University of Reading

Jeanette Winterson: Violent Acts and Violent language within a reimagining of literature of the Nineteenth Century.

PhD Thesis

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Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

The focal point in Jeanette Winterson's work for many scholars has been the search for personal completion or wholeness through the search for and expression of love. Studies have tended to concentrate on Winterson's writing of the romantic, the autobiographical, the traumatic and her adherence to a lesbian feminist aesthetic. Little is said about how her often grotesque depictions of suffering and dissipation make statements about the violence of human experience; however, I argue that looking at the volatility of Winterson's textual representations of the self, through her images of violence and the varied and layered violences that are enacted upon bodies, minds, and texts opens new areas of understanding in her work.

Using a combination of close reading and critical appraisal of four of her novels which represent a cross section of her work to date, I will argue that it is the writing of violence within Winterson's novels that has as much if not more to say about identity, and connectivity, than love. More specifically, these novels create a record of her developing feminist discourse within the context of the literature in the long nineteenth century, which seeks to reframe and write against phallocentric and misogynistic narratives. They effectively elucidate a progression from the marginalisation of military and patriarchal violence to a recognition of violence as a primeval and ever-present evolutionary and ecological force, a contest over language and beliefs and finally an enactment or recall of previous literary violence to inform an unknown future.

Violence in the Winterson text becomes associated with and aligned to all identities. In this sense Winterson illustrates not just how violence begets violence but how violent thoughts, beliefs, language, and actions render change on the identity and lives of those who experience it, those who view it and those who are an enactment of it.

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Introduction

Writing the conclusion to her 2006 monograph on Winterson's novels after the terrorist attacks by religious fundamentalists on New York, Madrid and London, Susana Onega opined that Winterson's oeuvre to that date responded to Ruth Parkin-Gounelas' and ultimately Julia Kristeva's demand for a new standard of ethics. In her view, Winterson's writing project underlines an idea of love beyond a purely humanistic integrity that moves towards 'a new ethics of freedom involving the recognition of alterity in the others as well as in ourselves'.[1] The focal point in Winterson's work, for Onega, is underpinned by the search for personal completion or wholeness which is most poignantly supported by a search for love in the face of difference, not just individually but also as a society. Written when society seemed to be teetering on the edge of disarray, brought on by fears of an elusive 'other' and the extreme violences of a terrorist attack, she goes onto conclude that, 'this ethical imperative seems not only necessary but vital for the survival of the human species and the preservation of the earth.'[2] Time has passed since Onega's words, and we seem to edge further towards a dystopian world. The discourses surrounding the climate emergency, the rise of the culture wars, and with some of the world's political movements lurching further towards a right-wing consensus that rejects what it dismisses as identity politics and seeks to further entrench conformity and homogeneity, Winterson's novels continue to be relevant precisely, I argue, because they call into question the efficacy of love in a violent world.

I do not reject Onega's claims completely. Whether in terms of romance, sexual desire, or the emotional bond between parent and child, Winterson has special regard for the importance of such relational positions. Yet, even when allowing for Onega's view that the novels are filled with the desire for connections, and a yearning towards solid

[1] Susana Onega, *Jeanette Winterson,* Contemporary British Novelists (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 233.
[2] Ibid., 233.

conclusions, it must be argued that these aspirations, whilst within reach, are yet more often frustratingly illusive and certainly never stable.

A part of the problem that Winterson exposes is that nothing can be solidly concluded and indeed the very idea of such a conclusion mitigates against the needs of those interconnected and often competing others, which must increasingly include all sentient beings other than human and the natural world itself. Judith Butler in her *Precarious Life* (2004) ponders the issue of bodily and psychological vulnerability in the face of our interdependence with others: 'Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.'[3] For Butler, autonomous bodies, 'are not quite ever only our own,'[4] given over to close contact with others from the start of our lives, our sense of bodily self and our inner life is shaped by our proximity with others. With this sense of vulnerability in mind, I explore how Winterson conveys those relational emotions and expectations that both complicate and isolate, as well as complete us, allowing a reading that exhibits these emotional disturbances as violent, and what it is to be 'undone.'

Rather than proffering solutions to human precariousness, Winterson has more often exposed the scale of the problem. In this sense her writing illustrates what Marco Abel in his work, *Violent Affect: Literature, Cinema and Critique after Representation* (2008) has argued, that a consideration of ethical concerns actively arises within the portrayal of violence itself, as he states, 'the one thing everyone seems to agree on is that a key attribute of such images is their ability to raise the question of their ethical value.'[5] Winterson's depiction of violence throughout her body of work has consistently involved setting her characters within periods of war, revolution, evolutionary change and ecological disaster, or where they experience religious or political oppression. This is not surprising given her project of occupying the same textual space of male authored myth,

[3] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life-, The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 23.
[4] Ibid., 26.
[5] Marco Abel, *Violent Affect: Literature, Cinema and Critique after Representation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 3.

history, and literature. Her very occupation of such texts, as I will discuss, can be seen as an aggressive muscling into and subversion of their violent symbolism. Harvested from literary sources, such as William Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe, and Charles Dickens, these depictions of violence are augmented by visual representations that can also be traced both through film and art, renewing and re-energising their verisimilitude. Winterson's texts, reminiscent of the German Weimar artists Otto Dix and Rudolph Schlichter, depict a violence from within a literary landscape that, whilst recognisable in its component parts, can be excused as unreal. Violence becomes marginalised, safely contained, but maintains its threat to the psyche even though it is obscured by the more pleasing aspects of Winterson's lyricism and engagement with a poetic reverence of romantic love. However, her romanticism also relies on an exposition of love as a violent emotion and its enactment fraught with personal risk and whilst the throes of passion or desire might be more palatable to our romantic yearnings, we might well consider what ethical value is derived from her depiction of exorcism, rape, and torture, what allows us to see beyond the shock or titillation and what is her purpose in revealing such violence. I would argue here that her purposes are in part at least illustrative, a way of highlighting injustices and abhorrence's whereby she allows us to bear witness to and rebel against such acts. In this sense she secures her writing within a radical feminist framework alongside that of Angela Carter.

In her study of Angela Carter's relationship to Edgar Allen Poe, Gina Wisker states:

> Similarly drawing from Jacobean revenge tragedy and fairy tales, as well as Hammer studios and a range of other perpetrators, Carter concocts and nurtures her own horror scenarios- scenarios which never underestimate or sell short the

> violence, terror and disempowerment Gothic horror enacts, while offering alternatives and escapes through comic undercutting and imaginative freedoms.[6]

One can see how such a statement can also be readily applied to Winterson. Certainly, Angela Carter's first novel *Shadow Dance* (1966) with its surrealist depiction of sexual violence towards the female body of Ghislaine by sadist Honeybuzzard, can serve as a backdrop to Winterson's writing of violence in the way it makes opens up a discourse on a continuing patriarchy. Therefore, Winterson can be regarded as inheriting Carter's position as a feminist writer prepared to be explicit about the realities of such violence even if they are presented within a surrealist framework.

However, what appears to set her apart from Carter is the sense that Winterson does not portray violence as an exception, even though in its description she allows it to be exceptional. There is a realism about how she portrays it as part of the fabric of everyday human experience, always setting it within the context of its placement in both time and space. For instance, in *The Power Book* (2000), a novel which centres on the constant renewal of stories and histories, opens with a retelling of the story of Antioch given to the main protagonist Ali, by the Captain of a Turkish ship. Having just finished telling of the Turkish hordes sacking Antioch into ruin, he is himself beheaded by Genoese pirates. Violence becomes inevitable in a novel where marauding pirates kill, knights endlessly rescue maidens from the flames of a fire, and cuckolded husbands seek revenge by impaling their wives and their lovers together with a hand made from a metal spike.

In embracing and taking on patriarchal violence in this way, like Carter before her, Winterson also sits slightly outside of mainstream feminist thought and has suffered criticism from feminist critics, such as Lynn Pearce, who have argued that Winterson risks upholding and amplifying misogynist beliefs about women's bodies and women's

[6] Gina Wisker, 'Behind Locked Doors: Angela Carter, Horror and the Influence of Edgar Allen Poe' in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts,* ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 178-197 (180).

suffering.[7] Likewise in 1977, Sarah Gamble argued rather harshly that Carter 'actually only furthers reactionary portrayals of women as nothing more than the objects of male desire.'[8] There can be no doubt that both Carter and Winterson tread on difficult critical territory here. Having both engaged with surrealism they necessarily come up against surrealisms difficult relationship with the feminine. As Anna Watz Fruchart points out, in her discussion of Ghislaine's and Edna's stereotypical positioning within the sexual politics of *Shadow Dance*, 'they both embody a myth of feminine passivity that has disastrous consequences in the realm of sexual politics. Woman in surrealism is similarly confined by the shackles of her passivity'[9].

One of the differences between the two writers and where Winterson can be seen to depart from Carter's representation of the violent man and passive woman connection is that Winterson's women are overall not passive. Winterson's treatment of violence towards women by men is an attempt to do two separate things. Firstly, and this is the part where she sits conterminously with Carter, Winterson attempts a direct reflection of women's lived experience without any softening descriptions. Secondly in a divergence away from Carter, Winterson's women in their experience violence are allowed to speak of it and act against it without diminishment. They are given agency by Winterson and if that does not result in actual physical retaliation, then at least they are allowed the expression of their own rage and violent thought. Winterson in this sense can be seen to further Carter's project of liberation.

Winterson's texts highlight how women's lived experience of the violence enacted upon them continues and remains largely hidden and to a large extent unspoken, despite

[7] Lynne Pearce noted how she was asked as a Winterson scholar following the publication of *Written on the Body*, 'has she sold out (as a lesbian, as a feminist)?', 'The Emotional Politics of Reading Winterson' in *'I'm Telling you Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading,* ed. by Helena Grice and Tim Woods, Postmodern Studies, 25 (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi 1998), 29-40 (32).

[8]Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing From the Front Line*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1977), 4

[9] Anna Watz Fruchart, 'Convulsive Beauty and Compulsive Desire: The Surrealist Pattern of *Shadow Dance*' in *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts,* ed. Rebecca Munford (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 21-41 (31).

previous feminist interjections. Whilst the recent MeToo movement has furthered the conversation between women and more generally into wider society about women's direct experiences of sexual violence, these conversations remain at risk from being silenced or dismissed, the inherent violence of those acts become subsumed into the doubts raised over their veracity and the diminishment of women experiencing them. The numbers claiming MeToo have not seemingly been enough to quieten the doubts wholly.

Winterson's written representations of violence whilst frequent is not dependant on numbers. Instead, it depends on, and is never at risk from failing in, its delivery of a visceral impact that seeks to guard against such doubts. If her seduction scenes are the epitome of breathless anticipation, then her depiction of rape or of enforced fellatio are shocking interruptions that interject both fear and revulsion into a textual space and disturb any notion of mitigating narrative. In her portrayal of sexual violence, she uses an economy of language that in its speed and directness has all the brutal power of an actual attack. As an example of this brutality, we can consider the character of Heracles in *Weight* (2005) and the way in which he views women. Whilst no particular rape is described, the language used to describe his sexual relations with women nevertheless can be seen to represent the act itself. For him, 'Women, like wood, were for splitting and for keeping him warm. He loved to divide a woman's legs and push himself inside her. No woman ever refused him. That was his charm.'[10] The diminishment within the text, is only on the part of Heracles himself and not the women he uses. Violent men are generally diminished by their own arrogance, their violent natures being exposed to be the result of their own weaknesses and insecurities. Justice finally comes to Heracles when he is finally poisoned by a woman.

Whilst Winterson's victims may be defined as such because they are recipients of violence, here her purpose is to hold up a mirror to violent men, whilst maintaining or

[10] Jeanette Winterson, *Weight* 2nd ed., (Edinburgh; Canongate Books, 2006), 60.

renewing the dignity of those abused as much as possible within the confines of the text. Indeed, it could be argued that the telling of those stories is part of the process of giving back such dignity.

The breaking down of those private spaces, and their secrets become acts of violence in and of themselves, a way that the status quo can be opened to question. This becomes particularly important when we consider Winterson's handling of historical events, texts and shared experiences that seek to refocus and illuminate women's placement either within them or indeed as authors of the same. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) and his discussion on the entrenchment of violence that is used to maintain control within colonial relationships provides a useful parallel here. Talking about the native people of colonised Africa he notes that, 'From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence.'[11] Women in Winterson's novels become retaliatory against sexual violence both in terms of defending themselves or each other, both physically and through expressing their rage through the violence of their language. Female violence in this sense becomes a necessity.

At times, Winterson's physically violent women occupy her textual spaces with relish and on some occasions with slapstick abandon. Such women become Winterson's focus on the monstrous and are well covered by previous criticism, thus it will not be covered in this current study. But it is useful to note how the critical response to her texts often centre on to the extent that Winterson writes to a particular feminist or lesbian agenda when depicting these grotesque women and whether she enables her violent women merely to become as bad as the men that they fight against. Her depiction of female monstrosity, can be viewed as too closely aligned with the stereotypical idea of the dangerous queer woman, again allowing questions to arise regarding her feminist loyalty.

[11] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 29.

In part such dangerous women, in Winterson's terms, are often to be found in particular situations. Whether perceived to be the font of all evil or merely foolishly deranged, they are prepared to enact violence upon those who in turn either suffer from their own hypocrisy or have physically threatened those close to them. One such is Winterson's overbearing mother figure, the Dog Woman in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Initially invisible despite her monstrous size, at the beginning of the novel she meets a demand for fellatio by biting off the member of her would be assailant, a scene that Winterson will in part echo in both *The Passion* (1987) and *The Daylight Gate* (2012). Being ignorant of what was demanded of her she has no understanding that a man's penis doesn't re-grow in such circumstances. Towards the end of the novel, not only has she cast aside her naivety but is also happy to lure the puritans Preacher Scroggs and Neighbour Firebrace to a meeting in a brothel, which they frequent in order to secretly partake in their homosexual acts. Her purpose is to avenge their part in the murder of Charles II. The two are taken by surprise as she catapults herself into the room by way of a revolving panel in the wall dressed as an executioner carrying a well sharpened axe. The scene though horrific has a dark comedic tone to it as she quotes Shakespeare and taunts them in turn.

For some characters, like the Dog Woman, violence becomes a form of self- expression. As she returns home naked, she likens herself to the angels that can, 'be invisible when there is work to be done'[12]. When she burns her bloodstained costume, she destroys that momentary identity. Thus, closely aligned to identity, violence itself becomes an enactment; it can be seen in the bragging of the violent hero, the swagger of the alpha male, the unpredictability of the dangerous woman. It may be merely an enactment of their evil, but it is also what creates that individual, what defines them in that moment. In this sense Winterson illustrates not just how violence begets violence but how violent acts

[12] Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry,* (London: Vintage, 1990), 88

have the ability to render change on the identity of those who enact them as well as experience them.

The wider field of Violence Studies remains largely concerned with violence as it pertains to war and acts of terrorism, their effect on geo-political stability, their prevention, and the way these are accounted for through different media. This top-down approach risks continuing the marginalisation of individual violent acts. Hannah Arendt states in her 1969 publication *On Violence* that 'No one engaged in thought about history and politics can remain unaware of the enormous role violence has played in human affairs, and it is at first glance rather surprising that violence has been singled out so seldom for special consideration.'[13] Recently the field has become increasingly concerned with interpersonal and community violence and Winterson's consideration of violence mirrors the way in which Violence Studies has moved from the macro to the micro in this way. As such we can place her within an area of study which seeks to consider wider acts of violence such as war and terrorism, through and alongside an interrogation of an individual impetus towards violence, individual acts, and their outcomes. Also, often hiding in plain sight, within her delicately poised discourses, is a depiction of how a destructive violence can be itself as integral to an urge towards creativity and resolution as it is to dissolution, thereby seeking a positive recognition of the necessity of violence in the process of change. This is not to be read as a justification of violence but a way of widening the consideration of its effects.

Without wishing to elevate Winterson's novels to rest alongside international military and political affairs, Arendt's statement could be applied to her texts for it is safe to say that the violence within her writing has similarly had very little attention. Instead, broadly, criticism in the emerging field of Winterson studies has revolved most enduringly around her personal identity, and her concerns around love. The success of *Oranges Are Not the*

[13] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc, 1969/70), 8.

Only Fruit (1985), enabled Winterson to be lauded in her representation of lesbian aesthetics, the televised representation of that novel in 1990 helped to secure that aesthetic within the mainstream. *The Passion* further heightened her claim over it, and her subsequent illustration of political feminism in *Sexing the Cherry* cemented her position within a radical feminist lesbian genre. Yet questions arose about whether she had stayed true to the tenets of such a style of fiction when she published *Written on The Body* in 1992.[14] Focus has rested on her use of the autobiographical, particularly her identity as a child of trauma, again through the success of *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* and latterly through the publication of *Why be Happy if You Can Be Normal?* (2012).[15] In an interview with Sonya Andermahr, she answered the question about the ongoing relationship between her life and her work by commenting that, 'I do believe that the past is the territory we have to work with if we want to develop as human beings.'[16] The risks of such disclosures are all too apparent; Winterson has been exposed to media criticism and disapproval because of it, confirming what Leigh Gilmore states in her *The Limits of Autobiography Trauma and Testimony* (2001), that 'public and private life are interwoven in such a way that either legitimation or shaming is always possible. Within the volatility generated by representativeness, the private becomes ambivalent as it transforms into public discourse.'[17] Most recently, an interesting interrogation of her work alongside that of Woolf has proven fruitful because it poses the question of how trauma

[14] Merja Makinen provides a detailed view of the contemporary and subsequent critical discourse around this novel in her excellent *The Novels of Jeanette Winterson,* Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism, Cons. ed. Nicolas Tredell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 110-129.
[15] In her television appearance in the BBC Series *Imagine*, Winterson admits to Alan Yentob that she realises she had always been writing about her childhood experiences and that ironically her adopted mother's insistence on the importance of 'the word' had been vindicated not only in her survival but also in her literary success. 'My Monster and Me' *Imagine*, BBC4 aired 4 December 2012.
[16] Sonya Andermahr, *Jeanette Winterson,* New British Fiction (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 125.
[17] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2001), 1-15 (4).

is written and to what end.[18] Other commentators have noted both her modernist as well as her postmodernist attributes, but again the criticism has often been harsh.[19]

Whatever the critical path, the ground of contest often settles into a discourse on Winterson's preferred *modus operandi*; her use of binary opposition and doublings. This binary placement initially had a particular significance towards her representation of gender, the subversion of which have led critics, such as Susana Onega and Sonya Andermahr, to raise questions about other potential readings, one of which has been the psychoanalytical, again relating back to the autobiographical in her work.

I contend that looking at the volatility of Winterson's textual representations of the self, through the lens of her use of violence and the varied and layered violences that are enacted upon bodies, minds, and texts opens new areas of understanding in her work. In 2001, writing in *The Guardian* in praise of Debora Warner and Fiona Shaw's success at the London Evening Standard Awards, Winterson wrote about their collaborations on allegedly violent theatrical texts that, 'darkness and ugliness are difficult on stage. While film is often more brutal, it is also more remote; theatre engages because it is live, there is a risk and a contact not present on screen. […] I go to the theatre so that I can begin to understand what is outside my imagination.'[20] I would contend that, similarly, her written violences offer an immediate access to an understanding directly within the reader's imagination. Little is said about how her often grotesque depictions of suffering and dissipation make statements about the violence of human experience. Yet Winterson's

[18] Reina Van der Wiel's work compares the Aesthetics of writing trauma between the two writers, comparing the modernist and post-modernist techniques, again the autobiographical and psychoanalytical is central to the critique. *Literary Aesthetics of trauma: Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson.* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[19] Makinen notes that following the publication of *Gut Symmetries* (1997), both Adam Mars Jones of *The Observer* and James Wood of *The Guardian* had noted Winterson's alignment with a self-reflective Modernism with Mars Jones going onto state that Winterson had become 'hypnotised by her own performance, radioactive with self-belief.' Merja Makinen *The Novels of Jeanette Winterson, Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*, ed. Nicolas Tredell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 142.

[20] Jeanette Winterson, 'Mary Whitehouse is dead. Now it's time for more sex and less violence on television' in *The Guardian (1959-2003)* 27th November 2001 Mary Whitehouse is dead. Now it's time for more sex and less violence on television - ProQuest [Accessed 18/6/22].

violence is present in her freakish bodies, in dismemberment either actually or figuratively, or more curiously in both. Hearts are frequently rent from chests, and as frequently as Winterson stitches the phallic onto her female characters, she just as frequently castrates her males. Hands, teeth, and text are all rendered asunder from their place of origin or status. As we consider these scattered symbols, we may ask to what schema can we apply to Winterson's texts where it comes to violence. What structure can be used that will elucidate a discreet study of violence in her texts that reaches beyond her playful theft of these symbols, myth, history and literature, for it surely cannot be enough to say that she is merely a literary magpie.

To create such a structure, the novels chosen for this thesis all pay tribute in some way to women who spoke against the patriarchy within which they lived. Be that Germaine de Staël, Virginia Woolf, Mary Shelley or Emily Pankhurst, all could be accused of a violent undertaking in their linguistic challenges to the status quo. The novels studied form part of a record of developing feminist discourse which seeks to reframe and write against phallocentric and imperialist narratives that are inherently misogynistic.

Winterson places herself amongst them as critic, dreamer, harbinger of danger, activist and literary terrorist. Her role as a literary magpie in this sense rests within the notion that the female occupation of a male literary or political space is a violent act in and of itself. Hence, I will come to centre my critical base on the work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar and their ground-breaking work *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (1984). Their discourse on the interjection of the female into literary spaces speaks revealingly about notions of permitted authorship that was originally based in the Western Christian ideology.

This thesis is divided into four sections, each dealing, in turn with *The Passion, Lighthousekeeping* (2004), *The Daylight Gate*, and *Frankissstein* (2019). These four novels are those which to my mind best represent a cohesive development of violent writing in Winterson's oeuvre, particularly as they effectively elucidate a progression from

the marginalisation of military violence to a recognition of violence as a primeval and ever-present ecological force, a contest over language and beliefs and who can speak to them, with finally a re-enactment or recall of previous literary violence to inform an unknown future. Though two of these novels concern in part a contemporary time, they also in some way hinge on the literature of the long nineteenth century either through historical placement or authorship of source material and as such illustrate this trajectory underlining it with a nexus of ideas, learning and literary development coterminous with developing thought across that time.

Violence is a broad category and this study will not be exhaustive either of Winterson's relationship to it and nor will it be exhaustive of the differing types of violence although it is hoped that it will highlight potential for future study of her work. There are some important focal points across the chapters, most obviously Winterson engages with the description of sexual violence, from the intrusive male gaze to rape and child sexual abuse, she highlights the underlying misogyny inherent in all of these acts. As such her texts are distinctly feminist but not anti-male. Indeed, some of her male characters are also written as victims of the patriarchal systems they reside in, their final denouements relying on the way they manage to negotiate their way through. But sexual violence becomes a constant threat that can be seen across all of the novels discussed here. It is the ultimate expression of a Patriarchal violence which becomes the seat of most, if not all worldly problems, holding sway over all non-patriarchal groups.

Likewise, the physical expression of patriarchal violence is inherent in all these texts. Its different forms and contexts become the particular focus of individual chapter but are not exclusive. For instance, mass violence through Revolution or War is a focal point for chapter1, chapter 2 exposes in part but not wholly partner abuse, chapter 3 looks at violence of the state that encapsulates political and religious control, whilst the physical violence in chapter 4 where it occurs looks more to violence towards the nonhuman.

Ultimately, the idea of the world around us being one of inherent harmony is called into question. In the second chapter I will highlight how Winterson exposes an environmental and evolutionary violence the knowledge of which would pitch humanity against itself and its prior understanding in the nineteenth century and would go onto reflect itself in current discourse around man made Climate Change, a change that can arguably be traced back to the industrial revolution. Not only does her discourse circumnavigate around the underlying causes of patriarchal violence but also highlights how an ongoing misogyny based within its language and ideas, will continue to thwart humanity's attempts at changing the course of potential climactic and social disaster.

Two things are important to note here. Firstly, whilst using male authored texts as source material, she uses feminist thinkers and writers in terms of how she engages with the subject matter. Thus, physical violence towards women is set within and against feminine intellectualism. Secondly physical violence is not seen as secondary to the violence that becomes inherent in a language formulated to write it or do battle with it. The female use of violent language becomes increasingly noticeable through the progression of the texts, so that in *The Passion* it is relatively muted, until it becomes the angry curses of the Witch in chapter 3 and towards a celebration of Mary Shelley's violent occupation of the male literary sphere in chapter 4. All the while, layered on top of this structure is the idea of Winterson herself indulging in violent language in the form of her intertextuality and her refashioning of source texts.

Away from the obvious depictions of rape or dismemberment such literary violence is deeply embedded within the structure of the textual spaces Winterson creates. I wish to examine how her intertextuality, which offers potentialities that expand outside of her texts, also stands as a violent literary act either writing against a hegemony of ideas or replacing them in a different frame. If we consider the breaking of textual boundaries as a violent act then we can see that such borrowings are not always genteel affairs, by implication they are acts that necessitate an act of ripping apart or dismembering of the

prior text and refashioning those pieces into a new whole, this applies also to her own textual creations. I wish to focus on the repeated imagery and textual references which weave in and out of her writing which particularly pertain to violence or the survival of it. Such repetition often speaks to and contains within it the repetition of insistence, of haranguing and intimidation, that which contains within it the threat to distort and destabilise the textual space it rests in. Presented chronologically, the chosen texts in this study illustrate how the different layers of violence have become progressively more persistent towards an overt and radical commentary on the present that has its roots in the occurrences and literary works of the long nineteenth century, reaching out, but never far away from her personal and feminist origins.

In *The Passion,* the violence I look at is focussed on the hedonism of Venice against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars, noting both the occurrence of sexual violence within war time as well as its military violence. My reading of the novel suggests that Winterson replicates the way in which French post-revolutionary narratives express the unspeakable, burying the horrific details of violence within the fantastic and surreal.

In *Lighthousekeeping,* I consider the environmental violence embodied in the theory of Charles Darwin and how that relates to literary development through the later nineteenth century and on towards modernism. My analysis of the text argues that in combining the symbols and thematic concerns of Robert Louis Stevenson and Virginia Woolf, Winterson exposes this process and simultaneously creates an evolutionary renewal of both texts and the issues of violent creativity and degeneration which they expose.

By contrast, my reading of *The Daylight Gate,* will raise the issue of intertextuality as a violent act and explore Winterson's use of gothic horror to reveal and rally against the violence of patriarchal hegemony. I will show how she injects alternative narratives into prior male texts about witchcraft and witches in order to reclaim and renew the symbolic female figure, whilst raising issues of bearing witness to physical forms of violence the chapter will also recognise the violence of language from a female-centred perspective.

In my last chapter I will consider Winterson's interpretation of the life and major work of Mary Shelley, in *Frankissstein.* I will look at the ways she upholds and applies Shelley's thematic concerns to current technical and scientific developments, the development of AI and ideas of the post human and violent monstrosities. In this she considers how the critical application of language in machine learning development is vital so that humanity can face the Anthropocene with confidence. I will argue that in this novel Winterson actively warns against a drift towards a violent future and calls for a participatory and cautionary approach that engages all individuals and communities in the recognition of the many violences acted out unseen.

Violent Fervour and Tumultuous Losses in *The Passion*

Violence is an all-pervading feature within Jeanette Winterson's first historical novel *The Passion*. Although it is noted for its portrayal of a lesbian romance and its rich depiction of a reimagined Venice,[21] this chapter will seek to disentangle it from these romantic readings. In the broadest sense the narrative is placed between two momentous historical occurrences. Sitting within the living memory of the French Revolution of 1789-1799, its characters are immersed in the martial violence of Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign across Europe and his defeat in Moscow. The geographical scope of the novel, ranges across the continent whilst always keeping Venice in its sights. Four movements in space and time, in Boulogne, and Venice, across Europe to the wintry wastes of Russia and the final return to Venice, create a structure around which a discourse is offered on a particular notion of passion or desire, each exposing its relationship to, experience with and images of violence. My overall purpose is to show how Winterson's depiction of this period exposes the fallacies surrounding the heroism of revolutionary or military action and nationalism, understanding it instead as the epitome of patriarchal advance made futile. In part I will use this to explore ways in which Winterson both occupies the textual space of male-centric writing to gain agency over those historical and textual spaces and introduces into them more feminine considerations particularly through the thoughts of the French writer Germaine de Staël.

The fact that the novel is entitled *The Passion* has offered some obvious routes of enquiry for Winterson critics. Most obviously these pertain to the notion of desire and centre

[21] Lisa Moore suggests that certain readers would find in Winterson's novels 'a perhaps disturbing faith in the transforming powers of romantic love, a Romantic investment in self-knowledge and sexual obsession that accords ill with post-modern conventions of irony or isolation' but notes that these features would be 'familiar to readers of lesbian fiction.' 'Teledildonics: Virtual Lesbians in the Fiction of Jeanette Winterson' in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Elisabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 1995), 104-127 (105-106). Merja Makinen notes that the range of criticism has focused on 'the lesbian representation and particularly lesbian narrative tropes or aesthetics, and on the city of Venice.' *The Novels of Jeanette Winterson,* Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism, Cons. ed. Nicolas Tredell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 79.

frequently if not wholly on the exposition of the love between Villanelle, the main female protagonist, and the Queen of Spades, her married lover, a relationship reflected in the desire for Henri towards Bonaparte. Susana Onega in her exceptionally detailed monograph on Winterson has moved the discussion on from this focus on love, identifying within the structure of the text a 'double quest pattern.'[22] This, she argues, is signposted by the quote, from Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE), concerning Medea, Jason and the tale of the Golden Fleece, which Winterson places as the epigraph of her novel: 'You have navigated with raging soul far from the paternal home, passing beyond the seas' double rocks and now you inhabit a foreign land.'[23] Onega notes how this indicates that *The Passion* relies on the 'two parallel quests, equally motivated by an all-consuming passion to possess something unique,'[24] that is the basis of the narrative in *Medea*, which follows Jason's successful acquirement of the Golden Fleece and Medea's successful acquirement of Jason's heart. The problem with this account is twofold. Firstly, there are arguably more than two quests within Winterson's narrative. Secondly, that whilst one could fully equate such a pattern to the initial narrative plot of Winterson's Emperor Bonaparte and his server Henri, far more than you can equate it with the relationship between Henri and Villanelle, it does not quite fit with the overall disruption of this model that occurs in the wider sense of the text. It is my argument instead that rather than an allusion to secure successful outcomes or endings placed by the chorus at the beginning of Euripides' play, these multiple quests interlock with each other, cause confusion, misplaced faith and ultimately end in isolation and personal breakdown, exhibiting the dissolution in the culmination of violent tragedy seen at the end of *Medea*.

[22] Onega, 56.
[23] Euripides, *Medea* (ll. 432-5) as quoted by Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion* (England: Penguin Books, 1988), Frontispiece. All further references are from this edition and are given parenthetically within the text.
[24] Onega, 56.

Sonia Andermahr in her study on the novel broadens out the ideas of passion as a signifier and identifies that:

> The 'passion' of the title is a polysemic sign, signifying simultaneously Henri's passion for Napoleon and then Villanelle; Villanelle's passion for the mysterious Queen of Spades; Napoleon's more banal passion for chicken; and finally, by implication, the sublime 'passion' of Christ.[25]

Least recognised in any of these enactments of passion, and perhaps because it is always already present within them as an intrinsic aspect of their nature, is the potential for violence. Andermahr does note that Winterson's text, 'explores the constitutive role of violence in the construction of male identity.[26] I concur with her on this and in the way that she also recognises how *The Passion* treats male identities with more nuance than in her prior work. Likewise, Philip Tew in his essay 'Wintersonian Masculinities' (2007) states that, 'Henri is apparently defined by a militaristic location and identity, a typical expression of an idealizing masculine concept.'[27] Most obviously, violence is inherent in Henri's army life, and within the historical setting of the novel. Those turbulent moments, from the French Revolution to the eventual defeat of Bonaparte hold a violence which pertains to, but in reality is swallowed up by, the larger movements of history, both national and international. It is as Walter Benjamin describes, the 'generalised use of violence as a means to state ends.' [28] As such it holds within it the valorisation of military action. These are after all male histories. Hannah Arendt's argument for why violence in these instances

[25] Sonya Andermahr, *Jeanette Winterson: New British Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 61.
[26] Ibid., 66.
[27] Philip Tew, 'Wintersonian Masculinities' in *Jeanette Winterson,* ed. by Sonya Andermahr, A Contemporary Critical Guide (London and New York: Continuum 2007), 114- 129 (118).
[28] Walter Benjamin, 'On the Critique of Violence (1921)', in *One-way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by J.A. Underwood, Intro by Amit Chaudhuri (London: Penguin Classics, 2009) 1-28 (9)

is often not discussed, is primarily that its existence within the military experience is taken for granted. She argues:

> Those who saw nothing but violence in human affairs, convinced that they were 'always haphazard, not serious, not precise' (Renan) or that God was forever with the bigger battalions, had nothing more to say about violence or history. Anybody looking for some kind of sense in the records of the past was almost bound to see violence as a marginal phenomenon.[29]

War is violent, but its violence is marginalised precisely because by looking at it, wider considerations of history become blurred. Instead, it remains, inferred, and unspoken. I will argue here that Winterson focuses on the fundamental violence held within these textual spaces of revolution and war, pulling apart their inherently male-centric view and injecting them with a female textuality that speaks from within a gothic sensibility but also from a sense of women's experience of violence, either undertaken by them or to them.

It could be argued that Winterson is deliberately, perhaps violently, placing her own text not just within a particular historical moment, but also within two literary moments, between the French literature of the post-revolutionary period on one hand and Tolstoy's vast account of the Crimean War, thus typifying Russian Realism, on the other. Winterson's novel highlights the literary development of those post-revolutionary discourses on the witness of violence within French literature, such as Mme de Staël, as essentially anti-patriarchal texts and we thus find within it not just the presence of the fictional strategies and motifs that post-revolution French writers used to speak the seemingly unspeakable, but a way to undercut and disrupt phallocentric histories.

During the timeframe of the novel, the Revolution has passed and Bonaparte's war itself is enacted outside of Winterson's textual space. With characteristic brevity she does not

[29] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc, 1969/70) 8.

need to depict vast battle scenes because these can be found in any history written of the time, or in literary terms, in Leo Tolstoy's epic *War and Peace* (1865-1867). Rather, Winterson has Henri raise questions associated with an Emperor's perspective, when he asks, 'What would you do if you were an Emperor? Would soldiers become numbers? Would battles become diagrams' (13)? Winterson, like Tolstoy will map out Bonaparte's campaign across a whole continent using the mere suggestion of numbers and diagrams to evoke its enormity. This continental upheaval, this momentous and violent mobilisation of people from the Boulogne to the depths of Russia, contains within it echoes of Tolstoy's romantic saga where personal passions of the victorious are writ large against the backdrop of international conflict; yet Winterson reverses the dynamic so that it is the specific actions and experiences of the people affected by the violence of war, those most bound to lose by it, that are given priority. That is to say that, whilst within *War and Peace* the characters and the narrative settle back into an ending which has a sense of the romantic and a familial renewal, Winterson's characters experience a war which has them move further towards physical and psychological dissipation, a dispersal of personal desire, and loss. It is this awareness of loss and the cost of violence that Winterson's text reflects from within the literature of the French Revolution and the post-revolutionary period, and it is in this sense that *The Passion* aligns itself with writers such as Mme de Staël, both in terms of the concern shown towards the personal impact of violent events on the individual but also in the expression of violence itself and the passions that initiate it.

Stephanie Genand, in her essay *Dreaming the Terror* (2013), identifies ways in which writers attempted to convey the horrors that occurred during the Terror of the Revolution in meaningful ways. She notes that, particularly within post-revolutionary texts, two techniques were used. The first of these was the use of dreams, fugue states and nightmares, plus the use of horror and fear within a fantastical world, which operates not just to symbolise violent acts but also to impart the ruptures caused by that violence.

Within Winterson's use of the gothic, we discover similar moments of rupture from the very beginning of her text, moments of horrific realisation which serve to break the continuity of time and cohesive experience.

The second technique provides further temporal ruptures that are written into the structure of the narrative itself. Referring to Mme de Staël's *Delphine* (1802), Genand shows how:

> The structure provided by dates and periods dissolves, giving way to the potency of horrific scenes conceived as images that resist representation. If violence, here a heterogeneous category, is no longer subject to the obstacles of chronology, it engenders a further aesthetic, philosophical and moral dilemma: how can these pictures of horror be made visible? [30]

Such narrative representations and disruptions create a distancing effect that makes the representation of violence more palatable. A kind of aesthetic process of momentarily looking away. But, Genand also identifies that, writing *a posterior* in this way, through the first person, with a fragmentary account, suppresses 'the unity of the whole canvass,' which creates an effect whereby only the 'lurid sparks of historical violence shine forth.'[31] In a sense then both the violent images and the distancing spaces in between flicker across the text and Winterson creates just such a fragmentary form through Henri's first-person narrative which flits from one time frame to another, between spaces and indeed one subject to another, as he writes or reads his diary.

The first part of Winterson's novel entitled 'The Emperor' follows Henri's story as a recruit to Bonaparte's army. This section, the largest of the novel, is a disjointed recounting of Henri's first experiences of life in Bonaparte's camp in Boulogne, the narrative then moves, from Boulogne to his family home, his naïve hopes, and the trauma of leaving his mother and rural village. It then goes onto Paris, his discourse on his mother's religiosity,

[30] Stéphanie Genand, 'Dreaming the Terror: The Other Stage of Revolutionary Violence', in *Representing Violence in France 1760-1820,* ed. Thomas Wynn, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013), 52.
[31] Ibid., 53.

and eventually to the trauma of drowning men. Through Henri's narration Winterson's discourse on war's violence is conveyed obliquely and subjectively whilst refusing its active portrayal. These first-person fragments do not themselves describe in any detail the violence that is experienced. Rather it is communicated through a disintegrated portrayal of its physical and mental consequences. Alongside him are two other men, forming a ragtag group of friends, who act as Bonaparte's closest personal staff who will follow him across Europe. They include Domino, personal groom to Napoleon's gigantic and bad-tempered horse, 'who came from the circus himself and stood as high as the horses flank' (3). Despite his small stature, Domino was brave and joyful in the handling of a horse that had already killed or maimed other grooms. He could speak no French but was able to make the Emperor laugh and thus became close to him. His clownish character acts to disrupt the text further away from its military formalities, and to add contrast to the more fearsome army officers, reframing the world of Bonaparte as that of the circus, both in visual terms and by underlining Henri's bitter commentary about its organisation. But Domino's physical stature and his ever-present laughter are misleading, for he acts as a grounding for the young man, emerging as a wise and experienced mentor. As Henri begins writing his diary, he advises him that, 'The way you see it now is no more real than the way you'll see it then.' (28)

Then there is Patrick, an often-drunk 'de-frocked priest' with a keen eye, who has been removed from his clerical duties for being a voyeur of both women's bodies and the sexual relationships of his parishioners. 'Imported from Ireland' (21) and hired for his particular ability to see extremely long distances as Bonaparte's look-out, Patrick is not the first priest that Henri has befriended; we find later that the education provided by his mother had been at the hands of a priest with a 'rusty scholarliness' who had 'supplemented his meagre income by betting and gambling' (12), and who kept a library of risqué literature. Although Henri's mother had given him such an education because she wanted him to be a priest himself, Henri knows that this is impossible because 'although my heart is as loud

as hers I can pretend no answering riot. I have shouted to God and the Virgin, but they have not shouted back and I'm not interested in the still small voice. Surely a god can meet passion with passion' (9). He is not like his mother who, whilst 'Outwardly she was obedient and loving, […] inside she was feeding a hunger that would have disgusted them if disgust itself were not an excess' (10). Surrounded by characters whose violent passions are expressed through either a framework of excess or a 'lukewarm' (7) sensibility, some hidden, some revealed, and some openly displayed, Henri himself is a naïve and gentle young man. As Domino states: 'Look at you […] a young man brought up by a priest and a pious mother. A young man who can't pick up a musket to shoot a rabbit. What makes you think you can see anything clearly.' (28)

Through Henri's retrospective witness, we are afforded a personalised view of army life which is centred within Bonaparte's kitchens. Unable to be a drummer boy, he starts as a 'neck wringer' (3), until to his excitement, he is promoted to wait on Bonaparte himself. The fact that he too is considered small enough to undertake this task, alongside Domino's reduced stature, allows for a satirical view of the Emperor's size and his sensitivity to it, but also underlines Henri's status as a small part of a larger whole.

Henri's observations of the military camp, as Bonaparte prepares to cross the English Channel to invade England, ironically reframe his situation within a more mundane and familiarly domestic viewpoint. This serves to highlight his naivete and excitement about impending war at the same time as his later disenchantment. Winterson in this way creates a retrospective account that is un-sentimental yet still in awe of what has been witnessed. Henri begins his first-person narrative with this imagery:

> It was Napoleon who had such a passion for chicken that he kept his chefs working around the clock. What a kitchen that was, with birds in every state of undress; some still cold and slung over hooks, some turning slowly on the spit, but most wasted in piles because the Emperor was busy.

Odd to be so governed by an appetite. (3)

I disagree with Andermahr when she considers this imagery to be that of the banal or hackneyed. I argue that the symbolism surrounding the mass slaughter and consumption of chicken operates on levels deeper than a straightforward expression of gluttony and greed. Importantly, it immediately signifies that Winterson aligns her text with post-revolutionary writers. The full impact of the symbolism of gorging on chickens is yet to fully reveal itself, as it is brought to one's attention surreptitiously by intertwining it with other commentary. The problem of communicating mass violence in particular, means that it is easier to disclose the industrial extent of the preparations, the relentless work-rate of the men and the sheer waste of the enterprise, in small manageable portions, within the arena of the army kitchen, than it is to describe the human cost afforded in the slaughter of war. Such symbolism allows Henri to convey an awed response to the reality that this is all to feed one man, or feed the ambition of one man, whist we realise that he is referring to the terrors of what he has witnessed on the battlefield. Presented right at the beginning of the novel, then, is the symbolism of the carcass and the disturbing relationship this symbol has to personal desire. It is a passage which will expand throughout the novel to coalesce with other images of meat and butchery and lays bare the reality of other consumed bodies, imbuing it with the notion of a mass ingestion.

The depiction that Henri gives of Bonaparte can be read as equally comic and disturbing with the image of the Emperor demanding chicken in the dead of night. Henri is summoned by a bell that is ringing, 'like the Devil himself is on the other end,' and the kitchen staff jump into action unsmilingly whilst Domino laughingly tells them that 'he'd rather take a chance with the horse than the master.' The chicken is finally prepared and garnished with parsley that the 'cook cherishes in a dead man's helmet' (4). In the Emperor's tent, lit by a mere 'yellow stain' we are met with the image of Bonaparte fondling a globe as if it were a breast and then as Henri leaves him, he pushes the whole bird into his mouth. As Henri states, 'He wishes his whole face were mouth to cram a whole bird'

(4). This mêlée of images conspires to link the inanimate to the human and the human to the carcass, either whole or amputated. The reference to the Devil merges with the idea of the deadly sin of gluttony whilst the fetishist handling of the globe conjures a sexualised conquest of the world. Back and forth these intermixing symbols create a seeming cacophony of diabolic desires. With this use of the interchangeability of these signs, what was once comic can now take on a more disturbing interpretation, especially when one replaces the idea of chicken carcasses in this passage with that of the bodies of the men who flock to Bonaparte's army.

Scott Wilson in his essay on the novel 'Passion at the End of History' (1998) has noted this strong correlation between, desire, chickens, the carcass, and soldiers:

> They too are equivalent to dead men, equivalent, perhaps, to the many thousands of dead men produced by Napoleon's voracious desire for recognition in combat, men who died for him, for the love of him and his state, and, of course, the men and women who died indifferently, because they had no choice.[32]

Nowhere is this made clearer than when the notion of violent consumption of chicken carcasses becomes aligned to the notion of unremitting waste. Napoleon often does not even eat a whole bird, discarding half eaten carcasses at will, whilst still demanding fresh meat. There is no satiating such demands because such violent appetites are beyond satiation, feeding upon themselves like a cannibalistic addiction.

Bonaparte's insatiable ambition for power and military victory likewise advances towards an inevitable collapse; the failed attempt to sail the flotilla across the English Channel is a precursor to the final defeat at Moscow, the two campaigns dominating the novel's military focus. The two thousand men that are drowned in the Channel are merely replaced the next day. Henri states that in order to invade England, 'All France will be

[32] Scott Wilson, 'Passion at the End of History', in *"I'm Telling you Stories": Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading* ed. by Helena Grice and Tim Woods, *Postmodern Studies*, 25 (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi 1998), 64.

recruited if necessary. Bonaparte will snatch up his country like a sponge and wring out every last drop' (8). This again underscores that the young men are units of consumption, like the chickens whose necks Henri has to wring, with their 'beaks and claws cut off, staring through the slats with dumb identical eyes' (6), these recruits too will be squeezed of all their vitality and life force in the name of a victory that they will never participate in themselves. Such is Bonaparte's heroic status at this point, any anger Henri feels towards him, dissolves: 'I had to serve him that night and his smile pushed away the madness of arms and legs that pushed in at my ears and mouth. I was covered in dead men' (25). A smile is all that is needed for him to be able to breathe through the mass of metaphorical bodies. We are led to believe that the promise of recognition from a hero is all that is required for someone to continue in the face of suffocation by carcasses. It is a psychological drowning which has resonances to the passage in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) that describes the revolutionaries at the grindstone. Covered in the blood of their victims they work on, sharpening their weapons at the stone which itself becomes a beast of insatiable appetite. The sharpening of the implements of terror becomes a frenzy of unthinking carcasses driven by a passion for bloody revolution:

> As these ruffians turned and turned, their matted locks now flung forward over their eyes, now flung backward over their necks, some women held wine to their mouths that they might drink; and what with dropping blood and what with dropping wine, and what with the stream of sparks struck out of the stone, all their wicked atmosphere seemed gore and fire.[33]

Mr Lorry and Doctor Manette bear witness to this scene from an upstairs window and Dickens tells us, 'All this was seen in a moment, as the vision of a drowning man.'[34]

[33] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. by George Woodcock (Suffolk; Penguin English Library, 1970), 291.
[34] Ibid., 292.

Through Henri's exposition of the new recruits, which he gives from the perspective as his older self, Winterson gives us an insight into how a man like Henri comes to understand more fully what it entails to psychologically survive such an onslaught of violence and horror. The new recruits, he says, 'will have to do in a few weeks what vexes the best philosophers for a lifetime; that is, to gather up their passion for life and make sense of it in the face of death. They don't know how to do that but they do know how to forget and little by little they put aside the burning summer in their bodies and all that they have instead is lust and rage.' (28)

This ability to set aside trauma emotionally is mirrored in a linguistic sense. Henri himself notes that, 'Words like devastation, rape, slaughter, carnage, starvation are lock and key words to keep the pain at bay. Words about war that are easy on the eye' (5). This unease with describing war lies in its very nature. The implication is that its violence is so overwhelming that it can render the words used to describe it two-dimensional, their meanings collapsing under its weight. To use them is to render the experience safely contained.

Genand has explained that political writing, contemporaneous with the French Revolution, represent its violence in a way that denotes it as a biproduct which can be easily detached from specific historical events. This, she argues, was to qualify the revolutionary movement as a 'coherent struggle for freedom.'[35] Separating out such horror allowed the principles of the revolution, of liberty, equality, and fraternity, to remain untarnished by its bloody cacophony. *De L'influence des Passions* which Mme de Staël wrote in 1796, two years after the enactment of the Terror, is one such text that Genand highlights for treating violence in this way. Winterson's actual reference to Mme de Staël within *The Passion* appears to be innocuous and fleeting, if not slightly amusing, and much to do with Mme de Staël's difficult relationship with Bonaparte:

[35] Genand, 52.

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

In a subtle twist Winterson returns to Mme de Staël the freedom of expression denied to her by Bonaparte. By injecting her ideas into the text of *The Passion,* Winterson mimics how Mme de Staël offset the masculine revolutionary and war narrative with female intellectualism. It would appear to be part of Mme de Staël's literary process that the re-counting of extreme bloody acts is necessarily decoupled from a pragmatic discourse on government. Again, largely because to attempt to describe it in already available terminology is to reduce it down to something known and therefore incapable of fully containing the horror. She states in the introduction to her text:

> No, not even now can reason attempt to approach the examination of that unaccountable era. And, indeed, to appreciate those events, under whatever colours you depict them, argues an attempt to reduce them to the class of existing ideas, of ideas which we are already in possession of words to describe.[36]

But also there is neither the language, nor the very ideas, able to give adequate weight to a description of the Terror without eclipsing any attempt at impartial discourse. As Mme de Staël goes onto say:

> It is therefore by secluding from my mind every retrospect of that prodigious era while I avail myself of the other prominent events of the French Revolution, and of

[36] Germaine de Staël, *A Treatise on the Influence of the Passions Upon the Happiness of Individuals and of Nations: Illustrated by Striking References to the Principal Events and Characters that Have Distinguished the French Revolution.* (United Kingdom: G. Cawthorn, 1798) Brainpickings eBook 26.

> the history of every nation, that I shall endeavour to combine a few impartial observations on the nature of governments. [37]

Whilst Mme de Staël points out the fact that such violence goes beyond speech, beyond discourse, the effects of her keeping it outside of her discourse essentially sanitizes the Revolution and we can also see how this misrepresentation works for Henri, even whilst he himself is facing unspeakable horrors. Henri recounts how he and his village viewed the Revolution as a benign yet liberating force. As Henri states: 'I was only five when the Revolution turned Paris into a free man's city and France into the scourge of Europe. Our village was not very far down the Seine, but we might have been living on the moon' (16). As the grand narrative of history will be for Mme de Staël necessarily easier to reflect on than its actual violent enactment, so in Winterson's text, the Revolution stands outside of the ordinary experiences of the farm workers of Henri's village. Seen from their perspective, it is situated externally to their world, denuded of violence, and closely aligned only to its overarching notions of freedom. Such a political awakening at the heart of French society creates the possibility that any man or boy from humble beginnings can themselves gain the same rise in status of a Bonaparte, that his rise to power could eventually be replicated by theirs, for as Henri says, 'In 1789 revolution opened a closed world and for a time the meanest street boy had more on his side than any aristocrat' (12). Bonaparte exists within Winterson's text not just as his singular self, an individual entity, but as a product of history; the Revolution had a hand in creating him. Where revolution began the trajectory, history, and historical narrative outside of Winterson's text continues the notion of Bonaparte as gallant hero, military genius, and romantic visionary, refusing reference to the violent horror enacted on his behalf.

His place in history confirms Mme de Staël's view that the search for glory in his case at least, ensures that the universe resounds with his name. In her deliberation on glory she

[37] Ibid., 26.

states, ‘Doubtless it is a most fascinating enjoyment, to make the universe resound with our name, to exist so far beyond ourselves that we can reconcile our minds to any illusion.’[38] Winterson in part allows this historical placement of Bonaparte as hero to stand through Henri’s admiration for him. But at this point in Winterson’s text, he has already told us how empty this promise is. In a moment of subconscious understanding, Henri merges his thoughts about the village neighbour, who had burnt his own house down on the village bonfire, with those concerning Bonaparte:

> I sometimes wonder why none of us tried to stop him. I think we wanted him to do it, to do it for us. To tear down our long-houred lives and let us start again. Clean and simple with open hands. It wouldn’t be like that, no more than it could have been like that when Bonaparte set fire to half of Europe. (7)

Mme de Staël’s criticism of glory is that it enables a person to reconcile themselves to their continued illusions and infallibility. Glory, particularly heroic male glory, allows for the breaking through the boundaries of personal and militaristic limits. As such, Winterson’s Bonaparte is not only a deeply flawed man but becomes a military failure. His failures are reported to us by Henri, whose consideration of Bonaparte slowly unravels through the text as the impact of war negates the romanticism within which the Emperor is held.

Henri elucidates how a call to arms, the enticement of a population to move towards the violence of war, is wholly reliant on one man’s charisma or illusion that is then accepted by a supporting population through a sense of romance, as he tells us, ‘He was in love with himself and France joined in. It was a romance’ (13). Tew recognises that Henri, despite his own lack of ‘religiosity and belief […] moves from the company of priests with their relationship to a self-sacrificing violence, to that of the putative emperor.’[39] Henri’s loss of faith in his own romantic investment slowly reveals the intrinsic imbalance of power

[38] Mme de Staël, 71.
[39] Tew, 119.

involved in such a relationship to heroes and by extension lovers: ‘Perhaps all romance is like that; not a contract between equal parties but an explosion of dreams and desires that can find no outlet in everyday life.’(13)

This inequality is driven by the way Bonaparte’s desires supersede that of anyone else and extends, not merely to the subjugation of the vanquished but even of those home populations who serve him, corresponding to Mme de Staël’s depiction of a man within whom the passions of glory and ambition converge, consumed by the need for power; he has a ‘disposition [that] supposes a species of contempt for the human race, a contracted selfishness which shuts the soul to other enjoyments.’[40]

So, whilst the idea of the historic Bonaparte within the text still gives rise to expectations of military brilliance, Winterson subverts any such hagiography through the depiction of a nihilistic Bonaparte who is more notable for his cold heartedness and his failures. A disillusioned Henri informs us, ‘Nowadays people talk about the things he did as though they made sense. As though even his most disastrous mistakes were only the result of bad luck or hubris. It was a mess’ (5). The rejection of hubris here is important because it blocks any additional interpretation of Bonaparte as a tragic hero and represents a further refusal of sentimentalised romanticism. The rejection of hubris is also an important understanding of Mme de Staël’s view that ‘even this short-lived enjoyment can never belong to the man who aims at glory. Its limits are fixed by no feeling, by no circumstance.’ [41]

The combined effect of the diverse ways in which Henri’s discourse and language labours at first to reconcile his hero worship with the realities of war and then express such horror against it, slowly reveals Bonaparte’s heroic failure. Eventually any hint of heroism, or glorification is replaced in the private spaces of the Emperor by an obsessive and

[40] Mme de Staël, 75.
[41] Ibid., 66.

maddened persona. Having been taken to Paris to serve Bonaparte and Josephine personally, Henri will eventually witness first-hand a man rendered erratic and paranoid; a man whose 'holiday mood was almost a madness,' a man who 'liked to laugh' and who took 'hotter and hotter baths […] at any time of the day or night' (34). When Josephine requests that Henri serve only her he exclaims, 'I was horrified. Had I come all this way just to lose him' (36)? But he was already losing him. Had already lost him. He witnesses a leader unravelling as Bonaparte 'grew morbidly afraid of being poisoned or assassinated, not for himself but because the future of France was at stake' (36). The qualification in the sentence exposes Henri's desperate attempts to believe in him, even though he is realising the fallacy. It is in this disillusion with ideas of glory that Winterson explores more emotional, proto-psychological levels of violence aside that of the physical.

The third Part of Winterson's text, 'The Zero Winter' concerns Napoleon's winter campaign in Russia. Again, told through Henri's first-person narration, we are informed of the Emperor's progress towards Russia, leaving behind him a war-torn continent. The original ragtag group are still together although individually they are much reduced. Henri tells us, 'I lost an eye at Austerlitz. Domino was wounded and Patrick, who is still with us, never sees much past the next bottle. That should have been enough' (79). The brevity with which he tells us of the personal effects of violence leaves a space which infers the greater impacts of the same experience in actuality; there is always more atrocity and more suffering implied. Personal reflection on the sheer scale of the experience becomes difficult to voice or contemplate; it is overwhelming. The statement 'That should have been enough' (79) lays bare the certainty and the desperation of violence left unexpressed. What is not spoken or written therefore remains present within the text, lending a psychological weight to a violence which has overreached quantifiable or tolerable limits.

Where there is no silent confirmation of trauma, Henri's sentence structure becomes collapsed into lists, for example, 'We fought on no rations, our boots fell apart, we slept two or three hours a night and died in thousands every day' (79). This listing further

highlights what Genand observes when she talks of the unified whole of the moment being suppressed. For Elaine Scarry in her work on pain, 'within war itself, the indisputably physical reality of the mounting wounds has as its verbal counterpart the mounting unreality of language'[42]. Listing not only exposes the intensity and the confusion but also the sheer scale of that horror as when Henri questions; 'Could so many straightforward ordinary lives suddenly become men to kill and women to rape? Austrians, Prussians, Italians, Spaniards, Egyptians, English, Poles, Russians' (79). So, having avoided Tolstoy's romantic notion of nationalistic heroism, Winterson also avoids the difficulties which we have become accustomed to, in some twentieth and twenty-first century war reportage which rely on images that shock yet, due to our familiarity with them and their disconnect to a workaday world, have simultaneously lost their power.

Henri's struggling romanticism eventually becomes replaced by a bitter cynicism and the final capitulation to notions of freedom or heroism:

> There's no such thing as a limited victory. Every victory leaves another resentment, another defeated and humiliated people. Another place to guard and defend and fear. What I learned about war in the years before I came to this lonely place were things any child could have told me. (79)

The lonely place is not just the physical actuality of a Russian winter, but also a dejected space of bitter realisation. That when the little girl in his village had asked who or what the enemy was, she had known the answer instinctively. In *The Power Book* (2000), a later novel, the opening passage concerns a retelling of the story of Antioch given to the main protagonist Ali, by the Captain of a Turkish ship. He tells Ali:

> There is always a city. There is always a civilisation. There is always a barbarian with a pickaxe. Sometimes you are the city, sometimes you are the civilisation, but

[42] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 133.

> to become that city, that civilisation, you once took a pickaxe and destroyed what you hated, and what you hated was what you didn't understand.[43]

Having just finished telling of the Turkish hordes and their sacking of Antioch into ruin, he is himself beheaded by Genoese pirates. Such is the nature of violence that it begets more violence and victory is replaced with the need for more, with the violent energy taking on a life of its own and building up so that it is too big to be contained.

In Henri's account of all his army experience what becomes most notable is how such knowledge is survivable only through the violent displacement of the 'lust and rage' that has fomented in the soldiers. In turn these are displaced onto the wider population that are either co-opted into or overwhelmed by the conflict. Nowhere is this more prominent than when it is exhibited through the sexual appetites of the men on leave in town, prominently illustrated through the sexual aggressiveness of the cook, in his preparations for a night on the town and a prospective visit to a brothel. He picks up a chicken carcass and, as he speaks about the night to come and the inferences of sexual promise to the kitchen hands around him, 'he rammed the stuffing inside the bird, twisting his hand to get an even coating' (9). At once the chicken becomes the victim of a violent, sexual act, and a substitute woman. Sexual violence becomes both bestial and representative of the consumption of women in the enactment of it. We see again the interconnectedness with Bonaparte's wasteful relationship to chickens and the men themselves.

What follows immediately after this passage is a lengthy discourse on the image of womanhood as expressed through Henri's images of his mother and by extension all the mothers of all the villages: pious, loving, maternal and revered. It is an image that situates itself as symbol, alongside that of the dandelions, which lie at the heart of Henri's remembrance of home: 'I was homesick from the start. I missed my mother. I missed the hill where the sun slants across the valley. I missed all the everyday things I hated. In

[43] Jeanette Winterson, *The Power Book* (London: Vintage Random House, 2001),17.

spring at home the dandelions streak the fields and the river runs idle again after months of rain' (6). It is something from and of nature, a wholesome pastoral. It is to be noted that these women occupy positions within a patriarchal society that are prescribed and accepted; sexuality in this regard is sanctioned and necessarily restricted by marriage. Most obviously, what Winterson's textual placement of these two passages presents to us is the old patriarchal representation of women as either the virgin or the prostitute.

But Winterson is taking on more than this when she places these passages together here. What is at stake is not just whether women are valued or revered or reduced to mere carcasses. The juxtaposition speaks to an urgency to actively underline and strengthen the need and expression of nationalistic control. In her work on the writer Yasmin Ladha's *Women Dancing on the Rooftops* (2010), Belén Martin-Lucas notes that, "the sexual crimes committed against girls and women at times of conflict are a direct consequence of the appropriation of women's bodies for symbolic uses within the dialectics of patriarchal cultural/ethnic/religious nationalisms."[44] Ladha's is an Indian/Canadian whose writing centres on the lives of often rootless, immigrant women, and the Indian diaspora. Concentrating on the experiences of women within the refugee camps of Kashmir, Ladha's text situates rape and sexual crimes within war, including sex as exchange for food or protection, as communal expressions of power which not only seek to undermine the opponent's notions of national identity, but further cements patriarchal control over the female body. Here we can link back to the words of the Captain in the Power Book and note that the women in this sense can be seen to be forcibly taken over both as individual civilizations, but also as the birthing core *of* a civilization.

Reading this discourse alongside Winterson's text reveals then how she manipulates the symbolism of women's bodies further. The conquest of women's bodies is not just required to augment any notion of geographic conquest; war reignites the urge towards

[44] Belén Martin-Lucas, 'Mum Is The Word', in *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives* ed. by Sorcha Gunne and Zoe Brigley Thompson (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 130-145 (131).

maintaining patriarchy even when an army is residing within its own territory. Winterson places our closest encounter with her prostitutes within Bonaparte's homeland. In addition, Henri recounts the lives of the women who Bonaparte has conscripted into the army as *vivandières*. These women are lower in status even in comparison to the prostitutes; they have no commercial power over the men they service. Henri tells us, 'Their food was often worse than ours, they had us as many hours of the day as we could stand and the pay was poor' (38). They are reduced to the same status as the rations that they themselves could not eat, 'Two pounds of bread, 4 oz of meat and 4 oz of vegetables' (37). The promised liberation of the Revolution has now become a greater imprisonment. In *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), Halberstam discusses Saidya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* and notes how Hartman, 'proposes not only that 'liberty' as defined by the white racial state enacts new modes of imprisonment' but that the definition used for the notions of freedom and humanity 'severely limited the ability of the former slaves to think social transformation in terms outside of the structure of racial terror.'[45] In a similar way the promise of the Revolution, of freedom from subjugation was not applicable equally across genders. Sexual atrocities enacted on women become occurrences that do not just happen, prior to revolutionary intervention or in some distant place and to unknown others, by an enemy force, but is continuous and in one's immediate environment. The immediacy of the deprivation and the exhaustion of the women brings the horror of war closer. Later we are told that attacks on women in enemy territories do occur. But all that changes here is the emphasis, in that sexual violence towards women moves from one of enforced service to become another weapon of war. In this way Winterson thematises the violence done to women in peacetime, with women being represented either as material goods or targets, within patriarchal societies.

Zoë Brigley Thompson and Sorcha Gunne, writing in their Introduction to *Feminism Literature and Rape Narratives* (2011), note that 'sexual violence in literature presents

[45] J. Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 126

feminism with a dilemma that goes to the core of its aims and objectives.'[46] They go onto quote Jyotika Virdi from her (2006) paper *Reverence Rape-and then Revenge*:

> As feminists we are caught between a rock and a hard place: the erasure of rape from the narrative bears the masks of a patriarchal discourse of honour and chastity: yet showing rape, some argue, eroticizes it for the male gaze and purveys the victim myth. How do we refuse to erase the palpability of and negotiate the splintering of the private/public trauma associated with it?[47]

Even given the differing cultural sensitivities around Virdi's comments and the fact that she speaks about film rather than written text, the issues highlighted here are important ones. Winterson's readership does not exclude men and, although language around sexual violence has a similar problematic to that describing other physical violence, sexual violence carries with it not just the problematic of eroticism but a moral judgement upon those experiencing it. Winterson works within a given historical framework where women's placement within a patriarchy consists of an enforced position of sublimation yet recognises that, even though that sublimated position has been altered, for a few if not all, women's lived experience of the violence enacted upon them remains hidden and to a significant extent unspoken. Winterson shows this by the way Villanelle silently returns to the 'gaming floor' (65) when she is abused by the Jack of Hearts. What this highlights is that those conversations around sexual violence continue to be at risk from being closed down or dismissed, the inherent violence of those acts subsumed into the doubts raised over their veracity and the diminishment of women experiencing them or calling into question their activities prior to any assault. Her answer to this conundrum, is to create a direct reflection of women's lived experience without using descriptions that soften or

[46] Zoe Brigley Thompson and Sorcha Gunne, 'Feminism without Borders: The Potentials and Pitfalls of Re-theorizing Rape', in *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation* ed. By S. Gunne and Zoe Brigley Thompson (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 2.
[47] Jyotika Virdi, 'Reverence, Rape- and then Revenge: Popular Hindi Cinema's "women's film"', in *Killing Women: The Visual Culture of Gender Violence* ed. by Annette Burfoot and Susan Lord (Waterloo Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 266.

excuse the act, and by ensuring that she gives the women experiencing violence a chance to speak or act without diminishment. This is interesting within this text because it seems to be the opposite of her treatment of military violence, but two things are also relevant here; firstly, as I have argued, Winterson seeks to replicate a particular type of writing when writing of patriarchal violence, by replicating Mme de Staël and, secondly, she is violently injecting the narratives around war with the experiences of women who were largely left out of accepted histories. She is undertaking a rebalancing of descriptive priorities.

Winterson's written representations of sexual violence are never at risk from failing to deliver a visceral impact and this guards against possible titillation. If her seduction scenes are the epitome of breathless anticipation and desire, her depiction of rape or of enforced fellatio are shocking interruptions that interject both fear and revulsion into a textual space and disturb any notion of a mitigating narrative. We shall see both in my third and fourth chapters how Winterson repeatedly portrays sexual violence in this way, causing ruptures within the narrative. In her depiction of sexual violence here, she uses an economy of language that in its speed and directness has all the brutal power of an actual attack. If we return to the symbolism of the chicken-woman, this is a convenient and importantly silent receptacle that has neither agency, nor emotion, nor sensory response. The cook's violence towards the carcass has at its heart a metaphorical impact, it represents a complete dehumanising of the female body, not just focused on the physical but in terms of those emotional responses that it engenders. One can go further and extrapolate from this imagery, notions of both necrophilia and bestiality. The symbolism of the cavity within a carcass, quite literally creates a dead space, an absence, which can only be redefined when it is occupied by the man's fist. Again, this contrasts sharply with Henri's idealised mothers, who can be viewed as being "repositories of cultural purity in the figure of the

mother."[48] Their cavities, unlike that of the chicken-woman and the prostitutes that she is aligned with, are representative of a protected fertile space.

But this notion of cultural purity is something that Martin-Lucas notes has within it an inherent danger. Citing Neloufer de Mel who argues that an authenticity in motherhood enables women to become a point of reference for nationalism, she argues that "the violence exerted on women at times of war is a clear consequence of such a conceptualization of the nation."[49] In this sense, even these mothers are put at risk from the ambitions of Bonaparte; they are not just something to be protected but used for the cause. Interesting then that the brothel madam is 'a giantess from Sweden' who has hair like the 'dandelions' (14) that we already know Henri associates with home. At one and the same time, we are given access to Henri's vulnerability, his homesickness and his longing whilst also being reminded that these women are not far enough away from being considered in the same light as the village women. But this is where the comforting familiarity and nostalgia ends.

The sex-workers are not voluptuous virgins, 'not at all like the pictures in the priest's book of sinful things. Not snake like, not Eve-like with breasts like apples but round and resigned' (14). They are instead visions of boredom. Winterson's text here, moves away from the kind of discourse explored within Ladha's work. Unlike the Kashmiri women in Ladha's documentary, Winterson's sex-workers refuse to submit to patriarchal rules. It is, I argue, part of Winterson's feminist project that her sex-workers and Villanelle have a notion of meeting violence with a violence of their own. For Winterson's women, even when they are most likened to chickens, have an agency that rejects victimhood. We first come across this in the figure of the Swedish madam. Tall and unafraid she wears about her neck a wooden doll 'from Martinique, like Bonaparte's Josephine' (13), a Quimbois charm of protection and certainly an indicator of someone who practices or who is close

[48] Martin Lucas, 138.
[49] Martin-Lucas, 139.

to darker arts. Her height, her nationality combined with this symbol of otherness is at once set against the cook's egotistical patriarchy.

In any event, Henri's first sexual experience is cut short by the cook's actual lack of sexual function and his berating of the woman who kneels before him with her arms folded. Akin to Bonaparte's failing heroism, the cook, though prodigious in his sexual violence towards dead chickens, and with his physical presence a domination over the young soldiers, all backed up by his vocal violence, is unable to fully function sexually. He walks into the brothel like a conquering emperor, 'slapping a woman on the rump' (14), ridiculing the woman's clothing and expressing his dominance through his abrasiveness. Yet ultimately, he is unable to get an erection. Through such outward symbols of impotence Winterson shows us the reality over the projected patriarchal posturing and at the same time sets up a rejection of the classical idea of heroic rape. Not only is the cook impotent, but he has also lost all ability to control his own body, he is unable to retrieve his penis from his own clothing. He is reduced to fumbling like a toddler whilst the woman kneels, arms folded before him. When the cook resorts to slapping the prostitute and demands that she help him, it is a moment that is held in time like an art tableau. It is not the depiction of a terrified woman straining to move away from her usurper as expressed in classical art; here is no worried virgin, fearing her fate. The posture of the woman is the enactment of resigned boredom; she has seen it all before and more besides. Her reaction to the physical violence is contempt; she curls her lip whilst the slap reddens her cheek.

What reduces the cook further is the way in which she is depicted as treating his penis 'like a ferret' (14). The bestiality first seen in his treatment of the chicken doubles back onto him. Far from dehumanising the woman, he himself is dehumanised and minimised for, whilst the sex act garners him some momentary feeling of domination and power, as depicted through his bellowing orgasm, when the woman spits his sperm into the bowl on the floor, it is an absolute rejection of that perceived supremacy. Why, he asks would she throw his 'sperm to the sewers of France,' to which she answers, 'What else would I do

with it' (15)? His violent search for a momentary glory results in a disgusted rebuff and a cursory throwing away of his faux heroic pretensions. More than this; whilst it is important to note how these working women react to this level of violence with both resilience and equanimity, at the same time such a rejection becomes an act of violence itself, an act that goes against the status quo as they perceive it. Also, their rebellion lies in the fact that they are not diminished by their experiences; their attitude towards their experiences is one of tedium, but it is also true to say that they are sustained and strengthened by their interconnections with each other, through their care of each other. This care is crystallised in the moment of active violence when the cook is coshed from behind with a wine jar. In their camaraderie and sisterhood, the women are shown to be able to maintain a level of solidity that is not afforded the women of the villages who instead become mirages of themselves. The contrast between these two groups, as either ordinary prostitutes or saintly village women, shows us that saintliness affords little protection. A further and stronger contrast rests within the perception of maleness, of the heroic and the sense of an occupying force, the power of the patriarchal position is shown here to be splintered, impotent and ultimately disappointing.

The second part of Winterson's text, entitled 'The Queen of Spades' is set in the same timeframe as its predecessor. It is the story of Venice, vacillating between its casinos, festivals, and glamour, and that of its quiet places, churches, and dark waterways, inspired by Italo Calvino's writing of Venice in his *Invisible Cities* (1972); this section of the text concerns a Venice that has become overtaken by Bonaparte's forces and diminished by the violence of his destruction of churches and theft of its ornamentation. David Barnes in his discussion of Venice and its literary depictions in *The Venice Myth*, discusses how political movements have historically interacted and informed interpretations of Venice as a city. Seeing Winterson's writing on Venice within this framework, he concurs with Judith Seaboyer when he illustrates that Winterson picks her historical moments precisely, placing her action within what he describes as a collapse of

structure and order which is itself connected to a Byronesque radical romanticism. He notes that Winterson's deconstruction of the city and its inhabitants gives rise to a reaffirmation of Venice as the site of resistance against such an order and structure. He goes on to state that, 'The challenge to nationalist militarism implicit in the socio-political plurality of Venice is also a challenge to masculine authority, to patriarchy and its attendant violence.'[50]

The canals have been allowed to block up with sediment and palaces once opulent are now the site of death and decay. The city's residents, Villanelle tells us, have 'abandoned (themselves) to pleasure' (52). Venetian nightlife and economy become based on games of chance. 'You play, you win. You play, you lose. You play' (66), is the refrain that underlines the city's nature. Having been disturbed by fear and loss, it has become a place where the older, more rigid boundaries of society are further diminished by the violence of yet another addiction, another passion.

Our primary character within this part of the text is Villanelle, an enterprising and independent boatwoman who 'cross dresses for a living and sells second-hand purses on the side' (61). Neither ordinary nor saintly, she does not belong to the distant romanticised villages of rural France, nor does she belong amongst the women of the brothel. Yet, she has some affinity with both. Her romance is underlined initially by the mythology of her birth, whereby her mother, whilst pregnant, undertakes the ritual prescribed by the society of the Venetian boatmen, offering 'a flask of wine, a lock of hair from her husband, and a silver coin,' to her father's grave to ensure 'a clean heart' for a daughter and 'boatman's feet' for a son (50). The ritual goes awry and so Villanelle is born with the webbed feet of a boatman and by inference an unclean heart. The reason for this we surmise is that the birth is mis-timed, with Villanelle conceding that she was 'as impatient then as I am now and I forced my head out' (51). Winterson having offered up the heteronormative roles of

[50] David Barnes, *The Venice Myth; Culture, Literature, Politics 1800 to Present* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 153.

gender from birth, immediately overlays these with a disruptive interchange. In part this allows Villanelle to be set apart from the anchors of most positions because of her ability to act across the given gender boundaries of the text, furthered by her mystical properties and her innate impatience.

Further, Onega writes extensively and most usefully on the linkages between Villanelle and Henri as alter egos of each other, acting within the double quest pattern that she detects within Winterson's text. Evidentially their narratives and discourse repeat and entwine with each other, repeating certain phrases and symbolisms. It is easy to see how we might assume that they are complementary figures. Andermahr notes that Villanelle, 'by virtue of her webbed feet, is rendered phallic, while the relatively passive Henri is feminised in both his attitudes and his relationships.'[51] Yet once Villanelle's character is decoupled from Henri's and removed out of this binary and viewed in closer contact with the character of Bonaparte, we can recognise many similarities and affinity between the two, especially given that Henri, most notably, will eventually transfer his romantic faith in Bonaparte to Villanelle herself and suffer much of the same disillusionment because of it.

Predominantly, it has been common in those reading this text to view Villanelle in the guise of heroic romantic lesbian. Jane Haslett in writing about Winterson's representation of fabulous female bodies goes further and notes that Villanelle's characterisation 'is that of a Christ figure, as well as that of a prostitute, a paid worker in a gambling casino, a mother and a lesbian.'[52] As such she occupies a queer space, with a body that Haslett goes on to describe as reflecting a 'feminist Biblical revisionism.' [53] Villanelle she argues, whilst having Christ-like attributes, such as the ability to walk on water, also has 'the body of a freak,'[54] Winterson's interpretation of this body as divine, in light of this, can be

[51] Andermahr, 62.
[52] Jane Haslett, 'Winterson's Fabulous Bodies', in *Jeanette Winterson*, ed. by Sonya Andermahr (London, New York: Continuum, 2007), 41-54 (43).
[53] Ibid., 44.
[54] Ibid., 44.

interpreted as troubling to 'the traditional dominant reading of Biblical narrative.'[55] The performative nature of Villanelle's gendered positions, her rebellion against the heteronormative assumptions of the casino goers and her ultimate survival, all become emblematic of a victory against the patriarchal hegemony. What is problematic with this reading is that it does not engage with the violence that is necessary to accomplish this positioning and it does not allow Villanelle's own violent corporeality to be explored. The former is a violence that is founded in necessity in the protection of the latter. Haslett's discussion of Villanelle's body is one that recognises that her webbed feet mark her out as a hermaphrodite, as a monster, within a traditional teratology. Once this position is found to be unassailable with the use of the midwife's knife, Villanelle's crossdressing becomes another way to protect a queer identity. Regardless of her perceived fluidity Villanelle is unable to work legitimately as a boatman 'on account of her sex' (53) and as a female, and as 'there aren't many jobs for a girl' (53), Villanelle has an economic reason to protect her outwardly female identity. As Haslett points out 'Economics and the femaleness of her body thus restrict Villanelle from displaying 'in your face' queer defiance and demonstrate how women and men are both positioned differently by their bodies even in a queer culture.'[56] As a result, she works at the casino dressed as a male, saving her boatmanship for the dark unfrequented waters of the city. Thus, as well as pleasing the visitors to the casino by adding mystery to her gender, she protects herself from the 'too many dark alleys and too many drunken hands on festival nights' (55).

Ironically, it is her work at the casino, the only job available to her having rejected her family's business, which allows her to encounter those wild and colourful Venetian characters who inhabit the 'enchanted island for the mad, the rich, the bored, the perverted' (52). It is an access to a world where she can exploit these people further, 'raking dice and spreading cards and lifting wallets where I could' (54). In the casino the

[55] Ibid., 44.
[56] Ibid., 47.

image of the predatory woman becomes as animalistic as it is disturbing, as she sniffs out her prey and assesses the mental state of each gambler. As she tells us, 'I like to smell the urgency on them' (55), She takes pride in her work, even though we understand that she is prepared to falsify the card packs or manipulate them for her customers' pleasure or disappointment dependent on her will and her understanding of the gamblers' heightened excitement. As she states, 'The price is high but the pleasure is exact' (55). She knows what she is doing, manipulating the outcomes of chance for her amusement in the same way that she manipulates customers through her varied disguises and gendered performances. Flamboyant and beautiful, the statement made by Bonaparte earlier in the novel could as easily be stated by her: 'What is luck, he said, but the ability to exploit accidents' (13)? Her outward identities hide her passion for gambling and risk taking, in much the same way that Bonaparte's performance as Emperor hides his morbid passion for Glory.

On the streets, in amongst the onlookers distracted by fireworks, street vendors and acrobatic acts she acts in the manner of that 'meanest street boy' (12) that Henri describes the young Bonaparte as, earlier in the text. Villanelle resembles Calvino's Marco Polo: as travel guide and describer of cities, she becomes someone one cannot trust always to be telling the truth. As well as subverting gender positions, she usurps the normative narrative paths, by taking the routes that are signified by the nooks and crannies of the city. The use of her refrain, 'I'm telling you stories. Trust me' (69), immediately presents a problem with how much she is to be believed at all. Even the story of her Christ-like ability to walk across water is undercut initially by the use of the term and then by the fact that she has no witnesses to it. All of this can be read as Villanelle's propensity towards the undermining of veracity, a form of linguistic violence.

Away from the bustle of the carnivalesque world, the disrupted yet still hetero-normative world of riches, the waterways, and churches of Venice, become a fantastical and contrasting backdrop that belies the everyday through notions of myth and superstition.

In a textual sleight of hand Winterson seems to give the impression of Venice's more public appearance as being the focal point of her text with its colour and its movement, but belying this focus is her description and Villanelle's occupation of its dark underbelly. Where, 'the shortcuts are where the cats go, through the impossible gaps, round corners that seem to take you in the opposite way. But here, in this mercurial city, it is required you do awake your faith. With faith, all things are possible.' (49)

By reformatting her birth as that of a female incarnation of Charon, the boatman of Hades, Villanelle becomes associated with death and disintegration. Negotiating this darkened part of the city in her boat, the text strengthens her relationship to the mortal and the morbid. In an image reminiscent of the caged chickens in Bonaparte's kitchens, Villanelle tells us:

> There is a city surrounded by water with watery alleys that do for streets and roads and silted up back ways that only the rats can cross. Miss your way, which is easy to do, and you may find yourself staring at a hundred eyes guarding a filthy palace of sacks and bones. (49)

Being able to use her fluidity to negotiate these two aspects of Venice at ease, she alerts us to the fact that wherever she is she likes 'to be among the desperate' (90). Yet, Villanelle with her mythical associations, her queerness, is able to access a Venice which is dangerous and inaccessible to hetero-normative people, because she inherently belongs to it. In much the same way that Jack Halberstam describes, in *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), that othered people gather against the ruling hegemony; he states, 'for some queer subjects, time and space are limned by the risks they are willing to take.' This does not just apply to obviously queer figures, but also, 'Those people who live without financial safety nets, without homes, without steady jobs, outside the organisations of time

and space that have been established for the purposes of protecting the rich few from everyone else.' [57]

Primarily it is the people of the back waters and the darkness that Villanelle is at home with. They are the estranged and rejected, the 'thieves and Jews and children with slant eyes who come from the eastern wastelands without father or mother' (53). The Napoleonic occupation has created its own group of downtrodden people set outside the bounds of society, the rich who are 'driven out of their gleaming palaces,' and those who are 'officially dead' (53). They are experiencing a death from one world but are yet present in a world of starvation and rotten corpses. As such they take on vampiric characteristics. If we read Bonaparte's treatment of humanity as a collection of carcasses for his consumption as necessarily vampiric, then Villanelle's moving amongst those cast out of Venetian society would appear to allow for a connection between Napoleon's world and Villanelle's.

More than this, her ability to conjure and recognise the ancestors as living presences speaks again to her association with the dead, and to a supernatural violence that is commensurate with her absorption into and association with darkness. She abides within a darkness that is 'soft to the touch and heavy in the hands. You can open your mouth and let it sink into you till it makes a close ball in your belly. You can juggle with it, dodge it, swim in it. You can open it like a door' (57). Winterson uses this sense of darkness not just to impart notions of fear, of impending horror and betrayal, although she plays upon the common responses to it. For it is also immersive, comforting, perhaps playful. Bonaparte's army insist on there being more flares to dampen down the activities that beset the night, because there are people who are attuned to live within it. Describing the Venetian soul as 'Siamese,' Villanelle also underlines the dualism inherent within her own nature. She tells us that the Venetians are 'conversant with the nature of greed and desire,

[57] [Jack] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 10.

holding hands with the Devil and God' (57). Villanelle's use of the first-person plural pronoun we, strengthens the ties she has with those living in the shadows, situating herself alongside those who have 'soft feet and thin knives' (57). Attributes required for any potential assassin. But again, we must be mindful of what is real or unreal within that darkness, what is truth and what is a fabrication.

The slippery account of Villanelle's character, however, is re-secured to the hetero-normative when Winterson allows her to relate the realistic responses to the violence that she herself experiences. Like the French sex workers, she is prepared to meet violence with a violence of her own and she expresses the same equanimity towards the aggression that she experiences. At this juncture we are also introduced to a meat man who frequents the casino. We later learn that he is in fact Bonaparte's cook, who having been cast out of Bonaparte's kitchen for being a drunkard is now in the business of getting rich by selling meat. She describes him with the disdain that is akin to how the French women treated him and yet seemingly accommodates his repulsiveness, for the money that he is happy to gamble. She describes him as 'A large man with pads of flesh on his palms like baker's dough. When he squeezes my neck from behind, the sweat on his palms makes them squeak' (55). Even so she occasionally wears 'a codpiece to taunt him' (56). Eventually he asks her to marry him, and her first reaction is to think of 'pulling a knife on him right there in the middle of the Casino' (63). When she insultingly rejects him, after he attempts to grope her as he did the woman in the brothel, he hits her and she returns the blow, 'Hard' (64). When he eventually rapes her, she describes it as like 'being under a pile of fish,' and remains passive, having 'nothing to lose either, having lost it already in happier times' (64). She endures it with silence: 'He left a stain on my shirt and threw a coin at me by way of a goodbye. What did I expect from a meat man?' (65)

Again, we see how in the abstract violence towards women is not unexpected, but that this is not the case in its enactment. Villanelle is shocked into her own retaliatory rage by the first physical attack the cook makes on her, only for that to be swallowed up by his

size and aggression. She is thus muted and dominated. Winterson here underlines the reality that silence does not equate with acquiescence. This moment in the text is weaved into the gaps between those episodes where she describes her first experiences with the woman who she knows as the Queen of Spades, elucidating a contrast between the violence of rape and the patriarchal imperative and the cautious seduction between the women. Onega recognises this as a sign of another intertext, a taking up of Pushkin's tale by the same name, *The Queen of Spades* (1834) which will link the inter-relating characters with the theme of gambling. However, one can also see it as a violent use of Pushkin's original, a tearing up of its narrative signs and a scattering of them across her own text with each of her characters taking a part, a fundamental re-working of a text re-used to augment and add weight to her own. Pushkin's main character, Hermann, is an inveterate gambler, who is compared to Bonaparte by two further characters in Pushkin's tale. Gary Rosenshield, in his article where he discusses Pushkin's tale in a comparison with Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler* (1866), describes Hermann's character as having 'impatience, strong passions, a fiery imagination, a fascination with gambling and a desire to make his fortune all at once,'[58] thus presenting strong similarities and links to Winterson's Villanelle.

For Villanelle, her relationship with the Queen of Spades and subsequent avoidance of her creates moments of emotional intensity which render her again, swallowed, and muted. This time not by the violence of the Jack of Hearts or the rage of her response to it, but by a desire that leaves her heart 'smashing at her chest' even though she states that previously, 'I have never needed a guard for my heart. My heart is a reliable organ' (60). Such desire is shown to be no less violent in its way, and she goes on to emphasise

[58] Gary Rosenshield, 'Gambling and Passion: Pushkin's The Queen of Spades and Dostoevsky's The Gambler' in *The Slavic and Eastern European Journal Vol 55 No2* (American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages, Summer 2011), 205-228 (207). https://shibbolethsp.jstor.org/start?entityID=https%3A%2F%2Freading.ac.uk%2Foala%2Fmetadata&dest=https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347738&site=jstor [accessed 22 February 2022]

its violence by describing its physical dangers when she tells us, 'Lovers have been known to have heart attacks' (66). Indeed if love does not kill you, it disrupts your ability to function and your very identity, as she asks, 'and what was myself' (66)? Love, for Villanelle, tortures as it dismantles any security of what went before: 'We who were fluent find life is a foreign language' (68). It is an example of what Karin Sellberg describes in relation to Winterson's romantic focus: 'Love for Winterson is a continual apocalypse: an ego obliterating and thoroughly destructive event, ensuring that history never takes shape'.[59] It exhibits what Mme de Staël considers to be 'the great and cruel character of the passions, to tinge the whole of life with the violence of their operations, and to communicate the happiness they may afford only to a few moments of our existence.'[60] Ultimately it is a love affair that begins to confine her in the strength of its allure, and she describes, a:

> 'hopeless heart that thrives on paradox; that longs for the beloved and is secretly relieved when the beloved is not there. That gnaws away at the night-time hours desperate for a sign and appears at breakfast so self-composed. That longs for certainty, fidelity, compassion and plays roulette with anything precious.' (73)

For Bonaparte, the campaign against the Czar, a similar tale of obsessive gambling against the grain of luck and chance, has ended in disaster. Bonaparte's *grand armee* had advanced on Russia because The Czar had betrayed the Emperor. It was to be a swift campaign. The imagery of the circus is used once more, Bonaparte is described as 'like a circus dog he thought every audience would marvel at his tricks, but the audience was getting used to him' (80). The Russians had pulled back, burning every village as they went, luring his army into the icy wastes of Russia with nothing but their summer uniforms. Again, we have disjointed descriptions, only now they are interspersed with the

[59] Karin Sellberg, 'Beyond Queer Time after 9-11 The Work of Jeanette Winterson', in *Women's Fiction and post 9-11 Contexts,* ed. by Peter Childs (London, New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 84-98 (94).
[60] Mme de Staël, 90.

angry expressions of Henri's hatred. Now the allure of Bonaparte's romanticism is finally exposed as a chimera. Henri informs us how the Russian peasants had suffered: 'We had killed them all without firing a shot' (81). They had assisted in their own demise by helping the Russian army to burn their villages and crops in support of their Czar and had died of the cold, 'in ones and twos or families' (81). These, Henri notes, are people akin to his own family, leading simple, faith-filled, agrarian lives and his bitterness increases along with his increasing loss of faith in his hero.

Bodies continue to be butchered, even though the Russian army refuses to fight, as Henri describes:

> When our horses died of the cold we slit their bellies and slept with feet inside the guts. One man's horse froze around him; in the morning when he tried to take his feet out they were stuck, entombed in the brittle entrails. We couldn't free him, we had to leave him. He wouldn't stop screaming. (80)

In one long disturbing account he tells us how more butchery was attempted in order to survive the war:

> The body clings to life at any cost. It even eats itself. When there's no food it turns cannibal and devours its fat, then its muscle, then its bones. I've seen soldiers, mad with hunger and cold, chop off their own arms and cook them. How long could you go on chopping? Both arms. Both legs. Ears. Slices from the trunk. You could chop yourself down to the very end and leave the heart to beat in its ransacked palace.
>
> No. Take the heart first. (82)

The loss of heart invoked here is not merely a metaphor of deflation or the loss of courage and faith. In aligning it with the reduction of the body through self-butchery, it becomes visceral, a physical reality. Winterson plays here with the notion of the heart as

representation in a way that part reverses how the post-revolutionaries had used their images. In doing so she allows it a level of corporeality that destabilises and disrupts our reassurance in its still present symbolism. Losing faith is a violent occurrence and Henri is now a man who, having seen such terror, is seemingly inured to it, he goes on:

> With the heart gone, there's no reason to stay your hand. Your eyes can look on death and not tremble. It's the heart that betrays us, makes us weep, makes us bury our friends when we should be marching ahead. It's the heart that sickens us at night and makes us hate who we are. (82)

Of course, it remains metaphorical, and having held it between the two worlds of body and representation Winterson through Henri rests it back into its symbolic meaning for he tells us 'there's no pawn shop for the heart. You can't take it in and leave it awhile in a clean cloth and redeem it in better times' (82). Instead, he tells us that you must 'give up your passion. Only then can you begin to survive' (82). Such a powerful sense of disintegration, loss and isolation implies a charge against the romantic heroism that one experiences within a text like Tolstoy's or indeed any of the male historic writers of war who skirt its violent necessity. To write about war in its totality is to minimise its particularity; notions of war taken as a whole take the pain away. In much the same way that Villanelle talks about passion being 'sweeter split strand by strand' (59), the images of war are more jolting when similarly pulled apart. In particular, this part of Winterson's text represents an inherent criticism of conflict and of war itself, even whilst such criticism is not the immediate focal point of the text.

When Henri leaves a dying Domino after telling him of his plans to desert with Patrick, he finds the priest in the kitchen tent with a woman, 'wolfing chicken legs' (87). It is Villanelle seen through the eyes of Henri, replicating the vision he once held of Bonaparte, and he instantaneously falls in love with her. Much of what we know about Villanelle after her love affair with the Queen of Spades is imparted retrospectively through this section whereby

the narratives of the two main characters begin to merge and coalesce through the 'The Zero Winter.' As she tells her story to Henri, Patrick, and Domino, we learn that after she had known the Queen of Spades, 'for only five months. We had nine nights together and I never saw her again' (94). Having seen the Queen's love for her husband, Villanelle chooses to walk away from the affair. Like Henri, she decides to give up her passion, and instead gives into the allure of a different gamble. For, as she states, 'there is no sense in loving someone you can never wake up to except by chance.' (95). Lisa Moore, in her essay *Teledildonics: Virtual Lesbians in the Fiction of Jeanette Winterson* (1995), whilst identifying Winterson's writing in *The Passion* as occupying the genre of lesbian eroticism within a postmodern framework, argues that Winterson is not 'intervening in or attempting to correct homophobic misrepresentations of, or assumptions about, lesbian relationships.'[61] We can interpret her objections as meaning that the strength of the romantic narrative is seen to be dependent on its inability to remain requited in its fullest sense. Because women are often in heterosexual marriages, lesbian relationships between them always run counter to expected norms, sinful, destructive, risky and never long term. Such affairs become imbibed with a notion of a violent gamble, a violence on the self, reminiscent of Henri's gamble on Bonaparte.

Villanelle, she tells us 'has always been a gambler. It's a skill that comes naturally to me like thieving and loving' (89). This growing awareness of the danger she places herself in and the violence of taking a chance is further laid bare in a tale of a man who takes the 'Devils gamble': 'The astute gambler always keeps something back, something to play with another time; a pocket watch, a hunting dog. But the Devil's gambler keeps back something precious, something to gamble with only once in a lifetime' (90). This man takes the wager of a strange man, 'from the wastes of the Levant' (91). An undescribed man yet still identified as an exotic other. The wager is for a life. The lengthy description

[61] Lisa Moore, 'Teledildonics: Virtual Lesbians in the Fiction of Jeanette Winterson', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism,* ed. Elisabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 1995), 104-127 (113).

of the games of roulette, cards, and dominoes they play are meted out in small yet distinct moments of increasing intensity until, 'there was neither sound nor movement save the clicking of the dominoes on the table' (93). The stranger wins and we are told that the wager is no simple death but 'the dismemberment piece by piece beginning with the hands' (93). Onega identifies this as a 'ritual phase of *sparagmos*'[62] (original emphasis), a sacrificial death that leads to rebirth. I contend alternatively that Winterson opens up remarkable parallels between the rich man, gambling his life away towards such a death and the frozen and starving soldiers that lose their lives in much the same way through self-mutilation and despair. In either situation, to participate is to knowingly to take a gamble on what is precious to you, as Villanelle tells us: 'What you risk reveals what you value.' (91) Months later, the casino receives a glass case in which the hands of the gambler are mounted in a stylised manner with a roulette ball and a domino. A Hand of Glory, a visceral symbol of a punishment, a warning to others not to follow the same path. This passage has all the hallmarks of the gothic description inherent in Pushkin's tale within a narrative structure reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe or the Grimm Fairy Tales, with its violence orchestrated through a rise in suspense and its acute attention to the expectations and horror of the onlookers.

Seen through the lens of Pushkin's tale, we can note how, just at the point where she can gamble on the Queen of Spades and win, Villanelle instead gambles on another path. In Pushkin's text, Hermann is a man who 'is a gambler at heart, someone who simultaneously wants to and does not want to, who wants to risk nothing and risk everything.'[63] This is the same ambivalence that we perceive in Villanelle who like Hermann will gamble, not on the Queen of Spades as we might expect, but gambles on the cook, the meat man, making him synonymous with the Ace that Hermann will play. She has not come to her decision by being driven mad by horror; she is driven by her

[62] Onega, 66.
[63] Rosenshield, 214.

pragmatism and instead decides on a marriage of convenience, travel, and riches. She travels with him for two years until she steals his watch and leaves him, travelling for a further three years, earning money, learning five languages, before eventually returning to Venice, as she says, 'because I wanted my heart back' (98). When she returns, she is discovered by her husband, who being the meatman he is, sells her into the army as a *vivandière*. Again, we have the symbol of the woman as commodity, as a military supply.

Interspersed with this part of her tale is another of a man called Salvador who offers his heart to a young female stranger. It is placed in a box which is 'enamelled on the outside and softly lined on the inside' (98). Again, we have the notion of a formalised dismemberment but, unlike in the gambler's case, Salvador lives, a representation of the living dead. Recalling Henri's discussion of the heart earlier, in both its visceral corporeality and its representativeness, Winterson's text takes on a creeping Gothicism in order to render uncanny this traditional symbol of love. The inference is that Villanelle's heart, like Salvador's, has not been metaphorically stolen, but physically stolen, physically removed. We understand at that point how Villanelle can withstand the life of a *vivandière*, how she can stand the cold and deprivation of the winter, because she is also a representation of the living dead. When Villanelle and Henri eventually return to Venice, she makes a bargain with him that she and her family will support a new life for him in return for him retrieving her heart from the Queen of Spades. He is confused, 'Was she mad? We had been talking figuratively. Her heart was in her body like mine' (115). Winterson's trick here is to continue the play between the figurative and the actual so that Henri makes the shocking discovery that she has no heart. In an inversion of the aural image of the beating heart under the floorboards in Poe's story, *The Tell Tale Heart* (1843), he cannot hear her heart beating at all.

The night that Henri retrieves Villanelle's heart, she takes him to the Queen of Spades' house in a funereal gondola. A soon as he enters, he is confronted by 'a full-sized scaly beast with a horn protruding from its head' (119). Momentarily scared, he is reassured

when he finds it to be stuffed. He is seemingly unperturbed by the contents of the third room he investigates which, 'had no windows and on the floor, side by side, were two coffins, their lids open, white silk inside' (119). This reference to the vampirism of the Queen of Spades confirms the violence that lays within her theft of Villanelle's heart and its unwanted entrapment. That she meant to keep the heart stitched into a tapestry is proof that Villanelle 'would have been a prisoner for ever' (121). Again, we can evoke Lisa Moore's criticism that Winterson is not trying to change the trope of the predatory and sexually aggressive lesbian. However, I would argue that such images offer the lesbian figure a certain erotic and romanticised danger which affords a certain status and gravitas. Here Winterson maintains this symbolism, in the same way that the women in *The Daylight Gate* maintain the tropes of the witch, as I shall discuss in a later chapter. What follows is a moment of Poe-like detection with Henri being lead to the heart by the sound of its beating. This aural suspense culminates in a gruesome auditory evocation of Villanelle swallowing her heart back into her chest as she makes, 'terrible swallowing and choking noises' (120). The absolute end of the affair is portrayed then as a violent renewal of a life with all the sound accoutrements of a strangulated death.

The fantastical is swiftly muted by the domestic as a small moment of peace opens within the day-to-day life in the home of Villanelle's parents. This becomes a time for Henri to reflect and realise that following her refusal of his hand in marriage he should go home. On his wanderings around Venice, he visits the Casino and Villanelle offers for him to go to the whipping room. He refuses, stating:

> No. I'd be bored. I knew about whipping. I'd heard it all from my friend the Priest. Saints loved to be whipped and I've seen pictures galore of their ecstatic scars and longing glances. Watching an ordinary person being whipped couldn't have the same effect. Saintly flesh is soft and white and always hidden from the day. (125)

The religiosity of whipping Saints merges with the sexual and vice-versa, this is an obvious point to make about the connections between religious passion and sexual passion, but we must remember that, set within this violent text, straightforward, symbolic exchange is disrupted. Henri's naivete allows him to assume still that there are essential differences between God and the Devil, but later in the text we see how the symbolism here is further deconstructed. Whilst Villanelle works, Henri sits and looks out of the window, thinking of his experiences. Having received two prophecies about danger and death, Henri is considering his reflection in the window when he sees the reflection of Villanelle, 'backed up against the wall' (125), by the cook, 'He was very wide, a great black expanse like a matador's cloak' (125) The image of the matador cements the idea of the cook as a tormentor of a cornered animal. For the first time, we are told that Villanelle is afraid. This is made clear to us outside of her first-person narrative and what is called into question following on from this, is all of her previous moments of self-confidence, brazen associations, and past bravery. Henri tells us, 'She was watching him evenly, but I could see by the lift of her shoulders that she was afraid' (125). The wincing from the threat of violence is so fleeting and yet such a poignant repositioning of her central characteristic flare and sure footedness. The cook attempts to kidnap Villanelle to restore her to her owners, the Generals to whom he had sold her. When the cook finally finds them after they try to flee him, Henri realises that it is indeed his old adversary from Bonaparte's kitchen. He was heavier, grown fat on life, 'with jowls that hung like dead moles and a plump case of skin that held his head to his shoulders. His eyes had receded and his eyebrows always thick, now loomed at me like sentries' (127). The animalistic, description of the cook reminds us of his bestial associations back in Boulogne and continues with the disturbing vision of his attempted kiss: 'A pale pink mouth, a cavern of flesh and then his tongue just visible like a worm from its hole' (128). The depiction of the small pink object belies its inherent image of a revolting violence, a reminder of his flaccid penis in the brothel scene earlier in the novel. The violence of a forced kiss can be as clear a mark of ownership and taunt as even rape itself, being both a precursor to that larger assault

and in this case a reminder of the cook's past actions. Henri's lack of masculine violence now is reversed, and he kills the cook with Villanelle's knife.

Henri's murder of his old tormentor stands out against the untold murders of war, particularised and shocking in its maelstrom of personal hate and pent-up rage. It begins as self-defence; the cook is attempting to throttle Henri. When Villanelle throws him her knife what is noticeable is that she does not use it herself, instead giving him direction, which is even more chilling. 'Soft side, Henri, like sea urchins' (128). What follows is an unremitting attack:

> I had the knife in my hand and I thrust it at his side. As he rolled I thrust it in his belly. I heard it suckle his guts, I pulled it out, angry knife at being so torn away, and I let it go in again through the years of good living. That goose and claret flesh soon fell away. (128)

Again, the imagery of butchery is paramount. The flesh and blood being torn apart, of a knife with a mind seemingly of its own in a mindless violence of penetration is more shocking because it is Henri who undertakes the attack. Henri, who could not lose himself in that self-sacrificial way that Tew identifies, now loses himself to a violent frenzy. Having just refused the whipping room because he does not want to see the normal flesh being scarred, as he has seen the flesh of saints, he now, through his own violence perceives the cook's corporeality as the same: 'Hairless and white, like the flesh of saints. Can saints and devils be so alike' (128)? It ends with Henri cutting out the cook's heart, 'scooping out the shape with my hand, like coring an apple' (128). To repeat what Henri tells us earlier, the heart is what makes you 'stay your hand' (82). This blinding attack on the cook, can arguably be a justified revenge in Henri's mind but it must also be symbolic of how that in tearing out the cook's heart he has now lost his own, or indeed he had lost it already in the Zero Winter. This changeable nature of the symbolic heart between Henri and

Villanelle, its corporeality and its representativeness now expand to a violent binary between love and hate.

It is at this point we can begin to explore and question the binary placements that Winterson sets up between Henri and Villanelle. Onega's reading of the text points to the main characters in *The Passion* as being representative of a struggle towards an overriding whole, an individuation of one single entity with Henri and Villanelle representing the ego and anima. The novel is constructed out of myths, folklore, histories, and literary tropes which Onega identifies as representing several archetypal characteristics. Such archetypes and their convergences, Onega argues, create a Jungian psychological movement towards self-determination and a final individuation in Winterson's central characters, this completion occurring through the depiction of alterity, written in binary forms which she argues points to a direction of travel that leads ultimately to a complimentary rather than a discordant state. This has some weight. Sonya Andermahr quotes Winterson as stating during an interview, 'I'm with Jung that the whole of life is about the process of individuation- that is bringing the conscious and unconscious parts of the self into relationship.'[64]

However, this linkage gives us a rather safe reading whereby everything ends with a seemingly marked-out progression towards psychological wellbeing and one with patriarchal undertones at that. Onega's interpretation of the novel's end is of Henri in his cell, not as

> a madman but a 'myth-maker,' in Jung's sense of the word- that is someone with the (Hermetic, or shamanistic) imaginative capacity to translate the deep, penetrating, and meaningful events and experiences of his own life(ego) into archetypal stories that give sense to human existence at large(eidos).[65]

[64] Andermahr, 127.
[65] Onega, 75.

In this interpretation, Villanelle, instead of exhibiting a dynamism and ongoing mastery of her own reality merely becomes 'a projection of Henri's ideal woman/anima.'[66] In a sense, then, Onega's readings, risk the integrity of the texts, allowing them to read as overly contrived, restrictively two dimensional and ultimately linear.

Whilst Onega's argument ultimately depends on seeing Winterson's use of binary representations like beautifully constructed equations, for Peter Childs, Winterson deconstructs binaries, subverts them, and then reassembles the component parts into new configurations. He states: 'Much of Winterson's writing aims at taking apart binaries […]and replacing them with symmetries.'[67] Alterity and identity in this sense is itself pulled apart, strand, by exquisite strand an echo of Villanelle's view of passion itself: 'Divided and re-divided like mercury then gathered up only at the last moment' (59). Again, it is possible to feel comfortable with this reading; we are transported through a discordant exposure of the component parts, through to the pleasing development of more reasonable ideas of symmetries. But we are still left with the question of how symmetry itself becomes a representation of a parallel, which, rather than offering completion, further reinforces the distance between its two component parts; any ideas of completion or merging are a mere optical illusion.

This sense of gathering up, is problematic, as indicated by the mercurial nature of endlessly divided positions. To all intents and purposes, binaries, if nothing else, offer us a security of knowledge in an insecure world. Ultimately the questions Winterson raises through the deconstruction of these binaries are focused in on the trauma of relationships to oneself, to other beings, to circumstances and how they impact on the creation of identity. Winterson asks that we consider what makes up the identity of any given person. For many of her characters the very idea of self is a twofold problematic. Firstly, in the

[66] Ibid., 75.
[67] Peter Childs, 'Jeanette Winterson: Boundaries and Desire', in *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction Since 1970,* 2nd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 260-287 (277).

sense of an interplay between characters, and, secondly, through a highlighting of the alterity inherent within a single individual. Winterson enables a multiplicity of being where personas are momentary, always subject to change and refracted out as through a multi-lens camera into a chorus of meanings. What an individual may be in one moment is not what they are in the next and as such their 'lives' in their multiplicity, offer a greater choice, but never a complete stability and often confusion. But also, once these lives are created, they remain as constant possibilities. As Villanelle suggests, 'perhaps our lives spread out around us like a fan and we can only know one life, but by mistake sense others' (144). Such a broadening of a single life and the feelings which reside within it, is nonetheless always at threat of collapse. Winterson's binaries and their suggested alterity, in this sense point alternatively to an underlying violence whereby personal perceptions of reality is constantly shattered, and discordant. Rather than reaching harmony and a romanticised idyll, they clash against each other, creating new possibilities whilst risking annihilation. In this way the incongruities of Villanelle's fear, and Henri's rage are merely offerings from different perspectives of others and self.

The final part, 'The Rock', is concerned with the aftermath of murder, Henri's trial, and his subsequent incarceration on San Servolo island. Once a monastery, then a military hospital, Winterson's realises the island in her text in its capacity as an asylum, its third historical identity. From the shreds of narrative that Winterson pulls from Pushkin's text, it is Henri who now takes on the position of Hermann. Rosenshield, in an overtly romantic reading of Pushkin's hero, states that 'he scores a victory for himself by participating in life at its most intense, being ready to sacrifice his life for one moment of intense experience.'[68] Rosenshield's words can be equally applied to Henri's character who has also undertaken the one act that can give him such intensity and like Hermann, Henri, on realising his total loss, will fall into madness. His loss of Bonaparte and the heroic romanticism he inspired, and Villanelle's inability to offer him anything other than a

[68] Rosenshield, 208.

plutonic love has ended his belief in, and yearning for a requited love. He has lost his own heart and with that he loses all hope and freedom.

Within this section, Henri's persona becomes realigned to that of his first love, Bonaparte, and within the text the identity of the first person slips between one and the other. Villanelle also at this point experiences a form of return when she realises that she is the neighbour of the Queen of Spades. The realisation that her great love affair cannot be rekindled aligns itself with the realisation that Henri is also lost to her through madness. It is his demise which is the most poignant. Whilst Villanelle declares that she could gamble her heart again, Henri's incarceration contains within it that which Mme de Staël details about passion: 'All the passions, no doubt, have common characters, but none of them leaves so much pain behind it as the disappointment of glory.'[69]

At the end of her novel Winterson fulfils all the aspects of the post-revolutionary genre by the depiction through something that Genand refers to as the 'monologue of the hallucinating narrator.'[70] The horrors of violent depictions are somehow mitigated if they are refracted through the notions of insanity. It is this latter technique which we see Winterson using most clearly when in the concluding section of the text we find Henri in the sanatorium. The once eloquent narrator is, and perhaps has always been, not quite as reliable as we thought. We discover that he has been broken by his experiences, both mentally and emotionally and what we have been told throughout his narrative has been refracted through that violent upheaval. Whilst he spends his days talking to figures of his past that are no longer present, we become aware that the narration has as its source both his loneliness and his madness. His character at this point becomes a reflection of the Sadean figure, brutalised and isolated by the violence of history itself.

[69] Mme de Staël, 68.
[70] Genand, 58.

Lighthousekeeping: Violent Environments, Violent Evolutions

In her afterword to *Lighthousekeeping* (2004), entitled 'Endless Possibilities', Winterson states that her work prior to *Lighthousekeeping* was part of a cycle which

> began with *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* in 1985 and felt more like a carpet I was weaving than a series of separate texts. I would cut the thread at the end of a book, only to take up the strands again, continuing a pattern, working new symbols, testing the symmetry, but with a sense of returning to work rather than starting again.[71]

Lighthousekeeping, she asserts, is the first of a new cycle whose direction and meaning are yet to fully unfold and be understood. Critics argue over whether this is indeed the case.[72] Yet, in some ways, the novel goes some way to mark a beginning, if not in Winterson's use of intertextuality or symbolism, then certainly in how the novel reveals and reimagines its intertextual sources, the way in which the text exposes the act of creativity to be connected to a sense of literary evolution. In *Art Objects* (1995) Winterson outlines her belief that: 'The act of writing is an evolution; from the Latin, *Volvere*, *volvi*, *volutum* to roll.'[73] A reading of *Lighthousekeeping* with this statement in mind, allows us to understand how Winterson's text exhibits this evolutionary movement giving example to the growth of language and texts, and their uses as they change across time.

Set on the coast off the Outer Hebrides, *Lighthousekeeping* can be said to be a novel that affords the reader a precipitous view. The idea of its precipitous nature will be further enlarged later but it is sufficient to say at this point that the novel relies on our understanding of the peril of height or depth, of falling, sinking, and disappearing. This

[71] Jeanette Winterson, 'Endless Possibilities', in *Lighthousekeeping* (London: Harper Perennial 2005), 18-23 (18).
[72] Lucy Daniel in her 2004 review of the novel stated that *Lighthousekeeping* was a return to the beginning of the cycle previously identified by Winterson. Lucy Daniel, 'Snooked Duck Tail: Jeanette Winterson', *London Review of Books* (3 June 2004) 25-6 (25).
[73] Jeanette Winterson, 'Art and Life', in *Art Objects* (London: Vintage, 1996), 153-164(160).

extends from its depictions of a wild coastline, where things are 'Cliff perched, wind cleft,'[74] where the violence of the natural environment, of wind-swept cliffs are matched only by the violence of the stormy seas. Within this setting stands its focal imagery of a lighthouse: 'The white tower of hand-dressed stone and granite was 66 feet tall, and 523 feet above the sea at Cape Wrath.' (15)

From the vantage points of both cliff and edifice, the novel offers a consideration of time across epochs, time that is both geological, evolutional, and historical. These three aspects are constantly being pulled into sharp focus, where they meet and fuse with literary precedents. One such dizzying moment occurs when the Reverend Babel Dark rescues his dog from a fall off the cliff heights and in doing so discovers the mass of fossils in the rock that will, in the novel, bring Charles Darwin to those cliffs. Another example can be found in the way that Darks' familial association with the Lighthouse will ultimately bring him into contact with Robert Louis Stevenson and his ideas of degeneration. Darks' pounding of those cliffs is matched by the movement of Silver through a landscape which in part mirrors the work of Virginia Woolf, echoing the moments of existential loss and renewal, the loss of a mother and a boat ride to a lighthouse. Within this nexus lies a thematic consideration of the revelations and concerns brought about by the evolutionary theories of the nineteenth century. If *The Passion* (1987) concentrates on those violent passions which are roused from and through revolutionary and military fervour, *Lighthousekeeping* highlights the sublimity and the violence of evolutionary processes. In this, Winterson reaffirms Benjamin, when he states that 'Darwin's biology, which in a thoroughly dogmatic manner, in addition to natural selection, sees violence alone as not simply the original means but also the only one up to performing all of nature's vital ends.'[75] Mostly hidden from view because of their progress through vast amounts of time,

[74] Jeanette Winterson, *Lighthousekeeping* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 43. All further references are from this edition and are given parenthetically within the text.
[75] Walter Benjamin, 'On the Critique of Violence' (1921), in *One-way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by J.A. Underwood, Intro. by A Chaudhuri (London: Penguin Classics, 2009) 1-28 (2).

but no less revolutionary in their application to humanity, encompassing as they do the realities of individual, societal and environmental chaos, the text gives voice to the evolutionary processes held within our cultural milieu. This reading of Winterson's novel will illustrate how, through the splicing and merging of texts from the past, the act of writing is to take part in such processes and thus can be understood as an act of violence in and of itself.

Winterson's central theme concerns itself with the tension created between religious faith and practice, and the scientific advances of the nineteenth century. Her text asks fundamental questions as to how one is to proceed both individually and as a society when the surety of a paternalistic God is brought into question, and she reveals and explores that moment when the confidence in the idea of a supreme creator and mans' controlling influence and guardianship of the world were finally turned on its head by Darwin's evolutionary theories. A.N. Wilson in his study of the Victorian period, elucidates how the belief in a specific doctrine of Special Creation, grew from and was jealously maintained by the orthodoxy espoused both by the Catholic and Protestant Churches. These bodies held onto the notion of the Garden of Eden as the rationalisation of a grand design and had publicly rejected all previous ideas of species transmutation as atheism. This notion of intelligent design had allowed people to accept and understand their role within creation as inheritors of the earth, beings separated from the rest of nature by a special relationship with its unseen instigator. It also allowed for the primacy of God's will as enacted through the power of the Church to direct and control societies' moral and political principles, especially the hierarchical social strata that existed at the time. Wilson asserts that, 'Darwin knew that there would be those, including himself, who felt that his theory of natural selection did away with the necessity of believing in a Creator.'[76] The potential was that with such a realisation came the threat of complete societal disorder.

[76] A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Random House, 2003), 227.

Wilson tells us that when Robert Chambers published *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in 1844 there 'had been an outcry' and that 'the Church had seen even in Chamber's generalised transmutationist tract, that such a view disposed of the need for any kind of interventionist God.'[77] This was of concern to Darwin who procrastinated about his own publication. In addition to this, Darwin had already recognised how some of the scientific establishment had reacted to Chambers' work in a way that was not always complimentary. He mentions in a letter to Asa Gray in September 1857:

> You will, perhaps think it paltry in me, when I asked you not to mention my doctrine: the reason is, if any one, like the author of the 'Vestiges', were to hear of them, he might easily work them in, and then I should have to quote from a work perhaps despised by naturalists, and this alone would greatly injure any chance of my views being received by those alone whose opinions I value.[78]

Wilson also notes that, 'Darwin was acutely aware of the intellectual objections to his theory, and this was his primary reason for anxiety; was it true?'[79] Veracity was vital to him, especially when the Church's power over the political and intellectual structures of the state meant that any science which put forward the growing understanding of evolutionary principles in the nineteenth century was likely to be met with resistance. This was the case even if, privately, it was accepted as logical given the evidence and understanding of many naturalists of the time. It is the tensions that this situation created which are embodied in the figure of Babel Dark.

Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) would indeed go on to undercut the assurance in Genesis and would confirm the growing acknowledgement of evolutionary principles; above all it would introduce the idea that organic beings were not specifically created in a

[77] Ibid., 227.
[78] Charles Darwin, 'Appendix E -Letter to Asa Gray', in *On the Origin of Species* ed. by Joseph Carrol (Canada: Broadview Press, 2003), 475-487 (483).
[79] Wilson, 227.

one-time event, but rather were involved in constant competition with others, and their surroundings, for survival. Any new characteristic which enabled them to be victorious in such a struggle would become a characteristic most likely to be handed down through future generations. As Darwin outlines in his introduction:

> As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be *naturally selected.*[80]

He goes on to emphasise that this process of natural selection is a violent one:

> In looking at Nature, it is most necessary to keep the foregoing in mind- never forget that every single organic being around us may be said to be striving to the utmost to increase in number; that each lives by a struggle at some period of its life; that heavy destruction inevitably falls either on the young or the old, during each generation or at recurrent intervals.[81]

It is so commonplace now to accept these revelatory comments, replete with continuous struggle and upheaval within nature, that it easy to forget the violent impact of their first espousal. By the time Winterson came to write *Lighthousekeeping*, Darwin's theories had become embedded into the cultural milieu, notwithstanding the recent reclamation of the Creationist theories by certain religious groups. Even so, to be understood clearly, such violent processes of sickness, death, and 'heavy destruction' are often comprehended through the example of species other than homo sapiens. Even in the early twenty-first century, with our awareness of climate change and encroaching ecological disasters, the immediacy of such violence is too much to bear, and death or extinction, feels safer one

[80] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* ed. by Joseph Carrol (Canada: Broadview Press, 2003), 97.
[81] Ibid., 136.

step removed or in the abstract. This can be evidenced through societies' fluctuating engagement with the climate change agenda, where the impact on the natural world and the extinction of endangered species make headlines in the news, and yet little or no correlation is made between these realities, the evidence of our decimation of the environment and the overall impact on human societies that these changes are already having: the wars that grow from a lack of water, the famines that effect whole swathes of sub-Saharan Africa, and the increasingly extreme weather events. The online science magazine, *The Verge*, in March 2018 reported that a Gallup poll taken earlier in that year showed that only 45% of Americans felt that global warming was a serious issue overall and would affect them personally.[82] Writing their journalistic piece, Alessandra Potenza reports that this situation occurs because of political influence, but perhaps more tellingly, because of the way in which we employ a psychological distancing to such high-risk occurrences. In the foreword to a United Nations publication on Disaster Risk Management, Mami Mizutori and Debarati Guha- Sapir state that, 'It is baffling that we willingly and knowingly continue to sow the seeds of our own destruction, despite the science and evidence that we are turning our only home into an uninhabitable hell for millions of people.'[83]

Winterson's text shows us that a dawning awareness of humanity's place within the inherent violence of the environment cannot be disavowed. Without the security of, in this case, a traditional Western Christian faith and a dependence on the idea of natural justice, a deeply personal realisation of mortality and individual insignificance is exposed. Winterson reframes this post-Darwinian discomfort, both through the personal responses of her characters to it and through the way in which such discomfort and insecurity is

[82] Alessandra Potenza, 'About half of Americans don't think climate change will affect them- here's why', *The Verge* (March 29 2018), http://www.theverge.com/2018/3/29/17173166/climate-change-perception-gallup-poll-political-psychology [Accessed 3 May 2022].
[83] Mami Mizutori and Debarati Guha- Sapir, *Human Cost of Disasters- An overview of the last 20 years 2000-2019* (UNDRR /CRED 2019), 3 https://www.undrr.org/publication/human-cost-disasters-overview-last-20-years-2000-2019#:~:text=in [Accessed 3 May 2022]

reflected across literary narratives. Notably, Winterson exposes the point at which the notion of a special creation event, the Garden of Eden, collides with the growing awareness and discomfort around ideas of natural selection as a moment of narrative evolution. The Genesis creation story, a tale that is orthodoxy for some, becomes just another narrative, less fact, and more myth. Wilson notes that this was already occurring at the time of Darwin's publication and he specifically points out John Henry Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) where Newman notes that 'Developments, reactions, reforms, revolutions, and changes of various kinds are mixed together in the actual history of states, as of philosophical sects, so as to make it very difficult to exhibit them in any scientific analysis.'[84] Thus a violent confusion over the old order occurs and doctrine itself becomes a part of the evolution of stories humanity tells itself to understand its environment and its place within it. Winterson's novel, in a sense, attempts to capture the essence of this historical point of cultural and societal revelation and in doing so underlines the notion that evolutionary processes are no more external to the individual human experience than revolutionary ones with an emphasis on the fact that this is a moment for society, the individual and the narrative space itself; that is ever recurring. This, she allows, can be both a point of inspiring revelation but also one of violent horror.

It is primarily by drawing on a combination of the literary worlds of Robert Louis Stevenson and Virginia Woolf, writers themselves deeply interested in Darwinism, that Winterson creates a space where the rupture through the neatness of creationism is expanded. Thus, not only allowing for a Darwinian sense of evolutionary movement, but also for the exposition of a moment of literary evolution whose continuous ripples expand from those authors texts and through into Winterson's own, carrying with them some characteristics and leaving behind or altering others. Winterson takes her cue from both Stevenson and Woolf, who respectively understood the importance of literature in the exploration of

[84] Wilson, 101.

evolutionary pressures in the human sphere and who saw literary endeavours as comparable, in evolutionary terms, to natural forces. Stevenson's interest and active participation in the discourse of his day with evolutionary psychologists James Sully and others, and his interest in hereditary influences on behaviour, are well documented.[85] Julia Read clearly elucidates, in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (2006) how Stevenson's texts go about 'raising unsettling questions about the relative influence of heredity and environmental pathologies.'[86] For her part, Woolf similarly recognised how, for her, writing was a coming into being of something that in part existed outside of the writer herself, something akin to an evolutionary force. She said of writing *To the Lighthouse*: 'The blessed thing is coming to an [end] I say to myself with a groan. It's like some prolonged rather painful yet exciting process of nature which one desires inexpressibly to have over.'[87] Here the act of creation is viewed as a potently violent act of physicality, something perhaps akin to childbirth. It is a desire for a finality or an outcome that can be experienced as solid and dependable, a desire that not only is accompanied by excitement and pain but is also driven by the same. It is a frisson of life captured in a moment that is contained within Lily Briscoe's triumphant cry of victory over the completion of her painting within *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

This frisson is also present within Stevenson's narratives, with the sense of threat and the fear of violence given prominence. As Reid states, his 'narrative momentum, indeed, turns upon fear, and the characters' story-telling also demonstrates the pleasures of terror.'[88] It is a vicarious thrill that the reader can participate in, safely removed from any real and

[85] Ed Block, Jr explores in detail the friendship and collaboration between the two men, citing both Sully's own recollections of their friendship and their membership of the Savile Club and their associations through the Cornhill Magazine. Ed Block Jr, 'James Sully, Evolutionist Psychology, and Late Victorian Gothic Fiction', *Victorian Studies*, 25:4 (Indiana University Press, 1982) 413-442. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3826981 [Accessed 23 June 2022]

[86] Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 56.

[87] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf Volume III: 1925-30,* ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: Penguin, 1987), 109.

[88] Reid, 34.

actual harm. As an example of this we can consider the moment Jim Hawkins and his Mother discuss what to do after the death of Captain Bill Bones:

> Indeed, it seemed impossible for either of us to remain much longer in the house: the fall of coals in the kitchen grate, the very ticking of the clock, filled us with alarms. The neighbourhood, to our ears, seemed haunted by approaching footsteps; and what between the dead body of the captain on the parlour floor, and the thought of the detestable blind beggar hovering near at hand, and ready to return, there were moments when, as the saying goes, I jumped in my skin for terror.[89]

In this moment, for Jim, all known security and constancy are thrown into disarray and replaced both by the fear of potentially violent outcomes and the spirit of adventure. So, whilst Woolf reaches for a desired ending that perhaps is never fully achieved, Stevenson can be seen to invigorate away from such an ending towards further action and the future potential of adventure. In an alternative to the excitement of the romantic quests of his young protagonists, Stevenson relays the dread of the descent into degeneracy as within his tale of Dr Jekyll. A gradual but increasingly violent collapse that precipitates a horror and fear of what lays within the human psyche. Winterson captures and combines all three of these distinct literary responses to the problem that Darwinian thought produces, and it is her combination of all these forms which enables a narrative space to hold within it a conception of limitless time with all its chaotic possibilities. Through the application of two Victorian narrative potentials, the romantic adventure story and the crime thriller depiction of monstrous moral degeneracy, alongside that of the momentary and the tragic that is inherent in the writing of Modernism, we have a narrative space that disrupts secure societal norms and narrative form, with characters exposed to the interlacing evolutionary

[89] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island,* ed. by John Seelye (London: Penguin, 1999), 20.

imperatives and seeming chaos of chance, reminiscent of *The Passion,* but this time not brought about by political or military upheaval.

Manya Lempert's work on tragedy and the Modernist novel is useful here, because it discusses how particular narrative forms suited modernist conceptions of the tragic. It is inciteful in its complicated argument that, far from being a refusal of Attic tragedy, whereby catastrophe and tragedy occur on the whim of voracious gods, Modernism re-works such tragedy for a post-Darwinian society. Lempert contends that, 'Modernist novelists gravitate toward Greek tragic conflict, restaged within a Darwinian cosmos, precisely to elude consolatory, rose-tinted narratives.'[90] These rose-tinted narratives are of course those Westernised Christian reassurances of a purposeful order of things and the sense that virtuosity and goodness can act as a cosmic insurance policy, that bad endings only come to bad people. So pervasive and entrenched is the belief that such laws can be controlled by one's behaviour or conscious thought; even Darwinian theory could be presented in such a way that its particulars were seen to be predictable and safe and could act as a consolation of sorts. However, Lempert uses a quote from J. L. Lucas's *Tragedy in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics* (1927) and Lucas's view that 'the Universe may proceed by law; but it knows no justice. For its laws are those of cause and effect, not of right or wrong,' to give a counter argument to that.[91]

It is the awareness of the fragility that is wrought through living within a chaotic and unpredictable world that Virginia Woolf captures so adroitly in *To The Lighthouse* (1927), through her depiction of a family moving through the crisis of World War I and personal loss. Within her elegiac text, Woolf presents a point of brittleness and insecurity where sentience, mortality and inconsequence butts up against the certainty of faith and finds that it poses more questions than answers. Her response to this, in part at least, was to

[90] Manya Lempert, 'Tragedy after Darwin' (University of California, Berkley: ProQuest Dissertation Publishing, 2015), 2 [Accessed March 2022]
[91] Ibid., 1.

give a primacy to the importance of the creative act as a way in which one could mitigate against such fragility and loss. This corresponds to Nietzsche's view, as Lempert notes, that, 'Greek tragedy bequeaths to modernity the lesson that redemption lies in art.'[92]

Lilly's recreation of the mother figure, Mrs Ramsay, through her painting, is an example of such a creative act, though what is highlighted is that it is not the finished article that is important: 'One might say, even of this scrawl, not of that actual picture, perhaps, but of what it attempted, that it 'remained for ever'.[93] It is through the very act of creativity that one engenders a solidity, an immortality that goes beyond the biological existence of the individual. For Winterson, within *Lighthousekeeping*, it is the creation and recreation of personal stories which becomes the imperative action towards the protection of the integrity of the fragile person. This is evident within the story that Pew tells Silver, about the sailor who had gone down with his ship and spent seven days keeping himself alive by telling 'all the stories he knew' (40). Having run out of stories, 'he began to tell himself as if he were a story, from his earliest beginnings to his green and deep misfortune' (40). Having seen the newly lit Cape Wrath Lighthouse, 'he knew that if he became the story of the light, he might be saved' (41). Thus, the connection between stories and lights are made and shared, 'as markers and guides and comfort and warning.' (41)

Since the violence of death is ultimately assured, to be always in the process of creation or adventuring within ever changing circumstances, is to live fully and yet it is to live in violent opposition to a conforming rigidity. There cannot be only one story and, similarly, adventuring begets further adventuring, which in turn creates new stories. In Winterson's text this sense of continuous adventure and story creation is given primacy through Silver's own adventures on the sea as lighthouse apprentice and later as a wandering adult. In the first example we see this adventuring beginning as a moment of chance, taken up as a quest. The young Silver is, 'A child born of chance,' and as such, 'might

[92] Lempert, 460.
[93] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* ed. by Stella McNichol (London: Penguin, 1992), 195.

imagine that Chance was its father, in the way that gods fathered children, and then abandoned them, without a backward glance, but with one small gift' (32). As such she embarks on a journey to achieve the gift. But it is not the conformist journey proposed by the unbending Miss Pinch but essentially a solitary 'drift' (92). Not a drift as a passive activity, but an active engagement with the imagination and narrative:

> I rowed my blue boat out to sea and collected stories like driftwood. Whenever I found something- a crate, a gull, a message in a bottle, a shark bloated belly up, pecked and pitted, a pair of trousers, a box of tinned sardines, Pew asked me the story, and I had to find it, or invent it, as we sat through the sea smashed nights of winter storms. (92)

Such narratives become shelter through harsh difficulties as well as inspiration in times of doubt. For Silver, they all begin in the quiet moments of relative isolation, either in the Lighthouse, or as we see later in the novel in 'The Hut' where an adult Silver tells us, 'these moments that are talismans and treasure. Cumulative deposits- our fossil record- and the beginnings of what happens next.' (212)

Interestingly *Lighthousekeeping* has notable similarities with Winterson's near contemporary publication *Weight* (2005), a retelling of the myth of Atlas and Heracles. In this short novel, Winterson begins with a compelling description of the classical creation story and the parentage of Atlas. Poseidon, representing the Sea and Gaia, as Earth, are present in an ever changing yet material space. Whilst 'He loved her demarcations and her boundaries. He knew where he stood with her,' she, 'loved my father because he recognised no boundaries. His ambitions were tidal.'[94] This breaking of boundaries ensures that delineations become unstable, they are there to be teased, seduced, repelled, and negotiated; it is here that creation occurs. Likewise, in *Lighthousekeeping,*

[94] Jeanette Winterson, *Weight* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), 11.

Winterson opens the novel with the information that Silver, her fatherless protagonist, paradoxically is fathered by a man who,

> came out of the sea and went back that way. He was crew on a fishing boat that harboured with us one night when the waves were crashing like dark glass. His splintered hull shored him for long enough to drop anchor inside my mother.
>
> Shoals of babies vied for life.
>
> I won. (3)

In this opening quote one can read almost the entirety of Winterson's project for the novel; for here is the act of chance, formulated through the occurrence of environmental violence, which will ultimately lead to a competitive yearning towards an act of creative victory. If Silver's father is an echo of Poseidon, he is also synonymous with his harboured boat, a cracked vessel whose momentary presence is also an echo of that 'past returning or not, depending on the tide,' which we see at the end of *The Power Book* (2001).[95] He is symbolic of a happenstance that both begins and furthers a chain reaction towards evermore new beginnings and divergences. Whether he returns is immaterial, it is the act of creation which is imperative, and once complete he himself becomes mythical.

The use of myth in *Weight* anchors the suggestion that, at their archetypal origins, stories are prehistoric textual elements which occupy a disturbed space, one that is rendered incomplete over time, ruptured by massive forces of pressure and intensity with resulting schisms and conflations. In this textual space stories become broken off, their incomplete parts butted against other fragments to create new texts. Such incompleteness and merging come from both forgetfulness and divergences over time. It is time that shields us from the violent nature of such evolutions. It is useful perhaps to consider Charles Lyell's plea to consider length of time appropriately in the study of geology and repurpose

[95] Jeanette Winterson, *The Power Book* (London: Random House, 2001), 242.

it for our view of literature. He argued that a historian would not see the dawning and waning of civilisations as taking merely a handful of years and so a geologist would conclude: 'that centuries were implied where the characters imported thousands of years, and thousands of years where the language of nature signified millions,' and this concept of a *long durée* would alter one's perspective of time and allow one to see that, 'the natural world had undergone a complete revolution.'[96] Indeed Lyell argues that the vast lengths of time involved in evolutionary movements enable a level of 'immutable constancy.'[97] Applying these arguments to literary considerations enables us to see the possibility of an inherent violence in the creation of texts occurring over time. Specifically, we can see that the primacy that Winterson gives to certain aspects of Stevenson's and Woolf's narratives comes at a price that inevitably is a violent one, precisely because it is evolutionary in the way that it eradicates some of its precedents and reworks and renews others. Evident in Winterson's appropriations of ideas, we see the small repurposing of symbols as well as the brave new departures of writing styles and subject. We see the subtle shifts of emphasis that get taken up into ongoing acts of literary creativity to eventually form a new oeuvre. By engaging with Woolf and Stevenson, in such a dynamic way, *Lighthousekeeping* represents, I argue, a text which plays a visible and active part in the process of textual evolution and of literary mythmaking.

More than this, when injecting her own prior creative additions into her source materials, Winterson rejects the act of re-telling as mere repetition or even an anachronistic, modernising update. In *Weight*, she extracts meaning from the original hypothesis of the myth, not by usurping meaning but by aligning her overriding literary project with the source, thus expanding the latter's allegorical potential, and increasing its breadth without compromising its validity or integrity. Indeed, the authenticity of the tale, something which she sees as vitally important, becomes more solid and more resilient as a result.

[96] Charles Lyell, 'Principles of Geology- Appendix G.4', in Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species,* ed. by Joseph Carroll (Canada: Broadview Press, 2003), 607.
[97] Ibid., 607

Storytelling in this regard becomes as anti-linear as time telling, creating a geology of texts which remains subject to change. In the view of Anita Gnagnatti, where she talks specifically about Winterson's use of religious texts within *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), 'For Winterson, challenging other people's versions or stories, or making one's own version, is of paramount importance, in order to encourage intellectual dynamism and a world view that is not static and set, but open, free and flexible.'[98]

In *Lighthousekeeping* we see Winterson underlining this dynamic use of the inter-textual. By engaging with authors who themselves were more in tune with the Darwinian moment in history, she is able to give a fuller and weightier example of such literary evolution, creating a space where she moves away from ancient myths towards highlighting how such mythologies are constructed. By picking out the symbolic and thematic highlights in Woolf's and Stevenson's texts: names of characters', the sense of place, she captures the sense of myth that already exists around them, pulling this into the fabric of her own text. Very few readers therefore would miss the fact that Winterson attaches names to her characters' that are reminiscent of those found within Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), even before Winterson herself underlines the links in her text:

> 1850- Babel Dark arrives in Salts for the first time.
>
> 1850-Robert Louis Stevenson is born into a family of prosperous civil engineers - so say the innocent annotated biographical details - and goes on to write *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. (25)

She effectively exhibits the mythologies that surround these writers' texts as textual moments along evolutionary lines, the creation of a geological record of literature which

[98] Anita Gnagnatti, 'Discarding God's Handbook: Winterson's Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and the Tension of Intertextuality', In *Biblical Religion and the Novel*, ed. by Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman (Hampshire, England:Ashgate, 2006),121-136 (123).

has much in common with the physical fabric of rock formations and the layering of sediments which she describes along the coast from the novel's seaside town, Salts.

Winterson's plot concerns the placement of the protagonist Silver, along with her skew-legged dog, with a blind Lighthouse Keeper named Pew following her mother's tragic fall from the cliff face into an abyss. Pew presents her and the reader with the tale of the Reverend Babel Dark, a descendant of the man who hires the Stevenson family of engineers to build the Lighthouse. Dark comes to Salts, the town by the coast, to become its source of spiritual guidance and comfort. Set in the mid-nineteenth century, Dark's story firmly situates the text within the moment of Darwinism and the engineering developments of the time, whilst Silver's narrative places us within the technological advances of the space age and computer technology.

With the exposure of Dark's double life, bigamy and violent nature, Winterson mingles the engineering feats of the Stevenson family with their author son's tales of dual personalities. She also reintroduces the Nietzschean idea of the Uber mensch, the idea of the powerful male battling along a Dionysian tragic path towards obsession and failure, like that which she imagines in her demonic Napoleon in *The Passion.* Meanwhile, Silver having a foundation from within Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, can be viewed as a composite of the swashbuckling, traitorous Long John Silver and the orphaned yet resourceful Cabin-boy Jim. As such she shares much in common with both. But the intertwining of textual references does not stop there because Babel dark and his socially conscious wife share many characteristics of Mr and Mrs Ramsay within *To the Lighthouse*.

Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* also serves as a foundational basis for much of Winterson's imagery. This is both in terms of its central image and its concerns around tragedy and eulogy. Winterson creates an intertextuality and meta-narrative that is anchored firmly to the physical representation of the lighthouse. This despite it being first introduced as an

afterthought within Silver's description of Salts: 'My home town. A sea flung, rock-bitten, sand-edged shell of a town. Oh, and a lighthouse' (5). At this point Winterson presents the building as having a comfortable familiarity, an edifice which has become submerged into the landscape.

What follows is a disrupted opening into Silver's narrative beginning with a brief description of her birth and that most tragic and violent loss of her mother, her relationship with Mrs Pinch, the schoolteacher, the story of the Dark family, the commissioning of the lighthouse, the history of Josiah Dark, his fortune and the story of the black gull, Silver's pet DogJim, the Atlantic, and the lighthouse keeper, Pew. The text jumps from one subject to another, and from the past to the present tense back and forth. In a chronological sense this movement seeks an origination, a desire to start at a beginning that, like stories of descent in natural history, cannot be sufficiently settled on. Indeed Silver, within her narrative cannot decide where the story begins, as new information and understanding come to her. She states, 'I suppose the story starts in 1814', only to tell us a later, 'the story begins now - or perhaps it begins in 1802' (11). And again, 'so, the story begins in 1802, or does it really begin in 1789.' (13)

Focusing specifically on Silver, this confusion of tenses, illuminates a desire for permanence, a disavowal of loss. In describing the home, she had shared with her mother Silver tells us that their house is not straight, perched at unimaginable angles on a precipice that defies physical laws, a violent effrontery to the rules of gravity and good sense, as such she 'came at life at an angle' (4). They lived cut off from the society of the town as outcasts because Silver is born out of wedlock, surviving despite the odds until the day her mother falls. She states on the very first page, 'We ate food that stuck to the plate- shepherd's pie, goulash, risotto, scrambled egg. We tried peas once- what a disaster-*and sometimes we still find them***,** dusty and green in the corners of the room' (3; emphasis added). This overlapping of the present with the past makes the reader's discovery of her mother's death even more poignant when it comes. The change to the

present tense conveys a momentary lapse away from grief; the use of the phrase 'we still' telling the reader that in that moment Silver has forgotten that now there is no *we*, that her mother is gone. The consequence of this is, of course, the realisation that she will again have to remember that her mother is absent. She will be reminded that she is now orphaned and homeless. Thus, both her early upbringing and her transition to orphanhood and survival is given a Darwinian sense of narrative struggle.

Alongside the sense of emotional immediacy found at the beginning of the novel, there are exhortations to the reader to be an active observer and participant, for example: 'Close your eyes and pick another date' (24), and 'there was a man called Josiah Dark -here he is- a Bristol merchant of money and fame' (12). The immediacy of the moment, of now, is captured within the past as the narration takes on the rhythm and speed of excited or nervous chatter. Like the tossing of the sea, the narrative is thrown about for the reader to digest as best they can. It is a violent regurgitation of the feelings of a child lost and trying to make sense of new experiences as well as old. It is within the squall of this passage that the physical presence of the lighthouse is gradually revealed. As Silver is transported to her new home she considers: 'There was only one way forward, northwards into the sea. To the lighthouse' (19). The last phrase allows Winterson's lighthouse to take on some of the imagery of Woolf's lighthouse. Within fourteen pages of text the lighthouse has grown from being a familiar local building to becoming the extraordinary literary symbol.

Woolf's symbolic lighthouse is a literary construction based on an experience that Woolf had as a young girl, visiting Godrevy Lighthouse off the coast of Cornwall,[99] and which she transplants to somewhere off a fictitious Hebridean island. As its fictional counterpart, it stands in the distance of Ramsay family summers, silently unattainable, cut off by tides

[99] James King in his biography of Virginia Woolf notes how Talland House, the Stephen's Family Summer house gave them 'a breathtaking view across the bay to Godrevy lighthouse,' and that an invitation for Woolf and her brother to take a trip to the lighthouse had been made by friends on the 12 September 1892. James King, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Penguin, 1994) 30-50.

and the threat of storms and inclement weather, never changing through the years of drastic alteration in the lives of the family and its companions, its unreachable quality seems to be in direct relation to James Ramsay's desire to go to it. Even the eventual trip, in the latter part of the novel does not form a complete denouement. Instead, it is the creative climax of the artist Lily Briscoe that alerts us to the possibility that the trip is successful. The completion of her painting becomes synonymous with the actualisation of the lighthouse that is still part hidden through mists:

> 'He must have reached it,' said Lily Briscoe aloud, feeling suddenly completely tired out. For the Lighthouse had become almost invisible, had melted away into a blue haze and the effort of looking at it and the effort of thinking of him landing there, had stretched her body and mind to the utmost. [...] 'He has landed,' she said aloud. 'It is finished.'[100]

Over this lighthouse, literary and mythical symbol of timelessness, which maintains an ethereal quality even within its own textual space, Winterson superimposes her own more material edifice, securing it within a factual landscape, the most north-westerly edge of Scotland, known as Cape Wrath, the name being Old Norse for The Turning Point an important navigational point for the Vikings, 'the wild, empty place, called in Gaelic, *Am Parbh*'' (11). But Winterson places her edifice on a rock further away into the sea, as opposed to where the actual Cape Wrath Lighthouse sits, to allow for Silver's dramatic arrival there by boat. For to underline Woolf's text further, Winterson overtly conjures the Ramsay's boat trip when Silver rides in Pew's 'patched and tarred mackerel boat' (18). The bouncing boat that has seen better days, with its 'outboard motor' (19), has a more utilitarian, less romanticised aspect than the one sailed by the Ramsay's, yet despite these contrasts, the familiarity between Pew and the silent Macalister, and the evocation of the smell of mackerel function as reminders of the Ramsay's journey.

[100] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* 225.

Now Woolf's ghostly image remains secured within Winterson's text much like the ghost ship of the McCloud that Pew insists he can still see: 'they built the new McCloud, and on the day they launched her, everyone on the dock saw the broken sails and ruined keel of the old McCloud rise up in the body of the ship. There's a ship within a ship and that's fact' (46). Some symbolic resonances remain common to both structures, their being seen as beacons of endurance and continuity for instance, but as well as being highly symbolic in literary terms, Winterson's lighthouse has a more multifaceted and visceral presence, as she develops it across all its legal, monetary, physical, visual, and spiritual facets. A form of textual violence occurs here, with Woolf's mythology fracturing into factual and historical accounts. We are told that Winterson's edifice has its beginning in '1814, when the Northern Lighthouse Board was given authority by an Act of Parliament' (11), to build it. We are informed that it cost £14,000 and was 'completed in 1828' (15). These are facts which secure it as an edifice which is, above all, solid. Silver also emphasises its physicality by inviting the reader to view it as a thing of awe-inspiring rigidity: 'Look at this one. Made of granite, as hard and unchanging as the sea is fluid and volatile. The sea moves constantly, The lighthouse, never. There is no sway, no rocking, none of the motion of ships and ocean' (17). Through this description we come to understand that it sits not just within its environment, but within history itself. The movement of the waves and tides which mark the movement of time do not outwardly affect it. However, its relationship to time has a dualistic aspect. Whilst sharing the same timelessness as Woolf's lighthouse with its body of unchanging granite, it is also subject to the march of time, both in terms of its cultural meaning and practical use.

Through Pew's stories and instructions to his apprentice, and Silver's own narrative, we come to see its altered practical application and cultural significance. Once new in its inception, as an engineering feat and as a necessity to warn against rocks and false lights used by smugglers that duped adventuring merchant ships into wrecking, the lighthouse has its position as a supreme outlier eventually overtaken by the Apollo moon rocket, not

just in terms of its technology but also in its ability to foster new narratives and new adventures, the stories of the space age. We come to understand the synergy between these two symbols within Silver's comparison of them. In reference to her arrival at the lighthouse she states, 'I have a lot of sympathy with that date because it felt like my own moon landing; this unknown barren rock that shines at night' (23). We also see within its depiction, a return to the tower of the San Servolo asylum, from which Henri surveys his past, carried over from *The Passion* its relevance to a space that houses the mentally ill becomes relevant on Silver's eventual return to its confines at the end of the novel following her own illness.

Early in the text, indeed early on in its very inception, the Lighthouse creates a yearning which becomes swiftly aligned with a religious imperative. One can argue that this builds on Woolf's image of the lighthouse as a source of desire for the young James Ramsay, a yearning towards something yet unfulfilled. However, when the innkeeper's wife says to Josiah Dark, 'You must build your lighthouse here as other men would build a church' (14), it is an indication that the lighthouse begins its existence as a religious idea, as a beacon of faith, light, and guidance. In this sense it represents a traditional faith, one that is set against turmoil and chaos, its light as beacon, perhaps reminding us of the Christ figure, as alleged light of the world. Within its solidity and its constancy are the narrative spaces within which Silver can seek shelter. Pew himself states, 'Imagine it, […] the tempest buffeting you starboard, the rocks threatening your lees, and what saves you is a single light.' (38)

In Winterson's text, as opposed to Woolf's, the lighthouse is eminently reachable. Indeed, whilst the Ramsays' journey dissipates beyond the end of Woolf's text, Silver's becomes the only journey she can make at that point, away from the vacant, faithless Salts with its empty Inn and uncaring community. Her clear destination, and one which she reaches, is towards a place where faith can be restored. Silver tells us: 'The town didn't have much

to do with the lighthouse anymore. […] Salts had become a hollow town, its life scraped out. It had its rituals and its customs and its past, but nothing left in it was alive.' (18)

The mutability, this aliveness within the solidity of the structure in comparison to the dead town, offers us a moment of realisation that something small but fundamental has changed within the original symbolism created by Woolf. Its materialism can be seen as a form of violent assault on Woolf's transcendental imagery. It becomes both an indicator of a change from the traditional patterns of faith, distant and a struggle to attain and moves towards newer divergent, vibrant perspectives. In this sense it has all the material, 'immutable constancy,' of Lyell's laws of nature, that outwardly it remains unchanged, and yet its inward or inherent nature also transmutes. It is, again, an example of literary evolutions. Part of this process is also inherent in the expansion of the symbol. One Lighthouse, like the Apollo rocket, is awe inspiring, but here, Winterson makes clear that the lighthouse is not the only one of its kind, being part of 'a string of lights […] built over 300 years' (17). These lights secure the boundary that is the coastline, a warning to shipping but also a symbolic warning to all who cross, either by accident or design to the side of chance represented by the sea itself.

Silver is transported from the windswept coastline, with precipitous and crumbling rocks after the emotional chaos of her mother's fall into the abyss. The geographical setting of this coastal landscape is important and one which uses Stevenson's method to imagine threat and danger. Held symbolically within its cliffs, stated to be 'the highest vertical sea cliffs in mainland Britain,'[101] is all the violence of peril and of loss which Winterson wishes to convey, from the fatal fall of Silver's mother to the perilous rescue of Dark's dog. The sublimity of the geography, the meeting of the Atlantic with the North sea all are used to display the hazards of life itself and its survival. To illustrate this further we can look to Susana Onega's consideration of Winterson's use of Stevenson's text in this regard.

[101]The Joint Nature Conservation Committee, *Cape Wrath* http://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0030108 [accessed 17 April 2022].

Onega usefully points out the similarities between Silver's cliff-faced home and that of the upturned keel of the pirate ship within *Treasure Island*. She states, 'this quasi-vertical house, built on the hill […] constitutes a formidably imaginative variation on Jim Hawkins's climactic adventure in *Treasure Island*, when the daring boy manages to pilot the Hispaniola'.[102] As the ship beaches, it tips at a stark angle and Israel Hand falls to his death, 'being both shot and drowned'[103] whilst Jim clings onto the mast by his fingernails. Again, this represents a precipitous moment one that also has a recurrence within *Kidnapped* (1886), when the protagonist David Balfour is forced up into the stair tower by his Uncle Ebeneezer to bring down a chest of papers, where his 'hand slipped upon an edge and found nothing but emptiness beyond it.'[104] For Stevenson's heroes such moments of peril come accompanied by a new or renewed purpose. Likewise for Winterson's Silver, such peril holds not only the violence of maternal loss, but all the other losses associated with it, but it is also the point at which Silver is saved, hanging onto the escallonia bush. Again, like the symbol of the lighthouse, we see the way in which Winterson re-lays and overlays these lifted images. The escallonia bush grows from being a childhood memory of the hedges of Woolf's childhood summer house, to being transplanted in *To the Lighthouse* where the bushes are present in the garden of the Ramsay's holiday home, becoming representations of the relationship and communication between Mr and Mrs Ramsay: 'that hedge which had over and over again rounded some pause, signified some conclusion.'[105] Winterson's Silver is rescued from her fall by the presence of such a bush, 'In a minute she had dropped past me, and I was hanging on to one of our spiny shrubs- escallonia, I think it was, a salty shrub that could withstand the sea and the blast. I could feel its roots slowly lifting like a grave opening' (6). By transplanting it into her description as a secure gripping place for a falling child,

[102] Susana Onega, *Jeanette Winterson*, Contemporary British Novelists (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 205.
[103] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 143.
[104] Robert Louis Stevenson *Kidnapped* (London: Cassell and Company, 1894) Apple Books, 33.
[105] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 48

Winterson uses all of its symbolism of childhood security and enclosure, maintaining the emotional pull, which ultimately is contained within its predecessor whilst allowing it to expand into becoming, importantly, a point of rescue and renewal. Further she adds the dimension of spikiness, creating a vision of Silver clutching it as painful, giving the symbol a violent edge. Also, it becomes partly funereal, with its association with the opening of a grave, a prediction of death within the moment that adds weight to that sense of loss.

When Silver comes into the lighthouse, it is at first a place that instils fear and bemusement and yet over time it becomes a place of security, where she gains care, renewal, and inspiration from its space: a dependable place, an enduring measure against which time moves, cliffs fall away, people leave. The reader is allowed a vision of the inside of it and the life that Pew and Silver live within it:

> Pew and I climbed slowly up the spiral stairs to our quarters below the Light. Nothing about the Lighthouse had been changed since the day it was built. There were candleholders in every room, and bibles put there by Josiah Dark. I was given a tiny room with a tiny window, and a bed the size of a draw. (19)

Indeed, one can argue that most of the text originates from within its walls. We are shown inside its textual space and have an emotional sympathy with the sense of security with which it is imbued. Silver will eventually list her favourite parts of her lighthouse keeping day, in the chapter, 'Known Point in the Darkness,' and these include, food, the smell of polish and being told history and stories, as she asserts 'I still get homesick when I smell bacon and Brasso.' (38)

Silver's initial arrival within the lighthouse however, cements her feeling of grief. Although its purpose is to provide a beacon of light, within its walls, darkness surrounds Silver and Pew, complete with a sense of foreboding and brooding thickness. Silver describes: 'Darkness came with everything. It was standard' (20). Darkness here is not merely the lack of light, it is something of substance, in ways similar to how it manifests within *The*

Passion (1988), darkness is tacky and viscous. In a particularly Dickensian motif, she mimics the arrival of Oliver into Fagin's den, with Pew cooking, 'the sausages *with* darkness' (20; original emphasis). Darkness becomes a substance to be used whilst simultaneously a phenomenon linked with both desire and of horror, 'Sometimes it took on the shapes of things we wanted: a pan, a bed, a book. Sometimes I saw my mother, dark and silent, falling towards me.' (20)

In the introduction to the 1999 edition of *Treasure Island,* John Seelye makes clear the connection between Dickens and Stevenson and the similarities between the characters of Fagin and Pew:

> Stevenson's best-known stories for boys resonate with fearsome spectres.
>
> The best known of these is undoubtedly Blind Pew, that grotesquely cruel ogre who crawls out from the same dark shadows from which Dickens derived his own frightening demons, such as Fagin and Monks in *Oliver Twist*, and who tap-taps his way into terrified imaginations.[106]

Certainly, by also making her Pew blind, and by associating him with darkness, Winterson writes the character in a way which consolidates and illustrates these literary connections. In *Lighthousekeeping*, he is described thus: 'His shapeless hat was pulled over his face. His mouth was a slot of teeth. His hands were bare and purple. Nothing else could be seen. He was the rough shape of human' (19). His is a spectral body, skeletal, a thing of nightmares. 'DogJim growled' (19), an indication of the threat he feels, 'Pew grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and threw him into the boat, then he motioned for me to throw in my bag and follow.' (19) The manoeuvre is rough and cruel.

It is interesting that in *Treasure Island,* Pew is the cruel, blind man who carries the black spot of doom; the messenger who tells of the individual's upcoming death or execution.

[106] Seelye, vii-xxvi (xi.)

Seelye, in his introduction, also states that, 'the gaunt, remorseless Pew is clearly a figuration of death itself.'[107] In *Lighthousekeeping* Silver also describes him thus, 'He was just Pew; an old man with a bag of stories under his arm, […] and he was too, a bright bridge that you could walk across, and look back and find it vanished' (95). Pew's brightness here cements his character as being rejuvenated and multi-faceted, at once he becomes not just a ghost, a harbinger of the darker side of nature, even though his storytelling of doom and darkness, fear and pending destruction remains as his black spot. We cannot escape the fact that Pew is telling a ten-year-old child a story of rage, intimidation, belittlement, physical violence, rape, sadomasochism, possible murder, and suicide. We can question and refute along with Silver that he is, indeed, an old man who relates closely to his presumed ancestors to the point of believing in himself as a continuity of Pews. His storytelling, his supposed clairvoyance and knowledge set him up as Silver's personal teacher of resilience and self-care, but he can also be viewed as a magus, or a trickster and conman. His blind eyes, 'blinking like a kitten' (47), have the look of innocence but his age and experience refute that and as Mrs Pinch questions the validity of his stories, so might we. Yet Silver recognises in him a solidity and a perseverance which underlines his role as Lighthouse-keeper, telling stories as he tends the light. Pew negotiates his world through this telling and retelling, writing himself into the fabric of history through his tales. Like the lighthouse to which he tends, he and his tales function as a source of enlightenment and guidance to Silver, and he himself merges into its imagery, as she states, 'There were days when he seemed to have evaporated into the spray that jetted the base of the lighthouse, and days when he was the lighthouse. It stood Pew-shaped, Pew-still, hatted by cloud, blind-eyed, but the light to see by.' (95)

It is through his instruction we learn that narrative art is one that recognises the interconnectedness between narratives. 'There's no story that's the start of itself, any more than a child comes into the world without parents' (27), he tells Silver who responds

[107] Ibid. xi.

with tears. Now it is Silver who must recognise the subtle changes in relation to faith otherwise obscured by the lighthouse's outward solidity. The absence of her father and the loss of her mother becomes associated with the loss of the very notion of an origin story. The promised security of the physical lighthouse becomes momentarily redundant as Pew's assertion undercuts the view that the book of Genesis represents the beginning of the narrative. Her tears are equally about her response to such an assertion as they are for her personal grief. It is a moment where faith is broken seemingly without there being any hope of a replacement, until Pew gives Silver the coping strategy of storytelling. 'That's another story yet,' he said, 'and if you tell yourself like a story, it doesn't seem so bad.' (27)

Pew and Silver go on to build a relationship with survival at its heart. Through the act of storytelling, a creative endeavour of remembrance and reciprocation with other stories. The tale of the shipwrecked sailor adds to this sense of narrative as a safety net, an act of self-salvation:

> And when night fell, he saw the Cape Wrath light, only lit a week it was, but it was, and he knew that if he became the story of the light, he might be saved. […] Later putting up at the Razorbill, and recovering, he told anyone who wanted to listen what he had told himself on those sea-soaked days and nights. Others joined in, and it was soon discovered that every light had a story- no every light *was* a story, and the flashes themselves were the stories going out over the waves, as markers, as guides and comfort and warning. (41)

As in Darwin's vision of nature, loss can be mitigated by creative reinvention; where for Darwin this creativity was evident in the patterns of descent, for Winterson it is present in narrative – a force similarly shaped by antecedents and history. For Silver, narrative becomes as necessary as shelter and food; it is a way of creating connections and identity. In this way Winterson transforms the mythology of Woolf's lighthouse into a verb,

lighthousekeeping, which not only describes the act of warning, of marking out the boundaries between land and sea, but also the creative act of storytelling seen as integral to the identity of the individual. Lighthousekeeping becomes a source of acknowledgement, of homage and of fearless aspiration, comparable to the Victorian crisis of faith which abandoned creationism but found inspiration in new narratives of natural plenitude, descent, and interconnectedness.

As we have seen, even though the lighthouse remains as a timeless stability, through the arc of the novel its inner nature changes. Similarly, in the way that Woolf's lighthouse changes its meaning at the end and disappears into the mists, Winterson's becomes empty. Technological advancement moves towards automation, a continuation of the story of man's progress. Left empty of its keeper, the lighthouse now becomes stripped of its human heart. Again, a widening reflection of the heart symbolism that we see in *The Passion,* acknowledging that what lies at the heart is not necessarily a romantic symbol but a realisation of an intrinsic humanity. This stripping away of the human, inherent in ongoing technological advance is problematic for Winterson for whom the act of lighthousekeeping becomes a metaphor for the evolution of humanity into dynamic and creative beings. In 'From Innocence to Experience', published within the Harper Perennial edition of *Lighthousekeeping*, Winterson states: 'Story telling teaches us to be unafraid of our imaginative power and I think it teaches us to be unafraid of the exuberance and the unruly, untamed nature of life, of our lives'.[108] In a sense, Winterson is advocating for a level of freedom in narrativity, which can allow for survival in unpredictable times. Both in terms of literature itself, and as an individual reader, she advocates a playful interaction with text and textuality and yet *Lighthousekeeping* indicates a deeper level of purpose than mere playfulness. I argue that the novel highlights the way in which adherence to unchanging narratives brings about its own violence; and the freedom that comes from

[108] Jeanette Winterson, 'From Innocence to Experience' in *Lighthousekeeping,* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005) 2-14 (4).

being able to engage with narratives that evolve over time can be redeeming. But it is a choice full of difficulties and she uses the figure of Babel Dark to illustrate this.

Dark's story situates Winterson's text within the moment of Darwinism and the engineering developments of the time. With the exposure of Dark's double life, bigamy and his violent nature, Winterson mingles the engineering feats of the Stevenson family with their author son's tales of dual personalities. This allows her to explore and interrogate the relationship between an old society whose engineering feats concentrated on the glory of God or kings in its churches and palaces, and the newly secured age of the industrial magnate, with its engineering feats bound up in the creation of great iron works and new churches as represented here by the lighthouse. Certainly, for Gavin Keulks, it is in this sense that the lighthouse becomes the 'ultimate spatial sign of patriarchy.'[109]

Babel Dark is very much a composite figure. Winterson gives him the role of inspiration for the Stevenson of the novel, enabling the writer to create his story of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and in this regard, we can readily see the character of the unhappy Doctor within his formation. They are similar in their personal and psychological struggle to remedy what they see in themselves as the improper and, immoral. For instance, Stevenson has Dr Jekyll proclaim that:

> the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high and wear a more commonly grave countenance before the public.[110]

[109] Gavin Keulks, 'Winterson's Recent Work: Navigating Realism and Postmodernism', in *Jeanette Winterson* ed. by Sonya Andermahr, A Contemporary Critical Guide (London, New York: Continuum, 2007) 146-162 (154).
[110] Robert Louis Stevenson 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror,* ed.by Robert Mighall (London: Penguin Books, 2002) 2-70(55).

Jekyll's 'impatient gaiety' becomes in Winterson's construction, the young Babel Dark, 'as rich and fine as any gentleman of the town. He was a ladies' man, for all he was studying Theology at Cambridge' (27). It is a gaiety which is undercut by an encroaching level of shame and an eventual sense of emptiness for both, as it falters against what Jekyll recognises as imperious, an overriding sense of arrogance and self-importance. It is the imperiousness of the Uber mensch that he recognises in himself. Jekyll here embodies the problematic of what it is to be the proper Victorian Gentleman, the all-powerful patriarch, directing humanity towards greatness and away from suffering. Likewise, Babel also struggles with this and will eventually follow the arc of a muscular Christianity. His 'imperious desire' first shows itself the day he sees his lover Molly welcoming a man into her home, whom he assumes to be another suitor. A jealous rage and self-loathing engulf him, 'He looked in the mirror and saw a highly polished abalone, its inhabitant gone, the shell prized for its surface' (80). From then on Dark struggles to marry his dandyish nature with his overbearing need for a personal moral authority by which he judges not just Molly, but himself. Both he and Jekyll are characters who consider that they have lived a previous life that could be condemned as one, not full of righteousness, but licentiousness and excess. Jekyll comes to understand, 'I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of the day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering.'[111] But this ability to understand that both sides of his nature are equally him, equally valid, Dark cannot accept for himself. Whilst Jekyll hides his alternative self, he goes on to explore this difference in his nature in a scientific experiment on himself, to a horrific end. In comparison, the Reverend Dark's attempts to completely disavow the brighter side of his character consist of enacting a violent religiosity that is based on the rejection of moral weakness.

Babel Dark also encompasses characteristics which originate in the characterisation of Mr Ramsay from *To The Lighthouse*. In Dark's brooding presence on the cliffs, we see an

[111] Ibid., 55.

echo of 'his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out thus on a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away, and there to stand, like a desolate seabird, alone.'[112] We can note similarly Babel's likeness to a gull. Ramsay also struggles with regrets and considers his identity as a disguise, 'a refuge of a man afraid to own his own feelings, who could not say, 'This is what I like-this is what I am.'[113]

All three men become associated with, or are concerned to refute, any notions of hypocrisy in their natures. Jekyll is at pains to underline the fact that, 'Though so profound a double dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest.'[114] And Mr Banks and Lilley Briscoe have a debate about whether Mr Ramsay is 'a bit of a hypocrite' or not, with Lilly finally thinking to herself that, whilst perhaps not a hypocrite, 'he is absorbed with himself, he is tyrannical, he is unjust.'[115] When the notion of his hypocrisy is raised, after his unkind behaviour towards his parishioners, Babel meets it with a horrific level of physical violence against his wife.

The figure of Babel Dark is also a human counterpart to the lighthouse. He shares with it, a symbolism that is interconnected both within the text and across its intertextual sources in multiple ways. When the fictional Robert Louis Stevenson comes to Salts, to visit his father's engineering feat, the relationship between him and Dark is secured. Between their fathers the lighthouse was created, and Dark had spent his boyhood studying the technical drawings of it. He is born on the day that the lighthouse is completed. At the very moment that the lamp was first lit, 'out rushed a blue boy with eyes as black as a gull. They called him Babel, after the first tower that ever was' (15). The building of the Tower of Babel occurs in Genesis (11:1-9), after the Great Flood. The people decide to build a tower, 'whose top is in the heavens' (11:4). Whilst they speak the same language, and are all one people, their cooperation allows them to accomplish this, but it is seen by

[112] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* 50.
[113] Ibid., 51.
[114] Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* 55.
[115] Woolf, *To the Lighthouse,* 52.

God as an act of over-reaching, and he fears that, 'now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them' (11.6). To thwart the people's ability to act together, God disrupts their use of language and scatters them across the world. This is generally given as a biblical reason why peoples across the world speak different languages, but Winterson uses it through Dark himself to underpin the violence with which he uses language to dupe, coerce and mortify. Certainly, it seems intrinsic within his use of different narratives for both his wife and Molly. Added to this is the violence inherent in withholding language altogether, in order to maintain his own position. For instance, he tells Molly 'nothing […] about his wife in Salts, and nothing […] about his salty new son, who had been born almost without him noticing' (87). Also, his association with the tower underlines the violent separation of his multi-faceted self, something that becomes reflected in his fascination with the Lighthouse's prism. Here we see Winterson maintaining the symbolism of the fractured identity that she expounds in *The Passion*. But whilst for Villanelle such fracturing becomes positive potentiality, for Babel it creates an insecurity that he violently rages against.

In this, Babel is also associated with the similar mythology of the Gigantomachy in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whereby giants 'pile mountains up to the distant stars,'[116] incurring the wrath of the Gods. Babel and the lighthouse both share a notion of the gigantic. The lighthouse as Cyclops, and Babel Dark as an overreaching aggressor, brings into play a different interpretation of Winterson's assertion that he is a 'shepherd to his flock,' bringing to mind instead the violent nature of the Cyclops when they are acting as shepherds. His role as Reverend on the surface at least, is intended to offer us a sense that he shines a pious light on the lives of his congregation and at first glance this seems to tally with the lighthouse's purpose of warning and guidance against the dangers of hidden rocks. A little further on into The Book of Isaiah it is stated: 'Hearken unto me my people and give ear

[116] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 1: 151-155 ed. Betty. Radice, trans M. M. Innes (London, Penguin Classics, 1955), 33

unto me, Oh my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgement to rest for a *light of the people*' (51.4; emphasis added). I argue that it is this biblical quote which Babel Dark aspires towards, to be the light to his people. But he ultimately stands as warning to the local community in quite a different way, and not for his piety. After Price exposes some of his secret other life, the parishioners look away, they hear rumours but say that it is no business of theirs. 'Wherever he went, riding alone on a black mare, no one was told, and no one followed.' (44)

His is a desperate search for his own righteousness and his first sermon reflects this. It is based on The Book of Isaiah (51:1), which Winterson takes from the King James Bible: 'Remember the rock whence ye are hewn, and the pit whence ye are digged' (43). A sermon that was enough to convince the innkeeper to change his establishment's name from the Razorbill to The Rock and the Pit, but not enough to convince Dark himself. Instead, Dark's remembrance is his past life, as the rich merchant's son and dandy who runs away from a woman whom he considers to have wronged him, and a child born out of wedlock. This is the rock and pit that Babel cannot or will not forget. It is the 'rough and unworked' stone that was exposed on meeting Molly again at the Great Exhibition.

Finally, his association with the lighthouse is phallic and particularly associated with the memories of his sexual relationship with Molly, which at its start has biblical, Edenic associations. Its innocence, and then its fall from innocence, pivots around Dark taking her 'apple picking in his father's garden' (68). His doubts about her first become apparent, fleetingly, after he notices her sexual confidence in comparison to his feeling of terror on their first sexual encounter. Whilst Winterson frames their lovemaking with a romantic tenderness, for a moment the spell is broken, and he wonders whether he is her first lover, 'Why was she so sure? He wondered, just for a second, if he was the first man who had come to her like this' (71). The inability of Dark to fully accept Molly's sexuality, and its confident expression, has its counterpoint in being unable to recognise his own, 'gentle, ardent, hesitant' (72) feelings. Such doubt has its roots back in the early verses of

Genesis, and that temptation which would underline all sin in the world. Molly in this sense becomes the knowing Eve. She also becomes emblematic of the New Woman. Winterson here extends her previous consideration of the dangerous lesbian woman into a deliberation of othering that extended to heterosexual women in the nineteenth century. Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst discuss this concept in the introduction to their reader of the *fin de siècle*:

> The icon of the New Woman was double coded: it could mark an image of sexual freedom and assertions of female independence, promising a bright democratic future; it could also mark an apocalyptic warning of the dangers of sexual degeneracy, the abandonment of motherhood, and the consequent risk to the racial future of England.[117]

This moral positioning of the New Woman, particularly the fear of moral degeneracy is everything that Dark finds disturbing about his lover, and he transfers all the fears he has about his own degenerate nature onto her. His doubting of her loyalty to him culminates in his jealous reaction to seeing her welcome another man into her house, and when later she tells him of her pregnancy, he physically pushes her away. So violent is his act of pushing her that she falls and the consequence he finds later is the blindness of the baby girl that she carries.

After his rejection of her and the unborn child, he looks at the drawings of the lighthouse that are hung in his rooms: it 'looked like a living creature, standing upright on its base, like a seahorse, fragile, impossible, but triumphant in the waves. 'My seahorse,' Molly had called him, when he swam towards her in their bed like an ocean of drowning and longing' (80). Drowning and longing are mixed here into a heady psychological torture. Onega sees a cynical re-framing of their relationship after it ends, comparing it to the way that

[117] Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, 'Reading the Fin de Siècle', in *The Fin de Siècle a Reader in Cultural History C.1880-1900* ed. by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), xiii-xxiii (xvii).

Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* (1912) processes his own difficult feelings for the young man. She states, ‘Like Aschenbach, Dark tries to sublimate the passion he feels for Molly by transforming it into a perfectly innocent, prelapsarian relationship.’[118] Yet I would argue that what he struggles with ultimately is the fact that it stands outside of any biblical definition for him. For although he considers it to be within, ‘a place before the flood’ (111), the renewal of their relationship will eventually occur within the sophisticated, industrial triumphalism of new industries and Empire and his desires and despairs are just as worldly.

Despite his father’s pleading, he sets out for Salts determined to create a new and more pious existence as its spiritual leader. Which he does, sailing from Bristol in choppy waters, ‘standing wrapped in black’ (31), with all the determination and forbidding nature of a Captain Ahab. Winterson here begins to violently pull images of dark heroes from other Victorian texts into her character. They bring with them the whole of the texts that they usually inhabit, injecting a seam of imagery for the reader to further explore and integrate into their reading.

Dark marries the pious ‘cousin of the Duke of Argyll, a Campbell in exile, out of poverty and some other secret. She was no beauty, but she read German fluently and knew something of Greek’ (44). Her character is a counterpoint to Babel’s idea of the Gentleman, a representative of the Victorian notion of the angel of the house, mild mannered and a little educated, yet inept in ways of household chores. Taught to be an easy conversationalist, a companion for her husband, 'gentle, well read, unassuming, and in love with him’ (51), but for him insipid and uninspiring, ‘dull as a day at sea with no wind’ (54). This is, of course, the same angel of the house, which Coventry Patmore writes about in her poem of that name (1858) and Woolf considered ‘the most pernicious image

[118] Onega, 219.

male authors have ever imposed upon literary women.'[119] In *Lighthousekeeping,* we are told that Dark 'had no reason to hate his wife. She had no faults and no imagination' (53). No narrative of her own making. Yet there are 'disturbances at night, sometimes, and the Manse windows all flamed up, and shouts and hurlings of furniture or heavy objects, but question Dark, as few did, and he would say it was his soul in peril, and he fought for it as every man must' (44). Here his brooding nature becomes aligned to Charlotte Brontë's Rochester, with the enactment of the disturbances created by Rochester's wife in *Jane Eyre* becoming his own. Dark's cruelty towards his wife is horrific and Winterson takes us through the different violences enacted within the domestic sphere, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial and physical. She tells us that at first his emotional and psychological violence of her was to 'test her, perhaps to find her. He wanted her secrets and her dreams' (54). He whips her horse, whilst they are riding, terrifying her as it bolts. What he came to enjoy was 'the pure fear in her face' (54), and her subjection. Taking her out sailing in stormy seas he 'liked to watch her drenched and vomiting' (54). She is tormented, then raped, the violence of such an act emphasised by its likeness to knocking a wooden peg into 'the taphole of a barrel' (54). Bruised and now finally humiliated, held down like a dog, whilst 'he let his semen go cold on her before he let her up' (55), the physical violence towards her finally erupts on the cliff path following their parish duties where she calls his ministry into question. It is followed by him plunging his hands into boiling water:

> That was the first time he hit her. Not once, but again and again, shouting, 'you stupid slut, you stupid slut, you stupid slut.' Then he left her swollen and bleeding on the cliff path and ran back to the Manse and into the scullery and plunged both his hands up to their elbows in the boiling water. (56)

[119] Sandra M Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984) 20.

It is his emotional, psychological, and sexual, abuse towards her that gives him pleasure, the fetishizing of her fear and her subjection becomes addictive to him. It is only when he physically attacks her that it results in his own self harm. This serves to emphasise the level of violence he feels and enacts against his own religious inadequacies. Her rebuke of him has revealed his real inability to care for his flock, and her own pious nature stands as further contrast to his inadequacy. His violence towards his wife is also in marked contrast to the feelings he continues to have for Molly once he finds her and their daughter at the Great Expedition. He takes his wife; it is their belated honeymoon and yet he leaves her sitting alone for six hours whilst he reunites with his first love.

The Great Expedition fills him with joy even before their rediscovery, 'Dark felt like a man raised from the dead' (77). The colour of the entertainment, the noise, the smell of food and flowers alongside all the wonder of the exhibits themselves lighten him but when Molly agrees to spend the day with him it is the workings of industrial machinery that take precedent and that which he wants his baby daughter to experience. It is after this reunion that his double life begins in earnest. The story of his bigamy and the dualistic side of his nature reflecting and exhibiting his inner toil. But Molly comes to see that she too continues to endure his violence, and in his prevarication over the idea of leaving his legitimate wife and following her to a new life, 'She had tried to absorb his anger and his uncertainty. She had used her body as a grounding rod' (101). She too at this point recognises him as like the lighthouse, 'lonely and aloof. He was arrogant, no doubt of that, and cloaked in himself. He was dark. Babel Dark, the light in him never lit' (102). When he finally breaks his promise to Molly a second time, when they meet in the lighthouse, the inference of his murdering her becomes entrenched into the story of their affair. The very idea of the independent New Woman is brought back under control.

Ultimately Dark rejects his better self and turns to further self-destruction in his quest to find salvation in a faith he can, in truth, no longer believe in. His violence, whilst enacted outwardly is ultimately internal and aligned closely with the suppression of a part of his

natural character. The narrator notes: 'His eyes were bars, and behind them was a fierce, unfed animal' (98). Reid's work on Stevenson is useful here. She notes that 'Stevenson's tales of horror are populated by characters whose mental disorders push them towards savage bestial conditions, insanity, or even death, but they also question biological notions of primitive resurgences.' Indeed, she refers to the west coast of Scotland in *The Merry Men* (1882), for example, as a trope for mental breakdown: 'the setting […] suggests a savage psychology.'[120] I argue that we can read this topographical inference within Winterson's depiction of the coast and Babel Dark's relationship to it. In this way his metaphorical relationship with the lighthouse becomes cursory, like his relationship to his religious faith; it is his relationship with the sea and the cliffs that then speak to his actual nature.

One particular experience on the cliffs becomes the main fulcrum on which Dark's character rests. 'Dark was walking his dog along the cliff path when the dog sheared off in a plunging of fur and loud barking' (113). The shearing and plunging becomes a violent and potentially catastrophic fall, not caused by a loss of faith but from having too much of it. Having been chasing a seagull, his dog had been assured of solid ground where there was none. When Dark returns to the rescue, he finds his dog patiently waiting to be saved:

> eyes full of hope. The man was his god. The man wished that he too could lie and wait so patiently for salvation. 'But it will never come,' he said out loud, and then fearful of what he had said began to bang the iron spike two-thirds of its length into the ground. (116)

It can be argued that this passage reflects the necessity of being proactive and pragmatic in any attempt towards salvation. The dog's situation and its rescue are imbued with the allegorical at this point, and highlights for Dark his own precarious position both in his own right and as a man of the cloth. Bemoaning his scuffed new boots, he imagines his wife

[120] Reid, 77.

scolding him for the ‘expense and risk’ (116), and how such inherent risk applies equally to all of life. He notices a gap in the cliff wall:

> The wall of the cave was made entirely of fossils. He traced out ferns and seahorses. He found the curled-up imprint of small unknown creatures. Suddenly everything was very still; he felt that he had disturbed some presence, arrived at a moment not for him. (117)

Such a discovery hits hard at the core of his belief system, his belief that the world was ‘4,000 years old’ (117). The discovery particularly calls into question the timing of the biblical flood. Ultimately his exploration of the rock face takes on a sexual nature, even though he tries to avoid such, he equates the internal feel of exposed shells with the genitals of his once lover. When he ‘put his fingers to his mouth, [he] tasted sea and salt. He tasted the tang of time’ (117). Religious doubts, the growing understanding of potential new realities and the loss of time and love conspire to engender in him a loneliness that he himself cannot see the reason for. It is a moment of existential dread. He returns to the ledge and cuts away two pieces of it, one the seahorse and another specimen to be sent off to the Archaeological Society. Here Winterson reminds us of the language of geology and its ability to tell stories, it is an ‘eloquent rock. […] like the tablet of stone given to Moses. […] God’s history and the world’s.’ (118)

The narrative of creation begins to be remoulded, expanded beyond the biblical timescale and boundaries. Winterson’s Darwin, when he arrives in Salts, also has doubts: ‘He admitted to being embarrassed by the lack of fossil evidence to support some of his theories […] Where was the so called ‘fossil-ladder’’ (119)? Even given Darwin’s assertion that the world is not ‘less wonderful or beautiful or grand’ (120), Dark exposes the doubts that are present when confronted with a world not secured by an ordered creation: ‘That things might be endlessly moving, and shifting was not his wish. He didn’t want a broken world. He wanted something splendid and glorious and constant’ (119). Between Dark’s

search for constancy and Darwin's perception that this new understanding of the world 'is less comfortable' (120), Winterson creates a space for degeneracy that is akin to that expressed by Jekyll, once he realises that he cannot control the changes that come over him, that there is no moral authority that will control Babel's baser self-reflexes, 'This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, would usurp the offices of life.'[121]

A link may also be made here, with Stevenson's contemporary H.G. Wells. In his *Zoological Retrogression* (1891) Wells points to what he considered to be a key point overlooked by many:

> The educated public […] has decided that in the past the great scroll of nature has been steadily unfolding to reveal a constantly richer harmony of forms and successively higher grades of being, and it assumes that this 'evolution' will continue with increasing velocity under the supervision of its extreme expression – man. [122]

Instead, Wells joins the chorus of degenerationist voices pointing to a more regressive possibility, a 'footway worn by leisurely wanderers in an undulating country.'[123] Likewise, Winterson has Dark noticing the eroding cliff faces – the wearing away of the very landmass he stalks. It is a process that he sees within himself, he reads Darwin's *Origin of Species* and has 'seen in himself all the marks of gradual erosion' (148). He refuses 'the fraying at the edges that had become so common a mental state for him' (114). Such a pathway is set out by Wells when he notices across both man and the ascidians the rise and fall of the individual. He outlines what Winterson comes to depict through her

[121] Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 69.
[122] H. G. Wells, 'Zoological Retrogression' in *The Fin de Siècle*, Ledger and Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000) 5-12(6).
[123] Ibid., 7.

characterisation of Dark, namely that, ‘every respectable citizen of the professional classes passes through a period of activity and imagination, of “liveliness and eccentricity,” of Sturm und Drang.’[124] Wells goes on to postulate that the individual settles down, marries his ‘wild ambitions and subtle aesthetic perceptions atrophy as needless in the presence of calm domesticity.’[125] For the ascidian, such settlement results in a degeneration from active organism becoming closer to invertebrates in classification to an existence more akin to vegetation. That Winterson has Dark repeatedly associated with the seahorse is perhaps a nod to the idea of degenerative animalism and points to Dark’s regression through his failed attempt at happiness. Wells talks about the replacement of happiness with ‘that colourless contentment.’[126] Dark himself recognises as much on noting that his wife was reading the story of Lazarus, ‘Dark wondered what it must be like to lie in the tomb, airless and silent, without light, hearing voices far off. ‘Like this,’ he thought’ (57). Winterson again toys with the gothic notion of the undead here as she does in *The Passion*, and as I will show she does both in *The Daylight Gate* and *Frankissstein*, frequently and insistently calling into question the fears around an active death set against the horror of an undefined non-existence. Dark’s choice of an active death becomes his last chance to experience the fulfilment of a life. As he states, ‘How can a man become his own death, choose it, take it, have no one to blame but himself? He had refused life. Well then, he would have to make what he could of his death.’ (57)

The life he has lived only becomes apparent through the trajectory of his dissolution and his return to the sea. One can see that there is something baptismal about this return. Something like a relinquishment of control and an acceptance of one’s reality and fate that enables a fuller recognition, like Jekyll, who says of his other self, ‘But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I who sicken and freeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall

[124] Ibid., 9.
[125] Ibid., 9.
[126] Ibid., 9.

the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him.'[127]

Interestingly, Onega links what she terms as 'artificial reversion' in both *Lighthousekeeping* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.* She determines that Babel Dark's suicide, his return to the sea, is 'his own experiment in artificial reversion.'[128] As such she links Babel's act of walking into the sea to drown with the moment that Stevenson's Jekyll begins to take the potion that will ultimately reveal Mr Hyde. While I agree with the view that Dark undergoes a form of 'reversion' or overhaul of identity comparable to Dr Jekyll's, there are two problems with Onega's association of this transformation with Stevenson's text. The first being that she assumes Jekyll understands the effects his potion will have before he takes it for the first time. It assumes primary understanding. In fact, although he acknowledges that he was, 'already committed to a duplicity of life,'[129] and his scientific endeavours were centred around being able to cast off that duplicity, he states, 'as my narrative will make alas! too evident, my discoveries were incomplete.'[130] He goes on to say, in describing his first experimentation, 'yet it remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption.'[131] At the end of his narrative he puts the success of his experiment down to an 'unknown impurity' in the first draft.[132] Secondly, in equating the two literary moments of reversion Onega places the focal point of Babel's degeneration at the end of his life rather than at the moment he attacks Molly O'Rourke and turns towards Salts. If the inversion of the Dark/Lux Jekyll/Hyde relationship is followed through, then it follows that his artificial reversion becomes reliant on him in becoming a man of the cloth. Indeed, it is the change in the colour of his clothing that represents the artifice within his choice:

[127] Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* 69.
[128] Onega, 220.
[129] Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* 55.
[130] Ibid., 56.
[131] Ibid., 58.
[132] Ibid., 70.

> He was dressed all in grey, and there was no sign of his bright waistcoats and red top boots. The only thing he still wore from his former days was a ruby and emerald pin that he had bought very expensive when he first took up with Molly O'Rourke. (30)

The change in the colour of Dark's clothing marks his piety out as a performance. It is a performance that is based in a rejection of origins. It can be argued therefore that Dark represents a criticism of the established church and the violence to a person's natural sense of identity, indeed the very refusal of it that is required for the status quo to be maintained and with it the security of the social order. Julia Reid argues that Stevenson had a concern with what the lack of recognition of the truly human condition in all its variants would mean. She asserts that, 'Jekyll's problems, ... stem not from his savage instincts per se, but from his culturally informed anxiety to deny his biological heritage.' [133] Likewise for Dark what begins as 'a penance had become a responsibility' (87). Eventually his flight to Salts, which he recognises as a form of self-harm, becomes an obligation that he cannot deny.

Andermahr confirms the idea that Babel Dark is emblematic of the solidity of the lighthouse, and she also confirms the sea as symbolising the fluidity and depth of creativity. Thus, walking into the water to his death could be read as Dark's return to the fluidity and depth of creativity and away from the patriarchal solidity of a prescribed life. But she also notes how, 'the text thus works to deconstruct the binary oppositions between the lighthouse and sea, stability and fluidity, masculine and feminine.' [134] Therefore, following on from this and in considering Well's argument I would contend that his suicide illustrates the culmination of his degeneration. Just as Charlotte Brontë's Rochester must be 'disabled' to be freed from his position of lord and master, Dark must also find posthumous release from suffering. The narrative of his suicide highlights the

[133] Reid, 98.
[134] Sonya Andermahr, *Jeanette Winterson,* New British Fiction (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 114.

blurred time and space between life and death. It occurs twice. In one aspect his death had already occurred. The passage begins, 'He breathed in, wanting the cold night air, but it was salt water he breathed. His body was filled with salt water. He was drowned already' (222). Then we read, 'They waded out, they swam, they swam into the cone of light, that sank down like a dropped star' (223). 'His body was weightless now. His mind was clear. He would find her.' (223) I agree with Onega that such an ending is optimistic, that it has, 'the escapism of a wish fulfilment dream, since Babel Dark's unification and healing takes place by virtue of Silver's act of imaginative creation.'[135] But within this imagery we notice that Winterson has an affinity with another violent trope that we come across throughout all four of the texts under discussion, and that is the imagery of drowning. Dark drowns just as surely as the two thousand men in the English Channel do, the men that will then go onto drown Henri. Drowning, like falling or being buried alive all symbolic violences which Winterson uses to indicate the disrupted mental states or fears of her protagonists.

As Andermahr notes Winterson sets up her customary binary contrasts between her major protagonists, using their names to underline certain differences between them, both in terms of their character and their trajectory through the narration. In contrast to Dark's all-pervasive regression as the Reverend is his alter ego Lux but outshining them both is the endless possibility encapsulated within the orphaned figure of Silver, named after the precious metal, and like it, bright, and resistant to corrosive elements, she sparkles with a flexibility that allows her to navigate a life of change. Like Dark, Silver is closely associated with the sea and lives within the darkness of the lighthouse. But where Dark's life is bound within the construction and placement of the lighthouse itself, forever looking out to sea until his final demise, Silver is begotten from the sea by chance, and she is cast away from the town seaward to live amongst its constant movement and possibilities.

[135] Onega, 221.

This contrast also ties in with the notion that Dark's fatalism sits in opposition to Silver's ultimate adventurism. Dark is unable to fully understand or willing to accept his true nature and therefore his darkness is tied to an unnatural conformity. Yet this is not to say that Silver does not experience a darkness of her own. When she acknowledges that within her lay whole oceans, she does so with the understanding that within that experience lies darkness. As she states, 'There were two Atlantics; one outside the lighthouse and one inside me. The one inside me had no string of guiding lights' (21). In this respect Pew's telling of Dark's story truly acts as a warning to Silver. It can be argued that this warning tale can be seen as an act of lighthouse keeping, a life affirming exhortation against a living death such that Dark suffers. Pew in this moment turns from being a harbinger of death to offering light and understanding to Silver, perhaps becoming a father figure. In this way Silver's relationship to the Lighthouse, like Dark's, is secured through familial association and recognition of her ultimate inheritance of the work of lighthousekeeping itself.

Silver lives with the violence of the natural world of the sea and the violent nature of human desires and emotions in a way in which Babel Dark cannot. This essentially is because of her role as a young romantic adventurer. Like Stevenson's Jim Hawking, she is removed from the security of home through circumstance. In contrast to Dark binding himself to a role and a future prescribed for him, she baulks against Miss Pinch's exhortation for her to prepare for a future. Her freedom of action enables her to collect and create stories in her boat from all the objects she finds tossed randomly in the sea. Whereas Dark relies on the biblical tales as truth. She is fearless whilst he is wrapped up in his own fear. He is lost to himself, and she has learnt that being lost is just a new beginning. On a structural level the contrasts between these two characters underlines Stevenson's fascinations with two aspects of human psychology and the divergent ways he related them through his two different narrative forms. As Reid points out, the contrasting modes are already set, as she states, 'While his romance writings engaged

with progressivist tradition of evolutionary psychology, Stevenson was equally fascinated by its dark side, the theory of degeneration'.[136] As we have seen through the figure of Dark, by creating a composite narrative Winterson is free to create composite characters whose meanings and symbolisms flow one to the other in unpredictable and complicated ways. Like the evolutionary force of genetics, the overall meanings and concerns for these characters become unpredictable after a certain point. For instance, Onega argues that Silver is a composite of Stevenson's Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins. In this sense Winterson's Silver takes on both the romantic ideal of boyhood adventure and the essence of the errant yet adaptable romantic anti-hero of Long John Silver. But as an apprentice of Pew, mirroring the relationship between Jim and Long John Silver, she is also the harbinger of death, uncertainty, and loss. Certainly, as an adult she steals, she tricks and she dissembles her way through life, like a literary pirate. Silver operates as a thief, both of library books, and of speaking parrots, anything that marks out the beginning or an end of narrative from the perfectly written short story, to the simple uttering of a name. She asks difficult questions of the librarian, as she did Mrs Pinch when she was a child, refusing to adhere to the normal structures of society's norms and expectations. She stalks and harasses, and is eventually deemed as mad, spending time in a mental health facility. Critics have found the later parts of this novel difficult and jarring set against the tale of Babel and the younger Silver. But a reading of this text which sticks to the rule Pew set down earlier, that there is no such thing as an ending, should be considered. Romantic adventure stories require a successful denouement, a 'happy ever after' and yet, as Reid has argued, 'The supposedly universal dream of 'a quest for buried treasure' embodied in Stevenson's novel is clearly a violent and aggressive masculine fantasy…'[137] Silver is happy to set out on such a violent quest, but in defying the terms of a romantic adventure, that things end well, she gives primacy to the adventure itself and, in doing so, opens out what it is to search for a story, to create a cohesive meaning. Silver's affair with

[136] Reid, 56.
[137] Reid, 35.

her unnamed lover comes to a physical end, and yet the narrative of that moment remains with all its potentiality; as she says it becomes ‘This caught moment opening into a lifetime’ (219). She returns to the lighthouse, and we are reminded of the importance of it, not only as a beacon but also as a receptacle of stories, the stories of the saved and of the avoidance of drowning. This and its inherent mythological impact, make its final identity as a museum piece a fitting end. Finally unmanned and computerised, it is set out for visitors to view and wonder at, its role confirmed as a place of history. At the end of Winterson’s text Pew and Silver are together again, she has stayed behind after a tour of the building, and he appears with DogJim. She tells us, 'We talked all night, as though we had never gone away, as though that broken day had hinged onto this one, and the two folded together, back to back, Pew and Silver, then and now.’ (230)

Fear and suffering reside within the notion of evolution in Winterson’s novel. The novel seeks to depict and illuminate late nineteenth century, and indeed more modern, considerations and concerns around a sense of degeneration and the notion that evolutionary principles are not in and of themselves positive or negative, but inherently violent and unpredictable. Winterson offers an illustration of the ways in which synchronicity plays a part in evolutionary pathways and gives voice, as did Stevenson, to the concerns around societal constructs which seek to control and mask evolutionary trajectories. It is the sense of optimism within evolutionary development which is ultimately at stake and Dark’s character, from its first inception to his end, is one which shows us the importance of a psychological resilience and trust in the face of the ultimate dissolution of self. Although touching on a dystopian sensibility, what sets this novel apart is that its narrative refuses to descend into a pessimistic mode. As much as Babel’s discovery on the cliff, following the fall of his dog, is one of terror and concern, his loss of faith is one whereby the terrifying concept of humanity’s insignificance contains the seed of hope which he chooses not to take. The dog’s fall mirrors his own psychological fall and the fall in paradise, but the knowledge gained becomes the potential source of new opportunities

because human beings were once themselves the new opportunity. What sets us apart is not a unique relation with an all-powerful God but one of language and narrative and for Winterson, the storytelling is not related to those stories which have a beginning, middle and end, but stories that are passed on, creating relationships with each other and between those who tell them. To be a Lighthouse keeper in this regard is to eschew any romantic notions of neat endings where the adventure is complete, and a settled peace ensues, but instead it is to co-exist within the constant and violent flux of narrative. The individual is, 'here, there, not here, not there, swirling like specks of dust, claiming for ourselves the rights of the universe. Being important, being nothing, being caught in lives of our own making that we never wanted' (133). *Lighthousekeeping* in this sense becomes an evolutionary enactment of literary development, through Victorian realism to modernism and on towards the postmodern, as Gavin Keulks states, 'it smuggles these realist characteristics across its modern borders, redrawing its metaphorical map.'[138] In the way in which at the end of *Lighthousekeeping*, the figure of Silver, mirrors the figure of Henri in *The Passion*, alone, solitary and visited by ghosts it also extends its vision back further towards an eighteenth century sensibility, ever reflecting back to what came before. It also becomes an act of compassion, whereby we save ourselves and each other through stories that redeem or inspire us, support, or vanquish us in an unending and violent rhythm.

[138] Keulks, 152.

Violent Reclamation in *The Daylight Gate*

Published in 2012, T*he Daylight Gate* is Jeanette Winterson's retelling of the events leading up to and including the Lancashire witch trials and executions of the early seventeenth century. Placing this text alongside *The Passion* (1987) and *Lighthousekeeping* (2004), one can see that Winterson's core interest in writing against the historic male narratives that have depicted women now becomes a more vivid and direct attack. It was originally commissioned by a revived Hammer company, of Hammer Horror fame, and published around the four hundredth anniversary of the events which took place at Pendle Hill. As befits a text which sits under the auspices of the Hammer brand, it does not disappoint in its depiction of gothic horrors and as such *The Daylight Gate* is perhaps Winterson's most viscerally violent text.

I will argue in this chapter that at its core, the text attempts an occupation of the space created by those mostly phallocentric discourses which have permeated the narrative of the Pendle witches since even prior to the trials themselves, and how violent language and the violent application of male power over female subjectivity and social status enabled this to occur. But this is not to say that the text seeks to develop a core female narrative as an overriding alternative or contradiction to these texts. Nor does it attempt to soften or reverse those established notions of the dangerous female; instead, Winterson's narrative is an attempt to forcefully equalise the ways in which these narratives subjectify such women, to occupy the same literary space, and luxuriate in the possibilities that become present by standing alongside it.

Typically for Winterson, the direct sources for her text are wide-ranging in their scope and include historical records, theatrical texts, religious tracts, and legal accounts, all of which are male-authored. In opposition to this Winterson places witchcraft, generally viewed as a female enterprise, even given that in the historical case of Pendle, two of the accused and executed were men. In this chapter I will show how Winterson actively engages with

and over-writes these prior male narratives about women, by injecting into them a fictional account of the same women from a female and feminist perspective. I will argue that by giving them their own voices and an account of their experiences, Winterson allows those women to challenge those base narratives, and their assumptions whilst maintaining the power of their presence. By doing this she not only holds up a critical viewpoint into the recorded histories but also offers a commentary on those remaining vestiges of patriarchal power that continue to this day. In underlining how *The Daylight Gate,* represents these female figures as being placed within the power structures of both the historical and the fictional, I will explore how Winterson's attempt in this task becomes itself a violent textual challenge to those texts and their arguments by using their own linguistic weaponry against them.

The text merges together all of Winterson's past preoccupations with literary violence. For within it we have a disrupted idea of motherhood, the heat of absorbing passion, the weight of past narratives and imagery, the force of a dominant masculine archetype and the rebellion against it. As such it is an aggressive text, and Winterson's narrative aggression not only sits within the harassment of the women but also in the championing of and relish in their violent responses. A sense of injustice underlies its depiction of the poverty and debasement of the least powerful. There is a perceivable empathy and an urge to advocacy that is strongly present through its use of narratorial satire and the sure-footed campaigning undertaken by its main character, Alice Nutter.

Politically the text appears to correspond with an adaptation of Frantz Fanon's argument, expounded at the beginning of his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), that in order to defeat the colonist, the colonised have to take on the violence of their tormentors:

> The violence which has ruled over the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the custom of dress and

> external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters.[139]

By viewing women in the role of the colonised we can see how a similar trajectory of history can be gleaned from within the feminist cause. The feminist cause, in its initial inception was mainly championed by middle class women and has been viewed often as an inherently passive campaign. However in her *Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere* (2019), an essay on the women's movement alongside Emily Pankhurst's speech 'Freedom or Death,' Winterson states, 'In Manchester, working women more used to the rough and tumble of life than their middle-class sisters, weren't afraid of the Pankhursts' call to go militant.'[140] Such militancy proved either to be against property or violence towards the self and as Winterson explains in her essay, more violence was used against them to support the status quo. Fanon argues that decolonisation is, 'a programme of complete disorder,'[141] and it is such a disorder that the suffragettes created.

Such a disorder is what Winterson's novel enacts within its own structural violence. Again, she uses a fractured and disrupted textual space, but here it is strewn with multi-layered images of dismembered and disintegrating bodies and minds, with a plot which careers back and forth across time frames, unfolding in a series of jumps across the real and fantastic, between retrospection and introspection. Winterson anchors her structure to an originating historical point of reference and in an obvious way the text is a literary response to Thomas Potts's documentation of the August Assizes, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* which, published in 1613 was, she tells

[139] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 31.
[140] Jeanette Winterson, *Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2018), 7.
[141] Ibid., 27.

us, 'the first witch trial to be documented.'[142] In her own brief introduction of the facts, Winterson provides a sparse history:

> The Trial of the Lancashire Witches, 1612, is the most famous of the English witch trials. The suspects were taken to Lancaster Castle in April 1612 and executed following the August Assizes. The Well Dungeon can be visited and Lancaster Castle is open to visitors. (vii)

Bar a few other clarifications of people and places which are historically placed within the narrative, this is as much of the history that Winterson is content to define as secure. Within the reference to the dungeon are suggestions that the trial and the witches themselves have been reduced to tourist attractions within the castle grounds, like the lighthouse in my previous chapter. Absent is the recognition that female violence through witchcraft was married in the early modern period with notions of spiritual and political threat, initially through the writings of Kramer and then again reviewed under the auspices of the Reformation to coincide with the fear of Catholicism. Winterson's text re-writes and underlines the context of lawlessness which was associated with Lancashire through its combined association with those indulging in magic and the gunpowder plotters and to this end Christopher Southwell renamed Southworth, carries the scars left from his previous arrest for the plot into Winterson's text.

These were contemporary concerns of James I, and the Court was both fuelled by his own personal fear of witchcraft and a wider political unease with religious dissent in the outer regions of his reign. The continued practice of the old religion of Catholicism and the age-old practices of the cunning woman or man were both equal to political treachery and their presence together represents a malign conflation. As Winterson notes: 'Witchery popery popery witchery, as Potts puts it, is how the seventeenth century English

[142] Jeanette Winterson, T*he Daylight Gate* (London: Arrow Books in assoc. with Hammer, 2012), vii. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically.

understood matters treasonable and diabolical' (vii). Even, in more modern times, the key ingredient to our celebration of Halloween remains the figure of the witch, as symbol of evil, and whilst she does not allude to Halloween directly, Winterson, by recalling the Gunpowder Plot and its celebration on the fifth of November, invokes two national celebrations together and exposes their associations as simultaneous occurrences. Fires, explosions, pointy hats, and incantations abound.

The renunciation of Catholicism in history, itself could be seen as an act of phallocentric desire, not only did Henry the Eighth break with Rome for him to be able to divorce, but the abandonment of Catholicism also saw a denial of the female as represented by the figure of the Virgin Mary. If there is a fear born from the notion that not only do women refuse to take on the role given to them by society, but they actively subvert it, it follows that there is a similar fear regarding those priests who continued to practice their religion. It would not be stretching logic too far to see a similar statement to that quoted from Madaj-Strang regarding witches, being made about Jesuit priests in the early modern period: that they placed themselves 'in between the world of people and demons'.[143] With Winterson underlining the point that Catholicism and witchcraft were conflated as heretical practices, it might not be too simplistic a notion to argue that Winterson conveys the idea of the witch being the feminine representation of political rebellion. Her use of Alice Nutter and Christopher Southern as doubles to each other, allows her to converge and manipulate these symbolic meanings within the text. As it stands, she diminishes the argument of a patriarchal attack on witches as women and widens it towards an understanding of overall religious and therefore political control.

When she states of Potts's text, 'It is supposedly an eye-witness account' (vii.), she alerts us to the fact that Potts was not merely acting as an impartial court reporter but that he was also writing within an already established misogynist tradition about witches and

[143] Adrianna Madaj-Strang, *Which Face of Witch: Self Representations of Women as Witches in Works of Contemporary Writers* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2015), 229.

witchcraft. Thomas Potts's historical account of the trial, in this regard was foregrounded by the writings of Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum* which was first published in 1487. Kramer, a discredited Catholic priest, wrote his tract to outline that witchcraft was a dangerous heresy equal to any other form of political treason. Malcolm Gaskill, an historian specialising in witchcraft, its history and present-day practice, asserts that Kramer's writings were, "part object-lesson about sin, part millennial jeremiad, part febrile sexual fantasy, part early modern horror film.'[144] Kramer's views became intrinsic to the subsequent notions of witchcraft as ubiquitous. Gaskill humorously goes on, 'In the dead of night, on a hillside near you, women respecting no other master but Satan, congregate to pay homage, to gorge and fornicate, to hatch evil schemes.'[145]

Whilst Potts and his interpretation of events become something of a focus for Winterson's opprobrium, and whilst she undermines the veracity of his account within her introduction, by her references to James I and his *Daemonology* of 1597 and William Perkins' *Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft,* which was first published in 1608, she goes on to overlay her text with this contemporary historical and cultural context. But interestingly, the narrative that most fully underpins much of her text is not alluded to in any obvious way. At no point in her introduction does Winterson mention William H Ainsworth's novel *The Lancashire Witches: A Romance of Pendle Forest,* which was first published serially in 1849 and which continues the misogynous trajectory. Yet her text importantly responds to and is an alternative vision of this earlier work both in the way it manipulates its characterisations and its structure. As such it is useful to look at this in some depth as it allows us to pinpoint the ways in which Winterson operates a violent intertextuality and how she interjects other views and narrative twists into this particular male narrative, with the effect of altering both its sensibilities and its focus.

[144] Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33.
[145] Ibid., 33.

Ainsworth's historical romance is set deep within the background of the Reformation and includes a lengthy introductory passage concerning the Abbot of Whalley by way of explaining the religious imperatives at work. Ainsworth's depictions of a ducking and the burning of babies are placed within an overriding melodrama of family curses, issues of doubtful parentage and questions of whether a woman is born or made marriageable or indeed whether she is born or made a witch.

Such male violence as he portrays is nothing compared to the everlasting threat of 'the ladies of the county,' who remain as irresistible as they are deadly and at the end of his tale Ainsworth warns, 'all who are afraid of a bright eye and a blooming cheek, and who desire to adhere to a bachelor's condition –to such I should say, "Beware of the Lancashire Witches."'[146] All threat and fear thus emanates from the figure of the sexually-attractive woman, the source of all violence against male equilibrium. The witch, as symbolic of the undesirable other, or more pertinently the desirable other, is no longer a figure who acts necessarily as a religious and therefore political heretic but goes on to become associated with and contrasted to the idealised woman, a woman untouchable and distant but perhaps more respectable, certainly more marriageable.

Gilbert and Gubar speak specifically about views of and about women in nineteenth-century literature and their arguments can be directly applied to Ainsworth's work. They argue that it was Milton's *Paradise Lost* which cemented the foundations of a phallocentric discourse. Milton's retelling of the *Book of Genesis* and its notion of the fallen Eve was written in 1667, fifty-five years after Pendle but with attitudes and beliefs that appear to have changed little. The temptation of Eve and her succumbing to the serpent's temptations is in Milton's work the fundamental cause of the loss of innocence and the entry of evil into paradise. It becomes the basis for all problems associated with the expression of all sexuality, and particularly to female sexuality. Gilbert and Gubar

[146] William Harrison Ainsworth, *The Lancashire Witches* (Manchester: E. J. Moreton 1976), 572.

recognise that a definition of womanhood developed from this time which was based on a dialectic binary which held up an idealised woman as the norm against a woman that was to be feared. They state, 'If we define a woman [...] as indomitably earthly yet somehow supernatural, we are defining her as a witch or monster, a magical creature of the lower world who is a kind of antithetical mirror image of an angel.'[147]

Following the path of Gilbert and Gubar is also useful here because much of Winterson's text speaks to the difficulties of creating a non-masculine literary language within a system of phallocentric discourse. The implication of Milton's poem for authorship was that only the male figure, made in God's image, held the authority to create, or to author. As they state, 'Milton's myth of origins, summarising a long misogynistic tradition, clearly implied this notion to many women writers who directly or indirectly recorded anxieties about his paradigmatic patriarchal poem.'[148] It is from within and against this sense that Winterson signals her recognition of the feminist imperative within writing.

The idea of women using their creativity outside of their prescribed biology, whether that be through the harnessing of otherworldly powers, through the making and selling of dyes or herbal cures or in writing, becomes aligned in Winterson's text with the notion of narrative control over one's own subjectivity. Judith Butler argues that 'the feminist claim that the personal is political suggests, in part, that subjective experience is not only structured by existing political arrangements, but effects and structures those arrangements in turn.'[149] In a sense, one has to rework a subject out of prior male conceptions and for Winterson, engaging with prior male texts, including those written and directed within the Hammer Films brand, is an act of engaging and affecting those

[147] Sandra M. Gilbert & S Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press 1979), 28.
[148] Ibid., 188.
[149] Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40, no. 4 (1988), 519-531 (522). https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893

structures. Particularly when engaging with those male texts about women, it becomes an act of questioning and reclaiming.

But it is not only these direct narratives about witches that Winterson seeks to question and reclaim. Within *The Daylight Gate* we also have echoes of a literary canon which stretches back to Ovid and encompasses the works of Shakespeare. *The Tempest* (1610-11) features to a great extent, in that it is played for the magistrate Roger Nowell within the action of Winterson's text and occurs alongside a scene of trance-like visions experienced by Alice Nutter, Shakespeare's play of magic and the supernatural, offering a backdrop to the atmosphere of this moment. Most obviously the witches within Macbeth are called to mind in the confusion of John Law's mind when at the beginning of Winterson's text he cannot make out whether there are two or three witches taunting him. The initial focus for Winterson's retelling of the tale immediately alerts us to the use of such dramatic, visual imagery and the consequent tangential physical, mental, and spiritual violence which it evokes.

She steers away from Ainsworth's romantic introduction and scene-setting and begins with a situation which more or less follows the historical narrative. The pedlar, John Law, crossing Pendle Hill at dusk, comes across Alizon Device and Old Demdike. Frightened by the nature of the place he is in, the time of day, and his recognition of the women in front of him and what he believes they represent, he refuses to stop and sell Alizon Device pins. It is getting dark, she taunts him. Driven by fear he violently pushes her away and kicks her to the ground. As he runs away, she curses him and seemingly sets her familiar onto him as he is confronted by her Grandmother Old Demdike laughing madly and carrying a dead carcass. Their laughter seems to multiply their number and call forth the devil. John runs on to the nearest village hostelry where he is taken ill and subsequently dies. So begins events that will result in the execution of the witches following the August Assizes. Having been made aware of the history and brooding nature of the local area by Winterson's brief introductory passage, the reader also comes across 'the witch Alizon

Device' (3), as a woman who fully fits the physical and stereotypical identity of a witch and the narrator has no qualms about identifying her as such. Alizon's goading of the pedlar supports her fearful image, and she willingly flaunts her identification as a witch to terrify John Law. Her need for pins underlines her suspected craft. Her teasing offer of kisses is a flaunting of the sexual power attributed to one of her kind, 'wheedling, smiling, flouncing her skirt. She wanted pins from his pack: *Kiss me, fat pedlar*' (3, original emphasis). A woman's linguistic violence is then mediated by the other's idea of her. She becomes a fulfilment of the abject, the horror of uncontrolled female power.

In this way Winterson asks a similar set of questions to the more recent feminist interpretations of witches and their treatment. For the most part feminist arguments have focused on the inherent misogyny to be found within the historical discourse.[150] In her very useful account of literary witches *Which Face of Witch* (2015), Adriana Madaj-Strang recognises that Winterson works across two particular areas of discussion in her text. On the one hand she argues that Winterson shows a concurrence with a radical feminist reading of women who are 'the female victims of the patriarchal misogyny that attempts to subdue women to men's wills, eradicating those who do not obey.'[151] She further states: 'For centuries a witch represented the hostile and feared "other" on the edge of human society, placing herself "in between" the world of people and demons.'[152] Winterson does not disabuse the reader of this seventeenth-century understanding of witchcraft. From the beginning of her text, we are aware that it is the malicious patriarchy that she wishes to expose and as such she depicts the women of the text as under attack from a misogynistic fear of women and an enthusiasm for witch-finding. On the obverse side of this argument, Madaj-Strang alerts us to the fact that Winterson also incorporates into her text Diane Purkiss's line of reasoning against using a reductive argument of victimhood. In *The Witch in History* (2005) Purkiss cautions against the creation of the witch figure that supports

[150] Gilbert and Gubar's ideas centre particularly on this notion.
[151] Madaj-Strang, 224.
[152] Ibid., 229.

the 'myth of the Burning Times',[153] especially as it is used as a feminist battle cry. She argues that not only does it create a distancing effect, but it also leads to a reductive argument which fails to acknowledge a normalised use of magical practices at that time. If one depicts witches merely through the violent and misogynistic oppression that they experienced, one further disallows them their own subjective choices. What becomes apparent throughout *The Daylight Gate* is that such subjective choices are, and to an extent can only ever be, mediated through an overriding phallocentric language. Winterson shows the primacy of this patriarchal symbolism, this language and its repeated rebuttal, being played out in a cycle of relations one to the other: in a dance like repetition of violent words and violent acts.

At first glance and most simplistically, within this text the different ways in which violence is performed operates across the genders, with female violence being vocalised and male violence enacted. The woman, or witch, uses language as a series of threats and curses. Gaskill informs us that,

> Witchcraft was rooted in language as well as feeling, and words could constitute witchcraft without need of any act to have occurred. Speech, seen as a female counterpart to male physical force, possessed destructive or otherwise transformative power- the overt imprecation or the inference of meaning from innocuous but ambiguous remarks.[154]

In Winterson's text the women who disrupt the security of male subjectivity and power through language are preconceived as witches, defined as such by men like John Law and Tom Peeper because they are always already seen as a threat to male power. Here, force of language necessarily becomes reliant on the female position as feared other and therefore associated with a threat even before any words are spoken. The power of a hex

[153] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations,* 1st. edn (London: Routledge, 1996), 10.
[154] Gaskill, 40.

lies in the fear of any curse being uttered at all. If we return to Winterson's later essay on the suffragettes, she argues that 'Force, it seems, only becomes violence when it threatens the status quo.'[155] Again, in this sense the women are already violent. This is also a view with which Ainsworth's Alice Nutter concurs with when she asserts that Potts' witch-finding activities 'will make more witches than it will find.'[156] Their victimhood in this regard is always assured. Seen from this angle, the irony in Ainsworth's own last paragraph, warning against those Lancashire ladies, is not lost.

More so within Winterson's text the Demdike and Chattox families recognise the definition of witch both as an identifier of power as well as an insult and accusation. What Winterson notices here is the accusation and counter accusation of an embittered sisterhood, where women, either through fear or desperation, trade on malicious words and gossip to maintain their own safety from the authorities. As James Sharp outlines for us from his understanding of the original cases; 'The investigations had reached critical mass and neighbours came forward in large numbers to tell the authorities of acts of witchcraft which had occurred sometimes many years before, their statements sometimes revealing how witchcraft suspicions were enmeshed in local feuds and rivalries.'[157] Language and more directly malicious language between women therefore becomes key to the support of an overarching misogyny.

The reader first comes across the women as a group after Old Demdike and Alizon have been arrested. They congregate at Malkin Tower, another of Winterson's re-imagined yet factually based places of isolation, loneliness and potential madness, 'a squat stone round of a building, soundly constructed and strangely placed, alone and remote, with no purpose anyone could remember, and no inhabitants anyone ever knew but for the family they called Demdike' (26). Here, Elizabeth Device not only defines Alice as a witch but is

[155] Winterson, *Courage*, 12.
[156] Ainsworth, 96.
[157] James Sharpe, 'Introduction: The Lancashire Witches in Historical Context', in *The Lancashire Witches Histories and Stories,* ed. by Robert Poole (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 6.

thoroughly convinced of Alice Nutter's superiority in magical matters, she tells her, 'You have the gift of magick and you learned it from the Queen's own magician, John Dee' (29). Alice herself refutes this. Yet she exhibits, through her use of age-defying creams, and magic mirrors, her ability to be transported elsewhere in trancelike states, and her congress with the supernatural, to have both the abilities and sensibilities of a witch. Set upon by the group at Malkin Tower, Alice's only recourse is to do what Tom Peeper accuses her of, by 'taking the witch's part' (36). In this way Winterson agrees with Purkiss that a one-dimensional and anachronous feminist discussion of the treatment of those accused of witchcraft may fall short of allowing us a clearer view of who they were as individual people and how they interacted with each other. Gaskill also argues that the point about female victimisation 'shouldn't be taken too far, it definitely doesn't mean that witch-hunting was a masculine conspiracy against uppity women, as some have claimed.'[158] His argument is that early-modern women were more likely to be accused of witchcraft as they were considered the weaker sex. As such, rather than being inherently evil or difficult, they were presumed to be more open to Satan's allure. He goes on to argue that 'the liminality of certain female life stages- the unmarried adolescent, the mother during childbirth, the menopausal wife or widow- might in people's minds place women in the company of witches.'[159] His argument rests on the way a controlling, Miltonian idea was used to prevent such women from succumbing to their own inherent weakness.

At the beginning of her novel then, we have Winterson upholding and giving voice to both the traditional identity of the witch and both sides of the contemporary considerations of them. Yet at the same time, there is also a sense here in which Winterson's text converges all of these identifications together. By such close comparative placement, she further destabilises their positions, thus exposing the intrinsic difficulties held within each of them.

[158] Gaskill, 39.
[159] Ibid., 74.

Winterson's Alice raises a further question in her discussion with Roger Nowell, when she states: 'If they think they are witches does that make them so? They will not be escaping Malkin Tower by broomstick however much Master Potts wants to see them fly over Pendle Hill' (46). The need to define and to hold that definition secure is at stake here for the women themselves. Both the witches as well as their detractors would wish to believe in and support the continuation of the definition. Fanon talks about the importance of maintaining such an identity as it pertains to the native populations of a colony in ways that may shed some light. He states:

> The atmosphere of myth and magic frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were an identification paper. […] Believe me, the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers; and in consequence the problem is no longer that of keeping oneself right with the colonial world and its barbed wire entanglements, but of considering three times before urinating, spitting, or going out into the night. [160]

Maintaining the identity of the women as witches, gives them power and as such becomes another way of survival, because it gives recourse to and at the same time continuously enhances the known 'traditions and the history of the community' of the women and how it fits within the wider social group. Such traditions secured the women a status which was not built on the usual paths to political power or money, and regardless of their position as outcasts still enabled them leverage from which they could gain support from the group they sat on the outskirts of. We have seen in a previous chapter how Winterson operates a similar retention of disputed lesbian tropes within the figures of Villanelle and The Queen of Hearts in *The Passion*. In the same way as these two figures, the witches, being set

[160] Fanon, 43.

aside from the absolute hegemony of the community meant that they could also use their identity as a rebellion against the sanctioned behaviour of church and state.

Winterson's Pendle shares similarities with the environment of Ainsworth's Pendle, with Winterson directly lifting some of the description of the area from him. Pendle Hill itself is written in both works as a bleak and forbidding place. Ainsworth describes it thus: 'Dreary was the prospects on all sides. Black Moor, bleak fell, straggling forest, intersected with sullen streams as black as ink, with here and there a small tarn, or moss pool, with waters of the same hue.'[161] This passage forms part of an extensive description of the surrounding area that also includes several towns that can be seen from its height, nearby houses and settlements, and people going about their business in the distance. Even so, Ainsworth returns to the fact that, 'All else was heathy waste, morass and wood.'[162]

Whilst Ainsworth's text is vibrant with romantic and lengthy descriptions of people and places, large gatherings, and abundant nature, Winterson's environment changes the tone to one of violent brooding menace. She removes from her landscape much to do with human habitation and offers an even sparser description presented merely in list form. Pendle Hill becomes, 'low and massy, flat topped, brooding, disappeared in mists, treacherous with bogs, run through with fast flowing streams plunging into waterfalls crashing down into unknown pools' (1). Later, when Alice is on Pendle Hill in a vision, Winterson reworks Ainsworth's previous description, again reducing the sentence to a list with a small potent addition at the end. 'Black moor, bleak fell, straggling forest, sullen streams, a small tarn, a moss pool, heathy waste, morass and wood. Driving rain' (94). On the surface this manoeuvre allows Winterson to use her a descriptive economy that creates a grey monotone, but it also signifies a deeper reclamation and I argue that such intertextuality can be viewed as an act of covert textual violence. By using Ainsworth's words in this way, Winterson not only signifies her textual links to his male narrative of

[161] Ainsworth, 3.
[162] Ainsworth, 4.

Pendle, thereby adding the weight of Ainsworth's novel onto her text, but also enacts a literary reclamation and reassignment, stripping away Ainsworth's romanticism and replacing it with a darker female gothic. Certainly, in this text, this creation of a gothic landscape owes as much to Emily Brontë's description of the moors around *Wuthering Heights* (1848) as it does Ainsworth's busy rural community, 'On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost.'[163] In Winterson's text there is no sun and generally only subdued colour; most of the action takes place in the dark or in fog, visibility is at a premium. What there is of light, is mostly attributed to that of the daylight gate or 'the liminal hour' (3), at dusk, itself a forbidding no man's land, being the province of female knowledge and power. Where there is colour, it is closely associated with violence and horror. Again, we can note across the three texts studied so far that Winterson sets great store on levels of gloom or darkness and its tackiness as a physical presence and how it acts as a dynamic entity in its own right.

These tropes from the nineteenth-century gothic are also referenced in the buildings that are dark even in daylight, with secret passageways, priest holes, hidden entrances, dungeons, and rats. Winterson uses these devices to both shatter and then reconstruct the belief systems of the seventeenth century, pulling them both backwards into images of the medieval, the barbaric dark ages, away from the coming period of enlightenment and again forward to a period where the gothic becomes familiar territory. Winterson's text then picks up and alters the male narratives that are its source and reorientates them towards a female cultural and literary history.

In much the same way, Winterson also reclaims the central interest in Alice Nutter from Ainsworth's novel. The figure of the land-owning widow who was indicted along with the Chattox and Demdike families in both novels, must overcome the incongruity of being amongst those accused and found guilty. Historically, Alice Nutter was indeed a

[163] Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. by David Daiches (London, Penguin Classics, 1985), 51.

propertied widow who had independent wealth and came from a landed family. She shared neither the poverty nor the social exclusion of the witches that she was eventually tried with. For both authors, the explanation for this incongruity becomes centred on a hidden or alternative identity.

For Ainsworth's Alice, the incongruity is overcome by characterising her as dangerously duplicitous. Far from being a mere widow who has an unseemly dispute over land with the local magistrate, in a secret double life she becomes a supreme witch amongst witches, the leader of the coven. Her maternal link to Alizon Demdike is a complication that commits her to the rescue of Alizon's status whilst her secret activities remain just that, a secret. In a twist on the ideas of the changeling, whereby a fairy or witch steals a baby and leaves in its place one of its own, Alizon Demdike is the replacement baby for Elizabeth Demdike, whose own child has been destroyed by being thrown onto the fire. It is the murderous actions of a twisted and unregulated patriarchy in the guise of Richard Nutter and Jem Device, thinking that the baby was Alice's child through adultery. For Ainsworth then, the patriarchal imperative remains pivotal to the narrative and, in this instance, even whilst it has been so very destructive, the male version of history is ultimately upheld. Ainsworth's discourses on class, which in his novel operate through ideas such as birth status and marriage suitability, are similarly set against a sense of the unruliness and barbarity of the mob, nevertheless led by the authority figures of Potts and the Beadle. They capture Nance and bind her in a trial for witchcraft. Inherent in this violent scene is a criticism of the impunity and coarseness with which they act, but again Ainsworth's narrative arc ultimately re-establishes patriarchal authority to its previous status.

Specifically with regards to the witches of Pendle, in either text, it is the fear or abhorrence shown towards women who strive for a self-determination and self-definition on their own terms, regardless of their social standing, which causes the most opprobrium. Indeed, for many feminist thinkers, this stripping away of female subjectivity through the figure of the

witch has come to signify and illustrate the way women's subjectivity is treated generally. Returning again to Gilbert and Gubar, we note that, 'Excluded from the human community, even from the semi-divine communal chronicles of the Bible, the figure of Lilith represents the price women have been told they must pay for attempting to define themselves.'[164] Lilith according to some scholars is the first woman in Eden who refuses to obey and then runs away from Adam and becomes a demon. In Jewish mythology she is seen as a night demon who haunts the desolate spaces of Eden, screeching like an owl. It is in this sense that the central figure of Alice Nutter holds most clearly the coalescence of Winterson's consideration of gender, religion, social position, and sexuality.

At the very beginning of *The Daylight Gate,* Winterson immediately dismisses the Demdike and Chattox women as 'riff-raff,' when compared to Alice Nutter, and questions why the latter was involved at all (viii). In part her answer to the incongruity of Alice, like Ainsworth, is to assume the latter's idea of her witchlike nature, a nature that Alice herself refuses to define and which encompasses both an intense reaction to her own personal experiences, history and her trancelike states and the breaking of social and educational boundaries for women of that period. Winterson's Alice Nutter is transformed from a secret Queen of Witches to a woman educated at the very beginning of scientific enquiry, a woman who has made her fortune creating a mystical dye by royal appointment and who exhibits Catholic sympathies. It is this wealth which enables Winterson's Alice to live as a rich widow, ostensibly a convenient masquerade. Unlike Ainsworth's Alice, Winterson establishes this woman as childless, no longer a concerned mother, she nevertheless becomes a concerned benefactor, and as such becomes an entirely threatening champion of the local women.

For Winterson's Alice, the hidden life is not one of maternity but a past love affair with Elizabeth Southern who we later learn is none other than Old Demdike. It is through this

[164] Gilbert and Gubar, 35.

association that she also becomes central to the symbolic violence of the text. Lynda Hart notes in her *Fatal Women* (1994) that:

> The violent woman is not an exceptional figure. Rather she is a handy construct that serves white patriarchal heterosexuality. She is essential to this discourse and functions most usefully as a specialised and hence containable category- The Lesbian- who, like The Woman, does not exist but most certainly has some useful properties for the patriarchal symbolic as well as some debilitating effects on it.[165]

It is the explicit sexuality of Winterson's Alice in this sense that underlines her difference from the Alice drawn by Ainsworth. In addition, Alice is committed to the protection of, and love for, a Catholic priest. Hers then is a sexuality that rejects the confines of both patriarchal and lesbian restrictions. This, along with her perceived class, creates a distancing contrast with the poverty-stricken group of women whom she houses on her land and who she seeks to protect, whilst flirting with the local representation of legal and politic power in the guise of Roger Nowell. Kristeva, in a discussion regarding women's relation to power, points out that women who achieve what she describes as economic and narcissistic advantages become staunch supporters of the status quo because, 'it results from a counter investment (in the psychoanalytic sense) of an initially denied symbolic order'.[166] Certainly to an extent we can see this in the figure of Winterson's Alice. In this way, Ainsworth's text yet again undergoes revision and is reframed into a more current idea of gender politics.

As Winterson points out with regard to the suffragettes, male force was not recognised as violence in the same way that women's rebellion was. In her novel the threat of female violence is given primacy over the actual violence undertaken by men. And male violence here is brutal, physical, and sexual; it relies on the use of weapons and implements

[165] Lynda Hart, *Fatal Women*: *Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression* (London: Routledge, 1994), 17.

including instruments of torture, fists, penises, or pens. With this violence the men seek to control and become the arbiters of language and wider discourse. The actions of the local constable Hargreaves and his sidekick Tom Peeper expose an easily recognisable and familiar patriarchal power. Following the flight and death of John Law, we witness an attack on Sarah Device by Tom Peeper and Hargreaves. Here we have an enactment of male violence against what the men perceive as an always already violent woman. Peeper asserts: 'This one's the Demdike witch that got away' (9). Sarah's role as victim is one of practiced sufferance which she combines with a verbal violence. We can note here, her similarity to the French sex-workers in *The Passion.* Likewise, her verbal rejection of male power is similar to theirs, however her curses and insults are actively aggressive, indicative of a gendered violence of language which seeks to attack the ego of her tormentors, diminishing their subjectivity as they attempt to diminish her. Of the dead pedlar John Law she states, 'Three women never ran after John Law in his life. He is as ugly as a boiled head' (10), a chilling comment considering the actual boiled head that we see later. When Sarah refutes that they have any evidence of witchcraft she is hit across the mouth. Physical violence is used literally to silence her.

During Sarah's rape, a young boy Robert happens to stumble upon the scene and is coaxed by Peeper into kissing her. Sarah's response is to initially encourage him until she then bites his tongue off. Quite directly, then, whilst she actively gains power through physical violence; her actions signify her own visceral ability to control male language. Symbolically Robert's means of communication, his language, his vocal access to subjectivity and his ability to provide witness are removed. Notwithstanding the horror of this scene, what begins as a young boy's tongue bitten off in an act of defiance, becomes the tongue which will speak its magical wisdom to a horrified Alice Nutter later in the novel. A young boy is rendered mute whilst a decomposing head sewn onto a cloth poppet becomes the vocal entity of a soothsaying power. Language becomes violently transferred away from the natural to the supernatural.

In a very real sense this rape scene has echoes of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. This Shakespearean revenge tragedy, which has Ovid as its source material, reveals the act of revenge to be the cause of moral collapse. Here again, is a strong indication of how Winterson not only subverts male language from within the text but also reclaims male literary provenance. Winterson's text will also contain a plot that involves a thwarted discourse and a violent movement towards a failed Ovidian revenge, but within Winterson's text the main protagonists are women. It is a woman already identified as a witch that begins it, 'They would duck her after this. They would kill her. Today, tomorrow, the next day' (12). This is a woman with nothing to lose, a woman who causes the loss of a tongue, not here to thwart the telling of a crime, but as an act of retaliatory rage. It is a violent act on an innocent, but its symbolism is directed at her oppressors. She knows that they will encourage the boy to bear a false witness to her situation so it would be best if he could not speak at all. Once Alice Nutter returns Sarah Device to Malkin Tower, revenge becomes disseminated through the whole of the coven This family of women, this matriarchy goes onto multiply the sense of injustice and transforms this revenge with magic, turning it from an attempt to release their imprisoned kinsfolk, into an act of supernatural rebellion. It is a magic which far from gaining justice for the women will ultimately harm their cause and will lead to the family's destruction.

But there is still room for male physical violence within the witches' sphere because it too takes place within the matriarchy of the coven when Jem Device prevents Alice from leaving the meeting at Malkin Tower, standing, 'behind her at the door. He was leaning on it, a rough axe in his hand' (28). He goes on to attack her with a knife in order to make her talk. He is frustrated with what he perceives as a weakness in his mother Elizabeth's attempt to convince Alice into producing a spell that would save her mother, Old Demdike and Alizon. The increasingly violent calls of the gathering to 'Make her do it, make her swear' (30), are ineffective. Crying that she, 'is not too powerful to bleed' (31), he slashes her arm. His actions underline his belief that physical violence can always trump any other

power based on language alone and calls into question whether her swearing and her spells would be enough. Alice in order to save herself from the cannibalistic group that falls upon her to lick her blood, assumes the authority that they demand and in turn cuts ‘a shallow bleeding pentagram on his bare chest’ (31), with a cry of ‘Feed on him’ (32), she not only secures her own escape route, exhibiting the power of language when it marries with the expectations of the group, she becomes the powerful witch that they need her to be. At the same time she also reassumes the power of her independent social status.

As we can see then, Winterson shows across her text that these positionings, created and disrupted through verbal and physical violence, are not always as clear cut and certainly not stable as the characters jostle for supremacy over each other. Jem’s physicality does not prevent him from being manipulated by Peeper’s language of deceit, any more than it could stand up against Alice’s ritualistic violence towards him. In that moment he is proven weak in the face of powerful words and likewise he is dupped by Peepers false promises in return for information. His physicality does not help him when he escapes house arrest from Malkin Tower by dreaming himself to be a hare. He had pleaded with Alice for her to help him, ‘hunted as the hare he dreamt himself to be’ (66).

Earlier, when Alice Nutter had happened upon Tom Peeper preparing to cut Sarah Device’s throat after raping her, she prevents it with some violence of her own, knocking Tom down with her horse, symbolically taking on the role of gallant knight and ultimately leading Sarah away as the maiden in distress. Similarly, she beats him as he attempts to prevent her leaving the tower, dashing ‘him across the shoulders with her riding crop’ (36). Her actions, whilst crossing gendered boundaries, are the actions of someone upholding the law or at least attempting to prevent the miscarriage of the power that it holds – something that Hargreaves as the embodiment of that Law is unable to do. Even as he states, ‘If she be a witch, Tom, then it must be proved according to Law and the Scripture’ (9), his words have been proven empty by his actions. Certainly, Tom’s language, for all

the authority he claims is behind it, does not exert the same level of violent power that is subscribed to Alice's language and in one vital sense her physical violence towards him lowers it further. When Roger Nowell discovers the tongue in Alice's saddle bag, Tom immediately cries that she 'took it to make a Devil's poppet,' to which she replies: 'I took it as evidence' (36), before accusing him of the assault on Sarah. The roles of power become reversed at that moment; Tom being lowered to the same status as the wheedling coven. These different violences then, are shown to have a direct and changeable impact on the status of the characters in any given situation. Winterson here uses violence to disrupt the presumedly solid social and political structures of society in general and the identity of the witch in particular. In this sense Winterson shows how anyone and indeed everyone is able to carry the label of witch in this text, as it is itself based on the shaky power paradigms of the social and the supernatural.

In two further important ways Winterson borrows from Ainsworth's novel by taking two of his figures of masculine power and manipulating their significance. Firstly, Winterson takes on and expands the notion of Faustian ideas that are found in *The Lancashire Witches*. It is from Ainsworth's novel that Winterson takes the appearance of a mysterious dark gentleman, even though dark gentlemen appear across all four of her texts under discussion. This dark gentleman has none of the frenetic greed that we find in the representation of Bonaparte in *The Passion,* and he has none of the tormented doubt found in Babel Dark in *Lighthousekeeping*. Between this incarnation of this figure and Alice, there develops a relationship which can be described as a feminisation of the Faustian myth. Ainsworth's text is one that highlights this relationship as being built on female weakness rather than agency, and Ainsworth has the Dark Gentleman appearing to Alice whilst she is in a trance-like state. For Winterson, most tellingly, it is the lustful Elizabeth Southern and not Alice Nutter, who bargains with the Dark Gentleman, a figure who, in Winterson's text, is a more violently physical presence. But he is not tall, dark, and handsome in the way that fatally attractive men are usually described within gothic

romances. Instead, he is, ‘short, handsome, deadly’ (177). He is, however, a symbol of sexual desire without bounds and he holds a promise of both rescue and threat that is found within the characterisation of Mephistopheles. Interestingly in Winterson’s text, the Dark Gentleman becomes a signifier of power that relates across genders. We see this when Winterson’s Alice is mistaken for him on several occasions, when she intercedes during Sarah Devices’ rape and when she visits Old Demdike in her cell.

Secondly, Winterson appropriates the character of Thomas Potts from Ainsworth. A disagreeable busy body, he is the embodiment of a man who seeks to shoe-horn evidence to meet the case he believes to be the most likely to see himself praised by authority. Whilst Ainsworth’s Potts is described as an irritating man whose assumptive authority is questioned, Winterson goes further and, within a satirical attack, he is revealed to be a pompous, self-proclaimed witchfinder and zealot. ‘Potts fluffed himself up inside his ruff. He was a proud little cockerel of a man; all feathers and no fight’ (17). Derided as a fool, his authoritative position is completely undermined. He becomes a signifier of a masculine imperative to the ownership of knowledge whilst being viciously undercut and reduced both by Alice and in particular Roger Nowell the Magistrate, who ‘would gladly have raised Potts up and thrown him on the fire’ (21).

Potts, in his desire to self-serve and to curry favour, fails to understand what is truly occurring within the world of the text and is only able to depend on a set of patriarchal ideas which are shown to be limited and unstable. Yet, whilst we laugh at the sideswipes made against Thomas Potts’s misogynistic authority, we fail to notice the patriarchy that is systematic in its effects and the danger he poses through his ability to use the weakest in society to further his aims. Ultimately, he uses the personal narrative of Jennet Device to fully incriminate her family. It is a narrative that is itself fragmentary, created from fear, sexual violence, and neglect, and is uttered through a restricted uneducated language.

To understand how the character of Jennet is vulnerable to such exploitation it is useful to explore Winterson's depiction of the coven and its relation to the outside world. In Winterson's Pendle, class expectations are exposed as being just as performative as gender expectations, giving influence to a fear of the other when the expectations are in some way thwarted or performed differently. We have seen how different violences add further disruption in this. Winterson engages with both the domestic and political dynamics of this fear, outlining the different strata of society and the way in which these pick up or reject the accepted narrative. Broadly it is fear which serves both the need of a controlling political power and the need for stability in times of social stress, poverty, and treasonable activities.

She makes it clear that the inhabitants of Malkin Tower stand outside of society because of their disempowerment through poverty and ill education as much as for their suspected supernatural powers. Mouldheels is described as she walks to Malkin Tower, 'begging, cursing and spitting all the way' (25). She has no broomstick but a stick that aids her walk on swollen and rancorous legs, with 'flesh that fell off her as though it were cooked' (25). Old, poor and obviously sick she underlines what Alice Nutter will state to Roger Nowell, 'Such women are poor. They are ignorant. They have no power in your world, so they must get what power they can in theirs. I have sympathy with them' (49). Gaskill asserts, 'If you can imagine leading a life of near destitution and dependence on capricious fortune, you're on the way to understanding the social reality of witchcraft.'[167] The witches' social class dictates how they are treated and the level of acceptance they receive. Hence, the Demdike and Chattox women are arrested and incarcerated on the merest suggestion of witchcraft but there remains a certain hesitancy in the arrest of Alice. Yet whilst their poverty and dependence on the natural world for resources by contrast sets them aside from the local community that comes to define them as other, within their own discreet

[167] Gaskill, 42.

group they are characterised as leaders of their, ‘strange, wild, ragged group of men and women’ (25) in the Winterson text.

As an example of how this plays out for the male characters, a useful comparison can be made between Jem Device and Tom Peeper who are again viewed differently through the lens of social and economic status. By virtue of age, perceived status and power Peeper is allowed to act with impunity. Depicted as angry and cruel, ‘tall, shaven-headed, lean-faced like a rat’ (9), this highly sexually aggressive man underlines his callousness through his alignment with a toxic patriarchal misogyny. Not only does he indulge in rape and incestuous child sexual abuse, but he is also happy to be known for it. Hargreaves turns a blind eye to Tom’s misdeeds on the basis that, ‘He was a spy and a sadist. That made Hargreaves’s job easier'(76). Tom does not have to curry favour to advance his position as he is fully prepared to act outside of it anyway; using the power of the state to secure his own agenda he can hold sway over the young Jem Demdike as he does many who he can bully and threaten. Jem is eventually deceived by him into betraying his family when Peeper promises him a future away from the coven with a life of godly marriage and a socially acceptable, hetero-normative existence. ‘You can get married. How about that, Jem? A wife to keep you warm. Something better than your squinty mother or a greasy sheep to quieten your cock. All you have to do is confess’ (77). That he can coax Jem into believing in a redemptive life based on a sanctified sexual gratification is equal to the way he coaxes the young Robert into participating in the sexual assault of Sarah for fun. Such an appeal to overt misogynistic behaviour does not end well for either boy. As we have seen, the only thing about Robert that remains within the narrative of the text is his tongue. For Jem, the promise of a positive repositioning within society spurs him onto his own betrayal, even as he continues to assist his Mother in the creation of the Poppet, and ultimately her demise. His horror and confusion at the end are an horrific denouement, which speaks to his final rejection from a patriarchy that had no more use for him once he had fulfilled what he could do for it. As such he is convicted as witch, and as other by

association and social class, not gender. He continues to believe the tales he has been told, the rewards he would gain, up until the very end, physically in shock, 'dazed and disbelieving' (191), and verbally in denial. When his execution goes wrong it is a man's hand which finally pulls on him, putting an end to his misery. Here Winterson clarifies how the patriarchy can be damaging and destructive to all genders.

Winterson also makes it clear that the matriarchal hierarchy within Malkin Tower is as limiting as the patriarchy which stands outside it. Jem is a child who moves between the two worlds, his masculinity and his role as food gatherer giving him partial access to the patriarchy outside of the coven. Unlike Jennet who is seen to be self-sufficient and able to question and learn about the rites and rituals of the coven, Jem is depicted as being angry, pitiful, stupid, and cruel. As such he is simultaneously cut adrift from participating fully within the Tower, at the same time as he is ill equipped to deal with the world at large, even whilst hankering after some of its privileges. He flounders when away from his mother's direct control and direct instruction. Having no meaningful connection to his own masculinity, his interaction outside of the coven's structure, and his only personal and proactive interaction with society, is a reliance on his base instinct for survival. As part of this he steals livestock for food, and prostitutes his smaller sister Jennet, selling her for favours and social acceptability with the jailer Tom Peeper. Jennet's commodification, then, is Jem's violent and only recourse to any meaningful social connection and that connection is with the patriarchal misogyny of the local lawmen.

In the world of the text such a matriarchy is of absolutely no use to its youngest female member either, who survives on scraps and lives rodent like amongst the earthworks and vegetation of the dilapidated building: a figure, 'vicious, miserable, underfed and abused' (26). She is afforded no protection against the patriarchal forces that surround her but in being able to secretly climb through the holes in walls, she can move between these two distinct worlds with impunity. Parental care within the Tower, unlike that found within Winterson's lighthouse in *Lighthousekeeping*, is absent. Rather than the mother being

physically absent, the very notion of motherhood itself, in this matriarchal world, is written as defective, its love non-existent, its promises broken. This is illustrated most clearly through the contrast in care taken over the creation of the poppet over and above the care of the children in general and Jennet in particular.

We cannot help being reminded of the development of feminist gothic, particularly Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a text I will be looking at later in this thesis, when considering the scene of creation which takes place in the bowels of the Tower itself. Shelley's text becomes important when considering the formation of the Poppet as an offspring that not only usurps godly power but also as it speaks to a disturbed maternal force. At its heart, the essence of the Poppet is the 'baby in the bottle' (104), boiled in the cauldron, which Jennet makes clear is the only body that she previously had to talk to. This gothic sibling or friend in a sense also becomes a symbol of Jennet's own maternal feelings, as a talking head it maintains this position as we can see when 'she patted it' (133). The Poppet in this sense is not just symbol of maternal lack but also a transfer of maternal responsibility to an unmothered child. At the end, she is left alone with the talking head, it encourages her to talk against the coven, it encourages her to trap Tom Peeper in the cellar when he falls, he had come to claim her, 'Daddy came back for his little girl' (181).

Within its description of child abuse, torture, castration, rape, and mutilation the gorier details of the text's fantastic element create their own disturbances, operating on a visceral as well as structural level. As we have seen, tongues feature at the start of the text and become intrinsic across the whole arc of the plot and along with decapitated heads, stripped skin, isolated body parts of dead babies, and a worrying collection of teeth, Winterson creates her own witches' brew of fragmented symbolism. When speaking of Ainsworth's novel, Gaskill notes that, 'Fantasy and reality converged in the public imagination, just as they had while the witch-trials were still in progress'[168]. In much

[168] Gaskill., 82.

the same way the fantastical notion of the fragmentary tongue converges with our understanding of its real use for language and sensation. As such its representativeness, expands and multiplies.

Deborah Harter in *Bodies in Pieces*; *Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment* (1996) describes fantastic narrative as that where the 'fragment remains fragmentary, often dominates until the part has begun to eclipse its framing context.'[169] In this regard the severed tongue's symbolic strength eclipses its framing context in a very real sense when we perceive its ability to belong to any character. Whatever its connection to the body or none, the tongue multiplies, commanding the flow not just of language and conventional notions of power but also of sexual and religious power. Tongues are kept for confession, tongues are thrown away and then retrieved to be kept in pockets or bags, passed between people, and passed between bodies. They seem to hover at the centre of our vision in various states of decay. The boy's tongue and Christopher Southwell's tongue in the reader's imagination become synonymous with each other. As the boy loses power over language, symbolised by the bitten off tongue in one instance, Christopher's tongue becomes that which acts in place of the castrated penis. Symbolically, language and sex become feminised.

Within *The Daylight Gate,* it is the depiction of layered and violent acts of gathering, of harvesting which further shatter and complicate this relationship between the real and the fantastic. In this sense the textual violence of nineteenth-century gothic becomes re-enacted and extended into an intertextual violence. It is here that Edgar Allan Poe's *Berenice* (1835), and arguably Berenice's teeth in particular, are to be found within Winterson's textual space. Again, it is useful to consider Harter's arguments here, that this type of narrative, whilst being part of a patriarchal conversation, 'subverts the very

[169] Deborah A Harter, *Bodies in Pieces*; *Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment* (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 25.

condition of possibility of phallocentric discourse, underlining as it does the profound sense in which masculinity (indeed all subjectivity) is always disintegrating, always castrated, always an idealized and perilous construction.'[170] Poe's narrator has a macabre relationship to his dead cousin. Unable to secure a stable relation to her in life his retrieval of her teeth from her grave underlines a most disturbing fetishization of the female body. In a like move, in a playful and darkly humorous nod to Poe, Winterson has Jem Device dig up a grave and exhume a skeleton and a semi-decayed body, he smashes the jaw of the skeleton to get to the teeth, 'Bits of chipped bone were scattered about. The teeth had been carefully collected in a mound' (99). Jem is disturbed in his activities and makes off with the head of the other body, leaving the teeth. They are found by Nowell and Hargreaves, who consider them but do not move them. Like the profusion of tongues, they become passed around amongst many characters, all of them female. Jennet retrieves them from where Jem has left them and takes them back to Malkin Tower, Elizabeth Demdike puts them on the Alter in her cellar, the teeth that have been dropped are then picked up by Alice Nutter's falcon and dropped one by one into her lap. Finally, Alice takes them to the herbalist and through her we come to know that the teeth, 'are for the pain' (121). They are, then, stolen goods, evidence, exchange for bounty, offerings, gifts, warnings, and creators of pain. This last has a double meaning; the herbalist is referring to the pain of Roger Nowell as he falls under the influence of the spell, but the implication is also that they spread pain wherever they go. As originally symbols of decay and deterioration, not only are the teeth thus multiplied but their new and different meanings are also fragmented and fetishized. In this way the symbolism of the teeth, the disintegration of their discursive collapse becomes multiplied, increasing the level of violent threat as it does so. Harter explains in her consideration of Poe that 'Berenice's body is an instantiation of the obsessive violence that lies behind the fragments on which this narrative form is built and the power these fragments often acquire as they usurp their

[170] Ibid., 79.

framing contexts.'[171] When discussing Edgar Allan Poe's fetishization of teeth in *Berenice,* Deborah Harter also sees them as signifiers of the narrator's, 'expression of anxiety in the face of a pervasive falling apart.'[172] In a sense, in Winterson's Pendle, what is at stake during the episode when the coven seeks to create the poppet is not just this sense of pervasive falling apart and its associated anxiety but an active, more explosive ripping asunder.

In terms of the plot *The Daylight Gate*'s fragments, speak to the disintegration of sanity and reason taking place within the text. Structurally however, the commodification of the male corpse hints at and parodies the commodification of the female body. Yet, within the context of a disordered matriarchy, where the creation of motherhood is rendered inadequate, this putting together of parts becomes disordered, never really moving away from the fetishization of the fragmentary. The severed head, now boiled in the witch's brew, with the tongue sewn into it, and the cloth body of the poppet never become a complete whole. It is 'strung up' (118) whilst the group in Malkin Tower sit, 'in a circle in front of the suppurating head waiting for it to speak' (118). This in itself represents a discord within the text. Like Harter's idea of the failed metonymy, 'The whole is lost, and the fantastic fragment left unable to reduce the anguish that produces it.'[173] Certainly the anguish that is produced becomes insurmountable as Alice witnesses: 'She could not believe what she was looking at. The empty eye sockets, the collapsed nose, the fetid boiled skin that hung in strips off the skull, The mouth hole propped open with a stick, and the fat black tongue protruding out.' 133

In this regard, like Kristeva's corpse, the collection of body parts, 'seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection.'[174] The reader's act of seeing these

[171] Harter, 33.
[172] Ibid., 32.
[173] Ibid., 49.
[174] Kristeva, 232.

fantastical things is no less significant than the reader witnessing violent torture within the narrative. It remains a violation of an intrinsic wholeness which reaches beyond language even as it becomes a prerequisite for it. If when reading torture we think of physical fragmentation, in the anticipation of the fragment which refuses to become whole we are alerted to a psychological diffusion. Harter states: 'The reader's act of looking is not different, in these texts, from what it must be in the face of others so much as it is more acutely drawn, more self-consciously involved. The titillation it invites moreover, if not more erotic, is often more violent.'[175] The poppet and the head become the source of Roger Nowell's pain and discomfort as it does ours. Harter attributes the discomfort to a reversal of Lacan's mirror stage, the creation of a memory, 'of a certain blending of parts, and blending of self with other, brought back ... by the very creative process that finds itself exploring all the rich possibilities of the body experiencing its relation to other bodies.'[176] It becomes a memory shattered and incomplete and reduced to meaningless parts. Whilst it remains a powerfully seductive symbol, the poppet also becomes a depiction of desperation on the part of the participants. This particular violence can only be enacted by the women at one step removed from their victim. It becomes their only recourse to any form of justice and can only really become active by force of intent, in a perverse way it becomes a diabolical reflection of Roger Nowell's patriarchal power.

I wish to return to the figure of Alice Nutter now and explore more of her relationship to the occult. As with the description of the poppet and its effects, we should not be in any doubt about the levels of violence being expressed here. Winterson uses the descriptive energy of one of Ainsworth's close friends, Charles Dickens to create a visual impact on her readers. In particular in this text she frequently uses the symbol of fire, not as a direct reflection of the burning times but as a symbol of a primordial power. John Carey in *The Violent Effigy* notes that Dickens had a 'fascination with fire as a beautiful and terrible

[175] Harter, 59.
[176] Ibid., 68.

destroyer, a visible expression of pure violence.'[177] Within *The Daylight Gate* Winterson displays her own fascination with this primal force and she particularly associates Alice with it. In her study whilst reading a letter from Edward Kelly, 'The new fire flared high and the flames pushed forward from the hearth, catching the little fire screen and igniting it.' (39) Also, John Dee's spirit tells her, 'Your nativity. You were born in fire. That is the first part of the prophecy. You have studied the alchemical arts, so you have been warmed by fire. That is the second part of the prophecy. The third part of the prophecy is how you will die. Choose your own death or fire will choose you' (110). This is reiterated by the talking head when it speaks to her, 'Born in fire. Warmed by fire, By fire to depart' (133). Alice has this potential destiny in common with Miss Havisham, the witch-like figure who is punished and eliminated by fire in *Great Expectations*.

Likewise, Winterson's use of nineteenth-century techniques again extends to Dickens' use of light to exacerbate the horror of physical violence. After Sykes' murder of Nancy in *Oliver Twist* (1837-9), the sun rises and he had 'tried to shut it out, but it would stream in. If the sight had been a ghastly one in the dull morning, what was it, now, in all that brilliant light! And there was the body—mere flesh and blood, no more—but such flesh, and so much blood![178]'

Within Winterson's text whilst the flares replace the sun in their exposure of the torture scene, the blood, exposed muscle and ripped skin of torture, retain their vibrancy of colour, and become a visual representation of pain and desperation, representative of a world out of kilter with itself. Alice's torture is no less gruesome than Nancy's murder for being not an act of passion but an act of exactment:

[177] John Carey, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber 1973), 12.
[178] Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* ed. by Peter Fairclough (Middlesex: Penguin Library, 1966), 423.

> The first man rammed the metal spike of the awl into Alice's back. He twisted it out. He stood back, pleased with his demonstration. That's how you do it. Now you.'
>
> His apprentice was hesitant. He was only a boy. He pushed his awl clumsily into the other side of Alice's spine. Blood flowed. […]
>
> They bled her until her back was a mass of raised welts and running blood. She could taste blood in her mouth where she had bitten her tongue to stop herself crying out.' (167-8)

Outside of the text, in religious history, red becomes associated with the devil, Catholicism and martyrdom and the colour of the petticoat worn by the defiant catholic Mary Queen of Scots at her execution. Within the text it is also the colour most associated with Alice Nutter. Not only does she wear it, but she creates it. 'Her fortune had come through the invention of a dye; a magenta that held fast in water and that had a curious depth to it - like looking into a mirror made of mercury' (5). She calls for her magenta dress before her execution. Symbolically then she becomes aligned with everything that is feared, an embodiment of martyrdom to a religious heresy, a visual violence towards a patriarchal status quo.

That Alice is associated intimately with the Jesuit Christopher Southwell as well as underlining her heresy, also takes us back to the consideration of class distinctions, particularly the distinction to be made between Alice and those at Malkin Tower. Alice's understanding, exploration, and practice of 'magick' together with her relations with the chemist John Dee and the necromancer Edward Kelly also underline the fact that what is at play in the text is a social positioning that is based just as much on access to learning, power, and influence as gender specifically. Gaskill informs us that, 'In a polarized scheme that placed witches and heretics at one extreme and priests and theologians at

the other, magicians were pushed closer to the former. The only indemnity was offered by high social status and, for a few, elite patronage.'[179]

Both Alice and the young Elizabeth Southern, who is later redefined as Old Demdike, are able then to access this elite status, which for Alice becomes a financially secure position. It is this positioning that Elizabeth Device recognises as one which means that Alice Nutter is the most powerful witch amongst them. This is indeed the case, and it is why Roger Nowell the magistrate can identify the diabolical possibilities of Alice Nutter's wealth and power:

> Suppose our Lancashire witches have found such a leader? Someone whose knowledge of the magick arts is directly from the Devil himself? Faust was a man who made such a pact. But a woman? Where beauty meet with wealth and power. What might she not accomplish? (50)

The answer to his question may well be that she would not accomplish very much. For it is perhaps within the characterisation of Elizabeth Southern that we see Nowell's idea of such a woman. Indeed, if Kramer's vision of a witch is in view at all in Winterson's novel, it is in this sexually liberated woman whose jealousy and hubris towards her lover Alice leads her to consort with the devil in the form of The Dark Gentleman. Such hubris begins her degradation, at first living in poverty and decrepitude and then through suffering her ultimate demise in the dungeon; she descends from powerful beauty to faecal soiled crone. This could be seen as a strong and salutary testament to the dangers of collapse through the search for absolute and corruptive power that is phallocentric in its very nature. She and not Alice is the female Faust who Nowell speaks of, but her ultimate demise undercuts his idea of the security in that status.

[179] Gaskill, 48.

Elizabeth Southern, in enacting a predatory sexuality for both men and women, exceeds all notion of accepted womanhood. Like the Queen of Spades and Villanelle before her she enacts an appropriation of masculine desire. Hart states, that 'The actively desiring woman thus entered history as a 'criminal,' for in confirming her desire, she exceeded the terms that ratified masculinity.'[180] Following the line of Havelock Ellis's argument as understood by Hart that 'it is the invert who initiates desire-the true invert-who becomes inextricably bound to the perpetration of violence,'[181] by implicating both Elizabeth's and Alice's sexual fluidity, Winterson noticeably disturbs the link made between masculine heterosexuality and lesbianism. I argue that Winterson here cautions against merely taking on the mantle of a masculine power as a way to equalise the experiences of gender, proposing instead, to become one body, 'to dissolve all boundaries' (59). This develops from Edward Kelly's claim that the alchemical, 'The Great Work was to transform one substance into another- one self into another. We would merge. We would be transformed' (59). When Alice is at her happiest living at Bankside with Elizabeth, the two women clearly complement each other, 'Where I was shy, she was bold, and where I was hesitant, she was sure.' (61) The issue seemingly, is not what gender role one occupies but whether two can act as a unified whole.

Hart asserts, 'If such a thing as a non-productive text existed, it would be purified of doubling, the interiorization of the other that is necessary to produce and maintain a fictive autonomy.'[182] That being the case, we can argue that Winterson's text is extra productive as she employs a technique which multiplies the double over and over. Clearly there is the notion of the lesbian couple as double, and in this regard Elisabeth Southern and Alice Nutter occupy a space associated with the homosocial double that Hart argues 'is characteristic of the lesbian as autoerotic/narcissistic.' [183] This is crucial in our

[180] Hart, 17.
[181] Ibid., 10.
[182] Hart, 2.
[183] Ibid., 129.

understanding of the position of the women in *The Daylight Gate.* Because both Alice Nutter and Elizabeth Southern are examples of an archetypal narcissistic womanhood, fitting the description offered by Gilbert and Gubar in their consideration of the Queen in Sleeping Beauty, 'To be caught and trapped in a mirror rather than a window, however is to be driven inward, obsessively studying self-images as if seeking a viable self.'[184] Winterson describes how Alice notices and adores Elizabeth's body, 'I have never seen a more beautiful body on a man or a woman, she was slender, full, creamy, dark, rich, open, luxurious' (59). At the Beltane ball, after Elizabeth has sold her soul to the Dark Gentleman, Alice notices how, 'She was as beautiful as ever but her softness had gone. She was bright like something of the sea, like treasure that the sea has covered in coral' (70), reminiscent of the fossils of *Lighthousekeeping*, like the abalone that Dark becomes, a thing changed through time, empty and brittle. Still later she is horrified by her spectral putrefaction, 'Alice touched Elizabeth's naked body, but as her hand stroked the skin she had loved so much, the skin gave way, liked soaked paper, and Alice's hand went through her, or more correctly into her. It was like reaching into black water.' Elizabeth has become a 'black viscous substance.' As she decays away, 'suppurating and liquefying' she laughs at Alice and says, 'As I am so shall you be' (94-95). Alice perceives this supernatural meeting as a very visceral and violent vision of her own death and decay. Her connection to Elizabeth is written therefore as perilous. This marries with Hart's discussion of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). She states that:

> Homosocial bonding between women was doubly perilous. Not only would it remove women from their function as objects of exchange to facilitate heterosexuality, but it would also constitute a pairing, a doubling that would lack a third term, an intermediary figure, on which to displace the violence of mimetic rivalry.[185]

[184] Gilbert and Gubar, 37.
[185] Hart, 45.

Arguably, Winterson illustrates how this works by introducing such a third term in the representation of the Dark Gentleman. Elizabeth's Faustian pact with the Dark Gentleman becomes a punishment on Alice for betraying Elizabeth through the enactment of her own subjectivity, through not sharing her monetary gain and status with her, 'I bought her anything she wanted but I would not make her equal' (61). Alice also becomes a bargaining point for Elizabeth's own continued identity. Elizabeth becomes removed from the homosocial world in this regard and is therefore under the influence of yet another great patrician, the devil himself. Unable to share the identity she wishes with Alice; Elizabeth seeks revenge for its loss and offers Alice as a sacrifice that will save her (Elizabeth's) soul. So, whilst the intermediary figure is seen to be the source of violence, it is actually contained within Elizabeth's enraged narcissism.

The evil represented through the Dark Gentleman is set against the sexually aggressive Tom Peeper, for his sexual threat is presented as a seduction, not a violent act in its most animalistic sense. Through her participation in the seduction, Elizabeth seeks to manipulate Alice into the enactment of penetrative sex which will induct her into a kind of hetero-normative awareness that she has not previously exhibited but which will also prepare her for her sacrifice which is nothing less than full participation in the phallocentric order. Yet this action also creates another double for Elizabeth Southern as exhibited by her descent into the character of Old Demdike. Layered onto this is another doubling represented by Alice's relationship with Christopher Southworth. Not only does their coming together mirror the relationship between her and Elizabeth, with Christopher Southworth's castration placing him in a similar position to that of a lesbian lover, but by implication he becomes a kind of double to Elizabeth with his violent Catholicism mirroring and equating with Elizabeth's devil worship. Not only does castration become symbolic of the emasculation of the Catholic priesthood, but it also effectively places him in the same liminal space as the symbolic witch. By including the experience of the injured and emasculated male, Winterson seeks to level the ground in which the different genders are

perceived. Through all of this complex character representation Winterson disturbs and usurps the patriarchal discourses of brutality and male tropes of violence that are to be found in the canonical literature. She does this to release and revitalise those discourses from the restriction of phallocentric language and reclaim them as statements of witness that extend across all genders.

In a move which seeks to further double the layers of violence within the text, Winterson operates within a textual space where the male narratives about witches and Catholics, tales she herself echoes, are seen to be supported by and constructed through the operation of a legitimated violence. Reinhold Görling in his writing on recent torture within society states, 'There is psychological memory, and certainly cultural and social memory: things, institutions, images and texts preserve experiences of violence and pass them on, and this all the more permanently the less they are socially bound and worked through.'[186] It is in this sense that the image of the tortured and executed witch, or religious heretic, remains with us. Socially and historically distant they have become a memory that has been otherwise disconnected from its visceral reality and reduced to a two-dimensional phenomenon, like that displayed in the contemporary seventeenth-century pamphlets or romanticised by authors like Ainsworth. We know that these witches and Catholics were tortured and burned or hanged, yet it is something beyond language for us to truly understand. The distance afforded by time and the particular image of the witch in history enables a form of denial regarding their lived experience. Within Winterson's text, the visceral exposure of blood, muscle and burnt skin of torture, retains its vibrancy of colour, and becomes a vivid sensual representation of pain and desperation.

In all three individuals within this specific triangle, Winterson's text shows the already subjectively isolated figures of Elizabeth, Alice and Christopher further reduced in the very physical violence they experience through force legitimated by the State. The

[186] Reinhold Görling, 'Torture and Society' in *Speaking About Torture* ed. by Julie Carlson and Elizabeth Weber (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 67. ProQuest E book,

representation of Elizabeth's split persona becomes just one expression of the violence of mental fragmentation which Winterson creates within her text, yet it also outlines a way in which female violence is disarmed. As Old Demdike suffers the violence of incarceration and ill treatment, the reader witnesses the deepening of her maddened state. Whilst at Malkin Tower, her sleeping chamber is clean and ordered and her relation to Jennet is one of grandmotherly instruction; within the confines of the dungeon, she becomes starved and physically neglected. She suffers a mental cruelty that removes her accessibility to meaning.

Ultimately Alice and Christopher's doubling is also made significant through their individual experiences of direct physical torture. Purkiss highlights what she sees as 'the very dangerous preoccupation with torture and execution in radical feminist narratives of witchcraft.'[187] She argues that an obsession with such violence can result in describing the indescribable at the cost of knowing the witch through her own words. Language and the very subjectivity of the women in question become subsumed and buried into this painful experience. Here we come across the same problematic that haunts the depiction of war, similarly to that which we come across in *The Passion*. Torture and pain linguistically can only occupy fleeting yet repetitive space. The distancing effect that occurs when speaking about violence, means that such telling does not represent a direct threat to the viewer, and is ultimately alienating. Gaskill also sees the pitfalls in using overt descriptions of violence. He argues that such descriptions become just another trope: 'the gallery of popular images that makes up popular knowledge of the witch hunt is incomplete without the torture chamber: a dungeon full of baroque contraptions for inflicting pain.'[188] He goes on to argue that torture in this time period has been somewhat misrepresented and, far from being a gratuitous form of confession extraction, was developed as a, 'progressive technique for preventing miscarriages of justice.'[189] He

[187] Purkiss, 14.
[188] Gaskill, 64.
[189] Gaskill, 64.

argues that it was used in actuality very rarely, the promise of it more likely to get people to talk rather than its enactment.

Yet Winterson does exactly what Purkiss and Gaskill argue against. This, after all, is a Hammer Horror production. The effect, however, is not merely gratuitous. Admittedly, in invoking the cultural memory alluded to above, the text manipulates our familiarity with the historical material at its most mythic level and merges it with a textual representation of violence that allows it to become revitalised and understood as current outrage. Yet, in this way, Winterson attempts to recreate the reader as witness, as it were, bringing memories of torture and state-controlled and state-endorsed violence back into the foreground. If one goes back to Görling, he argues that the witness or third party to violence is placed in a peculiar relationship to the victim. This entails both an empathetic connection which is then followed by an exclusion from empathy which is self-protective at best and indifferent at worst. He asserts that the witness, 'is required to accept his role as witness and thus to resist the exclusion of the victim from the social bond, or to look away, to close his eyes and to exclude what has been perceived from the realm of possible empathy.'[190] This exclusion is performative as we cannot un-see, or in this case, un-read the violence depicted. The distance of the text away from the reader works as a safe exclusion zone. The reader is not in personal danger. Neither is there a real ability to go further than description. We cannot smell the blood, and the burning, nor hear the screams. For Purkiss this is a problem in that it becomes impossible to fully appreciate this infliction of pain across time and her argument further elucidates the risk of sentimentalising such violence as a way to underline current feelings of oppression. But arguably Winterson's project, as we have seen in *The Passion*, is not to underline feelings of current oppression but to bring into focus the question of how we can speak about violence in a way that does not reduce its impact; how we can represent it from the past with any linguistic authenticity. For as we see within Winterson's text the violence of the

[190] Görling, 66.

torture chamber destroys the power of language. Humanity, subjectivity is disempowered and shattered through a violence that de-humanises both its victim and its perpetrator by the loss of words. Görling elucidates that, "Violence can on the one hand be defined as a power that intervenes in a social or cultural situation from the outside in order to rob it of its ability to express itself, to make it dumb or destroy it."[191] To add to this point therefore, violence is already in the process of disrupting and distorting the language used to describe itself.

Winterson tackles this problem textually by again writing of it in retrospective as she does in *The Passion*. More than this Winterson discloses the torture of Christopher across the narrative mimicking a slow seduction. Using completely un-emotive language which, in using the narrator to describe, is one step removed from its victims. We are first told that when Christopher Southworth is captured after the Gunpowder Plot, 'his torturers had cut his face with a hot iron' (54), and later in the text that, 'his chest was stamped with the scars from the branding iron and the red-hot wires' (72). Likewise, the scene of Christopher's torture and castration is written from a distant narrative voice. The torturers are faceless and nameless. As Elaine Scarry describes, 'built on […] repeated acts of display and having as its purpose the production of a fantastic illusion of power, torture is a grotesque piece of compensatory drama'[192]. And so it is here, presented as a mute dramatic performance, a dumb show; the scene is described using a prop list:

> In the cell was a rack, a winch, a furnace, a set of branding irons, a pot for melting wax, nails of different lengths. A thumbscrew, a pair of flesh tongues, heavy tweezers, a set of surgical instruments, a series of small metal trays, ropes, wire, preparations of quicklime, a hood and a blindfold. (73)

[191] Görling, 67.
[192] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 28.

Winterson presents us with a literary form of the territio, whereby an inquisitor tortures his charge just by showing him his instruments. Here, language takes on its own form of violence and operates in much the same way as witches' curses, malicious gossip, or the words of the Catholic mass in a Protestant world. Winterson then moves on to describe Christopher's castration, here again, as with Alice, we see a disturbing and confusing conflation of sex and violence. His torturers are relaxed, practiced, and careful. Their particular care over the build up towards the tortures climax befits a scene of seduction, mimicking the seductive reveal of Christopher's wounds. We have the vision of him being unwillingly aroused by these horrific proceedings; it is an arousal which degrades ideas of his religious chastity just as it complicates and disrupts his sexuality and fills him with shame. He is sodomised and then castrated. His castration then is a sexual act which results in the enforced reassignment of his gender identity. Again, we return to when 'they drew pictures on his chest with their delicate knives' (73), before they castrate him, preparing 'a small fire in a tin' in which they burn his testicles. The symbolic significance of Christopher the Jesuit being wounded in his side during his ordeal is not lost. He becomes a Christ-like figure at the very point at which he becomes impotent. It is a horrendous act of sexual violence committed under orders from the godly, an act of symbolic and actual blasphemy.

In a bold use of doubling Winterson describes Alice's torture after her arrest. In contrast to Christopher's, Alice's ordeal is within the time order of the text. The reader witnesses Alice naked, hands strapped above her head, vulnerable and exposed. Again, the torturers are without individual description their anonymity secured by hoods. However, we are informed that one is teaching the other how to proceed, a young apprentice, being taught how to commit violent acts. It is through this verbal explanation that the reader learns about the use of the torture weapon. Visceral pain does not move toward a climax of rape; instead, this time the torture stops. Alice is told of what could be done, what will not be done. Suggested violence is used as an encouragement for her to speak. She is

shown the skinning of an un-named man, ‘tied down to a bench. He was clothed but for his left leg. His eyes wild and bloodshot. His lips were flecked with foam. He turned his head, saw and did not see Alice’ (169). As readers we are placed alongside her as fellow eyewitnesses to this horror. The exclusion of empathy is something that must be battled with as we read on. As we are encouraged to reel with her against the horror and the anticipation of it, we may concur with the words of the innocent Jane Southworth from within the dungeon that, ‘Only humans can know what it means to strip a human being of being human’ (83). The loss of humanity becomes synonymous with the loss of language. We can refer back to Henri’s experience of the battlefield and the way that Scarry recognises how pain and wounding make language defunct. In a way we come full circle. What begins in the opening action of the text as a fundamental fear of and reaction to female language becomes the reality of the total loss of language and agency over it. By implication, through the inclusion of the torture scenes into her text and their example, Winterson signals that this risks a reality where what is lost threatens all humans regardless of their gendered positioning.

In the actual historical investigation and trial, the Device girl confesses to what she understands is her practice of witchcraft. But we have an example here of the writer silencing the figure of Alizon Device; Winterson refuses to give her the opportunity of self-expression. After her meeting with the pedlar, we hear nothing from her at all; she is effectively silenced out of her confession, brought to acting out childlike, dumb hand puppetry in her subsequent imprisonment in the dungeon. Whilst one can argue that this is an example of women losing language through their experience of brutality, Winterson gives us plenty of examples, in *The Passion* and in *Lighthousekeeping* were female figures remain stubbornly silent about what they witness and what they experience, cutting off the legitimacy of violent acts at their linguistic source, and quite capable of disrupting language on their own terms. Therefore, the experience of the dungeon, like that of torture also induces a loss of language. When Chattox paces muttering, ‘nobody

knows what,' it marks the point at which language has become chaotic and unstable (79). Old Demdike's magical language loses its power within the dungeon walls; her calling for her familiar or the Dark Gentleman is in vain, and she eventually is unable to believe in his coming. The spells that they make at the beginning of their imprisonment become empty curses.

All creativity is muted as the pile of faeces increases and their bodies disintegrate into sores. There is 'misery but no invention' (82). In this regard, the dungeon is more than just a dehumanising space. The power of language is not merely removed but its connection to a creative space is also obliterated and with it the women's humanity and their hope of creating anything new: 'Nothing human or not human enters this place' (81). The ability for the women to create their own world becomes as limited as the comatose victim of torture, half skinned. All that is left it seems is a space which is full of hate – a hate which is increased by repetition and inference – hate which is not deemed human. Nance Redfern, 'sits in the corner hating Alizon Device' (80). 'Chattox and Demdike hate each other. Their daughters Nance and Alizon hate each other. No alliances have been made. No sympathy each to each' (81). As Gilbert and Gubar assert, 'female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other.'[193]

In returning to the figures of the silenced children, Robert, and Jennet, we can see that there is something about sexualised violence that itself limits and controls the ability to use language. Robert's initiation into hetero-normative adulthood becomes the moment where he loses any power of language at all. In this he becomes a symbolic mirror image of Jennet as muted child. For much of the text, Jennet remains in a watchful silence. We only witness her talking in the company of witches and then only briefly at two significant points in the plot, the making of the poppet and at the trial itself. What we learn during the

[193] Gilbert and Gubar, 38.

making of the poppet is that her only other recourse to social interaction is with that of the dead baby which her mother eventually places in the pot to create the spell. When she discovers it has been used in this way, she 'lets out a great wail, so much so that the trapdoor above was pulled back for a second.' A child's distress at losing a cherished toy takes on the fantastical when the toy is a baby in a jar. The impact of its loss is more desolate still when she complains, 'I shall have nowt to talk to now the baby is boiled' (105). Meaningful communication and the ability to create her own subjectivity against another's on an intimate level is quashed and her language in this sense becomes a meaningless solipsism, until the trial that is. And then, 'Jennet Device tells the court all about their familiars, Fancy and Dandy and Ball. She says she has flown on a broomstick and seen the Dark Gentleman with her grand-dam, Old Demdike. Jennet pays special attention to her mother. She tells the court all about the poppet and the head' (187). Jennet's violent revenge against the adults around her and her consequent survival is reliant on her reclamation of language that fits in with the phallocentric order, as it is the only way that she can herself avoid punishment, it is the only way the authorities are going to believe her.

If Winterson's text adds further weight to a feminist discourse on the inherent patriarchy within language and literature, it is to show how to commandeer its trajectory without revoking its beginning position. Rather than creating a fully separate female history of Pendle, a matriarchal project that could limit its own nature as much as that in found in Malkin Tower, Winterson operates a textual violence which attempts to wrestles its meanings away from the patriarchal basis which made full use of physical violence as a means to an end. She revisits and reframes, but makes no attempt to move towards, any radical feminist ideal; the sisterhood categorically fails at the end of the novel, they cannot do otherwise because their focus is on the wrong thing. Hart argues that:

> It is not the 'reality' of the narcissistic woman that requires analysis, but rather the effects of this historical lamination, which at once establishes woman as the site

> for the ever- threatening potentiality of aggression *and* establishes the impossibility of women actually acting this aggression out. If Woman is always already 'armed,' women are persistently disarmed precisely because they are always already armed. This dialectic is crucial to the functioning of a phallocentric order.[194]

As witches, women become dangerous women, not poor women with no other choice for psychological and physical survival, not women who are educated and self-sufficient. In order to resist the movement towards continual disarmament, Alice Nutter has to remove herself and stay separate from the very relationships with women that can be used to pull her back into that dialectic. What becomes more relevant to Alice and to the text is a concentration on the individual's relationship to their own subjectivity, which is at once, both insecure and changeable. Alice decides it is rather better to have control over one's own unstable subjectivity than have one imposed on you. She chooses her own death just as she is seen to choose her own life. As Madaj-Strang states, 'Alice, a witch, a magician, a scientist, a tradeswoman, a saint as well as a martyr, outgrows the gender stereotypes of both man and woman becoming the representative of Wittig's "third" gender.'[195]

Violence within the context of *The Daylight Gate* is shown to have a deep relationship to language. It is both linked to gender in the way that it is used to enact power, and in how it can ultimately strip away language itself. Winterson, through writing the performativity of male violence, and through her reframing of masculine narratives of history and literature, usurps the control of such a phallocentric language and symbolism. She reframes the accepted narrative of the witch trials, enabling a reclaimed dynamic in subjectivity and identity which is at once is gender fluid and self-determining. The depiction of violence and cruelty inflicted or experienced is more than a base telling of

[194] Hart, 59.
[195] Madaj-Strang, 228.

horror, more than a gratuitous revisiting of a dark place and time in history because it exposes how violence at once shatters and complicates the relationship between people and their individual sense of self, a violence that whilst originating in gender normal performances can be used to breach the gender normal boundaries it seeks to secure.

In taking up these varied phallocentric discourses Winterson actively engages with the conversation not just generally around the historical and literary representations of the Pendle witches, but particularly around their gendered representation. Alongside this it is to be noted that she forcefully reclaims the textual devices of that very conversation and by doing so she realigns their relevance to a discourse that throws into question the security of all gender subjectivities. Her text raises the question of how phallocentric discourse can seek to control female subjectivity given that it is always dissipating because of its own inherent instability.

Recycling Gothic Feminisms to Save the World: Violence within *Frankissstein*

Winterson's *Frankissstein* (2019) sees her revisiting Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a novel generally recognised as being at the summit of literary texts that form both a female gothic and what is also considered to be the first example of science fiction. Here we can note a further movement of Winterson's narrative arc that makes use of and contains within it, a violence that disrupts, agitates, reformulates, and horrifies. In updating Shelley's narrative and biography into a recognisably contemporary, yet futuristic world, we see a repeat of the literary violence Winterson undertook within *The Daylight Gate,* with the novel's overall structure containing her trademark intertextuality and its revisiting of her own established narratives. Yet, I argue here that, whilst Winterson's earlier text manipulated its phallocentric precedents to create a space for renewed female centric narratives, it is in reworking Mary Shelley's iconically feminine, and for some intrinsically feminist text, that Winterson seeks to renew and rejuvenate Shelley's original for a post-human world.

In this regard we can see that her engagement becomes a recognition and a recollection that both amplifies and intensifies Shelley's prior warning against scientific overreach, marrying it to Winterson's own considerations of science, new technologies and their effects on humanity. Structurally she achieves this through collapsing the novel's time frames, reaching into a future time that is also recognisable as the present, pulling narratives of the past into the now, backwards and forwards, exploring further the issues that she has now firmly established as central to her oeuvre; that of language and narrative, gender, identity and sexuality, and the deconstruction of structural binaries in order to reveal the importance of the human in a post-human world.

Whilst acting to further develop earlier feminist readings of Shelley's work, Winterson again makes a renewed consideration of the figure and the symbolism of the powerful,

dark, gentlemen, in this case a man who seeks to push against the boundaries of humanity's narrative framework, through science. Like Shelley's own protagonist Victor Frankenstein, Victor Stein is well educated, well mannered, charismatic, urbane, yet a man who is also gradually misled by his own narcissistic justifications for a project that comes to stand outside proscribed scientific endeavour and the ethical considerations that such endeavours demand. It is a renewed portrayal of the descent into madness of the lone scientist, which has grown from Shelley's work to become an archetype of both the horror film and dystopian science fiction. Whilst Winterson places her narrative within the ideas and real spaces of collaborative science, not least by having her scientists meeting in collegiate settings, where things are discussed and interrogated, she returns through the figure of Stein to the notion of the lone man making a discovery that he will later regret.

This text is a multi-layered narrative, containing three distinct parts. These are: a partial retelling of Mary Shelley's biography, a divergent re-working of her creation whereby Frankenstein is a patient in Bedlam visited by Mary Shelley, and a new re-imagining of the moment leading up to Shelley's Frankensteinian apotheosis with the characters from the gathering at Geneva in 1816 being reconstructed, perhaps reincarnated, into a new science fictional now. Interspersed with these main threads are short biographical passages on the lives of Jack Good, the Bayesian mathematician, and that of Byron's own daughter Ada and her work with Babbage on the first computer. There are also brief allusions to the work of other renowned scientists, creating a montage of scientific endeavour along with multiple references to important science fiction and horror cinema. Through this multilayering, the character of Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, and notions of the monstrous and the scientific refract as if in a prism, multiplying and replicating each other in a myriad of ways, blurring their images into a ghostly and renewed mythology.

Within this re-imagining, Winterson makes use of the general misconception in the public understanding of Mary Shelley's text, that the monster himself is called Frankenstein and

not the scientist who creates him. This is explicitly and humorously illustrated when Ry, the modern reincarnation of Mary Shelley, first meets a re-worked Claire Clairemont, as a receptionist in the exhibition, Tec-X-Po on Robotics, which takes place in Tennessee. The conversation between them turns to the history of Memphis, founded a year after the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The conversation runs thus:

> The novel *Frankenstein*- it was published in 1818.
>
> The guy with a bolt through his neck?
>
> More or less
>
> I saw the T.V. show. [196]

Claire's experience of the novel is tangential, based more on the characterisation of the monster as created in the 1931 film starring Boris Karloff, which she merges with later depictions of the monster within an unnamed television show. This reminds us of and consolidates the idea that there has been a development of a Frankenstein myth, created through theatre, animation, comic books, television, and cinema, which can be seen as a type of textual evolution that moves away from Shelley's original in important ways. Firstly, it can be argued that Karloff's interpretation of Frankenstein's monster favours a phallocentric reading and as such the monster becomes another expression of isolated and diminished, male power and fear. In other ways, the monster has become re-worked as a superhero avenger in the comic book world, the creation becoming the figure of the strong man. Secondly the publication of Shelley's work as children's literature along with child focused television adaptations have allowed the development of the myth into wide-ranging products, toys, games, and videogames, highlighting its fundamental association with a capitalist trivialisation of Shelley's text into consumerist horror. In this sense it

[196] Jeanette Winterson, *Frankissstein* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019), 27. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically.

makes it easy to see the mispronunciation of the name Frankenstein becoming the title of Winterson's text in a sense to highlight these reductive reworkings of Shelley's original. In writing *Frankissstein* Winterson seeks to celebrate and reconnect with the evolutionary path of Shelley's novel, renewing those important questions concerning notions of authorship, creation and the consequences that follow.

Within the text we come across the misogyny, and its embeddedness in society, that Winterson tackles within nearly all of her texts. Its enactment through words, intent and deed and the linguistic and sexual violence that grows from it continue centre stage, but here we are also shown how that misogyny extends beyond just a disregard of the female, to encompass a disregard for anything, including the environment, which is not Western, white, male, human and straight. Specifically, the text exudes an urgent necessity to think carefully about how the language and symbolism of misogyny is used, and how it is imperative that we consider the way in which such communications are allowed to remain central to the way the future is framed. Most importantly Winterson again alerts us to the fact that the violence of linguistic misogyny is essentially hidden in plain sight, driven by the need to maintain the familiar and the status quo and warns us how its misuse has the potential to impact on the future in disturbing and horrific ways.

Winterson again reminds us of how identity, gender, and sexuality are part of an embodied language paradigm, which binds us into relationship with one another and how without it, we would be cursed into a devastating solipsism. In *The Passion* and *The Daylight Gate,* Winterson revealed how language is disrupted by violence, initially by a military violence and latterly by state legitimized violence, and within the sexual and domestic violences within groups and families. *Lighthousekeeping* conversely exposed a potential connection to a flexibility in language and narrative enabled survival, now in this later novel she considers how violent language may reduce the chances of humanity's survival. The consideration of solipsism is something that she shows her Mary Shelley to be thinking about before she goes on to write *Frankenstein* when she states, 'What would it be like-

nay, what would it be? There is no like, no likeness to this question. What would it be, to be a being without language-not an animal, but something nearer to myself' (2)? To be without language is as Kristeva informs us, to reside in the semiotic stage, a female stage, which is replaced when the individual realises its subjectivity and moves towards the symbolic, in other words towards language and meaning, and the phallocentric world. Between the semiotic and the symbolic lies that which is abject, the monstrous and the grotesque, all that is corporeal, the carnal, the animalistic. The abject reminds us of our instinctual nature, our impurities, our filth, and the potential for malformation and the horror of isolation. Winterson has Mary Shelley state, 'I reflected that without language, or before language, the mind cannot comfort itself. And yet it is the language of our thoughts that tortures us more than any excess or deprivation of nature.' (2)

For Gilbert and Gubar, Shelley's novel is identified as an example of female abjection hidden within a text. They return to her reading of Milton and, in particular, to *Paradise Lost* (1667) to illuminate the difficulty within a male-centric representation of gender and sexuality, reflecting the abject physicality of procreation, and how that links to and is formative of, creation, authorship, and language. Gilbert and Gubar assert that Mary Shelley undertook 'at least in part a despairingly acquiescent "misreading" of *Paradise Lost*, with Eve's sin apparently exorcised from the story but really translated into the monster that Milton hints she is.'[197]

In aligning her text to these ideas, Winterson points out and underlines how even in the present, masculinist and misogynist structures of language and belief systems continue to have primacy over that considered feminine, other, or natural. And she makes it implicit that even in a more atheistic society this rigid hold on these priorities remains. She first points this out when she has her fictional Byron state that, 'The male principle is readier and more active than the female principle' (8), and in doing so she underscores the

[197] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*: *The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 189.

phallocentric principles on which Mary Shelley's society is based. When Mary asks of Byron, as an avowed atheist, why he continues to cling to the notion of Eve being subservient to Adam, the female subservient to the man, he answers that the Book of Genesis, 'is a metaphor for the distinctions between men and women' (12). Even when Mary further points out that life comes through the female not the male, going against Byron's idea that it is the male which is the animating principle, he states that it is not, 'the soil, not the bedding, not the container; the life-spark. The life-spark is male' (13).

For Mary Shelley, 'Milton's myth of origins,'[198] especially in its formulation of Eve as Sin, becomes a way in which woman, as monstrous being, reclaims that life spark, can speak to the struggle for authorship, linguistic independence, and therefore subsequent acceptance. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley's monster struggles to learn the language of Agnes and Felix, in order that he would find acceptance as a relevant and vibrant possibility of being, of love and creativity:

> I looked upon them as superior beings, who would be the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour, and afterwards their love.[199]

In *Frankissstein*, Winterson continues the thread of Mary Shelley's bibliogenesis[200], and those notions of the animating principle, creation, and authorship. These are violently redisplayed within the tangled identities and relationships between writer, text, and character that enhance the notion of duplication and replication that permeates the world of information technology. They are also present in the bodies of the Sexbots, new age monstrosities that are solipsistic and without independent language. Winterson extends

[198] Ibid., 188.
[199] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein,* ed.by Paddy Lyons and Philip Gooden (London: Everyman, 1994), 95.
[200] Ibid., 224.

and resumes the literary violence of Shelley's text and its influence into a discourse on the borders of life and death as pertains to the developments of Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, cyborgs, and algorithms.

Winterson's trademark intertextuality and light touch is again at play but at the beginning of her text it is expanded to include a soundtrack and some lyrics of the song *Take it Easy.* 'We may lose, and we may win though we will never be here again.'[201] This may seem a strange almost jarring starting point to a novel that in its title signposts towards Mary Shelley's novel of 1818. What makes the Eagles track tie into this text so well, however, is that its lyrics contain an age-old assertion that the time is now and taking a chance on sexual congress before age sets in is preferable to not doing so. It is a soundtrack of the free love era of the twentieth century that resonates with Percy Shelley's own beliefs in freedom of sexual expression. Yet it makes an important point also about Winterson's overarching schema, which suggests that the time of the present is the most important. Now is the moment when we can make decisions and take actions which will affect the future in so many ways that from this point in our history we can win or lose.

In the first of his 2021 Reith lectures, Professor Stuart Russell proposed an important question, 'what if we succeed?'.[202] He was referring to the quest towards the development of General-Purpose AI, and machine learning, a quest which he describes as the 'last event in human history,'[203] the Singularity. Ray Kurzweil had previously explained his own idea of the Singularity as

> a future period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed. Although neither utopian nor dystopian, this epoch will transform the concepts we rely on to give

[201] As cited on the frontispiece of Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein*. Browne and Frey, *Take it easy*, released by The Eagles as a single, in May 1972.
[202] Stuart Russell, 'Living with A.I.: The Biggest Event in Human History,' *The Reith Lectures*, BBC Radio 4, 1st December 2021.
[203] Ibid.

> meaning to our lives, from our business models to the cycle of life, including death itself. [204]

In an article written for *The Futurist* in 2006 he also wrote that:

> This merger of man and machine, coupled with the sudden explosion in machine intelligence and rapid innovation in gene research and nanotechnology, will result in a world where there is no distinction between the biological and the mechanical, or between physical or virtual reality.[205]

The consequence of this rapid development, this speeding up and converging of human and machine evolution, in Kurzweil's optimistic view is that humanity's physical frailties and societal problems will have the potential of being resolved. Russell, however, considering machine learning particularly, argues that if we successfully design machines which can learn as they go, then they will necessarily, because of their computational speed, be able to develop and evolve far quicker than our own species and would ultimately have power and control over us. So, what do The Eagles have to do with this? It is the notion that we are 'taking it easy', that we are potentially sleepwalking into danger; blindly accepting that the consequences of such developments, will be positive, even though the dangers of such an 'overreach' of human power and influence had been highlighted by the nineteen-year-old Mary Shelley two hundred years ago.

This is a subject that Winterson has touched on before in her 2007 novel *The Stone Gods* where two companions, one human, the other a learning robot who has broken from the confines of her programme, live through a post human movement onto another planet because the old one is dying. In a passage from that text, considering the post-war world she writes:

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[204] Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (USA: Viking Penguin, 2005) 7.
[205] Ray Kurzweil, 'Reinventing humanity: The Future of Machine-Human Intelligence', *The Futurist* (March/April 2006) 39-48 Reinventing humanity: The future of human-machine intelligence « Kurzweil (kurzweilai.net) [Accessed online 11/1/22.]

> And then…
>
> Identity cards, Tracking devices in vehicles, Compulsory fingerprint database. Guilty until proven innocent. No right to appeal for convicted terrorists. Thirty billion pounds for new generation Trident. Diplomatic- style immunity from investigation and prosecution for all elected politicians. Stop and Search. Police powers of arrest extended to 'reason to believe…' End of dual citizenship. Curfew Zones. Routine military patrols in 'areas of tension' CCTV on every street….[206]

It is a list of worrisome developments, some fictional, some not, some scarily prescient, that are augmented and supported by machine led surveillance. This overtly political messaging continues in the Afterword to *Frankissstein*, as she reminds us:

> I see the major issues that will affect us all being trivialised, down-played, not discussed, not understood, given scant time by a media obsessed with vanity politics, or by governments in the pockets of Big Tech and Big Oil.
>
> Climate breakdown.
>
> Artificial Intelligence.
>
> We are sleepwalking towards disaster of many kinds. Not least allowing the wealthy of the world to control the planets future, and without consultation.[207]

The last of these quotes highlight the way in which Winterson engages with the concerns arising from what could be described as objective violence, a violence which according to Serres is the greater violence that occurs towards nature whilst humanity participates in its more social and subjective violence, such as war or the requirements of transnational corporations. Commenting on what he sees as a consideration of the objective violence

[206] Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods* (London: Penguin, 2008), 156.
[207] Jeanette Winterson, 'On Writing *Frankissstein'*, in *Frankissstein* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019), 354.

that Winterson outlines in *The Stone God's* Marc Diefenderfer writes that 'The magnitude of the threat to human life posed by this new world order is apparent in the degree to which that biopower is in the proverbial hands of transnational corporations and the modern security state.'[208] Biopower refers to Foucault's consideration of the power or control over human populations, here associated with socio-legal structures.

With such an overt statement on what she considers as a loss of democratic decision making, Winterson rises to the challenge made by Val Pulman, the Eco-critic who has spoken out for the need for writers to solidly engage with the future of the planet by rethinking the framework by which we consider ourselves in the world and in society. Winterson's call is for the population to wake up to the fact that technology giants and the fossil fuel lobby have marketed both fields as inherently positive for humanity. But inherent within such narratives lie misogynistic beliefs encompassing the idea of the human as supreme and, within the same, the idea that the male being is supreme overall. Plumwood in her 2008 article, 'Nature in the Active Voice' states:

> The appearance of ecological crises on the multiple fronts of energy, climate change, and ecosystem degradation suggests that we need much more than a narrow focus on energy substitutes. We need a thorough and open rethink which has the courage to question our most basic cultural narratives.[209]

Kyndra Turner in her Dissertation, *From 'Frankenstein to District Nine': Ecocritical readings of classic and contemporary fiction and film in the Anthropocene* (2015), notes Plumwood's exhortation to writers and literary scholars to join with scientists in mitigating against the worst outcomes of climate change and species extinction. She argues in her discussion of Shelley's work that 'These imaginative literary texts […] provide models for

[208] Marc Diefenderfer, 'Objective Violence, Spaceman Economies, and the Transnational Corporation: Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods'*, in Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 28:2 (2020), 526-543 (528) https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isaa076 [accessed 18/6/22]
[209] Val Plumwood, 'Nature in the Active Voice' *Australian Humanities Review,* 46 (May 2009), 113-129 Australian Humanities Review - Issue 46 (anu.edu.au) [Accessed online 14/2/22]

what "readings in the Anthropocene" might offer to those interested in shifting the direction of normative cultural narratives and consequently, in order to change human behaviour and suggest new practices of inhabiting the material world.'[210]

The merging of histories, narratives, and characterisations that leak into a posthuman world, throughout *Frankissstein*, allows Winterson to ignite thinking around these very issues of current political and humanitarian embattlement with climate change. She also notes how fascination with Brexit, the polarisation of politics, social media responses, and celebrity distracts from wide discussions that need to be had about the cost of AI to human experience and survival. Climate change has a violence of its own, environmental disasters, extinctions, the change to aggressive weather patterns. Yet discourse around climate change is also potentially violent, with deniers and campaigners agitating against each other. Polarisation could indeed be the defining word for our times, and Winterson's text hints at the nature of the violence that is reflected from within it. In this way Geopolitics and the politics of the market are not immune to the violence that the climate change of the Anthropocene can mete out.

To explain further why this is important, we must again visit Val Plumwood's discourse of cultural dualisms and binaries. As she states, 'Forms of oppression from both the present and the past have left their traces in western culture as a network of dualisms, and the logical structure of dualism forms a major basis for the connection between forms of oppression.'[211] Plumwood argues, like many feminist scholars, that the dominant or suppressed positions of the established binary positions, such as male/female, human/nature, creation/evolution allowed for a structure of thinking that reduced both nature and female as other. Something that requires management and control. She goes on to say that 'this explains many of the problematic features of the west's treatment of

[210] Kyndra Turner, 'From 'Frankenstein to District Nine': Ecocritical Readings of Classic and Contemporary Fiction and Film in the Anthropocene', (unpublished PhD Thesis, Arizona State University, May 2015), 3.
[211] Val Pulman, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

nature which underlie the environmental crisis, especially the construction of human identity as "outside' nature"'.[212] On this basis Plumwood argues that a fundamental re-working of how we conceive our relationship with nature, following on from and including a reconceptualization of other oppressive relationships, offers the only hope for halting environmental degradation. 'This is no longer simply a matter of justice, but now also a matter of survival.'[213] She argues that whilst science or reason may have been pitted against creationism, it has maintained its hierarchical, human centric focus. This hierarchical format is something that Mary Shelley writes into and extends in her own text. It is a scientist's hubris which compels him to takes on the discovery of creating life. Manipulating the creative impulse outside of the natural order of things usually the province of female biology. He is a man whose ego leads to a frightful apogee and then rejects the results as monstrous and inhuman. Winterson expands on this idea to include ideas of the monstrous that could exist outside any organic materialism whilst never allowing us to witness the result. By implication, as Shelley has Frankenstein state, 'the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart,'[214] so she would have us believe that this could also be an outcome that future selves would experience.

Winterson's main textual thrust alternates between a biography of Mary Shelly's experiences in Geneva, taking up themes of being, love, creativity, alongside a futuristic, and yet recognisably contemporary experience of a physician researching the effects of AI on the wellbeing of humans, Ry Shelly who has undergone gender re-identification. Within this structure Winterson exposes and explores the potential and apparent violence(s) inherent in such a future that fails to take account of the inherent hierarchies and dualisms that remain in existence. Although as Ry states, 'I don't believe the effects will be necessarily negative, by the way' (98). The main structure of the novel with its

[212] Ibid., 2.
[213] Ibid., 6.
[214] Shelley, 40.

three main separate but intertwined narratives also allows for some delightful and humorous interchanges. These, I argue, take on an overtly satirical stance, which offer a lightness of touch to a thesis that could be considered bleak. Through humorous juxtaposition, Winterson undertakes another form of violence towards what could be deemed, in literary circles, important, if not sacrosanct literary figures, creating binaries within each of Shelley's group, to explore them from modern angles but also to expose their positioning within the dualistic framework. As stated earlier, Mary Shelley becomes or re-incarnates into Ry Shelley, whilst Lord Byron becomes the Welsh Sexbot salesman Ron Lord. John Polidori becomes a loud and obnoxious female tabloid reporter called Polly D and Claire Clairmont is signified by one of Ron's sex bots but is also reimagined into a gospel preaching African American woman, a nod to the divergent understanding of her historic character. And Victor Frankenstein becomes Professor Victor Stein, a specialist in AI, a keen believer in a technological future, where life will be 'Fully self-defining' (73). He is also a social media influencer.

What we can perceive from this intertwining of characters is that they seemingly renew and refresh in a dizzying act of ever becoming. The notion of ever becoming is important here because it enables and underlines the significance of a fluid identity and fluidity of position and roles, whereby imposed binaries and dualisms can be challenged and broken down. Through these interplays, identity then is shown to be malleable and multifaceted. Gilbert and Gubar's argument about Shelley's novel that 'we are obliged to confront both the moral ambiguity and the symbolic slipperiness which are at the heart of all the characterisations'[215] is one that we can equally apply to *Frankissstein.*

Gilbert and Gubar also put forward the argument that Shelley herself becomes strongly associated with the character of Frankenstein, pushing against male literary boundaries in a comparable way to how Frankenstein pushes at the boundaries of ethical science.

[215] Gilbert and Gubar, 229.

Also, they argue that the mad scientist's 'single most self-defining act transforms him definitively into Eve,'[216] and he himself becomes the mother, punished for her audacity in creation. As such, he reflects Mary Shelley's own experience both of motherhood, and of her authorship. Within Winterson's novel, the representation of Mary Shelley's authorial relationship to Frankenstein, as he sits maddened in his cell further influences and adds depth to this connection, whilst violently reviewing his own identity as character.

To do this Winterson takes whole passages of Mary Shelley's novel into her own. Whilst heavily reworked and précised, Winterson takes Captain Walton's letters, written for Walton's sister in Shelley's original text and transplants them into a scene where Walton informs a doctor in the Bedlam hospital about the crazed individual, he has brought in. Frankenstein is incarcerated and when he finally emerges from his madness and is asked what his story is, he replies, 'I do not know if I am the teller or the tale' (194). Mary Shelley will later visit him at which point he asks her to 'unmake' (214) him. 'I am the monster you created, said Victor Frankenstein, I am the thing that cannot die-and I cannot die because I have never lived' (214). The trail of monstrousness becomes aligned not just with physical malformation but also with the undead and the mad. This is despite Winterson's Mary Shelley proclaiming earlier that she will not make her creator a madman but a visionary instead.

This notion of the undead is what disturbs us the most. It was the uncertainty of a living death which Babel Dark could no longer tolerate in *Lighthousekeeping*. Polidori certainly argues this when he states that 'The Deadness of the dead, […] is not what we fear. Rather we fear that they are not dead when we lay them in that last chamber. That they awake to darkness, and suffocation, and so die in agony' (20). Or rather they walk the earth eternally as Polidori wrote in his *The Vampyre* (1819). The undead are beings positioned between two worlds, which cannot find comfort in either. Victor Frankenstein,

[216] Ibid., 232.

as Winterson's mad patient, likewise is remote, 'cut off from the mainland of himself' (190). One cannot but be reminded of Renfield in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). When the doctor reads the papers, they mimic the textual responses to Renfield's sickness that are written in Seward's dairy, whereby we are told of Renfield's fascination with learning about the workings of life force. Seward notes, that while he remonstrated with him over the mass of spiders in his room on which he fed his flies, Renfield caught 'a horrid blow-fly, bloated with some carrion,' and ate it. Renfield's reasoning was that 'it was very good and very wholesome; that it was life, strong life and gave life to him.'[217] Likewise, Walton's papers concern the commencement of Frankenstein's studies, with his queries over life and death and the obsession to locate the exact source of the life force. Shelley's Frankenstein will come to understand that 'To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death.'[218] And it is through Winterson's text that death and extinction are given a clear priority over the concerns of creation through maternity as she replaces it with creation through augmentation that arguably has no life and life that extends beyond death and away from the physical into the realm of computer held data. Within her novel, Victor Stein, and the textual space that he occupies, comes not from within notions of a distorted motherhood per se but from a recognition of augmentation after death, an avoidance of decay or extinction through the provision of a noncorporeal existence.

A fear and rejection of material decay is especially noticeable within the fictional Shelley's love of Percy Shelley. Within Winterson's schema, we are left wondering who he particularly reincarnates as, for she never clearly identifies an obvious crossover. Certainly, at the end of *Frankissstein*, Winterson shows Mary Shelley to be confused between what potential reincarnation or reinvention her lover is, mythical scientist, computer programme or Percy Shelley:

[217] Bram Stoker, *Dracula,* ed.by Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), 93.
[218] Shelley, 35.

I feed the punch card into the machine and what comes out is Shelley.

Mary! He says.

(Victor! Is that you?)

I turn round. In the crowd. Over there. Is that him? (344)

The major indicator that Percy becomes Victor, lies within the Ry and Victor Stein relationship which mirrors, to an extent, something of what we are told about the Shelley's relationship from within Winterson's text. But whereas this doubling up of relationships may enable Winterson to interrogate those issues pertinent to both couples something else occurs in the way she creates a monster of her own. That is to say, if we take Gilbert and Gubar's assertion that there is a merging of identities between the author Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, and his monstrous creation, and go on to include the further merging of Winterson's characters of Percy Shelley, Frankenstein, Victor Stein and Ry, we can see the creation of a mass conglomeration of identities. Identities which extend beyond Winterson's text and arguably all become monstrous by their association with each other. Layers of becoming, identity and meaning are created through their multiple interactions with each other, exhibiting a parallel to what Andrew Mangham has described as William Lawrence's theory of morphological change, which suggested that they, 'were errors brought about by artificial interactions with nature which, he now argued, responds with hostility.[219] Such a mass of characterisation creates ever more divisions of identity, of less secure embodiment, more grief and madness in an endless replenishment. It reflects also the unchecked repetitious construction of the machine learning process and algorithm development that Russell warns us about. We could refer to it as a virtual monster creation frenzy.

[219] Andrew Mangham, *We Are All Monsters: How Deviant Organisms Came to Define Us* (Boston and London: MIT Press, forthcoming 2023), 97.

Winterson begins her text at the point that Mary and Percy Shelley are residing on the shores of lake Geneva:

> *Reality is water-soluble.*
>
> What we could see, the rocks, the shore, the trees, the boats on the lake, had lost their usual definition and blurred into the long grey of a week's rain. Even the house, that we fancied was made of stone, wavered inside a heavy mist and through that mist, sometimes, a door or a window appeared like an image in a dream.
>
> Every solid thing had dissolved into its watery equivalent. (1)

Reality here is perceived to be unreliable and at the same time cloyingly claustrophobic. Definitions have unravelled, creating an atmosphere which breaks down barriers between objects, causing redefinitions to appear through the imagination such as the chimneys appearing 'like the ears of a giant animal' (3). The deluge reduces the space for the occupants of the two villas to move within. The rain and the gloom reminiscent of that rain and mist found on Pendle Hill in *The Daylight Gate*, creates a medium whereby all the philosophical talk of the meaning of life and the unknown quantity, which is death, mixed with the *Fantasmagoriana* (1812) of German ghost stories can only incite nightmares. For Winterson's Mary, the nightmarish visions are already and always present, the unseen figure marching up the hill, visions of appearances just caught at the corner of the eye. She sees 'A figure, gigantic, ragged, moving swiftly on the rocks above me, climbing away from me, his movements sure, and at the same time hesitant' (4). A fleeting emergence and for the reader, a filmic remembrance of Frankenstein's lumbering monster himself. Winterson obliquely reminds us, through the figure of Eve's inherent moral weakness and seduction, of the presence of Genesis when she shows the fictional Mary approaching Percy Shelley as 'naked as Eve' (4) when she comes in from the rain. It is a prelapsarian moment, prior to language.

In all, *Frankissstein* contains three separate passages that concern the grouping of Mary, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, John Polidori and Claire Clairemont in Geneva, and the challenge which Byron instigates, the writing of a story, 'which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror- one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart'.[220] Known as the year without a Summer, 1816 saw major climactic change, caused initially by the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora, in modern day Indonesia the previous year. A volcanic winter, and several disrupted and unsettling weather events, in total, created three years of violent storms, flooding and harvest failures. These temporary climactic changes, occurring throughout different areas of the world, created a moment that meant societies suffered disturbances, either on account of the lack of food or the disruption to living situations. Lucy Veale and Georgina Endfield, investigating the level of impact the eruption actually had, interestingly note that, 'In Europe the writing of Mary Shelley and Lord Byron has been used to provide insight', into the event.[221] Having undertaken archival studies of the contemporary documentation that recorded the weather during the period of 1809 and 1818, they note that, 'The period between 1809 and spring 1815 was thus one of considerable hardship, associated with the anomalous weather, set against an already difficult socio-economic and political context'[222]

It is in keeping that Winterson writes about and with a text that itself was written in the aftermath of revolution and war in Europe, an exposition of passions uncontrolled and uncontrollable. The French Revolution had played out and the Napoleonic Wars had ended in failure, reducing the French republican dream back into an uncomfortable Empire. Disrupted trade had meant a disastrous economic plight. It is also of interest that

[220] Mary Shelley, 'Author's introduction to the Standard Novels Edition (1831)' in *Frankenstein* ed. by Paddy Lyons and Philip Gooden (London: Everyman 2004), 197.
[221] Lucy Veale and Georgina Enfield, 'Situating 1816 the Year without a Summer' *The Geographical Journal,* 182:4(August 2016), 1-13 (3). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306042378_Situating_1816_the_'year_without_summer'_in_the_UK [Accessed through Research Gate 31/1/22]
[222] Ibid., 5.

Mary Shelley's text reaches back to early discussions of evolutionary ideas undertaken by Erasmus Darwin that would eventually culminate in Charles Darwin's important work, a feature of *Lighthousekeeping,* that would undercut and raise questions about religious authority with its recognition of survival by violent struggle. The group discuss William Lawrence and his controversial lectures particularly those concerning life and the brain, where he expounded 'that there is no non-corporeal principle of life superadded to organic matter and that thought is as much the function of the brain as digestion is of the stomach.'[223]

Winterson has the party discuss British politics, their particular focus being on the Luddite Riots which had taken place in 1811: events that the group discuss at length, 'The Luddites are smashing the looms, said Byron. In England, now as we drink and dine, at home in England they are smashing the looms. The weavers do not want progress' (134). Percy Shelley reminds him that he had 'stood for their cause […] against your own class and kind when Parliament passed the Frame Breaking Act' (134). Whilst Polidori sees such an act as justified because, in his view, progress is more important than the lives and livelihoods of the working people, any reaction to it should be stopped. 'We cannot tolerate persons disrupting the inevitable order of things- and violently so' (134). This inevitability in his mind resides not in creating better conditions for the workers as craftsmen but in being able to produce more and thereby increasing profits. Mary argues, 'Is there not violence in forcing men to work for lower wages in order to compete with a machine?' (134).

Mary's position on this is an important central argument for Winterson's text and one that mirrors socio-economic arguments of the current time as well as in the early nineteenth century. Capitalism whether in its championing of Looms then, or AI now, lends progress

[223] Wells, Kentwood D. "Sir William Lawrence (1783-1867): A Study of Pre-Darwinian Ideas on Heredity and Variation." *Journal of the History of Biology* 4: 2 (1971): 319–61 (322). http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330564 [Accessed 24/6/22]

an inherent violence. Without wide consultations and the involvement of politically motivated populations, scientific exploration not only replaces religious motivations, breaking down those issues that religion held sacrosanct but creates new areas of knowledge that become sacrosanct themselves. In his book on *Violence* (2009), Slavoj Zizek states:

> We are talking about the way science functions as a social force, as an ideological institution: at this level, its function is to provide certainty, to be a point of reference on which one can rely, and to provide hope. New technological inventions will help us fight disease, prolong life, and so on. In this dimension, science is what Lacan called 'university discourse at its purest: knowledge whose 'truth' is a Master-Signifier, that is power.' [224]

This may be truer of the present-day scientific field because capitalism and scientific funding is in the hands of multinational companies. Mangham in his introduction to *We Are All Monsters* has argued that in the past, science freed the embodied individual from the power of the church's teachings allowing monstrosity its own textual space: 'monstrosity first began to take arms against bifurcations based on either/or […] when the secular theories of embryological, morphological, and evolutionary development discredited the parameters of more religious interpretations.'[225] So began the materialist exploration that would become a disrupted place of discourse within Frankenstein's monster. Now the potential is for science to create parameters dictating human divergence itself whilst making monstrosities of its own. When Winterson has her Frankenstein state, 'Outside waits one whose fiendish, pitiless cunning will instruct others to experiment as I did- without any care for the human race' (215), she indicates that such monstrous power is always already present. When he goes on to state that, 'The monster once made cannot be unmade. What will happen to the world has begun' (217), I argue

[224] Slavoj Zizek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2009), 69.
[225] Mangham, 32.

that she underlines Mary Shelley's creation itself, as reflecting and augmenting the scientific response to the question about the boundaries of the human body and embodiment, that all progressive scientific developments in this field up to and including the current development of AI can be seen as an answer to it.

We are continuously reminded through these Geneva passages of the important intellectual milieu that surrounded the Romantic writers. All of which offer various readings of the rights of humanity. This is the moment in history where Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), as an answer to Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), had entered the conversation to join with Hobbes, Rousseau, and Godwin on what it means to be human and how humans learnt about and experienced their world. The spectacle of Galvanism is interspersed with discussions that question the Bible, creating a maelstrom of thinking where the cry against Christian thought and its moral authority is marked by its revolutionary tone. Byron's talk of revolution, however traumatic, engenders the achievement of 'so little at first, yet we acknowledge that little, that very little, as the light-bringer of the world' (137). Whilst the weather would seem to be commensurate with the intellectual and political climate; violent, chaotic, and tumultuous, this group of literary revolutionaries remain isolated and powerless to be any active force. In a sense they are disembodied by their seclusion holding onto a little light of hope.

Within this weather driven confinement, 'by innumerable gaolers' (6), we are given a view of Mary Shelley's life as claustrophobic, not just in her physical circumstances but also within her psychology and within her gender. Winterson paints a picture of this young woman, which is replete with gothic sensibility. In the abstract to her paper, *Baroque Intensity: Lovecraft, Le Fanu and the Fold*, Patricia MacCormack asserts:

> Gothic sensibility is a haunted one. Protagonists are haunted by memories, by ghosts and supernatural beings, by the uncanniness of the unfamiliar made

> familiar and the familiar made unfamiliar, and by their own selves-which are often alienated, not known to themselves, impressionable and frequently ill.[226]

Such sensitivities impact on her relationship with Percy. Whilst their love is expressed through a corporeal and sexual connection, her psychological and spiritual distance from him worries her, and the fear of losing him through death cannot be assuaged by his assurances that the creation of a soul, which is 'that part of him not subject to death and decay; that part of him made alive to truth and beauty' (56), would continue on. He argues within the text that 'I believe it is each man's task to awaken his own soul' (56). Indeed, he believes further that 'the *becoming* of the soul, not its going, should be our concern' (56). There are two processes occurring here. There is a soul that needs awakening and a soul that is becoming, the former implies a prior entity, whereas the latter looks to something that needs to be developed. Having rejected the constraints of a moralistic Christianity, he turns to the notion of the spiritual, that which makes us human and not animal, subjective and not corporeal in his view. Mary adopts Percy's interest in the question, 'for how can it be that the body is master of the spirit? Our courage, our heroism, yes even our hatreds, all that we do shapes the world- is that the body or the spirit. It is the spirit' (15). In doing so, she presents the other half of the Cartesian dualism. She states, 'How would I love you, my lovely boy if you had no body' (15)? This frailty of embodiment is further underlined by Winterson's refrain of the Shakespearean Sonnet 53, 'What is your substance, whereof you are made, that millions of strange shadows on you tend?' The question is beyond biology, beyond the empirical and certainly beyond specifically male empiricism. It concerns what creates the person. It is a question that Mary contemplates, as she states, 'For the sake of my story I have my own desire to contemplate what it is about Man that distinguishes us from the rest of biology' (58). This opens out the question of whether it is the spirit as Percy Shelley believes, and if so, can

[226] Patricia MacCormack, 'Baroque Intensity: Lovecraft, Le Fanu and the Fold' *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies,* 2 (March 2007) 27-28 (27) Patrica MacCormack.2 (wordpress.com) [accessed 24/6/22]

it return or abide in other realms simultaneously? We see this occurring within Winterson's textual layering and her replication of Mary Shelley's characters, the disembodied soul itself becoming monstrous.

Like that flash of understanding within Byron's revolutionary spark of light, Winterson's Mary recognises that 'The world is at the start of something new. We are the shaping spirits of our destiny. And though I am not an inventor of machines I am the inventor of dreams' (3). The invention of dreams, and by inference stories, as an act of creation that can bring a renewal of hope into the future, recalls Winterson's own position as author. When she has Mary comment 'But there is something of a lighthousekeeper in me, and I am not afraid of solitude, nor of nature in her wildness' (17), it is not just a flattened example of Winterson's self-reflexive intertextuality, but also a reminder that light can indicate a moment of salvation, whether that be revolutionary or spiritually. It is also an indication that she places her text alongside Mary Shelley's own, not merely as an audacious act of self-glorification but rather to underline Shelley's text, bringing its interrogations of humanity and its purpose to the for once again.

That she would align herself so closely to her Mary Shelley is another way that the author's character relationships are violently disrupted. Winterson asserts herself as author within the mass of characters. When Winterson has Mary Shelley say that it is 'Hope that one day there will be a human society that is just' (9), this corresponds with Winterson's own words in her section *On Writing Frankissstein*: 'I wanted to connect a thread through the labyrinth, and to talk about the smaller scale impacts-the love stories of our lives- and the fact that most humans believe they are a) good people, and b) doing the right thing.'[227] On this matter of Mary's hope, Winterson's Polidori replies to Mary that justice will only occur when, 'every human being is wiped away and we begin again' (9). This of course recalls the necessity of God's great flood and the desire to return to a

[227] Jeanette Winterson, 'On Writing *Frankissstein'*, 353.

prelapsarian ideal. As Byron proclaims, 'And so we are back to our floated Ark. God had the right idea. Begin again' (10). The group's discourse, within Winterson's text pivots around the idea of drowning. In *Lighthousekeeping* one could argue that Babel's drowning was a form of baptism, yet here we have a Byronic, anarchical reaction to the notion of the biblical Flood that contains his negativity towards humanity that is fuelled by a fatalistic realism. He remarks that, 'The human race seeks its own death. We hasten towards what we fear most' (10), because 'death is heroic, […] And life is not.' (11)

It can be argued that we are at a similar point now. There are those in the field of philosophy and humanities, such as Patricia MacCormack, who would argue for a reduction, if not a full-scale extinction of humanity in order to enable Earth to regain its own natural equilibrium. As she states, 'From an anthropocentric view, I am speaking of many ends- the end of identity, the end of religion, the end of self-serving political movements, the end of human life, the end of the anthropocentric world, ultimately the end of humans' violent occupation of the earth'[228] For this stance she has been criticised in the popular press, commenting on such criticism she has stated, 'I think that what that shows is there is an anthropocentric- or a human-impulse to read acts of grace as automatically acts of violence.'[229] The act of grace is the giving up of our human privilege over all other life forms and systems, commensurate with Byron's notion of heroic death. Seen from within the space created by the polarisation of these competing arguments, either way, lies the constant threat of violence, and for human extinction.

Later in Winterson's text, following the death of Mary's son William, she shows how Mary and Shelley hear of and discuss the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. Winterson frames the imposition of the Corn Laws of 1815, in a way that showed its doubtful claim to patriotism, 'England for the English! John Bull bread at John Bull prices' (250). This is not unlike how

[228] Patricia MacCormack, '*The Ahuman Manifest: Activism for the end of the Anthropocene',* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2002), 7.
[229] Patricia MacCormack in *Mail Online* 16th Feb 2020 https: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8009861/Old-school-goth-professor-says-way-save-planet-stop-having-children,html?ns .

Brexit was envisaged. It was in fact, a way to protect English farmers from lower prices. The working people were starving as a result. The meeting on St Peters Field had been called, to protest against those laws and 'to petition for an end to rigged parliaments' (251). The protesters were charged at by local militias, 'and worse still, the dragoons on horseback with sabres' (251). People died and were wounded, and the Shelley couple are horrified. Percy particularly wants to take up his revolutionary zeal, back to England, 'To join our force to the protest' (252). Grieving and again pregnant, Mary wishes for actual disembodiment, 'I have love, but I cannot find love's meaning in this world of death. Would there were no babies, no bodies; only minds to contemplate beauty and truth' (254). So, in this sense, what Winterson's Mary Shelley wants in this moment is the grace that comes from relinquishing the need to be embodied, the grace to relinquish physical control over the physical world, only to be 'the pure spirit of eternity, not bound to the wheels of death or time' (254).

This places a great weight on the idea of a soul. Without anyone to remember us or read our narratives what becomes of us as individual memories, what becomes of that which we once were. For Pew, in *Lighthousekeeping* it was in maintaining individual stories that individuals were saved. For Ry, as an evidence-based scientist, of course the question is not even a consideration, and they balk at the idea of considering the soul at all, as they state, 'I'm not sure that's my area' (25). Yet a futuristic solution maybe hinted at with the presentation of a fragmentation of character into refracted narratives. We come across this notion with Ry's character and her talk with Claire about there not being enough time:

> If I could make copies of myself – upload my mind and 3D print my body, then one Ry could be in Graceland, another Ry at the shrine of Martin Luther King, a third Ry busking the Blues in Beale Street. Later all my selves could meet, share the day, and reassemble into the original self I like to believe is me. (30)

Not only is this a dream of a type of temporary technological dismemberment but the creation of multi personalities. This could either be viewed as a mere convenience, or a recognition of a serious psychiatric condition. At first glance such a suggestion would seem like fun, but the implications of a personality so split that it talks to its many selves at the end of the day is also harrowing. It is again a falling into madness. Textually it reminds us that many of Winterson's characters have refracted lives and multiple existences: there is Villanelle's recognition of different lives within *The Passion* (1987), *Lighthousekeeping* (2004) sees the double life of Babel Dark, whilst he peers into the prism of the light, Alice Nutter in *The Daylight Gate* (2012) also has a public life and at least two others. But the violence of these prisms of existence are pronounced and uncomfortable.

We have jumped forward to the more current reality that Winterson imagines for us within her text, the rain that creates a blurring of perception in Geneva becomes the heat of Memphis Tennessee. 'Reality bends in the heat. I'm looking through a shimmer of heat at buildings whose solid certainties vibrate like sound waves' (25). It is this blurring of reality that binds the two time periods together, allowing the intellectual and mechanistic considerations to leak one from the other. However, this leakage does not directly contain the Romantic notions of the sublime or that revolutionary verve within the imagery of the modern day or future now of this part of the text, because we have entered the pragmatic world of scientific logic and power.

The two worlds of Mary Shelley and Ry Shelley provide a major contrast in the way that language is employed and the violence of its reduction to a flattened simplicity in the future now of Winterson's text is exhibited through the two very different styles with which the sections are presented. At face value, they differ because of the historical and social aspects of the times and situations they recreate. As pointed out earlier, the first is itself important as a moment of literary history. A confluence of poetic minds, two of whom are wholly concerned with the expression of humanity's experience through poetry and

intellectual inspiration. Although not as rich as the actual writings of Mary Shelley, the biographical sections of Winterson's text exhibit a richer linguistic lexicon, an inclusion of quotations and references to other linguistic possibilities that enmesh to create a world where emotions and experiences are nuanced and diverse. The future now is wholly influenced by science and the espousal of Stein's 'works across the boundary of smart medicine and machine learning' (87). By contrast to the world of Mary Shelley, his world is wrapped up in a language which is utilitarian, factual, both logically and objectively clear. He is described as having a charisma which can hold the attention of a room full of people like a 'Gospel Channel scientist' (73). This is the world that Zizek describes when he argues that:

> Science and religion have changed places: today, science provides the security religion once guaranteed. In a curious inversion, religion is one of the possible places from which one can deploy critical doubts about today's society. It has become one of the sites of resistance.[230]

Ry has come to the X-po on AI and robotics, a marketing exhibition, and she is met by a receptionist called Claire. Claire is 'tall, black, beautiful, well dressed in a tailored dark green skirt and pale green silk shirt,' and wrote out Ry's name tag 'with brisk, manicured hand' (26). Elegant, efficient, friendly, intelligent, and religious in a 'serious and certain' (27) way. Ry tells her that Memphis and *Frankenstein* are both 200 years old. When she elaborates that, 'Tech. AI. Artificial intelligence. *Frankenstein* was a vision of how life might be created – the first non-human intelligence,' Claire's sharp rejoinder is 'What about angels' (27)? Claire is not interested in robots and takes a dim view of those operating in the café, comparing them unfavourably with her mother who worked for minimum wage in a diner. She notes her mother's proficiency against the mistakes made

[230] Zizek, 70.

by the robots. ‘She wasn’t an educated woman, but there was nothing artificial about her intelligence’ (31). Her view is that robots are a graven image:

> It says in the Bible that thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image. That is one of the Ten Commandments.
>
> Is a robot a graven image, Claire?
>
> It’s a ballpark likeness of a God given human.
>
> A likeness that comes to life?
>
> I wouldn’t call it life. We’re fooling ourselves if we call a robot alive. Only God can create life. (32)

Claire’s response to Ry on these issues speaks to the concern that Winterson’s text reveals, about the ways in which technology, whilst mimicking life for convenience, for ease of consumption or service, minimises the human with its ability to change and adapt quickly. It creates functions as a series of steps rather than the warmth of human interaction. The concern becomes that human life and experience develops into something less rich, and less spiritual, recalling Winterson’s concerns as expressed with the mechanization of the lighthouse in *Lighthousekeeping*.

One character formation allows Winterson to exhibit this in a disturbingly recognisable yet comical way. The future-now representative of Lord Byron, Ron Lord is not initially revealed as a poet, and not on the face of it bad or dangerous to know. Ron Lord is more of a lost soul without any of the charisma, presented as the epitome of the travelling, doorstep salesman; moving in on technological advances and structures to sell dubious wares that no one would really think they needed until he told them they did. Always putting the profit motive that any business venture creates before the ethical considerations about what he is selling. The violence of his capitalism, to the world and society, is exhibited in the reductive way that he considers himself to be proliferating a

harmless way to create happiness and serve the needs of lonely men. As such he consistently breaks down language to its most simplistic and venal meanings.

In a further nod to the problem of the sinful Eve and with the understanding that her sin was the revelation of sex and sexuality which remains a main driver of human intentions and passions in a highly sexualised society, Winterson can state with confidence, 'Let's start at the beginning: a very good place to start. Sex' (35). That she from here gives us a passage about sex dolls or robots is as illuminating and disturbing as much as it is amusing. It is also reminiscent of French writer, August Villiers de L'isle- Adam's book entitled *L'Ève future* (1886), a fragmented narrative about the design and construction of Hadaly, an android, in who Deborah Harter states, 'one see's already the easy reduction […] of bodies to objects and to circulating parts.'[231] Winterson multiplies this image of the android manyfold, increasing the number of parts whilst reducing further the notion of a singular identity. From the very first, Ron's language depletes his female gendered sex robots, reducing them to mere body parts where violence is already established as central to their meaning. Describing his first delivery of one he says, 'All her parts arrived in separate bags like a chainsaw massacre. I put her together with one screwdriver and the instruction video. Really its Lego for adults' (36). He describes their manufacturing process: 'Torso comes through first, swinging on the overhead wires, complete with two holes, user ready, and F cup moulded tits' (37). Thus Ron, and by inference Byron, becomes aligned to the notion of the masculinist that is Frankenstein himself.

What follows on from his first introduction into the text is a one-sided interview where we are left guessing the questions that Ry poses. The reader can understand what those questions are by how he answers them. The absence of language in this regard does not diminish the level of incredulity that we are meant to infer. Indeed, the silences merely allow the insertion of questions anyone reading the text may themselves want to ask. By

[231] Deborah A. Harter, *Bodies in Pieces; Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 42.

moving the questions outside of the text Winterson exploits it boundaries, implicating its reader in both its arguments and solutions in a Socratic exchange.

He tells Ry proudly that the robots embody the perfect woman, or indeed wife, yet unlike the Victorian angel of the house, rather than being merely ignored or denigrated when they are not required for male entertainment or succour, they can be literally turned off, rendered not alive, merely things, instruments, and outlets for male needs. As static ornamentation they look great in the passenger seat of the latest car. If they are allowed language at all it is pre-programmed. This not only means that their discourse can safely be contained within specific interests of their owner operator, but they can also be silenced. Their language is so controlled that there is no requirement to make conversation, no requirement to think outside one's own world view; thus, they are intellectually unchallenging. When you do not want them to be seen as well as not heard, or 'If you want to be a bit more discreet you can fold her up and strap her in the back or stow her out of sight in the boot or trunk or whatever you call it.' (40)

However logical his idea that the Sexbots can embody the type of female much lauded as the ultimate in companionship, they are, and can only ever be, merely a proximation of a commodified female body. Indeed, he goes so far to share that, 'The other way to enjoy an XX-BOT, more modern, to my mind, is rental' and he goes further, 'You see, Ryan, renting gives you all of the pleasure and none of the problems'; 'safer and cheaper than the human alternative' (38), because they are easy to disinfect. Ron in this regard is nothing more than a pimp and far from being involved in modern capitalism is in fact participating in one of the oldest professions.

That, these female bodies come without names, merely being numbered, raises question as to how they can approximate the human at all, given that the greatest act of dehumanising of a people occurred to European Jews being numbered by the Nazis. But as signifiers and in their usage, these bots must equate to the human in order to be of

rental or purchase value. The fact that they remain nameless at source is further muddied by the argument that he gives for this situation. It is, he argues, so that the people who buy or hire them can personalise them for themselves. Therefore, they can have many names, but they are denied any type of consistent personal identity that naming would provide for them and no name that they can choose for themselves. As the receptionist, Claire points out, the naming of things is an important, even biblical requirement, it was 'Adam's task in the Garden of Eden (26),' and therefore Ron offers to his clients the ultimate masculine experience, that of being in charge of naming them, and therefore having power over these plastic moulded women.

The capitalist market ensures that these non-women come in diverse types to suit a variety of tastes, not only then are their identities manufactured, but the tastes of men who purchase or hire them are equally seen as a given, a presumed and stereotyped assumption of what directs their desire, depending on their class, their education, and their age. It is a logical progression of market forces that these designed women then have no capacity to direct their own physical identities. Their design imperatives are only decided by the popularity of a certain type, there is economy model, the Cruiser, the Racy, a deluxe: 'And over to Vintage, I love the two-piece suit and pillbox hat. I got this idea from retro -porn sites. She's late to the game but she brings plenty to the party' (46). And there are those who are designed for specific territorial markets.

Ron expounds on the needs of Chinese men in particular, with a gusto that only proves his lack of real knowledge and sensitivity. His ability to exploit a horrific situation for capitalist gain is shown in his wish to fill the gap left by, 'All those strangled girl babies chucked in a paddy field somewhere' (49). His clumsy cultural references are further insulting as he mixes Chinese and Japanese culture into one: 'what goes around comes around- like a Sushi belt- you'd think they'd know that wouldn't you' (49). They, unlike like the dolls he trades in, all allegedly look the same. But like the dolls, they are othered, both

they and their culture remaining outside of his misogynistic, Western, and prejudiced world view.

If all of this is not alarming enough, these bots come with interchangeable heads. This, as Ron elucidates is convenient. Not only can he provide flexibility to match parts to further increase the choice he offers to his customers, but he can be environmentally friendly by his ability to restore the Sexbot to a whole if either their body or their heads malfunction, a kind of make do and mend alternative to buying a whole new one. Also, he receives many damaged returns, offering a view of unseen and unspoken violence that is meted out, 'A lot of the XX-Bots get their faces bashed in. Get thrown at the wall or something. I seriously thought about a detachable nose at one time,' 'I don't judge' (51). Such vitriolic violence towards a female form which is essentially an inanimate object speaks of something deeply disturbed. Arguably it is a form that one has complete control over; you can programme it yourself and dress yourself and even turn off and pack away if it is annoying you. The representation of the female that the Sexbot holds within it is what is at stake here. Winterson in this part of the text is returning to and underlining her world view regarding men that seemingly has not changed since she has Villanelle state clearly in *The Passion*, 'Men are violent. That's all there is to it.' [232]

Whilst we cannot but see that these Sexbots are female humans if only in form, and therefore they represent the way in which some women are treated in society, their symbolism gives to them alternating outcomes. The violence towards the Sexbot's body also reveals the opposite to the result of violence perpetuated against organic women in that whereas the violence towards the former humanises, violence towards the latter dehumanises. It offers a view of the female as occupying two realms at once. We can see how this is an example of how Winterson underlines how the post human continues to contain the same power structures of patriarchy and misogyny.

[232] Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion* (England: Penguin Books, 1988),109.

Ron further exhibits his Byronic tendency towards women when he claims, ‘women aren’t goldfish. They’ve evolved’ (38), he does so without any recognition of what his business fundamentally underpins or what his attitude exhibits. When he describes his Sexbots as having ‘three holes all the same size’ (40) that all vibrate or indeed have detachable heads, he is reducing the female body down to a number of conveniences. His own personal horror of the female form comes within the idea of an animalistic decay of female sexuality, ‘Jesus, no I wouldn’t put real hair down *there*! Or any hair, as it happens. You’d have it sopping wet and rotten in no time’ (45). Or when he says ‘Her mouth doesn’t move, but if you’re fucking her face off you wouldn’t want it to, would you? (46), he seems oblivious that the imagery he presents of the female as merely receptacle is a violating image. It is underlined by his inability to conceive of a Bot that would satisfy a woman, only considering female sexuality as passive, only conceiving that ‘they might enjoy sitting on top’ (49).

Of course, consent is not the issue when it comes to Sexbots, ever available and not having needs of their own. Ron can describe sexual relationships with these bodies as he does because, in his mind, women and Sexbots are two different things entirely. But this attitude of misogyny is a baseline opinion for him, and we are alerted to this by his questions to Ry, ‘Women? What about women? Are you a feminist, Ryan? I’m not, but my mum is, so don’t think we haven’t heard about this back in Wales’ (48). He is not a feminist and clearly, he assumes that people believe him to be parochial and unsophisticated because he is not from a suburban or city environment. As such his self-proclaimed ability to speak on behalf of women reads as an irritating and ill-informed overreach. For instance, when he refers to a moment of enforced fellatio, he expounds, ‘Personally, as a woman, even though I am not, I’d hate it if some random bloke wanted to cum anywhere except the usual place, but I’m a fussy eater’ (45). By reducing his criticism of it down to a personal preference and not to the reaction of an unwanted penetration, he creates another way of saying that they love it really.

His resistance to feminism is also linked to a nascent paedophilia that becomes apparent through his description of the Sexbots. Whilst he is adamant that he does not agree with child bots as entities, he states, 'there's no such thing as underage sex when it's a bot. I mean there's no can't do it till you're sixteen or whatever' (48). Given that the Sexbots are small in stature, there is nothing to suggest that they would not represent children and these representations become movable feasts as Winterson's text shows.

Eventually his misogyny is exposed and undercut regardless of his claim of 'public service.' The robots that do speak have a lexicon that their users teach them or programme into them. In a hilarious moment whilst Ron is attending Victor Stein's conference afterparty, an unwitting conference attendee finds Ron's personal bot in a sports bag in the locker room. Seeing an opportunity for a practical demonstration he unbags her and she launches into embarrassing and revealing sex talk. The first thing she does is to proclaim 'DADDY!' (90). Ron says, 'I don't know how she got set off … She's controlled by an app' (90). Here, not only is Ron's sexual preferences revealed but the app has malfunctioned, meaning that his embarrassment is set to increase. Both the salesman, pretending to be moral, and the technology are seen to have major faults. When Ron unfolds her, Claire asks, 'OPEN MY LEGS, DADDY! WIDER!' (90). It becomes clear that Claire's vocalisations are a reflection of how she's been programmed to respond to Ron in certain situations and in response to word cues that he gives her, so when he's explaining about being able to fold her up without splitting her clothes, she parrots back, 'SPLIT ME!' (91). Not only does this absolutely expose how she is being used by Ron, but it implies a level of violence in intent that he needs for sexual gratification. Moreover, Ron tells us that she is in the wrong mode, and he is depicted, 'sweating visibly as his fat fingers work his iPhone' (92) to alter her settings. A flattened lexicon may pose a flattened range of possibilities, however Claire's parroting of Ron's words still has the potential to create meaning and irony, as when she asks, 'HAVE YOU COME FROM AN INSTITUTION?' (92), like the stooge in a comedy duo illuminating her partner's words.

Technology in the form of the internet and social media does not escape from Winterson's interrogation either. It is cast in her text as a concerning, uncontrolled space where settings and algorithms hold sway over unsuspecting users. Professor Stuart Russell, in his talk to Davros Radio in January 2022, stated that there is some evidence to suggest that algorithms are very able at manipulating people:

> However, if you think about the way the algorithms work, what they're trying to do is maximise click-through. They want you to click on things, engage with content or spend time on the platform, which is a slightly different metric, but basically the same thing.
>
> And you might say, Well, OK, the only way to get people to click on things is to send them things they're interested in. So, what's wrong with that? But that's not the answer. That's not the way you maximise click-through. The way you maximise click-through is actually to send people a chain of content that turns them into somebody else who is more susceptible to clicking on whatever content you're going to be able to send them in future.
>
> So the algorithms have, at least according to the mathematical models that we built, the algorithms have learnt to manipulate people to change them so that in future they're more susceptible and they can be monetised at a higher rate.[233]

The vampiric characterisation of AI can be brought alongside Winterson's account of the vampiric quality of contemporary journalism, represented in this text in the guise of Polly D. A literary reincarnation of Polidori, Byron's personal physician who undertook a bit of literary violence himself by passing off Byron's original idea and publishing it as *The Vampyre* (1819), lampooning Byron in the process. Factual representation through the

[233] Stuart Russell, The promises and perils of AI, with Prof Stuart Russell | World Economic Forum (weforum.org) Radio Davos 6 January 2022 [Accessed 7/6/22]

journalistic style of popular culture is lambasted as rapaciously unnuanced, and in this instance particularly, is seen to be hoisted by its own petard. We first meet Polly D after she has had a difficult experience with virtual sex. She has experimented through Teledildonics[234], with a sex aid that would enable her to have part virtual, part physical sex with someone at distance. Winterson plays here with the online porn industry, merging its potential capabilities with a social media run riot and people unable to connect physically. The result is that the virtual sexual act is mistakenly uploaded by Polly, onto her Facebook account. Not mentioned within Winterson's text but known by inference is that such visual uploads would be owned and copyrighted by Facebook itself and dependant on privacy settings might well find themselves shared all over social media in a matter of moments. A comment certainly on social media but also a satirical sideways swipe at uncontrolled paparazzi journalism, online sex-shaming and the violent acts against personal privacy and integrity that they result in. The question is put by Ry, 'Why would anyone want a vibrator featuring a camera and remote control?' (34). Whilst amusing, Polly D's situation highlights a deeper concern about who owns an individual's identity and what does identity really mean, given that on-line it is ultimately coordinated in a digital manner in a sequence of noughts and ones. These two moments in Winterson's text, where there is either a personal and physical interaction or a virtual relation with technology are important because they present two points where recent technologies and developments, rather than altering societies misogynist perception of the female body and female sexuality, actively reinforce and underline well-established thinking. They speak necessarily to questions about the ownership of those embodiments and bring into question the moral positioning of any other embodied being, non-human, animal, plant, or planet.

[234] Winterson takes the title of Lisa Moore's essay on *The Passion* here. 'Teledildonics: Virtual Lesbians in the Fiction of Jeanette Winterson' in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism,* ed Elisabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 1995).

We have already seen how the depiction of sexuality within this part of the text appears to attach itself to a moralistic positioning, through the differences between the romantic and mechanistic use of language to describe the different sexual moments. Ron's misogynist language, his horror and lack of understanding about female sexuality are merely a response to his own ineptitude, an ineptitude that harks back to the fumbling of his youth where he experiences vaginas as 'dry as sandpaper' (48), owing to his own male inexperience and self-absorption. Sexbots offer a way to distance himself from a flesh and blood 'other,' in just the same way that Polly D can remain physically and emotionally removed from a lover. This creation of distance between physical bodies is made more complicated because what they are replaced with does not preclude or rid them from the difficulties that are self-generated in the first instance. In addition, they also come with a sense of the un-manageable.

The violence meted out to the Sexbots is not generated by them but comes from the abusers themselves, seated within a revulsion towards that which they represent. That Ron experiences the female body as monstrous plays on feminist arguments that have grown from the readings of *Frankenstein*. The monstrous body is abject, the idealised female body even in the form of a Sexbot can be perfected and made wholesome because it is disconnected from its true physicality. Polly D also becomes disconnected from her true physicality, in fact her physicality and intimate sexual act becomes digitalised, possibly reworked as a public event, to be shared millions of times, replicated, and manipulated. There is an abusive violence in the unwanted disclosure of an intimate act which exposes an underlying insatiable voyeurism within society.

So, in two very humorous but short sections of Winterson's text she explodes these ideas and responses, bringing to the fore all of their tensions and disrupted boundaries and questions of whose body belongs to who. Human embodiment is further disrupted by Ry. As a future-now incarnation of Mary Shelley, she extends Shelley's disturbance of female intellectual boundaries to one where the very embodiment of gender is fluid. This is not a

new area for Winterson to write in. Many of her central characters have gender identity's which are fluid, as we have seen in *The Passion.* But it is to be noted that Ry stands out as somebody who has permanently redefined their own embodiment on their own terms, in an overtly conscious and honest manner. Ron, already shown to be unable to cope with what cis females are, and also tied into a fixed heteronormative binary, has difficulty in seeing Ry as anything but male. He continuously refuses to acknowledge that Ry neither identifies as male or female. He does not dead name them at this point in the text but insists on calling them by a male name, Ryan. Naming is power, and by giving Ry a male name he attempts to place Ry back into a binary position with which he is comfortable.

It is the comfort or otherwise that people hold for other's bodily identity that is an underlying commentary from Winterson. Ron's position *vis-a-vis* Ry is part of a process of identification exhibited through the satirical process of character re-imagining into the future-now that Winterson takes the reader through and in this sense Ron's relation to Ry is fascinating. Mary Shelley in her female form remains in our minds eye from earlier in the text, and her relation to Byron is one where he respects her, 'but only up to a point' (13) grudging respect but also one in which she seeks to challenge his views interjecting a feminine perspective into their discussions. Her outward transformation into Ry only becomes fully apparent through Ron's naming of them as Ryan. Now, the questioning of Ry has Ron on the intellectual ropes, his arrogance remains, but he thinks he is talking to a man and his conversation is full of banter that becomes regressive and silly. At the same time Winterson is able to parody the responses to transgendered bodies from people who are unable to understand or accept the nuances of gender, in its performance and affect.

To other's outwardly, Ry is male, not the fluid person that Ry sees themselves as. We come across this again when the chalet worker refers to Ry and Victor seen together as 'you boys' (123). Whereas Ry sees themselves as, 'liminal, cusping, in between, emerging, undecided, transitional, experimental, a start-up (or is it an upstart?) in my own

life' (29), we are reminded that the society around them will make assumptions about them on visual cues alone. Whatever language Ry uses, the visual will dictate that first response and will also determine that Ry will have to self-explain or self-reveal on every new acquaintance. The notion of ever becoming is therefore embedded into their identity. Later, Ry's sexual orientation, stated as being attracted to men, although not exclusively, further confuses the issues for Ron. The knowledge disrupts his earlier understanding of Ry's unspoken incredulity when questioning Ron over his overt sexism. When Ron questions them over their feminism he does so from the position that he feels Ry to be supporting the wrong side. The irony of course is that Lord Byron was as well known for his fluid sexuality as he was for his sexual rapaciousness, yet both incarnations of this character remain within Winterson's text as misogynist.

The disruption that Ry's identity causes, continues in their relationship with and to Victor Stein. Victor who takes on a fatherly superior role to Ry in his discussions of biotechnology is astounded when he sees Ry naked, after they become drenched in a rainstorm. Replicating Mary Shelley as a vision of Eve from earlier in the text, but without, 'breasts like apples,'[235] that Henri sees in the priest's pictures in *The Passion.* Ry is undressing when Victor returns to the shower room. Now not Eve or at least a disrupted Eve. But like Percy Shelley, Victor Stein is aroused. As Ry will point out later, even though he finds Ry's body arousing Victor is actually disturbed by the fact that such an attraction would classify him as gay. Clinging to notions of the heteronormative, he indulges in sex that is exhibited essentially as heterosexual, no different in configuration from that experienced between Mary and Percy, even though in its description Ry's sexuality in contrast to Mary's is active not passive. Stein admits to Ry that what he responds to is their woman's body, that the absence of a penis re-feminises what Ry has attempted to make neutral.

[235] Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion* (England: Penguin Books, 1988), 14.

It is in the narration of the two sexual relationships where we find the contrast. Winterson has Mary Shelley wistfully describing her adoration of Percy Shelley's embodiment and their romantic love merging easily into sexual congress: 'With a fine movement Shelley rolled me onto my back and eased himself inside me; a pleasure I did not discourage' (14). On the other hand, Ry's physical relationship with Stein is told in mechanical terms, sterile, without any lyricism and flattened to the point of discomfort: 'He spun me over and went inside me, his forearms on either side of my shoulders, his head in my neck. He was done in about three minutes' (121). Further, we can compare, the post-coital moment between Percy and Mary Shelley where: 'He was spent. We lay looking out of the window together at the scudding clouds that speeded the moon [...]. Such a night of moon and stars. The rain had starved us of these sights and now they seemed more wonderful' (15), with that experienced by Ry and Victor who 'lay looking at the ceiling. Not speaking. The rain rattled the shutters' (121). The difference here opening up a consideration of the nature of human connectivity and levels of intimacy where nuance is replaced by the purely functional.

Stein's inability to feel fully comfortable with nuance becomes even more noticeable in his discussions with Ry. It is within this relationship that we come to learn Stein's thoughts on machine-learning and the interactions between what it is to be human, consciousness and the societal impact from robotics and the transhuman. Ry, as transgender, is representative of an embodied nuance and is consistently offering him other words and other meanings in regard of lived experience. When Stein says he wishes to be able to 'upload my consciousness, to a substrate not made of meat,' Ry replies, 'Isn't content also context?' (110). When Ry is invited to the storage facility containing the cryogenic remains, Stein makes his most important pronouncements about his vision for a post human world. Ry tells us that, 'to protect privacy there are no names on the cylinders' (106), like the Sexbots before, the need for privacy has reduced these dead people to data, numbers.

Victor Stein's end argument is indeed that humanity must become disembodied, must become merely data. His options for the future of humanity all eventually point to that. As he states, they are:

> Humans will learn to halt and reverse the ageing process; we will live healthier and longer lives. We're still biology but we're better biology. Alongside that we can enhance ourselves with smart implants to improve our physical and metal capacities. Alternatively, because biology is limited, we abolish death, at least for some people, by uploading our minds out of their biological beginnings…
>
> …we also create various kinds of artificial intelligence, from robots to supercomputers, and we learn to live with newly created life forms. Life forms that might, eventually phase out the bio-element altogether. (113-114)

Stein's thesis holds within it a misplaced but logical conclusion that AI would be gender neutral, 'The world I imagine, the world that AI will make possible, will not be a world of labels- that includes binaries like male and female, black and white, rich and poor' (79). He believes that 'true artificial intelligence; by which I mean machines that will learn to think for themselves' (75), would recognise its mistake if it favoured one gender over another and would upgrade the error out of its programme. 'And why? Because we humans will only programme the future once. After that, the intelligence we create will manage itself. And us' (80). At the conference, Polly D disabuses him of this sense of faith in AI, she accuses him of being, 'the acceptable face of AI,' and goes on to state, 'but in fact the race to create what you call true artificial intelligence is a race run by autistic spectrum white boys with poor emotional intelligence' (76).

She also points out that thus far AI has not done so well in being gender neutral, 'We know already that machine learning is deeply sexist in outcomes. Amazon had to stop using machines to sift through job applications' (76). The fact is that when challenged about his belief in AI and particularly regarding its effects on the position of women he

gets angry, and his words are revealed as unnuanced and rigid, exposing both his male arrogance and his narcissistic tendencies, something exhibited in his reply to her, 'Let me start by repeating what I said at the beginning of my lecture' (78). We can return here to the actual concerns raised by Russell regarding the language or information we use to programme those very machines. 'Control over AI systems comes from the machines uncertainty about what the true objective is. And it's when you build machines with certainty that they have the objective, that's when you get sort of psychopathic behaviour, and I think we see the same thing in humans.'[236]

With this in mind, we can see that there is something psychopathic about Stein and we get a glimpse of how deep-rooted this is soon after his sexual intimacy with Ry. Stein seems to experience sex with Ry, not as human to human intimacy but as yet another scientific experiment which provides him with more data: Ry asks him, 'Is that what I am? New data?' (123). Through this we are pulled further away from clarity regarding Ry's identity as human and she becomes re-objectified within Stein's schema. This further blurring of our perception will become important when Ry is violently raped in the toilet of a diner later in the novel.

When the rape occurs, it is shocking not least because it seems to happen out of nowhere. It is an ambush within the textual space, disconnected from the scene immediately before it. Ron, Claire (the woman, not the doll) and Ry are in the bar in the Sonoran Desert, they have just finished talking about God, and Ron has revealed to Claire that Ry is Trans and has dead named her in the process. Claire is shocked: 'Dr Shelley, God makes us as we are, and we should not tamper with it' (240). They discuss this further until the band start playing and Ron and Claire go to dance. Ry goes out to the restroom uses a cubicle and on hearing Ry pee, a man, 'older, heavy, unsteady on his feet' (241), who is already at the urinal shouts, 'YOU THINK I'M A FAGGOT?' (241). As before with the sex-bots we

[236] Stuart Russell, The promises and perils of AI, with Prof Stuart Russell | World Economic Forum (weforum.org) Radio Davos 6 January 2022 [Accessed 7/6/22]

can see clearly that this man's reaction to Ry is not based on Ry but comes from the man's own distorted sense of how others see him and his own homophobic insecurities. Ry ignores him but the man returns, 'WHAT'S SO PRECIOUS ABOUT YOUR FUCKIN' COCK THAT YOU KEEP IT TO YOURSELF?' (241). That Ry is presumed to be precious about his genitals makes the assumption that Ry considers themselves to be better than the attacker. It makes no sense to us as reader because we know the truth of Ry's situation. When Ry asks, 'Excuse me, will you?' (241), as they try to leave, the man accuses them of talking like a girl, politeness and common courtesy not being associated with maleness in this instance. The gendering of language rushes to the fore at this point because it is after this that the man goes to grab Ry's genitals to find an absence of what he expected. Physical violence comes as a reaction against this absence and against his presumption of Ry's lesbianism. He rams, drags, pushes, and slams his way into a position where he can commit an act of rape, all hard physical words that work to expose through juxtaposition, his 'wanking himself half hard' (242), as a futile act of impotence. His words themselves hold more violence and threat, 'THIS IS THE REAL DEAL YOU FUCKIN' DYKE FAGGOT. YOU WANT IT?' (242), only to increase in intensity when he realises that Ry has had top surgery, 'NO TITS, NO DICK, FUCKIN' FREAK' (242). The man's 'real deal' sets apart Ry's body as monstrous. I agree with Mangham when he argues that 'monsters are not unnatural calamities appearing unexpectedly from nowhere, like the ghosts and nightmares of tradition, but are linked firmly, as Erasmus Darwin predicted, to moments of construction through the act of making.'[237] The man's response has as much to do with their Ry's choice of self-making, the moving away from his brutal expectations.

The rapist's perception that his very being is represented as the normal belies the fact that his actions are themselves monstrous, caught in the act of 'construction through making.' The enforcement of that normality holds within it a cruel violence and the threat

[237] Mangham, 105.

of forced penetration is not mitigated against by the pure humiliation of a drunken man 'dry-pumping' (243). And it is when he screams 'OPEN YOUR FUCKIN' LEGS WIDER' (243), that it becomes a disturbing reflection of what we have heard the Sexbot ask Ron to do. Ry at this point is female, enforced back into a given gender that they themselves only feel in part. It is a sexual violation but also a violation that reaches into the very heart of Ry's identity and their soul. There is a numb devastation that comes after when we learn:

> This isn't the first time. It won't be the last. And I don't report it because I can't stand the leers and the jeers and fears of the police. And I can't stand the assumption that somehow I am the one at fault. And if I am not at fault, then why didn't I put up a fight? I don't say … see where putting up a fight gets you. And I don't say the quickest way is to get it over with. And I don't say, is this the price I have to pay for…? (244)

This passage reflects the totality of toxic masculinity. Homophobia, misogyny, transphobia, and self-hatred, all rolled into one and reflected onto one person alone. It is numbing. Apart from his violent actions and flaccid penis, which remind us of the impotent cook in *The Passion*, the man is non-descript; more, at the beginning of the encounter he is merely a disembodied voice. But his is the voice that shouts the loudest, even whilst his actions remain unspoken.

This episode of sexual violence engendered a commentary on social media which saw some criticising Winterson for showing a transgendered person being devalued through their humiliating sexual attack. But I would argue that Winterson's concurrent support of trans rights and the way in which she treats sexual violence towards women, as I have previously outlined, allows us to understand that sexual assault is always humiliating and is always devaluing because it breaks the boundaries of bodily autonomy both physically

and psychologically. But it is also the case that it allows her to underline the extra humiliation Ry has to overcome in all of their interactions with traditional maleness.

It is in all cases whereby Ry experiences maleness, up close, whether it be Ron, Stein, or their rapist, that the impetus to define themselves as one or the other gender becomes acute. This can be viewed as a psychologically constant and violent repositioning and even though both Ron and Stein are informed of it clearly and reasonably by Ry, and in Stein's case when he physically experiences Ry's body, their gender neutrality is not accepted. Stein also goes so far as to refer to them as a freak, although he includes himself in that definition. Ry corrects him, 'Don't call me a freak because I'm trans' (170). In this Stein shows himself to be upholding the normative values of subjectivity, aligning with Ry's rapist in referring to them as a freak, and thereby confirming what Halberstam says about the monstrous, in this case the perceived monstrosity of Ry, as being able to 'make strange the categories of beauty, humanity, and identity that we still cling to'[238]. The fact that Stein shares some of Ron's misogynist jokes about the Sexbots and is happy to receive Ron's monetary investment is an indication that for all his high talk about AI being gender neutral he has not left the phallocentric view that would enable him to make that neutrality a reality.

The problem that Winterson exposes is that we are nowhere near fully reconciling our future away from those misogynist hierarchies which Plummer noted. As such we risk anyone who occupies a marginal position to a bleak existence if one is allowed one at all. Stein's view is that 'Race, faith, gender, sexuality, those things make me impatient, […] We need to move forward, and faster. I want an end to it all, don't you see?' (199). But if robots are to engage in machine learning, then it cannot be without consideration to the nuances of human life. When Ry asks of Stein, 'Can you programme kindness?' (117),

[238] [Jack] Halberstam, 'Parasites and Perverts: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity', in Classic Readings on Monster Theory: Demonstrare 1, ed. by A.S. Mitman & M Hensel (York: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), 78.

he replies in the affirmative, underlining his belief in an 'Evolutionary cooperation' (117) that has enabled humans to survive. However, the question is as to whether an insentient being, a computer programme can feel kindness rather than merely exhibiting it. Winterson here asks us to consider whether kindness exists within any kind of logic and whether it is always predictable in its incidence; why cooperate or give kindness if it is not strictly useful or logical to do so, would a machine learning algorithm go out of its way to be kind outside of its programme of its own volition?

Further, his good words are undercut by the real intent behind his work, his hidden project. In a similar fashion to how Frankenstein had been warned against working with disreputable and dated science, Victor ignores the reputable and updated opinion and knowledge that is around him. In this way Winterson lays the same claim and retort that Mary Shelley does in her original text. Not that science itself is dangerous for its outcomes always has the potential to be so but as Mangham says about Victor Frankenstein, 'Victor makes the fatal mistake of forgetting to keep an open mind.'[239]

Winterson has Stein make a hero out of Jack Good, the Bayesian mathematician who dreamt the solution to cracking the German navy code at Bletchley. Within a brief passage which she takes out of a quote from Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's *Enigma*: *The Battle for the Code* (2000), Winterson describes the moment Jack Good identified that 'the first ultra-intelligent machine is the last invention that man need ever make, provided that the machine is docile enough to tell us how to keep it under control' (201). [240] Victor Stein, in awe of Good's vast and quick intelligence, has made a pact with him and has stored his cryopreserved head in the Cryopreservation storage lab, Alcor in Phoenix, Arizona.

Ry becomes a carrier for amputated body parts for Stein. An updated representation of the grave robber, she collects amputated limbs from patients both dead or alive,

[239] Mangham, 123.
[240] Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *Enigma: The Battle for the Code* (London: Weidenfeld &Nicholson, 2000), 189.

ostensibly so that Stein can experiment on diagnostic and prosthetics. Ry has agreed to bring Jack Good's head from the Alcor storage facility and bring it back to the subterranean laboratory under the streets of Manchester. The space resembles the Minotaur's space, a dungeon reminiscent of the underworld from the film *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967), where strange noises and rumblings occur. There are other visual media clues within this space. Winterson tells us that it has 'the look of a bad set from an early episode of Doctor Who' (184), and when talking about using his underground space for storing organs, the archetypal horror visual is provided by Stein himself. Stein considers his organ storage scheme as providing a convenience to transplant technology, storage ridding the system of the need for waiting lists. Ry sees through this:

> All that is good, I said, and laudatory. But you aren't really interested in kidney transplants, are you? You are interested in bringing back the dead.
>
> You make it sound like a Hammer Horror movie, said Victor.
>
> What else is it? I said.
>
> What is death? Said Victor. (186)

But in bringing him these human off-cuts Ry is the conduit through which. 'the dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished […] many materials,'[241] and as such takes part in Stein's laboratory occupations of bloodied death and decay which equates with Frankenstein's own. It is here that Winterson participates in her now established pattern of relish in the imagery that she conjures up through using established imagery of horror. In this case a collection of visual props from films, most noticeably *The Beast with Five Fingers* (1946), a film where its protagonist is tormented by the uncanny manoeuvrability of a dismembered hand. In this case specifically it is the horror of the detached hand that

[241] Shelley, 38.

is expressed in a number of diverse ways, and with varying levels of menace through its multiplication:

> Hands. Spatulate, conic, broad, hairy, plain, mottled. The hands I had brought him. Moving. Some were still, twitching a single finger. Others stood raised and hesitant on all four fingers and thumb. One walked using its little finger and thumb, the mid-fingers upwards, curious and speculative, like antennae. Most moved quickly, senselessly, incessantly. (169)

These hands, moved by electrical implants, hold all the movement and purpose of a group of spiders. Winterson uses the imagery of crabs, but I think that their spidery movements, 'crawling over each other' (169), inhabit better the world of the horror film visual. This reading is underlined further by the consequent reveal of his other experiment involving 'a number of broad-legged, furry spiders. Not the kind you want to meet in the bath' (170).

It is in this space that Stein intends to scan the contents of Good's head, thereby recreating Jack Good in virtual form. This has the effect of cross-referencing the classic horror film aesthetics with Stein's bold scientific adventure. His view is that reviving 'a 'dead brain' that would be fascinating- for the person who is returned, and for us' (188). Ry views that prospect as 'terrifying' (188), therefore mirroring Mary Shelley's attachment to corporeality. Stein considers that the brain-body disconnect which happens in ordinary circumstances would make the prospect less disagreeable and cites Ry as having already 'aligned [her] physical reality with [her] mental impression of [herself]. Wouldn't it be a good thing if we could all do that?' (188). Stein has all the answers to the questions that arise from his plans. All logically acceptable but all lacking in a fundamental compassion for the embodied individual. He wishes to rid the world of the monstrosities that he sees as already here, however in the sense that MacCormack elucidates that 'we are all

monsters and all not monsters depending on our relation to signifying systems,'[242] Winterson presents him as having theories that rest on an incomplete understanding of how language and subjectivity remains set within the normative, whilst still holding onto those same restrictive signifying systems. That what he is attempting develops not from compassion but from his own innate belief in the correctness of his patriarchal perspective. Like Bonaparte in *The Passion*, full of the passion for glory. When Ry, calls Stein's plans madness he replies, 'What is sanity […] Poverty, disease, global warming, terrorism, despotism, nuclear weapons, gross inequality, misogyny, hatred of the stranger' (204). The logical steps that he believes will rid the world of such things are enough justification for the greatness of his achievement and like Frankenstein himself can see no reason to hold himself back. As Frankenstein states in Richard Peak's dramatization *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), 'This discovery will be so vast, so overwhelming, that all the steps by which I have been progressively led will be obliterated, and I shall behold only the astounding result'.[243]

In her commentary on *The Stone Gods*, Kerim Cam Yazgünoğlu states that the novel, 'post humanizes a futuristic and post technological world in which every boundary is not only deconstructed but also biotechnologically, discursively and materially reconstructed.'[244] *Frankissstein* alternatively places itself on the moment that those reconstructive potentials are still in their relative infancy. Caution is required. For there are other prices to be paid, for as Ry states about her own position, 'Speaking as a doctor, […] nothing we do to the body is without consequences. I'm trans, and that means a lifetime of hormones. My life will be shorter and its likely I will be sicker as I get older' (310). This conversation takes place whilst they are trapped by Stein in the underground

[242] Patricia MacCormack, *Posthuman Ethics: Embodiment and Cultural Theory*, 1st edn (Abingdon :Taylor and Francis, 2012)74-92. ProQuest Ebook Central - Reader
[243] Richard Brinsley Peak, 'Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein', in *Frankenstein* ed. by Paddy Lyons and Philip Gooden (London: Everyman1994), 210.
[244] Kerim Cam Yazgünoğlu, 'Posthuman 'Metal(l)morphoses' in Jeanette Winterson's The Stone Gods', Ecozon@ 7:1 (2016) 144-160 (148) [Accessed 18/6/22] Academia.edu.

replica of a 1950s bar: they discuss, as Bryon and Shelley once did, embodiment and life. Ry has asked if anyone has any ghost stories, whilst Ron asks, 'Shall I recite one of my poems?' (309). It is an indicator that the past is being replicated in the present, the claustrophobia of the underground bar, where Stein has opened the flood gates, is a renewal of the original Geneva scene, and likewise cut off from everyday reality they have time to ponder the bigger questions of the day. Claire is there with them. Her religious beliefs have led her to go into partnership with Ron, on the basis that they could enlarge his business to include 'manufacturing a doll for Jesus' (238). They have accompanied Stein down into his laboratory to witness the reincarnation of Jack Good's mind into data. Polly D has gate-crashed the proceedings, hoping for a journalistic prize. Their conversation has necessarily been refocused on the issue of embodiment especially as Stein has created a body for Jack, 'a cross between a puppet and a robot' (265). We are reminded here of the Poppet fashioned by the Demdikes in the Malkin Tower, through magick and a force of will. Jack's disembodied head now takes on this visceral horror. In a surprising flash of compassion, Stein's concern is for the shock that Jack 'will experience at being out of body. A body is what we know' (266), in direct contrast to the vision that he has in ultimately ridding the body of all its peculiarities which cause difference and disruption.

As the group sit and wonder what Stein is up to, they attempt to come to terms with that same issue, a bodiless future, a nightmare of the posthuman. If humans can be translated into pure data, does that mean they are nobodies in the truest sense of the term? For, 'We're not someone, though, are we? said Polly. We're no one' (311). Without a body we have no need for labels as Polly says, 'There'd be no straight, gay, male, cis, trans. What happens to labels when there is no biology?' (311) Regardless of Stein's belief that survival as data is the only way humanity can go on into the future, Polly returns us to our greatest fears that we will be the undead. As Winterson would have Frankenstein say, we would not be able to die because we never lived. That is the horror and the greatest

monstrosity exposed in Mary Shelley's text. In a sense, becoming pure data pushes humanity beyond the point of language and reduces it to a conglomeration of noughts and ones, leaving it in a state of sterile abjection. Humanity, no longer a physical species, consisting of embodied individuals, would exist with the risk of being data that can be wiped clean, wiped out. It becomes the threat of death that occurs whilst in suspended animation in outer space, as in Stanley Kubrick's 2001 *A Space Odyssey* (1968). It is the ultimate expression of the violence of death. A violence which requires no bodily interaction merely a function or malfunction of an algorithm. But it is also a tormented existence that has an inability to be bodily present with other bodies, such a torment as of Frankenstein's monster when he claims, 'I am alone and miserable.'[245]

In Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, we are presented with a man who ultimately knows that his inherent narcissism has caused him to overreach himself and in so doing has caused misery to the world. Unlike in Winterson's text where we have no idea the result of Stein's experiment other than it creates a massive power outage and he mysteriously disappears, Shelley gives us the sense of the aftermath. Frankenstein's warning is clear: 'learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.'[246] In contrast, Winterson's Victor Stein has an arrogance and egomania that is uncontrolled, made even more deadly because he has refused or forgotten to operate within the understanding of good science which is attached necessarily to thought-out ethical considerations. There is no Captain Walton here to ensure the world's safety; there is no redemption. His only concern is the successful completion of his experiment regardless of its detrimental effect on humanity.

[245] Shelley, 121.
[246] Shelley, 36.

Stein's own Frankensteinian project is one where he believes that his experiment with uploading the disembodied mind of Jack Good will pave the way for all of humanity to become truly eternal, and the only way for humanity to truly occupy the universe away from a dying planet. He seeks a solution to humanity's survival which hastens its bodily demise. Ry questions what it will solve for humanity and states:

> All our faults, vanities, idiocies, prejudices, cruelty. Do you really want augmented humans, superhumans, uploaded humans, forever humans, with all the shit that comes with us? Morally and spiritually, we are barely crawling out of the sea onto dry land. We're not ready for the future you want. (280)

At the end of the text, Winterson refers back to her abiding image of the visceral heart, and she has Mary Shelley tell us, 'Any butcher will sell you one. I have bought them often enough when we had little money. The thing most prized in humans is the cheapest meat: The heart' (343) She is referring to the abiding image of Percy Shelley's heart retrieved from his funeral pyre. If Percy Shelley was concerned that his soul should live forever then Winterson at least enables his soul and his heart to be remembered here, with all that it contained, and all that Mary felt for it. It is a return to Villanelle's stolen and then retrieved heart, Henri's lost heart, and even the heart of the evil cook who in death looked the same as a saint, a visceral symbol of intrinsic humanity.

In this text Winterson's futuristic world has as much to say about abjection as Shelley's original consideration of the new sciences of the nineteenth century. Sciences that were and remain something to be approached with caution and respect because they raise questions directly about the definition of human and by extension humanity. Within Winterson's post-human context, her doubling back to Mary Shelley's biography questions and underlines how Shelley's implicit arguments about what it is to be human, female, and other, remain prescient and how a continual interest in such classic texts and the importance of the humanities in holding them up as a resource that informs the present

and the future, is an important consideration to their remaining relevance. Overall, the criticism inherent in Winterson's contrasting depictions of language, speak to a concern regarding a current prioritisation of the sciences at the cost of supporting the humanities. The warning she gives is the potential loss of linguistic and philosophical complexity which could act on humanity's ability to speak across these areas, and how people can continue to express themselves independently, as individuals away from the manipulations of algorithm click feeds.

Mary Shelley seems to have understood that she lived at a time of tumultuous new beginnings, and Winterson uses her text to reflect on a modern reoccurrence of similar intensities of development and thought. Frankissstein is a narrative which reflects another violent pivotal point in human history, and changes in the zeitgeist, whilst continuing to offer a comfortable familiarity, not just through the mythology of *Frankenstein*, but through a renewed exploration of a feminist science fiction. The most important communication between the two novels becomes the shared warning against the presumptive, a warning of the cataclysmic potential for the future if we are not clear in our language and if that language continues to be used to divide. It speaks to the requirement for humanity, especially some of those in the Western democracies to awaken out of their comfortable morass and face the violences of the future.

Conclusion

Within the four texts I have explored in this thesis, we see the ways in which Winterson undertakes her discourse through a prism of violence and how she raises questions about personhood and embodiment, and what it is to survive and live humanely in a world that is always on the cusp of anarchic chaos. Within the thread of her argument her concern never waivers from the fact that we need to rebalance our worldview away from that which is traditional and male-centred, away from the necessarily violent belief systems that give a hierarchy of importance over one set of sentient beings over another or even of the human animal over the natural world.

In *The Passion* Winterson interrogates the violence of revolution and war and considers how violence can stand to be written in any meaningful way. Taking her cue from French post-revolutionary writing she re-imagines the Napoleonic era as a masculinist tyranny through which women have to fight to maintain their own place. Lesbianism as divergent from a norm becomes a violent act and works within a lesbian aesthetics that seeks to ignite debate about the recognition of humans as driven, not just by a romantic ideal but by the inherent violences in their nature. In recreating originally male-centred histories that give room to the experience of the female, she exposes the violent effects of such male heroism and bravery, whilst also allowing for a rebalancing in the claims that surround the figure of the violent female.

In *Lighthousekeeping*, she openly gives voice to the underlying texts that she works with. Enabling the nineteenth-century scientific understanding of evolutionary movements to be applied across Stevenson's gothic tale towards the modernism of the earlier twentieth century, she shows how the renewal of texts, and their collisions help to formulate and underpin the twentieth century's literary progress towards post-modernist thought. As such she merges the notion of nature's power, its violent evolutions and changeability, its

dangerous and yet creative chaos with the violence of literary texts as they meet and fuse with each other, creating myths and new understandings. It is also here that we see Winterson's concerns forming around a perceived reductive development in the taking away of humanity from within the inner workings of the lighthouse itself, and the mechanisation of its interior, using it as a metaphor for the depersonalisation of experience.

The Daylight Gate offers us discourse on whose narrative is allowed primacy, and on how far the other is allowed entry into primary discourse. She subverts the male Romantic text about the figure of the occult female. Indulging in a more playful exposition of these ideas by allowing for more cinematic tropes often found in classic horror. Through this intermedial exploration, Winterson shows how the speaking of alternative world views, particularly from a feminine space or other worldly perspective, means to bring down a punishment of further violence and threat, even death. Taking previous texts that are ostensibly male in their perspective, she reclaims their language and their narrative in order to review the feminine experience of political and social control.

Frankissstein shows us the violence of our potential future and makes it clear that whilst we are still married to those age-old ideas from Genesis, those same old hierarchies, and normalities, we are doomed to suffer the violence of the end of our world. She does this by reclaiming the figure of Mary Shelley as the female hero of the gothic and as soothsayer to the modern world, taking her original text and revitalising its polemical warnings against a male centred capitalist and scientific overreach and the trust to be placed in the fact that the development of AI will necessarily always be beneficial to humanity.

Violence in the Winterson text becomes closely associated with and aligned to all identities. As an overt disturbance or subtly hidden from view, it can be seen in the bragging of the violent hero or heroine, the swagger of the alpha male, the unpredictability of the dangerous woman or the silence of the victim. In this sense Winterson illustrates

not just how violence begets violence but how violent thoughts, beliefs, language, and acts render change on the identity and lives of those who experience it, those who view it and those who are an enactment of it.

This is not a world of sentimentality or 'happy ever after' but an acknowledgement and acceptance of the ferocity of time, history and meaning, how violence is endemic to the human condition. Karin Sellburg puts it beautifully and succinctly when she argues of Winterson's writing:

> In reconfiguring and multiplying the historical grand narratives and foundational myths that have become the basis for the Western imaginary and allowing the present to create a space within each new historical account, they expand and explode temporality beyond any easily conceivable bounds.[247]

The contention within my thesis has been that this explosion of temporality allows Winterson's texts to pivot in a space that is necessarily violent in its precariousness, on the boundaries of discourse. It is an act of textual violence, one which repudiates all anchors and that substantially refutes a safe return to stasis where the threat of imbalance, falling or collapse, of returning to the abyss is a constant risk. It is therefore not just love that Winterson asks us to consider but the violence of abandonment, obsession, death, madness, desire, loss, and the passing of time. It is not the holding onto a secure sense of self that she implores us to achieve but the refusal to be just that one singular person. Instead, she implores us to be able to adapt and change. Within this creation of other identities, there lies an acknowledgement that dismemberment, sexual violence, degradation, torture, burning, drowning, suffocating and theft are also central to a creative process and are in themselves central to Winterson's textual imaginings. As Judith Butler argues, 'Individuation is an accomplishment, not a presupposition and

[247] Karin Sellberg, 'Beyond Queer Time after 9-11 The Work of Jeanette Winterson', in *Women's Fiction and post 9-11 contexts,* ed. by Peter Childs and others (London, New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 84-98 (86).

certainly no guarantee.'[248] It is the violence of flux in an indifferent universe that Winterson implores us to recognise and work with.

Ultimately, I have shown that it is the writing of violence within Winterson's novels that has as much if not more to say about identity, connectivity, and relation than love and taking into account the precariousness of our world today and the need for radical change both in thinking and action this study then seeks to explore the opposite of a 'call to love' by engaging with what could be described as Winterson's call to arms.

[248] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life, The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 27.

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