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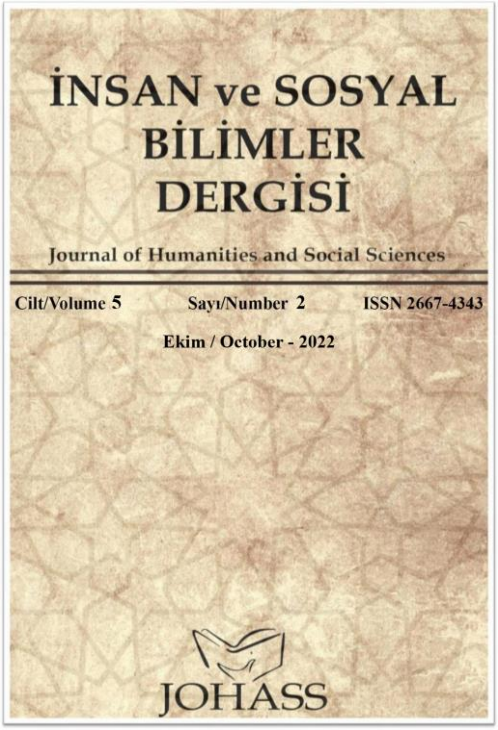

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Epistemophily and Women's Temporality in Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Cherry

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Epistemophily and Women's Temporality in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*

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Abstract

Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) offers a feminist interpretation of history by using epistemophilic language and a circular time structure as alternatives to epistemological patriarchal language and linear temporality. Epistemophilic language is used in the novel to argue that history is cyclical, fluid, and continuous, and there are not strict divisions between private and public histories, or between the past, present, and future. Winterson evaluates the personal histories of characters within the public history to remove the hierarchy between the private, which is associated with the feminine, and the public, which is associated with the masculine. Moreover, she depicts history as a subjective notion as each character reinterprets and re-evaluates history from their own perspectives. Characters that deviate from the dominant epistemologies emphasise the subjectivity of history by looking at history from a subjective, feminine perspective. In the light of the discussions on epistemophily and women's temporality, mainly referring to the arguments of Julia Kristeva, this study aims to demonstrate that Winterson's Sexing the Cherry challenges patriarchal epistemological language that favours singularity and linear temporality based on separation and divisions by describing history as a subjective recreation of the past which flows into the present and future.

Keywords: Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, epistemophily, epistemology, women's temporality.

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Introduction

Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) uses a circular time structure and "epistemophilic" language that favours diversity and flexibility to offer an alternative to paternalistic historical writing that uses linear temporality and epistemological language based on singularity and uniformity. The novel has a cyclical time structure in which public and private histories of the seventeenth and twentieth century are intermixed. It is principally set in the seventeenth century, a time of upheaval which witnessed such dramatic public events as the execution of Charles I and the conflict between the Puritans and the supporters of monarchy. However, the public history of the seventeenth century is narrated within the private stories of the protagonist Dog Woman, a childless, lonely woman who earns her living by dog-fighting, and Jordan, the boy adopted by Dog Woman. Set in the seventeenth century, the first scene of the novel introduces the reader to Jordan, who tells his personal, dream-like story about how he saw his own face before him at night in a foggy weather. However, in the final part of the novel, which is titled "Some Years Later," the reader is moved to twentieth-century London and encounters two new narrators: Nicolas Jordan, a young man who has an ambition to travel around the world with a ship, and a female activist, who protests the pollution of water with mercury. The two come together and decide to burn the factory responsible for the contamination of water. Meanwhile, the reader goes back to the past with the narration of Dog Woman, who evaluates how the plague breaks out after the king's execution, and the London fire of 1666, two important public events of the seventeenth century, from her own subjective perspective. The novel ends with the narration of Jordan, who speculates about the unity of the future, the present and the past while leaving the burning London with his mother. As can be noticed in the novel's structure, time in *Sexing the Cherry* moves in a circular line in which the past and future are intermingled. Accordingly, history is not depicted as something which progresses in a linear line, following chronological order. In the light of the discussions about epistemophily and women's temporality, this study aims to show that Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* uses epistemophilic language, which favours subjectivity, flexibility, and variety, to defy patriarchal epistemological language that imposes singular, uniform historical facts, based on linear temporality, to justify and sustain male dominance.

The literature review shows that Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* has been mainly discussed within the framework of postmodernism, historiographic metafiction, and gender relations. For instance, Langland (1997) studies the feminist poetics and politics in *Sexing the Cherry* and argues that the novel challenges the conventional cultural meanings people attribute to material body, which becomes a site of gender discrimination, and to time by using "narrative practices [which] disrupt conventional ideas of sequence, linearity, time and duration, the very concepts upon which the natural world is founded in the Creation stories" (p. 105). Kırca (2009), on the other hand, reads the novel as a historiographic metafiction in which facts and fictions are mingled deliberately and "the existence of a female narrator who not only catalogues the historical events but interprets them from her marginal position, allows a reading of the text as a means of voicing the untold histories of women as the marginalized other" (p. 64). Malhotra (2013) also makes a postmodernist reading of the novel and points to the relationship between the self, time, and space by arguing that the self is "able to transcend time and space in the construction of a new concept of time and space as flexible and at the command of the self" (p. 481). Moreover, Sancheti (2018) examines postmodernist politics in *Sexing the Cherry* and claims that "objective" historical facts are reinterpreted by individuals from their subjective perspectives, thus "historical narrative becomes postmodernist historiography by inverting the gaze from a bird's eye view record to a subjective and particularized one" (p. 11). Differing from the previous stories, this study

focuses on the examination of the epistemophilic language and women's temporality in *Sexing the Cherry*. Thus, it is important to explain and discuss the epistemophilic language and women's temporality. Epistemophilia is a term coined by Freud to relate "the human urge to gain knowledge" to the child's interest about sex (Rudberg, 1997, p. 182). Freud (1997) argues that "the sexual instinct of looking and knowing" are interrelated and the child's pleasure in looking forces him to know and explore the female body (p. 60). Accordingly, mental development of the child is induced and determined by sexual drive, which urges him to see and know the body of the opposite sex (Klein, 2011, p. 188). On the other hand, epistemophily introduces subjectivity into this deterministic psychoanalytic outlook and explores "the existence of a subjective zone" where "a creative authentic self-formation" is ensured by the emotional and spontaneous actions of individuals (Baggio, 2010, pp. 2, 1). Therefore, although epistemophily pertains to "a profound desire for thinking," it is distinguished from epistemology that searches for definite, universal meanings (Fiumara, 2014, p. 20). Unlike epistemology, it is inclusive in that it celebrates differences. In *Spontaneity: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, Gemma Corradi Fiumara (2009) suggests that epistemophily denotes "diversity, complexity and spontaneity," thus epistemophilic statements are not oppressive and they "do not claim to be sources of authority," (p. 47). For instance, epistemophilic statements underline the possibility of various meanings and realities created by different subjects having different perceptions. Epistemophily is also based on "a passion for radical listening" and asking the right questions to discover the variety of creation, as well as to "understand and accept, perceive limits and make connections, [and] allow confrontation" (Fiumara, 2009, p. 103). While epistemophily is open to discussions and enquiry, epistemology is restrictive, for epistemological knowledge is constituted as "the only legitimate way of knowing" and inquiries deviating from dominant epistemologies, like the questions directed by women, are subjugated, ignored, or rejected (Fiumara, 2003, p. 134). Rejection of the unorthodox questions, in turn, prevents productivity and creativity; therefore, epistemophilists, like Derrida, believe that questions should be asked, listened and answered "in an integrated epistemic outlook" (Fiumara, 2003, pp. 134, 135). Furthermore, epistemophillic language represents things without distorting or reshaping their "structure[s] in an alien language," for it does not aim to create a homogenous and hierarchical thought system advocated by classical philosophy (Fiumara, 2014, p. 23).

The second term articulated in this study is women's temporality. Kristeva discusses women's temporality with reference to the debates on women's language. In "Women's Time", Kristeva (1981) examines women's struggles to find a new language to define their unique identities and experiences. She maintains that although the first-wave feminists fought for equal socio-political and economic rights for women, it was the second-wave feminists who directed issues, such as the uniqueness of female identity, and the "plural, fluid, in a certain way nonidentical" nature of feminine experiences (Kristeva, 1981, p. 19). Since the demands of the first generation of feminists for political, economic, and professional equalities were achieved, the second generation focused more on the discussions about the distinctness and uniqueness of each individual, thus they extended feminist agenda by including "sexual equality, which implies permissiveness in sexual relations (including homosexual relations), abortion, and contraception" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 21). They argued that females are specific, and consequently each woman has her own individual identity (Kristeva, 1981). However, even in socialist states, based on an egalitarian ideology, woman could not appear as a distinct character but as a non-existent and inessential creature (Kristeva, 1981).

According to Kristeva, not only socio-political discourse but also Freudian separatist attitude were influential in the relegation of female subjectivity. Freudianism underlines "sexual difference" and "the difference among subjects" and articulates the language of "separation" in which meaning is constituted through "an articulated network of differences"

(Kristeva, 1981, pp. 20, 23). Kristeva (1981) maintains that while women reject separation and the language of detachment, men "magnify both and … attempt to master them" (p. 23). Moreover, in the Freudian psychosocial order women feel degraded and ostracized for they are excluded from taking essential roles in the symbolic paternal structure in which they are only expected "to maintain, arrange, and perpetuate this sociosymbolic contract as mothers, wives, nurses, doctors, teachers" and they are "left out of the sociosymbolic contract, of language as the fundamental social bond" (Kristeva, 1981, pp. 23-24). This, in turn, led women in art and human sciences "to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract" (Kristeva, 1981, pp. 24-25). In so doing, they aim "to nourish our societies with a more flexible and free discourse" so that they can give voice to the frustrations of the female sex, as well as, "the enigmas of the body, the dreams, secret joys, shames, hatreds of the second sex" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 32). However, "avant-garde" feminists, such as Valie Export, Cindy Sherman, and Francesca Woodman, who value differences, pay attention that women's language constitutes "a fluid and free subjectivity;" thus, it is not totalizing but open to reveal "the singularity of each woman, and beyond this, her multiplicities, her plural languages, beyond the horizon, beyond sight, beyond faith itself" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 33). Hence, the third-generation feminists challenge the conventional heteropatriarchal hegemonic discourse that views language "as a universal and unifying tool, one which totalizes and equalizes," and, instead, they address the notions of singularity, diversity, and relativity (Kristeva, 1981, p. 35).

Kristeva (1981) relates the problem of language to the discussions about temporality.

She specifies the existence of two types of temporality: "the time of linear history, or *cursive time*" and "the time of another history, thus another time, *monumental time*" (p. 14). Sociocultural groups, like young European people and women, are defined "especially according to their role in the mode of reproduction and its representations" (Kristeva, 1981, pp. 14-15). Women are related more to "*space*" rather than "*time*, becoming, or history," because they are thought to be "the *space* generating and forming the human species," and they are constituted as "nourishing, unnameable, anterior to the One, to God" (Kristeva, 1981, pp. 1516). Accordingly, women's time is characterized by "repetition and eternity" as it has "cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature," still it has a unity and regularity in itself for it is associated with "extrasubjective time, cosmic time" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 16). In these respects, women's time is related to monumental time which is "[a]ll-encompassing and infinite," in that it does not have splits or breaks (Kristeva, 1981, p. 16). Women's temporality is also linked to cyclical myths of resurrection, like the myth of the Virgin Mother, who "does not die but moves from one spatiality to another within the same time" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 17). Men's temporality, on the other hand, is linear and it is "both civilizational and obsessional," for it is the time of history and it progresses on a lineal stratum that signifies "departure, progression, and arrival" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 18). Therefore, while linear time is like a narrative that has a beginning and ending, cyclical, or monumental time is like the individual memories of the hysteric that transcend the strictly controlled masculine temporality (Kristeva, 1981). Defying the oppressive structure of men's time, cyclical, or monumental time enunciates "the multiplicity of female expressions and preoccupation" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 18). However, linear time, having a socio-political aspect, imposes the values accepted by nations, and ignores women's subjective psychological and corporeal realities (Kristeva, 1981). Hence, feminists turned towards "the archaic (mythical) memory," and joined in "the cyclical or monumental temporality of marginal movements" to surpass the limits inflicted on women's subjectivity by linear temporality (Kristeva, 1981, p. 20).

Sexing the Cherry: A Feminine Interpretation of His-Story by Using Epistemophilic Language

Janette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* handles the issues of language and time in terms of gender relations. Abolishing the divisions between the past, present, and future, which are imposed by totalizing epistemological language, the novel shows that different temporal units flow into one another rather than starting and ending at a certain point, as it is suggested by men's linear temporality. Accordingly, Winterson's work suggests that the chronological order, which patriarchal epistemological language enforces, is not natural for history is not present in human mind in an ordered, fixed, and stable way (Kristeva, 1981). For instance, Dog Woman's narration moves forward and backward arbitrarily throughout the chapters. In the second chapter, Dog Woman remembers Jordan as a three-year-old boy and in the same chapter, she suddenly starts to talk about Jordan as a mature man sailing her down the Thames. In the fourth chapter, her narration once again moves to Jordan's childhood, and she remembers him as a boy who "made paper boats … [and] came home to [her] with his boats broken and his face streaked with tears" (Winterson, 2001, p. 19). The first and the penultimate scenes are also arranged in a circular structure. The novel starts and ends with the same scene in which Jordan narrates his encounter with his own face at night in a foggy air. The repetition in narrative, which is peculiar to women's temporality, suggests that time does not have a definite beginning or end and it constantly repeats itself, like women's bodies going through cyclical temporal processes, such as gestation and menstrual cycles (Kristeva, 1981).

Challenging the conventional epistemological understanding of time as an entity that has intervals and units, *Sexing the Cherry* depicts time as an indivisible and flowing "temporal modalit[y]" (Kristeva, 1981, p. 16), in which the past, present and future join one another. Jordan, the male narrator from the seventeenth-century, explains that time exists in human mind in a unified form: "The future and the present and the past exist only in our minds, and from a distance the borders of each shrink and fade like the borders of hostile countries seen from a floating city in the sky" (Winterson, 2001, p. 144). The unity of time is also explained through such fantastic scenes as the emergence of Tradescant, another character from the seventeenth century, in the narration of Nicholas Jordan, who lives in the twentieth century. Tradescant tells Nicholas "[t]hey are burying the King at Windsor today," pointing at Charles I's burial (Winterson, 2001, p. 121). At this point the past, present and future are linked: the twentieth century is a future time for Tradescant and a present time for Nicholas, and the burial of the king is a past event. In this way, the novel deconstructs the structure of paternal temporality that makes a linear progress and claims that time flows backward and forward in human mind without any disruption or division.

Questioning the traditional narrative structures and the reliability of historical narratives, *Sexing the Cherry* demonstrates that official history recreated in historical works cannot be impartial completely. For instance, *The Boys' Book of Heroes* imposes an image of hero through its cover on which "there were ships and aeroplanes and horses and men with steel jaws" (Winterson, 2001, p. 116). The book depicts a hero as a male persona who should be skilful enough to control a ship, plane, or a horse. As the book has a patriarchal epistemological discourse, there is no place for heroines and it only talks about the successes and victories of great men: William the Conqueror, Christopher Columbus, Francis Drake, and Lord Nelson (Winterson, 2001, pp. 116-117). Nicholas Jordan parodies such historical works which attribute stereotypical characteristics to heroes: "If you're a hero you can be an idiot, behave badly, ruin your personal life, have any number of mistresses and talk about yourself all the time, and nobody minds. Heroes are immune. They have wide shoulders and plenty of hair and wherever they go a crowd gathers" (Winterson, 2001, pp. 117-118). War films also provide uniform models of heroic figures: "War films are full of men in tin hats

talking in terse sentences. They play cards round folding tables and lean over to each other from their bunk beds. They jump out of trenches ... with their machine guns" (Winterson, 2001, p. 118). As these historical works are the products of patriarchal epistemological discourses, they focus on brave and strong men, the superior, ruling race, doing heroic deeds while ignoring "small men" who "always get killed" (Winterson, 2001, p. 118). Therefore, the objectivity of such texts is questionable.

Sexing the Cherry also shows that each person perceives the past from a different angle; therefore, history is always reconsidered and revised, which contradicts the patriarchal epistemological understanding of history as a static, unalterable phenomenon. Therefore, the novel adopts a feminine discourse that endorses subjectivity and diversity. In *Sexing the Cherry*, the reader looks at the historical events of the seventeenth century from a subjective, female perspective. It is Dog Woman, who refers to the historical developments of her age:

> One morning, soon after the start of the Civil War that should have been over in a month and lasted eight years, Tradescant came to our house looking for Jordan. I was shouting at a neighbour of mine, a sunken block of a fellow with slant eyes and a nose to hang a hat on. This cranesbill was telling me that the King was wrong to make war on his own people (Winterson, 2001, p. 26).

Dog Woman cannot be objective when she talks about the Civil War because it is her personal belief that makes her claim that it is not the king but those who go against him are in wrong. Therefore, she depicts her neighbour who is against the king with such negative words as "a sunken block of a fellow with slant eyes and a nose to hang a hat on" and "[t]his cranesbill" (Winterson, 2001, p. 26). The fact that Dog Woman evaluates historical events from a subjective point of view creates a conflict between her subjective narrative and so-called objective version of normative official history. For instance, Dog Woman accuses only the Puritans of closing the theatres in London. However, the official history writes that the hostility of the Puritans towards theatres, which were considered to be places of corruption, is one reason of the closure of the theatres in London in 1593, but there are other reasons (Browne, 2012). The Church, the City of London Officials and upper-class London citizens objected to theatres due to the eruption of the Bubonic plague and the rise in crime because of the plays having fighting and drinking scenes (Browne, 2012). The subjective evaluation of past events from a feminine perspective that is critical of the oppressive Puritan regime, in turn, creates an alternative discourse against the epistemological discourse that imposes single, uniform truths about official linear history.

Although *Sexing the Cherry* proposes an alternative feminine vision against epistemological patriarchal view, it is not based on a hierarchical relationship between personal and official versions of history, but, rather, it offers various views on the past to show that history does not consist of a single truth. As Dog Woman looks at the historical events from the perspective of a Royalist, she claims that the war between Scotland and England broke out due to the brutality of the Scottish, who rejected to be converted to Anglicanism. However, history books do not take part with the either side and write that the Scottish War has both religious and legal aspects since Charles I not only wanted to model the Scottish Church on the Anglican orders, but also to introduce English legal system to Scottish courts (Reid, 1999). Moreover, while Dog Woman talks about historical events, she has superstitions and religious fears, which prevents her from being objective. She believes that "[i]t is bad luck to kill a king" (Winterson, 2001, p. 70). Therefore, she considers the plague that emerged after the execution of Charles I as a divine punishment: "God's judgement on the murder of the King has befallen us. London is consumed by the Plague. The city is thick with the dead" (Winterson, 2001, p. 138). Though she believes that God punished people for having executed the king, historical records claim that the plague was caused by the rats

transported from the foreign cities to London on ships (Kohn, 2001). She regards London fire also as a sign of God's anger with the citizens:

> On September the second, in the year of Our Lord, sixteen hundred and sixty-six, a fire broke out in a baker's yard in Pudding Lane. The flames were as high as a man, and quickly spread to the next house and the next. … But it was a sign, a sign that our great sin would finally be burned away (Winterson, 2001, pp. 142-143).

As a superstitious person, Dog Woman reads the fire as a means of purification from the sin of executing a king. However, historians claim that the Great Fire was caused by the fact that "[t]he summer of 1666 was hot and dry" (Bucholz & Ward, 2012, p. 319). Accordingly, the novel gives voice to a woman who interprets history from her subjective perspective by using an epistemophilic language, which merges various, contradictory truths, including official and personal facts, as an alternative to totalizing paternal epistemological language that attempts to degrade and repress the voices of females in the male-oriented society (Fiumara, 2003; Kristeva, 1981).

Debating over women's temporality that is related to "female subjectivity," and women's subjective experience of time as a modality moving through cycles (Kristeva, 1981, p. 17), Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* uses epistemophillic language that represents difference, multiplicity, and flexibility. In so doing, it offers an alternative to patriarchal epistemological language which imposes single, unifying meanings, values, and propositions. The possibility of the existence of conflicting and paradoxical truths is articulated by Jordan, who ruminates on the shape of the world: "The earth is round and flat at the same time. This is obvious. That it is round appears indisputable; that it is flat is our common experience, also indisputable" (Winterson, 2001, p. 81). Jordan claims that the two facts are true because the earth is shown as round in "the globe," but it appears as flat and two-dimensional on "the maps" (Winterson, 2001, p. 81). Accordingly, he believes that historical truth is also not fixed or absolute as it changes based on personal perceptions. While narrating the same story told by Fortunata, a fantastic character, he notices that he and Fortunata tell their stories from their own perspectives: "[W]hat we told you is true, although it is not" (Winterson, 2001, p. 95). Since they produce their own versions of the past, Jordan believes that neither version can be called totally wrong or true. This instance enables Jordan to recognize that each individual creates a different history and a different truth by interpreting the past from their own perspectives. Therefore, he claims that he and his friends will tell different stories about their journey to wild places: "When we get home, men and women will crowd round us and ask us what happened and every version we tell will be a little more fanciful" (Winterson, 2001, pp. 101-102). These examples show that there is not a single, universal historical fact as history is unstable and personal, which defies patriarchal, epistemological discourse that imposes a fixed, uniform temporality.

Exploring epistemophilic language and feminine, monumental temporality that favour unity and harmony against divisions and breaks, *Sexing the Cherry* resolves the public-private dichotomy created by epistemological historians. The novel shows that traditional historical works dealing mainly with the public lives of people and their relations with the outer world while ignoring the inner, private lives of individuals. In *Sexing the Cherry,* the conventional mythological tale about the rape of Artemis is narrated from a different perspective. While traditional story focuses on the act of rape and Artemis's subsequent revenge on Orion, her rapist, Fortunata's feminine version dwells more upon the thoughts and emotions of Artemis and her inner experiences:

> She wants to lie awake watching the night fade and the stars fade until the first grey-blue slates the sky. She wants to see the sun slash the water, but she can't stay awake for everything; some things have to pass her by. So what she doesn't see are the

> lizards coming out for food, or Orion's eyes turned glassy overnight (Winterson, 2001, p. 133).

Using an epistemophilic language, Fortunata studies the reflections of the acts of rape and murder occurring in the outer world on the private world of Artemis, who wants to forget anything which reminds her of Orion. In this way, she brings together the personal and public so as to create a wider temporal and spatial area for readers to evaluate the violation of Artemis and the murder of Orion. Fortunata's tale that gives little impression on the heroine's relationship with the outer life is contrasted with *The Boys' Book of Heroes*, which mostly gives information about the public achievements of famous male heroes and the official records about their birthday, education, profession, or marriage rather than their subjective, emotional experiences. For instance, Francis Drake is introduced as a famous historical figure born in 1540 in Devon (Winterson, 2001). He is said to be "[n]otable for his defeat of the Armada" (Winterson, 2001, p. 117). However, nothing is said about his feelings or emotions. Accordingly, epistemological language employed in describing Drake conflicts with the epistemophilic language used by Fortunata for it imposes undebatable, universal truths about the historical subject and creates an emotional distance between the hero and the reader. Moreover, it depicts the hero as a public figure and ignores his private self, thus drawing a strict line between the personal and public.

Since feminine epistemophilic language provides a platform for the discussions of different elements, ideas, and topics, including the ones dispelled from oppressive, heteropatriarchal epistemological language, Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* adopts an epistemophilic approach, discussing the relationship between fiction and historical reality. It removes the barriers between fiction and truth and argues that the two are so merged with one another that there is no clear-cut line between them. Therefore, the novel has an inclusive, epistemophilic language which examines "diversity" and "complexity," rather than ignoring subjective facts or fictive truths and suppressing them under historical facts (Fiumara, 2009, p. 47). For instance, the historical events, like the Civil War, the restoration of the monarchy, the Plague, and the Great Fire of 1666, are situated among the fictional stories, like the tales of the Twelve Dancing Princesses, or the stories about the silver city and a town suffering from a plague of love. The border between the real and fiction is displaced in the court scene where Charles I is tried and sentenced. Dog Woman and Jordan, who are fictional characters, attend the king's trial, which is a real, historical event, and see the king before them "in his velvet hat, with no jewels about him but his Star of the Garter" (Winterson, 2001, p. 69). Moreover, the novel draws parallels between the real and fictional worlds. The imaginary love plague that consumes a whole town is paralleled with the real plague occurred in seventeenthcentury London. Furthermore, Nicholas Jordan's and the female activist's plan to burn a factory for polluting water is paralleled with London fire of 1666, which is assumed to have been sent as a punishment from God. In this way, *Sexing the Cherry* dismantles the fictional-real dichotomy, which prevents it from being a work of history that has a linear epistemological narrative with divisions and discussions on single historical facts.

Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* adopts the strategy to draw parallels between seventeenth- and twentieth- century socio-economic issues to challenge epistemological patriarchal language that creates divisions between the past, present, and future. For instance, it shows that class discrimination is a common problem both in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Since Dog Woman is a poor woman belonging to the lower class in the seventeenth century, she wears "a poor woman's dress," and her best dress is "the one with a wide skirt that would serve as a sail for some war-torn ship" (Winterson, 2001, pp. 22, 65). Moreover, she earns her life by "enter[ing] [her] dogs in the races and fighting" (Winterson, 2001, p. 13). Therefore, she experiences the difficulties of being a poor woman, but it is when the Plague breaks out that she becomes very aware of the disparity between the lower and upper classes.

A grave digger tells her that as many people die of the Plague, only the rich get a proper burial, and the poor are just burnt: "There is no way but burning. The grave-diggers have no strength left, there are too many for them. Only the moneyed may be buried. For us [the common people] it is the pit" (Winterson, 2001, p. 139). Social hierarchy is not present only in the seventeenth century but also in the twentieth century. The woman activist, who protests ecological problems, comes from a poor, working-class family, and she spends her early years "in a council flat" as her family could not afford to live in a comfortable house (Winterson, 2001, p. 128). Accordingly, although Dog Woman and the female activist live in different historical periods, they are tied by a common socio-economic problem, namely class discrimination, which blurs the temporal distance between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries.

Sexing the Cherry uses epistemophilic language also to underline the close relationship between early colonisation of the seventeenth century and twentieth-century capitalism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries colonisation had a political aspect since English rulers sought the ways to expand their imperial boundaries (Said, 1994). However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries colonisation was regarded "as part of the foundation of capitalism and commerce" because "[it] was economically motivated and politically disinterested" (Fitzmaurice, 2003, p. 192). In the novel, English travellers go to exotic places for economic and commercial aims. For instance, the first banana is brought to England by Thomas Johnson, who exhibits the rare fruit in public and "charge money for a glimpse of the thing" (Winterson, 2001, pp. 12, 100). Jordan, on the other hand, returns with gold and pearls from Barbados, an island country in the Caribbean, which has been a British colony nearly for 300 years (Elias & Elias, 2000; Winterson, 2001). These are seventeenth-century capitalist enterprises as the travellers take the rarities and material wealth of the colonies to make an economic profit. The modern-day capitalism develops in a parallel line with the early colonisation. In the twentieth century, the developed countries exploit the undeveloped countries for their economic and commercial interests, which is protested by the woman activist: "[At the World Bank] [m]en in suits are discussing how to deal with the problem of the Third World. They want to build dams, clear the rain forests, finance huge Coca-Cola plants and exploit the rubber potential" (Winterson, 2001, p. 122). The woman activist protests also the capitalist greed responsible for diseases and the destruction of natural environment. Therefore, she camps near the Thames, which is polluted by mercury, but her protest is not welcomed by Jack, a capitalist-minded man who thinks that the protestors "[are] holding up progress and industry and the free market" (Winterson, 2001, p. 137). Showing that socio-economic problems of the past continue in the twentieth century, the novel breaks the boundaries between the past and future and challenges patriarchal epistemological language, which endorses linear temporality, based on breaks and discontinuities, against women's temporality, which suggests continuity and repetition, to create a male-oriented history.

Result and Discussion

As the literature review shows, scholars, including Langland, Kırca, Malhotra, and Sancheti, have mainly studied postmodernist elements and gender relations in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*. While Kırca (2009) has read *Sexing the Cherry* as a historiographic metafiction, in which the female narrator gives voice to women's suppressed personal histories, Sancheti (2018), Langland (1997), and Malhotra (2013) have respectively examined the postmodernist poetics, the feminist poetics and politics, and the connection between the self, space, and time to show how the novel challenges conventional historical narratives based on impersonal, uniform, and universal historical facts arranged in strict

chronological order. Distinguished from the previous arguments, this study has examined epistemophily and women's temporality in *Sexing the Cherry*, and it has concluded that the novel employs epistemophilic language and women's temporality associated with repetition, fluidity, and continuity to challange paternal epistemological language that endorses men's linear temporality based on divisions and creates single, totalizing historical truths to maintain patriarchal hegemony.

Sexing the Cherry displays that history cannot be narrated from a single, objective perspective as it is re-evaluated from various, subjective perspectives of individuals with different socio-economic backgrounds. In the novel, such factors as gender, social class, and political views, make characters interpret official, public history from conflicting, divergent angles. As each character produces their own versions of history, paternal epistemological language, which aims to create single, invariable truths, is challenged. Moreover, *Sexing the Cherry* studies the personal histories of the characters within a political, socio-economic, and historical context in order to defy epistemological paternal discourse that creates strict divisions and hierarchies between the public life of men and the private life relegated to women. In this way, it shows that public and private histories are not two separate things, but they are intermixed.

Sexing the Cherry also questions men's linear temporality based on breaks and shows that the past, present and future are not separated as they flow into one another by using a non-linear and cyclical narrative with no chronological order. Therefore, it shows the twentieth century as the continuation of the seventeenth century rather than treating them as two different ages. Based on the cyclical temporal structure associated with women's time, which rejects detachment and favours fluidity and unity, the novel concludes that the roots of the socio-political and economic conflicts of the twentieth century can be traced back to the seventeenth century; thus, it is impossible to detach the past from the present, or future. Discussing about the subjectivity, multiplicity, flexibility, and continuity of history, Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* defies traditional patriarchal historical writing, which is characterised by oppressive epistemological language and rigid linear temporality.

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