"Cover"-ing the Gaps in Art, Writing, and Time in Jeannette Winterson's *The Gap of Time*

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Abstract: *The present study examines the ways in which Jeanette Winterson's novel* The Gap of Time *(2015) engages in some intellectual reflections on the act of adaptation and on the creative act in general, by revealing various "gaps" which emerge in the process of adaptation and artistic creation, such as the one between the original and the adaptation, or between the "lost" time of the past and the "found" present, or between the transient and eternal existence of art. This article also focuses on the "gap of time" as the novel's central narratological means of expression, which delivers a movement in time performed by the text itself. Concomitantly, this study aims to reveal different dimensions which are employed by the novelist in her representation of the relationship between time, self, and creative act through some explicit dialogues set with the critical discourse on adaptation and also through the philosophical reflections on time, namely Bergson's concept of duration and Nietzsche's notion of immortality as movement.*

Keywords: *adaptation, cover, art, duration, eternal recurrence, Shakespeare,* The Gap of Time*, Jeanette Winterson*

Introduction

Jeanette Winterson's *The Gap of Time* (2015) is the first in the series of "Hogarth Shakespeare" launched in October 2015 by Penguin Random House to commemorate the quadricentennial of William Shakespeare's death. Having the purpose of reimagining Shakespeare's plays for the twenty-first century audience, turning from stage to page, and keeping "true to the spirit" of the originals, the world's largest trade publishers entered a crowded market by commissioning a range of all-star contemporary writers for rewriting any of Shakespeare's plays. The Hogarth project, with its focus on the novelization of Shakespeare's plays, attempts to establish a transcultural and transhistorical dialogue between the Great Bard and the contemporary novelists, in the hope that this intertextual interaction with the illustrious predecessor might confer some literary prestige to the present-day writers. However, this project also reveals some of the tensions of the contemporary cultural production related to the perception of the artwork in terms of commodity. The borderline between art and commerce is blurred, especially when considering that the writers are commissioned to novelize Shakespearean drama; working with a mega-publisher implies a larger audience than that of a theatre director who stages a

new production; and *la fortune d'un écrivain* (the writer's fortune) increases enormously due to the great opportunities gained in terms of influence, effect, success, diffusion, readership, and sale during the collaboration with such a mega-publisher as Penguin Random House. In this respect, Pierre Bourdieu explains that

> the liberty of writers and artists […] is purely formal; it constitutes no more than the condition of their submission to the laws of the market of symbolic goods, that is, to a form of demand which necessarily lags behind the supply of the commodity (in this case the work of art). They are reminded of this demand through sales figures and other forms of pressure, explicit or diffuse, exercised by publishers, theatre managers, art dealers. (114)

Jeanette Winterson tries to rise to the challenge launched by Penguin House with her novel *The Gap of Time*, which is a rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611). However, instead of setting the primary purpose of preserving the Bard's spirit, Winterson uses her narrative to reflect on "what is lost and what is found" in relation with various "gaps" which occur in the postmodern world of increasing commodification of art. Such "gaps" should be considered primarily in relation to time, as the title of the novel suggests; but the gap between original and adaptation, between stage and page, as well as the gap between fine and commercial art cannot go unnoticed. Moreover, Winterson takes after her illustrious predecessor in being a master of disguises, since, as she writes, "Shakespeare loved disguises; one thing or one kind masquerading as another – a girl who's a boy who's a girl. A princess who is a shepherdess who is a goddess. A statue that comes to life. That things are not what they seem is the terror and the glory of *The Winter's Tale*" (Winterson 288). The novelist uses her skills of deception to create some layers of signification while trying to "cover" some "gaps", initially reflecting upon them, masking her true intentions, and ultimately substituting the initially created codes of signification with new ones, revealing at the end of the narrative a kind of conceit that surprises through the dissimilarity of the things compared, but emerging as a powerful metaphor used to persuade her audience.

The Gap between the Original and the Adaptation
The interest in Shakespeare's texts has never been lost throughout the modern history of world literature and scholarship, but particularly so in the first decades of the twenty-first century, when the works of the Great Bard have attracted even greater attention from both writers and scholars. The growing fascination with Shakespeare's greatness led to a passion for producing rewritings and adaptations of the poet's texts, which resulted in novelized and

screen versions, intercultural and intergeneric adaptations, transmediations, appropriations, and even memes made in multiple languages from all around the world. While Graham Holderness refers to the perennial quality of the Great Bard as "the Shakespeare Myth" (1988), the writerly and scholarly enthusiasm, which the mythified writer inspires, has engendered an academic dilemma regarding the possibility of preserving an "authentic" Shakespearean text within this myriad of adaptations and revisions. The fascination with Shakespeare's poetic language, as well as with aesthetic and generic particularities of his scripts, has developed into a cherishing attitude of an ethical imperative of fidelity to the poet's texts. However, while the tribute to the "authentic" Shakespearean text has been rigorously paid by various adaptors and translators, among the scholars there has emerged an awareness of the fragility of the concept of "truthfulness" to Shakespeare (for instance, by William Worthen, 1997, 2003). The daunting challenge regarding the capturing of an "authentic" Shakespeare stems mostly from the view that Shakespeare always proved much versatility when adapting himself from a vast variety of ancient and contemporary sources, interweaving extensively mythology and history within the matrix of his texts, his creativity resulting in ever-fluid, ever-becoming, complex, and generically hybrid texts which appeal to the experimental spirit of adaptation, relocation, and recontextualization of postmodern writing.

Recently, the research on Shakespearean adaptations has moved forward into an age of post-fidelity, especially due to the postmodern reconsideration of the relationship between what is perceived as the original text and its re-productions. In this respect, Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) has proved to be ground-breaking. Noting the attitude of "belatedness" and "cultural inferiority" towards contemporary popular adaptations which emerged in the academic criticism and journalistic reviewing, Hutcheon (2) begins with a reflection on "originals", stressing out that Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Racine, Goethe, and da Ponte were also adaptors of the familiar stories in "new forms", transferring "from page to stage" and making their culture's stories available to new audiences. Moreover, Hutcheon emphasises that adaptation is always an act of re-interpretation and eventually a re-creation. In a dialogic and intertextual manner, "we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (Hutcheon 8). From the power emerging through variation, alteration and transmutation, an adaptation becomes "a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary" (Hutcheon 9). Hutcheon points to the homage payed to the adapted text while never ignoring the existence of its aesthetic or political values, concomitantly emphasising that "adaptation is an act of appropriating

or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new" (20).

Another noteworthy contribution to the study of adaptations and appropriations belongs to Julie Sanders, who relies on Gerard Genette's "open structuralism" mentioned in *Palimpsests* (ix). Sanders (18) sees adaptations as "readings which are invested not in proving a text's closure to alternatives, but in celebrating its ongoing interaction with other texts and artistic productions". This view of adaptation as a text which is relevant *per se* allows the possibility of voicing the silenced and marginalized attempts, valuing their artistic drive and worth not in opposition to the "classic" novels or drama but mostly in terms of the text's significance at the moment of time in which it becomes active, thereby indicating the text's possible meanings and also its cultural impact. In this context, the query regarding adaptations, stated by Estella Ciobanu, gains validity: "How do such "palimpsestic" works, or works in the "second degree" (both Genette's terms), explore/exploit [the fictional text] and what do they mine out of its depths?" (Ciobanu 7).

Given that Winterson was commissioned to pay homage to the "original", she reflects on the varied terminology related to literary adaptations and appropriations. Although the novelist has a long history of retellings, revisions and intertextualities, she still feels compelled to justify once again her need for rewriting; consequently, in the final pages of *The Gap of Time*, she writes: "Shakespeare walks away from the play, as we do, leaving it to the kids to get it right next time. As Ezra Pound said, 'Make it new'" (Winterson 286). Winterson validates her adaptation as a response to the imperative of the literary tradition which summons the authors and artists of new generations to rise to the expectations and pleasures that Hutcheon sees as emerging from "repetition and variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (4).

Winterson does not hesitate to surprise her audience when she calls her novel *The Gap of Time* as "the cover version" for the Shakespeare's "original". But while this distinction initially draws attention to the gap between original and adaptation, the very inclusion of the first title in her novel as "The Original" reveals that the intention of the novelist goes beyond the homage to Shakespeare's originality. Since the romantic concept of pure individual authorship has no validity in relation to fluid Shakespearean texts and by delivering the events of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* within the space of initial four pages of her narrative, she mocks the attitude of those who view adaptation as a supplement which is dependent upon "authentic" Shakespeare. Jeremy Rosen explains that Ezra Pound's modernist dictum "Make it new" is used by the novelist "to claim that both Shakespeare and Pound envisioned later generations taking over extant artworks, remaking them, and even improving upon them" (287). Winterson makes an abrupt transition from

Shakespeare to Pound with his modernist imperative and, after leaving a short gap on the page of her text, she brusquely continues with:

> *The Winter's Tale* is a play where the past depends on the future just as much as the future depends on the past. The past in *The Winter's Tale* is not history; it's tragedy. And tragedy can't happen without conscience. It is the scale of the loss, the sense of it and its senselessness, that makes the jealousy and violence of the first act so painful. (Winterson 286)

The momentary visualisation of the gap on the page of the text, followed by the immediate interplay between the past and present, the original and adaptation, history and tragedy, conveyed through the connection to conscience is extremely appealing. Moreover, the novelist surprises again by her ingenuity of relating the jealousy and violence which are major metaphors in Shakespeare's text to the jealousy and violence experienced towards the originals by the adaptors if they happen to lose their conscience. Even though pain is an intrinsic element in most acts of creation, tragedy can be avoided when approaching any repetition with sense and conscience. But the question is whether a creator is willing to avoid the pain preceding and accompanying the process of creation.

Instead of looking back to the past "originals" with a sense of loss and longing, Winterson suggests that "the past depends on the future just as much as the future depends on the past" (286), and this interdependence should stimulate future creativity in that new "originals" would emerge. Winterson impresses by her prompt resourcefulness with her choice of the word "cover" for her work, delivering another innovative option for a rewriting, but she surprises mostly by its interrelation to music. Jo Eldridge Carney explains that Winterson "[calling] the novel a cover, the popular term for one artist's rendition of another's song, signals its currency and contemporaneity as well as the centrality of music to the narrative" (80). The deliberate choice of the word "cover", complemented by the word "interval", which marks the gap of time clearly, suggests the intentional relation to the art of music. With the interplay of various connotations of both musical terms, the novelist reveals her intention as an adaptor who takes over some existent artworks and, in the process of remaking, tries to improve or expand their "original" significance.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* explanation for "cover" includes: "*verb*: 1. put something on top of or in front of (something), especially in order to protect or conceal it. 2. extend over (an area); *noun*: 1. A thing which lies on, over, or around something, especially in order to protect or conceal it. 2. Shelter or protection sought by people in danger" (*OED*, "cover"). The same dictionary explains "interval" as: "*noun*: 1. an intervening time. 2. a pause or

break in activity" (*OED*, "interval"), whereas the Cambridge dictionary explains the word "interval" as "a period between two events or times; the space between two points; a short period between the parts of a performance or a sports events. Music: the difference in pitch between two tones, as between two tones sounded simultaneously (harmonic interval) or between two tones sounded successively (melodic interval)".

The detailed dictionary explanations reveal the rich connotations of the words "cover" and "interval" beyond the realm of music as they also transmit a sense of rivalry, which is typical to any Shakespearean text since he himself dared to adapt and various texts of his contemporaries which would fit his artistic and commercial agenda. Simultaneously, the combative spirit indicates the inevitable rivalry between the "original" and the "adaptation" while striving for pre-eminence and visibility. Rivalry also delivers the option of a harmonious coexistence between two points or performances. With this deliberate interplay of various degrees of connotations of the words "cover" and "interval", Winterson reveals "the semantic density of language" pointed out by Roland Barthes, and creates an intertextual debate with Kristeva and Barthes through the concept of *signifiance*, namely the act of writing as an opportunity for language to displace, condense, repeat and invert the linear order of language, which produces eventually an "overmeaning". Winterson seems to engage into an intellectual debate with both scholars by questioning the possibility of "overmeaning" through her reflection on a myriad of possibilities that a word may contain. In this respect, the observation made by the translator of Roland Barthes's *Image-Music-Text* (1977), Stephen Heath, who emphasises the etymological origins of Barthes's term *signifiance* and elaborates on the specific usage of the concept in his work, is revelatory:

> As a theoretical concept initially proposed by Julia Kristeva […] *Signifiance* is a process in the course of which the 'subject' of the text, escaping the logic of ego-cogito and engaging in other logics (of the signifier, of contradiction), struggles with meaning and is deconstructed ('lost'). Contrary to signification, *signifiance* cannot be reduced, therefore, to communication, representation, expression: it places the subject (of writer, reader) in the text not as a projection […] but as a 'loss', a 'disappearance' (Barthes 10)

The translator's characterization of "signifiance" in opposition to "signification" creates an inverted relationship between the two words, since one refers to meaning, whereas the other signals its "loss". This inverted condition places the two concepts to mirror each other and, in their reciprocal reflection, "signification" leads to a semiological end, while *signifiance*

delivers an opportunity to move beyond the narrow semiological connotation and play with its various possibilities.

Winterson seems to clearly indulge into this opportunity of playing with various layers of meaning, and this interplay is mostly visible in the recurring motif of her novel: "That which is lost is found..." (Winterson 288). The first degree of signification of this statement evidently refers to the loss of Perdita and her later being found, but the more the reader is captured by this text, the more the abundance of possibilities emerge from this inversion, mostly being in antagonism with "disappearance" and "loss" because the stress is always on the word "found", followed by an ellipsis which may indicate something left unsaid. Moreover, returning to the rich possibilities implied by the words "cover" and "interval", the novelist's interaction with Barthes can be noticed again. Barthes goes beyond Kristeva's reduction of *signifiance* to reading and writing by expanding its possibilities to music, which, to him, becomes another "semiotic system" capable of elaborating the process of *signifiation* in a manner distinct from the one provided by language and perhaps being even better (Barthes 179).

In her desire to reveal that an adaptation is what Hutcheon calls "a derivation that is not derivative" (9), Winterson introduces her characters, who, though emerge from Shakespeare's text, are "second without being secondary" (Hutcheon 9). Winterson makes her own transformations, where Leontes, King of Sicily, becomes Leo Kaiser, the hedge fund manager of a world-scale corporation named "Sicily". The name "Leo" ("lion"), which, together with "Kaiser" ("king"), might confer an air of aristocracy or social eminence, still bears a predatory connotation in relation to lion, as well as a Mafioso suggestion through the relation to Sicily. Polixenes, King of Bohemia, is transformed into Xeno, who is established in New Bohemia and, prior to becoming a very successful artistic video game designer, is engaged in quite a bohemian mode of life. The connotations of the name Xeno, including "other" or "different", indicate his nonconformist way of life and also signify "guest", which may also refer to his unconventional accommodation with Leo and his wife. Hermione, Leontes's wife, becomes MiMi, a singer and music artist whom Leo met in Paris, and whose name might be a derivate of Hermione (meaning "well-born" and "stone"), but it also bears reference to a spirit person depicted in rock and bark paintings of Western Arnhem Land; it also suggests "mimesis", especially in relation to the musical notes, where the syllables of solmization (i.e., the Do Re Mi solfeggio) stop at Mi: MiMi. Florizel, Polixenes's son, is transformed into Zel, and while Shakespeare infused some feminine connotations related to flowers or deflowering, Winterson adapts this name to include reference to "zeal", "fervour", "frenzy". Mamillius becomes Milo, which suggests "dear", "beloved" but also "merciful", concomitantly creating the impression of merging MiMi's and Leo's names into "Milo". The

old Shepherd becomes Shep, bearing reference to pastoral harmony and guidance to love. Perdita surprisingly preserves the same name in Winterson, due to its reference to "loss".

In this extensive reference to characters one may assume the novelist's intention to improvise, extend, and complete what was suggested by Shakespeare's choice of names, giving an impression of fluidity of characters, of their *signifiance* with innumerable possibilities of their interpretation. The variations suggested by Winterson reveal her constant preoccupation with art, artistic originality, and her intention to create a difference by her novelistic contribution. Rosen argues, with respect to Winterson's choice of alluding to music, that

> a musical cover version is more similar to a new theatrical production of a Shakespeare's play, in which the "words and music" are largely the same but to varying degrees reinterpreted by a new director and performers, than to a novelistic transposition of a Shakespearean storyline into a contemporary setting that jettisons all the original language. (Rosen 285)

However, to this possibility of interpretation Winterson adds another degree of signification when she invokes her personal relationship to her text:

> I wrote this cover version because the text has been a private text for me for more than thirty years. By that I mean part of the written wor(l)d I can't live without; without, not in the sense of lack, but in the old sense of living outside of something. It's a play about a foundling. And I am. (Winterson 284)

At first glance, the novelist seems to explore, as Carney suggests, "the motif of child abandonment and the attendant potential for recovery, forgiveness, and redemption" (80). However, considering Winterson's ability and joy to stretch out the boundaries of the first degree of signification, the above fragment may refer to a private connection to Perdita as she is also a foundling; but it should not be ignored that most of the characters in the novel are to certain extents "abandoned", "separated", "lost", and later "found". Such a connection can be expanded in order to consider that through the word "foundling", the novelist identifies herself with each of them in various hypostases. Moreover, the possibility of her being any character in her narrative may indicate the overlapping of her characters' journeys through life with her own journey which has lasted "for more than thirty years" and is still ongoing. The abrupt shift from her characters and their actions to the novelist's first-person meditation on the reasons of Shakespearean play's significance for Winterson

reinforces her perpetual preoccupation concerning artistic originality and the importance of a work of art. It allows the reader to hear the novelist's reflection on her novel and her own condition and the comparison of these apparently dissimilar concepts results in the creation of Winterson's conceit: "It's a play about a foundling. And I am" (Winterson 284). In this instant, the novelist's identification with Perdita and with all the other characters with their private and creative pursuits, and eventually, with the novel itself, recalls Gustave Flaubert's famous statement *"Madame Bovary c'est moi"*, is counterbalanced by Flaubert's famous determination to keep a detached stance from his personal emotions and opinions. Perhaps this is the finest expression of Winterson's creative brilliance since, through her intrusive narrative voice, she creates some intertextual relations which would both connect her to the great imaginative tradition of writers and concomitantly "separates" her from them. At the same time, Winterson seems to transform her text into a playground in which she may challenge Barthes's famous declaration of "the death of the author" because if the death of the author implies the birth of the reader, then she proclaims herself as the reader of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, and her work, rejecting "death" through the novelist's search for identity in the imaginative realm where no one is the absolute possessor of truth, reflects the fluidity of possible readings and meanings which emerge continuously. A meshwork of irony emerges from this novel's unique poetics, which searches the facets of creation and creativity and also the possibility of "living" within it. All these are accomplished so subtly that the reader may never be aware of the patterns set within the narrative, creating a "cover" like a shield over a beating heart which suffers from the rupture, "separation", or "loss" of the precedents, but it still claims its regained vitality through "what is found", that is, a newly created text.

Reminding once again that things might not be what they seem, Winterson's narrative continues to play with the readers through the major symbols which lie within the body of her work of art: "Time can be redeemed. That which is lost is found... So let the last word be hers" (Winterson 288). Winterson, in her adaptation, recreates a symbolic pattern which is intermeshed with irony, because the last words of her narrative belong to Perdita, but in fact they belong to the novelist's narrative voice, and she subtly implies that the last words are hers, left to the posterity. Winterson gives a very startling evidence of her poetic originality while proving the beating heart within her body through the vitality of her text:

> here the sound of the night and my footsteps and my breathing. (...) although history repeats itself and we always fall, and I am a carrier of history whose brief excursion into time leaves no mark, I have known something worth knowing, wild and unlikely and against every rote.

> (...) Love (...) Though I find my way by flashlight in the dark, I am witness and evidence of what I know: this love. The atom and jot of my span. (Winterson 289)

The novelist clearly inscribes herself in history and in the long tradition of various remakes and rewritings through her artistic originality, which differentiates her work from the simple commodities with a very transitory existence.

The Gap of Time
In Jeanette Winterson's novel the dominant concern with time is represented in the narrative through the actions and experiences of the characters. One of the novel's central narratological methods, the "gap of time" delivers a movement in time performed by the text itself. *The Gap of Time* is set on several interwoven time levels; the first level, narrated in the novel's section "The Original", refers to Shakespearean characters' personal and political relationships, which, as a result of love and jealousy, lead to separation and hostility between Leontes and Polyxenes, Hermione's transformation into a stone statue, the loss of Perdita, and eventually the death of young Mamillius. The caused traumatic temporal and emotional gap brings all characters involved in this vortex to a second level of time, sixteen years later, with Perdita as a young woman in love with Florizel, King Polyxenes's son, the lovers' flight to Sicilia due to Polyxenes's rage, the discovery of Perdita's identity as King Leontes's long lost daughter, the union of lovers, Hermione's coming alive for reunion with Perdita, and, eventually, everyone's reconciliation. The third time level is set by the actions of Winterson's characters, four hundred years later, in a manner that closely repeats Shakespeare's plot structure but with the addition of an important variation of a twisted time. Winterson chooses to begin "The Cover Version" with Shep's finding of Perdita in New Bohemia, which establishes the narrative's third time level, preceded by certain events in London. There, Leo is struck by sudden jealousy and rage caused by his belief that Xeno was having an affair with his pregnant wife MiMi, which ends up in his attempt to run Xeno over in the parking garage; Leo's rape of MiMi results in Perdita's prenatal birth and, eventually, Milo's accidental death. The fourth time level goes far back into the past revealing Leo and Xeno's coming of age experience of love and friendship which is curbed by an unfortunate bike accident. The fifth level of time is again retrospective, depicting the moment in the past when Leo meets MiMi in Paris and falls in love with her. The sixth time level is again in the past but set a year later after Leo's falling in love with MiMi, when he sent Xeno to Paris to woo MiMi into marriage with Leo. The seventh level of time, eighteen years later from the events of Perdita's birth and her being sent away

by Leo and her eventual loss, reveals Perdita, a young woman brought up by her loving adoptive family, now in love with Zel, Xeno's son. Upon their encounter, Perdita reveals her true identity, after which they all go to London where everything began, and later meet Leo and MiMi, the events of the narrative concluding with a concert attended by everyone.

Within these numerous time levels, there can be noticed a linearity of time, which is related to the actions of Shakespeare's characters narrated in "The Original" part. Conversely, the time levels which are presented in Winterson's "The Cover Version" switch backwards and forwards in twists and turns that disrupt the uniform and linear movement of time, in a manner reminiscent of Henri Bergson's notion of time.

Bergson's view on time departs from the philosophical positivistic vision of the clock time which results in the development of a system of temporal measurement which is based on the uniform motion of stable bodies in nature. Time, as envisaged by this system, turns into an objective and neutral series of quantitative units which are independent of human experience, and in which the objects of observation exist only as discrete special counters whose actions can be measured and predicted by their uniform motion to each other. This perception of time reduces all motions which involve change to the kinetics of a mechanism. This façade of stability of the universe where everything can be measured, controlled, or exploited may be harmless when applied scientifically to "dead", "solid" objects. However, when the scientific intelligence shifts from objects to human consciousness, it delivers a serious distortion of reality.

Bergson suggests a new visualisation of time, which turns and twists backwards and forwards and which, in its association with the "vital impulse", stands outside the clock time conception. Bergson explains that "[the] essence of time is that it goes by; time already gone by is the past, and we call the present the instant in which it goes by" (*Creative Evolution* 177). Hence, time is never independent from the human being, because in its relation with human consciousness, it becomes identical with qualitative human time, which Bergson calls duration (*durée reelle*); the latter is not characterised by the "simultaneity" of the external world of objects, but by a process, by a continuous and interpenetrating flow. The philosopher questions "What is duration within us? A qualitative multicity, within likeness to number; an organic evolution which is yet not an increasing quantity; a pure heterogeneity within which there are no distinct qualities. In a word, the moments of inner duration are not external to one another" (Bergson, *Time* 226). Consciousness is never pliable to scientific analysis and measurement since the qualitative multiplicity (reality) is incommunicable. The human being experiences the states of consciousness in a continuous, indivisible and interpenetrated manner; they constitute a succession which is not an addition and does not culminate in

a sum (*Time* 79). Bergson perceives the depiction of the physical events which involve movement and interdependence: "We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought" (*Time* 101).

Bergson understands physical time as duration which is depicted by a being who "was ever the same and ever changing" (*Time* 101), in an uninterrupted extension of a past into a present which is perceived as a "virtual qualitative multiplicity", lived through heterogeneous feelings like the desire for the lost love and nostalgia for the traces of love, which emerge from past to present through the feeling of pity. Paula Marchesini explains that, for Bergson, duration "is an agent of invention and novelty"; it equals to invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new (144). Bergson considers that this facet of duration can be endorsed by the evolution of the living species through time; he believes that "the evolution of life [is] an intrinsically creative process, one that is constantly bringing about novelty and is thus unforeseeable" (Marchesini 144). Hence, each level of time always accommodates everything which is necessary for the emergence of new living species in the upcoming stage and with the rise of the new species, the reassemblage and adaptation of materials occur only through the externally driven workings of the natural selection.

Bergson's view on time as duration in its relation to the creative evolution is recognizable in the background of Winterson's variations on the representation of time and self-consciousness especially as it is interwoven with the act of creation. Duration may be viewed as a creative force which sustains the novelist's intellectual reflection on the act of writing or the creation of a work of art. Winterson's novel as a whole traverses through various gaps of time, entering new stages of time as a kind of intense process by which the characters become surrogates of the novelist who reflects on the literary and artistic ideal which is embodied in the works whose geneses are revealed in various hypostases: as the novel itself, as a song, and as an artistic videogame. The novelist, however, does not embark on her narrative journey determined to reveal some truths which are usually depicted through the exaltation of the intellect. Rather, Winterson places value on the exploration of senses in order to perceive various possible "essences" which can be recovered from the lost time of the past. But since the intensity of impressions, of perceptions of duration as virtual qualitative multiplicities are rather rare, even unique in themselves, the creative act, in order to sustain the existence of a work of art, engages frequently in the reflections of the intellect that enrich the artistic product. Winterson's style of writing clearly employs rigorous intellectual activity, preferring "fixation" and "expression" to any form of "abstraction".

This ideal of writing supposes a process of detachment from a private experience, and the juxtaposition of some experiences with a continuous, indivisible and interpenetrated metaphor or analogy which attains a universal significance. This results in the representation of an artistic process in its relation to time both in its explicit subject matter and in its formal technique.

Winterson employs various dimensions in her treatment of relations between time, self and creative act through some explicit philosophical reflections revealed in the narrative, through the workings of memory which justify those reflections, as well as through the narrative techniques by which the conveyance of the virtual qualitative multiplicity is transformed into the metaphor of creation of various works of art which attempt to recover the "lost" time. Drawing on Otto Rank's idea of artistic productivity, creativity, neurosis and the longing for immortality, Winterson employs the plot of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* and extends the characters' love, longing, jealousy, and neurosis to convey a conceit which surprises the reader by its unexpected analogy. Winterson dwells on the love triangle, homoerotic, heteroerotic, and on Oedipus conflict images to create a metaphor for the artist's need to move forward during the process of individuation in order to shape and structure the perceptions of the self, which leads to a creative impulse, manifested through a neurotic conflict, a desire to eternalize the soul and to replace that what has been lost. The Oedipus complex, according to Rank, is one of many possible neurotic conflicts which are creatively appropriated by the artist as an attempt to overcome the childhood trauma. The "inhibitive family ties (...) manifested as erotic desire (towards mother and sister)" (Rank 65) become immersed into the creative impulse, are externalized by it, and, therefore, detached from the creative individual. It is a process envisaged in Winterson's novel in Leo's and Xeno's desire for MiMi, or the reciprocal desire of Leo and Xeno, which is strengthened by the image of the love triangle between the lyric I, the "Dark Lady", and the "golden boy" of Shakespeare's sonnets. The artist's response to Oedipal conflict represents a creative and "deliberate affirmation of existence forced on us by fate" (Rank 65). Winterson's characters are apparently enmeshed in circumstances of fate that have determined Leo's, Xeno's, MiMi's, and Perdita's separation from the mother. But if all of them are incapable of altering this traumatic fate, they can still detach themselves from that trauma by their attempt to channel their pain and transform it into creative productivity or art. The detachment produced by the "separation anxiety" is one of possible neurosis which stimulates the artistic production, which is an underlying source of the creative impulse. Rank explains that "we fail to see how the sexual urge, which is designed to primarily preserve the race, should produce even the most primitive ornamentation, still less a higher art form" (84).

Winterson sets the origins of the neurotic conflict in the characters' separation from the mother, which reverberates in the narrative in various hypostases for each character, but mostly developed through the moment of the unfortunate bike accident which causes the rupture between the adolescents Leo and Xeno. This fateful instant functions like a black day in time: it marks the death of innocence and joy, in a way that represents the death of an "ideal" self, a traumatic moment in time which develops later into the urge to recuperate the "loss" through its search for its material or emotional analogies found in art, love, and friendship. However, this quest represents only a surrogate for the true search, the one which is capable of liberating from within the self the "lost" ideal self, which has the potentiality of the emergence of the "artist" from within the self. Therefore, this quest is set primarily to recover the "lost" ideal self which dissipated during that black day in the past and the only opportunity to do it is to recreate it anew in an artistic act. The true artist dwells in an individualized universe of suffering, characterised by the ambivalent coexistence of sacred and profane, of the vice and virtue of a genius, a coexistence which can be delivered in a work of art. The allegory of adultery, same-sex desire, incest and many other vices is represented in Winterson's characters' love triangle, which in fact reveals deepest neurosis fears that are grounded in the "absence", a form of anxiety corresponding to the separation from the beloved, which forms the separation anxiety for every love affair in *The Gap of Time*. The primacy of the beloved's absence over her presence is represented in another black day in the history of characters, manifested in Leo's attempt to kill Xeno, MiMi's rape, Milo's death, and Perdita's loss. The released pain from this appalling day induces the inward turn into the self for Leo, Xeno, and MiMi; such turn evolves into a magnanimous struggle for each of them to liberate from within the creative self as the only possibility of eternalizing that which was lost and can justify their sacrifices for the sake of art. Winterson makes an explicit reference to the gratification of forever in art, which emerges as an act of liberation from the subjugation to time: "And time, that sets all limits, offers our one chance at freedom from limits. We were not trapped after all. Time can be redeemed. That which is lost is found..." (Winterson 288).

The ingenuity of the novelist goes further with her novel's display of the analogy between seven stages of time and seven musical notes set on an octave, which is an interval of a qualitative acoustic relationship. Even though the octave has seven notes, Do Re Mi Fa So La Si, the repeated Do which begins a new octave is never similar; it differs in strength, variations and modes. The perfect octave is the interval between one musical pitch and another, which emerges with double force and intensity. Winterson explicitly makes the correlation with music through her choice of "cover" and "interval" as the titles of some parts in her novel, but also through MiMi. MiMi is a singer

and a song artist whose artistic acts are associated with "The Gap of Time" (Winterson 41) and whose inner experiences related to her black moments in the past reverberate through time and self, and culminate in the production of the artistic song titled "Perdita", interpreted by the artist MiMi at the charity concert at the end of the narrative. Music does not produce ideas; it rather seeks to affect the listener in that it may stimulate ideas in the one who listens. A fleeting, evanescent experience with various temporal dimensions, in its attempt to create an "essence" music functions as mode of liberation from the contingencies of time; the "lost" time is eternalized by the song "Perdita", enacted by "The Gap of Time" and created by MiMi, a surrogate of the novelist. MiMi presents the experience of duration by revealing the picture of memory, captured forever in its motion of the musical notes on the octave, which is triggered and intensified by the recollection of the painful past, thus attaining a conservation of the past in the work of art which will eventually prolong its existence into the future.

Winterson is extremely resourceful in depicting another opportunity to "cover" the "gap of time" through the variation on the creative act in the mode of videogame design. This new artistic endeavour is expressed by Xeno when he confesses to MiMi:

> 'I want to invent a game that's like a bookshop (...) Layers, levels, poetry, as well as plot. A chance to get lost and to find yourself again. Would you work with me on that? I need a woman' (...) I'll make time circular – like the Mayan calendar, each level of the game will be a time frame – specific but porous, so you may be observed from another level – and you may be aware of another level. It may be that you can operate simultaneously on different levels – I don't know yet. I know it's about what's missing. (Winterson 61-62)

What emerges from Xeno's artistic project is the emphasis made on action, on moving through time, juxtaposing the various stages of time, observing each level's specificity, but also raising awareness to each layer's permeability and revealing a fluidity of meanings which can develop in relation to "[l]ayers, levels, poetry, as well as plot". Each stage of time imagined by Xeno may seem to contain what is needed in next stage of creation; what is necessary for him right now is a "woman" who can trigger the search of delight, and from whom there will be an inevitable "separation" due to the envisaged circular time in videogame. This separation will prompt the quester's inward turn, which can lead to an epic struggle to liberate from within the self the creative impulse able to eternize the "mother"/"woman" and to justify her sacrifice to art, the immortal embrace between mother-son, man-woman attained only virtually in the realm of art. Unsurprisingly, his great expectations in art emerge only after

"that" frightful moment in the past, the rupture from MiMi and Leo, and the loss of Perdita, which is double in intensity when compared to the bike accident from their adolescence. Winterson, through Xeno's artistic design, conveys the ways in which memory becomes utilized for the present action. Like in the case of Bergson's memory, Xeno's utilization of past experiences to create present action leads to an automatic setting in motion of a mechanism which may become adapted to the circumstances, but it should also engage an effort of the mind which searches in the past the "moments" which can usefully be applied in the present.

Xeno's artistic videogame, which makes him extremely rich and famous, is inspired by a story told by MiMi about the French poet Gérard de Nerval's dream of the fallen angel, which Nerval had before committing suicide. Xeno designs a sophisticated concept which displays a battle between Dark Angels and Resistance, aiming at finding "the most important thing in the world", which is believed to be a lost baby. The space of the game is MiMi's apartment in Paris, the place of her seclusion, used by Leo and Xeno to keep track of each other and also recreate the fateful events which took place eighteen years ago. Imprisoned in that moment of the past, they all become surrogates for the ideal self, in the videogame – avatars – in their quest for their "loss". It is the only manner in which they can keep contact, and, as Carney explains, "within the landscape of the game, Xeno and Leo are both able to fully express the trauma they experience but that catharsis can only occur in the surreal confines of a virtual world" (91). This recollection memory is directed towards the action of finding "the most important thing in the world", believed to be the lost Perdita, but in the various degrees of *signifiace*, it may represent their quest for the "ideal" self, an essence, or the artist awaiting to be liberated by turning back to the past and by attempting to manipulate time: "At any point in the game you can deepfreeze an action, an event, a happening, and return to it later – because, perhaps, you can make it unhappen. I suppose that's what I wanted to do, make things unhappen" (Winterson 206). Xeno expresses the creator's desire to repeat the past in the present, to manipulate it, like in Leo's favourite Superman movie, where the hero bends the time and makes the painful moment unhappen. But, as Bergson explains, despite the conscious effort of the human, "repetition is (…) possible only in the abstract" (*Creative Evolution* 52); when it is excluded from the real time, it can be experienced only on the virtual level, like in a videogame which is called "The Gap of Time".

The fluidity of Winterson's novel *The Gap of Time* is revealed through various layers of artistic ingenuity, represented by music, videogame design, and fiction writing. The mutability is also emphasised by the ways in which the novelist discloses various levels of time and different creative acts which emerge as "gaps" as a result of juxtaposition, contrast, comparison of literary

and artistic heritage and by the ways the creative impulse and imagination of the novelist work to deliver some possible "covers" in order to mediate between these "gaps". Winterson creates within her narrative an artistic quest for the lost time by establishing an intertextual connection with Marcel Proust's *In Search of the Lost Time* (1927), which explores how the experiences of memory hold the secret key to unlock the creative process, and by creating a self-reflexive meditation on the act of writing fiction in relation to the past heritage. In this search for what is "lost", in terms of time and artistic tradition, Winterson is confronted inevitably with the problem of repetition, since an adaptation always delivers something which was experienced and expressed before, but also searches for the depth and richness of the "lost" past to be "found" in the renewal promised by an adaptation. In other words, the novelist seeks to release or relive the pleasure of finding the past in the present creative act, by restoring the "essence" which resists the ephemeral nature of time, giving instead permanence to it in the newly created act.

In the manner of the avatars in Xeno's videogame or of the traveller of Autolycus's Time Machine (Winterson 166), the novelist should "get in the car" and traverse all levels of time, go back to the past, "find" and "save" it. The intertextual connections to the movie *Back to the Future* and especially to the explicit words by William Faulkner "*The past is not dead. It's not even past*" (Winterson 166) convey the intention of the novelist to recover the past moment by immobilizing it in the new narrative of adaptation. Since the novel seeks to express the essence of the past for the second time, Winterson has an opportunity to reflect on those things which are no more, on the fact that nothing has the power to survive eternally, unless it is written and permanent, what dies and what is born. The numerous time levels which are traversed in the novel are never conveyed in a linear manner, the temporal dimension is delivered in a backward and forward movement through the constant presence of the past in the characters' memories. The depiction of some repeated events create the impression of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence which is sustained by words at the beginning of "The Cover Version":

> I saw the strangest sight tonight (…) I was on my way home when the weather broke in two and the rain came down like ice – it was ice - hailstones the size of golf balls and hard as a ball of elastic. The street had all the heat of the day, of the week, of the month, of the season. When the hail hit the ground, it was like the weather was coming up from the street instead of down from the sky. (Winterson 5)

Winterson recreates the Apocalypse imagery through references to flood, fire and ice, an outstanding moment that stops the passage of time by conveying an instant of Bergson's real duration, "which gnaws on things and, leaves on them

the mark of its tooth" (*Creative Evolution* 52). Winterson starts "The Cover Version" through the analogy to the end of the world, a unique experience which marks the "death" but also the "salvation" in one exceptional twist. A different layer of *signifiance* is elaborated through the analogy between the death of Shep's wife, relived through Shep's memory of this fateful event, and the "finding" of Perdita, the baby who is "as light as a star" (Winterson 9), an event through which Shep hopes to find his redemption and his salvation, respectively. This analogy is intensified by the allusions to Creation and Resurrection, made in the same chapter, and by the connection to the novelist's quest for what is "lost" to be "found" in the novelist's present act of creation. The past, which is already gone, "lost", or "dead", can be delivered into a present, only perceived by Shep as a "virtual qualitative multiplicity", which he can experience through such heterogeneous feelings like nostalgia for the lost love of his wife or the desire to recover the lost love through the "found baby". Pondering on his wife's death, Shep contemplates what "no longer exists", but he understands that his "mind is full of her" and by extending his reflection upon the world he lives in, he discovers the shouting "EVERYTHING MUST GO" (Winterson 13). What is left of his wife, his love, his hopes is "[n]othing in between us now", his rage and agony for the loss resulting in "Nothing? Then the sky is nothing and the earth is nothing and your body is nothing and our lovemaking is nothing…", returning once again with "EVERYTHING MUST GO" (Winterson 14).

The pain which emerges from the knowledge that "nothing" has the power to survive triggers the acknowledgement that if this private experience becomes general, it can be grasped as both new and as having occurred before. In the midst of transience, with the perception of the weight of perishability, the transformation of a particular experience can be attained in the distinctive universality of art. Therefore, Winterson reflects on the "Nothing", which is the "key word of [Shakespeare's] play" (Winterson 287) by repeating Leontes's demented speech on his wife's supposed adultery, words which echo Shep's earlier agony over "nothing":

> Is whispering nothing?
> Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
> Kissing with inside lip? (…)
> The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
> My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings
> If this be nothing. (Winterson 287-8)

The reiteration of this "nothing" achieves a multi-layered significance, since as a "key word" in music, the repeated note is double in intensity and it refers to Leontes's despair over the possibility of betrayal; it also refers to Shep's

desolation over the loss of love. Both connotations gain a universalizing nihilism of all dreams, desires, hopes, may be reduced to nothing. But, concomitantly, this reiteration, through the early analogy with the novelist's creative plight, reveals the adaptor's agony and fear that the hope and desire for future immortality may turn to "nothing". It is the fear that if the vital idea reflected in this work will fail to make the reader desire it, everything becomes "nothing". This repetition, along with many other repetitive instances in the narrative, conveys the imagery of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence not simply through the presence of the idea of a writer's desire to live on in the book, but especially through the idea of immortality, which is envisaged by the great philosopher in a metaphor of movement:

> If one now goes onto consider that, not only a book, but every action performed by a human being, becomes in some way the cause of other actions, decisions, thoughts, that everything that happens is inextricably knotted to everything that will happen, one comes to recognize the existence of an actual *immortality*, that of motion. (Nietzsche 97)

This association of immortality to motion becomes extremely intriguing since Winterson's entire novel envisages this idea in terms of motion through the gaps of time, fluidity of genre, and through the movement from one art to another, revealing the novelist's idea that the eternity is not present in the immobility of the past monuments of art and literary heritage but in the movement itself. As with Nietzsche's famous metaphor of eternity as paralyzing a transient thing in the viscosity of amber, Winterson's return with her adaptation, as a moving transient thing, can be "frozen" in the amber of a song, or a videogame, or the narrative matrix of her novel, which is a "cover" for many possible "gaps".

Conclusion

Jeanette Winterson's novel *The Gap of Time* engages into a self-reflexive meditation on the creative act, in general, and the act of writing fiction, in particular, releasing or reliving the pleasure in finding the past in the present, latently scattering this concern through various layers of her narrative and in different artistic manifestations, but the full awareness of the reader concerning this purpose is revealed mostly in the concluding reflections at the end of the novel. Yearning to find an "original" manner to reveal significant philosophical themes which may release the novelist's creative impulse, the narrator believes that the search may be successful in the mysterious pleasures triggered by memory, perceived as duration, and manifested in various works of art in which one finds a chance to get lost and to find oneself again. This novel is a work of fiction in which the reconstruction of the past within the vitality of

present encounters the finality of the past, but through the idea of duration, which preserves the past in a perpetual memory, as well as through the idea of amber of consciousness in which this past may reverberate, it delivers the fluidity and permeability of the past in present and, since the past is also located within the narrative, this past, even though is imperfect, gains perfection in the interplay between creation and discovery, literature and life, knowledge and action, in which one ought to regain the "lost" time together with the acquiring of the knowledge of separating from it.

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