

Winterson Narrating Time and Space

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Edited by

Margaret J-M Sönmez and Mine Özyurt Kılıç

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P U B L I S H I N G

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Art & Lies</i>	<i>Art & Lies: A Piece for Three Voices and a Bawd</i>
<i>Art Objects</i>	<i>Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery</i>
<i>Oranges</i>	<i>Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit</i>
<i>Weight</i>	<i>Weight: The Myth of Atlas and Heracles</i>
<i>World</i>	<i>The World and Other Places</i>
<i>Written</i>	<i>Written on the Body</i>

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INTRODUCTION¹

THE STORY OF OUR VOLUME

This study came about as one of the fruitful products of the 2006 14th METU British Novelists Conference focusing on the work of Jeanette Winterson. Never before in the history of this conference had so many scholars from so many different countries sent in proposals for papers. Winterson's growing and international stature and popularity in the academic world were clearly reflected in this extraordinary response. The conference itself was marked by great enthusiasm and dynamism, in addition to excellent presentations. More importantly, it was—and still is—the first international conference solely on Winterson and her work. This conference left behind not only a good number of satisfied audience members, including both students and scholars, but also a conference proceedings published and circulated, as is the tradition of METU conferences, in the following, 2007, conference.

The success of the conference and the proceedings was largely due to the variety of both the audience and the speakers. These involved Winterson fans, undergraduate students studying Winterson texts in the classroom, graduate students writing dissertations on Winterson, scholars with various research backgrounds who, being attracted to Winterson's works could not resist the temptation to extend their research into this field, and of course the Winterson scholars who saw the conference as an opportunity to explore different aspects of her work. For us, though, the culmination of the event was the attention it drew from the Cambridge

¹ The following editions of Winterson's works are used in this Introduction: *Sexing the Cherry*. 1989. New York: Grove Press. *Written on the Body*. 1992. London: Jonathan Cape. *Boating for Beginners*. 1999. London: Vintage. *The PowerBook*. 2000. London: Jonathan Cape. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. 2001. London: Vintage. *The Passion*. 2001. London: Vintage. *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. 1997. New York: Vintage International. *Gut Symmetries*. 1997. *Lighthousekeeping*. 2004. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt. *Weight*. 2005. Edinburgh: Canongate. *The Stone Gods*. 2007. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Scholars Press who announced their interest in publishing a volume with a unique and coherent focus on Winterson's work.

We immediately considered what was then available to readers; when we started this project Merja Makinen's critical guide and Susana Onega's monograph were recent and they seemed to address almost all possible aspects of the whole of Winterson's then existing *oeuvre*, and the books of two of our contributors, Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Antosa, were not yet published. The critical works available to the reader at that time mostly concentrated on Winterson as a postmodern woman writer of evocative texts, on her new techniques of narration and on the themes she explores drawing upon her own experience as an adopted child. Several articles had already appeared studying Winterson's texts as lesbian narratives, as metafiction and as historiographic metafiction (Farwell, 1996; Wingfield, 1998; Arostegui, 2000; Smith, 2005). While we were thinking about the thematic concerns of her texts that had not been explored fully, her interest in the concept of time and her skill in fashioning alternative worlds and new spaces became our starting point. In brief, the abundance of images, representations, metaphors and contestations of time and space in her narratives is the inspiration behind this study.

As the essays in this volume also manifest, time, space and narrative are integral parts of Winterson texts; they are the threads that build her thematic networks. Thus we see the three motifs of this volume "Winterson Narrating Time and Space" as a formula that Winterson's writing itself devises. It is also a key to a fuller understanding of the political implications of her work. First and foremost, what strikes her readers is that Winterson is a writer who aims to transgress the boundaries of time and space, and narrate what it is to be a human being living within the bounds of a patriarchal, traditional and polarised culture. Her novels present moments of being to illustrate how it feels to be liberated from these boundaries. While we were collecting the essays for our volume, Winterson with her new book *The Stone Gods* seemed to give us a nodding smile as if implying that we are on the right track. The title of the book she has been writing for children as this volume is prepared for press, *Robot Love*, is another good reason why we think our focus evokes and addresses many of her core concerns as a writer. Her fascination with artificial intelligence gives rise to works that show the skill she has in transgressing the boundaries of the often-mistreating present time and space. As she often shows in her answers to interview questions, Winterson fashions ideal times and spaces with a strong sense of mission and responsibility; this mission is to encourage humankind to be free from oppressive boundaries and to love each other. With these factors in mind,

we think that this volume of essays addresses one of the central concerns of Winterson's ever-growing *oeuvre*.

As the editors of this volume, we hold the belief that *Winterson Narrating Time and Space* has already become a medium for a fruitful exchange of ideas among/for those specialising in Winterson's work. The most recent books on Winterson, Sonya Andermahr's *Jeanette Winterson: A Contemporary Critical Guide* (Continuum, 2007) and *Jeanette Winterson* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and Silvia Antosa's *Crossing Boundaries: Bodily Paradigms in Jeanette Winterson's Fiction 1985-2000* (Aracne, 2008) come from contributors to this volume, and it has been possible for some of the essays presented here to refer to them. We hope that this collection of essays on time, space and narrative will open new venues and new visions in Winterson scholarship.

Winterson Narrating Time and Space

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 (*Sexing the Cherry*, 99).

By stating that fiction is a “flying carpet” (Michael Berkeley, interview), Winterson offers an image that liberates literature from its material constraints: her work takes the reader on a journey through different times and places as if on a flying carpet. As a writer who often speaks out her interest in time and space, Winterson employs techniques and strategies to find the best means both to illustrate the old-established notions of time and space and to portray temporality and spatiality of her ideal. She is very self-conscious about the function time and space serve in her narratives. In a comment on *Art & Lies*, which is one of the Winterson narratives that typically brings together in its texture characters from different times and places, she manifests her intentions: “All of my books manipulate time, in an effort to free the mind from the effects of gravity. The present has a weight to it—the weight of our lives, the weight of now. By imaginatively moving sideways, I try to let in more light and air” (Winterson website, *Art & Lies*). The strong desire to get rid of the weight of the present life and to move sideways is the source of the flying-carpet-effect which is ever existent in all Winterson narratives.

As the essays in this volume demonstrate, it is apparent that from *Oranges* to the most recent *The Stone Gods*, time and space are pivotal concerns of her fiction, so much so that her texts can be considered as meditations upon the nature of time and space. Even the comic book

Boating for Beginners which was “written for money in six weeks” (Winterson website, *Boating for Beginners*) is a manipulation of time and space² through an elaboration on the Flood myth populated by characters like Bunny Mix, a romantic novelist, and Noah and his family members like the sons, Ham, “the owner of that prestigious pastrami store”, Japeth “the jewellery king” and Shem, “once playboy and entrepreneur, now a reformed and zealous pop singer” (*Boating for Beginners*, 21). Although almost all her fiction displays a lengthy discussion of time past, present and future, her novel *Tanglewreck*, meant for children, places the topic centrally (Özyurt Kılıç 2008a, 326) and, as Kennedy argues in her essay,³ presents a radical challenge to conventional ideas of time and space. The statement Sally Munt makes in her *Technospaces* provides a clue to seeing the reason why Winterson seems to be obsessed with time and space issues; she states that space and time are the “first filters of knowledge” (2001,1). Following this maxim, one can easily see the political implications of Winterson’s manipulative construction of time and space in her narratives. The body of her works can be understood as a project to deconstruct the cultural and historical givens by shifting and redefining the spatio-temporal coordinates. A critique of official history, patriarchy, and all those boundaries that limit human beings’ potentials, Winterson’s fiction is a gesture towards demolishing the conventional notions of time and space as the first filters of socio-cultural knowledge, and setting new standards to replace that confining knowledge. In brief, Winterson’s work questions the validity of norms and everyday practices based on these norms.

In her work resonate the questions Brecht’s “worker” in the poem “Questions From A Worker Who Reads” poses about the distorted truth and the limiting official history:

[. . .]
 The young Alexander conquered India.
 Was he alone?
 Caesar beat the Gauls.
 Did he not have even a cook with him?

² The book is not a manipulation of time only through its anachronisms; when they cannot find any graph paper to play Battleship or Hang the Man, Gloria and Marlene, the two characters in the novel, are “forced talk about 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” (100).

³ Unless otherwise stated, essays in this volume are referred to.

[. . .]
 Every page a victory.
 Who cooked the feast for the victors?
 Every ten years a great man?
 Who paid the bill?
 So many reports.
 So many questions (Brecht 1987, 252-253).

To compensate for the lost account of those who cooked and paid the bill, Winterson gives voice to a character in *The Passion*, Henri who is Napoleon's cook, his chicken-neck-wringer. This time, it is Winterson who distorts the "truth" because she writes a new version of history by placing her focus on times and places not mentioned at all, speaking for the silenced and showing what the conventions systematically veil.

As elements central to plots, place and time are never lightly-sketched and never left to readers' imaginations in Winterson's fiction. They are so central to the plot and characterisation that any minute detail is in fact a telling comment on the thematic network of the work. Winterson often makes her characters speak explicitly on the nature of time and space; or sometimes a narratorial voice other than the character on the scene pronounces a framing consciousness. Her first book, *Oranges*, explores the concept of history and the notions of past and time both by juxtaposing the fictional, literary and historical characters within the same space⁴ and by allowing the protagonists to make direct comments on the concept of history and past:

Everyone who tells a story tells it differently, just to remind us that everybody sees it differently... 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 (*Oranges*, 91).

The Passion presents this idea, problematising the reliability of history in formulaic statements: "Time is a great deadener" (32) and "There is only the present" (86). *Sexing the Cherry* similarly starts with an epigraph, which, as Jenzen discusses in her essay, problematises the orthodox view of time (and space). In this novel, Winterson presents a set of comments, a plot and several characters, all employed to highlight the same idea, and critique the perception of time and space as disputable

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the juxtaposition of fictional and historical characters and the historiographic metafiction in *Oranges*, *Sexing the Cherry*, *The Passion* and *The PowerBook*, see Mine Özyurt Kılıç's "Demythologizing History Jeanette Winterson's Fictions and His/tories" (2004, 127-134).

cultural constructs. The following comment from *Sexing the Cherry*, which brings the text to a conclusion, can be read as an overarching statement that provides a framework for all the novels:

The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds and from a distance borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky. ... And even the most solid 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 (167).

As evidenced in her essay “A Work of my Own”, Winterson is not unaware of the function of the historical data in her works (in *Art Objects*, 188); she is employing them deliberately to create an alternative reality. A substantial element of this site of reconstruction is history. Winterson uses and distorts the historical data to show that history is a mere construct and a mirror which reflects a dwarfed version of common people whereas some others who are made heroes look like giants in it.

I have twice used the device of history, not because I am interested in Costume Drama Realism, or Magic Realism or any other Realism but because I wanted to create an imaginative reality sufficiently at odds with our daily reality to startle us out of it (*Art Objects*, 188).

She startles her readers by telling them that everything taught to us about time and history is a lie, and in *Sexing the Cherry* she gives a long list of these lies to challenge the assumptions about the nature of time and space: “Lies 2: Time is a straight line,” and “Lies 4: We can only be in one place at a time” (90). As if on a mission, she makes efforts by inserting such passages into her fiction to make her texts eye-openers and say that what is accepted to be the truth is something arguable. And most importantly, her texts present alternatives by delineating new models of time and space, and new ways of being. She gives a piece of advice to avoid lies. Drawing an analogy between ready-made food and official history, she suggests that to stay healthy, i.e., not to be manipulated by these lies, one should “make one’s own sandwich”:

The salt beef of civilisation rumbling round in the gut. Constipation was a great problem after the Second World War. Not enough roughage in the diet, too much refined food. If you always eat out you can never be sure what’s going in, and received information is nobody’s exercise. Rotten and rotting.

Here is some advice: If you want to keep your own teeth, make your own sandwiches (*Oranges*, 93).

This revolutionary perspective on time and space which rests upon Einstein's theory of relativity⁵ is often represented in Winterson's fiction by means of the recurrent image of a river. Recalling the Greek philosopher Heraclitus' famous dictum "You could not step twice into the same river; for other waters are ever flowing on to you", the image of river is almost always there in Winterson's novels as if to reflect the problematic nature of time. For example, Venice of *The Passion*, which is described as an ever-changing land of liquid matter—water, sets the best example. The idea of flux strikes a chord not only with the Bergsonian concept of time but also with Edward de Bono's "water logic", one of the categories of the "lateral thinking" he formulates. de Bono contends that traditional logic is static and based on solid foundations which he calls "rock logic" and that "our habits of thinking are [...] thoroughly based on rock logic" (1994, 187). In contrast to this traditional way of thinking, he proposes "water logic" based on the flow of the mind interrogating the reasons for things, rather than finding and clinging to fixed definitions. He uses the term to denote "movement and flexibility in thinking" (189). To illustrate alternative spatio-temporal coordinates, almost all of Winterson's books, which she maintains "speak to each other" (Reynolds and Noakes 2003, 25), bear images of a river as an emblem to reflect a new consciousness⁶ of time and space. For this aim, for instance, describing the nature of time in *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson employs a river image: "The river runs from one country to another without stopping" (167). As in Heraclitus, the river running from one place to another is meant to give a mental picture of time as a flow. Jordan is an orphan found floating on the River Thames. The ecologist girl, centuries later, sits by the same river. As two characters sharing a consciousness that is an alternative to

⁵ Jago Morrison in the "Frameworks" section of his *Contemporary Fiction* gives an extensive discussion of the new trends in contemporary fiction (2003, 1-52). For an excellent treatment of the themes of time, space and narrative linked to the questions of gender and body in the contemporary British fiction see this chapter. Another section of his book, "Jeanette Winterson: re-memembering the body", suggests that issues of gender, history, memory and space in her work co-exist in a continuum, thus are entities inseparable each reflecting the *raison d'être* of the other (95-115).

⁶ In an interview by Maya Jaggi, Winterson says "I write to bring about a change in consciousness".

the mainstream,⁷ standing by the same flow nullifies the logic that separates time past and time present. The same river stands for both things past and things present. The concluding section of *The PowerBook*, similarly, offers a crystallised image of the change in the notions of time and space achieved through a river:

I dipped my hands in the water. Liquid time.
 And I thought, "Go home and write the story again. Keep writing it
 because one day she will read it."
 You can change the story. You are the story.
 No date line, no meridian, no gas-burnt stars, no transit of the planets, not
 the orbit of the earth nor the sun's red galaxy, tell time here. Love is the
 keeper of clocks.
 I took off my watch and dropped it into the water.
 Time take it.
 Your face, your hands, the movement of your body...
 Your body is my Book of Hours.
 Open it. Read it.
 This is the true history of the world (*The PowerBook*, 243-244).

In this image are united the personal and cosmic time which achieves a state of much-longed harmony with the world outside. It should also be remembered that through such images of boundary crossing Winterson provides an alternative state of being outside the confines of traditional understandings of time and space, which Wagner-Lawlor in her essay calls "utopic space"

In their analysis of *Gut Symmetries*, Grice and Woods (1998, 120) refer to the section in the novel that is an elaboration on Einstein's understanding of time "as a river, moving forward, forceful, directed, but also bowed, curved, sometimes subterranean, not ending but pouring itself into a greater sea" (*Gut Symmetries*, 104). They explain that time "like a river, is far more complex than a straight flight of an arrow homing in on its mark. Rather time often doubles back on itself, moving in eddies, and whirlpools" (Grice and Woods 1998, 120). In line with the emphasis on the fluid nature of time, the language used to portray the desire between Alice and Stella, the two lovers in *Gut Symmetries*, brings in an unusual

⁷ In *Art & Lies*, as characters coming from different times, Picasso, Sappho and Handel meet in an imagined future (in this case the moving vehicle being a train), detailed interpretation of which is available in Silvia Antosa's essay.

conception of space and time.⁸ Offering another instance of boundary-crossing, Winterson makes her character speak:

Her breast as my breasts, her mouth as my mouth, were more than Narcissus hypnotised by his own likeness. ...I could have rested there beside her, perhaps forever, it felt like forever, a mirror of confusion of bodies and sighs, undifferentiated, she in me, me in she and lo longer exhausted by someone else's shape over mine (119).

Love becomes a space in which the two bodies vibrating in the same moment of being are united.

In a similar vein, *Written on the Body* calls the reader to rehearse a novel way of conceptualising time and space. Winterson's text invites the reader into the inner space of her character and introduces the world of cells and tissues. The narrative in *Written*, as David Nel discusses in detail in his essay, follows the rhythm of the body, rather a sense of time outside the realm of the body. The body which is the site of all that is experienced and is to be experienced becomes a vessel that contains its own peculiar spatio-temporal coordinates. In her "A Feminist Ethics of Love: Jeanette Winterson's *Written On the Body*", Andrea Harris suggests that "the narrator literally seeks to become one with each part of Louise's body" (Harris, 136). Her love "transcends the everyday and earthly" concerns, yearning for a unity almost in a spiritual way (130). Underlying the space between self and other, the space between masculine and feminine, and the space between word and object, the body is understood as a matter that is subject to binary thinking (130); yet love defies everything and wipes out the binaries. A later work by Winterson, *Lighthousekeeping* also presents a model of an innovative perspective through a lover seeing the body of the beloved as a haven, which is again described by means of an image of fluidity and flux:

You are the door at the edge of the world. You are the door that opens onto a sea of stars.

Open me. Wide. Narrow. Pass through me, and whatever lies on the other side, could not be reached except by this. This you. This now. This caught moment opening into a lifetime (*Lighthousekeeping*, 219).

⁸ "To feel like forever" when united is one challenge to time as something finite; Winterson states that she wanted to explore the dimensionality of time "How do we understand time? What happens to the past? Does the future already exist? These are questions the book deals with, not because I hope to answer them, but as a way of adding to the puzzle" (Winterson website, *Gut Symmetries*).

Meanwhile, this emphasis on love which features in *Oranges, The Passion, Sexing the Cherry, Art & Lies* and *The Stone Gods*⁹ makes us think that in Winterson's fiction love is the most efficient tool to be used in the big project of change. To Winterson, a change in the "rock logic" in the idiom of de Bono, i.e., in the long established layers of consciousness of time and space, is possible only through love. Answering a question about *Gut Symmetries*, Winterson herself comments on this emphasis that she places on love, and states that:

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

Reading Winterson's comments on time and space against this recognition of discrepancy between inner and outer realities, one can see the reflections of the ideas posed by the contemporary radical thinker Henri Lefebvre. He argues that social space is a social product and that the space produced in a certain manner serves as a tool of thought and action:

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity—their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and a set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object (Lefebvre 2001, 73).

The way he defines space suggests that it is not only a means of production but also a means of control in the Foucauldian sense. He contends that since networks of exchange, flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it, it cannot be separated either from the productive forces or from the social division of labour (85). In short, he suggests that every society—and therefore every mode of production—produces a certain space, its own space, which means a change in the perception of space is caused by and leads to a change in the productive forces, i.e., the superstructures of society (85).

Most of Winterson's characters are the very emblems of change occupying or searching for "appropriate" spaces in harmony with their thinking. Standing for a world that is an alternative to the present one, they

⁹ In their review of *The Stone Gods*, Birlik and Taşkesen also interpret love in the novel as "a solution to all the sickening patriarchal binaries" (2008, 71).

occupy spaces in a way that stands against uniformity. For instance, in *The Passion*, she deconstructs the gendered space perception which associates domestic space with women and public space with men by placing Villanelle, the beautiful red-haired woman in a casino and Henri, the soldier in a kitchen. Likewise, *Sexing the Cherry*'s ecologist girl lives in a hut by the river, closer to nature; withdrawing herself from the traditionally accepted space for housing, she represents an alternative life. She aims to put an end to the pollution and the sources of decay like the World Bank and the Pentagon (138). The Twelve Dancing Princess' "silver city," in which the inhabitants' occupation was to dance, serves a similar function in that this ideal space has the capacity to liberate women from the bounds of the oppressive forces in patriarchal order. *Lighthousekeeping* also includes spaces that are symbolic of an alternative lifestyle that works against the normative practices. The most central image is the lighthouse where Silver and Pew live in darkness to send out light to help people navigate at sea. Winterson presents this small and dark lighthouse, the home to Silver and Pew, as the monumental site which stands for the possibility of love and care outside the confines of family.¹⁰ And a hut is again there in *Lighthousekeeping* to serve as a place that shelters an individual and his/her inner reality from the oppression of the outer reality. Accordingly, only the negatively represented characters who comply with patriarchal and (hetero) normative life practices live in apartments or in standard places; like the married couples in *Gut Symmetries* and *Written*. *The Passion* places the lady, Villanelle's lover, in a big and comfortable house that metaphorically imprisons her with a husband who has an anchorite existence. But *Lighthousekeeping*'s Silver is not a bird in a gilded cage; she freely meets her girlfriend in a hut:

This is a love story.

When I fell in love with you, I invited you to stay in a hut on the edge of a forest. Solitary, field-flung, perched over the earth, and hand-lit, it was the nearest thing I could get to a lighthouse (*Lighthousekeeping*, 209).

In a 1997 interview by Laura Miller, Winterson describes herself as "a complete hermit" who lives in a cottage on her land (2). This reminds me of Bachelard's discussion, in his *The Poetics of Space*, concerning the significance of the hut. Bachelard maintains that the hut as a place is "so

¹⁰ The word "alternative" I use in describing the ideal world and life Winterson constructs in her work does include an alternative social order that is (hetero)normative and (homo)phobic. Cox, Andermahr and Wagner-Lawlor expand on the relation between gender and space in their essays.

simple that it no longer belongs to our memories—which at times are too full of imagery—but to legend; it is a center of legend” (Bachelard 1969, 31). The hut, then, practically means a utopic space that wipes out the memories, the things one automatically remembers, and as such offers a fresh perspective. In a rhetorical question that makes us think of Bachelard’s hut, even in terms of the lighthouse of Winterson’s novel, he asks:

When we are lost in darkness and see a distant glimmer of light, who does not dream of a thatched cottage or to go more deeply still into legend, of a hermit’s hut?

A hermit’s huts. What a subject for an engraving [...] A hermit’s hut is a theme which needs no variations, for at the simplest mention of it, “phenomenological reverberation” obliterates all mediocre resonances (32).

Bachelard contends that the hut symbolises solitude, and as the simplest form of housing it has the “power of protections against the forces that besiege it” (37). Metaphorically speaking, Winterson’s huts are alternative places that shelter individuals standing firmly against the normalising practices that surround them.

Billie in *The Stone Gods* lives in a simple hut-like farmhouse. Her space is far away from the high-tech city centre, a pile of flats packed with electronic devices that are supposed to make life easier and more comfortable at the cost of nature. Like the ecologist girl of *Sexing the Cherry*, Billie is represented as an alternative figure fighting against the sources of ecological crisis in her own tranquil way. Striving to lead a simple life far from the madding crowd, Billie sits by the fire (*The Stone Gods*, 43) “out of touch with real life” (33). Not in a hut, Atlas, the protagonist of *Weight*, with the earth on his shoulders becomes a flesh and blood representative of the both literally and metaphorically oppressive nature of the world. Winterson poses the protagonist as victimized by the patriarchal concept of masculinity, the emblem of which is Heracles, the antagonist, from a position that is estranged from the everyday space and time. Atlas speaks to us from space. The first-person narrator sets the challenging tone of the narrative¹¹ right from the beginning, with a comment on time and space: “In the beginning there was nothing. Not even space and time” (3). In its biblical opening, the novel attempts a challenge against (hetero)normative grand-narratives:

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of time and space in *Oranges* and *Weight*, see Antakyalıoğlu’s essay.

What is it that you contain? The dead. Time. Light patterns of millennia opening in your gut. Every minute, in each of you, a few million potassium atoms succumb to radioactive decay... Potassium, like uranium and radium, is a long-lived radioactive nuclear waste of the supernova bang that accounts for you. Your first parent was a star (4).

Although Winterson believes that what the writer does and what the writer says are irrelevant to the reader, as a critic I find the following account very relevant to the frame of her mind, the creative force behind her fiction that sheds light upon life as a meeting point of time, space and action: "I like to live slowly. Modern life is too fast for me" ("Art & Life" in *Art Objects*, 159). Defying the authority of the clocks and timepieces in her personal space, Winterson seems to follow the rhythm of her own. As a writer who sees herself as the only true heir of Virginia Woolf to follow in her footsteps, she implies that to be a writer, what one needs, apart from a room, is a rhythm of one's own. She signals how differently she perceives and experiences the "Modern life" we share. The lifestyle she seems to have built against all odds, namely against the childhood state she was destined to inhabit and impelled to leave behind, against the heterosexual bounds of the patriarchal culture, indicates the challenge apparent in her fiction to the life a modern urban individual is supposed to lead:

My day is simple: Get up, light the fire, and while it and my thoughts are catching, grind the coffee and have a wash.... I have been lighting my own fire since I was a tiny girl and I hope to do so on the day that I die. There is no comfort to be had from a radiator and no-one I recall has yet had a vision while staring into the white enamel. [...] Comfort and visions. The solace of the fire is an ancient one and evolution is a very slow process. I do not want to live in exile from my evolutionary environment (*Art Objects*, 159).

Sitting by the fire she lights and creating visions, Winterson sets a perfect example of the "flame thinker" in the idiom of Bachelard. She watches the flame which has the rich potential to incite the thoughts and emotions in a state of daydreaming and musing. In his *Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard calls this state of mind as a "reverie", he takes fire as the "exceptional and rare phenomenon" on which the human mind reflected¹², so it is the "prime element of reverie" (1968, 18). When a person descends into a reverie so deep, s/he in a way returns to a childlike

¹² In *The Passion*, Henri makes fire-watching synonymous with retrospection and reflection. He claims that he keeps a diary to refer to "in later life when [he] was prone to sit by the fire and look back" (28).

state which frees him/her from the boundaries of the present time and space. This existence with no boundaries, and this quiet, has the potential to establish the connection between the individual and the cosmos that is severed again and again in modern urban everyday practices. Winterson's deep reverie facilitated by an act of fire watching, to follow Bachelard's metaphorical reading of the fire and flame, is also related to the process of change, of transformation. As Bachelard says, fire is the "point of departure" and through the reverie comes a "creative mental process" (112). The desire to change, to bring the life that fails to celebrate one's existence to its conclusion, to create a life anew out of its ashes constitutes the core of Winterson's writing. (No wonder her *Sexing the Cherry* uses The Great Fire of London—as Dryden did—as a purifying force).¹³

To Bachelard, flame and fire is our primordial desire; Winterson makes this desire synonymous with universal love that is almost a substitute for the "500 pounds a year" that Woolf deems as the *sine qua non* for writing as a profession for women. Flame-gazing, through which one's mind and gaze focus on one thing, relies on a level of concentration similar to that in love. In his reflections on the nature of love, Jose Ortega y Gasset suggests that both love and fire help us focus on our existence in its pure and universal state liberated from the historical connotations and its cultural baggage (Gasset 1999, 7-14).¹⁴ It seems that for Winterson, a rhythm of her own and universal love are the essentials of creativity. As Jago Morrison diagnoses in his " 'Who Cares About Gender at a Time Like This?' Love, Sex and the Problem of Jeanette Winterson", Winterson commits herself to "the discovery of love in the agapeic¹⁵ mould, which centrally requires a shedding of the earthly and of the erotic." (Morrison 2006, 170). Following Morrison's statement, one can suggest that love in her works, as illustrated above, becomes a tool bridging differences by means of going beyond the bounds of time and space. For instance, in

¹³ For an extensive discussion of the fire as a purifying force, see again Bachelard's "Idealized Fire: Fire and Purity" in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (99-107).

¹⁴ Bachelard also sees an analogy between love and fire, thus he quotes Rilke: "To be loved means to be consumed in the flame; to love is to shine with an inexhaustible light" (1968, 106).

¹⁵ Austin Cline states that according to Plato, *agape* is the highest form of love. The concept of *agape* was not limited to just God's love of humanity; it is also used to describe the love one person feels for another. In contrast to the sexual love of *eros* or the friendship expressed by *philos*, *agape* denotes a kind of love that involves giving without expectation of anything in return.

The PowerBook this transgression, via an act of love, is represented by an image of the virtual space nullifying the limits like physical appearance, identity and gender. In *The Stone Gods*, transgression culminates in an act of love between a robo sapiens and a scientist, to suggest that this robo sapiens is one of the “new mystics” (*The Stone Gods*, 89), an agent of oneness through love. Interestingly, this sense of love becomes a framework that brings together the separate chapters of *The Stone Gods* that are set in different times and places.¹⁶ This freedom to love, to feel with the other, knows no bounds; so employing multiple levels of temporal and spatial markers reinforces the theme of overreaching the bounds of gender, class, and species. Her *Oranges*, *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry*, *Written*, *Gut Symmetries*, and *Art & Lies* incorporate in them a rich array of narrative genres like fairy tales, autobiography, scientific facts, history that all work on different spatio-temporal levels. This intertextuality also offers a space in which voices from different times and places come together. Moreover, Winterson uses already existing narratives to subvert the conventional notions of time and space, to put new wine in old bottles to explode them.¹⁷

At the time of writing this introduction, Winterson has just lost her father. The image of her father that she shares with the readers on her website is sadly reminiscent of the image in *The Stone Gods* of Spike, the robo sapiens dying by the dying fire, and the consciousness of love uniting Billie and Spike to make them one:

At night I made him a bed in front of the fire, and the dog lay beside him and the cats on top of him and the fire burned low through the night.

On Christmas night I came down about four in the morning to look at him because I didn't think he'd last. His breathing was shallow but the animals were easy, and animals always know. I sat for a bit by the dying

¹⁶ To conserve energy, Spike, the robo sapiens, removes her limbs one by one and reduces herself to a mere torso. Her body becomes a “piece of armour she has taken off”, she “unfixes”, thus “frees” herself with the help of her lover Billie who, as agreed, detaches her head from her torso”; they kiss and the comment that seems to belong to the voice of them united suggests that love is a transgression of boundaries of time and space: “Kiss me. Your mouth is a cave. This cave is your mouth. I am inside you, and there is nothing to fear” To literally and metaphorically prove that love is “journey on foot to another place” (90-92).

¹⁷ This image of “new wine in old bottles” can be read as a reference to what Angela Carter states to describe her subversive intent in her “Notes from the Front Line” (1983): “I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode” (1998, 37).

fire with my dying dad and cried some of the tears I should have cried a long time ago (Winterson website, *Column*).

Winterson admits that her feelings, though never her thinking, have been “black and white” because of the trauma of being left and then adopted. We learn that the last two years, “this half year especially” in which she says she has discovered “differentiated feeling,” changed everything in her life. Assuming that all writing is autobiographical in some way, and considering that Winterson puts a lot of her personal life into her texts, I believe that this change in the way she feels will probably open up a new vein in her writing. We will see how this “hardest, but the most important” time in her life will reflect itself upon the texts to be written: I feel that images filtered through this new consciousness that has defeated the “love or not love, care or don’t care, in or out” dichotomy, that practiced a transgression of binary feeling will bring new images of time and space, such as becoming one with love and care. Her latest published sentiment recalls the opening question she curiously poses in *Written* “Why is the measure of love loss?” (9). Now she wisely manifests: It does not matter when or where, but never let loss be the measure of your love!

Essays in this Volume

This volume contains five specially commissioned essays and four re-written papers based on work that was presented at the 2006 METU British Novelists Conference “Winterson and her Work”. Contributors were asked to write or re-write their papers with a focus on the issues of time, space and narrative. The result of this is a collection of essays that demonstrates an exciting mixture of thematic coherence and scholarly diversity: our list of contributors combines the names of established specialists with those of younger researchers, and the papers are written by academics from Australia, Britain, Italy, Turkey and the United States of America. These essays are presented under three main divisions: essays on time and narrative, on space and narrative and on time, space and narrative. There is, however, an almost inevitable overlapping between the categories, because it is often the case that time and space cannot be separated in the novels of Winterson. The writers have, in such cases, not separated them, either. The essays, especially those in the first two sections, could easily slip into each other's sections, showing that a transgression of boundaries between entities is not confined to Winterson's

fictions. The ordering of the essays in each section is based on the chronological order of the works under discussion.

The essay that starts the volume with a focus on time, “Telling the Temporary As Permanent: Winterson’s Re-Working of Autobiography in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Weight: The Myth of Atlas and Heracles*” is interesting in, among other things, that it fruitfully compares Winterson’s debut with a novel written two decades later. The essay illustrates these two novels as texts in which Winterson repeats the same story, namely the story of Jeanette. Zekiye Antakyalıoğlu contends that, no matter how different the subject matters and constructions seem to be, both *Oranges* and *Weight* employ a mixture of traditional texts, tales, myths and stories through which Winterson presents her own life as universal and timeless. The essay finds Winterson’s understanding of time (as non-linear) and history (as not teleological) to be the overarching framework that brings the two works together. Antakyalıoğlu’s analysis puts forward the idea that, unlike conventional autobiography which perceives life as a totality of the lived experiences of a mortal person, and which presents life chronologically in line with a linear perception of time, these two texts demonstrate how autobiography can transform into something more transcendental and transpersonal in its telling. To show how Winterson achieves this, Antakyalıoğlu discusses Winterson’s theories and practices of life writing in detail. This activity sheds light upon the reading of the following essays as well.

David Nel’s essay “The Solace of Quantum (Physics): Biochemical and Physical Time in Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*” analyses the conception of time that the novel reflects. Nel’s essay argues that the scientific strand, in Winterson’s writing which, particularly in *Written on the Body*, he regards as a “scientific turn” has always been concerned with the problematics of representational time. While elaborating on the temporal dimension of love stories, Nel traces the movement between the organic, biological “desire” and the codified, narrative form of “love” in this novel. The essay argues that *Written* incorporates multiple temporalities, most importantly biological time, but also mythic time and quantum time. Nel illustrates his point through first analysing the “peculiar” biological imagery in the opening pages of the novel. Then the essay links “atemporal temporality” to biological temporality, suggesting that the secrecy of the two lovers’, namely the narrator’s and Louise’s, affair produces a rupture in the temporal structure of the narrative. Nel draws a parallel between this rupture in time and a “queer space” that the affair builds outside the scope of conventional narratives of marriage and family, where the couple may reunite in “open fields.” By highlighting

passages from the novel as pieces of texts “outside time” and expanding on the term queer space, Nel’s essay suggests that in this reconfigured spatial and temporal topography of the “open fields” a happy ending is possible for the two lovers in the novel. In a nutshell, Nel’s essay demonstrates how differently an affair can be conveyed by employing various chronotopes.

Olu Jenzen’s essay “Reworking Linear Time: Queer Temporalities in Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* and *Art & Lies*” is a reading of the novels as political texts in terms of their use of time; Jenzen interrogates how these texts formulate a resistance toward (hetero) normative chronopolitics. Thus, her essay shows how Winterson’s texts, in their examination of how we think within the confines of time and space, reveal political aspects of the construction and organization of time. To illustrate the means Winterson employs, Jenzen discusses Winterson’s use of the fantastical mode together with a strategy of defamiliarization that works by colliding different discourses of time, to make the reader aware of the strangeness of time as we know it. The essay further explores how temporal compressions and extensions in the fantastical mode enable dissident, or queer, bodies and subjectivities to be expressed and visualised through history. In reading her texts as hybrid, queer fantastical texts the essay demonstrates how a focus on temporal mechanisms, where pleasure is central, enables a reading of Winterson’s texts as at once playful and political, linguistic and material. Throughout the discussion the essay also seeks to assess the relationship of narrativity to temporality and the function of the “story” as a convention to ascertain “imaginative control over time”, arguing that Winterson’s self-reflexive engagement with the notion of what constitutes story, and the significance of stories to identity, must also be seen as an exploration of temporality in itself. By employing anti-homophobic theoretical perspectives and the theories of queerness, Jenzen argues that queer temporalities in *Sexing the Cherry* and *Art & Lies* mark a state of being at odds with normative temporalities. Thus, her essay contends that these novels articulate a critique of patriarchal discourses, which can be seen as the very source of the ongoing search for alternative space in her fiction.

Essays in the second part, “Space and Narrative”, seems to follow the framework that the essays in the first part establish, in the sense that they investigate the theme of space as an attempt on the part of the individual to be emancipated from the bounds of normative practices in the present. The essays specifically cover not only the novels *Oranges*, *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry* and *The PowerBook* but also the collection of her short

stories *The World and Other Places* which has not received extensive critical interest so far.

Katharine Cox's "Knotting up the Cat's Cradle: Exploring Time and Space in Winterson's Novels", puts an emphasis on the journey motif in the cycle of Winterson's first seven novels. Cox argues that, as Winterson confirms in her introduction to *Great Moments in Aviation*, her writing is repeatedly configured around the journey, whereby characters construct fantastic travels through narrative, time and space. Recurrent themes in her work, Cox suggests, evidence the journey as a perpetual state that is not completed by the return home, or even by the end of the novel. With this general outlook on time and space as core concerns of Winterson's works, Cox's essay investigates certain space metaphors in the texts that represent a tension between constraint and possibility, like cyberspace, the cat's cradle and the maze. In the thematic network of these novels that manifest a tension between desire and boundaries, the allusions to knots and metaphors of thread function as symbols of restraint, Cox holds. Focusing mostly on *Oranges*, *The Passion* and *The PowerBook*, the essay places an emphasis upon the investigations of time and space across the cycle of Winterson's first seven novels. This essay illustrates the fact that Winterson's cycle of novels explores time through conflation and manipulation of history, myth, literature and personal narrative and reads the metaphors of space against the nature of time presented in her novels, which once again shows that elements of time, space and narrative in Winterson's novels work integrally.

Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor concentrates on Winterson's interest in the connections between space, freedom, and utopia in her earliest works. In her essay "Lusting Toward Utopia: Winterson's Utopian Counter-Spaces from *The Passion* to *The PowerBook*", Wagner-Lawlor argues that the claustrophobia of Winterson's original adoptive home is countered in her fiction by the freedom of "the world and other places", the freedom of spaces elsewhere from home. The essay proposes that freedom for Winterson may be searching for one's "real" home elsewhere and asks "Where is that elsewhere that is the home to which one truly belongs? Is it somewhere? Is it nowhere? Or is it nowhere that becomes somewhere in the spaces of the imagination?" Providing answers by analysing *The Passion* and *The PowerBook*, the essay puts forward that Winterson pursues an exploration of a space that is fluid and unbounded against which her characters search for the apparent boundaries of their subjectivities. Wagner-Lawlor's essay illustrates that the topographical features of a geography in Winterson's novels are not determined by coordinates of spaces and time but through the coordinates of desire and

ecstasy. In this geography, the spaces of imagination and reality blur to offer a utopic space created by her writing, where the protagonists are indeed most at home and most free. The essay ends with a proposition that this utopic space for Winterson is the realm of art, where the logic of reason and the logic of desire meet, and mold word and form into endlessly changeable narratives of possibility. Like Nel, Jenzen and Cox, Wagner-Lawlor interprets the spatial coordinates of Winterson's works as possibilities that help transcend the oppressive practices of here and now.

Sonya Andermahr's essay advocates that, as in her longer fiction, concern with time and space is central to the discussion of Winterson's short stories. As I note in the second part of this introduction, Andermahr remarks that even the title of the collection "The World and Other Places" indicates an interest in space. Upon a careful reading of each story in the collection, Andermahr draws the conclusion that these stories seek alternative spaces to be free from the oppressiveness of everyday reality. Suggesting that the journey motif becomes a medium for self-invention in the stories, the essay lists myriad images of time as a stream and of space in motion. To Andermahr, Winterson's stories also explore the distinction between chronological time and duration, the discontinuous relation between historical and mythical time, and the concept of journeying back through fictional time by means of many spatial and temporal images of flight. As we read the essay, we find that as manifestations of an on-going search for an alternative space, Winterson's stories in *The World and Other Places*, just like her longer fiction, critique the *status quo* yet show that the world is a place of limits as well as possibility.

Contributors in the third part of this volume highlight the linguistic and narrative features of Winterson's fiction as elements that amplify and reflect the theme of time and space. Thus, very much in line with the title of the volume "Winterson Narrating Time and Space", the three essays in this category concentrate upon narrative, time and space with particular attention paid to *Boating for Beginners*, *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry*, *Art & Lies* and *Tanglewreck*. With the last essay, the volume also offers a comparative outlook by means of studying a novel by Winterson along with novels written by J. K. Rowling and Philip Pullman that employ similar narrative tropes.

Margaret J-M. Sönmez's paper investigates how different times and places are represented in *Boating for Beginners*, *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry* by looking at the reported voices of their characters. She reports that Winterson allows only some of her characters to speak in voices that are, to a degree, individuated in terms of their historical and geographical origins, that in these novels there are very few speakers

whose utterances are marked as foreign in these ways, and that even for these speakers the markers of such difference are few. At the same time, all three novels treat the speech of historical times differently and in some cases (*Boating for Beginners* and *Sexing the Cherry*) this changes from character to character. It is argued that the varying uses of historically and geographically othered speech is subsumed to a consistent narrative voice, whose tone is characteristically Wintersonian. As a result, whatever alterity may be depicted within the narratives, the overriding style is that of the implied author. The trope of *mise-en-abyme* is mentioned, to show how, in these stylistic terms, all the novels can be seen as stories of their own narrations, which means that all sense of strangeness of othered times and spaces within the stories is extinguished by the domination of the now of the authorial voice speaking to the reader.

Silvia Antosa's essay "Journeying Through Space and Time Towards the Sources of Artistic Inspiration: Jeanette Winterson's *Art & Lies*" is another careful study of language and expression in Winterson's fiction. Antosa contends that in *Art & Lies: A Piece for Three Voices and a Bawd*, Jeanette Winterson investigates the complex interaction between language and corporeality. Antosa underlines that at stake is the constructedness of language and its dead metaphors, which convey the postmodern sense of living in a fragmented world, and the need to recover its potential for giving expression to individual experience. The first part of Antosa's essay is devoted to the process of rewriting the linguistic dehumanising strategies of language (scientific and religious languages in particular). Accordingly, she focuses on Winterson's exploration of the semantic ambiguities of language, which are parallel to the discovery of the uniqueness of bodily perceptions. She then studies the features of the three protagonists, who strive to find their own artistic expression in the contemporary world. Entrapped inside a patriarchal, circular structure of meaning, they undertake a real and symbolic journey which stands for their transition towards new semantic and artistic itineraries. Antosa suggests that these entrapped characters symbolise the three arts of music, painting and poetry, since they are named after famous artists. At the end of their journey, which made them cross the boundaries of space and time metaphorically, they discover an erotic use of language which has the power to revive the dead metaphors of postmodern society and simultaneously seduce readers with new meanings, by mixing referents with desires.

Valerie Kennedy's essay "In Search of the 'Imaginative Golden Age in Time or Space': Narrative Form in *Tanglewreck*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and *The Golden Compass*", studies Winterson's

Tanglewreck as a text that explores the theme of search of an alternative world and, as is manifest in its title, it compares the three novels in terms of Northrop Frye's "anatomy" of romance in *The Anatomy of Criticism*. Kennedy examines the novels as modified versions of romance narrative, focusing specifically on the quest form of journey, conflict, and resolution, with its emphasis on the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist, or between good and evil. Kennedy contends that although the three novels generally conform to Frye's description of romance narrative, they differ from it in the importance they accord to "other worlds", as well as to shifts in time and space. Focusing on the common elements in these novels such as the facts that the protagonists of the three novels are all effectively orphans, and that they are all subjects of prophecies, she argues that all have a quest to fulfil, and they do fulfil it, despite their fears and/or their sense of unpreparedness. Kennedy argues that it is the quest which takes the protagonists to the novels' "other worlds". The essay asserts that although narrativeshifts in time, place and point of view are very effective in Winterson's novels like *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry* and *Lighthousekeeping*, the technique in *Tanglewreck* seems less successful since it breaks the tension and lessens the suspense created by Silver's adventures. But the essay comes to the conclusion that the fact that Silver and Gabriel are together at the end of *Tanglewreck* suggests that, as in the other novels by Winterson, an alternative time and space is conceivable here too.

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