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Henda Ammar Guirat
University of Sfax, Tunisia

Jeanette Winterson's *Art and Lies*: A Contrapuntal Piece for Three Voices and their Readers/Listeners

Abstract. This paper addresses Jeanette Winterson's *Art and Lies: A Piece for Three Voices and a Bawd* as a contrapuntal performance that exemplifies an artistic ability to elaborate a counterpoint joining the major characters, Handel, Picasso, and Sappho whose names are used as titles for the novel's chapters. Three voices take turns to tell their stories as in a song or a piece of music to end up speaking/singing together in a chorus. To read the novel as a contrapuntal performance is to address its celebration of the artistic perspectives of music, poetry, and painting as movements that work together to reclaim a sense of wholeness and revitalize language deadened by clichés. The narrative ends, but the novel continues with pages from Strauss's "Der Rosenkavalier," inviting the Barthesian readers to straddle the boundary between fiction and music, engage these two genres in a dialogue, and take over the authorial project of celebrating art.

Key words. Contrapuntal performance, contrapuntal reading, polyphony, generic boundaries, écriture féminine, Barthesian reader

1. Introduction

In his exploration of the imperial discourses that implicitly inform the Western novel, Edward Said (1993, 78) formulates an innovative method of reading that he called "contrapuntal reading." It is in the words of Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia (1999, 93) "a form of 'reading back' from the perspective of the colonized to show how the submerged but crucial presence of the empire emerges in canonical texts". Inspired by Said's reading strategy but offering a different conception of contrapuntal reading, this essay addresses Winterson's *Arts and lies* as

a contrapuntal narrative/performance that works to revitalize its linguistic medium through incorporating other art forms and introducing multiple narrators. Offering itself to be read contrapuntally rather than univocally, this novel establishes a new reader/text relationship in which we become Barthesian readers actively participating in the act of writing. The contrapuntality of the narrative emerges out of its adoption of three voices that take turns to tell their stories until they are finally heard in the last chapter entitled ''Handel,'' where their distinct voices and styles are brought together in one fugue and become enriched by interweaving with one another. To read this novel contrapuntally, therefore, is to pay attention to the ongoing dialogue between the three voices in the narrative as Winterson plays them off and finally joins them to elaborate a particular theme, that of creating a subject, whole rather than split, capable of reclaiming the loss engendered by our entry into the Lacanian symbolic order. Said (1993, 59-60) points out:

> In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. (ibid.)

A contrapuntal reading of the novel takes into consideration this polyphony of voices and stories and would understand the last chapter of the novel entitled "Handel" not as an illustration of the primacy given to this male character and his story but as an all-encompassing principle that strives for unity in the face of fragmentation, for life in the face of death. Such a reading would allow us to focus on the overlapping and interconnected experiences of different artistic genres and consciousnesses; it helps us to avoid the reductive strategies of categorizing and classifying and opens a way for rethinking the literary text and its capacity for experimentation with generic and formal conventions. This contrapuntal reading also allows us to focus on the novel's celebration of the magical alliance between

poetry, painting, and the elevating, enchanting sensitivity of music to revivify language and regenerate our feelings.

2. *Art and Lies* as a Contrapuntal Work:

In *Art and Lies*, the author reveals her interest in the relation between art and society and adopts three voices, those of Sappho, Handel, and a female Picasso to revitalize language with their artistic sensibilities and talents. Her method, as Dominic Head (2002, 230-31) argues, consists of "bringing historical artistic resonance into a contemporary context from which aesthetic value is felt to have been expelled. The use of fantasy in order to deliver a sharper perspective on the real tallies with a traditional conception of literature's function". Winterson seeks, through the fantasy of bringing together these three artists, to suffuse language with emotions and beauty as a means to counter the desensitization of the age: "The use of fantasy, incorporating an emotionally charged use of language, is Winterson's method for reinvigorating the channels of social connection" (Head 2002, 230). Handel complains:

> No, in the dreary Hobbes world, where religion is superstition and the only possible actions are actions of self-interest, love is dead (Winterson1994, 13).

People are no longer able to feel for the suffering of others; mass media has only increased this insensitivity: "'Terrible' you said at Somalia, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Russia, China, the Indian earthquake, the American floods, and then you watched a quiz show or a film [. . .] and the fear and unease that such powerlessness brings, trails in its wash, a dead arrogance for the beggar on the bridge that you pass every day. Hasn't he got legs and a cardboard box to sleep in? And still we long to feel" (Winterson1994,14). The author, here, exposes the dark side of modern life and tries to create a potential change in the reader. She attempts to create a new language of love, beauty, and passion that transcends the debilitating effects of the familiar.

In *Art and Lies*, Winterson sets for herself the project of revivifying language deadened by our growing incapacity to feel for others and connect with them. She reveals her faith in art and in its capacity to reconstruct society and to rejuvenate the social imaginary. Considering the novel as a "response to a world" in which the need for consumption is such as it "juxtapose[s] the latest international catastrophe with a quiz show," Head (2002, 230) argues that "Winterson seeks an alternative form of nourishment for people still longing to feel. The use of fantasy, incorporating an emotionally charged use of language, is Winterson's method for reinvigorating the channels of social connection". In doing so, the novelist expresses the need to incorporate aesthetic values into society. Therefore, she brings to life three artistic figures whose voices would add the aesthetic beauty and sensitivity the modern world is in an urgent need of. No wonder, then, that the different chapters of the novel are named after these three historical and artistic figures. Every time one voice of these characters is heard telling his or her story, it confers the beauty of art on the world. Three voices take turns as in a song or a piece of music; they playfully switch the order of their turns to end up singing together in a chorus. In the last chapter entitled "Handel," the three distinct voices are heard. They have distinct styles brought together in one fugue where they become enriched by interweaving with one another.

Art and Lies succeeds into bringing together the artistic and the social in the figures of the three artists. Handel, to start with, is a surgeon who used to be a priest and who has become disillusioned with both vocations. As a doctor whose responsibility is to soothe pain, he finds himself in a world where people "do feel better, because little by little, they cease to feel at all" (Winterson 1994, 8). He lives in a world where people have less faith in God than in science, especially medical science, and where doctors coldly and daily cut the breasts of female patients while listening to operas. He describes the oppressing saturation and the deadening weight of clichéd emotions which take the place of love. The daily clash between

the violent medical surgeries he carries out and the acting out of these clichéd feelings has led to his withdrawal from passion:

> Of course we have romance. Everyone can see how useful romance is. Even the newspapers like romance. They should; they have helped to create it, it is their daily doses of world malaise that poison the heart and mind to such a degree that a strong antidote is required to save what humanness is left in us. I am not a machine, there is only so much and no more that I can absorb of the misery of my kind, when my tears are exhausted a dullness takes their place, and out of the dullness a terrible callousness, so that I look on suffering and feel it not (Winterson 1994, 13).

As he continually addresses the question "How shall I live?" to himself, Handel engages in a quest for connecting the two realms he belongs to, the realm of science and that of religion. Handel used to be a priest, that is, a minister of the word. Later on as a surgeon, he becomes a minister of the body. As a man of feeling, he can change the word into flesh; he can bring the word and the body together, but he needs, first, to solve the inherent clash between the two realms:

> I, Handel, doctor, Catholic, admirer of women, lover of music, virgin, thinker, fool, am about to quit my city, never to return. This action, my friends conclude, comes out of an excess of what the French call *La sensibilité*. Too much feeling is not welcome in a man and it is unhelpful for a doctor. Catholics, it is true, are encouraged to express their emotions, providing that the emotions they express are Catholic ones. (Winterson 1994, 26)

Handel finds himself in a dead city, torn between a Catholic world that offers only a restrained space of feeling and a scientific one that negates feelings altogether. He is caught between his unprofessionally emotional and sympathetic response to the delicate bodies of his female patients and the negation of the body in the Catholic faith.

Later in the narrative as he helps a woman in birth labor, Handel witnesses the birth of Picasso and undergoes a transforming experience where colors, light, and body interweave in

"yellow octaves that [Handel] could play with both hands" (Winterson 1994, 20). Handel makes Picasso's birth possible, for "I was not the father of the child but I knew that I had brought her to this moment as surely as if I penetrated her" (Winterson 1994, 182). This birth becomes a symbol of Handel's artistic fluidity, his capacity to experience and incorporate, in one vision, different artistic perspectives and sensibilities; in such a visionary moment, he almost promises to bridge the gap between the word and the thing it refers to, to change the word into flesh and turn the body into words that are a pleasure to the sight, touch, and hearing. As he witnesses the birth of "a bright red baby yelling herself purple in the blue air," (Winterson 1994, 183) Handel has a vision of color and light that he translates into a musical experience: "The baby was translucent when born. The doctor held him against the window and watched the light dappling the tiny liver. The baby was beautiful and for a moment the doctor found himself looking through a lens into an unacknowledged world" (Winterson 1994, 16). Later when he goes home to sleep, he "Dreamed that my body was transparent and that the sun drummed on my liver and tuned my spine in yellow octaves that I could play with both hands" (Winterson 1994, 20). Picasso's birth has generated a magical metamorphosis in Handel's body or rather in his body image, attesting to the status of the body as a linguistic and artistic (and as a result a socio-cultural) construct that allows for transcendence; what emerges from this change is that the new way Handel perceives his body affects his agency, his ability as a subject to pursue wished-for objectives. Rather than a fixed biological entity, Handel's body transformed through art becomes a variable condition of his identity and experience. Also note the Biblical intensity and the visionary insight that reflect a high degree of sensitivity and blur the boundary between the religious and the poetic. They stem from the power to change the ordinary and the mundane into an elevating experience. Such is the transforming, enchanting power of art.

Art and Lies aims at renewing the conventional and familiar ways in which we are taught to express our experience of the world as it experiments with language; its objective is to heighten, as Christy Burns (1996, 280) points out, "the readers' awareness of the 'body' of the word". Hers is a language that fuses religious fervor and the tonal effects of poetry with artistic beauty. It is an arresting mixture very similar to the one found in the book that the three characters read on the train that takes them far away from the dead city. This book, as Burns (1996, 302) points out, is "a conglomerate of literature, philosophy, and theology. It contains the remnants of the Great Library of Alexandria dating from 642, including some bits of the Odyssey, Greek philosophy, the Gospel of St. John, and eighteenth-century pornography (the bawdy tale of Doll Sneerpiece's love for the indifferent Ruggierio), and the erotic works of Sappho (which Doll reads)". Therefore, it could be read as the narrative's self-reflexive statement about its status as an artifact blending together criticism, fiction, and poetry and infusing the whole with religious fervor, poetic intensity, and erotic sensations. So, in its metafictional self-projection, the novel opts for the same kind of contrapuntal, multivocal structure that it displays.

Art and Lies is the outcome of different voices just like Handel's book which is the outcome of different contributors:

> The work had not been arranged chronologically; those who had owned it, and through whose hands it had passed, had each left their contribution, as writer, scholar, critic, eccentric, collector, and each according to temperament and passion. (Winterson 1994, 203)

Winterson's novel is also a work in which different discourses intersect: fiction, poetry, criticism, history, eroticism, philosophy, mythology, and religion. It is an achievement that is made possible by the special education the British novelist received as she was destined to be a preacher. However, long after her break with the evangelical church and her preaching role

inside it, Winterson still worships the word. After her secular transformation, she preaches the "healing power of art" and language (Winterson 1995, 156):

> [Language] is my sanity and my strength. It still is, and I know of no pain that art cannot assuage. For some, music, for some, pictures, for me, primarily, poetry, whether found in poems or in prose, cuts through noise and hurt, opens the wound to clean it, and then gradually teaches it to heal itself. (Winterson 1995, 156-57)

Having the same kind of faith in music, painting, and poetry, Handel, Picasso, and Sappho, with interweaving voices in the last chapter, assure us that "It was not too late" to celebrate art and to reclaim its importance in redeeming the social imaginary (Winterson 1994, 206). They also promise us a source of social connection between disconnected people.

Like Handel, both Picasso and Sappho open up a new language for self- expression. Together they symbolize the possibility of woman's re-discovery of her body and her retrieval of her voice through the magical alliance between poetry and painting; their story is one of struggling against the social and cultural prohibitions that surround the feminine body. Picasso and Sappho discover their artistic selves and struggle to free themselves from the masculinist discourse that aims at silencing their voices and to challenge the narrow patriarchal characterization spawned by inherited histories of thought. An oppressive and a tyrannical patriarch, Picasso's father discourages her from painting because it is unwomanly and chooses to ignore that his son has been repeatedly raping her. Silenced and estranged from her body, Picasso can only feel hate:

> As the days passed, and I breathed hate, ate hate, plumped up hate for my nightly pillow, I felt a strange numbness, new to my body. In my efforts to be rid of him, I was becoming like him, his rage, his misery, his methods, his pain circulating my veins. The more I hated him the better I pleased him. Not only would I become like him, I would become him, that is how the dead reproduce the dead. (Winterson 1994, 163)

To hurt him, Picasso understands that she should remain alive, that she should "throw life in his face" (163). Her art is what makes her "VICTORY. More life into a time without

boundaries" (Winterson 1994, 164). This is the point where her story and that of Sappho intersect as reflected in the previous quote in which her storytelling conflates prose and verse.

The two female characters meet when Sappho witnesses Picasso's fall from the roof of her house and tries to revive her. Her words bring Picasso to life, and in her hand, she leaves a note on which she writes "VICTORY" (Winterson 1994, 149). Sappho stands for the victory of art, its healing power:

> I picked up the flickering body, frozen in crystalline form, kissed the plane of your face and the solid geometry of each limb. Five points you; legs, arms and face, a pentagon of hope, and me a talisman at your hand. (Winterson 1994, 148)

The fall liberates Picasso from the depressing limitations imposed on her inside her family. It transforms her body and redefines it outside the parameters of "definite boundaries" and "fixed volume" (Winterson 1994, 148); she becomes through the words of Sappho a star, a "heavenly body" that starts to be defined at the moment of falling (Winterson 1994, 148). Her rebirth after the fall is an emblem of her freedom from the gravity of oppression and prejudices that imprison her. It is the magic of Sappho's words that work on Picasso, encouraging her to embrace her artistic capacity for transcendence. Sappho offers Picasso the living force of her poetry; in return, Picasso offers her love and turns her into "not a dead poet but a living love" (Winterson 1994, 148).

In liberating each other's bodies, Picasso and Sappho become, in fact, each other's muses. Both are trying to escape "the literalness of life" and to follow "a way of thinking that avoids the problems of gravity" as Sappho tells us (Winterson 1994, 136-37). Words save Picasso's life, while colors set her loose from "all the grey years" and into "one bright line" (Winterson 1994, 136). Painting has guaranteed her "a beginning outside of fear. [She] had not been destroyed by gravity" (Winterson 1994, 164). For Sappho, the word restores her lover back to her and "release[s][her] from all that unuttered weight" (Winterson 1994, 137). As a poet who

struggles to keep her poetry and the truth of its meaning alive across the ages, Sappho expresses her love to her muse, Sophia/ Picasso, but asks her to “love my words and not my mortal remains” (Winterson 1994, 57). In her fight against time, Sappho conflates her body and her words; her body becomes her words:

> The lines around my eyes are in terza rima, three above, three below. There is a quatrain at my chin and a sonnet on each breast, Villanelle is the poise of my hands. (Winterson 1994, 63)

In her struggle against the “dead bodies” of her family, Picasso is not only liberating herself but also Sappho who asserts that “the poet can no longer speak” when surrounded by these corpses (Winterson 1994, 64). Picasso liberates her body from uncertainty, fear, and hate: “I painted my uncertain breasts with strong black arrows and ran a silver quiver down my spine. I took out my lipstick and drew my lips into a red bow bent. I painted my legs with dangerous yellow chevrons and bathed my heels in mercury. I would need to move fast. I circled my buttocks with gold rings and gave my navel its own blue diamond. Thinking of your Victory I dyed my hair purple” (Winterson 1994, 45). In writing her own body in colors, Picasso liberates the words and the spirit of Sappho.

As the two female characters tell their stories, they negotiate their relation to the body and to language, for a woman cannot liberate her body without confronting the cultural taboos and the linguistic structures that encode them. Therefore, the artistic talents of Picasso and Sappho, painting and writing poetry, become an allegory of the woman’s discovery of her body. This is revealed in the novel in the way Winterson associates painting and poetry with the tactile sense. In fact, both writing and painting have the symbolic meaning of touching and caressing and vice versa. Writing, painting, and touching can symbolize bodily and sexual experience as well as using language and having a voice. Such symbolism draws on the dual association of the hand with the sexual and artistic pleasure. Picasso’s desire for colors and

Sappho's desire for poetic words become, thus, deeply involved in the question of their authority over their own bodies and ultimately of authorship and creativity :

> I have raided my own body and made my poem out of his. Split Time's metre and snapped his smooth rhythms. I have learned his forms and mastered them and so become mistress of what is my own. I am a warrior and this is the epic of my resistance. (Winterson 1994, 64)

Sappho's poetry is an expression of her creativity in the face of those who deny her the status of a poet; it is also a site of resistance whose aim is to free the female body from patriarchal oppression.

In writing their bodies, Picasso and Sappho achieve the goal that Hélène Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa" sets for women: breaking down the dualism of flesh and spirit that has traditionally devalued and silenced women. Sappho and Picasso, to echo the words of Cixous (1991, 320), "write about [themselves] and bring [each other] to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal". As they explore the pleasurable and the empowering aspects of touching the body with reading hands and writing the body in poetry, the poet and the painter become symbols of verbal plenitude and erotic fulfillment. The erotic and artistic experiences become mystical experiences linked to language and writing. In a complex web of references to the textual and the physical, body and word are brought together in a language that strongly endorses the objectives of Cixous's version of "L'écriture féminine."

Sappho's experience with words combines the spiritual and the sexual achieving a state of jouissance that is disturbingly readable only on a deep affective level. She represents a disruptive female sexuality and an intense corporeality that turn the text into a seductive field of significance and eroticize language. The erotic desire she generates, however, disrupts conventional visions of sexuality; it has almost religious, transformative, and

transubstantiating effects. Words, for Sappho, have the power to fill her with substance, to keep her alive:

> Day and night stretch before the word, hunger and cold mock it, but the Word itself is day and the Word itself is night. The word Hunger the word Cold. I cannot eat my words but I do. I eat the substance, bread, and I take it into me, word and substance, substance and word, daily communion, blessed. (Winterson 1994, 55)

This is a spiritual experience that suggests transubstantiation. The substance of the words is converted into the body of the poet, the worshipper of the word. The poet is the new Messiah who promises his/her disciples and followers a new Holy Communion. Picasso is revived after her fall and given life through the voice of Sappho, "a voice urging me with the sea in it. The water of life on the dry soil" (Winterson 1994, 162). She receives the Eucharist and the word becomes the kiss that revives her:

> Kiss me with the hollow of your mouth, the indentation of desire. Kiss me with the pulled-apart open space, demolition of propriety, rebuilding of a place of worship among an upright people.
>
> She kisses me. The words that there are, fly up from her lips, a flock of birds cawing at the sky.
>
> Her lips form the words. She scalds me with them. The cold, clear mould of her, melts, and gives way, she pours the warm honey of a long night's work. The word and the kiss are one. (Winterson 1994, 66)

This is an experience that transgresses the boundaries between the physical and the mental, the real and the imaginary. The mouth which is the vessel of language is the closest link between body and words. Therefore, the kiss brings the imaginary, that is writing the body, into the real. Kiss and word come together to form a new language which is based on reciprocity, mutual discovery, and desire.

Art and Lies is motivated by the project of granting language corporeality, of displaying its capacity to affect the real world. Notice its use of metaphors which although grounded in reality, recreate our world and de-familiarize language. The metaphors of the mouth/temple,

words/birds, words/ honey, and words/kisses bring together different experiences that we do not normally describe in terms of one another. But although they express something already known, they transform the experience of kissing and speaking completely. Language, therefore, travels between the real and the imaginary, the word and the body, the abstract and the concrete, making it possible to change the terms by which we understand our reality. Eroticizing language, emphasizing the sensate properties of words, using figurative language, and literalizing figurative language are different strategies that Winterson uses to revivify language deadened by the familiar, the realistic, and the conventional. Just like Sappho and Picasso who are fighting off death in its different forms and guises, Winterson, as Burns (1996, 281) contends, is combating "the various forms of alienation that critics find in postmodern society". She is trying to re-invigorate language as a means of social connection in order to fight the dead clichés that kill passion. In doing so, she pays homage to art, to its ability to heal social wounds.

What the female writer is trying to say is that "literature becomes a force of social mediation, counteracting the thinning of passions, the flattening of words" (Burns 1996, 281). It is the female author's aspiration for social reconstruction which has led her to set on a radical form of experimentation in *Art and Lies*: fusing the different languages of many art forms and straddling their generic boundaries. Fleeing a dead city, Handel, Picasso and Sappho connect together through reading a book on the train. As Handel reads it, the train becomes a playful movement of light. As the narrator describes the patterns of light that decorate the black train, we realize that the train stands for History while the "new light" that emanates from the "ancient sun" is the enlightening force of art:

> In its effect the light was choral. Harmonies of power simultaneously achieved, a depth of light, not one note but many, notes of light sung together. In its high register, far beyond the ears of man, the music of the spheres, vibrating light noted in its frequency. Light seen and heard. Light that writes on tablets of stone. Light that glories what it touches. Solemn self-delighting light.

> The train crawled on beneath the speeding light that had already belted the earth. The scientific train and the artful light. (Winterson 1994, 26)

"The scientific train" probably signifies Handel's scientific world whose austerity is abated by the enlightening effect of art. Art, Winterson seems to say, is "an ancient sun" (26); it has always existed, but its light can be made refreshing and new. Art needs experimentation to be "beautiful and surprising" (Winterson 1994, 26).

As the narrator describes the speeding train being engulfed and washed by light, the act of reading the book the Cardinal left for Handel becomes a visionary experience. The book seems to have the power of a sacred book. Note the Biblical tones and poetic cadence that perfectly match the rhythmic dance of colors as the train is moving fast:

> From a distance only the light is visible, a speeding gleaming horizontal angel, trumpet out on a hard bend. The note bells. The note bells the beauty of the stretching train that pulls the light in a long gold thread. It catches in the wheels, it flashes on the doors, that open and close, in commuter rhythm.
>
> On the overcoats and briefcases, brooches and sighs, the light snags in rough-cut stones that stay unpolished. The man is busy, he hasn't time to see the light that burns his clothes and illuminates his face, the light pouring down his shoulders with biblical zeal. His book is a plate of glass. (Winterson 1994, 3)

"The man" is Handel. His act of reading is a marriage of color, word, and rhythm. On her part, the novelist seems to be describing a painting where the ordinary takes mysterious forms through colors. So, the train becomes "a gleaming angel" with a trumpet or "a long gold thread." The untouchable becomes liquefied through colors, for "the light" is "pouring down his shoulders." Playfully, Winterson manages again and again to interweave music, painting, and poetry. She rejuvenates language as the social medium of her characters as well as the language of her own art.

3. The Barthesian Readers/Listeners of *Art and Lies*

Winterson's concern with the word influences her conception of authorship. She is a worshipper of the word, and her new faith in its liberating powers endows her with authorial self-confidence. She equates authorship with the word and, thus, confers on the writer god-like power and status. She engages in an unrelenting search for a language that closes the gap between the word and the thing or the feeling it refers to. The word that expresses ultimate power, that once uttered becomes the thing desired turns out to be at the centre of her fictional project. Her conception of the author, in fact, seems to be a re-writing of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is the word that has resuscitated Sappho from the dead; it is her poems, the truth and the power of her words and "not her mortal remains" which will keep her alive (Winterson 1994, 57). Sappho is the word as the female novelist asserts: "Which comes first? The muser or the muse? For Sappho (lesbian *c*.600 BC Occupation: Poet), herself, always, muser and muse. The writer and the word" (Winterson 1994, 140). She seems to say that God/writer and Word come together.

The British female novelist's almost religious investment in the transformative power of the word, however, does not eclipse the readers to whom she issues an invitation, through the narrative structure of her work, to be a part of the writing process. In fact, the readers of *Art and Lies* are invited to celebrate with her the healing and redeeming powers of art through taking the role of bridging and linking the text of the novel and the printed score fragment. The novel closes with Handel singing: "He began to sing. He sang from the place that had been marked; the book, his body, his heart. The place where grief had been hid, not once, but many times. His voice was strong and light. The sun was under his tongue. He was a man of infinite space" (Winterson 1994, 206).Then just after the writer announces "FIN.", nine pages of a score fragment from Richard Strauss's opera "Der Rosenkavalier" follow. The reader is probably very likely to interpret the music notations as the literal transcription of Handel's

song and, as a result, may attempt to take a journey back and forth between the two genres, the two texts, and between the two roles of reader and listener. It is true that a number of readers are more likely to ignore the inclusion of the musical notations after the end of the novel considering them outside its frame or to interpret them as signifying music in general; but a musically trained reader would probably hear the piece in his/her mind, hum its tunes or actually listen to it. S/he would probably establish a complex network of intertextual relations between the two genres opening therefore the text to a multiple interpretative possibilities. S/he would draw parallels between the novel that is metafictionally referred to by the author in the title as "a piece" and the printed notations of the score fragment. In doing so, s/he finds her/himself involved in a re-reading and rewriting process of the novel just after s/he finishes reading it.

Reading the fragment from the score of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) as the intertext of *Art and Lies* establishes the opera as a metaphor for the idea of three connected, overlapping voices in the narrative. The principal characters from the opera who are Sophie, her lover Octavian, and *his* older lover, the Marschallin, sing with each other. They make up "The Trio from the close of the work. The Marschallin, a woman of thirty-two, is letting her lover, Octavian, a boy of seventeen, go because she knows she has to, because she has always known she would have to when he meets, as he now has, a girl his own age. "I promised myself I would love even his love for another," the Marschallin says, "but I didn't think I would have to do it so soon." (Wood 1998, 184). This story is echoed in the story of the old castrato and the cardinal when still a young boy and is echoed again in the similar story of young Handel and the old Cardinal. The latter stands for the "sophisticated and wealthy Marschallin who helps her young lover to love someone else" (Wood1998, 196). Handel is his Octavian but an Octavian who many years later loves a woman and cannot accept her offer of love. This is because his separation from the Cardinal with whom he experienced a

state of happiness, wholeness, and enchantment was imposed and, therefore, harmful. He becomes a split subject striving for childhood wholeness but unable to connect. He cannot fight loss because he finds himself caught in the already said and the already felt. So, he asks "What kind of parrot am I?" and acknowledges that "what I am is quite the opposite of an individual" (Winterson 1994, 184).

By fleeing the city of the dead, Handel decides to choose "the world he could invent" through art and rejects the familiar, the hackneyed, and the clichéd: "Perhaps everything that can exist does exist, as Plato says, in pure form, but perhaps those forms with which we have become the most familiar now pass for what we call actual life. The world of everyday experience is a world of redundant form. Form coarsened, cheapened, made easy and comfortable, the hackneyed and the clichéd, not what is found but what is lost. Invention then would return to us forms not killed through too much use. Art does it. And I? Why should I not live the art I love?" (Winterson 1994, 199). In offering us the score, the author seems to shrink from communicating with words what have been cheapened by overuse and spares her readers clichés of love and romance. In doing so, she breaks free from, and transgresses, the literary conventions of romance in a manner that recalls Picasso/Sophia's escape from home and her use of the transgressive but healing powers of art as she paints her body and the bodies of her family members. Winterson breaks from one genre into another and revivifies both.

In his book *Literary Music Writing in Contemporary Fiction*, Stephen Benson (2006, 116) argues that unlike painting and poetry, music with its particularity and musicality resists being represented through the linguistic medium of fictional work and, therefore, defies the union of form and content Winterson aspires to in her work:

> The Unmusical marks of the score inadvertently reveal a stubborn materiality that refuses assimilation to the platonic union of form and content, on the latter of which Winterson has written in specific relation to *Art and Lies*: 'the tensions and harmonies between word and meaning that gradually can be resolved into form'

(*Art Objects* 171). A Score is not one of music's materials, but rather a conventional representation of them; we see not the living material of the music, but a time-bound representation of a particular fixing of the flow of musical sound. Benson (2006, 116)

According to Benson (2006, 117), the score does not "corroborate and exemplify the novel's aesthetic". However, it is possible to argue that in showing what each instrument is to play and what each voice is to sing in this fragment of the printed version of the orchestral score, the author is being faithful to the contrapuntal narrative structure of her novel by offering us another text that is the very illustration and representation of that contrapuntality. In this sense, the score actually exemplifies the novel's aesthetic, and Winterson legitimizes and validates her choice of referring to her novel as a "piece" of music incorporating, like the printed score, three voices. While the printed score cannot be a substitute for the music and its effects, it signifies both the sound and its representation and as such it can be approached as a piece of music or interpreted as a text whose multiple instruments and voices stand as counterparts to the three characters/narrators telling their stories in counterpoint. To interpret the score is both to attach meaning to it by drawing on its intertextual relation with the text of the novel and to come close to performing it (for to interpret a piece of music is to perform it) by projecting the feelings of understanding, acceptance, compassion, sadness, and joy that the fragment's trio express on the novel and its ending and, thus, turning the novel into an adaptation of Strauss's opera. It is difficult, if not impossible, as Benson seems to say, to represent music, but the novelist asks her readers to bridge the gap between music and the fictional text, to read and listen contrapuntally.

Art and Lies is made possible through the principle of yielding authority to the character-bound narrators and to its readers. This novel is not only the space where the author passes on power to her characters; it is also the space where the reader acquires an almost equal share of authority. By placing the printed score of Der Rosenkavalier outside the frame of the novel,

the author avoids imposing an external voice and authority functioning as a mediator between the reader and the text. She attempts to avoid an interposition of meaning very similar in kind to the one Barthes (1989, 147) views with suspicion when he decides to kill the author: "To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing". Throughout the narrative, Winterson foregrounds the consciousness of her narrators and their tales; at its end she offers the score, but she still chooses to withdraw yielding her own authority as the creator and the interpretative lenses of her narrative; she allows her readers to rewrite the narrative as they interpret the score as a musical expression or version of the novel given the parallelism in theme, experience and structure. It is a two-way process in which both texts are read as versions of each other, yielding, as a result, an exploration of multiple narrative and interpretative possibilities. In foregrounding the different artistic consciousness of its character-bound narrators and in dissolving the boundaries between different genres, *Art and Lies* also undoes the metafictional boundaries between writer and reader. It is a Barthesian "writerly" text that is in a state of production; it, therefore, requires an active reader who in interpreting it would, in the words of Barthes (1974, 5), "appreciate what *plural* constitutes it". Handel's singing seems to bring back memories to the three characters and to induce strong emotions, not of sadness and bitterness but of happiness and hope:

> From the cliff-head, the two women standing together looked out. Or did they look in? Held in the frame of light, was not the world, nor its likeness, but a strange equivalence, where what was thought to be known was re-cast, and where what could not be known, kept its mystery but lost its terror.
>
> All this they saw and the sea in gold-leaf and the purple and pearl of the cliffs.
>
> It was not too late. (Winterson 1994, 206)

The female novelist is not meticulous in describing the impact of Handel's singing on the female characters; she does not detail their precise emotional responses. Therefore, she does not have to confront the unbridgeable gap between the music itself and the multiple emotional

effects ascribed to it on the one hand and language on the other. In doing so, she allows her readers the freedom to choose or not to choose to share the characters' moment of epiphany as they seem to take a journey inside the self and embrace the healing and redeeming powers of art. In fact, the shift from the dominant first-person point of view of the novel to third-person narration in this section could be understood as a means of respecting the reader's independent will and allowing him or her free choice. The inherent possibility of identification with a first-person narrator is suspended for the sake of allowing the reader to decide whether or not s/he chooses to extend this epiphanic moment beyond the novel's frame to the score and, thus, participate in the authorial project of celebrating high art. Such a choice means that the reader has embraced the contrapuntal nature of the novel locating him/herself as another voice in the narrative. So, the last sentence of the novel "it was not too late" which seems to assuage Handel's fear revealed in his "Is it too late?" (205) and which agrees with Picasso when she answers "Not too late" (Winterson 1994, 205) does not attempt to bring the narrative to a closure, but invites the readers to take over the authorial project that motivates *Art and Lies*.

It is true that the score presents a formal problem; the mediated form of Strauss's music seems to resist the idea and possibility of transcendence as one of its effects; however, the score seems to say that meaning is related to the musical performance as well as to the listener's interpretation of it. Therefore, Winterson's subversion of the repressive concept of authority finds its most truthful expression in the inclusion of the score. She offers her readers another text that is most likely to be interpreted as an inspiration, an influence prior to the writing act and as a metaphor for the novel as a whole and for Handel's tale. In this case, it stands for the form as well as the thematic concerns of the novel allowing the readers another means of access to the consciousness and to the moment of transcendence that foster their healing and their interconnection in an artistic universe. This active participation of the reader

is motivated both by the use of the first-person narration and by the construction of narratorial artistic consciousnesses whose yearning and longing for passionate feelings are only satisfied through connecting with others. This means that the articulation of artistic consciousness depends on the textual and intersubjective relations between the characters/ narrators and the readers. The novel, therefore, becomes a tapestry of different voices that, in their equal importance and complementarity, reveal similar concerns and attitudes to life, society, and art and promise a perfect vision of harmony of voices as experienced in classical music.

4. Conclusions

Winterson is seeking an experimental and innovative fictional project that is not impeded by the conventional, the realistic, and the familiar. She transgresses the boundaries of genre and goes beyond the limitations of language by creating a polyphonic narrative whose contrapuntal structure alerts us to the uncertain nature of a novel that is not like one. Through its encounter with painting and poetry, *Art and Lies* turns out to be a statement about art, its reinvention of the world, and its redeeming and healing effects; its other and more surprising encounter with music turns it into a unique sensory experience that necessitates the complicity of an active reader embracing the contrapuntal structure of the novel and opening It further to multiple voices and interpretations. Inviting her readers to create a magical alliance between these two different genres, fiction and music, Winterson chooses to undermine her authority by empowering her characters and readers as the locus of textual authority, by incorporating them as contrapuntal voices. In this contrapuntally conceived world, the author, her character-bound narrators as well as her readers promise a unity and harmony that are characteristic of orchestral music.

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The Contributor's Bio: Henda Ammar is Assistant Professor at the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Sfax, Tunisia. She is interested in postmodern fiction, women's writing, feminist theories, psychoanalytical theories as well as theories of intertextuality. She wrote a number of articles on Jeanette Winterson, Angela Carter, Sara Suleri, and Anita Desai, and she is currently writing a critical book on the mind/body dichotomy in a selection of novels by contemporary female authors.

E-mail address: ammar_henda@yahoo.com