters through the various narratives assigned to them, which reveal the social and economic power which men wield, and also the brutal punishments which they inflict on women if they dare to defy or transgress the conventional role of object of exchange by forming sexual relationships with one another. With her open avowal of lesbianism and indifference to the literary establishment and stunning inventiveness, she captivates her own generation. She argues that in any discussion of art and the artist, heterosexuality is backgrounded while homosexuality is foregrounded. She writes:

> I am not suggesting that a lesbian who recognizes desire for a man sleep with him. We need not be so crude. What we do need is to accept in ourselves, with pleasure, the subtle and various emotions that are the infinity of a human being. More, not less, is the capacity of the heart. More not less is the capacity of art. [86]

This element is significantly located in Winterson's writing. Like other postmodern feminists such as Julia Kristeva and Monique Wittig, she proposes that the concept of gender is socially constructed and is not biologically inherent. Overall, the construction of the world in binary systems limits and excludes those people and stories that fall outside of the definitions. By not seeing the world as a strict duality, a greater multiplicity of people can be seen as creating its essence. People are not simply black and white, but they also line the many shades of gray in between. In "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan comments on Jeanette's (the narrator in <u>Oranges</u>

Are Not the Only Fruit) resistance towards the heterosexual hegemony in terms of her naturalizing the binary of good and evil to fit her lesbian view of life. Lesbianism, which is natural, is considered good and therefore heterosexuality is unnatural, it must be evil. [87] Throughout her literary works, Winterson describes sexual passion in the language and with the understanding of a parallel and informing spiritual faith and compassion.

Helena Grice and Tim Woods write:

> Despite the many differences between Winterson's texts, they return repeatedly to certain issues: love and desire; identity and subjectivity; artifice and aesthetic self-reflexivity; lesbian and gendered perspectives; the difficulty of forging a language suitable for the discussion of non-heterosexual love; and the relationships between narrative and reference... Winterson's fiction appears to resist simple categorization such as realist, postmodern, or fantasy, and the multiplicity of approaches to her fiction within the essays included within this volume attest to this resistance. [88]

The tendency to "return repeatedly to certain issues" is apparent in her texts where repetition continues to run even to the point of monotony. This repetition is made to produce a desired effect upon the readers. The "theme" that is repeatedly identified in such works as central to Winterson's writing(s) is lesbianism. Lisa Moore describes Winterson's oeuvre as a particularly powerful attempt to imagine a lesbian body without a liberatory political agenda. [89] Both Cath Stowers and Paulina Palmer are of the same opinion, who in their readings of Written on the Body and The Passion, argue respectively that "the trajectory of [Winterson's] work exceeds a gendered logic towards a specifically lesbian reconceptualization of female desire", [90] And that Winterson's

creation of a lesbian subject position or lesbian narrative space disrupts conventional heterosexual narrative structures and scripts, resulting in a re-figuration of female desire.[91] Whilst these readings portray Winterson's writing(s) as transgressing boundaries, for example, the boundaries of gendered logic and/or conventional heterosexual narrative structures, they simultaneously re-inscribe the texts in accordance with the logic of regionality by representing them as refiguring female desire and naming this reconfiguration lesbian.

In Sexing the Cherry as the narrative progresses, Jordan's desire to be more like Tradescant present him enmeshed in gender expectations which define appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. Throughout the novel he expresses anxiety at his inability to fulfill or reach that masculine teleological model of travel represented by Tradescant, whereby "voyages can be completed. They occupy time comfortably. With some leeway, they are predictable". [92] Like Henry, Jordan is surely more reminiscent of women travelers and his travels are infinite and labyrinth. In the text, Jordan's journeying is initiated by the very sight of the phallic signifier, namely the banana and his travels are an attempt to return to that sight of memory, and "to release whatever it had begun in me". [93] However, throughout the text, that phallic banana represents and becomes a symbol which is associated with Dog Woman while Jordan is represented by the more female fruit, namely the pineapple. This reflects her unsettled signifiers of gendered identity. In The Passion, Henri negates paradigms of heterosexual desire and the male model of control of the Other. Similarly in Sexing the Cherry, Jordan's explorations are more concerned with discovering a reciprocal love and desire to be wanted by both Fortunata and Dog Woman. Jordan justifies himself by saying that he is not like

Tradescant, because for Tradescant “being a hero comes naturally”. Rather than being a hero, Jordan would simply want his mother “to ask him to stay, just as now I want Fortunata to ask me to stay. Why do they not?” [94] Luce Irigaray has mentioned that identity is a male concept which is used to make sense of men’s necessary separation from their mothers. She claims that women have a closer relation to their mothers rather than men, Irigaray argues for the possibility of a female identity that is “unrecognized, unknown, unthought-of, as are reciprocity, fluidity, exchange” [95] and all these are clearly reflected in all of Winterson’s fictions.

Art and Lies is a meta-fictional work involving three characters namely Handel, Picasso, and Sappho, as they travel by high-speed rail to London. Each character presents a dramatic monologue that is interspersed with authorial comments that addresses sexuality, music, philosophy and art. This work emphasizes the ability and responsibility of art to move beyond the circumscribed and the known in order to open up more inclusive and far-reaching human possibilities. While Handel flees a hypocritical world, Picasso has to cope with having been continually raped by her brother and ignored by the rest of the family. Sappho is a reincarnating lesbian (or hermaphrodite) calling herself “a Sexualist” [96] whose poetic work is burned by Savonarola in the fifteenth century [97], and later maladjusted and re-interpreted again and again. All three suffer from patriarchal indoctrination and society as a whole. Winterson writes in Art Objects (1994) that “the question of ‘How shall I live?’ had to be addressed.” [98] In Art and Lies, She put the text into her life mainly because she believes that the true artist is somewhat connected with his/her writing. Through Art and Lies, she reveals both the beauty and the horror with which humans are confronted with on a daily basis. As the title suggests, Art and Lies is

more of a philosophical digression about art as artifice and invention than a story in the traditional sense of the term. It criticizes the Platonic notion of art as mimesis and reverences the power of the word. These three characters separately flee a London of the near future. They find themselves on the same train, drawn to one another through the curious agency of a book and stories within stories take the reader through the love affairs of an eighteenth century bawd and into a world of painful beauty. The text can be seen as an extended rift on art, sex, religion, social repression, the dangers of patriarchy, and everything that is wrong with the society. Each character is fleeing past traumas and present injustices. Alternating between these three narrators the text denotes a description of their unusual lives.

Love is discussed as a parallel to language and cultural forms of relating. James Wood, however, interprets this accretive process as a dulling return to sameness, finding only "identical mounds" of meaning while complaining that her language "appears to want to please itself—'not words for things, but words that are living things.'" [99] Winterson's sensate and erotic words in Art and Lies are both pleasurably self-directed when read. For instance, for Sappho, speaking another's words is sex, and the pleasure is always wrought in and through the exchange. It is through an emphasis on pleasure that she revitalizes postmodern language, so that words become living things.

Art and Lies also contains pieces about art and modernism as well as a defense of all her novels that are related to the technique of writing uncompromisingly intense poetic prose. Winterson, through double entendre, allusion, metaphor, and genre-blurring, reinvents literature as a form of play that creates a new space for the truth(s) of lesbian lives, love, and sex, a free(ing) space in which "lesbian" can exist liberated from the

over-determination of a homophobic and misogynist culture. [100]As Laura Doan has argued, Winterson's work is imbued with many of the conventions associated with postmodern historiographic meta-fiction in order to challenge and subvert patriarchal and heterosexist discourses and, ultimately, to facilitate a forceful and positive radical oppositional critique. [101] Broadly speaking, Winterson's concerns in her fiction, and the categories she interrogates, may be said to be history and the subject. She assumes that both of these have largely been regarded to have been inscribed in the past by male-centered, male-privileged narratives. She attempts to create and reconfigure such narratives so as to construct other cultural spaces within which it may be possible to enact alternative performances.

Winterson's novels are peopled and narrated by storytellers whose stories have their origins in lack and desire. Her heroes are sensitive people, who are often travellers and searchers, who are exploring their own selves. They are on a quest for the self and will cross boundaries in order to find it. They are, in that sense, revolutionary because they have the desire to go beyond what is already known, and the passion to go beyond what is common. With that, they embrace uncertainty. The beauty they hope to find there demands a letting go from old values, as well as openness and a passionate determination. The antagonists in Winterson's works display the exact opposite characteristics. They do not seek anything except stability, order, and law-like certainty and in some cases they are mainly interested in power or money. Her preference for the first set of characters and characteristics are evident from the passionately poetic language and visionary images with which she describes them in her fiction. They are also confirmed in her non-fiction,

essays and journalism. She makes constant references to the Bible, and to Greek mythology, while reinventing and reinterpreting them in order to reveal new perspectives.

In 2003 interview she declares:

> I've said that the seven books make a cycle or a series, and I believe that they do from Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit to The Powerbook. And they interact and themes do occur and return, disappear, come back amplified or modified, changed in some way, because it's been my journey, it's the journey of my imagination; it's the journey of my soul in those books. So continually they must address one another. And you don't know that at the time. You only know that when you've done enough of them. But that's why I say it is a series, and that's also why I say it's finished now with The PowerBook and there has to be new beginning. Whether or not I'll go on quoting myself in this new beginning, I don't know. [102]

Winterson is not restricted to what she has experienced or what she knows; she lets herself loose outside of her own dimension which makes possible "a total escape from Self". [103] Her novels reveal a preference for stories and romance over history. In her fictions, stories are less a way of trying to explain or understand the universe than of experiencing it, or alternatively, of sharing oneself against its confusions and complexities; less a way of understanding material history or "the historical process" than of transcending it or escaping from its confines. She denotes:

> What I do use are stories within stories within stories within stories. I am not particularly interested in folk tales or fairy tales, but I do have them about my person ... As a peddler, I know how to get a crowd round when I

> unpack my bag, and if one person buys the Dog Woman, and another, a pair of webbed feet, and another, a talking orange called Jeanette, and you, a forest of red roses on a salt-rock, then I'm glad of my wares, or should I call them my bewares? [104]

She also asserts that by telling stories and making them what we will, which is what inevitably happens (and that includes history too), "we have a way of keeping it all alive, not boxing it into time". [105] In the chapter "Deuteronomy", in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, she also outlines her preference for keeping history in untidy knots interwoven with stories, because clearly stated facts are easily discarded when they become uncomfortable. And besides, says Winterson in tune with Gertrude Stein, "how dreary it is when a fact is a fact is a fact." [106] Winterson's fiction forces the reader to work at reading, to reconsider the relationship of things and people in the world, and to recognize the multiplicities in things rather than their singularities. [107]

Throughout her literary career, Winterson has been guided by a strong belief in principles such as the freedom of speech, the value of art, or the anti-linearity and multi-dimensionality of reality, and she uses these principles as the wire-frame around which she models her characters. In her world, female values are predominant and the advocates of her ideas are females rather than men. Although there are some masculine heroes, Winterson's unfavourable idea of men in general is unmistakable in her fictions. As Gary Krist signals:

> With a few exceptions, the males in the book (like Sexing the Cherry) are depicted as cruel, hypocritical and/or insensitive, as little more than obstacles in the way of the self-realization of women. On analyzing the

> text, one finds that she needs her characters to be unhappy, oppressed, isolated or obsessed now and then, in order to make their solutions special and more often we might get the impression that she is calculatingly and deliberately place men in the position of the evil-doers, for instance the characters like Napoleon, the mischievous cook, God and many priests, Picasso's brother and father, Elgin, Handel's colleagues, some of the husbands of the twelve princesses and many others. Critics note that the male characters also appear either weak, like Jeanette's father in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, who might as well not be in the story at all, since he is usually kept out of the way, either at work or watching sports on television, as Jeanette says, was 'never quite good enough.' [108]

Jeanette's father is a mere shadow, and as such, gives an implicit message that men are not important in Jeanette's life, and sometimes they are made to seem ridiculous, like Pastor Spratt. In addition to that, most of the dominating characters in her fiction are female: Jeanette and her mother, Villanelle, Sappho, Dog-Woman, Fortunata and Louise. Two integral aspects remain noteworthy in her works. These are, that many children are adopted or are foundlings and many women are at least bisexual, gender-benders or true lesbians. Winterson achieves an accurate, non-male dominated, emotionality that releases genuine realities upon the reader. Only very few men are presented as sensitive and vulnerable. As a writer, she is significantly concerned with returning the lost meaning into the self. Her ever-present yet disappearing characters could be regarded as personifications, or concrete realizations of this lost meaning. With this in mind, thematic material that at first seems self concerned and petty takes on a

world of implication, which is why Winterson's lost lovers, are ever-present even though they seem to be gone. The beauty inherent in everyday life is there, wherever and whenever it seems to have been lost.

Winterson rejects being labeled as a "political" writer just as she rejects labels of all kinds. In spite of this, her work is suffused with a sense of political injustice and protest. It is combative and impassioned, and it is a text which is speaking up on behalf of history's silent majorities and minorities. Her use of language however remains poetic and original, and her advocacy of women's sexuality is a rejection of patriarchal assumptions, and a stand for women's sexual rights. Winterson hopes to offer, throughout her oeuvre, a writing that is original and influential especially in terms of freedom from the confines of literary orthodoxy and literary patriarchy.

NOTES

[1]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 15

[2]Ibid. 55

[3]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 156

[4]Ibid. 157

[5]Ibid. 154

[6]As elucidated by Granta and the Book Marketing Council, 2 Oct 2009 <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth100>

[7]As elucidated by Libby Brooks, "Jeanette Winterson at the complete review", The Guardian, 2 Sept. 2000

[8]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 118

[9]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 30

[10]Ibid. 158

[11]Ibid. 62

[12]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 186

[13]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 172

[14]Lyn Pykett, "A New Way with Words? Jeanette Winterson's Post-Modernism", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 53

[15]Simone De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. E. M. Parshley, (New York: Vintage, 1973) 301

[16]Jeanette Winterson, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985)10

[17]Ibid. 10

[18]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 16

[19]As elucidated by Patricia Duncker, "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 87

[20] Simone De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. E. M. Parshley, (New York: Vintage, 1973) 301

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[23]Cherry Smyth, Lesbian Talk Queer Notions, (London: Scarlett Press, 1992) 26

[24]As elucidated by Stevi Jackson, "Gender and Heterosexuality: A Materialist Feminist Analysis", Mary Maynard and June Purvis eds., (Hetero)sexual Politics, (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995) 18

[25]Michael Warner, Introduction, Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) xxvi

[26]Donald E. Hall, Queer Theories, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 53

[27]As elucidated by Patricia Duncker, "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998)) 78

[28]Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," Rayna R. Reiter ed., Toward an Anthropology of Women, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975) 159

[29]Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," differences 3.2, (1991): iv

[30]Ibid. v

[31]Sue-Ellen Case, "Tracking the Vampire," differences 3.2 (1991): 2

[32]Ibid. 3

[33]Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Tendencies, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) xii

[34]Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi, "Introduction", Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi eds., Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader, (Malden [Mass]: Blackwell, 2003) 1

[35]As elucidated by Nikki Sullivan, A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003) 81

[36]Ibid. 81

[37]As elucidated by Annamarie Jagose, Queer Theory: An Introduction, (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 126

[38]William B. Turner, A Genealogy of Queer Theory, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000) 3

[39]Nikki Sullivan, A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003) 51

[40]As elucidated by Monique Wittig, "The Point of View: Universal or Particular?" Feminist Issues 4. 2 (1984): 64. Also in The Straight Mind and Other Essays, 59-67

[41]Monique Wittig, "The Trojan Horse," Feminist Issues 4. 2 (1984): 68

[42]Esther Newton, '"Role Models" Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972) 103

[43]Patricia Duncker, "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998)) 85

[44]Nikki Sullivan, A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003) 43-44

[45]Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Tendencies, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 3

[46]Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theories: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 3.2 (1991): iv

[47]As elucidated in Merja Makinen, "Introduction", The Novels of Jeanette Winterson, (New York Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 2005

[48]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 103

[49]Ibid. 103

[50]Ibid. 104

[51]Sappho was an Ancient Greek poet, born on the island of Lesbos. She was included in the list of nine lyric poets. Her birth was sometime between 630 and 612 BC, and it is said that she died around 570 BC. The bulk of her poetry, which was well-known and greatly admired throughout antiquity, has been lost, but her immense reputation has endured through surviving fragments. Sappho's poetry centers on passion and love for various personages and both genders. The word lesbian is derived from the name of the island of her birth, Lesbos, while her name is also the origin of the word sapphic; both words were only applied to female homosexuality, beginning in the nineteenth century.

[52]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 69

[53]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson attacks 'anti-gay' tabloids, Interview with Pink News, Pink News, 14 Dec, 2009

[54]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995)104

[55]Ibid. 110

[56]Ibid. 104-5

[57]Ibid. 110

[58]As elucidated by Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", Adrienne Rich ed., Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986) 23-75

[59]As elucidated by Annamarie Jagose, Queer Theory: An Introduction, (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 112

[60]Ibid. 131

[61]As elucidated by Rosellen Brown, "Fertile Imagination", Women's Review of Books 7 (1990): 10

[62]As elucidated by Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 139

[63]Lynne Pearce, "'Written on Tablets of Stone?' Jeanette Winterson, Roland Barthes and the Discourse of Romantic Love", Susan Rait ed., Volcanoes and Pearl Divers: Essays in Lesbian Feminist Studies, (London: Onlywomen Press, 1994) 148

[64]As elucidated by Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 41

[65]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 105

[66]Ibid. 107

[67]As elucidated by Patricia Duncker, "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 83

[68]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 176

[69]Ibid. 170

[70]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 77

[71]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 156

[72]Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989) 32

[73]Ibid. 33

[74]Maria del Mar Asensio, "Subversion of Sexual Identity in Jeanette Winterson's

The Passion", Cornut-Gentille D'Arcy, Chantal, and José Angel García Landa eds., Postmodern Studies 16: Gender, I-deology-essays on theory, fiction and film, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1996) 268

[75] Patricia Duncker, "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 85

[76]Helena Grice and Tim Woods, "Reading Jeanette Winterson Writing," Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 9

[77]Jana L. French, "I'm telling you stories....Trust me": Gender, Desire, and Identity in Jeanette Winterson's Historical Fantasies" in Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts 3. 39 (1999): 243

[78]As elucidated by Ute Kauer, "Narration and Gender: The Role of the First-Person Narrator in Jeanette Winterson's Written on the Body", Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 50

[79]As elucidated by Judith Butler, "Arguing with the Real", Judith Butler ed., Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (New York: Routledge, 1990) 193, author's italics.

[80]Ibid. 191

[81]Elizabeth Groz, "Refiguring Lesbian Desire", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 78

[82]As elucidated by Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 152

[83]Lisa Moore, "Tedildonics: Virtual Lesbians in the Fiction of Jeanette Winterson." Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn eds., Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism. (London: Routledge, 1995) 104-127

[84]As elucidated by Paulina Palmer, Contemporary Lesbian Writing, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993) 104

[85]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989) 47-61

[86]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 108

[87]As elucidated by Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 145

[88]Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998)) 7

[89]As elucidated by Lisa Moore, 'Teledildonics: Virtual Lesbians in the Fiction of Jeanette Winterson', Elizabeth Groz and Elspeth Probyn eds., Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism, (London: Routledge, 1992) 104

[90]Cath Stowers, 'The Erupting Lesbian Body: Reading Written on the Body as a Lesbian Text', Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 89

[91]As elucidated by Paulina Palmer, 'The Passion: Storytelling, Fantasy, Desire', Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 105

[92]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 115

[93]Ibid. 113

[94]Ibid. 114

[95]Christine Holmund, 'The Lesbian, the Mother, the Heterosexual Lover: Irigaray's Recoding of Difference', Feminist Studies 17. 2 Summer (1991): 56

[96]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 58

[97]Ibid. 58

[98] Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 160

[99]James Wood, 'Art and Lies by Jeanette Winterson', The London Review of Books, 16.13 (1994): 9

[100]Diana L. Swanson, "Playing in Jeanette Winterson's 'The Poetics of Sex': Rescuing Words for Lesbians', Literature, Interpretation, Theory 7.4 (1997): 325

[101]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 138

[102]Margaret Reynolds, "Interview with Jeanette Winterson", JeanetteWinterson, Sept. 14 2002. 19Dec.2009 <www.jeanettewinterson.com/pages/content/index.asp>

[103]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 188

[104]Ibid. 189

[105]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 91

[106]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 128

[107]As elucidated by Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., ‘I’m Telling You Stories’: Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V, 1998) 10

[108]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 11

CHAPTER II

SEXUAL POLITICS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S DISCOURSE

This chapter shall locate the dynamics of queer theory while dwelling specifically upon the aspects of the self in Jeanette Winterson's discourse. It shall denote how her texts are represented through the aura of reading, while exceeding the limits of the various boundaries of existence. This chapter shall focus specifically upon Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985), The Passion (1987), Sexing the Cherry (1989), Written on the Body (1992) and Art and Lies (1994). Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit has been regarded to be Winterson's "Coming Out" story because it is a semi-autobiographical novel. The practice of "coming out again", while relinquishing a non-heterosexual identity and having to subsequently come out again as something else, have an enormous impact on feelings of belonging in particular social spaces, especially within the gay and lesbian community. These feelings are manifested through the perceived boundaries around sexual identity categories and the specific rules and expectations about how sexual identities should be performed in particular communities. In her fiction, Winterson seeks to challenge conventional thinking in an attempt to transgress gender boundaries; all her narrators are androgynous, and the areas that are related to the discovery of the self are usually involved in turbulent lesbian love affairs. Sexual passion, in all its dilemmas and even vindictiveness, also has been coherently expressed and reflected in her works. Winterson's lesbianism may be displaced in many interpretations of her novels but writers like Cath Stowers offers an analysis that is centered in a discourse of specifically lesbian desire in Winterson's fiction by arguing that "the imagery of exploration and travel, that are consistently present in Winterson's writing, serves to stimulate her text within a complex, but identifiable, context of sexual politics." [1] Therefore it is not merely Winterson's reception by the media that has made her portrayal of gender a contentious

issue. As Lynne Pearce noted, many feminist readers and critics have felt cheated by Winterson's handling of gender [2]. In "Journeying with Jeanette: Transgressive Travels in Winterson's Fiction" Cath Stower commented that Winterson herself has further problematized the issue with her reluctance at being cast as a straightforward feminist or radical lesbian.

There has been a continuous debate in terms of the relationship between women in history, and consequently in terms of what qualifies a woman or a relationship as lesbian. The result of such discourse has introduced three components while identifying lesbians: these are sexual behavior, sexual desire, or sexual identity. As women, lesbians face concerns that are separate from men. Political conditions and social attitudes also continue to affect the formation of lesbian relationships and families. Many lesbians have often reacted to their designation as immoral outcasts by constructing a subculture which is based upon gender role rebellion. When a woman realizes her romantic and sexual attraction to another woman, it may cause an "existential crisis"; and many women who go through this adopt the identity of a lesbian, by challenging what society has offered in stereotypes about homosexuals, to learn how to function within a homosexual subculture.[3] Lesbians in Western cultures generally share an identity that parallels those that are built upon ethnicity; they have a shared history and subculture, and similar experiences with discrimination which has caused many lesbians to reject heterosexual principles. This self is unique from that of gay men and heterosexual women, and it often creates tension with bisexual women.[4] Social theorists' note that often behavior and identity do not match: women may label themselves heterosexual but have sexual relations with women, self-identified lesbians may have sex with men, or women may

find that what they considered an immutable sexual identity has changed over time. Queer fiction calls attention to the fact that the division between masculine and feminine is not a fixed divide but a performance, that is enacted in order to fit within expectations; it demonstrates that gender is more flexible and shifting than heterosexual society admits to.

Winterson has stressed that her fiction has been striving to create an enchanted place. This statement has made it clear that this differing world which "doesn't exist" and "never did", which is unconcerned with "authenticity" or "realism", is being increasingly equated by Winterson with art. However, gender is never left behind in all of Winterson's works, but rather it is an inextricable and ultimately transformed aspect, which is part of Winterson's alternative, that is, the world of art. By positing her works in a discourse of specifically lesbian desire will help elevate the meaning of Winterson's text to a realm which is supposedly separable from sexual politics; this is, the love shared between two women. Winterson herself comments on this emphasis that she places on love, and states that:

> I write about love because it's the most important thing in the world. I write about sex because often it feels like the most important thing in the world. But I set these personal private passions against an outside world - sometimes hostile, usually strange, so that we can see what happens when inner and outer realities collide. [5]

And although Michele Roberts has argued that "the quest for the elusive and mysterious feminine" [6] in Winterson's work is linked to a contempt for femininity, Winterson's work stresses upon the manner in which femininity is not "cut off" but

allowed to feminize and re-sexualize, the masculine. Although lesbian studies emerged in the 1980s as a kind of annex to feminist criticism, it has been noted that before acquiring disciplinary independence, lesbian and gay theory had emerged prominently as a distinct field only by the early 1990s. Generally, lesbian and gay criticism denotes that a lesbian/gay study does for sex and sexuality approximately what women's studies do for gender. In lesbian/gay criticism, the defining feature is making sexual orientation a fundamental category of analysis and understanding. Although some writers treat lesbian themes on the level of entertainment, the works of writers like Winterson, on the other hand, assume a political dimension. It has been concluded that no longer is it valid to think in terms of "the lesbian novel", rather one must think in terms of a variety of different genres and kinds. The novels of Winterson are intellectually adventurous and inventively rework traditional modes of writing such as fantasy, the fairy tale and the romance. Her novels also incorporate new developments in the field of theory and narratives, which are also associated with postmodernism in particular. Monique Wittig, in The Straight Mind and Other Essays (1992) has analyzed the position of women, in terms of, how sexual difference is seen as a social construct, by the heterosexual hegemony of the straight mind and she states that a materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or the origin of oppression is in fact only the mark imposed by the oppressor, and, that women are seen black, therefore they are black: they are seen as women, therefore they are women. But before being seen that way, they first had to be made that way.

Wittig concludes her essay by stating that Lesbians are not women, which means that lesbians are not dependent on men (which is the heterosexual definition of

femininity). Responding to this statement by Wittig, Patricia Duncker explains how lesbian identity deliberately throws a spanner into the production works of heterosexual definitions of sexuality. Duncker traces what she perceives to be the historical trajectory of 1970s and 1980s feminist theory as it "grew up" into lesbian and queer politics in the 1990s. Duncker writes that queer calls attention to the instability of gender and she tries to situate Winterson's writing with this wider perspective of the feminist and lesbian writing with an instability and fluidity (of sexual and gender identities) which manifests itself throughout Winterson's fictions. Winterson's texts are filled with genre, some fixed (to a point) and others mixed while confronting certain cultural and social issues such as class and sexuality. Winterson clearly writes in the wake of and contributes to the important semantic and ideological shift brought about by Second Wave feminism. Queer's capaciousness and its ability to trouble and travel across the rigid binaries of sex and gender normativity are the qualities most valued by those who have embraced the term like Winterson did in her works. In an interview with Mark Marvel in 1990, Winterson comments: "I don't think love should be a gender bound operation. It's probably one of the few things in life that rise above all those kinds of oppositions - black and white, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual ... Fiction can build bridges between people with differing viewpoints."[7]

Throughout her literary works, Winterson describes sexual passion in the language of a parallel and informing spiritual faith and compassion. In her twenty-first century writing particularly, Winterson's commitment to an exploration of love in terms of agapeic tradition, with its sacrificial shedding of the erotic body, have made it more difficult than before for critics to sustain the idea of a lesbian feminist Jeanette

Winterson. This has been illustrated in her works, for instance in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit Jeanette's sexuality is repressed by the congregation and her mother. Similarly, The Passion elucidates aspects where Villanelle's heart is being imprisoned by the Queen of Spades, and in the Sappho sections of Art and Lies, Winterson exposes the damage that has been done to another group of abject persons - women who love women – as well as the silencing of this damage. From her first book, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, to her most recent fictions, Winterson has consistently drawn upon Biblical language and religious experience to produce her own exalted discourse of passion. In drawing upon Biblical language to express erotic passion, Winterson resists the popular cultural image of perfect rapprochement, the merging of the self and other characteristics that are typically ascribed to the lesbian couple. Rather, she emphasizes upon the challenge of union in love, by using the language of faith in order to indicate the elusive qualities of passionate connection. Jeanette's mother proceeds to inculcate in her child a worldview that is based on her rather eccentric interpretation of God's word. Yet, ironically, this very education, preparation, and experience as a child and later a teenage preacher, are precisely what compel Jeanette to challenge, and turn topsy-turvy the so-called natural plan. Even Jeanette's very willingness to fulfill the vocation chosen for her by her mother works to overturn those intentions. The Church grants Jeanette a lot of power and she manages to not only survive in the religious institution, but positively flourish as well. Jeanette declares that in terms of power she had enough to keep Mussolini happy. In the view of the Church fathers, Jeanette's masculine access to the religious domain- the privilege to preach to the congregation and thereby influence its members- is what allows her to usurp masculine power in the sexual domain. According

to their logic, which is at once perceptive and blind, Jeanette's "unnatural passions" stem, as Jeanette explains, from "allowing women power in the church…. [in taking] on a man's world in other ways I had flouted God's law and tried to do it sexually ... So there I was, my success in the pulpit being the reason for my downfall. The devil had attacked me at my weakest point: my inability to realize the limitations of my sex." [8] Jeanette, the narrator in the novel, had denoted that her mother and the congregation made her feel that she "loved the wrong sort of people" and that "romantic love for another woman was a sin." [9] Jeanette is adopted by an evangelical family in England at birth. She is raised by her zealous mother to become a missionary with her life divided between Church activities and the Old Testament. The problem, as Jeanette sees it, stems not from her exquisite longings for women, but from the inability of the others to recognize and acknowledge the loveliness of sexual love shared between women. She conforms to her mother's hopes till she falls in love with Melanie (a character in the novel with whom Jeanette falls into her first lesbian love affair) which makes her question, "What is it about intimacy that makes it so very disturbing?" [10] When their lesbian relationship is discovered. Melanie repents quite quickly (and later in the book is described as an insipid mother and wife), while the efforts of Jeanette's mother and her Church pastor to force her into an accepted gendered identity become more difficult. She experiences them as attempts to mutilate her and denoted that the pastor "explained to me as quietly as he could that I was the victim of a great evil. That I was afflicted and oppressed, that I had deceived the flock. ... They (her mother and the pastor) started arguing between themselves whether I was as an unfortunate victim or a wicked person." [11] Her mother orders her to move out of the house because she believed that the devil looked after his

own. From then on Jeanette moved out of the house and drove an ice-cream van on Saturdays and Sundays in order to earn her living. In the novel, it has been denoted that the Fundamental Mistake was the refusal to make the "ultimate decision" of adopting a heterosexual identity, and it lead from "Lost Chances" to the "Room of the Final Disappointment." Thus, Jeanette sees her love for another girl as hopeless, the foreclosure of all her chances and all her dreams. The narrator describes later in the novel that when she saw Melanie, she was crumpled like a balloon full of old air, and when Jeanette asked her as to what had been done to her, she winced upon her touch and said that nothing was wrong with her. Here, Winterson is trying to reflect that gendering, the taking on of sex, feels like nothing, even though Melanie is in pain. Sex seems to leave no traces, but the traces is the circular soul and walled-in body which is the norm, which passes as identity, and for the last time Jeanette and Melanie make love and their bodies are "mixed up" like rubble, and hence the wall came down. In the story, the stones that made up the wall of the body are meant for throwing: "She had a heart of stone. Who will cast the first stone?" [12] This wall is subsequently seen as the sacrifice to oneself.

Winterson, like Julia Kristeva and Monique Wittig, proposes that the concept of gender is socially constructed, and not biologically inherent. Overall, the construction of the world in binary systems limits and excludes those people and stories that fall outside of the definitions. By not seeing the world as a strict duality, a greater multiplicity of people can be seen as creating its essence. People do not simply exist in black and white, but they also line the many shades of gray in between. In "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan comments on Jeanette's (the narrator in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit) resistance towards the heterosexual hegemony in her naturalizing the

binary of good and evil in order to fit her lesbian view of life because lesbianism is considered good and therefore heterosexuality must be evil. She states that Winterson clearly presents lesbianism as the only viable and intelligible alternative for Jeanette; yet on the fundamental level, Winterson remains (albeit unwittingly) in the realm of parody, of imitation, in the unproblematic reversal of binary terms – a strategy that privileges the status of the lesbian over that of the heterosexual but does not facilitate an ongoing critique of compulsory heterosexuality or patriarchal control.[13] Isabel C. Anievas Gamallo names Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit as a lesbian Bildungsromane and thereby also points out the autobiographical elements of the novel that follow in the wake of using this genre. Gamallo considers this aspect to be an element which is able to bring about social change, because it subverts the traditional Bildungsromane genre. [14]

Jeanette's message, embodied in Winterson's novel Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, therefore, amounts to a reflection upon the issues of lesbian identity and "coming out" which are accompanied by several ideas that have been developed by lesbian cultural criticism. Jeanette's strength and the strength of this coming-of-age/coming-out novel, emerges from a profound and unshakeable conviction that her lesbianism is right. Winterson totally redefines the normal and renders heterosexuality as unintelligible for Jeanette the protagonist. The narrator explicitly states that she has "a number of notions about sexual politics" [15] and about lesbian literature before blaming the congregation's views on inversion to their reading of "Unnatural Passions." [16] The narrator's irony is remarkable when Jeanette attacks both heterosexist inability to see sexual sameness as a source of attraction and the conflation of the categories "sex", "gender" and "sexual orientation" brought about by this blindness, when she states that "a homosexual is

further away from a woman than a rhinoceros."[17] This irony is greater especially when she considers her mother's idea that she had usurped the male role by preaching in the church. The self consciousness of the novel about its political agenda is most conspicuous in the way it repeatedly inscribes within the fiction some of the main tenets which have been put forward by Adrienne Rich in her seminal work Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence (1980). The fairy tale about the prince who wants to marry a flawless woman echoes Rich's notion of the male fear of clever, independent women: the chosen woman is beheaded[19] when she refuses to marry him because the prince's advisor warns him, that his "kingdom [the patriarchal system] is at stake."[20]

The issues of marriage and compulsory heterosexuality are further tackled in the narrator's pondering about the children's tale *Beauty and the Beast* as an example of the "control of consciousness" which has been exerted by the "idealization of heterosexual romance and marriage" in literature, film and the media as "covert socializations [...] which have channeled women into marriage and heterosexual romance."[21] Fourteen-year-old Jeanette finds out that women are unaware that they are victims of "a terrible conspiracy", as they are cheated by tales where "women were marrying beasts?"[22] and such beasts never become handsome princes: "I wondered if the woman married to a pig had read this story. She must have been awfully disappointed if she had."[23] In terms of the concept of marriage, Jeanette also confesses that her "own family had done quite badly."[24] There is also criticism of the heterosexist association of love and sex exclusively with the reproduction of the species, an association which posits heterosexual identifications as the only possible, natural ones. Jeanette is upset because Melanie instead of nurturing her lesbian impulse gave it up entirely, in order to appease the

congregation, thereby, rejecting her quest and liberation of the self. At the end of the novel, Jeanette is steadfast in having lived a full life and in being true to herself without being controlled by the congregation or by her mother in particular. This aspect is reflected (in her opinion) as far as the concept of marriage and family are concerned: "Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of joining one, and no means of dismissing my own." [25]

Winterson's emphasis on humor may be seen as a contrast to the usual pathos of lesbian fiction. As Rich emphasizes that we romanticize at our peril what it means to love and act against the grain and under heavy penalties, and lesbian existence has been lived without access to any knowledge of a tradition, continuity, a social underpinning. The destruction of records and memorabilia and letters documenting the realities of lesbian existence must be taken very seriously as a means of keeping heterosexuality compulsory for women. For instance, Jeanette's mother's burning of the letters, cards and jottings written by Jeanette and her girlfriend echoes Rich's words concerning the fact that the lesbian past has been "erased," and obliterated by the actions of a hostile society and thus made unavailable for any possible reconstruction of a "lesbian her/story." Even though her mother attacked Jeanette's lesbian impulse, she had once experienced the same feelings with Eddie's sister, but her past, the lesbian impulse she once had was erased, as Jeanette comments, "I knew my mother hoped I would blame myself, but I didn't" [26] and she felt that her mother was a hypocrite, "If there's such a thing as spiritual adultery, my mother was a whore." [27] A definitive, straightforward attack upon religious discourse against homosexuality was launched when the narrator, focalizing through fourteen-year-old Jeanette, states: "We [Melanie and Jeanette] read the Bible as usual, and usually spent

half an hour in prayer."[28] They firmly believed that the Lord had brought them together. Feminist cultural critics like Teresa De Lauretis have studied the gender dimension of narrative structure, and have concluded that the masculine element is always represented as active and mobile and the female as passive and inert. [29] Winterson adopts women's sexuality and writing in women's terms, beyond phallocentric dictatorship and influence, as the solid foundations for the construction of a new sense of identity which is free from patriarchal definitions in binary terms. Circular oranges appear again and again as pertinent symbols throughout the book, along with the question: "What about grapes or bananas?" [30] When Jeanette became physically deaf and is operated upon and even hospitalized at times, her mother could not come herself and she would sent Jeanette's father with a couple of oranges with a letter that stated, "'The only fruit,'... Fruit salad, fruit pie, fruit for fools, fruited punch. Demon fruit, passion fruit, rotten fruit, fruit on Sunday. Oranges are the only fruit." [31] These oranges symbolize the dominant rhetoric that Winterson's mother embraces. While Jeanette's isolation from her mother reflects her mother's indifference, it ultimately has very positive effects. When Jeanette sees Melanie after their relationship has ended, Melanie offers her an orange but Jeanette refuses to take it saying "No, don't do that. … Don't waste it".[32] Her refusal represents her refusal to succumb to the ideas of the status quo even though she was aware of the fact that her increasing romantic preference for members of her own sex had caused conflicts within her congregation. The use of fruit in Winterson's texts interprets that food is crucial in defining as well as contesting lesbian identity, sexuality and community. Food memories and histories are portrayed as constitutive of the self, reaching back to childhood and images of "home". On the other hand, they are also

related to the social context of class inequalities and gendered hierarchies. Within these autobiographical narratives, food both constitutes and expresses a sense of self. This has been done by playing a crucial part in the construction of the writers' complex, multi-layered narratives of identity.[33] This overall aim is achieved most significantly through an experimental, chaotic structuring of the material, in which French feminists' claims for an essentially feminine expression are embodied, while creating, in turn, a space for a lesbian narrative that escapes the typical heterosexual conceptualization of narrative structure in binary gender terms. In Winterson's view, the homosexual is not an imitation of a heterosexual, just as the lesbian is not an inferior version of a man. Jeanette realizes at an early age that heterosexuality, for her is, disgusting and uninteresting and is made possible through conspiracy and coercion. When Jeanette admits her passion for Melanie, all of the community's resources are mobilized to exorcise these "deviant" impulses. Initially, she is shut in a darkened room and starved into submission "as a mark of new obedience to the Lord."[34] However, these authoritarian measures are in fact the least of the sanctions that are brought to bear against her. Her sexuality becomes closeted, and Winterson denotes how a radical split is opened, between her experience of lesbian desire, on the one hand, and her public performance of an acceptable, "reformed" feminist, on the other. Jeanette loves both God and Melanie and she felt that God was good and that her love was a gift from God and, therefore, must be appreciated. She felt that God was not her enemy but rather, it was his servants who were her enemies. That is why she decides to leave everything, including her family and church, but not her God. She declared "I miss God who was my friend. I don't even know if God exists, but I do know that if God is your emotional role model, very few human relationships will match

up to it." [35] The body of the novel has eight sections, whose titles correspond to the first eight books of the Old Testament. But what is inside each section is either completely different from the Bible, or an implicit parody of it. The real book of Genesis begins with the creation of Adam and Eve in Paradise but this version in the text, begins with the heroine being taken from an orphanage into a strange kind of exile. The heroine begins as a fundamentalist preacher of the Bible, but then things go wrong. The actual Bible turns out to be false, and the false Bible which is Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit becomes the truth. This naturalization of lesbianism depends on its representation through realist conventions. Such conventions are more usually the medium for transmitting ideological norms. Winterson herself argues in this novel that "walls protect and walls limit", it is consequently "in the nature of walls that they should fall." [36]

Heather Nunn points out that "...in Written on the Body (1992), this third space can be read as the transgressive site of a lesbian sexuality that challenges contemporary gender and sexual division". [37] So in the text when the narrator falls in between definitions of male and female, the binary oppositions of the heterosexual and patriarchal hegemony are not only destabilized but also demolished. The reader has been given clues to suggest that the narrator is a man, but equally many to suggest that it is a woman. The reader is left to decide. "This non-gender-specific narrator creates an intriguing (yet troubling) space that can be filled in as desires demand." [38] Just as Woolf deconstructed the notion of "woman as other" so does Winterson, specifically in Art and Lies, because she advance the issue of gender within the general context of deconstructing systems and truisms. Or as she says: "There is no system that has not another system concealed within it." [39] So Winterson may not deal with gender in a specific and overt manner, but by

questioning the entire world, as it sometimes seems she does, she ends up questioning gender as well. Another of Winterson's novels that destabilizes gender is The Passion. Henri's androgynous features are so obvious that when he envisions his married life with Villanelle, he sees himself as impersonating the traditionally passive, resigned, impotent fate of wives rather than the authoritarian destiny of husbands.

Winterson deals with gender as a performance and thus fosters a new sexual politics which is based on difference and diversity. Winterson in her novels frequently denotes how fantastically and powerfully bodies, even though fictional, can affect one's idea of the self. Three of her novels namely The Passion, Sexing the Cherry and Written on the Body, denote that Winterson encourages women to have a lively, irrepressible and highly personal relationship with one's own body and to cultivate its strength. In the opening line of Written on the Body Winterson denotes the undeniable and ever-present beauty of being left and of leaving, transcending the conventional perceptions of loss and its means of existence, namely time. Winterson presented a body which questioned gender identity through a complete absence of gender identification, with no physical description of the narrator's body throughout the novel. The novel is an intimate first person account of love which is won and lost as the story is narrated by an ungendered, unnamed, sexually plural, spatially dislocated and unfixed, narrator. The use of this first person narrative echoes Judith Butler's theories of gender. This theory provided insight into the subversive status of the ungendered narrator. According to Butler, gendering, or assuming sex, is part of a complex process that constitutes subjects, while ushering them into the symbolic realm while allowing the appropriation of the "speaking `I'". [40] Butler goes on to explain that the formation of the subject simultaneously produces a domain of

abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. [41] Butler uses the term "abject" to describe the unlivable and uninhabitable zones of social life that are populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. She claims that this zone functions as a site of dreaded identification against which and by virtue of which the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claims to autonomy and life. [42] Using s/he and him/her also seems to be inappropriate since they too reinforce, through language, the binary understanding of gender. The narrator is not part "she" and part "he", but rather is something other, which perhaps could be described as the slash between her and him rather than as the words on either side. Hence the narrator's body is indeed invisible to any objectifying gaze because it can be seen as male, female, hermaphroditic, transgender, differently abled, from any culture in the world. The self too could have a passion for any sexual orientation and the reader is left undistracted by the mechanics of the affair and is instead able to focus on the emotion.

Wittig points out that gender enforces sex in language in the manner in which a declaration of sex does in civil status. In her article "The Mark of Gender" she clearly expresses that "Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it". [43] But here Winterson circumvents the enforcement of a gender-bound concept of love by giving the narrator an invisible body and thus making it unclassifiable, mysterious, vague and attributing it with endless possibilities. Winterson occasionally hints that the narrator is male. For instance, a friend advises the narrator to "play the sailor and run a wife in every port", [44] and the narrator is compared to a "parody

of a sporting colonel". [45] But such masculine associations are also offset by the use of more feminine terms, as when the narrator says, "I'm not beautiful" [46], rather than "I'm not handsome", figuratively speaking, the narrator has no penis with which to penetrate with because she is very concerned with language, more so than with the feelings of Louise the narrator's lover whose husband is a doctor named Elgin. By constructing a lover or narrator whose gender remains undeclared, Winterson manages to unsettle perceptions of gendered difference. The reason for Winterson employing an ungendered, bisexual character is somewhat similar to the arguments that are used by Wittig in The Straight Mind (1992). Wittig aligns the sign "lesbian" with neither masculinity nor femininity, so too is Winterson's view of the genderless narrator in Written on the Body as it is an attempted escape from the effects of gender dichotomies. Wittig opines that the "imposition of gender" deny women "any claim to the abstract, philosophical, political discourses that give shape to the social body".[47] The narrator in Written on the Body is ambiguously and provocatively ungendered and s/he is free to pick up and plunder varying masculine discourses, especially while dissecting and analyzing the language of medicine and exploration. However, the absence of any declaration of gender is not suggesting that gender has no power, but rather reflects that gender dichotomies can be upset, as like the trajectory of mixed-gendered bisexuality. Hence it can be understood that in the novel, Winterson puts the concept of "woman" under erasure and displaces the phallic body and subject (of exploration, of medicine, and of language) with a lesbian body and subject which is founded on reciprocity and, no doubt, this displacement is achieved through the use of bodily journeys and explorations. Analogously, in some of the relationships the narrator recounts how s/he occupies a more pervasive traditionally

female role. For instance in the novel, at one time when s/he states, "I was Judith's bottom," Bathsheba (the narrator's previous lover) gives the narrator an emotional clap. But at other times the narrator occupies more conventionally male roles; these are reflected "as back door man" or a "tweedy big game hunter." His/her former lovers range from Bruno, Carlo, Crazy Frank to Inge, Catherine, Judith, Estelle, Bathsheba and Jacqueline. In fact, these romantic relationships seem less determined by sexual object choice, the conventions of gendered behaviour or an alignment between gender and sexual behaviour than by the narrator's ongoing vacillation between the desire for sexual excitement and risk and the desire for comfort and emotional safety. For instance, after relating the story of intense lovemaking with a married woman, she returns to her husband. The narrator concludes that "such things lead the heart-sore to the Jacqueline's of this world but the Jacqueline's of this world lead to such things. Is there no other way? Is happiness always a compromise?" [48] Patricia Duncker has denoted that gender is "the first thing we have to know about someone…Can you imagine a world where it wasn't?" Yet this is precisely what Winterson sets out to do. Winterson is attempting to state that the narrator's gender doesn't matter, and that it can be both, and that it changes. The novel also seems to echo many of Helene Cixous concerns, both thematically and formally. The section on Skin refers to "those ramified blood vessels that write the body's longing" [49] which makes Louise's body flush with desire. There is apparent replication of heterosexual patterns of travel, exploration and desire especially in terms of anatomical possession and penetration, "I took her two hands to my mouth and kissed each slowly so that I could memorize the shape of her knuckles. I didn't only want Louise's flesh. I wanted her bones, her blood, her tissues, the sinews that bound her

together". [50] These lines suggest that the narrator's excursions and explorations into Louise's body are not reiterations of masculine penetrative pioneering into passive femaleness, but rather they are an instance of Catherine Stimpson's claim that "Lesbianism partakes of the body, partakes of the flesh" [51] and that anatomical investigations can partly be read as the expression of that lesbianism which "represents a commitment of skin, blood, breast and bone". Thus, taking the viewpoint of traditional lesbian writers, a woman's body is compared to brewing qualities of blood and yeast.

Throughout Winterson's work, female characters frequently excavate the female body in a re-appropriation and parodying of the power of the phallus. In Written on the Body, these corporeal explorations are often figured in terms which are admittedly initially highly suggestive of the penetration of the passive female body by the active male. Instances like: "I began a voyage down her spine, the cobbled road of hers that brought me to a cleft and a damp valley then a deep pit to drown in" [52] continue to denote that the narrator's mind and thoughts come into focus and build the ground upon which the reader perceives her/his personality. That leads to the discovery that identity is not dependent on bodily functions or hormones. Furthermore the sexual activeness and eventual passion of the genderless narrator denotes to us that libido and sexual preferences are not dependent upon the physical sex either. In that respect the "I" narrator is the transformation of modern queer theory into a fictitious character and it mirrors Judith Butler's assumptions about gender and identity. She explains that heterosexual logic conflates identification and desire: "If one identifies as a given gender, one must desire a different gender". [53] In other words, both heterosexuality and homosexuality are constructed around gender difference; both identifying as a gendered person and desiring

another gendered person is what constitutes both heterosexuality and homosexuality. In this framework, lesbian and gay identities, although far from compulsory, are considered problematic in that, they too, project gender difference, which compulsory heterosexuality constructs as part of a causal line between sex, gender, gender presentation, sexual practice, fantasy, and sexuality. In other words, homosexuality is not merely not a threat to heterosexuality's hegemony but it also works to reinforce it. Butler argues that the regime of heterosexuality mandates the compulsory performance of sex and that "the very categories of sex, of sexual identity, of gender are produced or maintained in the effects of this compulsory performance disingenuously lined up within a causal or expressive sequence that the heterosexual norm produces to legitimate itself as the origin of all sex". [54] Cixous in her essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), explains the female sexuality as inherently affirmative, while delighting in a multiplicity of erogenous zones over all parts of her body. Cixous also sees it as a kind of bisexuality as she asserts that the female libido crosses boundaries both within the body and between its own body and the body of the beloved. This has been done not because it wants to make up for its own lack, but because she desires the other for the other, whole and entire, male or female. Winterson's formulation of a range of gender possibilities is reminiscent of Cixous' statement in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa." There is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman. But what strikes the reader most is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: "you can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes." [55] Winterson's text plays with and even exaggerates this conception of woman as multiple and heterogeneous, through

descriptions of the narrator's previous female lovers, all of whom perform various gender roles.

Although all the other characters, except the narrator, are gendered, their sexual object choices, namely in terms of the way in which they like to have sex, and the feelings they bring to relationships and sexual encounters, are all distinct. Each individual's different desires and needs, which are constructed as functioning independently of gender, make each sexual experience unique. For instance, the narrator explains that one ex-girlfriend only liked to have sex outdoors, while another female lover could only achieve orgasm between the hours of two and five o'clock. In one episode in the novel, Carlo made the narrator shave off all body hair, while Crazy Frank, who had a passion for miniatures, told the narrator after having sex that s/he would be perfect if s/he was "smaller". Through descriptions of the narrator's ex-lovers' sexual differences, the text disrupts traditional ways of thinking about sexuality. No longer configured in terms of man/woman and gay/straight, sexuality is constructed as pure difference, and is regarded to be the coming together of unique bodies possessing different desires. The performing of gender roles through technology certainly occurs in this novel where the use of the computer (and medical) technology is firmly in the hands of the male, namely Elgin. Elgin, Louise's husband is a frequent user of computer technology. He is a medical doctor researching carcinoma and the presence of computers in his life is used to represent and provide a locus for the lack of passion in his life, as Elgin works with computers in a lab simulating cancer cells he "hasn't been in a terminal care ward for ten years. He sits in a multi-million pound laboratory in Switzerland and stares at a computer."[56] This is presented as negative information and is used to justify

their continued affair. They dehumanise him based upon his use of computer technology. The use of computer technology in Written on the Body is also socially constructed. He is caught in the trap of cultural consumerism that has poisoned his marriage as well as his relationship with his own devout Jewish parents. His computer-filled existence is presented in opposition to the romantic passions of the lovers, namely they who, take walks in the rain, notice and enjoy the changing of seasons, and engage in sexual activity. They are presented as being rich in spirit, as compared to Elgin's spiritual emptiness. Elgin has, in a way; replaced God with medical and computer technology. The character of Elgin serves to fulfill one line of Winterson's enquiry into the body and technology. Speaking of the term technology, Lisa Moore locates Winterson's romantic love obsession as true to and representative of the canon of lesbian literature, as a narrative space. She also perceives Winterson's device, in terms of the narrator's undeclared gender, as constructing the space of narration into a virtual space, as well as a technical construction. In Written on the Body, Winterson is displaying the depth of her concern, or anxiety, about the approaching technological crescendo.

From Winterson's own standpoint, the narrator's relationship to technology is a difficult one which is fraught with contradiction. The ambiguity of the passage namely that, "Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. ... I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book" [57] serves to unite the narrator's and Louise's bodies. Rather than the narrator possessing or controlling Louise's body, s/he actually becomes part of her body. "I dropped into the mass of you and I cannot find the way out... Myself in your skin, myself lodged in your bones..." [58] Louise is also insistently bi-gendered in

her behaviour (if not physically). She is the aggressor in initiating the relationship with the narrator even to the extent of leaving her husband Elgin for him/her, Louise states that she wants "him/her to possess her". [59] The narrator also refers to her using masculine metaphors instead of feminine ones. In terms of the self she remains, a knight in shining armor, cocked and ready to fire, a Roman Cardinal (to the narrator's choir body). In the presence of Louise, the narrator is a child, an anchorite, and, in an amazingly gender indeterminate description, "She kissed me and in her kiss lay the complexity of passion. Lover and child, virgin and roué. Had I ever been kissed before? I was as shy as an unbroken colt. I had Mercutio's swagger. ... Her taste was fresh on my mouth, but would she stay? I quivered like a schoolgirl." [60] Remapping those old dichotomies of lover and beloved based on heterosexuality and domination into an almost fluid and fluctuating exchange of self and other in the novel, suggested that symbolic gender differences become undercut by lesbian metaphors of sameness. Clinical explorations that are based along masculine lines have become rejected in favour of reciprocal journeys where Self and Other can exchange positions as objects of the quest, and also as a source of pleasure, thereby reversing that paradigm of active male explorer and passive female land by figuring his/her self in those very terms. Dwelling upon the character of Louise's husband Elgin, Winterson denotes that he is a man of science, powerful and authoritative but at the same time he is also a man of small stature, weak, and passive with his penchant for masochism. He does not stand a chance of holding on to Louise. Louise marries him because she knows how to control him. Elgin is comfortable with the language of science, as well as with numbers, formulas, computers, and other technical equipment, but is bereft of passion and compassion. He is not capable of satisfying Louise

emotionally or sexually even though they have been married for ten years. Marriage becomes "the flimsiest weapon against desire" [61] which makes cheating easy without any guilt. Winterson states that "there's no swank to infidelity" [62] and that "adultery is as much about disillusionment as it is about sex." [63] For him, a woman is either a show piece, or a sexual object, someone like Louise, to make him look good, or someone like a prostitute, to make him feel good sexually. The narrator's power struggle with Elgin can be seen as a physical fight between men for Louise's own benefit. When the narrator eventually leaves Louise, it reflects men's inability to commit - a failure of commitment and an act of cowardice which is perhaps a more stereotypically male trait than female. On examining the text it can be concluded that the ungendered narrator in Winterson's Written on the Body is not a mere device to attract the reader's attention, but rather is a device that challenges dominant constructions of gender and sexuality. Winterson's text constructs a world in which, obtaining the status of subject is not contingent upon gendering, or assuming sex. The text states that Winterson imagines a world in which the ungendered self has come to matter. Written on the Body can thus be viewed as an imaginative attempt to deregulate desire, while freeing it from the regulatory and disciplinary binary regimes of gender and sexuality. In their place, the text imagines a freer, more fluid view of sexuality which is based upon difference.

The Dog-Woman in Sexing the Cherry seems to supersede in her monstrosity. In a positive manner, the traditionally negative female body that characterizes Dog-Woman, who is the main character of the novel, works as an effective instrument. This is done to oppose the traditional male ideals that have been established by the norm and also to offer new possibilities of representation and definitions of gender and identity to women.

Its central characters, the Dog Woman and her adopted son Jordan, who have been fished out from the Thames as a baby, are quite brilliantly imagined. In the Dog-Woman narrative, she recalls the first encounter with her son as follows:

> I call him Jordan and it will do. He has no other name before or after. What was there to call him, fished as he was from the stinking Thames? [64]

In this passage Dog-Woman is challenging the heterosexual and biologically determined premise of reproduction. She knows that to give birth, a woman needs a man to conceive but she sees this heterosexual precondition as impossible for as long as she can remember there was no man who was match for a monstrous woman like herself. However, she became a mother to a son whom she has named by herself, without a man and without giving birth. Sexing the Cherry is about boundaries and how these boundaries are fluids and at the same time, don't necessarily exist. Throughout the novel, time and reality are obscure. Winterson is trying to depict many events that are happening all at once. Jordan and the Dog Woman are seventeenth century figures and each has a twentieth century double or counterpart who displays analogous qualities and attitudes. Fights against the pollution of a river by mercury, by big business corporations mirrors the Dog Woman's furious attack on the Puritans who kill King Charles, and also those who try to force England into their bigoted and narrow morality and hence both women are ridiculed as unnatural and as monsters.

As with all of her work, there is a strong queer subtext in Sexing the Cherry, some female characters leave or murder their husbands to be with women and some characters are killed because they love the same sex. Unlike some of her other works, however, this is not the dominant theme. In her fiction Winterson attempts to develop the literary

narrative by continuously crusading against restricting a narrative of experience within the bounds of conventional modes of expression and perception. Winterson has denoted that she is interested in strong emotions like love and desire because such emotions create the world and it is a chance element which unsettles all the rules, thereby forcing people back onto their own resources, and away from their habits. The stories are connected with elements of the fantastic and they are clearly fictional. One of the princesses in the narrative denoted that her husband committed adultery, she said: "I didn't kill him. I left him to walk the battlements of his ruined kingdom; his body was raddled with disease. The same winter he was found dead." [65] One princess relates that "the first time I kissed him he turned into a frog. There he is, just by your foot. His name's Anton." [66] The next princess confesses that: "The man I had married was a woman. They came to burn her. I killed her with a single blow to the head before they reached the gates, and fled that place." [67] Another princess poisoned her fat husband because she preferred "farming to cookery." [68] In this retelling of the Twelve Dancing Princesses, they lived happily ever after but not with their husbands. Men were no longer the final destination of women's romance. Women could either be independent or seek the same sex for love. Thus, Winterson reverses the traditional concept that women sacrifice their goals and plans in order to turn themselves into promising lovers, whom men want to settle down with. Palmer denotes:

> Winterson portrays the princess as liberating themselves… The narratives variously assigned to them highlight the social and economic power which men wield and the brutal punishments which they inflict on women if they

> dare to transgress the conventional role of object of exchange by forming sexual relationships with one another.[69]

The twelve princesses are not the only features in Sexing the Cherry that take part in the discussion of gender or sex. Dog Woman destabilizes these aspects through her uncanny size which intimidates anyone she meets. No matter what, she will always be the strong one in a relationship: "I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains. ... For myself, the love I've known has come from my dogs, who cared nothing for how I look, and from Jordan, who says though I am as wide and muddy as the river that is his namesake, so am I too his kin."[70] Since the Dog Woman is so large, her male partner's penis is too insignificant to have any effect, and this is a ridiculing of phallic power in relation to the feminine "I did mate with a man but cannot say that I felt anything at all, though I had him jammed up to the hilt."[71] As a giant, Dog Woman intimidates men and men shoot at her, but she takes the bullets out of her cleavage and chews them up. Then she laughs and laughs and breaks their guns between her fingers the way one would a wish-bone. She can also perform a number of amazing acts, like tossing elephants and scooping up handfuls of Puritans. Palmer highlights that Winterson focuses attention on the Dog Woman's heroic qualities and describes her as presenting the rebellious, transgressive aspect of femininity which patriarchy attempts to suppress. This statement is supported by Jordan's reflection of her mother: "I want to be like my rip-roaring mother who cares nothing for how she looks, only for what she does. She has never been in love, no. and never wanted to be either. She is self-sufficient and without self-doubt."[72] On analyzing the text, in Reading Dialogics, entitled "Dialogism and Gender the Chronotope",[73] Pearce gives a negative

view of Winterson's oeuvre and sees it as universalizing lesbianism, which may be a disappointment for lesbian readers because lesbian readers have experienced this sliding of gendered and sexual identity, this refusal to name, as a serious political betrayal. In Sexing the Cherry as in The Passion, this universalism is ensured by the inclusion of a broad spectrum of characters of different gender and sexual preference. Pearce argued that by removing her characters to the realms of fantasy and history, Winterson has left behind the question of what it is to be a woman and/or a lesbian in a more pragmatic material sense. Jordan defies the conventions of gender/sex in a very different manner. In his (imaginary) journeys it becomes necessary for him to go where no man has gone before and so he has to dress as a woman in order to get in. Winterson does not represent his cross-dressing as something that is considered abnormal.

After this transformation he stays on as a woman, and by then, Jordan had met a number of people who, anxious to be free of the burdens of their gender, have dressed themselves in terms of men as women and women as men. He is even let into the women's secret society, and so he learns their secrets. One such being predominantly that women have a secret language and that there is a conspiracy against all men and this seems to draw up the lines of division between men and women. This enhances Judith Butler's notion of compulsory heterosexuality, and Winterson's naturalization of Jordan's appearance in drag (at which no one even remarks), is once and for all underlining that she is of the opinion that gender is performance, as is also pointed out by Butler in Gender Trouble, and so any differentiation between the genders becomes arbitrary and only creates problems. Neither the Dog Woman nor Jordan ever manages to transcend their genders, nor does Pearce conclude that it is because they never escape their sex. [74]

Both characters demonstrate not only selves that are unfixed, but genders as well. This notion is connected with the title of the book, "Sexing the Cherry" which is a reference to the historical first grafting of a hybrid cherry plant which had then caused a great debate as to whether it was a male or a female. It is described as a "third kind" which, quite ironically, is ultimately deemed a "monster" by the Dog Woman who queries, "of what sex is that monster you are making?" [75] ultimately, she and Jordan finally define it as female.

What the novel inherently reflects is that in a false sophistication, as nature has been replaced with an artificiality that is mere tasteless display. The purity of innocent Nature is replaced by a seduced nature, which is then reduced further in its moral and spiritual power into becoming merely a taste, and a fashion. Moral and spiritual categories are lost. This loss of innocence inevitably leads to incoherence and fragmentation. Nature loses its identity and spiritual meaning and coherence. Things become mixed-up and confused and they become unnatural. The cherry, for instance, is "without a sex" in the novel and it is most definitely considered an element which plays a part in Winterson's general destabilization of gender/sex and naturalization of what falls in between the male/female binary. With this statement, Winterson imagines that gender is socially constructed and enforced rather than inherent and, above all, that the hybrid is a third sex, existing in terms of a fusion of diverse strains, and without seed. She also denotes that the strongest, illuminates the ways in which the dominant culture opts out of creatively and freely exploring boundless gender options and instead becomes mired in weary boundaries and binaries. In this text, Winterson's reflection upon drag and upon

the notion of grafting provides, for her, an encouraging intimation of the political power that might be wielded by a lesbian postmodern.

Fiction, for Winterson, is the site to interrogate, subvert, and tamper with gender, identity and sexuality. Her fiction is a serious invitation to readers to imagine the emancipation of "normal" and "natural" from the exclusive and totalizing domain of patriarchal and heterosexual authority. Her writings denote that time has no meaning, and space and place also have no meaning and "[T]he self is not contained in any moment or any place, but it is only the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once." [76] In Sexing the Cherry, Winterson's population of bodies does transgress the boundaries of hetero-normativity in a multiplicity of ways. The transgressiveness in this sense concerns not only the propriety of acts - which here range from necrophilia buggery to oral castration. This encapsulates the writing of bodies themselves, from the stinking monstrosity of Dog Woman to the eleventh dancer, to Fortunata, who is the youngest and the best dancer of the twelve sisters. She had run out, leaving her husband to be (the youngest Prince) at the church on their wedding day [77] reduced and purified to spinning axes of light. The two main characters Jordan and the Dog Woman do appear in different bodily guises in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, while tempting a further, Foucauldian treatment of the novel as an archaeology of the body, in terms of a study of its changing historical production. Throughout the text, the body is represented as a contingent construction, no more than a shell through which earthly time flows. The Foucauldian archaeology of the body focuses on diverse aspects of the person and, particularly, the human social body. It considers the body as representation, as identity, and as experience, it addresses questions

of embodiment. It perceives the self as technology and as the site of social and power relations, the scalar and multiple qualities of the body. It reflects upon how bodies aggregate or congeal into larger social and political bodies. Winterson's representations of passionate love, sexual, homosexual and otherwise have been drawn along these various lines. In Feminist Revision and the Bible: The Unwritten Volume (1992), Ostriker comments that in The Passion Winterson's representation of Villanelle's body exemplifies aspects of feminist Biblical revisionism. Winterson troubles the traditional dominant reading of Biblical narrative by inscribing difference on Villanelle's body as it projects a shameless sexuality, and an insistence upon sensual immediacy, flesh seen as holy, and the compatibility between this flesh and intellect. Most importantly, this body of Villanelle forces a reader to imagine faith and spirituality extending beyond the Bible and religious institutions into areas eschewed by traditional interpretations of the Bible. [78] Though her body was extremely attractive she also had hermaphroditic and animalistic attributes. Villanelle's webbed feet, links her to the representation of the lesbian as an image of excess, and also relates her to the element of water. As in The Lesbian Body (1973), where Wittig represents the beloved gliding and hovering above the sea, Winterson describes Villanelle as defying laws of gravity and walking upon the surface of the Venetian canal. Villanelle's aquatic associations, combined with her sexual attraction, relate her to the motif of the mermaid who is an ambiguous image of woman and portrays her as a beautiful seductress, or even an unnatural monster. She worked in a casino and cross-dressed occasionally, and could even perform miracles. Villanelle declared that she dressed as a boy because it was what the visitors liked to see. It was part

of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind tight breeches and extravagant face-paste. She says:

> I made up my lips with vermilion and overlaid my face with white powder. I had no need to add beauty spot, having one of my own in just the right place. I wore my yellow Casino breeches with the stripe down each side of the leg and a pirate's shirt that concealed my breasts. This was required, but the moustache I added was for my own amusement. And perhaps for my own protection. [79]

Winterson also portrayed Villanelle's body as a body which is deformed or abnormal akin to the body of freaks. Elizabeth Groz's essay entitled "Freaks" to describe Villanelle's body is aptly applied in this context:

> [T]he freak is an object of simultaneous horror and fascination because, in addition to whatever infirmities and abilities he or she exhibits, he or she is an ambiguous being, a being whose existence imperils categories and oppositions dominant in social life. Freaks are those human beings who exist outside the structure of binary oppositions which govern our basic concepts and modes of self-definition. ... Freaks cross the borders which divide the subject off from all ambiguities, interconnections and reciprocal classifications. They imperil the very definitions we rely on to classify humans, identities, sexes, our most fundamental categories of self-definition. [80]

Queer theorists assert that the sexual orientation and sexual interests of a transvestite should not be treated on the basis of social constructs. The transvestites

developed their sexual behavior through biological inheritance and social pressures. However, in The Passion, Villanelle is prevented from working on the boats which are traditionally the domain for men who have webbed feet. She works instead in the gambling casino where her webbed feet are physically hidden. Instead of assuming a female identity (which would be upheld by the secondary sex characteristics of her undressed body), she assumes a male identity, which is upheld only by her invisible hidden webbed feet, by cross-dressing as a male. Born in Venice, the city of mazes, Villanelle oscillates between constructing her gender as male or as female. In addressing Villanelle's construction in The Passion, Doan notes with approval that:

> Villanelle enters the male domain because of a genetic inheritance. The oddity of webbed feet can remain hidden for years beneath boots, but there is no mistaking the implications: the search for clear-cut distinctions where gender is concerned is futile. [81]

Butler in her text Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'(1993) outlines the queer project, to the extent that she argues that there cannot be one, because queer may be thought of as activating an identity politics so attuned to the constraining effects of naming, and of delineating a foundational category which precedes and underwrites political intervention. The discursive proliferation of queer has been enabled in part by the knowledge that identities are fictitious, that is, produced by and productive of material effects but nevertheless arbitrary, contingent and ideologically motivated. In the realm of queer politics, Villanelle's body clearly explained that because of economic and potential physical difference, women held a very different status as compared to men. Not only is a woman's sexual capacity viewed as inferior to men, but a woman's

sexuality carries the stigma of shame and sin in the Western religious tradition. Even in a queer culture Winterson declares that women and men are being categorized and positioned differently. This is evident in the character of Villanelle, where due to the femaleness of her body she is not able to display “in your face” queer defiance. When she leaves the casino patron, the man takes his revenge by selling her to the French army as a whore. Villanelle explains: “I was to join the army, to join the Generals for their pleasure. ... They didn’t give me enough time to collect my heart, only my luggage, but I’m grateful to them for that; this is no place for a heart.” [82] Her body’s sexual ambiguity proves attractive towards a mysterious female casino patron as well, who invites her to dinner. This made Villanelle carefully consider the meaning of her body. She questions herself: “She thought I was a young man. I was not. Should I go to see her as myself and joke about the mistake and leave gracefully? My heart shriveled at this thought. To lose her again so soon. ... What was it about me that interested her?” [83] It is evident that Villanelle is willing to expose herself as a cross-dresser, but not as a hermaphrodite, and from her actions she indicated that a cross-dresser and a hermaphrodite have very different options open to them.

Villanelle arrives at a similar perception because her supposition of the girl’s role, which she generally plays, is no more real than the boy’s role, which she plays for the period of carnival. This aspect definitely draws attention to the inautheniticity of all gender roles, foregrounding their performative dimension “What was myself? Was this breeches and boots self any less real than my garters?” [84] Villanelle signals such a gender performance when she appears to her female lover in a soldier’s uniform, by calling it “fancy dress.” [85] In this way, Villanelle chooses to present her body to the woman she

loves as a cross-dressed lesbian body, a normal female body, rather than a hermaphroditic body, which is the body of a freak, and a queer body. The definition of queer seems to be well accepted with Winterson's general attitude and her oeuvre. When Villanelle arrives at the woman's house for dinner, she echoes the idea of Stone when she comments: "I began to feel like Sarpi, that Venetian priest and diplomat, who said he never told a lie but didn't tell the truth to anyone. Many times that evening as we ate and drank and played dice I prepared to explain. But my tongue thickened and my heart rose up in self defense." [86] Furthermore, Stone adds that the most critical thing a transsexual can do, the thing that constitutes success, is to pass. Passing means to live successfully in the gender of choice, and to be accepted as a natural member of that gender. Passing also means the denial of mixture. However, having a hermaphroditic body is not the same thing as being transsexual. It simply meant suppressing the truth of one's body, and "passing" as a gender that is not ambiguous; it entails the denial of mixture, the erasure of difference, and the obliteration of bodily complexity. Winterson's treatment of the mouth acts as a signifier of the lesbian self, while associating lesbian sex with artifice and stylization:

> She lay on the rug and I lay at right angles to her so that our lips might meet. Kissing in this way is the strangest of distractions. The greedy body that clamours for satisfaction is forced to content itself with a single sensation and, just as the blind hear more acutely and the deaf can feel the grass grow, so the mouth becomes the focus of love and all things pass through it and are re-defined. It is a sweet and precise torture. [87]

In introducing themes of sexual politics and lesbian relations, Henri prepares the way for the entry of Villanelle, the Venetian girl who loses her heart to the mysterious

woman whom she terms as "the queen of spades" and acts as the signifier of lesbianism throughout the text. In both Henri and Villanelle, there is role reversal and the deconstruction of sexual difference. Henri is seen to exemplify attributes that are conventionally regarded as feminine while Villanelle displays qualities that are typecast as masculine. Henri, the French peasant who works as Napoleon's cook during his military campaigns first introduces the themes of sexual politics and love between women, thus paving the way for the transformation of the text from a study of the relationships between men in the camp and on the battlefield, into an analysis of lesbian love. [88]

Henri also denotes the topics that are related to compulsory heterosexuality and the lesbian. He narrates an account of his mother's enforced marriage. His mother, Georgette, wanted to be a nun but she agreed to marry merely because her parents had prevented her from fulfilling her religious vocation and entering a convent. [89] Henri also gives an account of the brutal treatment which the cook subjects upon a prostitute in the local brothel, by slapping her face and forcing her to perform fellatio. This instance illustrates the pressure, which is both social and physical, in terms of forcing women into engaging in sexual relations with men. When Villanelle later meets Henri, he falls in love with her. The liminality of love is something which Winterson articulates continually throughout her novels. She writes that passion is "somewhere between the swamp and the mountains," "somewhere between fear and sex," and "somewhere between God and the devil." [90] Passion, in essence, is an elsewhere which is not ruled by society's laws. There are no clear demarcations in this land of loving, and Winterson emphasizes that this lack of marked borders lends an element of danger to love and pleasure. Henri's fondness for

her grows stronger and he recalled that, "being with her was like pressing your eye to a particular vivid kaleidoscope. She was all primary colour and although she understood better than I the ambiguities of the heart she was not equivocal in her thinking." [91] The topic of compulsory heterosexuality, as introduced by Henri in his account of his mother's enforced marriage and his description of his visit to the brothel, is developed in the portrayal of Villanelle and her adventures. Despite exposing her lesbian desire to Henri, she did not display her webbed feet, which marked her queer sexuality and this made Henri curious. Though Henri is willing to help Villanelle in the repossession of her heart which was kept in a jar by the Queen of spades, he also wanted to know "why had she never taken her boots off? Not even while we stayed with the peasants in Russia? Not even in bed?" [92] Henri risks much danger to retrieve Villanelle's heart and although he is deeply in love with her and wants to marry her, he freely gives her heart back, feeling that it is hers to give as she pleases. Villanelle is, in some strange sense, in love with him as well, but it is an unconventional love in which she simply must pick up and leave when she needs. She calls him her brother and not lover, but when in the mood she leads him in passionate love making: "He loves me, I know that, and I love him, but in a brotherly incestuous way." [93] He, however, could not bear this ambiguity and uncertainty and he somehow resembled a helpless puppy dog who must trail after her as he can. For Henri, "When passion comes late in life it is hard to bear." [94]

The Passion can be interpreted as an attempt to describe or make a comment upon the female self. Villanelle transcends the patriarchal framework of society first by being born with webbed feet, which was a particular feature of male fishers in Venice. All through the novel Villanelle resorts to cross-dressing as a means to gain power, and to

control aspects that are related to the self and upon how others perceive that self. Cross-dressing thus maneuvers the dresser into a position of power, especially in terms of the power and freedom to choose and to play with choice. By dressing up as a young man in the casino, or as a soldier when she flees from Russia, she challenges preconceived images of female beauty, frailty and weakness as defined by men. Her gender is always on the make, and is fluid and in constant metamorphosis. This indefinite identity of a woman echoes Luce Irigaray's emphasis upon the dynamic quality of being a woman. She states that a woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite and form is never complete in her. This incompleteness in her form, allows her continually to become something else, though this is not to say she is univocally nothing. In The Passion, also, Villanelle is always in control of her outward appearance, and she defies univocal definitions of womanhood and her identity is sexually dual, if not multiple. Her transgression of definitions of femininity is achieved, on the one hand, by the fact that physically, she is both female, through her sex, and male, through her webbed feet, and on the other hand, by her dress – garters, breeches, boots and false moustache. In pursuing her love affair with the Queen of Spades, Villanelle dresses as a boy, by making the most of the opportunity to engage in cross-dressing which the carnival festival furnishes. Villanelle and the Queen of Spades agree that they will not engage in sexual intercourse, but will only kiss. This act, which was engendered as a form of discipline and mildly sadistic denial of pleasure, ends up yielding a result which neither party expected: it magnifies the sexual experience. "Just as the blind hear more acutely and the deaf can feel the grass grow," Villanelle regales, "so the mouth becomes the focus of love and all things pass through it and are re-defined." [95] Villanelle and the Queen of Spades

experience the vision of erotic love that is set out by Irigaray. As Villanelle goes on highlighting the ambiguity of her sexual identity and desire, the text reveals that she cannot take off her shirt and reveal her breasts and she also cannot take off her boots because that would reveal her webbed feet. Much later Winterson reveals the moment of Villanelle's final revelation of her "femaleness" in a humorous and poignant manner.

The section concerning Villanelle and the Queen of Spades treat the fears of queer lovers throughout history and expresses the lengths to which women who love women have sometimes gone as cross-dressed women or as female husbands in order to keep the beloved. [96] In a text where every other sexual encounter is an overt power play, this love stands out as a pure form of pleasure but this does not mean that the relationship between Villanelle and the Queen of Spades does not involve a power play. Rather the nature of their kissing is in stark contrast to Villanelle's rape, forced prostitution, and also a willing prostitution. This explores the theme of mutuality in love and it recurs throughout Winterson's novels, if not as explicitly, as in this "kissing-only relationship" In Venice, such a compound of selves is possible because this is a city where "There are women of every kind and not all of them are women. ... The lips and the lips alone are the pleasure."[97] By presenting female sexuality as plural and never-ending, these women forcefully transcend the borders that have been constructed to limit their sexuality.

Villanelle's body can be termed as a transgendered body, and her body, coupled with lesbian desire has elaborated Anne Bolin's view that: "the transgenderist has pushed the parameters of the gender paradigm even further by disputing the entire concept of consistency between sexual orientation and gender" [98] The most important part of Villanelle's transgendered body is her heart, and it is the journey of her heart that takes

her towards a discovery of the self, as well as understanding of her own lesbian passion which begins in the casino. Her passion lies in watching the gamblers: “I like to smell the urgency on them. Even the calmest, the richest, have the smell. It’s somewhere between fear and sex. Passion I suppose.” [99] Winterson’s delineation of Villanelle’s trajectory, in foregrounding the pressures prompts her to relate sexually to men and highlight the brevity of her armour with the Queen of Spades. The lesbian relationship between Villanelle and the Queen of Spades ends abruptly. The main reason for this termination was due to the patriarchal society of the era, because the Queen of Spades was a married woman. As has been denoted, sexual difference is a framework or horizon that must disappear as such in the codings that constitute sexual identity and the relations between the sexes. Sexual difference is the horizon that cannot appear in its own terms but is implied in the very possibility of an entity, and identity, a subject, an other and their relations. [100]

Winterson’s creation of these bodies, in all their postmodern complexities, are all queer bodies, that are deconstructing notions of a stable bodily identity and a “natural” body, and they afford others the confidence to participate in being part of, or relating to, the differences that surround human beings at the end of the twentieth century. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the term “queer” signified both the over-determined sexual identity of certain texts by homosexual writers and the deconstructive practice of critics who were engaged in reading them. According to her, queer crosses gender, sexualities, genres and perversion and it becomes an:

> [O]pen mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithic. [101]

In Winterson's less conventional text, Art and Lies, the queer text sets its own terms with the three characters that Winterson takes from famous names: Handel, Picasso and Sappho. She transforms their identities to her own ends as they step out from history and into fiction. In her works, queer themes never suppress the politics of feminism and the analysis of the heterosexual system. In Handel's opinion:

> Men prefer one another. I am quite sure of that, women are a kind of indulgence. I don't expect my Arab friend to like them, he doesn't, but I find it odd when my heterosexual friends don't like them either. My colleagues don't like their wives. They do desire their mistresses. [102]

Through Sappho, Winterson describes the nature of sex: "I take bread from your hand. I take you on my horn. You skin me and call me 'your little red deer'. You are fond of my haunches; I am fond of the flat of your hand. My heart. My longing. As the parched animal is slaked at the rich pool, I have satisfied myself with water from your well. My mouth knows the shape of you. My mouth overflows." [103] Through Winterson's writing Sappho is allowed to lament the damage that has been done to her, through the destruction of her poetry: "My work, my work. The words spitting upwards in tongues of flame." [104]

Drawn from the reading, it is clearly expressed that, Winterson's narratives attack the idea of the tradition of marriage as being a holy institution. As cited, in Written on the Body, Louise is married to Elgin, an Orthodox Jew with a proclivity for masochistic sex

which is so deranged that Louise ceases to engage in sexual acts with him, after which he turns to prostitutes. Queen of Spades in The Passion is married to an adventurer who leaves her alone for months and even years at a time. Again there is no passion or romantic love occurring between Jeanette's mother and father in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. In each case, the woman is left without the children, friendship, and respect (with the exception of Jeanette's mother) which supposedly characterize the sanctified union of marriage. In Art and Lies, Winterson illustrates that love in the media are "actions of self-interest" and that "love is dead." [105] She also castigates romance as the "daily doses of world malaise that poison the heart and mind to such a degree that a strong antidote is required to save what humanness we have left in us." She further illustrates:

> I am not a machine, there is only so much and no more that I can absorb of the misery of my kind.When my tears are exhausted a dullness takes their place, and out of that dullness a terrible callousness, so that I look on suffering and feel it not. [106]

Winterson herself admits that the novel was a product of a particularly difficult period in her life when she was "looking inwards" [107] Art and Lies is narrated by three different voices, each giving a particular version of the "events." The book is a time travel experience. The readers share a high-speed train with Picasso, a young artist escaping from a sexually and emotionally abusive family, Handel, a disillusioned priest turned breast surgeon, and Sappho, the historical poet. Art and Lies is about dehumanization and the absence of love in society. There is a deception especially in terms of the names of the protagonists, for instance, Handel is not the eighteenth century

German composer but an English Catholic priest cum gynecologist and cancer specialist, Picasso is not the French painter but a young English girl whose real name is Sophia. Sappho is and at the same time is not the Greek woman poet of Lesbos as the voice is gradually appropriated by an English female. Therefore, with the exception of Doll Sneerpiece the Bawd, who does not have a voice of her own and appears on the scene as a character from an old book, the author only denotes contemporary figures along with critical comments on social ills that are attached to the fragments of their life stories. And yet a sense of the past permeates and defines the entire narrative. Winterson reflects upon how the past, which is both more or less distant, has created the present. This aspect remains both a question and a quest. According to Winterson the difference between the two is that art is the true means of not telling the truth and that one is not setting out to deceive, rather one is setting out to find an ultimate reality because lies are just lies. She denotes that they are deceptions that are created either for oneself or for others.

Each of these characters has been removed from the social fabric, and yet each of them aims to stay alive within a heartless, fatally confused society. It is not physical survival that they are struggling for, however, but the survival of their hearts and souls. Pritchard [108] explains that the novel argues that art transcends time, which he links to modernism, and that the three narrators speak in some way for three aesthetic genres. The novel is a hymn to lesbian eroticism. While Handel lives in a disconnected society, Sappho, in contrast, embraces desire and sex as the real, sensate connection and links language to the physical experience, since language itself, when uttered, is part of the sensate world. “For Sappho, the word and sex are one in their mutual linkage of imagination and embodiment. ... Language and sex are brought together through an

eroticization of speaking."[109] Doll Sneerpiece, the eighteenth century heroine, who is in love with Ruggerio, reads Sappho's poetry and these articulations are interleaved with Winterson's own lesbian poetry. Through Winterson's writing Sappho is allowed to lament the damage done to her, through the destruction of her poetry by denoting that her work is infused "with the words spitting upwards in tongues of flame."[110] In Sexing the Cherry, Winterson integrates Sappho as well, who in that novel poetically turns her body into a bird, out of love, and refers to her by denoting: "And of Sappho, who rather than lose her lover to a man flung herself from the windy cliffs and turned her body into a bird."[111] So, Winterson creates a character who personifies the free spirited woman.

An ascetic outlook on life conceals Handel from his passion not merely for women but also for his art, namely singing. It is something which has marked his body in the most violent of ways. Through the character of Handel, the narratives of science and religion are exposed, as purveyors of lies, even as their jargon and practices disguise their deceptions. Thus, in the train journey, Handel recalls who he was before he was deadened by medical practice and priesthood. Handel's displacement of desire, which is part of his shame and his damnation, results in a living death of desensitized disengagement. Thus, passive and an aesthete, Handel becomes Winterson's critique of both men and capitalism, revealing the insecurities behind the powerful and the hollowness of the postmodern, industrialized, media-saturated world. Handel has performed countless unnecessary mastectomies as a cancer specialist, and this can be viewed as a critique of the male self and its inherent lack of concern for the female self. Picasso is born to the maid who is raped by Sir John and Handel is subsequently the one who delivers Picasso. Picasso is sexually abused by her half-brother and this repeated rape by her half-brother

thus replays her father's rape of the maid, with the added dependence on familial as well as economic bonds. Winterson raises the stakes of social complicity with the abuse of women by turning it into an incest case. Burns finds this as a crucial critique and in many ways this instance becomes a powerful center within the novel. Burns states that it also functions as the negative other to eroticism and also as the enactment of lust which is forced upon a reluctant girl. In a phallocentric society, women are denigrated and are viewed only as sexual objects. Picasso is thus repeatedly figured as a witness who is "denied, suppressed, and silenced." [112] Picasso wrestles with a question; by wildly painting her way out of a leadenly respectable family in which her brother entertains himself by raping her and in which her parents becomes propelled by greed and fear. "My past, my house, is linked by two staircases: the one I use, and the one other people use. My private staircase leads me from the low basement of my infancy, through small bare rooms..." [113]

Picasso's father did not trust her. Even though Picasso has been desperately trying to tell her family how her brother Matthew had brutally molested her over the years, no one believes her. To stop Picasso from revealing the incest, her father pushed her off the roof of their house, but she is saved by Sappho. Picasso's struggle to escape from her family structure which is like a prison, invokes feminine anger which she transforms into a work of art by painting herself and her own body. Picasso's body has been so abused and bruised by her father and brother and she has been so repeatedly deceived that it is only painting that has prevented her return to hospital. Painting is an act of rebellion which is inspired by Sappho. Picasso paints herself and in the process, paints the family in different colours. Her father is purple, her brother envy-green, and her younger brother

blue. In this art, she externalizes or makes literal the knowledge that she affects them mentally and emotionally, and that she shakes them even as she answers back with her work. She walks away naked but painted in the snow, and is ultimately free from the social collusion that claimed her physically and emotionally, before and after her leap from the house. Sappho's words to Piccaso at the end of the novel evoke best the damage of domestic rape that Winterson lets the readers see, despite its discursive impossibility within patriarchy. Sappho speaks to the pleasure as well as the "healing" in the novel.

Handel and Picasso struggle to read both themselves and others due to the abuse that they have suffered and the lies that they have been told. Handel's social criticism and Picasso's artistic resistance combines with Sappho and the erotic and this remain the strongest of the voices for social change. Sappho's character works as a counterbalance to both Handel and Picasso's pain and suffering in coming to terms with their past and in voicing their future, mainly because Sappho has suffered much but has the self-knowledge to articulate herself fully and in this manner, her poetic contributions remain unapologetic contributions of life and love. Their journey is interrupted by reading from an aged, unfinished book that was given to Handel from the cardinal, and Doll Sneerpiece's story, *The Entire and Honest Recollections of a Bawd*, [114] a fictional narrative which parades itself as autobiography. [115] Handel and Picasso read only the story of Doll Sneerpiece and her bawdiness throws into relief Handel's asceticism and Picasso's pain. Doll is able to combine prostitution and self-education. Her life with this self-assured combination is reflected thus:

> She had found that by arching her bottom in a calculating manner, she could prop her forearms on the bed and continue to read undisturbed by

> the assaults on her hypotenuse. It was in this way that she had come to delight in the elevating works of Sappho. Her own copy, in its original Greek, had come from a one-eyed trader in antiquities, who claimed to have stolen it from the Medici themselves. [116]

According to Doll Sneerpiece, the text and the body are inextricably linked. They are not the same but analogous, experiences of one allowing easier access to and understanding of the other. This statement is supported by her comparison of Ruggerio with "his fitted coat, his slender back, his emphatic leg", [117] who is the object of her unrequited affection, to a book:

> And if I were to say that I would turn the pages of that gentleman one by one, and to run my fingers down his margins, and to decipher his smooth spine, and to go on my knees to enjoy his lower titles, and to upturn that one long volume that he keeps so secret to himself. [118]

Reading and sexual desire become metaphors for each other. Like Woolf, who she so admires, Winterson favours a feminist art that rolls back the supremacy of masculine perspective. [119] And like Woolf, Winterson uses the concept of androgyny. This term can apply to Handel, or even Picasso on the train and Handel's character is one of Winterson's feminized men and is a contrast to the rampant men in Picasso's family. Burns suggests that Woolf use androgyny but Winterson's characters are inherently crossing the genders more than defying them, and are exchanging traits with the feminine men and masculine women. Art and Lies has the courage of its convictions. It is a queer text asserting a lesbian identity with the presence of heterosexual women. Burns suggests: "Thus, the differences between genders are neither crystallized nor ignored;

Winterson's androgyny works to open up possible variations in personality and act." [120] The end of the book, consisting of nine pages of musical score from "Der Rosenkavalier" (1909-10), by Richard Strauss (1864-1949) is a meaningful part of the queer text, even as opera is seen to epitomize queer text. In this manner, Art and Lies uncompromisingly asserts the aggression that is heaped upon women, through three queer characters all at odds with the conventional notions of gender division.

Drawn from the reading, it is clearly expressed that, Winterson's narratives attack the idea of the tradition of marriage as being a holy institution which offers women the only appropriate sphere for their sexual activity, while relegating extra-marital sex to the arena of inner defilement. The beauty and intensity of their love affairs, which Winterson describes in the Biblical marital terms of "one flesh," are a foil to their "empty marriages." With this inversion, these women's passionate extra-marital relationships, or "fornication" and "adultery", [121] become sacred, while marriage is illustrated as anything but a holy sacrament of mutual love and respect. Rather than being defiled and ashamed, Louise and the Queen of Spades experience freedom, pleasure and joy. Winterson highlights the fallibility of believing simply that marriage is good and pure, and that sexual acts outside of marriage are evil and sinful; her configuration of erotic love resists these hierarchical binaries. Winterson seeks to challenge conventional thinking and as reflected, her narrators are usually involved in turbulent lesbian love affairs, thereby transgressing gender boundaries, and, thus making sexual politics as well as sexual passion, in all its dilemma and vindictiveness as integral to her works. Winterson's texts reflects the fact that in disrupting the binary gender divisions and codes, along with the dissolution of boundaries and binaries and in refusing to accommodate them, queer

politics problematizes the concept that power should be associated with the masculine. In short, queer politics remains oppositional, challenging, and at its best, angry. Her works are increasingly concerned with the multi-faceted dimension of female sexuality. Winterson's writing rejects the conventional perception of life. She reveals that the shallow fulfillment which is inherent in traditional values, expands the notion of time and reality, and denotes new insight upon existing realities. Winterson's work is deeply creative and she is constantly moving between territories which seem to be uncharted. In all her fictions, her characters have consistently refused to accept the conventional means of living and these are paralleled by her own refusal to abide by the conventional means of storytelling. Winterson lives in a world where "All times can be inhabited, all places visited. ... Some people who have never crossed the land they were born on have traveled all over the world." [122] Michiko Kakutani describes her worlds as, "worlds in which the usual laws of plausibility are suspended." [123]

Winterson's works offers the reader, significant narratives which are full of fabulous sexual and linguistic transformations. She creates new language for the expression of sexual love, while drawing upon the long tradition of Western quest romances as well as lesbian romance. Her vision of the self is projected in terms of an erotic love that transcends the hierarchical binaries of man/woman, dominant/inferior, lover/beloved, symbolic/abject, and sinful/righteous aspects that have long pervaded sexual relations. Without the division and oppression that are implicit in these oppositions, love becomes a holy and transformative union. In this regard, Winterson's essay "The Semiotics of Sex" coherently denotes that she regards the very notion of lesbian writing as imprisoning and she reiterates that the lesbians as well as gays are

more sophisticated and that it is worth remembering that the conventional mind is its own prison. [124] Winterson has always wanted to create a self which is passionate, but vulnerable. This self could be a narrator that men and women would identify with especially in terms of creating women who have to be in control of their lives and in control of their environment. Her work is decidedly not marginalized and she believes that individuals have the ability to alter their relationships, and that women especially have the power to move into a position of equality with men. Thus, Winterson becomes the practitioner of an emergent lesbian postmodern self, while enacting in her writing, a sexual politics of heterogeneity and a vision of hybridized gender construction which is at once political and postmodern.

NOTES

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[3]As elucidated by Neil Schlager, ed., Gay & Lesbian Almanac, (London: St. James Press, 1998) 93

[4]As elucidated by Paula C. Rust, “The Politics of Sexual Identity: Sexual Attraction and Behavior among Lesbian and Bisexual Women”, Social Problems 39. 4 (1992): 366–386

[5] As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson 3 Oct 2009

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[6]Michele Roberts, “Words Are Not the Only Art”, The Independent on Sunday, 19 June 1994: 5

[7]Jeanette Winterson, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 124

[8]Ibid. 134

[9]Ibid. 127

[10]Ibid. 103

[11]Ibid. 131

[12]Ibid. 112

[13]As elucidated by Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 145

[14]As elucidated by Isabel C. Anievas Gamallo, "Subversive Storytelling – The Construction of Lesbian Girlhood through Fantasy and Fairy Tale in Jeanette Winterson's Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit", Ruth O. Saxton ed., The Girl – Constructions of the Girl in Contemporary Fiction by Women, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 123

[15]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 128

[16]Ibid. 85

[17]Ibid. 126

[18]Ibid. 134

[19]As Charles Perrault's tale "Bluebeard" (1694-1697) clearly warns the reader, beheading is the punishment reserved to independent and curious women. Without their heads, women become the perfect objectified bodies of patriarchy's desire.

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[21]Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", Henry Abelove et al, eds., The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 231

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[25]Ibid. 176

[26]Ibid 134

[27]Ibid. 134

[28] Ibid. 86

[29]As elucidated by Teresa De Lauretis, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation", H. Abelove, M. A. Barate and D. M. Halperin eds., The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, (London: Routledge, 1992) 94.

[30]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 113

[31]Ibid. 29

[32]Ibid. 122

[33]As elucidated by Antje Lindenmeyer, 'Lesbian Appetites': Food, Sexuality and Community in Feminist Autobiography, Sexualities 9. 4 (2006): 469-485

[34]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 134

[35]Ibid. 170

[36]Ibid. 112

[37]Heather Nunn, "Written on the Body: An Anatomy of Horror, Melancholy and Love", Women: A Cultural Review 1 (1996): 19

[38]Ibid. 20

[39]Mette Bom, "Language and Lies: Jeanette Winterson's Experimental Modes of Narration", Helene Bengtson, Marianne Borch and Cindie Maagaard eds., Sponsored by Demons – The Art of Jeanette Winterson, (Denmark: Scholars' Press, 1999) 68-9

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[41]As elucidated by Judith Butler, "Introduction", Judith Butler ed., Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of Sex, (New York: Routledge, 1993) 3

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[44]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 40

[45]Ibid. 77

[46]Ibid. 85

[47]Monique Wittig, The Straight Mind and Other Essays, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 81

[48]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 94

[49]Ibid. 124

[50]Ibid. 50-1

[51]Patricia Duncker, Sisters and Strangers: An Introduction to Contemporary Feminist Fiction, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 169

[52]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 82

[53]Judith Butler, "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion", Judith Butler ed., Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex', (New York: Routledge, 1993) 128-239

[54]Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, David M. Halperin eds., The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, (New York: Routledge, 1993) 315-18.

[55]Helene Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” David H. Richter ed., The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989) 1090

[56]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 67

[57]Ibid. 89

[58]Ibid. 120

[59]Ibid. 52

[60]Ibid. 81-82

[61]Ibid. 78

[62]Ibid. 77

[63]Ibid. 77

[64]Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, ((New York: Grove Press, 1989) 3

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[69]Paulina Palmer, “New Developments in Fiction: Fantasy and Sex”, Paulina Palmer ed., Contemporary Lesbian Writing: Dreams, Desire, Difference, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993) 104-5

[70]Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989) 34

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[73]Lynne Pearce, “Dialogism and Gender the Chronotope”, Lynne Pearce ed., Reading Dialogics, (London: Edward Arnold, 1994) 173-96

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[75]Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989) 85

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[78]As elucidated by Jane Haslett, 'Winterson's Fabulous Bodies', Sonya Andermahr ed., Jeanette Winterson. A Contemporary Critical Guide, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007) 44

[79]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 54-5

[80] "Freaks. A Study of Human Anomalies" Social Semiotics 2 (1991): 3

[81]Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 149

[82]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 99

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[84]Ibid. 66

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[95]Ibid. 67

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[98]Anne Bolin, “Transcending and Transgendering: Male-to-Female Transsexuals, Dichotomy and Diversity”, Gilbert Herdt ed., Third Sex Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History, (New York: Zone Books) 485

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[101]Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Tendencies, (Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf: 1994) 8

[102]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 97

[103]Ibid. 59

[104]Ibid. 58

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[110]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 59

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[112]Christy L. Burns, "Fantastic Language: Jeanette Winterson's Recovery of the Postmodern Word", Contemporary Literature 37 (1996): 372-80

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[115]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 29

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[117]Ibid. 7

[118]Ibid. 6

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[122]Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989) 87

[123]Michiko Kakutani, “A Journey through Time, Space, and Imagination,” New York Times 27 Apr. 1990: 7

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CHAPTER III

NARRATING THE SELF

This chapter shall concentrate upon Winterson's position in terms especially of the notions of queer identity that she deploys, so as to reinforce the aspects that lie behind the writing of the self. Winterson's work touches upon lesbianism and gender stereotypes and makes use of postmodern traits such as intertextuality and genre mixing. For Winterson, "the reality of art is the reality of imagination" and the fashionable approach to the arts is through the narrow gate of "subjective experience." [1] In her fiction, Winterson seeks to challenge conventional thinking, in order to transgress gender boundaries; thus, all her narrators are androgynous and are usually involved in turbulent lesbian love affairs. Sexual politics and sexual passion, in all its dilemmas and even vindictiveness remains integral for her. In her introduction to the published script of the television version of her novel, Winterson said that Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit "challenges the virtues of the home, the power of the church and the supposed normality of heterosexuality." [2]

The screening of Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit drama in 1990 by the BBC during peak viewing hours, and in the winter season, constituted a significant feminist/ lesbian intervention in the sexual politics of popular culture. Reading, or watching, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit as simply autobiographical would be, then, to disregard the complexity of layers that lie behind Jeanette's story. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is a literary novel which is rich with allusions, myth and thought-provoking meditations on truth and life. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit depends for its aesthetic appeal on formal and linguistic aspects rather than narrative and description. H. A. Harris comments:

> By equating the Bible with fiction and fable, the novel directly challenges religious fundamentalist's central tenet: 'the [factual] authority of scripture.' [3]

It also acquired the status of a cult novel among women-identified women in Britain because of its funny and sensitive portrayal of a lesbian protagonist. The novel highlights that Winterson leavened her keen satire of legalistic faith with deep insight and empathy. Even as she rejected dogmatic religion, she displayed an acute understanding of the human need for God. In the novel, an orphan named Jeanette is raised in a devout Evangelical household in the English Midlands. The novel is interwoven with numerous literary and Biblical intertexts, which underpin the religious themes and allows Jeanette, as young protagonist and adult narrator, to explore creatively, a world that is apart from the Biblical doctrine. The opening of the novel itself immediately switches the ordinary traditional gender division of labor with Jeanette's adopted parents. Her father is rather passive, and nearly absent throughout the narrative and remains inconsequential while her mother is active and domineering. She is a woman who imposes a philosophy of life with frightening clarity. She divides the world into enemies and friends. Laura Doan notes:

> Jeanette learns at an early age that such oppositions (mentioned in the novel's first section Genesis: light/dark, good/evil, believer/heathen, order/disorder, lost/found, saved/fallen) provide the faithful and vigilant with the strategies and the weapons that are necessary to wage battle; thus slugs pellets destroy slugs and the dog attacks the Next door. The devil and sex are singled out as especially pernicious for either can appear in 'many forms'.[4]

The novel relates the story of Jeanette who comes out of the closet, in her quest for self and subjectivity as well as (homo)sexuality but rejects the traditional appropriation of the theory of the subject by the masculine and emphasizes instead the mother-daughter bonding as a counter-narrative of conventional masculine bondage that highlights upon female specificity and gender difference. These feelings are manifested through the perceived boundaries around sexual identity categories and the specific rules and expectations about how sexual identities should be performed in particular communities. The aspect of the self, especially in terms of the sexual identity underpins the deepest sentiments of the protagonists and this has been clearly illustrated in the character of Jeanette who is the narrator in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. The story immediately reminds the reader of Jeanette, who is the writer in real life. The key central relationship in the novel is that of Jeanette's relationship with her mother and this reflects one of the major concerns of feminism in terms of the mother-daughter relationship. The relationship between Jeanette and her mother is constantly strained and filled with denial. This has been reflected in the truth behind the "Jane Eyre story" that her mother used to tell Jeanette. It also portrays Jeanette's lesbianism and betrayal with regards to her biological mother, her adoption papers and the desperation in terms of Jeanette's desire to be loved. Jeanette in the narrative discovers that her biological mother had come to visit her one day but had been dismissed by her mother. Jeanette recounts: "I'm your real mother," she [Jeanette's mother] said very quietly."[5] The natural mother is never spoken of again. The dynamics of the relationship between Jeanette and the mother is worked through in terms of their filial bond but her mother is so busy with God all the time that she forgets about the feelings of her own daughter. Jeanette's idea of love, especially for

God, is very intense. She denotes, "I want someone who is fierce and will love me to death and know that love is as strong as death." [6] Betrayal, as mentioned previously, becomes a strong and continuing theme within the text, especially as the only one she appears to trust is God who could perhaps exist only in her imagination, or within the realms of fantasy. According to her, to accept God was to accept Otherness, even though this did not make the life of the artist any easier. Jeanette points out that there were different sorts of treachery "but betrayal is betrayal wherever you find it." [7]

Jeanette recounts that her mother betrayed her by confessing about her unnatural passion to the church: "In her [Jeanette's mother] she was still queen, but not my queen anymore, not the White Queen any more." [8] She refers to her mother as a servant of God and as such, "the servants of God ... by their very nature betray." [9] Perhaps most importantly, the "real" world is hidden from her and denied of her. It is replaced with a world of obsession, self-sacrifice, violation and human selfishness. In other words, Jeanette's search for love appears hopeless and it may be an indication that the real world is a complex and harsh place, one in which fairy tales and fantasy flourish. [10] This unyielding, dualistic and dogmatic view of the world is at the root of the conflictive relationship between mother and daughter, especially as the latter develops her subjectivity and begins to assert her own world-view. According to Gemma López:

> Indications throughout the novel, and more specifically over Jeanette's adolescence, point to the fact that the mother had a past of sensuality that she wishes to silence, and thus her religious fanaticism is represented as a means of sublimating the 'Unnatural passions' she felt at a young age. [11]

Winterson states that “love is reciprocity and so is art. Either you abandon yourself to another world that you say you seek or you find ways to resist it.” [12] For the young lesbian, Jeanette, her first socialization situates her as heterosexual, even while her first desire and her first love is for another woman. It is the mother who teaches her how to fabricate for social acceptance, in order to fit the culturally negated gender stereotypes of femininity in being “a woman”, and hence she lies to her daughter and teaches her how to dissemble. Jeanette and her mother articulate exactly this complex relationship of desire and oppression that feminism was concerned with. This has been done within an evangelical context and precisely mirrors lesbian feminism’s exploration of the childhood development of the young lesbians. Jeanette’s mother confirms Jeanette’s position as a Christ figure by convincing Jeanette that her destiny lies in changing the world. Due to her mother’s propaganda, Jeanette herself reports that from a very young age she always knew that she was special. Ironically, this characteristic would most obviously relate to her future as a lesbian (who belonged to a group often categorized as “special”), rather than as a Christ-like figure. Elsie Norris, Jeanette’s much older friend is a woman-identified woman. She has been a suffragette, who is militant enough to have been imprisoned. Elsie forcefully begs her to listen to her internal self, even as she focuses upon seeing the external world. [13] Jeanette does not yet understand at this stage, but later her imagination continues to flourish even as she discovers her own nature, and the precepts of pleasure. [14] Her emotions and her internal self changes and unravels as she grows. Her views and that of her mother’s, contradict, as Jeanette narrates: “I lay in it, unable to forgive myself, unable to forgive her [her mother].”[15] As Jeanette grows

increasingly detached from her mother she comes closer to fully accepting and celebrating her lesbian identity.

The injuries and sufferings along with love and passion in Winterson's novels lead to a knowledge and understanding that the power to transform oneself is always within that person. In the novel, Winterson advocates alternative ways to understand the sexual, emotional, and intellectual self through the protagonist, Jeanette. It merges the experience of discovering one's sexuality with the struggle to construct a personal identity. Jeanette declares, "I cannot recall a time when I did not know that I was special."[16] Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is based fundamentally upon the philosophical idea that the struggle for self-knowledge and the pursuit of happiness are more worthwhile than self-denial and the dark torments of sexual repression which religious dogmas often impose on people. Within the story, the secular world of the school fails to meet Jeanette's needs in the same way that her church, family and community fails her as she grows up in an environment in which the pursuit of personal happiness and sexual fulfillment is an extremely difficult endeavour, and one that is constantly thwarted by the obscure pressures of religious morality.

Lesbianism is often seen in relation to other issues like religion, family, society, or simply "growing up."[17] Sedgwick discovers a number of pairs of opposing terms (binarisms) which she then shows to be inconsistent with and dependent upon each other. Among the pairings that she assembles and dissects for consideration are secrecy/disclosure, private/public, masculine/feminine, majority/minority, innocence/ initiation, natural/artificial, new/old, growth/decadence, urbane/provincial, health/illness, same/different, cognition/paranoia, art/kitsch, sincerity/sentimentality, and voluntarily/

addiction. She asserts that a true understanding of the force of the opposition of these terms must be grounded in the realization and acceptance that the content of all of these terms was determined around the turn of the century amid and through anxious questioning over who and what was homosexual. These opposing terms, all of which operate today, therefore have a residue of the homo/hetero definitional crisis. Lesbianism is also often identified with oddness and textual reading could even suggest that Jeanette's lesbianism was caused by her peculiar upbringing. For instance, when gay people in a homophobic society come out, perhaps especially to parents or spouses, it is within the consciousness of a potential for serious injury that is likely to go in both directions. The pathogenic secret itself, even, can circulate contagiously as a secret: and a mother would denote that her adult child's coming out of the closet with her has plunged her, in turn into the closet in her conservative community. [18] This has been reflected in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit with Jeanette's mother and one of Jeanette's alter egos, namely Winnet Stonejar. In the case of Winnet Stonejar, the sorcerer who adopts her teaches her the magic arts so that she can "take the message to other places, where they hardly know how to draw a chalk circle", [19] just as Jeanette's mother wanted her daughter to carry God's message to the heathen. Similar to Jeanette's fate, Winnet is forced to leave the castle when she falls in love with a person that the sorcerer does not accept. This mirrors a turning point in the protagonist's self-understanding: the raven Abednego tells Winnet that she would not lose her power, she will "just use it differently", [20] before vomiting "a rough brown pebble." [21] Jeanette's message, embodied in the novel amounts to a reflection on the issues of lesbian identity and "coming out" accompanied by several ideas that are developed by lesbian cultural criticism.

As the substitution of the phrase "woman-identified woman" for "lesbian" suggests, as indeed does the concept of the continuum of male or female homosocial desire, this trope tends to re-assimilate to one another a sense of identification and desire, where inversion models, by contrast, depend upon their distinctness. Gender separatist models would thus place the man-loving woman and the man-loving man each at the "natural" defining center of their own gender, again in contrast to inversion models that locate gay people whether biologically or culturally - at the threshold between genders. [22] As in the novel, when Jeanette refuses to repent in front of the church community about her lesbian affair with Melanie, Jeanette's rebellion offers a clear sign of her willingness to accept the fears, tensions and complexities of her difference with other people. Jeanette's struggle to accept her sexual orientation in spite of the reactionary religious education that she has received, and the determination to become strong enough to remain unaffected from external aggression when she reasserts her lesbian identity become a real tale of a heroine's quest for self. The Church community subjects her to an exorcism, and deprives her of food and light for a period of thirty six hours. The exorcism causes Jeanette to hallucinate, and conjure up an "orange demon" which acts as Jeanette's defense against the community's attempt to subjugate her. This demon helps her to protect those aspects of the self, such as that of her creative imagination and her homosexuality which are proscribed by the Church. Jeanette recounts that her lesbianism had become by "accident": "that accident had forced me to think more carefully about my own instincts and attitudes of others. After the exorcism I had tried to replace my world with another just like it, but I couldn't. I loved God and I loved the Church, but I began to see that as more and more complicated." [23] After Melanie, Jeanette finds a satisfactory

love relationship with Katy: “She was my most uncomplicated love affair, [Jeanette explains] and I loved her because of it.” [24] This closing also contains a new fable, that of the pilgrim whose arrival and departure from an Edenic garden symbolizes Jeanette’s acceptance of her homosexuality and her determination to live according to her own dictates. The death of Elsie finally breaks Jeanette’s ties with her town. [25] Elsie Norris is Jeanette’s sensitive, kind, and intelligent friend who makes up for the maternal neglect of her mother and provides Jeanette the attention and love that she requires. Griffin argued that “both essentialist views (you are born one) and social constructionist views (you are made one) on lesbianism are offered”. The title of the novel “Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit” is symbolic. In Jago Morrison’s reading, the orange demon is Jeanette’s acceptance and internalization of lesbian sexuality as evil and deviant, and hence it is part of the reason as to why she initially reverts to a masquerade of normalcy instead of being excluded. [26] Winterson denotes that there are different ways of living life and different forms of sexual desire and expression. It is not only heterosexuality that exists in the world, but also homosexuality. She declares of the novel that the novel exposes the sanctity of family life as something of a sham as it illustrates by example that what the Church calls love is actually psychosis and it dares to suggest that what makes life difficult for homosexuals is not their perversity but other people’s. In Winterson’s view, the homosexual is not an imitation of a heterosexual; the lesbian is not an inferior version of a man. Contrary to Jeanette’s mother’s belief, Jeanette perceives that oranges which were once soothing, comforting and sufficient were no longer the only fruit. There is more to fruit than just oranges. Oranges were thus, not the only fruit. The oranges symbolized the dominant rhetoric that Winterson’s mother embraces, and they also

become a means of avoiding the truth. For example, her mother would avoid talking to Jeanette by giving her an orange to eat. [27] This is also evident in the case of Melanie who tried to conform Jeanette to the accepted standards of sexuality by offering her an orange.[28] Lauren Rusk contends that both offerings turn out to be "sanctioned but insufficient fare". [29] The "half each" fruit that Jeanette shares with Elsie[30] is associated with the orange demon, and is linked to an "equal sharing of lovers or close friends". Hence, oranges proved to be more nourishing. Oranges also proved to be a device for Jeanette to back her mother and the pastor: "They started arguing between themselves about whether I was an unfortunate victim or a wicked person. ... 'Have an orange,' I offered, by way of conversation. They both started at me like I was mad." [31]

Instances in the novel about a prince who was looking for perfection is also symbolic, because at the end of the tale the prince's ongoing quest for perfection is ridiculed, suggesting that such totalitarian views of the world only lead to grotesque error. This fairy tale functions within the story as a representation of Jeanette's new-found awareness of human frailty and the contradictory nature of personal freedom, a painful but necessary process by which she starts to question both the Church's and her mother's authority. In this way the importance of fantasy in the construction of the self and of Jeanette's adolescent psyche, as well as the complex task for a writer who tries to represent subjectivity and the achievement of a sense of identity is reflected in the novel. With Katie, Jeanette finds a new and more satisfactory love relationship. Jeanette can truly accept the nature of her own self and she explained that theirs had been the most uncomplicated love affair. Jeanette's quest for self is also equated to that of Sir Perceval and the Holy Grail. As Susana Onega accurately points out: "The interpolation of the

Perceval story adds a mythical and archetypal dimension to Jeanette's autobiographical life story, providing the unitarian quest pattern into which the other subsidiary texts can be integrated." [32] Similarly like Sir Perceval, Jeanette has to give up the security of the round table (namely the church) and the love of King Arthur (namely her mother) and set out on her quest for the Grail (the fulfillment of her desires). However as the Grail is a metaphor of her subjectivity, this endeavour will never be completely fulfilled. In the final book of the novel, entitled "Ruth" there is a narrative about a girl named Winnet (a condensing of Jeanette and Winterson), who dwells in a kingdom, "long ago":

> In those days, magic was very important, and territory, to start with, just an extension of the chalk circles you drew around yourself to protect yourself from elements and the like. It's gone out of fashion now, which is a shame, because sitting in a chalk circle when you feel threatened is a lot better than sitting in the gas oven. [33]

Winterson denoted that circles like walls could protect as well as limit, and, the important thing was to draw one's own circle and not get drawn into someone else's. Winnet in the novel was trying to get out of a forest but was consistently persuaded by a wizard who eventually entraps her by drawing a circle into which she steps. There is a struggle ensuing between Winnet and the wizard, who must guess her name in order to possess her. When the wizard said that he knows her name, Winnet stopped, afraid because if this were true she would be trapped. Naming meant power. Adam in the Bible had named the animals and the animals came at his call. "I don't believe you," [34] she shouted back. But unfortunately the wizard denotes her name correctly, "Winnet Stonejar," her patronym itself was a round stone object with a lid to block out the sky and

as a result, Winnet must enter the stone walls of the wizard's castle. Judith Butler in Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex', examines the power of naming and the struggle to control the deployment of a name, for instance, in terms of the name queer. She states that being named by another can be a form of violence, and therefore, there are attempts that are made on parts of persons and groups in order to own their own names. [35]

Winterson explains that Jeanette's homosexuality places her outside of the binary by denoting that she is neither wholly good nor wholly evil. At the same time, Jeanette's lesbianism defies the binary gender roles that traditionally dominate society. Jeanette is a woman who does not act as a traditional woman because she does not love men. Winterson exposes the damage that has been done to women who love women, as well as the silencing of this damage, in terms of the violence of sex. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit demonstrates the multiplicity of selves within the postmodern fragmented identity, through Jeanette's imaginative fantasy identifications with various fairytales. These include Malory's story of Sir Perceval's search for the Holy Grail, in order to place Jeanette's story in the mythic realm. There are also protagonists, illustrating both the fluidity of identity and gender positions. The young Jeanette's fabulation can be linked to her personal formation of the self, a self-creation of a feminine voice that, through its variety and its crossing of genre boundaries, refuses to limit its potential. The self, via the differing narratives, is always shifting and always in process. Jeanette was forced to abandon her mother's house and the religious congregation, and she then begins her quest for adulthood and autonomy through a series of odd jobs: first in a funeral parlour and then selling ice cream until she finishes school and is offered a full- time job in a mental

hospital, a position she accepts mainly because (echoing Virginia Woolf) it offers her: “A room of my own, at least.” [36] In the city Jeanette has time to reflect on what she has lost and gained. She has no intention of going back to the equivocal safety of home and church; and given the choice between priest and prophet she opts for the latter despite the many perils.

The novel may be read as a fairy tale which is creative. It could also be interpreted as psychic stories that the young Jeanette tells to herself in order to navigate the construction of her own identity. This aspect is also a self-creation which is singular and it also becomes a psychoanalytic conception of the self. Winterson portrays a view of human identity as diffused and disintegrating, as rendered explicitly in the following passage:

> I have a theory that every time you make an important choice, the part of you left behind continues the other life you could have had. [...] I might be anywhere at one time, influencing a number of different things [...]. There’s a chance that I’m not here at all, that all the parts of me, running along all the choices I did and didn’t make, for a moment brush against each other. That I am still an evangelist in the North, as well as the person who ran away. Perhaps for a while these two selves have become confused. I have not gone forward or back in time, but across in time, to something I might have been, playing itself out. [37]

In keeping with this contention, Winterson adopts women’s sexuality and writing in women’s terms beyond phallocentric dictatorship and influence. These aspects are

reflected as the solid foundations for the construction of a new sense of identity which is free from patriarchal definitions in binary terms. In Art Objects (1995) she wrote:

> Close the shutters and turn up the lamp. The room is full of voices… Intimate illuminations when the reader and what is read are both unaware of the hands of the clock. The clock is ticking. Let it. In your hands, a book that was in their hands, passed to you across the negligible years of time. Art is indifferent to time, and if you want proof, you have it. Pick up the book. It is still warm. [38]

In Epistemology of the Closet (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that standard binary oppositions limit freedom and understanding, especially as related to sexuality, and that according to her, limiting sexuality to homosexual or heterosexuality, in structured binary opposition, is just too simplistic. Epistemology of the Closet proves that modern sexual contradictions lead to modern misunderstandings, that language is a deeply relevant force behind sexuality, and that labeled speech acts are ultimately the proof of the nature of one's sexuality. Sedgwick's use of queer theory exposes the underlying meanings behind the oppositions and distinctions in modern culture at large. This device is also employed by Winterson, for instance in Written on the Body, where the novel begins with the monologue of a nameless narrator struggling to come to terms with the utter pain and sorrow of having lost Louise, and the person s/he loves. Throughout the narrative Winterson depicts the narrator's progression from a promiscuous Lothario to a faithful and deeply passionate lover who tries to escape from the platitudes of romantic love: "Love makes the world go round. Love is blind. All you need is love. … It's the clichés that cause the trouble." [39] Winterson uses tropes of travel

and anatomy in order to pursue her textual exploration of the corporeality of love. The usual love story is eclipsed by Winterson's deft juggling of the English language. The narrator often warns denotes her/his own unreliability as a story teller by directly addressing the reader in a self-conscious manner: "I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator." [40] This way of addressing the reader brings to mind previous Winterson protagonists, like the Jeanette of Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit or the Henri of The Passion, who recount the stories of their lives while at the same time warning the reader of the slippery margins between the real and the unreal, or between fact and fiction: "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" [41] repeats Henri constantly, his line being, a literary device which seeks to emphasize the postmodern condition of Winterson's writing.

Even though it is a largely plot less narrative, Written on the Body explores the subject of gender and sexual identity, while tackling the problem of conveying a love story without falling prey to cliché. Her main concern in the novel, among other things, is metafictional exploration of the concept of self and the idea of crossing boundaries. In Winterson's hands, love, is pummeled, dissected, and flipped upside-down, until the word itself rings new and unfamiliar. Written on the Body focuses upon the power of language to create both subjectivity and sexuality, and it is exclusively vested upon the politics of the lesbian self. It explores the space between love and death, and rejected essentialist sex roles wherein masculinity is the other of femininity. In this way, Winterson appears to suggest the idea that narrators are also "in process" thus illustrating the narrator's ability to subvert the equivocal status of an objective reality since the narrator is ungendered with unspecified age. In her analysis of Monique Wittig's work

Judith Butler argues that "one can, if one chooses, become neither female nor male, woman nor man, [and that] the linguistic discrimination of 'sex' secures the political and cultural operation of compulsory heterosexuality."[42] In the process of asserting her lesbian sexual identity, Jeanette in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit refuses to conform to the constructed norms and taboos of the phallocentric ethos. Similarly, the narrator of Written on the Body also refuses to be either male or female in his/her journey towards self-consciousness, in his/her quest of self and an understanding of the ethics of love, thus disrupting "the easy flow of meaning and making us aware of the inherent ambiguity and mediating influence of language." [43]

The novel reflects a highly controversial writer and by adding a creative spark the novel withholds the gender of the narrator from the reader. The dynamics of marriage and adultery have been cut open. The narrator repeatedly ridicules the clichés that are attached to married love: "Settle down, feet under the table. She's a nice girl, he's a nice boy. It's the clichés that cause the trouble." [44] The narrator contemptuously dismisses the safe confines of marriage: "Marriage is the flimsiest weapon against desire. You may as well take a pop-gun to a python." [45] Louise, the protagonist, also makes her married life seem like a sham when she said: "I'm going to leave him because my love for you makes any other life a lie." [46] In Written on the Body, Winterson explores the roguish narrator's quest for sexual love and highlights upon power relations as an integral part of sexual relationships. The novel focuses upon the love between the narrator and a married woman called Louise. The opening sentence of the novel offers the key: "Why is the measure of love loss?" [47] Winterson's unusual word order ensures that love and loss are directly juxtaposed. Love, the novel implies, necessitates, and is constituted by loss. When Louise

contracts cancer, the narrator is persuaded by Louise's husband, Elgin, an Orthodox Jew, to give her up, so that Elgin who is an eminent doctor can provide her with the treatment she requires, in order to survive. Louise's husband, Elgin, with a proclivity for masochistic sex, is so deranged that Louise ceases to engage in sexual acts with him, and at this point he turns to prostitutes. Similarly in The Passion, the Queen of Spades is married to an adventurer who leaves her alone for months, and even years, at a time. In each case, the woman is left without the children, friendship, and respect which supposedly characterize the sanctified union of marriage. Both women consequentially turn to relationships outside of their marriages for emotional as well as sexual fulfillment. The beauty and intensity of their love affairs is described by Winterson in the Biblical marital terms of "one flesh."[48] These terms become a foil to their empty marriages. Rather than being defiled and ashamed, Louise and the Queen of Spades experience freedom, pleasure and joy. Winterson highlights the fallibility of simply believing that marriage is good and pure, and that sexual acts outside of marriage are evil and sinful; her configuration of erotic love resists these hierarchical binaries. She does not, however, assert that all sexual encounters are sacred; she asserts that only those that occur in a relationship characterized by true love remain sacred.

Written on the Body is a novel about love that remains irrespective of gender. In the second section of the novel the narrator, nursing his/her pain, enters into an extended series of prose poems while meditating upon the various parts of Louise's cancer-ridden body. S/he cannot let of Louise because s/he feels that Louise might still be on the other end of the rope. His/her mournful soliloquy brings to mind Judith Butler's analysis of Freud's 1917 essay, "Mourning and Melancholia". In the experience of losing another

human being whom one has loved, Freud argues, the ego is said to incorporate that other into the very structure of the ego, taking on attributes of the other and "sustaining" the other through magical acts of initiation. The loss of the other which one desires and loves is overcome through a specific act of identification that seeks to harbour that other within the very structure of the self: "So by taking flight into the ego, love escapes annihilation."[49] There are sections that open with a quotation from an anatomical textbook and such sections are The Cells, Tissues, Systems and Cavities of the Body; The Skin; The Skeleton; The Special Senses. With the aid of the anatomical book the narrator realizes that the world is a world of decay and disease: "Within the clinical language, through the dispassionate view of the sucking, sweating, greedy, defecating self, I found a love-poem to Louise. I would go on knowing her, more intimately than the skin, hair and voice that I craved."[50] This love story is one which is written on the body and not of the body as s/he narrates: "Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there."[51] The narrator's explorations of Louise's body at times combine anatomical definitions with tropes of travel: "I dropped into the mass of you and I cannot find the way out."[52] This entire section[53] refers to topics such as the validity of diagnosis and medical intervention. It denotes medical ethics and constitutes an extended conceit, that centers upon the paradox that love is so frequently thought of as a disease; namely lovesickness. For the narrator, love has usually lasted for around six months but with Louise, his/her lifestyle had altered. The narrator cannot help seeing analogies between visions of love by which the definition is dependent for its power on its potential undoing of a terminal disease like cancer. Both love and cancer end in sorrow, loneliness and death. Winterson uses an anatomical theme

in order to render poetic expression to the underlying duality of love and of the language of love. As the narrator acknowledges, Louise "opened up the dark places as well as the light." [54]

However, the one element that really sets Written on the Body apart from any other well-written story about love is that it leaves the gender of the main character unknown while recounting a relationship that cannot be categorized as either homosexual or heterosexual. Thereby, love is stripped down to nothing more and nothing less, than an emotion. To Winterson, the narrator's gender really does not matter. Patricia Duncker in "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism" (1998) has denoted that gender is "the first thing we have to know about someone…Can you imagine a world where it wasn't?" Winterson proposes to denote this aspect inherently in her texts by denoting that the narrator's gender does not matter, and that it can be both. It could also radically change Winterson herself as she is very clear about where she stands on this issue. "When I read Adrienne Rich or Oscar Wilde [. . .] I am not reading their work to get at their private lives, I am reading their work because I need the depth-charge it carries." [55] In "The Laugh of Medusa", whether the central relationship is homosexual or heterosexual, its power lies in the fact that it is based on what Cixous sees as a specifically female principle, called the "economy of the gift", rather than on an economy of exchange. Cixous has often been accused of essentialism, because by urging women to "write the body" she seems to imply that female identity is determined by their bodies. Winterson creates this sense of indeterminacy around the question of the narrator's gender and she disrupts that link between body and voice. The novel, with its sexually indeterminate narrator, is a deliberate attempt to dispense with distinctions of gender and

it meditates on the nature of love which remains stripped of its specifically hetero- and homosexual features. Winterson's use of the first person narrative forces one to consider what gender stereotypes are being carried in order to measure what is "male" or "female". Winterson has stated that she does not "think people's sexuality is really that fixed." [56] She observes that it does not matter which sex the narrator is, because "the gender of the character is both, throughout the book, and changes; sometimes it's female, sometimes it's male." [57] Winterson disturbs fixed boundaries and rigidly gendered identities that objectify the body in order to build up a concept of the body that is fluid. It also leaves room for changes and merger with other bodies, where bodies are held together, not by a stable body image and a gendered identity, but by forces of connection and interaction between parts of the body. Winterson criticizes the equation of the female body with a penetrable surface. The androcentric concept of sexuality that associates penetration with the exploration of hidden depths and the achievement of power and knowledge are unmasked as necrophilia. This brings up the recurring passage from the book, which mentions how both Renoir and Henry Miller create their art with their penises. [58] In a conversation between the narrator and a former girlfriend, Catherine, Catherine asks, "'Do you know why Henry Miller said "I write with my prick"?' 'Because he did. When he died they found nothing between his legs but a ball-point pen.' 'You're making it up,' she said. Am I?" [59] Here, the narrator's final question immediately speaks to the playfulness of the text. The narrator leads to an interesting section in which s/he becomes obsessed with human anatomy textbooks and uses them to write intense, lyrical descants on Louise's body which is by turns beautiful, moving, and disturbing and

this is where the narrator explains how he/she knows Louise: “That is how I know you. You are what I know.”[60]

The conclusion of the novel celebrates the transformative effects of art by itself because it is neither factual nor explainable simply as a character’s fantasy. The text celebrates the triumph of a purely textual and artistic recreation of a lover who is already dead. As the narrator denotes “I had been reading books that dealt with death partly because my separation from Louise was final and partly because I knew she would die.”[61] It is but a love which is revived in terms of a renewed use of language. The structure that Winterson has bonded by language is one of love that is brought into focus through loss. Textual love necessarily sacrifices sexual love with language as the only consolation that is left behind.

Louise’s cancer permeates the second half of the novel, filling her body and the text as the narrator wants to; and in a sense, the disease can be said to translate the novel’s style. Leukemia is cancer of the blood and it is a disease as well as a kind of self-consumption that spreads to every hollow of the body, thus making the entire body a potential enemy, a mystery, unknowable—uncontextualizable. The novel becomes primarily a collection and recreation of the narrator’s memories, meditations and lamentations upon love and loss. Much of these aspects are intimately and erotically bound to the body and the cancer is brutal and toxic: “she [Louise] would be badly anemic, suffering from deep bruising and bleeding, tired and in pain most of the time. She would be constipated. She would be vomiting and nauseous. [...] She would be very thin, my beautiful girl, thin and weary and lost. There is no cure for chronic lymphocytic leukemia.”[62]

The novel does not denote any detail upon what Louise's cancer does to her health. It only illustrates how news of her imminent suffering affects her lover and the text. The very word "cancer" introduces mystery into the novel. "Cancer" also reveals the origins of lyricism which lie in the sense of loss, and not of love. It is thus narratively appropriate that the narrator forces Louise to disappear once s/he learns of the diagnosis. If Louise's body is a blank slate, what has been definitively written on it is disease and not love. Disease at first seems to defeat the impulse toward lyricism, while setting a different scene for language entirely. With Louise gone, poetry leaves the text and the lover moves into an ugly cold hovel in Yorkshire and works in a wine-and-fish bar. After leaving Louise with her husband, a doctor who is comfortable with the language of science, as well as with numbers, formulas, computers, and other technical equipment, but who is without both passion and compassion, the narrator tries once again, to read Louise.

Louise, in the novel, suffers tenfold from this problem: she is a vessel of tedious perfection and is always seen in a flattering light. Winterson describes her in foamy lyricism in such a way that her flesh has the moonlit shade of a silver birch, she muses that the creamy apart from your hair your red hair that flanks you either side and in blank generalizations. The relationship with the narrator and Louise is flawless, un-sexy in its total fulfillment and nothing mattered to them. It was as if a treasure had fallen into their hands and the treasure was each other.

Like Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Written on the Body focuses upon the power of language to create both subjectivity and sexuality. It stands for a life that can revivify the love and the loss of which it is brooding on, to concentrate exclusively upon

the politics of the lesbian self. In her collection of essays, Art Objects, she asserts, "I realized that [...] plot was meaningless to me. [...] I had to accept that my love-affair was with language, and only incidentally with narrative."[63] Winterson confronts the linguistic problems of narrating a romance, starting with her admission that the entire subject of love has been verbalized so extensively and repeatedly that it is almost impossible to write anything new about the experience. She employs a variety of specialist languages drawn from such discourses as those of the Bible and travelogues and anatomy. She also employs such divergent narrative modes as dramatic dialogue and epistolary fiction, in order to overcome the over-worn status of romance fiction. Winterson's negotiation between the unavoidable use of cliché and the breakthrough into a new language of love reflects an ambiguity which is lying at the center of the phenomenon of love itself. Michel Foucault has diagnosed a similar duality while underlying the discourse of love in his three volumes of The History of Sexuality. For Foucault, sexuality itself is a function of ideology and it is the name that can be given to a historical construct which is not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp. It becomes a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.

If Written on the Body is a eulogy to the body, even in its sickness and decay, then Art and Lies is a cry of pain. The novel is concerned with how to live life and what path to take. Each character in Art and Lies is associated with a different art-form: music, painting and poetry. As the title suggests, the text is more of a philosophical digression about art as artifice and invention than a story in the traditional sense of the term. It

criticizes the Platonic notion of art as mimesis and reverences the power of the word. Winterson said:

> When I wrote Art and Lies, I said it was a question and a quest. The protagonists, Handel, Picasso and Sappho, are each fleeing a dead city, and a life they can no longer bear. The dead city is a London of the future, a potential place without values. ... I did not put my life into Art and Lies, as people commonly understand the artist at work, but I have put Art and Lies into my life. The question 'How shall I live?' had to be addressed to myself. [64]

Handel along with the other two narrators, Picasso and Sappho, are on a train, trying to flee from the past. They want to flee from their family and from the all-pervasive death of the heart which made them so miserable. These characters appear to be constructs of identity, even as they represent elements of consciousness. Their identities are dissolved and they constitute the reality of imagination which, according to Winterson, is the only reality of art. Each character strives to reconstruct his/her autobiography. One of them, namely Handel, imagines and even writes his life story on the remaining blank pages of the book he is reading. The other, a painter, namely Picasso, uses painting in her healing process, which implies that art is the artist's autobiography. The third character, Sappho, denotes the story of how her biography and poems were transformed by literary critics. The relationship between these characters is multi-dimensional and it appears that the boundaries between these three are not clearly drawn. Winterson considers art to be a superior form of knowledge which is filled with inconsistencies. According to Winterson, these complexities make a work of art an

"Other", which she believes is a bringer of realities beyond the commonplace. Thus, the experience of art is a travel through time, space and place. The train journey that they embark upon allows Handel to move back and forth between the past and the present of his existence. The descriptions of the city are mentioned in the first chapter through Handel. He mentions three cities but he actually makes a reference to only one and although the name London is not mentioned in any of the three descriptions, it is London that he has in mind. The book is set in the City 2000 After Death, which explains that the time and the space coordinates are indefinite. Yet the City is not really any city, and the time is not an unreal, end of millennium future. It can be identified as the present age, especially since the problems that Handel is faced with such as, breast cancer (which his patients are afflicted with), lack of feeling, lack of compassion, hollowness, and despair and of understanding between people, are issues of contemporary concern. Handel distinguishes between three types of cities that coexist within the boundaries of the same official administrative form of organization: the ceremonial, the political and the invisible city, within the novel.

In the essay entitled "Art & Life" in Art Objects, Winterson reflects her resistance to postmodernism. She associates postmodernism with the mass media and with a loss of authorial control and aesthetic value, both of which are highly prized by modernism. She denotes, "You are a slave to advertising, to fashion, to habit and to the media. You like to call yourself a free man but you are bound by rules of which you know nothing." [65] The only way out of such miserable slavery of this century, for Winterson, is to return to real ideas which are to be found in books. As in modernism, Winterson insists upon the discreteness and integrity of the artistic realm.

When Picasso first agonizes over her family life, Winterson does not convey to the reader that she has been incestuously abused. Her excessive use of figuration and artful sentence structure is designed both to hint at a secret and to retain an aura of mysterious excitement. In this text, Winterson denotes famous names: Handel, Picasso and Sappho. She transforms their identities to her own ends even as they step out from history and into the realms of fiction. The unsettling effect of Winterson's narrative time commences here with the reader's expectations being not just unfulfilled but shattered by the deception of the protagonists' names: Handel is not the eighteenth century German composer but an English Catholic priest cum gynecologist and cancer specialist. Picasso is not the French painter but a young English girl whose real name is Sophia. Sappho is similarly not the Greek woman poet of Lesbos. Therefore, with the exception of Doll Sneerpiece the Bawd, who does not have a voice of her own and appears on the scene as a character from an old book, there are only contemporary figures within the text. The text denotes Winterson's critical comment upon the social ills that are attached to the fragments of their life stories. Yet, a sense of the past permeates and defines the entire narrative. This novel is a polemical book as well as an angry book where queer is a gender game and depicts the best of queer emotions that is pure, undiluted rage which is not delicate, playful or self-indulgently vain. All the three characters are alienated, restless, dissatisfied and seeking. Handel, Picasso and Sappho find themselves on the same train and are drawn to one another through the curious agency of a book. They are linked in their struggle against a toxic society and they end up together in a train which is speeding towards freedom. Sappho is searching for the woman that she had seen as attempting to fly from the window ledge of family values. Picasso is inherently escaping

from an abusive family as well as repeated molestation from her incestuous brother even as she explains: "Until I was fifteen, my brother used me, night after night, as a cesspit for his bloated adolescence. That place is sealed now. My own narrow stair stops outside the door and begins in a new direction" [66] Sappho, the "sexualist" and whose poetic fragments have been poked about in for 2,500 years, is associated with the figure of a hermaphrodite which was once a common classification for the lesbian. Sappho describes herself saying that in the olden days she was a great poet but a bad girl and that Ovid came along in the first century AD and tried to clean up her reputation with a proper tragic romance. She further denotes that if one says her name and one would simply imply the term "sex" and that if one said her name and it would also imply white sand, under a white sky and white trammel of her thighs. These two narrators, namely Sappho and Picasso, are lesbians and hence not quite women. Handel is a failed priest but an abiding Catholic with elitist tendencies, whose work as a doctor forces him to consider social questions that he would probably rather avoid. As a youth, he was raped by a Cardinal in Rome. He too is trying to escape from his past and his sinking sense of self-worth. He suffers from guilt over a blotched mastectomy in which he had cut off the wrong breast of his patient. The callousness and misery he encounters in the disintegrating city present him, with unbearable moral dilemmas. He is not quite a man; he is, in fact, a castrato, or eunuch. Art and Lies thus is both a question and a quest. According to Winterson, the difference between the two is that art is the true means of not telling the truth. She denotes that the protagonists are setting out to find an ultimate reality and that lies are just lies. Winterson denotes that what art tries to do is cut through all that and come up with something that really is objective.

Art and life, Winterson feels, are completely intertwined. To her, stories are a way to re-envision the world and appropriate it for oneself. Each of the characters has been removed from the social fabric. This has been done through violence for Picasso and Handel, and from sexual preference for Sappho. Each of them have the same aim, that is, to stay alive in a heartless, fatally confused society. It is not physical survival that they are struggling for, however, but the survival of their hearts and souls. Pritchard [67] explains that the novel argues that art transcends time, which he links to modernism, and that the three narrators speak in some way for three aesthetic genres. The novel is a hymn to lesbian eroticism. While Handel lives in a disconnected society, Sappho, in contrast, embraces desire and sex as the real, sensate connection and links language to the physical experience, since language itself, when uttered, becomes a part of the sensate world: "For Sappho, the word and sex are one in their mutual linkage of imagination and embodiment. ... Language and sex are brought together through an eroticization of speaking." [68] Doll Sneerpiece, the eighteenth century heroine, who is in love with Ruggerio, reads Sappho's poetry and these articulations are interleaved with Winterson's own lesbian poetry and that if Doll's passages in Art and Lies parody eighteenth-century pornography, Sappho is an erotic of eye and ear, mining both the sensual and sentimental side of romantic imagination. Her poems of love between women have been burnt and her story has been retold by heterosexual men. Picasso is sexually abused by her half-brother and this repeated rape by her half-brother thus replays her father's rape of the maid, with the added dependence on familial as well as economic bonds beyond critiquing the inequities and the abuses of protection that the family might otherwise provide, Winterson raises the stakes of social complicity with the abuse of women by

turning it into an incest case. Burns finds this as a crucial critique and in many ways this aspect becomes the powerful center of the novel. Burns states that this abuse also functions as the negative "other" to eroticism as the enactment of lust forced upon a girl who resisted. In a phallocentric society, women are denigrated and are viewed only as sexual objects and "Picasso is thus repeatedly figured as a witness who is denied, suppressed, and silenced." [69] Picasso wrestles with a question, while wildly painting her way out of a leadenly respectable family in which her brother entertains himself by raping her, and where her parents are automatons who are propelled by greed and fear and commented thus, "My past, my house, is linked by two staircases: the one I use, and the one other people use. My private staircase leads me from the low basement of my infancy, through small bare rooms..." [70] Picasso's struggle to escape from her family structure which is like a prison invokes feminine anger which she transforms into a work of art by painting herself. Her own body that becomes an act of rebellion which is inspired by Sappho and Picasso paints herself and in the process paints the family. In doing so, she frees herself from the social collusion that claimed her physically and emotionally. Through the process of painting, Picasso retains her self as well as the importance of her being. Sappho's words to Picasso at the end of the novel evoke best the damage of domestic rape. Sappho speaks to the pleasure and the "healing" of finding a staircase through language which reaches the room, the body and where it happened. She states:

> Lie beside me. Let me see the division of your pores. Let me see the web of scars made by your family's claw and you their furniture. Let me see the wounds they denied. The battleground of family life that has been your

> body. Let me see the bruised red lines that signal their encampment. Let me see the rooted place where they are gone. Lie beside me and let the seeing be the healing. [71]

Art and Lies has the courage of its convictions. It is a queer text that asserts a lesbian self with the presence of heterosexual women. Burns suggests: "Thus, the differences between genders are neither crystallized nor ignored; Winterson's androgyny works to open up possible variations in personality and act. Sexing the Cherry makes sex central to its historic revision and strives for a similar sexualization of the spirit and condemnation of hypocrites who both exploit" [72] (and denounce prostitutes). The crime of Puritan Preacher Scroggs and Neighbour Firebrace meet a grisly end in a brothel at the hands of Dog-Woman. Palmer highlights that Winterson focuses attention upon the Dog Woman's heroic qualities and describes her as presenting the rebellious, transgressive aspect of femininity which patriarchy attempts to suppress. [73]

Dog-Woman's stories describe many instances in detail. These include the rise of the Puritans, the Civil War, the execution of Charles, the rule of Cromwell and the Restoration of the monarchy. Dog-Woman's story encompasses death as a natural component of life and meaning. Despite all these characteristics, some traits define the Dog-Woman as being a sensitive, love-longing person. For instance, her motherly love for Jordan while protecting him from harm comes especially from the heart as Winterson narrates:

> When Jordan is older I will tell him what I know about the human body and urge him to be careful of his member. And yet it is not part of him I fear for; it is his heart. His heart. [74]

She witnesses the deaths of her beloved King Charles I, and of Tradescant; and significantly she is present when the bodies of the Puritans are hung out:

> Tradescant is dead. Cromwell is dead. Ireton and Bradshaw, the King's prosecutors, frequently found together beneath soiled sheets, are dead. Cromwell, Ireton and Bradshaw, who had thought to lie peacefully in Westminster Abbey, that place of sanctity they had denied their rightful king, were dug out on 30th January and hung up for all to see on the gallows at Tyburn. . . . Thousands of us flocked to watch them swinging in the wind, what was left of them, decay having made no exception for their eminence. ... A gypsy with a crown of stars offered to tell fortunes, but when she looked at my hand she look away. I was not discouraged; I am enough to make my own fortune in this pock-marked world. [75]

The Dog-Woman needs to be loved like every other person. Love is what defines the Dog Woman as being a woman. According to Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex the word "love" has different meanings for the two sexes. As Byron denotes, love is just an occupation for the man, while for the woman, love is life itself. So, the Dog Woman's desire to be loved is easily understandable. However, she is well aware that society only rewards those who conform to expectations as she admits saying:

> I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains. [76]

Winterson's female characters are exactly the opposite of what is expected in a woman. She narrates aspects which do not usually belong to a woman's sphere of topics. For instance:

> As far as I know,… the King had been forced to call a Parliament to grant him money for his war against the kilted beasts and their savage ways…The King, turning to his own people, found himself with a Parliament full of Puritans who wouldn't grant him money until he had granted them reform. Not content with the Church of England that good King Henry had bequeathed to us all, they wanted what they called 'A church of God'. [77]

Dog-Woman in this instance is a complex figure who brings dark echoes of woman as "otherness": the threatening, distanced, isolated individual. Jana L. French denotes that Dog Woman [...] defies sex and gender stereotyping not only because of her size and physical appearance, but also because of her independence from men. Besides, the Dog Woman is always reminding herself that the boy she has adopted, Jordan, will one day leave her, as if reinforcing the idea of separation from the mother. The Dog Woman shatters to pieces, the traditional Freudian image of the woman whose development is defined by the lack of the male sexual organ. It happens when she takes Jordan to see the first banana brought to London (the action takes place in the seventeenth century), and she mocks it, "'Where is this wonder?'", [78] and feels repulsion before what she thinks it is "the private parts of an Oriental". Later on, the Dog Woman bites off the private parts of a man, and she was disgusted by the leathery thing filling up her mouth. She spat out what she had not eaten and gave it to one of her dogs.

Dog-Woman thus, is another powerful woman, defying gender expectations while fighting for her convictions. She is no longer the innocent, narrow-minded housewife like the female characters that are usually depicted, but a strong-willed woman, who sees

through this hypocritical world and cannot take it anymore: “The truth is I lost patience with this hypocritical stinking world…I can’t flatter, lie, cajole, or even smile very much. What is there to smile about?” [79] Winterson denotes that the world needs to be changed and that the existing order and norms do not please her anymore. In the novel, men are no more to her liking because they all want to become heroes. She declares that all men “want to be heroes and all we want for them is to stay at home and help us with the housework and the kids. That’s not the kind of heroism they enjoy.” [80] Her comments reflect everything about the existing norms and expectations in the society. For instance, the ecologist woman would like to do something to change the existing order, norms and expectations in the society, in order to change the existing order saying “I force all the fat ones to go on a diet and all the men line up for compulsory training in feminism and ecology.”[81] And she does make a difference with her continuous effort. Things are already beginning to change towards the end of the text: “…space films. They’re happy and they have women in them who are sometimes scientists rather than singers or waitresses. Sometimes the women get to be heroes too, though this is still not as popular”. [82]

All the male characters present in the novel are mere caricatures. They are weak, and small, and they are victims of their vices. Jordan is gentle and romantic and several times in the novel he speaks about love. He also admits his fear of confined places, which is inherently something a man would never reveal. He uses hedges in his speech, modals, questions and similar instances. His ideal is a very common one and says, “I want to be brave and admired and have a beautiful wife and a fine horse. I want to be a hero…I want to be like other men.” [83] All he wants to do is to conform to the norm, and to be like other

men. In regard to a meditation on the self in Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Cherry, Jordan talks about the multiplicity of life. He asserts that, "The inward life tells us we are multiple not single, and that our existence is really countless existences holding hands like those cut-out paper dolls. But unlike the dolls never coming to an end. ... 'I'm here now,' but in another life, another time, doing something else." [84] In one episode in the text, Jordan having spent the night at a house with no floors, but only ceilings, seeks the dancing woman he met there. It is a town whose inhabitants "knock down their houses in a single night and rebuild them elsewhere. So the number of buildings in the city is always constant but they are never in the same place from one day to the next." [85] Jordan is directed to the house of The Twelve Dancing Princesses, whose story he has heard, and who may know the dancer he seeks. The eldest sister retells their story, in terms of how the sisters flew every night from their beds to a "silver city" where the "occupation of the people was to dance." [86] The account of the incidents denoted the reconfigured power structures, where the women would violently reclaim their right to freedom and to self-narrative, and their narratives in turn questioned mythical norms. The various narratives assigned to them highlight the social and economic power which men wield, as well as the brutal punishments which they inflict upon women, should they dare to transgress the conventional role of the object of exchange by forming sexual relationships with one another. [87] Jordan takes on the role of the hero of the novel as he is entrusted to complete a quest. His mission is to find Fortunata, an ethereal dancer who teaches dancers how to become "points of lights" and thus subvert matter. His journeys involve simultaneous physical journeys through space and time (for instance, sea voyages and discoveries with the royal gardener), as well as spiritual journeys through various co-existing worlds (the

world of the twelve dancing princesses, juxtaposed to Dog-Woman's concept of a documented England of the Revolution). Eventually, with Fortunata's help, Jordan's quests bring the desired result, and he unites the two worlds in becoming "light" as denoted in the novel.

In Sexing the Cherry, Winterson challenges the notion of a singular, self-determining individual. She insists that the characters are multiple and not single, and by depicting modern incarnations of Dog-Woman and Jordan, she refuses to fix their location in space and time. But as Winterson mystifies Jordan's pursuit of Fortunata, she makes clear that what he really seeks is access to an inner, ideal self. He explains thus, "The Buddhists say there are 149 ways to God. I'm not looking for God, only for myself." He further claims, "I'm not looking for God, only for myself, and that is far more complicated. God has had a great deal written about Him; nothing has been written about me. God is bigger like my mother, easier to find, even in the dark. I could be anywhere, and since I can't describe myself I can't ask for help. We are alone in this quest, and Fortunata is right not to disguise it, though she may be wrong about love. I met a great many pilgrims on their way towards God and I wonder why they have chosen to look for him rather than themselves."[88] Unable to understand why spiritual seekers would look for God, Jordan explains his opinion in this passage. "But it is not difficult to lose oneself, or is it the ego they are talking about, the hollow screaming cadaver that has no spirit within it."[89] Jordan has undertaken the arduous attempt to find and not to lose his essential self. This is essentially a self which is again clearly distinct from his body. By making this ideal self the object of a religious quest, the novel reinforces an essentially

romantic drive to locate a ground of being outside time, space, as well as material existence.

Henri's alternative to Napoleon in The Passion is Villanelle. She is the primary object of desire, but she is also a desiring subject. For her, eroticism is "a sweet and precise torture' in which the subjective are dismantled and re-defined". [90] For Villanelle, passion is, somewhere between fear and absolute non-knowledge. The Passion can be considered a romantic love story in which love is given impossible conditions. It depicts Henri's love for Napoleon, Villanelle's love for the Queen of Spades and Henri's love for Villanelle, none of which are equally reciprocated. In her essay entitled "'Self' and "Other" in Jeanette Winterson's The Passion", Susana Onega, observes that this tendency towards romance, aids in the destabilization of historical facts. Winterson renders the historical events the unrealistic, ontologically unstable and generically uncertain characteristics of romance. This is symbolized in terms of the city of Venice, which is the city of romance. This city defies all forms of logic in its labyrinth-like structure. Winterson's account of the labyrinthine structure of Venice, "with its alleys and canals encircling the city within the city that is the knowledge of the few", [91] assumes a remarkable significance. It serves as an image of the pleasures and ambiguities of love between women. The city is projected as a utopian realm where: "In this enchanted city all things seem possible. Time stops. Hearts beat. The laws of the real world are suspended." [92] In The Passion, Winterson's heroine, Villanelle, has webbed feet and finds destructive love with the Queen of Spades. Winterson does not divorce aesthetic experience from bodily sensation. Judith Seaboyer has denoted that when Winterson resuscitates a metaphor she "reminds us of the corporeality of the resulting pleasure and

pain in language.” [93] Villanelle literally loses her heart to her married lover and just as literally eats it up again. Villanelle has a fabulous body in many senses of the word. It resembles a Christ figure yet it also looks like that of a prostitute, as well as a paid worker in a gambling casino in Venice. She is a mother and a lesbian but in a Christ-like fashion, she can walk on water. Winterson’s representation of Villanelle’s body exemplifies aspects of feminist Biblical revisionism. Winterson troubles the traditional dominant reading of Biblical narrative by inscribing difference upon Villanelle’s body as it projects a shameless sexuality, which is an insistence on sensual immediacy. It is flesh which is seen as holy, and it establishes compatibility between this flesh and intellect. Most importantly, this body of Villanelle forces the reader to imagine faith and spirituality as extending beyond the Bible and religious institutions and into areas that are eschewed by traditional interpretations of the Bible. [94] Though her body was extremely attractive and attributed with female beauty, she also has hermaphroditic and animalistic attributes. She worked in a casino and she cross-dressed occasionally, and she could perform miracles. Villanelle says that she:

> …dressed as a boy because that’s what the visitors liked to see. It was part of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind tight breeches and extravagant face-paste. ... I made up my lips with vermilion and overlaid my face with white powder. I had no need to add beauty spot, having one of my own in just the right place. I wore my yellow Casino breeches with the stripe down each side of the leg and a pirate’s shirt that concealed my breasts. This was required, but the moustache I added was for my own amusement. And perhaps for my own protection. [95]

Doan reads Villanelle, then, as a postmodern trope, with her problematic gender and her search for her "real self", as seeking not a unified self, but a multiple questioning of gender binaries. This, she asserts, allows for an interesting opening for lesbian space. Villanelle cross-dresses not just for her own pleasure but also for economic profit and for her own protection because "there are too many dark alleys and too many drunken hands". [96] For instance, Winterson denotes that a man comes to play Chance with Villanelle on various nights at the casino because he was fascinated with her sexually ambiguous body. In the realm of queer politics, Villanelle's body clearly explained that because of economic and potential physical difference, women held a very different status as compared to men. In the story, Villanelle rejects the advances that were made by the casino patron. In anger, the man raped Villanelle, but later she marries him because of money even though she despised and cursed him. She says "He clasped me with his terrible hands, with fingertips that feel of boils bursting, and asked me if I'd changed my mind about his offer. We could travel the world he said. Just the three of us. Him, me and my codpiece". [97] Not only is the woman's sexual capacity viewed as inferior to that of a man, but the woman's sexuality carries the stigma of shame and sin in Western religious tradition. Even in the realms of queer culture Winterson declares that women and men have been categorized and positioned differently. This is evident in the character of Villanelle. When she leaves the casino patron, the man takes his revenge by selling her to the French army as a whore. Villanelle's sexually ambiguous body is put to test when the passion between Villanelle and the woman leads to physical intimacy. When the woman asks Villanelle to take off her shirt Villanelle was terrified: "Not my shirt, if I raised my shirt she'd find my breasts" and as Villanelle did as she was told she saw "her eyes stray

lower. Did she expect my desire to be obvious? ... She buried my head in her hair and I became her creature”. [98] It is evident that Villanelle is willing to expose herself as a cross-dresser, but not as a hermaphrodite, and from her actions she had indicated that a cross-dresser and a hermaphrodite have very different options open to them. Villanelle chooses to present her body to the woman she loves as a cross-dressed lesbian body, a normal female body, rather than a hermaphroditic body, the body of a freak, or a queer body. However having a hermaphroditic body is not the same thing as being transsexual. It simply meant suppressing the truth of one’s body, and “passing” as a gender that is not ambiguous, and it entails the denial of mixture as well as the erasure of difference, and the obliteration of bodily complexity.

Henri was one of the first within the narrative to write his diary so that he would not forget. He started to record events, even the most mundane, in terms of longing, memories, hopes and fears. He believed in love and as the title of the novel suggests, it is about experience, and about taking the experience of the novel into account. Henri continually reviews and re-writes his archive. History, the future and the past, is arranged and understood according to a feeling in the present which is gradually established in relation to an absence. It is measured according to “an absorption in the imaginary register” [99] in which a lost love haunts the familiar notebook, rending it foreign, yet wordlessly reflecting back an image of its own identity. The gap sustained by the mirror sends Henri mad. Yet it is madness that was always implied in his notebooks, in the will to produce a comprehensive archive; for madness implied the very desire to record every fleeting fleeing and changing perception. It is a madness that manifests itself in Henri hearing “under that stone, on the windowsill ... voices (that) must be heard”. [100] The

concept of the archive is crucial, and in the theory it provides the possibility for universal recognition; inscribed in the archive or in its significant gaps it remains an imperative that everyone has a history to tell, and a promise that there are infinite numbers of histories to be had, that are arranged in an eternal concurrence. It is the impossibility of the archive that drives Henri mad. He cannot take account of the past when each year, each flickering moment, is unique in its identity and difference, like so many snowflakes. Henri cannot "recover from the wonder of it", but neither, in spite of his good advice, can he forget it.[101] By "passion" Henri signifies the subject's obsessive involvement with the Other, namely the object of desire. When Villanelle later meets Henri who is a soldier in the French army, Henri falls in love with her. It is Villanelle to whom Henri wordlessly tells the truth about himself in the words of notebooks, yet the visage whose contours Henri is endlessly retracing in the mirror of his text is still that of Napoleon, his first love. Winterson writes that passion is "somewhere between the swamp and the mountains, somewhere between fear and sex," and "somewhere between God and the devil". [102] Passion, in essence, is an elsewhere which is not ruled by society's laws. There are no clear demarcations in this land of loving, and this lack of marked borders lends an element of danger to love and pleasure as the novel unravels. Henri makes an insightful comment about Villanelle towards the close of the novel, which illuminates one aspect of the passion of love: "A person who is not me. ... My passion for her, even though she could never return it, showed me the difference between inventing a lover and falling in love. The one is about you, the other about someone else". [109] In the text the lesbian affair between Villanelle and the Queen of Spades appears to have a sinister dimension. A significant scene in which the issue of female identity is topical is the one which is set in

the house of Villanelle's female lover. Henri is present on an errand to retrieve Villanelle's heart. The rooms through which the French narrator wanders are akin to a smaller maze within the larger maze of Venice and they have a sexualized appearance. There is a stuffed horned beast in one room which is an indicator of the fact that the phallus is powerless there, just like the woman's husband who is always away. In an adjoining room there is an unfinished tapestry representing Villanelle. Just like Venice, once again, the female body and the female identity are never complete, determined or final.

The Passion can be interpreted as an attempt to describe or make a comment upon the female self. Villanelle transcends the patriarchal framework of society first by being born with webbed feet, which was a typically male physical feature of male fishers in Venice. All through the novel she resorts to cross-dressing as a means to gain power, in order to control who she is, as well as her identity, and the manner in which the others perceive her. By dressing up as a young man in the casino, or as a soldier when she flees from Russia, she challenges preconceived images of female beauty, frailty and weakness as defined by men. Her gender is always on the make and is fluid, and in constant metamorphosis. This indefinite portrayal of the self and especially of a woman echoes Luce Irigaray's emphasis upon the dynamic quality of being a woman: "Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, infinite; form is never complete in her. This incompleteness in her form, allows her continually to become something else, though this is not to say she is univocally nothing." Cixous on the other hand denotes that, it is otherness and difference that must be distinguished, because for Irigaray otherness conceals sameness. Thus, the woman's difference must be written into culture and into

the "Symbolic Order" in order to challenge what is, in effect, a woman's absence as woman. In The Passion also, Villanelle is always in control of her outward appearance and she defies univocal definitions of womanhood and her identity is thereby sexually dual, if not multiple. Her transgression of the definitions of femininity is achieved, on the one hand, by the fact that physically, she is both female, (through her sex), and male, (through her webbed feet, and by her dress in terms of her garters, breeches, boots and false moustache). Winterson explores an extreme version of this type of sexual interaction in The Passion. The most important part of Villanelle's transgendered body is her heart, and it is the journey of her heart that takes her towards self-discovery. An understanding of her own lesbian passion which begins in the casino remains inherently in her passion as she watches the gamblers: "I like to smell the urgency on them. Even the calmest, the richest, have the smell. It's somewhere between fear and sex. Passion I suppose". [110] Villanelle sees herself as exempt from a gambler's passion and not affected by the passion of love. Hence, when she gambles with the masked woman at the casino, she realizes that she has lost, "It was a game of chance I entered into and my heart was the wager. Such games can only be played once. Such games are better not played at all."[111]

Her married lover does not reciprocate her love in kind and Villanelle realizes that gambling on love can be disastrous: "The gambler is led on in the hope of a win, thrilled with the fear of losing, and when he wins, he believes his luck is there, that he will win again. If nine nights were possible why not ten? So it goes and the weeks pass waiting for the tenth night, waiting to win again and all the time losing bit by bit that valuable fabulous thing that cannot be replaced". [112] The loss of her heart to her married lover

makes Villanelle's body weak and exhausted saying "I lost weight. I found myself staring into space, forgetting where I was going. I was cold". [113] Her lover physically possesses her heart and even plans to weave it into tapestry where she could imprison it forever. She would keep Villanelle's heart as a trophy and as a remembrance of past pleasure. Villanelle finds out that her heart is no longer a reliable organ for her "If you should leave me, my heart will turn to water and flood away". [114] The loss and recovery of her heart brings Villanelle to respect both her transgendered body and her love for a woman, even as she realizes that her passion deserves better than her married female lover can give her. Henri's perception of Villanelle taking off her boots as she walks on the water is actually the performance of a political act. When Villanelle reveals her Venetian origins, she told Henri and Patrick that the boatmen have webbed feet which made them laugh, Henri denotes "the Poles grew wide-eyed and one even risked excommunication by suggesting that perhaps Christ had been able to walk on the water thanks to the same accident of birth." [115] This quote is connected with the more serious alignment of Villanelle and Christ which have been made throughout the text. Winterson denotes that she has been born with webbed feet, which is an anomaly that is usually reserved for the male gondoliers. This physical characteristic actually enables her to walk on water. In other words, she is endowed with the ability to do what Christ did as the figure of the Messiah. There are many casual references to the New Testament, [116] and they all they connect characters with Christ. Written against the grain of the traditional heterosexual romance plot, Villanelle's story denotes that there can be more tragedy in following traditional socially accepted practices. She had married for convenience once, but has denoted that she will never repeat that disastrous experience. Winterson's narratives

attack the idea of the tradition of marriage as being a holy institution which offers women the only appropriate sphere for their sexual activity, while relegating extra-marital sex to the arena of inner defilement.

While employing tactics of narrative disruption and ironic appropriation, however, Winterson is not content simply to challenge an older model of historiography or to destabilize traditional categories of the portrayal of the self. In fact, in her revisionist account of the Puritan Revolution, Winterson ultimately develops a counter-historical framework that naturalizes lesbian desire. The “theme” that is repeatedly identified in her works as central to Winterson’s writing is undoubtedly lesbianism. As in the lesbian romance, Winterson’s work enacts the characteristic separation from patriarchal ties and heterosexual marriage, by which lesbian desire is accorded a privilege narrative space. Her protagonists, whatever their gender, appear to be “always already” lovers of women: from Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit to Lighthousekeeping, the narrator’s sexuality is presented as “naturally” woman-oriented. In some of her novels, Winterson conveys that the love objects in the narrative, from Melanie in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit to Louise in Written on the Body, denote that the beloved is seduced from the path of normative heterosexuality by the narrator’s passionate overtures. In her work the emphasis upon independence from men has been echoed and her texts invariably eschew any straight-forward “happy-ever-after” resolution even as her endings are ambiguous. Cath Stowers and Paulina Palmer, argue that Written on the Body and The Passion, are, “the trajectory of [Winterson’s] work. ... They exceed a gendered logic towards a specifically lesbian reconceptualization of female desire”. [117] They feel that Winterson’s creation of a lesbian self or lesbian narrative space disrupts “conventional

heterosexual narrative structures and scripts, resulting in a re-figuration of female desire."[118] Whilst these readings portray Winterson's writings as transgressing boundaries, for example, in terms of the boundaries of gendered logic and/or conventional heterosexual narrative structures as they simultaneously re-inscribe the texts in accordance with the logic of regionalism by representing them as refiguring female desire while naming this reconfiguration as lesbian.

Winterson also denotes that "art must resist autobiography", and it must avoid making "what is unlike anything else into what is just like everything else." [119] In opposition to the foreclosure of heterogeneity (which constitutes both a forgetting and an act of violence) integral to the regionalizing approach to texts discussed earlier, Winterson posits the possibility of reading/writing as an encounter with a text in its own right, separate and particular. She denotes that it must be a form of reading/writing that would allow the text to "speak in its own voice, not in a ventriloquism of yours" that would acknowledge that "the love between you is not a mutual suicide." [120] This means that reading/writing is not "the nymph Echo falling for the sound of her own voice nor is it the boy Narcissus falling for his own reflection." [121] Winterson's claims have been bolstered by the late twentieth century vogue for literary biography, tying the writer's life with the writer's work so that the work becomes a diary and thus "save us from the attack of Otherness." [122] In this manner her work is deeply creative and she is constantly moving between territories which seem to be uncharted and new. Postmodernist techniques, along with modernist tradition, meta-fiction, and magical realism are instruments that Winterson deftly combines with a strong political commitment which is aimed at subverting socio-cultural power structures and, ultimately, at appropriating traditionally

male-defined concepts for her lesbian politics. Her work is characterized by a strategy of simultaneous universalizing and particularization wherein her representation of love and desire oscillate between non-specific universals which could apply regardless of sex and sexuality.

Winterson's novels reveal elements of fantasy and the grotesque, while foregrounding a complex intertextual lineage. She creates a fictional world which is dominated by gigantic women, and floating dancers who teach how to transform one's body into points of light, men and women who cross-dress to conceal their sexual identities and easily move from one world into another. She also denotes characters who undertake imaginative journeys with their own bodies and characters that physically inhabit a timeless dimension. In telling her stories, she historicizes the larger patriarchal forces that shaped the lives of their characters, and exposes the contingency of supposedly universal values, including the naturalness of heterosexuality and the father's authority in a patrilineal culture. Winterson has ultimately developed distinct feminist approaches to history while she also premises her celebration of lesbian desire on the complete rejection of patriarchal history and its linear temporality. She dismantles the heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy by suggesting alternative ways of imagining the self. She is not content simply to challenge an older model of historiography or to destabilize traditional categories of gender identity but she also ultimately develops a counter-historical framework that naturalizes lesbian desire.

In her works, the participating first person narrator has been ascribed a certain set of values and opinions. She focuses upon particular modes of expressions together with preferred vocabulary and a defined intellectual and experiential capacity. She has

invented a specific pair of spectacles through which the first person narrator perceives and then relates the fictional world around her. She narrates only a valid subjective account of events and, thus, is highly dependent upon her restricted capacity. Her novels are a testament to the self-reflexive experience that the best writing provides, with reference to the self, even as she poses towards her reader the inherent questions in terms of identity and sexuality within the entire social order.

NOTES

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[38] Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 131-132

[39]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 10

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[41]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, ((London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 13

[42]Judith Butler, Gender Trouble, (London: Routledge, 2006) 153-54

[43]Vicky Kirby, Judith Butler: Live Theory, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006) 5

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[45]Ibid. 78

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[48]As elucidated by Winterson's narrator writes of Louise, "your flesh is my flesh," echoing Genesis: "therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". Cf. Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Vintage, 2001) 106; Genesis 2.24.

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[101]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 43

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[104]Ibid. 94

[105]Ibid. 109

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[107]Ibid. 146

[108]Ibid. 146

[109]Ibid. 158

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CHAPTER IV

NARRATIONAL LAYERS

This chapter shall reflect upon the narrative aspects that lie between content and form in Winterson's novels. Winterson denotes that none of her novels are autobiographical even though she consistently maintains that there is s much of her life reflected in every one of her books. Winterson denotes that the seven books written by her within a span of fifteen years have made an entire cycle. These texts include Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985), The Passion (1987), Sexing the Cherry (1987), Written on the Body (1992), Art and Lies (1994), Gut Symmetries (1997), and The PowerBook (2000). In all her fictions she works both intertextually and stylistically with James Joyce in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, with T.S. Eliot in Sexing the Cherry, with Virginia Woolf in Written on the Body, and with H.D. Joanna Dehler in Art and Lies. She not only references these writers in her work, but consciously undertakes to work collaboratively with them in creating her own body of work. She has resurrected their notions of humanity and their vision of literature as an art form as well.

Lyn Pykett has denoted:

> Winterson's postmodernism is post-Modernist not in the sense of constituting a break with Modernism or superseding it, but rather as a collaborative dialogue with Modernism which continues what Winterson sees as the Modernist project.[1]

Winterson herself has denoted a tremendous amount of intimation to guide readers of her fiction in this direction:

> When we read a modern writer who is true, part of the excitement we get from her style is the excitement of other styles that have passed that way ... The alert reader, especially the reader/writer, is ready for clues, clues

> that unravel the past as well as the modern writer we are enjoying. The chase to the bookshelf, to test this theory, that idea, is a hunt we can expect from writers who bring multitudes with them. [2]

In all her novels, Winterson conducts a textual exploration of the corporeality of love by employing alternative discourses such as those of anatomy, travel and the Bible. Winterson has consistently drawn upon Biblical language and religious experience in order to produce her own exalted discourse of passion. In drawing upon Biblical language so as to express erotic passion, Winterson resists the popular cultural image of perfect rapprochement, the merging of self and other characteristics which are typically ascribed to the lesbian couple. Rather, she emphasizes upon the challenge of union in love, by using the language of faith to indicate the elusive qualities of passionate connection. The language she borrows from her Pentecostal childhood allows her to describe a kind of charismatic experience of meeting between self and lover while recognizing the essential difference between partners, and the foreignness of the beloved. Her texts are highly fractioned, and are packed with re-mythologizing, undercurrents of critique directed at phallocentrism while sometimes resulting in "ex-gendered" protagonists. She creates dense eroticism and plays with text-sorts sometimes to an extent of willful plot-negligence. She is fascinated by the nature of time love, journeys and quests, outsiders and strangers. In her texts one finds all kinds of emotions and insistent poetic passages that are interrupted by encyclopedic quotations, newly molded fairy tales/myths, time travel and meta-narratives, parody and the grotesque. Thus she explains the interconnection between different aspects of her worldview in terms of the religious, feminist, scientific, political, technological and poetical.

While Winterson's novels have progressively de-emphasized plot and character, they continue to examine the nature of love, time, art, sexuality, self-discovery and the evocative power of language and storytelling:

> Storytelling is a way of establishing connections, imaginative connections for ourselves, a way of joining up disparate material and making sense of the world. Human beings love patterns; they love to see shapes and symmetries. We seem to have a need to impose order on our surroundings, which are generally chaotic and often in themselves seem to lack any continuity, any storyline. [3]

Her main characters are inherently forceful and larger than life and they often personify concepts or qualities. Winterson's characters can be seen as models with an almost emblematic internal coherence. They are easily divided in terms of heroes and their foes. In her introduction to Great Moments in Aviation (1994), one of the few occasions where she openly discusses her literary strategies, Winterson herself claims that she wanted to follow the fairytale convention, comprising a heroine, a hero, a villain and a fairy godmother. The ultimate effect of Winterson's efforts is a narrative that might appear slightly confusing to some. Her story is not always told chronologically and she frequently jumps to inserted tales that appear to have nothing to do with the life of the main character. The fragmented style helps the reader to see the novel as "meta-fiction" and additionally demonstrates Winterson's desire to explore the relationship between the reader and the text. This states that Winterson's articulation of the lesbian self is actually inseparable from her re-visionary engagement of the Bible. By repeatedly turning and returning several types of narrative about the origins of identity and story-making,

Winterson reconstructs certain Biblical texts and several concepts that are related to the hallmark of the gay and lesbian literary tradition as precursors for the prophetic voice of the main character. Thus, lesbian feminist critics and theorists have everything to gain from acknowledging the potential of a political postmodern. Critics such as Linda Hutcheon contend that the metafictional writing practices along with instances such as Winterson's rapturous style are, by definition, increasingly qualified to pose challenging questions to patriarchal discourses and consequently execute the first critical step toward disruption. Winterson's style is elaborate and her narration splinters now and then in order to enable reception at meta-levels. Although hardly ever directly using the term 'culture', she amasses huge and various representations thereof and twirls them in a laconic-seeming textual kaleidoscope. She also uses locality namely Venice, Paris, London and Capri, in order to problematize otherness [4] and the human reactions towards it. She builds up a lively dialogue with Biblical and fantastic corpora and mythmaking, even as she demands her own right to re-mythologize. She does that in a postmodern manner, by applying techniques that make the reader aware of the textuality and the subjectivity of what she examines.

Like various twentieth century women writers Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, chooses to render her life story in a narrative mode which straddles the generic divide between fiction and autobiography, in the production of an accompanying alter ego, "Jeanette". As Shari Benstock, suggests, the biographical impetus arises out of the desire to "know the self", in order to "recapture the self." [5] Benstock further notes that it necessarily assumes that there is a locatable self and that this "self" is knowable. It renders beliefs which are rather at odds with the slippery subjectivities that are evident

elsewhere in Winterson's work. Winterson's own answer to the question of the autobiographical mode in the novel: "Is Oranges an autobiographical novel?" remains. "Not at all and yes of course." [6] Winterson wishes to separate the autobiography of a writer from the activity of writing: "Forcing the work back into autobiography is a way of trying to contain it, of making what has become unlike anything else into what is just like anything else." [7] Moreover, Winterson appears to regard the strangeness of language as a disruption of the phenomenological world as it renders the "I" of the personal experience problematic and uncertain and that strangeness or queerness becomes a borderline position that deconstructs the representation of identity. As Winterson herself states, "complexity leads to perplexity." [8] Hence, Winterson's fiction forces the reader to work at reading; to reconsider the relationships of things and people in the world, and to recognize multiplicities in things rather than their singularities. Although Winterson acknowledges that art is about communication, her writing is a frontal assault on the straightforward exchange of communication and the easy assimilation of the self.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit involves an intertextual rewriting of the Bible. In keeping with other Bildungsromane, Winterson sets out to write her novel of "coming out" by following the pattern of the hero's quest for individuation of the self, while simultaneously attempting to rewrite the most totalitarian, patriarchal but also the most unquestionable history of all. This involved sacred history which was written, according to Jewish and Christian doctrines, by God himself and containing both history and revelation, the recording of the past and God's plan for the future. Hence, Jeanette's life-story in the novel is narrated by the mature heroine in the retrospect, by following a simple chronological layout, from Jeanette's childhood initiation into the mysteries of

dissenting secularism, through her puberty and climatic discovery of her sexual "difference", to her defiant acceptance of this "difference" in early adulthood. The linearity of this retrospective narration is undermined, however, by its division into eight chapters, which are named after the first eight books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Ruth. In other words, the story moves, interestingly enough, from the monologic and totalizing history of the creation of the world by God to the "individual" story of redemption of a woman while enduring a threefold marginalization, as a woman, as a poor widow and as a stranger.

In Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit the realist narrative which is set in Northern England in the early 1960s and the 1970s. It is clearly more than just a realist autobiographical text, and its fragment and multiple narratives, echo and pastiche a variety of different narrative styles from the Bible to fairy tales. It also incorporates fantasy in terms of the usage of the orange demon, which constitutes a complex postmodern text. The novel is a largely traditional developmental narrative in the vein of the bildungsromane, starting with the author's early trails and tribulations, and culminating in her triumph in the face of adversity. The Bible is present in the novel as subject matter, and as the ground of belief and source of language and imagery for the members of Jeanette's community. At the same time the chapters of the novel are given the titles of books from the Old Testament, which, on one level, makes it a comic parody. For instance "Genesis" recounts the heroine's family background and her adoption by her mother while "Exodus" contains her escape to school. "Joshua" narrates instances which are related to her blowing her own trumpet and standing up against the community in defense of her lesbian sexuality. The stories of the creation of the world, and a nation's

survival, are applied to the events of an individual life. Winterson in this light narrates the community's habit of seeing their mundane lives in these cosmic terms. Also at the same time, she is claiming for herself the language of her adversaries. School, according to her mother, is a "Breeding Ground" [9] and not liberation from captivity and Jeanette's refusal to give up her lesbianism is demonic possession. Hence, the titles in each chapter are both parodic send-up, and deeply serious appropriation.

The novel's "Deuteronomy" chapter is central to the understanding of the novel. It is a two page-long reflexive commentary wherein the voice of the adult narrator theorizing on the true nature of reality, of story-telling and of history is truly reflected. "Deuteronomy", reflects that story-telling is a muddled, fanciful and contradictory way of recording the past, where "Everyone who tells story tells it differently, just to remind us that everybody sees it differently." [10]

In this chapter, Winterson questions the claims to objectivity, in terms narrating of traditional history, while denying its capacity to pin down reality. She insists that history has very often been a means of denying the past, of telling people "what to believe" and of building "an empire and [keeping] people where they belonged, in the bright realm of the wallet ...." [11] In Winterson's own words, she denotes that history also becomes a verbal structure in narrative prose discourse. In her own words:

> And when I look at a history book and think of the imaginative effort is has taken to squeeze this oozing world between two boards and typeset, I am astonished. Perhaps the event has an unassailable truth. God saw it, God knows. But I am not God. And so when someone tells me what they heard or saw, I believe them, and I believe their friends who also saw, but

> not in the same way, and I can put these accounts together and I will not have a seamless wonder but a sandwich laced with mustard of my own. [12]

The story of "Winnet Stonejar and the Wizard" plays a very significant role in Jeanette's own life story, even though other tales also similarly make a counterpoint to different episodes of Jeanette's story as well. Jeanette's theological disagreement over the "sermon on perfection" [13] is extended and further nuanced by the "Tale of the Perfect Woman", where she denotes the tale of a king in search of a "woman, without blemish inside or out, flawless in every respect ... a woman who is perfect." [14] Another instance occurs when her nightmares about marriage[15] are mirrored by fragments from the tales of "Beauty and the Beast" [16] and of "Little Red Riding Hood." [17] The turning point in Jeanette's life is the discovery of her mother's shameless rewriting of Jane Eyre. [18] This event brings about Jeanette's realization of the true nature of her mother and how she was blinded by bad faith, just before she finds her adoption papers while searching for a pack of playing cards. She had ever since never played cards, and had never since read Jane Eyre [19], and later on, Jeanette's mother becomes the "Queen" who wanted her to move out while accusing her of bringing evil elements into the church. Jeanette says thus: "Once, trying to reach a huge icicle, I fell down to a quarry ledge and couldn't climb back again; the earth kept crumbling away". [20] Finally, in the chapter entitled "Joshua", Jeanette's loss of innocence is articulated in her dream of "the City of Lost Chances and the Room of Final Disappointment", while the entire relation to her mother and to their religious congregation is allegorically expressed through the tale of the "Walled Garden with the Orange Tree". [21]

Elsie Norris, or rather "Testifying Elsie" as she was better known in their religious community, was an expert in Numerology and an admirer of the most romantic and metaphysical poets. [22] With Yeats, she believed in "the great effects of the imagination on the world" [23] and was always ready to accept competing interpretations of facts. One day, for instance, she showed Jeanette a wooden box with three white mice inside and told her that they were "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace". However, when Jeanette retorted that the "angry orange paint shaped into the tongues of flame" reminded her of Pentecost, Elsie immediately accepted the suggestion by agreeing, "Oh yes, it's very versatile". [24] One of the most important issues pertaining to her novels is the struggle with literary clichés about womanhood and her stand against the devaluation of females. This relates to her own lesbianism and feminism.[25] She declares that the writer is an instrument of transformation. [26] Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is a novel which is based upon the belief that love shouldn't be "gender-bound." Winterson herself explains, "It's probably one of the few things in life that rises above all those kinds of oppositions - black and white, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual." [27]

In the novel, Jeanette has inherently viewed her lesbianism as essentially natural, but also at the same time she recognizes that whoever holds the power to categorize can establish a claim for the label "natural." After Jeanette eventually comes to realize that there is no space for her in the church, she has a final confrontation with Pastor Spratt during which she reveals an innate confidence in the rightness of her passion for women and dismisses as arbitrary and unfounded the rejection of her choice according to God's law. When Spratt asks, "Have you no shame?" she replies "Not really". [28] Hence, for

Jeanette (as well as for Winterson the author, herself), lesbianism cannot be regulated, contained, or controlled by heterosexual hegemony because the lesbian, in refusing to acknowledge its power, nullifies and renders it impotent, and thereby positions the lesbian at the center. In a Village Voice interview, Winterson emphasized her interest in such characters that move in marginalized and liminal spaces: "'I always write about outsiders. All my characters are exiles, people on the margins…who are in fact interesting and special and have their own way of looking at the world." [29] This outsider status, which seems paradoxically both predetermined and willingly adopted, initiates Jeanette and Perceval into a period of journey and errantry. In this respect, as stories of formative and spiritual development, Perceval and Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit share in the tradition of the Bildungsromane. When Jeanette's mother turns on the narrator, she affirms the Church's patriarchal belief regarding the fact that, "the message belonged to the men." [30] By assuming to turn preacher, the girl narrator had "taken on a man's world," not just in a social but a sexual form. [31] Her adoption of the male role of a preacher led (in their opinion) to her adoption of the equally "unnatural" role of a lesbian lover. The elders of the Church accordingly attempt to alter her sexual orientation by depriving her of the Word, and forbidding her to preach.

Winterson's meta-narrative and self-reflexive texts challenge divisions between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy and femininity and masculinity which all point towards her status as a postmodern writer. These objects are real and invented, within the world of objects and the human imagination, as well as science and literature, and Winterson weaves these apparent oppositions together in an oeuvre that celebrates the power of love, beauty and language. Her fiction combines elements of history, religion,

myth, and magic realism in order to form a sort of quicksilver anti-reality, while creating fiction that is designed to revive and reclaim language, in order to challenge stereotypes about gender and lesbianism. It also explores the intricate relationship between fact and fiction. In all her works Winterson ascribed political efficacy to narratives by denoting that the invention of stories remained a political act and that she hopes that it will challenge people, both into looking more closely at these things they thought were cut and dried and also, perhaps, into inventing their own stories.

In her sixth novel Written on the Body the ungendered narrator denotes (towards the end of the novel), "I couldn't find her. I couldn't even get near finding her. It's as if Louise never existed, like a character in a book. Did I invent her?" [32] By means of intertextuality, Winterson exposes linguistic and narrative conventions and provides alternative versions of history that focus upon groups of people who have been marginalized by official history. Winterson's fame had by then confirmed with the publication of her third novel, and it had been concluded that The Passion was a good example of "full-bloom magic realism". [33] The Passion is divided into four chapters with the stories of the two protagonists being at first parallel, later connected and continuously driven by their tales of the past and of each other. In the first chapter, "The Emperor", Henri narrates from a first-person point of view his life story up till the age of twenty. These instances include his endeavors in the Napoleonic Wars ending with New Year's Day, 1805. Then, by a similar narration in chapter two, "The Queen of Spades", Winterson denotes Villanelle and her work at a casino and her cross-dressing (as with Henri) until New Year's Day, 1805. Hereafter, their stories are intertwined as they meet and become involved in chapter three which is entitled, "The Zero Winter", continuing

into chapter four entitled, "The Rock." The novel as already denoted, follows two main storylines: one, the life of a young man, Henri, who is employed as a cook in Napoleon's army (Henri's job is limited to wringing chicken necks), and the other, the story of a web-footed young woman, Villanelle, who is a daughter of a boatman. The readers meet Villanelle, who as a character was impatient when she was born and had thus, forced her head out, while the midwife was downstairs heating some milk. She had "A fine head with a crop of red hair and a pair of eyes that made up for the sun's eclipse." [34] Inherently the colour red is associated with fire, warmth and blood, and it creates a dramatic effect. Combined with femininity, it also seems that in Winterson's work this colour symbolizes an intense passion. This overall sense of the timelessness of Winterson's story seems to be also enhanced by the spiral narrative which is multiplied by the two narrative voices. On analyzing the two narrators, Henri and Villanelle, through their descriptions or representations convey a clear image of the city. Villanelle lives in the deeply mysterious labyrinthine world of the Venetian subculture, and it is a world of gambling, chance and androgyny. The city of Venice has been described, for Villanelle thus:

> Venice is a "city of chances, where everything is possible but where everything has a price. ... Some who come on foot leave on horseback and others who trumpeted their estate beg on the Rialto.[35]

These descriptions of Venice do not aim at pictorial, realistic representations but at psychological characterization. Throughout the novel Winterson negotiates between two types of realities, namely, the imaginative reality and the daily one. The pervasive images of Venice are reflections in the distorting looking glass of her characters and are under the spell of emotion and imagination. As such, Venice as a symbol is not set in a

one-tenor-one vehicle relationship, rather Venice is constructed as a paradigm of meaning while revolving around the nature of passion and has been given such descriptions as "the city of "mazes" [36], "disguises", [37] "uncertainty" [38] "littered with ghosts" [39] and as "the city of chances".[40] The notion of time in The Passion is threefold, that is, there is a chronological story, there is historical time and there is fabular time, but they merge seamlessly within a sense of timelessness. The chronological time of the story more or less observes the rules of linearity, and is broken by occasional, clearly discernible flashbacks or anticipation and only temporal ambiguity. The historical time has been marked both by dates and well known events from Napoleon's rule in France. The figure of Henri, as Napoleon's chicken chef cannot be but fictional, and the manner in which it is anchored in a historical setting gives it a certain reality and substance. This makes it harder to tell fact from fiction and underlines the futility of trying to do so, because Winterson is not just questioning male history; rather she is questioning all of history. She also uses tropes of travel and anatomy in order to pursue her textual exploration of the corporeality of love. She has narrated that she wrote The Passion with its Venetian locale much before she even visited Venice. "I do travel in my head." [41] She depicted that travel is a simple trope for conveying "an inner journey and an outer journey at the same time." [42] There is also fabular time, which is mostly connected with Venice, and it is a time which is unstated and only related to Napoleon's time through the figures of the narrators. She narrates:

> Our ancestors. Our belonging. The future is foretold from the past and the future is only possible because of the past. Without past and future, the

> present is partial. All time is eternally present and so all time is ours... Thus the present is made whole. [43]

Henri and Villanelle are never presented as opposing figures. In fact, both the characters relate, explain, and complement one another by indistinctly occupying the positions of the self and the other. Like Winterson, these characters offer themselves as stories that are codified as textual signs which have to be de-codified. From his rustic home on the farm, Henri goes to join Napoleon's army, even as he is unquestioning in his hero-worship of him. He travels widely, suffers much and eventually as fate would have it, and he ends up in Venice with Villanelle. Villanelle herself, having worked the casinos and the dark gambling underworld of Venice, found herself, married, separated and obsessed with a mysterious woman who steals her heart. Together, they become embroiled in a bizarre chain of events that leads ultimately to their own internal battle and destinies. The two main stories and all their attendant characters and dimensions become inexorably and masterfully entwined. As Jan Rosemergy suggests that in The Passion, the varying narrators are also of importance to the interpretation of Winterson's relation with the sense of a mixing of history and story and the notion of "truth".

In The Passion, Winterson knots the "cat's cradle" of history with fiction so that it is impossible to unknot the two. One of the novel's refrains is "I'm telling you stories. Trust me". Together, the stories of Henri and Villanelle, because they intertwine history and fable, are ultimately more trustworthy in their representation of the human condition. Writing such as Winterson's "takes for granted that the process of representation can never be the reconstitution of presence ... it variously celebrates or struggles with the opacity of the signifier ... The subject is what speaks, writes, reads, signifies, and it is no

more than that. Silence is death. Desire lives, then, in its inscription."[44] Winterson's works shows and evinces a commitment to revivify language and transform them, and reveals evidence of an "other" language, one that expresses desire by keeping language in motion, rather than simply preserving language as a prison house of reputation that maintains the status quo. Winterson depicts that when we "[t]urn down the daily noise ... at first there is the relief of silence. And then, very quietly, as quiet as light, meaning returns. Words are part of silence that can be spoken."[45] Winterson writes, "the cities of the interior do not lie on any map".[46]

Winterson also expresses that, "People have an enormous need ... to separate history, which is fact, from storytelling, which is not fact ... and the whole push of my work has been to say, you cannot know which is which."[47] Winterson's telling refrain throughout The Passion – "I'm Telling You Stories. Trust me" fits her fiction squarely within historiographic meta-fiction's assertion "that is world is both resolutely fictive and yet undeniably historical and that what both realms share is their constitution in and as discourse."[48] It is this paradoxical assertion that fiction embodies and connects and lies as well as truths, stories and trust, becomes a relationship upon which Winterson preys. The character of Henri, for instance, accounts for the reason that he has been willing to follow Napoleon for so long, through so many hardships by expressing his strong emotions for his leader: "He stretched his hand towards the Channel and made England sound as though she already belonged to us. To each of us. That was his gift. He became the focus of our lives. ... He made sense out of dullness."[49] Later he denoted, "I should admit that I wept when I heard him speak. Even when I hated him, he could still make me cry. And not through fear. He was great. Greatness like his is hard to be sensible about."[50]

Winterson emphasizes the intentionally illogical state of this type of history by repeating four times in the course of the novel, including in its last line of the text, “I’m telling you stories. Trust me.” Though history becomes a story of the past, it claims not to be fiction. By stating that this narrator is “telling stories,” however, Winterson makes the reader suspect him or her as a historian, so that even though the “trust me” statement, tries to establish reliability, the reader is sent into an endless oscillation between faith in and distrust of the narrator. She establishes that the reader can no longer merely take what history depicts as the truth, but it must be treated as if it was memory and this could be sifted through its convolutions for traces of the real past. This element thus, must be acknowledged in the relativity of that past. Winterson’s Villanelle, too, consistently maintains autonomy through her manipulation of gender, whether through mere costume change or real transformation. In The Passion, Winterson uses fantasy to destabilize any notion of the transparency of language. For instance when Villanelle asks Henri to help her rescue the heart that she has lost, Henri believes that she had been talking figuratively and replied “‘Villanelle, you’d be dead if you had no heart’”.[51] Even as Henri finds her heart and gives it back to her, Villanelle swallows it again. When Henri fells her heart beating he comments that it was “[n]ot possible.” [52] But the postmodern text replies, “I tell you her heart was beating.”[53]

The “passion” as an idea variously refers to the point between fear and sex as well as religion, love and hate. “Passion” in this novel is as multifarious and ambiguous as the world inhabited by these characters: “The hardship is a man-made device because man cannot exist without passion. Religion is somewhere between fear and sex. And God? Truly? In his own right, without our voices speaking for him? Obsessed I think, but not

passionate... In between freezing and melting. In between love and despair. In between fear and sex, passion is." [54] Napoleon's idiosyncratic passion for chicken, the gamblers' and their passion for throwing the die, Henri's passion for Napoleon himself and Villanelle's passion for an enigmatic gambling woman are all fundamentally different and yet ultimately connected. "Passion" encompasses the mad passion of the rapist as well as the gentle passion of old love. This depicts that time is connected with language at the same time that it is rendered arbitrary to divide it up into past, present and future. If the past is the same as the present, it must also imply a reduction in the status of history, since history becomes stories of the past, and it is a past in the context of the text which supposedly did not exist.

Sexing the Cherry is set in an alternate history and includes a lot of elements within magical realism. While Winterson does recreate a historical period, she does not allow herself to be confined to one story line, or one set of characters or one setting. Intertwined with Jordan's story of traveling the world by sea is a retelling of the fairy tale of the Twelve Dancing Princesses and various fantasy lands. The novel attempts its own larger-than-life mythmaking in its narration of Jordan's quest. Like Ulysses, Jordan has left his homeland to sail the seas in search of the rarest fruit. He has left his mother and his people for a life of ceaseless wandering in which his adventures include falling in love with a princess. It alternates between the first person narratives of the enormous woman and her son, Jordan. As Winterson in an interview says:

> The central relationship is between Jordan and the Dog Woman. It is a savage love, an unorthodox love, it is family life carried to the grotesque, but it is not a parody or a negative. The narrative moves through time, but

> also operates outside it. At the centre of the book are the stories of the Twelve Dancing Princess, each only a page long, written as a kind of fugue. The stories aren't just parachuted in there; they are integral to the whole, in just the same way that the Percival stories are integral to Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. That is, they tell us something we need to know to interpret the book. [55]

The Dog Woman's style of speech is matter-of-fact and the only figurative language that she indulges in consists of comparisons of herself to either animals or mountains. When she narrates her story, or conveys her opinion or questions something, it is usually laconically said, as if with a shrug. An example is her catapulting an elephant up into the sky with her weight and then stating: "What it says of my weight I cannot tell, for an elephant looks big, but how am I to know what it weighs? A balloon looks big and weighs nothing." [56] She said, "I know that people are afraid of me, either for the yapping of my dogs or because I stand taller than any of them." [57] It is with this frankness that Dog Woman talks about herself throughout the novel. There is no glossing over in her narrative and she does not try to find excuses. The first person narrative provides first-hand insight into Dog Woman's motivations for every murder or violent act that she commits. One part of her violent acts is a result of Dog Woman not getting heard or of her being afraid of not getting heard. Dog Woman always narrates a "prequel" which does not always justify but at least explains her reasons for attempting or carrying out each individual murder. She does not accept any authority except that of the King and God. She hates the Puritans for misinterpreting the words of God, especially for overthrowing and beheading the king and for being outrageously hypocritical. The other

part of her violent acts results from her tendency to take what is being said at face value. This corresponds with her way of expressing herself and she uses the same direct manner that she obviously expects from others.

The novel also indicates why the story is not fixedly set at a time and why the author brings back Greek homosexual mythologies to her narrative in terms of Britain as the setting. Throughout Sexing the Cherry, Winterson approaches aspects that are related to the reality of the world. She denotes that the things we may have considered to be real are proven not to be so because "'[E]very journey conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle. These are journeys I wish to record. Not the ones I made, but the ones I might have made, or perhaps did make in some other place or time. I could tell you the truth as you will find it in diaries and maps and log-books."[58]

One of Winterson's techniques include self-quotes or cross-references. The ecologist in Sexing the Cherry recur the previous novel Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, "I developed a passion for personal evangelism."[59] Comparing the notion of "the cities of the interior [that] are vast and do not lie on any map"[60] with "the Third City [that] is invisible, the city of the vanished, home to those who no longer exist."[61] Winterson also re-moulds contexts for the other figure as young, kind, overworked, patient, and neglected by her husband in Art and Lies. It is noteworthy to mention that the banana is the icon that indicates passages representing the Dog-Woman in Sexing the Cherry. The Dog Woman gives an account on how a banana was a present from god Queen Henrietta to a favourite of hers who had made a wondrous garden full of continental devices.[62] Winterson is obsessed with reality and in her (meta)fictional realm, she broadens it and

erases what outline it might have had. Winterson's novels are intertwined and connected with each other in such a way that her characters do not necessarily cease to exist on the last page of one of her books. The Dancing Princesses, for instance, only really fully come to life in Sexing the Cherry, but one of them seems to already appear briefly in the earlier novel The Passion: "One day he saw a young woman flying past, her clothes flying out behind her." [63] Although many women in Winterson's novels are able to float, only the Dancing Princesses are actually able to fly and this anonymous single flying female might be one of them. The Passion also introduces Villanelle, the daughter of a boatman. In Art and Lies, she and her linguistic alter ego, the poetic form, briefly return: "There is a quatrain at my chin and a sonnet on each breast, Villanelle is the poise of my hands." [64] Likewise, Louise, an adult in Written on the Body , spends her childhood in The Passion and is thus reflected in the novel in this manner: "One little girl who always followed me around pulled at my hand, her eyebrows close together with worries. 'Will you kill people, Henri?'" [65]

Louise, who is the female protagonist in Written on the Body, appears in The Passion as well. In Written on the Body, Winterson depicts Louise as the wife of Elgin. She is depicted as having an extramarital affair with the anonymous narrator, whose sex is undeclared. Elgin is aware of his wife's adulterous relationship and when she appears to be ill, Elgin who is a cancer specialist believes that she has cancer of the blood. Indeed, the test results he comes up with, back him up upon this issue. The text in Written on the Body, however, contains passages that raise doubts concerning Elgin's trustworthiness. It is in fact not at all clear if Louise really is ill, or if she is only declared ill. Winterson denotes that Elgin's diagnosis might just amount to blackmail. It is no coincidence, then,

that in <u>The Passion</u> this theme of "knowing the enemy" is also tied up with the character of Louise when she asked whether Henri will kill people. Henri replied "'Not people, Louise, just the enemy'".[66] Problems such as existentialism and uncertainty arises in her characters. For instance in <u>Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit</u>, Jeanette feels uncertain, about her self, "I wasn't quite certain what was happening myself, it was the second time in my life I had experienced uncertainty. ... Uncertainty was what the Heathen felt, and I was chose by God."[67] However, as the novel ends she chooses a life that embraces that feeling, and she leaves behind the certainties of the black-and-white binary structured world that has been created by her mother by depicting that she has "not gone forward or back in time, but across in time, to something [she] might have been, playing itself out."[68]

Another central aspect remains in terms of Winterson's own evangelism which remains geared toward the importance of love. In her novels namely <u>The Passion</u> and <u>Sexing the Cherry</u>, she uses history as a means of creating a world in which to explore a world free of the conventional assumptions of time and in terms of narratorial identity. It is a world in which language flourishes and words become living things. <u>The Passion</u> is a bawdy historical fantasy that centers upon Henri, a French peasant who worships Napoleon, and becomes his chicken chef, and consequently falls in love with a bisexual Venetian girl with webbed feet. It is a beautiful meditation upon the unfulfillable condition of humanity, and it possesses a genuine feeling for magic and mystery.

Winterson confronts the linguistic problems of narrating a romance in <u>Written on the Body</u>, starting with her admission that the entire subject of love has been verbalized so extensively and repeatedly that it is almost impossible to write anything new about the experience. It stands for a life that can revivify the love and the loss of which it is

brooding on, to concentrate exclusively upon the politics of lesbian subjects. Written on the Body, use the female body as a text and, more specifically, as a palimpsest thereby demonstrating that the novel's genderless narrator uses the beloved's body as a palimpsest. This has been done because, in trying to celebrate it, s/he is unable to depict it as it is and merely inscribes a set of meanings onto it. The female body has been described through two major sets of images: as a landscape, via a colonial language, and as a diseased body, via an anatomical language. The female body has been used in a traditional way within the text and it is confirmed by the novel's wide use of literary references from canonical texts. The novel, then, appears to be positioned outside a feminist or lesbian tradition, since it is not able to represent the female body in a new and fertile way and draws too much upon an all-male literary tradition, while configuring itself as a palimpsest, and is just like the body that is trying to describe. The book is a highly individual expression of a universal emotion that reassesses power relations between the sexes and dissects the clichés that too often cloud in Written on the Body. It is intense and erotic, and it depicts the extent to which Winterson is capable of delivering prose which is deceptively simple and sparingly truthful. It is a prose which strips love and passion down to the bare bones and it has an inclusive humanity about it. That directness is evident, too, in Art and Lies, but here it blends with Winterson at her excessive worst. Three separate voices, Handel, Picasso, and Sappho, separately flee a London of the near future and find themselves on the same train, and are drawn to one another through the curious agency of a book. Stories within stories take the reader into a world of lyrical beauty that is marred by frequently impenetrable prose, including

paragraphs of Latin, German, and French as well as fragments of opera, and linguistic twists that feel uncharacteristically contrived.

Winterson has continually stated that she is not interested in constructing an objective history but provides instead a "cat's cradle" of entangled narrative threads or a "string full of knots." [69] This metaphor has been developed in Written on the Body in order to include the narrator's relationship to Louise:

> The interesting thing about a knot is its formal complexity. ... For the religious, King Solomon's knot is said to embody the essence of all knowledge. For carpet makers and cloth weavers all over the world, the challenge of the knot lies in the rules of its surprises. ... Louise and I were held by a single loop of love'. [70]

What this serves to do is to strip love down to nothing more (and nothing less) than an emotion. When the narrator falls in love with Louise, passages of tender lyricism evoke the emotions of love and loss aroused by her body:

> You were milk-white and fresh to drink. Will your skin discolour, its brightness blurring? Will your neck and spleen distend? Will the rigorous contours of your stomach swell under an infertile load? ... It may be so but if you are broken then so am I. [71]

The use of an ungendered narrator is an innovative move that has significant implications in terms of reading the novel in its entirety. The ungendered narrator is only one strategy that she employs among many to denote whether she cannot revivify the jaded language of love. It occurs first on the second page of the novel saying that it's the clichés that cause the trouble. This aspect is reiterated like a refrain five more times in the

course of the book. [72] Michel Foucault has diagnosed a similar duality in terms of underlying the discourse of love in his three volumes of The History of Sexuality. For Foucault sexuality itself is an ideological-function:

> It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.[73]

It is interesting that Foucault throws together “stimulation of bodies” and “the incitement to discourse,” that is, sexuality and textuality (about sexuality). Whichever of the two is invoked, there appears to be an internal contradiction that resists any attempt to achieve stability of meaning or effect. Winterson uses these variations on an anatomical theme in order to render poetic expression to the underlying duality of love and of the language of love that is the obsessive theme of this narration. As the narrator acknowledges, Louise “opened up the dark places as well as the light.” [74] Winterson also denoted that disease is “one of those useful metaphors that everyone understands.” She continues: “Even the dimmest people can see that this is not only to do with their own bodies but a kind of metaphor for the state crumbling away.” [75] The narrator’s failures in love can be seen as part of a wider failure in the narrator’s society as a whole. Characters such as Elgin, Gail Right and her pretentious wine bar, Louise’s mother and her fear of what the neighbors think, even the degeneration of the local railway station are aspects that indicate a criticism of contemporary Britain. In Art and Lies Pritchard find

Winterson "either too clever or too perverse for words" and he claims that in all of Winterson's books "there is a general contempt for hearth and home, the family, for 'our broken society' and especially for men." [76] As Christy Burns suggests in a discussion of Winterson's postmodernism: "Art, and for Winterson especially literature, provides the link between both the real and the imaginary through its medium: the Word." [77] In a counterpoint to the movement in Written on the Body, figurative and rhythmic expressions have a very direct negative impact on the body in Art and Lies. When Picasso first agonizes over her family life, the reader does not know that she has been incestuously abused. Her excessive use of figuration and artful sentence structure has been designed both to hint at a secret and to retain an aura of mysterious excitement. As Picasso narrates:

> When my brother lay over me like a winding sheet and me his corpse, it was a patch of red I remembered on a Leonardo robe. While my brother embalmed me with his fluid I clung to life through a patch of red. When I had to look at his empty eyes over me, it was the red that speeded my own blood from clotting. It was the red that pushed life through veins I had thought to slit. Warm red light in it. Gold decorated red that gave me a robe of dignity to put over my own torn dress. [78]

In the words of Winterson:

> It is a strange time; the writer is expected to be able to explain his or her work as though it were a perplexing machine supplied without an instruction manual. The question 'What is your book about?' has always

> puzzled me. It is about itself and if I could condense it into other words I should not have taken such care to choose the words I did. [79]

Winterson continues this questioning throughout her essay, "A Work of My Own". She makes points, and then slips in a one-sentence paragraph: "But I have said these things in Art and Lies." [80] She emphasizes that her choice of form is sometimes the narrative, and feels bewildered at being asked to express, and essentially to repeat, her ideas in other forms. Winterson's treatment of man is just as offensive as the abuse that she has depicted against women, and the only man who escapes the diatribe is the castrated Handel, since he lacks the offending phallus. Art and Lies carries a strident certainty and Winterson most explicitly takes up the project of revitalizing language and the imaginary in a disconnected society. While Winterson invests her work in reconnecting these three characters that are adrift in the London of 2000, her chief concern in Art and Lies is with the impact of postmodern banality on language, which is the medium not only of her art but of social communication. Winterson's use of fantasy and her liturgical style been explicitly fused into a kind of fantastic language. In Art and Lies, Winterson adopts the voice of Sappho to articulate her concern for the flattened state of language: "Delicate words exhausted through overuse. Bawdy words made temperate by repetition. Words of the spirit forced into the flesh. Words of the flesh unlovely in a white gown. Slang in a sling shot hurled and hurled and hurled. That is the legacy of the dead." [81] Winterson not only attempts to recover the words of the dead as the history of literature that has been brought into the present but more importantly she works to overcome the "death" of language. Fantasy is no longer a vision that fills up the

imagination; it is the inspiration that arises in and through the sensuous and erotic aspects of language.

Winterson also denotes;

> The writer is restricted to what she has experienced or to what she knows; she is let loose outside of her own dimensions. This is why art can speak to so many different kinds of people regardless of time and place. It is why it is so foolish to try and reconstruct the writer from the work. [82]

Winterson states, "[W]hereas science outdates the past art keeps it present" [83] and that "[A] writer has no use for the clock. A writer lives in an infinity of days, time without end, ploughed under." [84] Both sport dual narrators namely a "feminine" male narrator alongside a woman narrator who has been singled out by her fantastic or grotesque features, to deconstruct the concepts of gender identity and the fluidity of sexual desire.

Thus, through its narrative technique Winterson's works can be viewed singularly as texts that seek to situate the self. Her words reveal and unfold layers of unrealized meaning upon every page, until the reader is gently lowered back into his or her own world with a new fascination and awe for what already existed. Winterson's writing rejects the conventional perception of life as she reveals the shallow fulfillment which is inherent in traditional values. This aspect expands the notion of time and reality, and renders new insight upon existing realities. These elements are not only apparent through the content of Winterson's stories but also through her use of unusual and varied narrative structures. Winterson's work is deeply creative, she is constantly moving between territories which seem to be uncharted and new. Thus her characters' refusal to

accept the conventional means of living has been paralleled by her own refusal to abide by the conventional means of storytelling. Kyle Wilson denotes that Winterson not only writes between the lines of our lives, she writes between the lines of our foundational texts. She makes constant references to the Bible, and to Greek mythology while reinventing and reinterpreting them to mean new things. She also manipulates history like no other writer of her time and Winterson makes clear that while meaning is contextually bound, contexts are boundless and this makes her state that there is no limit to new territory. Reality is continuous, multiple, simultaneous, complex, abundant and partly invisible. The notion of layered, fragmented and simultaneously continuous time seems to play a significant role in the process of revealing the self. In Winterson's scheme of things, literature like art, works across time and in this way keeps the aspect of the self inherently dynamic.

NOTES

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[2]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 181

[3]Jeanette Winterson, "P.S. About the author", Appendix interview with Louise Tucker. Lighthousekeeping, (London: Fourth Estate, 2005) 4

[4]Judith Seaboyer, "Second Death in Venice: Romanticism and the Compulsion to Repeat in Jeanette Winterson's The Passion," Contemporary Literature 38.3 (1997): 488

[5]Shari Benstock, The Private Self: The Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 11

[6]Jeanette Winterson, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) xiv

[7]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 106

[8]Ibid. 113

[9]Jeanette Winterson, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 16

[10]Ibid. 93

[11]Ibid. 93

[12]Ibid. 95

[13]Ibid. 60

[14]Ibid. 61

[15]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 71

[16]Ibid. 72

[17]Ibid. 73

[18]Ibid. 74

[19]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 75

[20]Ibid. 127

[21]Ibid. 123

[22]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 29-30

[23]Ibid. 30

[24]Ibid. 31

[25]'The lesbian feminists believe that by denying male sexual definition, by identifying only with women, women will be able to discover their own true nature, as opposed to the male-defined roles and behaviour patterns imposed on them for centuries.' Susana González Ábaloz, 'Winterson's Sexing the Cherry: Rewriting "Woman" through Fantasy.' In: D'Arcy / Landa, 290

[26]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 5

[27]Mark Marvel, "Winterson: Trust Me. I'm Telling You Stories," Interview 20 (1990): 165

[28]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 157

[29]Carol Anshaw, "Into the Mystic: Jeanette Winterson's Fable Manners," Village Voice Literary Supplement 86 (1990): 17

[30]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 133

[31]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 133-4

[32]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 189

[33]Susana Onega, Telling Stories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1995) 135

[34]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 51

[35]Ibid. 90

[36]Ibid. 49

[37]Ibid. 56

[38]Ibid. 58

[39]Ibid. 61

[40]Ibid. 90

[41]Audrey Bilger, "Jeanette Winterson: The Art of Fiction CL." The Paris Review 145 (1997-98): 100

[42]Ibid. 101

[43]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 61-62

[44]Catherine Belsey, Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 77

[45]Jeanette Winterson, Weight, (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) 135

[46]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 114

[47]Jeanette Winterson in conversation with Rosemary Harthill, “Writers Revealed”. Radio 4. Autumn 1990.

[48]Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism, (London: Routledge, 1988) 142

[49]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 68

[50]Ibid. 3

[51]Ibid. 116

[52]Ibid. 121

[53]Ibid. 121

[54]Ibid. 74-6

[55]As elucidated by Jean Pierre 23 Sept 2008 <http://www.jpderosnay.wordpress.com/.../sexing-the-cherry-by-jeanette-winterson/>

[56]Jeanette Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989) 21

[57]Ibid. 21

[58]Ibid. 2

[59]Ibid. 140

[60]Jeanette Winterson, The Passion, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 152

[61]Winterson (1994) 22

[62]As elucidated in Winterson (1989) 9

[63]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 97

[64]Ibid. 63

[65]Ibid. 8

[66]Ibid. 79

[67]Jeanette Winterson in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, (London: Pandora, 1985) 99-100

[68]Ibid. 169 emphasis added

[69]Ibid. 91 and 166

[70]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 88

[71]Ibid. 125

[72]bid. 10, 21, 26, 71, 155 and 180

[73]Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1981)105-6

[74]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 174

[75]Audrey Bilger, "Jeanette Winterson: The Art of Fiction CL." The Paris Review 145 (1997-98): 108

[76]W. H. Pritchard, "Art and Lies, A Piece for Three Voices and A Bawd", The New York Times Book Review (1995): 14-15

[77]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 43

[78]Ibid. 154

[70]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995)165

[80]Ibid. 173

[81]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 65

[82]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995)187

[83]Ibid. 166

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Winterson has won international acclaim for her innovative and lyrical writing that directly and explicitly challenges the conventional novel form. This thesis has predominantly concentrated upon Winterson's position with respect to different narratives that she deploys so as to reinforce and situate the self within the ambit of a queer dynamics. The aspect of the self has been well located in her writings as well as her own self. Her adoption into a family that was committed to the Pentecostal evangelical Church has been denoted at length, and her novels draw upon her experience as a preacher and missionary protégée, who was expelled from the church as a young adult for her homosexuality. If the fundamentalist practices of Pentecostal evangelism inform the novels' critique of institutionalized religion, its belief in divinely bestowed charismatic gifts has been reworked in their valorization of subjective, spiritual reality, as well as the divinity of romantic love and the sacred power of language. She denotes in this light "I started writing because I wanted to write sermons, because I was driven to preach to people and convert them … now I do it for art's sake, and then I did it for God's". [1] Subsequently her sexual orientation has been central in determining the self. She has come a long way since the success of her first novel, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit wherein she introduces both the themes of love and storytelling and the postmodern techniques that characterize her subsequent work. The novel can be read as Jeanette's journey in trying to find herself and understand her own sexuality. As it merges the experience of discovering one's sexuality with the struggle to construct a personal identity, the novel perpetrates a ferociously satirical criticism of religious fundamentalist discourses and their cruel methods of manipulation and the treatment meted out to Jeanette. But these very cruel methods to repress her sexuality towards the end of the

novel in fact nurture her own perception of the self and she vindicates and celebrates the existence of the same-sex desire, and clearly rejects heterosexuality as "the only fruit."

In her second novel The Passion, she moves beyond the autobiographical mode, while adopting a form that Linda Hutcheon has termed as "historiographic metafiction". This is a mode contained within the postmodern novel which self-consciously explores the relationship between history and fiction and questions what is meant by each. As in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, the themes of love and personal integrity are uppermost, but juxtaposed within a narrative of lesbian love, is the tale of a French soldier's hero-worship of Napoleon in The Passion which is set during the Napoleonic wars of 1804-1815. Ironically, Winterson had enough faith in her own merit, and when she was asked in 1992 to name the best novel of the year, she chose her own novel, Written on the Body. To some, it may seem that she had become insufferable, arrogant, and pretentious, yet she was simply breaking new ground for women writers. When asked about her work she replied:

> At college, I was told there were four great women novelists in the nineteenth century, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Bronte. Not one of them led an enviable life; all of them had to sacrifice ludicrously in order to be writers. I wasn't prepared to do that.[2]

Her novels are always experimental, straining and stretching language and genre into new forms, frequently with a poetic texture. Religious languages, sexual desire, the quest motif, all of these are prominent, within various guises, throughout Winterson's subsequent works. Her fiction brings in a play of signifiers that result in a continuous deferral of meaning that suggests a number of alternative readings. While abounding in

experimental narrative techniques and de-centering strategies that have been associated with postmodernist writings, her texts also show a dialogic relationship with the modernist tradition, especially with the modernist writers. As an author she rejects the conventional perception of life. Her work, in particular with the recent (re)turn to an "authentic" account of her traumatic childhood within her fiction acts as symptomatic of trauma culture as she reveals the shallow fulfillment which is inherent in traditional values. It also expands the notion of time and reality, and renders new insight into existing realities. This is apparent through the content of her stories and through her use of unusual and varied narrative structures. Her work is deeply creative as she constantly moves between territories which seem to be uncharted and new. In all her works she re-evaluates female desire as something which is distinct from male desire and as a part of a separate sexual economy. Winterson's characters refuse to accept the conventional means of living, and these aspects are paralleled by her own refusal to abide by the conventional means of storytelling. Her stories often discard the linearity of basic conventional laws of time and space, especially as reflected in Sexing the Cherry and Art and Lies, embracing instead works of extended reality, she builds realities out of her metaphors, as opposed to using them as tools to describe the literal. Her stories become both allegorical and literal, and seem to uniquely bridge the territory which lies between the two. Her writing exposes the richness of both language and experience and she cautions herself against the "dangers of automatic[ally] writing" oneself towards an unnecessary ending. This seems to be her strategy against needless repetition, which nevertheless cannot be wholly prevented. Of the self she denotes:

> Can I speak my mind or am I dumb inside a borrowed language, captive of bastard thoughts? What of me is mine? [3]

Susana Onega has described this as:

> ...the contemporary writer's awareness that no particular text can be original in the sense that it exists in a discursive space whose pre-existing codes and conventions determine the text's intelligibility and condition the reader's and even the writer's approach to it. This awareness often produces in the writer-to-be a tension that Harold Bloom has described as "the anxiety of influence", the pressure exerted on him by the bulk of the whole literary tradition which he must absorb, assimilate and recast. [4]

Winterson disliked the label "the lesbian writer" and does not want it to define her as a person, especially because the label is often used derogatorily in the press. In one of her interviews, she has rightly retorted that the sexuality of a writer is not the business of literary criticism; to make it so is a cheap way out of dealing with the work on its terms and in its own right. She further argues that it is writing "fiction" that matters to her:

> My concerns have always been the same: to stretch the possibilities of fiction and to work with language so that it is metaphor as well as meaning. I want words to double and tilt, I want them to shift matter, heavy solid matter, with a lightness that is possible because language itself is light, both not weighed down, and illuminating. [5]

Thus she explains in an interview with Times Online saying that there are some rotten no-good lesbians and some rotten no-good gay men, but there are rotten no-good heterosexuals too, and that people do not use sexuality as the explanation of whatever it is

they have done. She also gives her reason as to why she keeps doing the gender bending and she states:

> Because I'm queer. … Being queer, that is not straight-line, not belonging, tells me that gender is only the beginning of the story, not the last word. I like some ambiguity. … I don't want a unisex world. … But I think we should have more fun with it, and the fun and the experiment is what Queer Culture is all about. To that extent, my own experience interfaces with my work. [6]

As such her fiction also poses a problem for lesbian theory, for it operates without reference to a founding assumption grounding many theories of lesbian cultural production and representation: that of the essentially marginal status of lesbianism. Judith Roof, in her book A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory (1991), states the paradigm this way:

> By implicitly challenging the habitual heterosexual paradigm, representing lesbian sexuality conspicuously unmasks the ways gender and sexuality normally coalesces to reassert the complementary duality of sexual difference. . . . As a point of failure [of representation], lesbian sexuality is a phenomenon that evades the rules; as a point of return, it is the example that proves the rule and reveals the premises upon which the rules depend.[7]

In her own way she redefines the concepts of impersonality and emotion as transpersonal and love. To connect love only with gender and thus with sexual orientation limits the scope of human experience and undermines the potential of the human mind to

transcend its physical boundaries. Furthermore, as she herself deduces upon this issue in Art Objects:

> The Queer world has colluded in the misreading of art as sexuality. Art is difference, but not necessarily sexual difference, and while to be outside of the mainstream of imposed choice is likely to make someone more conscious, it does not automatically make that someone an artist. A great deal of gay writing around the Aids crisis, is therapy, is release, is not art. […] all art, including literature, is much more than its subject matter. [8]

These are the very assumptions that her fictional world rejects. In the world of her novels, culture does not have to and does not always operate to assure the successful rule of heterosexuality. Representation does not depend upon the centrality of the heterosexual paradigm, nor on the inevitable "duality" of femininity in relation to masculinity just as a lesbian experience can be at the centre and not the margins, not only of postmodern culture but of modernity itself. For her as an author, the rules do not work for anyone (even heterosexual men), and never have. She offers neither a critique of heterosexual culture nor a salvific account of lesbianism, largely because she refuses to accept that conventional distinction in the first place. While she mobilizes certain conventions of lesbian representation, she understand them to produce an identity no less fractured than those (like heterosexuality) produced by other, equally conventional, textual strategies. Instead, she takes a certain lesbian narrative space for granted – a space romantic and postmodern, sincere and ironic. Thus the "virtual lesbianism" of Winterson's fiction challenges the notion that the fragmentation of the subject also means the end of desire.

Also, from the analysis of her works, as reflected in the previous chapters, none of her texts runs through uninterrupted. The tendency to include small semi-closed units into larger narrative is apparent in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Written on the Body, and is also considerably evident in Sexing the Cherry. While The Passion fluctuates between narrators but somehow follows a consistent plot scheme, Art and Lies loosely binds together the fates of three characters but also more severely incises linearity, a feature which is not appreciated by the author. Her fiction frequently calls into question the assumptions about narratorial identity, fictional artifice, and objective reality. In her texts one finds all kinds of emotions and insistent poetic passages, which are interrupted by encyclopedic quotations, newly moulded fairy tales and myths, time travel and meta-narrativity, parody and the grotesque. Winterson's early modern settings allow her to make an argument about the inextricability of postmodern unraveling of the subject and the founding moments of modern subjectivity itself. In other words, the regime of the subject and the colonial technologies that produced it can be seen to be historically specific ways of addressing the felt sense, in history and in representation, of the coherence and fragmentation of human life. In 1992, during an interview about Written on the Body, she said, "Few writers achieve their own form and open up new landscapes [...] I want to encourage language in all its complexity; that's what really excites me. Too often it is just sloppy and dirty." [9]

Appropriately enough, then, when she was asked to name her favorite writer working in English, she chose herself, because "No one working in the English language now comes close to my exuberance, my passion, my fidelity to words." [10] This is inherent after analyzing her five novels in this thesis because her achievement is a portrayal of the

interesting possibility of more than everyday reality regarding plot, setting, and mode of expression. A lyricism, especially as connected to fantasy, also represent her way of reinventing language and also plots and even the world itself. Language has the ultimate power in her work because it shapes not only perceptions of events but also the events themselves and the element of fantasy in terms of language, both helps to thicken the intertextual, narrative layers, for instance in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, besides the main plot there are numerous sub-plots that denote the story of Morte D'Arthur, Jane Eyre, as well as narratives from the Bible. [11] The juxtaposition of legends and myths with the life of the main character, Jeanette, questions the reality of the stories as told by the narrators. The book also contains Winterson's distinctive storytelling style in fairytale passages where Jeanette conjures up characters such as Sir Percival, a sorcerer and a wise goose. Winterson reveals the fluidity of traditional interpretative patterns and the subjectivity of truth, as she mobilizes all kinds of mythic texts to deconstruct them in a light manner. When she interrupts her storytelling in a book, she often begins to comment on her own authorship, and puts forward proposals concerning the plot, while addressessing the reader openly. "I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator." [12]

Her reflections on text structure as such emphasize that she uses meta-fiction knowingly, and not accidentally. This becomes clear when she handles biblical material especially in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. In the essay collection Art Objects, she paid tribute to her modernist lineage such as Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, among others and delineated her own views on art, contemporary life, culture, writing, and her work. The themes of this collection echo those that she had

developed in her fiction, notably the transformative power of literature, its autonomy from the life of the artist, and its capacity to move human beings to ecstasy. Winterson has been variously compared to Jonathan Swift for her biting satire, to Gabriel Garcia Marquez for her magic realism, to Italo Calvino for her meta-fictional experimentation and adaptation of myth and fairy tale, and to Monty Python for her comic abilities. Scholars have focused upon the purely literary qualities in her work, while noting the endurance of such themes as the nature of love, time, and art, along with the persistent search for self and the perennial presence of outsiders, strangers, and other characters that have been marginalized by society. Reviewers have often commended her ability to cut across cultural barriers with such widely popular works as Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. They also have cited her ability to continually challenge literary and social conventions in all of her works. She weaves together myth, metaphor and allegory skillfully to offer up a narrative that explores some of the central questions of identity and destination. Feminist critics have paid particular attention to postmodern elements of her work, while arguing that her lesbian fiction re-envisions what is "normal," and validates lesbian life and experience. Her androgynous approach to characterization has prompted many scholars to credit Winterson with successfully deconstructing patriarchal stereotypes and binary sexual oppositions that relegate women and lesbians to "otherness" and cultural subjugation. Such critics praise her tireless experimentation, her commitment to revitalizing language and discovering new possibilities for fiction, and her steadfast belief in the transformative power of literary art. For instance, Jeanette in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit encounters massive resentment and is being exorcised because of her lesbianism. She has to escape her narrow-minded (adoptive) mother and

question all her beliefs and values. Jeanette's account of her youth with subsidiary narratives of myths and fairy tales are an integral part of the novel and perform a number of important functions. Jeanette instead of uncovering a single, static identity constructs for herself a series of shifting, fluid selves by means of the acts of story telling and fabrication. Jeanette's account of her youth with subsidiary narratives of myths and fairy tales are an integral part of the novel and perform a number of important functions. Jeanette instead of uncovering a single, static identity constructs for herself a series of shifting, fluid selves by means of the acts of story telling and fabrication. Winterson provide a space for a female self defined not in polar opposition to "man" but in her own "feminine", postmodernist terms. Winterson's Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit sets out to explore, redefine and reassert the notion of the individual self from the position of its narrator, Jeanette, who is doubly "ex-centric" [13] because she is a female and also a homosexual, while upholding a perspective that is postmodernist in both formal and ideological terms. Winterson's treatment of fairytale and fable, as vehicle for representing Jeanette shifting identities and displacements, also has ideological import. It functions as a strategy to question and challenge the patriarchal values associated with fairytales. It questions images of femininity constructed by male-dominated culture. Images of stereotypically feminine attributes are rejected, and the Prince's search for a flawless woman examines male ideals of femininity and their oppressive effect on women. The story of Red Riding Hood is transformed into a fable illustrating a young girl's feelings of anxiety about heterosexual relations and male duplicity.

Villanelle and Henri in The Passion are singled out as well. Henri, the fragile and anxious soldier, adores Napoleon and follows him through Europe until the campaign is

shattered in Russia, in the zero winter. Another remarkable figure is the giantess Dog-Woman in Sexing the Cherry. Winterson enacts in her meta-fictional writing practices, what Butler pioneers theoretically, that is, a sexual politics of heterogeneity and a vision of hybridized gender constructions outside an either/or proposition, at once political and postmodern. Fiction, for her, is the site to interrogate trouble, subvert, and tamper with gender, identity, and sexuality. Her fiction is a serious invitation to readers to imagine the emancipation of “normal” and “natural” from the exclusive and totalizing domain of patriarchal and heterosexual authority. The emergence of new paradigms throughout her work reverses, relativizes, and problematizes notions of normal and natural in order to “naturalize” cultural oddities, monstrosities, abnormalities, and conformities-from Jeanette’s love of women, to Villanelle’s masculine webbed feet, to Dog-Woman’s enormous stature, or to Jordan’s sartorial intuition and biological experimentation. In Sexing the Cherry the image of grafting does not fully address Winterson's continued reliance on problematic binary distinctions in her depiction of lesbian desire. In fact, Doan suggests that Winterson continues to rely upon rigid notions of gender identity as Sexing the Cherry begins “to map an alternative social order, one that positions the lesbian at the center.” [14] Doan here acknowledges that the novel goes beyond simply challenging existing categories of gender identity. By positioning the lesbian at the “center” of this alternative social order, the novel inverts the binary logic that posits heterosexuality as the norm by which lesbianism is judged perverse. What Winterson attempts to inscribe in Sexing the Cherry through the practice of grafting, is a replication process “whereby a plant, perhaps tender or uncertain, 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”. [15] This astonishing procedure, though simple enough to explain and understand, incurs the wrath of churchmen who declare it, to be almost akin to homosexuality, “unnatural, holding that the Lord who made the world its flora as he wished and in no other way.” [16] It also incurs the frustration of Jordan’s mother who asserts that “such things had no gender and were confusion to themselves.” [17] Despite the disapproving objections of the perplexed populace, Jordan himself solemnly proclaims, in a phrase with scriptural resonances: “But the cherry grew, and we have sexed it and it is female.” [18] Winterson, with this statement, imagines that gender is socially constructed and enforced rather than inherent and, that the hybrid, that is, a third sex, is a fusion of diverse strains, without seed and also the strongest, which illuminates the ways in which the dominant culture opts out of creatively and freely exploring boundless gender options and instead becomes mired in weary boundaries and binaries. The fact that Jordan was himself adopted, like Jeanette in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, and was thus in a sense created without seed chooses to experiment upon the cherry, which is an emblem of virginity and an euphemism for the hymen. She anticipates a solution well beyond the fruit metaphor or the superficial “peel” of cross-dressing; and it is a solution as Doan suggests that anticipates a different order to supplant the old. [19] By imagining nascency as emerging from virginity created and sustained outside binaries, outside of the seed, Winterson nips the old order in the bud before it even begins; a liberatory displacement that brims with new gender configurations and enacts a plausible “convergence of multiple sexual discourses,” [20] in Butler’s own terms. In the act of grafting the cherry, she envisions the contours and logic of a lesbian postmodern that collapses binarisms and creates a space not just for lesbians but for productive, dynamic, and fluid gender

pluralities and sexual positioning. Winterson enacts in her metafiction definite writing practices, which is inherently a sexual politics of heterogeneity and a vision of hybridized gender constructions outside an either/or proposition, that is at once political and postmodern. In this manner, she invites readers to accept alternatives to heterosexuality, particularly lesbianism, as natural expressions of the basic human quest for love.

The desire that inspires Jordan's quest finally becomes a new foundation for his essential self in the novel. For much of the novel, Winterson challenges the notion of a singular, self-determining individual as she insists that the characters are multiple and not single, and by depicting modern incarnations of Dog Woman and Jordan, refuses to fix their location in space and time. Even as she mystifies Jordan's pursuit of Fortunata, she makes clear that what he really seeks is access to an inner, ideal self through his narrative, "the Buddhists say there are 149 ways to God," he claims, "I'm not looking for God, only for myself ..." [21] Jordan has undertaken the arduous attempt to find, not lose his essential self and this is a self which is clearly distinct from his body. By making this ideal self the object of a religious quest, the novel reinforces an essentially romantic drive to locate a ground of being outside time, space, and material existence. Ironically, even as the novel celebrates Jordan's search for his true self, Sexing the Cherry records the painful isolation produced by his narcissistic desire. Both Dog Woman and Jordan suffer in their isolated subjectivity as they misinterpret each other's motives and doubt each other's love. Although Dog Woman continually worries about Jordan's future and the possibility that his heart will be broken, she never expresses these concerns to him. For his part, Jordan hopes to emulate Dog Woman, whom he sees as "self-sufficient and without self-doubt." [22] He does not understand her concern for him or how self-conscious

she is. In fact, her reserve leads him to question her love: “I think she loves me,” he says, “but I don't know.” [23] The novel here registers the human suffering that results as her characters focus upon their internal journeys and turn away from their connection to others. The Sappho section in Art and Lies helps both Handel and Picasso in their quest for self. Sappho has no physical form because she leaves no prints in the snow and states that she cannot see herself. Instead, she is being lugged around by Handel who is carrying her along with him. Sappho observes, “I looked behind [Handel] and saw Time churning the sands in pyramids and river beds. He turned away and I turned with him…The groves and towers were gone…The sea had shrunk away leaving only the blue mist of after-rain. Ignorant of alchemy, they put faith in technology and turned the whole world into gold.”[24] Sappho can see where Handel travels and what he sees along the way. She has been around for centuries and has witnessed all these changes to the world taking place. Sappho further mentions, “Must keep up with the times…Drag me, how he [Handel] drags me, knows the creature that I am. Beg him? He is deaf still. In spite of that I cry out.” [25] This proves that Sappho looks at the “new world” in Handel’s hands and provides him with a new understanding of his own self despite his past failures and loneliness. At the same time we see that the connection between Sappho and Picasso, in terms of understanding her true self, is much more intimate as compared to Handel In Art and Lies, her aim has been “to test experience against language and language against experience”.[26] In Art and Lies, Winterson expresses a fear that language is moribund – “Delicate words exhausted through overuse” [27] and her work attest to her attempts to resuscitate language.

Fiction, for Winterson, is the site to interrogate, trouble, subvert, and tamper with gender. This aspect is mostly concerned with identity, sexuality and one's own search for self with an invitation to imagine the emancipation of "normal" and "natural" from the elusive and totalizing domain of patriarchal and heterosexual authority. Some of her characters have to face situations involving ignorance, fanaticism in sects, homophobia, war, assault, the cruel public sphere, rape, or even solitary existence. They react in developing survival strategies that lead out of conventional plots. In her novels, the manner in which the female protagonists present themselves from a first person narrator perspective can be understood as a critique upon the existing patriarchal structures. The female protagonists live their lives on their own terms and they have to accept the drawbacks that come with such attempts in order to challenge social structures. Often the freedom they gain outweighs their loneliness that is founded at the cost of their freedom yet the protagonists simply do not have a choice; their identities simply refuse to accommodate gendered expectations.Winterson's passion for "the word" is self-confessedly "evangelical." [28] Her emphasis upon the spiritual role of language and literature in the reinvention of reality is developed in Art Objects, a manifesto for romantic, aesthetic and modernist writing published as a critical compendium to her literary production. Art as she denotes, reveals a new and timeless world and confronts us with other dimensions of emotional and spiritual experience and provides a guiding vision; and elevates one above the mundane. "The true effort [of art]", says Winterson "is to open to us dimensions of the spirit and of the self that normally lie smothered under the weight of living". [29] The artist is a "prophet" who is endowed with "prescience" and "an immanence that allows him or her to recognize and make articulate the emotional

perplexities of his age".[30] Such examples are Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and The Passion which evoke the spiritual dimension of art to counter the effects of institutionalized religion and the consumer culture that "deadens our sensibilities and makes us fear what is not instant, approachable, consumable".[31] These novels chart a progression which is away from organized religion and panders towards spiritual experience. In their critique of fundamentalist and institutionalized religion and, conversely, their valorization of subjective spirituality, the novels draw upon Winterson's formative Pentecostal evangelicalism and critical investment in the visionary arts. This division between religion and spirituality equally reflects the shift towards spirituality within the wider cultural context of the late twentieth century.

Winterson's has always pushed at the boundaries of story telling in order to inter relate the self and nuances that are related to the power of language. Her concern with the transgressive clearly includes crossing and re-crossing the conventional limits of narrative. She highlights the fictionality of her work so she also foregrounds the practices of reading. She is archly aware of the fact that her books only take on existence when read; that is the reading re/creates the text: "When I talk about writing I have to always come back to reading."[32] Her heroes are sensitive people and are often travelers and searchers who are exploring the world around them. They are on a quest for beauty and will cross boundaries in order to find it. They are, in that sense, revolutionary because they have the desire to go beyond what is already known, and the passion to go beyond what is common. Alongwith that, the protagonists embrace uncertainty and the beauty they hope to find there demands a letting go, as well as an escape from old values, and an openness as well as a passionate determination. On the other hand, the antagonists in her

work display the exact opposite characteristics and they do not seek anything except stability, order, and law-like certainty and in some cases they are mainly interested in power or money. Her preference for the first set of characters and characteristics is not only evident from the passionately poetic language and visionary images with which she describes them in her fiction, but is confirmed in her non-fiction, essays and journalism. Throughout her literary career, Winterson has been guided by a strong belief in principles such as the freedom of speech, the value of art, or the anti-linearity and multi-dimensionality of reality, and she uses these principles as the wire-frame around which she models her characters. In her world, female values are predominant and the advocates of her ideas are females rather than men. Although there are some masculine heroes, Winterson's unfavourable idea of men in general is unmistakable in her fictions. Her rejection of a rationally and technologically conditioned modernity is akin to some of the romantics' rejection of the spirit of the enlightenment. Her search for an alternative world while leaving behind modernity can be seen as a romantic strategy as well as a specifically postmodern feminist aesthetics. At the same time, Winterson's aesthetic view of the world is an instrument for the emancipation of feminine values. She rejects the traditional univocal and totalitarian concept of history and defends the right of the individual to contribute her own subjective version of it, insisting at the same time upon the truth-revealing power of imaginative story-telling and the impossibility of separating fact from fiction, the real from the unreal, the desired from the actuality lived. From this stance, Winterson, then redefines reality as complex and many-sided, and situates it in the realm of the fantastic, that is to say, in that frontier territory of epistemological

uncertainly located between inner and outer reality where the real and the unreal aspects of the self coexist.

Winterson's novels demonstrate that when critiques of the subject entail an abandonment of passion and desire, they construct new illusions of their own "purity". For her, the subject can be a fragmented and yet a still obsessed self with all its impossibilities. Crucial to the understanding of the "virtual lesbian" is the acknowledgement of the subject's necessary implication in conventional narratives of its own origins as well as its implication in the failures of those narratives. She self-consciously questions the mechanisms by which narrative texts are produced and partakes of a clear penchant for fantasy, magical realism, and the fabulous. She deftly combines with a strong political commitment the various aspects that are aimed at subverting socio-cultural power structures and, ultimately, at appropriating traditionally male-defined concepts for her lesbian politics. In her writing she metamorphoses a variety of literary forms such as romance, the gothic mode, and fairytales while raising questions about life, love, boundaries, desire, identity, and individual responsibility. As a writer, her main concern is the exploration of the limitless possibilities the self. She denotes, "I believe that storytelling is a way of navigating our lives."[33] She then adds "… stories are a way of making sense differently, of enlarging upon what we are and not being afraid of the unruly elements within it."[34] In her novels, there are recurring themes such as the indissolubility of the inner and the outer self, the quest for love and self-knowledge; the nature and spirit of sexual love, even the pointlessness of separating fact from fiction, and the exploration of the complexities of the human heart. One can find, in Winterson's writing that, there is a constant subversion of the patriarchal binary

regulation of sexuality that unveils and lays bare the constructedness of a gendered conception of the self, and the restrictiveness of the concept of love within the compulsory heterosexual economics. The task for her, as an author, is to create in fiction what Butler argues is “the more insidious and effective strategy”, that is, “a thoroughgoing appropriation and redeployment of the categories of identity themselves, not merely to contest ‘sex’, but to articulate the convergence of multiple sexual discourses at the site of ‘identity’ in order to render that category, in whatever form, permanently problematic.” [35]

Winterson’s fiction establishes that there has been an inherent depiction that every novel is clearly embedded within the writer herself and that her commitment to intellectual adventure remains in terms of a quest for the self. All the five novels within the study namely, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985), The Passion (1987), Sexing the Cherry (1989), Written on the Body (1992), and Art and Lies (1994) demonstrates that anything can be split into its self and it’s opposite. Winterson conveys that advocating plurality of desire as a complex form of consciousness can and will eventually defy binary antitheses and sexual stereotypes. The search for the self, which has been expressed as a personal quest, along with the desire to trespass the rigidly fixed boundaries between fact and fiction, are inherent with the manner in which myth lends itself to hi/story. These aspects are characteristic of Winterson’s narrative art in all of her novels. Most of her work has been devoted to the exploration of the self in its entire multiple and contradictory manifestations. Her characters are a subtle combination of various realms namely; heroic, delicate, insolent, seductive, ingenious, melancholic, and

fervent adventurers who prefer the pleasure of the pursuit to the achievement of the reward, and who believe that "only the impossible is worth the effort." [36]

From her first novel, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Winterson's work has always been critical of heterosexual and male privilege and ferociously anti-marriage. Almost every novel by Winterson is a critique of, if not a diatribe against, the various institutions which she sees as 'stifling and domesticating love' and giving a specious state and Church dominion to human relationships and to the quest and liberation of the self. Through Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Winterson exposes the sanctity of family life as something of a sham; and it illustrates by example that what the Church terms love is actually a psychosis. In Art and Lies, Winterson questions women's "supposed heterosexual orientation" and the basis for it: "She had been told that many women looked at a man and wanted his children. She could understand that but 'marriage became survival and economics". [37] Winterson, presents marriage as a conveyor belt approach to human relationships, and a lemming-like act of conformity: "Down the aisle they went, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health", "till Death do us part. Death did part them; dead to feeling, dead to beauty, dead to all but the most obvious pleasures ..." [38] Winterson represents "reality" and "identity" as radically unstable concepts, whereby the "self" and the world it inhabits are continually in flux and instable. To Winterson, to love differently emerges as a goal which is achieved by telling stories differently, and by re-imagining and re-mapping life. All this has been rendered because she seeks to find a truly universal mode of expression that speaks to all people who love regardless of gender and sexuality. Written on the Body, Art and Lies, Sexing the Cherry and The Passion continue to focus upon the body and the concept of desire in order to

foreground the complexity for one's own search for self, with an invitation to imagine what it would be, and partly in answer she declares that it is, "the accumulation of parts", constituting, a series of objects, texts and events that construct "myself". [39]

Significantly, as denoted at the very outset, the thematic concern of the research has been focused upon the aspect of the self, and thus the study has deduced that Winterson is concerned in terms of returning the lost meaning to the self. She is not restricted to what she has experienced or what she knows, and she lets herself loose outside of her own dimension which makes possible "a total escape from Self". [40] Through her literary art, Winterson opens up a new consciousness which examines the vulnerable and self-doubting intricacies of the self. The study has also concluded that always in her writing there is a constant subversion of the patriarchal binary regulation of sexuality that unveils and exposes the constructedness of a gendered conception of the self, and the restrictiveness of the concept of love within the compulsory heterosexual world. It has also established that, Winterson, through her characters, advocates, and alternative ways to understand the sexual, emotional, and intellectual self. Her characters endure pain and hardship in order to discover the self and explore their sexual identity even as she recognizes that there are characters who have an ambiguous sexual identity that struggle between incompleteness and wholeness. She deconstructs these narrative conventions to illustrate that storytelling need not be subordinated to the constraints of the patriarchal grand narratives. Her corpus demonstrates that it is possible to subvert the constructed binary oppositions between masculine and feminine through innovative and challenging ways of writing.

In conclusion, the study has inferred that Winterson's works advocate that the struggle for the "construction of the self" is more meaningful than the denial of the true self, the latter being a domain that has often been imposed upon by society and religious doctrine. Thus, she undermines the traditional notion of fantasy as mere escapism and affirms instead its revolutionary capacity to bring about the fulfillment of her lesbian heroine's innermost desires, and so provides a space for the definition of self. Winterson's fictions suggest revisions to certain normative assumption in both postmodern and lesbian writing. Her writings also challenge the convention of lesbian theory that lesbians and their point of view are excluded by the normative identity categories of modern culture. Her fiction instead installs a particular lesbian narrative space at the centre of the novels in terms of understanding of history, sexuality and the self.

NOTES

[1]M. Reynolds, “Interview with Jeanette Winterson”, J. Noakes and M. Reynolds eds., Jeanette Winterson: The Essential Guide, (London: Vintage, 2003) 11

[2]As elucidated Stuart Jeffries, “Jeanette Winterson: ‘I thought of suicide’”, The Guardian, 22 Feb. 2010: 4

[3]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 22-23

[4]Susana Onega, “Self, Text and World in British Historiographic Metafiction,” Anglistik: Mitteilungen des Verbandes Deutscher Anglisten 6.2 (1995): 93

[5]Naina Dey, Life & Letters ~ Fiction is stranger than fact, 7 June 2010 <www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option.com>

[6]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson 2 Aug 2008 <www.jeanettewinterson.com>

[7]Judith Roof, A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory. (New York: Columbia, 1991) 2-5

[8]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 10

[9]Susann Cockal, “Expression in a diffuse landscape: Contexts for Jeanette Winterson’s Lyricism”, Style, 22 Mar 2004: 170

[10]William Pritchard, ‘“Say my name and you say sex”: A trip into Prose-Poetry, with a General Contempt for Family - and for Men”, The New York Times 26 Mar. 1995: 14

[11]Tess Cosslett, “Intertextuality in Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit”, Helena Grice and Tim Woods eds., ‘I’m Telling You Stories: Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V, 1998) 15

[12]Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 24

[13]Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism, (London: Routledge, 1988) 57-73

[14]Laura Doan, The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 145

[15]Winterson, Sexing the Cherry, (New York: Grove Press, 1989) 84

[16]Ibid. 85

[17]Ibid. 85

[18]Ibid. 85

[19]Laura Doan, "Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Postmodern", Laura Doan ed., The Lesbian Postmodern, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 153

[20]Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (London: Routledge, 2006) 128

[21]Ibid. 115

[22]Ibid. 114

[23]Ibid. 114

[24]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 57

[25]Ibid. 138

[26]Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 79

[27]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 65

[28]Jeanette Winterson, speech, Manchester Metropolitan University, 22 Mar. 2006.

[29] Jeanette Winterson, Art Objects, (New York: Vintage, 1995) 137

[30]Ibid. 39

[31]Ibid. 15-16

[32]Jeanette Winterson, speech, Manchester Metropolitan University, 22 Mar. 2006.

[33]"Endless possibilities" Winterson's appendix essay to *Lighthousekeeping*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2004) 20

[34]Louise Tucker "From Innocence to Experience", Appendix Interview to *Lighthousekeeping*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2004) 5

[35]Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (London: Routledge, 2006) 128

[36]Jeanette Winterson, The PowerBook, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000) 222

[37]Jeanette Winterson, Art and Lies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 82

[38]Ibid. 83

[39]Ibid. 187

[40]As elucidated by Jeanette Winterson in Art Objects (1995) 188

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