

**POSTMODERN ELEMENTS IN *SEXING THE CHERRY* BY JEANETTE
WINTERSON: THE USE OF GENDER, HISTORY AND FICTION**

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Abstract

After two devastating world wars, humanity witnessed the collapse of all of their facts, values and judgments one by one that had been accepted as absolute truth. However, this destruction did not mean the disappearance of everything that they owned; it was simply a radical reassessment of previous judgments which were perceived as determined stereotypes and certain facts. Thus, from the middle of the twentieth century, the intense relationship between human history and the postmodern movement has gained speed. With this movement, all of the traditional judgments in a society and culture began to be questioned. Along with postmodernism, the phenomenon of gender, history and reality was reconsidered, and so it showed people the existence and possibility of other perspectives. This study aims to analyse *Sexing the Cherry* by Jeanette Winterson who is one of the most important postmodern writers of the literary world, in accordance with the postmodernism theory in terms of gender, history and fiction that the author has questioned and reinterpreted in her book. Throughout this study, how the postmodern elements, which the author has used meticulously, problematize the mentioned facts and what kind of results they bring about have been examined. Combining the seventeenth and twentieth centuries in her work, Winterson tells the historical facts of the previous century through perspectives of her fictional and extraordinary characters, on the other hand, she reveals how history is accepted in the twentieth century with similar characters of previous ones. Consisting of interchangeable narrators, this work paves the way for its readers to question the place of women in a society, the concept of time and the reliability of truth with experiences through each of her characters.

Keywords: *Postmodernism, Postmodern Fiction, Women, Jeanette Winterson.*

JEL Code: Y92

**JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN *VİŞNENİN CİNSİYETİ* ADLI ROMANINDAKİ
POSTMODERN UNSURLAR: CİNSİYET, TARİH VE KURGU KULLANIMI**

Öz

Yıkıcı iki dünya savaşının ardından, insanlık sahip olduğu tüm olguların, tüm değerlerin ve tüm kesin gözüyle kabul ettiği yargıların ardı ardına yıkıldığına şahit oldu. Ancak bu yıkım, sahip olunan her şeyin ortadan kaybolması demek değildi; sadece, kalıplaşmış ve kesinliğinden asla şüphe edilmeyen önceki yargıların, radikal bir bakış açısıyla yeniden değerlendirilmesiydi. Böylece, yirminci yüzyılın ortasından itibaren, insanlık tarihinin postmodernizm akımıyla olan yoğun ilişkisi hız kazandı. Bu akımla birlikte, bir toplum ve kültür içerisindeki tüm geleneksel yargılar sorgulanmaya başlandı. Postmodernizm ile birlikte cinsiyet, tarih, gerçeklik olgusu

yeniden ele alındı ve insanlara başka bir bakış açısının varlığını ve mümkün olabileceğini gösterdi. Bu çalışma, edebiyat dünyasının önemli postmodern yazarlarından biri olan Jeanette Winterson'ın *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* adlı eserini, yazarın sorgulamış ve yeniden yorumlamış olduğu cinsiyet, tarih ve kurgu açısından postmodernizm teorisine uygun olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma boyunca, yazarın titizlikle kullanmış olduğu postmodern unsurların, belirtilen olguları nasıl sorunsallaştırdığı ve nasıl bir sonuç ortaya çıkardığı incelenmiştir. Eserinde on yedinci ve yirminci yüzyılı birleştiren Winterson, bir yandan önceki yüzyılın tarihi gerçeklerini, kurgu ve sıra dışı karakterleriyle anlatırken, diğer bir taraftan ise yirminci yüzyılda bu karakterlerin benzerleriyle tarihin nasıl kabul edildiğini gözler önüne serer. Değişen anlatıcılardan oluşan bu eser, her karakterin yaşadıklarıyla, okuyucularına kadının bir toplumdaki yerini, zaman kavramını ve gerçeklik olgusunu sorgulamasının yolunu açar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Postmodernizm, Postmodern Kurgu, Kadın, Jeanette Winterson.*

JEL Kodu: Y92

INTRODUCTION

The movement of postmodernism is “a thing of the past” although the term appears as a product of twentieth century and in today’s literary world, it is accepted as an institutional phenomenon with “its canonised texts, its anthologies, primers and readers, its dictionaries and its histories” (Hutcheon, 2002: 5). Linda Hutcheon puts forward “[w]hat we have witnessed in the last ten or fifteen years is not only the institutionalisation of the postmodern, but its transformation into (...) a counter-discourse, and even more specifically, perhaps the generic counter-discourse of the last years of the century” (2002: 5). Postmodern views depend on social and political changes including “the information society, secularisation, cultural democracy and the hybridisation of cultures” (Fokkema, 1998: 22) which destroy traditional explanations. After two world wars, nothing is the same for writers and readers; they can easily access to higher education and they actively participate in cultural life; thus postmodernism closes the gap between the elite and popular culture and it addresses a larger community. Postmodernism can be defined as a debate about the nature of contemporary culture which offers a term for the whole condition of late capitalist society; at the same time, it offers both positive and negative dimensions searching to question the present from a position within it. Additionally, it denaturalises all dominant ways of life such as beliefs, moral values, idea or an understandable language. It also breaks and denaturalises the concept of gender, reality, history and time. Consequently, postmodern critics claim that all texts are not neutral, everything in them is ideological.

The postmodern movement asserts that an absolute truth in the past/history concerns about “some exact correspondence between historical narratives and the past events” which creates ineffective and unsubstantial meanings (Southgate, 2005: 107); thus, history writing becomes a narration in which historians are perceived as writers in fiction. There is not a way to go back in time and to understand what really happened; and only documents may help historians; however, postmodern theorists have recognised that documents cannot absolutely complete emptiness of historical records by pointing the unreliability of written materials. They believe

that there might be various realities, causes and effects about a particular historical event. They have also questioned the position of historians, for they know “theoretical complexities” are peculiar to their subjects and this produces “the subjectivity” which is incorporated in referring “causal connections” (Southgate, 2005: 107). Hence, the history becomes how the historians construct events as a mixture of documents and their imagination; and this situation causes to evaluate the past through the historians’ eyes rather than the past itself. Therefore, the historians have to explain their writings, for the historical documents are “both too full and too sparse” (White, 1973: 281). There may be many materials about a particular event including different points of view, causes and effects, and the historian should choose the appropriate one. Dissimilarly, there may be limited sources about the past, and then the historian has to connect events according to his/her interpretation. Postmodernism stresses on this situation and insists that history writing needs historians’ interpretations and reconstructions. In this way, historical events have created stories with the help of “the suppression or subordination” of a particular of them and “the highlighting of others, (...) characterisation, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies” in which history readers anticipate to read in literary texts (White, 1978: 84). Thus, it can be deduced that postmodernism questions the relation between history and fiction. Hutcheon states in her work *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* that both are forms of writing, linguistic constructs and intertextual, and these are “discourses” which represent structures of meaning through adding up the past with shaping efforts and “ordering imagination” (1988: 89). In different words, “the meaning and shape” are not withinside the issue; yet, they are withinside the structures that produce the present historical truth by recreating this past (Hutcheon, 1988: 89). However, this cannot be accepted as untrustworthy because it is a recognition of the meaning of human constructions. Thus, evaluating the past through a present point of view consists of reconstructions which makes sense of the term ‘historiographic metafiction’ that is coined by Hutcheon and she defines it as “well-known popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” and whose “theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past” (1988: 5). With this explanation, it is substantially important to understand the postmodern term ‘metafiction’, which undermines conventional structures of texts and fictions; and so it can be defined as the most efficient “self-destruct mechanism” (Sesto, 2001: 37), “setting in opposition those linguistic and narrative elements which construct illusions of reality, in the manner of classic 19th century realist fiction, and those which deconstruct them” (Sesto, 2001: 38) Metafiction is fiction that is about fiction: “drawing attention to its own artifice, announcing its status as fable rather than reality, or exposing in a systematic way, the writer's process of tale-telling” (Mikics, 2010: 180). To Mikics, the narratives reflect upon “how people create meaning for themselves by self-amusing aspect to this invention or a liberating one” (2010: 180).

Jeanette Winterson is accepted as one of the crucial postmodern figures of the literary world. With her first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), she wins the Whitbread First Novel Award. While her third novel *The Passion* (1987) wins the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, her next novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) wins E. M. Forster Award. In her works, she has used general

historical conditions from the perspectives of common people and she has fictionalised them. Silvia Antosa measures her writing style in the framework of postmodernism in which Winterson unifies “history, fictional stories and fairy-tales” through an experiential manner that positions her works in postmodern writings as representations of conventional narrations (2008: 11). In her novels, she has proficiently utilized postmodern elements as “historiographic metafiction, parody, intertextuality, selfreflectivity, pastiche and rewriting of history” in addition to her interest in the cultural recreation of “referentiality” with the purpose of defying male-dominant and “heterosexual hegemonic discourses” (Antosa, 2008: 12).

Jeanette Winterson’s third novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) has fantastic elements blending with history and it tells the seventeenth century’s historical and fictional stories of England by using postmodern devices. Throughout the novel, the writer explores the relationship between a mother and a son, expresses the power of women and presents real and fantastic events extensively in the concept of time. In the light of all these expressions, the aim of this study is to present postmodern elements through questioning gender, history and fiction with an analysis of *Sexing the Cherry* by Winterson.

An Analysis of Postmodern Elements in *Sexing the Cherry*

In *Sexing the Cherry*, there are four characters who narrate their parts by running a parallelism between centuries and the writer divides them by using icons at the top of each section. While a banana represents the Dog Woman in the seventeenth century, a split banana indicates her parallel version in the present time. Similarly, as a pineapple points out Jordan in the earlier century, a split pineapple presents his version in the present. The novel begins with the Dog Woman, who is a giant with ugly appearance; she finds a baby boy on the river bank and names him Jordan. As a child, he is fond of boats; and one day he meets Tradescant – a former adventurous and a royal gardener. After the start of the Civil War, Tradescant demands to hire Jordan as an Assistant in the royal garden; and thus Jordan and the Dog Woman move to Wimbledon. During Jordan’s adulthood, he is charmed by a dancer and he starts to search for her; his search pushes him into fantastic stories such as twelve dancing princesses represented by Winterson’s postmodern rewriting of the original patriarchal tales. In 1649, the Dog Woman, Jordan and Tradescant attend King Charles’s trial and his execution with sorrow in which the writer blends historical facts with fiction with the help of the postmodern technique - historiographic metafiction. While Tradescant and Jordan go back to sea, the Dog Woman takes revenge of the Puritans for the execution of the king. Jordan finally finds the dancer – Fortunata; after spending time with her, he turns back to England with a pineapple. In the second part of the story, the writer reveals main characters’ in the twentieth century version: Nicholas Jordan wants to join the Navy and an unnamed chemist woman works for the public health. While in the seventeenth century, the Dog Woman thinks that the Plague in London is the punishment of God because of the execution of the king, in the twentieth century, the chemist woman offers Nicholas to burn the poisonous factory. Time and characters intermingle and it is learned that the fire destroys London, but the Dog Woman and Jordan escape; and in the twentieth century, they burn the factory. This plot includes themes such as time and gender with their understandings that construct the purpose of this study.

1. The Use of History as a Postmodern Element

Winterson challenges the concept of history in her novel and she presents her story mainly based on the seventeenth century England, then she connects it with similar characters in the twentieth century. Two unusual and fictional characters – the Dog Woman and Jordan – experience historical events; and readers follow their perspectives about King Charles and his execution, Queen Henrietta, Tradescant, the Puritans, the plague and the fire in London. Hence, the writer fictionalises the history of the seventeenth century with the help of historiographic metafiction. These fictionalised characters are common people in the society and through their first-hand experience, history is stated personally; it is not a ‘general truth’ in a history book. The Dog Woman explains that the Civil War “lasted eight years” (1990: 26), some people - mostly the Puritans - are against the king and they say “the King was wrong to make war on his own people” (1990: 26); therefore there are people who are Royalist like her defending “if the foul-mouthed Scots hadn’t started their jiggery-poker (...) we’d have had no war. We’d lived with a King and without a Parliament for eleven years, and now we’d got a Parliament and precious little of a King” (1990: 26). She adds “As far as I know it, and I have only a little learning, the King had been forced to call a Parliament to grant him money for his war against the kilted beasts and their savage ways” (1990: 26). It is clear that the writer is dealing with the opinions of common people rather than written historical facts. In 1649, even the press “had declared the King a traitor to his own people. A despot, a tyrant, a spendthrift, unwilling to accept a Parliament of the people for the people” (1990: 67). Finally he was found guilty “Charles Stuart, Tyrant, Traitor, Murderer and Public Enemy, you shall be put death by the severing of your head from your body” (1990: 70). The Dog Woman, Jordan and Tradescant are really sorry for the loss of the king and she thinks “[it] is bad luck to kill a king” (1990: 70). Hence, the writer both gives place to a historical event written in newspapers and includes ordinary but fictionalised characters’ opinions and emotions about it with the help of Hutcheon’s historiographic metafiction. It is also important that the history is mainly told by a woman rather than a dominant male figure which brings the idea of gender in the novel.

2. The Use of Gender as a Postmodern Element

This book is a splendid example of postmodern feminist novel which challenges the stereotyped position of women in societies. The traditional historical texts include few important women and so women are “hidden from history” although they have experienced everything with men throughout ages (Jenkins, 1997: 9). They have been behaved as side characters and their concerns about events in the past are ignored. Postmodernism cannot accept this discrimination and as a postmodern writer, Winterson creates strong female characters and blends them with historiographic metafiction to threaten the male-dominant authority and its narration. According to her, people should “be free of the burdens of their gender” (1990: 31) and she presents the Dog Woman who is not a traditional kind of woman. As it is stated earlier, she is huge and accepts that she is “hideous” (1990: 24), but she is not ashamed of it. She objectively describes her physical appearance as “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” (1990: 24). On the other hand, she

emphasises her strength and tells “When I was a child my father swung me up on to his knees to tell a story and I broke both his legs” (1990: 25). Winterson draws powerful feminine characters and compares them with male ones by questioning gender roles. They cannot be defined as physically weak and additionally, they are strengthened by their emotional characteristics. They are not fragile or pretty toys any more. They are also clever and the writer warns the readers “never to try and cheat” them (1990: 32), for “a woman, if cheated, will never forget and will some day pay you back, even if it takes years” (1990: 32) indicating that men are too easy to trick and they forget everything in a short time. She also writes women’s rule book including the characteristics of men in which men are portrayed as weak creatures. This list consists of criticisms about the traditional perceptions about the nature of man and woman by challenging the idea that women are “light” and “soft” (1990: 32). It points out that men will be destroyed “without strong women”, they “must be occupied” by women or they will be miserable, they are only best “in drunkenness and competition”, and they “are never never to be trusted” (1990: 32). With the help of this list, Winterson questions the canonised perceptions about gender by identifying men through their weak characteristics admitted that women have them. Unfortunately, women are labelled to be powerless, dependent, ignorant and unreliable; but the writer pushes her readers to doubt about these prejudices and presents a rule book including these conventional assumptions are not reality; and what she lists is “to be true” (1990: 33).

As one of the narrators of the book, the Dog Woman is not also a thin-skinned person; she accepts “I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me” (1990: 34) and “I hate to wash” (1990: 35); thus she is not an absolute example of ‘a lady’ who is expected to be nice and beautiful in every second of her life. Even though she is an ugly giant, she is a good fighter and she does not let people to occupy her home. When she visits her home six years later, she realises that her neighbours Firebrace and Preacher Scroggs live in her home; she strictly objects it and beats eight men at the same time. In another example, after the execution of the king, she knows that nothing will be the same and starts to take revenge of the Puritans. She kills them and once a month in the Royalist meeting, she brings what remain after them: “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 2000 teeth” (1990: 85). Most of the others pass out and she feeds the eyeballs to her dogs and decides “to continue [her] sabotage alone” (1990: 85). In a brothel, she learns that her neighbour Firebrace and Preacher Scroggs are also clients, and she kills them “but they could not tell it as me, only some giant in the uniform of an executioner” (1990: 87). She is not a ‘typical’ traditional woman, who stays at home without doing anything. Finally, her foreshadowing about London also becomes true:

God’s judgment on the murder of the King has befallen us. London is consumed by the Plague. The city is thick with the dead. There are bodies in every house and in a street south of here the only bodies are dead ones. The houses are deserted, their shutters banging open in the night. (1990: 138)

This plague ends with the great fire in London; hence, her connection between the execution of the King and disasters becomes true thanks to the Winterson’s technique of fictionalising the history through her wise female character.

In the novel, not only the female characters realise the power of women but also the male ones respect the strength of them. As one of the main characters, Jordan is also appreciating the presence of powerful and self-sustained women. He searches and finally finds the dancer – Fortunata, who builds a school to teach people how to dance. He explores her story and realises that this dancer is a highly self-confident one and she strongly believes that women “are fallen creatures who once knew how to fly” and because of this manner, they should behave as “a freed spirit from a darkened jar” (1990: 72). She knows that a woman is stuck in men’s world with traditional obligations such as being in charge of cleaning, cooking, baby-sitting and being a perfect wife for her husband. So she chooses dance to get rid of this slavery darkness and teaches others how to dance with a hope to save all of them. After a month, he says “I am getting ready to leave. Fortunata will not come with me and I cannot stay here” (1990: 100). He cannot force her to be his bride, for she has her own life with her own decisions; at the same time she cannot force him to stay and live the life as she experiences.

The writer also gives a place to a traditional woman – The Dog Woman’s mother to show the change in the perception of women. She defines the mother as a silent figure and describes her as:

(...) 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. There was talk of witchcraft but what is stronger than love?
(1990: 25)

Even though she is physically strong to carry her huge daughter, she is never against decisions of her husband. She continues her life through the wishes of him and fulfils everything he says. She also accepts sexuality as an obligation in which “men take pleasure and women give it” (1990: 107); but it is interesting that she never complains or objects, she only accepts the situation. The Dog Woman senses that her mother does not care, for she tells it “in the same tone of voice she used to tell me how to feed the dogs or make bread” (1990: 107). She is helpless and powerless; and so she cannot stop her husband from selling their daughter. Although The Dog Woman is a tiny girl, she murders her own father. As a postmodern character, she cannot be controlled by men power. In the twentieth century, the unnamed woman is also aware of this oppression and she imagines that she is “huge, raw, a giant” (1990: 121). She knows that man dominant intentions have ruined this world like the poisoning factory which she wants to destroy. She imagines that she has “a sack” that she fills it up with the so-called important men in powerful organisations such as “the World Bank” and “the Pentagon” (1990: 122) in which they have meetings that women are not accepted. She is strongly against the idea of a world managed only by men. While The Dog Woman literally kills men and collects their remainders in her sack “only by thought of justice” (1990: 129), the unnamed woman just dreams about it; but this does not mean that she is weak, she runs “a one-woman campaign” and writes papers to create awareness (1990: 123). However, centuries do not matter in the perception towards women and their roles in societies. In the twentieth century, a man still expects a woman to be ‘the perfect wife’ that cares everything for him. As it is stated by the unnamed woman, “all we want is for them to stay at home and help with the housework and the kids” (1990: 127); the only wish is to share life. Hence, the writer challenges the traditional perceptions of women with the help of postmodernism by presenting that an equal world is

possible. To corroborate this idea, the writer has used another postmodern device of rewriting the traditional stories and she draws attention to the forced female roles in societies. Hence, Winterson rewrites Grimm Brothers' fairy tale "The Dancing Shoes" and questions the conventional gender roles through her transformation. Kintzele puts forward that the result of "an appropriation" firstly becomes pleasant and critical, for it alienates the narration and it points out how it forms the male and female relations; it is ironic that it creates the perception that the political relations are in all places (2010: 8). Though the reader is a mature grown-up, rewriting "a fairy tale" becomes rewriting a "childhood"; and so it deeply digs the cultural systems and reconstructs it (Kintzele, 2010: 8). Winterson has used earlier fairy tales as an element of parody and she defamiliarises them in the consideration of feminism. With the help of this rewriting technique, each story is under the control of women and all of the characters are against male authority in contrast to the original version. To the female characters of Winterson, there is not a happy ending in a marriage; they find real happiness when they left their husbands. Thus, the writer presents that women should be free of the domination of the male authority.

3. The Use of Time as a Postmodern Element

As stated before, the writer uses tiny pictures at the top of the every narration: a banana for the Dog Woman, a pineapple for Jordan, a split banana for the chemist woman in the twentieth century, and a split pineapple for Nicholas Jordan in the twentieth century. In the beginning, the novel is narrated by the Dog Woman and Jordan interchangeably. While the readers follow history from the Dog Woman's perspective, they witness the fantasy world of Jordan at the same time. Here, the term 'magic realism' is essential and it is defined as the "marvellous and impossible events occur in what otherwise purports to be a realistic narrative is an effect especially associated with contemporary Latin American fiction (...) but it is also encountered in novels from other countries" (Lodge, 1994: 114). According to Slemon, magic realism is a mixture of postmodernist assumptions. He states that there are two discourses in the magical realist narrative that each of them has a different perspective: the magical and the real. None of them is dominant but there is a continuous tension and resistance between them (1995: 409). In this novel, Jordan is a voyager and he mixes his adventures with fantasy such as a house without floor and in it furniture "is suspended on racks from the ceiling", people swing "their feet over the abyss where crocodiles live", "the ceiling of one room is the floor of another" and they "must travel by winch or rope from room to room" (1990: 20 – 21). There he sees 'the dancer' "on a thin rope" (1990: 21) and starts to search her. In this search, he has experienced great adventures; he returns in female disguise; comes across a girl locked in a tower; learns each story of twelve dancing princesses who "flew to a silver city where no one ate or drank" (1990: 48); destroys the order in a city where "love should be illegal (...) and anyone found indulging in it would be put to death" (1990: 75). Eventually, what he tells about different adventures is mingled by the narration of the Dog Woman who reflects the historical background of the seventeenth century England.

Hence, in this novel, time is another concept questioned by postmodernism and Jordan also puts forward his ideas about it in his adventures; to him "[time] has no meaning, space and place

have no meaning” (1990: 80). He compares maps to the concept of time and utters “[maps] are constantly being re-made as knowledge appears to increase. But is knowledge increasing or is detail accumulating?” and when maps show a place, he has not seen but imagined, the place where he will find through the direction of maps is not the one he has imagined; so “maps, growing ever more real, are much less true” (1990: 81). Hence, he writes a list about lies about time as follows:

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.

Lies 5: Any proposition that contains the word ‘finite’

Lies 6: Reality as something which can be agreed upon.

Lies 7: Reality as truth. (1990: 83)

With the help of this list, Winterson challenges the traditional concept of time and denaturalises it by presenting seventeenth and twentieth centuries together at the same time and setting. To show that time is not on a straight line, the writer constructs the twentieth century characters and events under the title of ‘some years later’ with lives of Nicholas Jordan and the chemist woman. Nicholas comes across the news about the woman struggling against the poisonous factory to protect public health. When these characters meet, they also discuss about time and the unnamed woman confesses about it as “I do not measure time now, time measures me” and “my stronger instinct is to abandon the common-sense approach and accept what is actually happening to me. (...) why not? (...) There are so many fairy stories about someone who falls asleep for a little while and wakes up to find himself in a different time” (1990: 126). At the same time, Jordan and the Dog Woman are on their way to present the pineapple to the King and he mentions about the Hopi – an Indian tribe – “they have no tenses for past, present and future. They do not sense time in that way. For them, time is one” (1990: 134-135).

Winterson defends the tribe’s perspective about time, and she mingles the past and present with characters. She simultaneously presents similar events in different centuries, and so this technique gives her readers the idea that characters experience everything together. The plague affects London deeply in the seventeenth century and even though it finishes, the Dog Woman still believes “God’s revenge is still upon us. We are corrupt and our city is corrupted. There is no whole or beautiful thing left (...) This city should be burned” (1990: 141-142). At the very same time, Nicholas and the woman meet, she says “tests are conclusive” (1990: 142), so the factory pollutes the river and harms the public health. She offers him “Let’s burn down the factory” (1990: 142). Hence, two different periods have been destroyed by corruption at that exact moment of postmodernism. The narrator again changes to the Dog Woman and it is learned that in 1666 there was a fire and “A day later it seemed the whole London was burning.” This historical truth is reconstructed by these fictional characters who are aware of the fact that they “have done with this time and place” (1990: 143). While living the city, on the board, she realises:

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. (1990: 143)

Time and place are jumbled and the Dog Woman sees both Jordans from different centuries. To strengthen this postmodern manner, at the same time in the twentieth century, Nicholas Jordan is also on the board with the woman and since time is one, two Jordans mingle on the same moment. When they “left behind the livid flames and the terrible sound of burning” (1990: 143-144), the Dog Woman thinks “I saw someone standing beside him, a woman, slight and strong” (1990: 144). Thus, she even encounters her twentieth century version. The novel ends with the narration of Jordan in the seventeenth century and he utters “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” (1990: 144). Hence, Winterson mingles the past and the present and blurs the reality in history as well as the present.

CONCLUSION

The postmodern writer Jeannette Winterson challenges traditional ways of writing. She denaturalises the concept of time and pushes her readers to question what the reality is. Through her fictional characters, she suggests that time is not flat or one. One may experience the past and the present at the same time. With the help of ‘historiographic metafiction’, she presents the seventeenth century England with the trial and the execution of King Charles, the Plague and the Great Fire in London. However, these historical events are explained by two fictional characters: the Dog Woman and Jordan. These two unusual characters withdraw history from written history books and make it common for every one through their own perspectives; and so these fictional characters intermingle with historical ones such as King Charles, Queen Henrietta and Tradescant. The writer uses the first person narration with different narrators who are symbolised by a (split-) banana and a (split-) pineapple and each of them narrates their own parts interchangeably. While the Dog Woman narrates the history with her perspective, Jordan speaks about his fictional adventures and tells different fairy tales. The writer makes use of ‘magic realism’. Hence, history and fiction follow the literary path hand in hand. Winterson also denaturalises the female identity. The Dog Woman is not a typical seventeenth century woman who stays at home. She is huge, ugly and she frightens the others. She is powerful and she can beat many men at the same time thanks to her physical advantage. These fictional characters mingle with their twentieth century representations – Nicholas Jordan and the unnamed chemist woman- at the end of the novel. The older century characters escape the great fire in London which annihilates dead bodies after the plague; and the younger century characters burn the factory which pollutes the river and harms human and nature. Consequently, the use of gender, history and fiction makes this novel a splendid example of postmodern literature.

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