TESIS DOCTORAL

Recurrent Structural and Thematic Traits in Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*: Time, Space and the Construction of Identity

María del Mar Asensio Arostegui

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RECURRENT STRUCTURAL AND THEMATIC TRAITS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *THE PASSION* AND *SEXING THE CHERRY*: TIME, SPACE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

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Abbreviations

All references to quotations from the works by Jeanette Winterson appear parenthetically in the text itself. For the sake of conciseness, the following abbreviations are used:

AL	*Art and Lies*
AO	*Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*
BB	*Boating for Beginners*
GMA	*Great Moments in Aviation*
GS	*Gut Symmetries*
O	*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*
OS	*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. The Script*
P	*The Passion*
Ps	"The Poetics of Sex"
Pb	*The.Powerbook*
SC	*Sexing the Cherry*
WOP	*The World and Other Places*
WB	*Written on the Body*

Next to each abbreviation the page number(s) in which the specific quotation may be found is also given. Full details about the specific editions of Winterson's books used in this work are provided in the Bibliography.

ONE

INTRODUCTION:
JEANETTE WINTERSON, THE WRITER IN CONTEXT

1. QUEERING AUTOBIOGRAPHY: THE LESBIAN *EN ABYME*

"There's no such thing as autobiography there's only art and lies" (*AL* 69)

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985) is Jeanette Winterson's first book of fiction: the coming out story of an adopted child named Jeanette who, by defending her (homo)sexuality, defies her zealous mother and the fundamentalist religious community of which she is an outstanding member. Author and fictional character share more than Christian names in a book that depicts familial, religious, and sexual experiences similar to those endured by Winterson herself. Not surprisingly, then, many readers *and* critics have taken *Oranges* as disguised autobiography[1]. In the preface to the Vintage edition of the book, Winterson poses herself the question: "Is Oranges an autobiographical novel?" (1991a: xiv). Far from throwing any light on the debate about the faithfulness of the contents of the book to her life, her playful response —"No not at all and yes of course" (1991a: xiv)— fuels a still more intemperate interest on her private world. Only a year later, the publication of Winterson's fourth novel, *Written on the Body* (1992), further contributed to the general tittle-tattle about the author's sexual mores and her lack of respect for the Establishment[2]. In an interview with Justine Picardie (1992), Winterson praises the ability readers have to follow her clues and impudently cross over every boundary between fiction and autobiography in her works, although she regrets the critics' inability to go beyond mere gossiping[3].

The autobiographical mode of fiction has traditionally privileged the male subject, his patriarchal point of view, and his monologic discourse. The category

1 This conception applies both to the novel and to the three-episode series adapted by Winterson for television and successfully broadcast by the BBC in January 1990. On 1 May 2001 BBC4 re-screened *Oranges are not the only fruit* (Kidron 1990) in full over one night as a tribute to actress Charlotte Coleman, who had died the same year.

2 For example, Michelle Field recalls how *Written on the Body* "was notorious for 'outing' the torrid affair Winterson had with her literary agent, Pat Kavanagh, who is the wife of Julian Barnes" (1995: 38).

3 These paradoxical assertions on the factuality of fiction are totally in keeping with the postmodernist ethos as theorised by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988).

"subject" has only been "naturally" applied to the representation of the masculine, a whole whose coherence derives "from the unity of the self" (Anderson 1997: 2). As second element of a binary opposition, the feminine is lack and the female is only made coherent through her otherness. Postmodernism problematises, however, this clear-cut distinction. Linda Hutcheon, for example, describes the postmodern subject 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. (1989: 39-40)

Hutcheon's definition goes against the humanist belief in a fixed, rational, unified, (a)historical subject. The postmodern subject is a socio-cultural construct, dependent on the ideologically-laden linguistic signs from which its meaning derives and which is deferred in an endless play of signifiers. Contradictory and constantly changing, multiple and unlimited, the postmodern self is in a process of continuous (re)definition since it depends on changing discourses of gender, sexuality, race, or religion. 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 positionality and performance.

Winterson is no exception. She insists on the fact that "none of my novels are autobiographical" (in Thomson 1992: 5) and also maintains that "there is as much of me and my life in every one of my books as there is in *Oranges*" (in Miller 1997: 5). This game of hide and seek, this performative act, points both to Winterson's undeniable gift for subversive self-publicity and, more importantly, to her attempt to question the status and function of (auto)biography in the textual construction of identity. As she explains:

> I didn't realise that if you invented yourself, everybody would think that the book was autobiographical. But now I'm thinking of telling everybody that I was brought up by two accountants in Weybridge […] I was inventing myself when I wrote Oranges. I was remaking myself. It was a conscious act, a creative act. (in Picardie 1992: 44)

Winterson's understanding of the self as linguistic, as that which escapes all forms of categorisation because it is always constructing itself, always in process, justifies her giving an equal status to both her life and her literary works. Winterson denies autobiography its right to represent the self as single and fixed. Instead, she chooses to adopt multiple literary *personae* which relate to one another dialogically. The

short story "The Poetics of Sex"(1993)[4] and the collection of essays *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1995) are key examples in this respect, as I intend to show in the following paragraphs.

"The Poetics of Sex" explores the multiple ways in which a writer's life and work may be confused. The love story of the narrator and a painter called Picasso is unusually presented as a combination of genres[5], which parody and eventually destabilise the form of sneaky interviews which Winterson tries to avoid and which were the cause of her retreat from public events in the early 1990s. Two unnamed voices[6] take turns in the text, asking questions and providing answers. However, no true dialogue or direct communication is established between them. Both speakers use the same code, English; but the communicative situation is unsuccessful because the speakers' interests do not coincide and because they approach one another from utterly different cultural perspectives which modify what would otherwise be the same reality. The interviewer asks intrusive, even rude, questions "from the perspective of the dominant culture" (Swanson 1997: 331) and insistently claims for factual responses and intimate details. The interviewee refuses to answer in those terms and offers instead a poetic account of a love affair in which the two partners happen to be women. Diana L. Swanson provides enough evidence as to the fact that the interviewee "ignores or completely redefines the questions posed at the beginning of each section of the story/essay in order to give the lie to the discrediting of lesbians and to represent the reality of lesbian existence" (1997: 332). Thus, while maintaining the intimacy and directness associated with the interview, "The Poetics of Sex" provides sufficient evidence to expose that interviews provide no more (and no less) factual information about the person interviewed than any other form of

4 Proof of the notoriety of "The Poetics of Sex" is the fact that it has been issued as equally representative of different trends in contemporary fiction. In the same year, it was selected for *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* (Reynolds 1993) and for Granta's publication *Best of Young British Novelists 2* (Buford 1993). More recently, it was reissued as part of Winterson's collection of short stories, *The World and Other Places*, published in 1998.

5 In a telling article on "The Poetics of Sex", Diana L. Swanson describes Winterson's story as a palimpsest of voices and genres which aims at rescuing words for lesbians through playfulness and which:

> Combine Monique Wittig, Emily Dickinson, Gertrude Stein, Marilyn Hacker, and the Song of Solomon and you get an idea of the passion, exuberant word play, literary inventiveness, and metaphoric intensity of this text as well as of the traditions upon which Winterson draws to launch her voice into a new literary space. Combine the short story, interview, fairy tale, and satirical essay and we might approach a definition of the genre of this text. 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. (1997: 325)

6 The lack of precise references to the name and identity of either interviewer or interviewee contributes to enhancing the universality of Winterson's project.

narrative does. The interview is a discursive practice which, like autobiography, may be easily rewritten in the guise of a more elaborate art form: romance.

"The Poetics of Sex" is built upon two apparently opposed structural movements. On the one hand, the structure of the interview is manifestly circular, since exactly the same question: "Why do you sleep with girls?" (*WOP* 31, 44), is used both at the beginning and the end of the story/essay. On the other, the romance story reflects the forward, although not necessarily linear, movement of narrative. Using separate discourses and structures, Winterson shows that intruding upon an author's personal life is an empty, circular task, which always sends the quester back to the beginning, insofar as no knowledge of the author should be available outside her fiction.

The narrator in "The Poetics of Sex" codifies her responses and presents them as a romance narrative[7] that the interviewer —intratextually— and the reader —extratextually— will have to decodify in their search for autobiographical details. The homodiegetic narrator and her lover, Picasso, are presented in the story not as fixed subjects but as "subjects-in-process" (Kristeva 1982a: 135-136) intent on the mutual (re)presentation of each other's identities. Painting and storytelling are used as two complementary forms of self/other representation. These particular art forms constitute the core of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), a novel of which "The Poetics of Sex" is clearly reminiscent[8], so much so that one of the female characters in Woolf's novel, the painter Lily Briscoe, only manages to understand herself when she completes the painting she has been engaged with from the beginning of the story. This moment of recognition coincides with the end of the novel, where the parallelism between storytelling and painting is overtly emphasised. Woolf's influence on Winterson's writings is undeniable and the echoes of *To the Lighthouse* in "The Poetics of Sex" contribute to underlining the similar viewpoints the two writers have with regard to the relationship between art and life and their shared knowledge of the active role that literature may perform in the (re)positioning and/or (re)construction of the identity of readers and authors alike.

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7 The literary scholar Kristin Ramsdell defines romance narrative as "a love story in which the central focus is on the development and satisfactory resolution of the love relationship between the two main characters, written in such a way as to provide the reader with some degree of vicarious emotional participation in the courtship process" (1999: 5).

8 This intertextual allusion is especially significant for our argument because, as Linda Anderson has noted, *To the Lighthouse* constitutes a salient document of what Woolf understood to be "the connection between identity and writing and the need to deconstruct realist forms in order to create a space for the yet to be written feminine subject" (1997: 13).

The writings of Virginia Woolf are not, however, the only acknowledged influence in Winterson's literary career. Romanticism and the aesthetics of modernism, with its bent for experimentation with language and narrative techniques, find expression not only in Winterson's fiction[9] but also in her most comprehensive attempt at criticism to date, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1995). Winterson's critical essays pay homage to those writers who saw autobiography not as the representation of one's life but as a different reality, a free space for the recognition of the self. As Winterson explains, autobiography is the site where questions about "identity, the nature of truth and the purpose of art" (*AO* 51) intersect. In "Testimony Against Gertrude Stein", Winterson lists *The Prelude* (Wordsworth 1799-1805), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Joyce 1916), *Orlando* (Woolf 1928) and *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Stein 1934) as some of the most significant precursors of her project of committed experimentation with language, narrative structures, and generic forms. Sharing the same disrespect towards the clichéd form of autobiography, Winterson argues, all those texts contribute in one way or other to the understanding of one of the recurrent issues in her fiction: the relationship between art and life and, by extension, between narrative and reference. Wordsworth's *Prelude* refuses to forge "actual life into a copy of itself" (*AO* 56) and creates, instead, a heightened reality of deep poetic emotions; Joyce's *Portrait* transforms life, clothed "in a thin veil of fiction" (*AO* 58), into art; Woolf's *Orlando* genders and reworks the conventions of biography to provide her readers with "a fiction masquerading as a memoir" (*AO* 53); and Stein's *Autobiography*, in "refusing to recognise the scriptural authority of actual life" (*AO* 60), is an example of a writer *becoming* fiction. Winterson places *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* on a par with *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and confesses that, "Like Stein, I prefer myself as a character in my own fiction" (*AO* 53).

Only on the basis of the problematisation of the boundaries between art and life in romantic poetry and modernist narrative may Winterson's paradoxical response "No not at all and yes of course" be fully understood. Winterson's fiction is truly autobiographical not because it guides the reader through the facts of her life, but rather because it is engaged "in a *search* for its own origins, tracking the subject through the process of writing itself" (Anderson 1997: 49; italics in the original). To this extent, Winterson's fiction offers a "*double* reading" which, as Nancy Miller

9 Especially *The Passion* (1987) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) which, as is analysed in the third and fourth chapters of this work, owe much to the poetry of T. S. Eliot and more precisely to his *Four Quartets* (1935-1943).

observes, "would privilege neither the autobiography nor the fiction, but take the two writings together in their status as text" (in Anderson 1997: 49).

Winterson, like many of the characters in her novels, is a born storyteller who disdains any clear-cut distinction between fact and fiction. She presents herself as an open text not only in her writings of fiction but also in her public performances, which have also contributed to the creation of her external image, a constructed self which may be traced in the different interviews she conceded a few women writers and/or journalists in the past decade[10]. Every single thing Winterson says about herself enlarges the mysterious, grotesque, and irreverent nature of the *persona* she is in the process of building. According to Michele Roberts, "Ultimately, the narrative of a writer's life, which Winterson is striving so assiduously to create, is an art of itself, as necessary for acceptance into the historical literary canon as is the writer's work" (1994: 22). As a consequence, although it is Jeanette Winterson, the flesh-and-blood author, we are listening to, the sum of stories we get actually refer to Jeanette.Winterson[11], the fictionalised character. In this respect, Alice Thomson has noted that Winterson's "conversation does not follow a pre-determined course. She marries history to myth, aphorism to poetry and fairy-tale to fact" (1992: 5). Justine Picardie has commented, in this same line, that "both in her novels and in conversation, Winterson takes pride in creating different versions of herself" (1992: 44). Winterson continuously hides behind a wealth of heterogeneous anecdotes, theatrical gestures, and fictionalised stories. She concedes that: "People make up so many things about me that I don't think they should have it all their own way. Two can play that game. Now I make up things when I talk to journalists" (in Field 1995: 38). Roberts, however, explains Winterson's attitude in less fanciful and much more propitious terms when she observes that:

> In seeking to illuminate her behaviour, it is perhaps more fruitful to examine her immense desire for literary greatness and its modernist influences. Total commitment to mandarin art, willed alienation from the everyday —these are the tenets of the highest modernist of all, T. S. Eliot. (1994: 22)

[10] The interviews to which I am referring are, chronologically, "The Prophet" (Gerrard 1989), "Face to Face" (Barr 1991), "The Body Politic" (Messud 1992), "Making Things Up" (Picardie 1992), "Passionate Apostle for the Lexicon of Love" (Thomson 1992), and "I Fear Insincerity" (Field 1995). "Why does my Jeanette do this to us?" (Levy 1994) offers a different perspective, that of Winterson's father.

[11] I am using here the spelling Winterson herself offers her readers in the cover of the last book she has published to date, *The.Powerbook* (2000), because I understand it to be a typographical device which signals Winterson's becoming a dominion in the abyssal world of the internet, a fact which allows for infinite possibilities of self-fictionalisation.

Winterson's fantasy has never elicited a lukewarm response from her audience. Rather on the contrary, she acknowledges that: "Some readers […] feel as violently affectionate as others feel violently angry" (in Field 1995: 38). Likewise, the different explanations suggested by some reviewers for Winterson's game of blurring boundaries between the real and the imagined in her life story spring *either* from an intense affection for an author they find charming and great *or* from a violent anger against her provocative arrogance. Thus, Claire Messud suggests that Winterson's tendency to make a fiction of herself is a clever attempt to keep her private life private, while feeding the curiosity of her readers with innumerable fables[12] (1992: 29). A second interpretation, wittily suggested by Nicci Gerrard, would see Winterson's stance as a "process of self-healing" (1989: 13), a way to come to terms with her difficult past, an attempt to free herself from the encumbrances of a damaging childhood. However, some critics observe that Winterson's fondness for self-invention and polemics are means of distracting the general public's attention from her work in order to hide some of the foibles of her narrative prose. The year 1994, with the publication of *Art & Lies*, was especially hard for Winterson, who saw how reviews insistently questioning the quality of her fiction were filling many more pages of critical newspapers and magazines than desirable. Peter Kempt described Winterson as "a talent more and more dispiritingly debased by self-worship" (1994: 71a). Julie Burchill criticised her "garish, artificial, bejewelled mechanical nightingale of a prose style, always straining for special effects, fancying itself stupid, literally" (1994: 26). Philip Hensher said: "in sheer pomposity, Winterson now rivals the fattest archdeacon imaginable" (1994: 29). Lawly openly accused Winterson of badly "suffer[ing] from a lack of a bit of constructive criticism" (in D. S. 1994: 18) and of being able to sacrifice everybody for the sake of her own success. And Geoffrey Levy expressed his conviction that Winterson's game of blurring lines is but a dramatic *tour de force* aimed at enhancing the self-acclaimed quality and uniqueness of her talent:

> artistic licence certainly enabled her to proclaim not only her brilliance but also the infinitely more dramatic story of how the power of her genius enabled her to burst out of the intellectual prison of her home —a prison, she would certainly like us to believe, that might have destroyed a lesser talent. (1994: 32)

[12] This hypothesis has been fostered by Winterson herself, who affirms that: "The author's work is a public resource […] but the author isn't […]. Very often, in criticism the author and the author's work are muddled up. That's silly. It's the wrong kind of inference of art from life. It just doesn't help" (in Messud 1992: 29).

Leaving equally aside feelings of fondness and/or displeasure, Winterson's creative act mixes the playfulness of postmodernist storytelling (which uses metafictional techniques in order to stress the self-reflexive quality of fiction) with the seriousness of the essentialist/anti-essentialist diatribe, which feminist theory and practice are still engaged in. According to Linda Hutcheon:

> Textually self-conscious metafiction today is a most didactic form. As such, it can teach us more about both the ontological status of fiction (all fiction) and also the complex nature of reading (all reading). Its central paradox for readers is that, while being made aware of the linguistic and fictive nature of what is being read, and thereby distanced from any unself-conscious identification on the level of character or plot, readers of metafiction are at the same time made mindful of their active role in reading, in participating, in making the text mean. They are distanced, yet involved, co-producers of the novel. (1984: xi-xii)

Winterson's deliberate merging of the factual and the fictional in her life story and her fiction is a self-conscious wink which manages to lure readers —either through teasing or complicity— into an active participation not only in the literary experience she offers in her novels but also in the political revision they incorporate. By creating a fiction and then exposing it, "the two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'" (Waugh 1984: 6).

Winterson's life story, like her works of fiction, is imbued with current feminist theories of the subject. Hence the historico-cultural and generic construction of the self is a recurrent theme in Winterson's life and works and, as she says, it is in the fiction that she is to be found. Besides, since Winterson writes the self as a linguistic sign, the paradoxical presentation and overt exposure of its continuous construction gives way to a simultaneous process of deconstruction. Diane Elam has theorised ways in which feminism and deconstruction may be brought together in spite of the fact that, as she reckons: "Initially the two seem to have little in common. Feminism seems to be a political project, whereas deconstruction appears more philosophical or literary. By this account, their mutual interests do not converge" (1994: 1). However, Elam does not see the interaction between feminism and deconstruction in terms of convergence. She argues instead that they:

> are beside one another in that they share a parallel *divergence* from (or dislocation of) politics and philosophy. On the one hand, feminism shifts the ground of the political, interrogating the opposition between the public and private spheres. On the other hand, deconstruction displaces our understanding of how theory relates to practice by rethinking the opposition of philosophical reflection to political action […] feminism necessarily upsets the way we think about politics because its activist political movement is inseparable from a critique of the history of representation […]. Deconstruction upsets the way we think about philosophy because its analysis of the philosophical tradition is inseparable

> from an attention to the performative effects of the discourse of analysis itself. (1994: 1-2; italics in the original)

The postmodern condition denies the existence of either epistemological or ontological certainties which would settle the foundations for knowing what women are and what they can do, whence the importance that Elam assigns to the *mise en abyme*[13] as a means to describe and represent the Protean condition of "women" and as a way to determine the extent of their political actions:

> The *mise en abyme* thus opens a spiral of infinite regression in representation. Representation can never come to an end, since greater accuracy and detail only allows us to see even more Quaker Oats boxes. This is rather odd, since we are accustomed to think of accuracy and detail as helping us to grasp an image fully, rather than forcing us to recognize the impossibility of grasping it.
>
> To think of feminism in these terms would be to suggest that each new attempt to determine women does not put an end to feminist questioning but only makes us more aware of the infinite possibilities of women. That is to say, women may be represented, but the attempt to represent them exhaustively only makes us more aware of the failure of such attempts. Hence the infinite regression that I specifically call the "*ms. en abyme*." (27-28; italics in the original)

The authority of representation that constrains women is questioned in the use of the *mise en abyme* because "the work of the *abyme* is a sort of filling up the image with more and more definitions and representations of itself. The avalanche of determinations seems to fill up the abyss" (30; italics in the original). However, as Elam further observes,

> the abyssal operation is infinite. The very filling up leaves one "full of abyss." The series of images in the *mise en abyme* is without end; each additional image changes all the others in the series without ever completely filling up the abyss, which gets deeper with each additional determination. (30; italics in the original)

Through the deconstructivist philosophy that underlies the *mise*/*ms. en abyme*, Elam questions the phenomenology of the subject/object relationship which —together with related binary categories such as self/other, public/private, or man/woman— has often been at the core of feminist debates.

Winterson's fiction adds up to the representation of the uncertain condition of "women", but she shows a special interest in deconstructing binary oppositions[14] as a

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[13] In 1893, André Gide first proposed the use of a heraldic term to refer to a narrative technique which he described as follows:

> J'aime assez qu'en une œuvre d'art on retrouve ainsi transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette œuvre. Rien ne l'éclaire mieux et n'établit plus sûrement toutes les proportions de l'ensemble [...]. Aucun de ces exemples n'est absolument juste. Ce qui le serait beaucoup plus [...] c'est la comparaison avec ce procédé du blason qui consiste, dans le premier, à en mettre un second 'en abyme'. (in Dällenbach 1977: 15)

[14] The blurring of boundaries between male and female is one of the functions of characterisation in *The Passion*, as I explain in the third chapter of this work. For a simplified version of this analysis, see Asensio (1996).

necessary precondition to present sex/gender differ(e(a)nce in terms of fluidity[15]. Instead of either/or categorisations, Winterson's fiction makes "other sexes" possible, continuing the task initiated by Virginia Woolf. According to Andrea L. Harris,

> Woolf's notion of "other sexes" is simply remarkable: in Western culture, our very notions of love, reproduction, and even humanness are firmly grounded in the "fact" that there are two sexes, the male and the female. To casually suggest, as Woolf does, that there may be "other sexes" out there strikes me as a subversive and irresistible challenge. I borrow Woolf's phrase "other sexes" in order to point to the ways in which certain texts by women pose a distinct threat to the prevailing concept of sexual difference. For the notions of both sex and gender are binary: to speak of a "third sex", as Barnes does, or of "other sexes", as Woolf does, is already to begin the work of dismantling the system in which both sex (conceived as anatomical or biological) and gender (conceived as social or cultural) are made to fit into two discrete and narrow categories. (2000: ix-x)

Winterson locates herself in this open space since, on the one hand, the lesbian is to be found somewhere near the boundary between the masculine and the feminine, and, on the other, it cannot be described with a language that still maintains the dominant concept of sexual difference in terms of binary oppositions[16]. Winterson is aware that in order to express her concerns with the definition and political activity of lesbians, this linguistic hindrance needs to be overcome by resorting to other narrative techniques such as the *mise en abyme* and its spiral of infinite regression, which recur, as we will see, both in Winterson's life story and in her fiction[17].

Insofar as Winterson's public image rests on a deconstructive process which is based on self-reflexivity and repetition and having established sufficient parallelisms between the kind of infinite regression that Diane Elam calls *ms. en abyme* and Winterson's process of self-construction, it does not seem too far-fetched now to refer to the latter as the "lesbian *en abyme*". Winterson fictionalises herself and provides her interviewers with a surplus of contradictory definitions and (re)presentations of what is ultimately depicted as her textual self, a free space, open to interpretation and recreation, which combines past and present relations, that is to

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15 In *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson uses characterisation, narration, and the intimate relationship between temporal and spatial indicators to enhance the shifting sexual and generic qualities of most of the characters that people the novel and that contribute, to a large extent, to its production.

16 In this respect Winterson's position is clearly influenced by the writings of Monique Wittig. In her article, "One Is Not Born a Woman", Wittig affirms "that a new personal and subjective definition for all humankind can only be found beyond the categories of sex (woman and man) and that the advent of individual subjects demands first destroying the categories of sex, ending the use of them, and rejecting all sciences which still use these categories as their fundamentals (practically all social sciences)" (1992: 19-20).

17 The *mise en abyme* and the spiral are repeated spatio-temporal images and structural patterns in both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, as is explained in the third and fourth chapters of this work.

say, actual experiences with (re)drawn and (re)charged emotions, as a means of re-ordering her own identity. Winterson drags her audiences to a vertiginous abyss of stories, a black hole of discursive signs, in which any notion of identity, understood in absolute terms, is forever lost in favour of a relational selfdom which is to be discovered in the differential alliance of self and other.

It is precisely at this point, just before providing a new re-telling of Winterson's life story, that a brief reference to the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue seems more than pertinent, since it is my contention that both Winterson's process of self-fictionalisation and her portrayal of characters in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* may be best understood when analysed relationally or dialogically. According to Michael Holquist, one of the greatest *connoisseurs* of Bakhtin's *œuvre*, it is the development and constant theorisation of the concept of dialogue that gives coherence to Bakhtin's massive and heterogeneous theoretico-critical production. In his book *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, Holquist observes that "dialogism is able to make claims in many different areas because it is basically a theory of knowledge, an architectonics of perception" (1990: 35). At the basis of perception lie the categories of time and space, which in their turn are

> shaped by the even more fundamental set of self and other. We perceive the world through the time/space of the self and through the time/space of the other. The difference between the two is a relation of otherness that can be gauged by differing positions of outsidedness that are enacted as varying degrees of transgredience. (Holquist 1990: 35)

One of the recurrent themes in Winterson's fiction is precisely that of questioning any clear limit between self and other. As Susana Onega has argued, Winterson defines the self within a psychoanalytic frame of reference, based on Freudian and, especially, Lacanian theory, which women writers have been using when confronted with their position of "otherness" with respect to male writers (1994). Adopting the position of other in the representation of the self, Winterson lays special emphasis on the relational aspects of the set self/other, instead of considering them as the two sides of a binary opposition. The two character-narrators in *The Passion*, one of them a surrogate author, construct themselves in their stories. Despite their differences, Henri and Villanelle are never presented as opposed figures; they relate, explain, and complement one another by indistinctly occupying the positions of self and other. Like Winterson herself, these characters offer themselves as stories, as codified textual signs which have to be decodified. Holquist explains in this respect that:

> My "I-for-itself" lacks such a consummated biography: because the self's own time is constantly open, it resists such framing limits. Within my own consciousness my "I" has no

> beginning and no end. The only way I know of my birth is through accounts I have of it from others; and I shall never know my death, because my "self" will be alive only so long as I have consciousness —what is called "my" death will not be known by me, but once again only by others. In order to remain a constantly potential site of being, my self must be able to conduct its work as sheer capability, a flux of sheer becoming. If this energy is to be given specific contours, it must be shaped not only in values, but in story. Stories are the means by which values are made coherent in particular situations. And this narrativity, this possibility of conceiving my beginning and end as a whole life, is always enacted in the time/space of the other. (1990: 37)

The theory of the self as text lurks beneath Winterson's process of self-fabulation as well as beneath my own attempt at (re)presenting her in relation to her fiction. Thus, the subsequent narrative of Winterson's life and works could never purport to be a conventional biographical survey full of material data and intimate details. Nothing would do least justice to Winterson's project than to burden the lightness of her masquerade with the dead weight of the factual. As one of Winterson's characters says:

> The search for truth is tainted with willing falsehoods. The biographer, hand on heart, violates the past. The biographer, grave robber and body snatcher, trading in sensational dust, while the living spirit slips away. The biographer, inventory of pots and pans, dates and places, auction house and charnel house in one room. (*AL* 140)

I am no body snatcher and, since I agree with Winterson that any attempt at biography is a (re)writing —a new turn of the fictional screw—, I propose to present both her personal story and her literary production as discursive texts which, I assume, benefit one another in what I call a symbiotic relationship. Only by tracing Winterson's narrative footsteps will it be possible to track her frantic voyage into the unknown region of the self, an adventure that requires a truly active participation on the part of the reader. What follows is a representation of my personal reading adventure and it intends to be in accordance with the philosophy that underlies the expression "lesbian *en abyme*" as defined above. Consequently, it presents Winterson not as a complete, graspable object of analysis but as a subject(object)-in-process, a self forever engaged in a quest for "that which cannot be found" (*WOP* 49) because each new finding is only partial, another position in a self-reflexive *abyme* that gains depth and perspective with each new contribution.

Finally, I deem necessary to explain that I have decided to frame each of the episodes of the subsequent narrative of Winterson's life with the word "chapter" in order to enhance both the fictionality of my presentation and that of Winterson's process of self-construction through storytelling. This fiction-enhancing technique was suggested to me by the opening sequence of *Manhattan* (1979), a film by the American director Woody Allen. In spite of their working with different media,

Winterson's position towards the autobiographical reminds me of Allen's. Like Winterson, Allen loves becoming a fictional character in his films and, in so doing, he also pushes the limits of the autobiographical a step further. As Graham McCann has pointed out in his book *Woody Allen. New Yorker*, *Manhattan* is a case in point in this respect since "with this movie Allen, America's most respected contemporary humorist, had made clear what had often been left implicit in his previous work: his identification with New York" (1991: 1). McCann uses Allen's self-representation and self-fictionalisation in this film as a means to justify the subtitle of his book, New Yorker, just as some biographical accounts of Winterson's childhood stem from her self-representation in her novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. In both cases, fiction is used as evidence for biography. As McCann explains:

> Saul Bellow has remarked how tempting it is to see New York as a microcosm of America, compressing its ethnic, religious, sexual, and political divisions into a single city. Allen arrived at a similar conclusion in *Manhattan*, describing New York as "a metaphor" for decaying values, a lost innocence, and a breathtaking arena for a nation's conflicting hopes and dreams. As Allen identifies so strongly with the city, these hopes and dreams are, in part, his own; his reading of New York is inescapably connected to his understanding of himself. (13-14)

The opening of the film contributes to a great extent to this blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction because the panoramic presentation of the city of New York is accompanied, on the one hand, by a voice-over narrator which the spectator immediately identifies with Allen's own voice. Later it is discovered that the Allen character is the main character in the story together with the city itself. On the other hand, this presentation of the city is accompanied by George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue", which points both to Allen's fascination with jazz and to his Jewishness. It was, then, the overtly self-conscious opening of Allen's *Manhattan*, in which the voice-over narrator repeats the phrase, "chapter I", up to five consecutive times as he stubbornly fights to find the right words and the adequate tone with which to begin his own story and that of his city, that suggested to me the possibility of using the word "chapter" as a fiction-enhancing device for my presentation of Winterson's life, which I engage with in the following pages.

Chapter One: Untraceable Origins, Invented Childhood[18]

Jeanette Winterson is a tiny woman[19] with "the wry face of a leprechaun" (Messud 1992: 29), a hauntingly mellow voice that carries the listener miles away into her private world, a serene smile, and profound questioning eyes that express "a melancholy knowledge of what it is to be hurt and how deep and enduring that hurt can be" (Gorra 1990: 24).

Her story begins in 1959, somewhere in the North of England. She does not know either her biological father or her mother, and this personal anonymity seems to have endowed her with a special gift for fabulation. One of her selves —the resented one— confesses publicly that she has never had any desire to trace her biological parents and that "since I'd be quite easy to find, I assume they don't want to trace me —which I am glad about" (in Picardie 1992: 46). This refusal to know brings to an end the story of Winterson's origins, giving way instead to the "compensatory" fabulation of her emotional lack. The (re)creation of her childhood in Accrington, a small working-class town in Lancashire, with her adopted parents, the Wintersons, is presented from a multiplicity of voices and perspectives with slight modifications and added details.

The first stage in the creation of Winterson's public *persona* corresponds with the (re)construction of her childhood. Winterson is adopted as a six-week-old baby and is brought up by an unhappy Pentecostal couple, who had apparently longed for a boy (Levy 1994: 32). The portrait of her adopted family is grotesquely hoarse. Her mother is described as a resolute, domineering woman who refuses to have sexual intercourse with her husband —and consequently to have children of her own— because she is due to the Lord[20]. Mrs Winterson exerts a very strong and somewhat pernicious influence on her daughter, whom she sees as an extension of

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18 In order to insist on the fact that my narrative of Winterson's life and works is a textual construct, the narrative is fragmented into four arbitrary parts which are introduced by the same number of headings in which the word "chapter" is intentionally repeated to remind the reader that this is no factual biography but a fiction which, in my opinion, further contributes to positing the writer *en abyme*.

19 I met Winterson, after some prior failed attempts (see Appendix I), in April 1999 in the course of the 14th Oxford conference on the teaching of English literature. I had made all sorts of efforts to be there because I knew that Winterson had been invited to read some stories from her latest publication, *The World and Other Places* (1998). This conference proved an occasion to learn more about the teaching of literature, to present a paper on *The Passion* and, very especially, to meet Winterson at last. Appendix II collects my impressions about her as well as the brief but intense conversation we maintained in a quiet, cosy room in Corpus Christi College.

20 Geoffrey Levy offers "evidence" of the fact that Winterson's adoption was considered by her step-parents only after twelve years of marriage, once they had accepted that they were unable to conceive (1994: 32).

herself and an heir to the holy mission of spreading the Word of the Lord and saving souls. She denies her step-daughter access to any work of fiction —with the exception of a conveniently rewritten version of *Jane Eyre*— but she feeds her with sermons and readings from the Bible at all hours. Mr Winterson's depiction is not much more favourable. He is presented as a weak, passive man, whose sole self-realisation is work and who has no will of his own but depends completely on her wife's volition. He is never assigned the role of *pater familias*, in charge of the well-being of both wife and daughter. He is just a shadow of the massive mother. In this household, marriage is a pantomime, the family a site where atrocities may be safely committed, and religion a form of martyrdom.

Winterson's story runs parallel to and criss-crosses with the account of roughly the same period of time provided by another fictional self, significantly called Jeanette, in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985). The absence of a clear distance between these two fables, Winterson's story and Jeanette's life account, and the complementary relation of their narrative voices create a self-reflexive effect whose magnitude is only imagined when put in relation to other narrative voices which are found in Winterson's fiction. Jeanette, the female homodiegetic narrator in *Oranges*, is the first but not the only foundling Winterson portrays. In *Art & Lies*, a maid's baby, conceived as a result of sexual harassment and born because of the refusal of a Catholic doctor to practice an abortion, is abandoned "in a tiny heap in the big hall" (*AL* 205). Jordan, the male character-narrator in *Sexing the Cherry*, is found by her surrogate mother, the Dog-Woman, "in the slime of the river […] wrapped up in a rotting sack such as kittens are drowned in" (*SC* 10). Although Henri, the male-narrator in *The Passion*, is not an orphan, he soon abandons the family household to join in Winterson's persistent acclamation of "freedom" from all family ties. In *The Passion* it is Henri's mother that has lost all contact with her family as a result of her "obstinate" inclination to lead a consecrated life. Unlike his mother, Henri has no mixed feelings when he remarks that:

> a shadow crossed her eyes when she thought I would never see them, but I liked my anonymity. Everyone else in the village had strings of relations to pick fights with and know about. *I made up stories about mine. They were whatever I wanted them to be depending on my mood*. (*P* 11; italics added)

It is, however, the female narrator in *The.Powerbook* (2000) who presents the most acrimonious depiction to be found in any of Winterson's stories of what it means to be an adopted child in a hostile environment:

> I think it's fair to say that my parents were not loved as children, that they did not love each other and that they did not love me. There was possession, fear, sentimentality, desire, but not love. This has left me with certain absences and certain intensities.
>
> Absent is any real sense of family, of bonding, of belonging. Intensified is a longing for love as it really is —as freedom, abundance, generosity, passion. (*Pb* 187)

This is perhaps the closest we may get to Winterson's feelings for and remembrances of parental love.

Chapter Two: Revealing Lies

A new stage in Winterson's life story begins with her first encounter with romantic love. This is a moment of revelations: Jeanette discovers her sexual preferences almost at the same time as she finds out that she is an adopted child. At the age of sixteen, Winterson starts a lesbian relationship whose sustaining values she trusts to be freedom, abundance, generosity, and passion. The feelings that raise from her intense relationship engage her in a process of self-knowledge. However, she is not artful enough to keep this affair in private[21]. Winterson's mother discovers her daughter's "unnatural passion" and denounces her publicly. From that moment on, Jeanette's is a story of betrayal. She is betrayed by her lover, who shows no spirit of sacrifice to fight for their love and proves to her that what Jeanette had thought to be true love was nothing but a sustained lie:

> "Jeanette," said Melanie, "I think you've got a temperature."
>
> She was sitting beside me, drinking a cup of tea. She looked tired and crumpled like a balloon full of old air. I touched her cheek but she winced and pulled away.
>
> "What did they do to you?" I asked.
>
> "Nothing, I repented, and they told me I should try and go away for a week. We can't see each other, it's wrong." (*O* 109)

Together with this emotional loss, Jeanette also suffers betrayal from the Church[22] on account of her being a woman-preacher:

> By Sunday the pastor had word back from the council. The real problem, it seemed, was going against the teachings of St Paul, and allowing women power in the church. Our branch of the church had never thought about it, we'd always had strong women, and the women organized everything. Some of us could preach, and quite plainly, in my case, the church was full because of it. There was uproar, then a curious thing happened. My mother stood up and said she believed this was right: that women had specific circumstances for

21 The narrator's voice in *Art & Lies* cunningly approaches this issue by providing ironically related pieces of warning from famous historical figures: "'Know thyself,' said Socrates. 'Know thyself,' said Sappho, 'and make sure that the Church never finds out'" (*AL* 54).

22 In *Oranges*, emotional and religious loss may, however, be read in positive terms since they contribute to unmasking the fatuous world in which Jeanette lives —what Roz Kaveney names "a fool's paradise, but one whose odd passionateness almost makes up for its cultural and emotional thinness" (1985: 326). Such an exposure constitutes the first stage in Jeanette's process towards self-cognition.

> their ministry, the Sunday School was one, the Sisterhood another, but the message belonged to the men. Until this moment my life had still made some kind of sense. Now it was making no sense at all. My mother droned about the importance of missionary work for a woman, that I was clearly such a woman, but had spurned my call in order to wield power on the home front, where it was inappropriate. She ended by saying that having taken on a man's world in other ways I had flouted God's law and tried to do it sexually. (*O* 131)

Most importantly, Jeanette is doubly betrayed by her mother, who apart from hiding from her the fact of her adoption, leads the crusade to refuse her daughter any further participation in church: "My mother wanted me to move out, and she had the backing of the pastor, and most of the congregation, or so she said. I made her ill, brought the house ill, brought evil into the church" (*O* 125).

Deprived of all forms of love and abandoned for the second time, Winterson initiates a furious escape from social mediocrity, religious fundamentalism, and sexual false pretences, which is depicted by Jeanette in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the book, and by Jess in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the television series. As Winterson explains to Helen Barr:

> They both look at the way the Church is offered up as a sacrament of love when really it is an exercise in power. They look at the hypocrisy of family life and they suggest very strongly that heterosexuality is not the only way to live and indeed, might not always be the best way to live. (1991: 30)

Religious, familiar, and sexual betrayal find a salient place in Winterson's later novels. In *Art & Lies*, Handel, one of the three voices in the book, has given up priesthood for plastic surgery, a decision he explains as follows:

> I wanted to be a priest and not a traffic warden. I wanted to open the way to spiritual insights, not dole out penalties for every single offence. That is why I left the Church, not the teachings of Christ but the dogmas of Man, and when I turn to the Church now, I know, God forgive me, that it is because I am too weak to turn to myself. (*AL* 186)

Handel's words are reminiscent of Jeanette's in *Oranges* and of Winterson's as quoted in Barr (1991: 30). Like Jeanette (and) Winterson, Handel elaborates on the criticism of the Church from the inside. The Church is described as an established institution which is incapable of providing either spiritual or material solace any longer because it only cares for those impositions that will grant its socio-political status:

> The Pope is often an embarrassment. Each Pope nurses his own foibles and follies, pet truths and pet hates, and all must be accommodated within the seamless seemingly unchanging whole of Catholic Truth. Often the Popes contradict one another, and even more often, they contradict the great masters they reanimate to support their own certainties. The theologians take it as a joke. They are interested in the power of the Church and her authority. Power, authority and revenues, are what they are there to protect. They can dye black white.

They do. (*AL* 190)

Religion and the family form a well knitted unity in Winterson's fiction. Her novels are full of women —almost all of them mothers— with zealously strong religious feelings which they try to inculcate their children. In fact, they are used as a means to criticise all forms of dogmatism in the Church through their humorously exaggerated portrayal. Jeanette's mother in *Oranges* is an outstanding, utterly grotesque example. Mrs Munde, Gloria's mother in *Boating for Beginners* (1985), is a lesser version of the same type[23]. She also forces her daughter Gloria to follow her steps and to work for Noah, who, in the book, has an equally grotesque relationship with Yahweh, whom he has invented quite by chance, as one of the female protagonists of the story, Desi, finds out after reading Noah's manuscript: "She couldn't believe it. Noah had made the Unpronounceable by accident out of a piece of gâteau and a giant electric toaster" (*BB* 85). In *The Passion*, Georgette, Henri's mother, has a religious vocation that is thwarted by her parents, firstly, and by marriage, eventually; she, nevertheless, trusts the education of her son to the village priest, but the latter proves extremely unorthodox in religious matters. The Dog-Woman, Jordan's surrogate mother in *Sexing the Cherry*, is, literally, an Old Testament woman, who takes to the letter the formula "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" against her enemies, the Puritans, and therein calls attention to the danger of taking religious decrees literally.

In these matriarchal worlds, women are active and strong and, in spite of the fact that they are often deprived of a name and a satisfactory (hetero)sexual life, they have, and exercise, power over weak, unambitious men. In *Boating for Beginners*, Gloria's father is dead and it is her mother who is in charge of her education. In *The Passion*, Villanelle's father disappears in a most bizarre manner, leaving all responsibilities to her wife; as to Claude, Henri's father, he is never presented as a

23 Winterson's literary production is full of intratextual echoes which add up to the idea that the seven books of fiction which she has published to date complete a literary cycle which parallels the course of her life. In this respect Mrs Munde, Gloria's mother in *Boating for Beginners*, seems to be Winterson's archetypal mother, the character in whom all the salient features that are attributed to her female characters of the eighties conflate. Apart from the religious zeal she shares with Jeanette's mother in *Oranges*, Mrs Munde is described as a woman who "had never heard of mixed feelings. There were friends and there were enemies" (*BB* 54). Exactly the same words are used by Jeanette when she is about to portray her mother: "She had never heard of mixed feelings. There were friends and there were enemies" (*O* 3). Like Villanelle in *The Passion*, Mrs Munde also loses her heart (*BB* 15). But above all, Mrs Munde is a precursor of the Dog-Woman in *Sexing the Cherry*: she is presented as a "primal force" by the heterodiegetic narrator (*BB* 63) and Gloria herself "had seen her in cartoon terms: larger than life, which she probably was, and entirely fixed in her ideas" (*BB* 61), a description that would apply equally well to the Dog-Woman.

model of masculinity for his son. When Henri is about to leave the village to become a soldier and fight for his country, he comments: "Mother didn't cry. It was Claude who cried" (*P* 12). In *Sexing the Cherry*, Jordan is brought up by the Dog-Woman, an immense, Rabelaisian being, who would have liked to be a mother but, as she regrets, "you have to have a man for that and there's no man who's a match for me" (*SC* 11). Whatever the cause, whether biological or adoptive, mothers and their pretty burdensome alliance with their progeny become central and coercive in the family, whereas fathers always remain marginal and/or dispensable[24].

Winterson describes herself as a courageous woman who is aware of the fact that it was her strict religious education that has given her the courage to redeem herself and begin again away from her "roots" in Accrington. She states that:

> My parents had always said two things: one, that they weren't my parents, so I was cut free from a sense of family that most children usually need and find comforting; two, that I belonged to God and had been chosen by God, and because God was empowering me, I could do anything. I had a lot of strength from that. (in Messud 1992: 29)

Her public masque is a sign of her strength and ability to always take a new chance and move forward, no matter the obstacles.

Chapter Three: Regained Freedom

Having left the past behind and yearning for a new beginning, in the late 1970s Winterson undertakes a wide range of equally astonishing jobs: as an assistant in a funeral parlour making up corpses, driving a van and selling ice-cream, or as a domestic in an asylum. Eventually, she decides to leave Accrington and moves to Oxford, where she studies English from 1978 to 1981. Although Winterson makes some friends there, she refuses serious emotional engagement either with the place or with the people and begins to develop a taste for seclusion, partly because, as she explains: "People seemed very young, much younger than they were, because they were so helpless and inadequate" (in Picardie 1992: 46). She seems to have had enough chances to get to know them well because, to support herself, Winterson ran the College bar for three years: "I learnt a lot about cocktails, and slightly less about English literature," she banters with Justine Picardie (1992: 46). At university, Winterson proves a talented student, who does not get any grant "because her parents did not fill in the relevant forms" (Picardie 1992: 46).

[24] Husbands and male lovers prove equally inadequate and/or wanting in Winterson's novels, although the issue of lesbianism is hardly ever explicitly central —with the exception, perhaps, of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit.* The truth is that either through lesbianism or through bisexuality, heterosexuality is systematically challenged and exposed in Winterson's fiction.

St Catherine's College becomes her new home, the place which provides her with "a room of her own". For three years she reads avidly. Literature draws for her a rear window on to her self and the world and she discovers the existence of other worlds where conventional rules, "gravity", may be suspended. In St Catherine Winterson starts to recognise the factuality of fiction.

Chapter Four: Literary Recognition (I)

After graduating, Winterson leaves Oxford and goes to London where she tries to get a job in advertising but, apparently "writing the words for a symphony of Schweppes floored her" (Gerrard 1989: 13). She works at the Roundhouse Theatre where she writes the programmes, opens the curtains and "ferries the actors about". After some time the theatre closes down and Winterson applies for an editorial job with the then-new feminist publishing house, Pandora. She does not get the job but meets Phillipa Brewster, editor at Pandora at the time and the woman who has been something of a talisman in Winterson's literary career as well as one of her closest friends. After listening to Winterson's mixture of apocrypha and true stories, Brewster shows a keen interest in what is still the project of a book. "If you can write it as you just told it," Brewster says, "I'll publish it" (in Messud 1992: 29). *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) is thus completed in two months and Pandora immediately accepts it for publication. The book achieves what Michele Roberts refers to as "an almost immediate literary apotheosis" (1994: 22). *Oranges* is awarded the 1985 Whitbread Award for First Novel and Winterson enters the London literary scene as a promising young talent.

Apart from (re)writing Winterson's life story, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* also revises one of the most representative literary models of hero development, the *Bildungsroman*. Whereas the *Bildungsroman* rests on the necessary separation from and rejection of the mother, as part of the Oedipal phase, if the hero is to succeed in his process of maturation, *Oranges* tells the story of Jeanette's quest for subjectivity and (homo)sexuality but rejects the traditional appropriation of the theory of the subject by the masculine and emphasises instead mother-daughter bonding as a counter-narrative that highlights female specificity and gender difference. Winterson wraps the life of her fictional Jeanette in myth —as is shown by the frequent references to Perceval and the Holy Grail—, exposes the conventionality of romantic love as sustained and transmitted by patriarchy in fairy tales, and transforms her heroine into a modern prophet by parodying Biblical

narratives and choosing Ruth as a role model for both her heroine and all women and/or lesbians[25].

Oranges is immediately followed by *Boating for Beginners* (1985), Winterson's second novel, which she admits to have written for money. Probably because this is a book Winterson "regrets" having written, many reviewers and critics patronisingly refer to it as an early work, in spite of the fact that it was written three months after the publication of the successful *Oranges*. Fairly recently, Winterson has explained that *Boating* "was never intended as a second novel" (www.jeanettewinterson.com/pages/books/boating_for_beginners.htm). In a letter I received in 1993, Margaret Reynolds names *Boating for Beginners* "a comic book" and at the same time denies it the privilege of being "part of Jeanette Winterson's experiment" (Appendix I). Winterson abounds in this idea when she describes *Boating* as "a comic book with pictures" and explains that:

> The reason I've been quiet about this book is not because I don't like it —I do— but because I was fed up with people (newspapers) getting the facts wrong, or rather never bothering to check them. […] It's a pity when something fun gets used as a rod to beat you with, but there are always people who will use whatever is to hand to prove their thesis. I don't know what that might be but I do know that this book was written for money in 6 weeks. Nothing wrong with that. I never write my real books for money, but I have no problem writing anything else with the bung in mind. (www.jeanettewinterson.com/pages/books/boating_for_beginners.htm)

While it is true that *Boating* lacks the literary accomplishment of *Oranges*, David Lodge has described it as "an extremely funny travesty of the Book of Genesis, which transfers the story of Noah to our own commercialized and media-ridden times" (1988: 25). Lodge even admits that "although it won no prizes and has not been published in America it gave me more simple pleasure than the other two [*Oranges* and *The Passion*], which did, and have" (25). Besides, *Boating* continues with the exploration of some of the key issues that keep on reappearing in Winterson's literary production, her so-called "fiction experiment". *Boating* tells the story of a female adolescent, Gloria, who, like Jeanette in *Oranges*, struggles to find her identity in a world of distorted fictions that pass for unquestionable facts. In the course of her individual and mental awakening, Gloria "mocks fundamentalists, takes off romantic novels, slips in sly asides about literature and criticism, and pokes fun at numerous phenomena of modern life such as fashion jargon […], the food business and publishing" (Fisher 1985: 1228). Although Winterson uses a heterodiegetic narrator, the story has many issues in common with *Oranges* since it is, above all, a demystification of religion, romance, heterosexuality, and the family.

[25] For a detailed analysis of this issue see Asensio (2001).

Gloria, together with the reader, learn to distrust all these long established truths and to (re)assess the neglected liberating potential of storytelling.

"Stories were all we had," says Henri, the male protagonist of *The Passion* (1987), a story about identities, love, and desire, which together with *Sexing the Cherry* constitute two examples of "historiographic metafiction" as theorised by Linda Hutcheon (1988). In these two books, Winterson problematises the nature of time, narrative discourse and history, a concern that already occupies a central position in *Oranges* and to which the "Deuteronomy" chapter is entirely devoted: "History should be a hammock for swinging and a game for playing, the way cats play. Claw it, chew it, rearrange it" (*O* 91). Presented as discourse, history becomes subjective, limited, biased, and open to revision and (re)contextualisation, which is what Winterson successfully attempts in *The Passion*, a story set in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. It combines the life stories of two character-narrators, Henri, a French soldier-cook from the ranks and files of Bonaparte, and Villanelle, a Venetian bisexual woman who shares webbed feet with Venetian boatmen. *The Passion* consolidates Winterson as a storyteller who "writes with astonishing poise and directness" (Lodge 1988: 25). It won the 1987 John Llewelyn Rhys Prize, has been translated into several languages[26], and is nowadays cited "as a modern classic" (Field 1995: 38).

The same bent for storytelling continues in Winterson's next book, *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Set in Puritan England during the years of the English Civil War, the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, *Sexing the Cherry* is also primarily told by two different characters, the Rabelaisian Dog-Woman —Winterson's decisive portrayal of woman as excess— and her adopted son Jordan, "the foundling botanist" (Winterson in Barr 1991: 30). Named after the river whose water was chosen by God for the baptism of his son, Jesus Christ[27], Jordan is restless. He voyages to exotic countries in the hope of carrying out some heroic deed, which eventually materialises in his bringing the pineapple to England. But Jordan also initiates a spiritual journey in search of his flying self, his anima, represented in the story by Fortunata, one of the twelve dancing princesses whose story Winterson (re)writes and juxtaposes with history in a most fruitful dialogue. In the final part of

[26] The hardback Spanish translation by Elena Rius, *La pasión*, was published by Edhasa in 1988, the same year in which the novel was issued as a Penguin paperback in Great Britain.

[27] The religious subtext in *Sexing the Cherry* is perhaps still more significant than in *The Passion*. At the beginning of her account, the Dog-Woman connects his son with Moses, because the Thames brings Jordan to her much like the Nile carried Moses to Egypt, when she acknowledges that "a child can't be called Thames, no and not Nile either, for all his likeness to Moses" (*SC* 11).

the book, Winterson further defies the fixity of spatio-temporal co-ordinates by creating two twentieth-century counterparts of the Dog-Woman and Jordan in the persons of an unnamed feminist ecologist[28] and Nicolas Jordan, a dreamy sailor who also wants to be a hero.

After the publication of *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson received the E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters as a recognition to her literary career. She then became "one of the most exciting and acclaimed authors of her generation" (Gerrard 1989: 13). John Bayley, professor of literature at Oxford at the time and husband of another great novelist, Iris Murdoch, compared Winterson to Virginia Woolf (in Picardie 1992: 44), one of the best compliments she has ever received.

At the summit of fame, Winterson is asked to adapt *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* for television, a proposal she gladly accepts, on condition that she is in absolute control, since she desired "to subvert the relentless realism of the medium" (in Thomson 1992: 26) and use television for her preaching purposes while redeeming it from its mediocrity. As Winterson acknowledges:

> I wanted to make superb television and I wanted to keep the instructional side of my work. I do have a moral sense. I don't see myself as somebody who wishes to entertain. And so television, which has become the arch-entertainer and the utterly debased medium suddenly and necessarily was transformed into something quite worthwhile. (in Barr 1991: 30)

The final outcome, a three episode television drama, was broadcast by the BBC in January 1990 with an audience of 2.9, 4.4, 3.9 million, which, as Marilyn Brooks points out, "for a mid-week screening is considered a success" (1994: 131). Like the book, the series was surprisingly well received[29] not only by the general public but also by mainstream critics, who referred to it as "art television" or "quality drama".

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28 "To emphasize her connection with the Dog Woman", Rebecca L. Sturgeon calls the twentieth-century female character "the River Woman" (1995: 84). Although this naming is clearly convenient for Sturgeon's argument about the close connection existing between feminist spirituality and ecology, I prefer to stick to Winterson's conscious refusal to name this character since one of Winterson's tenets in this novel is that naming is a form of constraint. Furthermore Sturgeon's insistence on the exclusive connection between the Dog-Woman and her twentieth-century *alter ego*, the eco-feminist woman, obscures the no less important connection that also exists between the Dog-Woman and the other characters in *Sexing the Cherry*, thus limiting the auto-reflexive potential of the book.

29 Exception made of a few negative remarks uttered by gay and lesbian critics, who accused Winterson of having sacrificed the critical strength of her lesbian narrative text for the sake of prime-time TV slot. Gina Wisker, for example, argued that "Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* appears much less challenging and radical when televised, the lesbian element seen as one example of a tomboyish rebellion motif" (1994: 6).

Even the academy contributed to this general acclaim by granting the series two BAFTA awards for best drama and best actress in 1991[30].

By the beginning of the 1990s, Winterson was already a woman of considerable means with an empire of her own. The unequivocal commercial success achieved by the television series and very especially by her literary production, matched with her impeccable talent for business, yield such substantial proceeds as to allow her to set up her own corporation, Great Moments Ltd., "a literary agency-cum-production company which oversees everything to do with the author in Britain" (Messud 1992: 29). Simultaneously, Winterson acquires the reputation of being irresistibly dangerous. Rumours about wild romances with eminent married women spread as quickly as do news about her literary success. The publication of her next book, *Written on the Body* (1992), caused a real turmoil in London literary circles[31]. In spite of the fact that the book is dedicated to Winterson's present partner, Peggy Reynolds, the story is seen by many as an act of retaliation on Pat Kavanagh, Winterson's former editor and one-time lover. Winterson has never acknowledged this fact, although, in an interview with Nicci Gerrard, "she recalls her anti-social behaviour, and her stormy relationships" (1989: 13).

Written on the Body explores the nature of love, desire, and sexuality and experiments with the limits of narrative by taking away the structural elements on which traditional narratives rest. Thus Winterson's character-narrator is unnamed and ungendered. The story —an obsessive passion for a married woman, Louise, who is about to leave her husband, a cancer-researcher, but who learns that she is possibly dying from leukaemia— is not set in a particular place or time, either. There is no suspense, because the whole story is already revealed in the first pages of the book. *Written on the Body* is Winterson's proof that stories transcend plots, that conventions and clichés in narrative do not make good novels just as conventions and clichés do not make true love. Winterson's account of desire, abnegation and loss in *Written on the Body* is an overt critique both of the formulaic expressions and long established sexual roles of romance narratives and of "the whole institution of marriage, condemned with wit and cruelty by the narrator for its hypocrisy, dull

30 Hilary Hinds attributes the surprisingly favourable reaction of what she calls "a generally homophobic mainstream press" (1991: 129) to the representation of such thorny issues as religious fundamentalism and lesbianism in television to a specific socio-political context in which freedom of speech had been seriously threatened: firstly, with the passing of Section 28 of the Local Government Act banning the promotion of homosexuality in 1988; and secondly, with the dead threat against Salman Rushdie by Muslim fundamentalism after the publication of *The Satanic Verses* in 1989.

31 "It was at that point", says Winterson, "that the London literary scene became hostile" (in Field 1995: 38).

decency, and smug rituals" (Glendenning 1993: 128). In *Written on the Body*, Winterson demonstrates that, on the one hand, true love is original and poetic, that it can be still more so when the lover resorts to an anatomy textbook for imagery, and, on the other, "that gender has no significance to lovers" (Koenig 1993: 61).

With *Written on the Body*, Winterson achieves her first tangible political success: "the body politic" (Messud 1992: 29). For the first time a lesbian writer manages to publish at Cape, "which is seen as a very literary, high class list" (in Messud 1992: 29). Winterson is very proud of being one of the few working-class lesbians that has managed to be taken seriously by the literary establishment and to appeal to a broad audience, lesbian and mainstream alike.

The flirting-with-cinema parenthesis

Producer Phillipa Brewster, director Beeban Kidron and script-writer Jeanette Winterson retake working partnership in 1993 with what was to be Winterson's first incursion in the film industry, *Great Moments in Aviation*. This film "traces the journey of a youngish West Indian woman to England in the Fifties" (*Observer Review* 1994: 2) and has flight —a metaphor for physical and metaphysical journeys which she had already used in *Sexing the Cherry*—, the enquiry into the nature of truth, and the possibility of personal redemption as its main themes. Despite its being co-produced by the BBC and the American company Miramax, *Great Moments in Aviation* fails utterly. Problems start with the casting, as black members of the actors' union in Britain complain to both the BBC and the Department of Employment for having been "passed over" in favour of overseas artists (*The Voice* 1992: 5). Winterson describes the making of the film as "a difficult journey" (in Collis 1994: 49).

Finding no distributor in Britain, *Great Moments in Aviation* is denied theatrical release and has to be aired on television. Despite its terrific cast, including great actresses and actors such as Vanessa Redgrave, Dorothy Tutin, John Hurt, and Jonathan Pryce, the film only gets negative reviews about its lack of passion (Dunkley 1995: 16), its gratuitous blending of genres (Ellman 1995: 16), and its excessively stylised language (Massingberd 1995: 33) that makes of the actors and actresses "simply Winterson's puppets, jerked around the symbolic demands of the plot" (Sutcliffe 1995: 2). In the United States, the film is eventually released as *Shades of Fear* (1993) and, alongside with the title, it suffers such a transformation, including considerable editing and a completely different ending, that it makes of the film an alien product almost completely deprived of the Winterson touch. As a result

of this unexpected disaster, Winterson refuses several offers to make *The Passion* into a film[32] and attempts to justify what is her most obvious failure to date by explaining that "I never wanted to write for films […]. My fiction experiments will continue" (in Collis 1994: 49).

Chapter Four: Literary Recognition (II)

Winterson's next novel, *Art & Lies* (1994), is her riskiest experiment with fiction to date, since in it she tries to fit the cadence of opera music to the rhythm of prose, by transcribing Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* at the end of the book and making these two different languages correlate both structurally and thematically. Its reception by the critics has been unequal, either as "her greatest accomplishment as a writer" (Field 1995: 38), or as merely "an extravagant gesture" (Hensher 1994: 29).

Winterson's relationship with music has always been very intense. She has explained that: "I grew up in a very musical household. My mother was an extremely good pianist, and I was taught to read music when I was young, as if it were another very important language" (in Field 1995: 38). This fusion of languages makes of *Art & Lies* a modernist project that (re)assesses the discourses of history and narrative and deals with the nature of sexuality and love. *Art & Lies* is a time travel experience for the reader who moves from London in the year 2000 as far back as Greek antiquity hand in hand with its three character-narrators: Handel —an ex-priest turned breast surgeon—, Picasso[33] —a young artist fleeing her repressive family and a history of sexual and emotional abuse—, and Sappho —the famous poet of antiquity, alive as both text and persona.

As the title suggests, *Art & Lies* is more of a philosophical digression about art as artifice and invention than a story in the traditional sense. The three characters always remain worlds apart and, therefore, despite the fact that they inhabit the same spaces, they never talk to each other. The book is a juxtaposition of monologues,

[32] However, she has recently accepted Miramax's proposal to make a film of *The Passion*, with Gwyneth Paltrow and Juliet Binoche featuring as leading female characters. Still, Winterson regrets her not being writing the script. In her official site on the internet she complains that: "They threw me off. That's showbiz folks". But she is happy to announce two more projects: a European production of *Sexing the Cherry*, which she promises to control "from beginning to end" and her new experiment with media: "a brand new Internet project with the BBC. I'll be writing 24x4 minute episodes to be shot very simply with a lock-down camera" (www.jeanettewinterson.com/filmandtv.htm).

[33] The female character in *Art & Lies*, Picasso, seems to have been transposed intratextually from Winterson's pseudo-autobiographical story "The Poetics of Sex". There, the narrator's lover is a painter called Picasso. Taking into account that "The Poetics of Sex" explores the multiple ways in which a writer's life and work may be confused, a further blurring of the limits between reality and fiction is carried out by means of this intratextual transposition.

which are nevertheless structurally and thematically connected. It criticises the Platonic notion of art as mimesis because, for Winterson, art, and by extension literature, should not reflect reality but rather improve it. Art is not only beautiful but also political. Therefore art and literature not only have the potential but also the responsibility to change givens and to open up endless, more comprehensive possibilities.

Literature becomes self-echoing, multi-dimensional and cosmic in Winterson's next novel, *Gut Symmetries* (1997). As in *Art & Lies*, the story is told by three different voices, each giving a particular version of past "events". Stella and Jove are a married couple but they live on different planets. Stella refuses feelings because they are always painful. Jove is a renowned physicist who works in a new model of the cosmos and lectures on "Time Travel" and "The World and Other Places" (*GS* 15). Alice initiates a double love affair as she falls in love with both Jove and Stella. At the end of the novel, Stella, Jove, and Alice meet on board a boat, at sea, in a floating space where everything is changeable, where astronomy and astrology lead. Although *Gut Symmetries* has no conventional plotline, Susana Onega considers this book one of Winterson's best *novels* because, as she demonstrated in a lecture read on May 2002 at the International Conference "Letteratura e Scienza / Literature and Science" at Colli del Tronto, Italy, entitled "Science, Myth and the Quest for Unity in Jeanette Winterson's *Gut Symmetries*", this book has indeed a definitive plot, which includes protagonists with their respective parents and grandparents, all of which is set within the background of twentieth-century history. As in her previous novel, passion oozes Winterson's dense poetic writing, which sublimates the eternal love triangle by making it a part of physics' Grand Unified Theory, the metaphor contained in the title of the book. In *Gut Symmetries*, the discourses of magic and myth are set on a par with the scientific discourses of Quantum Physics, which "provide Winterson with a vibrant metaphor for the instability of identity once a 'rogue element' like love enters the picture" (Miller 1997: 1). The result seems to be not a fictional universe but rather a "multiverse" (Onega forthcoming) which is both real and virtual, material and philosophical, scientific and esoteric, as the title of Jove's lecture, "The World and Other Places" (*GS* 15), suggests.

Apart from being the title of Jove's lecture, *The World and Other Places* (1998) is also the title of Winterson's only collection of stories to date. Written over a period of twelve years, which begins soon after the publication of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, these stories chart Winterson's preoccupation with the nature of time,

love in its multiple forms, the search for the self as journey or quest, and the figure of the outsider as either stranger or marginal to society. All these are not only key issues but also leitmotifs in Winterson's fiction. In *The World and Other Places*, literary production and personal narrative continue to mirror one another since this collection of stories is an open window to Winterson's creative and personal quest. Already in 1992, Winterson explained that:

> As far as I am concerned, what happens to me —my experiences, my thoughts, my fears— are nothing, mean nothing, unless I can somehow transform them into something which is more pertinent to the reader, something which is more general, which leaves me behind. It is like the Indian rope trick. I have to disappear. (in Picardie 1992: 46)

"Disappearance I" is one of the central stories in *The World and Other Places.* It tells of a professional dreamer whose job is to provide people with dreams which "are tele-electronically recorded and transmitted at Dream-points around the City" (*WOP* 109) in a society which sanctions sleeping because it is "dirty, unhygienic, wasteful and disrespectful to others" (*WOP* 105). This professional dreamer is a metaphor of what Winterson believes to be her duty as a writer. Like her professional dreamer, the writer herself wants to feed her readers with alternative imaginary worlds in a society which neglects the power of the imagination to free the individual from the everyday and from the pressure of the commonsensical.

This is precisely the starting point in *The.Powerbook* (2000), Winterson's latest book of fiction to date, where Ali, the narrator, is paid by her internet customers to invent stories which might help them to overcome the confining power of reality and to achieve instead: "Freedom for a night, you say. Just for one night the freedom to be someone else" (*Pb* 4). Ali is, consequently, like the professional dreamer in the above-mentioned story "Disappearance I", because both of them only manage to free the self either in the realm of dreams or in the virtual reality of the internet. In *The.Powerbook*, writer and reader are brought inside the fiction in a process of endless reflections and deferrals, to the extent that they both *become* the fiction. The "I" as writer-narrator-lover and the "you" as reader-narratee-lover appear as two sides of the same coin, who interchange roles and make the narrative advance through interfacing:

> It's only a story, you say. So it is, and the rest of life with it —creation story, love story, horror, crime, the strange story of you and me.
>
> The alphabet of my DNA shapes certain words, but the story is not told. I have to tell it myself.
>
> What is it that I have to tell myself again and again?
>
> That there is always a new beginning, a different end.
>
> I can change the story. I am the story. (*Pb* 4-5)

The.Powerbook is an endless virtual (re)writing of a love story —sex, gender, the eternal love triangle—, of a life story —time, language, fiction— and of Jeanette.Winterson's story. But this time the story seems to have spiralled through to its end. Or so does Winterson want us to believe. She explains that "yes. There are seven books and they make a whole cycle […]. I've done a lot of work over the last fifteen years, all the books, screenplays, loads of journalism but it is in the cycle of the fiction that I can be found" (www.jeanettewinterson.com/books/the powerbook2.htm). Like Gertrude Stein, Winterson is in her own fiction. Fiction is her (auto)biography. The end of the twentieth century has seen the completion of both a narrative and a personal cycle, but Winterson is still a subject-in-process who lures her twenty-first-century readers to navigate the internet and virtually follow her steps towards her new project of (re)configuration in the web.

2. ATTEMPTING CRITICISM: THE PO(E)(LI)TICS OF (POST)MODERNISM

"Art does not imitate life. Art anticipates life." (*AO* 40)

Jeanette Winterson is often described as one of the most controversial yet innovative fiction writers in contemporary English literature. Her promising career has been rounded off in the past decade and a half. Her fiction is nowadays frequently included in university curricula and considered part of the literary canon. Nevertheless it continues to evade categorisation.

In 1993, *Granta* listed the best twenty British novelists under forty. The shortlist was carefully elaborated by the magazine editor, Bill Buford; Waterstone's marketing director, John Mitchinson; Antonia S. Byatt, who accepted the task out of a special concern "for women writers who, for reasons of marriage or childbirth or social conditioning, tended to come in to their own later than their male counterparts" (Buford 1993: 9); and Salman Rushdie, who was "driven by a refreshing curiosity" (Buford 1993: 9). Eventually the writers chosen were, in alphabetical order, Iain Banks, Louis de Bernières, Anne Billson, Tibor Fischer, Esther Freud, Alan Hollinghurst, Kazuo Ishiguro, A. L. Kennedy, Phillip Kerr, Hanif Kureishi, Adam Lively, Adam Mars-Jones, Candia McWilliam, Lawrence Norfolk, Ben Okri, Caryl Phillips, Will Self, Nicholas Shakespeare, Helen Simpson, and Jeanette Winterson.

Despite the fact that all of these authors were born in the decade of the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, it is difficult to consider them a "generation". Buford feels unable to find any marked tendency in their writings and confesses that:

> while I believe that, overall, these authors are, sentence by sentence, writing at a higher, more accomplished level than their predecessors ten years ago, I couldn't tell if they are dirty realists or neo-gothics or baggy monsters or anything but themselves. In fact, my thoughts tend heavily towards inconclusiveness. (1993: 15-16)

Similarly, in *A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain*, Randall Stevenson asserts that "patterns in recent fiction can be identified only rather more provisionally than in the writing of the earlier part of the century" (1993: 6).

Winterson makes of this provisionality one of her greatest strengths. She presents herself as a self-made writer who venerates modernist authors and disdains the works of almost all of her contemporaries. She finds fault with them because "they are deeply complacent and there is a lot of copy-catting. Few writers achieve their own form and open up new landscapes and there has been a total turning back of any pleasure in language" (in Thomson 1992: 5). In a review of *Sexing the Cherry*, Charlotte Innes seems to agree with her when she comments that:

> The arrival of the British writer Jeanette Winterson on the world's literary stage is surely a cause for rejoicing. Not only is she a lesbian whose work is informed by her lesbianism and a deeply feminist point of view, she is also a remarkable writer, and therefore accessible to anyone who loves prose that soars above the ordinary. (1990b: 17)

Winterson strives to find new landscapes for fiction. Both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* are significant examples of the use of formal experimentation to create new alternative spaces where the voices of people marginalised by society on account of their social status, their sexuality, or their beliefs may be freely expressed. She is also very concerned with language and the multiple pleasures that can be derived from its adequate use. Many of Winterson's novels are openly metafictional. In *Sexing the Cherry*, words are so tangible that they form clouds over cities and have to be brushed away, although sometimes, however, especially beautiful, poetic words can gain immortality by leading cleaners astray:

> I was sorry to see the love-sighs of young girls swept away. My companion, though she told me it was strictly forbidden, caught a sonnet in a wooden box and gave it to me as a memento. If I open the box by the tiniest amount I may hear it, repeating itself endlessly as it is destined to do until someone sets it free. (*SC* 18)

Besides, in the city of words, language is so physically powerful that it can be fatal:

> That night two lovers whispering under the lead canopy of the church were killed by their own passion. Their effusion of words, unable to escape through the Saturnian discipline of lead, so filled the spaces of the loft that the air was all driven away. The lovers suffocated, but when the sacristan opened the tiny door the words tumbled him over in their desire to be free, and were seen flying across the city in the shape of doves. (*SC* 19)

Winterson's prose is rich in images and flights of fancy. Much of its beauty is gained when read aloud because of its rhythm and sonority. Both her language and imagery are biblically powerful. Actually, her flight from Pentecostal Evangelism seems to have been more a physical separation from a suffocating world than a psychological liberation, since she still evinces an evangelical yearning to reach out to people, so much so that she could be labelled a literary preacher of the late twentieth century. The gift for preaching which she somehow developed as a child

pervades her approach to literature. As she says, "I want to influence the way people think, to jolt them out of assumption and habit and let them discover their passions. I have a responsibility not to be shoddy or lazy in art or life" (in Thomson 1992: 5).

A genius in epigrammatic virtuosity, Winterson perceives two opposed religious functions: the passive role of priests who "have all the words written out already and only have to read them" and the subversive non-conformist role of prophets who "are always crying in the wilderness —and often they say what isn't wanted" (in Gerrard 1989: 13). Winterson applies these religious images to the writing of literature and favours literary prophets over priests. As she explains in the introduction to the second edition of *Oranges*: "It is the duty of every generation of writers and artists to find fresh ways of expressing the habitual circumstances of the human condition. To serve up the lukewarm remains of yesterday dinner is easy, profitable and popular (for a while). It is also wrong" (1991a: xv). As a working-class lesbian, Winterson feels pretty much isolated but makes of her isolation a necessary stance in order to strike against middle-class mediocrity and complacency. If one is to be a great writer, Winterson declares, the important thing is to be an outsider, a prophet crying in the wilderness: "I want to push forward what is possible in prose; I'm not content to use what's already there. And I also want to change people's lives. That's my double agenda" (in Messud 1992: 29).

Winterson neither believes in the motto "art for art's sake" nor does she conceive art as mere entertainment. She strongly believes in the power of literature to transform the way people think and act through a renewal of perception, a defamiliarising process which would expose inherited assumptions while offering readers the possibility of (re)defining "reality" from a multiplicity of perspectives. As she explains: "Art is meant to empower people, so that they can see further into their own lives"[34] (in Picardie 1992: 46). All of Winterson's books respond to a need to search for new and better ways to do this. In an essay on Joseph Conrad, the Indian novelist V. S. Naipaul writes:

> Experimentation not aimed at the real difficulties (which are that "the great societies that produced the great novels have cracked") has corrupted response […]. The novelist, like

[34] Winterson's words echo Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) when the latter states that reading such books as *Lear*, *Emma* or *À la recherche du temps perdu*, "seems to perform a curious couching operation on the senses; one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life" (1977: 105). Yet, whereas Woolf's statement responds to the modernist epistemological question, "How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?" (McHale 1987: 9), Winterson's statement answers the postmodernist ontological question, "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" (McHale 1987: 10). In other words, Woolf's *aesthetics* become Winterson's *politics*.

> the painter, no longer recognises his interpretive function; he seeks to go beyond it, and his audience diminishes. And so the world we inhabit, which is always new, goes by unexamined, made ordinary by the camera, unmeditated on; and there is no one to awaken a sense of true wonder. That is perhaps a fair definition of the novelist's purpose, in all ages. (in Massie 1990: 34)

Winterson is faithful to this purpose. Her imaginative attempts at experimentation with narrative conventions and generic forms may be said to be not only aesthetic but also, and primarily, ethic. They are grounded on an acknowledged political basis. When Winterson talks about the importance that publishing *Written on the Body* at Cape has for her literary career, she insists on the fact that her programme is double: "I thought, if I'm there, it changes people's ideas of what good writing is, however subtly. What I'm doing […] is about art, but it's also about politics" (in Messud 1992: 29). The search for a personal aesthetics, directly influenced by the practices of modernism in literature, and the presentation of explicitly political demands, much more in accordance with postmodernism and its discontents, reflect the double nature of Winterson's fiction, what I have called the "po(e)(li)tics of (post) modernism".

In *A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain*, Randall Stevenson presents recent and contemporary fiction "as a legacy of the now-established classics of the twentieth century —those of the modernist period in particular" (1993: 6). The relationship between modernism and postmodernism is, however, far more complex and problematic than may be inferred from Stevenson's words[35]. As Steven Connor explains

> the characteristic of postmodernism is this peculiar complex relationship which it has to modernism which in its very name is at once invoked, admired, suspected or rejected. This relationship is overlaid with further complexities in the different disciplinary discourses of postmodernism, in which the struggle with modernism often represents an internal struggle with the history and institutions of the discipline. (1989: 66)

Winterson's definition of the value and purpose of literature equally stems from some of her modernist influences and from her postmodernist concerns. Her fiction is both the product of the interrelation of modernism and postmodernism and the battle field in which these two contending forces are represented[36].

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35 In the past decades an incredibly large number of pages have been produced on the modern/postmodern debate. Among the most influential names the following should be mentioned in chronological order: Ihab Hassan (1980, 1987), Jürgen Habermas (1983), Jean-François Lyotard (1987), Brian McHale (1987), Linda Hutcheon (1988, 1989), Patricia Waugh (1989), Steven Connor (1989), Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (1992), Thomas Docherty (1993), Hans Bertens (1995), etc.

36 This issue is retaken in the textual analysis of *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* that I engage with in the main body of the thesis.

As has already been pointed out, Winterson's definition of literature as well as her literary production find their most immediate antecedents in modernism and more precisely in the writings of Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and W. B. Yeats. Winterson's ideas on the artistic responsibilities of the writer (in Thomson 1992: 5) echo Virginia Woolf's in her essays "Modern Fiction" (1967) and "Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown" (1966). Like Winterson, Woolf proved to be extremely critical with some of her contemporaries —Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells in particular. She accused them of failing to fulfil their responsibilities or, as Stevenson words it, for revealing "an incapacity to represent human nature in general and a particular inability to deal with the new demands and shifting nature of their times"[37] (1993: 220).

On the other hand, Winterson's advocacy of a necessary distance and partial exile from society, which she expresses through the image of the prophet shouting in the wilderness, is very much the same feeling Woolf records in *A Room of One's Own*, when she observes that "if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of [English] civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical" (1977: 93).

Winterson also echoes her modernist models by becoming not only a writer of fiction but also a literary critic. Her career as a literary critic begins when she interviews the Afro-American female writer and singer Maya Angelou in the *Sunday Times* (1987: 45). More recently, Winterson has been contributing with some more book reviews in *The Times*. Some of these include Margaret Visser's *The Geometry of Love*, a novel set in the year 305 AD, which Winterson defines as "a brief pilgrimage, or life in note form" and "a meditation on human failure and human success" (2001a: 1); Wendy Steiner's *The Trouble with Beauty*, a book on art which criticises modernism's withdrawal from the representation of female beauty in

37 Virginia Woolf ranges her contemporaries "into two camps: Mr Wells, Mr Bennet, and Mr Galsworthy I will call the Edwardians; Mr Forster, Mr Lawrence, Mr Strachey, Mr Joyce, and Mr Eliot I will call the Georgians" (1967: 105). While she admired the latter because of the renewal of literature they were unmistakingly bringing about, she fiercely criticised the former for spending "immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring" (105), but failing to represent life. "Their work has a living, breathing, everyday imperfection which bids us to take what liberties with it we choose" (103). Much like Winterson's, Woolf's liberties are manifest in the harsh irony of her words:

> The most prominent and successful novelists in the year 1910 were, I suppose, Mr Wells, Mr Bennett, and Mr Galsworthy. Now it seems to me that to go to these men and ask them to teach you how to write a novel —how to create characters that are real— is precisely like going to a bootmaker and asking him to teach you how to make a watch. […] Sometimes I wonder if we are right to call them books at all. For they leave one with so strange a feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction. (1966: 326)

painting, and which Winterson accuses of being apolitical since she argues that "art is discussed in a vacuum" (2001b: 1); Adrienne Rich's *Arts of the Possible*, a collection of Rich's earlier essays which Winterson remembers as "medicinal reading" (2001c: 1); and, surprisingly, Victoria Beckham's *Learning to Fly*, an autobiographical account for whose review Winterson uses her most acrid sarcasm and provocative style, as when she refers to Beckham's treatment of gender issues in the book:

> The Spice Girls set themselves up as role models from the beginning. They were a Girl Band, this was Girl Power. What is girl power now to Victoria Beckham? She is conventional in her espousal of family values and she deals in womanhood as though it were a commodity. What is she offering women, from her new guru HQ? "I like women to wear make-up, do their hair, and wear tight, sexy clothes." Then she tells us how even she needs a bit of help to get a proper feminine shape. If she's not careful, she can be mistaken for a young boy. We wouldn't want that to happen, would we? In Essex, we need to know what gender we are. For all the protestations about her campness and theatricality, this is a girl who lives by the rules. She can't change anything because she can't change herself. (2001d: 2)

Winterson's most outstanding adventure in literary criticism to date is, however, a collection of ten essays compiled in a book published by Cape under the title *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1995). Written with the same passion and exuberance as any of her previous books of fiction and exhibiting a similar urgency and directness towards her audience, *Art Objects* develops Winterson's ideas on fiction in an elaborate, well-structured way. Alex Clark highlights the indisputable modernist traits of *Art Objects* by defining the book as "a collection dedicated to renewing and redefining the link between the imaginative life and external reality, to making a hero of the artist and to emphasizing the primacy of language, and the importance of style and form" (1995: 40). Its final chapter, which is significantly entitled "A Work of My Own," (*AO* 165-192) is Winterson's most explicit tribute to modernism and very especially to Virginia Woolf.

Winterson is also immersed in the contemporary prevailing cultural mode, postmodernism. On the one hand, rejecting the ivory tower and the solipsism of modernism, she gives her critical opinion about contemporary socio-political issues such as multinationalism and malnutrition (2002), teenage sex and pregnancy (2001e), or legislation and homosexuality (2001f), to name but a few, through her periodical contributions to *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Building Design* or *Vogue*. Already in 1989, in an article published in *New Statesman and Society*, Winterson risked her way into social criticism, denouncing the corruption of the body politic and encouraging her readers to fight for a better world. As she stated, "We have the best chance since the aftermath of the first world war to totally restructure our

culture. Refusing to accept the lies, refusing to deal in lies, may sound philosophical, perhaps even the ivory tower but will have far-reaching and practical effects" (1989: 33). The publication of two more articles on film criticism in *Sight and Sound*, the first, "Blooded with Optimism" (1991), on the art of Ingmar Bergman and the second, "Outrageous proportions" (1992), on animation by women, confirmed Winterson's desire to have an active participation in, and thus wield her powerful influence on, every aspect of contemporary British culture.

On the other hand, her novels show a variety of forms and styles that link her work, firstly, to that of other female writers such as Angela Carter, Marina Warner, Margaret Atwood, or Emma Tennant; secondly, to that of male practitioners of magic realism like Italo Calvino, Salman Rushdie, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, or Julio Cortázar; and thirdly, to historiographic metafictional writers such as John Fowles, Peter Ackroyd, Graham Swift, or John Banville. Although her particular approach to literature —feminist revision of fairy tales, reliance on historical pastiche, insistence on the subjectivity of truth[38]— has paradoxically become so fashionably familiar that it begins to account for the clichés of postmodernism, Winterson still keeps her idiosyncratic literary strengths. They are diversely manifest as emotional intensity coupled with prose exuberance, celebration of liminality, subversively erotic appreciation of the elasticity of gender, and a fascination with sexual ambiguity which allows for the most daring literary games. Despite her arrogance, or maybe because of it, Winterson's fictions do offer her readers an unmistakable freshness of vision. Her writings are complex and deep and they bring in a play of signifiers resulting in a continuous deferral of meaning which invites a number of alternative readings.

Biblically powerful language, postmodernist techniques, modernist tradition, metafiction, and the use and exposure of the conventions of fantasy and the fairy tale are, however, mere instruments which Winterson deftly combines with a strong political commitment aimed at subverting socio-cultural power structures and, ultimately, at appropriating traditionally male-defined concepts for her sexual

[38] Jeanette Winterson's work undoubtedly partakes of the traits which, according to J. D. Taylor seem to be common to the strain of experimental fiction of the 1980s. Firstly, a new eclecticism, "a defiance of categories and a willingness to use whatever writerly styles and techniques may be necessary to achieve the overall effect" (Taylor 1989: 115); secondly, a fabular quality, "this obsession with telling stories, indulging in any sort of fabrication and artifice if it can be seen to assist the forward motion of the text" (116); thirdly, an open acceptance of artifice, which "is a central force at work in the modern novel" (116); fourthly, a kind of re-invention of historical episodes favoured by the "debate about truth and fiction" (118); and finally, the undeniably political stance of these writers "the novel *is* politics in that it is an analysis, a refraction of prevailing circumstance" (130-131; italics in the original).

politics. Winterson's vision of literature may be described as carnivalesque if we follow Allon White's definition of this mode of fiction and its impact on society and culture:

> an activity which brings the laws of established discourse into question, and thereby presents itself as a terrain where new sorts of discourse may be engendered. And since, as I argued in my first paragraph, a change in discourse is a change in the status of the subject, a radical new poetic discourse may produce a radical new status for the subject. (1993: 66-67)

Winterson's texts critically rewrite the discourses of history, religion, romance, heterosexuality and literature itself, laying special emphasis on linguistic and generic conventions. Her fiction is deeply concerned with the opening up of spaces where the postmodern subject-in-process may develop. Like Jove in *Gut Symmetries* (*GS* 15), Winterson keeps on experimenting on a new model of the cosmos free from the constricting power of gravity. Her fiction transports her readers into a space where time may be suspended. Her wonderful way with words and her ability for outrageous humour are at the service of feeling and the imagination.

TWO

SPACE AND TIME AS CATEGORIES OF COGNITION AND REPRESENTATION IN NARRATIVE: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

SOME NOTES ON METHOD

My first contact with Jeanette Winterson's fiction was *The Passion*, a novel I read as an undergraduate student in 1991. Professor Susana Onega had included it as part of the syllabus of the fifth-year subject "Contemporary English Literature", which she then taught at the University of Zaragoza. Reading *The Passion* was extremely gratifying. I was charmed by its beauty, its strength, its emotion, its complex mixture of humorous and painful scenes and what were then, and still are, innovative narrative techniques. Even now, after having read the novel quite a few more times and dedicated half a decade to its study, I still laugh at some of its passages and undergo a new rewarding literary experience with each reading. *The Passion* gave way to my reading of two of the other three novels Winterson had published by that time, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Sexing the Cherry*, which further increased my interest in her literary career. From then on, I have followed Winterson and her work as closely as one may[1].

When I took the decision of making Winterson's fiction the subject of my doctoral thesis, I was lured by both a deep interest in her novels and, very especially, by the fact that, although Winterson had become an icon of the lesbian subcultural context after the publication of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the other novels had remained quite unexplored. The majority of documents on Winterson's fiction which were available at the time were more or less detailed book reviews of *Oranges* (Hegi 1987, Kaveney 1985, Raine 1990), *The Passion* (Ash 1987, Cheuse 1988, Duchêne 1987, Gilbert 1988, Lodge 1988, Monmany 1989, Nagy 1988, Pall 1988, Pickering 1987), *Sexing the Cherry* (Allison 1990, Birch 1989, Brown 1990, Buzbee 1990, Dirda 1990, Eyres 1989, Gorra 1990, Innes 1990a and 1990b, Johnson 1991, Kaganoff 1991, Kakutani 1990, Krist 1991, Mackay 1989, Miller 1990, Ott 1990, Rifkind 1990, Sage 1989, Sudrann 1990, Tremain 1989, Urquhart 1990), and *Written on the Body* (Koenig 1993, Petro 1993, Sheenan 1993, Summer 1994, Vaux 1992).

[1] Proof of my interest are the two documents I have included as appendixes to this work. Appendix I reproduces the discouraging response I received when I tried to arrange an interview with Winterson in 1993, while I was doing a Master's course in Studies in Fiction at the University of East Anglia. Appendix II contains the product of my second attempt at getting to know Winterson personally, six years later in Oxford.

Yet, with the exception of some miscellaneous MA and PhD theses (Stanborough 1993, Stemmler 1993, Sturgeon 1995) and a few genuine articles (Anshaw 1990, Lee 1994, Onega 1993 and 1994, Oxbrow 1993, Pearce 1994, Regnier 1994, Seaboyer 1997), by 1995 the only interesting aspect of Winterson's fiction seemed to turn round homosexuality and the pseudo-autobiographical in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*[2]. As a result, the literary establishment was much more concerned with digging into her private life than in her novels, as is seen in the numerous interviews and profiles which were published at the time (Field 1995, Gerrard 1989, Levy 1994, Messud 1992, Picardie 1992). This fact allowed me to enjoy a certain unusual freedom as to the choice of novels and method while, at the same time, made me aware of the risks and dangers involved in exploring an almost virgin territory. Most of the scholars showing an interest in Winterson's works were adopting feminist approaches in their analyses, a tendency which was further fuelled by the publication of *Written on the Body*, which was seen by many as a sequel to *Oranges* and as another case in point with regard to the problematisation of the issues of love, gender, and sex. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Written on the Body* became key texts for feminist and queer studies (Allen 1996, Belsey 1994, Bollinger 1994, Brooks 1994, Carter 1998, Doan 1994, Duncker 1998, Farwell 1995 and 1996, Fried 1994/95, Griffin 1994, Hinds 1991 and 1992, Kauer 1996, Lindenmeyer 1999, Moore 1995, Nunn 1996, O'Rourke 1991, Onega 1995b, Schmid 1997, Stowers 1998, Suleiman 1990).

Perhaps on account of this specific critical orientation, scholars seemed to have relegated *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* to critical oblivion in their studies. This neglect accounts for my decision to make these two novels the core of analysis in this work. I read them as complementary insofar as they show Winterson's overt engagement with two apparently opposed discourses, the historical and the fantastic. Due to the very characteristics of the texts themselves, which self-consciously deal with narrative categories while simultaneously exposing the limitations of these conventions, and since very few attempts have been made to study Winterson's texts from a narratological point of view, exception made of the long list of publications by Professor Susana Onega and some other examples such as Susan Lanser's "Queering Narratology"[3], I decided to carry out a narratological

2 From the mid-90s on, however, a sudden explosion of criticism on Winterson's novels in the form of journal-articles and miscellaneous book-collections began to take place from almost all theoretical perspectives, although it is still difficult to find MA or PhD dissertations which deal exclusively with Winterson's fiction or have her as their central focus.

3 Lanser's article centres on *Written on the Body* as a text which, in its ambiguous portrayal of the narrator's sex, flouts the narratological category which Gerald Prince calls "person":

analysis of *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, which will focus especially on the way in which spatio-temporal co-ordinates condition the construction and representation of character-identities. It is my contention that in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson consciously problematises the notions of reality and fiction as traditionally conceived in literature. She questions the validity of such a distinction and ends up blurring and continuously transgressing the very limits of these two traditionally separate realms just as she blurs gender oppositions. In these two novels "the normally tough (if translucent) membrane between the natural and supernatural worlds" turns out to be "but a thin, discontinuous and shifting veil" (Pall 1988: 20). *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* play with two different ontologies, the "factual" space of history and the uncanny space of fantasy and magical realism. Each of these spaces is associated, even if variably, with the domains of the masculine and the feminine and the traditional connotations attached to it by the power structures of patriarchy; these clearly-established limits are also simultaneously blurred. My working hypothesis, therefore, is that these novels propose fantasy and the imagination as alternative spaces to the traditional historical and patriarchal co-ordinates.

> At this time when lesbian, gay, and queer studies are burgeoning, *Written on the Body* leads me to imagine that there might eventually be a queer narratology in which questions of sexuality and the challenges sexuality poses to conventions of sex and gender become a telescope through which to seek narrative elements not before attended to or attended to differently. (1996: 259)

1. NARRATOLOGICAL THEORIES OF SPACE AND TIME

Narratology has traditionally been defined as "the theory of narrative texts" (Bal 1985: 3). Its original intent was, in Kathy Mezei's words, "to found a science of narrative through a comprehensive study of structures underpinning all narrative" (1996: 2). This interest in the structure of all texts derives from the development of structural anthropology, linguistics, Saussurian semiotics, and Russian formalism which engage in a constructivist approach to myth and literature resulting in the emergence of a poetics of narrative. As Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa have observed, it was precisely as a result of the fact that the term narratology was popularised in the 1970s by such structuralist critics as Gérard Genette (1972), Mieke Bal (1977) and Gerald Prince (1982), that its definition "has usually been restricted to structural, or more specifically structuralist, analysis of narrative" (1996: 1). However, Onega and García Landa add that:

> The post-structural reaction of the 1980s and 1990s against the scientific and taxonomic pretensions of structuralist narratology has resulted in a comparative neglect of the early structuralist approaches. […] Narratology now appears to be reverting to its etymological sense, a multi-disciplinary study of narrative which negotiates and incorporates the insights of many other critical discourses that involve narrative forms of representation. (1)

Open up to new lines of development in gender studies, psychoanalysis, reader-response criticism or ideological critique, narratology still concentrates on aspects of textual production, structure, and reception which are specific to narrative.

Almost all narratologists agree that the structure of narrative texts can be analysed both horizontally and vertically[4], just as post-Saussurian linguists and, more precisely, generative grammarians, take resource to the notions of surface structure and deep structure in the analysis of sentences. Thus, the latter refer, on the one hand, to the syntagmatic relations established among the constituent elements of

[4] Discordant voices have raised in the past decade, though. Andrew Gibson has criticised this multiplication of axes and narrative levels, which he understands to be one of the basic principles of narratology, in what he accuses to be a "narratological imaginary" (1996: 1), the "geometrisation of narrative [which] was present in narratology from the start" (4), because, as he reckons:

> Narrative theory, then, has repeatedly constructed the space of the text as a unitary, homogeneous space, determined by and organised within a given set of constants. Narratological space has seldom been disturbed by blurrings, troubling ambivalences or multiplications. In it boundaries are clearly defined and categories clearly distinguished. Proportions and regularities establish and maintain certain harmonious and orderly relations. (7)

Similarly, Monika Fludernik offers a new approach to the study of narrative texts which she labels "natural" narratology and which she opposes to conventional "non-natural" approaches which, in her opinion, "manifestly exceed the boundaries of naturally occurring story(telling) situations" (1996: 12).

sentences, which are governed by temporal and causal principles, and, on the other, to their paradigmatic relations, which refer to the logical associations among those same elements. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan has defined narrative fiction as "the narration of a succession of fictional events" (1983: 2). As Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa have remarked, this definition calls attention to the fact that:

> a narrative can be analysed into the events that compose it, and that these events can be studied according to their position with respect to each other. In a series of events some are at the beginning, some in the middle, some at the end. A narrative therefore consists of a number of successive parts: it has a longitudinal structure of time and actions. This "horizontal" approach to narrative description is analogous to syntactic analysis in linguistic studies. We shall call it the *syntagmatic* axis in analysis. (1996: 5; italics in the original)

However, Rimmon-Kenan does not define narrative fiction simply as a succession of fictional events but rather as the narration or (re)presentation of those events, that is to say, as a composite of signs, a semiotic construct in which meanings multiply, or as Roland Barthes points out in *S/Z*, as a braided texture or an interweaving of codes (1990a: 160). Onega and García Landa explain that:

> Here the composite nature of narrative appears not as a number of successive parts, in length or horizontally, but, as it were, vertically, in *depth*: the narrative is not what it seems to be; it is a sign which represents a state of affairs. This "vertical" direction in analysis leads us from the sign to its signification. The basic activity in this sense is interpretation, and therefore we shall call this the *hermeneutic* direction in narrative analysis. (1996: 5; italics in the original)

This vertical axis in the analysis of narrative texts has led some narratologists to see narrative as "an essentially divided endeavour […] involving the *what* of the story told and the *how* of its presentation" (O'Neill 1996: 13; italics in the original). This two-fold division of a narrative text for the purposes of analysis has been defended by such theorists as Seymour Chatman (1978), Gerald Prince (1982) or Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires (1988). At its most ancestral origins is Aristotle's distinction between *logos*, or represented events, and *mythos*, or the rearrangement of those events in the plot. Closer in time are the theories of such Russian formalists of the 1920s as Viktor Shklovski, Boris Eichenbaum, and Boris Tomashevski who speak of the distinction between fabula and *siuzhet*. However, other renowned narratologists such as Gérard Genette (1972), Mieke Bal (1977) or Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983) prefer to put forward a three-level model in which, as Patrick O'Neill notes, "two of the three terms take the place of a single term in the two-level system, Rimmon-Kenan's 'text' (the concrete product of narrative discourse) and 'narration' (the inferred process of narrative discourse), for example, each representing a single aspect of what Chatman is content to think of as 'discourse'"

(1996: 20). As Mezei has argued, "the his/story of narratology, like any story, rather depends on who the narrator is" (1996: 2). This fact explains the considerable divergence as to the definition of each narrative level and, very especially, as to the terminological multiplicity which on occasion may lead the analyst to confusion. As O'Neill has detailed (1996: 20-21) and may be easily inferred from the following adapted scheme, the same term is sometimes used to refer to two different narrative levels:

Two-level models			
Aristotle	*logos*	*mythos*	
Tomashevski (1925)	fabula	*siuzhet*	
Chatman (1978)	story	discourse	
Prince (1982)	narrated	narrating	
Cohan and Shires (1988)	story	narration	
Three-level models			
Genette (1972)	*histoire*	*récit*	*narration*
Genette (1980)	story	narrative	narrating
Bal (1977)	*histoire*	*récit*	*texte narratif*
Bal (1985)	fabula	story	text
Bal (1987)	*fábula*	*historia*	*texto*
Rimmon-Kenan (1983)	story	text	narration

In order to avoid unnecessary confusion I will be adopting Bal's terminology and her three-level model of fabula, story, and text in the analysis of the recurrent "structural" traits in Winterson's novels. Thus, the term fabula will refer to "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (Bal 1985: 5), that is to say, what Onega and García Landa call "a synthetic abstraction" which "does not take into account any specific traits that individualize agents or actions into characters or concrete events" (1996: 7). Story will describe "a fabula that is presented in a certain manner" (Bal 1985: 5); this manner includes perspectival and temporal distortions as well as individualised characters and events. Finally, text will be understood as "a finite, structured whole composed of language signs" (Bal 1985: 5). As Bal further explains:

> A narrative text is a story told in language; that is, it is converted into language signs […] produced by an agent who relates. This agent cannot be identified with the writer. Rather, the writer withdraws and calls upon a fictitious spokesman, an agent technically known as the *narrator*. But the narrator does not relate continually. Whenever direct speech occurs in

> the text, as if the narrator temporarily transfers this function to one of the actors. When describing the text layer, it is thus important to ascertain *who* is doing the narration.
>
> A text does not consist solely of narration in the specific sense. In every narrative text, one can point to passages that concern something other than events: an opinion about something, for example, or a disclosure on the part of the narrator which is not directly connected with the events, a description of a face or of a location, and so forth. It is thus possible to examine *what* is said in a text, and to classify it as narrative, descriptive or argumentative. The one question that still remains is *how* all of this is narrated. There is often a noticeable difference between the narrator's style and that of the actors. (1985: 7-8; italics in the original)

Within this general narratological frame, I will analyse the novels under discussion laying special emphasis on the importance of the co-ordinates of space and time, which are to be located at the levels of the story and the text, in the construction and narrative representation of character-identity.

Space and time have traditionally been defined as basic forms of human perception and indispensable categories of cognition. Consequently they have a prominent position as framing devices in the spoken or written presentation of events, whether personal or communal, fictional or historical. In spite of the fact that space is agreed to be a fundamental category of thought, perception, and textual representation, narratology, the science of narrative texts, has traditionally refused space the important place it deserves. A quick revision of the theories of some of the best-known narratologists is enough to conclude that, generally speaking, space has been too frequently treated as a secondary aspect, equally subordinated to such elements as event, character, focalisation, and time. Mieke Bal, for example, defines space as what results from linking place, an element of the fabula, to certain points of perception which "may be a character, which is situated in a space, observes it, and reacts to it. An anonymous point of perception may also dominate the presentation of certain places" (1985: 93). When Bal refers to the function of space in narrative, she subordinates place to action in such a way that space is seen either as the frame of events or, at most, as an "acting place", in which case "space is thematized: it becomes an object of presentation itself, for its own sake" (1985: 95). For Bal, then, space does not seem to have any intrinsic value; on the contrary, it only deserves analysis in relation, or rather, subordination, to other elements such as character, events, focalisation or time. Likewise, Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires signal that "the events of a story *count* as significant points in time —as enchained, embedded, or joined kernels and satellites— only in so far as they are *recounted* by a narrative" (1988: 84; italics in the original).

The extent to which space has been undervalued in "classical narratology"[5] is also made evident by the limited textual space it is normally conceded in the various theoretical studies of narrative. Space is most often than not absent from the table of contents of what may be called narratological manuals. Thus, Jonathan Culler praises Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980),

> because it fills this need for a systematic theory of narrative. As the most thorough attempt we have to identify, name, and illustrate the basic constituents and techniques of narrative, it will prove indispensable to students of fiction, who not only will find in it terms to describe what they have perceived in novels but will also be alerted to the existence of fictional devices which they had previously failed to notice and whose implications they had never been able to consider. (1980: 7)

Culler's appreciations are undeniably correct but *Narrative Discourse*, Genette's thorough method of analysis of narrative texts, does not consider space as a major area of interest, nor does he speak of it as a basic constituent of narratives.

Something similar may be said about Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983) and Jeremy Hawthorn's *Studying the Novel: An Introduction* (1992). Both Rimmon-Kenan and Hawthorn reduce the notion of space to the more simplistic one of "setting" in two books which aim at being much more comprehensive than Genette's in terms of the study of the techniques and elements of narrative fiction. Rimmon-Kenan relates the description of setting with, respectively, characterisation and narration. Firstly, Rimmon-Kenan explains that "a character's physical surrounding (room, house, street, town) as well as his human environment (family, social class) are also often used as trait-connoting metonymies" (1983: 66). Later, she refers to the description of setting as a "relatively minimal sign of a narrator's presence" (96-97). On both occasions, setting is not interesting in itself but is side-stepped as merely an instrument for the definition of characters and for the determination of the degree of perceptibility of a narrative instance. Unlike Rimmon-Kenan, Hawthorn deals with the issue of setting *per se* and acknowledges that "'setting' is one of those terms about which recent literary critics have felt increasingly uneasy. Does the term not suggest a perhaps too-simple relationship between characters and action on the one hand and the context within which these take place on the other?" (1992: 102). However, he never attempts to provide a solution to the problem he cleverly poses but rather approaches

[5] I use the phrase "classical narratology" as one of the stages in the development of narratological scholarship, and more precisely as what the narratologist Ingeborg Hoesterey defines as "the phase of maturation and peak of achievement for this branch of literary criticism", deriving from the structuralist-formalist paradigm and following the first, "archaic" phase marked by "the seminal work of the text-oriented aesthetics of New Criticism" (1992: 3).

the issue in fairly traditional terms by simply calling attention to the distinction between realistic and conventional or stylised settings.

In *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory*, Patrick O'Neill approaches the issue of space from the double standpoint of story and discourse. He draws "a comparison between story setting (the physical setting in or against which the events of the story take place) and *discourse setting* (the textual setting in which the discourse self-referentially places itself)" (1996: 55 italics in the original). O'Neill quickly discards story setting because for him "discourse subversion of story by means of the manipulation of narrative space has fewer possibilities than those afforded by the treatment of time, for narrative space is clearly less amenable to discursive manipulation than is narrative time" (47). For its part, discourse setting is either seen as a genre marker in the sense that narrative discourse "also always arranges, sometimes more overtly and sometimes less so, the manner in which its reader will react" (54-55) or in terms of its relation to focalisation (56) and narration (68).

Ingeborg Hoesterey calls attention to the fact that "during the past decades certain literary critics have moved away from narratology's almost exclusive focus on the question of what individual texts mean […] to a heightened awareness of how texts […] mean and for whom" (1992: 3). This shift has not only contributed to "a clearer understanding of the discourses that constitute cultural and social institutions" but has also forced narratology to undergo "critical scrutiny and development" (3). Postmodernist and feminist theories have greatly contributed to the revitalisation of the category of space in narrative, a critical move which has altered traditional models of narratology. In *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*, Andrew Gibson likewise observes that "there are one or two signs elsewhere that narratology is becoming more aware of the importance of questions of space and spatialization for narrative theory", while he regrets that "classical narratology has no vocabulary adequate to such developments" (1996: 12). His proposal of what he calls a postmodern theory of narrative rests on the theoretical work of Michel Serres, which "constitutes a powerful mode of postmodern theorizing to which the thought of space is crucial" (12). Gibson's basic postulate criticises narratology's presumption of a singular space, what he calls narratology's "'geometrics' of structure" (20), insofar as it produces a resistance to postmodernity and because, as he observes:

> Narrative space is now plastic and manipulable. It has become heterogeneous, ambiguous, pluralised. Its inhabitants no longer appear to have an irrefutable or essential relation to any

> particular space. Rather, space opens up as a variable and finally indeterminate feature of any given narrative "world". (12)

Feminist fiction and, as a result, feminist literary theory and criticism have found in the narrative category of space a metaphor for the textual representation of gender issues to the extent that a true poetics of space has developed in the past decades. In 1986, Susan Lanser theorised the relation that might be established between feminism and narratology in an essay entitled "Towards a Feminist Narratology". There Lanser asks "whether feminist criticism and particularly the study of narratives by women, might benefit from the methods […] of narratology and whether narratology, in turn, might be altered by the understandings of feminist criticism and the experience of women's texts" (1986: 342). Nowadays it may be safely affirmed that the symbiotic relationship suggested by Lanser has proved not only correct but also productive. Feminist criticism has found in narratology instruments for textual analysis while narratology has benefited from the feminist contextualist approach to narrative, which shows that stories are culturally determined. Feminist narratology examines both the role of gender in the construction of narrative theory and the construction of gender in narrative texts and their readers.

If narratology and feminism have fruitfully engaged in a symbiotic relationship, both of these approaches to the study of literature have also shown an increasing interest in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin precisely because of what Christine Roulston reads as Bakhtin's "emphasis on the fact that any linguistic act necessarily belongs to a particular context and is therefore always ideologically encoded open[ing] up a space for inserting gender difference as a crucial ideological category" (1996: 40). Hoesterey refers to these multiple connections as a fertile form of syncretism:

> Having staked out its parameters as a critical theory and as a political program, the field of feminist studies has celebrated a syncretic mode for some time, borrowing from French poststructuralist writing, especially from Barthes and Lacan via Cixous and Irigaray, and adding semiotics and Bakhtinian concepts through the work of Julia Kristeva. This syncretism has facilitated the rise of a feminist narratology, by definition the conflation of an orientation toward form with a political agenda —an approach that has destabilized the formalism/antiformalism opposition that has so long been a staple of twentieth-century literary criticism. (1992: 10-11)

The problems of temporality and narrative have also become central to many experimental novelists since modernism because, as Stacy Burton has synthesised:

> Since the late nineteenth century, as Stephen Kern demonstrates in his rich history *The Culture of Time and Space*, how human beings perceive and experience time has changed

> dramatically. As the twentieth century began, the new public institution of world standardized time was countered by a profound awareness of the diversity of private time, a revolution in thinking about temporality fostered by the development of history and psychology as disciplines and the theories of Henri Bergson, Albert Einstein, and others. For many writers it became a given that whatever "time" was, it was characterized above all by multiplicity. (1996: 39)

However, with the exception of some outstanding examples, such as Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980) and, very especially, Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1984-1988), a comprehensive work which integrates narratology and theories of mimesis and hermeneutics to discuss the nature of historical writing and fiction, neither narratologists nor literary theorists in general have produced a clear, adequate critical discourse about these issues. Narratologists distinguish between "narrating time" and "narrated time" and provide a detailed analysis of the multiple ways in which our experience of time may be altered, rearranged, iterated, condensed or swollen in narrative. However, these approaches often rest upon the premise that time is unitary and therefore that all texts can be tamed into linearity. Burton has stated instead that:

> A deeper understanding of temporality and narrative must recognize that the experience and perception of time vary from individual to individual and event to event, and within texts as well as between them. It must explore the interrelation of past, present, and future in both textuality and life, must find ways to consider twentieth-century multiplicity without forcing it into neat typologies, and must address the complex relations of time and the languages in which we discuss, understand, and represent them. It must, in practice, combine acknowledgement of literary form with attention to consciousness and experience. (1996: 43)

Jeanette Winterson's novels are grounded in a contemporary understanding of time's complexity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity and they use space as a means to provide alternative modes for the representation of character identity. As a result, they systematically problematise unitary categories of time and space[6]. The heterodiegetic narrator in *Boating for Beginners*, undoubtedly another of Winterson's textual *personae*, overtly tackles this issue when it hilariously portrays the exchange of ideas between Marlene and Gloria who respectively voice their most intimate concerns, cellulite in the case of the former and "the Space-Time Continuum, and whether or not you should write books which clearly fixed themselves into time or books which flouted the usual notion of time in an effort to clear the mind of arbitrary divisions[7]" (*BB* 100) in the case of the latter. Winterson,

6 It was precisely this observation that opened the way to my brief talk with Jeanette Winterson at Oxford. Appendix II offers the transcript of this improvised interview.

7 It should be noted that *Boating for Beginners* is a portrait of the artist as a young woman, impersonated by Gloria, who is introduced into political feminism by Desi, Noah's rebellious

who is much more proximate to Gloria than to Marlene, opts for the second alternative proposed by Gloria and, in the seven books of fiction that she has published to date, she invariably experiments with linguistic and narrative techniques that may allow her prose —and, by extension, her imaginative worlds— to escape from spatio-temporal boundaries and culturally-determined identity constraints. Her purpose is to explore, question, and (re)write the complex, direct, and always mediated relation between language and reality, art and life.

Winterson's first book of fiction, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, is the author's first attempt at signalling the importance of spatio-temporal categories in narrative discourse and the way in which the limitations derived thereby for the development of the self may be overcome. As seen in the first chapter of this work, the story of its protagonist, Jeanette, is presented as an apparently straightforward linear *Bildungsroman* and is set in the decade of the 1940s in a small town in the North of England under the constraining influence of a fundamentalist Pentecostal community. This specific environment does not seem too adequate for the protagonist's discovery and defence of her "unnatural" sexuality. The text gives examples of other women —Miss Jewsbury, Elsie or even Jeanette's mother— who are not courageous enough to fight in defence of their homosexuality and who opt for hiding it from the knowledge of others, for silently suffering from exclusion and community reproval, or for hiding it not only from the others but also from themselves. In contrast, Jeanette chooses to stand up for her rights and denounces the intransigence of the religious community she has been brought up in.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is not only a coming-out story but also a portrait of the artist as a young woman, which is the reason why Jeanette authorises her story by engaging it in a productive dialogue with such paradigmatic texts as the Old Testament, Sir Perceval's quest for the Holy Grail, and the fantasy world of fairy tales. The Old Testament suits Winterson for both the structure and contents of *Oranges*. The chapters of this novel, which, as she has stated, overtly criticises the Church because it "is offered up as a sacrament of love when really it is an exercise in power" (in Barr 1991: 30) and which defends homosexuality against religious fundamentalism as a form of intolerance and oppression, are ironically titled after the first eight books of the Old Testament, also called the Books of the Law:

daughter-in-law. This explains her concerns with the above-mentioned issues and others like "whether or not the Experimental Novel had any significance in the society that haggled over which television channel should show *Dallas*" (*BB* 99). Written the same year as *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *Boating for Beginners* constitutes a second stage in Winterson's process of self-textualisation and adds up to the rewriting of her fictional persona, first as a lesbian and then as an experimental writer.

"Genesis", "Exodus", "Leviticus", "Numbers", "Deuteronomy", "Joshua", "Judges", and "Ruth". All in all, the Books of the Law account for the origins and development of the whole of (hu)man(ity) and for the foundation of the laws upon which the two most widely spread monotheistic religions in our present world, the Christian and Muslim faiths, rest[8]. Winterson subverts the attempted universality of any religious creed and exposes their actual fanaticism and narrow-mindedness when she parodically rewrites the Sacred Book to tell the sacrilegious story of Jeanette's origins and of the development of her queer sexuality.

Jeanette's individual quest is levelled with Sir Perceval's quest for the Holy Grail, which also has strong religious connotations and symbolises the individual's ultimate archetypal quest. Neither of them is, then, an "ordinary quest" (*O* 127) and the alternation and simultaneous coexistence of a homodiegetic and a heterodiegetic narrator in *Oranges* makes of Jeanette and of Perceval[9] mirror images. A special communion is seen between these two characters at the moment in which Jeanette presents the ritual of purification imposed on her by the most outstanding members of her religious community, her mother included, as a means to expel from her the devil that "had attacked me at my weakest point: my inability to realise the limitations of my sex" (*O* 132). As a result of her "ecclesiastical quarantine" (*O* 131), Jeanette literally *becomes* Perceval, the Arthurian knight who eventually finds the Grail. Perceval is the icon Jeanette needs to symbolise endurance of physical torture and the overcoming of psychological anguish:

> Sir Perceval has been in the wood for many days now. His armour is dull, his horse tired. The last food he ate was a bowl of bread and milk given to him by an old woman. Other knights have been this way, he can see their tracks, their despair, for one, even his bones […]. Last night Sir Perceval dreamed of the Holy Grail borne on a shaft of sunlight moving towards him. He reached out crying but his hands were full of thorns and he was awake. (*O* 132)

In the last chapter of *Oranges*, which is significantly titled "Ruth", the intertextual echoes attached to the figure of Jeanette multiply further through the juxtaposition of still another discourse, the fairy tale. In this closing chapter, then,

8 The "Muslim" terrorist act against the Twin Towers that occurred on the 11 September 2001 in New York and the subsequent irrational "Christian" bombarding of Afghanistan, unfortunately came to corroborate Winterson's accusations against fundamentalism and the Church which lie at the core of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and which Winterson emphasises in the interview with Helen Barr (1991), which I have already referred to, when she denounces the number of atrocities that may be safely committed in the name of God.

9 I have recently analysed the connection between Jeanette and Sir Perceval in the article called "La influencia de Chrétien de Troyes, Rabelais y Stendhal en la obra literaria de Jeanette Winterson" (forthcoming).

Jeanette not only shares in the features and the story of the biblical Ruth[10] and insists on Jeanette's mythical association with the legend of Sir Perceval but she also adopts a new, equally consistent, fairy-tale persona as the apprentice to a sorcerer, who is trained to prevent the art of magic from dying: "the more of us there are, the better. You have gifts, you can take the message to other places, where even now they hardly know how to draw a chalk circle" (*O* 139). Winnet's story adds up to the spiralling structure of *Oranges* and contributes to its self-reflexivity and to the continuous multiplication and deferral of meaning of this work *en abyme*. Furthermore Winterson's newly-adopted name, Winnet, proves a multiple textual signifier. Thus if the word "Winnet" were phonetically engaged in a process of commutation[11] consecutively affecting the two phonemes of which the second syllable is composed (vowel |ə| and consonant |t|), two closely related minimal pairs[12] would derive therefrom. Firstly, if |ə| is substituted by an equally weak vowel |ɪ| the name "Winnet" |'wɪnət| is immediately paired with the phrase "win it" |'wɪnɪt|. Likewise substituting final |t| with silence |ø|, "Winnet" |'wɪnət| becomes "winner" |'wɪnə|. No matter the commutation we choose, the two resulting homophones equally put the name of the protagonist in relation to a precise semantic field: victory. The name Winnet, then, implicitly forecasts the success of Jeanette's enterprise in *Oranges* not only because she manages to defend her sexual orientation but also because, like Ruth, she is capable of returning home, to her mother taking her winnings with her, like Sir Perceval, who gains the redeeming boon of the Holy Grail denied to those who, like the members of Jeanette's religious community, try to win it by force. Secondly, the name Winnet results from chiasmically reworking the full name of the flesh-and-blood author of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Jeanette Winterson[13]. As a result, the name Winnet playfully connects the internal world of the fiction with the external world of writer and readers, emphasising the implicit relation that *Oranges* establishes between Jeanette, the protagonist, and

10 For a detailed analysis of the relationship between Ruth and Jeanette in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, see Asensio (2001).

11 According to A. C. Gimson, "a phoneme may be thought of as the smallest contrastive linguistic unit that may bring about a change of meaning" (1989: 46). In our analysis, the possible change of meaning is far less interesting than the multiplicity of meanings that are suggested by such a process of commutation.

12 "Pairs of words which are different in respect of only one sound segment" (Gimson 1989: 47).

13 Chiasmus is defined as "an inverted parallelism; the reversal of the order of corresponding words or phrases (with or without exact repetition) in successive clauses which are usually parallel in syntax […]. While the term, chiasmus, is usually used in reference to syntax and word order, it also includes the repetition in reverse of any element of a poem, including sound patterns". The inverted parallelism I am referring to here includes the juxtaposition in reverse of the last syllable of Winterson's surname "-nette" and the first syllable of her name "Win", whence "Winnette", which easily becomes "Winnet" through phonetic assimilation.

Winterson, the author, as presented in the first chapter of this work. The name Winnet also succeeds therefore in questioning the boundaries between reality and fiction in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and allows readers to partake of the power of fiction to change our perception of the everyday for the better by bringing in magic and the imagination as alternatives[14].

In relating Jeanette's pseudo autobiographical narrative with the discourses of religion, myth, and fantasy, *Oranges* transcends the presentness and individuality of Jeanette's story endowing it with an aura of atemporality and universality that affects such narrative categories as space, time, and narrative agency. Depending on the intertext to which Jeanette's discourse is juxtaposed in the book, she can simultaneously speak in the first person or in the third person and inhabit different identities belonging to separate spatio-temporal co-ordinates: the historico-religious time of Ruth, the legendary time of Sir Perceval, the fantasy realm of Winnet, and the present time of Jeanette, the character who has grown up to become a writer. Time and space, as both framing devices of a story and identity markers are, therefore, fluid and context-bound in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit.*

Likewise, by connecting the first chapter of the Bible with the first chapter of *Oranges*, Winterson exposes the discursive status of all texts and calls the readers' attention to the importance of names. Naming, Winterson seems to suggest, implies categorisation, difference, and the establishment of hierarchies which are dependent on the socio-cultural context which produces them. In other words, the ideology of linguistic utterances depends on the spatio-temporal co-ordinates which frame them. This may be one reason why Winterson is so interested in the relations between time and space and the influence these relations may have in the linguistic utterances which "create" not only invented, literary worlds but also what is commonly labelled "reality" and what is widely accepted as objective "history". *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* hints at the monologic nature of History and of its claims to universal truth in a chapter with an ironic subtitle "Deuteronomy: the last book of the law" (*O* 89), a chapter which constitutes a narrative pause in Jeanette's story and which capitalises the word "time":

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14 A variation of this issue is to be found in one of the stories that compose *The World and Other Places*, "Disappearance I", in which the narrator is a professional dreamer, a Civil Servant, in a city where "dreaming is dirty, unhygienic, wasteful and disrespectful to others" (*WOP* 105). The narrator's otherness is very important for the well-being of the same society that rejects such a job, though:

> When the no-sleep lifestyle was pioneered, it was soon discovered that people functioned better if they had a dream-boost. A pad on the heart and the wrist can electronically lull the body into a sleep state in seconds, but it can't dream. I can, and if you'd like to try me, last night's will be on the headset in about an hour. (*WOP* 109-110)

> TIME IS A great deadener. People forget, get bored, grow old, go away. There was a time in England when everyone was much concerned with building wooden boats and sailing off against the Turk[15]. When that stopped being interesting, what peasants there were left limped back to the land, and what nobles there were left plotted against each other.
>
> Of course that is not the whole story, but that is the way with stories; we make them what we will. It's a way of explaining the universe while leaving the universe unexplained, it's a way of keeping it all alive, not boxing it into time. Everyone who tells a story tells it differently, just to remind us that everybody sees it differently […]. The only thing for certain is how complicated it all is, like string full of knots. It's all there but hard to find the beginning and impossible to fathom the end. The best you can do is admire the cat's cradle, and maybe knot it up a bit more. History should be a hammock for swinging and a game for playing, the way cats play. Claw it, chew it, rearrange it and at bedtime it's still a ball of string full of knots. Nobody should mind […]. It's an all-purpose rainy day pursuit, this reducing of stories called history. (*O* 91)

"Deuteronomy" and its digressions on time, history, and storytelling is purposefully located at the very centre of a novel which talks about origins (those of Jeanette and, due to the intertextual references already analysed, those of humanity at large) and which is itself the nucleus of Winterson's literary production to date, the embryonic form of almost all of Winterson's narrative and ideological concerns. The Deuteronomy chapter is especially relevant for *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, the two books of fiction which constitute the main objects of analysis in the present thesis. It is my contention that *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* call attention to the power that such categories as space, time, and history have in written texts and to the way in which their destabilisation helps to clear the way for alternative forms of identity as representation in storytelling.

15 These words parody T. S. Eliot's discussion of time in "Burnt Norton" (1959: 171-176).

2. BAKHTIN'S THEORIES OF TIME AND SPACE: THE "CHRONOTOPE"

While I shall not deny the utility of narratology as a methodological tool for the description and classification of the structure of complex narratives, I am also aware of the limitations that an exclusively structuralist theory would have when applied to the textual complexity of two novels like *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, in which the categories of time and space are presented not only as describable framing devices but also as ideologically-charged signs whose meaning multiplies when analysed as two interconnected sides of the same coin. Time and space are so closely-knit in the two texts under consideration that they lead to one another not only in their formal construction but also, and very especially, in the exposition of their ideological tenets. Due to this overtly formal and ideological self-conscious alliance of temporal and spatial components in the two texts under consideration, in the next two chapters of this work I propose to complement the narratological approach to the representation of the self in the multiple stories told by the different narrators in both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* with the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin[16], whose writings have been considered "alongside contemporary post-structuralist theory, and, particularly, in relation to feminist theory" (Vice 1997: 3); and which have, furthermore, "provided a framework through which to read the decentred global politics of the postmodern world" (Pearce 1994: 15). Further, as Stacy Burton has noted, "Bakhtin opens ways to discuss how assumptions about time condition narrative forms, how narratives reconstruct experience, how characters' temporality shapes their perceptions, how multiple senses of time can be at play in a single text, and how the process of reading reshapes texts" (1996: 44).

Bakhtin discusses time and narrative in his late essay "The *Bildungsroman* and its significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the

16 This complementary approach is by no means new since in 1996 Stacy Burton already pointed out that:

> The temporal heterogeneity so evident in modern narrative finds its theoretical complement in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Critics have been slow to appreciate this aspect of Bakhtin's work: "chronotope," the key term in his discussion of time and narrative, has remained a hazy item in the critical lexicon. If we develop the theory of temporality suggested *in nuce* in the idea of the chronotope, however, and examine its relation to Bakhtin's theories about discourse, we can discover new, rich concepts for exploring time and narrative. (1996: 43-44; italics in the original)

Similarly, although using different arguments, two years later, Bernhard F. Scholz insisted on that fact that:

> Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope […] can indeed be seen to fill a serious gap in Structuralist poetics, namely that of a theory of "story" which will be sensitive to historical change, and which will allow us to talk about "story" not just as a functional re-construal which needs to be undertaken so that the importance of *récit* as essentially reordering and restructuring of *histoire* can be understood, but as a construal in its own right which will allow us better to understand some of the most fundamental characteristics of narrative. (1998: 160; italics in the original)

Novel)" (1986). Nevertheless, his greatest contribution to time as a narrative category appeared fifty years earlier in the form of a book-length essay entitled "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics", which Bakhtin wrote in 1937-1938. This essay contains the germ of Bakhtin's ideas on "the process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature" (1981: 84), and introduces the concept of "chronotope", which Bakhtin presents as follows:

> We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature. (1981: 84)

The chronotope has largely remained one of the least popular of all the concepts Bakhtin introduces in his works, firstly, because this term "does not obviously present itself as part of the dialogic continuum" (Pearce 1994: 18), although, as Morson and Emerson have noted, Bakhtin's "discourse and chronotope theories of the novel are two aspects of the same theory" (1990: 372); secondly, because, for the largest part of his essay, Bakhtin focuses on the diachronic dimension of the chronotope in order to write "a 'historical poetics' that accounts for the 'generic heterogeneity' of European fiction from Greek romance to the nineteenth century in terms of a developing series of 'novelistic chronotopes'" (Burton 1996: 45). As Bakhtin himself explains, "it can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time" (1981: 85). It is not until the very end of his essay, in a section Bakhtin titles "Concluding Remarks" and which he adds to the original essay twenty-five years later in 1973, that his ideas on time and the chronotope are greatly improved as, immediately after providing a summary of his diachronic discoveries, Bakhtin directly addresses the question that is latent in the entire essay, namely "What is the significance of all these chronotopes?" (1981: 250). Bakhtin's response introduces a second dimension of the term chronotope, its synchronic element, "the *representational* power of the chronotope" (250; italics in the original), which accounts for the fact that language is shaped by our understanding of time and space insofar as "every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope" (258) and which is especially useful to approach individual narrative texts such as *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* because:

> What is most obvious is their meaning for *narrative*. They [chronotopes] are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative. […] It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. […] Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements —philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect— gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope. (250; italics in the original)

Bakhtin insists from the very beginning of the essay on the fact that "in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). Space, time, and their relation to plot have traditionally worked as constitutive elements of narrative texts; thus, as Michael Holquist observes, what makes Bakhtin's project more distinctive is his

> radical emphasis on *particularity* and *situatedness*, the degree to which it insists that apparently abstract questions about selfhood are pursuable only when treated as specific questions about *location*. Given this way of looking at things, it is not surprising that Bakhtin devotes so much attention to questions of time and space, and relations between them. (1990: 12-13 italics in the original)

It is my intention to show that in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson may be said to share Bakhtin's way of looking at things in that she problematises *location* as a means to open the way to performativity and the reworking of the self through History and in the process of telling stories.

The Passion and *Sexing the Cherry* are deliberately set in two periods of social transformation and historical change —the French Revolution and the period of the Puritan Commonwealth in England, respectively. In this way, Winterson repeats what Jewel Spears Brooker defines as "a defining feature of modernism, namely, the tendency to move forward by spiralling back and refiguring the past. The main literary reference point will be T. S. Eliot, whose work is paradigmatic in regard to this characteristic" (1994: 1-2). In the first chapter of this work I insisted on the influence modernism in general and T. S. Eliot in particular exert on Winterson and her works of fiction. This is just one of the many arguments in favour of such a statement. Winterson turns to the past in order to open the door to a better, more comprehensive and promising future for both life and literature. Her concern with history, which she has inherited from modernism, in the two books of fiction

under analysis here is based on the ideas of the modernist philosopher F. H. Bradley, for whom history:

> is always invented after the fact. It is always a mental construct, and even in the best of circumstances, […] is never disinterested. In part, writing history is an exercise in self-definition. Inventing historical periods and recognizing themselves in the latest enables people both to see themselves as part of history and to distance themselves, morally and aesthetically, from the previous generation. (Brooker 1994: 8)

The problematising of the categories of space and time together with the historical context in which this philosophical questioning is undertaken, makes of *The Passion*, and especially of *Sexing the Cherry*, two particularly suitable texts to be studied in the light of the Bakhtinian "chronotope" for, as Sue Vice says, "Bakhtin describes the chronotope as a means of measuring how, in a particular genre or age, 'real historical time and space' and 'actual historical persons' are articulated, and also how fictional time, space, and character are constructed in relation to one another" (1997: 200-201). She further explains that:

> Although every text has its own chronotope or set of them, which interact dialogically with other chronotopes within and between texts, some texts are more fruitful to approach in this way than others, for instance those which are set at a particularly fraught historical moment, which set out to represent a historical event, or which adopt one of the forms where relations between time and space are especially clear, such as the road movie, or tales of time travel[17] (202).

The subsequent analyses of the chronotopic relations established in (and between) *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* rest on Vice's assumption that "the relations between time and space, and the human figures that populate it, alter according to the text's setting in both literary and wider history" (201).

17 Significantly enough, I read both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* as representative examples of the quest or adventure narrative, from which the variation that Vice calls "road movie" may be said to stem. *Sexing the Cherry* should not be expected to merely repeat what Winterson already achieves in *The Passion*, though. The reader accompanies the characters in *The Passion* along a spatial journey, whereas *Sexing* engages reader and characters alike in "time travel", a motif which Winterson uses again in *Art & Lies*.

3. TIME, SPACE, AND INTERTEXTUALITY

Added to the three levels of analysis provided by narratology and to the complement they receive from the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope, I will also take into account a fourth narrative level which Gérard Genette has called "transtextuality" and for which Julia Kristeva has coined the more specific term "intertextuality". Onega and García Landa explain intertextuality in association with metafiction insofar as:

> Metafiction often amounts to an act of criticism of previous traditions, because of its links with parody and self-consciousness. A discussion of reflexivity therefore cannot be isolated from intertextuality, the theory of which asserts that no text exists as an autonomous and self-sufficient whole: the writer's and the reader's experience of other texts conditions its form and interpretation. (1996: 32)

The term derives from Mikhail Bakhtin's work on social linguistics and is associated with the notion of "polyglossia", which Bakhtin defines as "the interanimation of languages" (1981: 51) according to which "two myths perish simultaneously: the myth of a language that presumes to be the only language, and the myth of a language that presumes to be completely unified" (68). According to Bakhtin, polyglossia and his revolutionary concept of dialogism are the distinguishing features of the novel as a literary genre:

> The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization –this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel. (263)

Interpreting and refocusing Bakhtin's work from a psychoanalytic perspective, it was Julia Kristeva who actually coined the term "intertextuality" in "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1967) in order to refer to a literary theory that "insists that a text […] cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (Still and Worton 1990: 1). As Linda Hutcheon has clearly stated:

> When Julia Kristeva coined the term 'intertextuality,' she noted that there were three elements involved besides the text under consideration: the author, the reader, and the other exterior texts. These elements she arranged along two axes: a horizontal one of the dialogue with his/her potential reader, and a vertical one between the text itself and other texts (1986: 231)

Thus, for Kristeva, the meaning of a text depends on other texts which it assimilates and parodically transforms. Kristeva also calls attention to the politically subversive nature of this form of intertextuality insofar as it exposes and challenges official and established discourses. Intertextuality and metafiction are key issues in the analysis of the subversive potential of both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* with regard to the monological discourses of history, time, and heterosexuality, as I intend to show in the following chapters.

THREE

TIME, SPACE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN *THE PASSION*

1. HISTORY, IDEOLOGY AND FICTION IN *THE PASSION*

Mikhail Bakhtin's interest in the chronotope is not reduced to the study of the way in which the narrative categories of time and space relate to one another in a particular text. His essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938) has a telling subtitle, "Notes towards a Historical Poetics", which explicitly emphasises his concern with the relationship that is established between a text and the socio-historical context in which it is produced and received. These concerns are prominent in *The Passion*, a novel which was published in 1987, at the end of a self-reflexive decade, which was also deeply interested in history. The discourses of fiction, theory, and history combine in the writings of Peter Ackroyd, Julian Barnes, Charles Palliser, Graham Swift or Rose Tremain, and other British novelists of the 1980s[1]. Linda Hutcheon is one of the first critics to have paid attention to a literary current which she sees to fulfil the poetics of postmodernism and which she calls "historiographic metafiction" (1988). As Hutcheon explains:

> Since *Narcissistic Narrative* was written, a particular variety of metafiction has proved especially popular: what we could call a historiographic mode. What is most significant about this relatively new form is that the hard-won textual autonomy of fiction is challenged paradoxically, by self-referentiality itself. If language, as these texts suggest, constitutes reality (rather than merely reflecting it), readers become the actualizing link between history and fiction. […] Historiographic metafiction, therefore, works to situate itself in history and in discourse, as well as to insist on its autonomous fictional and linguistic nature. (1984: xiv)

By the term "historiographic metafiction", Hutcheon refers, then, to a large body of well-known novels which combine the kind of intense self-reflexivity, inherited from modernism, which is characteristic of metafiction, with historical events, characters and settings depicted in accordance with the most traditional techniques of realism. The conjunction of two apparently disparate terms such as metafiction, on the one hand, and historiography, on the other, clarifies somehow the complex relationship between modernism and postmodernism. Metafiction is the direct inheritance of modernist aesthetic autonomy and self-reflexivity. Historiography, understood not as

[1] Susana Onega has amply dealt with the rise of British historiographic metafiction in the 1980s in her essays "The British Novel in the 80s: Historiographic Metafiction, the Way Ahead?" (1992), "Introduction: 'A Knack for Yarns': The Narrativization of History at the End of History" (1995a), and "The Mythical Element in British Historiographic Metafiction" (1997).

"the history of historical writing" but rather as the more unsettling "studies in the methodology of historical writing[2]" (Canary and Kozicki 1978: xi), grounds modernist aesthetics in the historical, social, and political contextualisation of fiction brought about by postmodernism.

In the nineteen-eighties both postmodern theory and art question the separation of the literary and the historical by focusing on the elements shared by these two modes of writing. Hutcheon details their shared features as follows:

> They have both been seen to derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth; they are both identified as linguistic constructs highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent either in terms of language or structure; and they appear to be equally intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own complex textuality. But there are also the implied teachings of historiographic metafiction. Like those recent theories of both history and fiction, this kind of novel asks us to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time. (1988: 105)

The teachings of historiographic metafiction, as exposed by Hutcheon, are very much in keeping with Bakhtin's assertion, as paraphrased by Sue Vice, that "the relations between time and space, and the human figures which populate them, alter according to the text's setting in both literary and wider history" (1997: 201). In the same line, Susana Onega relates the eclosion of British historiographic metafiction in the nineteen-eighties with "a world-wide phenomenon, which goes back not only to North-American experimental 'fabulation' but also to Spanish-American 'magic-realism' and to Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges in particular" (1992: 94).

As Helena Grice and Tim Woods note, Winterson is "a writer who self-consciously explores the equivocal status of an objective reality. Her fiction frequently calls into question assumptions about narratorial identity, fictional artifice, and objective reality" (1998: 1). She is equally imbued with notions of postmodern philosophical, aesthetic, and political debates. As a result, her ironic (re)writing of history exposes the fact that all representation is unavoidably ideologically laden.

The Passion is basically set in Boulogne, the frozen battlefields in Russia, and Venice, three distinct spaces whose geographical distance is nevertheless

[2] These studies in the methodology of historical writing have been motivated by the rise of the New Historicism, an important contemporary trend among philosophers of history, which does away with historical claims to universality. Louis O. Mink observes that: "Instead of the belief that there is a single story embracing the ensemble of human events, we believe that there are many stories, not only different stories about different events but even different stories about the same events" (1978: 140).

bridged by similar socio-political circumstances[3] derived from the French Revolution and, especially, from the subsequent arrival into power of young General Bonaparte and the events leading to the materialisation of his grandiose idea of becoming the ruler of a dazzling empire. The time of the story expands for about half a century. It begins in approximately 1769 and comes to an end (without conclusion) some time after the year 1824. Roughly speaking, *The Passion* has the rise and fall of Napoleon as historical framework for the stories told from the contextualised perspective of two representatives of traditionally inarticulate classes and equally silenced social groups: respectively a French soldier-cook and a Venetian bisexual woman who is sold to the army as a *vivandière*[4]. These two characters alternate in the roles of narrators. In telling their stories, which are consciously and inevitably linked to the Napoleonic campaigns, Henri and Villanelle offer on the one hand, new versions of history in the first person and from within, firstly, as direct witnesses of and participants in the war and, eventually, as individuals who try to cope with their past and to make sense of it in the light of the present; on the other, they construct their own selves by means of their discourses and represent themselves in the space of the text.

The choice of the French Revolution is by no means casual. A markedly disruptive moment in Western history, it proves especially appealing as the setting of Winterson's book. As J. D'Hondt observes: "La Révolution française a fondé juridiquement et politiquement le monde moderne" (1989: 301). Modernity originates with the spirit of the French Revolution which dethrones worn-out political, religious, and cultural structures and substitutes them by a new set of more democratic principles, derived, as Teresa Ebert has pointed out, from the ideas defended by the Enlightenment:

> En la teoría de la Ilustración radica la esencia del modernismo (que tuvo un gran efecto en la aparición del feminismo a finales del siglo diecinueve y a principios del veinte) con sus principios de igualdad para todos los seres humanos, los derechos humanos universales y el privilegio de la razón y el racionalismo como medios para conseguir una sociedad más justa. (1999: 199)

José Luis Villacañas compares the enormous influence of the French Revolution with Christianism, when he explains that

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3 Anne Duchêne has signalled that "the setting itself is a challenge: the Grand Armée after 1805, and a splendidly dark, brooding backcloth of Venice at the same period" (1987: 697).

4 Henri self-consciously enhances the particularity and significance of these viewpoints when he writes: "Soldiers and women. That's how the world is. Any other role is temporary. Any other role is a gesture" (*P* 45).

> cuando afirmamos que nuestra época comienza con la Revolución Francesa, decimos algo parecido a cuando alguien defiende que nuestra época comienza con el Cristianismo. El que invoca la Revolución Francesa dice que las tareas despejadas por aquel hecho definen el centro de nuestras luchas y problemas, de la misma forma que el cristiano confiesa que su meta práctica consiste en culminar la forma de vida que acabó con la cultura clásica[5]. (1997: 6)

The French Revolution is also groundbreaking in cultural terms. Philosophy and literature[6] come together to sustain and encourage the socio-political revolution. Thinkers like Kant, Hegel, or Fichte express their views on the revolution and contest one another in their postulates, contributing thus to opening the discourse of philosophy to a plurality of perspectives. It is my contention that all these contestatory phenomena add up to the exposure of the reductive nature of monologic discourses and make of Winterson's turning back to History not an end in itself but a means of subversion, a tool for mastery, a way to move forward which necessarily requires the dominion of the past.

The origins of the revolutionary spirit that characterises the historical period in which *The Passion* is set may be said to go back to the extraordinary progress of the sciences and of industrialisation, both of which transform eighteenth-century society and its customs. Still more important, though, is the influence of the theories of the Enlightenment which, as a cultural movement, stimulate people's darkened potential to reasoning and criticism. The most outstanding intellectuals of the period of "the Lights" (or "Les Lumières") encourage their contemporaries to fight for their rights, including the power to make decisions about their own lives without having to blindly obey despotic governors. From the very beginning, *The Passion* presents Henri as a philosopher who is deeply influenced by the theories of the Enlightenment from the moment that he starts to keep a journal and as he engages in the writing of his memoirs. Henri meditates on the way in which the French Revolution and, above all, his past experience serving Bonaparte have conditioned his whole life. In this sense, *The Passion* pictures Henri as a modern man who dreams of being considered an intellectual and shares the same illuminating experience with such contemporary German philosophers as Hegel and Fichte, for whom:

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5 The parallelism between the French Revolution and Christianism is particularly appropriate when read in relation to *The Passion*. Winterson's text overtly emphasises this correspondence not only through the powerful Biblical imagery used but also because of the parodically insistent association the narrative establishes between the figure of Christ and the two character-narrators, Henri and Villanelle.

6 In the next section of this chapter, special attention is paid to the study of the way in which *The Passion* alludes intertextually to the writings of such authors as Stendhal, Madame de Stäel, William Blake or Sir Walter Scott, who bring about radically opposed conceptions of the position of literature with respect to the rapidly changing social situation.

> la experiencia iluminadora clave […] fue la Revolución. Por ella el hombre alcanza su conciencia de que su Yo más originario es libre, mostrándose esa libertad en su capacidad para superar los obstáculos que el mundo cosificado de la naturaleza y de las relaciones despóticas plantea. Esto en Fichte. Por la hazaña de 1789 también, según Hegel, adquieren sentido cumplido las luchas y las pasiones de los hombres de la modernidad, desde el día inaugurado por el *Cogito* cartesiano. En ambos pensadores, la Revolución significó el chispazo decisivo de la autoconciencia humana llevada hasta sus últimas consecuencias. Y ésta era la garantía de que la enseñanza revolucionaria no se olvidaría jamás: nadie olvida quién es, una vez que se ha conocido esencialmente. A partir de la Revolución, la historia de la libertad no podrá jamás regresar al pasado de la servidumbre. (Villacañas 1997: 17)

German philosophy remains the cornerstone of the success of the French Revolution and of its acquiring a double status as a mythical and dangerous episode in Western history. Kant synthesises the two dominant currents in sixteenth and seventeenth-century European philosophy, rationalism and empiricism, under the philosophical current known as transcendentalism. As Joachim Kopper explains:

> La réflexion transcendentale a besoin d'être complétée par l'expérience. Cette expérience qui, en tant qu'elle, est une expérience totale et unique contient toutefois en elle ces deux moments, qui lui donnent sa structure et sa cohérence; le grand événement historique d'une part et la contemplation enthusiasmée des spectateurs non engagés de l'autre. La réflexion transcendentale, qui n'est pas seulement la réflexion d'un seul homme, Kant, mais par laquelle s'exprime un état de conscience universellement et publiquement atteint, est capable de réunir en elle ces deux moments dans leur signification unique et totale et par cette réunion elle accède à la veritable compréhension du sense intelligible de l'événement de la Révolution française. (1993: 274)

Kant is convinced of the fact that History inevitably advances towards progress and towards the affirmation of truly democratic political regimes, which means that the French Revolution is for him a necessary stage, a "grand événement historique". This conviction conditions his own uncritical attitude towards the savage consequences derived from the radicalisation of the revolutionary process. Kant blindly welcomes the momentuous changes that the Revolution brings about and disregards all the crimes that are committed in the name of individual freedom and political progress. François Azouvi observes that, strictly speaking, the foundations of Kantian philosophy are similar to those that fuelled the revolution, to the extent that both of them follow parallel lines of development, since

> au fondement du kantisme, il y a donc un excès: excès d'ambition, excès de complication dans le vocabulaire —une science bien faite, et une langue bien faite est une langue claire— excès de passion. Excès d'esprit critique enfin. Or ceci n'est évidemment pas sans rapport avec la Révolution française. La relation est très claire pour Degérand, comme elle l'était pour Michel Berr: ce sont "les mêmes causes" qui ont amené la révolution politique et la révolution kantienne. (1993: 201)

Hegel agrees with Kant in understanding that revolution and philosophy have the same substructure, although his attitude towards the French Revolution is less

passionate than Kant's. Henri's meditations on the French Revolution and on his experience at Bonaparte's orders are much more reminiscent of Hegel's philosophical system and on his views of History[7]. Hegel's attitude towards the French Revolution is much more cautious than Kant's even though J. D'Hondt contends that Hegel may be called "le philosophe de la Révolution française, au sens où il l'accompagne intellectuellement" (1989: 295). Just as Henri tries to do when he starts to write his memoirs, Hegel "tente d'en élaborer une explication exhaustive et profonde" of what he considers to be "le phénomène historique fondamental de l'époque moderne, et qui désormais conditionnera toute la suite". The course of the French Revolution did indeed condition Hegel's philosophical system for, as D'Hondt's states, "dans son oeuvre, on peut déceler une correspondance, très approximative, entre les grandes reprises du mouvement révolutionnaire et les variations successives de la pensée" (295).

Paul Naulin likewise defends Fichte's engagement with the French Revolution by arguing that it is precisely Fichte, one of Kant's disciples, that occupies a singular and privileged situation among the philosophers who have meditated on the French Revolution:

> Pour lui, en effet, révolution et philosophie sont deux faces d'un même combat, tout à la fois politique et spirituel: la lutte du peuple français contre le despotisme dont il était le spectateur attentif tandis qu'il commençait à élaborer sa philosophie conforte sa critique du dogmatisme, c'est-à-dire d'une doctrine qui, en asservissant le moi aux choses, cautionne en quelque manière le despotisme. Dans les deux cas, il s'agit d'un choix fondamental, exclusif de tout compromis, en faveur de la liberté. Ainsi, la défense de la Révolution française n'est pas une tâche contingente, mais un engagement que lui impose sa vocation en tant que philosophe. (1989: 287)

Freedom is one of the most favoured conditions of humanity by the end of the eighteenth century in Europe. Even the French monarch Louis XVI is deeply concerned with the issues of equality and freedom which are so dear to the intellectuals of the time and he proves unable to sustain an inherited form of government which he is not in accordance with. The King's passivity results in the eventual success of the French Revolution which *The Passion* offers as a *fait accompli* because none of its protagonists have been direct witnesses to it. Henri, for example, remembers how

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7 Scott Wilson provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between Hegel's philosophy of history and Henri's narrative discourse. According to Wilson,

> more important than the fact that Henri's micronarrative tells the larger story, the grand narrative, his tale appears to repeat, in its desire and its linearity, the all-encompassing project characteristic of a Hegelian history. It does this in the form of an implied critique, of course. Henri wishes to put love back into the heart of a communitarian politics as the means of recognition and self-identity. Henri is always on the point of homogenising the world into familiar Hegelian categories. (1998: 67)

> I was only five when the Revolution turned Paris into a free man's city and France into the scourge of Europe. Our village was not very far down the Seine, but we might have been living on the moon. No one really knew what was happening except that King and Queen were imprisoned. We relied on gossip, but the priest crept back and forth relying on his cloth to save him from the canon or the knife. The village was divided. Most felt King and Queen are right though King and Queen had no care for us, except as revenue and scenery. But these are my words, taught to me by a clever man who was no respecter of persons. (*P* 16)

The Passion focuses instead on the emergent figure of a young revolutionary, General Bonaparte[8], and links his military career to the personal development of a fictional character, Henri, firstly, as an inexperienced young man, and, later, as an adult who critically revises his past experience of war and the army, as well as his blind loyalty to the great leader. At the beginning of the first part of the book, significantly titled "The Emperor", Henri, as would-be historian, brings his story to a halt in order to provide what intends to be a detached portrait of his hero:

> Bonaparte, the Corsican. Born in 1769, a Leo.
>
> Short, pale, moody, with an eye to the future and a singular ability to concentrate. In 1789 revolution opened a closed world and for a time the meanest street boy had more on his side than any aristocrat. For a young Lieutenant skilled in artillery, the chances were kind and in a few years General Bonaparte was turning Italy into the fields of France. (*P* 12)

General of the French army at the age of 27, Bonaparte carries out a brilliant campaign against the Austrians in Italy which grants him the chance to make a name for himself among the most reknown politicians of the age. *The Passion* significantly gives prominence to one of the cities conquered by Napoleon, Venice, and presents it through the fabulous account of Villanelle, the female protagonist of the story,

> après la chute de la République et au moment de l'occupation franco-autrichienne. Jeanette Winterson a choisie d'évoquer non pas les heures de gloire de la Venise du XVIe siècle, mais le début de sa décadence à la fin du XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècles, moment où la liberté de mœurs devint perversion et où on s'éturdit de plaisir pour oublier l'occupation […]. La décadence de Venise offre un contrepoint à la lente déchéance de Napoléon évoquée par ailleurs[9]. (Regnier 1994: 27)

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8 Despite the fact that Napoleon is one of the central characters in the book, *The Passion* is not a historical novel in the traditional sense of the word. Winterson refuses to deal with historical facts or documented details. Hers is not a nostalgic revival of a glorious past but a critical revision of givens, a means of introducing different versions of the same historical events, a way of opening an intense dialogue with official history, which is completed in *Sexing the Cherry*.

9 The literary historian Élisabeth Ravoux-Rallo provides a description of eighteenth-century Venice which emphasises the general tone of *The Passion*. Ravoux-Rallo blames the conservative attitudes of Venetian governors towards historical change and the ideas favoured by the Enlightenment:

> Las ideas, las aspiraciones y las teorías de la clase dirigente estaban en absoluta contradicción con las nuevas ideas, y fueron estas ideas las que mataron al Gobierno de Venecia, basado en la autoridad, el derecho tradicional, el interés de la dinastía, y no sobre la libertad, el interés del

Villanelle's discourse in "The Queen of Spades" corroborates Christine Regnier's words. Villanelle notes that

> Since Bonaparte captured our city of mazes in 1797, we've more or less abandoned ourselves to pleasure. What else is there to do when you lived a proud and free life and suddenly you're not proud and free any more? We became an enchanted island for the mad, the rich, the bored, the perverted. Our glory days were behind us but our excess was just beginning. (*P* 52)

General Bonaparte continues his occupation of foreign territories to the glory of France and his own. The Italian campaigns are immediately followed by a one-year campaign in Egypt. As Bonaparte advances, his legend enlarges. Henri explains that "I knew about Egypt because Bonaparte had been there. His Egyptian campaign, doomed but brave, where he had remained immune from the plague and the fever and ridden miles in the dust without a drop of water" (*P* 17-18). The legend gets tinted with connotations of religious myth when the text alludes to the easiness with which Henri's tutor fuses political and religious matters, two equally coercitive forms of power, when he talks about Bonaparte:

> The priest said we were living in the last days, that the Revolution would bring a new Messiah and the millennium on earth. […] He took me on his knees, holding me against the black cloth that smelled of age and hay, and told me not to be afraid of rumours in our village that everyone in Paris was either starving or dead. "Christ said he came not to bring peace but a sword, Henri, remember that." (*P* 16)

When Henri was a boy, every single event in his everyday life seemed to turn around one vortex, Napoleon Bonaparte, the hero, the redeemer. Henri remembers again how

> for years, my mentor, the priest who had supported the Revolution, told me that Bonaparte was perhaps the Son of God come again. I learned his battles and campaigns instead of history and geography. I have lain with the priest on an old and impossibly folded map of the world looking at the places he had gone and watching the frontiers of France push slowly out. The priest carried a drawing of Bonaparte next to his drawing of the Blessed Virgin and I grew up with both. (*P* 15-16)

Just as the images of Bonaparte and the Blessed Virgin are mixed in Henri's childhood memories, Napoleon's (his)story and Henri's story blur into one another from the moment when Henri is recruited for the army and follows the emperor through Eastern Europe up to the Russian winter. There he realises that "there's no such thing as a limited victory. One conquest only leads on, ineluctably, to another, to protect what has been won" (*P* 105). Eventually, Henri deserts and escapes from

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> individuo y el derecho nuevo. Venecia no pudo adaptarse. En el siglo XVIII es como una fachada maravillosa, que sólo cubre ruinas, una reminiscencia del pasado. (2001: xix)

the physical hold of Napoleon, although he is still so emotionally attached to him that he will keep on recording in his memoirs Napoleon's downfall after the battle of Waterloo and his death on the island of St Helena: "I can hear Bonaparte; he didn't last long on his rock. He put on weight and caught a cold, and he who survived the plagues of Egypt and the zero winter died in the mild damp" (*P* 133).

History gets rewritten in *The Passion*. The story of the Napoleonic wars, as traditionally portrayed by history books, is the story of the military successes of a polemical man whose deeds brought about the expansion of the French Empire in the last decades of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Winterson offers a different version of the same events, the Napoleonic wars, by resorting to the perspective of a disillusioned young man, who initially partakes of the general climate of passionate enthusiasm and chooses to become a soldier but who is physically and psychologically destroyed by Napoleon's unquenchable thirst for power. Thus, Winterson uses Henri's progressive process of disappointment to undermine patriarchy and its claims to universal history and completes her picture with the point of view of a brave Venetian woman, Villanelle, who is also forced to follow Bonaparte in his mad military career. Both Henri and Villanelle denounce that the rise of Bonaparte progressively naturalises another form of patriarchy in the newly born order installed by the revolution. Napoleon and the Russian Czar become patriarchal figures *par excellence*, symbols of power and oppression in the book, the butts of Winterson's criticism.

Unlike Henri, Villanelle is not emotionally attached to either the Generals she has been sold to or the historical situation in which she is immersed quite by chance, not by choice. Villanelle disregards History just as she despises Napoleon. Her concern is neither with the past nor the future; she is only interested in the present, which she tries to enjoy as much as she can regardless of its conditions. Villanelle loses her freedom and is reduced to a mere commodity, an object of exchange but, paradoxically, she is never Napoleon's or History's victim, like Henri. Quite on the contrary, Villanelle is always in control and enjoys the multiple chances that the present offers her so long as she sticks to what she values most, her independence and her emotional liberty. Villanelle is then as much concerned with the issue of freedom as Henri, although, unlike Henri, she fights once and again to regain what she has lost within the very world of experience, not by retreating from it into the realm of the mind, as Henri does.

It has already been signalled that Henri is deeply influenced by the theories of the Enlightenment and that, therefore, he values reason over experience. Kant

affirms that knowledge depends on the structure of the mind, not on that of the world. For Kant, it is the representation of the object rather than the object itself that makes the representation possible. This statement and its implication that knowledge, therefore, "has no connection to the world and is not even true *representation*, but a solipsistic or intersubjective fantasy" (Ross 2002: 1; italics in the original), has a special relevance for the analysis of Henri's conscious retreat from the empirical world in an attempt to acquire a true knowledge of himself. Henri trusts reason to bring some order to the chaos of his past experience and realises that self-cognition is only possible once the mind has been liberated from all empirical distractions, which is why he chooses to remain in San Servelo, the realm of the mind *par excellence*, as I explain later in this chapter. Paradoxically, then, although San Servelo is depicted in the book as a prison and a madhouse, it is here that Henri achieves both freedom from the slavery of History and true knowledge of himself. Henri goes back to his past as a necessary movement to control it. Writing himself, mastering his experience of the world in language and syntax, is the best way to escape from the constraints of History. Only when Henri admits the power of his story over History, as grand narrative, does he reach a position from which to move forward and from which to enter a new creative project: making a garden, a "forest of red roses" (*P* 160). At least this is what Henri would like readers to believe in spite of the fact that behind this moment of self-cognition lurks the ghost of madness and self-delusion.

2. THE METAFICTIONAL ELEMENT IN *THE PASSION*

In *The Passion*, Winterson's rewriting of world history is combined with overt self-consciousness[10] or "narcissism", as Linda Hutcheon called it in *Narcissistic Narrative* (1984). In this book, Hutcheon signals two main forms of narcissism, namely the "linguistic mode" in which "the text would actually show its building blocks —the very language whose referents serve to construct that imaginative world" (1984: 28) and the "diegetic mode" in which "the text displays itself as narrative, as the gradual building of a fictive universe complete with character and action" (28). In keeping with this, *The Passion* is presented as a linguistic artefact which focuses on the process of actually writing the fictional text we are reading at the moment. This creative process demands completion by means of the active participation of the reader. This is what Hutcheon calls "mimesis of process" (5), an expression which is equally valid to describe the processes of writing and reading the text insofar as metafictional texts are endlessly rewritten from the interrelation between author and reader.

Aware of the debate concerning the relationship between postmodernism and its immediate literary precursor, modernism, Hutcheon argues that "the 'post' of 'postmodernism' would therefore suggest not 'after', so much as an extension to modernism and a reaction to it" (1984: 2). Thus, she contends, postmodernist fiction inherits and expands on one of the most outstanding features of modernist fiction[11], its concern with the plausibility of narrative texts, while simultaneously laying bare narrative conventions. This narcissistic self-conscious attempt at making explicit the artificiality of fiction is labelled *metafiction* by Patricia Waugh, who defines it as "a

10 In the terminology used by Robert Alter. In the introduction to his work, Alter explains: "A self-conscious novel, briefly, is a novel that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and that by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality" (1978: x).

11 Patricia Waugh describes metafiction as "a mode of writing within a broader cultural movement often referred to as post-modernism" and argues that "post-modernism can be seen to exhibit the same sense of crisis and loss of belief in an external authoritative system of order as that which prompted modernism. Both affirm the constructive powers of the mind in the face of apparent phenomenal chaos" (1984: 21). Other interesting theories of self-reflexive fiction are provided by Robert Scholes (1967, 1979), Inger Christensen (1981), and Brian Stonehill (1988).

term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (1984: 2). Waugh further extends the functionality of metafiction when she alludes to its potential for social criticism and political agency:

> Metafiction thus converts what it sees as the negative values of outworn literary conventions into the basis of a potentially constructive social criticism. It suggests, in fact, that there may be as much to be learnt from setting the mirror up to its own linguistic and representational structures as from directly setting it up to a hypothetical "human nature" that somehow exists as an essence outside historical systems of articulation. (11)

Metafiction is then a paradoxical mode of fiction which acts in two complementary ways: firstly, the author produces a world in which "the reader is required to identify the products being imitated —characters, actions, settings— and recognize their similarity to those in empirical reality" (Hutcheon 1984: 38); but she or he also makes these conventions explicit disrupting linguistic and narrative codes, thus laying bare the illusion of reality and proclaiming the contrived nature of the text as artefact. The alternation of realism-enhancing with realism-undermining mechanisms provides the essential deconstructive method of metafiction, which forces the reader to become aware of the linguistic status of representation.

As John Barth argues in his essay "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction", metafiction replenishes exhausted conventions using parody, pastiche, intertextuality, the *mise en abyme*, and many other forms of linguistic and narrative playfulness, such as the direct address to the reader (1980: 65-71).

The Passion focuses on its status as linguistic artefact with the double aim of problematising the relationship between fiction and reality, and of emphasising the complementarity of the reading and writing processes. As Elizabeth Ermarth argues: "Reading, like any other use of consciousness is literally writing in the expanded sense of inscribing and reinscribing the languages or discourses of culture" (1992: 71). Henri explicitly relates writing and reading when he says that "I go on writing so that I will always have something to read" (*P* 159).

The status of narrative as linguistic artefact is overtly exposed in *The Passion* by means of four basic techniques. Frequent allusions to the processes of storytelling and writing are accompanied by direct addresses to the reader, a manifest concern with the way in which language produces meaning and with the limitations of language to represent experience, and "a parodic, playful, excessive or deceptively naïve style of writing" (Waugh 1984: 2). In *The Passion* self-conscious references to the process of writing the text call attention to the way in which experience is constructed in language. These self-conscious references are interspersed with the

narrative product itself, leading to the willed confusion of process and product. Henri's activity as a writer is hinted at by Villanelle when she says referring to Henri's first few months in San Servelo that "he said he had his notebooks and he was busy" (*P* 143). Henri himself alludes explicitly to it when he informs his readers that

> I have to stop writing now. I have to take my exercise. They expect you to take your exercise at the same time each day, otherwise they start to worry about your health. They like to keep us healthy here so that when the visitors come they go away satisfied. I hope I will have a visitor today. (*P* 81)

A third reference to the process of writing counterbalances the apparent neutrality of the two previous allusions by insisting on the impossibility of providing an objective account even of what you know best, your own life story. Thus, a dismal Henri acknowledges that

> When I think of that night, here in this place where I will always be, my hands tremble and my muscles ache. I lose all sense of day or night, I lose all sense of my work, writing this story, trying to convey to you what really happened. Trying not to make up too much. I can think of it by mistake, my eyes blurring the words in front of me, my pen lifting and staying lifted, I can think of it for hours and yet it is always the same moment I think of. Her hair as she bent over me, red with streaks of gold, her hair on my face and chest and looking up at her through her hair. She left it fall over me and I felt I was lying in the long grass, safe. (*P* 103)

Henri accounts for the inherent partiality and subjectivity of all narratives when he observes that no matter his efforts to reduce experience in his writing and to level the weight of his memories he cannot escape from the dominion of passion and of those moments of epiphany that illuminate his whole life and serve as guiding forces when things go wrong. The above reference to Henri's writing process exposes the supposed neutrality of the previous two because the three texts mentioned establish an inescapable connection between the act of writing and the space in which Henri initiates his work as a writer. Henri never addresses such a space by providing its actual name: it is either a simple "here" (*P* 81) or a slightly more elaborated "here in this place where I will always be" (*P* 103). It is Villanelle who connects Henri's "here" with San Servelo, the madhouse on the island. The text is ambiguous enough to suggest a triple interpretation of Henri's refusal to locate himself in space: "perhaps he has lost himself", as Villanelle imagines (*P* 150), and is unable to position himself inside temporal and spatial co-ordinates as a result of his mental illness; or perhaps he is deliberately being mysterious in order to increase the proximity between his discourse and the mode of fantasy he has eventually decided to espouse; or perhaps he is afraid of the fact that nobody will believe his story to be

true if he acknowledges that he has written it after having been declared insane. Obviously the choice among these suggestions depends only upon the attitude with which different readers might approach Henri's narrative. This means that Henri always has his reader in mind and suggests multiple possibilities in order to make his text attractive for a wider audience, regardless of the background and the expectations that each of his implied readers may bring with them. As Hutcheon argues,

> What has *always* been a truism of fiction, the making of fictive worlds and the constructive, creative functioning of language itself, are now self-consciously shared by author and reader. The latter is no longer asked merely to recognize that fictional objects are "life like"; he is asked to participate in the creation of worlds and of meaning, through language. He cannot avoid this call to action for he is caught in that paradoxical position of being forced by the text to acknowledge the fictionality of the world he too is creating, yet his very participation involves him intellectually, creatively, and perhaps even affectively in a human act that is very real, that is, in fact, a kind of metaphor of his daily efforts to "make sense" of experience. (1984: 30; italics in the original)

The role of the reader is further textualised in *The Passion* through the very frequent direct addresses the narrator makes to its implied reader. Occasionally the conversation between narrator and implied reader is overtly spatialised in the text in the form of a dialogue in which different typographies are used as identity markers:

> She touched my back and when I turned round took my hand and placed it on her breast.
> Her heart was beating.
> *Not possible*.
> I tell you her heart was beating. (*P* 121; italics in the original)

In this particular example the implied reader becomes explicit, materialising inside the narrative space and voicing its surprise about the fantastic revelation that the narrator has just made. The use of italics[12] marks the phrase "not possible" as different from the rest of the narrative, calling attention to its source and hinting at the voice of an other which interrupts the story the narrator is telling. The narrator, for his part, resorts to the authority he has been granted as both main voice and direct witness of the events and acknowledges the existence of a "you", different from and perhaps independent of the telling "I". Apart from acting as a narrative frame break, the introduction of the implied reader inside the narrative contributes to bridging ontological differences and to establish a higher degree of intimacy and confidence, which may guarantee a certain disposition with regard to otherwise fairly dubious

[12] In *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson uses typographical and other visual indicators as identity markers of the several characters that populate the space of the text, as I show in the fourth chapter of this work.

stories. A similar move is at play in the following quotation, where the narrator provokes the reader to verify what he is saying and to extract some evidence from experience:

> At midnight the bells ring out from every one of their churches and they have a hundred and seven at least. I have tried to count, but it is a living city and no one really knows what buildings are there from one day to the next.
> You don't believe me?
> Go and see for yourself. (*P* 158-159)

Here, the voice of the sceptic other is not graphically represented but its presence is suggested in the question that the narrator addresses a "you", which is challenged to verify the narrator's words on observable evidence and to accept the truthfulness of his narration.

At least three of the refrains which recur rhythmically in the text are direct addresses to the reader: "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (*P* 5, passim), "You play. You win. You play. You lose. You play" (*P* 17, passim) or "What you risk reveals what you value" (*P* 43, passim). The ideological implications associated with these refrains are analysed in the next section. Here I would like to pay attention to the doubly self-conscious function they have in the text. Firstly, the fact that they are constantly repeated enhances the artificiality of the fiction in which they are inscribed. But these refrains are also used to provide the narrative text with a rhythmic pattern that disrupts the intrinsic linearity of writing and enhances the spiral structure of the narrative. Elizabeth Ermarth calls this structuring device "rhythmic time" and engages it chronotopically with textual space:

> Rather than embalming the past in a commanding structure of significance, rhythmic time keeps its precise, concrete details in play and in process of constant renewal. In a complex and specific rhythm each sequence works out its exploratory repetition, its obscure enterprise of form, uniquely specifying the discursive potentials that belong to a collectivity, a text, a life. (1992: 213)

Thematically, the refrains "You play. You win. You play. You lose. You play" (*P* 17, passim) and "What you risk reveals what you value" (*P* 43, passim), which are indistinctly repeated by Henri and Villanelle, work as leitmotifs partaking of the same semantic field of chance, risk, and play to which one of the central leitmotifs of *The Passion*, gambling, also belongs. Focusing on the elements of risk in *The Passion*, Bényei Tamás argues that the text is structured around the tension between memory and oblivion:

> In fact, the text is involved in constantly putting itself at risk, constantly trying to lose its way; it is as if it had no memory. It practices what Nietzsche called "active forgetting": what has been said does not constrain the possibilities of what can still be said, and thus the

> text does not rely on its previously accumulated knowledge. Every sentence —however banal and brief, however oblivious of what has come before— risks itself. They are unaware of each other —hence both their naiveté and danger. The same logic of forgetting is also the logic behind one of the text's key metaphors for the world of passion: gambling. (1997: 201)

The gambling motif alludes not only to the characters' bent for risk-taking and their experiencing of passion but also to the self-conscious representation of the text as risk, as excess. Villanelle calls herself a gambler and acknowledges that "we gamble with the hope of winning, but it's the thought of what we might lose that excites us" (*P* 89). Tamás observes that Villanelle, Henri's narrative and the text itself reflect the same kind of movement[13], which she describes as "motion without telos, that is, without a teleology that would structure the events into a coherent accumulation of meaning and logic"[14] (1997: 203). The gambling motif is less conspicuous but equally present in Henri's life from his early childhood, as he remembers, "because the priest also supplemented his meagre income by betting and gambling I learned every card game and a few tricks" (*P* 12). Some pages later Henri admits that gambling is a form of entertainment for his dull hours as a soldier: "when the first exhausted messenger galloped into the camp warning us that Bonaparte was travelling non-stop and would arrive before noon we were sprawled in our shirt-sleeves drinking coffee and playing dice" (*P* 17). Henri only refers explicitly to the gambling motif as a pastime but, taking into account that gambling in *The Passion* is a metaphor for passion, Henri proves to be a gambler not only at a surface but also at a deeper level, which Tamás relates to religious passion by noticing that Henri divides

> passion into two distinct realms or two opposing kinds of desire. One is the desire for life, for finding oneself, for safety in stillness. The other is a base, violent emotion, a passionate rage for absolute loss, a desire whose principle is the desire for death as the ultimate risk to sovereign existence[15]. By this he repeats what —according to Bataille— Christianity did to the domain of the sacred, dividing it up into what Henri calls "holy," on the one hand, and filth or impurity, on the other […], excluding the latter from the realm of the sacred altogether. (1997: 205)

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13 Pamela Petro expands on the idea of self-reflexivity further when she establishes a neat connection between Villanelle and Winterson through the gambling motif. Petro signals that

> Winterson is a writer to whom literary gambling comes naturally. Language offers choices: it's the author's gamble as to which words will make her tale irresistible. Winterson adds to this challenge the task of wresting erotic ambiguity from commonplace words. She is an inventive, idiosyncratic, and subtle wordsmith, whose novels seem poised on the brink of poetry. (1992: 66).

14 Tamás is wrong, though. The novel seems to have no "telos", as she says, but it is neatly structured, as Onega shows, following the structure of the Tarot (1993). This ambivalence between apparent chaos and neat underlying structure is characteristic of historiographic metafiction.

15 Georges Bataille calls sovereign existence "a mode of life that characterises the world of passion. The sovereign person is ruled by a will to be, subordinated to nothing, and refuses to conduct his or her life according to projects or plans" (in Tamás 1997: 201).

The importance of chance and risk in *The Passion* is a central concern of the next section of this chapter. Suffice it to add, for the time being, that the insistence on the gambling motif is also a metaphor for the playful relation with language and narrative conventions that is displayed in metafiction. Waugh argues that

> The more "playful" a literary work (the more, for example, it shifts from everyday to alternative world contexts), the more such metalanguages are needed if the relationship between the "real" and the "fictive" world is to be maintained and understood. In metafictional novels it is the nature of this relationship which is the subject of enquiry. […] In metafiction [the historical world and the alternative world of fantasy] are always held in a state of tension, and the relationship between them —between "play" and "reality"— is the main focus of the text. (1984: 37-38)

The Passion is undeniably such a metafictional text and, as a result, it evinces a deep concern with language[16]: with the way in which the meaning of words is culturally produced and with the inability of words to translate feeling, experience or thought. Elizabeth Ermarth explains that:

> The materiality of language is always in view in a postmodern text, and any putative "neutrality" that language might once have appeared to possess remains conspicuously absent. Language is not neutral and not single. In postmodernism, language means residence in a particular discourse, and alternative semantic systems or discourses are not just alternate views or versions of "a reality" that remains beyond them. (1992: 3-4)

Henri, as surrogate author, is especially careful with the choice of words in his discourse. He is perfectly aware of the fact that he is reconstructing his life story through language, a fact which explains his self-conscious attitude towards words and their meanings. Thus he appropriates those terms he learns from the books he reads and with which he feels particularly identified. Madame de Staël, for example, is quoted as one of his sources: "I once bought a book of hers from a travelling pedlar who'd had it from a ragged nobleman. I didn't understand much but I learned the word 'intellectual' which I would like to apply to myself" (*P* 9). Henri is extremely careful to use words in its correct context and he is explicitly critical with his own utterances, an example of which is the parenthetical remark "(I sound like a street urchin)" (*P* 36). Furthermore, Henri overtly criticises the way in which language hides social injustices when he calls attention to the use by power structures of such linguistic euphemisms as the word *vivandière*; Henri denounces the harsh reality concealed underneath:

16 This is by no means an exclusive trait of *The Passion* but rather a common concern in Winterson's works of both fiction and criticism. Pamela Petro calls Winterson "a sorceress with language" because, as she states, "her slim books are packed with the stuff of speech and reflection in pure, concentrated form, undiluted with extraneous modifiers and unbothered by pleasantries like transitions" (1993: 112).

> Napoleon himself ordered *vivandières* to be sent to special camps. *Vivandière* is an optimistic army word. He sent tarts who had no reason to be *vivant* about anything. Their food was often worse than ours, they had us as many hours of the day as we could stand and the pay was poor. The well-padded town tarts took pity on them and were often to be seen visiting the camps with blankets and loaves of bread. The *vivandières* were runaways, strays, younger daughters of too-large families, servant girls who'd got tired of giving it away to drunken masters, and fat old dames who couldn't ply their trade anywhere else. (*P* 38; italics in the original)

Henri also problematises referentiality in language by arguing, first, that quite frequently words are used as substitutes for the "real" thing:

> I was happy but happy is an adult word. You don't have to ask a child about happy, you see it. They are or they are not. Adults talk about being happy because largely they are not. Talking about it is the same as trying to catch the wind. Much easier to let it blow all over you. This is where I disagree with the philosophers. They talk about passionate things but there is no passion in them. Never talk happiness with a philosopher. (*P* 25-26)

and, secondly, by exposing the negative anaesthetising effect that customary use of words has on representation and on our perception of the world and its miseries. Thus, Henri explains that: "Words like devastation, rape, slaughter, carnage, starvation are lock and key words to keep the pain at bay. Words about war that are easy on the eye" (*P* 5). Henri seems to imply that in repeatedly naming the horrors in our societies we deprive those words from their true meaning while we dilute the harshness of the reality they are meant to uncover. Henri realises that an excess of familiarity with language provokes the vacuity of words and the inability of language to convey the intensity of experience. Henri suggests defamiliarisation to fight against the normalisation of language:

> when I had regarded myself for the first time, I regarded the world and saw it to be more various and beautiful than I thought. Like most people I enjoyed the hot evenings and the smell of food and the birds that spike the sky, but I was not a mystic man nor a man of God and I did not feel the ecstasy I had read about. I longed for feeling though I could not have told you that. Words like passion and ecstasy, we learn them but they stay flat on the page. Sometimes we try and turn them over, find out what's on the other side, and everyone has a story to tell of a woman or a brother or an opium night or a war. We fear it. We fear passion and laugh at too much love and those who love too much. (*P* 155)

and against the waning of meaning:

> I re-read my notebook today and I found:
>
> I say I'm in love with her, what does that mean?
>
> It means I review my future and my past in the light of this feeling. It is as though I wrote in a foreign language that I am suddenly able to read. Wordlessly she explains to myself; like genius she is ignorant of what she does.
>
> I go on writing so that I will always have something to read. (*P* 159)

Self-consciousness in language results in the problematisation of narrative order. Storytelling and the fragmentation of narrative are two devices that *The Passion* uses as a means of defamiliarisation and as appropriate modes for the description of love and passion.

> For the reader/critic of metafiction, overt diegetic narcissism seems to involve the thematizing within the story of its storytelling concerns —parody, narrative conventions, creative process— with an eye to teaching him his new, more active role. For the metafictionist himself this thematizing operation is also central. (Hutcheon 1984: 53)

Linda Hutcheon stresses the importance of two literary devices which are frequently used in this thematising process to which the above quotation makes reference. These are parody and the *mise en abyme*. *The Passion* is a book about storytelling which overtly places fictionality, structure, and language at the core of its contents. The literary technique known as *mise en abyme* and the overt and covert citations of literary traditions and specific works are especially productive as thematising devices.

"Est mise en abîme tout miroir interne réfléchissant l'ensemble du récit par réduplication simple, répétée ou spécieuse," explains Lucien Dällenbach in his work *Le récit spéculaire* (1977: 52). Since its adoption by the French *nouveau roman*, the term *mise en abyme* became so popular as to pervade the field of literary criticism and many other neighbouring areas. There is, however, no appropriate translation into English for a term which was first coined in 1950. A metaphor rests behind it, the heraldic image of a shield which includes within itself a smaller shield which in its turn reproduces an exact image of the shield in which it is embedded. This metaphor led such authors of the *nouveau roman* as André Gide to see the *mise en abyme* simply as "the work within the work". Dällenbach proves that the term is more complex, however. He theorises three different types of *mise en abyme*: of the utterance, which he defines as "une citation de contenu ou un résumé intertextuel"[17] (1977: 76); of the enunciation, which Dällenbach understands as "la 'présentification' diégetique du producteur ou du récepteur du récit"[18] (100); and of the code, which is the one that makes "intelligible le mode de fonctionnement du récit" (127). Although these three types of *mise en abyme* are explicitly used in *The*

[17] An example of the *mise en abyme* of the utterance is the epigraph from Euripides's *Medea* — "You have navigated with raging soul far from the paternal home, passing beyond the seas' double rocks and now you inhabit a foreign land" (*P* v)—, which may be said to synthesise both Henri's and Villanelle's stories, as Susana Onega has argued in "*The Passion*: Jeanette Winterson's Uncanny Mirror of Ink" (1993).

[18] In the process of writing his memoirs, Henri mirrors the activity of the empirical author, who thus becomes present within the text.

Passion, it is the latter that has greater interest in that it offers different spatio-temporal metaphors that reflect the structure of *The Passion*: namely the tapestry in the house of the Queen of Spades and number eight in its relation with the shape of the city of Venice.

Searching for Villanelle's heart in the house of her lover, Henri is captivated by "a tapestry some three quarters done" (*P* 119) which pictures "a young woman cross-legged in front of a pack of cards. It was Villanelle" (*P* 119). The tapestry pictures Villanelle just as she is drawn as a character in the narrative text which the reader is in the process of both reading and recreating. The tapestry, as fabric, is an emblematic metaphor for narrative texts in that it activates the etymological root of the word "text". A text, like a tapestry, is a webbed structure, a relational net in which several elements are arranged to compose its structure, its texture. In order to emphasise the fact that the tapestry mirrors the narrative text, Winterson makes the two fabrics develop at a similar pace. Neither of them is finished when the image of the tapestry is conjured up by Henri. The first reference to the tapestry, which was "some three-quarters done", appears on page 119, which roughly marks the first three-quarters of the book itself.[19] Villanelle is pictured by both tapestry and story but her image is still incomplete.

Two pages later, Villanelle asks Henri to describe the house of her lover just as he has seen it. Henri, as narrator, reduces his description to the syncretic sentence "I told her of each room" (*P* 121), avoiding repetition, because the reader is already familiar with the details. Yet he indulges in the description of the tapestry which, although new to Villanelle, is presented twice to the reader, who this time is allowed to witness Villanelle's reaction towards the tapestry, an object which is thus made to stand out from the rest:

> then I told her about the tapestry. Her face whitened.
> "But you say it was not finished?"
> "It was three-quarters finished."
> "And it was me? You're sure?"
> Why was she so upset? Because if the tapestry had been finished and the woman had woven in her heart, she would have been a *prisoner* for ever. (*P* 121; italics added)

Henri poses the right question indeed and the suggested answer insists on the idea of freedom. Villanelle is afraid of becoming a prisoner not only of her lover, who would have possessed Villanelle's heart for ever, but also of the sense of completion provided by both tapestry and narrative text as works of art, which would transform

[19] Bearing in mind that *The Passion* is composed of 160 pages, its three-quarters would correspond to approximately page 120.

her into a fixed, unitary subject, instead of the subject-in-process, whose multiplicity she insists on preserving. Surrendering to the fixity of representation, whether through embroidery or description, can be read as Villanelle's allowance to be trapped by modernity or, as Robyn Wiegman puts it, "as, in fact, the refusal to jettison contradiction in favour of modernity's quest for totality and coherence, for a singular and romantic tapestry, unified regardless of its many colored threads" (1994: 13). As has already been explained, Villanelle favours multiplicity and process, rather than unity or completion.

Besides, the tapestry is a reflection of the power of art to blur the limits between illusion and reality. When Henri is taken to San Servelo, Villanelle buys a house opposite her lover in an attempt to regain, at least spatially, the lost communion that had been granted by their past love affair. Significantly, Villanelle explains that "I paced the floors of my house, never bothering to furnish any of them, looking in her sitting-room, her drawing-room, her sewing-room and seeing not her but a tapestry of myself when I was younger and walked like an arrogant boy" (*P* 143). Villanelle does not furnish her house because she contents herself with the reflection provided by the water of the channel which lies between both houses and which projects the lover's rooms into Villanelle's house just as it projects not the lover's image but a tapestry of herself reproducing the exact moment when Villanelle, seeing in the Queen of Spades a reflection of herself, falls narcissistically in love with her double[20].

The image of the double and of the multiplicity of the self which the tapestry expresses at a syntagmatic level is also represented in a paradigmatic relation by Villanelle's explicit allusion to the most common metaphors for the technique of *mise en abyme*: "I have seen dolls from the east that fold in one upon the other, the one concealing the other and so I know that the heart may conceal itself" (*P* 94). The image of the Russian dolls is a spatial metaphor which adds up to the notion of multiplicity and fragmentariness while also drawing the idea of depth which is pervasive of the spiral structure of *The Passion* composed as it is of stories-within-the-story.

The image of the spiral as narrative structure is spatialised in *The Passion* through the interrelation of the two elements, space and time, whose intimate fusion makes possible the understanding of the chronotope as a productive category of analysis. Henri's and Villanelle's stories may be visually represented as two circles

[20] For a Lacanian interpretation of this according to which the Queen of Spades would represent Villanelle's ideal-I, see Onega (1994).

which intersect for a relatively brief period of time but which end up separately closing upon themselves. Trying to represent graphically the structural organisation of the text we would come up with something like the following symbol "∞" (two complete circles intersecting at a given moment). This is of course a mathematical sign which stands for infinity. To that extent, the structure of the text could be considered an example of plurality, the author's attempt to represent and give voice to the whole of humanity within its pages[21]. Yet, if we take that horizontal symbol and place it in a vertical position, what we obtain is another mathematical sign, number eight, "8", a number which has a distinctive diegetic meaning in *The Passion*.

The recurrent presence of number eight reinforces the strong relationship that exists between space and time in this novel. On the one hand, eight years is the period of time that Henri and Villanelle spend separately until they become united in the Russian winter, a period of time of which we are respectively told by both narrators. On the other, there is an explicit mention to number eight in the text, although this time it is an allusion to the spatial organisation of Venice and its canals. On page 113, Henri exclaims: "We rowed in a shape that seemed to be a figure of eight working back on itself". This is precisely what the reader is forced to do while reading this book, whose structure is also "a figure of eight working back on itself". Thus, number eight does not only refer to a precise lapse of time in the story, nor is it exclusively an allusion to the peculiar form which defines space, it is also a symbol that stands for the structure of the text since the parallelism which is established between the structure of the text and the act of rowing a boat is further extended by the way in which Villanelle describes Venice: "The city enfolds upon itself. Canals hide other canals, alleyways cross and criss-cross so that you will not know which is which until you have lived here all your life" (*P* 113). Applying this quotation to the structure of *The Passion* it could be stated that the book, like Venice, enfolds upon itself, that stories hide other stories and that they cross and criss-cross in an infinite expansion and deferral of meaning.

In *Narcissistic Narrative*, Linda Hutcheon approaches the notion of parody as "an exploration of difference and similarity" and questions any distinction between

21 Susana Onega hints at a similar idea when she refers to the different levels of meaning hidden underneath the structure of *The Passion*. As she says:

> In the novel, both Villanelle's and Henri's passionate quests are simultaneously developed at three related symbolic levels: in archetypal terms, as a hero's (or heroine's) quest for maturation; in psychological terms, as an ego's quest for individuation; or in card symbolism, as the Fool's journey along the interlocking circles formed by the twenty two major arcana of the Tarot, as suggested by the titles of the first two chapters, Villanelle's job as a croupier, and the structure of the novel in two symmetrical loops overlapping in the middle. (1993: 119)

"the modern concept of 'intertextuality' or textual intersubjectivity […] from the parodic dialectic that appears to be central to the novel" (1984: 24)[22]. The fact that the term "intertextuality" was coined by Julia Kristeva, the literary theorist who has contributed to the actualisation and revision of the theories on the novel proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, argues in favour of the understanding of parody and intertextuality as parallel concepts. Judith Still and Michael Worton observe that

> the theory of intertextuality insists that a text […] cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the writer is a reader of texts […] before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind. […]
>
> Secondly, a text is available only through some process of reading: what is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilisation of the packaged textual material (say a book) by all the texts which the reader brings to it. (1990: 1-2)

The Passion engages in a multiple dialogue with previous literary texts, which enrich the symbolism of its textual space. It is set up against an extremely varied background of literary tradition and convention to the extent that it transcends its own textuality in a series of intertextual, or in Genette's terms, transtextual allusions. In *Palimpsestes*, Genette defines "transtextuality" as "tout ce qui met [un texte] en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d'autres textes" (1982: 7) and distinguishes five types of transtextual relationships which he names "intertextuality", "paratextuality", "metatextuality", "hypertextuality", and "architextuality". Of these, only two, intertextuality and hypertextuality, have a specific weight in *The Passion*.

Genette understands by hypertextuality "toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr, *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire" (1982: 11-12; italics in the original). Usually the hypertext derives from its hypotext through a process of transformation by means of which the former evokes the latter without talking of or even naming it. *The Passion* as hypertext derives from a wide range of hypotexts: from literary works, legends, and myths such as the *Odyssey*, Euripides's *Medea*, the myth of Orpheus, and the legend of the Holy Grail, to the theoretical works of Joseph Campbell or Carl G. Jung. In spite of their comprehensive scope, all these hypertextual allusions function as instances of the adventure novel or quest. In the third section of this chapter, the theory advanced by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1988) is presented as an

[22] Hutcheon further explores on the relationship between intertextuality and parody in the monography *A Theory of Parody*, which constitutes a thorough analysis of the formal structuring and the semiotic functions of parody (1985: 18-29).

overt hypotext of *The Passion*, since the book follows the pattern of the monomyth or three-stage adventure in the development of both hero and heroine.

The text explicitly mentions the names of three classical heroes, Ulysses, Orpheus, and Perceval, plus another heroine, Medea, in order to establish a number of parallelisms and contrasts among those figures and the protagonists of *The Passion*. Henri regrets that "not all men are as fortunate as Ulysses" (*P* 83), an utterance which exposes his own impossibility of returning home. Perfectly aware of his limitations, Henri chooses to behave like Perceval, "the gentle knight, who came to a ruined chapel and found what the others had overlooked, simply by sitting still" (*P* 154). What Perceval finds is nothing less than the Holy Grail, capable of restoring fertility to the wasteland. However, as Bényei Tamás deftly observes,

> The stillness he achieves is that of the Rock, the island of the mad, where narrative and narratable time come to an end, since all the dead visit him and since the borderline between Henri and the dead is much less distinct than the border that separates him from the living. Henri cannot come back from the negative stillness of his rock and his madness; the final section of the novel is an inversion of the Orpheus-Eurydice myth, with Eurydice, feeling pity rather than love for her Orpheus, trying to retrieve what is by now irremediably beyond. (1997: 207)

Villanelle, for her part, describes the strength of her passion for the Queen of Spades and the difficulty she finds in resisting it by alluding to a well-known passage from the *Odyssey*, in which Ulysses is tempted by the call of the mermaids:

> She said again, "Will you stay?"
>
> When passion comes late in life for the first time, it is harder to give up. And those who meet this beast late in life are offered devilish choices. Will they say goodbye to what they know and set sail on an unknown sea with no certainty of land again? […]
>
> Not usually.
>
> And if they do, you will have to strap them to the mast as the boat pulls away because the siren calls are terrible to hear and they go mad at the thought of what they have lost. (*P* 145)

Villanelle acknowledges the reversal of the Orpheus-Eurydice myth in terms of gender roles when she explains her eventual decision to resist her passion for the Queen of Spades by associating herself with Orpheus: "If I give in to this passion, my real life, the most solid, the best known, will disappear and I will feed on shadows again like those sad spirits from whom Orpheus fled" (*P* 146).

The epigraph from Euripides's *Medea* that frames the story told in *The Passion* is also self-conscious in suggesting that *The Passion* can be read as an inversion of the love story of Jason and Medea. *The Passion* like *Medea* establishes an overt link between passion and madness in the form of a violent killing: Medea kills her offspring and serves them as food to Jason as a form of revenge against his

dismissal; Henri kills Villanelle's husband as a form of deliverance and, more significantly, madness drives him to serve the cook's heart to Villanelle in what is one of the most dramatic scenes of the novel:

> "You said he had no heart, Villanelle, let's see."
> She put her hand out, but I had already made a rip with my silver friend, such an eager blade. I cut a triangle in about the right place and scooped out the shape with my hand, like coring an apple.
> He had a heart.
> "Do you want it, Villanelle?"
> She shook her head and started to cry. I had never seen her cry, not through the zero winter, not at the death of our friend, not in the teeth of humiliation nor the telling of it. She was crying now and I took her in my arms dropping the heart between us. (*P* 128)

Gender roles are once more subverted when the reader realises that it is Henri, not Villanelle, that takes the part of Medea.

Genette defines intertextuality as "une relation de coprésence entre deux ou plusieurs textes, c'est à dire, [...] la présence effective d'un texte dans un autre" (1982: 8). The Bible and the Tarot become two unequal intertexts in *The Passion*. Both of them work as systems of meaning, as referential points for the organisation of the chaotic reality which is experienced in the book. The title of the book, *The Passion*, overtly alludes to the biblical figure of Christ, to whom the main protagonists of the book are quite frequently compared. Like Christ, Villanelle can walk on water; as Henri recounts: "I raised my head fully, my knees still drawn up, and saw Villanelle, her back towards me, a rope over her shoulder, walking on the canal and dragging our boats" (*P* 129). For his part, Henri feels the imprints of his own passion the first time he goes to church in the army:

> I took the wafer on my tongue and it burned my tongue. The wine tasted of dead men, 2,000 dead men. In the face of the priest I saw dead men accusing me. I saw tents sodden at dawn. I saw women with blue breasts. I gripped the chalice, though I could feel the priest try and take it from me.
> I gripped the chalice.
> When the priest gently curled away my fingers I saw the imprint of the silver on each palm. Were these my stigmata then? Would I bleed for every death and living death? (*P* 42)

"Bible words again," (*P* 27) admits Henri in the first chapter of the book like the aphorism that Villanelle repeats in the book: "with faith all things are possible" (*P* 49).

Explicit or implicit allusions to other characters in the Bible would extend further. Henri tells of the drunk cook, who is being forced to stand in place by means of an oar, as if "it was Lazarus being raised from the dead" (*P* 18). Likewise, the way in which Henri chooses to describe the boxing matches held between Patrick and Domino openly recall the biblical fight between David and the giant Goliath:

> Sometimes Domino came up for a boxing match. His unusual height was no disadvantage to him and, although Patrick had fists like cannonballs, he never once landed a blow on Domino, whose tactic was to jump about until his opponent started to tire. Judging his moment, Domino hit once and once only, not with his fists but with both feet, hurling himself sideways or backwards or pushing off from a lightning handstand. (*P* 23)

The Passion, like the rest of Winterson's literary production, is strongly influenced by the style, metaphors, and images in the Bible, which was the first book to which she had access as a child and which she almost knew by heart. Nevertheless, the influence of the Bible on *The Passion* is, despite its title, much lighter than in *Sexing the Cherry*, as shown in the next chapter.

If, as was said in the first section of this chapter, in historical terms the period of time used as a framework in *The Passion* is that of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, in literary terms this temporal span situates the reader under the spell of Romanticism, an intensely artistic, philosophic, *and* political movement which appears to be eminently suitable as a literary background for Winterson's fiction. To this extent, Henri's progressive change in attitude towards the historical moment which engulfs him may be said to echo the progressive disillusionment experienced by some of the Romantic poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Blake, among others, in relation to the French Revolution. In a short article on *The Passion*, David Lodge aptly synthesises Winterson's literary evolution when he says that, "in *The Passion*, Jeanette Winterson's bent for fantasy, which showed itself in the interpolated fairy tales of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and the Monty Pythonesque surrealism of *Boating for Beginners*, manifests itself as full bloom magic realism" (1988: 26). According to Lodge, *The Passion* is the result of the adoption by Winterson of the Romantic tradition of storytelling as developed by Edgar A. Poe, Mary Shelley, and Emily Brontë:

> whereas the realist tradition reflects back to us a familiar world subtly defamiliarised, and thus made more luminous or comprehensible or meaningful than it was before, the Romantic tradition deals with the unfamiliar, transgresses known limits, and transports the reader into new imaginative territory. (26)

Together with the historical background, *The Passion* shares with Romanticism some of the main themes of its poetry. Henri's archetypal quest for maturation, which I analyse in the next section, may be read in the light of one of the commonest *topoi* in Romantic poetry, namely, the hero's separation from his natural world, his abandonment of a previous state of innocence, and his involvement with and corruption by experience and society. In this respect, Henri's life story begins with an explicit reference to the happy childhood he spent in his village. Henri

invariably associates his memories of childhood with the natural space of his village and with the memory of his mother. When the nostalgia of a happier past assaults him in the army, he always resorts to strikingly poetic descriptions of the natural environment that surrounded him as a child: "I was homesick from the start. I missed my mother. I missed the hill where the sun slants across the valley. I missed all the everyday things I had hated. In spring at home the dandelions streak the fields and the river runs idle again after months of rain" (*P* 6). Henri chooses to describe Nature in all its splendour, in spring, at the magical moment of rebirth, thus bringing to mind the myth of the Fisher King[23].

This nostalgic revision of the glories of nature openly contrasts with Henri's account of the development of his life as a soldier. The Romantic idea that experience suffocates innocence and adds up to the destruction of goodness in the human being, while giving free rein to their egotistic drives, is reminiscent of Blake's collections of poems, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789, 1794), in which the lyrical subject undergoes a similar process to that experienced by Henri. Blake also felt the call to revolution. He insisted that, in order to restore freedom to the body, the will, and the imagination, three forms of authority have to be overthrown: firstly, orthodox religion, with its rigid sexual morality; secondly, the laws of the politically established, which is often designed to oppress all kinds of social "ex-centrics" and tie them to marginality; and thirdly, the "common-sense" view of reality which believes only what can be perceived or learnt from the senses. Briefly stated, Blake proposed the rejection of religious orthodoxy, repressive politics, and empiricism.

In *The Passion* it is Henri who shoulders the responsibility of sowing the seeds of disruption against religious authority and Bonaparte's autocratic politics. Henri's undermining of religion and patriarchal politics implies the overcoming of a set of principles that he had been brought up to assume and take for granted. His memories of childhood and early youth present the reader with a boy who not only inhabits and defends his surrounding patriarchal world but also learns to be in very close contact with its two representative Father figures, Napoleon and God. For,

23 Henri will not regain this communion with nature until he enters San Servelo, a place which grants him this magical moment of rebirth by freeing him from the past. It is this moment of epiphany, which Henri places in the garden he is tending for his mother (*P* 156), that he puts on a level with the myth of the Fisher King:

> I breathe carefully, smelling the air, and when the sun is up I turn my face that way and let it lighten me.
>
> I danced in the rain without my clothes one night. I had not done that before, not felt the icy drops like arrows and the change the skin undergoes. I've soaked through in the army times without number but not by choice. (*P* 156-57)

even though Henri grows up surrounded by nature and partaking of its innocence, he very early gets in touch with religion and politics through the odd influence of the priest who is in charge of his education:

> Thanks to my mother's efforts and the rusty scholarliness of our priest I learned to read in my own language, Latin and English and I learned arithmetic, the rudiments of first aid and because the priest also supplemented his meagre income by betting and gambling I learned every card game and a few tricks. (*P* 12)

Henri's tutor, the village priest, is not precisely what would be called a representative figure of religious orthodoxy. When asked to account for the reasons why he has decided to become a priest, his answer is pointedly ironic: "if you have to work for anybody an absentee boss is best" (*P* 12). The priest talks about Bonaparte as if he were a new Messiah sent by God[24] and offers Henri a romanticised version of reality and history, which the latter has to deconstruct and unmask in the course of his process of maturation.

Due to the specific education he receives as a child, Henri's rejection of patriarchy cannot be sudden but progressive. Little by little, he discovers that the reality in which he unconsciously plunged after signing for his recruitment does not conform at all with the descriptions of the priest. When he arrives at the camp at Boulogne, he cannot help comparing what he has been told by the priest with what he actually sees. Two examples can be mentioned in this regard. Firstly, the description Henri makes of the brothel he is forced to visit[25] in the company of Bonaparte's male-chauvinist, ruthless cook:

> I had expected red velvet the way the priest had described these seats of temporary pleasure, but there was no softness here, nothing to disguise our business. When the women came in they were older than I had imagined, not at all like the pictures in the priest's book of sinful things. Not snake-like, Eve-like with breasts like apples, but round and resigned, hair thrown into hasty bundles or draped around their shoulders. (*P* 14)

Secondly, Henri had been told that "soldiering is a fine life for a boy" (*P* 8), but his very first impression is quite depressing, according to the description he makes of Bonaparte's storeroom:

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24 The priest's association is totally in keeping with the relationship that Hegel establishes between philosophy, history, and theology and which he also embodies in the person of Bonaparte. Paul Harrison explains that "For Hegel, Napoleon embodied the world-historical hero of the age, driving forward the self-realization of God in history" (1997: 1). Harrison also refers to the moment when Hegel saw Napoleon riding past, after the Battle of Jena where he had defeated the Prussians in 1806, and quotes the words Hegel wrote as a result of this encounter: "I saw the Emperor —this world-spirit— go out from the city to survey his realm. It is a truly wonderful experience to see such an individual, on horseback, concentrating on one point, stretching over the world, and dominating it" (1997: 1).

25 A kind of ritual of initiation or a rite of passage from childhood and innocence to adulthood and experience which many men undergo in order to conform to the rules of patriarchy.

> The space from the ground to the dome of the canvas was racked with rough wooden cages about a foot square with tiny corridors running in between, hardly the width of a man. In each cage there were two or three birds, beaks and claws cut off staring through the slats with dumb identical eyes. I am no coward and I've seen plenty of convenient mutilation on our farms but I was not prepared for the silence. Not even a rustle. They could have been dead, should have been dead, but for the eyes. (*P* 5-6)

Silence, mutilation, dumbness, and the choking sensation of being a prisoner in a wooden cage are used here in order to refer to the awfully cruel state in which Napoleon keeps his chickens. I have already signalled that Napoleon's passion for chicken is only paralleled by his passion for power and victories[26]. Thus this image can be extrapolated and understood as a metaphor for the way in which Napoleon, as Henri will soon learn, will treat the boys he recruits as soldiers. The only finality of chickens is to appease Napoleon's physical hunger. Similarly, his soldiers are only valuable insofar as they are the instruments he needs to quench his thirst for power. Like his chickens, soldiers become objects, military toys with dumb identical eyes in the hands of the Emperor: "What would you do if you were an Emperor? "Would soldiers become numbers? Would battles become diagrams? Would intellectuals become a threat? Would you end your days on an island where the food is salty and the company bland"[27] (*P* 13).

More important still for the argument, Henri ends up by acknowledging that the romanticised image of Napoleon that the priest has served him is but a construct —"I invented Bonaparte as much as he invented himself" (*P* 158)—, the logical outcome of a human longing for greatness that justifies and perpetuates patriarchal values. Only when Henri releases himself from his imbued idealistic frame of mind does he become aware of his own mistake: "They [the Russians] called the Czar 'the Little Father', and they worshipped him as they worshipped God. In their simplicity I saw a mirror of my own longing and understood for the first time my own need for a little father that had led me this far" (*P* 81). In this sentence, Henri rejects simultaneously the three holding values of patriarchy: the Czar, as the representative

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26 Already in his 1987 review of *The Passion*, Paul Pickering calls attention to the metaphorical relationship that Winterson establishes between chicken and the omnipresence of cocks in the cover illustration of the Penguin edition of the book by titling his review "Le coq sportif". Susana Onega (1995b) has also signalled that significantly, *le coq gaulois* is the symbol of the French nation. Making Napoleon a compulsory chicken-eater Winterson is metaphorically referring to the way in which Napoleon "eats" the children of France, shedding their blood in the battlefield and cramming the fields of France with their dead carcasses.

27 Henri immediately falls in love with Villanelle after having heard her say that all snowflakes are different. His love for Villanelle is a rush of fresh air in an otherwise desensitising world. Actually, as Mercedes Monmany clearly states, history in *The Passion* is an excuse insofar as "se escogen algunos pasajes de la historia napoleónica para abordar y enlazar una metáfora bellísima y de estilo muy singular, sobre la pasión y sobre el amor" (1989: 19).

of political power; God, as the supreme religious authority; and the Father, as the sole arbiter in the family. It also marks Henri's decisive turn of mind and his decision to desert, as he confesses that "I think it was that night that I started to hate him. If the love was passion, the hate will be obsession […]. The hate is not only for the once loved, it's for yourself too; how could you ever have loved this?" (*P* 84).

Henri never manages to escape from that "hate for oneself" and its subsequent feelings of guilt and shame in spite of the fact that he refuses all contact with the external world in order to try and leave behind his individual "nightmare of history", firstly, to find a free space in which to explore his true nature, secondly, and, eventually, to write down the memoirs that conform *The Passion*. A Romantic young man, Henri is disillusioned by the historical events to which he is an exceptional witness. Such a disappointment, together with his inability to subdue the painful experiences he acquires in the process of growing up, force him to adopt what may be described as a modernist attitude, reflected in his rejection of any form of social or political commitment and in his conscious retreat to the inner self, to the realm of the mind. Sensing an unbridgeable disharmony between man and his environment, Henri finds refuge in the parallelistic allusions to his mother and nature. These allusions may be interpreted as evidence of Henri's yearning for a symbolic return to the mother's womb that would grant him the recovery of that previous state of lost innocence[28] although his memoirs do away with any romanticised version of the Napoleonic wars and expose the ideology inscribed in his patriarchal world, an ideology of oppression which denies him "the freedom to make my own mistakes" (*P* 157).

It was precisely to fight against all forms of oppression that Madame de Staël dedicated her life and written production, whether novels, critical texts, or political works (Larg 1926). Like Winterson, de Staël considers that the writer's activity has to be integrated in society and intimately linked to philosophy and politics. The way in which literature, philosophy, and politics come together in *The Passion* has already been sufficiently emphasised, but the fact that the book refers explicitly to Madame de Staël has not been analysed yet. It is Henri, the male character-narrator

28 Henri eventually manages to make his desire come true in San Servelo, either on account of his madness or on his recently acquired ability to make the real world coexist with alternative worlds of the mind:

> That proves I'm a Venetian now. There's straw on the floor, like at home, and some days when I wake, I can smell porridge cooking, thick and black. I like those days because it means mother is here. She looks just as always, perhaps a little younger. She walks with a limp where the horse fell on her, but she doesnt't have to walk far in this little room. (*P* 135)

who explicitly mentions Mme. de Staël as both a literary and political authority of the period, confronting her with Napoleon, the authoritarian figure *par excellence*:

> Domino the midget says that being near him [Napoleon] is like having a great wind rush about your ears. He says that's how Madame de Staël puts it and she's famous enough to be right. She doesn't live in France now. Bonaparte had her exiled because she complained about him censoring the theatre and suppressing the newspapers. (*P* 8-9)

Born in the high society of *l'Ancient Regime*, Madame de Staël becomes "une femme qui a influencé profondement l'évolution de la pensée littéraire et politique" (Noe 2002: 1). The attraction de Staël has for Winterson is, therefore, double: her feminine and feminist attitude, on the one hand, and her combative disposition towards the person and the ideas of the great leader, Napoleon, on the other. Alfred Noe observes that

> la carrière de Mme de Staël fournit l'un des exemples les plus éclatants des combats que les femmes écrivaines ont à mener contre une société qui ne leur reconnaît pas d'aptitude au maniement des idées et ne leur concède guère le droit d'écrire. Or elle aborde les domaines traditionnellement réservés aux hommes et ajoute aux oeuvres de fiction des travaux politiques et philosophiques. Pour se faire admettre, elle doit affronter un public généralement sexiste et jusqu'à Napoléon lui-même dont on connaît les opinions franchement traditionnalistes. Il lui faut du courage quand les interdits sociaux, alourdis par la Révolution et la tyrannie impériale, se liguent tous contre elle. Mme de Staël est une femme d'action à qui la nature a joué le mauvais tour de la faire naître dans le deuxième sexe. À défaut de jouer un rôle public, d'occuper des fonctions officielles, il lui reste deux possibilités que lui permet son rang dans la société: tenir un salon comme sa mère, publier des livres. (2002: 1)

As Noe further points, Mme. de Staël's feminism is manifest both in her theoretical and her literary works. *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau* is a case in point, insofar as it develops de Staël's moderate critique against the educational system that Rousseau had proposed in *Emile ou de l'éducation*, which, in her opinion, contributed to the maintenance of the superiority of the male over the female:

> Elle critique surtout ses idées sur les femmes que le philosophe de la sentimentalité voit toujours dans une position inférieure. Elle constate d'abord que Rousseau voulait élever la femme comme l'homme, d'après la nature, et suivant les différences qu'elle a mises entre les deux sexes. Mais, au lieu de confirmer les femmes dans leur faiblesse traditionnelle, aussi confortable pour elles-mêmes que pour les hommes qui les dominent tout en les protégeant, le système éducatif devrait plutôt, selon Mme de Staël, leur inspirer des vertus que les hommes n'ont généralement pas. Au lieu de les encourager dans leur infériorité actuelle, l'éducation devrait leur offrir un choix et non pas une consolidation de leur incapacité. (5)

Feminism and literature fuse in Mme. de Staël's novels, which deploy committed fictional heroines in whom the author herself is readily recognisable. Corinne, the protagonist of de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), is, like the author herself, "the

first fictional heroine who, as a woman of genius[29], is unapologetic about living for her art" (Lewis 2002: 4), and who is not scared of voicing the most daring ideas on political, philosophical, and religious questions. This fictionalisation of the flesh-and-blood author and her adoption of a multiplicity of *personae* in her fiction further connects de Staël with Winterson.

Coming back to Henri, it is clear that he is not so interested in Mme. de Staël's feminism as in underlining the tempestuous relationship she maintains with Bonaparte. To a certain extent, Henri's allusion to de Staël functions proleptically in that it announces the progressive movement from love to hatred that Bonaparte inspires him:

> I think it was that night that I knew I couldn't stay longer. I think it was that night that I started to hate him.
>
> I didn't know what hate felt like, not the hate that comes after love. It's huge and desperate and it longs to be proved wrong. And every day it's proved right it grows a little more monstruous. If the love was passion, the hate will be obsession. A need to see the once-loved weak and cowed and beneath pity. Disgust is close and dignity is far away. The hate is not only for the once loved, it's for yourself too; how could you ever have loved this? (*P* 84)

As Lewis observes, "Madame de Staël zealously praised and courted Napoleon until he became First Consul in 1800" (2002: 4), a date that marks de Staël's subsequent disillusion and growing hatred:

> The battle between the Emperor of Matter and the Empress of Mind, as Sainte-Beuve called them, lasted for fourteen years. And although it is not clear that her resistance was effective in practical terms, it served as a powerful inspiration. While Madame de Staël was for Napoleon a minor but persistent annoyance, he was a whetstone for her genius. By exiling her, he opened her mind to the rest of Europe and concentrated her political focus on liberalism. All of her books written after 1800 bear the mark, implicitly or explicitly, of her defiance of him. Her most direct accounts of this clash appear in her posthumously published manifesto, *Considerations on the French Revolution*, and in her unfinished memoir *Ten Years of Exile*. (2)

The conflict between Napoleon and Mme. de Staël also extends to their respective ideas about the function of literature: "pour Napoléon, celle-ci ne pouvait être qu'un instrument de propagande au service du régime actuel, tandis que pour Mme de Staël la première fonction de la littérature est de garantir la liberté collective et la vertu individuelle" (Noe 2002: 3).

Deeply influenced by Mme. de Staël, and also having experienced in the course of his life unequal feelings towards Napoleon Bonaparte, was the French

29 The critic Gayle A. Levy notes that applying the word genius to a woman, immediately brings to the fore "the issue of gender since historically, the person or literary character of genius has been almost exclusively male" (2002: 115). Something similar occurs again with Winterson and her work.

novelist Stendhal. The presentation of *The Passion* as a *Künstleroman*, or a portrait of the writer as a young man[30], favours the exploration of the parallelisms that may be established between Henri, the male protagonist and surrogate author of the story told in *The Passion*, and Stendhal[31], the French novelist who projected (but never accomplished) two historico-political essays on Napoleon as a response to Mme. de Staël's *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*.

It is my contention that Winterson chooses Stendhal as a model for the characterisation of Henri for two basic reasons. Firstly, because "assez instinctivement, Stendhal historien révèle le caractère passionné, nécessairement partiel et partial de toute rétrospective —*reconstruction toujours intéresée du passé*" (Ansel 2000: 280; italics added). Secondly, because by making Stendhal Henri's model and Henri a fictionalised *alter ego* of herself, Winterson enters into a dialogue with the past that enhances the specular structure of her narrative production.

As we have seen, *The Passion* is told by two homodiegetic narrators, Henri and Villanelle, who provide the reader with their life stories, simultaneously including their own subjective representations of History. Although in the first two chapters they enjoy the same narrative status, in the last two it is Henri who presents himself as an author intent on writing his memoirs, made up from the notes he had taken in a diary[32] while at Bonaparte's service: "It was after the disaster at sea that I started to keep a diary. I started so that I wouldn't forget. So that in later life when I was prone to sit by the fire and look back, I'd have something clear and sure to set against my memory tricks" (*P* 28). Henri thus becomes a character-narrator-author who searches for himself in History, first, believing it to be objective or, as he puts it, "something clear and sure" (*P* 28), but who eventually finds himself in his writing. It is this obsession for writing the self in history that links Henri with Stendhal, the French novelist who "ha escrito siempre para conocerse. Toda su obra, tanto autobiográfica como de ficción revela el papel privilegiado que representa la escritura en su relación con el mundo. […] al final está la función mediadora y

30 This idea is further emphasised by the intertextual relationship that is established between James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *The Passion*, as I explain later.

31 I have recently explored this relationship in a paper titled "The writer *en abyme*: Jeanette Winterson meets Stendhal in *The Passion*", which I read at the XXVI Congreso Internacional AEDEAN (forthcoming).

32 The text provides explicit references to Henri's diary, thus establishing an ironic relationship with his later memoirs. The following quotation is but one example: "July 20th, 1804. Too early for dawn but not night either. There is a restlessness in the trees, out at sea, in the camp. The birds and we are sleeping fitfully, wanting to be asleep but tense with the idea of awakening" (*P* 23). For a more detailed analysis of this relationship see Asensio (1994).

gratificante de la escritura para conocerse y aceptarse, la literatura como destino personal" (Hernández 1993: 50).

Henri mirrors Stendhal just as Jeanette, the protagonist of *Oranges*, stands for Winterson. It should be born in mind that Stendhal[33] is merely the pseudonym of Henri Beyle. Therefore, naming her protagonist "Henri" is the first clue that Winterson scatters in her book to uncover the intertextual relation that she establishes between Henri, her fictional surrogate author, and Stendhal, the flesh-and-blood novelist. Apart from the name, Henri shares other features with Beyle, the man. Both have equally emotive paternal figures[34] and, perhaps because of that, they are closer to their mothers. Consuelo Berges explains that Henriette Gagnon "es, en la vida de Beyle-Stendhal una dulce sombra que él pretende animar con el violento color de un complejo de Edipo" (1983: 20). Henri joins Napoleon's army at Boulogne out of a desire he had built upon the false picture of Bonaparte that the priest in charge of his education had drawn, and he deserts him in the Russian campaigns. Likewise, Beyle "fit la campagne de l'Allemagne à la remorque des armées napoléoniennes" (Ansel 2000: 17) and, although he did not desert, Stendhal creates a fictional *alter ego*, Fabrice, who escapes from the battlefield in *La Chartreuse de Parme*. As Ansel further notes, both Henri's and Fabrice's desertions mark the rejection of "une Histoire qui trahit les Lumières. 1815, c'est la défaite du héros de 1876, le 'retour aux idées anciennes', l'obscurantisme, la réaction, la regression" (33). What is more, Henri literally stands for the defeated hero who, having been sent to the prison/madhouse of San Servelo after killing Villanelle's husband, chooses to stay there in what could be described in psychoanalytic terms as a return to the mother's womb: "mother is here. She looks just as always, perhaps a little younger" (*P* 135). Nevertheless, Henri makes the most of his return to obscurantism. In mythical terms, "the idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolised in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale" (Campbell 1988: 90). In San Servelo, Henri is reborn to a new dimension that overcomes History and acknowledges the power of words to

33 "Beyle choisit un pseudonyme aux sonorités étouffées, le nom de la petite ville natale de Winkelmann, Stendal, dans la Marche de Brandebourg, non loin de Brunswick, où il séjourne en 1807 […]. Beyle ajoute un H pour rendre compte de la prononciation allemande, où l'accent se porte sur la dernière syllabe et où la dentale s'accompagne d'une légère aspiration" (Servoise 1983: 1).

34 Henri merely states that "when I left, Mother didn't cry. It was Claude [his father] who cried" (*P* 12). Stendhal is ashamed by his father's attitude and he refers to a similar episode in the following harsh terms: "Lo que voy a decir no es bonito. En el preciso momento de la partida, esperando el coche, me despedí de mi padre en Jardin-de-Ville, bajo las ventanas de las casas que dan a la calle de Montorge. Lloraba un poco. La única impresión que me hicieron sus lágrimas fue encontrarle muy feo" (Berges 1983: 47).

create reality. Curiously enough, Henri starts to write his memoirs as a means to explore his inner self when he is isolated from the outer world: "There was a time, some years ago I think, when [Villanelle] tried to make me leave this place, though not to be with her. She was asking me to be alone again, just when I felt safe. I don't ever want to be alone again and I don't want to see any more of the world" (*P* 152). The end of his search marks the beginning of his activity as a writer who tries to make sense of his past experience in order to get to understand himself better. In this respect Henri is reminiscent of Stendhal, whose single obsession is scrutinising the man Henri Beyle to try to understand him (Hernández 1993: 50). Loneliness, pen and paper are the best allies Stendhal had to get to know himself. Similarly, Henri shares with Stendhal his understanding of the activity of writing as "una imperiosa necesidad para introducir un orden en el torrente caudaloso de sus vivencias y más tarde de sus recuerdos" (52).

As pointed out above, Winterson returns to the historical past of the French Revolution, and the starting point of the modern period in order to engage in a dialogue which is typically postmodern. Like Henri, Stendhal planned the writing of two books on Napoleon, *Vie de Napoléon* and *Memoires sur Napoléon*, which aimed at being objective and slightly critical. However, his position towards the figure of Napoleon follows a circular movement in the course of his life. As an adolescent, he feels a profound admiration; in the first years of the Empire when "su todavía fresco amor a la libertad, apaga sus entusiasmos por Napoleón" (Berges 1983: 9), he becomes a convinced republican, and after Napoleon's death, he initiates a passionately romantic defence of "este hombre extraordinario, al que quise en vida y al que ahora estimo tanto como desprecio lo que ha venido después de él" (Stendhal 1990: 291). As a young man, Henri partakes of Stendhal's admiration and passionate attachment to Napoleon but his memoirs are much more critical than Stendhal's renderings. In San Servelo, feeling "the presence of the past" (Hutcheon 1988: 4), Henri does not experience "a nostalgic return" but rather initiates "a critical revisiting" through which he revises his life and memories in the light of his present knowledge:

> Nowadays people talk about the things he did as though they made sense. As though even his most disastrous mistakes were only the result of bad luck or hubris.
>
> It was a mess.
>
> Words like devastation, rape, slaughter, carnage, starvation are lock and key words to keep the pain at bay. Words about war that are easy on the eye.
>
> I'm telling you stories. Trust me. (*P* 5)

Reworking his war diary into his memoirs, Henri realises that there is no such thing as History[35] but a multiplicity of stories that, brought together, offer a more complete and less partial description of experience. Stendhal also fictionalised and rewrote the first seventeen years of his life in a text, *Vie de Henry Brulard*, which is considered to be "la obra maestra de la escritura autobiográfica" (Hernández 1993: 47) and which is simultaneously a rewriting of Beyle's *Journal*, produced fifty years earlier. Like Henri and like Winterson herself, Stendhal makes a perpetual autobiography of his writings, which are set *en abyme* in a clear attempt to blur all boundaries between reality and fiction[36]:

> Las vacilaciones y las cautelas ante la empresa de contarse a sí mismo, las intermitencias de la memoria, el choque entre el tiempo vivido y el tiempo de la narración, la distinción/confusión entre un género como la novela que ya había adquirido un cierto "status" literario y la naciente escritura autobiográfica, el paso de la autobiografía a la ficción, etc., etc. son cuestiones que han sido abordadas y desarrolladas por Stendhal de forma ejemplar y con un espíritu de modernidad coherente con sus invocaciones a los lectores de 1880 o de 1935. (Hernández 1993: 48)

Both Winterson and Stendhal share the same concern with the search for the self in writing. In this sense, the body of their works may be seen as equally specular but when they are brought together in a single text, as in *The Passion*, the mirror distorts reality and produces the image of the writer *en abyme*.

In the analysis of intertextuality in *The Passion*, Alexander Pushkin, one of the greatest authors in Russian literature, and his story "The Queen of Spades" (1833) also deserves special mention. What at first sight might have been described as a mere paratextual relation between the title of the second chapter of *The Passion* and the title of one of the most entertaining stories written by Pushkin, turns out to conceal a more extensive web of significant interrelations. Pushkin was born in 1799 and died in 1837. His life was marked by very similar events to those recounted by Henri. Firstly, "the young Pushkin shared the high hopes of a new era which swept Russia after the Napoleonic débâcle of 1812, and experienced the disappointment which followed" (Edmonds 1962: 7). As an adult, Pushkin spent six years in exile on account of the publication of "a very daring *Ode to Liberty*" (Edmonds 1962: 7). It is likewise interesting to note that Pushkin began his prose work in 1827 precisely with

35 This idea is emphasised by the fact that, as Matthew Gilbert notes, "Winterson leaves the various historical situations […] in the background. […] Her aim is to fashion the most personal, philosophical perceptions of a man and a woman, and thereby illuminate the human condition" (1988: 79).

36 According to René Servoise, Beyle "s'est caché délibérément derrière un masque allemand pour se présenter au public" (1983: 1), which is another reason why Stendhal serves Winterson so well as a model for both Henri and herself.

a historical narrative, *The Negro of Peter the Great*. This was the age of the great historical romances of Sir Walter Scott but Pushkin fought to express in his stories a new idea of history which might be much more in accordance with present times and which is also valid to account for the overt problematisation of the relationship between history and fiction undertaken in *The Passion*: "'In our day', wrote Pushkin, 'the word *novel* means an historical epoch developed in the form of an imaginary story'" (in Edmonds 1962: 9; italics in the original).

Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" is the story of a young man, Hermann, who craves to find his place in society regardless of the means. He is told a fabulous story about three winning cards whose secret knowledge was tightly kept by an old countess. In order to have access to her secret, Hermann manages to enter her room. He begs her to tell him her secret but she refuses to do so, so Hermann decides to make her speak by drawing a pistol from his pocket. At the sight of the pistol, the countess suffers a heart attack and dies. Three days later, the spirit of the countess visits Hermann in order to reveal her secret: "'The three, the seven and the ace will win for you if you play them in succession, provided that you do not stake more than one card in twenty-four hours and never play again as long as you live" (Pushkin 1962: 178). Hermann strictly observes the instructions provided by the old woman and he wins the first two games. But the day of the final game comes and the winning ace is mysteriously turned into the queen of spades:

> Hermann started: indeed, instead of an ace there lay before him the queen of spades. He could not believe his eyes or think how he could have made such a mistake.
>
> At that moment it seemed to him that the queen of spades opened and closed her eye, and mocked him with a smile. He was struck by the extraordinary resemblance…
>
> "The old woman!" he cried in terror. (Pushkin 1962: 182)

The young hero loses his money and his mental sanity and is secluded in "room number 17 of the Obuhov Hospital" (Pushkin 1962: 183).

This brief summary of the story told by Pushkin evinces quite a number of similarities with *The Passion*. Pushkin wraps the plot of his story with frequent allusions to historical personages, such as Cardinal Richelieu, Count Saint-Germain or Casanova. These historical figures coexist with the most important female character in the story, Countess Anna Fedotovna, the queen of spades. Likewise, the world of fantasy and the everyday world are systematically juxtaposed in the text: on the one hand, marvellous and supernatural forces are present in the story from its very beginning; on the other hand, each of the five chapters of which the story is composed is preceded by an epigraph, which connects the reader to the external world of the author.

Pushkin's story and Winterson's book display similar themes such as the metaphor of gambling in the form of a game of cards that emphasises the power of chance and the dangers of risk; the hero's loss of mental sanity and his eventual seclusion; the feminine nature of the queen of spades, symbol of Villanelle's lover and of her city in *The Passion*, and tool for the revenge of the Countess on her murderer in "The Queen of Spades". Pushkin's queen of spades adopts the Countess's countenance to mock Hermann, a character who represents "the type of young man determined on success [who] was bound up in contemporary understanding with the person of Napoleon. Pushkin makes Hermann resemble Napoleon and at the same time describes him as a mean character" (Edmonds 1962: 12). Napoleon is the figure around which both Pushkin's and Winterson's criticism turn. Fiction rewrites History.

Apart from those already commented on by Susana Onega (1996) and which include Jorge Luis Borges, James Joyce, Mario Vargas Llosa or Voltaire, some other intertexts of *The Passion* are Lawrence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy: Gentleman* and the *Arabian Nights*[37]. These texts are more or less indirectly brought to the reader's mind. Domino, Bonaparte's midget and Henri's friend in the army, is a re-gendered echo of Scheherezade, the witty storyteller who is capable of staying alive night after night by amusing the caliph with her tales. Henri tells the reader at the very beginning of his narrative that all the grooms who had preceded Domino in the task of being in charge of Bonaparte's horse are dead: "the ones the beast didn't kill itself with an easy kick, its master had disposed of because its coat didn't shine or the bit was green" (*P* 3). However, Domino, like Scheherezade, manages to survive because "he made the Emperor laugh and the horse couldn't better him, so he stayed" (*P* 4). In fact, Domino is the only character in *The Passion* who stays with Napoleon after the Russian winter and manages, in spite of this, to outlive the great man. Henri becomes aware of Domino's death when he notes that:

> My talisman had melted. Only the gold chain remained, lying thin in a pool of water, glittering.
>
> I picked it up and wrapped it around my fingers, strung it from one finger to another and watched it slid like a snake. I knew then he was dead, though I do not know how or where. (*P* 152)

A paradigmatic example of the self-conscious novel *avant la lettre*, Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* shows similar devices to those signalled in *The Passion.* Its direct addresses to the reader, which also occupies a space inside the narrative, its

[37] The parallel structure of *The Passion* and *The Arabian Nights* enhances the intertextual relation of both texts.

frustrated narrator who cannot cope with the enterprise which he has voluntarily decided to accomplish, its frame breaks and typographical elements which insist on calling attention to the work as artefact, its concern with language and its meaning, are all narrative devices which *The Passion* shares with Sterne's text, a novel which, according to Christopher Ricks, "is the culmination of a decade [the 1750s] of such experiment. Sterne was fascinated by the problems which have come to dominate our recent art, especially the problems about *deception* in a work of art, about what kind of credence we are to play in art itself" (1967: 12; italics in the original). "I'm telling you stories, trust me", seems to be Winterson's response. *Tristram Shandy* is a novel about writing a novel and in it "Sterne reminds us that there is no such thing as a beginning, middle, and end. That even in a minutely faithful novel, we cannot find out enough about people to be sure how they would behave. That all art is artifice" (Ricks 1967: 21).

Especially significant in the analysis of intertextuality is the symbolic space represented by the city of Venice in *The Passion*. Christine Regnier singles out the double function of the Venetian space as both frame and thematic sign when she states that:

> Même si l'auteur offre une description qui, d'un point de vue historique et géographique, est exacte, elle ne fait pas œuvre d'historien. Le ton de l'ouvrage, plein d'humeur et de fantaisie, ôte toute dimension réaliste à la peinture de la ville. Celle-ci n'est pas une simple toile de fond, un simple décor et l'époque n'a pas été choisie au hasard. L'auteur dote la ville d'une fonction littéraire et la transforme en un véritable espace signifiant au symbolisme multiple —ce qu'elle ne fait pas vraiement avec les autres lieux que traversent les personnages, que ce soit le Camp de Boulogne ou la Russie. (1994: 28)

Indeed, the city of Venice proves especially interesting as thematic sign insofar as its space is indistinguishable from the space of the text itself. Both spaces work to provide an alternative to the either/or categories, derived from the insistence on gender difference, in the form of the both/and formulation that makes of Venice, of Villanelle, and of *The Passion* equally feminine spaces of freedom and tolerance. As Regnier concludes: "Au centre de ce roman se trouve Venise, la ville où tout est possible, où l'on ne doit s'étonner de rien, où, en un mot, les frontières entre le réel et l'imaginaire sont brouillées. Ainsi l'espace vénetien se confond en dernier lieu avec l'espace du texte, espace ambigu et labyrinthique, espace du je(u)" (36).

Like *The Passion*, Venice is represented as a postmodern space which is composed of both an inner and an outer city whose boundaries are as fluid as the water that keeps them apart while simultaneously reflecting one another. Inner and outer spaces have traditionally been considered separately and have been used as metaphors to account for two opposed conceptions of reality which have been

culturally gendered as respectively feminine and masculine: inner spaces point at feminine domesticity and "subjective" reality while outer spaces are related to the "objective" world and masculine agency. Glòria Poal Marcet explains gender roles in terms of what she names "teoría de la socialización diferencial mujer-varón", which can be summarised as follows:

> A los *hombres* se les socializa para el ámbito *público* y a las *mujeres* para el *privado*. […] Así, de cada sexo se espera que sea exitoso básicamente en un solo ámbito y se le adiestra para ello, educándole para que desee estar y disfrute en ese ámbito y para que valore su felicidad en función del éxito en él.
>
> En el caso de las mujeres, el ámbito en cuestión es el privado (familiar, doméstico, afectivo) […].
>
> A los hombres, a la inversa, se les socializa para que se incorporen y progresen en el ámbito público (laboral, profesional, académico, tecnológico, político, científico). (1993: 85, 87; italics in the original)

It is my contention that *The Passion* disrupts any form of socialisation in terms of gender difference by representing the city of Venice and the island of San Servelo not as independent spaces but as parts of the same spatial whole. According to Diana L. Swanson, "islands constitute a transitional geographical and metaphorical space, neither mainland nor boundaryless ocean" (1997: 334). This being-on-the-edge favours creativity and "provides the opportunity for changing cultural and social codes and customs" (335). It is not strange then that the island of San Servelo, described as it is in negative terms and populated by the criminal, the mad, the exiled, the alien, eventually becomes the space of creation, of imagination, of freedom and, as such, constitutes the most potent source of fertility with which to transform the wasteland into a forest of red roses or as Henri himself explains "I'm doing this garden partly for her [his mother]; she says it's so barren here with nothing but the sea" (*P* 156). Henri is a direct witness of the crumbling of all the foundations of his society. The image of barrenness, of a wasteland, immediately relates Henri's account of what he considers the end of history to the poetry written by T. S. Eliot in a similar context of war and crisis of values which he sees as isolating the individual and threatening to destroy Western civilisation. In aligning Henri and San Servelo with Eliot and modernism, and in situating them as the inner part of Venice, a postmodern city, *The Passion* exemplifies in spatial terms the idea that "at the heart of postmodernism is a recoil from humanism and the classical tradition, but […] those who have led the rebellion are conspicuously dependent on the values and the traditions they are trying to invert" (Brooker 1994: 208). Calling attention to the active role that women's fiction and feminist literary theory and criticism have had in the inscription of the ideology of postmodernism, *The Passion*

refuses to represent both gender difference and the debate on the relationship between modernism and postmodernism in terms of binary oppositions. As I show in the following pages, Venice becomes the spatial diegetic metaphor for the text's refusal of binaries. T. S. Eliot and Italo Calvino provide Winterson with the literary tradition that allows her text to both pay her respects to her ancestors and simultaneously to move forward in search of the "'really new' [which] is the fruit of this encounter" (Brooker 1994: 12).

Invisible Cities (1972) is a postmodern text composed of nine chapters. Contributing to its circular structure, each of these chapters opens and closes with a fragment of a simple frame story, printed in italics and told by a heterodiegetic narrator: Kublai Khan, emperor of the Tartars sits in his garden in the company of Marco Polo, the Venetian explorer, and listens attentively to Polo's description of "the cities visited on his expeditions" (Calvino 1974: 5). Embedded within this frame narrative, which has two historical personages as only characters, are fifty five descriptions of cities which interrupt the linear development of the extradiegetic narrative and simultaneously illuminate it. The stories Polo tells are imaginative descriptions which, no matter whether true to reality or totally fictional, help the emperor to escape from the imminence of his death and the subsequent corruption and disintegration of his empire. As in *The Passion*, the historical and the fictional engage dialogically to question the problematic boundaries between reality and fiction and to expose the power that language has to transform both individual remembrances of reality —"'Memory's images, once they are fixed in words are erased,' Polo said. 'Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little'" (87)— and reality itself. At the beginning of the sixth chapter, Marco Polo says:

> "Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know."
> "There is still one of which you never speak."
> Marco Polo bowed his head.
> "Venice," the Khan said.
> Marco smiled. "What else do you believe I have been talking to you about?"
> The emperor did not turn a hair. "And yet I have never heard you mention that name."
> And Polo said: "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice." (85-86)

Invisible Cities is a book about Venice, *the* invisible city, and about all the possible descriptions that the human mind can make of it through language. Venice, like the rest of the cities in the book, is the product of Marco Polo's mind. It is never the actual geographical place but just a mental image, a pastiche of remembered

features which, like the other cities, is brought into existence through the communicative process between narrator and narratee, author and reader:

> Kublai Khan had noticed that Marco Polo's cities resembled one another, as if the passage from one to another involved not a journey but a change of elements. Now, from each city Marco described to him, the Great Khan's mind set out on its own, and after dismantling the city piece by piece, he reconstructed it in other ways, substituting components, shifting them, inverting them. (43)

Winterson has acknowledged on several occasions that Calvino's work has certainly inspired her fiction. Calvino's influence on Winterson's aesthetics and politics is most clearly appreciated in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, perhaps because *Invisible Cities* also uses two historical figures and freezes them in the temporal immediacy of a continuous present. I shall deal with *Sexing the Cherry* in the next chapter of this work but first allow me to come back to *The Passion* and its depiction of Venice.

Calvino's *Invisible Cities* has a strong imprint on *The Passion* in that Villanelle's presentation of Venice echoes Marco Polo's display of cities to a great extent. Although, as has already been said, Henri and Villanelle are equally exposed to the characteristic features of the army and of Venice, *The Passion* makes clear that Venice is Villanelle's city not only on account of her having been born there but also because it proves her natural environment. In fact it is Villanelle who first speaks about the city in the second chapter of the book. Just as Henri's narrative starts with a detailed depiction of Napoleon Bonaparte, "The Emperor", Villanelle's narrative begins with the description of a city, whose symbol is "The Queen of Spades":

> There is a city *surrounded by water* with watery alleys that do for streets and roads and silted up backways that only the rats can cross. […] This is the city of mazes. You may set off from the same place to the same place every day and never go by the same route. If you do so, it will be by mistake. Your bloodhound nose will not serve you here. Your course in compass reading will fail you. Your confident instructions to passers-by will send them to squares they have never heard of, over canals not listed in the notes.
>
> Although wherever you are going is always in front of you, there is no such thing as straight ahead. (*P* 49; italics added)

Villanelle conceals the name of this city for a few pages and enhances the city's shape and fabulous qualities. This fact prevents the reader from equating this linguistic city with any other she or he might have visited while simultaneously putting it in dialogue with both the actual geographical place in the North of Italy and any of the "invisible" cities described by Marco Polo. In this way, Venice in *The Passion* partakes both of the real city and of Calvino's book as an intertext. Both *The Passion* and *Invisible Cities* encourage readers to question the unclear boundaries between reality and fiction by resorting to metafictional comments directly

addressed to the reader: "if you choose to believe me, good" (Calvino 1974: 75) and "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (*P* 5, 13, 69, 160). They also teach readers the extent to which reality is constructed by language and invite them to actively participate in the formation and transformation of spatial Venice.

It is only later and indirectly that Villanelle gives the name of the city. Firstly, by quoting the words uttered by the fortune teller, one of the grotesque characters inhabiting the space of "The Queen of Spades", firstly: "You're a Venetian, but you wear your name as a disguise" (*P* 54); secondly, by establishing a clear relationship between herself and the space she inhabits: "I love the night. In *Venice*, a long time ago, when *we* had our own calendar and stayed aloof from the world, we began the days at night" (*P* 56; italics added). This first allusion to the name of the city in *The Passion* is only interesting insofar as it brings to the fore the strong bond that exists between space, time, and gender binaries in this text; but this identification does not add much to the recognition of the city by the reader, who, like Kublai Khan, has already learnt to perceive multiple cities hidden, while at the same time intertextually exposed, beneath the so-called Venice. To that extent, Venice in *The Passion* becomes a pastiche of features selected from the extensive range provided by Marco Polo in Calvino's text.

Invisible Cities is, no doubt, one of the many intertexts of *The Passion* in that it provides Winterson with a catalogue of features from which she can construct her own city of dreams, desires and memories. Parallelisms between the already quoted description that Villanelle makes of Venice at the beginning of "The Queen of Spades" and the way in which Marco Polo pictures the city of Esmeralda are only too obvious, as can be seen from the following italicised fragments that foreshadow some of the basic traits of Villanelle's Venice:

> In Esmeralda, *city of water, a network of canals and a network of streets span and intersect each other*. To go from one place to another you have always the choice between land and boat: and *since the shortest distance between two points in Esmeralda is not a straight line but a zigzag that ramifies in tortuous optional routes, the ways that open to each passerby are never two, but many,* and they increase further for those who alternate a stretch by boat with one on dry land. […]
>
> Secret and adventurous lives, here as elsewhere are subject to greater restrictions. *Esmeralda's cats, thieves, illicit lovers move along higher, discontinuous ways, dropping from a rooftop to a balcony, following gutterings with acrobats' steps. Below, the rats run in the darkness of the sewers, one behind the other's tail, along with conspirators and smugglers*. (Calvino 1974: 88; italics added)

Esmeralda is the last name in Calvino's series of "Trading cities". Yet it is not a unique point of connection between both texts. A "*mercurial* city" (*P* 49; italics added), Venice partakes of the multiple and changeable nature of "Eutropia",

Calvino's "Trading cities 3". As Marco Polo says: "Alone, among all the cities of the empire, Eutropia remains always the same. Mercury[38], god of the fickle, to whom the city is sacred, worked this ambiguous miracle" (65). Esmeralda and Eutropia are both "Trading cities" and, in *The Passion*, trade is of the utmost significance in the life of Venice and especially of the boatmen. Villanelle explains that "if ever I saw a stern disappearing down a black, inhospitable-looking waterway, I followed it and discovered *the city within the city* that is the knowledge of a few" (*P* 53; italics added). "Eusapia", like Venice, "the city of pleasure" (*P* 55), is "inclined to enjoy life and flee care" (Calvino 1974: 109). Eusapia has also got a life underground, which is governed by "a confraternity of hooded brothers" to which "no one else has access" (110). Venice is "the city of ghosts" (*P* 61) and a city with another powerful brotherhood, that of the boatmen. The city of "Valdrada" is at the same time a double city, the surface city and the mirrored city (Calvino 1974: 53). Venice is "the city of reflections" (*P* 57).

Echoes of Calvino's book expand in such a way that it looks as if Villanelle had either visited all of Marco Polo's invisible cities or heard the stories about them as an-other addressee veiled by the greatness of the historical figure, Kublai Khan. Or perhaps Venice is the result of Villanelle's and Henri's "identical dream" like "Zobeide", Calvino's "Cities & Desire 5" (45). As Marco Polo argues:

> With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else. (Calvino 1974: 44)

Venice is the city that brings to the conscious mind of characters their desires and fears, that is, their passions. One of Villanelle's refrains in the book actually is passion: "Somewhere between fear and sex passion is" (*P* 55, 62, 68, 74, 76). There does not seem to be a better place for passion than Venice, a city which does not respect givens, a deceitful place which has its secret ways and where the visible external city conceals an inner city.

Although Villanelle seems to have assembled a new city out of the most outstanding oddities of Marco Polo's tales/reports, the similar treatment of Calvino's

38 According to Robert Graves in *The Greek Myths*, Zeus agrees to make Hermes (the Greek name for Mercury) his herald, on condition that he carries out some duties including "the making of treaties, the promotion of commerce, and the maintenance of free rights of way for travellers on any road in the world" (1996: 69). Graves adds that "when Hermes agreed to these conditions, Zeus gave him a herald staff with white ribbons, which everyone was ordered to respect; a round hat against the rain, and winged golden sandals which carried him about with the swiftness of wind" (69-70).

invisible cities and Winterson's Venice is not as significant for the interpretation of *The Passion* as the implications behind Winterson's intertextual move. On the one hand, by building up her city from a good assortment of fictionalised places, Winterson is equally favouring multiplicity, fragmentation and disparity as opposed to singularity, identity and unity[39]. Thus, in spite of its apparently being a single place, Venice turns out to be an amalgam of different cities, of all the cities the imagination may conjure up. In this respect, Venice foregrounds its own imaginary fictional status at the same time as it symbolises the conflict between appearance and reality that permeates the book at different levels. Venice is the city of carnival and masks, an enchanted city where "all things *seem to be* possible" (*P* 76; italics added).

On the other hand, Villanelle's Venice parodies Marco Polo's cities on account of its being gendered female. Winterson exposes in this way the problematic male-oriented perspective, the one-sidedness, from which every city in Calvino's text is presented, in spite (or perhaps precisely because of) their outstandingly feminine names. Venice is a universal city, a city which hides within itself all those groups marginalised by society that Linda Hutcheon calls the "ex-centrics" (1988) at the same time as it lodges mythical figures such as the old fortune teller, who, as Susana Onega has pointed out, is reminiscent of Eliot's Madame Sosostris in *The Waste Land* (1993: 122), a "famous clairvoyante" who

> is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
> With a wicked pack of cards. (Eliot 1969a: 70)

Villanelle explains that "in this inner city are thieves and Jews and children with slant eyes who come from the eastern wastelands without father or mother […]. There are exiles too" (*P* 53). Venice is a city in which the high and the low walk the same ground, breathe the same air. It is the city of Satan (*P* 104), a subversive city which "not even Bonaparte could rationalise" (*P* 112), "the city of chance" (*P* 55), where prostitutes, gamblers, the mad, the poor, the dead, find their place. It is not for nothing that this city of the "ex-centrics" is a "silent city" (*P* 54), "the city of uncertainty" (*P* 58), where everybody is in disguise because even gondolas can be disguises (*P* 118).

The alleged mutability of Venice in *The Passion*, the blurring of the limits between being and appearing, together with the mixture of the mainstream and the marginalised, the overt references to the city as a product of the imagination and its favouring of multiplicity, fragmentation and diversity all add up to the depiction of

39 Multiplicity and diversity not only characterise the city, they are also common features of its inhabitants, who may be seen as the products of this dream-like cosmopolitan microcosm.

Venice as a postmodern city, the ideal space for Villanelle, who cross-dresses as a man by wearing a moustache and a man's shirt which conceals her breasts, to subvert culturally accepted constructions of sexuality.

Inside Villanelle's postmodern city and as a part of it, lies the madhouse of San Servelo, the place in which Henri is confined as a prisoner after having killed Villanelle's husband, and the place which he wilfully accepts as his final abode. Although the first allusion to this particular space is made by Villanelle, San Servelo is, at the end of the novel, the natural space for Henri, the only place that grants him peace of heart —not of mind, though— privacy, concealment, and protection. Villanelle presents San Servelo as "a quiet place that caters for the well-off and defective" (*P* 50). This is a fairly soft depiction for a place whose name is not mentioned again until the very last part of the book when Villanelle makes Henri aware of the precarious situation he is in after having murdered her husband: "Henri, if you are convicted as insane, they'll either hang you or send you to San Servelo. The madhouse on the island" (*P* 140). After all, San Servelo does not seem so good a spot, but a "lonely place" (*P* 79). Perhaps for this reason does Henri use most of the times vague expressions and the indefinite "here" as euphemisms to refer to the only space he paradoxically identifies with in the whole book:

> I didn't expect to come *here*. The view is good and the seagulls take bread from my window. *One of the others here* boils seagulls, but only in the winter. In summer, they're full of worms.
> Winter.
> The unimaginable zero winter. (*P* 80; italics added)

Alongside Romanticism, modernism is the literary movement that has had the greatest authority on Winterson's idea of fiction writing and to which she has paid her respects in *Art Objects*. The whole corpus of T. S. Eliot's poetry stands as an intertext in both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man* (1916) is also of special intertextual interest in *The Passion*. If, as seen above, *Invisible Cities* has proved fairly productive as an intertext in the depiction and meaning of Venice, it is my intention to show how San Servelo engages in an equally fertile, dialogic relation with Eliot's ideological stance, especially as drawn in his *Four Quartets*.

The overt influence of Eliot's poetry in *The Passion* is already latent in the titles of the last two chapters of the book. On the one hand, the presentation of the third chapter of the book as "The Zero Winter" closely links it to the fourth of Eliot's quartets, "Little Gidding", in whose first part the poet sorrowfully asks:

> Where is the summer?, the unimaginable

Zero summer? (Eliot 1959: 191)

The reference to Eliot's literary production is widened through the selection of the title of the fourth chapter of the book, "The Rock", which is unmistakably one of the most frequent and well-known symbols in Eliot's poetry. *The Rock* is, to begin with, the title of a play which was written by T. S. Eliot in 1934 and which has been described as "at least not a routine English play" which "takes its place among popular-highbrow experiments of the day" due to "its stylized fragmentariness, and incorporated variety-acts" (Grove 1994: 171). Secondly, and equally interesting is Eliot's own comment on the title of his third quartet, "The Dry Salvages" (1941), which "is a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N. E. coast of Cape Ann. Massachusetts" (Eliot 1959: 184). "The Dry Salvages" is, in my opinion, the poetic composition which best suits the plaintive, melancholic mood that suffuses Henri's story in *The Passion*. It also provides a symbolic featuring of San Servelo as "the ragged rock in the restless waters" (187).

San Servelo is Henri's "rock", a lonely place surrounded by water, where life and death are difficult to tell apart. The madhouse is obviously inhabited by mentally deranged people. Two wings separate "the remaining rich and mad" from "the increasing numbers of poor and mad" (*P* 142), so in this respect San Servelo is a class-conscious place with hierarchical distinctions based on economic standards. This madhouse resounds with the voices of the dead for, as Henri explains: "They say the dead don't talk. Silent as the grave they say. It's not true. The dead are talking all the time. On this rock, when the wind is up, I can hear them" (*P* 133)[40]. So, apart from the inmates and the warders, San Servelo is densely populated with the voices and ghosts of dead people who come to pay a visit to the inmates from time to time: "I only began to feel afraid when the voices started, and after the voices the dead themselves, walking the halls and watching me with their hollow eyes" (*P* 142). Hollow eyes which again send us back to T. S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" (1925).

None of the so far mentioned features of San Servelo would make this place into a particularly appealing one, for it should be borne in mind that this is a penitentiary institution for mentally deranged people, which Henri describes as follows: "My room here is very small. If I lie down, which I try not to do for reasons I will explain, I can touch each corner just by stretching out. I have a window though

40 These words echo Eliot's in "Little Gidding I":

> And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
> They can tell you, being dead: the communication
> Of the dead is tongued by fire beyond the language of the living. (1959: 192)

and, unlike most of the other windows here, it has no bars. It is perfectly open" (*P* 134). Although a small room with very scarce commodities, Henri's cubicle possesses a distinctive trait, there are no bars in the window, something which sounds extremely odd for a prison. As the reader soon learns, there is no need of placing iron bars in the window of a man who has decided to remain a lifelong inmate and who has overtly refused the chance to abandon that seemingly disgusting place. Perplexity may assault the reader when confronted with Henri's apparently illogical attitude. Nevertheless, the following words, uttered by Henri himself, give way to a new interpretation of his frame of mind: "There was a time, some years ago I think, when [Villanelle] tried to make me leave this place, though not to be with her. She was asking me to be alone again, just when I felt safe. I don't ever want to be alone again and *I don't want to see any more of the world*" (*P* 151-2; italics added).

Henri consciously decides to inhabit San Servelo for life. As he declares, "I stay here by choice" (*P* 152), but his decision is not motivated by the alluring character of a place which is, rather on the contrary, unquestionably far from being idyllic. The charm of a place like San Servelo is of a different nature altogether. San Servelo, Henri's rock, responds both to the idealised Romantic vision of the artist's retreat from society into his or her imagination and to the tenets that underlie the modified modernist notion of the medieval topos of the "ivory tower" and the mythic overtones provided by another Tarot card, "la tour abolie". Henri opts for taking refuge in a closed space which is alien to the outer world, an inner space where the mind is in absolute control and where a young man can also become a writer. The choice of the name of this place, San Servelo, further adds to this interpretation because the word "servelo" is a near pun on the Italian name for "cervello", the front part of the brain which is concerned with thought and perception. Henri admits that: "On this rock, the events in France hardly touched me. What difference could it make to me, safe at home with mother and my friends?" (*P* 151). Interpreted in psychological terms, these words imply a regression of the character's mind to a previous moment of his existence in which he felt safe and happy. San Servelo provides Henri with the security, the freedom and the happiness he needs if he wants to attempt to organise his painful experiences, if he wants to be able to understand his own confused past, to find his own identity by joining together his presently fragmented self and to write himself into existence.

It is precisely as an inmate in San Servelo that Henri will start to write down his memoirs, to work on his own portrait of the soldier as a young man. Parallelisms

between Henri and the main character in Joyce's *Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus, are easy on the eye. Stephen rejects the outside world and enters the realm of his mind, of his imagination and his memories of her beloved in order to embrace himself as artist and work upon a poetic composition, which culminates his performance as a poet:

> The verses passed from his mind to his lips and, murmuring them over, he felt the rhythmic movement of a *villanelle* pass through them. The roselike glow sent forth its rays of rhyme; ways, days, blaze, praise, raise. Its rays burned up the world, consumed the hearts of men and angels: the rays from the rose that was her wilful heart. (1977: 197; italics added)

Stephen's love inspires him a fairly infrequent poetic form, a villanelle, by means of which he is not only capable of accepting his desire but also of bringing his created beloved to life:

> The instant of inspiration seemed now to be reflected from all sides at once from a multitude of cloudy circumstance of what had happened or of what might have happened. The instant flashed forth like a point of light and now from cloud on cloud of vague circumstance confused form was veiling softly its afterglow. O! In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh[41]. (1977: 196)

The female protagonist of *The Passion*, and object of Henri's passion, is significantly called Villanelle, a rather unusual name for a Venetian girl, especially at a historical moment in which Venice had been conquered by Bonaparte and his French soldiers. At the beginning of her story in the second chapter of the novel, Villanelle explains that it was her father who gave her this French name because "They've [the French] made his business thrive with their craving for foolish cakes" (*P* 53). Later she refers to one of her no less peculiar encounters with the Eliotean version of Madame Sosostris and the latter's comment on Villanelle's name: "You're a Venetian, but you wear your name as a disguise" (*P* 54). Naming her female protagonist Villanelle, Winterson makes explicit the intertextual relation of *The Passion* with Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man.*

Bonnie Roos has analysed *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man* as a retelling of the Pygmalion myth (2001: 100), which not only brings the artist into existence but also deals extensively with the concept of art coming to life. As Stephen says: "The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery of esthetic like that of material creation is accomplished. The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (1977: 194-195). Roos establishes a

41 This quotation is also echoed in *Sexing the Cherry*, as I point in the next chapter.

correspondence between the statue in the Pygmalion myth, as narrated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the villanelle Stephen writes almost at the end of Joyce's novel. Like Pygmalion, who, repelled by all the women he meets in the real world, decides to model a statue which would stand as a perfect recipient of his desires as well as a mirror reflection of himself (Roos 2001: 97-98), Stephen is also seen in the process of bringing to life the woman of his dreams in the form of a villanelle, the feminine villain of his story (Roos 2001: 108). It is his desire for her that inspires Stephen's moment of epiphany as a poet. The passage and the villanelle deserve to be quoted in full:

> While his soul had passed from ecstasy to languor where had she been? Might it be, in the mysterious ways of spiritual life, that her soul at those moments had been conscious of his homage? It might be.
>
> A glow of desire kindled again his soul and fired and fulfilled all his body. Conscious of his desire she was waking from odorous sleep, the temptress of his villanelle. Her eyes, dark and with a look of languor, were opening to his eyes. Her nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm, odorous and lavishlimbed, enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life: and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain.
>
> *Are you not weary of ardent ways,*
> *Lure of the fallen seraphim?*
> *Tell no more of enchanted days.*
>
> *Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze*
> *And you have had your will of him.*
> *Are you not weary of ardent ways?*
>
> *Above the flame the smoke of praise*
> *Goes up from ocean rim to rim.*
> *Tell no more of enchanted days.*
>
> *Our broken cries and mournful lays*
> *Rise in one eucharistic hymn.*
> *Are you not weary of ardent ways?*
>
> *While sacrificing hands upraise*
> *The chalice flowing to the brim,*
> *Tell no more of enchanted days.*
>
> *And still you hold our longing gaze*
> *With languorous look and lavish limb!*
> *Are you not weary of ardent ways?*
> *Tell no more of enchanted days.* (1977: 201-202)

In the process that precedes Stephen's production of the villanelle, he offers the reader his fantasised woman, "who is simultaneously constructed perfection and powerful creation, both aspects of which are in the end created by him, her author" (Roos 2001: 107). However, as Roos has argued, whereas the statue in the Pygmalion myth is always a passive recipient of male desire, in the *Portrait* it is

Stephen who always remains passive and women who are responsible for making him both into a young man (sexually) and into an artist.

In *The Passion*, Villanelle, a woman who belongs to the realm of fantasy, is the recipient of Henri's passion. Villanelle is responsible for awakening Henri to sexuality and, consequently, she transforms him into an unconventional male lover, aware of and concerned with female desire and pleasure; as she acknowledges: "He had a thin boy's body that covered mine as light as a sheet and, because I had taught him to love me, he loved me well. He had no notion of what men do, he had no notion of what his own body did until I showed him" (*P* 148). Villanelle is also responsible for Henri's fatherhood, when she decides to become pregnant; but she denies him the possibility of assuming the role of *pater familias* because she chooses to remain a *femme sole*. Finally, it is Villanelle's refusal of his passion that eventually makes of Henri a surrogate author who, in spite of his real or feigned madness, is in charge of bringing the novel to an end, systematically subordinating Villanelle's embedded story. As Susana Onega has deftly suggested, Villanelle may be read as a product of Henri's imagination, an idea which she indirectly expresses when she affirms that the reader is aware that:

> the text we have in our hands is no other than Henri's war journal/diary, a fact that adds a metafictional dimension to the novel, suggesting the possibility that Henri might have been writing himself and Villanelle into existence. This possibility adds a fictional colouring to Villanelle's affirmation of "difference" and freedom and to Henri's achievement of entropic peace, reminding the reader that their heroic struggles have only taken place within the cardboard covers of the fictional text that contains them. (1994: 190)

In this sense, Villanelle could be read as the textual incarnation of Henri's desires just as the villanelle Stephen produces refines his beloved into existence. In both cases, we witness the birth of a writer, who rejects the patriarchal world influenced by femininity and feminine creativity. As Stephen confesses to his friend Cranly:

> You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use —silence, exile, and cunning. (1977: 222)

San Servelo is, then, the place where Henri will reject history, together with chronology, in favour of memory and "time in the mind". Eliot's poetic words in "Little Gidding III" provide an equally illuminating defence of memory over history:

> This is the use of memory:
> For liberation —not less of love but expanding
> Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
> From the future as well as the past. […]

> History may be servitude,
> History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
> The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
> To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern. (1959: 195)

Situated within a clearly postmodern Venice, the madhouse of San Servelo distinctly shines as a modernist sign, the "ivory tower" seclusion of the writer. A world of one's own to which access is utterly restricted. Villanelle is left out of it because having her near and not being allowed to love her hurts Henri too much. Nevertheless, Henri's mother, Napoleon and some of his friends are freely allowed to come and go. "This is not a barren place" (*P* 156), states a proud Henri who has assumed the responsibility of transforming a bleak, sterile place into an Eliotean rose-garden, the modernist version of the medieval *hortus conclusus*:

> I have started work on the garden here. No one has touched it for years, though I am told it once had fine roses of such a scent that you could smell them from St Mark's when the wind was right. Now it's a barbed tangle of thorns. Now the birds do not nest here. It's an inhospitable place and the salt makes it difficult to choose what to grow. (*P* 155)

In this way is the initial "waste land" metamorphosed into the "dream of a wide field where flowers grow of their own accord" (*P* 155). Actually, the book comes to an end with the promise of "a forest of red roses" (*P* 160). This image sends us back to T. S. Eliot's poetry and more precisely to the relationship that Eliot establishes between the rose-garden and memory in "Burnt Norton I":

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden. (1959: 171)

According to A. David Moody, in the poems of T. S. Eliot "the entry into the rose-garden of memory introduces the theme of love" (1994: 153). In *The Passion*, however, as we have seen, the rose-garden is rather a manifestation of Henri's urgent need to bring order and life to his barren, chaotic experience of the world and to move back in time to a moment of lost security and well-being.

3. GENDERING CHRONOTOPES IN *THE PASSION*

Since ambiguity and paradox are two characteristic features of postmodernism in art, the chronotope proves a valuable critical device for the analysis of postmodern narrative texts, although it presents some methodological problems for the analyst. Mikhail Bakhtin is aware of the uncertainty of establishing "the boundaries of chronotopic analysis" (1981: 257), an issue which he addresses at the end of his essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938). Bakhtin observes that, in spite of the fact that the objects of our abstract cognition are in principle not subject to spatial or temporal determinations,

> We somehow manage however to endow all phenomena with meaning, that is, we incorporate them not only into the sphere of spatial and temporal existence but also into a semantic sphere […]. For us the following is important: whatever these meanings turn out to be, in order to enter our experience (which is social experience) they must take on the *form of a sign* that is audible and visible for us (a hieroglyph, a mathematical formula, a verbal or linguistic expression, a sketch, etc.). Without such temporal-spatial expression, even abstract thought is impossible. Consequently, every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope. (1981: 257-258; italics in the original)

Bakhtin's argument is anything but conclusive, nor does it restrict or at least point in any precise direction. What becomes obvious from his statement is that the chronotope is inextricably bound with representation and meaning, that is to say, all means of representation in narrative texts are subject to a chronotopic analysis.

The Passion represents history by means of such unequal tools as memory, chance, and desire. It has already been pointed out that Winterson's text is not conventionally historical, although history occupies a central position and has a distinct function in the text. *The Passion* is a novel about the importance of telling stories, oral or written, as a successful means of representing the self both in and across history. Reviewing *The Passion* for North-American audiences, Alan Cheuse observed that the novel is "the stuff of fairy tale and myth, though all of it is rooted in the hard truths of 19th-century continental history. Winterson presents it with the broad gestures of opera in the key of high romance" (1988: 3). The chronotopic representation of history in *The Passion* is bound to the writing of Henri's memoirs, to which Villanelle's discourse is simultaneously subordinated and juxtaposed.

These two chronotopes intersect with a third, the adventure narrative or quest, which is related to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the "chronotope of the road", where "the unity of time and space markers is exhibited with exceptional precision and clarity" (1981: 98), and which, in its turn, intersects with the chronotope of romance narrative, where the desired other is systematically represented in terms of space.

"Since the text is a spoken or written discourse," argues Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, "it implies someone who speaks or writes it" (1983: 3). Susan Rubin Suleiman expands this idea further when she says that "since all writing is done by some-body for some-body, it is not merely permitted, but downright valuable, to remember who you are as you write" (1994: 2). As we have seen, the story in *The Passion* is told by two narrative agencies, a male narrator, Henri, and a female narrator, Villanelle, who are simultaneously the two main characters in the novel. Both of them are, therefore, homodiegetic narrators which participate in the action being told. Their life stories are presented in the retrospect, a narrative technique that makes it possible for the reader to appreciate two different perspectives within the same narrative agency, the younger voice that experiences and focalises and the older voice that reflects upon those experiences and tells them.

Two homodiegetic narrators assume the responsibility for the narration in *The Passion*. The novel is divided into four chapters, each of which establishes a different relationship between these narrative agencies. Henri is the first-level (Bal 1985) or diegetic (Genette 1980) narrator of the first chapter, "The Emperor". Villanelle is the first-level narrator of the second chapter, "The Queen of Spades". The third chapter, "The Zero Winter", is primarily narrated by Henri, even though he gives Villanelle the chance, the space, and the voice to tell her life story. The fourth chapter, "The Rock", is half told by Henri and by Villanelle. Using Steven Cohan and Linda Shires's theories, the reader may find "multiple accounts appearing in succession (one after another)" (1988: 91) in the first two chapters of the novel. The third chapter furnishes the reader with a radically different relationship in the sense that a "hierarchy" is established between the two narrative agencies, to the extent that Henri's narration totally encloses Villanelle's. The complex web of narrative possibilities eventually comes to an end in the final chapter of the novel where the story is told in "alternation (one alongside another)". I am not concerned here, however, with the quantity but rather with the quality of Henri's and Villanelle's narrative activities. In this respect, it is my assumption that their status as narrators is considerably different, and that this distinction contributes to the reinforcement of the deconstructive blurring of binary oppositions in the text. Behind the apparently

unegalitarian distribution of the narrative voices just described, there lies a veiled ideological ploy, which I intend to expose in the subsequent pages.

Narratologically speaking Henri and Villanelle initially represent two opposed conceptions with regard to the role that a narrator/character is supposed to perform within a narrative. Villanelle is a storyteller, an "oral" narrator, whose *spoken* discourse is almost always subordinated to Henri's *written* discourse. For his part, Henri stands for the self-conscious first-level narrator who assumes full control of his work. Henri is not only a narrator, he is also a writer, a surrogate author. His story is told in the retrospect, as is made evident by the use in his narrative of the past tense, which "is enough to make a narrative subsequent [i.e. the story precedes the discourse], although without indicating the temporal interval which separates the moment of the narrating from the moment of the story" (Genette 1980: 220). However, the first pages of the novel contain two pieces of narrative which are surprisingly told in the present: "The midget *laughed* and said he'd rather take a chance with the horse than the master, but we *don't laugh* (*P* 4; italics added)". Has the narrator decided to use a narrative present in order to do away with the distance that separates his memories from the experienced events? It could be, if we agree that "a present-tense narrative which is 'behaviorist' in type and strictly of the moment can seem the height of objectivity" (Genette 1980: 219). Further, Henri is extremely concerned with being objective in an attempt to both being true to the "facts" of his life and to achieving the strongest degree of complicity with the reader, so the use of the present tense would highlight the cruelty of the scenes being described to the reader who is unconsciously forced to feel more directly concerned with them. A few pages later, however, the use of the present tense is framed by the typical structure of a particular narrative genre, the journal:

> July 20th, 1804. Too early for dawn but not night either.
> There is a restlessness in the trees, out at sea, in the camp. The birds and we are sleeping fitfully, wanting to be asleep but tense with the idea of awakening. (*P* 23)

The only difference between these two scenes is that the latter is framed. Aligning his discourse with the conventions of a specific mode of fiction, the journal, the text hints at the existence of two separate narratives, a war journal and the memoirs, which alternate in Henri's written discourse and which would explain his apparently chaotic use of present and past tenses. The reader learns then that, on the one hand, Henri has been keeping a war journal, that he has been writing down his feelings and experiences as they were taking place, that he has kept a record of the most significant events in his life as a soldier: "It was after the disaster at sea that I started

to keep a diary. I started so that I wouldn't forget. So that in later life when I was prone to sit by the fire and look back, I'd have something clear and sure to set against my memory tricks" (*P* 28); and that, on the other, now that he is wilfully secluded in the madhouse of San Servelo for a lifetime, Henri is intent on metamorphosing his schematic war journal into a more developed work of art. Later in the novel he says: "I woke that morning and counted my possessions as I do; the Madonna, my notebooks, this story, my lamp and wicks, my pens and my talisman" (*P* 152). Apart from being a romantic description of the writer secluded, lonely writing his memoirs by candlelight, this quotation is interesting because, when Henri enumerates his possessions, he talks of *this* story *and* of his notebooks, acknowledging the existence of two separate narratives. Henri has rewritten the war journal, a passionate product of youth, into his more pondered and mature memoirs, in an attempt to come to terms with his past by reconstructing it, by mastering it. To this extent Henri's attitude parallels modernism's "despair of coherence in a materialistic, chaotic social life, increasingly bereft of religious, moral or historical certainties, and to see art, vision and the depths of the individual spirit as the only refuge from this disorder" (Stevenson 1993: 30).

Henri self-consciously acknowledges his task as narrator-author who orders, chooses, and leaves out whatever he considers irrelevant as he engages in the process of rewriting his life story. Henri presents himself not only as author of his memoirs but also as its reader when he reckons that: "I go on writing so that I will always have something to read" (*P* 159). In this way and breaking all narrative frames, Henri becomes not only the narrator and the narratee of his journal but also the fictional writer and fictional reader of his memoirs. His insistence on the fact that he is trying to be true to reality, "what really happened", paradoxically attains the opposite effect and enhances the fact that writing down "reality" inevitably means altering it. Language modifies reality as it represents it and Henri's discourse is doubly removed from reality since it has been transformed twice into a linguistic construct, first as journal and then as memoirs, for the writing of which he resorts to his memories of past events, which have only been partially collected in his war journal. Suleiman observes that the activity of remembering

> is not a passive reception of memories fixed forever like a series of faded images in a scrapbook, but an active (re)construction, a putting together and shaping (the way an artist puts together and shapes certain materials) of a life or part of a life. Similarly the self is not a fixed entity but an evolving process, not something discovered (or passively "remembered" but something made; which does not mean that it does not exist, but that its existence is always subject to revision (re-vision). (1994: 2-3)

In an illuminating comparative study of several theories of subjectivity, Kim L. Worthington notes that "the idea that our sense of selfhood inheres in the creative act of self-constituting narration has been advanced by a number of theorists in recent years" (1996: 180). Of special interest to my argument here is the theory of subjectivity put forward by Jonathan Glover in *I: The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity*, a theory which, as Worthington summarises:

> relies heavily on memory, through the agency of which a sense of personal continuity is achieved through time. In suggesting the importance of remembrance, Glover writes of the *re*cognition of one's personal identity as one might describe the writing or reading of a novel, as a narrative and interpretative process in which past significations, events, and actions are assimilated into the present interpretative moment. (1996: 181; italics in the original)

Henri's memories in *The Passion* bring both the historical past and Henri's self to life. As has already been mentioned, Henri's narrated memories do not correspond to the actual events he himself focalises as a soldier. His loyalty to Napoleon is ironically portrayed from the start. *The Passion* presents the reader with two distinct voices, that of the optimistic young man who believes in the promising career of his Emperor and the subsequent flourishing of his country, and that of the grown-up man who has experienced all the abominations of war and becomes profoundly disappointed with it. His memories are narrated from a distance by an adult Henri who is already "imprisoned" in San Servelo and who can review his past experiences at Napoleon's service from a critical perspective. The ironic distance that the adult narrator-author maintains with regard to his own past adventures as a young character as he rewrites them is one of the keys to success in the undermining of the monolithic world of hierarchical oppression by sex, class, militarism and religion in which Henri has been brought up.

In writing his memoirs, Henri does not choose to provide a chronological account of events but rather uses memory as structuring element because, as Worthington explains, "our sense of who we are is synthesized in the narrative assimilation of past subject positions that is achieved through the interpretative interconnections of memory, 'a process of involuntary comparison [which] locates present experience in the context of past history'" (1996: 181). The use of memory as structuring element is another feature Henri has in common with the most representative writers of modernism, for whom memory is a means of escape from both the impending bondage of the clock and the nightmare of history. In Randall Stevenson's words, "just as modernist authors turned away from the increasing pressures of social reality to the private inner space of consciousness, so they also

moved into an inner dimension of memory; into what *Orlando* calls 'time in the mind' rather than 'time on the clock'" (1993: 46). In this sense, it may be asserted that Henri impersonates the modernist idea of the artist consciously writing for himself, unaware of and uninterested in the external world, suspended in a perpetual present and echoing the works and the words of T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, or Samuel Beckett.

Henri is not however the only one who refers to his writing activity. Villanelle mentions first that: "He said he had his notebooks and he was busy" (*P* 143), words that preclude Henri's acknowledging the existence of two separate narratives. Three pages later, Villanelle insists on describing Henri's activity in San Servelo in a more explicit way:

> And what of Henri?
> As I told you, for the first few months, I thought him his old self. He asked for writing materials and seemed intent on *recreating* his years since he had left home and his time with me. (*P* 146; italics added)

Villanelle makes no reference to such notions as reality, truth or memoirs. On the contrary she uses a self-explanatory verb, "recreating", which calls the reader's attention to the fact that, for Villanelle, writing is not a mimetic activity but rather a creative process. The narrative progressively emphasises Henri's disillusion with the empirical world, as expressed in the journal, and his loss of certainty in the face of crumbling traditional values and grand narratives, as evinced by his denial to accept his memoirs as the ultimate text. It is then that Henri's narrative discourse meets Villanelle's discourse. Henri recognises himself neither as a scribe who copies reality nor as a writer of history but as a storyteller in whose discourse both war journal and memoirs alternate to construct the very same text that the reader has in her or his hands, ultimately his own fantastic portrait of the writer, and who can summarise the learning he has achieved at the end of his literary journey in the sentence "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (*P* 160).

Apart from the fact that Villanelle is a homodiegetic narrator like Henri, similarities and dissimilarities between these two narrative agents conform Jeanette Winterson's deconstructive move in *The Passion*. I have just pointed out how Henri has recourse to memory as structuring element of his narrative and the resulting disruption that it produces on the linear presentation of history[42]. Similarly,

[42] Elisabeth Joyce relates Jeanette Winterson with Rikki Ducornet and Susan Daitch by pointing out that "these novelists emphasize […] the inconsistencies of memory to show that rational, sequential, event-driven history is at root just as illogical in its granting primacy to certain features of the past as […] contemporary rereadings of history" (1996: 2).

Villanelle rejects the logical and chronological order of events and substitutes it in her discourse by what Gina Oxbrow names "a deliberately haphazard sequential ordering", which reinforces "the underlying theme of the fabula contained in the novel —that of the rôle of destiny and chance in the selection and manifestation of human passion as a cyclical universal event" (1993: 595). Oxbrow's emphasis on this mode of presentation of events in *The Passion* is interesting in that it refers to the second means by which the text represents identity in history, namely chance, its associated gambling motif, and the fairy tale as literary mode.

Villanelle begins the story of her life with the statement: "I have always been a gambler. It's a skill that comes naturally to me like thieving and loving" (*P* 89). This self-description, like one of the refrains which she repeatedly puts into practice: "You play, you win. You play, you lose. You play", installs the intrinsic relation that exists between Villanelle's life and its retelling[43] and the way in which they are both ruled by chance. This idea is further emphasised by the structure *en abyme* of both Villanelle's story —which contains the story of the two gamblers whose wager is a life and the story of Salvadore, the Jew, who gambles away his heart— and the third chapter in which Villanelle's story is contained. Both of them present the reader with what Mieke Bal (1985: 143) refers to as "frame narratives"[44]. The technique known as "story within the story" contributes to adding perspective and depth to the novel. Infinite regress functions as a vital element of the structure of the text, acting as a mechanism that thematises the process of creation. Thus, it is not casual that, immediately after having finished telling the first interspersed story of the two gamblers, Villanelle explicitly uses one of the most common metaphors for the *mise en abyme* when she says: "I have seen dolls from the east that fold in one upon the other, the one concealing the other and so I know that the heart may conceal itself" (*P* 94).

Villanelle's status as narrator also reflects the importance of chance in *The Passion*. Whereas Henri remains an autodiegetic narrator in all the chapters he narrates, Villanelle's hierarchical position as a narrator, like her social position as a character, is fluidly Protean. In the third chapter of the novel, Villanelle's story is explicitly subordinated to Henri's narrative. Villanelle's life story is embedded in Henri's story; therefore, as a narrator, she occupies an intradiegetic position framed

43 Villanelle literally engages in the *re*telling of her life story because she provides slightly different versions in chapters two and three of *The Passion*, which seem to be respectively addressed to the reader, and Henri and Patrick.

44 According to Mieke Bal, frame narratives are "narrative texts in which at second or third level a complete story is told. The classic example is the story cycle of the *Arabian Nights*" (1985: 143).

and contained by the extradiegetic narrator, who transcribes Villanelle's words immediately after saying:

> "A fire and a tale", said Patrick. "Now all we need is a drop of something hot," and he fathomed from the bottom of his unfathomable pockets another stoppered jar of evil spirit. *This was her story*. (*P* 89; italics added)

Villanelle's story follows this introduction and curiously enough there is no other formal sign, such as quotation marks, for instance, that may characterise this story as other. No strict boundaries are established between the discourses of the two narrators; rather on the contrary, the narrative easily flows from one voice to the other. As a result, Villanelle's status as narrator in "The Queen of Spades" is highly ambiguous. Reading this second chapter after the first, as the reader is expected to do, Villanelle seems to be an extradiegetic narrator who, like Henri, starts telling the story of her life but who opposes Henri in that, far from attempting to write her memoirs to rationalise an otherwise chaotic reality, Villanelle, "who loved to tell stories, wove for their wildest dreams" (*P* 104). However, when reread in the light of the third chapter, Villanelle's story in "The Queen of Spades" is again subordinated to Henri's narrative activity. It is true that no external frame is used on this occasion but Villanelle presents herself as a storyteller when she says that "I'm surprised at myself *talking* in this way" (*P* 68; italics added), not as a surrogate author. Villanelle is never tempted to transcribe reality as it is; she believes in the healing potential of the imagination and is therefore best described as an "oral" narrator. Actually Villanelle adopts the conventions of the fairy tale as a mode of representation of her city:

> There is a city surrounded by water with watery alleys that do for streets and roads and silted up back ways that only the rats can cross. Miss your way, which is easy to do, and you may find yourself staring at a hundred eyes guarding a filthy palace of sacks and bones. Find your way, which is easy to do, and you may meet an old woman in a doorway. She will tell you your fortune, depending on your face. (*P* 49)

Villanelle's representation of her father likewise begins as any classical tale would: "*There was once* a weak and foolish man whose wife cleaned the boat and sold the fish and brought up their children and went to the terrible island as she should when her yearly time was due" (*P* 50; italics added). The same may be said about her accounts of Venetian people: "In Venice, *a long time ago*, when we had our own calendar and stayed aloof from the world, we began the days at night" (*P* 56; italics added). The repeated use of tale-like beginnings creates the appropriate atmosphere for the bizarre, mysterious, and legendary contents of Villanelle's stories and

functions as a framing device which constantly reminds the reader of the fact that what she or he is reading is the result of a juxtaposition of stories.

The fourth chapter of *The Passion*, "The Rock", contributes to adding ambiguity to the position that both Villanelle and Henri occupy as narrative agents in the text. Although the reader would expect Villanelle to put an end to the story, it is Henri who does so. It is Henri's narrative the reader finds at the beginning of the chapter and it is Henri's voice that is heard as the novel ends. This means that, at least in the space of the text, Villanelle's story is again embedded within Henri's narrative discourse. However, this is by no means the only possible reading. Since Henri is voluntarily secluded in San Servelo and has refused all direct communication with Villanelle, it seems quite unlikely that he might have had access to her words and that he is merely transcribing them, unless Villanelle and his story are the product of his deranged imagination.

An alternative reading endows the two discourses an equal status. Both Henri and Villanelle have undertaken separate lives and, consequently, their narratives become equally independent and juxtaposed. Immediately before listening to Villanelle's voice for the last time, Henri, the surrogate authorial voice, admits that "there are *voices* and they *must* be heard" (*P* 142; italics added). The first obvious interpretation of this utterance would relate those "voices" to Henri's madness and the fact that he seems to have lost touch with reality. There is however another equally valid reading of this statement, which encompasses the ideological stance expressed in *The Passion*. Henri, who has experienced the weight of patriarchy, renounces the authorial position he has claimed so far and acknowledges multiplicity and fragmentation of both self and narrative. Henri democratises History when he realises that he is part of a system composed of other voices which *must* be heard, which *must* be endowed with a discourse of their own.

Finally, if the reader listens to Winterson's suggestion to read in spirals, the last sentence of the text, the refrain and motif "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (*P* 160) is especially significant. Who utters the final sentence of the book? Obviously the answer is multiple: a) Henri, who in this way acknowledges that "literature, and specifically fantasy literature can be more truth-revealing than history" (Onega 1995b: 142); b) Henri and Villanelle, whose joined voices express the way in which the outcome of their narratives is similar in spite of the different modes of representation each of them adopts; c) a non-intrusive, heterodiegetic, authorial voice which is responsible for the spatial organisation of Henri's and Villanelle's discourses in the text. The third possibility destabilises my former readings of the

relations between the two narrators in *The Passion*, adds up to the self-reflexive structure of the novel, and connects Winterson with the representative of magic realism[45] *par excellence*, Jorge Luis Borges. His story "Las ruinas circulares" in *Ficciones*, proposes a similar blurring of ontologies when characters realise that they are just a dream in someone else's mind:

> Recordó que de todas las criaturas que componen el orbe, el fuego era la única que sabía que su hijo era un fantasma. Ese recuerdo, apaciguador al principio, acabó por atormentarlo. Temió que su hijo meditara en ese privilegio anormal y descubriera de algún modo su condición de mero simulacro. No ser un hombre, ser la proyección del sueño de otro hombre, ¡qué humillación incomparable, qué vértigo! (1992: 68)

Storytelling and chance are not only used in *The Passion* to enhance the ambiguity of discourse or to offer an alternative to narrative linearity. "Fiction, for Winterson," Laura Doan (1994: 154) contends, "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". Both Villanelle and Henri eventually come to experience "the truth-revealing power of storytelling" (Onega 1995b: 143). All fictional characters in *The Passion*, unlike "referential" characters (Bal 1985: 83), share a bent for storytelling, "a knack for yarns"[46]. Patrick and Domino, Henri and Villanelle's mothers, the French cook, even the peasants Henri and Villanelle encounter when they are travelling back to Venice, all have stories to tell. Fictional characters share their stories because, as Henri acknowledges: "Stories were all we had" (*P* 107). In fact, only the act of telling their stories conjures them up into existence. In *The Passion*, Winterson argues for the production of identity in terms of "the self as narrative", an ideological stance which, as Worthington argues,

> the construction of a subject's sense of selfhood should be understood as a creative narrative process achieved within a plurality of intersubjective communicative protocols. In the act of conceptualization of one's selfhood, one writes a narrative of personal continuity through time. That is, in thinking myself, I remember myself: I draw together my multiple members —past and other subject positions— into a coherent narrative of selfhood which is more or less readable by myself and others. Understanding personhood in this way, I argue, leaves open the possibility of revision of one's conceptions of self, and also

45 Reviewing *The Passion*, John Ash insists on the fact that "Winterson has been called a 'magic realist' and has been compared to García Márquez, but if there is a Latin American novel that *The Passion* resembles it is surely Alejo Carpertier's spare and concentrated *The Kingdom of this World*" (1987: 5). Ash explains that "like Carpertier (whose novel is also set in the time of the Napoleonic wars) Winterson has the ability to fuse seamlessly the historical and the imaginary" (5).

46 This expression, which belongs to Graham Swift's novel *Waterland* (1984), is rephrased by Susana Onega as part of the title of her illuminating study on British fiction in the nineteen-eighties (1995a: 7-18).

> acknowledges the potential for misreading and misinterpretation of the narratives of self and others. At the same time it recognizes that a narrative of self provides the human subject with a sense of self-continuity and coherence that enables the projection of desire and intention towards an imagined future. (1996: 13)

Villanelle relies on fantasy and the fairy tale as an alternative means to represent history from the margins of patriarchy and heterosexuality. Her attacks on patriarchy are therefore not only defined by her acts as a rebel against the established system, not even by the genetic "mistake" which allows her to be born with webbed feet —the symbol of the phallus in her society—, but they are also and more significantly defined by her voiced opposition to Napoleon's policy. Her task as a woman, in Judith Butler's words, "is to assume the position of the authoritative, speaking subject —which is, in some sense, [women's] ontologically grounded 'right'— and to overthrow both the category of sex, and the system of compulsory heterosexuality that is its origin" (1990: 115). Her discourse is anchored in the fantastic but it also constitutes a revision of the traditional values of fairy tales. The fantastic as an alternative discourse allows Villanelle to openly express her alterity, "a powerful destabilizing agent of political culture and discourse" (Doan 1994: xi). On the other hand, the fantastic space provided by her feminist revision of fairy tales facilitates Villanelle's freedom to choose her own status as a mother and, at the same time, an independent *femme sole*.

Just as woman should not be regarded as the "Other" of man, and bisexuality and lesbianism as the "Others" of heterosexuality —with the negative implications of lack and absence that such oppositions tacitly suggest—, Kathryn Hume (1984: xii) attempts to define fantasy not as a separable mode of fiction, that is to say, not as the "Other" of mimesis but as "an impulse as significant as the mimetic impulse." Hume's position overtly contradicts other excluding definitions that have been provided by those theorists of the fantastic who understand that "the essential impulse behind literature is mimetic, and that fantasy is therefore a separable, peripheral phenomenon" (8). Like Winterson in *The Passion*, Hume proposes the subversion of essentialist notions of *either* fantasy *or* mimesis. This is the reason why, in my opinion, Hume's definition of fantasy is especially suitable to refer to Winterson's move behind her creation of a fantastic space and a fantastic discourse for the representation of her fantastic heroine, Villanelle. "By fantasy," Hume states, "I mean the deliberate departure from the limits of what is usually accepted as real and normal" (xii). This definition parallels Winterson's deliberate departure from the limits of a patriarchal world which sees heterosexuality as real and normal.

Elsewhere in her book, Hume provides a new definition of fantasy, one which lays especial emphasis on the possibility of considering this literary mode not as a passive dismissal of "reality" but rather as a very specific type of agency: fantasy understood as "the desire to change givens and alter reality —out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience's verbal defences" (20). In this valorisation of agency through fantasy, Hume prefigures the paradoxical move from margins to centre that the fantastic in literature seems to be in the process of undergoing in our present age. Neil Cornwell explains this situation in the following terms:

> In the twentieth century, in the age of modernism and postmodernism and under progressive impact from the ideas generated by (or encapsulated in) psychoanalysis, existentialism and dialogism (Freud and dreams, Sartre and being, Bakhtin and carnival) the fantastic has, arguably, reached a position in which it is increasingly itself becoming "the dominant", as it continues to develop not only its dialogical, interrogative, open and unfinished styles of discourse but also a strong social, political and ethical thrust. (1990: 211)

Villanelle's discourse in *The Passion* not only represents the historical by means of chance and fantasy but also revises the conventions of the fairy tale, which "have always been one of culture's primary mechanisms for inculcating roles and behaviours" (Rowe 1979: 238). Her discourse masquerades under the formal conventions of the fairy tale, but the linguistic and ideological contents of her tales are not only an alternative to patriarchy but also mechanisms of exposure of this dominant order. Thus *The Passion* overcomes the limitations that, according to Rosemary Jackson, fantasy has, to become a truly subversive mode:

> The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made "absent". The movement from the first to the second of these functions, from expression as manifestation to expression as expulsion, is one of the recurrent features of fantastic narrative, as it tells of the impossible attempt to realize desire, to make visible the invisible and to discover absence. Telling implies using the language of the dominant order and so accepting its norms, re-covering its dark areas. (1981: 4)

Villanelle's "womanness" is a cause of her marginalisation in a society which is ruled by patriarchy, as represented by the exclusive brotherhood of the boatmen. This fact leads Villanelle to explore an alternative narrative means to represent her subjectivity, the fairy tale. The transformation of her story into a sum of tales allows Villanelle to achieve the position of speaking subject in *The Passion*. Furthermore the ambiguous, although persistently suggested, levelling of the position of her role as narrator to that of Henri, the status *The Passion* achieves when considered as a whole resulting from the juxtaposition of stories, reverses Villanelle's ancillary

position, transforming it into an authoritative position from which she can revise gender conventions of fairy tales, just as Henri revises the conventions of the historical novel in the act of writing his memoirs.

Desire and romance are closely interrelated in a book in which passion is not only a flamboyant title but also the feeling that unifies characters in the story. Napoleon has a passion for Joséphine and his historically verified passion for power is symbolised, as we have seen, by Henri's insistent allusion to Napoleon's passion for chicken. Joséphine feels a strong passion for melon, horticulture, billiards, and men. Henri initially shares with the whole of France a passion for the emperor (although passionate love eventually turns into an equally passionate hate) which, in the course of the story, is easily substituted by a passion for life and for Villanelle. Villanelle also has a passion for life, for gambling, for disguise, and for a mysterious Venetian lady, whom she metonymically calls "the Queen of Spades" and to whom she loses her heart. Henry W. Sullivan explains that, according to Jacques Lacan,

> desire concerns a "lack in being" (*manque-à-être*) and is apparently not so far from the etymological sense of the pedantic English cognate "to desiderate": "feel to be missing, regret absence of, wish to have" (*OED*). But desire in Lacan is more fundamentally something lacking: the unconscious which is itself built up around loss. Desire is also a principle of structuration in the genesis of the subject. It points to that void or real in human existence around which interpretation in the registers of the imaginary and/or symbolic grows up. (1991: 40)

In *The Passion* desire is the force that promotes and conditions Henri and Villanelle's behaviour. It is represented in Lacanian terms, that is to say, "as an effect of a primordial absence" (Sarup 1992: 68). Accordingly, Henri's desire for Napoleon may be explained in terms of the absence of a father figure. Henri insists on emphasising the leading role that her mother, Georgette, has as head of the household. His father, Claude, is systematically overshadowed by Georgette and, as he himself acknowledges in his narrative, Henri still feels closely connected to her mother by some sort of Oedipal attachment: "When Claude had finally gone to bed and we [mother and I] were alone, we didn't talk. We held hands until the wick burnt out and then we were in the dark" (*P* 34).

Villanelle's desire for the Queen of Spades stems from the alluring game of hide and seek that the Venetian lady plays with her. Their first encounter takes place in the context of carnival and gambling, that is to say, a moment in which traditional laws are suspended and appearances and chance rule. The Queen of spades makes of this encounter an intensely erotic exchange in which she elegantly displays her charms for seduction. The scene, which could have been extracted from any manual on the art of love and seduction, is worth quoting:

> It's getting late, who comes here with a mask over her face? Will she try the cards?
>
> She does. She holds a coin in her palm so that I have to pick it out. Her skin is warm. I spread the cards. She chooses. The ten of diamonds. The three of clubs. Then the Queen of spades.
>
> "A lucky card. The symbol of Venice. You win."
>
> She smiled at me and pulling away her mask revealed a pair of grey-green eyes with flecks of gold. Her cheekbones were high and roughed. Her hair, darker and redder than mine.
>
> "Play again?"
>
> She shook her head and had a waiter bring over a bottle of champagne. Not any champagne. Madame Clicquot. The only good thing to come out of France. She held the glass in a silent toast, perhaps to her own good fortune. The Queen of spades is a serious win and one we are usually careful to avoid. Still she did not speak, but watched me through the crystal and suddenly draining her glass stroked the side of my face. Only for a second she touched me and then she was gone and I was left with my heart smashing at my chest and three-quarters of a bottle of the best champagne. (*P* 59)

The woman responds to Villanelle's silent wish that she tries the cards and, in turn, provokes Villanelle's touching her hand which she offers with the coin. The chosen one becomes the chooser and mental contact is transformed into physical touch. After winning Villanelle at cards, the Queen of Spades smiles and unmasks, revealing Villanelle her beauty in all splendour and becoming the object of Villanelle's gaze. But again the object of the gaze takes the position of voyeur as she scrutinises Villanelle, emphasising the erotics of sight. Touch enters the scene for the second time with a new reversal of roles, since the woman who had offered Villanelle her hand is now the one who touches Villanelle's face. Villanelle falls passionately in love and experiences simultaneously the loss of the beloved, who disappears among the crowd in silence, and the loss of self-control. In the encounter of the two women seduction, chance, and loss arouse Villanelle's desire. More interestingly still, the self-reflexive representation of this encounter, which presents the beloved as a mirror image of the lover and both lover and beloved as masquerading women —the Venetian lady playing the role of seducer and masking the fact that she is a married woman and Villanelle disguising her femininity dressed as a boy and wearing a moustache— blurs all boundaries between self and other, subject and object and originates what Carolyn Allen refers to as "the erotics of resemblance" in which "the language of difference and sameness, incorporation and engulfment, twinning and mirroring promotes a reading of lesbian affective connection. These are traditional literary tropes for such textual liaisons" (1996: 76). Villanelle's desire comes to her quite by chance[47] and takes her by surprise as,

[47] It is not for nothing that when Villanelle begins to tell her life story to Henri and Patrick she presents herself by acknowledging that "I have always been a gambler. It is a skill that comes naturally to me like thieving and loving" (*P* 89). Allen observes that "as a novel written in the 1980s but set in the early 1800s, it plays off of the historical shifting meanings of "risk" and its

immediately after acknowledging her love for the mysterious lady, she confesses that "I am pragmatic about love and have taken my pleasure with both men and women, but I have never needed a guard for my heart" (*P* 59-60).

Relating fiction and desire, Catherine Belsey poses the following questions:

> Is desire a matter of fact or fiction? Fact, self-evidently: its effects are visible on the surface of the body; its experience changes lives. Or fiction? The role of fantasy in the construction of desire cannot be overestimated. The same events, the same bodies, differently imagined, differently interpreted, generate different effects. The fascination of the beloved stems to an unknown degree from meanings and values, some personal, some cultural, which invest this body, these actions […]. Is desire real, the only reality, or unreal, precisely romance, fairy tale, a temporary madness, an obsession from which we recover? (1994: 688)

Belsey provides an answer to this complex issue arguing that *The Passion* is a novel which "throws into relief the issue of desire's reality" (688). *The Passion* is constructed upon the juxtaposition and criss-crossing of several love stories. Initially both Henri and Villanelle get emotionally and/or sexually involved with persons of their same sex. Progressively the representation of a more or less explicit homosexuality gives way to Henri and Villanelle's unconventional heterosexual relation. Eventually, though, all stories of love turn out to be stories of refusal. Henri abandons Napoleon out of disappointment and refuses to see Villanelle any more "because she hurts me too much" (*P* 151). Villanelle rejects a live-long relationship with Henri because what she values most is her freedom and she is not led by the temptation of giving in to her passion for the Queen of Spades, either: "So you refuse and then you discover that your house is haunted by the ghost of a leopard" (*P* 146).

Rosemary Jackson states that "fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss" (1981: 3). Fantasy and romance share an equally difficult relationship with the literary conventions of realism as mimesis. Diane Elam's theoretical work *Romancing the Postmodern* (1992) is a particularly edifying exploration of romance narratives in relation to both feminism and the understanding of history. Elam argues that:

> postmodernism's rethinking of the political permits us to revalue romance as political […]. The political force of romance is to dislocate politics from the hegemony of the real, which is always the hegemony of the status quo, even when the utopian imagination of alternative reality functions negatively. If postmodernity is neither historical nor ahistorical, romance is neither realistic nor fantastic. (1992: 23)

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origins in gambling discourse" (1996: 53). Gambling, risk, love, loss, and desire converge in Villanelle's story.

History, fantasy, and romance blend in *The Passion*, generic boundaries are blurred, and conventions exposed. Fairy tales "glorify passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a heroine's cardinal virtues" and "suggest that culture's very survival depends upon a woman's acceptance of roles which relegate her to motherhood and domesticity" (Rowe 1979: 239). Likewise, historical romances reinforce a view of society centred on the family and made safe by men, who are presented as natural leaders (Hughes 1993: 15). In *The Passion* Henri has interiorised the ideology of romance. He believes in marriage as the culmination of love but Villanelle refuses male authority and does not believe in the "and they lived happily ever after". Villanelle is not used to complying with the authority of a father figure in her home. At the very beginning of her story, she gets rid of her biological father by alluding to his "fantastic" disappearance as if it were not her past but a distant part of a fairy tale:

> There was once a weak and foolish man whose wife cleaned the boat and sold the fish and brought up their children and went to the terrible island when her yearly time was due. Their house was hot in summer and cold in winter and there was too little food and too many mouths. This boatman, ferrying a tourist from one church to another, happened to fall into conversation with the man and the man brought up the question of the webbed feet. At the same time he drew a purse of gold from his pocket and let it lie quietly in the bottom of the boat. Winter was approaching, the boatman was thin and he thought what harm could it do to unlace just one boot and let this visitor see what there was. The next morning, the boat was picked up by a couple of priests on their way to Mass. The tourist was babbling incoherently and pulling at his toes with his fingers. There was no boatman. They took the tourist to the madhouse, San Servelo, a quiet place that caters for the well-off and defective. For all I know, he's still there.
>
> And the boatman?
>
> He was my father.
>
> I never knew him because I wasn't born when he disappeared. (*P* 50)

This scene admits at least two different interpretations. Firstly, Villanelle's father might have been punished with disappearance for contravening one of the golden rules established by the hermetic guild to which he belongs by profession. Villanelle explains that "no boatman will take off his boots, no matter how you bribe him" (*P* 50). This interpretation situates Villanelle's father in a spatial limbo and subject to some strange form of enchantment which is typical of fairy tales. A second interpretation, much more in accordance with the ironic tone of the passage just quoted, would be that Villanelle's father, who is neither used to hard-work nor to the economic penuries he suffers at home, is actually bribed into showing his webbed-feet to the tourist. Having fulfilled his part of the treaty, he takes the money and disappears with it, leaving the maddening tourist and his family behind.

No matter the explanation we choose, it seems quite obvious that Villanelle has grown up with an absent father, which she nevertheless does not seem to have

missed after all. Hers is not a nuclear family, always presided over by a father figure in charge of the well-being of wife and children. It is true that Villanelle's mother gets married again in a relatively short span of time. However, she does so out of a need to satisfy her desires as a woman[48]. Besides, she marries a hard-working, liberal man who does not belong to the patriarchal world of the boatmen and who, unlike the rest of society, does not find Villanelle's webbed feet a cause of embarrassment (*P* 52). Villanelle's step-father always adopts a marginal position in the family and never shows any sign of authority. "He's a curious man," utters Villanelle, "a shrug of the shoulders and a wink and that's him. He's never thought it odd that his daughter cross-dresses for a living and sells second-hand purses on the side. But then, he's never thought it odd that his daughter was born with webbed feet" (*P* 61).

Patriarchal givens regarding the issues of love and romance are also rejected by Henri's mother, Georgette, who is portrayed as the strongest character in Henri's male dominated world. She is continually defined by her acts as a rebel against the conventionality of her allotted female role. Georgette defies the oppression that parental authority intends to impose on her. Although her parents do not accept her desire to become a nun, assuring her that "marriage would be more fulfilling" (*P* 10), Georgette continues to feed her dream "in secret, away from their eyes" (*P* 10). And when her father, "in a rash moment" (*P* 10), points to the man he had chosen as her husband, Georgette flees from her home never to return. Georgette, like Villanelle, remains a rebel till the end of the narrative. She is a "positive heroine" who, unlike conventional fairy-tale princesses, rejects being rescued by the typical prince charming —although she ends up "rescued" by Henri's father and is "forced" to marry him— and tries to take her own decisions as to her life and creed, both political and religious. As Henri remembers, even after the success of the Revolution and despite Napoleon's coronation, "she remained a monarchist" and, as a devotee of the Holy Mary, "still prayed for the soul of Marie Antoinette" (*P* 16).

The idea of heterosexual marriage as the ultimate fulfilment of romance is also repeatedly subverted in *The Passion*. Villanelle first experiences marriage as an obstacle to the development of true love. At the age of eighteen, she falls passionately in love as any romance heroine is expected to. However, the object of her passion is not the traditional prince charming, but a mysterious queen, the Queen of Spades, who is also on the side of chance and therefore agrees with two of the

48 Villanelle voices society's gossiping about the relationship between the fact of her having been born with webbed feet and her mother's liberal attitude when she ironically wonders whether they are the result of a misdevelopment of the boatmen's wives' ritual: "Or perhaps it was her carefree pleasure with the baker she should blame herself for?" (*P* 51).

motifs that are repeated in the book: "You play, you win. You, play, you lose. You play" and: "What you risk reveals what you value". Villanelle risks her heart and loses it to a married woman but their love story is truncated after Villanelle's discovery that her queen is also in love with her husband:

> I was about to tap on the window when her husband entered the room startling her. He kissed her forehead and she smiled. I watched them together and saw more in a moment than I could have pondered in another year. They did not live in the fiery furnace she and I inhabited, but they had a calm and a way that put a knife to my heart. (*P* 75)

Villanelle sees herself as the "queer" element in an otherwise stable relationship, a married couple. She foresees her future as "a pose instead of a position, the lesser version of the same instead of a difference" (Roof 1994: 51). Villanelle paradoxically decides to comply with heterosexuality and marries a French cook on the agreement that "we could travel the world" (*P* 96). In what looks like a variation of the typical ending of romance stories and fairy tales, Villanelle confesses that: "We were married without ceremony and set off straight away to France, to Spain, to Constantinople even. He was as good as his word in that respect and I drank my coffee in a different place each month" (*P* 97). Villanelle's craving for freedom and independence is stronger than any legal bondage and she robs and abandons her husband after two years of opulent bliss, a transgression against patriarchal laws for which she is severely punished: she is first objectified and exposed to the male gaze for her surprising ability to masquerade as a boy and is later sold, as a commodity in the economy of exchange, to the army of Napoleon for the pleasure of his generals:

> The officer looked me up and down in my woman's clothes then asked me to change into my easy disguise. He was all admiration and, turning from me, withdrew a large bag from within his effects and placed it on the table between himself and my husband.
> "This is the price we agreed then," he said.
> And my husband, his fingers trembling, counted it out. (*P* 99)

When Henri falls in love with her, Villanelle is unable to return his passion. Henri remembers how "one night she turned over suddenly and told me to make love to her" (*P* 103) and Villanelle explains that, being his first sexual experience, she introduces Henri into the unknown realm of female pleasure, subverting in this way the notion of sex and pleasure as a masculine domain and women's introduction to love making as a way of becoming male property. Sex, desire, and pleasure have never appeared to be a "proper" province for women in fairy tales and romances — not so in the tradition of the picaresque and of medieval fabliaux, for example. Elizabeth Grosz (1994: 70) tries to explain this exclusion by assuming that "there are, in my understanding, three irresolvable problems associated with the notions of

desire we have generally inherited in the West". First, desire has been explained by Plato as "a lack in man's being, an imperfection or flaw in human existence" which "can function only if it remains unfilled" (70-1). Secondly, and as a result of seeing desire "in negative terms, in terms of an absence" (71), psychoanalytic theory has produced desire as inherently masculine. Grosz further explains that for Freud "there is only male or rather masculine libido; there is only desire as an activity (activity being, for Freud, correlated with masculinity); in this case, the notion of female desire is oxymoronic" (72). Finally, the third related problem is what "could be described as the implicit 'homosexuality' of desire" (73). Winterson problematises traditional notions of desire and proposes instead a space in which feminine desire is made visible and therefore can be both experienced and expressed freely as indistinctly a part of homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

The revision of the conventions of romantic love is eventually completed as the novel comes to an end in a completely unconventional manner. Villanelle discovers that she is pregnant and knows that her baby is the product of her relationship with Henri. To Henri this is enough to justify his marriage to Villanelle, although he knows that his married life will not be conventional. But Villanelle has already experienced that, far from constituting a reward, marriage implies the woman's transference from father to husband and her sexual and material dependency because "beneath romantic justifications of 'love' lurk actual historical practices which reduce women to marketable commodities" (Rowe 1979: 245). Villanelle has never been subjected to paternal authority and she could not suffer her subjection to a husband. Marriage and the patriarchal conception of female sexuality as lack are repulsive to Villanelle, who does not renounce, however, to the experience of motherhood. She decides to give birth to her daughter in a space of freedom, immune to the imposing ideas of patriarchy in respect to family organisation, a space in which the link between mother and daughter is not seen as a danger to the authority of the father but as a means to strengthen female bondage. This is of the outmost significance for the ideology of the text because, as Joan W. Scott argues, "the dissolving of the boundaries between mothers and daughters constitutes the reclaiming of a certain 'lost territory', the pre-oedipal love of the mother, and it provides what Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva refer to as a non-phallic (and, in the context of patriarchal symbolism, subversive) *jouissance*" (2001: 299). *The Passion* represents Elam's claims that:

> the politics of romance do not merely lie in escapist nostalgia, […] romance isn't merely the fantasy that keeps women eating chocolates and in the kitchen. Romance may also act as the site of a struggle with the politics of the representable, as locus for the articulation of

> cultural groups that are not simply minorities within a homogenous field, a small percentage of that population, but are radically excluded from the representable population, *a priori*. (1992: 76; italics in the original)

In summary, *The Passion* may be described as what Hume names "literature of revision" (1984) in so far as it allows for the exposure of the power of patriarchal ideology in the construction of reality and the rewriting of romance and the fairy tale in order to clear the ground for the spatialisation of women's desire. By representing her subjectivity in a fantastic space, Villanelle overtly scorns any form of categorisation according to sex and refuses to comply with any role imposed on her by gender, rejecting the conventionality of heterosexuality and the nuclear family without renouncing desire, pleasure, and motherhood.

Going back to the question of the chronotope, Lynne Pearce has deftly observed that any attempt at identifying and classifying Bakhtin's different chronotopic images within a text is always partial and problematic:

> One of the obfuscations of Bakhtin's analysis of the literary chronotope is that the term is used to cover both the dominant *generic* spatiotemporal form of a text (i.e., 'adventure' or 'idyll') *and* the subset of more 'local' chronotopes that might occur within it (e.g., the chronotope of the road, the chronotope of encounter, the chronotope of the threshold). These secondary chronotopes may, themselves, be associated with a particular genre (e.g., the chronotope of the road is often found within the adventure chronotope), but they may also appear in less congruous contexts and form an oppositional and contrapuntal relationship with the main chronotope. (1994: 176; italics in the original)

Aware of these problematic interrelations, the identification and classification of the different chronotopes in *The Passion* that I propose in the following pages is justified by Pearce's open-ended conclusion that "a chronotope may be labelled differently *according to the textual function under discussion at any one time*" (1994: 176-177; italics in the original).

It is my contention that in *The Passion* spatio-temporal images are initially gendered in order to eventually cause a complete deconstruction of gender differences. I also claim that each gendered space conditions the temporal presentation of events employed by each of the two homodiegetic narrators in the story. In this sense, narrative time in *The Passion* proves to be strongly dependent on the spatial co-ordinates in which the action takes place and on the fact of their being represented as either male or female. It is the novel's insistence on difference and opposition that I intend to illustrate in the following pages.

The time that follows the success of the French Revolution, the space of the camp at Boulogne and the referential form of presentation of events chosen by Henri to tell his story fuse carefully into a concrete whole that may be defined as the

"historical chronotope". Henri introduces himself and his distinct microcosm in the chapter entitled "The Emperor". Set in the Napoleonic campaigns, Henri's narrative begins in early April 1804, at the precise moment when he volunteers as a recruit "to join the Army of England at Boulogne" (*P* 8), and comes to a halt at Boulogne on New Year's Day 1805, when Henri is twenty years old (*P* 45). Short as this "primary story time" (Bal 1985: 57) seems to be, scarcely nine months, it is punctuated by a selection of very precise dates which overtly fuse the public and the private through the intimate connection that Henri systematically establishes between the historical moment he lives in and his personal experiences. The following moments represent outstanding examples.

"July 20th, 1804" (*P* 23, 24). This is the first and only time that Henri provides a full date in his narrative. The actual relevance of this date is double: firstly, it is presented as the entry of a diary, Henri's diary, which he starts to write precisely as a means of distancing himself from the horror of war; secondly, it is uncommonly repeated twice in less than two pages, as a marker of the beginning and the ending of the same day. In structural terms, the entry functions as a frame for the story of a single day. The tone and the use of verbal tenses establish a huge temporal distance (in terms of Bergsonian *durée* or mental time) between the apparently idyllic but tense and fatalistic description Henri makes of a new day dawning and the bitterness and pain with which he closes his narrative of a day, marking a turning point in Henri's process of maturation. Let us consider the two moments in relation. Henri's description of dawning centres on nature but there is no place for romanticism in his words because, far from offering the prospect of a welcoming milieu, Henri produces a Gothic presentation of a familiar but threatening situation of unease, cold, and impending danger, which enhances the drabness and monotony of a new day, another day:

> July 20th, 1804. Too early for dawn but not night either.
>
> There's a restlessness in the trees, out at sea, in the camp. The birds and we are sleeping fitfully, wanting to be asleep but tense with the idea of awakening. In maybe half and hour, that familiar cold grey light. Then the sun. Then the seagulls crying out over the water. I get up at this time most days. I walk down to the port to watch the ships tethered like dogs. (*P* 23)

Henri is not prepared for the massacre he relates by the end of the day, though. In the final account the contemplative mood gives way to the expression of impotence. Henri describes Bonaparte's insistence on carrying on with the sea practices in spite of the roughness of the weather:

> July 20th, 1804. Two thousand men were drowned today.

> In gales so strong that Patrick as look-out had to be tied to barrels of apples, we discovered that our barges are children's toys after all. Bonaparte stood on the dockside and told his officers that no storm could defeat us.
>
> "Why, if the heavens fell down we would hold them up on the point of our lances."
>
> Perhaps. But there's no will and no weapon that can hold back the sea. (*P* 24)

The strength of this passage indicates Henri's feelings towards the Emperor. For the first time, he becomes aware of the cruelty and foolish arrogance of his leader and also of the inconsistency between patriotism and the ironical laughter of destiny that does not grant soldiers the "glory" of dying as heroes in the battlefield but as drowning rats fighting against the elements.

The choice of an iterative (Genette 1980: 116) or repeating presentation emphasises the importance of this date not so much for the French army, which does not seem to care about its losses because, as Henri denounces: "In the morning, 2,000 new recruits marched into Boulogne", but for Henri himself who, in the face of the real, becomes aware of the fact that in the army soldiers are merely numbers, undistinguished elements of a destruction machine which deprives them of their individuality. At this moment of "epiphany", time seems to stand still in Henri's narrative, a fact that adds to the scene described an emotional strength that mirrors the turmoiling feelings that the massacre provokes in Henri's mind and that leads him to imagine that "I was covered in dead men"[49] (*P* 25).

August, 1804. "Bonaparte announced his Coronation that coming December" (*P* 29). He tells Henri "he'd want me with him after that. Told me we were going to do great things" (*P* 29). But Bonaparte's words sound hollow and barren again when set side by side with those he had been uttering to his drowning men. Henri decides to go back to his village and spend some time with his parents. Although it seems as if Henri were capable of regaining his old innocent self again while he is away from the army, this moment of apparent return is rather a confirmation that there is no way back for Henri, that the past cannot be retrieved, that it gets lost forever, that as Henri says, echoing T. S. Eliot, "time is a great deadener. People forget, grow old, get bored" (*P* 32). It is his mother's attitude that makes Henri aware of this fact, which links once more the public with the private, history with individual lives, in this book:

> We stayed up late so many nights drinking Claude's rough cognac and sitting till the fire was the colour of the fading roses. My mother talked about her past with gaiety, *she seemed to believe that with a ruler on the throne much would be restored. She even talked*

[49] This moment marks Henri's acceptance of his cross, in a gesture that starts the parallelism between Henri and Christ. This parallelism is further explored when Henri alludes to his stigmata (crucifixion) when he talks about his resurrection in Venice.

> *about writing to her parents*. She knew they'd be celebrating the return of a monarch. I was surprised, I thought she'd always supported the Bourbons. Becoming an Emperor didn't make this man she'd hated into a man she could love surely? (*P* 31-32; italics added)

Only six months have passed since Henri's recruitment (*P* 30) but he is definitely a different man. His direct experience of war and the historical dimension in which he moves has turned him into an outsider in his own family. Henri is inevitably bound to eventual alienation, as his disappointment with and distancing from Bonaparte grows.

End of November, 1804. Bonaparte's Coronation is approaching and Paris prepares for the occasion. Henri has been called to attend the Bonapartes "in Court dress" (*P* 34), thus becoming an exceptional witness to private incidents. This intimacy contributes to the deepening of Henri's doubts about the Emperor while simultaneously and, inevitably, establishes a proleptic parallelism between Bonaparte's and Henri's final destinies: "This holiday mood of Napoleon's was *almost a madness*. He had appeared at dinner two nights ago dressed as the Pontiff and lewdly asked Joséphine how intimate she would like to be with God[50]" (*P* 34; italics added).

Henri's illusion of being a direct witness to Bonaparte's Coronation and of taking his mother to see Paris is thwarted by the Emperor when he sends Henri back to Boulogne so that he may acquire "a real soldier's training" (*P* 37) "only two weeks" (*P* 36-37) before his Coronation with a new empty promise, that "there was a special job for me in the New Year" (*P* 37). Bonaparte denies Henri the privilege of witnessing this historical moment of glory. As he sadly reports, "I left the city of dreams just as it was about to flower and heard second-hand reports of that gaudy morning when Napoleon had taken the crown from the Pope and placed it on his own head before crowning Joséphine" (*P* 37).

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50 The proleptic tone of this episode, which makes Henri feel ashamed, is eventually realised in Villanelle's description of Henri's attitude in San Servelo:

> He was silent and when we made love he put his hands to my throat and slowly pushed his tongue out of his mouth like a pink worm.
> "I'm your husband," he said.
> "Stop it, Henri."
> "I'm your husband," and he came leaning towards me, his eyes round and glassy and his tongue so pink.
> I pushed him off and he curled in the corner and began to weep.
> He wouldn't let me comfort him and we never made love again. (*P* 148)

In spite of the similarities with Napoleon's "mad" and lewd behaviour, Henri's attitude is the result not of a "holiday mood" or of an extreme insolence and a loss of perspective that leads him to call himself God but, rather on the contrary, of a desperate, broken heart, of a destroyed man who humiliates himself to the extent of impersonating the man whom he has always despised and eventually killed.

December 2nd, 1804, Coronation Day. Henri's personal experience of cold, hunger, and abandonment back at the camp at Boulogne contrasts with the festive, opulently sensuous mood in Paris:

> In Boulogne, in the terrible weather, I trained for ten hours a day and collapsed at night in a damp bivouac with a couple of inadequate blankets. Our supplies and conditions had always been good, but in my absence, thousands more men had joined up, believing through the offices of Napoleon's fervent clergy that the road to Heaven was first the road to Boulogne. (*P* 37)

This time the personal and the public are ironically portrayed in a temporal simultaneity but in a continuous dialogue that exposes Napoleon's banality through insistence on the miserable situation his men are in. As the text makes clear, there is no glory in this situation, either for Henri or for the other soldiers. He has been chosen as a direct witness to human pain and misery, a suffering he literally takes on his shoulders.

This sequence also criticises Napoleon's power over the church which is latent, in the way in which priests encourage boys to accept their individual "passion" and give their lives for their leader/God. It is also overt when set in relation to the previous scene in which Napoleon is seen taking the crown from the Pope, the highest authority of the Church, and placing it on his head, a gesture that raises himself above any authority on earth and as close as possible to the authority of God.

Christmas, 1804 to New Year's Day, 1805. As a logical outcome of the sum of historical, personal and religious negative experiences which Henri has brought to the fore in his narrative by framing them with chronologically discrete temporal markers, Henri confesses to Patrick that "I am a non-believer" (*P* 41). His personal drama is that he has lost his faith not only in the Church but also in Napoleon and the values he represented. One of the reasons of this loss may be found precisely in society's insistence on fusing politics and religion, of making them a single whole[51]. Thus Henri's first apostasy proleptically announces his eventual desertion from the army in an attempt to escape from the grasp of an unbearable now, a tremendously heavy historical present, and to follow his belief in the possibility of a future, a better world.

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51 It should be remembered that the priest who educates Henri back in his village is the first to suggest the identification of Bonaparte with Christ when he tells Henri that "we were living in the last days, that the Revolution would bring forth a new Messiah and the millennium on earth" (*P* 16). Further, when describing the celebrations of the New Year, Henri repeats this "natural" assimilation: "No bells were ringing, no flares were lit, heralding a new year and praising God and the Emperor" (*P* 42).

Henri's confession occurs precisely in the course of the celebration of the most joyous of the Church's festivities: the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the Messiah sent by God the Father to redeem the sins of the world and to open the doors to eternal salvation for the whole of humanity. The fact that Henri chooses this moment for his confession enhances the agony he experiences for his lack of faith, which stands in harsh contrast to the peaceful comfort that illuminates the believers. Henri knows this to be his tragedy for he is not capable of looking straight into the eyes of the future. His existential *angst* makes him feel like a prisoner of the present moment, of religion, of Bonaparte. Henri's weakness is that he needs some certainty to hold on to, a fact which anticipates the failure of his revolt when he accepts that

> I had not intended to take communion at all, but my longing for strong arms and certainty and the quiet holiness around me forced me to my feet and down the aisle where strangers met my eyes as though I had been their son. Kneeling, with the incense making me light-headed and the slow repetition of the priest calming my banging heart, I thought again about a life with God. (*P* 42)

As New Year's Day dawns, the twenty-year-old Henri finds himself trapped in a present which is full of doubts. Actually the final paragraphs of "The Emperor" are mined with endless questions about the nature of human spirituality and about the veracity of the mind's perceptions. Henri's only conviction at this stage of the story is his acknowledgement of the supremacy of the present moment: "This year is gone, I told myself. This year is slipping away and it will never return. Domino's right, there's only now. Forget it. Forget it. You can't bring it back. […] There is only the present and nothing to remember[52]" (*P* 42-43). This conviction brings about a change in the relationship between narrative time and story time in the rest of his narrative.

Still, the narrative presentation of Henri's story in "The Emperor" is not as linear as this revision might suggest. Some anachronies[53] break the chronological and causal organisation of events and yet they enhance the same kind of interrelation between time and history as the one that has been analysed so far. The information gaps in the above-mentioned nine months of primary story time are filled by four

52 Henri's certainty with regard to the nature of time echoes the meditation on time that opens the first movement of "Burnt Norton", which is the first of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1935-1943). The circle that women make in a dance (*P* 44) and the reference to the "unimaginable zero temperature" at the end of the chapter together with the title of the third chapter "The Zero Winter" are all references to Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

53 "The various types of discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative" (Genette 1980: 36).

analepses[54], which provide information about some of the characters who are closer to Henri: his mother, Patrick and Domino.

First, Henri takes his narratee back to the moment of the outbreak of the French Revolution. He does not refer explicitly to the precise date, although he helps his addressee to deduce it by opening this voyage back to the past with a significant piece of information: "I was only five when the Revolution turned Paris into a free man's city and France into the scourge of Europe" (*P* 16). If on New Year's Day 1805 Henri says he is twenty years old, the fact that in the analepsis he is only five implies that the reach of this analepsis is of fifteen years, thus situating the action in 1789. It is interesting to note that, although the analepsis breaks the linear presentation of Henri's story, the interdependence of story time and history in the narrative process is insistently maintained. This year of capital importance for the immediate history of France is also pinpointed by Henri on account of the impact and consequences it will have for his personal development:

> Our village was not very far down the Seine but we might have been living on the moon. No one really knew what was happening except that King and Queen were imprisoned. We relied on gossip, but the priest crept back and forth relying on his cloth to save him from the cannon or the knife. The village was divided. Most felt King and Queen are right though King and Queen had no care for us, except as revenue or scenery. But these are my words, taught to me by a clever man who was no respecter of persons. (*P* 16)

Henri reports the outbreak of the Revolution through hearsay just as he would talk about Bonaparte's Coronation, another historical and personal turning point, fifteen years later. Being still a child, Henri is only conscious of the lukewarm division of opinions that exists among his fellow villagers. Significantly, however, Henri makes recurrent references to the attitude of the priest, who seems to be the only person in the village who is seriously concerned with his personal safety and the political future of France. Henri remembers that, from the very first stages of his education, religion and politics have always formed a solid unity:

> For years, my mentor, the priest who had supported the Revolution, told me that *Bonaparte was perhaps the Son of God come again*. I learned his battles and campaigns instead of geography and history. I have lain with the priest on an old and impossibly folded map of the world looking at the places he had gone and watching the frontiers of France push slowly out. *The priest carried a drawing of Bonaparte next to his drawing of the Blessed Virgin and I grew up with both*, unknown to my mother, who remained a monarchist and who still prayed for the soul of Marie Antoinette. (*P* 15-16; italics added)

54 Instead of maintaining the traditional terms of anticipation and retrospection, in talking about order, Gérard Genette brings forth two, in his opinion, more neutral terms: analepsis, "any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment," and prolepsis "any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later" (1980: 40).

It does not seem too far-fetched to affirm that Henri is greatly conditioned to become a soldier by the political situation of his country and the education he received from the priest. As Henri further reflects:

> As I grew older and the turbulent times settled into something like calm, Bonaparte began to make a name for himself. We called him our Emperor long before he had taken that title to himself. And on our way home from the makeshift church in the dusk in winter, the priest looked towards the crack that led away and held my arm too tight. "He'll call you," he whispered, "like God called Samuel and you'll go." (*P* 16-17)

The next two analepses respectively refer to the radically different circumstances that forced Henri's friends, Domino and Patrick, to become part of Napoleon's troops. Both of them had joined the army quite a few years before Henri. Actually it would be more accurate to say that both Patrick and Domino end up under Bonaparte's orders quite by chance[55]. Neither of them is a Frenchman so they do not participate in Henri's romantic idea of patriotism. They do not hear the "call" in the mystical terms anticipated by the priest; unlike Henri, they do not even volunteer but are recruited under equally grotesque and apolitical circumstances. Patrick is a "de-frocked priest with the eagle eye[56]. He is imported from Ireland "in 1799, when Napoleon was still vying for power" (*P* 21) by General Hoche, who had discovered the unusual but extremely useful properties of Patrick's eye: "he heard a story about a certain disgraced priest whose right eye was just like yours or mine, but whose left eye could put the best telescope to shame" (*P* 21).

Unlike the previous analepsis, this new retroversion of the story time sets on the same footing a historical date, 1799, and a historical personage, General Hoche, with a grotesquely fantastic story which would be taken as mere old wives' tale by any realist mind. "Don't believe that one" (*P* 23) warns a voice that might be that of Henri; or perhaps not. This time, the breaking of chronological linearity is accompanied by the first attack on the equation of time as history, which is taken a step further with Henri's description of Domino's "past" life.

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55 In this sense, as I explain in more detail later on, Patrick and Domino are much closer to Villanelle, the female protagonist, than to Henri, in spite of their being male.

56 The phonetic proximity of Patrick's most remarkable characteristic "eagle eye" with the expression "evil eye" in the context of an Irish de-frocked priest gains perversely humorous connotations which contribute to Winterson's criticism of the Catholic church. The subtlety of this remark is blatantly emphasised by the narrator's comment that Patrick had not been excluded from the Church because of his lack of chastity but because of his heterosexual inclinations. As Henri comments in an openly sarcastic mood, "the women looked at the earth and said they knew when they were being watched. The Bishop had taken them seriously, not because he believed the talk about Patrick's eye, but preferring the smooth shapes of his choirboys he found the affair exceedingly repulsive" (*P* 21).

When talking about Domino, Henri's narration leaves behind every precise temporal reference for the first time[57]: no date is provided and the reader is led to guess that Domino might have become Bonaparte's groom sometime around 1793. This would make Domino the most veteran of the three:

> He never talked about the future and only occasionally, when drunk, would he talk about his *marvellous* past. A past filled with sequine women and double-tailed horses and a father who made his living being fired from a cannon. He came from somewhere in eastern Europe and his skin was the colour of old olives. We only knew he had wandered into France *by mistake*, *years ag*o, and saved the lady Joséphine from the hooves of a runaway horse. (*P* 29; italics added)

The marvellous and chance are joined to Henri's uncertainty about time as shown from the italicised expressions. The singularity of these two characters makes them stand out from the other soldiers in the camp at Boulogne. They are not nameless soldiers who die and are immediately replaced by other anonymous soldiers. Patrick and Domino have each a special quality that makes them matchless in their jobs, and a strength that defeats the alienating force of the army. Consequently, these analepses not only contribute to insert more historical dates and information about the past of Patrick and Domino but also foreclose the power that the marvellous and grotesque have over the representation of historical time in *The Passion*. Domino represents the co-existence of a different conception of time which, always in dialogue with history, allows for the simultaneity of the high and the low in which historical dates, personages, and deeds are naturally mixed up with ambiguous temporal references, grotesque characters and marvellous stories[58].

Although much less frequent, prolepses are no less meaningful. In both cases they advance two "dramatic climaxes" (Bal 1985: 73) or turning points in Henri's story. The first is a covert allusion to the Russian campaigns and to the cold —real and symbolic— that will prompt Henri to desert and to leave Bonaparte behind. The

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57 It should be borne in mind that Domino is the only male character in *The Passion* that denies the existence of such clear-cut temporal categories as past, present and future. He rarely talks about the past and he does not acknowledge the future, as Henri recalls:

> He wrote, FUTURE. And then he put a line through it.
>
> What did he mean? His future? My future? I thought back to those sea-salt days when the sun had turned the grass yellow and men had married mermaids. I started my little book then, the one I still have and Domino had turned on me and called the future a dream. *There's only the present, Henri*. (*P* 86; italics added)

58 As I have already mentioned, analepses provide the reader with information about those characters who are closer to Henri: Patrick and Domino, his best friends in the army, and Georgette, his mother. The first two analepses are analysed in connection with Villanelle's story. The third analepsis is practically irrelevant for the present study of time although I use it in the pages that follow as a means to illuminate the future in the light of gender, a formal technique which prefigures Winterson's more extensive treatment of this issue in her next novel, *Sexing the Cherry*.

second advances Henri's fatal meeting and killing of the cook, Villanelle's husband, in Venice, and his resulting imprisonment in San Servelo, where he ends his days:

> Finally he came to where I sat with my little Bible and grabbed me close by the collar. "You think you're safe because Bonaparte wants you. You're safe now, but there are years ahead."
>
> He pushed me back into the onion sacks and spat in my face. *It was a long time before we met again* because the Captain had him transferred to the stores outside Boulogne. (*P* 19; italics added)

Prolepses increase the dramatic tension of the plot and thereby contribute to the mechanisms of suspense as conceived and analysed by Roland Barthes (1990a).

The spaces along which Henri moves in "The Emperor" are clearly marked by the above-mentioned dates and may be said to be mostly *steady* spaces, that is, "fixed frames, thematised or not, within which events take place" (Bal 1985: 96). Thus, in early April 1804, Henri changes his village, the only place he has known so far, a secure space which has witnessed his happy childhood and early youth (*P* 25), for an insecure space, the military camp at Boulogne. While at Boulogne, Henri's microcosm is almost reduced to a few places inside the camp —the visit to the brothel excepted. These places vary in accordance with his allotted jobs: first, the storeroom, where he starts as a chicken neck wringer, and then the kitchen tent, once he becomes Bonaparte's personal cook.

In August, Henri is given leave to go back to his village, which means that he undertakes a short return journey: "It took me a week to get home", he says (*P* 30). This is the only *dynamic* space —"a factor which allows for the movement of characters" (Bal 1985: 96)— to be found in the first chapter. After a brief stay in his village, the only place he calls home and restores him to his lost security, Henri moves on to Paris, another *steady* space, some time before Napoleon's Coronation, and he stays in court serving Napoleon and Joséphine until the end of November 1804. At that time, he returns to the camp at Boulogne, where he will remain till New Year's Day 1805. In this last month, Henri will spend most of the time on *steady* spaces, Patrick's pillar inside the camp, and, outside it, the church Henri and Patrick go to on New Year's Eve.

In all the different spaces which Henri inhabits he feels alien, an outsider, although the fact of his being a boy would make him perfectly liable to adapt himself to a space which is consciously gendered male. This is already manifest in the choice of chapter title, since "The Emperor" brings to mind connotations of action, power, domination and, above all, masculinity.

The camp at Boulogne and, by extension, the whole of France is a markedly masculine space, set in a very precise historical period that has Bonaparte at the head of the government and as its unarguable leader, that considers life in the army as the highest achievement for boys, and that sees the need for victories and conquests as the sole means of quenching an excessive thirst for power and domination of equally free lands and peoples. France is depicted as the country of discipline and sacrifice, a nation dominated by the will of its ruler, for, as Henri himself states:

> He [Napoleon] stretched his hands 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. The thought of fighting excited us. No one wants to be killed but the hardship, the long hours, the cold, the orders were things we would have endured anyway on the farms or in the towns. We were not free men. He made sense out of dullness. (*P* 19-20)

This quotation shows that Henri is not a convinced soldier, that he is not at ease in the army. His resigned allusion to his lack of choice when he admits that the farms and the towns are governed by the same patriarchal structures as the army and therefore would constitute equally cold, harsh, and disciplinary spaces from which no *man* can escape, brings to the fore the issue of freedom and its immediate relation with one of the leitmotifs of the French Revolution. The brief statement "we were not free people" permits the narratee to grasp the actual degree of irony derived from the distance that separates Henri's confidence on the figure of Bonaparte as saviour of his nation before entering the army from his present awareness that everything, hope included, was and is nothing but a lie. This generic everything also includes the exposure of the culturally received notions of patriotism, heroism and masculinity that the first chapter of *The Passion* enhances.

Henri's narrative continues in "The Zero Winter". The first six pages of this chapter constitute a shockingly brief summary of the eight years that have elapsed from New Year's Day 1805 to that winter day in 1813 when Henri escapes from the army and renounces the object of his passion, Bonaparte. In line with the chronological disposition of story time in "The Emperor", this summary is exhaustively punctuated by historical dates which can be found in any historical monograph. This time the addressee is offered a numb enumeration of countless battles that point to Henri's progressive process of alienation: "Ulm and Austerlitz. Eyelau and Friedland" (*P* 79), October and December 1805; February and June, 1807. Then another unkept promise: "Two years later Bonaparte was standing on a barge in the middle of a river hugging the Czar and saying we'd never have to fight again" (*P* 79); and finally, the march on Moscow in the winter of 1812: "The unimaginable zero winter" (*P* 80).

Although in "The Emperor" the dates selected as frames of reference formed a well-balanced mixture of historical events and personal experience, in the third chapter history suffocates Henri's story completely. Historical dates become detached markers of the tortuous monotony that anaesthetises both Henri's feelings and their narrative presentation. The appropriation of the first-person-plural personal pronoun underlines Henri's loss of individuality, which was his most valuable possession in "The Emperor": "We fought on no rations, our boots fell apart, we slept two or three hours a night and died in thousands every day" (*P* 79).

The summary is used in accordance with Mieke Bal's description of its double function: "a suitable instrument for presenting background information, or for connecting various scenes" (1985: 73). The reader is transported thus to the winter of 1812-1813 when, by the end of February, Henri, Patrick, and Villanelle set off on their journey of some 1,300 miles (*P* 101) away from the maddening horror they had all endured in their experience of war. Patrick dies on the way (*P* 106), but Henri and Villanelle eventually reach Venice in May 1813 (*P* 109), after more than two months walk (*P* 105).

History and, as a result, chronological time take hold of Henri's life and discourse in the final chapter of *The Passion*, "The Rock", in such a way that, on the one hand, Henri becomes a prisoner of the past, and, on the other, the structural circle of his narrative is completed. After killing the cook, Henri and Villanelle spend the next seven days together, "cramming our bodies with pleasure" (*P* 136) before the police finds Henri, the judge tries him and he is sent to San Servelo, the madhouse on the island. The text ends with Henri in San Servelo watching and reporting, this time as eye-witness, the way in which "over the water in that city of madmen they are preparing for Christmas and New Year" (*P* 158). The reader does not know for sure the exact date of this particular New Year because Henri says that "I forget how many years I've been here" (*P* 135). Nevertheless, in the last page of the book, where "story time and narrative time overlap in a present that projects itself into the future as the novel ends" (Onega 1993: 118), Henri signals with sudden precision that: "It's more than twenty years since I went to church at Boulogne" (*P* 160). History and fantasy equally influence Henri's narrative discourse from the moment he is sent to San Servelo.

Henri again has recourse to the use of analepses to complete the account of his life story and to frame it again in history. He first provides a detailed summary of the decline and fall of Bonaparte, which establishes a remarkable parallel

development of both leader and follower, idol and disciple, master and servant. The analepsis begins just before Napoleon's death in 1821:

> They say the dead don't talk. Silent as the grave they say. It's not true. The dead are talking all the time. On *this rock*, when the wind is up, I can hear them.
>
> I can hear Bonaparte; he didn't last long on *his rock*. He put on weight and caught a cold, and he who survived the plagues of Egypt and the zero winter died in the mild damp. (*P* 133; italics added)

and continues backwards till it flashes back to the point when the Russians invaded Paris in 1814. From then on Henri's narrative proceeds chronologically again and he uses historical detail to mark the forward movement of his discourse: Napoleon's seclusion on the island of Elba on March 2nd, 1815; his triumphant return to France for a hundred days; the decisive defeat of his troops in Waterloo on June 18th, 1815; and his seclusion on "a darker rock where the tides were harsh and the company unsympathetic, [and where] they were burying him alive" (*P* 134). The analysis of the differential relation between story time and narrative time with respect to the male homodiegetic narrator of *The Passion* evidences the circular movement of Henri's conception of time in terms of history and the intimate relationship that he establishes between historical time and personal experience. To a certain extent, it can be said that Henri chooses to emulate his hero to the very end of his days by refusing to escape from San Servelo, the mirror space of Bonaparte's death rock.

With the immediate juxtaposition of "The Queen of Spades" to "The Emperor", which presents Villanelle and her weird microcosm, Jeanette Winterson establishes not only a break in terms of plot, since the reader is presented with a new story told by a new narrator which has no apparent relation with Henri's, but also a self-conscious opposition to the presentation of space and time in "The Emperor". Although the temporal setting coincides with the same historical moment, the Napoleonic campaigns, the space in which the action occurs has radically changed. This is not France, the sacrificed nation, but Italy and, more precisely, Venice, a city which has turned its back on history and has invented a time of its own. This new space produces a complete change in the form of temporal representation used by Villanelle, the female narrator of this story. This interrelation leads me to talk of the introduction of a different chronotope which I call the "mythical chronotope".

Completely opposed to Henri's masculine space, Villanelle's story is set in a clearly feminine space[59], framed by the title "The Queen of Spades"[60], which refers

[59] In the preface to an interesting study of the different roles of women in eighteenth-century Venice, Élisabeth Ravoux-Rallo insists on the feminine qualities of this city as she explains how, in spite of the moment of decline, Venice still maintained the appearance of "despreocupación y ligereza, como tantas y demasiadas veces se ha subrayado. Quien dice ligereza dice… mujer, por

simultaneously to a gaming card, to the city of Venice[61] (of which it is the symbol) and to the object of Villanelle's passion, the Venetian lady. All these associations bring in connotations of chance, freedom, and femininity.

Unlike Henri's realistic descriptions of space, the presentation that Villanelle makes of her microcosm is much more in accordance with fantasy and the fairy tale. Ruled by chance, intuition, and imagination, Venice is the city of freedom, of open-mindedness, of gaiety, and pleasure. Almost completely surrounded by water, utterly changeable and brimming with life, Venice is a feminine realm *par excellence*. Henri understands the special nature of this city from the very outset and emphasises the similarities between Venice and Villanelle when he admits that he feels at a loss with both of them:

> I got lost from the first. Where Bonaparte goes, straight roads follow, buildings are rationalised, street signs may change to celebrate a battle but they are always clearly marked. Here, if they bother with street signs at all, they are happy to use the same ones over again. Not even Bonaparte could rationalise Venice. (*P* 112)

Immune to the omnipotent power of Napoleon and disregarding any historical control, Venice is an independent city governed by chance and free will. Even when conquered, Venice refuses to surrender to an imposed authority and sticks to its ancillary traditions.

Henri finds it so difficult to move in Venice because the city is not single but double. Venice enfolds upon itself. The external city, the one to which the common visitor has access, conceals an inner city, "the city within the city that is the knowledge of a few" (*P* 53). The interrelation between the conscious, visible city and the realm of the unconscious[62], the hidden inner city, makes of Venice no place for order, reason or chronology. Standing as the two sides of the same coin, these

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supuesto. Observaremos más detenidamente esta ciudad , a la que habría que levantar la máscara para advertir, detrás del barniz de la fiesta, su rostro y su interior. Sobre todo cuando se trata del sexo femenino. En este siglo XVIII, Venecia, en manos de los hombres en lo que se refiere a la política, es, en todo lo demás, la *città delle donne*. (2001: xi-xii; italics in the original)

60 The titles of the first two chapters of the novel also allude to two of the major and lesser arcana in the Tarot, which, is a significant organising system in the structure of this novel, as Susana Onega has shown (1993), and "a therapeutic and meditative model", as Winterson acknowledges (see Appendix II).

61 The city of Venice in *The Passion* is a wonderfully rich sign, as reported in the course of this chapter. M. Daphne Kutzer states that:

> Winterson's Venice, Villanelle's Venice, is on one level a metaphor for the unmapped territory of passion, and specifically of female passion. If, as Cixous and others have argued, male passion is phallus-centered and female passion is more elusive, diffuse and, perhaps, powerful, Venice becomes an evocative symbol of that passion. (1994: 139)

62 According to Carl Jung, "water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious" (1980: 18). Venice is built up on water, channels cross and criss-cross the city and the life that takes place in its streets finds its reflection on the silent waters that flow to the sea.

two worlds are, however, completely independent. Each has its own idiosyncratic laws and traditions, which make difficult the exchange between the dwellers of these mirroring spaces:

> On New Year's Eve, a procession of boats alive with candles stretched down the Grand Canal. Rich and poor shared the same water and harboured the same dreams that next year, in its own way, would be better[63]. My mother and father in their bakery best gave away loaves to the sick and the dispossessed. My father was drunk and had to be stopped from singing verses he had learnt in a French bordello.
>
> Farther out, hidden away in the inner city, the exiles had their own observation. The dark canals were as dark as ever but a closer look revealed tattered satin on yellow bodies, the glint of a goblet from some subterranean hole. The slant-eyed children had stolen a goat and were solemnly slitting its throat when I rowed past. They stopped their red knives for a moment to watch me. (*P* 74)

Only the water and Villanelle, who is a boatman's daughter, are allowed to freely cross the threshold that both joins and separates these two spaces. Unlike Henri, who journeys through a horizontal space in search of himself, Villanelle looks for her identity in a vertical space[64]. The inner city conceals secret knowledge about the self, whereas the outer city silently forges the development of events.

Insofar as it encompasses the comings and goings of the female character and as a living creature that enjoys an independent existence and a movement of its own, Venice functions as a *dynamic* space. Its vertiginous inner city, with its canals that hide other canals, add to the labyrinthine structure of Villanelle's microcosm.

The spaces in "The Queen of Spades" can also be classified into open spaces and closed spaces. Open spaces are both "the watery alleys that do for streets and roads" (*P* 49) and the lagoon. Closed spaces are the Casino and the house of the Venetian lady. This new duality stands for the binary opposition freedom/confinement which I have already connected with the textual representation of time. When Villanelle goes "up and down the canals and into the lagoon" (*P* 53), she is free to transgress social norms in order to do what she likes most: "rowing alone for hours" (*P* 53). However, the Casino and the house of her lover lay on the side of chance and restraint:

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63 This sentence, spoken by Villanelle at the end of the second chapter, voices Henri's feelings at the end of the first, emphasising thereby the close parallelisms between these two protagonists and their stories. Both characters have tried to make sense of their selves in the light of their feelings for an "other". In other words and, as the analysis of time in both parts has attempted to demonstrate, their lives are marked by the passionate relationships they each engage in with Napoleon and the Venetian lady, respectively. However, by the end of the chapter, they are both left alone and disappointed with no external support to hold them. Having been left to their own resourcefulness, each of them initiates a new quest for identity which, as will be shown, ends rather unequally.

64 Like time, space in this second chapter is not linear but vertical, both temporal and spatial relationships are paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic.

> When I was eighteen I started to work the Casino. There aren't many jobs for a girl. I didn't want to go into the bakery and grow old with red hands and forearms like thighs. I couldn't be a dancer, for obvious reasons, and what I would have most liked to have done, worked the boats, was closed to me on account of my sex. (*P* 53)

The Casino is, then, the only option for a woman in a patriarchally established society which denies her entrance into the closed world of the boatmen because of her having been born sexually female[65].

Yet the Casino is a place where people gamble and take risks. In the Casino everything is subject to change because becoming a winner or a loser, which to the profane might seem to be the result of the greater or lesser ability of each player, is just a matter of chance. Villanelle, who loves taking risks, plays cards twice in the Casino and on each occasion her bait is what she values most. Firstly, she plays against a masked woman who gets the Queen of spades, "a lucky card. The symbol of Venice" (*P* 59) and wins. "The Queen of spades is a serious win", says Villanelle, "and one we are usually careful to avoid" (*P* 59). However she is not careful enough and gambles her heart to the mysterious lady both in metaphorical terms —Villanelle falls passionately in love with her— and in literal terms —the lady steals Villanelle's heart and keeps it beating in a jar until Henri comes to its rescue eight years later[66]. Farther on in the book, this idea is textualised in the tapestry "some three-quarters done" (*P* 119) that Henri finds in the house of the Queen of spades when he is searching for Villanelle's heart. The ensuing dialogue deserves to be quoted again because of its explicitness:

> I told her about the tapestry. Her face whitened.
> "But you say it was not finished?"
> "It was three-quarters finished."
> "And it was me? You're sure?"
> Why was she so upset? Because if the tapestry had been finished and the woman had woven in her heart, she would have been a *prisoner* for ever. (*P* 121; italics added)

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65 *The Passion* insists on calling the attention of the reader to the negative influence that socio-cultural values have in the process of formation of the individual. Biological sex and cultural gender subjugate personal development to the communal *status quo* in the case of both Henri and Villanelle. If Henri had been taught that "soldiering is a fine life for a boy" (*P* 8), Villanelle denounces that "what I would have most liked to have done, worked the boats, was closed to me on account of my sex" (*P* 53).

66 *The Passion* partakes of some characteristic features of fairy tales and magic realism. This is a clear example of such a type of narrative. The heart is familiarly taken to be the organ where feelings of love, pain, sadness, hatred are to be found. Villanelle is literally heartless for eight years, which means that she is unable to feel. The loss of her heart to the Venetian lady is used in the text as a metaphor that explains why Villanelle gets married to the cook —a man she has always despised—, bears the harshness of her life in the army as a *vivandière*, and is unable to return Henri's love until he finds her heart and returns it to her.

The second time Villanelle plays cards against her husband, the despicable French cook, whom she had abandoned after two years of marriage but who finds her three years later in Venice and asks her for a requital. This time Villanelle takes an even greater risk and, having already lost her heart, gambles what she values most, her freedom:

> A friend of his, a sophisticated man, suggested a little wager for the two of us, a way of solving our differences. We were to play cards and if I won, I should have my freedom to come and go as I pleased and enough money to do so. If I lost, my husband should do with me as he pleased, though he was not to molest or murder me.
> What choice had I? (*P* 98)

Villanelle loses again, this time to the Jack of hearts, and her husband chooses to make a profit of his superiority by selling her to the French Generals after exhibiting her as a freak of nature "in my woman's clothes" first and then changed into a boy with the help of "my easy disguise" (*P* 99) .

In "The Queen of Spades", temporal relations are subordinated to spatial description. "The Queen of Spades" proves that not all representations of time in *The Passion* are coterminous with the historical[67]. Although both Henri's and Villanelle's stories are roughly set in the same historical period, and although the texts insists on reinforcing temporal parallelisms by making the first two parts of the book end with the same date "New Year's Day 1805" (*P* 52), Villanelle refuses historical time as the organising principle of her story and the traditional notion of time as a referential and/or historical category used to pin events on a temporal chart. She also disregards the linearity of time and transforms temporal expressions into fluid elements and open indicators.

If continuous and very precisely scattered historical references turned the analysis of the relationship between story time and narrative time in "The Emperor" into a sufficiently straightforward enterprise, the events told in "The Queen of Spades" are presented with an almost absolute temporal imprecision. The presentation of time in "The Queen of Spades" is nocturnal, mythical, and deprived of its referential element as in fairy tales and legends. Villanelle's world is a no-time land where the boundaries between past, present and future collapse. "The Queen of

67 Ursula K. Heise underlines the "manifest extremely divergent attitudes with regard to issues of time" (1997: 14) to be found in both theories and practices of the postmodern and their unequal effects on historicity: either the waning of history or of historical consciousness. She argues that "part of the problem in considering this contradiction between different theories of the postmodern is the relation between the concepts of 'time' and 'history', which are unquestionably entangled with each other, but not necessarily identical" (15).

Spades" is impossible to analyse in terms of chronology because, as Villanelle explains,

> In Venice, *a long time ago*, when we had our own calendar and stayed aloof from the world, we began the days at night. […] *In those days* (*I cannot place them in time because time is to do with daylight*), in those days when the sun went down we opened our windows and slid along the eely waters with a hooded light in our prow. (*P* 56; italics added)

"The Queen of Spades" begins like a fairy tale told by a heterodiegetic narrator from an immediate present: "There is a city surrounded by water with watery alleys that do for streets and roads and silted up back ways that only the rats can cross" (*P* 49). There follows a detailed description of an uncanny city inhabited by people who "walk on water" because "their feet are webbed. Not all feet, but the feet of the boatmen whose trade is hereditary" (*P* 49). Suddenly, what looked like the beginning of a disquieting fairy tale acquires a more solemn tone as the narrator says: "This is the legend" (*P* 49). What follows is no less unsettling, though:

> When a boatman's wife finds herself pregnant she waits until the moon is full and the night empty of idlers. Then she takes her husband's boat and rows to a terrible island where the dead are buried. She leaves her boat with rosemary in the bows so that the limbless ones cannot return with her and hurries to the grave of the most recently dead in her family. She has brought her offerings: a flask of wine, a lock of hair from her husband and a silver coin. She must leave the offerings on the grave and beg for a clean heart if her child be a girl and boatman's feet if her child be a boy. There is no time to lose. She must be home before dawn and the boat must be left for a day and a night covered in salt. In this way, the boatmen keep their secrets and their trade. (*P* 49-50)

The narrator immediately juxtaposes this legend to the still more marvellous story of the disappearance of an unidentified man in fairly strange circumstances: "There was *once* a weak and foolish man whose wife cleaned the boat and sold the fish and brought up their children and went to the terrible island as she should when her yearly time was due" (*P* 50; italics added). Having moved from the general to the particular, the narrator uses the past tense as a device to maintain what looks like a polite distance between narrator, story and addressee. However, in an astonishing break of narrative laws, as the story of this individual man is brought to an end, the narrative voice changes from being heterodiegetic to becoming homodiegetic and the individual is further imbued with the connotations of the private account of the narrator's personal background:

> The next morning, the boat was picked up by a couple of priests on their way to Mass. The tourist was babbling incoherently and pulling at his toes with his fingers. There was no boatman. They took the tourist to the madhouse, San Servelo, a quiet place that caters for the well-off and defective. For all I know, he's *still* there.
>
> And the boatman?
>
> He was my father.
>
> *I never knew him because I wasn't born when he disappeared.* (*P* 50; italics added)

This episode pictures Villanelle as a storyteller who differs from Henri in that she is not intent on telling *the* truth. She simply cannot, because, for Villanelle, there is no such thing as a single truth but a number of diverse possibilities. Villanelle opts for fabulation and presents the addressee not with a coherent and temporally structured life story but with the sum of separate episodes. Simultaneously she explores the possibilities of turning her back on history through the use of the mythical as a narrative mode. The mysterious disappearance of her father is followed by a hilarious description of her mother's performance of the boatmen's wives' ritual:

> *A few weeks after* my mother had been left with an empty boat she discovered she was pregnant. Although her future was uncertain and she wasn't strictly speaking married to a boatman any more, she decided to go ahead with the gloomy ritual, and *on the appropriate night* she rowed her way silently across the lagoon. As she fastened the boat an owl flew very low and caught her on the shoulder with its wing. She was not hurt but she cried out and stepped back and, *as she did so*, dropped the sprig of rosemary into the sea. *For a moment* she thought of returning straight away but, crossing herself, she hurried to her father's grave and placed her offerings. She knew her husband should have been the one, but he had no grave. How like him, she thought, to be as absent in death as he was in life. Her deed done, she pushed off from the shore that even the crabs avoided and *later* covered the boat in so much salt that it sank. (*P* 50-51; italics added)

Her father's disappearance and her mother's inept performance of the ritual open Villanelle's narrative and are presented as the two incidents prior to her being born that would mark her for life as different from the rest of the girls in her community. As Villanelle further remarks:

> *The hour of my birth coincided with an eclipse of the sun* and my mother did her best to slow down her labour until it had passed. But I was as impatient *then* as I am *now*. […] It was an easy birth and the midwife held me upside down by the ankles until I bawled. But it was when they spread me out to dry that my mother fainted and the midwife felt forced to open another bottle of wine.
>
> My feet were webbed.
>
> There never was a girl whose feet were webbed in the entire history of the boatmen. My mother in her swoon had visions of rosemary and blamed herself for her carelessness. (*P* 51; italics added)

I have emphasised all the temporal phrases used by Villanelle in the fragments I have selected of the account of the first three significant episodes that determine her near future in order to point out their common feature: a complete lack of temporal precision. Words and phrases like "a long time ago", "in those days", "once", "a few weeks after", "on the appropriate night", "for a moment", "later" are in themselves temporally neutral; they only gain a referential meaning when placed in the appropriate temporal context. This does not happen in Villanelle's account, though. She self-consciously refers to this fact when she admits that "I cannot place them in time because time is to do with daylight", a statement which is also

meaningless when quoted in isolation. Continuing with this self-conscious attitude, Villanelle makes the hour of her birth coincident with an eclipse of the sun, thus relating time in her story with "natural" time while at the same time reversing the connotations attached to night and day, darkness and light, or life (activity) and death (sleep), on the one hand, and, on the other, establishing a tight relationship between the mythical and the personal. As a result, Villanelle's representation of time in "The Queen of Spades" is completely different from Henri's representation of time in "The Emperor" for whereas the former rests on the mythical the latter is marked by the historical.

Villanelle moves easily from the past to the present tenses in her discourse as another way of questioning the traditional conception of the category of time. Iteration brings the past and the present together under the same indeterminate representation[68]: "I did take a boat out *sometimes*" (*P* 53; italics added); "If *ever* I saw a stern disappearing down a black, inhospitable-looking waterway" (*P* 53; italics added); "I saw her *once*" (*P* 54; italics added); "*Tonight*, he's wearing his best suit and his moustache gleams" (*P* 56; italics added); "*Nowadays*, the dark has more light than *in the old days*" (*P* 57; italics added); "*This morning*, there's no going home" (*P* 61; italics added).Villanelle draws a difference between the old, magical times, and the bleak, rational present. The former is ancestral, timeless and feminine, whereas the latter is not.

In "The Rock" Villanelle finds some more space as a narrator immediately after Henri's imprisonment in San Servelo, as she sets "about procuring his release straight away" (*P* 142). She briefly alludes to the situation Henri is in, her visits to the madhouse and her surprise that "for the first few months that I visited him he seemed cheerful and sanguine, despite sleeping in a room with three other men of hideous appearance and terrifying habits" (*P* 143). Using a new "characterised" ellipsis that leaps over the events that have happened to her in the past eight years (and which she has previously told her addressees), Villanelle seems to retake the story she had left behind on New Year's Day, 1805, at the end of "The Queen of Spades". Space is the same as it was then and time seems to have stopped still as she perceives that: "More than eight years had passed, but when I knocked on her door I didn't feel like an heiress who had walked from Moscow and seen her husband murdered. I felt like a Casino girl in a borrowed uniform. Instinctively, I put my hand to my heart" (*P* 143). In the past eight years and after so many extreme

68 *The Passion* represents the still moment only in textual or formal terms. It is in *Sexing the Cherry* that Winterson achieves the physical disruption of time as a category.

experiences, Villanelle has learnt to value her freedom over her passions. Just as Henri's narrative concentrates on the parallelism between the fate of his idol, Bonaparte, and himself, Villanelle centres on the telling of her last encounter with the Venetian lady, her only love, and of her pondered decision to put an end to their affair:

> One more night. How tempting. How innocent. I could stay tonight surely? What difference could it make, one more night? No. If I smell her skin, find the mute curves of her nakedness, she will reach in her hand and withdraw my heart like a bird's egg. I have not had time to cover my heart in barnacles to elude her. If I give in to this passion, my real life, the most solid, the best known, will disappear and I will feed on shadows again like those sad spirits whom Orpheus[69] fled. (*P* 146)

Villanelle benefits from the second chance she has been offered and manages to leave her past behind and start a new life. This implies leaving the Casino behind as well, which she does: "I'm leaving alone. I prefer it that way, though I am not alone every night and increasingly I go to the Casino, to see old friends and to look at the case on the wall with two white hands" (*P* 150). Devoid of all precise temporal references, Villanelle's discourse has an open ending: "Now that I have it back? Now that I have been given a reprieve such as only the stories offer? Will I gamble it again? Yes" (*P* 150). Unlike Henri's, Villanelle's discourse has a positive message, which is an overt celebration of life, love, and freedom. Her final "Yes" (*P* 151) recalls the ending of Molly Bloom's monologue in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1986: 644) and constitutes a moment of literary epiphany that brings together the past and the future to illuminate the present moment.

Once the two gendered chronotopic motifs which I have called the chronotope of history and the chronotope of fantasy, or mythical chronotope, are clearly and separately constructed as two opposed worlds, *The Passion* exposes the arbitrariness of these associations by initiating a deconstructive process which disrupts culturally-produced binaries. The chronotope inside which such a disruption is achieved is no other than the chronotope of the journey. It is my contention that in overcoming spatial limitations and narrative patterns, Henri and Villanelle also overcome gender constraints.

Neither Henri nor Villanelle are prisoners of the spatio-temporal co-ordinates with which they identify in the first two chapters of the novel. Rather on the

69 This reference to the myth of Orpheus is as suitable for Henri as it is for Villanelle. Henri, like Orpheus, clings to his passion and refuses to accept the loss of his beloved and of his past to the extent that he gives away "his real life" for a secluded existence fed on the shadows of the sad spirits which haunt his mind; Villanelle, unlike Orpheus and unlike Henri, refuses passion in favour of freedom.

contrary, in an attempt to possess and/or escape from their passions, Henri and Villanelle undertake journeys in space and show that the representation of identity is much more conditioned by spatial indicators than by those of gender. The chronotope of the journey provokes the interaction of characters, spaces, and narrative modes and results in the crossing of boundaries between the historical and the mythical, on the one hand, and between history and fantasy, on the other. Thus, although initially gender difference is highlighted in *The Passion* through the unquestioned association of each of the two characters with a specific space and a different presentation of time, when each of the characters enters the spatial co-ordinates of the other, their conception of time and narrative accommodates to the new spatial requirements. Thus Henri's entrance into the fantastic Venetian space radically alters his perception of time, narrative and self; likewise Villanelle's imaginative account is constrained by the patriarchal world which she is forced to inhabit when she is sold to the army as a *vivandière*. Furthermore, the chronotope of the journey is especially productive as a narrative mode for the textual subversion of gender categories on account of its being archetypally masculine:

> A *hero* ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on *his fellow man*. (Campbell 1988: 30; italics added)

The distribution of roles in traditional romance narratives and fairy tales propose men as would-be heroes that journey into the wilderness to face all forms of perils, find the object of their quest, bring it back to their communities and in doing so restore peace, order, and/or prosperity to the waste land. On the other hand, these narratives portray women either as a wicked force which deserves to be killed by the hero or engaged in passive roles, always waiting, preferably inside an enclosed space (very frequently the house), either for the return of their sons or lovers or to be rescued from a threatening environment.

The spiralling movement of the narration, with its double chronological/ mythical timing and spacing, already hints at the overall structure of the novel, which is that of the mythical hero's quest for individuation. This fact is enhanced by the repeated allusions in both Henri's and Villanelle's discourses to the literary quest *par excellence*: the search for the Holy Grail (*P* 67, 154). Almost at the end of the book, Henri connects his quest for freedom with that of the Holy Grail when he says that: "There's a lot of talk about freedom. It's like the Holy Grail, we grow up hearing about it, it exists, we're sure of that, and every person has his own idea of

where" (*P* 154). In Villanelle's discourse the search for the Holy Grail is also apparently considered an exclusively male quest:

> Her husband dealt in rare books and manuscripts from the east. Ancient maps that showed the lairs of griffins and the haunts of whales. Treasure maps that claimed to know the whereabouts of the Holy Grail. He was a quiet and cultured man of whom she was fond. (*P* 67)

However, underneath this maintenance of traditional roles, the text proves subversive enough. Villanelle comments that the Venetian lady's husband deals "only in what was unique, he never bought a treasure someone else might have" (*P* 96). Ironically, while her husband is engaged in impossible quests[70], the Venetian lady begins her particular erotic quest. The husband comes back home empty-handed and it is the Venetian lady that finds what is unique, Villanelle's passion, and the treasure nobody else will have, Villanelle's heart, which the lady keeps "low down, concealed" inside "an indigo jar" wrapped "in a silk shift" (*P* 120).

The Passion also exposes the exclusivity of male protagonists in the chronotope of the quest by providing the reader with two parallel quests, Henri's and Villanelle's. Winterson has acknowledged that "life for me is a quest and that is how I must interpret it" (in Barr 1991: 32). Understood in the mythical terms proposed by Joseph Campbell in his most celebrated book, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (1988), the physical and psychological journeys that both Henri and Villanelle undertake become the topos of the characters' search for identity and maturation[71]. In *The Passion*, both characters engage in analogous adventures which converge in the zero winter only to be separated for good in Venice in what Campbell sees to be "the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero" which is "a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation — initiation — return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth[72]" (1988: 30). Henri's and Villanelle's journeys follow the threefold pattern of the hero's quest for individuation. In "The Emperor" and "The Queen of Spades", both hero and heroine are still in their respective homelands: Henri's unnamed French village and Villanelle's Venice. "The Zero Winter" presents hero and heroine going

70 The lady's husband not only plans the search for the Holy Grail. Villanelle describes him "in his study, poring over some new and fabulous treasure. The whereabouts of the Cross or the secret tunnels that lead to the centre of the earth where the fire dragons are" (*P* 75).

71 The quest topos in *The Passion* may also be approached from a different perspective, that of Tarot card symbolism, an approach that Susana Onega follows in "*The Passion*: Jeanette Winterson's Uncanny Mirror of Ink" (1993: 113-129).

72 This term, as Campbell (1988: 30) concedes, is taken from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939: 581).

through different trials, which constitute their ritual initiation, and "The Rock" brings both adventures to a separate and unequal end.

Henri's and Villanelle's physical and psychological adventures begin with the "call to adventure" (Campbell 1988: 49). For Henri, this call to adventure takes the "alluring" form of voluntary recruitment. Henri is seduced by the romantic patriarchal idea of becoming a soldier in the ranks and files of Napoleon. He has been taught that "soldiering is a fine life for a boy" (*P* 8), although he experiences it otherwise and feels "homesick from the start" (*P* 6). For Villanelle, the call to adventure is a matter of sheer chance, brought about by her falling in love with a woman who comes to the Casino to play cards against her. "Whether small or great," Campbell argues,

> and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration —a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand. (1988: 51)

Both characters abandon their previous spaces in order to enter a new physical and spiritual world, which implies both a mystery and a transfiguration. In this sense, they symbolically die to their old selves in order to be born in a new dimension, a realm of endless possibilities. Napoleon is the magus-like figure for Henri, who initiates him in his rite of passage from boyhood into manhood, a process which requires his actual separation from the protective influence of his birthplace and his mother and from the feelings and ideas attached to them. A similar role is played by the Venetian lady in the case of Villanelle's initiation. As we have seen, the mystery she has to solve belongs to an altogether different dimension, the realm of passion conjured up by a lesbian love affair which she has to learn how to control.

Campbell explains that "in these adventures there is an atmosphere of irresistible fascination about the figure that appears suddenly as guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the biography" (1988: 55). Napoleon, as a father figure, exerts a strong fascination on Henri at the beginning of the story. The same occurs with Villanelle's fascination for the Queen of Spades, who makes her lose her heart. However, such fascination is an obvious hindrance for the development of the hero's and heroine's identities since they are turned into slaves to their own passions[73].

After crossing the threshold, the mythical hero enters a totally new, mysterious land. He "moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous

73 For a Lacanian analysis of these relationships and their negative effect, see Onega 1994.

forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell 1988: 67). In keeping with this, Henri travels along the all-stretching wasteland of war and witnesses the destruction of whole villages and, the nonsensical death of enemies and friends alike, the alienation and dehumanisation of young men, who are transformed into depersonalised numbers that fill in endless lists of war casualties. As an army cook, Henri accumulates extensive knowledge about the actual meaning of "words like devastation, rape, slaughter, carnage, starvation [which] are lock and key words to keep the pain at bay. Words about war that are easy on the eye" (*P* 5). In sum, he is forced to suffer physical and psychological pain and exhaustion. He learns about the outrageous price a boy has to pay on his way to manhood if he is to conform to the patriarchal standards of masculinity and heroism. After eight years of continuous agony, Henri deserts from the army and in so doing he rejects the patriarchal world and the heroic role he was expected to play in it. He finally manages to break his bond with the Law of the Father in a process of individuation that allows him to continue his quest for freedom, by liberating himself from any socio-cultural constraint. As he recalls in San Servelo, "Bonaparte taught us that freedom lay in our fighting arm, but in the legends of the Holy Grail no one won it by force. It was Perceval, the gentle knight, who came to a ruined chapel and found what the others had overlooked, simply by sitting still" (*P* 154). Henri longs to emulate Perceval and once he has completed his emancipatory process under the influence of Villanelle and her city, Venice, he makes of San Servelo his "ruined chapel" and there, "simply by sitting still", he finds his Holy Grail: "I think now that being free is not being powerful or rich or well regarded or without obligations but being able to love. To love someone else enough to forget about yourself for one moment is to be free" (*P* 154).

Likewise, Villanelle undergoes a series of trials for a similar period of eight years. She first becomes aware of the fact that her deep passion for the Queen of Spades does not find an equal counterpoint, the same intense emotion in her partner, who actually loves her husband "with a calm and a way that put a knife to my heart" (*P* 75). Thus her pure and profound lesbian love is faced with a no less pure and profound heterosexual love. This first emotional reversal induces Villanelle to espouse heterosexuality and get married to "a man I had refused, cursed. A man I despised" (*P* 96). Villanelle's marriage may be interpreted as an attempt to flee from herself and her passion and as a form of self-punishment, as Susana Onega has explained (1994). After two years of masochistic/sadistic relationship, Villanelle abandons her husband and manages to escape detection by cross-dressing:

> I dressed as a boy to escape detection, and while he snored off his red wine and most of a goose I lost myself in the dark that has always been a friend.
>
> I got odd jobs on ships and in grand houses, learned to speak five languages and did not see that city of destiny for another three years, then I caught a ship home on a whim and because I wanted my heart back. (*P* 98)

Unlike Henri, who stoically suffers an untenable situation for eight years, Villanelle chooses agency in order to ameliorate the equally harsh circumstances of her life. She is determined to make her own mistakes even though she eventually pays excessively high prices for them.

Analogies with the literary figure of the *pícaro* are clear, in my opinion. Villanelle is a young woman of endless resourcefulness who is able to benefit from the most precarious situations. We have seen how, fleeing from her husband, whom she has previously robbed of his watch and "what money he had on him" (*P* 98), Villanelle learns five languages and manages to survive perfectly well by cross-dressing and by accepting any kind of odd job. She is used to obtaining extra incomes by stealing: "I was optimistic that, with so many heads looking up, so many pockets would be vulnerable" (*P* 55). Like a fine *pícaro*, Villanelle is a subversive force within society. She contravenes its established moral and civil laws and even takes pleasure from those lawbreaking actions. The following quotation from Jeremy Hawthorn would perfectly apply to Villanelle,

> A "picaro" in Spanish is a rogue, and the picaresque novel is built on the tradition of the sixteenth-century Spanish picaresque narrative, which typically portrayed a sharp-witted rogue living off his wits while *travelling through a variety of usually low-life settings*. Recent commentators have suggested that the key aspect of the picaro is that he is *a minor delinquent* who offends against moral and civil laws and whose behaviour is anti-social without being utterly vicious. The picaro typically *lives by begging or by minor theft*, he is a cynical in his attitude to the softer emotions, especially love, and by witty and satirical comments *questions most established beliefs and customs*. (1992: 28; italics added)

Villanelle questions established beliefs and customs even more profoundly than any other *pícaro* figure would, because she is a woman. Traditionally, it is far more frequent to find male *pícaros* in the history of European literature[74]. However, and in line with the reversal of roles carried out in this book, it is not strange to observe how, in *The Passion*, it is Villanelle, not Henri, who is already marked by birth to subvert any categorisation according to sex. Villanelle is represented as an androgynous character. She is not only a bisexual woman who cross-dresses as a man for money and for fun but she also shares with men one of their exclusive biological features, their webbed feet. At the very beginning of her narrative

[74] Exception made of eighteenth-century literature, which shows many female *pícaros* like Defoe's Moll Flanders and Roxana.

Villanelle cunningly says: "Rumour has it that the inhabitants of this city walk on water. That, more bizarre still, their feet are webbed. Not all feet, but the feet of the boatmen, whose trade is hereditary" (*P* 49). The description of the moment of her birth portrays Villanelle as a subversive force when she tells the reader that: "There never was a girl whose feet were webbed in the entire history of the boatmen" (*P* 51).

The society of the boatmen is patriarchal and phallocratic, the phallus being precisely represented by the webbed feet that only boatmen have. A "mistake" of nature makes Villanelle, a woman, inherit the phallus and any effort to do away with the "offending parts" is pointless. The fact that Villanelle is biologically marked by the phallus may be read as evidence that she has the power to subvert patriarchy, heterosexuality, and referentiality. "Endowed with this singularly masculine trait, Villanelle grows to be a rather androgynous creature, equally attracted to men, women, and gambling," (Nagy 1988: 3). Together with her webbed feet Villanelle also inherits boatmen's special instinct and desire to work on the boats. Echoing Georgette's frustrated desire, Villanelle would have liked to be a "boatman" herself but, once more, society reacts negatively against any such intrusion in the established order of patriarchy: "what I would have most liked to have done, worked the boats, was closed to me on account of my sex" (*P* 53). Yet Villanelle does not give up, she is another rebel by birth: "I did take a boat out sometimes, rowing alone for hours up and down the canals and out into the lagoon. I learned the secret way of boatmen, by watching and by instinct" (*P* 53). What Winterson implies here is that there is no such thing as sexual identity, that neither skills nor jobs are gender-specific; more so, they should be available to anyone regardless of her/his sex. In this sense, Winterson surpasses Monique Wittig's conviction that biology constrains but does not necessarily determine the behaviour of either of the two sexes (1992). In fact, biological research has produced more and more evidence to the effect that the behavioural possibilities of the sexes are multiple and variable, which is why Villanelle considers herself a real boatman when she explains to Henri that: "Boatmen don't need to swim. No boat*man* would end up like this. We can't go home till we're dry, *I*'ll be made fun of" (*P* 124; italics added). Henri also comments on Villanelle's ability with boats, which he reads as another form of power to master him: "When I suggested to Villanelle that she was being deliberately mysterious and taking me a way I would never recognise again, she smiled and said she was taking me down an ancient way that *only a boatman* could hope to remember" (*P* 113; italics added).

When Villanelle inhabits the Venetian space, her discourse is fantastic and mysterious. However, the whole of her story is not free from the constraints of historico-referential time, just as Henri's narrative will be shown to partake of chronological inaccuracy. With the exception of the explicit or "characterised" ellipsis (Genette 1980: 106-107)[75] that Villanelle uses to situate her story as simultaneous with those of Henri and Bonaparte, Villanelle only punctuates with precise temporal references the description of the two relationships which, although in uneven circumstances, have equally made her an emotional and a physical prisoner: Villanelle's love affair with the Venetian lady and her marriage to the French cook.

Historical time enters Villanelle's discourse for the first time when she talks about the love affair she has with her "Queen of Spades". Firstly, Villanelle situates their fortuitous encounter at a gaming table in: "August. Bonaparte's birthday and a hot night" (*P* 54). The lady finds Villanelle again sitting at a table in Florian's and having a drink. Apparently three months have passed since they first met at the Casino, because Villanelle begins her description of their second encounter by placing it again in the time of the calendar: "November in Venice is the beginning of the catarrh season" (*P* 65). November marks the beginning of their clandestine meetings, which come to a halt because: "The object of my love has gone away for Christmas. That's what they do at this time of year. He and she" (*P* 72). It is not until New Year's Eve that Villanelle sees her beloved again through the window of her house "staring at the palms of her hands" (*P* 75). Villanelle starts to imaginatively read her lover's mind but she realises that she is merely projecting her own thoughts and desires on the other —"Was she searching for the line of her desire for me?" (*P* 75)— as soon as the husband enters the room, unexpected to both his wife and Villanelle:

> I was about to tap on her window when her husband entered the room, startling her. He kissed her forehead and she smiled. I watched them together and saw more in a moment than I could have pondered in another year. They did not live in the fiery furnace she and I inhabited, but they had a calm and a way that put a knife to my heart. (*P* 75)

[75] The passage I refer to here is presented immediately after the description of Villanelle's birth and the unsuccessful attempts on the part of both the midwife and her mother to make an incision in the membranes between Villanelle's toes in order to "normalise" her. After such detailed descriptions, it comes as a surprise that Villanelle condenses the next eighteen years in a single sentence: "This comforted my mother somewhat and we passed the next eighteen years in a normal family way" (*P* 52). Normalcy seems to have no appeal for Villanelle, who furthermore juxtaposes this ellipsis with the reference to a historical episode: "Since Bonaparte captured our city of mazes in 1797, we've more or less abandoned ourselves to pleasure" (*P* 52).

The intensity of what she perceives makes Villanelle conscious of her personal situation and leads her to search for solace in the multitude, in the communal gathering of people which makes the city brim with life, reconciles opposites, and is surrounded by a carnivalesque atmosphere:

> The Moors on the great clock swing back their hammers and strike in turns. Soon the Square will be a rush of bodies, their warm breath ascending and shaping little clouds above their heads. My breath shoots out straight in front of me like the fire dragon's. The ancestors cry from about the water and in St Mark's the organ begins. In between freezing and melting. In between love and despair. In between fear and sex, passion is. (*P* 76)

"The Queen of Spades" is brought to an end with the reference to the only complete historical date that will be uttered by Villanelle in the course of her story: "My oars lie flat on the water. It is New Year's Day, 1805" (*P* 76). Villanelle is silent and time stops: the present moment is enriched with the echoes of the past as the addressee realises that this date underlines the simultaneity of Henri's and Villanelle's stories, grounding in time their dialogic relationship.

Unlike Henri, Villanelle does not retake her narrative in "The Zero Winter" but reelaborates it. When Henri and Patrick are planning their escape from the Russian winter, Patrick meets a *vivandière* who has the intention of joining them in their desertion, thus occupying the physical and emotional vacancy left by Domino who, badly injured, decides to stay. To this moment in the text, it has been Henri's prerogative to provide the addressee with background information concerning other characters' past. When it comes to this unknown *vivandière*, however, it is not Henri's description that is offered but her own voice; this means that the *vivandière* is telling her story not to the first-level addressee, but to her fellow-travellers, Henri and Patrick. Giving her the status of second-level narrator, the text places this woman in a position of power which it had previously denied Georgette, Domino, or Patrick and which only Henri and Villanelle had occupied so far. As her story moves forward, as slowly and paradigmatically as Sheherezade's in *Arabian Nights*, the *vivandière* provides her addressees with a detailed account of her past life which she interrupts with stories-within-the-story by means of which she can increase narrative tension, on the one hand, and, on the other, offer a new context for and a different perspective on the same story[76], her own.

Allowing the *vivandière* to speak for herself conceals and simultaneously reveals her identity. In a new attempt at crossing the limits between fiction and

[76] Villanelle uses the technique of the embedded story twice: firstly, with the story of the two gamblers whose bait was a life and, secondly, with Salvadore's story. Despite their being different, I read both of them as two more variations on Villanelle's story, as two examples of the specular technique known as *mise en abyme*.

reality, this piece of information is sagaciously withheld from both the main characters in the story and the external addressee, who nevertheless is almost always the first to share with each of the narrators their secret, albeit partial, knowledge. The *vivandière* accompanies Henri and Patrick in their escape from the army but it is not until the seventh night of their journey that she chooses to tell her life story. The *vivandière*'s story constitutes a narrative pause in Henri's discourse which functions as frame and consequently makes of the female's an embedded story. The meaning of this story-within-the-story is very different for the internal and external addressees. For the internal addressees, Henri and Patrick, the contents of the *vivandière*'s story are completely new. This is not so, however, for the external addressee who, following the clues that this female narrator purposefully scatters along her story, is asked to lift up the literary mask and reveal Villanelle, the fabulator, hiding underneath. The reader is thus offered a reorganised and slightly changed version of the story she or he has had access to in "The Queen of Spades". The characteristics of this narrative pause make its analysis in terms of order, frequency, and duration especially productive.

In terms of order, Villanelle's story constitutes an internal analepsis which provides Henri and Patrick with information about the past of a character which has a pre-eminent role to play in the further development of the story. According to Mieke Bal, when the details provided "overlap that of the primary fabula, the retroversion usually serves as compensation for a gap in the story" (1985: 60). In *The Passion* this retroversion is not just meant to fill in an information gap. In telling her story to her two companions, Villanelle is retelling her story to the external addressee, a fact that becomes interesting in terms of frequency and duration.

From the reader's perspective, Villanelle's story is a repetition of previously described events. The repeating mode of presentation is again used in *The Passion*, but the reader is not presented twice with exactly the same story but is rather led in through what may be called repetition with a difference. Thus Villanelle's retelling of part of the story she had already presented in "The Queen of Spades" introduces two basic and interdependent differences. The first one has to do with duration: Villanelle's story is condensed in fewer pages but, at the same time, the story time is expanded to catch up with her narrative present, the seventh night of her journey of escape. The second transformation is still more significant for our argument, since it has to do with the form in which Villanelle presents the events of her past life in time. Just as Henri's narrative has been altered by his entrance into the "mythical" chronotopic atmosphere of Venice, Villanelle's story is equally influenced by the

"historical" chronotope from which she is intent on escaping. Villanelle is no longer under the spell of the nebulous ambience of Venice and the retelling of her story evinces this change. The key moments in her life are much more specifically located in time. Villanelle clings to her personal narrative style but time is rationalised and events are enchained chronologically and causally.

After having told the story of two anonymous gamblers whose wager was a life —a story which, as we have seen, foreruns her own gambling away her heart, first and her freedom, later—, Villanelle's story goes back to the moment when she falls in love with the mysterious Venetian lady: "There was a night, *eight years ago*, when a hand that took me by surprise slid the secret panel and showed me what it was I kept to myself" (*P* 94; italics added). In this way the external addressee learns that Villanelle had fallen in love in 1804, the same year that Henri had recruited the French army, a fact that makes of this year a turning point for the future of both Henri and Villanelle. Villanelle continues her placing of events in chronological time and in a single sentence she explains that "I knew her for only *five months*. We had *nine nights* together and I never saw her again" (*P* 94; italics added). Villanelle refers again to their last encounter "early in the New Year" (*P* 95) and from that moment on her narrative of the next eight years[77] starts.

The extended version of Villanelle's story rescues from her past all the painful memories she has of her marriage to "a man I had refused, cursed. A man I despised. A rich man with fat fingers" (*P* 96). Villanelle sees marriage as her chance to escape from Venice and the oppressive passion she feels towards her lady-lover[78]: "We travelled *for two years*, then I stole his watch and what money he had on him and left him" (*P* 98; italics added). What she believes to be her final escape eventually becomes a new trap Villanelle sets for herself:

> I got odd jobs on ships and in grand houses, learned to speak five languages and did not see that city of destiny *for another three years*, then I caught a ship home on a whim and because I wanted my heart back. I should have known better than to risk my luck in the shrinking city. He soon found me out and his fury at being robbed and abandoned had not abated, even though he was living with another woman by then. (*P* 98; italics added)

Echoing her loss of independence, Villanelle's account of this episode is likewise dependent on the primary narrative in which it is embedded and by which it

77 This lapse of time further enhances the parallelisms between Villanelle's and Henri's stories.

78 For Villanelle escaping from Venice and her lover amounts to the same thing. The Queen of spades is, according to Villanelle, "the symbol of Venice" (*P* 59) and it is this the card that the mysterious and unnamed woman chooses at the gaming table, the "lucky card" (*P* 59). The symbolic association of Venice, lover, and card is completed when Villanelle "spread[s] the cards in a perfect fan, [takes] out the Queen of spades [so that] no one else should win tonight" and says: "I would keep her card until she needed it" (*P* 60).

is limited. As we have seen, in "The Zero Winter" Villanelle is a second-level narrator subordinated to Henri and, as a result, her narration is presented chronologically[79] and scattered with more precise temporal references than in the chapter in which she is a first-level narrator. Thus, with the introduction of narrative hierarchies, the text rounds off the intimate relationship it creates between any conventional form of temporal representation, history, and the characters' loss of freedom.

After three years as a *vivandière*, Villanelle embarks on a new successful escape. It is at this moment that Henri's and Villanelle's quests overlap. But while the decision to travel back to Venice implies, in mythical terms, Villanelle's return to her homeland, it constitutes Henri's second "call to adventure". The arrival in Venice is "a return threshold" (Campbell 1988) for Villanelle. Back in Venice, Villanelle presents herself as a dissident heroine who has the difficult task of facing her old world. Her experience of it makes her believe that time has stopped and that the encounter with the beloved might be a second chance to start anew (*P* 143). However, the Queen of Spades perceives Villanelle's "change" by exclaiming: "You've grown up" (*P* 143). Villanelle succeeds in overcoming the temptation to cling to her past love affair with the queen of spades because, now, she knows better

> When I met her I felt she was my destiny and that feeling has not altered, even though it remains invisible. Though I have taken myself to the wastes of the world and loved again, I cannot truly say that I ever left her. […]
>
> 'Will you stay?' she said.
>
> No, not in this life. Not now. Passion will not be commanded. It is no genie to grant us three wishes when we let it loose. It commands us and very rarely in the way we would choose. (*P* 144)

Having achieved maturity and psychological individuation, Villanelle refuses passion in favour of the freedom to choose. What she chooses is independence and motherhood. In mythical terms, Villanelle becomes the "womb of redemption", which "remaining fallow as the primordial abyss, summons to itself by its very readiness the original power that fertilized the earth" (Campbell 1988: 308). Villanelle is presented as a surrogate image of the Holy Virgin and an echo of the woman with a baby Henri meets on New Year's Eve at the camp at Boulogne (*P* 43) when he is desperate to find some hopeful sign to cheer his heart. A newly-born baby is always a source of joy, the miracle of life. According to Villanelle, their daughter "is a girl with a mass of hair like the early sun and feet like his" (*P* 150). In the religious context of *The Passion*, Henri and Villanelle's daughter represents the

79 For the sake of the argument I am leaving aside the two embedded stories already commented on.

incarnation of a new messiah, a she-saviour, the promise of the reconciliation of opposites.

The arrival in Venice is a second initiating threshold for Henri, who is now faced with a world ruled by fantasy where, as he will end up acknowledging, "all things seem to be possible" (*P* 76). Villanelle and Venice offer Henri a second chance but a previous process of initiation is first necessary. Villanelle tours him through the city, "then you won't go missing again" (*P* 113); she makes up her mind "to teach me to row. Not just row. Venetian row" (*P* 124). Henri is not yet prepared to accept the fragmentary and changeable nature of this city, where he still feels an exile who is being led "through an impossible maze[80]" (*P* 110). Henri insists on pointing out the differences between himself and Villanelle: "free will, my friend the priest said, belongs to us all. The will to change. I don't take much account of scrying and sortilege. I'm not like Villanelle, I don't see hidden worlds in the palm of my hand nor a future in a clouded ball" (*P* 153). He will, eventually[81].

The allusion to the end of Henri's journey across Western Europe and his first sight of the city of Venice constitutes the last occasion on which Henri uses referential time in his narrative. The moment is significant enough to be framed by a precise date: "We were fortunate in a fair passage and on that calm glittering sea the war and winter seemed years away. Someone else's past. And so it was that *in May 1813* I had my first glimpse of Venice" (*P* 109; italics added). May 1813 signals the end of a period and the beginning of another: this chronological date functions as a hinge between the chronotope of history and the chronotope of fantasy. Venice is separated from Europe by the sea, which functions as a threshold or liminal space in which Henri's change is seen to start. Before entering the city, Henri describes this space in similar terms to those employed by Villanelle at the beginning of "The Queen of Spades". He emphasises the unreal, changeable, independent, arrogant and defiant nature of this new space:

> Arriving at Venice by sea, as one must, is like seeing an invented city rise up and quiver in the air. It is a trick of the early light to make the buildings shimmer so that they seem never still. It is not built on any lines I can fathom but rather seems to have pushed itself out, impudently, here and there. To have swelled like yeast in a shape of its own. There are no preliminaries, no docks for the smaller craft, your boat anchors in the lagoon and in a moment with no more ado you are in St Mark's Square. (*P* 109-110)

80 The Venetian maze is a mirror image of the disordered thoughts and experiences that populate Henri's mind and memories.

81 Henri will not only be capable of seeing hidden worlds but also of creating worlds of his own and of transmitting them to the reader when he eventually becomes a writer.

Henri enters the city of Venice and his narrative is contaminated by the laws of what he reads to be a completely different world, an "impossible maze" (*P* 110). As a result, the precise historical dates that had framed Henri's narration as he was travelling through Europe with Napoleon's army, suddenly and almost immediately disappear from his narrative discourse; even temporal indicators become more and more scarce until Henri's narrative turns imprecise and mythical as far as chronology is concerned. Historical time, first, and referential time later, are progressively replaced by mythical time. Once in Villanelle's house and feeling safe again after many years, Henri undergoes a process of self-healing through sleep: "I thanked her and slept *for two days*. *On the third day* I awoke to a quiet house and my room completely dark because the shutters were so tightly close" (*P* 111; italics added). This moment of awakening corresponds to "the Belly of the Whale", a mythical phase which Campbell connects with the image of symbolic death, as a form of self-annihilation, and a necessary life-renewing act:

> the idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolised in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died. (1988: 90)

Henri goes a step ahead, though, because the temporal expressions he uses infuse this moment of passage with overt religious connotations which contribute to enhancing the parallelisms that the text establishes between Henri and the figure of Jesus Christ.

Like Christ, Henri resurrects from the dead[82] on the third day and believes that he has succeeded in leaving the past behind. Immediately after his "resurrection", he is lost for five days in Venice (*P* 112). When Villanelle finds him, she asks him to find something for her in return: Henri has to retrieve Villanelle's heart from the house of her lover. Once this miracle is completed and Villanelle's heart is again beating in her chest, Henri remembers how: "She was happy *these days* and *often* she took my hand and put it to her heart as though she were a patient given a second chance" (*P* 124; italics added). Vagueness invades the description of the passing of time from this moment on until, eventually, all notions of temporality are lost from the narrative when Henri is charged with the murder of Villanelle's husband and he is taken on an unrecorded date to San Servelo, paradoxically, a much more rational place than the city of Venice.

82 It should be remembered that Henri had explicitly claimed that "I was covered in dead men" (*P* 25).

Although in thematic and ideological terms the connection between Henri's story and the rise and fall of Bonaparte is obvious and necessary, Henri's narrative espouses a precise formal placement of his story in historical terms for a while, only to question it later and to eventually refuse to provide any further historical marker as a point of reference at the end of his narrative. Henri fails to attain the individual height of a hero in the terms preached by patriarchy. Nevertheless, Henri learns that: "Knowing the past becomes a question of representing, that is, of constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording" (Hutcheon 1989: 74). This insight discharges Henri from the pressure of the real, of referentiality, and allows him to embrace the liberating power of the imagination. The ultimate boon of his quest is wisdom: although reality and fiction seem two distinct realms, they are actually one. The realm of fiction, of the imagined is a forgotten dimension of the world we know, of what we call reality. The exploration of the forgotten dimension teaches the hero to assimilate otherness to self; acknowledging its multiplicity, the individual is enriched and progresses towards tolerance and acceptance of difference as the unknown part of the self.

As Campbell explains, "when the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmutating trophy" (1988: 193). Henri feigns madness, refuses to return to his motherland, and chooses to remain forever enclosed in his "ivory tower[83]". As Antoine Roquentin, one of the characters in Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), explains

> Voici ce que j'ai pensé: pour que l'événement le plus banal devienne une aventure, it faut et il suffit qu'on se mette à le *raconter*. C'est ce qui dupe les gens; un homme, c'est un conteur d'histoires, il vie entouré de ses histoires et des histoires d'autrui, il voit tout ce qui lui arrive à travers elles; et il cherche à vivre sa vie comme s'il la racontait.
>
> Mais il faut choisir; vivre ou raconter. (1973: 61-62)

Henri chooses meditation to the detriment of action and, in doing so, he achieves the kind of mythical *grandeur* he prefigures when he alludes to the silent, passive role of the greatest of all knights, Sir Perceval. Henri, like Villanelle, embraces solitude and declines any form of physical bestowal of his gain. Henri fulfils his responsibility to communicate the wisdom he has achieved in the course of his quest by representing

83 Coming back to the analysis of *The Passion* in terms of Tarot symbolism, it seems interesting to note that Alfred Douglas points out how "in mundane terms the Tower suggests the destruction of an outdated philosophy which is unable to adapt to new conditions […] the lesson here is that any structure is only defensible as long as it remains flexible and capable of evolution" (1972: 95). Henri's "ivory tower" suggests, as we have seen, the undermining of patriarchy and of traditional History, with its insistence on keeping facts and fiction separate when both exist only in discourse and are context-bound.

himself in narrative. Narrating himself Henri is not only capable of bringing the boon of renewal to his community: both the inmates of San Servelo, whose waste land Henri transforms in "a forest of red roses" (*P* 160), and the outer world, to whom he gives his and Villanelle's daughter, as a promise of reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universe. Henri is also capable of bringing renewal to any twenty-first-century reader who may approach the text with an open mind because narrative is atemporal and transcendent. As he insists at the end of his narrative, "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (*P* 160). Henri is the prophet crying in the wilderness. He tells history as a prophet.

As a conclusion it could be stated that, in *The Passion*, space and time mirror each other making two mutually exclusive spaces, the historical and the mythical, coexist, thus providing the novel with a rather innovative structural organisation. Instead of the traditional linear arrangement of events in chronologico-causal terms, Winterson proposes a different form of organisation which is based on the idea of repetition with a difference, the sum of reworked, self-contained circular stories which influence one another favouring beginnings and denying endings.

FOUR

TIME, SPACE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN *SEXING THE CHERRY*

1. HISTORY, SCIENCE AND IDEOLOGY IN *SEXING THE CHERRY*

In the preceding chapter, I have illustrated the way in which *The Passion* destroys any neat ontological distance between the two traditionally separate discourses of history and fiction drawing on the idea that any textual representation of events, whether historical or fictional, can never be read as objective or ideologically neutral. Having disrupted the taken-for-granted objective nature of History, which is one the most solid master narratives of patriarchy, *The Passion* revisits and problematises equally assumed issues of gender, which are shown to be also cultural constructs systematically maintained and authorised by their inclusion and representation in specific literary genres. Space as both a category of perception and representation, and as metaphor for the text and for its structure has proved of vital importance in Winterson's process of revision, to the extent that different spaces condition the specific behaviour of characters, their changing perception of time, and the particular narrative mode they select for the presentation of their experiences through storytelling.

In the present chapter, it is my intention to show that *Sexing the Cherry* not only revisits an equally significant historical period, seventeenth-century England, but also, and perhaps more importantly, that the text puts this revision of the past in a surprising dialogue with a second historical moment which is either associated with twentieth-century England or gloomily portrayed as a distopian "ever after" in the two different editions of the text published so far.

In an otherwise fairly accurate review of *Sexing the Cherry*, the British writer Rose Tremain regrets "the novel's failure to use history in a way that illuminates the present" (1989: 29). She further argues that:

> The traumatising events of the mid-17th century —the execution of Charles I, the public hanging of the regicides, the plague and the Great Fire— are dutifully recorded, and we get a sniff at the filthy waters of the Thames, but this is all. There seems to be no attempt to inhabit the age, either in image or in language, so that in the end the choice of century seems arbitrary. (29)

In my opinion Tremain's criticism results from the excessive importance that she confers on the historical in *Sexing the Cherry*. Her arguments rest on a mimetic approach which is clearly inappropriate for a book whose central aim is precisely to

expose the constructedness of any narrative representation of reality. As the first epigraph of the novel suggests, *Sexing the Cherry* refuses to maintain any form of cultural fragmentation of time and, by extension, of history, derived from the Protean divisions of past, present, and future, and instead furnishes the reader with a sustained present moment, a temporal continuum which joins rather than separates, thus suggesting one possible way of transcending the postmodern chaotic experience of the self as fragmented. Tremain is unaware of the emphasis that *Sexing the Cherry* lays on transcendence by representing history, time, and self not as the summing up of fragments but as a systematic whole[1], as Jordan suggests in a sentence which condenses what, in my view of the text, is its central idea: "There will be a moment (though of course it won't be a moment) when we will know (*though knowing will no longer be separate from being*) that we are a part of all we have met and that all we have met was already a part of us" (*SC* 90; italics added).

Even if we accept Tremain's hypothesis that the choice of the seventeenth century as setting of part of the action in *Sexing the Cherry* might be arbitrary, this should by no means be considered a shortcoming, as Tremain's statement implies. Given the novel's ideological stance, such an "arbitrariness" in the choice of historical setting would be a way to expose the no less arbitrary division of time and history into clear-cut periods, on which the patriarchal understanding of the "real" inevitably depends, and to engage the reader in a process of defamiliarisation. As Jordan says: "Thinking about time is like turning the globe round and round, recognizing that all journeys exist simultaneously, that to be in one place is not to deny the existence of another, even though that other place cannot be felt or seen, our usual criteria for belief" (*SC* 89).

I understand, nevertheless, that the choice of the seventeenth century is far from arbitrary and thereby I strongly disagree with Tremain's affirmation[2]. In the following pages, I dive into the political, religious, philosophical, and scientific

1 Echoes of the great modernist poet T. S. Eliot are clearly perceived in this formulation. I argue in this chapter that Eliot's poetry and literary theory have a still greater influence on *Sexing the Cherry* than they have been shown to have on *The Passion*.

2 The American critic Greg Clingham has also used Tremain's words to argue, as I do, that "Winterson's choice of the origins of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth-century [is] clearly strategic and not, as Tremain suggests, arbitrary" (1998: 63). Although Clingham's analysis and my own coincide in reading Winterson's retelling of the past as a means of insisting on "an always already engaged nexus of textuality and historical truth" (1998: 66), the American critic devotes the greatest part of his article to demonstrate that the textuality of history was already operative in some seventeenth-century works, which he selects as analogues for Winterson's book, namely Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion in England* and the trope of translation in the Restoration as represented by John Dryden. Although from a totally different standpoint, Susana Onega (1999) has also studied the importance of *Sexing the Cherry* as a subversive rewriting of one of the most repressive periods in English history, the Puritan Commonwealth.

features which make of seventeenth-century England a particularly suitable period for the setting of roughly the first three quarters of the action of *Sexing the Cherry*. To do so, I intend to deal with some of the basic constitutive elements of the period, paying special attention to those which receive a specific treatment or have a prominent place in the novel. However, since the narrative in the last quarter of the book leaps over to the twentieth century, I also refer briefly to its most significant cultural transformations, paying special attention to Einsteinian physics and postmodernism.

Roughly speaking, the first three quarters of the primary fabula (Bal 1985) of *Sexing the Cherry* expand from some time around 1630 —the year in which the Dog-Woman seems to have found Jordan "in the slime of the river" (*SC* 10)— to a precise date which marks the outbreak of the Great Fire of London. Travelling back in time to this significant epoch, "the worst period of religious fanaticism and patriarchal totalitarianism in British history" (Onega 1999: 443), *Sexing the Cherry* critically revisits "the false ideology […] of the Puritan Commonwealth" (443). Also, and perhaps more interestingly, *Sexing the Cherry* revises certain scientific and philosophical ideas which were then, and are still now, key issues under consideration because of their unsettling and destabilising potential.

Part of a dense period which the contemporary historian Stevie Davies has labelled "a century of troubles" (2001), the years 1630 to 1666 correspond in socio-political terms to the first years of Charles I's kingdom, the outbreak of the Civil War, the beheading of the King, the abolition of Monarchy and the House of Lords, the proclamation of Cromwell's Republic, and, eventually, the restoration of Monarchy in the person of Charles II with its two cataclysmic events: the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. Incomplete as it is, this quick revision of the basic stages that precede the so-called "Glorious Revolution" is significant for two main reasons: firstly, because it contributes to enhancing the circular movement of history —a kind of movement which is both repeated and overcome in the structure of *Sexing the Cherry*; and secondly, because it pinpoints the socio-political parallelisms that exist between this moment of revolution and the historical setting of *The Passion*, establishing thus an overt connection between the two novels.

However, to provide a full account of the socio-historical background of *Sexing the Cherry*, a crucial element in the contextualisation of both the situation of the period and the ideological stance of the narrative text should be taken into consideration: religion. In seventeenth-century England, political and religious affairs were difficult, if not impossible, to tell apart. As Davies has remarked,

"religion and politics were twin trees twisted round one another from one cloven root" (2001: 8). It is precisely this close relationship between politics and religion that distinguishes the English revolution from, say, the German or the French:

> Inglaterra tuvo en el siglo XVII la fortuna de ver reinar juntamente el espíritu de fe religiosa y de libertad política, y por esa razón pudo simultáneamente considerar las dos revoluciones. Así pudieron desplegarse, sin romper todas sus trabas, todas las grandes pasiones de la naturaleza humana, y así aquellos hombres pudieron conservar sus esperanzas y sus ambiciones de lo eterno, cuando sus esperanzas y sus ambiciones terrenales quedaron desvanecidas. (Guizot 1985: 320)

Charles I accedes peacefully to the throne in 1625. Although the reign of James I had seen "the growth of political stability in England, a lessening of religious passions, domestic peace and the continuing respect of the international community" (Morrill 1984: 307), in 1630 the situation is completely different — although neither Jordan nor the Dog-Woman show any kind of awareness in this respect, for as the latter confesses "at first the Civil War hardly touched us" (*SC* 63). Charles I intends to install in England the type of monarchy that would flourish in France roughly three decades later: Absolutism[3]. With this aim in mind and after several confrontations, Charles I dissolved Parliament in 1629 and ruled on his own thereafter, guided exclusively by what he deemed to be "right". Simultaneously he sponsored the Puritans, "a new minority group within the Church, whose beliefs and practices sharply diverged from the developing practice and teachings of the Anglican mainstream" (Morrill 1984: 310).

England was at war with Spain and France. As a means of financing these armed conflicts, taxes (both legal and illegal) increased to the point of becoming socially oppressive. John Morrill ironically writes that "by 1637 Charles was at the height of his power. He had a balanced budget, effective social and economic policies, an efficient council, and a secure title" (1984: 310). However, a subversively political, religious, and social discontent steadily rose among his subjects and, only five years later, Civil War broke out. It is not the purpose of this work to inquire into the complex causes that determined the war since both Morrill (1984) and Davies (2001), as well as many other contemporary historians, have provided equally detailed analyses of the circumstances which hailed this conflict. I will simply foreground the historical fact which is of the utmost significance for my

[3] A form of government that blurs all distinctions between politics and religion by assuming that the power of the King directly derives from the authority of God, Absolutism is contrary to any form of democracy and inevitably leads to all kinds of abuse. Charles I did not resist this temptation. Davies notes that, rather on the contrary, "Charles adopted an elaborate protocol modelled on glimpses of the absolutist courts of Catholic Europe, but he went further. Alone among European kings, he required his retainers to serve his meals on their knees" (2001: 48).

reading of Winterson's choice of these particular decades as part of the temporal setting of her novel: the two contending sides in the conflict —Cavaliers versus Roundheads— were fuelled not only by strictly political adhesion —partisans of Charles I versus supporters of Parliament— but also by religious creed —Anglicans versus Puritans. Morrill summarises the situation as follows:

> There was an Anglican party before there was a royalist party, and those who rushed to join the king in 1642 were those clearly motivated by religion. On the other side, those who mobilized for Parliament were those dedicated to the overthrow of the existing Church and to the creation of a new evangelical church which gave greater priority to preaching God's words, greater priority to imposing moral and social discipline. It was a vision reinforced by the return of exiles from New England who told of the achievements of the godly in the Wilderness. Like the Israelites of the Old Testament led out of bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land, so God's new chosen people, the English, were to be led out of bondage into a Promised Land, a Brave New World. (1984: 316)

Morrill's straightforward reference to a "Promised Land"[4] brings to the reader's mind those religious images used to describe the outbreak of the French Revolution and the charismatic figure of Napoleon Bonaparte by the priest in charge of Henri's education in *The Passion*. Indeed, world-wide, historians agree in positing that the English revolutions of the seventeenth century acted as models for the revolt of the American colonies and of the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. A clear example of this position is provided by the eighteenth-century historian François Guizot, who always felt a special attraction towards the history of England. In the introduction to the Spanish translation of Guizot's *Historia de la revolución de Inglaterra*, Diego Fernández Mardón notes how Guizot

> en varias ocasiones se manifestó como un ferviente admirador de este país, primera potencia colonial y mundial del siglo XIX, en que el autor vivió. Dentro de este campo, sin embargo, manifestó siempre un interés especial por la revolución inglesa, que acabó con el despótico reinado de Carlos I e impuso en el país una monarquía parlamentaria. Esto no se logró en Francia hasta finales del siglo XVIII, con lo que, una vez más, Inglaterra se había adelantado a las demás naciones europeas. (1985: 6)

Considering *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* as two complementary parts of a common ideological and literary project, this *Historia de la revolución de Inglaterra* (1985) is especially pertinent because it brings to the fore the dialogic relationship that may be established between the two historical periods chosen by Winterson as settings of her two novels. On the one hand, its author, François Guizot, a French historian, is, so to speak, a contemporary of Henri's, the character in *The Passion*

4 Morrill's use of this image is also particularly to the point in my analysis of *Sexing the Cherry* because it highlights the important link that exists between, on the one hand, the historical period chosen as setting of this novel and the Biblical "Book of Exodus" and, on the other, between Jordan and Moses, the leader of the children of Israel.

who is in closer association with the world of history, not only because he is a soldier of the ranks and files of Napoleon's army but above all because of his conscious and various attempts at representing them first in his diary and later in his memoirs. Their "contemporariness" prevents both Henri and Guizot from being direct witnesses of the French Revolution but they share in the general disappointment that followed the Napoleonic era. On the other hand, François Guizot may be linked with the Dog-Woman insofar as both flesh-and-blood historian and fictional chronicler select and lay special attention to roughly the same historical events, starting with the assumption to the throne of Charles I and signalling his violent death in 1649 as a central moment in their narratives. What is more, as may be inferred from the concluding remarks in his *Historia de la revolución de Inglaterra*, Guizot seems to be both a conservative and a royalist, which means that he shares the same political allegiances with the Dog-Woman:

> Si se fija la atención en el destino de las naciones, o en el de los grandes hombres, si se trata de una monarquía o de una república, de una sociedad aristocrática o de una democracia, siempre se verá brillar una misma luz en todos sus hechos: siempre se verá que el resultado definitivo es consecuencia de unos mismos principios y no se obtiene sino marchando por un mismo camino. El espíritu revolucionario es tan fatal a los hombres que ensalza como a los que derriba. La política que conserva los Estados es la única que da feliz término a las revoluciones, y garantías de seguridad a sus resultados. (1985: 386-387)

Sexing the Cherry is located in the years preceding and leading up to the Civil War, which ends with the defeat of the King's troops and his forged trial and sentence to death, the abolition of Monarchy by Parliament and the proclamation of the Republic of England, Ireland, and Scotland in 1649. An extremely important date in the history of England[5], this year and its central event —the beheading of Charles I— function as a formal and thematic hinge in the novel. The Dog-Woman explicitly refers to the uncertainty felt at this historical moment by a great number of her contemporaries, especially the Anglicans, when she anticipates that "the death of the King has put an end to the future as a place we already know. Now the future is wild and waits for us as a beast in a lair" (*SC* 83). Like Bonaparte, who at the beginning was generally acclaimed as the saviour of the nation but soon began to adopt the very same despotic manners the French Revolution and himself had worked to destroy, Oliver Cromwell becomes the "beast" symbolically alluded to by the Dog-Woman. The Anglicans, who had shown a great hostility to the Puritan regime, are soon dominated and forced to silence and clandestine meetings, like the one the Dog-Woman admits to having attended when she says that: "We agreed to meet at

[5] Davies has commented, in this respect, that "the execution of Charles I as a tyrant, shocking to most citizens of all persuasions, was the turning point of English history" (2001: 7).

the full and new moons to encourage one another, as the disciples of old" (*SC* 84). In line with the outlook of the period, politics and religion are thus explicitly connected in the Dog-Woman's discourse. She establishes a parallelism between the kind of persecution the Anglicans suffered in her present days and the hostile and dangerous environment that the first Christians had to endure in Roman times. In doing this, the Dog-Woman uses religious history as a means to authorise her individual discourse.

If the "republican" government had been quite severe from its very origins —theatres had been closed down and all kinds of merriment prohibited—, a true military dictatorship begins from 1653 onwards, as Cromwell takes the title of "Lord Protector" and becomes Head of the State. Unlike Napoleon, who crowns himself Emperor of France, Cromwell refuses coronation. Nevertheless, his refusal is merely an external gesture because his actions progressively mimic those previously undertaken by the beheaded King: Cromwell concentrates political and religious power in his hands; he dissolves a Parliament he does not consider to be submissive enough; he erects himself as an acrimonious persecutor of his opponents; and he designates his son Richard as his eventual successor in the government of the nation. All this leads the English to realise that their revolution has been to no avail. Disappointed with the "republican" experiment, Monarchy is restored in the person of Charles II in 1660, eighteen months after Cromwell's death.

The restoration of the Stuart dynasty reduces the power of Parliament in favour of the Crown. Charles II takes over power harmoniously and brings with him political conciliation and compromise. He cannot, however, control superstition or religious fears, being himself half a Catholic. A growing anti-Catholicism spreads furiously and causes the execution of many innocent Catholics who are accused of conspiracy. The Great Plague and the Great Fire of London reinforce popular hysteria and many see these two catastrophes as God's retaliation upon their sins. Davies has remarked that:

> The fratricidal hostility simmering just beneath the surface of English social life, even in the relative political calm of the Restoration, was everywhere incipient. The experiences of plot, plague and fire bled their implications into one another, so that the seditious "overturning" of the Civil Wars was understood in terms of the sickness of the body politic, and mobs were understood both literally and metaphorically to be carriers of plague. Plague might be God's punishment for plots, as might fires, ignited by plotters wishing to overturn the framework of society. (2001: 135)

A woman of her time and a committed citizen, the Dog-Woman, who has significantly been silent about Cromwell's Protectorate, considers the plague to be "God's judgement on the murder of the King" (*SC* 138) and, once the plague is over, she foresees the Great Fire of London when she tells Jordan that "God's revenge is

still upon us […]. We are corrupt and our city is corrupted. There is no whole or beautiful thing left…" (*SC* 141). The degree of general superstition reaches its peak as the numinous year 1666 approaches:

> Dr Simon Thurley, Director of the Museum of London, points out, "For the previous ten or fifteen years, people had been worried about what might happen in 1666. It was regarded as the most dangerous year because 666 is the mark of the beast in the Book of Revelation in the Bible." The year was expected to bring forth wonders or horrors. (Davies 2001: 143)

Indeed it is precisely in 1666 that the city of London is literally consumed by the apocalyptic Great Fire and, although historical accounts reflect the general rumour that Catholics had been involved in what was understood as an act of sabotage, the Dog-Woman presents herself as the executory hand of the wrath of God, when she suggests that:

> I had been drinking with my friends the bakers all night, or, rather, they had been drinking and it was fortunate for them that I was able to pull their bodies to a safe place. I did not start the fire —how could I, having resolved to lead a blameless life?— but I did not stop it. Indeed the act of pouring a vat of oil on to the flames may well have been said to encourage it. But it was a sign, a sign that our great sin would finally be burned away. I could not have hindered the work of God. (*SC* 143)

The Dog-Woman believes in the purifying potential of fire, which she regards as the only means to do away with the illnesses of the human body and of the city of London, both of them spatial metaphors for social and political corruption. Her development as a special "heroine" in *Sexing the Cherry* highlights the fact that in religious and political terms the years expanding from 1630 to 1666 are a highly subversive period, a period markedly self-conscious, critical of traditions, and eager for innovation and reform. But it is also an extremely disappointing period, full of frustration and devoid of firm convictions or certitudes. These characteristics would explain, in my opinion, the fact that the English Revolution suits Winterson's unsettling stance so well.

At this particular moment of scepticism, a French philosopher, Réné Descartes, consecrates his life to the construction of a philosophical method, founded on what he calls "*doute méthodique*", which in itself permits the search for truth by questioning everything that, not being evident, has been given and accepted as true knowledge. Descartes publishes his well-known *Discours de la méthode* in 1637, not as an independent work but as a prologue to his more scientific treatises *Dioptrique*, *Météors*, and *Géometrie*. It is interesting to note that the latter has for Descartes a therapeutic value insofar as it is meant to cure the illnesses of the human mind, that is to say, of the spirit. Descartes conceives his geometry, then, as a "spiritual exercise" which "can overcome the sickedness and delusion inculcated by

institutions, traditions, and everyday commerce" (in Jones 2001: 42) and which is, therefore, indispensable if the human mind and, by extension, the individual subject, is to be considered the source of knowledge and truth.

Despite its asystematic, autobiographical, and fabled[6] nature, *Discours de la Méthode* constitutes the starting point of a new philosophy which was to be inaugurated in seventeenth-century Europe and which contributed to a great extent to the development of modern scientific thought[7]. Insofar as it recognises the primacy of reason over experience and places the subject as the basis of all thought, Cartesian philosophy respectively marks the birth of rationalism and of idealism[8]. At the core of Cartesian philosophy lies the *cogito ergo sum*, an immediate intuition that places the unitary "male"[9] thinking subject as the bedrock of existence.

From this first proposition emanates the second principle of Cartesian philosophy, which is also of special relevance in the analysis of *Sexing the Cherry*, and which is no other than the radical separation of the spiritual world from the material world, of reason from experience, and the favouring of the former to the detriment of the latter:

> Puis, examinant avec attention ce que j'étais, et voyant que je pouvais feindre que je n'avais aucun corps, et qu'il n'y avait aucun monde, ni aucun lieu où je fusse; mais que je ne pouvais pas feindre pour cela que je n'étais point; et qu'au contraire de cela même que je pensais à douter de la vérité des autres choses, il suivait très évidemment et très certainement que j'étais; au lieu que si j'eusse seulement cessé de penser, encore que tout le reste de ce que j'avais imaginé eût été vrai, je n'avais aucune raison de croire que j'eusse été: je connus de là que j'étais une substance dont toute l'essence ou la nature n'est que de penser, et qui, pour être, n'a besoin d'aucun lieu, ni ne dépend d'aucune chose matérielle. En sorte que ce moi, c'est à dire l'âme pour laquelle je suis ce que je suis, est entièrement distincte du corps, et même qu'elle est plus aisée à connaître que lui, et qu'encore qu'il ne fût point, elle ne laisserait pas d'être tout ce qu'elle est. (Descartes 1963: 603-604)

Cartesian philosophy considers knowledge, reason, memory, and the imagination to be the superior faculties of the spirit; the material body is imperfect and necessarily subject to scientific study. *Sexing the Cherry* textualises the

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6 Descartes insists that "mon dessein n'est pas d'enseigner ici la *méthode* que chacun doit suivre pour bien conduire sa raison, mais seulement de faire voir en quelle sorte *j'ai tâché de conduire la mienne* […] ne proposant cet écrit que comme une histoire, ou, si vous l'aimez mieux, que *comme une fable*" (1963: 571; italics added).

7 The philosopher John Cottingham begins his short study on Cartesian philosophy by calling attention precisely to the fact that "the name of René Descartes is synonymous with the birth of the modern age. The 'new' philosophers, as he and his followers were called in the seventeenth century, inaugurated a fundamental shift in scientific thinking, the effects of which are still with us today" (1999: 3).

8 The parallelism between Descartes's and Kant's belief in the superiority of the mind and the need to create a philosophical method based upon the refusal to take anything for granted should be noted here.

9 Self/subject (male) as opposed to other/object (female).

Cartesian split mind/body in the persons of the earth-bound, physically huge, Dog-Woman, and her son Jordan, the philosopher who, like Descartes, engages in a "spiritual" quest that confirms the power of the mind to question givens and offer pure knowledge. Jordan's is the story of his pursuit of Fortunata, a woman who belongs to the realm of the mind, defies gravity, and proves to be a spiritual guide to the self in search of self-knowledge. As Jordan says, "I stayed with Fortunata for one month, learning more about her ways and something about my own" (*SC* 99). If the object of Descartes's quest is a form of superior philosophy modelled on pure mathematics, Jordan separates from his solid, corporeal mother, leaves his "body where it is, in conversation or at dinner" (*SC* 17), in order to discover his hidden life, his spiritual other, which paradoxically "materialises" in the "person" of Fortunata, the dancer who triggers Jordan's quest. In the course of his journey of the imagination, Jordan asks himself: "Was I searching for a dancer whose name I did not know or was I searching for the dancing part of myself?" (*SC* 40). Only by the end of his quest does he realise that the answer is not an either/or, but rather a both/and, because he is searching for the dancing part of himself that is a complement to the body he has left behind. Jordan engages in a spiritual quest whose object is metaphorically and metonymically represented by Fortunata. The description of Fortunata as a superior teacher occupies the physical centre of the book, where it can be read that Fortunata has the power to spin her pupils "*until all features are blurred, until the human being most resembles a freed spirit from a darkened jar*" (*SC* 72; italics in the original). In other words, Fortunata can exercise sufficient control of the body so as to free the spirit, a much more ethereal, light, unobservable part of the individual, but at the same time the point of connection between human beings and the divinity.

With his mathematical formulations, Descartes also contributed to the scientific discoveries that took place in the seventeenth century and to the revolution they brought about, especially in the field of physics. Galileo, Kepler, and Newton greatly contributed to the establishment of the physical laws that regulate the movement of material bodies in space. Galileo pioneered the use of the empirical method that he substituted for an abstract, purely rational, and, on occasion, mystical[10] procedure which does not take experiential evidence into account. He

10 Science and religion in the seventeenth century still have a close, although difficult, relationship. As Christopher Pressler observes,

> Galileo and Newton are frequently carried like heroes in the Holy War of science against religion. It is easy, and tempting to simply consider early scientific history in these terms; of science pulling away from superstition. But it must be conceded that most of the great scientific discoverers and innovators of this period were deeply religious men, and their discoveries only

observed that the movement of matter in space is infinite, with a constant speed and a linear trajectory, thus formulating the principle of inertia. Kepler provided three laws that described the movement of the planets not as circular but as elliptical. Newton brought together Galileo's principle of inertia and Kepler's laws of the movement of the planets and elaborated the theory of universal gravitation, a theoretical frame which has served physical research until the formulation of the theory of relativity by Albert Einstein in the first half of the twentieth century.

Finally, it is interesting to point out that history, religion, and science come together in 1649, a year which not only signals the beheading of King Charles I and the subjection of Anglicanism, but also marks the beginning of Jordan's sea voyages and the Dog-Woman's entrance into social life. Besides, it is precisely in the year 1649 that Descartes died[11] after having completed his last œuvre, *Traité des passions humaines*, an essay on morality which centres on questions deriving from the union of spirit and body and which finds an echo in the role that Fortunata plays in *Sexing the Cherry*. The year 1649 is, therefore, the date in which time seems to reach the point of stillness, to become forever present.

In the last quarter of the novel the action is situated in the year 1990, that is to say, the final decade of the twentieth century. This ellipsis of more than three hundred years calls the reader's attention to the fact that nothing has changed much, an issue which is emphasised further by the fact that this new time period is inhabited by two characters, Nicolas Jordan and a female ecologist, who are mirror images of the seventeenth-century characters whose company the reader has enjoyed so far. As Lewis Buzbee has pointed out, "Winterson has aptly chosen this period in British history [the seventeenth century]. A time of great pollution and plagues, when the governors where narrow-minded, joyless and corrupt, it stands as a mirror for our own world" (1990: 9). Some other reviewers[12] also insist on the presentness of the final part of *Sexing the Cherry* and on the idea that the emphasis on the

> served to replenish people's wonder at a God who could create such a variety of animate and inanimate things. (2000: 52)

In *Sexing the Cherry* the discourse of the Dog-Woman reflects this mixture of religion, superstition and esoterism, which situate her as a representative figure of the common people for whom old traditions are still in vigour. Jordan's discourse is much more in accordance with the latest scientific developments and with the new philosophical order of the world.

11 Descartes had been residing in the Netherlands since 1629 and, for a period of twenty years, he had led a retired and isolated life exclusively dedicated to the construction of his philosophico-scientific system. Feeling his tranquillity menaced in Holland, Descartes moved to Sweden in 1649 but the roughness of Nordic weather soon affected his already frail health and he died of pneumonia only four months later. "His last words, encapsulating the mind-body dualism which he had so long maintained, were 'Now my soul, 'tis time to depart'" (Cottingham 1999: 17).

12 See Dirda 1990, Innes 1990a and 1990b, Rifkind 1990, Tremain 1989, or Urquhart 1990, among others.

similarities between the two "historical" periods exposes the damaging effects of so-called scientific and technological progress as well as the failure of Western civilisation to make a better place of this world. *Sexing the Cherry* was published in the second half of the year 1989, simultaneously in Britain and in the United States by, respectively, Bloomsbury (1989a) and Grove Press (1989b). This fact makes the final part of Winterson's book roughly contemporary with the reader's present as a form of social, political, and religious criticism.

Theorising on the postmodern experience of time, Ursula K. Heise emphasises "the overwhelming importance of the present in the contemporary time sense" where "the concept of the 'future' has been replaced in the second half of the twentieth century by that of an 'extended present'" (1997: 29). Like the first two 1989 editions of the novel mentioned so far, the second edition of *Sexing the Cherry* that Winterson publishes in Vintage in 1990 shows that the author shares in this contemporary time sense by laying a special emphasis on the present. However, although the 1990 Vintage edition could have done away with the slightest distance between the reader's present and the final part of *Sexing the Cherry*, this equation never occurs. The title of this section is self-consciously modified and substituted by the phrase "Some Years Later" (*SC* 111), which situates the reader in an indefinite time which may be described as what Heise calls an "extended present" and shows that Winterson is not content with denouncing present-day corruption and pollution but also forecasts an apocalyptic, distopian social landscape if the human being is deprived of the power of the imagination and its liberating and didactic potential, as experienced by Jordan. Changing the original title "1990" to "Some Years Later", Winterson succeeds in representing history in *Sexing the Cherry* as a juxtaposition of present moments and also makes her book transcend the temporal contingency to which it would have been subject if a title like "1990" had been maintained, bearing in mind that to the 1989 reader, "1990" would mean a near future, whereas, to the 1990 reader, it would account for the present, and, to the 2002 reader, a section dated "1990" would be as much a part of the past as the section dated "1649".

Also significant is the fact that Winterson substitutes a precise historical date with a temporally ambiguous phrase like "Some Years Later", which turns its back on history and stands more on the side of the fairy tale. Thus the parallelism established between the two sections titled "1649" and "1990" in the first editions of *Sexing the Cherry* is replaced by a similar parallelism between the first and the last sections of the book "The Story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses" and "Some

Years Later". This change enhances the spiralling structure of the text and insists on the mastery of the imagination and mythical time over historical and referential time.

On the other hand, the fact that *Sexing the Cherry* not only describes the past but also produces a distopian landscape of an "extended present" aligns Winterson's text with modernism and more precisely with the poetry of T. S. Eliot and with his critical essays, where he elaborates on his convictions about human nature and his continuous meditations on history and the decay of Western civilisation. Later in this chapter I analyse Eliot's influence on the form and the ideology of *Sexing the Cherry* as anecdotally acknowledged by Winterson in her essay "The Semiotics of Sex", in *Art Objects*:

> 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. (*AO* 118)

For the time being, suffice it to say that Eliot's poetry and Winterson's fiction share an equally apocalyptic tone with regard to the progress of humanity and of history, which is emphasised in *Sexing the Cherry* by the modification carried out in the Vintage edition and which makes the story move from a repressive historical past to a distopian "ever after". *Sexing the Cherry* also textualises the dialectics of modernism as theorised by Eliot in his famous critical essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). There Eliot theorises about the presence of the past, what he names as "the historical sense", describing it in the following terms:

> The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (1950: 4)

Sexing the Cherry not only textualises the simultaneity of the historical and the mythical but also rewrites Eliot's historical sense when it makes characters of different time periods coexist by transplanting Jordan and the Dog-Woman as part of the discourse of the year 1990, on the one hand, and, on the other, making Nicolas Jordan and the female ecologist travel in body and/or mind back in time to the year 1649. This transgression of temporal and fictional boundaries contributes to blurring any explicit rendering of chronotopic areas in *Sexing the Cherry*, highlights the arbitrariness of traditional divisions of time, and drags the identity of characters and readers alike across an abyss of spinning temporal black holes among which characters are able to move freely, subverting Bakhtin's belief that "although it was the privilege of author and reader to move between the different chronotopes, the

characters themselves could not" (in Pearce 1994: 176). Time in *Sexing the Cherry* moves from the historical past of seventeenth-century Britain to a distopian "ever after". This movement is not, however, linear or chronological; instead it echoes the mythical pattern used by Eliot in *Four Quartets*, that is to say, "the sequence moves forward through repetition, recapitulation, circling, echoing, and other versions of looping back" (Brooker 1994: 16).

In *Sexing the Cherry* the notion of time as a valid category of representation is then deliberately sabotaged by means of the emphasis that the text lays on the present. This stance is possible thanks to the revolution in physics and philosophy caused by Einsteins's theories, their impact on the modernists and on the philosophy of history, and the appropriation of the concepts of time and history in postmodernism.

Although Winterson has acknowledged that *Sexing the Cherry* is a rewriting of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, no allusion has been made to the fact that *Sexing the Cherry* is also a literary homage to one of the greatest scientific geniuses of all times, Albert Einstein. Einstein was the first modern scientist to examine physics from the point of view of philosophy. The astrophysicist William J. Kaufmann III explains that Einstein "approached physical reality with the deep personal conviction that the way in which we understand the workings of the universe should be completely independent of the position and state of motion of the observer" (1980: 69). This approach implied the rejection of the phenomenon of gravity as understood by Sir Isaac Newton, that is to say, in terms of the notion that "the gravitational force between two objects depends solely on their masses and the distance between them" (Kaufmann 1980: 72). Einstein's philosophical approach to science resulted in the formulation of the theory of relativity, which "teaches us to think of matter and energy as different aspects of each other, according to the famous equation $E = mc^2$" (Kaufmann 1980: 69). The theory of relativity describes the way in which gravity works:

> unlike the old-fashioned ideas of Newton, we never speak of gravity as a "force". Instead, the gravitational field around an object is manifested by curving the fabric of space and time. Far out in space, far away from any sources of gravity, space and time are perfectly flat. But as you approach a massive object, such as a star or a planet, you are moving into regions of increasingly curved spacetime. The stronger the gravitational field, the more pronounced is the curvature of spacetime. (Kaufmann 1980: 72)

Matter, space, and time are interdependent in Einstein's theory of relativity. His conclusions shook the foundations of classical physics represented by the Newtonian

absolutes of time and space. Einstein demonstrated that time and space are relative, that the mass of bodies is not fixed and that matter is a form of energy.

In *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson uses the fundamentals of twentieth-century physics as a literary theme[13] in a way that revisits the enormous influence that the Einsteinian revolution had on the arts in general and on the modernists in particular[14]. Christopher Pressler describes *Sexing the Cherry* as a book whose "central premise, the force that holds [it] firmly together, is ironically that nothing solid actually exists" (2000: 22). *Sexing the Cherry* textualises Einsteinian theory of relativity in the two epigraphs that frame and "relativise" the web of stories told within its pages:

> The Hopi, an Indian tribe, have a language as sophisticated as ours, but no tenses for past, present and future. The division does not exist. What does this say about time?
>
> Matter, that thing the most solid and the well-known, which you are holding in your hands and which makes up your body, is now known to be mostly empty space. Empty space and points of light. What does this say about the reality of the world? (*SC* 8)

The first epigraph brings to mind the Sapir-Whorf theory of language, suggesting that any representation of time is relative and cultural- or, at least, language-specific. In other words, language creates reality. Such is the Biblical story of the creation of the world as told in Genesis I, 3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Carroll and Prickett 1998: 1). The Word of the Lord brings the world into existence. *Sexing the Cherry* attempts to restore light to a decaying world, to the human condition, and to the art of fiction. The term light is to be understood both as a noun (meaning not only luminosity, radiance but also vision), and as an adjective (meaning airy, free from gravity). To that extent, as the title manifestly shows, *Sexing the Cherry* is a creation story that permits characters to emulate God. The technique of grafting allows Jordan to create the cherry (*SC* 98) and the Dog/goD-Woman self-consciously refers to the power of words to create new worlds:

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13 In two of Winterson's later books of fiction *Written on the Body* (1992) and *Art & Lies* (1994), science occupies a pre-eminent position, although it is in *Gut Symmetries* (1997) —which opens with the birth of Paracelsus, the sixteenth-century Swiss physician— that the axioms of quantum physics have a more active role. As David Lloyd Sinkinson has pointed out:

> One of the many languages Winterson utilizes is that of the new physics to describe the relationship between the self and others. Winterson lights up a multifarious firework of scientific analogies to describe the relationships in the book. For example, Alice depicts Jove as "unstable as uranium. Stella, a living fission" (*GutS*, p. 198). (1999: 83)

14 The collection of critical essays, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1995), "with its punning title designed to cast art both as artefact and as process" (Clark 1995: 40), constitutes Winterson's homage to modernism and calls attention to the fact that the paradigmatic shift in science initiated with Einstein's theory of relativity contributed to the parallel revolution in literature and to the breaking of the old clichés to create a new language.

> When I sing the dogs sit quiet and people who pass in the night stop their jabbering and discontent and think of other times, when they were happy. And I sing of other times, when I was happy, though I know that these are figments of my mind and nowhere I have ever been. But does it matter if the place cannot be mapped as long as I can describe it? (*SC* 15)

Furthermore, through their discourses, characters bring themselves and their worlds into existence and, by acknowledging that language influences and/or modifies the world it describes, they are also capable of revising long established myths and traditions, among which the issue of gender is especially prominent.

The second epigraph insists on questioning further all sorts of experiential evidence and demystifies the solidity of the world, thus echoing Einstein's theories about matter. The literary critic Daniel Albright has pointed out that "Einstein seemed to advocate a vision of unsolid and unstable worlds, in which matter existed only in the form of temporary clots of randomly circulating energies" (1999: 11). Similarly, as David Lloyd Sinkinson has explained, "the idea that reality is not an autonomous phenomenon, but totally dependent upon the observer, acquired scientific respectability with Einstein's theory of relativity and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle" (1999: 89). The American physicist Peter Galison further argues that, in propounding the theory of relativity and its "toppling" the Newtonian absolutes and Kantian categories of perception of space and time, "Einstein's removal of these philosophical absolutes was more than a contribution to relativity; it has become a symbol of the overthrow of one philosophical epoch for another" (2000: 355). Of special significance was Einsteinian formulation of the constitution of the universe for literary modernism. In a thorough study of the relations between science and literature, tellingly titled *Quantum Poetics*, Albright observes that:

> In their earlier years, when the exhilaration of twentieth-century science was in its first bloom, the Modernists were excited by the Futurist hope that art could assimilate scientific themes, that art and science could cooperate toward some complete elucidation of mankind. (1999: 8)

However, the negation of the solidity of the world resulting from scientific development, which had been seen as a source of liberation, soon became a cause of disturbance and anxiety to the extent that "the revolt against Einstein came quickly, and soon Einstein was to become one of the great villains of literary Modernism" (Albright 1999: 9). The co-operation between art and science seemed no longer possible because the Einsteinian revolution had brought about an epistemological vacuum. In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson re-establishes the relationship between modern art and Einsteinian physics by making time a central concern in her novel just as "the crux of Einstein's argument" seemed to be the redefinition of time

(Galison 2000: 357). Besides, Einstein's reformulation of time was, in Galison's words, "a co-ordinated system of infinite spatiotemporal extent, but its infinity was without centre" (386). From this perspective, it could be said that the structure of *Sexing the Cherry* rests on the Einsteinian formulation of "distant simultaneity" and its emphasis not on the events themselves but on their relationships in and across time. This emphasis on co-ordination and relationship disrupts the very category of metaphysical centrality which makes the binary opposition self/other possible.

On the other hand, *Sexing the Cherry* insists on the absence of solidity of the everyday world in order to justify the existence of simultaneous alternative worlds which, like our experiential world, are only liable to be described by means of language. As Winterson argues in her essay "Writer, Reader, Words",

> the only way into a piece of literature is through the front door — *Open it.* Once there, if the arrangement of the rooms is unfamiliar and the fabric strange, reflect that at least it is new, and that is what you say you want. It will be too, a world apart, a place where the normal weights and measures of the day have been subtly altered to give a different emphasis and perhaps to slide back the secret panel by the heart. Check that the book is made of language, living and not inert, for a true writer will create a separate reality and her atoms and her gases are words. (*AO* 43-44; italics in the original)

The Einsteinian reformulation of time did not only have a direct influence on modernism in literature; as Peter Galison has pointed out, "it has become a symbol of the overthrow of one philosophical epoch for another" (2000: 355). In a comprehensive study on the postmodernist reformulation of time, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth establishes a telling connection between time as described by Einstein and philosophical thought when she argues that:

> The best-known twentieth-century revision of the modern view of time is Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, where time is no longer a constant but instead a function of relative motion, a dimension of events. Just as the classical object has been redefined in physics, so the phenomenological subject is no longer discrete, apart from the event, but, like time and space themselves, functions of specific events and bound by their limitations. (1992: 8)

Physics and philosophy work together in order to "subvert historical thinking and its supporting discourse of realism and empiricism" (8). The philosophical approach to history known as the New Historicism is especially relevant in this respect.

Briefly stated, the New Historicism breaks with the nineteenth-century idea of world history as described by Hegel. According to Hayden White, one of the most influential representative figures of the New Historicism, in the nineteenth century, "'History' was considered to be a specific mode of existence, 'historical consciousness' a distinctive mode of thought, and 'historical knowledge' an autonomous domain in the spectrum of the human and physical sciences" (1975: 1).

Instead, the New Historicism "encourages us to admire the sheer intricacy and unavoidability of exchanges between culture and power" (Veeser 1989: xi), emphasising the narrative basis of history, denying it any claim to objectivity, and exposing "the historical constructedness of ideas and beliefs" (Thomas 1991: xii). Although the New Historicism is a heterogeneous phenomenon, its practitioners share some key premises, which Judith Lowder Newton has summarised as follows:

> Those engaged in "new historicism" […] generally assume that there is no transhistorical or universal human essence and that human subjectivity is constructed by cultural codes which position and limit all of us in various and divided ways. They assume that there is no "objectivity", that we experience the "world" in language, and that all our representations of the world, our readings of texts and of the past, are informed by our own historical position, by the values and politics that are rooted in them. They assume, finally, that representation "makes things happen" by "shaping human consciousness" and that as forces acting in history various forms of representation ought to be read in relation to each other and in relation to non-discursive "texts" like "events". (1989: 152)

In closing the gap between history and literature, the New Historicism invokes "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (Rozett 1996: 145) and makes clear that all writing of the past, either in a historical or a fictional text, is both constructed and partial. In a collection of critical essays, significantly called *The New Historicism*, published in 1989, Jean Franco calls attention to the fact that this change in the philosophical conception of history has been widely reflected in the literary production of the 1980s in Britain, which has "witnessed a proliferation of testimonial fiction and chronicle as well as novelised histories and historical novels that seem to suggest that generic boundaries cannot easily contain the bizarre overlappings of cultures and temporalities" (1989: 211). Martha Tuck Rozett emphasises the double connection of the historical fiction produced in the last two decades of the twentieth century with the New Historicism, on the one hand, and with postmodernism, on the other. In her own words:

> a number of contemporary novelists who are exclusively or even principally known as writers of historical fiction have been similarly immersing themselves in the language, the texts, and the material culture of the past to produce some remarkable works of fiction. What they share with the new historicists —and what distinguishes their novels from traditional or classic historical fictions and allies them with postmodern fictions— are a resistance to old certainties about what happened and why; a recognition of the subjectivity, the uncertainty, the multiplicity of truths inherent in any account of past events; and a disjunctive, self-conscious narrative, frequently produced by eccentric and/or multiple narrating voices. (1996: 145-146)

Sexing the Cherry, like *The Passion*, was published in the last years of the 1980s, a decade which, as has already been argued, shows a deep concern with historical issues in almost all areas of knowledge. Ursula K. Heise has noted that "most critics agree that this renewed interest does not imply a simple return to conventionally

understood historicity, but on the contrary a questioning of traditional notions of history and historiography" (1997: 14). In the following pages I intend to show that *Sexing the Cherry* shares in this renewed interest in history as described by Heise in the above quotation. As Alison Lee explains, *Sexing the Cherry* relies on some assumptions of the New Historicism in order to:

> examine the discourse of traditional history and to see the other journeys concealed within it, not just the physical journeys of those who are often excluded from historical narrative, but also the ideological journeys of the writers of history, and the taken-for-granted assumptions which remain unquestioned. To recognise that there are always other journeys is also to recognise the heterogeneity of any historical moment. (1994: 219)

Besides, it also relies on the epistemological and ontological concerns of postmodernism in fiction, as defined by Rozett. In other words, Winterson takes to the letter what Joan W. Scott sees as "the advice of Michel Foucault to historicize the categories that the present takes to be self-evident realities" (2001: 285), and politicises history in *Sexing the Cherry* because, paraphrasing Scott's words, only through the denaturalisation of the categories upon which contemporary structures of power rest (globalisation politics, religious fundamentalism or the normalisation of heterosexuality), may those structures of power be firstly exposed and eventually destabilised (2001: 285-286).

Before engaging in the textual analysis of *Sexing the Cherry*, I deem necessary to refer succinctly to those socio-political, religious, and sexual factors which are constitutive of the society in which Winterson locates Nicolas Jordan and the female ecologist (and which still prevail in our days, as Winterson seems to suggest) in order to highlight the strong parallelisms that exist between these conditions and those of the seventeenth century. These parallelisms insist on Winterson's idea that, in spite of the much-talked-about notion of progress, the situation has not changed much in the past three hundred years; the body politic is equally corrupt and London is as filthy and decadent a city as it was in Jordan's and the Dog-Woman's times. These parallelisms also contribute to explaining the discursive echoes that may be found in the text, the problems characters have in representing identity, and the presentation of time as the fourth dimension of events.

1989, the year of publication of *Sexing the Cherry*, witnessed the accelerated process of disintegration of the political world order which had been established after the Second World War and which had maintained the potential confrontation between Communism and Capitalism in what was known as the "Cold War". One of the most significant historical events to contribute to put an end to the Cold War was undoubtedly the fall of the Berlin wall on 9 November. The demolition of the wall,

which had maintained Eastern Germany and, by extension the Eastern countries as a whole, completely separated from the Western world, was only possible thanks to the enormous social movement in favour of free speech and against the political monopoly of the Communist Party. The fact that people were progressively abandoning the country in great numbers, and the continuous demonstrations against the communist regime contributed to bringing about an important change in government by means of which Egon Krentz substituted Erich Honecker, who had been in power for the previous eighteen years. This political exchange opened the way to the important political changes that would take place in Eastern Germany and which facilitated the process of reunification of the two Germanies and the redefinition of their position within the continent. All this had profound consequences for the whole of Europe. The international press showed an alert and tactful attitude with regard to these historical events, as several examples from different European newspapers compiled in the book *Crónica del siglo XX* illustrate[15] (González Priego and Gómez Carrizo 1999: 557).

The end of the conflict between the East and the West renewed hope in a new world order to which, however, only powerful countries would have access. Simultaneously the socio-political inequalities between the First World and so-called underdeveloped countries increased by the day as economic, technological or even human resources which could have been used to fight against the extreme poverty of roughly two thirds of the world were employed instead in the construction of more and more sophisticated weapons, in the participation in some of the new conflicts especially in those involving the interests of powerful countries, and in the foolish exploitation and quick destruction of natural resources. All these changes caused a socio-cultural response in the decades of the sixties, seventies, and eighties which Susana Onega has purposefully summarised in two of her articles, namely, "'Self' and 'Other' in Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion*" (1994) and "Laberintos de pasión: las fantasías narrativas de Jeanette Winterson" (1995c). In the former she explains that:

> Jean-François Lyotard (1984) has described the cultural panorama of the seventies and eighties as the result of a generalised loss of faith in the centralized and totalizing impulse of humanist thought which is reflected in a complex change of sensibility in the Western world, traceable, as Julia Kristeva has explained (1969), to the decade of the sixties,

15 *The Independent* in Britain wrote in this respect that:

> Anoche no sólo cambió de repente el paisaje de la política europea, sino el cosmos europeo. Para la mayoría de los europeos el mundo siempre había acabado en la frontera con la RDA y el muro; al otro lado reinaban la oscuridad y los demonios. La apertura de la frontera significa que el mundo ya no tiene fronteras. Europa es de nuevo una y esférica. (in González Priego and Gómez Carrizo 1999: 557)

> characterised by the widespread demands for engagement and commitment, expressed, for example, in the students' revolt of May 1968 in France and in the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights protests, in Black and Feminist activism and in the appearance of the New Left in the U.S.A. These popular protests, as well as the increase of interest in pacifism, in anti-militarism and "green" political options are the most evident expressions of what Fredric Jameson (1984: 56) has described as a generalized reaction against the "humanist cultural dominant," or, a reaction against what Lyotard (1984) has called the "master narratives" of bourgeois liberalism, expressing the unchallenged position of the patriarchal system. (1994: 177)

In "Laberintos de pasión: las fantasías narrativas de Jeanette Winterson", Onega reads these popular protests as a basis for what some critics refer to as the postmodern revolution (1995c: 105) and uses an article that Winterson published, almost simultaneously with *Sexing the Cherry*, in the magazine *New Statesman and Society*, in order to situate Winterson as a socially and politically committed writer who "aún conserva el celo reformista y la impaciencia con la hipocresía y la mentira institucionalizadas de sus tiempos de predicadora evangelista" (1995c: 108).

In *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson exposes some of the illnesses of our civilised world through the discourse of the unnamed woman who confesses that: "The truth is I've lost patience with this hypocritical stinking world. I can't take it any more. I can't flatter, lie, cajole, or even smile very much. What is there to smile about?" (*SC* 127). Once more this fictional character voices the author's ideology, a fact which transforms her into one of Winterson's *personae*. In the 1989 article already mentioned, Winterson explains her own loss of patience with hypocrisy in the world in the following terms:

> The 1980s has been the decade of the Big Lie. For the first time, outside of fiction, lying has become an acceptable mode of discourse. Naturally, people have always lied, politicians more than most, but as far as I know it has never been accepted as an ordinary part of life. Lying used to be something reserved for matters of expediency. Now, from the most trivial to the most serious it is simply what we do. Lying has become a realistic alternative to telling the truth. (1989: 32)

To fight against this hypocritical stinking world, the unnamed woman in *Sexing the Cherry* dreams of taking revenge on the twentieth-century "Puritans" which she identifies with two of the most powerful institutions in her (and our) society: the World Bank and the Pentagon[16], that is to say, the financial and military establishments from which the destinies of humanity and the world are decided upon. Imagining herself "huge, raw, a giant" (*SC* 121), the unnamed woman voices

[16] Regrettably, on 11th September 2002, Osama Ben Laden shocked the world into dreadful awareness that these are the first two logical targets if Capitalism is to be attacked. The fantasies of Winterson's unnamed woman came true in the macabre attacks, first, against the World Trade Center, lodged by the Twin Towers in the City of New York, and, immediately after, against the Pentagon, with the terrible resulting murder of thousands of innocent people.

her fantasies about a save-the-world mission, which starts as an attack against those modern "Puritans" whose activities she describes with great sarcasm as different forms of fundamentalism:

> First Stop: The World Bank.
> I go straight to the boardroom. There's a long hardwood table surrounded by comfortable chairs. Men in suits are discussing how to deal with the problem of the Third World. They want to build dams, clear the rain forests, finance huge Coca-Cola plants and exploit their rubber potential.
> They say, "This is a private meeting." […]
> Next Stop: the Pentagon.
> I smash through the maximum security doors, past the computers, the secrets, the army of secretaries, and burst into a band of generals and lesser lights talking about defence and peace and how to eliminate the nuclear threat by ordering more weapons. (*SC* 122)

A convinced ecologist, like Winterson herself[17], the unnamed woman refuses the comfortable life that modern society offers her on condition that she remains silent and complies with the establishment, either working for the ICI or NASA or becoming a university professor and working "behind the scenes" (*SC* 125). Simultaneously, she rejects heterosexuality on the grounds that it is utterly unsatisfactory for women:

> I had sex with a man once: in out in out. A soundtrack of grunts and a big sigh at the end.
> He said, "Did you come?"
> Of course I didn't come, haven't you read Master's and Johnson.
> And then he fell asleep and his breathing was in out in out. (*SC* 127)

Nicolas Jordan also joins in the unnamed woman's denunciation of the negation of women's right to sexual pleasure prescribed by patriarchy when he comments on a conversation between his mother and father which he transcribes as follows:

> We have been talking about my career in the Navy.
> "What if there's a war?" said my mother.
> "You and I were both in the war," said my father. "We're all right."
> "It was nerve-racking," said my mother.
> "It wasn't too bad, we had good times —do you remember we danced together and then made love in the dark?"
> "Don't say that in front of Nicolas," said my mother. Then after a little pause, "It was nerve-racking."
> Did she mean the war or making love to my father? (*SC* 119)

17 In her article "Revolting Bodies", Winterson declares herself convinced of the fact that "the Green party is going to alter what we think of as politics" (1989: 33). She opposes their agenda and their style to those of the Tory government and of their leader, Margaret Thatcher, whom she blames for the cultural and social situation of Britain by perpetuating the ideology of totalitarianism and patriarchal humanism (in Onega 1995c: 108). Winterson adds that "the Greens are the manifestation of the real imaginative shift of the late twentieth century. They are what comes after the lying and the disgust. What bliss it will be to see a parliament that is not dominated by overweight ugly men in suits" (1989: 33).

Fundamentalist attacks against the principle of free speech and the normalisation of heterosexuality as denounced in *Sexing the Cherry* were two extremely fashionable issues among the British society of the year 1989 due, on the one hand, to the death threat made on 14th February 1989 by the leader of the Irani revolution, the ayatollah Jomeini, against the Anglo-Indian writer Salman Rushdie on account of the publication of *The Satanic Verses*[18] and, on the other, to "the passing of Section 28 of the Local Government Act, which aimed to ban the 'promotion of homosexuality' by any bodies funded by local authorities" (Hinds 1992: 158) in 1988[19].

With the publication of *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson overcomes these two modes of repression against the principle of free speech. She criticises religious fundamentalism through the grotesque characterisation of the Dog-Woman and her taking the teachings of the Old Testament to the letter. On the other hand, although it would be perhaps too far-fetched to affirm that Winterson promotes homosexuality in *Sexing the Cherry*, what she does for sure is to expose the normativity of heterosexuality and the refusal of patriarchy to acknowledge female pleasure as a constitutive part of sexuality and she also argues in favour of considering literature as a form of art leaving aside the author's religious beliefs or her or his sexual orientation.

18 Apart from the death threat against Salman Rushdie, the year 1989 also witnessed an even more disquieting consequence of the activities of religious fundamentalists: the murdering in November of eight people at the Centroamerican University of San Salvador. These people were accused of trying to apply the principles of the so-called theology of liberation, that is to say, helping the poor against social injustice and calling for respect of human rights.

19 The literary critic Hilary Hinds associates these two events and the social repercussion they achieved with the unanimous welcoming attitude towards the broadcasting by BBC2 of Winterson's adaptation of her book *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* into a three-episode television series, directed by Beeban Kidron. For full details of this association, see Hinds 1992.

2. NARRATIVE REPRESENTATION AND METAFICTION IN *SEXING THE CHERRY*

Sexing the Cherry recreates the two specific historical periods with which I have dealt in the preceding section and, like *The Passion*, it does so with the kind of self-conscious awareness which is characteristic of metafiction and which was extremely fashionable by the time Winterson published these two novels. Patricia Waugh resorts to fairly contemporary books of fiction, such as B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo*, Ronald Sukenick's *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories*, Donald Barthelme's *City Life*, and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, together with the proto-novel by Lawrence Sterne *Tristram Shandy*, in order to approach the literary phenomenon which, she argues, was causing "a good deal of writerly and critical confusion" in the early 1980s (1984: 7). Her analysis of the similarities to be found among the extracts she selects may be taken as one more definition of the concept of metafiction:

> a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations; an extreme self-consciousness about language, literary form and the act of writing fictions; a pervasive insecurity about the relationship of fiction to reality; a parodic, playful, excessive, or deceptively naïve style of writing. (Waugh 1984: 2)

In a no less interesting book called *Narcissistic Narrative: the Metafictional Paradox* published the same year, Linda Hutcheon remarks that the purposes behind the presentation that texts make of their self-consciousness may vary greatly since:

> A text may self-consciously present its own creative processes, perhaps as a model of man's exercise of language and meaning production. And, it may do so, as Jonathan Culler suggests in *Structuralist Poetics*, with an eye to disarming attacks on its *vraisemblance* by admitting its artificiality. However, it might also be done in order to make a specific demand upon the reader, a demand for recognition of a new code, for a more open reading that entails a parodic synthesis of back and fore-grounded elements. (1984: 25; italics in the original)

In the pages that follow, it is my intention to show that these three forms of narrative self-consciousness seem to concur and interrelate in Winterson's novel. Firstly, *Sexing the Cherry* exposes its constructedness as a literary artefact built upon the technique of repetition with a difference. Secondly, it highlights the importance that language has in the production of meaning and, consequently, in the transmission of

ideologies. And, thirdly, it revises the literary tradition in order to offer a parodic rewriting of some canonical texts.

In the introduction to F. K. Stanzel's "A New Approach to the Definition of the Narrative Situations", Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa observe that:

> Stanzel defines the essence of narrative in terms of the generic concept of "mediacy", the presence of a mediator, a narrator whose voice is audible whenever a piece of news in conveyed, whenever something is reported. Mediacy is "the generic characteristic which distinguishes narration from other forms of literary art". (1996: 161)

In both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* events are mediated by clearly intrusive presences. In the previous chapter I explained how in *The Passion* Jeanette Winterson uses two homodiegetic narrators, Henri and Villanelle. Respectively gendered male and female, they present their life stories simultaneously in time and report their experiences of places to which they do not belong but feel like strangers with the aim of providing two equally marginal and, although at the outset ideologically divergent, eventually converging world views. Through the close relationship that is established between different spaces and specific forms of temporal perception and representation, Winterson evinces the enormous importance of cultural systems in the formation of the individual, represents narrative as ideologically-laden, manages to gender chronotopes, deconstructs all forms of binarism and opens the way for an alternative feminine space which is coexistent with the masculine world.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, the narrative structure of *The Passion* is repeated to a certain extent: the story, which is set in a specific historical period, seventeenth-century London, is alternately told by two narrators, Jordan and the Dog-Woman, who are also respectively gendered male and female but who, as is shown in the next section of this chapter, have problems to conform to any established definition of gender and use the world of history and the realm of the imagination to find alternative ways of self-expression. In doing this, *Sexing the Cherry* exploits the literary specificity of the seventeenth century not only in formal terms, by resorting to the distinctive literary styles of the period, but also thematically, through a series of intertextual references to several authors and works produced at the time. In a groundbreaking theoretical work on "natural" narratology in which special attention is paid to the study of the diachronicity of narrative, Monika Fludernik explains how

> in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries two competing narrative styles can be observed to coexist, […] on the one hand, humanistically inspired prose with its views on stylistic decorum and its sophisticated syntactic balancing and, on the other, the popular genres which sprang in the sixteenth century: the rogue's story, the travelogue, the pamphlet,

> Protestant hagiography (Foxe), diaries, autobiographies, as well as vernacular and popular historiography (Hollinshed). (1996: 120-121)

According to this Austrian scholar, "it is the second of these, the popular type of writing, which eventually feeds into the development of a new genre, the novel" (120). However, it is not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that literary historians begin to speak of the novel as a well-defined literary form. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the seventeenth century provides Winterson with a sense of freedom from novelistic convention in favour of experimentation and playfulness with language and narrative which, at the time, could be found in Miguel de Cervantes's literary masterpiece, *The History of Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1606), a proto-novel which shows a concern with the power of language to create new worlds, which consciously and systematically breaks the illusion of verisimilitude, and which playfully parodies the generic conventions it feeds on. Likewise, *Sexing the Cherry* refuses to abide by the conventions associated with the novel, becoming instead a pastiche of different narrative forms which are never taken from granted but subject to perpetual revision. Winterson's text brings together high and low forms of literature such as historiography, religious pamphlets, the travelogue, romance, or the picaresque. More significantly still, *Sexing the Cherry* neatly follows the kind of structure which Fludernik associates with the adventure story, a literary genre on which "most Elizabethan and Jacobean popular literature is predicated" (1996: 124). These are the basic features which Fludernik attributes to the adventure story:

> Protagonists travel to distant countries and see magnificent sights; they roam the streets of London or the highways and have a series of encounters. The main action structure of such writings is therefore one of brisk movement from one place to the next with a series of either experiences that befall the protagonist or actions of special bravery and trickery that he performs to the detriment of other characters. (124)

Sexing the Cherry is basically presented in the form of a multiplicity of adventure stories whose protagonists are mostly women (with the exception of Jordan and his twentieth-century *alter ego*, Nicolas Jordan). This means that the book systematically questions the alleged masculine nature of this form of literature, which even Fludernik takes for granted in the above-mentioned description when she equates "protagonist" with "he". Obviously I am not saying that men are barred from the adventure story in *Sexing the Cherry*. Both Jordan and Nicolas Jordan are the protagonists of their own stories and undergo several adventures in the course of their journeys. However, as Susana Onega has pointed out, they belong to the category of "lunar males" that radical feminists prescribe as the only alternative to

male chauvinist "iron men" (1996). Indeed, as is explained later in this chapter, in *Sexing the Cherry* women are no longer the passive reward the male protagonist obtains when "his" quest comes to an end.

On the other hand, if it is true that *Sexing the Cherry* is published at the end of a decade with an increasing concern for the possibility of critically re-visiting significant historical moments in order to illuminate the present and the future in the light of the past, it is no less true that the seventeenth century endeavours to dignify not only historical deeds but also personal experiences with the patina of literature. In *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Sir A. W. Ward emphasises what he sees as a "growing interest in historical writing in the reign of James I and in the earlier years of that of Charles I" (1969: 205)[20]. According to Ward, the seventeenth-century "historian" seems to be as preoccupied with the events to be told as with the artistry with which they are to be expressed: "some few far-seeing minds had dawned the conception of historical writing which, while still furnishing a full account of the events of the past should, at the same time, interest the political thinker and satisfy the demands of literary art" (202). Precisely on this account, seventeenth-century historiography is not always separable from (auto)biography and, as a consequence, historical texts tend to blur the boundaries between the factual and the fictional, the historical and the personal, as well as between public and private affairs. Stevie Davies argues in this respect that:

> The century was outstandingly rich in personal writings, for memoirs, diaries and autobiographies were confessional forms especially important to Protestants. The diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn, the *Journals* of George Fox and the autobiography of John Bunyan (*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*) give a vivid sense of individual and group experience. Biography, such as John Aubrey's brilliant *Brief Lives*, and histories such as Gilbert Burnet's *History of my Own Time*, open vivid windows into the age, and the way it thought about itself. (2001: 10)

The voices and problems of the seventeenth-century character-narrators in *Sexing the Cherry* find an echo in the final part of the novel in the narratives of Nicolas Jordan and a female ecologist. The two twentieth-century character-narrators stumble into the time, the space, and even the body of the two seventeenth-century character-narrators, thus destroying traditional conceptions of temporality and materiality. Furthermore, in the final pages of the book all the voices and their discourses are juxtaposed. In this sense, it could be said that *Sexing the Cherry* doubles the narrative structure of *The Passion*. Besides, *Sexing the Cherry* overcomes narrative binarism by opening up the spectrum of narrators to include

[20] For a succinct overview of the relationship of history and literature from the Middle Ages to the end of the twentieth century, see Onega (1995a).

Fortunata, the Dancing Princesses, and two other authorial voices. This multiplication of voices not only universalises the text by offering alternative perspectives but also transforms its structure into a complex web of interrelated and self-echoing voices, whose complexity is further increased by the novel's refusal to conform to clearly-established chapters or given parts, as I intend to show in the following pages.

Winterson's novels are usually framed by a paratext consisting of the title, a table of contents, a dedication, and one or more epigraphs which connect the novel intertextually with other texts. Both *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Passion* are two cases in point in this respect because their tables of contents provide the reader with clues about the novels' structural organisation and about the way they interact with other texts[21]. Winterson names the chapters of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* after the first eight books of the Old Testament; in doing this, she establishes a parodically subversive, even blasphemous, connection between what she presents as two foundation stories, those of the people of Israel and that of Jeanette, the main protagonist in the novel (fig. 1). Likewise, the titles of the four chapters of *The Passion* allude, respectively, to the symbolism of two Tarot cards, like "The Emperor" and "The Queen of Spades" (which, as we have seen, represent two opposed but complementary ideological stances in the novel) and to the modernist poet T. S. Eliot and one of his most generally acclaimed poems, *Four Quartets* (fig. 2).

21 With the exception of *Written of the Body*, a novel Winterson presents in the form of a spatial continuum only fragmented by four page markers which insist on the numinous power that Winterson gives number four in her novels and which equally fragment the beloved's diseased body by means of such titles as "The Cells, Tissues, Systems and Cavities of the Body" (*WB* 113), "The Skin" (*WB* 121), "The Skeleton" (*WB* 127) and "The Special Senses" (*WB* 133), Winterson's other novels are equally framed by tables of contents which illuminate in one way or another their structure and themes. *Art & Lies* titles its eight chapters after the names of its three narrative-voices —Handel, Picasso, and Sappho. *Gut Symmetries* is overtly structured after several of the mayor and minor arcana of the Tarot cards, which are used as symbols of either characters' behaviour, time-space relations, or refer to the way in which chance and destiny condition events —"The Fool", "The Tower", "Page of Swords", "The Star", "Ten of Swords", "Page of Cups", "Death", "The Moon", "Knave of Coins", "The Lovers" and "Judgement". *The.Powerbook*, a novel which offers the reader an interactive experience, has a "Menu", instead of a table of contents, which juxtaposes the language of computers —"Open Hard Drive" (*Pb* 7), "New Document" (*Pb* 29), "Empty Trash" (*Pb* 135) or "Quit" (*Pb* 211)— with everyday and poetic language — "terrible thing to do to a flower…" (*Pb* 23), "great and ruinous lovers" (*Pb* 75) or "blame my parents" (*Pb* 131).

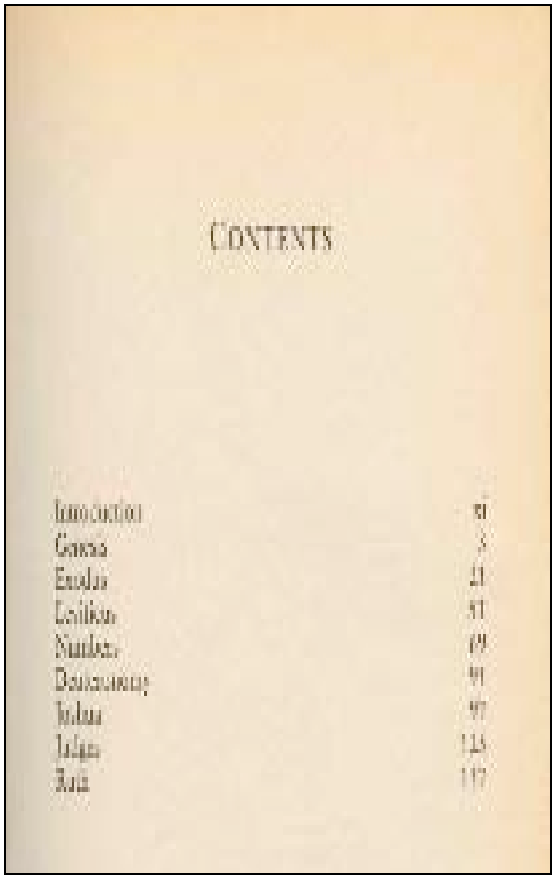

Fig. 1. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

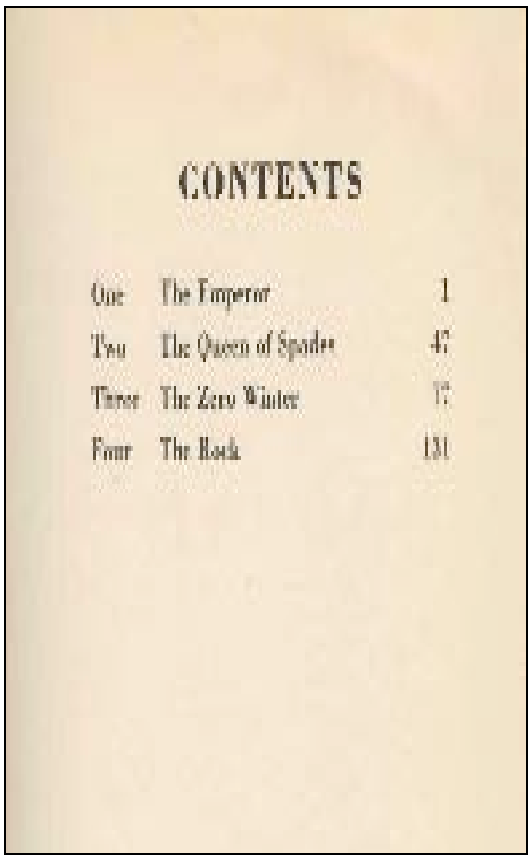

Fig. 2. *The Passion*

Although *Sexing the Cherry* is also framed by a title, a dedication, and two epigraphs, Winterson refuses to make this experimental novel comply with a more or less conventional division into chapters. *Sexing the Cherry* is presented instead as a textual continuum[22], whose unity is only broken by the intrusive presence of three internal title pages and several childlike drawings of pineapples, bananas, and princesses. As I explain later on in more detail, the latter stand iconically for the multiple voices that contribute to telling the story we read in *Sexing the Cherry*. The former, however, should be read as markers of different spatio-temporal realms which, by helping to flout any clear-cut distinction between past, present, and future, as well as any established boundary between the real historical world and the realm

[22] In this respect, *Sexing the Cherry* resembles Winterson's "comic book" (Reynolds in appendix I) *Boating for Beginners*, since both of them refuse to impose any fixed pattern. Another shared feature of both *Boating for Beginners* and *Sexing the Cherry* is the inclusion of visual drawings and typographical variations to highlight and illustrate an amalgam of discursive fragments. There is, however, an important distinguishing feature as to the structures of *Boating for Beginners* and *Sexing the Cherry*: whereas in the former an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator provides a fairly chronological account of events and organises the text (although it frequently uses internal focalisation to efface intrusiveness and to confer the narrative with a higher degree of objectivity), *Sexing the Cherry* denies the overt presence of an authoritative narrator.

of the imagination, insist on the fact that, as Jordan overtly warns the reader: "Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning, on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited" (*SC* 80).

Sexing the Cherry begins with the simultaneous self-presentation of two of its central protagonists, Jordan, a baby boy rescued from the river Thames, and the Dog-Woman, his rescuer and surrogate mother. Jordan describes their uncommon encounter in the following terms:

> I heard dogs coming towards me and a roar in the water and a face as round as the noon with hair falling on either side bobbed over me. She scooped me up, she tied me between her breasts whose nipples stood out like walnuts. She took me home and kept me there with fifty dogs and no company but her own. (*SC* 10-11)

The Dog-Woman, for her part, offers alternative but complementary information about their peculiar relationship:

> They call me the Dog-Woman and it will do. 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? A child can't be called Thames, no and not Nile either, for all his likeness to Moses. But I wanted to give him a river name, a name not bound to anything, just as the waters aren't bound to anything.[…]
>
> Jordan…
>
> I should have named him after a stagnant pond and then I could have kept him, but I named him after a river and in the flood-tide he slipped away. (*SC* 11)

Mother and son are located in seventeenth-century London, their meeting having taken place somewhere around the year 1630. Both Jordan and the Dog-Woman inhabit this moment in history and, because they belong to the lowest social stratum and occupy a marginal position in society, they are capable of providing the reader with an unofficial representation of the historical events which they witness in the course of their lives.

When Jordan is three years old, the Dog-Woman discovers quite by chance that her son has developed a no less uncommon ability by means of which he is capable of travelling in his mind without his body moving from place. Jordan's special gift allows him to transcend the boundaries of space and time and move along the realm of the imagination and fantasy, which transfers him both mentally and physically to the "the city of words" (*SC* 20). There he meets Fortunata, the woman whom he falls in love with, and her sisters, the Dancing Princesses of the fairy tale written by the Grimm brothers, *Die Zertanzene Schuhe.*

It is precisely an adapted version of the title of this fairy tale, "The Story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses" (*SC* 45), that may be read in the first internal title page. In order to avoid any trace of ambiguity, these words are accompanied by the

drawing of an open window on the wall of an indeterminate building (which in the light of the preceding phrase may be read as a castle) through which twelve figures (the twelve princesses of the title) defy the rules of gravity and ascend in flight following one another towards their secret destination (fig. 3). This internal title page brings to a halt the presentation of characters which had been flowing uninterruptedly for some thirty seven consecutive pages and prepares the reader for Jordan's meeting with the fairy-tale princesses. The function of this internal page is, then, double. On the one hand, it frames the individual stories each of the princesses tells Jordan. On the other hand, it emphasises the fact that Jordan has entered a new ontological realm, represented by the "city of words" and inhabited by women-of-words, that is to say, literary creations which do not have an independent existence in the historical world of the novel, seventeenth-century London, but which can be rewritten as a form of resistance to the conventions of patriarchal romance. The princesses' uncertain ontological nature allows Jordan to refer to Fortunata, his love object, as "a dancer who may or may not exist" (*SC* 80) and to describe her, when he tells his mother about the origin of the necklace he is wearing, as "a woman who does not exist" (*SC* 130).

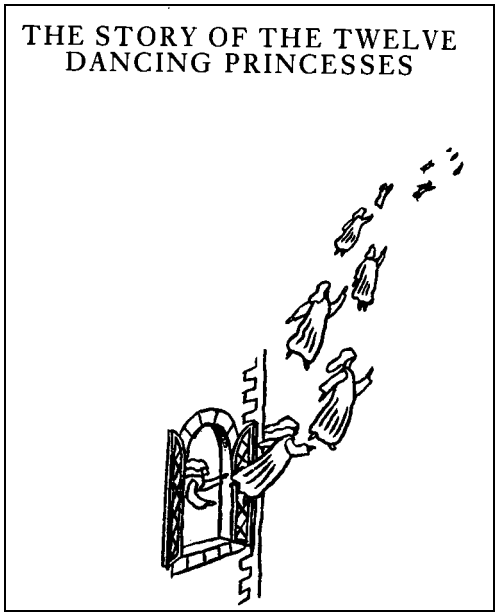

Fig. 3. First internal title page

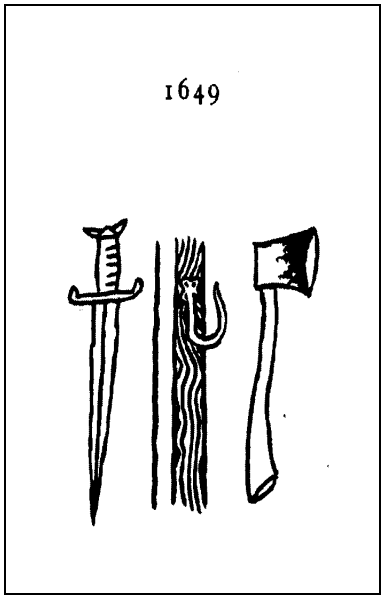

Fig. 4. Second internal title page

A title like "THE STORY OF THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES" and the accompanying scene as reproduced above constitute, thus, an overt intertextual allusion to the homonymous fairy tale popularised in the nineteenth century by the Grimm brothers as well as an intratextual reference to Jordan's declaration of

intentions at the beginning of the book. There Jordan uses the story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses as a referent for the description of his discovery that "my own life was written invisibly, was squashed between the facts, was flying without me like the Twelve Dancing Princesses who shot from their window every night and returned home every morning with torn dresses and worn-out slippers and remembered nothing" (*SC* 10). As Susana Onega has signalled:

> Echoing T. S. Eliot Jordan warns us at the beginning of the novel that, unlike traditional travel books, his recorded journeys are 'Not the ones I made, but the one's I might have made' (*Sexing the Cherry* 10). The reader's expectations thus raised, are, however, immediately undermined by the discovery that, instead of a recording of the paths imagined or dreamt by Jordan, the travel book contains, rather, overtly derivative versions of earlier literary texts. Thus, for example, although his search for Fortunata is presented as a mythical hero's quest for individuation of the self, it nevertheless takes Jordan to the well-known folk-tale world of the *Twelve Dancing Princesses*, and what is more, as Elizabeth Langland has pointed out, for all the apparent deviation of the Grimm brothers' version of the tale, Jordan's report of the Princesses' stories is not original but intertextually charged with parodic echoes of well-known Romantic poets. (1999: 444-445)

After fourteen pages of alternative literary love stories told by women and, once Jordan has discovered that the missing princess is precisely Fortunata, the dancer he is searching for, a new internal title page which sends the reader back to the world of history, as narrated by the Dog-Woman, is introduced. This time the selected title is no intertextual reference but a precise historical date, "1649" (*SC* 61). Placed below this date, three juxtaposed objects —a sword, a piece of wood, and an axe—metonymically suggest past, present, and future historical moments of destruction and chaos (fig. 4). The sword would stand iconically for the Civil War; the beheading of King Charles I would be obviously represented by the axe; and the piece of wood could be interpreted as a "proleptic" reference to the destruction of the city of London by the Great Fire of 1666. The fact that these objects are placed side by side in the drawing would represent the idea that these three historical events were read by many as causes and consequences of one another. Thus, political alliances in the years of the Civil War led to the judgement and condemnation to death of King Charles I and this in turn provoked God's wrath, which was made manifest in the plague and the Great Fire. As the British historian Stevie Davies has remarked:

> Fires were commonplace in the timbered buildings that shouldered each other for space in the prestigious, medieval centre. The tight-packed lanes, yards and alleys crammed the areas off the main streets with businesses and families, and the use of lath and plaster infilling for timber-framed buildings (known as "paper buildings") was a recognized fire hazard. […] This encroachment into the street was an open invitation to fire to leap the fire-break. Fires were expected and normal. But when the Great Fire came, it seemed like a visitation from God —or the Pope. (2001: 144)

The year 1649 is especially significant in both the history of England, since it signifies the beheading of King Charles I and a series of subsequent socio-political changes, and in the lives of Jordan and the Dog-Woman, each of which experiences a radical transformation. The Dog-Woman's narrative begins with the words "at first the Civil War hardly touched us" (*SC* 63), but later she acknowledges that it is the execution of the King that causes Jordan to take the decision of voyaging the world with John Tradescant, presumably in an attempt to escape from the brutality that rules London. As the Dog-Woman herself notes:

> The King gave the signal, and a moment later his head was wrapped in a white cloth and his body was carried away.
>
> In the Crown of Thorns that night Tradescant made plans to take ship and leave us. I saw the look on Jordan's face and my heart became a captive in a locked room. I couldn't reach him now. I knew he would go. (*SC* 71)

Having been left alone, the Dog-Woman modifies her manners as well and, from being devoted to the exclusive job of acting as a protective mother, she decides to carry out her own peculiar contribution to the social welfare, leading a campaign against Puritans. As she remembers:

> the death of the King has put an end to the future as a place we already know. Now the future is wild and waits for us as a beast in a lair.
>
> I resolved for Jordan's sake, and Tradescant's, and the memory of the King, to spit on the Puritans whenever I passed them and to wear in my hair bright braids of clashing colour whenever I had the occasion to be near one of their churches. Many of them have set upon me for my insolence, and most of those are dead. Out of charity, such as I am famed for, I left one or two to be crippled. (*SC* 83-84)

This third part of the novel ends with the Dog-Woman's words, telling about Jordan's return to his mother and his home as a hero, that is to say, as he is carrying the pineapple as an exotic gift for the newly crowned King, Charles II. However, the Dog-Woman's account is juxtaposed and relativised by Jordan's stories about his "real" voyages with Tradescant and, more importantly, about his fantastic quest in search of Fortunata and his eventually meeting her. Once more, and in spite of the fact that this part of the novel seems to be framed by an internal title page which takes the reader back to the historical world, after having been carried to the world of fantasy and the fairy tale by Jordan's narrative, the world of history and the realm of the imagination are dialogically juxtaposed in the text. As the female ecologist acknowledges almost at the end of the novel, "I don't know if other worlds exist in space or time. Perhaps this is the only one and the rest is rich imaginings. Either way it doesn't matter. *We have to protect both possibilities. They seem to be interdependent*" (*SC* 128; italics added).

Forty-eight pages later, the third and last internal title is brought to the reader's attention. Jordan is back from his journeys and the Dog-Woman feels that she has to protect him again. The new internal title page prepares the reader for an ellipsis in the time of the story, which is introduced by the conventional expression, "SOME YEARS LATER"[23] (*SC* 111), and is illustrated with a new drawing that represents a night sea scene in which a small boat with a blurred human figure on board towers over the centre of three symmetrical waves which, despite their size, do not look threatening (although they make the reader think of the harshness of any sea voyage) but rather seem to sail the boat towards a peaceful starry sky and into infinity (fig. 5). However, the reader's expectations are immediately thwarted when, as she or he turns the page, it is not Jordan's or the Dog-Woman's voices she or he finds but those of two new characters, Nicolas Jordan and a female ecologist, who inhabit a different historical present to be located somewhere in the decade of the 1990s. It is then that the reader is made aware of the emptiness of such temporal expressions as "some years later", and even "1649", which, unless properly contextualised, mean nothing *per se*.

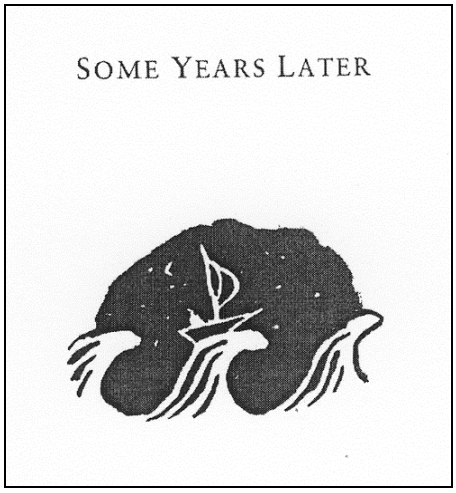

Fig. 5. Third internal title page

In the fourth and last part of the novel, temporal boundaries are flouted in all possible ways. Firstly, what is announced as a gap of some years proves to be a leap forward in time of some three centuries. Yet, Jordan and the Dog-Woman's narratives seem completely oblivious of this fact. The Dog-Woman completes her chronicle of the Plague and the Great Fire of London and tells us about the things Jordan is trying to teach her about his voyages and of her own problems to grasp

23 Or "1990" if we follow the second edition of *Sexing the Cherry* published in Vintage.

them fully. Secondly, Nicolas Jordan and the unnamed woman move across their spatio-temporal co-ordinates as each of them fuses with his or her seventeenth-century *alter ego*. It is not strange, then, that the novel comes to an end with a meditation on the nature of time, of the world we take for real, and of the power of the imagination:

> The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky. The river runs from one country to another without stopping. And even the most solid of things and the most real, the best-loved and the well-known, are only hand-shadows on the wall. Empty space and points of light. (*SC* 144)

In the analysis of the structure of *Sexing the Cherry*, these three internal title pages may be interpreted as narrative pauses and frame breaks which seem to fragment an otherwise undivided textual space into four arbitrarily separated parts, of unequal hierarchy and length. This arbitrary division of the text into parts would reflect a similar idea to the one expressed in the opening epigraph of the text, where traditional divisions of the temporal continuum into past, present, and future are exposed as cultural constructs and, therefore, as equally arbitrary: "The Hopi, an Indian tribe, have a language as sophisticated as ours, but no tenses for past, present and future. The division does not exist. What does this say about time?" (*SC* 8).

However, at the same time, and totally in keeping with the paradoxical nature of the postmodern *ethos* in which *Sexing the Cherry* can be inscribed, the function of these markers turns out to be equally paradoxical. On the one hand, they insistently call attention to the duality that exists in the novel between two different ontologies: the historical world and the world of fantasy. But, on the other hand, this opposition is simultaneously deconstructed because these markers do not actually establish clear-cut distinctions between these two realms but instead, and indistinctly, juxtapose them and call attention to their interrelations. In other words, internal title pages function relationally rather than binarily; they do not separate or exclude one alternative from the other but rather present them as coexistent and interrelated.

Drawings of pineapples, bananas, and flying princesses, like the internal title pages, further contribute to the fragmentation of the narrative continuum in *Sexing the Cherry* and to the enhancing of its artificiality. This is a fact that the British writer Rose Tremain has noted when she presents these "comical little drawings of pineapples and bananas" as breaks in the narrative (1989: 29). Winterson makes of these drawings iconic representations of the different character-narrators whose voices are heard in the course of the novel. Before analysing each of these voices and their relationships in the text in greater detail, it would be convenient to dwell

upon the symbolic meaning of these "simple" drawings to show that they are much less innocent than they appear at first sight.

Only the association of the drawing of a flying princess (fig. 6) with each of the stories told by the dancing princesses in Jordan's journeys of the mind proves conventionally straightforward. Initially framed by an internal title page (fig. 3), each of these intradiegetic stories is also punctuated by a smaller drawing which represents a princess in the process of escaping from her father's castle and flying upwards into a world of freedom where she can dance the whole night long. Winterson chooses, then, an image that symbolises women's freedom from the subjection of patriarchy in order to outline a set of parables about the disappointments of heterosexual love and conventional marriage. All the stories contribute to enhancing the same ideological tenet through repetition and slight variation and this might be the reason why no modification, however slight, is introduced in the drawing that represents each of the eleven speaking princesses. Winterson's argument here seems to be that the individualisation and differentiation of each narrative voice is not as important as the fact that Jordan can listen to these women and their actual experiences of marriage, one of the familial institutions of patriarchy *par excellence*. Actually, their stories begin where traditional fairy tales end, that is to say, immediately after the conventional ending "and they lived happily ever after", which is normally voiced by a heterodiegetic narrator which refers thus to the moment in which the hero receives the girl in marriage as a reward for his courage in the adventure he has successfully completed. Winterson gives these women the voice and the space they need to speak for themselves. As homodiegetic narrators, they tell Jordan their stories of love and loss after marriage and introduce alternative forms of sexual relationships which may be coexistent with normative heterosexuality.

Fig. 6. Icon that frames each of the princesses' stories

Apart from this repeated icon, the text is punctuated with the introduction of four additional drawings of complete and/or sliced pineapples and bananas, which stand for the four extradiegetic narrators whose discourses they systematically frame. The use of fruit as a central motif in Winterson's fiction is nothing new. Her first

novel was significantly titled *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, apparently after one of Nell Gwynn's famous expressions, which Winterson quotes in one of the epigraphs to the novel. Besides, in *Oranges*, Winterson exploits the popular use of fruit as a metaphor for sexuality: oranges symbolise compliance with the establishment and stand for heterosexuality whereas, perhaps because they popularly tend to be associated with the male penis and the phallus, bananas hint here at female homosexuality. Let us reproduce a yielding example in this respect:

> There were two women I knew who didn't have any husbands at all; they were old though, as old as my mother. They ran the paper shop and sometimes, on a Wednesday, they gave me a *banana bar* with my comic. I liked them a lot, and talked about them a lot to my mother. One day they asked me if I'd like to go to the seaside with them. I ran home, gabbled it out, and was busy emptying my money box to buy a new spade, when my mother said firmly and forever, no. I couldn't understand why not, and she wouldn't explain. She didn't even let me go back to say I couldn't. Then she cancelled my comic and told me to collect it from another shop, further away. I was sorry about that. I never got a banana bar from Grimsby's. A couple of weeks later I heard her tell Mrs White about it. She said *they dealt in unnatural passions*. I thought she meant they put chemicals in their sweets. (*O* 7; italics added)

By establishing an overt alliance between women's homosexuality and banana bars, Winterson offers a challenge to the patriarchal and heterosexist conventions of the collective unconscious. As Louise Horskjær Humphries has recently stated on account of Winterson's lesbian political agenda, "Jeanette plays with the Church's notions of what is natural and unnatural, but rather than privileging lesbianism (good and natural) over heterosexuality (evil and unnatural), she reveals such notions to be constructs —relative rather than absolute— which opens up the possibility of a complete re-thinking of things" (1999: 9). Thus, when Jeanette is locked in her room and forced to fast for a day and a half in order to think about and repent from what others see as a destructive demon that has taken hold of her, Jeanette discovers that she actually has an orange demon which, far from complying with the traditional notion of evil, gives Jeanette valuable pieces of advice in difficult circumstances:

> "Demons are evil, aren't they?" I asked worried.
> "Not quite, they're just different, and difficult. You know what auras are?"
> I nodded.
> "Well, the demon you get depends on the colour of your aura, yours is orange which is why you've got me. Your mother's is brown, which is why she is so odd, and Mrs White's is hardly a demon at all. We're here to keep you in one piece, if you ignore us, you're likely to end up in two pieces, or lots of pieces, it's all part of the paradox."
> "But in the Bible you keep getting driven out."
> "Don't believe all you read." (*O* 106)

Like demons, oranges transcend the world of either/or which Winterson exposes in the novel. In Winterson's hands, oranges become malleable symbols which, in

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, allude not only to all forms of conventional behaviour —no matter whether social, religious, sexual, or otherwise— which is taken for granted by patriarchy and thereby admits no criticism, but also and paradoxically to the colour of subversion and alterity.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson retakes the fruit motif and, as it is my intention to show in the following pages, uses it with even more varied implications. Most of the scholars who have shown an interest in Winterson's works seem to have ignored the fact that fruit proves an important motif in Winterson's novels, while others, such as the British writer Rose Tremain, evince a certain puzzlement as to what she misreads as "Jeanette Winterson's obsession with fruit" (1989: 29). In an interview with the author, Helen Barr alludes to the symbolic potential of "bananas, pineapples, cherries and especially oranges" in Winterson's work and asks her "why fruit?" (1991: 32). But, once more, Winterson refuses to provide straightforward, inevitably reductive, answers preferring instead the protection of all possibilities. Thus, her elusive response links her works with Romanticism and the rediscovery of the natural world while it leaves this field open to multiple interpretations:

> There is a lot of tactile description in the books, largely because I do live in this world, as much as I live in a larger living world. The things we can see, touch, smell, taste and hear delight me. I find them quite extraordinary in themselves. I don't think it is embarrassing to cry when the world bursts into bloom or when you see a swan on the water. What more perfect thing could you see than the ark of the neck on the water and the reflection beneath? And those things are there for us to wonder at. This is the awe and wonder of the natural world, which, largely now, we just close our eyes to. It is there as a humbling, instructive thing and it is a pity to pass it by, so I do try to draw my readers' attention to the things they really will see everyday. They may not see a woman who swallows her own heart but they will see spring. And that in itself is a wonderful sight. So why not say it is? Why not acknowledge it? Has it all died out with the Romantic poets? (in Barr 1991: 32)

What I suggest here should be considered just as one of the several possibilities that the novel offers each and every one of its readers. Just as the drawing of a flying princess frames the stories of the princesses Jordan meets in his journeys of the imagination, the four extradiegetic narrators in *Sexing the Cherry* are graphically singled out by means of drawings of pineapples and bananas. Pineapples symbolise the two male narrators, Jordan and Nicolas Jordan, while bananas symbolise the two female narrators, the Dog-Woman and the female ecologist. Contrary to the undifferentiation of the icon used for the eleven princesses, the drawings of the pineapple and the banana are slightly modified in order to guarantee a visual distinction between seventeenth and twentieth-century narrators. These fruit icons are used in *Sexing the Cherry* to clarify the authorship of each of the discourses which are juxtaposed in the novel, to point to the fragmentation of the narrative

continuum and of all notions of the self as subject, and to expose the constructed nature of the links between sexuality and gender.

Nothing, except the drawing of a pineapple, separates the two introductory epigraphs from the actual discourses of the different characters in the novel. This pineapple, which seems to sprout from the earth (fig. 7), is placed on top of the page and frames the first piece of discourse which begins in the following way: "My name is Jordan. This is the first thing I saw" (*SC* 9). After such an ambiguous beginning, the reader is left wondering whether the pineapple is the first thing Jordan sees or whether she or he is listening to a speaking pineapple named Jordan. The first option is discarded as soon as the narrator provides a detailed account of a fabulous scene which is more likely to accommodate to what is presented as "the first thing I saw". Since the speaking voice seems to share several features with those of a human being, the second option does not seem too valid either. Then, which is the meaning of this self-imposing pineapple? No actual explanation is provided for an unfamiliar (perhaps unnatural?) identification of a pineapple and somebody called Jordan whose intent is providing the reader with a travel book composed of astonishing journeys presented in a no less unusual way: "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" (*SC* 9-10).

Fig. 7. Jordan

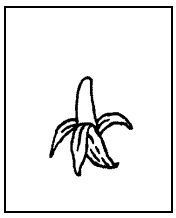

Fig. 8. The Dog-Woman

If this presentation were not confusing enough, the drawing of a half-peeled banana, suspended in mid air and ready to be eaten (fig. 8) presides the opposite page and announces what looks like the self-introduction of a different character: "I had a name but I have forgotten it. They call me the Dog-Woman and it will do. 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?" (*SC* 11). Strange as this beginning seems, the Dog-Woman provides the first clue not only as to her relationship with Jordan, but also as to the meaning of the scene the latter describes at the very beginning of his story. Still more significantly, she makes the alliance of fruits and voices in the novel explicit, when she remembers how "when Jordan was

three I took him to see a great rarity and that was my undoing" (*SC* 11). This great rarity proves to be nothing more and nothing less than a banana, an exotic fruit recently brought to England from far-away countries, which the Dog-Woman mistakes for "the private parts of an Oriental. It was yellow and livid and long" (*SC* 12). The Dog-Woman does not offer a direct connection between the icon of the banana and herself, but rather verbalises the association that is popularly made between bananas and male sexual members. The relationship between fruit and sexuality is comically made manifest, then, from the very beginning of the novel for, as the owner of the banana strives to explain: "THIS IS NOT SOME UNFORTUNATE'S RAKE. IT IS THE FRUIT OF A TREE. IT IS TO BE PEELED AND EATEN" (*SC* 12-13; capitals in the original), a suggestion that is kept in the particular graphic depiction of the banana that frames each piece of narrative uttered by the Dog-Woman. By establishing a direct association between the presentation of the banana, its immediate association with the issue of castration, and the comicity of the scene described, Winterson mocks the discourse of Lacanian psychoanalysis for, as Ángeles de la Concha has stated, "if woman has been ontologically depicted as the 'bearer of the bleeding wound', that is, as the one who exists solely in relation to a castration she cannot transcend, she has skilfully appropriated the image and turned its metaphorical texture into physical substance" (1996: 59-60). The Dog-Woman transcends castration when Winterson makes the banana an icon for her representation.

Although pictures of half-peeled bananas are ever present in the novel, the banana, as a fruit, is not mentioned any more in the text. Nevertheless, the Dog-Woman shows a keen interest in male sexual organs all through the novel, especially those bitten off or those belonging to the Puritans. So, eventually, the banana does not simply stand iconically in representation of the Dog-Woman[24] but also hints at her obsession with the phallus. For his part, the male character-narrator is identified with a pineapple. In spite of the fact that the pineapple is not explicitly attached to

[24] Winterson uses another fruit, the orange, as a metaphor for the Dog-Woman's sexual organs; more specifically her clitoris. In one of her scarce sexual encounters with men, her partner, who has proved unable to give her any sexual satisfaction through penetration, proposes a form of alternative pleasure:

> I was the first woman he said he had failed. Accordingly, he burrowed down the way ferrets do and tried to take me in his mouth. I was very comfortable about this, having nothing to be bitten off. But in a moment he thrust up his head and eyed me wearily.
> 'Madam,' he said, 'I am sorry. I beg your pardon but I cannot.'
> 'Cannot?'
> 'Cannot. I cannot take *that orange* in my mouth. It will not fit. Neither can I run my tongue over it. You are too big, madam.' (*SC* 107)

female sexual organs in the text, as was the case with the banana, judging from the definition provided by, for example, the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*: "a large oval fruit that is sweet, juicy, and yellow inside and is covered by a thick, hard, wooden skin" (1987: 1085), the pineapple would in principle share more features with the female uterus than with any of the male sexual organs. To this extent, it could be stated that Winterson reverses culturally established links between certain fruits and human sexual organs. Besides, the paradigmatic relationships between Jordan and the pineapple, on the one hand, and the Dog-Woman and the banana, on the other, bring to the reader's notice the arbitrariness with which culture sexes neutral objects. Likewise, it exposes the equally arbitrary constructedness of gender categories as a necessary precondition for the representation in the book of the instability and fluidity of sexuality and for the ultimate destabilisation of identity.

Fruits, like the banana and the pineapple, are also used in *Sexing the Cherry* as symbols of the exotic and the new in opposition to the ordinary and the habitual insofar as they have been brought to England from foreign countries. They exert, therefore, a certain fascination on those who see them for the first time. In this sense, Winterson defamiliarises what the contemporary reader, like the twentieth-century character-narrator Nicolas Jordan, would simply acknowledge as familiar. Winterson's aim behind the choice of these particular fruits is indirectly expressed by Nicolas Jordan himself, when he says that: "I tried to look at a pineapple and pretend I'd never seen one before. There's so little wonder left in the world because we've seen everything in one way or another" (*SC* 113). Consequently, the choice of such exotic fruits is especially suitable in a text which is partially set in a time and a place, seventeenth-century England, in which people were great voyagers eager to discover unknown territories.

It is precisely Jordan's desire to discover new lands, new peoples, and new ideologies that acts as a call to his multiple adventures. Having seen the banana for the first time, Jordan travels in his mind to the realm of the imagination where, as the Dog-Woman recounts, he sees "deep blue waters against a pale shore and trees whose branches sang with green and birds in fairground colours and an old man in a loin-cloth" (*SC* 13). Jordan spends some thirteen years abroad and as he returns he brings with him a new rarity, a pineapple with which to marvel his fellow citizens. It is the Dog-Woman who announces that:

> The pineapple arrived today.
>
> Jordan carried it in his arms as though it were a yellow baby; with the wisdom of Solomon he prepared to slice it in two. He had not sharpened the knife before Mr Rose, the royal gardener, flung himself across the table and begged to be sawn into bits instead.

> Those at the feast contorted themselves with laughter, and the King himself, in his new wig, came down from the dais and urged Mr Rose to delay his sacrifice. It was after all, only a fruit. At this Mr Rose poked up his head from his abandonment amongst the dishes and reminded the company that this was an historic occasion. Indeed it was. It was 1661, and from Jordan's voyage to Barbados the first pineapple had come to England. (*SC* 104)

According to the Dog-Woman's perception, the pineapple is the final outcome of Jordan's heroic deeds, the boon that has transformed her into "a hero's mother" (*SC* 108) although she will explain that, resulting from his innate modesty, Jordan will refuse any form of glory and prefers to continue with his former life:

> He could have been a lord had he wished it. The King wanted to heap honours on him and would have equipped him with any ship to sail the seas. But Jordan would not. He said he wanted to sit by the river and watch the boats. There were looks then; they could not understand him, and some whispered that he had gone mad in his thirteen years away. Others said his heart was broken. (*SC* 140-141)

For his part, Jordan considers the pineapple "his rarest find" (*SC* 130) when he chooses it as *the* gift to present to King Charles II as he returns from his journeys. It can be safely affirmed, then, that Jordan is identified with the pineapple because that is the reward he obtains from his adventures into foreign territories; the pineapple represents Jordan's boon and his presenting it to the King is described by the Dog-Woman as a historic occasion. However, it should be borne mind that Jordan's quest is double. Actually it is Jordan's search for his ideal woman, Fortunata, that encourages him to ally "himself with John Tradescant, the botanist and traveller who was also bent on the pursuit of an exotic ideal" (Birch 1989: 19). Thus, the arrival in England of the pineapple is much more than a historic occasion, because it symbolically brings together the reward he has obtained from, on the one hand, his voyages along the world and, on the other, his journeys of the imagination. It does not seem too far-fetched, then, to affirm that the process of defamiliarisation generated by Winterson's treatment of these exotic fruits metafictionally highlight the newness of a novel such as *Sexing the Cherry*, which is capable of fusing fiction with history to create a narrative hybrid, a representative example of "historiographic metafiction". As Dinah Birch has signalled, in *Sexing the Cherry* "fiction and history merge in the image of the first pineapple to reach Britain's shores" (1989: 19).

The iconic representation of pineapples and bananas and its association with the different character-narrators in the novel contribute to establishing a set of significant connections among the seventeenth and the twentieth-century characters, whose depth is further increased by the words these characters use to describe their lived and/or imagined experiences. The established link between each of the sexes and the fruits chosen as their icons is still maintained. Nicolas Jordan is still

identified with a pineapple, while the female ecologist is symbolically represented by the drawing of a banana.

Nicolas Jordan, the male twentieth-century character-narrator, begins his narrative by making reference to the moment when he decides to become a naval cadet with the sole purpose of sailing the world. Nicolas's philosophy of the world is so romantic that it may be said to be much closer to Jordan's than to the pragmatism of his friend, Jack, and to the consumerism of the society he chances to have been born into. It is not strange then that the first thing that urges him to join the Navy is what he presents as a different version of the "historic" episode described some pages earlier by the Dog-Woman:

> PAINTINGS 3: "Mr Rose, the Royal Gardener, presents the pineapple to Charles the Second." The artist is unknown, probably Dutch. Mr Rose in his wig is down on one knee and the King in his wig is accepting the pineapple. Colours of fruit and flowers make up the painting.
>
> Soon after I saw this painting I decided to join the Navy. […]
>
> I saw the painting and tried to imagine what it would be like to bring something home for the first time. I tried to look at a pineapple and pretend I'd never seen one before. I couldn't do it. There's so little wonder left in the world because we've seen everything one way or another. Where had that pineapple come from? Barbados was easy to find out, but who had brought it, and under what circumstances and why? (*SC* 113)

Nicolas Jordan's declaration of intentions at the beginning of his narrative immediately connects this twentieth-century character-narrator with Jordan, the seventeenth-century character-narrator, and his story, such as it has been presented to the reader so far. This parallelism is undoubtedly enhanced by the drawing Winterson uses as an icon for this contemporary narrator (fig. 9).

Fig. 7. Jordan

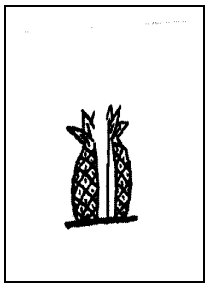

Fig. 9. Nicolas Jordan

Nicolas Jordan's first words are framed by the drawing of a pineapple which is identical with the one that represents Jordan but which is sliced into two vertical halves slightly separated from one another so as to show its pulpy interior. This new presentation of the pineapple seems to emphasise the idea that what one sees is only a part of what actually exists; that is to say, the slicing of a pineapple which up to

this point had been a complete whole stresses the fact that the self is not single but multiple, that, to be complete, the outer self, the one we traditionally project on to the world, requires the complement of the inner self, that part of the self which is either unconscious or imagined[25]. This interpretation would suggest the possibility that Jordan, the seventeenth-century character, might be the impersonation of Nicolas Jordan's ideal self which he imagines as an improved, unified, projection of himself and which he sets in a historical past where his philosophy of life would no longer seem anachronistic. This possibility is further enhanced by the fact that, in the novel, Nicolas Jordan and Jordan, ego and ideal ego, meet once Jordan has completed his process of individuation in the outer and inner worlds, in order to fulfil the myth of perfection and wholeness. This moment of unification is described twice in the course of the novel, firstly, by Jordan in the very first page and, later, by the Dog-Woman in his last intervention. The latter is much more explicit in this respect:

> About half an hour after midnight I heard him come aboard. His face was pale, his hands trembled. I thought it was the devastation he had seen, but he shook his head. He was coming through London Fields when the fog covered him and, hurrying, he had fallen and banged his head. He came to, and feeling his way, arms outstretched he had suddenly touched another face and screamed out. For a second the fog cleared and *he saw that the stranger was himself.*
> 'Perhaps I am to die,' he said, and then, while I was protestating this, '*Or perhaps I am to live, to be complete as she said I would be*.' (*SC* 143; italics added).

As Susana Onega has pointed out, the Dog-Woman is providing here a fictional version of the Lacanian mirror stage, "a crucial phase in the evolution of the human being because it brings about for a brief moment the exhilarating experience of the identification of the 'je' (Freud's 'ich' or 'ego') with the 'je-idéal' (Freud's 'ideal ich' or 'super-ego')" (1994: 192). Understood in psychoanalytic terms, the notion of the ideal ego is closely related to the Lacanian theory of the mirror stage which, as Malcolm Bowie explains:

> represents a permanent tendency of the individual: the tendency that leads him throughout life to seek and foster the imaginary wholeness of an 'ideal' ego. The unity invented at these moments, and the ego that is the product of successive inventions are both spurious: they are attempts to find ways round certain inescapable factors of lack, absence and incompleteness in human life. (1988: 105)

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25 Winterson's drawing of a sliced pineapple, like her drawing of a sliced banana, would symbolise the subject's process of individuation which, according to psychoanalysis, and as Susana Onega has explained,

> encompasses the whole life, but falls naturally into two halves. The first half is concerned with the individual's relationship to the world outside himself (Freud's "Umwelt"); it is directed towards the development of the conscious mind and the stabilization of the ego. The second half reverses this process and confronts the ego with the depths of its own psyche, seeking to establish links with the inner self (Freud's "Innenwelt"), the true centre of consciousness. (1994: 192)

To this, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan adds that, in both the mirror stage and the ideal ego, the gaze is a substantial element, insofar as:

> the gaze exceeds the ocular act of looking, although looking seeks to know or understand. Rather, the gaze turns us inside/out. Are we seeing, looking, or looked at? While looking certainly offers pleasure […], Lacan's gaze is commensurate —not with the eye, but—with *jouissance* encountered on the side of anxiety and idealizations: judgement, narcissistic fantasies, threat, the presence of a void. The gaze and the voice constitute component parts of a superego-like constellation Lacan called the ideal ego where unconscious fantasies dwell. The ego is, however, susceptible of fragmenting back into its signifying components in art, psychosis, sexual acts, or certain uncanny moments of everyday life. (1991: 73-74)

In keeping with this, Jordan[26] starts his presentation by referring precisely to the first thing he sees, endowing this verb with the multiple connotations attached to it by psychoanalysis, in general, and by Lacan's theories, in particular. Jordan offers a version of his experience of identification with his self that differs from the one offered by the Dog-Woman. The scene is located in a very special setting which reminds the reader, on the one hand, of the world of dreams, the surreal, and the unconscious, as suggested by the use of key words such as "night", "fog", "water", and especially the horse running loose. On the other, it is reminiscent of the world of fantasy and the fairy tale, as hinted at by the reference to giants and genies in a bottle:

> It was night, about a quarter to twelve, the sky divided in halves, one cloudy, the other fair. The clouds hung over the wood, there was no distance between them and the top of the trees. Where the sky was clear, over the river and the flat fields newly ploughed, the moon, almost full, shone out of a yellow aureole and reflected in the bow of the water. There were cattle in the field across, black against the slope of the hill, not moving, sleeping. One light, glittering from the only house, looked like the moat-light of a giant's castle. Tall trees flanked it. A horse ran loose in the courtyard, its hooves sparking the stone.
>
> Then the fog came. The fog came from the river in thin spirals like spirits in a churchyard and thickened with the force of a genie from a bottle.[…]
>
> The fog came towards me and the sky that had been clear was covered up. It was bitterly cold, my hair was damp and I had no hand-warmer. I tried to find the path but all I found were hares with staring eyes, poised in the middle of the field and turned to stone. I began to walk with my hands stretched out in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of my own face opposite me. (*SC* 9)

[26] Fortunata presents herself exactly in the same way as Jordan: "'My *name* is Fortunata,' she said. '*This is the first thing I saw*'" (*SC* 93). Her process of identification has its origins in the symbols which are traditionally associated with the fairy tale, the symbols of the collective unconscious: "It was winter. The ground was hard and white. There were late roses in the hedges, wild and red, and the holly tree was dark green with blazing berries. It snowed every day, dense curtains of snow that wiped out the footprints coming to and from the house, leaving us to believe that no one ever came here or ever had" (*SC* 94).

A similar dual attachment is established between the two female narrators in *Sexing the Cherry*: the seventeenth-century Dog-Woman and the twentieth-century female ecologist. The icon chosen for their representation is a half-peeled banana.

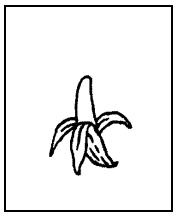

Fig. 8. The Dog-Woman

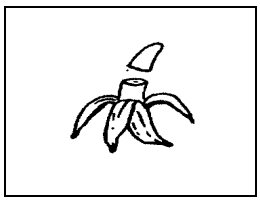

Fig. 10. The female ecologist

Again the only difference that exists between these two drawings is that the one representing the female ecologist (fig. 10) is horizontally divided in two halves separated from one another and permitting a view of its pulpy, hidden interior. On this occasion, the text is explicit enough since the female ecologist introduces herself in the following terms: "I am a woman going mad. I am a woman hallucinating. I imagine I am huge, raw, a giant" (*SC* 121). The female ecologist's imagined self is strongly reminiscent of the Dog-Woman with whom she shares many features (see section I in appendix III). The female ecologist herself refers to these similarities as, at one point in her narrative, she notes that:

> When the weight had gone I found out something strange: that the weight persisted in my mind. I had an *alter ego* who was huge and powerful, a woman whose only morality was her own and whose loyalties were fierce and few. She was my patron saint, the one I called on when I felt myself dwindling away through cracks in the floor or slowly fading in the street. Whenever I called on her I felt my muscles swell and laughter fill up my throat. Of course it was only a fantasy, at least at the beginning… (*SC* 125; italics in the original)

Both twentieth-century character-narrators seem, then, to have an *alter ego* which helps them to escape from the individualistic and alienating world that surrounds them and with which they do not seem very much in accordance. Their function would be very similar to that of the orange demon Jeanette discovers inside herself in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, namely a form of escape from the threat of fragmentation of the self[27], which is characteristic of the postmodern condition.

Last but not least, I would like to pay special attention to the meaning of a fruit whose presence in the course of the novel, like the presence of an authorial voice, is only subtly perceived.

[27] The two sets of binary relationships according to sex analysed so far are further multiplied and deconstructed by what I have called discursive echoes in appendix III. These blur all boundaries among the different characters that populate the novel, as analysed in the following pages.

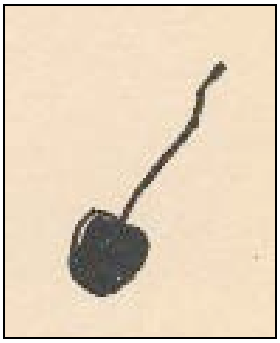

Fig. 11. The third which is not given

The cherry of the title does not have the same status as symbol or metaphor as do the banana and the pineapple. Actually, the only drawing of a cherry to be found in the novel (fig. 11) appears in the very first page of the book, which provides the title of the novel, *Sexing the Cherry*, and a brief biographical note about its author, Jeanette Winterson. This does not mean, however, that its significance is more limited than that of the banana or the pineapple. Rather on the contrary, it is my contention that the cherry is the central fruit motif in the novel insofar as it unites all the individual connotations which have been commented on so far with respect to each individual fruit.

Like the banana and the pineapple, the cherry is an exotic fruit but, unlike them, it does not grow naturally but is the resulting product of an antique form of genetic manipulation on the part of the human being: grafting. Jordan learns this technique, to which he refers as a "new fashion […] which we had understood from France" (*SC* 78), from John Tradescant, gardener to King Charles I, and, as a real *connoisseur*, he provides a telling definition:

> Grafting is the means 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. In this way fruits have been made resistant to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not. (SC 78)

The cherry is, then, the third kind, *per se* neither male nor female but gender neutral. Being different from what the establishment conceives of as normal, the cherry is considered unnatural by many members of the Church (*SC* 78) as well as by the Dog-Woman, who, in spite of the fact that she has the chance of witnessing the process by which it is yielded, refers to it as a "monster" (*SC* 79). As Jordan says:

> I tried to explain to her that the tree would still be female although it had not been born from seed, but she said such things had no gender and were a confusion to themselves.
>
> "Let the world mate of its own accord," she said, "or not at all."
>
> But the cherry grew, and we have sexed it and it is female. (*SC* 79)

The adjectives used both by the Church and Jordan's mother to describe the cherry —unnatural and monstrous— are reminiscent of the way in which Jeanette's sexual "deviance" is depicted by her own mother and the religious community to which she belongs in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, a novel which fictionalises Winterson's process of discovery of her homosexuality. Added to this similarity is the fact that, in *Sexing the Cherry*, the picture of the cherry does not stand for any of the narrators in the text but rather seems to illustrate Jeanette Winterson's biographical note, that is to say, her self-introduction to the reader. Taking these two issues into consideration I would dare say that Winterson wants her readers to identify her with the cherry, a hybrid "between a Polstead Black and a Morello" (*SC* 79). This idea would be in keeping with Winterson's exposure of the concept of "naturalness" when applied to the links between gender and sex. As Sheena Mackay has stated in an intelligent review of the novel, "the titular cherry, the result of a bit of early genetic engineering, the grafting of a Polstead Black on to a Morello, turns out to be female, but the significance of its sex is not clear. As with much of the book there may be more, or less, to that than meets the eye" (1989: 1006). Further, being a totally new human creation, the cherry also has a defamiliarising potential that encourages the reader to make an effort against the conventional and the taken-for-granted in order to open up a space for the alternative and the new. A result of the process of grafting, the cherry may then be read not only as a metaphor for sexuality but also as a metaphor for the novel itself, which also results from the mixture of different genres, narrative modes, and intertextual allusions[28].

Sexing the Cherry not only parodies the most representative modes of seventeenth-century writing, as we have seen. It also alludes intertextually to individual texts produced in the seventeenth century with the intention of showing that, like the cherry of the title, canonical male authors contribute to the maintenance of patriarchal values through their "sexing the texts". Approaching *Sexing the Cherry* from the point of view of performativity, as theorised by Judith Butler in her complementary books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Elizabeth Langland calls attention to the fact that Winterson's book is a parodic rewriting of Andrew Marvell's "The Mower Against Gardens", a poem published in 1681, and stresses "the performative destabilization of convention and tradition accomplished through Winterson's parodic text" (1997: 99). Langland begins by

[28] This possibility was suggested by Michael Gorra in a review of the novel, in which he stated that:

> fruit as a metaphor for sexuality —well, nothing new in that. But for Ms. Winterson fruit is also something rich and sweet, an exotic juiciness hidden beneath the pineapple's unpalatable skin, a new marvel brought into our ken. "Sexing the Cherry" fuses history, fairy tale and metafiction into a fruit that's rather crisp, not terribly sweet, but of a memorably startling flavor. (1990: 24)

demonstrating that the connections between these seventeenth and twentieth-century texts are not merely reduced to the title that Winterson uses for her book of fiction as an overt acknowledgement of the fact that the former is undoubtedly a source of inspiration for the latter. Marvell's poem criticises the fact that, by building well-structured gardens and filling them with plants which result from the fashionable application of the technique of grafting, man dangerously modifies the order of Nature and explicitly presents the uncertain origins of the cherry as a clear example of the confusion that this alteration causes:

> No plant now knew the stock from which it came;
> He grafts upon the wild the tame:
> That th'uncertain and adulterate fruit
> Might put the palate in dispute.
> His green seraglio has its eunuchs too,
> Lest any tyrant him outdo.
> And in the cherry he does nature vex,
> To procreate without a sex. (1985c: 105)

Just as the title in Marvell's poem is explicit enough, Winterson's title also repeats this explicitness in that, as is explained in the third section of this chapter, her subversion of gender boundaries has as central tenet precisely the utopian possibility of (pro)creation without a sex. As Langland explains:

> "Sexing the Cherry" is, of course, the title and a subject of Winterson's novel, insofar as it is concerned, like Marvell's poem with how the world constructed as natural or God created can be refashioned by humans for human purposes. While the mower reads grafting as unlawful, Winterson's text and her character Jordan explore it as one central means to escape the tired binarisms of reproduction. (1997: 100)

Winterson "calls into question the sense of order, unity, and progression created by Marvell's text" (Langland 1997: 116), revealing them to be illusions. Furthermore, using a deconstructive technique, Winterson shows that the reconciliation of binary oppositions is possible because, as Langland concludes, "in *Sexing the Cherry*, the self and other, masculine and feminine, past and present, nature and culture are envisioned not as alternatives but as simultaneous and coexistent" (116).

Marvell's poetry is a very important point of reference in *Sexing the Cherry* Quoting the above-mentioned relationship between "The Mower Against Gardens" and *Sexing the Cherry* as developed by Elizabeth Langland, Susana Onega has pointed out that Winterson's book and more specifically Jordan's journey in search of a unique object, the pineapple, is reminiscent of another of Marvell's poem "Bermudas" (1985b), in which the poet not only mentions pineapples but also insists on their uniqueness, when he says that: "No tree can bear them twice" (1999: 452). Onega explains that what Marvell presents as a peculiarity of the pineapple

> undermines the moral scruple against grafting and the manipulation of nature in general that Marvell himself voices through the speaker in "The Mower, Against Gardens", for if the pineapple can only grow once, it exists in nature independently of the laws of reproduction. (452)

Onega develops her argument further when she notes that, as described by Marvell, that is to say, as simultaneously a "natural" product and an "exotic" fruit independent of the natural laws of reproduction, the pineapple "questions the very idea of order on which Marvell's nature/culture opposition rests"; his poem is paradoxically much more in keeping with "the overall message" of *Sexing the Cherry* in which "the loving mother/son relationship established between herself [the Dog-Woman] and Jordan is separated from the biological reproductive functions" (Onega 1999: 452). The German critic Helga Quadflieg establishes the same kind of association between Winterson's use of the imagery of fruit and her disruption of the traditional concept of gender and, by extension, of heterosexuality and the family structure in an article which pays special attention to the feminist elements of Jeanette Winterson's novels. Quadflieg explains that "for Dog Woman and Jordan sexuality is a phenomenon just as exotic as the bananas and pineapples newly introduced to England" (1997: 109). For her, their particular perception of gender as both natural and exotic is the main reason why their family relation, unlike the more traditional ones depicted by Winterson in *Boating for Beginners* or *Written on the Body*, "actually seems to work" (102). Apparently, as Quadflieg insists, the key to their success is that:

> theirs is a very unusually structured family: An unwomanly woman who has never lived her sexuality and a slightly feminized boy, whose sexuality is sublimated into a romantic quest for a fairy tale figure. With the frequently absent Tradescant as a surrogate father figure, they constitute a visibly constructed, "unnatural" family in the sense that there is no bio-genetic link between them. (102)

As a conclusion, it could be said that, identifying the drawings of pineapples and bananas with some of the narrators in *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson exposes conventional links between fruit and sexuality, reverses them, and ends up making of these associations something fluid and unstable. Further, the novel, like the cherry, has a defamiliarising power that exposes the construction and the expectations raised by conventional narratives and, consequently, demands the reader's active participation in the recognition and recreation of a new narrative code, the "book of my own" (*SC* 102) which Jordan chooses to present the narratee with.

So far I have been dealing with the identification Winterson establishes among the drawings that are scattered throughout the text and some of the narrative

voices in *Sexing the Cherry*. In doing this, it has been suggested that *Sexing the Cherry* overcomes the narrative dualism of *The Passion* by presenting not two but several voices engaged in the telling and retelling of a wide range of interrelated stories. Therefore, I presently intend to analyse the power relationships that are established among all those narrators. I will also study the way in which the different perspectives provided are used, on the one hand, as a structural device and, on the other, as a means to subvert the stability of the traditional narrative agency and as a means to blur all boundaries among the different speaking subjects.

Jordan, the Dog-Woman, Nicolas Jordan and the female ecologist are initially presented in the text as hierarchically equal narrators, thus disregarding any textual distinction based on gender. Although the amount of narrative space they are allotted gives more importance to the two seventeenth-century narrators, Jordan and the Dog-Woman, who seem to have been given a greater narrative responsibility in the overall composition of the text, the two twentieth-century narrators, Nicolas Jordan and the female ecologist, share the same narrative status with their senior counterparts. The four of them are homodiegetic, in that they engage in the telling of their own stories of which, sometimes, they are the main protagonists and, some other times, direct witnesses. Likewise, they are all extradiegetic, or first-level, narrators, since the novel does not apparently present a superior narrative instance, which would organise the different pieces of discourse individually uttered by these four voices. Each of their utterances are juxtaposed to one another in a sort of conversational turn-taking, which highlights their narrative equality and disregards both the spatial and temporal distance that separates one speaker from the others. What is more, their discourses are also repetitively introduced by means of the four individual drawings to which the narrative voices are associated in the novel, as we have just seen.

In keeping with a practice established by seventeenth-century literary and historical texts, *Sexing the Cherry* rejects boundaries and abandons any teleological notion of plot in favour of an apparently episodic structure[29] and the alternation of several narrative voices with specific although reflexive discourses. These four narrative agents are not only individualised by their respective associations with different fruit icons which indicate who is speaking and which, as we have seen, emphasise the novel's constructedness. Each of the narrative voices clearly has a distinctive narrative style which separates his or her pieces of discourse from those

[29] The structure of *Sexing the Cherry* becomes circular if we take into account the twentieth-century "reincarnations" of Jordan and the Dog-Woman.

of the others. As Michael Dirda has observed in a review of the novel, the Dog-Woman discloses "a mildly archaic diction that can shift from the starky Biblical to the coarsely Rabelaisian" (1990: 9). This puzzling mixture is made evident, for instance, in the Dog-Woman's description of her first sight of the banana, and her reaction to the man's presentation of it as a fruit to be eaten:

> At this there was unanimous retching. There was no good woman could put that up to her mouth, and for a man it was the practice of cannibals. We had not gone to church all these years and been washed in the blood of Jesus only to eat ourselves up the way the Heathen do. (*SC* 6)

The Dog-Woman is firmly bound to the earth and to common sense, which in the novel is read as a synonym of narrow-mindedness (with the exception of her attitude towards sex). As a consequence, her descriptions are rather conventional and prosaic. The Dog-Woman has no literary pretensions. She is a chronicler who chooses to talk about her experiences in history, about the solid, physical world. She provides a personal account of a specific historical moment and makes the reader aware not only of the things that *happened* to herself and Jordan but also of the way in which their lives were conditioned by these events:

> It was not until the afternoon that the King appeared in his linen shirt, his beard trimmed and nothing of him shivering, though many a spectator had fainted with cold. He knelt down and rested his head on the block, and I saw Tradescant's face stream with tears that froze at once and lay on his cheeks like diamonds. The King gave the signal, and a moment later his head was wrapped in a white cloth and his body was carried away.
>
> In the Crown of Thorns that night Tradescant made plans to take ship and leave us. I saw the look on Jordan's face and my heart became a captive in a locked room. I couldn't reach him now. I knew he would go. (*SC* 71)

The Dog-Woman's is the voice of the other, the return of the repressed. Her distinctiveness is paradoxically achieved through the appropriation she makes of various canonical discourses from which she borrows impudently. Her narrative style can be described as a pastiche of the highly estimated literary modes of the period: biography —"It must have been in about 1640, when Jordan was something close to ten, that he met John Tradescant on the banks on the boiling Thames" (*SC* 21)—, memoirs —"I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains" (*SC* 34)—, historical account —"At Wimbledon we were sure that at any moment Queen Henrietta would return with allies from France or Italy or Spain and sweep away the snivelling Puritans dressed in starch. But she found no allies" (*SC* 63)— and politico-religious pamphlet:

> He said "Thou shall not kill" is a tenet of our faith, but we should too be aware of another part of the Law of Moses "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

> I have long been interested in these contradictions and looked forward to a full rendering of their meaning. The preacher went on to say that for us, as Royalists, avenging the King's murder was a matter of urgency, and yet we could not break the Holy Law.
>
> I blushed here, having broken it many times.
>
> "Then you must go in secret and quiet, and gouge out your enemies' eyes when you see them, and deprive them of their teeth if they have them. This fulfils the Law of God."
>
> I was very much taken with this rendering, and could only wonder how it had not come to me voluntarily before now. It is a thing to have learning and so be able to interpret the Scriptures. (*SC* 84)

The discourse of the Dog-Woman has a subversive potential which lies not so much in her attempt at being a subjective chronicler but in the mixture of a feigned naiveté and a satirical mood that wraps every critical comment and subjective reflection which she adds to the description of apparently objective facts.

Jordan is, on the contrary, "adrift in time and space. Even his language is modern, a little weary, poetic" (Dirda 1990: 9); sometimes deeply philosophical, we should add, and highly reminiscent of the diction of the modernist poet T. S. Eliot, as will be later explained.

Nicolas Jordan also feels alien to his time and place, a fact that finds reflection in his discourse. He is a grown-up dreamer who experiences an intimate connection with nature, which he romanticises in spite of evidences. Thus, when Nicolas meets the female ecologist who is camping alone by the river, he remembers how:

> We ate supper from her campfire: baked potatoes and beans and tin mugs of tea. She didn't want to talk much so we sat back to back watching the stars.
> "The river's glowing," I said.
> "It's phosphorous, the tests are conclusive."
> "It reminds me of *The Ancient Mariner*, the slimy sea." (*SC* 142)

For her part, the discourse of the female ecologist is coloured by feminism, ecology and anti-globalisation politics. She imagines herself as the anonymous avenger of social injustice:

> I force all the fat ones to go on a diet, and all the men line up for compulsory training in feminism and ecology. Then they start on the food surpluses, packing it with their own hands, distributing it in a great human chain of what used to be power and is now co-operation. (*SC* 123)

Each of these character-narrators has, then, its specificity. Nevertheless, the novel is crammed with discursive echoes (see appendix III) which undermine the singularity and individuality of each of these narrators and depicts them rather as versions of the same narrative entity. The Danish scholar Bente Gade resorts to the metaphor of grafting, which is central to the novel, in order to understand the relations that are established between the different narrators. As she remarks:

> they are grafted on to the author. […] The different voices are fused into the author's voice to make a "hardier" narrative without referring to the author as parent and final referent of the text. […] Through the metaphor of grafting, Winterson represents identity as radically fragmented and multiple —and in consequence dependent upon construction. (1999: 36)

Already in *The Passion*, Winterson had resorted to the use of refrains, which were often conveyed as direct addresses to the reader, and which were used as a link between the two narrative voices in charge of the telling of the story, Henri and Villanelle. In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson takes this mesmerising repetition of phrases to an extreme. She not only makes each narrator repeat himself or herself:

> The *earth is round and flat at the same time*. This is obvious. (*SC* 81; italics added)
> *The world is flat and round*, is it not? (*SC* 90; italics added)

She also makes the different narrators voice similar pieces of discourse. Since appendix III displays a detailed presentation of the way in which ideas, phrases, and other pieces of discourse repeat themselves, sometimes, in exactly the same terms and, some other times, with slight variations, regardless of the narrative voice that utters them, it will suffice here to provide an example in order to show that these discursive echoes not only affect *alter egos* but also expand to all the narrative instances in the novel, making them all a part of the same authorial voice. The first example brings together both the literal and the metaphorical meanings of voyaging as well as one of the commonest forms that points of light may assume: the stars. The Dog-Woman remembers how "Jordan said *the stars can take you anywhere*" (*SC* 15; italics added). Likewise and since, as he explains, his parents could not afford to buy a telescope, Nicolas Jordan "has a book instead on how to *navigate by the stars*" (*SC* 114; italics added). A few pages later, Nicolas alludes to the same idea again when he says that: "I lay on my bed and looked out of the window at the stars. I read in a book that *the stars can take you anywhere*" (*SC* 119; italics added). Fortunata in her dancing classes teaches her pupils to become star-like points of light by concentrating on their inner light: "She asks them to meditate on *a five-pointed star in the belly* and to watch the points push outwards, the fifth point into the head" (*SC* 72). Jordan, who has been one of her pupils for a month, explains to the reader that Fortunata, who teaches others to become points of light, is herself his guiding star: "Then she turns away and I watch her walk back across the sand and up over the rocks. *I begin to row, using her body as a marker*" (*SC* 103).

Summarising, then, it can be stated that Nicolas Jordan's discourse is strongly reminiscent of Jordan's discourse, just as the female ecologist links herself with the Dog-Woman by appropriating the latter's discourse. But Jordan also echoes

the Dog-Woman and the female ecologist, and viceversa. The overall effect of these discursive echoes is then that of hinting at the existence of a single authorial voice that playfully adopts different roles, names, and sexes inside the novel. This multiplication of self-echoing narrative voices is directly related to the fragmentation of the narrative continuum and also of the plot. The stories themselves are almost insignificant; what really matters is the way in which they are variously represented, that is to say, depending on the point of view the teller chooses to adopt at each particular moment. Using this technique, Winterson deconstructs the notion of the narrative agent as a stable subject, just as she refuses linearity and teleology for, as Gade explains:

> A narratological approach highlights the interrelation between plot and identity; identity as narrative means that it depends upon available plots. The plot of *Sexing*, like the narrative voice, is fragmented and the text tells several independent stories. These stories are narrative illustrations of postmodernist destabilisation. […] This plot (as coherent progress of events) is deferred in order to pursue a subject matter and represent the world anew. (1999: 35)

The case of the twelve dancing princesses is of an altogether different nature in narrative terms. In rewriting the Grimm brothers' fairy tale, Winterson keeps on insisting on the need to represent the world anew. With the exception of Fortunata, the object of Jordan's quest, none of the princesses is given a proper name and all of them are indistinctly associated with the same drawing. Nevertheless, this textual undifferentiation does not prevent each of the princesses from becoming the narrator of her own distinct story. To that extent, they are all homodiegetic narrators, like the four other voices mentioned so far. However, their stories are embedded within the narrative of Jordan, one of the first-level narrators. The princesses are, hence, redeemed from the silent and therefore complacent position that traditional fairy tale has allotted them but, still, they are intradiegetic narrators. Jordan's narrative frames the first set of stories, in which each princess tells her life story from the moment when a prince had discovered their secret and their father forced them to marry. These stories are doubly framed: firstly, by the internal title page "THE STORY OF THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES", which discloses a drawing of the moment, previous to their marriages, when the princesses escape through a window of the castle and fly up in the night towards their dancing place; secondly, by Jordan's words which, having provided the setting and the context in which his encounter with the princesses occurs, introduce the princesses' narratives thus: "'It is the penalty of love,' sighed the first princess, and began at once to tell me the story of her life" (*SC* 47). Aiming again at the visual equilibrium among all these narrators,

the first story is juxtaposed to the second, the second to the third and so on, until it is the youngest of the princesses' turn to tell her own story. By this time, Jordan has retaken control over the narrative to observe that the youngest princess is missing:

> They looked at one another, then the eldest said, "Our youngest sister is not here. She never came to live with us. On her wedding day to the prince who had discovered our secret, she flew from the altar like a bird from a snare and walked a tightrope between the steeple of the church and the mast of a ship weighing anchor in the bay.
>
> "She was, of all of us, the best dancer, the one who made her body into shapes we could not follow. She did it for pleasure, but there was something more for her; she did it because any other life would have been a lie. She didn't burn in secret with a passion she could not express; she shone". (*SC* 60)

This last story serves, in terms of the plot, to establish a clear connection between the dancer Jordan is searching for and Fortunata, the youngest of the twelve dancing princesses. Furthermore, in structural terms, the fact that the last story is told by the eldest sister and that it is introduced by Jordan's words not only enhances the circularity of the novel but also hints at the specific technique Winterson frequently uses in the novel: repetition with a difference[30]. Thus, when some pages later Jordan finally meets Fortunata in her island, she is given a new chance to retell her story, which is once more subordinated to Jordan's narrative, as hinted at by the use of quotation marks:

> "We were married one by one under branches of mistletoe, but when it came to my turn, and I was the last, I looked at my husband to be, the youngest prince, who had followed us in secret and found us out, and I did not want him.
>
> "At the last possible moment I pushed him aside and ran out of the church through the crowds of guests, mouths open like fishes.
>
> " I took a boat and sailed round the world earning my living as a dancer. Eventually I came here and built this school. I never advertise. People find me because they want to, as you have."
>
> "I have met your sisters," I said […]. "But the story they told me about you was not the same." (*SC* 94-95)

As Jordan notes, Fortunata's story refers to the same events previously told by her eldest sister, which she opts to present from a more "rational" perspective, insisting

30 The mixture of a circular development of the story with the narrative technique of repetition with a difference is what manages to endow *Sexing the Cherry* with a similar spiralling structure to the one that lies beneath *The Passion*. In *Sexing the Cherry*, this spiralling structure is also textually thematised in the description Jordan makes of Fortunata's movement in her dancing class:

> There appeared to be *ten points of light spiralling in a line along the floor*, and from these beings came the sound I had heard. It was harmonic but it had no tune. I could hardly bear to look at the light, and the tone, though far from unpleasant, hurt my ears. It was too rich, too strong, to be music.
>
> Then I saw a young woman, *darting in a figure of eight* in between the lights and turning her hands through it as a potter turns clay on the wheel. (*SC* 93; italics added)

Fortunata's movement is still more significant if we read it as a metaphor for the creative power which Jordan insistently pursues along the novel.

thus on the idea that language, and more specifically narrative representation distorts reality and that no two tellings of the same story can ever be equal. In this way, Winterson denies the existence of an ontological essence and lays special emphasis on perception.

Winterson seems to have chosen to rewrite this particular tale because of its central image of flight, which is obviously recurrent in *Sexing the Cherry* as a metaphor for the power of the imagination to free the spirit from the constraints of the everyday. As Jordan says:

> It is certainly true that a criterion for true art, as opposed to its cunning counterfeit, is its ability to take us where the artist has been, to this other different place where we are free from the problems of gravity. When we are drawn into the art we are drawn out of ourselves. We are no longer bound by matter, matter has become what it is: empty space and points of light[31]. (*SC* 91)

The twelve dancing princesses iconically represent Jordan's flying self. Jordan sets this parallelism in motion already at the very beginning of the novel: "I discovered that my own life was written invisibly, was squashed between the facts, was flying without me like the Twelve Dancing Princesses who shot from their window every night and returned home every morning with torn dresses and worn-out slippers and remembered nothing" (*SC* 10). This is further made explicit when Jordan first asks himself: "Was I searching for a dancer whose name I did not know or was I searching for the dancing part of myself?" (SC 40) and then, some pages later, provides the following answer:

> In an effort to find out I am searching for a dancer who may or may not exist, though I was never conscious of beginning this journey. Only in the course of it have I realized its true aim. When I left England I thought I was running away. Running away from uncertainty and confusion but most of all running away from myself. I thought I might become someone else in time, grafted on to something better and stronger. And then I saw that the running away was a running towards. An effort to catch up with my fleet-footed self, living another life in a different way. (*SC* 80)

In accordance with this argument, the stories of the twelve dancing princesses add perspective to Jordan's own narrative. Their relationship to Jordan as narrators is not to be found on a horizontal axis, like the Dog Woman's, but rather in the vertical axis of the three-dimensional grid of the novel.

The story of the twelve dancing princesses also connects with the Dog Woman's narrative and her individual fight against society's evil by denouncing the

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31 The allusion to *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man* (1916) is fairly explicit in Jordan's words. As we have seen in the analysis of *The Passion*, Stephen presents the artist refining himself out of existence and into the realm of the imagination. Furthermore, Stephen describes the moment of creative inspiration as flashing forth "like a point of light" (Joyce 1977: 196).

condition of women in general and lesbians in particular as outsiders in a patriarchal and heterosexual culture. Bruno Bettelheim has repeatedly shown that fairy tales are extremely important in the psychological development of children, regardless of their sex (1991). Contemporary fiction by feminist writers, such as Angela Carter, Emma Tennant or Marina Warner, has denounced the fairy tale as a genre that actively contributes to the maintenance of patriarchal values, which result in a negative socialisation of women. Much of their work consists of revising these fairy stories and offering women instead critical attitudes and active roles. Beginning with *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and ending with *The.Powerbook* Jeanette Winterson's literary trajectory shows in practice the importance of "revised" fairy tales for a feminist and/or lesbian politics. In *Sexing the Cherry* Winterson chooses to re-write the tale of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" and begins exactly at that point where the traditional story ends, immediately after the marriages of the princesses to the brave, clever prince and his brothers. In the original version, marriage is already deprived of its romantic disguise since it is explicitly presented as a male-to-male transaction that objectivises women and curtails their freedom by simultaneously taming their sexuality. All this makes the tale interesting enough for the politics of *Sexing the Cherry*, which restores women to their position of subjects in control of their narratives and refuses the closure provided by the clichéd formula "and they lived happily ever after".

Apart from the stories of the twelve dancing princesses, there is till another embedded narrative in *Sexing the Cherry*, "FORTUNATA'S STORY" (*SC* 131; capitals in the original). Twice removed from the first-level narrative, this story is doubly set *en abyme* because it is the story told to Jordan by Fortunata, as Jordan told it to the Dog-Woman, on account of the latter's discovery of the necklace that Jordan is wearing in place of the medallion she had given him as a baby. Fortunata, a fairy-tale dancing princess, tells the story of the goddess Artemis, a mythical figure, in order to explain why she has chosen to stay single. This story, like those of the dancing princesses, insists on the same idea of offering alternatives to marriage and heterosexuality and, in that sense, is also applicable to both Jordan and the Dog-Woman.

Sexing the Cherry thematises the overwhelming power of words as well as their ability to create a world more real than the empirical one we experience. It has been sufficiently argued that Jordan favours the world of the imagination and rejects reality and its mimetic modes of representation. Even the Dog-Woman, in spite of her being earthy and common-sensical, admits that sometimes to escape from the

harshness of her reality, she takes refuge in the world of the imagination. As she acknowledges:

> Singing is my pleasure, but not in church, for the parson said the gargoyles must remain on the outside, not seek room in the choir stalls. So I sing inside the mountain of my flesh, and my voice is as slender as a reed and my voice as no lard in it. When I sing the dogs sit quiet and people who pass in the night stop their jabbering and discontent and think of other times, when they were happy. And I sing of other times, when I was happy, though I know that these are figments of my mind and nowhere I have ever been. But does it matter if the place cannot be mapped as long as I can still describe it? (*SC* 14-15)

Likewise, one of the flying princesses confesses that language can change reality when she tells that "I was none of these things but I became them. […] As your lover describes you, so you are" (*SC* 56).

Winterson's stance in *Sexing the Cherry* is very much in keeping with the post-structuralist idea that language not only represents but also constructs reality. This is the reason why *Sexing the Cherry* emphasises its linguistically-constructed status and makes of language one of its central themes. Thus several voices in the novel explicitly refer to the difficult relationship that exists between language and both the outer and the inner worlds, that is to say, the material world and the world of feelings. This normally results in the problems of communication that the different characters seem to have in their relationships. Jordan regrets her mother's silence, which prevents him from knowing anything about her feelings: "Before I left I took her down the Thames and out to sea but I don't know if it made any impression on her, or even how much she noticed. We never talked much" (*SC* 101). The Dog-Woman herself explicitly alludes to the difficulties she finds in talking about her feelings, when she says that: "I wanted to tell him things, to tell him I loved him and how much I'd missed him, but thirteen years of words were fighting in my throat and I couldn't get any of them out. There was too much to say and I said nothing" (*SC* 108). Nicolas Jordan voices a similar constrictive experience with language when he meets the female ecologist: "I wanted to thank her for trying to save us, for trying to save me, because it felt that personal, though I don't know why. But when I tried to speak my throat was clogged with feelings that resist words" (*SC* 142). Jordan is perfectly aware of the limitations of language to represent experience when he acknowledges that: "Language always betrays us, tells the truth when we want to lie, and dissolves into formlessness when we would most like to be precise" (*SC* 90).

Winterson denounces that the language we know and use in everyday intercourse is worn out and weary and that, in order to make it meaningful and adequate again, it needs to be revalued and reworked. This is the idea that lies behind

the episode in which Jordan arrives at a city over which words form a thick cloud. Indeed this is the first city Jordan visits in his journeys of the imagination. Rose Tremain understands this episode as Winterson's depiction of "the dilemma of the novelist in the late Eighties: we are in the literary greenhouse. The novel will die if we continue to add to the noxious emissions of tired stories. The only way to a healthier text is via the imagination. We must dream our way out" (1989: 29). Tremain's reading is far from mistaken but Winterson seems to believe that, in order to accomplish a true replenishment of the novel, and of literature in general, it is not only new imaginative stories that we need but also a purified form of language which may help the physical production of those stories and may open our minds towards new alternatives. But first, the world has to be liberated from the weight and oppression of dominant languages:

> The people who throng the streets shout at each other, their voices rising from the mass of heads and floating upwards towards the church spires and the great copper bells that clang the end of the day. Their words, rising up, form a thick cloud over the city, which every so often must be thoroughly cleansed of too much language. Men and women in balloons fly up from the main square and, armed with mops and scrubbing brushes, do battle with the canopy of words trapped under the sun.
>
> The words resist erasure. The oldest and most stubborn form a thick crust of chattering rage. (*SC* 17)

Jordan associates these dominant languages with religion, represented in the allusion to the church and to the "parson caught fornicating with his mother" (*SC* 18); with the university and "the dons, whose arguments had so thickly populated the ether that they had seen neither sun nor rain for the past five years" (*SC* 19); and with the language of love:

> That night two lovers whispering under the lead canopy of the church were killed by their own passion. Their effusion of words, unable to escape through the Saturnian discipline of lead, so filled the spaces of the loft that the air was all driven away. The lovers suffocated, but when the sacristan opened the tiny door the words tumbled him over in their desire to be free, and were seen flying across the city in the shape of doves. (*SC* 19)

But above all, Winterson refers to the language of patriarchy which has been established and sustained for centuries:

> Cleaners have been bitten by words still quarrelling, and in one famous lawsuit a woman whose mop had been eaten and whose hand was badly mauled by a vicious row sought to bring the original antagonists to court. The men responsible made their defence on the grounds that the words no longer belonged to them. Years had passed. Was it their fault that the city had failed to deal with its overheads? The judge ruled against the plaintiff but ordered the city to buy her a new mop. (*SC* 17)

Bente Gade has commented that "Jordan's story of a place where language is more material illustrates the postmodernist argument about the materiality of discourse"

(1999: 37). Jordan's city of words, furthermore, exemplifies a frequent device used by Winterson to destabilise any notion of the transparency of language, which Helena Grice and Tim Woods have described as "the literalisation of metaphor" (1998: 7) and which was already used in *The Passion* when Villanelle falls so passionately in love that she literally loses her heart to the Queen of Spades. In *Sexing the Cherry*, love literally kills those who suffer it (*SC* 19); the Dog-Woman sweats enough liquid to fill a bucket (*SC* 21) and weighs more than an elephant (*SC* 24); princes kissed by princesses turn into frogs (*SC* 52); and women fly like birds (*SC* 60). Nevertheless, the literalisation of metaphor is paradoxically nowhere more explicit than in the Dog-Woman's literal understandings of metaphorical expressions, such as, for example, the one that comes to summarise the meaning of the Law of Moses in the Old Testament: "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". The Dog-Woman takes the words literally and, as she reports:

> By the time of the full moon I had done gallantly, I thought, and went to the meeting to hear stories of injury and revenge. I was suspicious to see that no one had brought any trophy of their right-doings, and so, as an encouragement, I tipped my sack of takings over the floor. I had 119 eyeballs, one missing on account of a man who had lost one already, and over 2,000 teeth.
>
> A number of those in the room fainted immediately, and the preacher asked me to be less zealous in the next fortnight or, if I could not be, at least to leave my sack at home.
>
> I was hurt by this; he had put no quota on our heads, and it seemed to me that my zeal had only made up for the sloth of others. (*SC* 85)

Alongside Biblical language, the Dog-Woman also exposes the conventionality of certain expressions or associations that have to do with female and male sexual organs. At the first sight of a banana, the Dog-Woman, like the rest of people who had gathered to see such a great rarity, take it to be a penis, not a fruit to be peeled and eaten, as the man insists. Nevertheless, some time later, a man she encounters on her way to Wimbledon shows her his penis and offers her to "'Put it in your mouth,' he said. 'Yes, as you would a delicious thing to eat'" (*SC* 41). The Dog-Woman has no doubt in taking him literally and bites his member off, believing that she has done nothing else than what she was expected to:

> The whore from Spitalfields had told me that men like to be consumed in the mouth, but it still seems to me a reckless act, for the member must take some time to grow again. None the less their bodies are their own, and I who know nothing of them must take instructions humbly, and if a man asks me to do the same again, I'm sure I shall, though for myself I felt nothing. (*SC* 41)

By means of the Dog-Woman, Winterson is undoubtedly mocking some constitutive elements of the psychoanalytic theory of sexuality. The above example literalises men's fear of castration. The woman's mouth is depicted as the *vagina dentata*.

Some pages later, it will actually be the Dog-Woman's vagina that swallows her lover whole: "I did mate with a man, but cannot say I felt anything at all, though I had him jammed up to the hilt" (*SC* 106).

In all these cases, literalisation of metaphor works alongside the technique that the formalists called "defamiliarisation" and that Linda Hutcheon considers a basic operation "at work in metafictional parody", since, as she argues: "The laying bare of literary devices in metafiction brings to the reader's attention those formal elements of which, through over-familiarization, he had become unaware" (1984: 24). Furthermore, as Bente Gade has argued in this respect:

> The Dog Woman purports directly to represent reality as it *is* and she confidently situates events within the conventional, linear calendar. However, her trust in language as directly representing the "real" is undermined: taking words literally, she misunderstands people, although she can see no wrong done. […] While these misunderstandings have a humorous effect, they also direct focus to the ambiguity of language and the perpetual deferral of meaning. (1999: 33; italics in the original)

Winterson offers her novel as a word-dependent, self-sufficient world which sublimates all distinctions between ontological and epistemological concerns, making real Jordan's imaginary journeys and his utopian statement that: "There will be a moment (though of course it won't be a moment) when we will know (*though knowing will no longer be separate from being*) that we are a part of all we have met and that all we have met was already a part of us" (*SC* 90; italics added). In order to reach this moment of epiphany, a new language is needed: the language of women that Jordan learns in the course of his inner journeys: "I noticed that women have a private language. A language not dependent on the constructions of men but structured by signs and expressions, and that uses ordinary words as code words meaning something other" (*SC* 29). *Sexing the Cherry* disrupts the essential nature of givens and calls attention to the way in which language influences and/or modifies the reality we perceive. Such is the Biblical story of Creation, the Word brings the world into existence: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis I, 3). *Sexing the Cherry* is an attempt at restoring light to the world, to the human condition and to the art of fiction. To that extent, as the title manifestly shows, *Sexing* is a creation story that revises long established myths and traditions.

As we have seen, *Sexing the Cherry* is crammed with speakers which offer a multiplicity of perspectives and retellings. All this makes of the novel an open space in which alternative viewpoints coexist and interact. *Sexing the Cherry* lacks the salient presence of an authoritative narrator to whom the rest of narrative voices

might be subordinated[32], a feature which makes of Winterson's book an example of what Monika Fludernik names "montage writing" (1996: 281), and which is a form of narrative presentation which offers a multiplicity of competing discourses in substitution of the more traditional Jamesian notion of telling. As Fludernik notes, by rejecting the presence of a single ruling consciousness which would frame the rest of discourses in the text, montage writing requires a more sophisticated interpretative activity on the part of the reader insofar as "the novel threatens to disintegrate into a congeries of unrelated discourses whose juxtaposition at best betrays the shaping hand of an arranger behind the scenes who is responsible for the montage" (278). The discourses juxtaposed in *Sexing the Cherry* are by no means unrelated, though. Rather on the contrary they are closely *interrelated* by the mesmerising repetition of phrases or whole sentences (what I have called "discursive echoes" and presented in appendix III) as well as by theme. *Sexing the Cherry* escapes in this way any threat of disintegration and offers itself as a spatio-temporal narrative continuum inside of which plain drawings of pineapples, bananas, flying princesses, rudimentary weapons, or sailing boats remember the reader, on the one hand, that she or he is moving across different spatio-temporal co-ordinates and along historical worlds and imaginative realms; on the other hand, the reader is insistently made aware of the fact that she or he has access to a multiplicity of voices which provide complementary and/or opposed perspectives on the narrated events. As Bente Gade remarks:

> Winterson's writing itself is deconstructive: the text undermines the innocence of conventional forms of representation and seeks alternative ways of describing human experiences. Thus Jordan's opposition to traditional ways of representing life (diaries and maps) directs attention to the power and distortion of these discourses. Empowering the inner life of the imagination, the text challenges these outer representations. (1999: 29)

Sexing the Cherry is a cross-time story, a story in which real and imagined selves can meet in a narrative spatio-temporal continuum that does away with the limiting notion of chronology and places the real and the imaginary at the same ontological level. In so doing, this story constructs and deconstructs itself in and through language, which is exposed as ideologically laden and culturally bound. As hinted at in the opening quotations, this de-constructive movement affects physical certainties, shakes narrative conventions, and may even have a reflection on the

[32] Although *Sexing the Cherry* offers evidence as to the existence of a surrogate author who plays with the different possibilities that language and, by extension, narrative offers for the telling of a story and presents itself inside the text indistinctly as author, homodiegetic narrator or heterodiegetic narrator, and who also imagines its other selves in the persons of the various characters that populate the novel.

identity of characters. Paradoxically, then, spatial fragmentation does not lead to disintegration but to the transcendence of both spatio-temporal co-ordinates and individual identities. As Lorna Sage has argued: "there's a quest lurking in this journey, a quest for a self that's not just a body or a 'soul', but a vagrant, multiple 'I'" (1989: 51). The positive result of the quest for this multiple 'I' which transcends spatio-temporal and identity boundaries is to be found at the very end of the novel, when Jordan progressively changes the first-person singular pronoun 'I' by the more comprehensive 'we':

> As I drew my ship out of London I knew I would never go there again. For a time I felt only sadness, and then, for no reason, I was filled with hope. The future lies ahead like a glittering city, but like the cities of the desert disappears when approached. In certain lights it is easy to see the towers and the domes, even the people going to and fro. We speak of it with longing and with love. (*SC* 144)

As we have seen, Christopher Pressler has correctly argued that *Sexing the Cherry* is a paradoxical book since its "central premise, the force that holds [it] firmly together, is ironically that nothing solid actually exists" (2000: 22). In *Sexing the Cherry*, established certainties give way to shifting appearances and given truths are confronted with a multiplicity of alternative possibilities. This is what Susana Onega has intelligently called Winterson's "politics of uncertainty" (1996), whose central tenet is that, since the solidity of the world has been scientifically disproved by the Einsteinian theory of relativity, storytelling and narrative prove equally valid roads towards the acquisition of knowledge.

In this sense, *Sexing the Cherry* is also a parodic rewriting of a third poem by Andrew Marvell, "A Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body". Reminiscent of such traditional medieval debates as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Marvell presents a dialogic poem in which two voices, representing the body and the soul, may be seen defending in turn their opposed positions. Emphasis is, therefore, laid on fragmentation since the self is cut into two irreconcilable halves which blame their misery on one another. Hence, the Soul describes itself as a prisoner of the Body:

> SOUL
> O, who shall from this dungeon raise
> A soul, enslaved so many ways,
> With bolts of bones, that fettered stands
> In feet, and manacled in hands. (1985a: 103)

and the Body presents itself as a hostage of the Soul:

> BODY
> O, who shall me deliver whole,
> From bonds of this tyrannic soul,

> Which, stretched upright, impales me so,
> That mine own precipice I go; (1985a: 104)

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson reworks the typical structure of the medieval debate by juxtaposing and strictly intercalating the discourses of Jordan and the Dog-Woman, and by making each of them respectively a representative of the Cartesian split between spirit and matter, as exposed in Marvell's "Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body". The similarities in form between Marvell's poem and Winterson's fiction prove more arresting by the fact that, as shown in the fragments by Marvell quoted in the preceding page, Winterson exploits the same kind of thematic symmetry in the discourses of Jordan and the Dog-Woman as evinced in their first two utterances. The pineapple, as Jordan's icon, introduces his speech with a reference to his name and a description of landscape with a special emphasis on the river:

> MY NAME IS Jordan. This is the first thing I saw.
>
> It was night, about a quarter to twelve, the sky divided in halves, one cloudy, the other fair. The clouds hung over the wood, there was no distance between them and the top of the trees. Where the sky was clear, over the river and the flat fields newly ploughed, the moon, almost full, shone out of a yellow aureole and reflected in the bow of the water. (*SC* 9)

Likewise, the banana, as the Dog-Woman's icon, introduces her speech in which she makes reference to her lack of a proper name and describes the moment in which she finds Jordan in the river:

> I had a name but I have forgotten it.
>
> They call me the Dog-Woman and it will do. 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 Tames? (*SC* 11)

Nevertheless, other voices in the text, especially those of Fortunata and Nicolas Jordan, widen the scope of these initially dual symmetric presentations and destroy the intended opposition and inevitable fragmentation of the self in Marvell's poem in favour of the recognition of the self as multiple in Winterson's text. In this sense, Jordan echoes himself at the beginning of his narrative in his introduction to Fortunata:

> Opposite me, attentive and smiling, was the woman I had first seen at dinner, what seemed like years ago and might have been days.
>
> "My name is Jordan," I said. (*SC* 93)

and Fortunata repeats Jordan's scheme in her own presentation, which endows what would otherwise be a normal turn taking with a mesmerising rhythm:

> "My name is Fortunata," she said. "This is the first thing I saw.

> It was winter. The ground was hard and white. There were late roses in the hedges, wild and red, and the holly tree was dark green with blazing berries. (*SC* 93-94)

Thus, when Nicolas Jordan introduces himself to the reader, almost at the end of the book, his words link him with the discourses of each of his textual predecessors calling attention to the fact that he is a part of the whole, not a fragment which opposes another fragment but part of the palimpsest of the self as devised by Winterson in *Sexing the Cherry*:

> "My name is Nicolas Jordan," I said.
> We ate supper from her campfire: baked potatoes and beans and tin mugs of tea. She didn't want to talk much so we sat back to back watching the stars. (*SC* 142)

It has already been mentioned that Winterson's fiction is clearly deconstructive. Thus, in using the form of the medieval debate while at the same time multiplying the number of echoing voices which compose the space of her text, Winterson paradoxically destabilises the orthodox seventeenth-century established opposition between matter and spirit as exposed in Marvell's poem[33]. Presenting a multiplicity of distinct bodies, male and female, eyes that see differently and ears capable of manifold hearing, Winterson shows Marvell's Soul the way to overcome its subjugation to singleness, as denounced in the following lines of Marvell's poem:

> Here blinded with *an* eye; and there
> Deaf with the drumming of *an* ear (1985a: 103; italics added)

Quoting Fortunata's words, the only apparently heterodiegetic, "authorial" voice, which is located at the very centre of *Sexing the Cherry*, insists on the fact that "*Through the body, the body is conquered*" (*SC* 72; italics in the original) and details the means by which this form of transcendence is achieved when it explains Fortunata's technique in the following metaphysical terms:

> *She asks them to meditate on a five-pointed star in the belly and to watch the points push outwards, the fifth point into the head. She spins them, impaled with light, arms upraised, one leg at a triangle across the other thigh, one foot, on point, on a penny coin, and spins them, until all features are blurred, until the human being almost resembles a freed spirit from a darkened jar.* (*SC* 72; italics in the original)

In her above-mentioned article, Onega brings to the reader's attention the fact that the "attribution of paradisal features to the Bermudas and the Barbados was a common seventeenth-century metaphor that became a literal belief for the most radical Puritans after the fall of the Commonwealth" (1999: 452). The paradise that

[33] Helga Quadflieg is conscious of the importance of "another long-term axiom which dates back to the 17th century […] Descartes' centralization of the human mind and the dualism of body and soul or the material and the immaterial that went with it" (1997: 105).

Winterson envisions differs greatly from that of Marvell in his poem "Bermudas". Lucie Armitt has argued that, although in *Sexing the Cherry* Jordan's "attendant fascination with the exploration of the unknown in the form of sea-voyages to newly discovered lands" initially seems to result from "a perceived loss of innocence caused by civil unrest at home", his efforts "prove fruitless in their attempt to recapture Eden" (1999: 188). But, as Jordan himself explains:

> The Buddhists say there are 149 ways to God. I'm not looking for God, only for myself, and that is far more complicated. God has 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. […] I have met a great many pilgrims on their way towards God and I wonder why they have chosen to look for him rather than themselves. […] Some of them have told me that the very point of searching for God is to forget about oneself, to lose oneself for ever. (*SC* 102-103)

Thus, simultaneous with Jordan's arrival at Barbados, is his discovery and exploration of another island where Jordan finds no exotic fruits but "a deep pit full of worn-out ballet shoes. The satin was stained and the toes were scuffed through in holes" (*SC* 92). This is Fortunata's home, a feminine paradise in which Jordan finds himself. Back home Henri takes with him two complementary findings. One is the pineapple, which appeases his need of becoming a hero, who would "bring back something that mattered" (*SC* 100) from his explorations around the world. The other, that "something" he had lost, knowledge of the self as desiring and, consequently, as incomplete, a discovery he expresses as follows:

> The sense of loss was hard to talk about. What could I have lost when I never had anything to begin with?
>
> I had myself to begin with, and that is what I lost. Lost it in my mother because she is bigger and stronger than me and that's not how it's supposed to be with sons. But lost it more importantly in the gap between my ideal of myself and my pounding heart. (*SC* 101)

By rejecting the Cartesian notion of identity as unified and replacing it with the postmodern perception of identity as something which is perpetually reconstructed, the text transcends all boundaries and, as the critic Bente Gade has underlined, illustrates within its pages the postmodernist substitution of "the *cogito* with a *desidero*", with the interesting implications derived from this shift:

> Whereas the *cogito* refers to the rational subject with an inner core that may be expressed, the *desidero* relates identity to unconscious desire and in consequence makes it retrospective: we can only know who we are by seeing where we have been or how we have practised our identity. This directs attention to the narratological perception of identity, that it only exists as narrative. (1999: 29; italics in the original)

Gade's words perfectly explain what in the first chapter of this work was referred to as the shared aim in Winterson's life and works: representing the self as narrative, as

a process which is modified with every retelling, as a palimpsest of discursive *personae*, the self *en abyme*.

As pointed out above, *Sexing the Cherry* apparently lacks the salient presence of an authoritative narrator to whom the narrative voices of the four narrator-characters might be subordinated although, as a result of the profound discursive echoes that are established among them, that authorial presence seems to lurk underneath the whole text —or beyond, or above, in Stephen Dedalus's terms. The reader listens instead to a mosaic of voices[34]. Some of them are easy to identify due to the fact that they are introduced by a precise drawing that, as has already been shown, links each piece of discourse with the character-narrator that utters it. However, some others are neither overtly attached to any of the above-mentioned narrators nor presented as belonging to any other narrative voice. I am referring, on the one hand, to the two epigraphs which are situated at the very beginning of the text but which are already a part of it; and, on the other, to the central page of the novel, page 72, which is not framed by any drawing but which is singled out and differentiated from the Dog-Woman's speech by a wide blank in the previous page and by the use of italics, and from Jordan's narrative, to which it precedes by the insertion of the icon of a pineapple. These two unidentified pieces of discourse further point to the ambiguous and shifting status of narration in *Sexing the Cherry* because, as Lorna Sage commented in an acute review of the novel:

> The book's major juggling act is the one which keeps all its first persons in the air, sometimes sounding like the author, at other times some other he or she, then or now. Jeanette Winterson produces, as if out of a hat, the ancient idea that art takes you out of yourself and then gives it a new twist: out of yourself into your selves. (1989: 51)

This italicised page stands at the same narrative level as the two epigraphs which stand out from the rest of the narrative not only because of their specific disposition before the first character-bound narration, but also because of the smaller size of the font used. As we have already pointed out, these opening fragments contain the basic ideological tenets which are elaborated as the novel moves forward. Unlike other epigraphs used by Winterson in both her previous and later fictions,

[34] This amalgam of voices is multiplied by the fact that the narrators constantly interrupt one another. All in all, the narrative voice changes on no less than thirty eight occasions in the course of the novel. Thus, although the text is not divided into conventional parts, far from flowing freely and uninterruptedly, the narrative is fragmented into a succession of speeches of various lengths, which the text insists on attaching to the voice by which they are uttered, in spite of the fact that each of the characters expresses himself or herself in an utterly personal and distinctive style. Such an insistence lays special emphasis on what Rose Tremain has described as the novel's frequent shifts of focus (1989: 29).

these fragments are not followed by the name of their authors[35]. Rather on the contrary, they seem to be already a part of the text and to be singled out as two gnomic thoughts to be borne in mind throughout the reading process. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that these two ideas are frequently repeated with slight variations in the text. Let us see some examples. The Dog-Woman echoes the first epigraph when she reports what Jordan has taught her about his journeys:

> Then he said, "On my travels I visited an Indian tribe known as the Hopi. I could not understand them, but in their company they had an old European man, Spanish I think, though he spoke English to us. He said he had been captured by the tribe and now lived as one of them. I offered him passage home but he laughed in my face. I asked if their language had some similarity to Spanish and he laughed again and said, fantastically, that their language has no grammar in the way we recognize it. Most bizarre of all, they have no tenses for past, present and future. They do not sense time in that way. For them, time is one". (*SC* 134-135)

Even more significant still is the fact that the last words uttered by Jordan at the end of the book repeat the meaning of the two epigraphs with which the novel begins, thus echoing T. S. Eliot's words at the beginning of "Burnt Norton"[36]:

> The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky. The river runs from one country to another without stopping. And even the most solid of things and the most real, the best-loved and the well-known, are only shadows on the wall. Empty space and points of light. (*SC* 144)

Although the epigraphs belong to the paratext of *Sexing the Cherry*, and can therefore in theory only be ascribed to an extradiegetic narrator, identifiable with the author, the fact that Jordan uses virtually the same words to close the book unsettles this clear-cut narratological distinction between extra and intradiegetic narrators, suggesting that Jordan is both. Indeed, Jordan is the only character-narrator in the novel who explicitly talks about becoming a writer, when he declares his intention of recording only part of the experiences he has lived in the course of his journeys. He also establishes a direct dialogue with his potential readers at the beginning of his narrative, in which he settles the rules of the game he is about to propose. Thus, although he announces in the very first page of his narrative that what follows is a

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35 As we have seen, the first epigraph is based on the controversial theory developed by Sapir and Whorf on the language of the Hopi. The second refers back to the definition of matter in post-Newtonian physics.

36 Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present. (Eliot 1959: 171)

travel book —one of the best-regarded genres in the seventeenth century—, Jordan immediately thwarts his readers' expectations and warns them against ready-made assumptions and generic conventions by bringing to the fore its special nature:

> Every 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 in some other place or time*. I could tell you the truth as you will find it in diaries and maps and log-books. I could faithfully describe all that I saw and heard and give you a travel book. You could follow it then, tracing those travels with your finger, putting red flags where I went. (*SC* 9-10; italics added)

Precisely because Jordan is perfectly aware of the generic conventions upon which travel books are traditionally built, he self-consciously refuses to write what may be called "factual fiction" and chooses instead to give free rein to his imagination. In so doing, Jordan separates his physical journeys from the imaginary ones and imposes on them a hierarchy that benefits the latter. Jordan, furthermore, admits his refusal of mimetic representation in his narrative in favour of an imaginative alternative, when he acknowledges that he has written two complementary books: the first one in the manner of seventeenth-century travel literature and the second one much more in accordance with a postmodern readership:

> I've kept the log book for the ship. Meticulously. And I've kept a book of my own, and for every journey we have made together I've written down my own journey and drawn my own map. I can't show this to the others, but I believe it to be a faithful account of what happened, at least of what happened to me. (*SC* 102)

Jordan's discourse, furthermore, contains most of the digressions on art, language, and on the nature of narrative and of its component elements which are to be found in the novel. His inner journey, the one he chooses to present the reader with, may be said to function as an extended metaphor for his meditations on the creative process, which result in the text we are reading. Jordan refers to his inner journey thus:

> Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning, on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited. In a single day the mind can make a millpond of the oceans. Some people who have never crossed the land they were born on have travelled all over the world. The journey is not linear, it is always back and forth, denying the calendar, the wrinkles and lines of the body. The self is not contained in any moment or place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once. (SC 80)

This presentation of his journey perfectly suits the basic tenets upon which the novel has been built: the refusal of linearity in the presentation of events, the particular understanding of time as the sum of present moments, which allows characters who inhabit apparently different historical periods to co-exist as mere co-ordinates in a

spatio-temporal grid, and the depiction of the self as multiple. Jordan's digressions on the nature of time, matter, or memory undermine traditional perception of givens and reinstate them instead as cultural constructs, conventionally agreed upon. This attitude of his results in the destabilisation of ontologies and gives way to an alternative form of narrative representation which is extremely self-conscious and which evinces the narrator's enormous potential of manipulation when fixed categories have been undermined and when everything depends upon discourse:

> *Memory 1*: The scene I have just described to you may lie in the future or the past. Either I have found Fortunata or I will find her. I cannot be sure. Either I am remembering her or I am still imagining her. But she is somewhere in the grid of time, a co-ordinate, as I am (*SC* 93; italics in the original)

Jordan's discourses also incorporate what may be read as authorial notes, pieces of the story which are presented in their embryonic form, so to speak. This is the case of the section Jordan titles "HALLUCINATIONS AND DISEASES OF THE MIND" (*SC* 81; capitals in the original) and, more precisely, of the extracts that follow his first two italicised presentations of time:

> *Time 1*: A young man on board an Admiralty salvage tug close to the mouth of the Thames goes on deck to look at the stars. His mates are asleep, the lifeboats firmly battened. A man stands next to him and says "I have heard they are burying the King at Windsor. It is more than a hundred years since Henry was left to rot there beneath a purple pall. Jane Seymour is beside him. No monarch has ever been buried there since. There is room for Charles, a little room."
>
> The young man turns astonished; he knows of no King, only a Queen, who is far from dead. He opens his mouth to protest the joke and finds he is face to face with John Tradescant. Above them the sails whip in the wind.
>
> *Time 2*: They are cat-calling the girl as she comes out of school. She hates them, she wants to kill them. They tell her she smells, that she's too fat, too tall. She walks home along the river bank to a council flat in Upper Thames Street. The traffic deafens her. She climbs up the steps at Waterloo Bridge to look at St Paul's glinting in the evening. She can't see St Paul's. All she can see are rows of wooden stakes and uncertain craft bobbing along the water. She can't hear the traffic any more, the roar of dogs is deafening. Coming to herself, she kicks the bunch of hounds and drags her blanket shawl closer to her. For a moment she felt dizzy, lost her balance, but no, she's home as always. She can see her hut. Jordan will be waiting for her. She doesn't have to see him to know he's there. (*SC* 82; italics in the original)

Each of these fragments is later developed as part of the narrative by respectively Nicolas Jordan (*SC* 121) and the female ecologist (*SC* 128), when each of them tells about their uncanny experience of time-travel as they literally become one with their seventeenth-century *alter egos*.

Jordan goes so far as to adopt a position of authority with regard to his fellow narrators, when he claims that:

> *Lies 8*: It was not the first thing she saw, how could it have been? Nor was the night in the fog-covered field the first thing I saw. But before then we were like those who dream and pass through life as a series of shadows. And so what we have told you is true, although it is not. (*SC* 95; italics in the original)

The titles of all these self-conscious breaks in the development of the plot, and some others which are scattered along the novel as a means to highlight its constructed nature, stand out from the rest of the narrative because they are written in italics. It could be safely affirmed, then, that this is a typographical technique used by Winterson to separate Jordan's intradiegetic narration from the extradiegetic narration of a surrogate author that might be Jordan himself. The same might be said of the piece of narrative that occupies the physical centre of the novel and is written in italics summarising of Fortunata's story and her dancing school[37]: "*At a dancing school in a remote place, Fortunata teaches her pupils to become points of light*" (*SC* 72; italics in the original). Thus, as in *The Waves* (1931) and in *Invisible Cities* (1972), the boundaries between intra and extradiegetic narration are purposely blurred, suggesting the fictionality of the flesh-and-blood author and the world she or he inhabits.

[37] Later in the novel, Jordan re-tells this same story as homodiegetic narrator.

3. RE-GENDERING CHRONOTOPES IN *SEXING THE CHERRY*

Just as the use of a multiplicity of voices echoing one another has been shown to represent textually the multiplicity of the self, in the following pages I intend to show how Winterson uses what can be described as a modified version of the Bakhtinian chronotope, that is to say, of the time-space correlative as represented in literature, in order to challenge traditional definitions of gender, even if, admittedly, she does not manage to transcend gender constraints. Approaching *Sexing the Cherry* from the point of view of the chronotope is, therefore, still more productive that it was with regard to *The Passion*, although identifying, and very especially classifying, the different chronotopes that appear in the novel is also much more problematic. In the analysis of *The Passion* I spoke of two different chronotopes which I called the historical chronotope and the chronotope of fantasy, or mythical chronotope. Each of them were respectively gendered male and female and were seen to trigger off two specific forms of narrative representation of events, respectively, referential time and seasonal or cyclical time.

The opposition that existed in *The Passion* between the chronotopes of history and fantasy, which was seen to modify characters' behaviour and narrative standpoints, is radically transformed in *Sexing the Cherry* where these two chronotopes engage dialogically and complement themselves in order to provide the reader with a more comprehensive view of the world depicted in the novel. As we have just seen, *Sexing the Cherry* contains not one but two historical presents: the first one roughly expands from the year 1630 to the year 1666; the second one is to be situated somewhere in the year 1990. In spite of the fact that there is a temporal distance of more than three centuries between these two epochs, the novel presents them as synchronic and simultaneous, so much so that it allows characters to move freely along and across them. The chronotope of fantasy, on the other hand, is not presented as ontologically at a level with the chronotope of history, as was the case in *The Passion*, but rather as the product of one of the character's imagination, a form of escape from an oppressive reality. These are only some of the problems that have to be surmounted before providing a satisfactory classification of the chronotopes in *Sexing the Cherry*. The literary critic Lynne Pearce has dealt with this

issue at length and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, has noted that the greatest complication with respect to the classification of chronotopes lies in the ambiguity with which this term was employed by Bakhtin.

The classification of chronotopes in *Sexing the Cherry* is, then, further complicated by the co-existence in the text of major chronotopes "those that are more fundamental and wide-ranging" (Bakhtin 1981: 252), such as the adventure chronotope or the chronotope of romantic love, with other, more local or minor chronotopes, such as the chronotope of the road and the chronotope of encounter. The chronotopes of history, of adventure, of fantasy, and of romantic love are deeply intertwined, or as Pearce puts it, "one chronotope slides into another" (1994: 177). On the one hand, it is in the course of his adventures as a sailor apprentice with John Tradescant, that is to say, inside the major chronotope of history, that Jordan initiates his voyages of the imagination within the chronotope of fantasy. In turn, these parallel journeys lead Jordan to see Fortunata, the dancer, and to immediately fall in love with her, thus opening the way to the development of the chronotope of romantic love. On the other hand, it is within the chronotope of romantic love that Jordan enters a new chronotope of adventure whose aim is that of finding her beloved and which comes to an end with the chronotope of encounter. Although all this confusing mixture of elements could lead us to think that the simplest way of classifying chronotopes in *Sexing the Cherry* would be perhaps, as Pearce suggests, "presenting the subjective temporal experience of the individual narrators as a chronotopic continuity", I totally agree with her when she asserts that: "This last possibility would, however, inevitably undermine the key theoretical premises of the text: that individual characters can inhabit/move between different chronotopes and that chronotopes are *intersubjective* and not commensurate with individual consciousnesses" (1994: 177; italics in the original).

Having said this and acknowledging that any classification of the chronotopes of *Sexing the Cherry* would be equally partial and imperfect, I shall focus my analysis on three main chronotopic areas, namely, the two historical presents, the sea voyage, and the cities of the imagination. These areas deviate from Bakhtin's formulation of the chronotope in two respects. On the one hand, they have fairly thin and unclear spatio-temporal boundaries which not only readers but also characters can and do traverse. This is a possibility that Bakhtin never took into consideration because for him:

> Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another or find themselves in more complex interrelationships. The relationships themselves that exist *among* chronotopes cannot enter into any of the

> relationships contained *within* chronotopes. The general characteristic of these interactions is that they are *dialogical* (in the broadest use of the word). But this dialogue cannot enter into the world represented in the work, nor into any of the chronotopes represented in it; it is outside the world represented, although not outside the work as a whole. It (this dialogue) enters the world of the author, the performer, and the world of the listeners and readers. (1981: 252; italics in the original)

Further, although Bakhtin theorises the chronotope as gender neutral, in *Sexing the Cherry* chronotopic areas are explicitly and variously gendered, as it is my intention to show.

In the first part of the analysis of *Sexing the Cherry*, it was already established that most of the story takes place in seventeenth-century England and that, almost at the end of the novel, a wide temporal leap situates the reader in the twentieth century. It has also been explained that, although textually set apart by an internal page marker which announces that the action is retaken "some years later" when in fact more than three centuries have passed, the novel insists on representing these two moments outside time, and therefore, outside history, that is to say, as simultaneous and co-terminous. As Jordan learns in the course of his journeys: "Thinking about time is like turning the globe round and round, recognizing that all journeys exist simultaneously, that to be in one place is not to deny the existence of another, even though that place cannot be felt or seen, our usual criteria for belief" (*SC* 89). In order to predicate upon the synchronicity of time, *Sexing the Cherry* insists on exposing the conventionality of the temporal divisions between past, present and future and, consequently, on the fact that the linear succession of events in narrative is also part of the same construction. It is again Jordan, as a surrogate author, who lays bare his narrative techniques and who gives voice to the novel's basic tenet, when he warns the reader that:

> Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited. In a single day, the mind can make a millpond of the oceans. Some people who have never crossed the land they were born on have travelled all over the world. The journey is not linear, it is always back and forth, denying the calendar, the wrinkles and lines of the body. The self is not contained in any moment or any place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once. (*SC* 80)

Talking about the crisis of representational time in postmodernist fiction, Elizabeth Ermarth provides a suitable explanation for the explicit refusal of historical time as discussed and developed in *Sexing the Cherry* and its substitution by a timeless present, a moment of synchronicity:

> Historical time, and the consciousness extensive with it, is at least potentially interchangeable among individuals because it is consciousness of the *same* thing: an invariant world, one that changes according to certain laws that do not change. Any

> individual perspective is only arbitrarily limited; it is only the "accidents" of language, nationality, gender, and so on that obscure its potentially cosmic vision. But this condition notwithstanding, if each individual could see all the world (so the representational convention of time goes), all would see the *same* world. (1992: 30; italics in the original)

Ermarth explains that: "Postmodernist novelists begin their primary task of reformulating temporality by showing readers *that* such an idea of temporality is a convention and a collective act of faith, not a condition of nature" (1992: 30; italics in the original). Jordan uses the example of the Hopi to highlight this conventionality in the opening epigraphs of the novel and later exposes some of these conventionalisms by presenting them as long-established lies:

> *Lies 1*: There is only the present and nothing to remember.
> *Lies 2*: Time is a straight line.
> *Lies 3*: The difference between the past and the future is that one has happened while the other has not.
> *Lies 4*: We can only be in one place at a time. (*SC* 83; italics in the original)

In line with the theoretical premises of the novel, I will analyse the two historical presents depicted in it as part of the same chronotopic whole, the chronotope of history. Although these two historical presents and their inhabitants slide into one another blurring all chronotopic boundaries, for the sake of clarity it will be necessary to refer to each of these presents separately. Both the period 1630-1666 and the year 1990 are shared by two main characters, one male and the other female. The former serves as location to Jordan and the Dog-Woman while the latter contextualises Nicolas Jordan and the unnamed female ecologist.

As I have already pointed out, Jordan and the Dog-Woman do not seem to be living in the same world. Jordan's basic relationship with the historical here and now in which he has chanced to be living is that of escape. Already when he was three, the Dog-Woman discovered Jordan's ability to imagine other worlds as a form of escape when he sees a banana for the first time. As the Dog-Woman recalls, Jordan hides among the crowd and sets his imagination free: "I put my head next to his head and looked where he looked and I saw deep blue waters against a pale shore and trees whose branches sang with green and birds in fairground colours and an old man in a loin-cloth" (*SC* 13). Later, when he is nineteen years old and immediately after the public execution of the King, Jordan again escapes the material world through his imagination. As the Dog-Woman explains: "In the Crown of Thorns that night Tradescant made plans to take ship and leave us. I saw the look on Jordan's face and my heart became a captive in a locked room. I couldn't reach him now. I knew he would go" (*SC* 71).

It may be safely affirmed then that, since the historical present 1630-1666 is represented mostly through the narration of the Dog-Woman, it is her spatio-temporal experience of seventeenth-century London that the reader has access to. As Lynne Pearce has observed, the Dog-Woman's presentation of this chronotope is "typically Rabelaisian" (1994: 178).

As is well known, Mikhail Bakhtin showed a deep critical interest in the work of the French writer François Rabelais, to whose revaluation he greatly contributed in the early twentieth century. Bakhtin approaches Rabelais' work at length for the first time in "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (1937-1938), where he dedicates a first chapter to the analysis of the basic features of what he called the Rabelaisian chronotope and a second chapter to illustrate its origins in folklore and popular culture. Almost thirty years later, Bakhtin would complete what many have seen as one of his masterpieces, a book itself of Rabelaisian proportions, titled *Rabelais and His World* (1965), where he completed the analysis of the Rabelaisian chronotope he had initiated in "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel". According to Bakhtin:

> Rabelais' task is to purge the spatial and temporal world of those remnants of a transcendent world view still present in it, to clean away symbolic and hierarchical interpretations still clinging to this vertical world, to purge it of the contagion of "antiphysis" that had infected it. In Rabelais this polemical task is fused with a more affirmative one: the re-creation of a spatially and temporally adequate world able to provide a new chronotope for a new, whole and harmonious man, and for new forms of human communication. (1981: 168)

The Dog-Woman rejects in principle everything that is not directly concerned with the here and now and mocks any statement or idea that has the slightest scent of metaphysics. Thus, she dismisses Tradescant's argument that "every mapped-out journey contains another journey hidden in its lines" (*SC* 23) because she considers it impractical and contrary to her own beliefs: "I pooh-poohed this, for the earth is surely a manageable place made of blood and stone and entirely flat. I believe I could walk from one side to the other, had I the inclination. And if a great body of us had the inclination there would be no part of the earth left untouched" (*SC* 23). In *Sexing the Cherry*, as in the works of Rabelais, the Dog-Woman's rejection of the transcendental results in an emphatic focus on the material and more specifically on the corporeal. Mary Russo has developed an interesting theoretical work on "the female grotesque", in which she argues that:

> The central category around which Bakhtin organizes his reading of Rabelais as a carnivalesque text is "grotesque realism", with particular emphasis on the grotesque body. The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the Classical body which

> is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world. (1994: 62-63).

All along the novel, the Dog-Woman proves to have a certain fixity with bodies: her own, which is depicted as excessive and grotesque, and others, to which she shows no respect. The Dog-Woman is herself an icon of excess, strongly reminiscent of such Rabelaisian characters as Gargantua and, to a lesser extent, his son Pantagruel. Her first attempt at self portrait is utterly grotesque and fairly disgusting:

> How hideous am I?
>
> My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. I had smallpox when I was a girl and the caves in my face are home enough for fleas. But I have fine blue eyes that see in the dark. As for my size, I know only that before Jordan was found a travelling circus came through Cheapside, and in that circus was an elephant. We were all pleased to see the elephant, a huge beast with a wandering nose. Its trick was to sit itself in a seat like any well-bred gentleman, and wear an eyeglass. There was a seat on its opposite side, and a guessing game was to offer up a certain number of persons to climb on to the seat, topsyturvy, as best they could, and outweigh Samson, as the elephant was named. No one had succeeded, though the prize was a vat of ale. (*SC* 24)

The Dog-Woman succeeds on her own, though, with no external aid. She not only outweighs Samson but sends the elephant far away into the sky to the enormous surprise of the people that have witnessed such a wonder. Nevertheless, in line with the carnivalesque, which always allows for comicity, surprise and the feeling that everything is relative, the Dog-Woman remarks: "It is a responsibility for a woman to have forced an elephant into the sky. What it says of my size I cannot tell, for an elephant looks big, but how am I to know what it weighs? A balloon looks big and weighs nothing" (*SC* 25). The Dog-Woman insists on the relativity of appearances by recalling how:

> When I was a child my father swung me up on to his knees to tell a story and I broke both his legs. He never touched me again, except with the point of the whip he used for the dogs. But my mother, who lived only a while and was so light that she dared not go out in a wind, could swing me on her back and carry me for miles. (*SC* 25)

Her description abounds in examples of hyperbole, exaggeration and excess, which are for Bakhtin fundamental attributes of grotesque realism. It is because of her size that the Dog-Woman is physically degraded by her father[38], who decides to make an

[38] Apart from the fact that she lives with the dogs she breeds as a means to earn her living, the fact that her mother dies early and that she is left with a father who treats her as if she were a dog might perhaps be another reason why, as she says at the beginning of her story: "I had a name but I have forgotten it. They call me the Dog-Woman and it will do" (*SC* 11). The establishment of analogies between human beings and the animal world is also a feature of the poetics of grotesque realism, as David Danow has observed (1995: 109).

exhibition of her daughter as a means to earn some money, an idea which eventually causes his death:

> One night my father tried to steal me and sell me to a man with one leg. They had a barrel ready to put me in, but no sooner had they slammed on the lid than I burst the bonds of the barrel and came flying out at my father's throat.
>
> This was my first murder. (*SC* 107)

The Dog-Woman is narrativising here the idea of woman as spectacle[39], as freak of nature, an idea which is associated as well with the image of flight as metaphor for woman's freedom and individualism. Nevertheless, in the case of the Dog-Woman, and in opposition to that of the flying princesses, as will be seen in due course, the image of flight should not be understood as "freedom from oppressive bodily containment", or the freedom of transcendence (Russo 1994: 26). Precisely because of her size, the Dog-Woman is earthy and materialistic, which is why references to her vastness abound in the novel. In accordance with the double face of the carnivalesque, her size can either be threatening and destructive: "Firebrace started his wriggling, so I lifted him clean from the floor and brought him to my eye level. He began to dribble" (*SC* 65); or it may be caring and protective: "When Jordan was new I put him on the palm of my hand the way I would a puppy, and held him to my face and let him pick the fleas out of my scars" (*SC* 25). Quite frequently, as in this last quotation, the Dog-Woman's allusions to her size are reminiscent of some passages in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), especially those which situate Gulliver in the land of the Lilliputians, of which the following extract may be an example:

> My gentleness and good behaviour had gained so far on the Emperor and his Court, and indeed upon the army and people in general, that I began to conceive hopes of getting my liberty in a short time. I took all possible methods to cultivate this favourable disposition. The natives came by degrees to be less apprehensive of any danger from me. I would sometimes lie down, and *let five or six of them dance on my hand*. And at last *the boys and girls would venture to come and play at hide and seek in my hair*. (1985: 73; italics added)

The Dog-Woman also alludes to the enormity of her proportions indirectly, that is, through the description of her attire and garments: "Jordan told me to put on my best clothes for our voyage. I did so, and *a plumed hat that sat on my head as a bird nests in a tree*" (*SC* 15; italics added). The following description of her dress is another suitable example:

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39 The sense of theatricality and spectacle are, according to Bakhtin, characteristic features of the carnivalesque and of grotesque realism, which in *Sexing the Cherry* manifest themselves for example in the disguises the Dog-Woman, Jordan and Tradescant adopt in order to attend the trial of the King, as is commented on later.

> I was wearing my best dress, the one with a wide skirt that would serve as a sail for some war-torn ship, and a bit of fancy lace at the neck, made by a blind woman who had intended it to be a shawl. I had given her some estimate of my dimensions, but she would not believe me and so, although I have nothing to go round my shoulders save a dozen blankets sewn together, I do have a fine-worked collar. (*SC* 64-65)

As I have argued in an article titled "La influencia de Chrétien de Troyes, Rabelais y Stendhal en la obra literaria de Jeanette Winterson" (forthcoming), Rabelais also uses the exhaustive description of Gargantua's clothes in order to give an estimate of his proportions. A case in point is the eighth chapter of the first book of *Gargantua*, which is exclusively dedicated to the description of the clothes that Gargantua's father orders for his son when he is merely twenty-two months of age. What follows is just one extract:

> Pour son manteau, on leva dix-huit cents aunes de velours bleu, teint en écarlate, brodé sur les bords de beaux pampres et, au milieu, de pots en canetille d'argent, entrelacés d'anneaux d'or, avec beaucoup de perles, pour signifier qu'il serait un bon buveur en son temps. […]
>
> Pour son bonnet, on leva trois cent deux aunes et un quart de velours blanc. Il fut de forme large et ronde, à proportion du volume de la tête, car son père disait que ces bonnets de métèques, faits comme une croûte de pâté, porteraient un jour malheur aux tondus qui s'en affublaient.
>
> Pour plumet, il portait une belle et grande plume, prise à un pélican de la sauvage Hyrcanie, retombant bien élégamment sur l'oreille droite. (Rabelais 1973: 61-62)

Bakhtin's theories on the work of Rabelais situate the latter's focus on the body alongside a number of images of the material bodily principle, "that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life" (1968: 18). He further notes that all of them are alluded to by means of the comic imagery which characterises grotesque realism and which is inherited from the culture of folk humour. In grotesque realism, as Bakhtin argues,

> the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable. (1968: 19)

Bakhtin interprets this movement as the rehabilitation of the flesh that occurs in the Renaissance in reaction against the ascetic Middle Ages. *Sexing the Cherry* is set, as we have seen, in "the worst period of religious fanaticism and patriarchal totalitarianism" (Onega 1999: 443). The Dog-Woman's insistence on the body and the sins of the flesh is, likewise, a reaction against the false ideology of the Puritan Commonwealth and their attitude against all forms of pleasure. The Dog-Woman is explicit enough in this respect when she denounces that:

> The Puritans, who wanted a rule of saints on earth, and no king but Jesus, forgot that we are born into flesh and in flesh must remain. Their women bind their breasts and cook plain food without salt, and the men are so afraid of their member uprising that they keep it strapped between their legs with bandages. (*SC* 67)

In a much more satirical way the Dog-Woman observes that "I've seen Puritans go past a theatre where all was merriment and pleasure and holding their starched linen to their noses for fear they might smell pleasure and be infected by it" (*SC* 26-27). What is more, the Dog-Woman insists on exposing the double moral standard of Puritan males, like Preacher Scroggs, who feign the utmost purity in their marital relations, for she remembers that "I heard from his wife that he makes love to her through a whole in the sheet" (*SC* 27) and has never kissed her "for fear of lust" (*SC* 27), but then they release their lowest instincts in a brothel which trades only in Puritans and where women have to provide all manners of sexual satisfaction:

> She led to another door and opened the flap. On a low bed a woman was being entered in the usual position, but on top of the man was another man, clinging as a beetle to a raft and busy by the back passage.
>
> "How heavy that must be for the woman," I cried, and at the same moment the two men sat up and began embracing each other and wiping each other's faces with their emissions.
>
> It was then that I recognized them.
>
> "It is Preacher Scroggs and Neighbour Firebrace." (*SC* 87)

The influence of the Rabelaisian work in *Sexing the Cherry* cannot be denied. Yet, Winterson regenders her main protagonist and makes of the Dog-Woman an extraordinary example of the grotesque female body as a means to deconstruct conventional femininity. Although Winterson maintains the direct familiar bond that exists between Gargantua and Pantagruel in the works of Rabelais, she chooses to present the reader with the grotesque body of the mother, which, as Lucie Armitt has stated, is for Freud the ultimate taboo which deflects us from a recurrent confrontation with death (2000: 102). This gender reversal modifies the presentation of images of the bodily principle in *Sexing the Cherry*, if compared to those present in the works written by Rabelais. To give only one example of the latter, both Gargantua's birth and his name are the direct result of the importance that eating and, above all, drinking in excess have in the world created by Rabelais. Gargantua's birth coincides with a popular feast and is prompted by his mother's excessive eating and dancing. Besides, the reader is told that, unlike other babies, his first words are uttered in demand of drink, which causes his father to call him Gargantua:

> Pendant qu'il bouvait et s'amusait avec les autres, le bonhomme Grandgousier entendit l'horrible cri que son fils avait poussé en voyant le jour, braillant pour demander: "A boire! à boire! à boire!" Ce qui lui fit dire: "Que grand tu as!" (sous-entendez: le gosier). A ces mots, les assistants dirent qu'assurément on devait, pour cette raison, l'appeler Gargantua, pour suivre l'example des anciens Hébreux, puisque telle avait été la première parole de

> son père à sa naissance. Grandgousier y consentit et la chose convint tout à fait à la mère. Ensuite, pour apaiser l'enfant, on lui donna à boire à tire-larigot, puis il fut porté sur les fonts et baptisé selon la coutume des bons chrétiens. (1973: 58)

Sexing the Cherry does not pay excessive attention to eating, drinking, or defecating. The material bodily principle defined by Bakhtin concentrates basically on sexuality, the Dog-Woman's sexuality, which is also a direct exposure of heterosexuality. Patriarchal culture has normally dissociated female sexuality from the maternal body which, as Julia Kristeva has theorised, is the site of abjection *par excellence* (1982b). As Lucie Armitt has explained, this has led feminists like Monique Wittig "to employ utopia as a means of freeing women from the biological shackles of maternity" because they firmly believe that female sexuality needs to be separated from the mother in order to give her autonomous definition (2000: 27). In *Sexing the Cherry*, the Dog-Woman expresses a similar feeling when she realises that her life has been divided into two mutually exclusive phases, that of motherhood, in which all her efforts were aimed at the care and well-being of her son Jordan, and that of her entrance in society, which begins immediately after the moment in which Jordan sets sail, and results in the Dog-Woman's discovery of different forms of sexual relations. The separation between these two phases is overtly stated when the Dog-Woman becomes aware of her "flair for enterprise. It was ever with me, but *smothered under my maternalness* and the pressing need to do away with scoundrels. There is something to be said for this childless quiet life" (*SC* 135; italics added).

Nevertheless, *Sexing the Cherry* goes a step further. In presenting the Dog-Woman as neither a conventional mother nor a conventional lover, Winterson manages to bring these two concepts together and to transform them into a specially threatening site for men, which shares many features with Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection, as Susana Onega has shown in great detail (1999). The Dog-Woman is the surrogate mother of a child brought to her by the river Thames. Already at the beginning of the novel she admits that "I would have liked to pour out a child from my body but you have to have a man for that and there's no man who's a match for me[40]" (*SC* 11). Having been denied the possibility of fulfilling her womanhood by giving birth to a child, the Dog-Woman has also been hindered access to sexual pleasure because of her unusual size:

> I did mate with a man, but cannot say I felt anything at all, though I had him jammed up to the hilt. As for him spread on top of me with his face buried beneath my breasts, he

[40] This idea is also in keeping with the Dog-Woman's character of "phallic mother", insofar as she is complete in herself and, consequently, needs nobody.

> complained that he could not find the sides of my cunt and felt like a tadpole in a pot. He was an educated man and urged me to try and squeeze in my muscles, and so perhaps bring me closer to his prong. I took a deep breath and squeezed with all my might and heard something like a rush of air through a tunnel, and when I strained up on my elbow and looked down I saw I had pulled him in, balls and everything. He was stuck. (*SC* 106)

In spite of her physical enormity, the Dog-Woman is a romantic at heart. She regrets that: "I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains" (*SC* 34). She can only remember to have been in love once, "if love be that cruelty which takes us straight to the gates of Paradise only to remind us they are closed for ever" (*SC* 35), and recalls her failed experience with a mixture of melancholy and sarcasm. Contrary to her custom, the Dog-Woman makes every effort to please her beloved, washing herself properly and trying to disguise the fact that, in the light of Kristeva's theory of abjection, she may be seen as the embodiment of woman as abject by getting a very peculiar make up from the baker's:

> I had a white coating from the flour, but that served to make my swarthy skin more fair.
>
> In this new state I presented myself to my loved one, who graced me with all of his teeth at once and swore that if only he could reach my mouth he would kiss me there and then. I swept him from his feet and said, "Kiss me now," and closed my eyes for the delight. I kept them closed for some five minutes, opening them to see what had happened, I saw that he had fainted dead away. I carried him to the pump that had last seen my devotion and doused him good and hard, until he came to, wriggling like a trapped fox, and begged me let him down.
>
> "What is it? I cried. "Is it love for me that affects you so?"
>
> "No," he said. "It is terror." (*SC* 36)

Passages like this account for Lucie Armitt's definition of *Sexing the Cherry* as "an engendering combination of sexual naivety and outrageous comedy" (2000: 19) but they are still more interesting if their symbolic meaning is also taken into account. This passage, like many others in the novel, focus insistently on the Dog-Woman's mouth. The feminist critic Patricia Parker has signalled that the mouth is a displaced gendered metaphor for female sexual assertiveness (in Armitt 2000: 32-33). The Dog-Woman's sexuality is grotesquely oral[41]. She represents and literalises all the dangers which lie in women's orality and which obsess patriarchal culture. Her self-descriptions frequently centre, as we have seen, on her mouth, and additionally on her teeth. The Dog-Woman presents herself as a huge gaping mouth when she says

[41] The Dog-Woman's orality is also manifest in the fact that she is an oral storyteller, who has and exerts the power to speak, tell, criticise, and expose. This is a quality the Dog-Woman shares with characters in the work of Rabelais for, as J. M. Cohen has argued in the introduction to his translation of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, "the characters of Gargantua and Friar John, and of Pantagruel and his company, are built up from what they say. All are loquacious talkers, and all are inveterate parodists" (1955: 17-18).

that Jordan was proud of her: "because no other child had a mother who could hold a dozen oranges in her mouth at once" (*SC* 26). Mouths are sometimes representations of the vagina, which psychoanalysis has theorised as the *vagina dentata*, "the taboo behind cultural readings of the Medusa's head, an association deriving from what Freud sees as the young boy's vision of the mother's genitalia, 'surrounded by hair', at the original site/sight from which the castration complex derives" (Armitt 2000: 73-74). Indeed, the first description that Jordan makes of his mother reminds the reader of Medusa's head:

> my head was wedged uppermost against the bank. I heard dogs coming towards me and a roar in the water and a face as round as the moon with hair falling on either side bobbed over me. She scooped me up, she tied me between her breasts whose nipples stood out like walnuts. She took me home and kept me there with fifty dogs and no company but her own. (*SC* 10-11)

Jordan's emphasis on the depiction of the Dog-Woman's hair and of her breasts points to the Freudian conception of women's sexuality and of the mother's genitals as the all-pervasive embodiment of the uncanny, precisely because of the dual function they possess in psychoanalytic terms: "Though the origins of life, for Freud the castration complex refigures the mother's body as the space of death to the phallus and hence death in general" (Armitt 2000: 102-103). The Dog-Woman's breasts are described as nourishing and protective by Jordan but they can also be destructive forces, weapons which can cause death if let out of control, as is hinted at in the episode in which mother and son discover the banana: "I lifted Jordan up and I told Johnson that if he didn't throw back his cloth and let us see this wonder, I'd cram his face so hard into my breasts that he'd wish he had never been suckled by a woman, so truly would I smother him" (*SC* 12). As has already been pointed out, this episode significantly brings together the association of the Dog-Woman with the banana, a symbolic phallus which enhances both her strength and power to dominate men and the subsequent threat of castration she provokes on them. Susana Onega has pointed out that

> the fact that [the Dog-Woman] sleeps on a bed made of watercress and the teeth she has torn from the skulls of the Puritans she has murdered, present [her] from the perspective of patriarchy as the monstrous embodiment of Freud's *vagina dentata*, and her counterpart, Joseph Campbell's "phallic mother", the castrating mother of primitive men's fears. (1999: 450)

Winterson makes of the Dog-Woman a sexually active woman in order to transform her into the image of the castrating mother. Thus she makes men's desires and fears as theorised by psychoanalysis come true, when she agrees to practising a *fellatio* on

a man she meets on her way to Wimbledon[42] and literally eats the man's penis, as he asks her to do (*SC* 41).

"The grotesque conception of the body is interwoven not only with the cosmic but also with the social, utopian and historic theme, and above all with the theme of the change of epochs and the renewal of culture" (Bakhtin 1968: 324-325). The world depicted by the Dog-Woman is as firmly rooted in the material body[43] as it is in referential time and history. Her story is told in a fairly linear manner (exception made of a few minor anachronies which add suspense and expectation to her narrative, though they never break its chronological development) and it follows the dictates of causality. In this sense, the Dog-Woman's actions are rarely gratuitous; she always reacts to the external world that provokes her. For example, when she listens to one of her neighbour's arguments about "the Will of God" and "the Rule of Saints", she feels compelled to action: "I had no choice but to strangle him, and though I used only one hand and held him from the ground at arm's length, he was purple in no time and poor John Tradescant was swinging on my arm like a little monkey, begging me to stop" (*SC* 27). In this sense, the Dog-Woman rewrites Bakhtin's theory that there is a "special connection between a man and all his actions, between every event of his life and the spatial-temporal world" (1981: 167), showing that, in her case, this special connection is not between a man and his actions but between a woman and her actions, which turn out to be as exaggerated and excessive as her own body.

Lynne Pearce has adroitly argued that "all the great historical moments of the chronotope Dogwoman inhabits are represented in terms of bodies" (1994: 178). When the Dog-Woman refers to the outbreak of the Civil War, she does so in fairly tactile terms: "At first the Civil War hardly *touched* us" (*SC* 63; italics added). She believes that there is no real danger, that political and religious matters will stay the same, as they always have. At this stage she presents the situation in terms of innocent games which favour the necessary exchange of opinions and ideas: "I like a

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42 The Dog-Woman embodies here the two opposed perspectives on marriage which Rabelais respectively puts in the mouth of Panurge, for whom oral sex seems to represent the promise of eternal bliss when he says that:

> Ma femme me sucera le bon bout. Je m'y dispose. Vous comprenez assez que c'est le bâton à un bout qui me pend entre les jambes. Je vous jure et vous promets que je le garderais toujours succulent et bien ravitaillé. Elle ne me le sucera pas pour rien. La bonne petite ration y sera éternellement, ou d'avantage. (Rabelais 1973: 435)

And Pantagruel, who can only think about women's infidelity and threat, rather believes that: "elle vous battra, en vous écorchant et meurtrissant certain membre du corps" (434).

43 The materiality of the Dog-Woman's body also connects with Judith Butler's theorisation of the body and with the opposition that Hélène Cixous establishes between the female body and the "Lacanian phallus, symbol of male hegemony and power" (in Onega 1999: 443).

fight myself, and enjoyed baiting Neighbour Firebrace. Indeed I sorely missed his crooked face while I was in Wimbledon. With every one in accord, what merriment is there?" (*SC* 63). But as time passes, she becomes more and more aware of her mistake. The trial of the king constitutes a turning point, a true moment of crisis, and marks the beginning of the Dog-Woman's actual engagement with the spirit of the carnivalesque, which is intimately related to the beginning of her active participation as a public figure in the realm of the social.

David K. Danow has signalled that the carnivalesque brings into play a permanent dialogue between the official self and the unofficial other, who exchange roles, influence each other and end up blurring fixed boundaries. Likewise there is another dialogic exchange that takes place between the life-affirming quality of the carnivalesque (its desire for renewal) and its death-embracing aspect (its potential for destruction). Danow has also pointed to the existence of several features which he considers to be representative of, and generated by, the carnivalesque. These are: a sense of theatre as spectacle; slaughter as vengeance; eating and drinking with Rabelaisian abandon; and the all-consuming presence of fire (1995: 30). As I intend to show, all these features find their place in *Sexing the Cherry*, once the Dog-Woman definitely embraces the carnivalesque as a mode of subversion and revolt. They are, furthermore, intimately connected with the three historical moments which centre the Dog-Woman's attention.

The sense of the theatrical is nowhere more evident than in the actual trial of King Charles I. The Dog-Woman denounces its lack of transparency by insisting on the fact that, whereas the trial is presented as a public event, the supporters of the King are systematically denied attendance to it. The trial is turned into a spectacle, a public performance which reveals itself as the origin of the socio-political corruption that follows the murder of the King. Everything is arranged in advance for, as the Dog-Woman laments: "the trial lasted seven days, and it was no trial but a means to an execution" (*SC* 69). This sense of the theatrical and of the corruption of the body politic is mirrored in the actions of individual bodies. Being declared supporters of the King, the Dog-Woman, Jordan, and Tradescant break the established rules, disregard the prohibition of attendance to the trial and mock all forms of detection by means of disguise:

> Tradescant and Jordan dressed themselves as drabs, with painted faces and scarlet lips and dresses that looked as though they had been pawed over by every infantryman in the capital. Jordan had a fine mincing walk and a leer that got him a good few offers of a bed for the night.

> I swathed myself about in rags, black as pitch, and put on an old wig we begged from a theatrical. Then I made myself a specially reinforced wheelbarrow and sat in it like a heap of manure. (*SC* 68)

The Dog-Woman chooses for herself a grotesque disguise that hides her no-less grotesque body underneath a heap of excrement, which is not only a symbol of the corruption that is going on inside, but also represents her own feelings of disgust for the situation she is about to witness. Furthermore, as Susana Onega has pointed out, this is a literalisation of the Dog-Woman as abject (1999: 449). For their part, Jordan and Tradescant adopt women disguises that deceive quite a few men, including Hugh Peter from whom Jordan manages to obtain three passes. Dressed in this manner, the Dog-Woman, Jordan and Tradescant carry out their tricky performance:

> The soldier squinted at the bits of paper and asked me to leave my wheelbarrow at the entrance to the gallery.
>
> "I cannot, sir," I cried, "for I have the Clap and my flesh is rotting beneath me. If I were to stand up, sir, you would see a river of pus run across these flags. The Rule of Saints cannot begin in pus."
>
> Jordan and Tradescant stood behind me, each holding a handle of the wheelbarrow.
>
> "My daughter and my niece, sir" I said, waving a hand. "These two have pushed me from Plymouth so that I can be redeemed."
>
> "We have," said Jordan, "every mile a torment." (*SC* 69)

In doing this, the three characters occupy the place of the unofficial other and pay official treachery with their individual deceptive performance and social hypocrisy with farcical adulation.

Immediately after the trial, the Dog-Woman offers a vivid account of the King's beheading, which is presented as the central historical episode in the novel. This moment in history is represented in terms of the dismemberment of the body, an image which plays a considerable part in the carnivalesque. At this point in the narrative, this image represents not only the obvious dismemberment of a human body: "The King gave the signal, and a moment later his head was wrapped in a white cloth and his body was carried away" (*SC* 71). It also symbolises the dismemberment of the body politic, pointing to a threatening moment of change, which the Dog-Woman describes metaphorically: "the death of the King has put an end to the future as a place we already know. Now the future is wild and waits for us as a beast in a lair" (*SC* 83). Finally the King's beheading also results in the dismemberment of the Dog-Woman's family since, as has already been mentioned, immediately after the execution Jordan takes ship and leaves her mother on shore for some thirteen years.

A second feature of the carnivalesque is slaughter as vengeance. Having been left on her own, the Dog-Woman initiates her social acts of revenge against the new

order and its most offensive representatives, the Puritans. At first her actions are merely comic, much like a child's grudge: "I resolved for Jordan's sake and Tradescant's, and the memory of the King, to spit on the Puritans wherever I passed them and to wear in my hair bright braids of clashing colour whenever I had occasion to be near one of their churches" (*SC* 83). However, her resentment soon finds release in the form of dismemberment and murder. In the carnivalesque mode of fiction, death is comically portrayed to the extent that it provokes hilarity on the part of the reader; dismemberment and death are a necessary stage towards renewal and, in our case, social justice. All this is part of the popular-festive forms and images which are at the origins of the carnivalesque for, as Bakhtin has asserted:

> Bloodshed, dismemberment, burning, death, blows, curses, abuses —all these elements are steeped in "merry time", time which kills and gives birth, which allows nothing old to be perpetuated and never ceases to generate the new and the youthful. This interpretation is not Rabelais' abstract conception; it is, so to speak, immanent in the traditional popular-festive system which he inherited. He did not create this system, but it rose in him to a higher level of historical development. (1968: 211)

In the preceding pages I already dealt with the episode that marks the Dog-Woman's first real action against the Puritans, namely her enthusiastic putting into practice the Old Testament law "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". But, then, the Dog-Woman realises that she is not alone in this enterprise as she learns from her friend, the whore from Spitalfields, that she and her companions have been killing those Puritans that come to the brothel to seek satisfaction. The Dog-Woman recalls that: "Over this they had no difficulty —what troubled them was the disposal of bodies. They would not trust a man to help, and already the bodies were so thick in the cellar that she feared an outbreak of the plague. Would I help? I was strong enough" (*SC* 85). The Dog-Woman is quick to admit that "bodies mean nothing to me, dead or alive" (*SC* 86), so she does help them. She not only gives them a hand with the physical disposal of dead bodies, but also contributes to the killing of Puritans, her wrath fuelled by the guided visit to the brothel in which she discovers Preacher Scroggs' and Neighbour Firebrace's amusement. Naturally, it is the two of them that the Dog-Woman chooses as her next victims. Her description of their ritual murdering is totally in keeping with grotesque realism and it assembles almost all the features which Danow, following Bakhtin, has signalled as coterminous with the carnivalesque. An example of slaughter as revenge, the Dog-Woman resorts to the beheading of his victims and explicitly establishes a comparison with the execution of the King in the middle of her grotesque performance, whose elements are sex, masks, spectacle, dismemberment, hyperbole, excrement and death. All this is

arranged with some doses of cowardice, weeping and good manners, which give the scene its comic, Rabelaisian touch. The episode deserves to be quoted in full:

> "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him," I said, quoting from a playwright whose name I can't remember.
>
> The pair laughed nervously and Firebrace said he hadn't paid for any extra entertainment.
>
> "Then you can pay for it now," said I, stepping down and swinging at him with my axe. I missed on purpose, but it gave them the chance to see how sharp the thing was, as it sliced the bed in half.
>
> "Please continue with your pleasure." I waved my hand in a gracious gesture.
>
> Scroggs reached up to ring the bell, but I chopped the cord and one of his thumbs as he did so. I have never seen so much bobbing and screaming over a minor injury.
>
> Firebrace, not in the least loyal, but most like to Brutus in his treachery, tried to escape through the window, but I soon had his leg off and left him hopping in circles and begging for mercy.
>
> I pulled off my mask and let them see me.
>
> "Preacher Scroggs, on to the block if you will."
>
> He would not, and I was forced to hold him there myself while I tied him to the rings I had thoughtfully provided in case of such cowardly manners.
>
> "Think of the King," I said, "who lay on the block as a lamb to slaughter and never uttered a word."
>
> Then, without more ado, because I am not a torturer, I took his head off in one clean blow and kicked him off the block.
>
> By this time Firebrace was whimpering in a corner and had soiled his toga with excrement. (SC 88)

As Bakhtin has noted: "We must stress, however, that the carnival is far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time" (1968: 11). A similar capacity for revival and renewal could be ascribed to the female principle understood in psychoanalytic terms. Thus, balancing her life almost at the end of her narrative, the Dog-Woman acknowledges that:

> I do not think of myself as a criminal, and indeed would protest any attempt to confine me in Newgate. My actions are not motivated by thought of gain, only by thought of justice, and I have searched my soul to conclude that there is no person dead at my hand who would be better off alive. As evidence, if any need evidence, I will cite the good wife of Preacher Scroggs, she whose only pleasure had been his member poking through a sheet. When she heard of the death of her husband (I was too ladylike to describe the circumstances themselves) she raised her hands to Heaven and thanked God for his mercy. Such is my humility that I bore no resentment at this mistaken gratitude towards Our Saviour. (*SC* 129)

The last representative feature of the carnivalesque which has a special incidence in *Sexing the Cherry* is the all-consuming presence of fire and its association with two historical episodes: the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. Almost at the end of her narrative, the Dog-Woman refers briefly to these two events, which, for the Dog-Woman, seem to share a similarly divine origin. Of the first she says that it has been caused by "God's judgement on the murder of the

King" (*SC* 138). Of the second, she comments that "God's revenge is still on us [because] we are corrupt and the city is corrupted" (*SC* 141). In saying this, the Dog-Woman establishes an overt link between the corruption of the flesh caused by the plague, the resulting corruption of the city and the corruption of the body politic, which is transformed into a cosmic issue when she remarks that:

> When the Plague was over in 1665, London was a quieter place and there were plenty of houses to be had. I approved of being able to go to the market without having to fight through a Godless stream of foolish persons. But a strange sickness had come over me, not of the body, but of the mind. I fancied that I still smelt the stench wherever I went. I couldn't rid my nostrils of the odour of death. I began to think of London as a place full of filth and pestilence that would never be clean. (*SC* 141)

The historical Great Plague and the Great Fire complement one another in the Dog-Woman's imaginary. The flesh-corrupting pestilence of the Plague can only be smothered by the flesh-consuming purge of fire. Dead bodies are burned in an attempt at the purification of rotten flesh. Likewise, the only means of purging the city of London from its rottenness and corruption, which is described by the Dog-Woman, already at the beginning of her narrative, as "a foul place, full of pestilence and rot" (*SC* 13), is burning. The Dog-Woman's narrative comes to an end with the apocalyptic vision of the city of London being consumed by fire (*SC* 143).

Murder and procreation, destruction for the sake of renewal, these are the two contending forces in the historical chronotope of 1630-1666, a Rabelaisian chronotope coloured female by the fact that it is narrated by the Dog-Woman (and is thereby a feminine re-creation if we take the metafictional status of the novel into consideration). Being represented in terms of bodies, this historical chronotope is grotesquely female. The Dog-Woman is conceded the power to make women's justice over men's oppression and question conventional notions of feminine beauty, proportion and behaviour. Nevertheless, and as Lynne Pearce has signalled, in the Dog-Woman's Rabelaisian historical chronotope, "relations between the sexes […] will remain unchanged: which is why Jordan has to journey elsewhere" (1994: 179). And yet, it is precisely the Dog-Woman's carnivalesque spirit that makes Jordan's alternative chronotopes possible, so much so that in the carnivalesque there is a permanent dialogue between the official self and the unofficial other who exchange roles, influence each other and blur fixed boundaries. In Bakhtin's own words:

> In all these writings, in spite of their differences in character and tendency, the carnival-grotesque form exercises the same function: to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted. This carnival spirit offers the

> chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things. (1968: 34)

Thus, the Dog-Woman's particular exposure of givens facilitates Jordan's new outlook on the world and his efforts to enter a completely new order of things.

The final part of the novel is set in a different historical time which may be said to be contemporary with the reader's present[44] at the time of publication. This new historical present is inhabited by two main characters: Nicolas Jordan and a woman of no name, who camps alone by the river in order to protest against the problems of pollution and of men's inadequacies. This brief presentation already establishes quite a few connections between these two characters and those inhabiting the historical present of 1630-1666. But there is much more to be said in this respect.

Nicolas Jordan and the "river woman", as Rebecca Sturgeon calls her "to emphasize her connection with the Dog Woman" (1995: 84), move along the same spatio-temporal co-ordinates and yet none of them feels at ease with the world in which they have chanced to be living. As Maria Elena Stanborough has wittily remarked: "they have both a critical perspective on the social order of which they are a part, and a belief that there must be something better" (1993: 41). However, their attitude towards such a feeling of uneasiness is radically opposed. Whereas Nicolas chooses several forms of escape, the river woman adopts a stubbornly combative disposition, which she can only sustain by resorting to the creation of a utopian self which is capable of putting into practice what her real self can only dream about[45].

Nicolas fantasises with the possibility of escaping from the constraining colourless monotony of the everyday. Thus, influenced by a Dutch painting which represents the moment in which King Charles II is presented with a pineapple, Nicolas is overcome by a desire to experience the discovery of something unknown: "I tried to look at a pineapple and pretend I'd never seen one before. I couldn't do it. There's so little wonder left in the world because we've seen everything one way or another" (*SC* 113). After his failed attempts with the pineapple, he feels the call to adventure first as a desire to join the army as a naval cadet and then as a desire to meet a woman of whom he knows nothing apart from what he has learnt from the newspaper. If the parallelisms between Nicolas and Jordan were not obvious enough,

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44 As I have already pointed out, in the Grove Press edition of *Sexing the Cherry* it is marked as "1990".

45 In this respect, Sara Martín has criticised Winterson's inability to overcome "women's longing to be really powerful and the limitations of the fictional solutions to the problem of how to achieve power and what to do with it once it has been achieved" (1999: 209).

the text leaves no space for doubt when contemporary Nicolas meets seventeenth-century Tradescant on board his ship:

> Six months later I was on board an admiralty tug in the Thames Estuary outside Deptford. We were after a mine someone had spotted, or said they had. There was no hurry. The public was reassured by our presence and we were reassured by ourselves. It was a warm night, the lights of London and the black water all restful enough. I was content.
>
> I was standing on deck with a friend of mine. He was an astronomer of sorts and liked to show me the constellations. I didn't tell him I already knew them. […]
>
> I rested my arms on the railing and my head on my arms. I felt I was falling falling into a black hole with no stars and no life and no helmet. I heard a foot scrape on the deck beside me. Then a man's voice said, "They are burying the King at Windsor today." I snapped outright and looked full in the face of the man, who was staring out over the water. I knew him but from where? And his clothes…nobody wears clothes like that any more.
>
> I looked beyond him, upwards. The sails creaked in the breeze, the main spar was heavy with rope. Further beyond I saw the Plough and Orion and the bright sickle of the moon.
>
> I heard a bird cry, sharp and fierce. Tradescant sighed. *My name is Jordan*. (*SC* 120-121; italics added)

Nicolas's experience of the blurring of temporal boundaries, which allows him to meet John Tradescant face to face, makes him aware of his other self. Consequently, as a narrator, and after a contemplative pause, which is also made explicit textually in the double space that separates the last two sentences of the quotation, Nicolas cannot avoid saying: "My name is Jordan" (*SC* 121), to both the reader and to himself. It does not seem too far-fetched, then, to read the two characters' double voyage out as mirror images of one another, that is to say, as an escape from home in search for their own identity, which is first sought in conventional masculinity but later found in the didactic encounters these characters have with women, whether real or imagined.

This means that the contemporary present, like the seventeenth-century present, is mostly described through the narration of the female character, which shares some of the features of grotesque realism with the Dog-Woman's narration, namely: an impulse towards breaking up the established order, a feeling of immeasurable dimensions and a reliance on excess. The female ecologist's narration of her spatio-temporal experience of the late twentieth century is ideologically tinted with the postulates of ecology and feminism. The ecologist belongs to the margins of society, a position she has consciously chosen as part of her political agenda, since she has given up the possibility of working for a big company in order to be free to denounce their anti-ecologist practices (*SC* 125). Like the Dog-Woman, the female ecologist is fairly critical with heterosexuality and marriage because of the passive role allotted to women by patriarchy. Thus, she recalls her first and only heterosexual experience as utterly pleasureless and somewhat debasing (*SC* 127), and in spite of the fact that she is physically attractive, she realises that her non-

compliance with the established transforms her into a monster for society (*SC* 127). Like the Dog-Woman, the female ecologist uses her body as a form of protest. As a child, she felt lonely and different from the rest. Worst of all, different from and rejected by her parents who "found me difficult, not the child they had wanted" (*SC* 124). This oppressive situation provokes in her a strange psychological process by means of which she gets fatter by the day not because of her excessive eating but, as she explains:

> I was fat because I wanted to be bigger than all the things that were bigger than me. All the things that had power over me. It was a battle I intended to win.
>
> It seems obvious, doesn't it, that someone who is ignored and overlooked will expand to the point where they have to be noticed, even if the noticing is fear and disgust. (*SC* 124)

The female ecologist describes here a process of physical mutation of psycho-somatic origins which is clearly reminiscent of the grotesque female body as presented to the reader by the Dog-Woman[46]. This physical process stops once the female ecologist abandons her paternal home to start living on her own. Nevertheless she realises that:

> When the weight had gone I found out something strange: that the weight persisted in my mind. I had an *alter ego* who was huge and powerful, a woman whose only morality was her own and whose loyalties were fierce and few. She was my patron saint, the one I called on when I felt myself dwindling away through the cracks in the floor or slowly fading in the street. Whenever I called on her I felt my muscles swell and laughter fill up my throat. Of course it was only a fantasy, at least at the beginning… (SC 125)

The female ecologist's fantasy brings together an image of the grotesque body and the subversive potential of carnivalesque laughter strongly reminiscent of the Dog-Woman's and, whereas she regretfully admits that there is no Rabelaisian dimension for rage" (*SC* 124), her memories of her school days when she imagined herself abandoning her home and living alone by the banks of the river strongly echo the Dog-Woman's abode and tell of a similar time-travel experience to the one previously referred to by Nicolas:

> I have a memory of a time when I was a schoolgirl and getting fatter by the day. […] I was walking home from school by myself. I walked along the Embankment and watched the boats going up and down. […] I watched the sun sliding behind the buildings, and as I

46 The insistence on the representation of the female body as excess and the female ecologist's association between the excessive body and the need to be noticed, together with the paradoxical links that the Dog-Woman establishes between her huge proportions and her invisibility, may also be understood as part of Winterson's move to denounce women's invisibility in history. I therefore agree with Ansgar Nünning's reading of *Sexing the Cherry* as an outstanding example of "these revisionist historical novels [which] describe and polemicize not only against the discrimination against women in former periods, but also against the thoroughness of the erasure of women from the historical record" (1997: 223).

> concentrated the screeching cars and the thudding people and the smells of rubber and exhaust receded. I felt I was alone on a different afternoon.
>
> *I looked at my forearms resting on the wall. They were massive, like thighs*, but there was no wall, just a wooden spit, and when I turned in the opposite direction I couldn't see the dome of St Paul's.
>
> I could see rickety vegetable boats and women arguing with one another and a regiment on horseback crossing the Thames.
>
> I had to get on to Blackfriars, there was someone waiting for me.
>
> Who? Who?
>
> Now I wake up in the night shouting "Who? Who?" like an owl. (*SC* 128-129; italics added)

Characters in *Sexing the Cherry* are not constrained by spatio-temporal limitations. Nicolas Jordan falls into the black holes of time when he identifies with Jordan, his name sake and *alter ego*; likewise, the female ecologist sees herself for a moment inside the body and the social context of the Dog-Woman. Nevertheless, while they can transgress temporal boundaries, they are still prisoners of the limitations of gender, which can be alternately defined but never transcended in *Sexing the Cherry*.

Having said all this, it could be stated that, like the Dog-Woman, the twentieth-century woman uses images of the grotesque body as a site of subversion that not only seeks to empower women but also as a means of destabilising gender stereotypes. This is perhaps one of the reasons why in the image that *Sexing the Cherry* presents at the very end of the novel, men and women have to act together if, as in the carnivalesque, the old order is to be overthrown and the construction of a new society where male and female can be free and whole is ever to become something more than a mere utopia. The exposure of patriarchal canons of femininity through the representation of the female grotesque does not seem to be enough. Collaboration of men and women will be impossible unless men also question given stereotypes of masculinity and allow themselves to be impregnated by the feminine principle, as Jordan and, by extension, Nicolas Jordan do in the course of the novel, as I will presently attempt to demonstrate.

As I have already pointed out, the historical chronotope described by the Dog-Woman does not seem to be the natural abode for Jordan. This is explicitly shown in the novel by the scarce amount of textual time he seems to spend there and also by the fact that it is the Dog-Woman's not Jordan's account of that time that the reader is offered along the novel. It can be safely affirmed, then, that Jordan's basic relationship with the historical here and now in which he has chanced to be living is that of escape in any of its forms, either physical or imagined. Jordan's physical escape from the reality that surrounds him and his entrance into a second chronotopic area is defined by his sea voyages and constitute, as it is my intention to show, his voyage out into self-definition.

If the historical chronotope was clearly gendered female, although grotesquely so, the chronotope of the voyage is presented in the novel as strictly masculine. Only Jordan and his surrogate father figure, John Tradescant, have access to a chronotopic area which implies the physical separation from the female principle in general, and from his mother, the Dog-Woman, in particular, as the only possibility the boy has of defining his gendered identity. Lynne Pearce has suggested that Jordan's entrance into the chronotope of the voyage constitutes a "spatiotemporal rite of passage" (1994: 181) and represents "his first full initiation into the world of orthodox masculinity" (180). Needless to say, the realisation of the Oedipus complex and, consequently, the psychoanalytic theory of sexual development underlie the presentation of the chronotope of the sea voyages in *Sexing the Cherry*.

As I have already pointed out, Jordan becomes aware of himself as an individual when, at the age of three, he happens to witness the exhibition of a banana. The connotations attached to this scene are endless and, although I have previously alluded to this passage, I deem necessary to retake its analysis for the sake of my present argument. While the textual presentation of this scene, which is carried out by the Dog-Woman, undeniably puts forward the idea of male castration and, as a result, may be said to have awakened Jordan's most intimate fears, the Dog-Woman adds more meaning to the scene when she describes Jordan's flight of fancy in detail and asserts that: "This was the first time Jordan set sail" (*SC* 13). The first sight of the banana prompts Jordan's call to adventure in a quest for individuation he will not undertake until some sixteen years later. In the meantime, Jordan's imagination depicts his unconscious desire to travel to far-away exotic lands in order to do something great, such as bringing back to England something as precious as the banana. Remembering this particular moment in his life, Jordan also realises that the sight of the banana aroused his desire for adventures and glory, as he explains later, while he is staying in the island with Fortunata:

> When I was little my mother took me to see a great wonder. It was about 1633, I think, and never before had there been a banana in England. I saw it held high above a man's head. It was yellow and speckled brown, and as I looked at it I saw the tree and the beach and the white waves below birds with wide wings. Then I forgot it completely. *But in my games with ships and plants I was trying to return to that memory, to release whatever it had begun in me.* (*SC* 100; italics added)

What the sight of the banana triggers off in Jordan is nothing more and nothing less than a desire to become a hero and to conform to the standards of conventional

masculinity. The confirmation of his desire definitely occurs as he enters the chronotope of adventure. There and then he explicitly announces that:

> I want to be brave and admired and have a beautiful wife and a fine house. I want to be a hero and wave good-bye to my wife and children at the docks, and be sorry to see them go but more excited about what is to come. I want to be like other men, one of the boys, a back-slapper and a man who knows a joke or two. (*SC* 101)

Jordan wants to be like the other boys and to be given a woman in marriage as a reward for his success and courage.

Understood in psychoanalytic terms, this process requires the radical separation from the mother. This separation seems especially necessary when the mother that has to be left behind is no other than the Dog-Woman, not only because of her physical and psychological peculiarities but also because of the kind of relationship she has maintained with her son. It should be borne in mind that Jordan is found by the Dog-Woman and that, as he insists from the very beginning of his narrative, "she took me home and kept me there with fifty dogs and no company but her own" (*SC* 11). Being a foundling, Jordan has not been given the chance to meet his biological father and, since the Dog-Woman has always lived on her own, Jordan has had no other role model apart from the Dog-Woman herself. This fact would explain Jordan's initial attachment to the Dog-Woman when he admits that: "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. […] We never talked much. She is silent, the way men are supposed to be" (*SC* 101). Yet, being like his mother, proves fairly confusing and rather inappropriate for Jordan in terms of gender identification. As I have already explained, nothing the Dog-Woman does, says or is could be unproblematically labelled "feminine" and although she not only possesses many characteristics which would be considered typically masculine but can also better men in many respects, she is still a woman, the Dog-Woman. This is why, aiming to be like her, Jordan seems to be condemned to lose himself to the impossibility of developing a clearly-defined gender identity. As he notes later in the novel: "I had myself to begin with, and that is what I lost. Lost it in my mother because she is bigger and stronger than me and *that's not how it's supposed to be with sons*" (*SC* 101; italics added).

It is precisely at this decisive point that John Tradescant, gardener to the King, comes to Jordan's rescue and offers him his ship, company and tutelage as the tools he needs to engage in the quest for his lost self. Tradescant proves to be the

model of masculinity that has been lacking so far in Jordan's life and can set his process of Oedipalisation in motion.

Jordan's encounter with Tradescant takes place inside the historical chronotope and is, therefore, narrated by the Dog-Woman, who situates it "in about 1640, when Jordan was something close to ten" (*SC* 21). The Dog-Woman, who is watching the scene attentively just in case Jordan might need any kind of protection, portrays Tradescant quite favourably as a handsome, respectful, polite, courageous gentleman:

> He was a good-looking man in his thirties, and he gave no sign of fear that wormy jetty might dissolve at any moment, with my weight swaying it as a crow would a wren's house. He asked if I cared to sit down, and I took pity on him and trod back onto the bank. He squatted a while to fiddle in his bag and came out with three peaches. One he offered me, and one he gave to Jordan, who held it in both hands as though it were a crystal ball. (*SC* 22)

The Dog-Woman's presentation of Tradescant is in keeping with female romanticised versions of conventional masculinity. Still more interesting, though, is the fact that Tradescant acts as a surrogate father towards Jordan as soon as he meets him:

> He showed Jordan how to lengthen the rudder so that the boat could sail in deeper water without capsizing. He told him stories of rocks sprung out of the ocean, the only land as far as the eye could see, and no life on that land but screaming birds. He said that the sea is so vast no one will ever finish sailing it. That every mapped-out journey contains another journey hidden in its lines. (*SC* 23)

Tradescant's words fuel Jordan's desire to sail the seven seas in search for the precious thing.

In a telling analysis of Winterson's novels, the literary critic Jan Rosemergy has pointed out that "the family, most particularly the mother, defines the child's present and future identity —unless the child challenged that definition. Winterson's characterizations of mothers reveal the possibilities of oppression or liberation in the parent-child relationship" (2000: 249). Clearly, the Dog-Woman's behaviour towards Jordan is always respectful and distanced. Her attitude is already manifest when she refers to the reasons she has had to call his foundling son Jordan: "I wanted to give him a river name, a name not bound to anything, just as the waters aren't bound to anything[47]" (*SC* 11). Unlike Jeanette's mother in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, who could not imagine the possibility of losing not only physical but

[47] At some point in the narrative, feeling lonely and abandoned, the Dog-Woman seems to regret having given Jordan that name. She complains that "I should have named him after a stagnant pond and then I could have kept him, but I named him after a river and in the flood-tide he slipped away" (*SC* 11).

also spiritual control over her adopted daughter, the Dog-Woman does not consider his son a possession but rather God's blessing. As she says: "Safe, sound and protected. That's how I wanted Jordan to be. When he left me I was proud and broken-hearted, but he came from the water and I knew the water would claim him again" (*SC* 83).

Jordan does not always understand her mother's attitude and he sometimes believes that her respect towards his individuality is but a proof of her inability to love him and a symptom of her desire to get rid of him and be left alone with her dogs. Unaware of his son's feelings, the Dog-Woman leads a constant battle between her generosity and open-mindedness with regard to his son's development and the natural instincts of protection that a mother is supposed to have towards her children. Thus, when Tradescant attempts to take Jordan to Wimbledon with him, her instincts take hold of the situation and, although Tradescant offers to make Jordan the gardener's boy and to teach him every single thing he has learnt about gardening, just as a father would be expected to do with his son, the Dog-Woman refuses to let Jordan go until she eventually finds what she considers to be the best way out for both:

> But how could I lose Jordan, so dear to me and my only comfort?
> Tradescant tried all his gentle ways to persuade me. I continued to refuse, saying it was too far for my boy to travel daily. And yet I wanted Jordan to have the work, knowing how it would delight him to see such exotic things growing all in one place. At length I hit on a solution.
> "I'll accompany him," I said. (*SC* 28)

Nevertheless, in psychoanalytic terms, this may be read as Tradescant's failure to cut the symbolic umbilical cord that keeps Jordan physically and emotionally united to the Dog-Woman. Besides, from that moment on, Jordan, the Dog-Woman and Tradescant initiate a new life together in Wimbledon, composing what could be labelled a fairly grotesque familial unity.

The second and definitive attempt at breaking the bond between Jordan and the Dog-Woman takes place immediately after the King's execution, when

> In the Crown of Thorns that night Tradescant made plans to take ship and leave us. I saw the look on Jordan's face and my heart became a captive in a locked room. I couldn't reach him now. I knew he would go.
> I went outside and walked until the lights of the inn were specks in the distance and I was alone with the river flowing out to sea. (*SC* 71)

This time Jordan is old enough to make his own decisions, which is why the Dog-Woman accepts his determination without even questioning it. This is a fact that takes Jordan by surprise when he says that: "We never discussed whether or not I

would go; she took it for granted, almost as though she had expected it" (*SC* 101). The reader knows perfectly well that the Dog-Woman had not exactly expected but rather feared this instant from the very moment in which she took the boy with her, and very especially as she had observed his son's growing interest for plants and his passion for building paper boats and sailing them on the river:

> when Tradescant left Jordan and I went home, he skipping ahead and carrying his ship and I a few steps behind. I watched his thin body and black hair and wondered how long it would be before he made his ships too big to carry, and then one of them would carry him away and leave me behind for ever. (*SC* 23-24)

Jordan belongs to the water and it is the water that claims him when the time comes for him to engage in a complex process of individuation.

Having broken all ties with the maternal principle, Jordan initiates his voyage out, his rite of passage, in the company of a male figure, John Tradescant, his surrogate father. Taking ship with Tradescant gives Jordan the chance to define his masculinity far from the influence of his mother. At least, these are the expectations he has at the beginning: "When Tradescant asked me to go with him as an explorer I thought I might be a hero after all, and bring back something that mattered, and in the process find something I had lost" (*SC* 100). However, he soon realises that his gendered identity is not as clearly defined as Tradescant's, probably because he lacks the necessary family background. He complains that: "For Tradescant being a hero comes naturally. His father was a hero before him[48]. The journeys he makes can be traced on any map and he knows what he's looking for. He wants to bring back rarities and he does" (*SC* 101). Perhaps more important than his lack of a family tradition, which Tradescant is determined to solve for him, is Jordan's discovery of the fact that his self is not single but multiple and that, consequently, his identity cannot accommodate to stereotypical definitions of gender but needs to be redefined and renegotiated in ways that require an alternative route:

> At sea and away from home in a creaking boat, with Tradescant sleeping beside me, there is a town I sometimes dream about, whose inhabitants are so cunning that to escape the insistence of creditors they knock down their houses in a single night and rebuild them elsewhere. So the numbers of buildings in the city is always constant but they are never in the same place from one day to the next. (*SC* 42)

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48 The Dog-Woman had already described John Tradescant Junior as his father, John Tradescant's direct inheritor in the following terms:

> For years, until 1637 when his father died, he had sailed to exotic places collecting such rare plants as mortals had ever seen. These he housed in his father's museum and physic garden in Lambeth. On his father's death he was forced to return from voyaging in Virginia and take up the family post of gardener to the King. He liked it well enough, but sometimes he felt hollow inside, and on those days he knew his heart was at sea. (*SC* 23)

Jordan's depiction of this mercurial city stands metaphorically for the instability of his own gender identity, which prevents him from being a true successor for his role model:

> For Tradescant, voyages can be completed. They occupy time comfortably. With some leeway, they are predictable. I have set off and found that there is no end to even the simplest journey of the mind. I begin, and straight away a hundred alternative routes present themselves. I choose one, no sooner begin, than a hundred more appear. Every time I narrow my intent I expand it, and yet those straits and canals still lead me to the open sea, and then I realize how vast it all is, this matter of the mind. (*SC* 102)

Jordan is perfectly aware by now of the fact that if he is ever to approach completeness, his "voyage out" needs to be supplemented with a simultaneous "voyage in", a realisation he expresses, first, when he refers to the two books that he has kept in the course of his journeys, "the log book for the ship" and "a book of my own" (*SC* 102) and, later, when he makes of his narrative the double account of his lived experiences and of his reflections upon them[49].

According to the standards of patriarchy, as represented by the Dog-Woman and the society from which Jordan escapes, his voyage out is utterly successful. In the first place, Jordan succeeds as an explorer to the extent that, as the Dog-Woman says, he can occupy Tradescant's place as any biological son might have done: "When Tradescant died, Jordan took over the expeditions and charted the courses and decided what was precious and what was not" (*SC* 105). Secondly, he manages to satisfy his desire to do something heroic when he returns to England carrying the pineapple with him and assembling around him other men and women who are eager to listen to his stories of remote adventures and exotic places. Finally, he acknowledges that, after thirteen years at sea, he is no longer a boy but "a man" (*SC* 102). However, having discovered the existence of an alternative realm which is both independent from and coexistent with the official, Jordan understands that "the true voyage is an interior journey" (Rosemergy 2000: 249). In his own words:

> When I left England I thought I was running away. Running away from uncertainty and confusion but most of all running away from myself. I thought I might become someone else in time, grafted on to something better and stronger. And then I saw that the running away was a running towards. An effort to catch up with my fleet-footed self, living another life in a different way. (SC 80)

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49 Maria Elena Stanborough reads this dual presentation from a feminist theoretical position and argues that:

> I see Jordan's narrative as mapping the contours for a reshaped subject which exists both separate from and dependent upon others. Through Jordan's story the reader observes how our sense of self is simultaneously defined by interacting with the world and reflecting upon it. (1993: 40)

This is the possibility that the chronotope of the invented cities offers him, as will be subsequently shown, but, first, a brief comparison between Jordan and his twentieth-century namesake, Nicolas Jordan, proves necessary. Nicolas provides a brief biographical sketch in a simplified, detached manner, which presents him as an anodyne young man:

> Nicolas Jordan. Five foot ten. Dark. Makes model boats and sails them at the weekend. Best friend Jack. No brothers or sisters. Parents can't afford a telescope. Has a book instead on how to navigate by the stars, and a pair of binoculars on a khaki strap. That's all there is to say about me. On the outside, anyway. (*SC* 114)

He insists further on the monotony of his life when he ironically describes his familial surroundings and his parents as "very tidy eaters. They arrange their food according to colour and shape and eat proportionally so that they never have too much of one thing and too little of another. I eat all my peas first and this annoys them" (*SC* 119).

Surely as a form of escape, Nicolas has developed a world of his own, a world of the imagination, which is nourished by two books he has avidly read and reread from childhood, *The Observers' Book of Ships* (*SC* 114) and *The Boys' Book of Heroes* (*SC* 115), and which contribute to establishing and maintaining patriarchal ideology and conventional masculinity. Thus, on the front of one these books "there were ships and aeroplanes and horses and *men with steel jaws*. I opened it and some pages fell out in my own childish handwriting. I suppose I had been ten at the time. It was my précis of heroes. The ones I liked. I'd drawn pictures of them on the margins" (*SC* 116; italics added). Nicolas builds his own boats, which he sails at weekends because, as he says, "I liked the uncertainty of the wind" (*SC* 114) and dreams of becoming a hero in the light of the advantages this status would bring to his life. As he has learnt from his books:

> If you're a hero you can be an idiot, behave badly, ruin your personal life, have a number of mistresses and talk about yourself all the time and nobody minds. Heroes are immune. They have wide shoulders and plenty of hair and wherever they go a crowd gathers. Mostly they enjoy the company of other men, although attractive women are part of their reward. (*SC* 117-118)

He also imagines a secret lover, Mina Frogs, passively waiting for him at the docks "and desperate to marry me" (*SC* 114).

Nicolas Jordan's society suffers from exactly the same burden of gendered stereotyping as that of his precursor, Jordan. Men and women have different roles: men are heroes; women are either ignored or used as objects of enjoyment or pleasure. This separation is already manifest inside his home, where he depicts his

mother cooking and his father reading the paper or watching films which portray the kind of behaviour expected from a man. As Nicolas explains:

> My father watches war films. War films are full of men in tin hats talking in terse sentences. They play cards round folding tables and lean over to each other from their bunk beds. They jump out trenches and mow with their machine guns in 180 arcs. They have girlfriends but they prefer each other.
>
> My father watches submarine films. The siren goes and the men in T-shirts get thrown against the wall.[…]
>
> My father watches ocean-going films. (*SC* 118)

Thus, as Lynne Pearce has remarked, Nicolas "is torn between the glamour of traditional masculine heroism (symbolized by the lives of the soldiers and sailors in *The Boys' Book of Heroes*), and a burgeoning consciousness of its limitations, epitomized by the sexually stereotyped behaviour of his father" (1994: 180). His initiation in the world of orthodox masculinity also takes the form of a sea voyage. His narrative opens with the depiction of his urgent need to escape from mediocrity when he affirms that: "I was straight out of school and eager for a career. *Any career that would take me away*" (*SC* 113; italics added). It should be noted that Nicolas's desire for adventure and glory is prompted not by the sight of a banana, as was Jordan's case, but precisely as he sees a picture of a pineapple:

> PAINTINGS 3: '*Mr Rose, the Royal Gardener*, presents the pineapple to Charles the second.' The artist is unknown, probably Dutch. Mr Rose in his wig is down on one knee and the king in his wig is accepting the pineapple. Colours of fruit and flowers make up the painting. (*SC* 113)

This "coincidence" lays a deeper emphasis on the textual connection between Jordan and his twentieth-century counterpart, Nicolas Jordan, and insists on the notion that, although three centuries have gone by, nothing has really changed that much.

Although Nicolas's idea of the voyage out is fairly romantic —"Jack don't you wish we could still be pirates or something?" (*SC* 114), he asks his friend—, it eventually materialises in the Navy:

> I went to the Naval recruitment office and they told me about all the sophisticated equipment I'd be using and all the places I'd see. They had a film show about life in the Navy and afterwards an old Admiral turned up and told us how he'd learned to iron his bell-bottom trousers with seven creases for the seven seas. (*SC* 118)
>
> There was a lot about camaraderie and mates. It's not homosexual, of course. (*SC* 118)

Despite the luminous radiance with which patriarchy represents this world of conventional masculinity in every one of its expressions, Jordan is fairly critical with its stereotypes and, when he sees his father watching ocean-going films, he is not attracted by those charismatic "men in polo-neck sweaters and black wellingtons running on to the bridge and asking about the enemy" (*SC* 118) but rather by another

order of heroism which is much less noticeable but paradoxically much more effective:

> There's always a little guy with a mop who says simple things that all the bigger guys ignore. Later in the film, when the ship's going down, the little guy's the only one who's small enough to jam his body in the gaping hole and stop the sea pouring in. He doesn't look like a hero but he is one. He's there to make all the small men feel brave. A lot of small men would like to be heroes, they have to have their fantasy moments. Thing is, the small ones always get killed. (*SC* 118)

Nicolas cannot find his place in a society which is defined in terms of orthodox masculinity and economic profit and which denies women the site they deserve. In this respect he is only moved by space films because:

> They're different: they're the only area of undiminished hope. 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. When I watch space films I always want to cry because they leave you with so much to hope for, it feels like a beginning, not a tired old end. (*SC* 120)

Nicolas is not like his friend Jack who, in this sense, seems to mirror John Tradescant's adaptability and self-assurance. Jack does not question the world but follows the path his father has trodden before him. Already as a child he is pragmatic, which means that, while Nicolas sails his boats, "Jack came with me, bringing his books on computer science and his father's copies of *GP*, a magazine for doctors. The magazines were full of pictures of incurables, and that included anyone suffering from the common cold" (*SC* 114-115). Jack's standards of personal success rest on the world of finance. As a result, he does not hesitate to accept natural or human casualties for the sake of progress:

> I'll tell you what's the matter. I work twelve, fifteen hours a day at what I'm good at and I'm getting tired of nosy people poking about in the private business of perfectly respectable companies. Everybody wants jobs and money. How do they think we make jobs and money? There's always some fall-out, some consequence we'd rather not have, but you do have them and that's life. (*SC* 137)

Unable to find what he is looking for and in order to redefine himself, Nicolas plans a further voyage out, which he presents as another sea voyage of special characteristics: "I'm thinking of sailing round the world. The same route as Drake took in the *Golden Hind*. I'm going to do it alone" (*SC* 136). Nicolas's proposal looks like a voyage into self-reflection and self-definition, a journey in search of his other self, which is never completed because of his encounter with his feminine complement, the woman who is camping by the river in order to protest against the problems of pollution. It is paradoxically through Jack's intervention that Nicolas manages to get to know her and to realise that she represents the new order

of heroism away from conventional masculinity and capitalism that he is fighting to define, in other words, that she is his missing part. His words are explicit enough:

> I read the article. Surely this woman was a hero? Heroes give up what's comfortable in order to protect what they believe in or to live dangerously for the common good. She was doing that, so why was she being persecuted? The article said her tent had been mysteriously fired at on a number of occasions. I tried to understand her through her photograph. She was pretty; I felt I knew her, though this was not possible. Before I realized it I stood up and took down my kit bag.
>
> I would find her. (*SC* 138)

The female ecologist teaches Nicolas Jordan to regard heroism not from the narcissistic perspective of patriarchal values but rather from a much more altruistic, though immensely less spectacular, feminine perspective which, although debased and rejected by the dominant structures of power, like those represented by Jack, can make of this world a more egalitarian, better place. The novel ends when Nicolas has barely initiated his instruction but he is capable of sensing that he has finally found what he was looking for: "She had a rowing boat tied to a tree, and we took it out and floated on the eery water, the orange of the campfire burning in the distance. I wanted to thank her for trying to save us, for trying to save me, because it felt that personal, though I don't know why" (*SC* 142).

Unlike Nicolas, who finds his own Fortunata close at hand, camping by the river Thames, Jordan undergoes a series of adventures which situate him in a new chronotopic zone. The chronotope of the sea voyages, which, as has been explained, is the chronotope of adventure and is clearly and conventionally gendered male, is set side by side with Jordan's entrance into a new spatio-temporal zone, which partakes of the adventure chronotope but is rather unpredictable, changeable and elastic. This new chronotopic area is composed of different cities which are situated outside the geographical and the historical, and which thus question traditional notions of space and time. This is the world of the imagination and fantasy, of language and the fairy tale, a fact that explains my referring to it as the chronotope of the invented cities.

Jordan does not give a proper name to any of the cities he visits in this new adventure and yet each of them is granted a specific characteristic feature which transforms it into a meaningful sign in itself. Space takes on flesh in each of the cities and time is reformulated from chronological to mythical or cyclic. There is the city of words, in which language materialises in the form of clouds that cover the sky and have to be regularly cleaned to avoid suffocation; there is the enchanted city with its never-ending death tower built by "a young girl caught incestuously with her sister" (*SC* 38); there is the mercurial city, where the number of buildings "is always

constant but they are never in the same place from one day to the next" (*SC* 42); there is the city where love is an epidemic because "the entire population [has] been wiped out by love three times in a row" (*SC* 75); and there is the island of worn-out ballet shoes where Fortunata teaches her pupils to defy gravity and become points of light. Some of these cities are dreamed of, some others imagined, but they all respond to Jordan's desire to live his life differently, unofficially. In this sense, it may be argued that the chronotope of the invented cities clearly conforms to the spirit of the carnivalesque in which, as Bakhtin contended:

> Thought and word were searching for a new reality beyond the visible horizon of official philosophy. Often enough words and thoughts were turned around in order to discover what they were actually hiding, what was that other side. The aim was to find a position permitting a look at the other side of established values, so that new bearings could be taken. (1968: 272)

The invented cities offer Jordan a completely new uncharted territory in which he feels like an absolute stranger and whose exploration eventually offers him an interesting view of the other side. In so doing, the invented cities constitute an alternative to the established values to which Jordan had been subjected in both the chronotope of the Dog-Woman's historical present and that of the sea voyages. The subversive potential of this new chronotope is enhanced by the fact that it is co-existent with both the historical present and the sea voyages and, consequently, it may be said to establish a dialogic relationship with both of them.

To begin with, the chronotope of the invented cities frees Jordan from the oppressive materiality of the world the Dog-Woman depicts in the chronotope of her historical present. Very early in the novel, Jordan announces that "*to escape from the weight of the world*, I leave my body where it is, in conversation or at dinner, and walk through a series of winding streets to a house standing back from the road" (*SC* 17; italics added). The house Jordan visits is located in the city of words[50] and its main peculiarity (apart from its smell of wild strawberries) is that the house and its inhabitants systematically defy the laws of gravity. As Jordan recalls:

> The family who lived in the house were dedicated to a strange custom. *Not one of them would allow their feet to touch the floor*. Open the doors off the hall and you will see, not floors, but bottomless pits. The furniture of the house is suspended on racks from the ceiling; the dining table supported by great chains, each link six inches thick. (*SC* 20; italics added)

The house also disrupts all forms of logic when, in spite of the fact that, as Jordan explains, "it is well known that the ceiling of one room is the floor of another, the

[50] I will not refer here to the metafictional implications of this city since they have already been analysed in detail.

household ignores this ever-downward necessity and continues ever upward, celebrating ceilings but denying floors" (*SC* 21).

The city of words is then the city of lightness and airiness. It, therefore, constitutes the perfect abode for the woman Jordan sees once "climbing down from her window on a thin rope which she cut and re-knotted a number of times during the descent" (*SC* 21), and who turns out to be a dancer. It is precisely the sight of this dancer, a woman so light that "the winds supported her" (*SC* 60), that functions as Jordan's call to adventure, while she herself becomes the object of his journey/quest. Little by little Jordan discovers that this dancer is a fairy-tale princess, Fortunata, the youngest sister of the Twelve Dancing Princesses in the brothers Grimm's tale, who is now living alone in a remote place where she has built a dancing school where she "teaches her pupils to become points of light" (*SC* 72).

Fortunata's lightness stands in opposition to the Dog-Woman's materiality and her emphasis on the body. Fortunata is so light that she can literally fly, a fact that, as Mary Russo has pointed out, makes several fantasies converge, significantly, the fantasy of "transcendence and freedom signified by the flight upwards and the defiance of gravity, and the fantasy of a femininity which defies the limits of the body, especially the female body" (1994: 44). It is precisely the metaphor for flight that makes the story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses especially attractive for Winterson's ideological tenets. The classical fairy tale has the princesses escape every night through the window of the castle and fly to a place where they can spend the whole night dancing. Winterson expands upon this metaphor making the princesses travel to a city which Fortunata portrays as "a silver city that knew neither day nor night, and in that city we had danced for joy thinking nothing of the dawn where we lived" (*SC* 94).

Fortunata uses her narrative of what she grandly calls "the history of the city, which is a logical one, each piece fitting into the other without strain" (*SC* 97) to make Jordan aware of the fact that the substitution of lightness for the weight of the world cannot be effected instantaneously. It rather requires a process in which the old ways are progressively left behind. Thus, Fortunata starts her parable by acknowledging that "to begin with no one in the city danced. They paid their taxes and brought up their children and ate and slept like the rest of the world. But that was when the city was also like the rest of the world, and seemed to be still" (*SC* 95-96). Then the city began to move, "at first it was no more than a tremor, then an upheaval" (*SC* 96) which caused people to be scared and take shelter but, after a time, and having noticed that "the underground activity had neither ceased not

worsened, a few brave citizens tried to make the best of it and sprung ropes from one point to another, as supports to allow them to go about their business" (*SC* 96). Soon the rest of the population continued to do the same "and it was discovered that the best way to overcome the problem was to balance over it" (*SC* 96). A few generations later "no one remembered that the city had ever been like any other, or that the ground was a more habitual residence" (*SC* 96). Fortunata points out that "as it became natural for the citizens to spend their lives suspended, the walking turned to leaping, and leaping into dancing, so that no one bothered to go sedately where they could twist in points of light" (*SC* 96). From the description Fortunata makes of the silver city, the reader gradually infers that this is exactly the same "city of words" from which Jordan initiated his journey in search of a dancer and/or the dancing part of himself. Fortunata makes evident the connection between these two cities when she concludes that:

> After a few simple experiments it became certain that for the people who had abandoned gravity, gravity had abandoned them. There was a general rejoicing, and from that day forth *no one concerned themselves with floors* or with falling, though it was still thought necessary to build a ceiling in your house in order to place the chandelier. (*SC* 97; italics added)

In the silver city/city of words, the images of dance, of lightness and of flight are associated with the idea of freedom from the conventional and, more specifically, with freedom from the patriarchal confinement imposed upon women's desires and, consequently, upon their bodies. Mary Russo continues to argue in this respect that:

> Reclaiming space has been a central metaphorical concern of modernism and liberation discourse, including women's liberation where it is often understood as a freedom from oppressive bodily containment. I have tried to suggest, thus far, that there may be affirmative models of risk and deviance in the high registers of modernism, and ways in which the image of freedom as limitless space, transcendence, individualism, and upward mobility of various kinds may be embodied and diverted, giving way to a model of feminist practice. (1994: 26)

Fortunata embodies all of these images. It is her ability to fly that allows her to escape from an imposed marriage. As her sisters recall: "On her wedding day to the prince who had discovered our secret, she flew out from the altar like a bird from a snare and walked a tightrope between the steeple of the church and the mast of a ship weighing anchor in the bay" (*SC* 60). Fortunata is not tamed by patriarchy or marriage and she chooses to maintain her independence to the extent that, as one of her sisters seems to regret, "she never came to live with us" (*SC* 60). Besides, she has learnt to free her body from the confinement of space and time and has managed to achieve transcendence as a result. This is what she teaches her special pupils,

those people who, as she tells Jordan, "find me because they want to, as you have" (*SC* 95). This is also the lesson Jordan will learn from Fortunata at the end of his journey. His acceptance of lightness in opposition to the weight of the world is metaphorically expressed in the novel when the Dog-Woman realises that Jordan is no longer wearing the medallion she had placed around her son's neck "the day she found me in the slime by the river" (*SC* 10), with the inscription she herself had carved on it: "Remember the rock from whence ye are hewn and the pit from whence ye are digged" (*SC* 10). In its place, the Dog-Woman discovers Fortunata's gift, a silver pendant made of "a tiny pair of shoes, dancing shoes, their feet curved inwards as though standing on tip-toe" (*SC* 109).

At first sight, Jordan's voyage along the invented cities in search of Fortunata seems to conform both to the adventure chronotope and the chronotope of romantic love in the terms described by Bakhtin. When Jordan describes the dancer he sees just once as "a woman whose face was a *sea voyage* I had not the courage to attempt" (*SC* 21; italics added), he establishes an overt connection between the sea voyages he has undertaken in the company of John Tradescant and this parallel "sea voyage" he is about to start on his own. Nevertheless, Lynne Pearce has pointedly observed that the chronotope of the "enchanted cities", as she calls them, "exists in sharp contrast to that represented by the sea voyage, in which the passage of time is marked by the projected end of the journey (i.e., the quest causes time to stretch itself into a teleological sequence), and space is charted in terms of conquest and possession" (1994: 181; italics in the original).

It cannot be denied that the chronotope of the invented cities seems to correspond to Bakhtin's description of time in the adventure chronotope, although its ideological implications are utterly divergent, as will be signalled later. According to Bakhtin, in the chronotope of adventure "the first meeting of hero and heroine and the sudden flareup of their passion for each other is the starting point for plot movement; the end point of plot movement is their successful union in marriage. All action in the novel unfolds between these two points" (1981: 89). Thus from the moment when the hero falls in love with the heroine until he finally meets and marries her, time seems to "stand still" and, although time keeps flowing, characters do not age. This fairy-tale convention is of special application to Fortunata, as Pearce has noted (1994: 181). When Jordan meets Fortunata's sisters, they regret the fact that "we have not seen her for years and years, not since that day when we were dressed in red with our black hair unbraided. She must be old now, she must be stiff. Her body can only be a memory. The body she has will not be the body she had" (*SC*

60). Nevertheless, when he eventually finds her, Jordan describes Fortunata as magically unchanged: "Opposite me, attentive and smiling, was the woman I had first seen at dinner, what seemed like years ago and might have been days" (*SC* 93). Pearce has explained Jordan's depiction of the apparent arbitrariness of time in this quotation as the particular use Winterson makes of a convention of romance according to which time becomes wilfully ahistorical and universal with the aim of presenting "all the lovers of past and future centuries sharing, albeit temporarily, the same time/space vacuum (the chronotope of 'being in love')" (1994: 181). But Pearce has also pointed out that, while Jordan's journeys

> are all *prompted* by his quest for Fortunata (the quest for love/the quest for "the missing part of himself"), the cities themselves represent an alternative vision of time and space which is *in excess* of the romance chronotope. While romance is most typically about the temporary suspension of time, the hiatus between "meeting" and "marriage", what Jordan learns in his journeys through the enchanted cities is the *synchronicity of time*: the simultaneity of past, present and future. (1994: 182)

This is the knowledge Winterson chooses to share with the reader from the very beginning of the novel in the two opening epigraphs and the same knowledge Jordan reformulates later in the novel, when he argues that:

> Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning, on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited. In a single day the mind can make a millpond of the oceans. Some people who have never crossed the land they were born on have travelled all over the world. The journey is not linear, it is always back and forth, denying the calendar, the wrinkles and lines of the body. The self is not contained in any moment or any place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once. (*SC* 80)

Jordan's philosophical musings provide a better explanation for the fact that Fortunata has not aged than simply saying that the suspension of time is characteristic of the romance chronotope. Fortunata is as young and light as when Jordan saw her for the first time because his journey is not diachronic but synchronic[51]. As Pearce has argued, "through his encounter with Fortunata, he has learnt that 'the answer' is not to exist outside time, but to be *coexistent* with all its temporal mutations" (1994: 182).

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51 The synchronicity of time is emphasised by Jordan's retelling of his encounter with Fortunata on three different occasions and with a different temporal perspective. Firstly, Jordan writes of this encounter proleptically as a surrogate omniscient author; secondly, a few pages later, he becomes a homodiegetic narrator providing a simultaneous narration of his experience with Fortunata; and thirdly, he presents this same moment under the heading "memory", that is to say, as a past event, only to eventually destroy any possibility of situating it in the past, the present or the future: "The scene I have just described to you may lie in the future or the past. Either I have found Fortunata or I will find her. I cannot be sure. Either I am remembering her or I am still imagining her. But she is somewhere in the grid of time, a co-ordinate, as I am" (*SC* 93).

Jordan's adventures along the invented cities may be said to gain narrative unity, on the one hand, from the motif of the road which, as Bakhtin explained "is both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement" (1981: 243-244) and, on the other, from the motif of encounter, which "is marked by a higher degree of intensity in emotions and values" (1981: 243). The motifs of the road and of encounter, the chronotope of adventure, and the chronotope of romance, have been traditionally portrayed as essentially male. However, it is my contention that, in spite of its similarities with the sea voyages, the chronotope of the invented cities not only teaches Jordan to redefine time and space but also takes him away from the spell of orthodox masculinity, allowing him to renegotiate his gendered identity by reconnecting him with the feminine principle. This process is carried out both as an exploration of gender stereotypes and as a revision of the conventions of heterosexual love.

The quest for Fortunata and for his hidden self takes Jordan through several cities and, although it is Jordan's narrative that the reader is mostly presented with, his experiences of time and space are clearly gendered feminine. Jordan invariably situates himself within a feminine chronotope, inhabited by individual women but also, and very especially, by what Nina Auerbach (1978) and Cath Stowers (1996) have theorised under the name of "communities of women"[52], who function as physical and spiritual guides in the purblind hero's quest for Fortunata and who offer Jordan a privileged view of men and masculinity from the perspective of the other.

Many feminist critics have acknowledged the importance of female alliances insofar as they serve as "a rebuke to the conventional ideal of a solitary woman living for and through men" (Auerbach 1978: 5). Lucie Armitt has also pointed out the fact that "the female principle is always stronger when women are collectively bound" (2000: 150). Paulina Palmer has written that "sisterhood and women's community are generally regarded by feminists as providing both a refuge *from* and a challenge *to* the oppressive facets of a patriarchal society" (1989: 126; italics in the original). Stowers expands on Palmer's idea by establishing a connection between communities of women and emancipatory strategies of several kinds. In her own words:

> Such communities effect an excavation of the feminine; are associated with new configurations of space, time, self and gender; are a major motif of lesbian aesthetics; and enable experimental excursions into a female Imaginary connected to notions of a pre-Oedipal, maternal realm and a new female language. Whether suggesting a more subtle,

[52] Stowers has noted that "subversive communities of women are a recurrent motif in contemporary women's writing" (1996: 69).

> unanticipating power or tending towards more blatant separatist concepts, self-contained collectivities of women become emblems of female self-sufficiency and freedom. (1996: 69)

The communities of women Jordan encounters along the road —the pen of prostitutes, the nuns in the Convent of the Holy Mother, and the Dancing Princesses— illustrate most of the emancipatory strategies mentioned by Stowers, but their greatest interest in the novel is that they are not only emblems of female self-sufficiency and freedom; they also help Jordan to explore gender in different ways and to become aware of the burden of gender that orthodox masculinity has imposed on him.

Jordan's quest for Fortunata begins in the city of words. After looking for her in the theatre, the opera, in cafés and casinos, he visits "a pen of prostitutes kept by a rich man for his friends" (*SC* 30). This is Jordan's first stage in the process of redefinition of his gendered identity, a process which requires Jordan's disrobing himself of any external attribute of his masculinity. Thus, in order to be accorded entrance into this female world, Jordan is asked to adopt a female disguise. This external gesture seems to have other far-reaching results, since it uncovers Jordan's feminine side. In his own words: "I did as they advised me and came to them in a simple costume hired for the day. They praised my outfit and made me blush by *stroking my cheek and commenting on its smoothness*" (*SC* 30; italics added).

Staying with the prostitutes for a day, Jordan becomes aware of these women's ability to cheat the man for whom they work and to make the most of patriarchal constraints. Jordan's first impression is that these women are prisoners to the rich man and, consequently, live in seclusion because they are not allowed to go outside. But this is far from the truth for they have devised a curious means of escape, based on the alliance of women, that enables them to come and go as they please by night. As the women themselves explain to Jordan:

> Underneath the house was a stream. The stream, on its way to the river, on its way to the sea, passed beneath the lodgings of quite a different set of women. Nuns. This convent, the Covent of the Holy Mother, had its cellars opening over the stream. Every night, any of the women who wished to amuse herself in the city, visit friends, eat dinner with her beloved, dropped herself into the fast-flowing water and was carried downstream towards the convent. It was the custom of the nuns to keep watch over the stream through the night, and any of the women shooting past the convent vault was immediately fished out in a great shrimping net by the nun on duty. […] At dawn the women were let down into the water, and with great fortitude swam upstream into their locked citadel. (*SC* 30-31)

Just as the dancing princesses escaped from the seclusion of their father's castle flying through the open window, these prostitutes escape from confinement with the help of water and of a different group of women, the nuns. No matter the means,

both communities of women redefine spatial boundaries in *Sexing the Cherry*. Further, the sisterhood of women against patriarchal power that Winterson depicts at this stage of the novel significantly fuses the two images of women that male writers have systematically presented as antithetic and irreconcilable, namely the image of the angel and that of the whore. Winterson insists thus on the necessity of undoing gender stereotypes of all sorts as the only means to achieve freedom[53]. Finally, Winterson also shows that women's intelligence is of great help to transform a negative situation, such as the use of women as objects of male pleasure, into a profitable one for, as the prostitutes go on explaining:

> Their owner, being a short-sighted man of scant intelligence, never noticed that the women under his care were always different. There was an unspoken agreement in the city that any woman who wanted to amass a fortune quickly would go and work in the house and rob the clients and steal the ornaments supposedly safe on the wall. He did not know it but this selfish man, to whom life was just another commodity, had financed the futures of thousands of women, who were now across the world or trading in shops or as merchants. (*SC* 31)

After his experience with the pen of prostitutes, Jordan decides to continue his journey in disguise in order to go on experiencing the world as women do. The next stage in the process of gender redefinition is Jordan's discovery that "women have a private language. A language not dependent on the constructions of men but structured by signs and expressions, and that uses ordinary words as code-words meaning something other" (*SC* 31). The different linguistic spheres that men and women seem to inhabit bring about different cultural spheres. Jordan confesses that:

> In my petticoats I was a traveller in a foreign country. I did not speak the language. I was regarded with suspicion.
>
> I watched women flirting with men, pleasing men, doing business with men, and then I watched them collapsing into laughter, sharing the joke, while the men, all unknowing, felt themselves master of the situation and went off to brag in bar-rooms and to preach from pulpits of the folly of the weaker sex. (*SC* 31-32)

Trying to teach a poor girl who knows nothing about men, Jordan is given a rule book which parodies the Ten Commandments and which faces him with the burden of his own sex: "I was much upset when I read this first page, but observing my own heart and the behaviour of those around me I conceded it to be true. Then my heaviness was at its limits and I could not raise myself up from where I was sitting" (*SC* 33). Lynne Pearce draws attention to the important correlation that *Sexing the*

53 In this belief, Winterson goes so far as to regender the Biblical episode in which Jesus Christ chooses his apostles from among poor fishermen and says to them that "from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (St Luke 5.10) in the above quotation, when she literally makes the nuns fish the prostitutes from the water.

Cherry establishes between chronotope and language, when she explains that "one of the key demarcations between chronotopes may be their deployment of different languages. Persons in different times, different places, speak in different tongues, and although Jordan can disguise his sex he cannot disguise his feminine 'illiteracy'" (1994: 183). The chronotope of the invented cities is gendered female because, although it is Jordan himself who tells about his adventures, his narrative is complemented by the stories of the Twelve Dancing Princesses and of Fortunata as intradiegetic narrators and by his retelling of a multiplicity of stories other women have previously told him.

Jordan's process of education continues in the mercurial city, whose "inhabitants have reconciled two discordant desires: to remain in one place and to leave it behind for ever" (*SC* 43). In this city, houses change from place overnight, "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" (*SC* 42). This is the city where the Dancing Princesses now live. Jordan pays them a visit in an attempt to learn more about the dancer he has seen in the city of words. Apart from the information he receives about Fortunata, the object of his quest, Jordan discovers in the Dancing Princesses a new community of women who tell him their stories of escape from imposed, unsuccessful marriages. The traditional fairy tale, told from a male perspective, portrays the princesses as male property, first of their father, who curtails their attempts at independence by locking them in their room every night, and later of their husbands, who outsmart them and eventually manage to tame them into submission under the seemingly appealing form of love and marriage. In contrast, Winterson rewrites the story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses and "explodes the myth that every woman is a princess rescued by marriage to a prince" (Rosemergy 2000: 255). In giving each of the princesses the voice and the chance to tell their own story of survival and escape, Jordan restores to each of the princesses the individuality and independence they have been refused by patriarchy. Likewise, presenting them as a collectivity, a true sisterhood against patriarchal dominion, Winterson challenges the happily-ever-after marriage myth and emphasises women's power over their own lives and identities. The eldest princess alludes directly to the traditional ending of fairy tales only to subvert it:

> we were all given in marriage, one to each brother, and as it says lived happily ever after. We did, but not with our husbands. […] For some years I did not hear from my sisters, and then, by a strange eventuality, I discovered that we had all, in one way or another, parted from the glorious princes and were living scattered, according to our tastes. (*SC* 48)

The stories of the Dancing Princesses not only contribute to guiding Jordan in the exploration of gender stereotypes, they also favour the revision of the conventions of heterosexual love and destabilise the presentations of those conventions in literature. Several critics have pointed out that the stories told by the princesses are not original tales of survival but rather parodic rewritings of previous works and poetic traditions. Elizabeth Langland, for example, has pointed out that:

> the second princess begins her narrative with the words, "That's my last husband painted on the wall … looking as though he were alive," explicitly evoking Browning's Duke, the speaker of "My Last Duchess." In Winterson's revisionary narrative the second princess echoes the Duke's repression and stifling of his Duchess in her own macabre murder of her husband: "She had wrapped her own husband in cloth and went on wrapping the stale bandages round and round until she reached his nose. She had a moment's regret, and continued" (49). The third princess parodies Byron, beginning, "He walked in beauty." Denied his beauty because "it was a boy he loved," she "pierced them with a single arrow where they lay" (50). She claims, "I think it was poetic," pointing to how poetic tradition can be deployed in killing ways. (1997: 101)

Jan Rosemergy also calls attention to the intertextual parodic echoes of the stories told by the princesses when she states that the story the fifth princess tells is a revision of another fairy tale, that of Rapunzel (2000: 256). The fifth princess disdains her story with the prince she had been married to by reversing a fairy-tale convention, when she says that "the first time I kissed him he turned into a frog. There he is, just by your foot. His name's Anton" (*SC* 52). The princess focuses instead on her real story of love, which begins: "You may have heard of Rapunzel. Against the wishes of her family […] she went to live in a tower with an older woman" (*SC* 52). The princess turns out to be the older woman, who is blinded by a prince disguised in women clothing before he steals her beloved Rapunzel[54].

Susana González-Ábalos has pointed out that: "in keeping with radical feminist analysis of the oppression of women, Winterson seems to treat heterosexuality as the primary social sphere of male power, and she shows heterosexuality as having been enforced upon women as one of the most effective means of male patriarchal oppression" (1996: 290). This proves to be undeniable if we realise that none of the women in the novel are happy in a heterosexual relationship, including the Dog-Woman, the female ecologist, the Dog-Woman's mother, the female ecologist's mother, Nicolas's mother, Preacher Scrogg's wife, the whores in the two chronotopically separate brothels and, obviously, the Dancing

54 Jordan had provided a different version of this tale of lesbian love when he visits the enchanted city. Still dressed as a woman, he is welcomed by a young girl who "asking me if I were the sister she had prayed for, courteously invited me to bed with her, where I passed the night in some confusion" (*SC* 33). The next morning Jordan is told the terrible story of this girl Zillah, "who caught incestuously with her sister was condemned to build her own death tower" (*SC* 38).

Princesses. However, the love stories the eleven princesses tell Jordan, while naturalising homosexuality, male and female, show that no form of love can easily escape the constraints of patriarchal power and that lesbianism may not always be the most revolutionary, radical and effective weapon against patriarchy, as may be deduced from the stories of the third, fifth and seventh princesses. This argument is very much in keeping with Pearce's remark that: "These stories, like his experience of working on the fish stall, reveal to Jordan the abuse of masculine privilege that is concomitant with patriarchy" (1994: 183). The only solution seems to be what Jordan learns from Fortunata, her refusal of love in any of its expressions. As Jordan recalls:

> I stayed with Fortunata for one month, learning more about her ways and something about my own. She told me that for years she had lived in the hope of being rescued; of belonging to someone else, of dancing together. And then she had learned to dance alone, for its own sake and for hers.
>
> "And love?" I said.
>
> She spread her hands and gave me a short lecture on the habits of the starfish. (*SC* 99)

A complement to both the Dog-Woman's present and the sea voyages, the chronotope of the invented cities is the narration of Jordan's inner journey, his "voyage in", which develops through a number of alternative routes that allow him to redefine conventional notions of space, of time and also of gender. After his experiences in the invented cities, Jordan learns to chart space not in the patriarchal terms of conquest and possession but rather in terms of freedom and respect; similarly, time is no longer measured teleologically because, as he discovers, there are no salvational destinies such as love or the future, there is only "empty space and points of light" (*SC* 144). Finally, although unable to transcend his gender, after his illuminating encounters with women, Jordan embraces a new form of masculinity which substitutes power and the submission of women by the mutual co-operation of all human beings.

FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

In the final pages of this work, it seems not only advisable but also necessary to try and make a comprehensive summary of the main issues which have been raised so far, especially those related to the analysis of *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, in order to extract some overall conclusions.

The first part of this work has been dedicated to Jeanette Winterson, a writer who problematises the boundaries between reality and fiction, between the historical and the fantastic, not only in her works of fiction but also in her experience of the everyday. Winterson's life and works are fairly difficult to tell apart because she blindly believes in the power of stories and of storytelling to create a different reality and to alter givens. She understands the self as text and presents herself always in the process of becoming, never as a finished product. She rejects the notion of the self as single and fixed and advocates instead the adoption of multiple literary *personae* which relate to one another dialogically. Like the characters in her novels, Winterson uses all kinds of fictional disguises in order to conceal her true self and insists on the fact that there is nothing of herself outside language and that it is in her fiction that she is to be found. Her fondness of paradoxical statements and the overt exposure of the construction-deconstruction of the self is perfectly in keeping with the socio-cultural context that influences both her lifestyle and her literary production: postmodernism as "a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (Hutcheon 1988: 3), and feminism, with its current theories of the subject. This means that Winterson's imaginative attempts at experimentation with narrative conventions and generic forms are not only aesthetic but primarily ethic. Her strong political commitment aims at the subversion of socio-cultural power structures and, ultimately, at the re-appropriation of traditionally male-defined concepts for the development of a new sexual politics.

A few notes on method seemed, then, necessary before undertaking the proper analysis of the two novels under consideration. Due to the very characteristics of the texts themselves —two experimental novels which make the reader aware of narrative conventions while simultaneously exposing their shortcomings— a

narratological approach to the texts proved particularly suitable as starting point. Aware of the fact that these aspects had been systematically neglected in the criticism of Winterson's works, I chose to focus on the narrative categories of time and space and on the way in which they were used by Winterson as a means to provide alternative modes of narration/representation of character-identity. The "classical" narratological approach to these two categories was productive for the analysis of the structural elements of the two novels but it proved insufficient to account for their ideological implications. At this point, I found the symbiotic relationship between narratology and feminism of great help since feminist criticism has found in narratology instruments for textual analysis while narratology has benefitted from the feminist contextualist approach to narrative, which shows that stories are culturally determined. Taking into account the overtly formal and ideological alliance of temporal and spatial components in the two texts under consideration, Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of time and space and his concept of "chronotope" have been regarded as an interesting complement to the narratological approach. Finally, in addition to the three levels of analysis provided by narratology and to the complement they receive from feminist criticism and the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope, a fourth narrative level, that of metafiction and intertextuality, has been of the utmost interest in the analysis of those texts which *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* assimilate, parody and transform in order to disrupt established discourses and grand narratives.

The third and fourth parts of this work have been dedicated, respectively, to the analysis of the way in which Winterson opens up a space for the definition of the self and its gendered identity in the conscious manipulation of the space and time co-ordinates in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*. These two novels constitute the only incursions Winterson has made into the postmodern literary trend characteristic of the fiction written in Britain in the decade of the nineteen-eighties that Linda Hutcheon has called "historiographic metafiction". At the same time both novels expand on the revision, from a feminist point of view, of fantasy, the fairy tale, and grotesque realism and/or the carnivalesque, following a tendency Winterson had already shown in her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. This revision is carried out chronotopically, that is to say, through the specific depiction in the novels of gendered images of time and space. In order to study all these recurrent structural and thematic traits, the analysis of each of the novels has been divided into three parts. The first one examines the historical element and its handling in each of the two novels. The second part centres on the metafictional techniques which

emphasise the constructed nature of both texts. Finally, the third part focuses on the chronotopic portrayal and/or redefinition of the identities of their main character-narrators.

In *The Passion,* the illegitimisation of History is carried out through the interrogation of conventional historiographic practices and the exposure of the subjectivity of all historical accounts, as well as through the use of metafictional techniques, which emphasise the linguistic, and therefore fictional, status of all narratives. The choice of the historical setting of *The Passion* is significantly the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic campaigns. The story of the Napoleonic wars, as traditionally portrayed by history books, is the story of the military achievements of a polemical man whose deeds brought about the expansion of the French Empire in the last decades of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Winterson offers a double version of the same events. On the one hand, she resorts to the perspective of a Venetian woman, who suffers the oppression of patriarchal ideology in her city, which had been conquered by Napoleon, and in her own body, which is sold for the pleasure of Napoleon's generals. On the other hand, Winterson uses the very special perspective of a young man, Henri, who initially partakes of the general climate of passionate enthusiasm for Napoleon's policy and chooses to become a soldier, but who is physically and psychologically destroyed by Napoleon's unquenchable thirst for power. While the former remains an active storyteller, Henri becomes a peculiar historian who retreats from the empirical world in an attempt to acquire a deeper knowledge of himself. He trusts reason to bring some order to the chaos of his past experience and realises that self-cognition is only possible once the mind has been liberated from all empirical distractions. Paradoxically, then, although San Servelo is depicted in the book as a prison and a madhouse, it is here that Henri achieves freedom from the slavery of History and true knowledge of himself. Henri goes back to his past as a necessary movement to control it. Re-writing himself in history, mastering his personal experience of the world in language and narrative, is the best way to escape from the constraints of the past. Only when Henri admits the power of his story over History does he reach a position from which to move forward and from which to enter a new creative project: making a garden, a "forest of red roses" (*P* 160).

The use of metafictional techniques in *The Passion* further points to the linguistic nature of all narratives, be they historical or fictional. The intertextual references to other literary and critical works, the use of *mise en abyme* and other recurrent motifs, and the transformation of the story into another kind of work of art —a tapestry of words and sentences— exposes the artificiality of the world proposed

by the novel. The refrain, "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" is especially significant in this respect. The paradox both statements convey overtly points to the idea that "the only 'genuine historicity' becomes that which would openly acknowledge its own discursive, contingent identity" (Hutcheon 1988: 24). Hutcheon had accused historiographic metafiction of failing to reach beyond its problematising force. Through the leitmotif, "I'm telling you stories. Trust me", which significantly puts an end to the book, Winterson suggests that storytelling can "expand our possible reality rescuing us and our language from the narrow conceptions to which historical habits of thinking increasingly have confined it" (Ermarth 1992: 140). This is precisely the power of literature, which, apart from unmasking absolutes, provides an alternative space in which the self may be represented, for: "What historiographic metafiction suggests is a recognition of a central responsibility of the historian and the novelist alike: their responsibility as makers of meaning through representation" (Hutcheon 1989: 87).

The Passion represents history by means of such unequal tools as memory, chance, and desire. Winterson's text is not conventionally historical, although history occupies a central position and has a distinct function in the text. *The Passion* is a book about the importance of telling stories, oral or written, as a successful means of representing the self both in and across history. The chronotopic representation of history in *The Passion* is then the writing of Henri's memoirs, to which Villanelle's discourse is simultaneously subordinated and juxtaposed. These two chronotopes intersect with a third, the adventure narrative or quest, which is related to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the "chronotope of the road", and which, in its turn, intersects with the chronotope of romance narrative, where the desired other is systematically represented in terms of space. Space and time are fused into two carefully thought-out, concrete chronotopes which I have respectively called the "chronotope of history" and the "chronotope of fantasy" and which are respectively gendered male and female. As a result, a double set of binary opposites is established by the text. The spatial duality of the camp at Boulogne and the city of Venice triggers off the opposition between referential narrative time and mythical narrative time respectively used by the male character-narrator, Henri, and the female character-narrator, Villanelle, in the telling of their stories. *The Passion* self-consciously installs and genders two chronotopic images only to disrupt their boundaries later by having recourse to the chronotope of the journey which allows characters to perceive, react, and describe the chronotope of the other, thus blurring any distinction in terms of gender difference and emphasising the leading role of space in

the chronotopic whole. The discrete chronotope of the journey is represented in the mythical form of the hero's quest and is especially useful for textual subversion of gender categories on account of its being archetypally masculine. The quest is, furthermore, especially productive in generic terms because it ideologically partakes of the adventure chronotope, the chronotope of romantic love, and the no less significant chronotope of religious spirituality, three motifs which are interestingly grafted thereby.

The analysis of *Sexing the Cherry* has evinced that, despite the fact that, at first sight, these two novels conform to the same fictional trend, historiographic metafiction, and despite the clear similarities that exist between them, it cannot be said that *Sexing the Cherry* is a mere sequel to *The Passion*. It is true that more than three quarters of the story told in *Sexing the Cherry* are situated in the years running from 1630 to 1666. As I have argued in the first part of the analysis, Winterson seems to have chosen another moment of crisis, seventeenth-century Puritan England, because of its paradoxical nature: on the one hand, in religious and political terms, this is a highly subversive period, a period markedly self-conscious, critical of traditions, and eager for innovation and reform; on the other hand, this is also an extremely disappointing period, full of frustration and devoid of firm convictions or certitudes, equally disrupted by scientific discoveries and new philosophical questions. As in *The Passion*, two character-narrators, Jordan and the Dog-Woman are temporally located in this historical time span. However, none of them aims at providing a historical record nor do they attempt at making sense of either their past or their historical situation, as Henri had obsessively done in *The Passion*. Neither Jordan nor the Dog-Woman aim at rewriting themselves in History. Quite on the contrary, both of them insist on presenting their own subjective stories, which happen to be punctuated and, on occasions even motivated, by certain historical events, such as the execution of King Charles I, the Great Plague or the Great Fire of London. At the very beginning of the novel, Jordan presents himself to the reader as the surrogate author not of a historical book but of a travel book. What is more, he refuses to give the reader an account of the voyages he makes all over the world and offers instead the narrative of his parallel journeys of the imagination. In this respect an interesting comparison could be made between the madhouse of San Servelo in *The Passion* and the journeys along the invented cities in *Sexing the Cherry*. Both Henri and Jordan escape from the historical world in which they have chanced to live and which equally alienates them. Henri takes refuge in the madhouse and renounces all forms of external contact with the material world with the intention of getting to know himself better. Jordan takes refuge in the world of his imagination

but presents it as coexistent with the material, external world; further, his journey along the invented cities turns out to be eventually not a form of escape but a way towards self-knowledge, the knowledge of his multiplicity, whose acceptance prepares him to return to the material world and teach the many lessons he has learnt.

The use of metafictional techniques in *Sexing the Cherry* is also much more disruptive than in *The Passion*. Three forms of narrative self-consciousness have been seen to interrelate in Winterson's novel. Firstly, *Sexing the Cherry* exposes its constructedness as a literary artefact built upon the technique of repetition with a difference. Secondly, it highlights the importance that language has in the production of meaning and, consequently, in the transmission of ideologies. Finally, it revises the literary tradition in order to offer a parodic rewriting of some canonical texts. *Sexing the Cherry* has a defamiliarising power that demands the reader's active participation in the recognition and recreation of a new narrative code, the "book of my own" (*SC* 102) which Jordan provides the reader with. The novel's spatio-temporal narrative continuum is fragmented by internal title pages, which call attention to its chronotopic organisation, and by drawings of pineapples and bananas which iconically represent some of the narrators in the novel, a device that exposes conventional links between fruit and sexuality, reverses them, and ends up making of these associations something fluid and unstable. Moreover, *Sexing the Cherry* is a cross-time story, a story in which real and imagined selves can meet in a spatio-temporal narrative continuum that does away with the linear notion of chronology and places the real and the imaginary at the same ontological level. In so doing, this story constructs and deconstructs itself in and through language, which is exposed as ideologically laden and culturally bound. This deconstructive movement affects physical certainties, shakes narrative conventions, and is reflected in the identity of characters. Paradoxically, then, spatial fragmentation does not lead to disintegration but to the transcendence of both spatio-temporal co-ordinates and individual identities.

In the third part of the analysis of *Sexing the Cherry*, it has been shown that Winterson uses a modified version of the Bakhtinian chronotope in order to challenge traditional definitions of gender, although she does not manage to transcend gender constraints. Once the problems of identification and classification of chronotopes in *Sexing the Cherry* was overcome, the approach to the novel in chronotopic terms proved very productive. The opposition that existed in *The Passion* between the chronotope of history and the chronotope of fantasy, which was

seen to radically modify characters' behaviour and narrative standpoints, is destroyed in *Sexing the Cherry*, where these two chronotopes engage dialogically and complement themselves in order to provide the reader with a more comprehensive view of the world. Taking into account all the major and minor chronotopic elements that intersect in the novel, three basic chronotopes have been established and analysed, the two historical presents, the sea voyages and the invented cities.

The two historical presents have been considered as a whole because, in spite of the fact that there is a temporal distance of more than three centuries between these two epochs, the novel presents them as synchronic and simultaneous, so much so that it allows characters to move freely along and across them. The period 1630 to 1666 has been read as a regendering of the Rabelaisian chronotope insofar as it is the Dog-Woman, a grotesquely female version of Gargantua, who represents it through her narrative. The time of the narration perfectly corresponds to what we have called the chronotope of history in both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*. This means that the Dog-Woman's story is told in a fairly linear manner (exception made of a few minor anachronies which add suspense and expectation to her narrative, though they never break its chronological development); her actions also invariably follow the dictates of causality, they are never gratuitous but rather reactions to specific external stimuli. The seventeenth century is spatially depicted in terms of the material principle and very especially in terms of bodies. The Dog-Woman's portrayal of her own body conforms both to the standards of carnivalesque/grotesque realism and to Kristeva's theories of woman as abject, two devices which deconstruct conventional standards of feminity and make woman especially threatening for men. The main historical events are also depicted in terms of bodies and a clear parallelism is established between the corruption of the body politic and that of the city of London, which, after the Great Plague is covered in putrefied bodies.

The chronotope of the sea voyages constitutes Jordan separation from the oppressive socio-historical situation to which he does not belong and from his imposing mother, who prevents him from achieving personal maturation. Simultaneously, it represents his entrance into the realm of conventional masculinity as impersonated by John Tradescant, a character who acts as surrogate father to Jordan from the very beginning of the novel. If the historical chronotope was clearly gendered female, although grotesquely so, the chronotope of the sea voyage is presented in the novel as strictly masculine. According to the standards of patriarchy, Jordan's voyage out is successful because, on the one hand, as he acknowledges,

after thirteen years at sea, he is no longer a boy but "a man" (*SC* 102); on the other hand, Jordan has learnt enough to substitute Tradescant as an explorer, having found and brought back to England the pineapple, his own precious achievement.

However, the sea voyages make Jordan aware of his multiplicity, and of the need to find his own hidden part, which he does in the journeys along the cities of the imagination he visits. The chronotope of the invented cities reconnects Jordan with the female principle which becomes a new space to be explored. A complement to both the Dog-Woman's present and the sea voyages, the chronotope of the invented cities is the narration of Jordan's inner journey, his "voyage in", which develops through a number of alternative routes that allow him to redefine conventional notions of space, of time and also of gender. After his experiences in the invented cities, Jordan learns to chart space not in the patriarchal terms of conquest and possession but rather in terms of freedom and respect; similarly, time is no longer measured teleologically because, as he discovers, there are no salvational destinies such as love or the future, there is only "empty space and points of light" (*SC* 144). Finally, although unable to transcend his gender, Jordan embraces a new form of masculinity which substitutes power and the submission of women by the mutual co-operation of all human beings.

The final part of the novel takes the reader back to the chronotope of history in the form of the twentieth-century present which includes Nicolas Jordan, a boy who longs to emulate past heroes and who falls back into Jordan's present and fuses with him, and a female ecologist who imagines herself to be the Dog-Woman as a means to regain the necessary strength to fight against pollution, patriarchy and globalisation politics. Unlike Henri and Villanelle, who end up following separate lives in *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry* brings Nicolas Jordan and the female ecologist together on the one hand, and Jordan and the Dog-Woman, on the other, to show that men and women have to act together if, as in the carnivalesque, the old order is to be overthrown and the construction of a new society where male and female can be free and whole is ever to become something more than a mere utopia.

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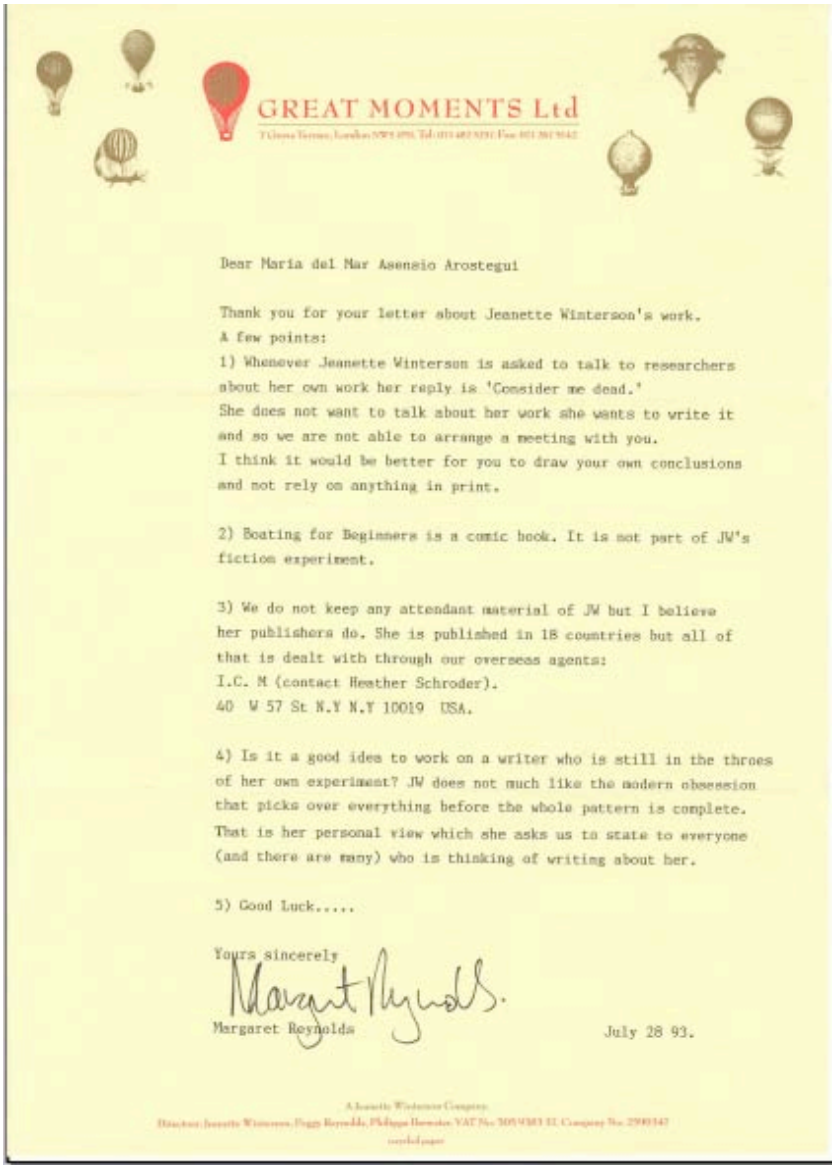
APPENDIXES

Appendix I: Letter from Margaret Reynolds

The first time I tried to get in touch with Jeanette Winterson was in the year 1993, while I was doing a Master's course in "Studies in fiction" at the University of East Anglia. The late professor Lorna Sage, who was my tutor at the time and knew of my deep interest in Winterson's work, advised me to contact her and see whether a meeting could be arranged. The following letter from her editor, Margaret Reynolds, is the closest I managed to get to the author herself then:



GREAT MOMENTS Ltd

Dear Maria del Mar Asensio Arostegui

Thank you for your letter about Jeanette Winterson's work.
A few points:
1) Whenever Jeanette Winterson is asked to talk to researchers about her own work her reply is 'Consider me dead.'
She does not want to talk about her work she wants to write it and so we are not able to arrange a meeting with you.
I think it would be better for you to draw your own conclusions and not rely on anything in print.

2) Boating for Beginners is a comic book. It is not part of JW's fiction experiment.

3) We do not keep any attendant material of JW but I believe her publishers do. She is published in 18 countries but all of that is dealt with through our overseas agents:
I.C. M (contact Heather Schroder).
40 W 57 St N.Y N.Y 10019 USA.

4) Is it a good idea to work on a writer who is still in the throes of her own experiment? JW does not much like the modern obsession that picks over everything before the whole pattern is complete.
That is her personal view which she asks us to state to everyone (and there are many) who is thinking of writing about her.

5) Good Luck.....

Yours sincerely
Margaret Reynolds

Margaret Reynolds

July 28 93.

Appendix II: "More Life into a Time without Boundaries" An Accidental Talk with Jeanette Winterson

April needs not always be the cruellest month. It was in April that I travelled to Oxford to attend the annual conference on the teaching of literature sponsored by the British Council. My vernal pilgrimage was ultimately prompted by the announced presence of Jeanette Winterson, a writer whose fiction has drawn my attention for the past eight years. Leaving aside the fact that Oxford is Winterson's intellectual home, her presence in this forum of debate was doubly justified. Firstly, because of the outstanding place Winterson occupies in contemporary British literature. Secondly, because she was promoting her first collection of short stories, *The World and Other Places* (1998).

Winterson's reading was to be the last session of the conference. All delegates were sitting expectantly in the Music Room at Corpus Christi College. At six o'clock sharp the doors opened and we had the first glimpse of Jeanette Winterson: a fragile tiny woman with a wild crop of short curly hair, dressed in black jeans and a white shirt. She was wearing no make up but her timid smile seemed intent on hiding a certain uneasiness. Val Cunnigham, a former professor of Jeanette Winterson's at Oxford, steps forward to introduce Jeanette to the audience. His words are warm and inviting but it seems obvious that Jeanette does not like public appearances, no matter how intimate they may be intended to be. She does not speak about herself but shelters behind her fiction, her imaginary world. She presents her collection of short stories as a kind of open window to her creative trajectory. "It is a chart of my preoccupations," she says. As she begins to read, her voice sweetens and her face lightens.

The first story she reads, "Disappearance I", is the story of a professional dreamer whose job is to provide people with dreams which "are tele-electronically recorded and transmitted at Dream-points around the City" (p. 109) in a society which sanctions sleeping because it is "dirty, unhygienic, wasteful and disrespectful to others" (p. 105). This professional dreamer, who like the narrator in Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992) has no definite sex, is another fictionalised persona of the author. Jeanette Winterson feeds her readers with imaginary fictional worlds in a society which values facts over the power of stories and imagination.

Her second choice for this reading is another very significant story, "The Three Friends". "It was written out of fun and pleasure, following all the rules of the fairy tale," Winterson says. She cuddles us with her mellow voice. Listening to her story, we all become children again. Yet she is cheating us. "The Three Friends" is the story of an ultimate quest: "that which cannot be found" (p. 50). So behind the formulaic beginning: "Once upon a time there were two friends who found a third" (p. 49), behind the apparent lightness of the fairy tale mood, lie Winterson's preoccupations with the motif of the quest, as a metaphor of her own ontological quest, of her narrative and personal restlessness. Which may explain why this story resonates with echoes of her previous fictions: there is the "house that celebrated ceilings and denied floors" (p. 49), which is the first stage in Jordan's quest in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989: 21); or the image of the "tower in the middle of the sea" (p. 51) that marks the end of the three friends' quest just as the rock, another tower in the middle of the sea, which is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's poetry, works as a metaphor of Henri's failed quest in *The Passion* (1988).

Winterson's reading comes to an end with "The 24-Hour Dog", the opening story in *The World and Other Places.* "This story is the outcome of two sleepless nights," she says, pointing once again to a feigned lightness. What she does not say is that, far from being as casual as she wants us to believe, "The 24-Hour Dog" is an open door to her heart and soul. You only need to go down the surface and look for what she has written with invisible ink. Is this story autobiographical? "No not at all and yes of course" as she cunningly comments of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1991: xiv). The game of hide and seek continues but there is a significant refrain in this story —as there were refrains in *The Passion*— "*He's only a dog*. Yes but he has found me out" (1998: 10).

During the days preceeding her arrival, I have been in touch with her editor and partner Margaret Reynolds, who is one of the organisers of the conference and a very pleasant person who has had an active participation in the conference's seminars. But when I mention the possibility of talking to Winterson about her works in private, she sounds like the cold editor whose disencouraging letter I had received some six years earlier. Reynolds is definitely not the best way to approach Winterson. My last chance will be Winterson herself. Will she allow me to find her and her work out?

She does. I have taken my copy of *The World and Other Places* with me and, as she is signing it for me, I ask her for an informal interview. Eternal seconds — what's the meaning of time?, I had just asked her. The answer is here. And the answer is yes. Winterson guides me through the labyrinthine corridors of Corpus Christi College. And my heart pounds as I follow her. We enter a quiet room and she offers me something to drink. Orange juice, naturally?

MA: First of all thank you very much for agreeing to this improvised interview. I have been working under the assumption that the fiction you wrote in the 1980s, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *Boating for Beginners*, *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* form a unified, self-contained group, a continuum, which seems to be broken with the publication of your next novel. Was there any significant change in the way you conceived your fiction in the 1990s, I mean from *Written on the Body* on?

JW: I think the difference is that I want to use different narrative devices. And obviously in *Oranges*, because it was the first novel, I used a very straightforward narrative technique like the first person, interspersed with those fairy tales to act as a kind of allegory, a commentary on the whole thing. I used them as a sort of Greek chorus to comment on the action. But it is essentially a simple structure using the books of the Bible. I wanted to reinterpret *the* book out of my own experience, out of

my own imagination. And then in both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* my obsession with time was beginning to take shape.

MA: But time was already a key issue in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, wasn't it? I am thinking about the Deuteronomy chapter as a digression on the relationship time has with the two terms of the dichotomy history/storytelling which, later on, would be central to both *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*.

J.W.: Yes, that is why I had written in *Oranges*, in the Deuteronomy section, all about time being a great deadener. In the sense of time as history. I wanted to explore and to break it down, I didn't want time to be history. I didn't want history to be time. I wanted to go back into a notion of the past that I could reinvent so that it would work as a very elastic sort of structure but one which was not in any sense slavish or regular. I didn't want obviously to write a historical novel. I didn't want to go into period detail. But I was attracted by using the past because I have always thought that it is actually important to get away from what I call "abject realism" where you are just parodying the language of the everyday and the ordinary situation in which you find yourself, pretending that coping with everyday life and interspersing it with a bit of a story is actually writing a book. It is not. It is just a kind of mimicry that actually traps you.

MA: Do you mean to say that going back into a historical past, 19th-century France in *The Passion* and 17th-century England in *Sexing the Cherry*, is for you, as a writer, escapist?

JW: I very much tried to get away. And also I felt that the 80s were very suffocating. It was such a materialistic decade. There was such a concentration on what simply was there in front of your nose and nothing else at all, no imagination, no passion, no religious feeling, no love. And everything seemed to be paired off to its basic structure which is how much do I earn, how much do I pay, and the world is simply what it appears to be everyday when you wake up. And I thought that was so one-dimensional. And as somebody growing up —I was in my 20s in the 80s—, I wanted to fight against that very materialistic monologue and I wanted to set up a dialogue again which is, I think, what human civilisation rests on: when you stop just talking to yourself, when you start talking to other people and recognising that there is a whole culture out there with which you can engage and which you can build upon. So I thought, how can I break away from that? For me the answer at the time was to use these invented spaces in history, to manufacture a world that was entirely dependent on language, that would be built out of language, that would function with

language and where all the characters would be deeply immersed in language, that they would explain themselves through language.

MA: These are precisely the kind of mercurial spaces in which both Villanelle and Jordan, the free spirits of *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*, feel at ease. Venice, as the multiple city where you cannot go twice to the same place by the same route. And the unnamed places Jordan describes in *Sexing the Cherry*, which, like Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972) may be knocked down and rebuilt from one day to the next and thus freed from the limitations of routine, of the everyday, of gravity, but which, at the same time, are ruled by the weight of language. In *Sexing the Cherry*, the physicality of words, of clichés above all, is such that they may suffocate lovers…

JW: Exactly. I thought that if you could do that with words, with language, with fiction, it would mean that you could walk away from the punishing roar of the 80s and enter these other spaces where you might find again those values and responsibilities which mean something, which are permanent, which are not tied. I mean those things which, on the line, we call civilisation, we call human morality. Things that have made the West, I suppose, in the last thousand years. So I thought I would make a space perhaps where people can find out who they are, and also where they can be moved, where they can find their hearts again.

MA: That is one thing I really appreciate in your fiction. That it touches the reader's innermost fibres, that it leads us into a new space where we are invited to travel hand in hand with the characters who, as mirror images, help us to rediscover our feelings. Quite often, as I was reading certain passages of your fiction, I have had the impression that I was reading myself, that you had found the precise words I had always searched for but was unable to find.

JW: Well, that is my job. I think finding the words *is* it, because I think a lot of people struggle with feelings that they can't express and then they find, if those feelings are not the correct feelings of the moment, if they are not fashionable, that those feelings are trodden upon or ignored. It is easy to express whatever is in fashion at the moment because you have got the whole weight of society around you. So go for it, that is fine, that is clear. But there are all those other things which perhaps are not clear and become lost, or forgotten. And I think one of the functions of art —literature and all art— is to bring through those things which from time to time become obscured or trampled on but which are still essential to the human spirit. And in the 80s the idea of putting power before the self was absurd.

MA: Does this account for your choice in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* of two contexts of political instability, rebellion and war?

JW: Definitely. In *The Passion* I chose a situation, which is a war situation, which of its own wipes out individuality in a world where the individual doesn't count. Power, of course, counts. And I wanted to show how those human values could be brought back to make sense of what was intolerable, so that Henri and Villanelle find some stability. By reasserting their small human scale values in the face of all this mess and bloodshed and foolish glory, they are able to keep to themselves and to find their sanity and also to find a way of building a life. And it seems to me that is always relevant because it is a mass society which we are in. One which is continually trying to disempower the individual so that the individual doesn't count. It is strange that all this has been made more so by all this insistence on people's rights. You only start insisting on your rights when actually you feel you haven't got any. And so we have tons of pressure groups all over the world talking about rights. And increasingly the State is taking away these fundamental rights and the space to be brought forth. That is where art is saying: there are still small voices saying no. Actually, we don't like that, we won't like that, there is another way. And so what is often called the monstrous selfishness of the asserting private values is in fact the only way, I think, to find again sanity and to remember that we are in a civilisation which is made of individuals. That there is no such thing as the State, it is just an invented monster which devours people.

MA: And you feel that this monster is engulfing all of us as it engulfs Henri in *The Passion* and threatens to engulf the female counterpart of the Dog Woman in *Sexing the Cherry*. You fear that we too may refuse any form of action and choose any of our individual ivory towers instead.

JW: Yes, absolutely. Yes. The more I was talking about this revolution the more it was plain to me that it is so much easier now simply to erode any boundary between the public and the private life, to enter other people's homes in a way which would have been impossible not even fifty years ago. It would be quite hard to keep anything private or secret from now on and that is why we all have to work towards not communicating but keeping silent. It is going to be very difficult trying not to be watched, trying not to be heard, trying not to be data. I mean we are now simply living in a society which is full of data and has no meaning, whereas the medievals were in a society of very little data but rich in meaning, where everything was multilayered and the fabric of the world spoke of all and was infused by all. I feared that we would lose that. So I suppose, to get back to our fiction, yes. I mean, I

thought I should carry on with the same tone in *Sexing the Cherry* because I wasn't satisfied that I had finished in *The Passion*. I thought I could work on this further and it was worth another shot in a way. Actually in my books —some of them at least— I sort of take up from the other. I pick up the last trail of the previous one.

MA: There is a rhythmical repetition of motifs and even sentences which confers a very special distinctiveness on your fiction. I mean, when reading any of your short stories, despite their being innovative in many ways, there is always something of your previous writings, literary winks aiming at mutual recognition. I am thinking in particular about your latest work to date, *The World and Other Places*. On the one hand, it is your first collection of short stories, and to that extent you seem to be experimenting with a different narrative genre. But, on the other, as I was reading these stories, I got the feeling that they were parallel to the rest of your fiction. Maybe not simultaneous in time but sharing some common concerns, some common metaphors.

JW: Yes, very much so. And of course, you know, in "The Three Friends" there is a reference to *Sexing the Cherry* in the place which celebrates ceilings and denies floors. And *The Passion* is there with the man in the tower in the sea. I just wanted to bundle it all in. But I think all of my books are about a quest, about a search, because I *am* looking for that which cannot be found. And I know you never find it, maybe it finds *you*, at the end. But the point is to keep pursuing it. It is a kind of Holy Grail, just to go on pushing yourself in the search of it. Not because you are disatisfied but simply because, I think, it is part of the curiosity of the human soul to go on seeking beyond what you already know and into new spaces with no boundaries. The Jews have a nice phrase for that, they call it "more life into time without boundaries" which I love.

MA: It sounds beautiful…

JW: It *is* beautiful. And I suppose that is what I want. It is this time without boundaries that has always seduced me in fiction where I could create myself. And so at the end of *The Passion* which ends, as you know, with "I'm telling you stories, trust me", I wanted to be trusted further and to go on in *Sexing the Cherry* with that idea of the individual and the quest. And of course in the Dog Woman I wanted to create the kind of woman who is not superficially attractive. There is absolutely nothing going for it in her. She is huge and fat and murderous and everything that an attractive woman is supposed not to be.

MA: Yes, but, unlike Jeanette's frightening, distant mother in *Oranges*, the Dog Woman is somehow sweet, murderously critical —if you allow me— but full of tenderness.

JW: Yes, threatening, and yet you love her. I wanted people to love her. I suppose she is a continuation of the monstrous mother in *Oranges*, as you may be pointing out. In her size, in her all-consuming self, in her refusal to see beyond her own world. But, yes, she is somebody that you sympathise with. I suppose for me in my books I don't really like to create impersonal characters because it is easy to find those. I always want to create something that makes you think. Maybe I do care about these people that will make you feel something, that will not make you turn away in disgust. It is fashionable now in modern fiction to write of things from which you would turn away in disgust. But I am not sure where that leads us. For me, it doesn't lead me anywhere. And so I can admire writers like Will Self or Martin Amis, but I can't love them, and I can't count on them to take me where I need to go. And I suppose that is why I carry on the way I do, why I, although I mostly like them and respect them, I don't want to write in that way, because in the end you have somehow to make more space for people, to make them be what they are not. And it is so easy to bring people back into the world of data. It is easy for us, writers, to do that. Think of Milton, for instance… It all starts in the playground. But it is not easy for us to visualise worlds which are better than our own and I think that is part of the artist's duty. You see this particularly in painting, I suppose. It's more obvious there…

A knock on the door interrupts Winterson's argument. Margaret Reynolds, one of the chairs of the conference and the woman who has accompanied Winterson from *Written on the Body* on as both her literary editor and partner, reminds Jeanette of the rest of delegates waiting for her to share the final "grand dinner" of the conference. Jeanette manages to gain five more minutes. Resolute, she goes on with our conversation. Her words are brisk now.

JW: And then of course after *Sexing the Cherry* I didn't want to do that any more because it would have become for me repetitive. It wouldn't have helped. One of the prompts as a writer is that once you have found the way of solving the problem you have to find a new problem because that is what writers want and I think it is what all artists want. It is the problem that excites them and obviously as you go on working you become more fluent, you become more aware, you become more self-conscious, which is as it should be. And then you must never start parodying

yourself. That is a great danger. It is so easy to write the book that you have already written, if you see what I mean.

MA: I think so. In five years, from 1985 to 1989, you produced four books —if you allow me to include *Boating for Beginners* to the list— which is quite a productive rate. And suddenly, three whole years go by between the publication of *Sexing the Cherry* and that of *Written on the Body*. Does this unusually long silence account for your need to start afresh?

JW: I did the television script for *Oranges* and various sorts of things during this three-year gap you mention. But I wanted to break completely and I wanted to do it in a sense that was then, I suppose, up to date and modern. But I didn't want to fall back into this "abject realism" I was talking about before. So that is why I decided I would take away all of the structures and not tell you anything. Not tell you the date, not tell you the place, not tell you the gender, not tell you the narrator's name. I mean we actually know so little in *Written on the Body.* And the whole story is told to us in the first couple of pages so there is no suspense either. So I thought, can I take all that away and still leave a book that people would want to read and that would move them? That was the point.

MA: A difficult one, I guess.

JW: It was difficult because it wasn't always understood as I had intended. And yet it is funny because in the States that is the book everybody likes best. It is in its thirteenth printing. That is amazing, I know. They just love it in America. So that was that. And then as I moved on, I suppose, I had also begun to go through a kind of interior phase like in *Art & Lies.* It seems I was caught in a dire world and I had to find a way through it. I think this is probably what happened. Because, in a sense, the more books you write the harder it becomes to write because you have your own standards to keep up to. And when I came through *Art & Lies,* I wrote my essays *Art Objects*. I really couldn't see where I was going or what the next question would be for me and then of course it was absolutely obvious because it became *Gut Symmetries.* Again I wanted to use an up-to-date narrative but one which was not in any sense straightforward realism.

MA: In *Gut Symmetries* you use the pattern of the Tarot, which was also a significant, although less explicit, intertext in *The Passion,* as a structuring device and you mix it with quantum physics. The result seems to be a world which is real and virtual at the same time.

JW: Yes. I have worked with the Tarot for twenty years. It is extremely important to me as a therapeutic and meditative model. I constantly work with the Tarot. I

suppose as an access to the subconscious and as a way of focusing on images because, for a writer, life is a very visual thing and images are very important to me. That is why I tie and round my theories and ideas in images which are very sensuous and concrete, so they relate, so they are not only ideas. I hate the world of ideas, you want to feel, touch, hear and smell. Using pictures, all pictures and particularly for me the Tarot, which is always there, is a way sometimes of cutting through the platter and returning to those simple solid images.

MA: Last question, I guess. All of your fiction brimms with intertextuality. Your stories abound in references to the work of T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf. Obviously Modernism is of utmost importance in your work. Would you agree with my contention that your fiction has Modernism as a point of departure although being in constant dialogue with Postmodernism? For example, take your characters. I would dare say that both Jeanette in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and Gloria in *Boating for Beginners* echo Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist.* But then *The Passion* establishes an interesting dialogue between the forms of Modernism, represented by Henri —who refuses action and finds his own refuge from society in his voluntary seclusion and in his books— and such a postmodernist character as Villanelle, who subverts social conventions concerning, for instance, sexual relationships and the notions of marriage and the nuclear family…

JW: Yes, I think that is right. I think you are only good if you have your own voice right from the start so that people will say "ah yes, we know this person, she is different". So obviously you begin to work out your own agenda as you go along even if you are conscious that Modernism is all around. So, yes, I think that is true. I have tried always to sort of absorb the lessons of Modernism: good English, exactness, the wish to go underneath the surface… But more and more against that, though, I really think I want to tell the stories because that is what is useful for a life: the battle of passion over tradition, the stories I tell you and you tell me and we tell ourselves add up to the whole web of stories which we grant each other. I suppose storytelling is set up as a challenge to the meaningless weight, the junk that is continuously out there, surrounding people so that they can't see, hear, or feel. The web of stories, I think, is much lighter and much more liberating and is actually something which supports you rather than something which smothers you. And so what I am trying to do now is to use stories in a very particular way whilst not abandoning any of my Modernist credentials. I am sure that it is possible to make them coexist in a way. The book I am writing now is very much an attempt to do

that, accepting the world we are in, a world that is changing, but also tying it back into these civilised human values we have been talking about.

MA: I am really looking forward to reading that new one…

JW: It will be there next year.

MA: Great. Well, I'm afraid we have probably run out of time by now. Thank you very much for your kindness. Talking to you has been a real pleasure and a privilege.

JW: Thank you.

We could have gone on and on with this amiable conversation. There were so many more aspects of her most recent books that I would have loved to discuss with her. But, although Jeanette's words have transported me into a space where time is suspended, the outer world manages to break the spell. We definitely need Jeanette Winterson's fiction to make the illusion real: more life into a time without boundaries.

María del Mar Asensio Aróstegui
Corpus Christi College.
Oxford, 16th April 1999

Appendix III: Discursive Echoes in *Sexing the Cherry*

Although the text insists on associating each piece of discourse with the voice that utters it through the use of varied frame markers, it is my contention that *Sexing the Cherry* transcends any notion of the self as individual by making the different narrators echo one another on countless ocassions. What follows is a chart of examples that illustrate this idea.

A) Parallelisms between the heterodiegetic voice in the opening epigraphs and Jordan.

Example 1: Time as a continuum.

• The *Hopi*, an Indian tribe, have a language as sophisticated as ours, but no tenses for past, present and future. The division does not exist. What does this say about *time*? (*SC* 8) **Voice in epigraph**	• Then he said, 'On my travels I visited an Indian tribe known as the *Hopi*. […] Most bizarre of all, they have no tenses for past, present and future. They do not sense time in that way. For them, *time* is one'. (*SC* 134-135) **Jordan quoted by the Dog-Woman** • The *future and the present and the past* exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky. The river runs from one country to another without stopping. And even the most solid of things and the most real, the best-loved and the well-known, are only shadows on the wall. Empty space and points of light. (*SC* 144) **Jordan**

Example 2: Language creates reality.

• The Hopi, an Indian tribe, have a *language* as sophisticated as ours, but no tenses for past, present and future. The division does not exist. What does this say about *time*? (*SC* 8) **Voice in epigraph**	• *Language* always betrays us, tells the truth when we want to lie, and dissolves into formlessness when we would most like to be precise. And so we cannot move back and forth in *time*, but we can experience it in a different way. If all time is eternally present, there is no reason why we should not step out of one present into another. (*SC* 90) **Jordan**

Example 3: Matter as empty space: weightlessness.

• *Matter*, that thing the most solid and the well-known, which you are holding in your hands and which makes up your body, is now known to be mostly empty space. *Empty space and points of light.* What does this say about the reality of the world? (*SC* 8) **Voice in epigraph**	• And even the most solid of things and the most real, the best-loved and the well-known, are only shadows on the wall. *Empty space and points of light.* (*SC* 144) **Jordan**

B) Parallelisms between Jordan and Nicolas Jordan.

Example 4: First call to adventure.

• I put my head next to his head and looked where he looked and I saw deep blue waters against a pale shore and trees whose branches sang with green and birds in fairground colours and an old man in a loin-cloth. *This was the first time Jordan set sail*. (*SC* 13) **Jordan's vision described by the Dog-Woman**	• 'Mr Rose, the Royal Gardener, presents the pineapple to Charles the Second'. The artist is unknown, probably Dutch. Mr Rose in his wig is down on one knee and the King in his wig is accepting the pineapple. Colours of fruit and flowers make up the painting. *Soon after I saw this painting I decided to join the Navy*. (*SC* 113) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 5: Voyaging by the stars.

• Jordan said the *stars can take you anywhere*. (*SC* 15) **Jordan's words quoted by the Dog-Woman**	• I lay on my bed and looked out of the window at the stars. I read in a book that the *stars can take you anywhere*. (*SC* 119) **Nicolas Jordan** • Parents can't afford a telescope. Has a book instead on two to *navigate by the stars*. (*SC* 114) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 6: Both build paper boats in their childhood.

• When Jordan was a boy he *made paper boats* and *floated them on the river*. From this he learned how the *wind* affects a sail, but he never learned how love affects a heart. (*SC* 19) **Jordan described by the Dog-Woman**	• I *built my own model ship* from the pictures. At first I had kits with balsa wood rigging and plastic seamen, but soon I learned to design my own with tools from my father's workshop. […] At weekends my mother cooked and my father read the paper. I went to the pond and *sailed my boats*. I liked the uncertainty of the *wind*. (*SC* 114) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 7: Love at first sight as starter of the quest.

• Then I saw her. She was climbing down from her window on a thin rope which she cut and re-knotted a number of times during the descent. *I strained my eyes to follow her, but she was gone*. (*SC* 21) **Jordan**	• I tried to understand her through her photograph. She was pretty; I felt I knew her, though this was not possible. Before I realized it I stood up and took down my kit bag. *I would find her*. (*SC* 138) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 8: Love as destiny and threat.

• He shook his head and assured me that *nothing was proof against love*. (*SC* 73) **Jordan**	• 'Like love,' I said, setting the rudder. '*There's no cure for love.*' (*SC* 115) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 9: The need to escape from the self and the quotidian.

• Running away from uncertainty and confusion but most of all, *running away from myself*. (*SC* 80) **Jordan**	• I was straight out of school and eager for a carrier. Any career that would *take me away*. (*SC* 113) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 10: Fusion of both characters in time and space.

• *Time 1*: A young man on board an admiralty salvage tug close to the mouth of the Thames goes on deck to look at the stars. His mates are asleep, the lifeboats firmly battened. A man stands next to him and says '*I have heard they are burying the King at Windsor*. It is more than a hundred years since Henry was left to rot there beneath a purple pall. Jane Seymour is beside him. No monarch has ever been buried there since. There is room for Charles, a little room.' The young man turns astonished; he knows of no King, only a Queen, who is far from dead. He opens his mouth to protest the joke and finds *he is face to face with John Tradescant*. Above them the sails whip in the wind. (*SC* 82) **Jordan**	• I rested my arms on the railing and my head on my arms. I felt I was falling falling into a black hole with no stars and no life and no helmet. I heard a foot scrape on the deck beside me. Then a man's voice said, '*They are burying the King at Windsor today*.' I snapped upright and looked full in the face of the man, who was staring out over the water. I knew him but from where? And his clothes…nobody wears clothes like that any more. I looked beyond him, upwards. The sails creaked in the breeze, the main spar was heavy with rope. Further beyond I saw the Plough and Orion and the bright sickle of the moon. I heard a bird cry, sharp and fierce. *Tradescant sighed.* My name is Jordan. (*SC* 121) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 11: Freedom from materiality: weightlessness.

• Passion, delirium, meditation, are words we use to describe the heightened condition of superconductivity. It is certainly true that a criterion for true art, as opposed to its cunning counterfeit, is its ability to take us where the artist has been, to this other different place where we are *free* from the problems of gravity. When we are drawn into the art we are drawn out of ourselves. We are no longer bound by matter, *matter* has become what it is: *empty space and light*. (*SC* 91) **Jordan**	• I'd want my whole body to feel the space, the *empty space and points of light*. That's how dancers must feel, dancers and acrobats, just for a second, that *freedom*. (*SC* 120) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 12: Characters introducing themselves.

• 'My *name* is Jordan,' I said. (*SC* 93) **Jordan**	• 'My *name* is Nicolas Jordan,' I said. (*SC* 142) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 13: Heroism for men is associated with honour and the reward of a woman.

• I want to be brave and admired and have a beautiful *wife* and a fine house. I want to be a *hero* and wave goodbye to my wife and children at the *docks*, and be sorry to see them go but more excited about what is to come. I want to be like other men, one of the boys, a back-slapper and a man who knows a joke or two. (*SC* 101) **Jordan**	• For a long time I had a secret lover called Mina Froggs. When I came home a *hero* she was always waiting at the *docks* and desperate to *marry* me. (*SC* 114) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 14: Heroism and women.

• I want to be a *hero* […] 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. (*SC* 101) **Jordan**	I read the article. Surely this *woman* was a *hero*? Heroes give up what's comfortable in order to protect what they believe in or to live dangerously for the common good. (*SC* 138) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 15: Acknowledging the existence of both an outer and an inner life.

• I've kept the log book for the ship. Meticulously. And I've kept a book of my own, and for every journey we have made together I've written down my own journey and drawn my own map. I can't show this to the others, but I believe it to be a faithful account of what happened, at least, of what happened to me. Are we all living like this? *Two lives*, the *ideal outer life* and the *inner imaginative life* where we keep our secrets? (*SC* 102) **Jordan**	• Will it take as long as that before we start the *journey inside*, down our own time tunnels and deep into the realms of inner space? (*SC* 120) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 16: The beloved lacks an essence.

• 'It was given to me by *a woman who does not exist*. Her name is Fortunata.' (*SC* 130) **Jordan quoted by The Dog-Woman**	• 'Who are you in love with?' said Jack. 'No one. *She doesn't exist.*' (*SC* 115) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 17: Refusal of glory.

• 'See what I mean? Even when you have the chance to do something useful you don't. What's the point of sailing round the bloody world if you're not going to break a record? You could go round the world in a plane if that's all you want.' (*SC* 136) **Nicolas Jordan**	• He could have been a lord had he wished it. The King wanted to heap honours on him and would have equipped him with any ship to sail the seas. But Jordan would not. He said he wanted to sit by the river and watch the boats. There were looks then; they could not understand him, and some whispered that he had gone mad in his thirteen years away. Others said his heart was broken. (*SC* 140-141) **The Dog-Woman**

C) Parallelisms between Jordan and Fortunata

Example 18: Recognition of the self as double.

• I began to walk with my hands *stretched out* in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of *my own face* opposite me. (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• One evening when Artemis had lost her quarry she lit a fire and tried to rest, but the night was shadowy and full of games. She saw herself by the fire as a child, a woman, a hunter, a queen. Grabbing the child she lost sight of the woman, and when she drew her bow the queen fled. What would it matter if she crossed the world and hunted down every living creature so long as her separate selves eluded her? In the end when no one was left she would have to confront herself. (*SC* 131) **Fortunata's words quoted by the Dog-Woman**

Example 19: Characters introduce themselves.

• My *name* is Jordan. This is the *first thing I saw*. It was night, about a quarter to twelve, the sky divided in halves, one cloudy, the other fair. The clouds hung over the wood, there was no distance between them and the top of the trees. Where the sky was clear, over the river and the flat fields newly ploughed, the moon, almost full, shone out of a yellow aureole and reflected in the bow of the water. There were cattle in the field across, black against the slope of the hill, not moving, sleeping. One light, glittering from the only house, looked like the moat-light of a giant's castle. Tall trees flanked it. A horse ran loose in the courtyard, its hooves sparking the stone. […] I began to walk with my hands stretched out in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of my own face opposite me. (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• 'My *name* is Fortunata,' she said. '*This is the first thing I saw*.' It was winter. The ground was hard and white. There were late roses in the hedges, wild and red, and the holly tree was dark green with blazing berries. It snowed every day, dense curtains of snow that wiped out the footprints coming to and from the house, leaving us to believe that no one ever came here or ever had. One day a robin landed on my windowsill and sank immediately. I dug it out with a teaspoon and it flew away, the snow falling like fetters from its wings. Because the snow was so deep it muffled the noise we made, and we crept about like a silent order, exchanging glances and surprising one another in the garden, where we moved in slow motion, each step shifting feet of snow like sand-dunes.[…] 'It was the winter of our marriage, my sisters and I. We were to be married all together, all twelve of us on the same day. On New Year's Day, in blood-red dresses with our black hair. (*SC* 93-94) **Fortunata's words quoted by Jordan**

Example 20: Grafting and the third kind.

• *Grafting* is the means 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. In this way fruits have been made resistant to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not. (*SC* 78) **Jordan**	• The alchemists have a saying, 'Tertium non data': *the third is not given*. That is, the transformation from one element to another, from waster matter into best gold, is a process that cannot be documented. It is fully mysterious. (*SC* 131) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**

Example 21: Freedom from gravity.

• but the household *ignores this ever-downward necessity* and continues ever upward, *celebrating ceilings but denying floors* (*SC* 21) **Jordan** • It is certainly true that a criterion for true art, as opposed to its cunning counterfeit, is its ability to take us where the artist has been, to this other different place where we are free from the problems of *gravity*. When we are drawn into the art we are drawn out of ourselves. We are no longer bound by matter, matter has become what it is: empty space and light. (*SC* 91) **Jordan**	• After a few simple experiments it became certain that for the people who had *abandoned gravity*, gravity had abandoned them. There was a general rejoicing, and from that day forth *no one concerned themselves with floors* or with falling, though it was still thought *necessary to build a ceiling* in your house in order to place the chandelier. (*SC* 97) **Fortunata's words quoted by Jordan**

D) Parallelisms between Jordan and the Dog-Woman:

Example 22: Encounter with the other self.

• I began to walk with my hands stretched out in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of *my own face* opposite me. (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• He came to, and feeling his way, arms *outstretched* he had suddenly touched another face and screamed out. For a second the fog cleared and he saw that the *stranger was himself*. (*SC* 143). **The Dog-Woman about Jordan**

Example 23: Alternative places and times.

• These are journeys I wish to record. Not the ones I made, but the ones I might have made in some *other place or time*. (*SC* 9-10) **Jordan**	• And I sing of *other times*, when I was happy, though I know that these are figments of my mind and nowhere I have ever been. But does it matter if the place cannot be mapped as long as I can still describe it? (*SC* 14-15) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 24: Fantasy as metaphor and as reality.

• The fog […] thickened with the force of a *genie* from a bottle (*SC* 9) **Jordan** • A woman coming by hears noises from the bottle, and taking her knife she cuts open the seal and my mother comes thickening out like a *genie* from a jar, growing bigger and bigger and finally solidifying into her own proportions. She grants the woman three wishes. (*SC* 79) **Jordan** • Paintings show us how light affects us, for to live in light is to live in time and not be conscious of it, except in the most obvious ways. Paintings are light caught and held like a *genie in a jar*. The energy is trapped for ever, concentrated, unable to disperse. (*SC* 91) **Jordan**	• He starts humming and hawing and reaching for some coloured jar behind his head, and I thought, he'll not let no *genie* out on me with its forked tongue and balls like jewels. (*SC* 12) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 25: First sight of the banana.

• When Jordan was three I took him *to see a great rarity* and that was my undoing. (*SC* 11) **The Dog-Woman**	• When I was little my mother took me *to see a great wonder*. It was about 1633, I think, and never before had there been a banana in England. (*SC* 100) **Jordan**

Example 26: Relativity.

• What I remember is *the shining water and the size of the world*. (*SC* 16) **The Dog-Woman**	• *The shining water and the size of the world*. (*SC* 17) **Jordan** • Every time I try to narrow down my intent I expand it, and yet those straits and canals still lead me to the open sea, and then I realize how vast it all is, this matter of the mind. I am confounded by *the shining water and the size of the world*. (*SC* 102) **Jordan**

Example 27: Protection of paradoxes.

• I pooh-poohed this, for the *earth* is surely a manageable place made of blood and stone and *entirely flat*. I believe I could walk from one side to the other, had I the inclination. And if a great body of us had the inclination there would be no part of the earth left untouched. What then of *journeys folded in on themselves like a concertina*? (*SC* 23) **The Dog-Woman**	• The *earth is round and flat at the same time*. This is obvious. That it is round appears indisputable; that it is flat is our common experience, also indisputable. The globe does not supersede the map; the map does not distort the globe. […] And now, swarming over the earth with our tiny insect bodies and putting up flags and building houses, it seems that all the journeys are done. Not so. Fold up the maps and put away the globe. If someone else had charted it, let them. Start another drawing with whales at the bottom and cormorants at the top, and in between identify, if you can, the places you have not found yet on those other maps, the connections obvious only to you. Round and flat, only a very little has been discovered. (*SC* 81) **Jordan** • Until now religion has described it better than science, but now physics and metaphysics appear to be saying the same thing. *The world is flat and round*, is it not? (*SC* 90) **Jordan**

Example 28: Shared memories.

• When Jordan was new I *sat him on the palm of my hand the way I would a puppy*, and I held him to my face and *let him pick the fleas out of my scars.* (*SC* 25) **The Dog-Woman**	• I'm *sitting on her hand, the way she holds her puppies*, and *picking at her face* for something, I don't know what. (*SC* 79) **Jordan**

Example 29: Freedom of the self from space and time.

• The self is not contained in any moment or place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen *vanishing through a door*, which disappears at once. (*SC* 80) **Jordan**	• We slid peacefully towards the sea, the wind behind us, the great sail fat. I looked at Jordan standing in the prow, his silhouette black and sharp-edged. I thought I saw someone standing beside him, a woman, slight and strong. I tried to call out but I had no voice. Then *she vanished and there was nothing next to Jordan but empty space*. (*SC* 144) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 30: The experience of time.

• *But we do not move through time, time moves through us.* I say this because our physical bodies have a natural decay span, they are one-use-only units that crumble around us. To everyone this is a surprise. Although we see it in parents and our friends we are always amazed to see it in ourselves. The most prosaic of us betray a belief in the inward life every time we talk about 'my body' rather than 'I'. We feel it absolutely part but not at all part of who we are. (*SC* 90) **Jordan**	• I have been alone for a long time, days and nights of time, so that time is no longer measured in the units I am used to but has mutinied and run wild. *I do not measure time now, time measures me*. (*SC* 126) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 31: Language and the problems of communication.

• *Language* always betrays us, tells the truth when we want to lie, and *dissolves into formlessness when we would most like to be precise*. (*SC* 90) **Jordan**	• I wanted to tell him things, to tell him I loved him and how much I'd missed him, but thirteen years of *words were fighting in my throat* and I couldn't get any of them out. *There was too much to say and I said nothing*. (*SC* 108) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 32: Time and memories.

• *Time 4*: Did my *childhood* happen? I must believe it did, but I don't have any proof. My mother says it did, but she is a fantasist, a liar and a murderer, though none of that would stop me from loving her. I remember things, but I too am a fantasist and a liar, though I have not killed anyone yet. There are others whom I could ask, but I would not trust their word in a court of law. Can I count it in a more serious matter? I will have to assume that I had a childhood, but I cannot assume to have had the one I remember. Everyone remembers things which never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did. Either we are all fantasists and liars or the past has nothing definite in it. I have heard people say we are shaped by our childhood. But which one? (*SC* 92) **Jordan**	• I have forgotten my *childhood*, not just because of my father but because it was a bleak and unnecessary time, full of longing and lost hope. I can remember some incidents, but the sense of time passing escapes me. If I were to stretch out all that seemed to happen, and relive it, it might take a day or two. Where then are all the years in between? (*SC* 107-108) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 33: Trickiness of memories.

• Before I left I took her down the Thames and out to sea but I don't know if it made any impression on her, or even how much she noticed. *We never talked much. She is silent*, the way men are supposed to be. I often caught her staring at me as though she had never seen me before; she seemed to be learning me. I think she loves me but I don't know. She wouldn't say so; perhaps she doesn't know herself. (*SC* 101) **Jordan**	• I wanted to tell him things, to tell him I loved him and how much I'd missed him, but thirteen years of words were fighting in my throat and I couldn't get any of them out. *There was too much to say and I said nothing*. (*SC* 108) **The Dog-Woman** • On our way back to London Jordan apologized to me for *talking so little*. 'It was never my way,' he said, 'not yours either.' I was perplexed by this, since I like to think of myself as a cheerful person, ever ready with some vital conversation. Had not Jordan and myself *talked forever when he was a boy*? (*SC* 134) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 34: Importance of bodies.

• Escape from what? The present? Yes, from this foreground that blinds me to whatever may be happening in the distance. If I have a spirit, a soul, any name will do, then it won't be single, it will be multiple. Its dimensions will not be one of confinement but one of space. It may inhabit numerous changing *decaying bodies* in the future and in the past. (*SC* 126) **Jordan**	• I made up my mind to help her because of her straightforwardness and because *bodies mean nothing to me*, dead or alive. (*SC* 86) **The Dog-Woman**

E) Parallelisms between the heterodiegetic voice at the centre of the novel and Jordan:

Example 35: Description of Fortunata's dancers: music.

• *And at a single moment, when all are spinning in harmony down the long hall, she* hears music *escaping from their heads and backs, and livers and spleens. Each has a tone like cut glass. The noise is deafening. And it is then that the spinning seems to stop, that the wild gyration of the dancers passes from movement into infinity.* (*SC* 72) **Heterodiegetic voice**	• There appeared to be ten points of light spiralling in a line along the floor, and from *these beings came the sound I had heard.* It was harmonic but it had no tune. I could hardly bear to look at the light, and the tone, though far from unpleasant, hurt my ears. It was too rich, too strong, to be music. Then I saw a young woman, darting in a *figure of eight* in between the lights and turning her hands through it as a potter turns clay on the wheel. (*SC* 93) **Jordan**

Example 36: Description of Fortunata's dancing school.

• *The* polished wooden floor *glows with the heat if their bodies, and one by one they crumble over and lie exhausted on the ground.* (*SC* 72) **Heterodiegetic voice**	• Inside, the rooms where *wooden-floored* and without furnishings, though each had a large fireplace and in each fireplace a cast of embers or a furious blaze warmed the room. (*SC* 93) **Jordan**

Example 37: Freedom of the spirit through the dance.

• *She asks them to meditate on a five-pointed star in the belly and to watch the points push outwards, the fifth point into the head. She spins them, impaled with light, arms upraised, one leg at a triangle across the other thigh, one foot, on point, on a penny coin, and spins them, until all features are blurred, until the human being almost resembles* a freed spirit from a darkened jar. (*SC* 72) **Heterodiegetic voice**	• A woman coming by hears noises from the bottle, and taking her knife she cuts open the seal and my mother comes thickening out like *a genie from a jar*, growing bigger and bigger and finally solidifying into her own proportions. She grants the woman three wishes. (*SC* 79) **Jordan** • Paintings show us how light affects us, for to live in light is to live in time and not be conscious of it, except in the most obvious ways. Paintings are light caught and held like *a genie in a jar*. The energy is trapped for ever, concentrated, unable to disperse. (*SC* 91) **Jordan**

Example 38: Description of Fortunata's dancing school.

• *She spins them, impaled with light, arms upraised, one leg at a triangle across the other thigh, one foot, on point, on a penny coin, and spins them, until* all features are blurred, until the human being almost resembles a freed spirit from a darkened jar. (*SC* 72) **Heterodiegetic voice**	• If I have a spirit, a soul, any name will do, then it won't be single, it will be multiple. *Its dimensions will not be one of confinement but one of space.* (*SC* 126) **Jordan**

F) Parallelisms between Jordan and Tradescant:

Example 39: Same feelings of bafflement.

• Perhaps I'm *missing* the point — perhaps whilst looking for someone else you might come across yourself unexpectedly, in a garden somewhere or on a mountain watching the rain. (*SC* 102) **Jordan**	• I've been everywhere, but I still have a feeling I've *missed* it. I feel like I'm being laughed at, I don't know what by, who by, it sounds silly. I think I may have missed the world, that the one I've seen is a decoy to get me off the scent. I feel as though I'm always on the brink of making sense of it and then I lose it again.' (*SC* 115) **Tradescant quoted by Nicolas Jordan**

G) Parallelisms between Jordan and the princesses:

Example 40: Description of Fortunata's lightness.

• Then I saw her. She was *climbing down* from her window on *a thin rope which she cut and re-knotted a number of times during the descent*. I strained my eyes to follow her, but she was gone. (*SC* 21) **Jordan**	• 'Do you remember,' said another sister, 'how light she was? She was so light that she could *climb down a rope, cut it and tie it again in mid-air* without plunging to her death. The winds supported her.' (*SC* 60) **Princess quoted by Jordan**

H) Parallelisms between Jordan and the unnamed ecologist:

Example 41: Fantasies about parents.

• I *imagine her* on the bank, in a bottle. The bottle is cobalt blue with a wax stopper wrapped over a piece of rag. A woman coming by hears noises from the bottle, and taking her knife she cuts open the seal and my mother comes thickening out like a genie from a jar, growing bigger and bigger and finally solidifying into her own proportions. She grants the woman three wishes. (*SC* 79) **Jordan**	• I *imagined* my *parents*' house as a shell to contain me. An environment suitable for a fantastic creature who needed to suck in the warmth and nourishment until it was ready to shrug off the shell and burst out. At night in bed, I felt the whole house breathing in and out as I did. The roof tiles, the bricks, the lagging, the plumbing, all were subject to my rhythm. I was a monster in a carpeted egg. There I go, my shoulders pushing into the corners of the room, my head uncurling and smashing the windows. Shards of glass everywhere, the garden trodden in a single footprint. (*SC* 124) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 42: Imagination as a disease.

HALLUCINATIONS AND DISEASES OF THE MIND (*SC* 81) **Jordan**	• I am a woman going *mad*. I am a woman *hallucinating*. (*SC* 121) **Unnamed ecologist** • That's how it started, the mercury. That's where my *hallucinations* began, checking mercury levels in rivers and lakes and streams. (*SC* 123) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 43: Time, memory and imagination.

• *Time 2*: They are cat-calling the girl as she comes out of school. She hates them, she wants to kill them. They tell her she smells, that *she's too fat,* too tall. She walks home along the river bank to *a council flat in Upper Thames Street*. The traffic deafens her. *She climbs up the steps at Waterloo Bridge* to look at St Paul's glinting in the evening. *She can't see St Paul's.* All she can see are rows of wooden stakes and uncertain craft bobbing along the water. She can't hear the traffic any more, the roar of dogs is deafening. Coming to herself, she kicks the bunch of hounds and drags her blanket shawl closer to her. For a moment she felt dizzy, lost her balance, but no, she's home as always. She can see her hut. *Jordan will be waiting for her*. She doesn't have to see him to know he's there. (*SC* 82) **Jordan** • ***Memory** 1*: The scene I have just described to you *may lie in the future or the past.* Either I have found Fortunata or I will find her. I cannot be sure. *Either I am remembering her or I am still imagining her.* But she is somewhere in the grid of time, a co-ordinate, as I am. (*SC* 93) **Jordan**	• I have a memory of a time when I was a schoolgirl and *getting fatter by the day*. At that time we lived in *a council flat on Upper Thames Street* in London, by the river. […] I didn't want to go home. I wanted to say out all night and make a bed by the river and light a fire. *I climbed up the steps at Waterloo Bridge* and ignored the racing traffic so that I could look out on either side at St Paul's and Westminster. It wasn't easy: everyone wanted to get home, the view didn't matter. It was autumn and so the sun was setting early and the air was sharp. I liked it hurting my nostrils and make patterns when I blew out. I watched the sun sliding behind the buildings, and as I concentrated the screeching cars and the thudding people and the smells of rubber and exhaust receded. I felt I was alone in a different afternoon. I looked at my forearms resting on the wall. They were massive, like thighs, but there was no wall, just a wooden spit, and when I turned in the opposite direction *I couldn't see the dome of St Paul's.* I could see rickety vegetable boats and women arguing with one another and a regiment on horseback crossing the Thames. I had to get on to Blackfriars, *there was someone waiting for me.* Who? Who? (*SC* 128) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 44: Experience for the individual.

• I've kept the log book for the ship. Meticulously. And I've kept a book of my own, and for every journey we have made together I've written down my own journey and drawn my own map. I can't show this to the others, but I believe it to be a faithful account of what happened, at least, of *what happened to me*. (*SC* 102) **Jordan**	• My own experience is different. I feel as though I have been here for years already. I could be talked out of that but I couldn't be persuaded not to feel it any more. How do you persuade someone not to feel? And so my strongest instinct is to abandon the common-sense approach and accept what *is actually happening to me*; that time has slowed down. (*SC* 126) **Unnamed ecologist**

I) Parallelisms between the Dog-Woman and the unnamed ecologist:

Example 45: Shared sack.

• I was wrapped in a rotting *sack such as kittens are drowned in*. (*SC* 10) **Jordan describing the Dog-Woman**	• I have *a sack such as kittens are drowned in* and I stop off all over the world filling it up. (*SC* 121) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 46: Characters' self-presentation.

• I had a name but I have forgotten it. They call me *the Dog-Woman* and it will do. (*SC* 11) **The Dog-Woman**	• *I am a woman* going mad. I am a woman hallucinating. (*SC* 121) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 47: Shared smell.

• I grabbed him and started to push him into my dress. *He was soon coughing and crying because I haven't had that dress off in five years*. (*SC* 12) **The Dog-Woman**	• They are cat-calling the girl as she comes out of school. She hates them, she wants to kill them. *They tell her she smells*, that she's too fat, too tall. (*SC* 82) **Jordan describing the unnamed ecologist**

Example 48: Acceptance of paradoxes.

• I pooh-poohed this, for the earth is surely a manageable place made of blood and stone and entirely flat. I believe I could walk from one side to the other, had I the inclination. And if a great body of us had the inclination there would be no part of the earth left untouched. *What then of journeys folded in on themselves like a concertina?* (*SC* 23) **The Dog-Woman**	• I don't know if other worlds exist in space or time. Perhaps this is the only one and the rest is rich imaginings. Either way it doesn't matter. *We have to protect both possibilities.* They seem to be interdependent. (*SC* 128) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 49: Ugliness as a form of power.

• How hideous am I? My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have *only a few teeth* and those are a poor show, *being black and broken*. I had small pox when I was a girl and the cave in my face are home enough for fleas. (*SC* 24) **The Dog-Woman**	• For a moment she felt dizzy, lost her balance, but no, she's home as always. She can see her hut. She laughs and the wind blows through the *gaps in her teeth*. (*SC* 82) **The unnamed ecologist described by Jordan**

Example 50: Same blanket shawl.

• I was wearing my best dress, the one with a wide skirt that would serve as a sail for some war-torn ship, and a bit of fancy lace at the neck, made by a blind woman who had intended it to be a *shawl*. I had given her some estimate of my dimensions, but she would not believe me and so, although I have nothing to go round my shoulders save *a dozen blankets sewn together*, I do have a fine-worked collar. (*SC* 65) **The Dog-Woman**	• She can't hear the traffic any more, the roar of dogs is deafening. Coming to herself, she kicks the bunch of hounds and drags her *blanket shawl* closer to her. (*SC* 82) **Jordan**

Example 51: They overpower bullets.

• I ran straight at the guards, broke the arms of the first, ruptured the second and gave the third a kick in the head that knocked him out at once. The other five came at me, and when I had dispatched two for an early judgement another took his musket and fired me straight in the chest. I fell over, killing the man who was poised behind me, and *plucked the musket ball out of my cleavage*. (*SC* 66) **The Dog-Woman**	• Men shot at me, but I *take the bullets out of my cleavage* and I chew them up. Then I laugh and laugh and break their guns between my fingers the way you would a wish-bone. (*SC* 121-122) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 52: Experience for the individual.

• I did mate with a man, but cannot say that I felt anything at all, though I had him jammed up to the hilt. As for him, spread on top of me with his face buried beneath my breasts, he complained that he could not find the sides of my cunt and felt like a tadpole in a pot. He was an educated man and urged me to try and squeeze in my muscles, and so perhaps bring me closer to his prong. I took a great breath and squeezed with all my might and heard something like a rush of air through a tunnel, and when I strained up on my elbows and looked down I saw I had pulled him in, balls and everything. He was stuck. (*SC* 106) **The Dog-Woman**	• I had sex with a man once: in out in out. A soundtrack of grunts and a big sigh at the end. He said, 'Did you come?' Of course I didn't come, haven't you read Master's and Johnson. And then he fell asleep and his breathing was in out in out. Later I said, 'I'd like to swallow you.' 'Adventurous, eh?' he said. Whole, I meant, every single bit, straight down the throat like an oyster, your feet last, your feet waving in my mouth like a diver's flippers. Jonah and the Whale. I don't hate men, I just wish they'd try harder. They all want to be heroes and all we want is for them to stay at home and help with the housework and the kids. That's not the kind of heroism they enjoy.(*SC* 127) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 53: The individual experience of time: subjectivity.

• I have forgotten my childhood, not just because of my father but because it was a bleak and unnecessary time, full of longing and lost hope. I can remember some incidents, but the sense of time passing escapes me. *If I were to stretch out all that seemed to happen, and relive it, it might take a day or two.* Where then are all the years in between? (*SC* 107-108) **The Dog-Woman**	• I have been alone for a long time, days and nights of time, so that time is no longer measured in the units I am used to but has mutinied and run wild. I do not measure time now, time measures me. This is frightening. Very often I sleep all day and stay awake all night —why should not I, since there is no one to mind? I have a calendar and a watch, and so rationally I can tell where I am in this thing called a year. My own experience is different. I feel as though I have been here for years already. I could be talked out of that but I couldn't be persuaded not to feel it any more. How do you persuade someone not to feel? And so my strongest instinct is to abandon the common-sense approach and accept what is actually happening to me; that *time has slowed down*. (*SC* 126) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 54: Social criticism: shared need to make of this world a better place.

• I see I have a flair for enterprise. It was ever with me, but smothered, I think, under my maternalness and *the pressing need to do away with scoundrels.* (*SC* 135) **The Dog-Woman**	• The truth is *I've lost patience with this hypocritical stinking world*. I can't take it any more. (*SC* 127) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 55: Shared belief in the purifying potential of fire.

• 'This city *should be burned down*,' I whispered to myself. 'It should burn and burn until there is nothing left but the cooling wind.' (*SC* 141-142) **The Dog-Woman**	• 'Let's burn it,' she said. '*Let's burn down* the factory.' (*SC* 142) **Unnamed ecologist**

J) Parallelisms between the Dog-Woman and Nicolas Jordan:

Example 56: Description of the presentation of the pineapple to King Charles II.

• The pineapple arrived today. Jordan carried it in his arms as though it were a yellow baby; with the wisdom of Solomon he prepared to slice it in two. He had not sharpened the knife before *Mr Rose, the royal gardener*, flung himself across the table and begged to be sawn into bits instead. Those at the feast contorted themselves with laughter, and the King himself, in his new wig, came down from the dais and urged Mr Rose to delay his sacrifice. It was, after all, only a fruit. At this Mr Rose pocked up his head from his abandonment amongst the dishes and reminded the company that this was an historic occasion. (*SC* 104) **The Dog-Woman**	• PAINTINGS 3: '*Mr Rose, the Royal Gardener*, presents the pineapple to Charles the second.' The artist is unknown, probably Dutch. Mr Rose in his wig is down on one knee and the king in his wig is accepting the pineapple. Colours of fruit and flowers make up the painting. (*SC* 113) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 57: Description of sexual intercourse.

• When I was a girl I heard my mother and father copulating. I heard my father's steady grunts and my mother's silence. Later my mother told me that men take pleasure and women give it. She told me in a matter-of-fact way, in the same tone of voice she used to tell me how to deed the dogs or make bread. (*SC* 107) **The Dog-Woman**	• 'You and I were both in the war,' said my father. 'We're all right.' 'It was nerve-racking,' said my mother. 'It wasn't too bad, we had good times —do you remember when we danced together and then made love in the dark?' 'Don't say that in front of Nicolas,' said my mother. Then, after a little pause, 'It was nerve-racking.' Did she mean the war or making love to my father? (*SC* 119) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 58: Difficulty of expressing feelings with words.

• I wanted to tell him things, to tell him I loved him and how much I'd missed him, but thirteen years of *words were fighting in my throat* and I couldn't get any of them out. *There was too much to say and I said nothing*. (*SC* 108) **The Dog-Woman**	• I wanted to thank her for trying to save us, for trying to save me, because it felt that personal, though I don't know why. But *when I tried to speak my throat was clogged with feelings that resist words*. (*SC* 142) **Nicolas Jordan**

K) Parallelisms between the Dog-Woman and Fortunata:

Example 59: The meaning of silence.

• *We never talked much*. She is silent, the way men are supposed to be. I often caught her staring at me as though she had never seen me before; she seemed to be learning me. I think she loves me but I don't know. She wouldn't say so; perhaps she doesn't know herself. (*SC* 101) **The Dog-Woman described by Jordan**	• *She didn't want to talk much* so we sat back to back watching the stars. (*SC* 142) **Fortunata described by Nicolas Jordan** • Eventually he allowed her to wade in from the rising water and light a fire for them both. *He didn't want her to talk*, he knew about her already, he'd been looking for her. She was a curiosity; he was famous. What a marriage. (*SC* 132) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**

L) Parallelisms between the Dog-Woman and the twelve dancing princesses:

Example 60: Sisterhood of women.

• *We bought this house and we share it*. You will find my sisters as you walk home. As you can see, I live in the well. (*SC* 48) **Princess**	• She [Preacher Scrogg's wife] *packed up her things straight away and went to live with her unmarried sister* in the town of Tunbridge Wells. (*SC* 129) **The Dog-Woman**

M) Parallelisms between Nicolas Jordan and the heterodiegetic voice at the centre of the novel:

Example 61: Dancing as a form of freedom.

• *And at a single moment, when all are spinning in harmony down the long hall, she hears music escaping from their heads and backs, and livers and spleens. Each has a tone like cut glass. The noise is deafening. And it is then that the spinning seems to stop, that* the wild gyration of the dancers passes from movement into infinity. (*SC* 72) **Heterodiegetic voice**	• I'd want my whole body to feel the space, the empty space and points of light. *That's how dancers must feel, dancers and acrobats, just for a second, that freedom*. (*SC* 120) **Nicolas Jordan**

N) Parallelisms between then unnamed ecologist and Fortunata:

Example 62: Social criticism: shared need to make of this world a better place.

• I don't hate men, I just wish they'd try harder. *They all want to be heroes and all we want is for them to stay at home and help with the housework and the kids*. That's not the kind of heroism they enjoy.(*SC* 127) **Unnamed ecologist**	• Soon her fame spread and other women joined her, but Artemis didn't care for company. She wanted to be alone. In her solitude she discovered something very odd. *She had envied men their long-legged freedom to roam the world and return full of glory to wives who only waited. She knew about the heroes and the home-makers, the great division that made life possible*. Without rejecting it she had simply hoped to take the freedoms of the other side, but what if she travelled the world and the seven seas like a hero? Would she find something different or the old things in different disguises? The alchemists have a saying, 'Tertium non data': the third is not given. That is, the transformation from one element to another, from waste matter into best gold, is a process that cannot be documented. It is fully mysterious. (*SC* 131) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**

O) Parallelisms between Fortunata and Tradescant:

Example 63: Possibility of inhabiting all places.

• 'I used to make them,' said the man, 'and sail in them too. *I've been everywhere*, but I still have a feeling I've missed it. I feel like I'm being laughed at, I don't know what by, who by, it sounds silly. I think I may have missed the world, that the one I've seen is a decoy to get me off the scent. I feel as though I'm always on the brink of making sense of it and then I lose it again.' (*SC* 115) **Tradescant quoted by Nicolas Jordan**	• The ragged shore, rock-pitted and dark with weed reminded him of his adventures, and he [Orion] unravelled them in detail while the tide came in up to her waist. *There was nowhere he hadn't been, nothing he hadn't seen*. He was faster than a hare and stronger than a pair of bulls. He was as good as a god. 'You smell,' said Artemis, but he didn't hear. (*SC* 132) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**

P) Parallelisms between Fortunata and the heterodiegetic voice at the centre of the novel:

Example 64: Stars and the conquest of space.

• Tonight is clear and cold, the wind whipping the waves into peaks. The foam leaves slug trails in rough triangles on the sand. The salt smell bristles the hair inside her nostrils. Her lips are dry. The *stars* show her how to hang in space supported by nothing at all. Without medals or certificates or territories she owns, she can burn as they do, travelling through time until time has no meaning any more. (*SC* 133) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**	• *She asks them to meditate on a five-pointed* star *in the belly and to watch the points push outwards, the fifth point into the head. She spins them, impaled with light, arms upraised, one leg at a triangle across the other thigh, one foot, on point, on a penny coin, and spins them, until all features are blurred, until the human being almost resembles a freed spirit from a darkened jar*. (*SC* 72) **Heterodiegetic voice**

Q) Parallelisms between Fortunata and the twelve dancing princesses:

Example 65: Different versions of the same event.

• On her wedding day to the prince who had discovered our secret, she flew from the altar like a bird from a snare and walked a tightrope between the steeple of the church and the mast of *a ship weighing anchor in the bay*. (*SC* 60) **Princess**	• 'At the last possible moment I pushed him aside and ran out of the church through the crowds of guests, mouth's open like fishes.' '*I took a boat and sailed round the world earning my living as a dancer*. Eventually I came here and built this school. I don't advertise. People find me because they want to, as you have.' (*SC* 95) **Fortunata quoted by Jordan**

Example 66: Use of typical symbolism in fairy tales.

• 'We have not seen her for years and years, not since that day when we were *dressed in red with our black hair unbraided*. She must be old now, she must be stiff. Her body can only be a memory. The body she has will not be the body she had.' (*SC* 60) **Princess**	• 'It was the winter of our marriage, my sisters and I. We were to be married all together, all twelve of us on the same day. On New Year's Day, in *blood-red dresses with our black hair*.' (*SC* 94) **Fortunata quoted by Jordan**

R) Parallelisms between the twelve dancing princesses and the Dog-Woman's neighbour:

Example 67: Floating free from gravity.

• My neighbour, who is so blackened and hairless that she has twice been mistaken for a side of salt beef wrapped in muslin, airs herself abroad as a witch. No one knows her age; what age can there be for a piece of leather like a football that serves as a head and a fantastical mass of rags that serves as a body? Not I nor anyone else has ever seen her feet beneath her skirts, so there's not knowing *what it is she walks on*. (*SC* 13) **The Dog-Woman**	• The family who lived in the house were dedicated to a strange custom. Not one of them would allow their *feet to touch the floor*. (*SC* 20) **Jordan** • and when we danced we were the envy of all the rest because our *feet seemed never to touch the floor*. Fortunately our dresses were long, and so no one caught sight of us, floating. (*SC* 98) **Jordan**

S) Self-echoing voices:

S.1. Jordan

Example 68: Comparisons with fairy-tale figures.

• The fog […] thickened with the force of *a genie from a bottle* (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• A woman coming by hears noises from the bottle, and taking her knife she cuts open the seal and my mother comes thickening out like *a genie from a jar*, growing bigger and bigger and finally solidifying into her own proportions. She grants the woman three wishes. (*SC* 79) **Jordan** • Paintings show us how light affects us, for to live in light is to live in time and not be conscious of it, except in the most obvious ways. Paintings are light caught and held like *a genie in a jar*. The energy is trapped for ever, concentrated, unable to disperse. (*SC* 91) **Jordan**

Example 69: Relativity refrain.

• *The shining water and the size of the world*. (*SC* 17) **Jordan**	• Every time I try to narrow down my intent I expand it, and yet those straits and canals still lead me to the open sea, and then I realize how vast it all is, this matter of the mind. I am confounded by *the shining water and the size of the world*. (*SC* 102) **Jordan**

Example 70: References to the secret life.

• Occasionally, in company, someone would snap their fingers in front of my face and ask, 'Where are you?' For a long time I had no idea, but gradually I began to find evidence of the *other life* and gradually it appeared before me. (*SC* 10) **Jordan**	• A man or woman sunk in dreams that cannot be spoken, about a life they do not possess, comes suddenly to a door in the wall. They open it. Beyond the door is that life and a man or a woman to whom it is already natural. It may not be possessions they want, it may very well be the lack of them, but *the secret life* is suddenly revealed. This is their true home and this is their beloved. (*SC* 74) **Jordan** • And then I saw that the running away was a running towards. An effort to catch up with my fleet-footed self, living *another life* in a different way. (*SC* 80) **Jordan** • Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning, on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited. In a single day the mind can make a millpond of the oceans. Some people who have never crossed the land they were born on have travelled all over the world. The journey is not linear, it is always back and forth, denying the calendar, the wrinkles and lines of the body. The self is not contained in any moment or place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen *vanishing through a door*, which disappears at once. (*SC* 80) **Jordan**

Example 71: Freedom from gravity.

• but the household *ignores this ever-downward necessity* and continues ever upward, *celebrating ceilings but denying floors* (*SC* 21) **Jordan**	• Passion, delirium, meditation, are words we use to describe the heightened condition of superconductivity. It is certainly true that a criterion for true art, as opposed to its cunning counterfeit, is its ability to take us where the artist has been, to this other different place where we are *free from the problems of gravity*. When we are drawn into the art we are drawn out of ourselves. We are no longer bound by matter, matter has become what it is: empty space and light. (*SC* 91) **Jordan**

Example 72: Alternative presentations.

• I noticed a *woman* whose face was a sea voyage I had not the courage to attempt. (*SC* 21) **Jordan**	• Opposite me, attentive and smiling, was the *woman* I had first seen at dinner, what seemed like years ago and might have been days. (*SC* 93) **Jordan**

Example 73: Love as penalty.

• 'It is the *penalty of love*,' sighed the princess, and began at once to tell me the story of her life. (*SC* 47) **Jordan**	• The *penalty of love*, he reminded them, was death. They took a vote and unanimously agreed to be put to death. (*SC* 78) **Jordan**

Example 74: Grafting.

• *Grafting* is the means by 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. In this way fruits have been made *resistant* to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not. (*SC* 78) **Jordan**	• 'Let the world mate of its own accord,' she said, 'or not at all.' But the cherry grew, and we have sexed it and it is female. What I would like is to have some of Tradescant *grafted* on me so that I could be a hero like him. He will flourish in any climate, pack his ships with precious things and be welcomed with full honours when the King is restored. (*SC* 79) **Jordan** • When I left England I thought I was running away. Running away from *uncertainty* and confusion but most of all, running away from myself. I thought I might become someone else in time, *grafted* on to something *better and stronger*. And then I saw that the running away was a running towards. An effort to catch up with my fleet-footed self, living another life in a different way. (*SC* 80) **Jordan** • I stayed with Fortunata for one month, *learning more about her ways* and something about my own. She told me that for years she had lived in hope of being rescued; of *belonging to someone else*, of dancing together. And then she had learned to dance alone, for its own sake and for hers. (*SC* 99) **Jordan**

Example 75: Acceptance of paradoxes.

• The *earth is round and flat at the same time*. This is obvious. That it is round appears indisputable; that it is flat is our common experience, also indisputable. The globe does not supersede the map; the map does not distort the globe. […] And now, swarming over the earth with our tiny insect bodies and putting up flags and building houses, it seems that all the journeys are done. Not so. Fold up the maps and put away the globe. If someone else had charted it, let them. Start another drawing with whales at the bottom and cormorants at the top, and in between identify, if you can, the places you have not found yet on those other maps, the connections obvious only to you. Round and flat, only a very little has been discovered. (*SC* 81) **Jordan**	• Until now religion has described it better than science, but now physics and metaphysics appear to be saying the same thing. *The world is flat and round*, is it not? (*SC* 90) **Jordan**

Example 76: Non-linearity of time and experience.

• Until now religion has described it better than science, but now physics and metaphysics appear to be saying the same thing. The world is flat and round, is it not? We have dreams of moving back and forward in time, though to use *the words back and forward is to make a nonsense of the dream, for it implies that time is linear*, and if that were so there could be no movement, only a forward progression. But we do not move through time, time moves through us. I say this because our physical bodies have a natural decay span, they are one-use-only units that crumble around us. To everyone this is a surprise. Although we see it in parents and our friends we are always amazed to see it in ourselves. The most prosaic of us betray a belief in the inward life every time we talk about 'my body' rather than 'I'. We feel it absolutely part but not at all part of who we are. (*SC* 90) **Jordan**	• *The journey is not linear, it is always back and forth*, denying the calendar, the wrinkles and lines of the body. The self is not contained in any moment or place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once. (*SC* 80) **Jordan**

Example 77: Bodies as decaying matter.

• But we do not move through time, time moves through us. I say this because our *physical bodies have a natural decay span*, they are one-use-only units that crumble around us. To everyone this is a surprise. Although we see it in parents and our friends we are always amazed to see it in ourselves. The most prosaic of us betray a belief in the inward life every time we talk about 'my body' rather than 'I'. We feel it absolutely part but not at all part of who we are. (*SC* 90) **Jordan**	• Escape from what? The present? Yes, from this foreground that blinds me to whatever may be happening in the distance. If I have a spirit, a soul, any name will do, then it won't be single, it will be multiple. Its dimensions will not be one of confinement but one of space. It may inhabit numerous changing *decaying bodies* in the future and in the past. (*SC* 126) **Jordan**

Example 78: Thoughts on being a hero.

• For Tradescant *being a hero* comes naturally. His father was a hero before him. The journeys he makes can be tracked on any map and he knows what he's looking for. He wants to bring back rarities and he does. (*SC* 101) **Jordan**	• I want to *be a hero* […] 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. Before I left I took her down the Thames and out to sea but I don't know if it made any impression on her, or even how much she noticed. We never talked much. She is silent, the way men are supposed to be. I often caught her staring at me as though she had never seen me before; she seemed to be learning me. I think she loves me but I don't know. She wouldn't say so; perhaps she doesn't know herself. (*SC* 101) **Jordan**

S.2. The Dog-Woman

Example 79: Nourishing Jordan.

• When Jordan was a baby he sat on top of me much as a fly rests on a hill of dung. And I *nourished* him as a hill of dung nourishes a fly, and when he had eaten his fill he left me. (*SC* 11) **The Dog-Woman**	• When Jordan was new I *sat him on the palm of my hand the way I would a puppy,* and I held him to my face and *let him pick the fleas out of my scars.* (*SC* 25) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 80: Male sexual organs and bananas.

• '*THIS IS NOT SOME UNFORTUNATE'S RAKE. IT IS THE FRUIT OF A TREE. IT IS TO BE PEELED AND EATEN.*' At this there was unanimous retching. There was no good woman could put that to her mouth, and for a man it was the practice of cannibals. (*SC* 12-13) **The Dog-Woman**	• 'Put it in your mouth, he said. 'Yes, as you would *a delicious thing to eat*.' I like to broaden my mind when I can and I did as he suggested, swallowing it up entirely and *biting it off with a snap*. (*SC* 41) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 81: The Dog-Woman keeps her words.

• I am a sinner, and common withal, but if I had trade enough for a rope of *pearls* I'd *wash my neck* before I wore them. (*SC* 15) **The Dog-Woman**	• And now the bells are striking and I must drape on my *pearls* and get ready for Jordan. I have *washed my neck.* (*SC* 135) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 82: Metaphors come true.

• 'But madam,' screeched the little bit of vermin, 'I see you weigh no more than an *angel*.' (*SC* 24) **The Dog-Woman**	• Like the *angels*, I can be invisible when there is work to be done. (*SC* 89) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 83: Sisterhood of women.

• The *whore from Spitalfields* has told me that men like to be consumed in the mouth, but it still seems to me a reckless act, for the member must take some time to grow again. (*SC* 41) **The Dog-Woman**	• I had decided to continue my sabotage alone when I was approached again by the *whore from Spitalfields* whom I hadn't seen for seven years. She was older and less beautiful but her figure showed the discipline of her trade. (*SC* 85) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 84: The subjectivity of time.

• I have forgotten my childhood, not just because of my father but because it was a bleak and unnecessary time, full of longing and lost hope. I can remember some incidents, but the sense of time passing escapes me. *If I were to stretch out all that seemed to happen, and relive it, it might take a day or two*. Where then are all the years in between? (*SC* 107-108) **The Dog-Woman**	• *In a night 200,000 years can pass, time moving only in our minds.* The steady marking of the seasons, the land well-loved and always changing, continues outside, while inside light years revolve under different skies. (*SC* 132) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 85: The Dog-Woman as a hero's mother.

• When I got news of Jordan's return I knew he would be returning as a hero and that I had to meet him as *a hero's mother*. I spared no expense and had a new dress made of the finest wool with a beautiful shawl cut out of the alter cloth of Stepney church. (*SC* 108) **The Dog-Woman**	• After some argument it was agreed that we should go to the expense of a carriage. It is my custom to walk everywhere, but *as the mother of a hero* I deemed it undignified to limp into London two days after my son and carrying my own baggage. (*SC* 130) **The Dog-Woman**

Example 86: On the purifying potential of fire.

• Morning. Out at sea the ship held at anchor. Jordan's rowing boat pulled high on the beach. The fire is smoking, it must be blazing when he wakes. *In Hell the fires will blaze eternally*, there'll be no scouring the sands for driftwood. (*SC* 129) **The Dog-Woman**	• 'Where are you taking the bodies?' I asked. 'To be burned,' they said. '*There is no way but burning*. The grave-diggers have no strength left, there are too many for them. Only the moneyed may be buried. For us it is the pit.' (*SC* 139) **The Dog-Woman** • 'It is a vision of Hell,' I said. There was a man next to me who had some charge over the matter. 'It is Hell indeed, and this is work for imps. *I must keep the fire burning to purify the rot of the bodies*. Should it smoulder, myself and my men must take that cut stairway you see to the side and invigorate the flames with bellows.' (*SC* 139) **The Dog-Woman** • 'This city should be burned down,' I whispered to myself. '*It should burn and burn until there is nothing left but the cooling wind*.' (*SC* 141-142) **The Dog-Woman** • I did not start the fire —how could I, having resolved to lead a blameless life?— but I did not stop it. Indeed the act of pouring a vat of oil on to the flames may well have been said to encourage it. But *it was a sign, a sign that our great sin would finally be burned away*. I could not have hindered the work of God. (*SC* 143) **The Dog-Woman**

S.3. Fortunata

Example 87: The third kind.

• The alchemists have a saying, 'Tertium non data': *the third is not given*. That is, the transformation from one element to another, from waster matter into best gold, is a process that cannot be documented. It is fully mysterious. (*SC* 131) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**	• The sea was hypnotic. Not the wind or the cold could move her from where she sat like one who waited. She was not waiting, she was remembering. She was trying to find out what it was that had brought her here. What it was about herself. *The third is not given*. All she knew was that she had arrived at the frontiers of common sense and crossed over. She was safe now. No safety without risk, and what you risk reveals what you value. (*SC* 134) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**

S.4. Unnamed ecologist

Example 88: What do women want?

• It's one life or countless lives depending on what you want. What do I want. When I'm dreaming I want a *home* and a *lover* and some *children*, but it won't work. Who'd want to live with a monster? I may not look like a monster any more but I couldn't hide it for long. (*SC* 127) **Unnamed ecologist**	• I don't hate men, I just wish they'd try harder. They all want to be heroes and *all we want is for them to stay at home and help with the housework and the kids*. That's not the kind of heroism they enjoy. (*SC* 127) **Unnamed ecologist**

T) Several voices echoing one another:

Example 89: The guiding power of stars.

• Jordan said *the stars can take you anywhere*. (*SC* 15) **The Dog-Woman**	• Then she turns away and I watch her walk back across the sand and up over the rocks. I begin to row, using her *body as a marker*. I always will. (*SC* 103) **Jordan** • Parents can't afford a telescope. Has a book instead on how to navigate by the *stars*. (*SC* 114) **Nicolas Jordan** • I lay on my bed and looked out of the window at the stars. I read in a book that *the stars can take you anywhere*. (*SC* 119) **Nicolas Jordan**

Example 90: Characters' self-presentation.

• My *name* is Jordan. This is the first thing I saw. (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• 'My *name* is Jordan,' I said. (*SC* 93) **Jordan** • 'My *name* is Fortunata,' she said. 'This is the first thing I saw.' (*SC* 93) **Fortunata quoted by Jordan** • 'My *name* is Nicolas Jordan,' I said. (*SC* 142) **Nicolas Jordan** • I had a *name* but I have forgotten it. (*SC* 11) **The Dog-Woman** • I am a *woman* going mad. I am a woman hallucinating. (*SC* 121) **Unnamed ecologist**

Example 91: The encounter with the self.

• I began to walk with *my hands stretched out* in front of me, as do those troubled in sleep, and in this way, for the first time, I traced the lineaments of *my own face* opposite me. (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• He came to, and feeling his way, arms *outstretched* he had suddenly touched another face and screamed out. For a second the fog cleared and he saw that *the stranger was himself*. (*SC* 143). **The Dog-Woman** • Perhaps I'm missing the point — perhaps whilst *looking for someone else you might come across yourself unexpectedly*, in a garden somewhere or on a mountain watching the rain. (*SC* 102) **Jordan** • One evening when Artemis had lost her quarry she lit a fire and tried to rest, but the night was shadowy and full of games. She saw herself by the fire as a child, a woman, a hunter, a queen. Grabbing the child she lost sight of the woman, and when she drew her bow the queen fled. What would it matter if she crossed the world and hunted down every living creature so long as her separate selves eluded her? In the end when no one was left she would have to confront herself. (*SC* 131) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman**

Example 92: On hidden journeys and hidden selves.

• *Every journey conceals another journey within its lines*: the path not taken and the forgotten angle. (*SC* 9) **Jordan**	• He said that the sea is so vast no one will ever finish sailing it. That *every mapped-out journey contains another journey hidden in its lines*… (*SC* 23) **Tradescant's words quoted by the Dog-Woman**

Example 93: References to the inner self.

• The *inward life* tells us that we are multiple not single, and that our one existence is really countless existences holding hands like those cut-out paper dolls, but unlike the dolls never coming to an end. When we say, 'I have been here before,' perhaps we mean, 'I am here now,' but in another life, another time, doing something else. Our lives could be stacked together like plates on a waiter's hand. Only the top is showing, but the rest are there and by mistake we discover them. (*SC* 90-91) **Jordan**	• Will it take as long as that before we start the *journey inside*, down our own time tunnels and deep into the realms of inner space? (*SC* 120) **Nicolas Jordan** • I've kept the log book for the ship. Meticulously. And I've kept a book of my own, and for every journey we have made together I've written down my own journey and drawn my own map. I can't show this to the others, but I believe it to be a faithful account of what happened, at least, of what happened to me. Are we all living like this? Two lives, the ideal outer life and the *inner imaginative life* where we keep our secrets? (*SC* 102) **Jordan** • One evening when Artemis had lost her quarry she lit a fire and tried to rest, but the night was shadowy and full of games. She saw herself by the fire as a child, a woman, a hunter, a queen. Grabbing the child she lost sight of the woman, and when she drew her bow the queen fled. What would it matter if she crossed the world and hunted down every living creature so long as her *separate selves* eluded her? In the end when no one was left she would have to confront herself. (*SC* 131) **Fortunata quoted by Dog-Woman** • In a night 200,000 years can pass, time moving only in our minds. The steady marking of the seasons, the land well-loved and always changing, continues *outside*, while *inside* light years revolve under different skies. (*SC* 132) **The Dog-Woman**