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Invasion of The Symbolic by The Semiotic in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit: A Kristevan Analysis¹

Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir Romanında Semiyotiğin Semboliği İşgalinin Kristevacı Bir Okuması

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ÖZ

Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir romanının, iki ataerkil kurum olan aile ve kiliseyi tersyüz ederek ataerkil düzene bir eleştiriyi getirdiği öne sürülebilir. Aile ve kilise, Jeanette’in gelişimi ve kimlik oluşumunda etkileri sebebiyle önemli bir yer tutar. Ek olarak gizemli bir şahsiyet olan anne karakteri her iki alanda baskın bir karakterdir. Kısıtlayıcı özellikleri ve ataerkil gündemlerine rağmen, bu kurumlar romanda ataerkil düzenin tersine işlemektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, aile ve kilisenin ataerkil düzenden saptığı durumları ve bu durumların ne anlama geldiğini bulmayı amaçlar. Çalışmanın kuramsal çerçevesi, getirdikleri psikoanalitik bakış açısı sebebiyle, Kristeva’nın kayıt kuramı ve “Stabat Mater” makalesindeki kuramsallaştırmalarından oluşmaktadır. Kristeva makalesinde, Bakire Meryem’i Hristiyanlığın sembolik düzeninde bastırılmışın geri dönüşü olarak ele almıştır, diğer bir deyişle, Bakire Meryem figürü semiyotik maddelerin sembolik düzende veya anneselin babasalda yüzeye çıkmasıdır. Bu durumlar romanda aile ve kilise alanlarında cinsiyet rollerinin içinin boşaltılmasında, dini dogmaların kişisel çıkarlara uyarlanmasında ve sembolik düzenin araçlarına direnmelerde görülmektedir. Semiyotiğin yüzeye çıkması aile ve kilisenin ataerkil düzenin araçları olmalarına rağmen bu alanların anneseli, babasal söylemlerinde bulundurduğunu ima etmektedir. Semiyotiğin sembolik işgali, bütünlendirici doğruların ve gelişme mitinin her insanın tecrübesini kapsayamayacağını, böylelikle ataerkil ve sembolik düzenin köşe taşlarının sorunsallaştırmasını beraberinde getirir.

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ABSTRACT

It can be argued that *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* brings on a criticism to patriarchy by subverting the two main patriarchal institutions, which are the family and church. They hold an important place in the novel due to their influence on Jeanette’s upbringing and identity formation. Additionally, the enigmatic figure of the mother is the dominant character in both spheres. Despite their constraining traits and patriarchal agenda, these institutions function contrary to the patriarchal order. This study aims to find out the instances and implications of deviations from patriarchal order in these patriarchal spheres. The theoretical backdrop of this study is comprised of Kristeva’s register theory and her theorizations in “Stabat Mater” because of their psychoanalytic view. Kristeva discusses the Virgin Mary as the return of the repressed in the symbolic order of Christianity; in other words, this figure is the resurfacing of semiotic material within symbolic, or the motherly in the fatherly discourse. Such resurfacings take place in the family and church in the novel with the debunking of gender roles, appropriations of religious dogma and resisting symbolic order’s agents. It is argued that semiotic resurfacings indicate that the family and church entail motherly in their fatherly discourse although they are glorified for being tools of patriarchy and symbolic order. Invasions of the symbolic by the semiotic proves that binary oppositions, totalizing truths and the myth of development cannot encompass all human’s experience; thus, the novel problematizes the cornerstones of patriarchal and symbolic order.

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Introduction

“The church is my family.” (Winterson, 1985, p. 38).

Oranges are Not the Only Fruit has a special place among the novels written by Jeanette Winterson not only for its being the debut novel, but also for its subverting the conventions of self-writing, autobiography and Bildungsroman through the story of Jeanette’s upbringing. It can be claimed that *Oranges*² subverts the two main patriarchal institutions, the family and church, by laying bare how they accommodate the motherly in their fatherly discourse. These subversions emerge especially in the problematic mother-daughter relationship and its reflections in the spheres of the family and church. As a result of their confusing nature, centrality in the novel and formative effects on Jeanette’s life, these two main domains in the novel require further analysis. To better grasp how and why the family and church entail motherly discourse within their patriarchal order, Julia Kristeva’s register theory and her discussions in “Stabat Mater” would yield a deeper psychological insight into the workings and practices of the family and church in *Oranges*. In “Stabat Mater,” Kristeva’s discussions of the Virgin Mary as a return of the repressed and a subversion of the semiotic within the symbolic order of monotheistic religion can offer better insight into the construct of the family and church. This study aims to analyze and find out workings of the family and church in *Oranges*, how they subvert the fatherly discourse from within and what such subversions mean in terms of the myth of growing up, Bildungsroman and self-writing. By taking on Kristevan register theory and discussions about the maternal in “Stabat Mater,” this study argues that the family and church entail the maternal at their heart despite the mother’s, thus the society’s, efforts to protect and perpetuate their patriarchal discourse and role in the symbolic order.

Oranges has attracted widespread attention from various fields such as literary studies, gender studies and psychoanalysis so far. Its rich subject matter has opened the path for varied scholarly analyses devoted to the novel. Winterson’s writing her own life story in the form of a Bildungsroman, including her troublesome upbringing as an adopted child by emotionally distant parents and discussing her first experience of lesbian relationships alongside her active role in a Methodist Church have led to the analysis of *Oranges* in terms of trauma, self-writing, fact/fiction boundaries, gender identity, religion and problematic mother-daughter relationship with a psychoanalytic vantage point. To illustrate, Bijon (2008) analyzes “self-dyspositionings” (p. 322) in *Oranges* based on Judith Butler’s and Kristeva’s theorizations about the relationships between gender and writing to offer a reading of the novel beyond sweeping generalizations. Reisman analyzes coexistence and intermingling of fact and fiction in *Oranges* in terms of the novel’s deconstruction of binary oppositions. Backus (2001), on the other hand, explores the sexual orientation of the fictional Jeanette through the issues of being adopted, family relations and the two mother figures in her life. Similarly, Bollinger (1994) explores the female figures in Jeanette’s life and their religious counterparts in Christianity.

There are numerous studies that take on a Kristevan vantage point in their analyses of *Oranges*. To illustrate, Ellam offers a comparative reading of Winterson’s novels from *Oranges* to *Lighthousekeeping* in terms of fictional families and “nurtured relationships” (2006, p. 79) instead of natural ones in Kristevan terms. In “The Consuming Fruit,” Carter (1998) analyzes the two important revelations Jeanette goes through during her formative years and their effects on her psyche through Kristeva’s “abjection” theory. Morera (2014) traces and analyzes self-

² *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* is abbreviated as *Oranges*.

exploration patterns in *Oranges* through abjection theory as well. Chen (2014) offers an analysis of intertextuality between *Oranges*, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* and the interviews with Winterson in the light of theorizations of Genette, Foucault and Kristeva. Likewise, Rinawmi (2013) explores Kristevan self-inventing strategies through writing in *Oranges* in “Reinventing the Self.” Stowers (1996) explores female communities in Winterson’s novels in terms of female dynamics and space politics. Finally, Yakut (2011) explores categories of sex and gender in *Oranges* and *Written on the Body* in terms of Butler’s “performativity” and Cixous’s “écriture feminine.”

As a survey on scholarly works devoted to *Oranges* would reveal, in the novel, main issues that raise attention center around family relations, self-creation through writing and gender identity. In all of these issues, Jeanette’s mother functions like the central figure as Carter claims that the novel is determined by “its central mother-daughter relationship” (1998, p. 15). Therefore, the mother and motherly figure in the novel require further attention. Previous studies have focused on the meaning and implications of the mother’s practices of patriarchy on Jeanette’s identity formation and psychology or writing practices. However, no study specifically focuses on subversions the text brings on to the two cornerstones of patriarchy that the mother gives great importance, the family and church with a Kristevan vantage point. To make up for this gap and offer a deeper insight into the novel’s treatment of patriarchy, this study aims to analyze working mechanisms of the family and church and the underlying disruptive forces behind the guise of patriarchy in these spheres. The subversive elements and “anarchic” potential inherent in these spheres can be explained through Kristeva’s theorizations about disruption of the semiotic within the symbolic in “Stabat Mater.” Kristeva’s theorizations have been widely referred for the conceptual backcloth of studies on *Oranges*. Especially Kristeva’s works on abjection, self-writing and intertextuality have been consulted often as it can be seen in studies mentioned in the previous section. However, “Stabat Mater” has never been referred as a conceptual backcloth for analyzing *Oranges* although this article by Kristeva can offer great insights into religion, patriarchy, the mother figure and psychoanalysis though they hold a substantial place in the novel.

An overview of *Oranges* would yield a story of Jeanette’s crossing to the diabolical leg of the “friends/enemies” (Winterson, 1985, p. 1) list of her mother with her coming out as a lesbian. In this falling-from-Eden story, Jeanette portrays her mother as a stern, stubborn and cold-hearted woman. She functions like an oppressor with her keeping her biological mother secret from Jeanette, unleashing the church community on her, practicing “crude, sadistic” exorcism sessions (Carter, 1998, p. 20) on her by depriving her of food and light. In these terms, the mother aims to function as a perpetuator of patriarchy. However, it can be claimed that the spheres where the mother tries to assert patriarchy, which are the family and church, are full of the resonances of motherly despite belonging to the discourse of the father.

I claim that *Oranges* subverts the main tools of patriarchy, the family and church by laying bare the fact that they accommodate the motherly in the patriarchal discourse, which reveals the novel’s stance that total separation of fatherly from motherly, or semiotic from symbolic, is not possible although the mother claims to have established clear-cut binaries among them. The family and church, which are main institutions of patriarchal discourse, are subverted and fractured by the existence of motherly at their heart. Similar to Kristeva’s discussion of the Virgin Mary as a motherly figure at the heart of patriarchy in “Stabat Mater,” in *Oranges*, the family entails motherly discourse because it is the place where the traditional patriarch is silenced; intercourse is condemned, and institutionalized schooling is not allowed. Similarly, in the church, binary oppositions are rendered problematic; religious dogmas are appropriated for personal choices; the church community functions as a communal motherly

space where music and auditory sensations hold an important place over Biblical sayings; additionally, in this community, female preachers have authority over male priests.

Overview of Kristeva's Register Theory and "Stabat Mater"

This study takes Kristevan conceptions of register theory, semiotic and mainly her discussions about the existence of motherly in fatherly discourse in "Stabat Mater." Kristeva develops a register theory that is different from Lacan's theorizations, who posited a clear-cut distinction between the symbolic and the semiotic. Kristeva's theorizations are significant because they reveal the coexistence of two registers within the individual, which are the symbolic and semiotic:

Kristeva argues that when an infant enters the symbolic realm of language it cannot completely leave behind its primal desires, "pulsations," and rhythms. This anarchical realm remains with the infant in what she calls "the semiotic." So from infancy onward a subject has two registers for signifying: the orderly symbolic and the anarchic semiotic. Kristeva finds something promising, even revolutionary, in semiotic signification. It can help break through the Law of the father and offer other modes of subjectivity. (McAfee, 2000, p. 115-116).

In other words, the symbolic does not begin where the semiotic ends. Rather, the symbolic entails the semiotic in varying degrees for every individual. One cannot get rid of the semiotic once he/she enters the symbolic; instead, the semiotic finds ways of surfacing within the symbolic. This suggests that these two registers are not distinctly separated from one another. The anarchic one, the semiotic, finds ways of representation and disruption of the symbolic order. Kristeva attains positive traits to the disruption of the symbolic by the semiotic because it enables the existence of different modes of becoming. Becker-Leckrone presents examples as to how semiotic can operate within symbolic and in what ways these disruptions occur:

cries and laughter, sound and touch and gesture indicate for Kristeva a pre-symbolic dimension to signification that is bodily and drive-motivated and that lacks the defining structure, coherence, and spatial fixity implied by Lacan's formulations. Bodily interdependence, shared smiles, crying, and the abstract rhythms, sounds, and touches of the symbiotic mother-child interaction set up and intimate a space, without interior or exterior, that Kristeva calls the "semiotic chora." (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 32)

According to Kristeva, bodily and drive-motivated phenomena such as laughter, cries, pulsations and sound that do not have an origin, structure and coherence are resonations of the semiotic within the symbolic. Kristeva further discusses the register theory in "Stabat Mater" through the analysis of a well-known religious figure as the return of the repressed within the symbolic order of the church, the Virgin Mary. "Stabat Mater" embodies Kristeva's discussions on the register theory, the semiotic and symbolic and illustrates the applications of the register theory through the analysis of the collective unconscious. Additionally, "Stabat Mater" stands out as a good source that offers ample evidence for analyzing the motherly residing in the patriarchal discourse in *Oranges* since Kristeva provides an extensive reading of the image of mother alongside familial relations within the Western church tradition, which is quite in synch with *Oranges*. The main points in "Stabat Mater" such as "a new understanding of the mother's body; the physical and psychological suffering of childbirth and of the need to raise the child in accordance with the Law; the mother-daughter relationship; and finally, the female foreclosure of masculinity" (Moi, 1986, p. 161) are quite similar to the issues of mother-daughter relationship, growing up, family and religion in *Oranges*.

In "Stabat Mater," Kristeva gives an overview of the Virgin Mary's gaining prominence in Christianity over the course of centuries, and she discusses Mary's functioning within Christian Western discourse as the virginal phallic mother. Kristeva opines that despite "the apparent incapacity of modern codes to make the maternal – i.e., primary narcissism – tractable"

(Kristeva, 1985, p. 134), there have always been the practices of taking the maternal upon oneself, such as the ancient mystics, saints and their modern counterparts who tried to associate themselves with the Virgin Mary, or their wives and daughters. While posing questions as to the maternal's position in Christianity, Kristeva ponders if Mary figure can be the reconciliation of a fantasy hiding the primary narcissism from view or if it is a mechanism of enigmatic sublimation. Kristeva claims that the Virgin Mary is "a triumph of the unconscious in monotheism" (Kristeva, 1985, p. 135) because the followers of the church have been fascinated with her for being the repository of the father's power, and this is an imposition of a belief with pagan roots onto Christianity, which is an institutionalized religion.

Kristeva argues that the Virgin Mary started to gain prominence in the religion as a response to people's need to accommodate the semiotic in the symbolic order of Christianity. For example, the filial bond between Mary and Christ is only symbolic in the Gospels. However, in apocryphal sources Mary was given extensive space, so the expansion of complex images and significations surrounding Mary begun to take place, which led to the Virgin Mary's finding a central role progressively. This progression took place through three levels, which were the Immaculate Conception, invention of a parallel life with Jesus for Mary and Mary's being freed of sin and death through Dominion or Assumption. Since the fathers of church associated sex with death, the West has come to glorify Mary for Immaculate Conception especially with Orthodox Church's emphasis on Mary as the perpetual virgin.

Kristeva argues that the figure of Mary "passes through all three women's stages in the most restricted of all possible kinship systems" (Kristeva, 1985, p. 139) as the mother, daughter and wife, and she turns into a power figure over the centuries. Despite her powerful state, Mary is also humanized as the figure of a mother of flesh and blood through her representations as a poor, modest, humble and devoted mother. This has brought many worshippers to church and led to "humanization of Christianity" (Kristeva, 1985, p. 142). Kristeva discusses the extensive focus on the virginal body and its representations through ear, tear, breasts and implication of sexuality through sounds as a source of this humanization because these elements are resonances of the semiotic. The Mother and her attributes through "orality," the metaphors of non-language and the "semiotic" outside linguistic communication brought about the Virgin's emergence in Christianity as "the return of the repressed" (Kristeva, 1985, p. 143). In other words, Mary emerges as, "the 'virginal Maternal' function in the symbolic economy of the West" (Kristeva, 1985, p. 143). Kristeva further explains the appearance of the semiotic in the symbolic in Christianity through Resurrection and its dependence on the semiotic:

All belief in resurrection is probably rooted in mythologies dominated by the mother goddess. True, Christianity found its vocation in the displacement of this biological determinism by the postulate that immortality belongs primarily to the name of the Father. But it could not achieve its symbolic revolution without drawing on the support of the feminine representation of biological immortality. (Kristeva, 1985, p. 144).

In other words, through auditory, tactile and visual memories that precede language and through primary identifications of the primitive shelter, "man surmounts death" (Kristeva, 1985, p 145). Kristeva clearly explains the existence of the motherly in the fatherly discourse as follows:

the representation of virgin motherhood seems to have crowned society's efforts to reconcile survivals of matrilinearity and unconscious needs of primary narcissism on the one hand with, on the other hand, the imperatives of the nascent exchange economy, and before long, of accelerated production, which required the addition of the superego and relied on the father's symbolic authority. (Kristeva, 1985, p. 149).

Kristeva's discussions of the Virgin Mary as the return of the repressed along with the driving forces behind this figure's rise to prominence in Christianity are invaluable and quite illuminating for laying bare the nature and workings of the family and church in *Oranges* since

these two patriarchal institutions are located in the fatherly discourse, but their practices suggest the containment of motherly discourse.

Discussion

In the light of Kristeva's discussions about Christianity's entailing the semiotic disruptions in its fatherly discourse through the figure of the Virgin Mary, it can be claimed that Jeanette's family accommodates motherly discourse in its patriarchal discourse. Family in the traditional sense is a patriarchal institution, but in *Oranges*, the family is dominated by motherly discourse as it can be seen in the erasure of the patriarch figure, condemnation of intercourse, avoidance of schooling and evacuation of binary oppositions. Before moving on to the instances of the maternal's surfacing within the fatherly discourse, it is of importance to clarify what Kristeva means by the maternal:

the ambivalent principle that derives on the one hand from the species and on the other hand from a catastrophe of identity which plunges the proper Name into that 'unnameable' [sic] that somehow involves our imaginary representations of femininity, non-language, or the body. (Kristeva, 1985, p. 134).

In other words, the maternal entails the resurfacing of pre-castration materials and their finding means of expression within the fatherly discourse.

Jeanette's family entails the maternal, the motherly discourse, because the traditional patriarch figure, who is the father "normally," is a null character in the novel. The father figure exists, but he is dominated and silenced in the household by the mother, which is quite contrary to the patriarchal order. Jeanette's parents look like they are in an ordinary heterosexual and conservative relationship, but their marriage is quite unorthodox since the mother acts as if she were the sole parent. The father never speaks; he is not named, and he is pushed around, given orders and reproached by the mother. Jeanette and her mother are conscious of the father's inadequacy and submissive nature when compared to his spouse. For example, Jeanette compares their conflicting traits: "My father liked to watch the wrestling, my mother liked to wrestle; it didn't matter no matter what" (Winterson, 1985, p. 1). The father has no agency or power, and he does not even have a name; therefore, he is continually erased from the household: "Her husband was an easy-going man, but I knew it depressed him. He would have cooked it himself but for my mother's complete conviction that she was the only person in our house who could tell a saucepan from a piano" (Winterson, 1985, p. 4). The mother takes on all of the power onto herself under the excuse that the father is not capable, but the actual reason is that she enjoys being in charge of him. That's why, she emphasizes his inadequacy frequently by saying, "He's not one to push himself" (Winterson, 1985, p. 7-8). Morera describes such practices of the mother as "the patriarchal imposition of heterosexuality represented in the figure of . . . mother" (2014, p. 259). Therefore, Jeanette feels pity towards her father, instead of seeing him as a power figure, as she states: "Poor dad he was never quite good enough" (Winterson, 1985, p. 10). Jeanette calls the father rarely "dad" or "father;" instead, she mostly mentions him as her mother's "husband" or just "he/him." Clearly, Jeanette feels like there is no father figure in her life because her mother appropriates the father figure to herself. To illustrate, Jeanette says she does not have a father or "not much" (Winterson, 1985, p. 85) of a father when Melanie tells her that she lost her father years ago. It is clear that the mother's efforts to perpetuate the patriarchal order backlash and create a motherly order within patriarchal discourse of the family.

It can be argued that the condemnation of sexuality and marital intercourse in Jeanette's family indicate the residues of the motherly because this is against the fatherly order. In Lacanian terms, entering the symbolic order includes taking on gender roles and embracing reproductive responsibilities through sexuality. When it comes to Jeanette's family, sexuality

is completely avoided, and even non-deviant forms of sexuality like marital sex are condemned and seen as a sin. The mother adopts Jeanette because she wants to have a child without sexual intercourse: “She had a mysterious attitude towards the begetting of children; it wasn’t that she couldn’t do it, more that she didn’t want to do it. She was very bitter about the Virgin Mary getting there first” (Winterson, 1985, p. 1-2). From this fact, it can be deduced that their marriage is not consummated. Likewise, when Jeanette asks her mother why they got married in the first place, she simply answers, ““We had to have something for you”” (Winterson, 1985, p. 75). The mother even portrays aggression when sexuality is on the table. She resents the next-door neighbors for living their sexuality openly: ““They’re fornicating,’ cried my mother, rushing to put her hands over my ears” (Winterson, 1985, p. 54). She panics and tries to silence their voice by playing the piano furiously: ““Listen to the heathen,’ my mother shouted jubilantly, her foot furious on the hard petal” (Winterson, 1985, p. 55). Her avoidance and aggression towards sexuality lead her to condemn her daughter’s sexuality as well. She advises Jeanette to ““Don’t let anyone touch you Down There”” (Winterson, 1985, p. 91) before she goes out to meet her friend. That’s why, “the atmosphere of sexual repression that always surrounds the protagonist” (Morera, 2014, p. 263), and repression comes to define the mother-daughter relationship as well.

The mother’s inability to embrace sexuality and her censoring sexuality through infantilizations through euphemisms such as “Down There” (Winterson, 1985, p. 91) or repressing the subject aggressively such as her silencing the noise with the piano indicate surfacing of the maternal in the patriarchal order of the family. This avoidance and aggression towards sexuality echoes Kristeva’s discussion about Immaculate Conception in “Stabat Mater.” Kristeva argues that the Virgin Mary’s finding acceptance within Christian Church was due mainly to her avoiding death by avoiding sex:

In the fourth century the notion of an immaculate conception was further developed and rationalized by grafting the church Fathers’ arguments for asceticism onto the spirit of the apocrypha. The logic of the case was simple: sexuality implies death and vice versa, so that it is impossible to escape the latter without shunning the former. (Kristeva, 1985, p. 137)

The mother’s avoiding sex altogether might seem like an extension of her extreme practices of religion, but the underlying motive is in fact the desire of “being excluded from time and death through the very flattering image associated with the Dormition and Assumption” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 148). The mother’s being jealous of the Virgin Mary stems from her being the only one who achieved Immaculate Conception, and this reveals the existence of the semiotic needs for timelessness and infinity surfacing in the symbolic.

The family acts like a motherly space in *Oranges* because it is not compatible with another patriarchal institution, which is the public school. Normally, agents of patriarchal order are expected to be complimentary and similar in their workings. Therefore, the family and school are expected to operate on individuals in similar ways, both being agents of the symbolic order. However, in the novel, the school is not regarded well within the family; therefore, Jeanette is homeschooled. The curriculum is designed by the mother, and it consists of Bible study beside limited attention to other subjects. The homeschooling is conducted also by the mother, but it is quite problematical because she bombards the young Jeanette with wrong information:

I learnt that it rains when clouds collide with a high building, like a steeple, or a cathedral; the impact punctures them, and everybody underneath gets wet. The more godly your town, the more high buildings you’d have, and the more rain you’d get. ‘That’s why all these Heathen places are so dry, explained my mother. (Winterson, 1985, p. 16)

The mother is not an ignorant or uneducated person, so she purposefully misleads Jeanette to

produce a discourse and mindset specific only to herself and Jeanette without the disturbance from the outside world. Likewise, she rewrites the ending of *Jane Eyre* and hides the book from Jeanette. Jeanette is devastated when she reads the original ending for being cheated by her mother, and she can never read this novel again (Winterson, 1985, p. 75). Similar to the transforming effect of this revelation, being sent to school acts like a castrating effect on Jeanette. After she is enrolled into a public school after the court notification, Jeanette experiences great difficulty in adjusting for a very long time mostly because her mother keeps telling her the school is a “Breeding Ground” (Winterson, 1985, p. 17), and what she is taught there by teachers is heresy. However, Jeanette realizes that her mother’s misleading fails her in the school, so she decides to stop giving heed to her words and follows her teachers’ instructions. It can be argued that the mother deterred Jeanette’s entrance into the symbolic order by isolating her from the outer world and the school, but Jeanette’s attending the school acts like a castrating effect eventually. The mother’s efforts to avoid this are clear in her homeschooling Jeanette; therefore, the semiotic exists in her patriarchal practices just like the way in which she rips the father off his patriarchal power. Yakut too draws attention to this delay in castration: “Jeanette is devoid of a powerful father figure, and she is fatherless in metaphorical terms, as a result of which she cannot submit herself to the Law of the Father and cannot be castrated or symbolically positioned” (2011, p. 55). Jeanette and the mother are aware of the castrating effect of the school in their relationship, since they both acknowledge they are growing apart:

As it was I just forgot about it, did my lessons as best I could, which wasn’t that well, and thought about our church. I told my mother how things were once. ‘We are called to be apart,’ she said. My mother didn’t have many friends either. People didn’t understand the way she thought; neither did I, but I loved her because she always knew exactly why things happened. (Winterson, 1985, p. 45)

The family harbors the semiotic within its symbolic order also because binary oppositions are rendered problematic and absurd in familial relations. Binaristic thinking and categorizations are the cornerstones of patriarchal order. In the novel, the mother’s organizing her life and the household also is based on the binary opposition “friends/enemies.” However, her list of friends/enemies is problematic and arbitrary as the incompatibility of their components reveals:

She had never heard of mixed feelings. There were friends and there were enemies. Enemies were: The Devil (in his many forms), Next Door, Sex (in its many forms), Slugs. Friends were: God, Our Dog, Auntie Madge, The Novels of Charlotte Brontë, Slug pellets and me at first. (Winterson, 1985, p. 1).

Binary oppositions, which are the foundations of symbolic order, are presented as fragile and nonsensical through this categorization of irrelevant things. Similarly, Jeanette easily trespasses from the friend to the enemy category with her coming out, so the binaries are fragile and cannot contain all. In “Stabat Mater,” Kristeva criticizes binaristic thinking for its inadequacy to include the semiotic. She argues the female body already disrupts the binary oppositions with its heterogeneity, but this already-existing heterogeneity of women’s body “explodes with pregnancy – the dividing line between nature and culture” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 149). She glorifies the pregnant body for entailing traits indefinable by binaries; thus, the pregnant body breaks down binaries and hierarchies like subject/other by bringing the anarchic semiotic into the orderly symbolic. A parallel between Kristeva’s argument and Hélène Cixous’ discussions on “écriture féminine” in her article titled “The Laugh of the Medusa” can be drawn. Cixous advocates for a women’s writing about women’s experience beyond the conventions of masculine writing and the binary oppositions that inhere in it such as mind/body:

Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallogocentric tradition. It is indeed that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogocentrism. (Cixous, 1976, p.

879)

Cixous glorifies the female body, for it cannot be contained within binaries. She encourages women writers to put their body into their writing and make it heard (Cixous, 1976, p. 880) because the body has been suppressed as the inferior counterpart of the reason by phallogocentric practices.

Alongside the family, the church which Jeanette and her mother attend entails motherly within the patriarchal discourse. Kristeva argues, “Christianity is no doubt the most sophisticated symbolic construct in which femininity . . . is confined within the limits of the Maternal” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 133-134). Through the Virgin Mary figure, Christianity entails the maternal although it is an institutionalized religion, thus has a paternal discourse. In fact, this maternal figure attracted many followers to Christian religion and led to the humanization of the religion and West (Kristeva, 1985, p. 140). Kristeva suggests that many saints and mystics connected to the religion through the Virgin Mary and used this maternal figure as a way of their relation to God: “Comfortable in their relation to the maternal ‘continent,’ mystics use this comfort as a pedestal on which to erect their love of God” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 134). In the light of Kristeva’s discussions about Christianity’s entailing the semiotic disruptions in its fatherly discourse, it can be claimed that Jeanette’s church portrays the traits of a motherly space as a result of its entailing the appropriation of religious dogmas in accordance with personal interests, communal traits, emphasis on auditory sources and power of females within the church community. The church and church community appropriate religious rules in accordance with their needs. Although the church has very strict rules and present an orthodox obedience to the rules of Christianity, instances of such appropriations subvert rules of the religion and lay bare the hypocrisy within this religious circle. To illustrate, Jeanette’s mother is quite stern when it comes to the religion; however, she always prays standing up instead of kneeling: “She always prayed standing up, because of her knees, just as Bonaparte always gave orders from his size. I do think that the relationship my mother enjoyed with God had a lot to do with positioning” (Winterson, 1985, p. 2). Jeanette remarks that this ritual of hers mostly has to do with a power struggle rather than a health condition because her mother likes being in charge. The mother’s appropriation of the rule of kneeling is reminiscent of Vatican’s accepting the dogmas about Mary. Kristeva argues that the religion responds to and evolves by acknowledging the need to accommodate the maternal in its patriarchal order. The Immaculate Conception is accepted in the fourth century, and in the aftermath of the two world wars, Dominion is accepted as dogma due to massive numbers of death. The maternal resurfaces in the religion and offers comfort to the followers; thus, rules of the religion are appropriated accordingly, which is a disruption of the symbolic by the semiotic.

Another instance that indicates the existence of the maternal in the religion is that the church community acts like commune for Jeanette and her mother. This community consists of a big number of women of varying ages. What is remarkable about this community is that it is not restricted to the church space, but it invades the personal life of its every member. Women travel, preach and organize church events communally, and they visit each other’s home often. Their lifestyle and reactions bear a communal trait as well, and this is reflected on Jeanette’s life as her having multiple mother figures. For example, when she undergoes surgery and stays at the hospital for a long time, she is visited by a different member of the community every day while her mother never visits her. Especially Elsie acts like a guardian angel for Jeanette and gives affection and protection to her more than her mother does. The reactions of this community are communal as well. Just like their praying together, the community gives the same reactions altogether as it can be seen in their condemning Jeanette for her lesbianism, practicing exorcism by praying over her and forgiving her for her sins. Although towards the

end this community takes on a bitter attitude towards Jeanette, the church community acts like a motherly space for her. Her making a distinction between the church and the school where she enters the symbolic reveals that she regards the church as a maternal space: “It [the church] was clear and warm and made me happy. At school there was only confusion” (Winterson, 1985, p. 42). Whereas the church gives Jeanette a sense of wholeness, the school confuses and frustrates her. Likewise, Jeanette states, “The church is my family” (Winterson, 1985, p. 38). While this statement reveals the centrality of the church in her life, it also posits a conflictual state. The church’s offering a blissful space where she can feel wholeness reveals that Jeanette regards it to be in the motherly space although the church is located in the symbolic traditionally. Reminiscent of the saints’ and mystics’ using the Virgin Mary figure as a way to relate to the love of God as Kristeva argues, Jeanette regards the church as a motherly space to relate to God.

The church entails the maternal through its heavy emphasis on auditory sources as well. Rather than biblical lines and quotes from saints, which would be expected to be shared within a church community, extensive emphasis on religious hymns is given in the novel. “Auld Lang Syne,” “Little Brown Jug,” “Ol’ Man River” (Winterson, 1985, p. 23), “Redemption Hymnal” “Ask the Saviour to Help You” (Winterson, 1985, p. 53), “You Don’t Need Spirits When You’ve Got the Spirit” (Winterson, 1985, p. 87) and “What a Friend We have in Jesus” (Winterson, 1985, p. 111) are some of the many other hymns mentioned in *Oranges*. Rather than preaching and teachings from the Bible, descriptions of choir rehearsals with the orchestra and lines from these hymns are given extensive space in the novel. This indicates existence of the maternal within religion as Kristeva mentions auditory sources as an implication of the semiotic residing in the symbolic:

Of the virginal body we are entitled to the ear, the tears, and the breasts. That the female sexual organ has been transformed into an innocent shell which serves only to receive sound may ultimately contribute to an eroticization of hearing and the voice, not to say of understanding. (Kristeva, 1985, p. 142)

The heavy dependence on hearing and the moving and uniting power of sound imagery in the church community suggests semiotic resonances within the patriarchal discourse of the religion.

Similar to power relations within the family, the position of the priests within the church community suggests the existence of the maternal in that they have a secondary position to female members. The priests have less power over churchgoers than female preachers’ power, and they are infantilized, manipulated or even sexualized by female members of the church community. Interestingly, in the novel flirtations take place between female churchgoers and the priests, and the sexualized ones are always the male. For example, Jeanette tells that her mother’s conversion story is “*very romantic*”:

One night by mistake, she had walked into Pastor Spratt’s Glory Crusade. It was in a tent on some spare land, and every evening Pastor Spratt spoke of the fate of the damned, and performed healing miracles. He was very impressive. My mother said he looked like Errol Flynn, but holy. A lot of women found the Lord that week. (Winterson, 1985, 7)

Her mother is a convert in the first place because of the handsome pastor, which is also implied by the big number of new female converts then. Similarly, in her youth, she preaches in bars and makes men listen to her by using her beauty: “‘Oh, I had my offers,’ she confided, ‘and they weren’t all Godly.’ Whatever they were, the church grew, and many a man will still stop in street when my mother goes past and raise his hat to Jesus Belle” (Winterson, 1985, p. 37). The mother’s playing with the idea of flirting with a pastor is evident throughout the novel as she sexualizes them despite her condemning sexual intercourse. To illustrate, she keeps Pastor Spratt’s picture by her bed still (Winterson, 1985, p. 8), and she blushes when Pastor Flinch

compliments her saying, ““You can always tell a good woman by her sandwiches”” (Winterson, 1985, p. 11).

Alongside such sexualizations, the priests are infantilized within the church community. To illustrate, Pastor Finch’s preaching about the number seven and tendency to sin is disrupted continually by a woman asking about a leftover piece of cake (Winterson, 1985, p. 12). Later, Pastor encounters Jeanette while she is playing with Fuzzy Felt and starts playing like a little child with her (Winterson, 1985, p. 12-13). Years later Pastor Finch appears with his “devil bus” and brags about the miracles he has done in this bus such as saving a person combusted by the demon: ““What do you do about the flames?” we asked. ‘I use an extinguisher,’ he explained”” (Winterson, 1985, p. 86). His mentioning a fire extinguisher right after his miracles presents him as a caricaturized figure. In contrast to the secondary position of pastors, the female preachers enjoy power and agency quite at leisure. Kristeva argues, “It is frequently suggested that the flourishing of feminism in the Protestant countries is due, among other things, to the fact that women there are allowed greater initiative in social life and ritual” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 139). Likewise, women have a wide space within the church community, and they are very influential in preaching, reaching out to non-converts and organizing activities like camps and fairs. Jeanette is a very influential preacher and on the nights that she preaches many new members join their church. She describes her power in the church as follows: “I had no quarrel with men. At that time there was no reason that I should. The women in our church were strong and organized. If you want to talk in terms of power I had enough to keep Mussolini happy” (Winterson, 1985, p. 127).

After the second incident of Jeanette’s relationship with a female churchgoer, the church officials decide to reduce the women’s power in the church. They actually use Jeanette’s lesbianism as pretense to end female authority and power in the church by claiming giving women too much power makes them go awry:

The real problem, it seemed, was going against the teachings of St Paul, and allowing women power in the church. Our branch of the church had never thought about it, we’d always had strong women and the women organized everything. Some of us could preach, in my case, the church was full because of it. (Winterson, 1985, p. 135-136)

The church officials’ restlessness over women’s power in the church is reminiscent of Vatican’s disapproval of the Virgin Mary’s turning into a power figure. Kristeva argues that as the Virgin Mary became a figure of power, she emerged in paintings and hymns as an almighty figure; thus, the Vatican shunned such descriptions of Mary in art: “The church later became wary of Mary’s role as repository of power and tried to put a halt to it, but it nevertheless persisted in popular and artistic imagery” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 140). It is interesting that Jeanette’s mother, who enjoys having the upper hand in her relations – even in her relationship with God –, is the first person to support the church officials’ decision to limit women’s power with the church community, which lays bare the conflictual practices of the mother: an “all-powerful figure who retains much of the authority of the pre-Oedipal mother, while at the same time standing firmly . . . on the side of patriarchal law” (Carter, 1998, p. 16). However, the mother’s efforts to comply with the patriarchal order is always disrupted by the semiotic, which implies that a clear separation between the symbolic and semiotic is not possible. The mother’s attempts to suppress Jeanette and make a priest out of her backlash as well because Jeanette sustains her voice and power through writing and becomes a “prophet:”

“What would have happened if you had stayed?”

I could have been a priest instead of a prophet. The priest has a book with the words set out. . . . The prophet has no book. The prophet is a voice that cries in the wilderness, full of sounds that do not always set into meaning. (Winterson, 1985, p. 164)

The juxtaposition between the priest and prophet indicates Jeanette's deviating from the rules and life set out for her and finding her own path, which includes her appropriating the conventions of self-writing and subverting *Bildungsroman* tropes. Since "the Bildungsroman (the novel of formation) flourished in English literature in the Victorian Age among the realists" (Golban, 2017, p. 113), it is generally associated with bourgeoisie epistemology, Cartesian understanding of a unified self and a teleological flow of events through which the protagonist is tested and integrated into the society. Jeanette subverts such conventions by integrating fairy tales into her narration, disrupting the linear flow of the time, and keeping her position as an outcast in the society intact. The novel posits that "the words set out" (Winterson, 1985, p. 164) cannot contain the growing-up process of everyone; thus, *Bildung* does not consist of a linear integration into the symbolic order through one's turning her back to the semiotic and getting rid of the semiotic material. It is rather a chaotic and non-localizable process within the symbolic disrupted constantly by the repetitions and resonances of the semiotic.

Conclusion

Kristeva's discussions in "Stabat Mater" offer a deep insight into *Oranges* for understanding the workings of the family and the church and their role in Jeanette's upbringing. Kristeva's describing the Virgin Mary's large appeal in Christianity as the "triumph of the unconscious in monotheism" (1985, p. 135) reveals the existence of humans' need to accommodate the anarchic flows of the semiotic within the symbolic order. Even in Christianity, which is thought to entail a strict patriarchal discourse and function as an institution of the symbolic, the motherly finds ways of resurfacing:

the representation of virgin motherhood seems to have crowned society's efforts to reconcile survivals of matrilinearity and the unconscious needs of primary narcissism on the one hand with, on the other hand, the imperatives of the nascent exchange economy and, before long, of accelerated production, which required the addition of the superego and relied on the father's symbolic authority. (Kristeva, 1985, p. 149).

The Virgin Mary's central role in Christianity and her depictions that are rich with semiotic resonances reveal that even in the strictest patriarchal orders it is possible to find subversions of the symbolic by the maternal. This view is crucial in understanding the two formative institutions that hold an important place in Jeanette's life in the novel. The paternal discourse is most evident in Jeanette's family and the church, and these are agents of symbolic order traditionally. However, a deeper look into the workings of the family and church with a Kristevan vantage point would reveal that these spheres are subverted and fractured by the existence of motherly at their heart. Despite the mother's feverous efforts to maintain and perpetuate patriarchal order both in the family and church, their effects on Jeanette and her operations within these spheres reveal that they accommodate the semiotic at their heart.

The reading of *Oranges* in the light of Kristeva's "Stabat Mater" reveals that patriarchal institutions can entail the motherly because their symbolic order is always disrupted by the semiotic waves. As Kristeva suggests, the symbolic and semiotic cannot be separated from each other easily, and one does not begin at the expense of the other. This revelation is important in understanding that binary oppositions like symbolic/semiotic or fatherly/motherly are arbitrary and invalid. Through Jeanette's accepting the existence of her orange demon and learning to live with it, *Oranges* acknowledges the coexistence of the two registers and subverts the glorified family and church institutions by laying bare how close they are to the motherly sphere. This view is important as it is the claim that lies underneath the novel's recurrent message that "Oranges are not the only fruit." This Kristevan view entails that acknowledging the anarchic disruptions of the semiotic can open up new spaces of signification within the symbolic for the existence of various identities, zones of becoming and multiplicity of truths

that cannot be contained within binaries as it is imposed by the patriarchal order. Such new spaces of signification can open up opportunities for a “heretics” (Kristeva, 1985, p. 152) that is inclusive of women’s experiences in studies about women. It can be suggested that future studies can focus on narratological aspects, gender issues and self-writing processes in *Oranges* in the light of this Kristevan reading and register theory, and their relations to identity and sexual politics alongside feminisms studies.

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