

**From the Imaginary in Lacan to the Material in Malabou: The Gaze as the Catalyst in
Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit***

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Pre-print Version

Submission Date: April 2025

Publication Date:

Abstract

The present paper intends to closely explore Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) in terms of Catherine Malabou's concepts of the material in alterity without transcendence, plasticity, and trans-subjection. The significance of the other in the process of identity formation would be illustrated in the novel, and the other as Catherine Malabou's notion of alterity without transcendence would be lime lighted as the other in the self in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Unlike Jacques Lacan, Malabou believes that 'the material' plays a substantial role in the notion of the other. The attempt would be spotlighting the gaze as both the producer and product of the other which triggers the mutability of identity. In other words, the process by which the main character identifies herself as a subject would be argued. Moreover,

desiring the other or craving for the desire per se would be expounded as the process toward trans-subjection. Due to the intrinsic plasticity of love, lust, gender, body, and femininity, Jeanette is able to transform her destructive plasticity into inconsistent trans-subjection. That is to say, the present study would attempt to express the materiality of identity formation in Jeanette through the lens of Catherine Malabou while it endeavors to present the way Jacques Lacan's triad lacks the materiality.

Key Words: Alterity without Transcendence, Destructive Plasticity, The Material, Plasticity, Trans-Subjection.

1. Introduction

Jeanette Winterson is a highly praised British writer known for her audacious narrative style, innovative storytelling, and exploration of themes like identity, gender, and sexuality. Her literary works often challenge conventional boundaries, mingling elements of fiction, autobiography, and myth. Winterson first gained extensive recognition with her debut novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), a semi-autobiographical tale about growing up in a strict religious environment and noticing her sexuality. Her work is marked by a lyrical, often poetic prose and a deep philosophical searching of love, time, and selfhood. Over the years, Winterson has built a reputation as a daring voice in contemporary literature, known for engaging in complex themes with wit, intelligence, and emotional depth.

Many of her novels, such as *The Passion* (1987) and *Written on the Body* (1992), defy traditional narrative forms, and she recurrently uses fantastical elements to explore human experience. Winterson's writing delves into the fluidity of gender and the transformative power of love, inspiring readers to rethink static notions of identity. Her bold literary experimentation and ability to intertwine themes of existential inquiry have earned her numerous honors. Beyond fiction, Winterson is also a renowned essayist and public intellectual, offering stimulating insights on art, politics, and society. Through her diverse works, she has made a long-lasting impact on both modern British literature and global researches about gender and identity.

2. Significance of the Study and Research Questions

A comparative study of Jacques Lacan and Catherine Malabou has not been provided the way this research aims to meticulously discuss. The significance of this study would be in lighting how Malabou's notion of the materiality could transform Lacanian concepts of desire, the other, and identity formation. It also paves the ground for the possibility of a new perspective on not only identity formation and consciousness but also the unconscious. In other words, regarding Malabou's notion of the materiality in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson, the research will examine how identity is not merely repressed or restructured; yet, materially reshaped.

The research questions of the present study would be whether Catherine Malabou's framework of the materiality transforms the paradigms of desire and the other in Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Moreover, the way the outer gaze evolves into the inner gaze would be spotlighted. The reason why the clash between the self and the inner gaze ends up into trans-subjection could be investigated, as well. Furthermore, the dissimilarity between Malabou's definition of trauma (destructive plasticity) and the model of trauma by Lacan (rupture in the Symbolic) could be expressed in Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Another question would refer to explaining how gaze could be both the producer and the product of the other and in what ways they contrast in this novel.

The present paper first provides the literature review on *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Then, the Malabouian critical concepts of the material, alterity without transcendence, destructive plasticity, plasticity, and trans-subjection shall be presented. The Material by Catherine Malabou and The Mirror Stage by Lacan would be juxtaposed. The aim would be the presentation of the way each thinker conceptualizes the formation of subjectivity in the process of subjectivation. Consequently, the core section of the study would be elaborated. It would be expressed that while Lacan's model is rooted in the Imaginary, Malabou insists on the formative and plastic power of materiality itself. Finally, the findings of the research would be addressed in the concluding section. This comparison further allows for a critical reflection on the philosophical and political stakes of embodiment, presence, transformation, and subjectivation in contemporary theory.

3. Literature Review

There have been numerous scholarly articles on Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*; yet, it has never been explored through Catherine Malabou's philosophical perspective on plasticity. Sinem Oruc in "Invasion of The Symbolic by The Semiotic in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*: A Kristevan Analysis" argues how the symbolic could be disturbed by the semiotic regarding Kristeva's 'stabat mater' since the symbolic and the semiotic can coexist. She elaborates that "As Kristeva suggests the symbolic and the semiotic cannot be separated from each other easily, and one does not begin at the expense of the other" (2022, 2015). Oruc clarifies that by confirming of the existence of orange demon and learning to live with it, Jeanette indicates the coexistence of the family and the church as two institutions close to the realm of mother.

Mara Reisman in "Integrating Fantasy and Reality in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*" expresses the fact that how authority could be granted and maintained and adds that "by narratively juxtaposing reality (Jeanette's history) with fairy tales and "fantastic" spaces, Winterson complicates the "truth" of each setting, disrupts the binary imperative, and reveals the spaces where change can occur" (2011, 11). She elaborates that Winterson recurrently constructs, deconstructs, and reconstructs meaning and identity in this novel.

Gillian Alban in *The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Petrifying, Maternal and Redemptive* asserts that Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* "offers an alternative perspective through piquant narratives and tales that probe the assumptions of gender" (2017, 12). She enlightens the issue that Winterson's spectacular narration could be an emblem of 'écriture feminine' (women's writing) and the combination of words in her texts shies away with the grammatical rules. Alban investigates the symbolic presence of Medusa figure as both a destructive and redemptive maternal archetype.

Zaydun Al-Shara in "Deconstructing Religion in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*: A Metacritical Study" demonstrates the way Winterson "uses her narrative to deconstruct religious beliefs and stories in order to open new possibilities of interpretations to replace these religious references" (2015, 238). He admires Winterson's heteroglot texts and argues the way her works benefit from multi-voicedness and dialogism. He interrogates the

construction of religious authority in the novel, highlighting how Winterson subverts doctrinal rigidity via narrative fragmentation and irony.

Ebru Ceker in “The Representation of Evangelical Society in Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*” elaborates on the point that this novel could reveal the “contrast between the fictional world of the novel and the non-fictional world of members of a sect of Christianity” (2016, 56). Juxtaposing fictional and non-fictional contexts related to Winterson’s works, Ceker mentions that her objective standpoint represented in her novels could be the manifestation of polyphony which serves as reversing the values of Evangelic society.

Emrah Atasoy in “Conflict between the Individual and Society in Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*” believes that “Through the portrayal of her transition into adulthood, the novel touches on numerous challenging issues such as gender, identity, and the reliability of the mainstream patriarchal discourse” (2021, 1). Discussing the main character’s transformation, Atasoy claims that she could be seen as a rebel in a monolingual society.

4. Theoretical Framework: Critical Concepts

Catherine Malabou’s works, particularly her ideas on destructive plasticity (trauma), plasticity, and alterity without transcendence challenges traditional accounts of identity. In Malabou’s view plasticity is a dynamic process of creation and destruction and underscores the capacity of form to take shape, transform, and even break. Derived from the Greek ‘Plassein’, plasticity resists the dichotomy between durability and alteration, offering a model that integrates both continuity and rupture (Malabou, 2008, 5). Catherine Malabou’s core argument highlights how neurobiology has introduced a fresh perspective on subjectivity. Drawing on the concept of plasticity from neurologists, Malabou notes that she first encountered ‘another plasticity’—a philosophical understanding—in Hegel’s classification of the subject during the process of subjectivation. She suggests that Hegel’s concept of modern human subjectivity is rooted in divine subjectivity. In *The Future of Hegel*, Malabou claims that, in Hegel’s view, the process of representation “seals into one the divine kenosis and the kenosis of the transcendental subject” (Malabou, 2005,112).. Expanding on divine alienation as a form of temporalization, Malabou argues that “each persona consists of a progressive alienation that is not a manifestation of a lack but the appearance of a new ontological guise of time” (2005, 113). By emphasizing

temporalization as the linear progression of events, including incarnation, Malabou provides an innovative interpretation of Hegel's concept of the divine subject, noting that "God envisages himself as a moment" (2005, 119)—a crucial phase to be experienced. Aligning human subjectivity with divine kenotic alienation, Hegel's interpretation of Christianity embeds plasticity at the heart of the human subject's definition.

Considering the fact that "the plasticity of identity and the plasticity of time could be amalgamated" (Niknezhadferdos & Sadjadi, 2021, 135), it could be stated that time is plasticity in its core. As Clayton Crockett mentions in the foreword of *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, the subject views himself as a moment in time, a manifestation of temporalization, reaching his essence in history even as it culminates. Temporal plasticity propels the dialectic forward and beyond itself, even as it negates itself in the process (Crockett, 2010, p. xii). In simple words, time is constantly changing and is flexible while drives the process of development and change (dialectic) and "Temporality as absolute plasticity would be demonstrated while trans-subjectivation and plasticity would be considered as the two faces of a coin" (Niknezhadferdos & Sadjadi, 2024, 14). However, as time moves forward, it transforms or undoes what has happened before, expressing that progress happens via a cycle of destruction and creation. In uniting neurology with Hegelian philosophy, Malabou clarifies that the differences between the two are not fundamental since plasticity in both systems signifies a form of organization. In Malabou's view, plasticity in the system of absolute knowledge/subjectivity and the nervous system performs the same function, providing identical being and structure.

Malabou's notion of destructive plasticity (trauma), takes transformation a step further by focusing on moments of rupture, when something irreversibly changes or breaks down. In these very moments identity can shatter, and the other can emerge not as a distant figure but as a force of disruption within our lives. Malabou instead suggests that our relationship with the other is grounded in shared fragility and the potential for profound change. In *Ontology of the Accident*, Catherine Malabou re-examines trauma through a neuroscientific lens, proposing that the transformation of identity under extreme pressure begins in the brain, with its consequences becoming evident later. She posits that "destructive plasticity enables the appearance or formation of alterity where the other is absolutely lacking" (Malabou, 2012, 11), and explains that "the flight identity forged by destructive plasticity flees itself first and foremost" (2012, 12). Malabou highlights the philosophical aspect of trauma, arguing that "what destructive plasticity

invites us to consider is the suffering caused by an absence of suffering, in the emergence of a new form of being, a stranger to the one before” (2012, 18). She elaborates her unique concept of trauma as destructive plasticity, claiming that “even if the destructive and disorganizing explosive power is present virtually in each of us, ready to manifest itself, to take body or self-actualize at any moment, it has never received a name in any field whatsoever” (2012, 5). Furthermore, Malabou links coldness and indifference to “characteristics of destructive plasticity, of this power of change without redemption, without teleology, without any meaning other than strangeness” (2012, 24). In Malabou’s view, trauma or destructive plasticity denotes the metamorphosis or mutation of the body into a wholly new form, resulting in an identity distinct from its former self. While destructive plasticity is deep down a type of plasticity, Malabou insists on labeling it as destructive plasticity owing to the fact that unlike the constructive plasticity which leads to growth, adaptation, and reformation, destructive plasticity revolves around rupture, loss, and irreversible change.

Malabou’s idea of alterity without transcendence rejects the concept of the other as an entity unreachable or beyond us. Instead, she believes that otherness is deeply embedded in one’s everyday experiences and transformations. Catherine Malabou, in her exploration of trauma as destructive plasticity, argues that alterity—the experience of otherness—can emerge from within destructive plasticity, even in the absence of an external ‘other’. In this view, alterity in trauma refers primarily to becoming other to oneself, rather than encountering the other outside one’s being. Malabou suggests that the condition of plasticity in existence involves “experiencing otherness starting with the defeat of any alterity of pure transcendence without the possibility of an exit” (Malabou, 2010, 70). In simpler terms, her concept of plasticity describes a realm in which breaking free from oneself or transcending seems impossible. Rejecting the idea of transcendence, Malabou proposes that alterity is expressed within plasticity. She contrasts this with Levinas’ view, in which alterity occurs outside oneself, in a metaphysical space; by contrast, Malabou asserts that in plasticity, the other is not encountered as someone external. Malabou emphasizes that trauma creates a new self, with the other which exists within the self. She explains that, “the other of the self is within the self; but in trauma, it is the self, not the other, that cannot be encountered. The self is what is missing, with no possibility of reflecting back” (2010, 141). Highlighting the transformative power of trauma, Malabou describes how a traumatic event “invents its subject. The past of the traumatized person changes, becoming a

different past, or in some cases is simply destroyed or forgotten” (2010, 152). Although the self may seem unable to transcend the boundaries of being, Malabou argues that this absence of transcendence is what drives transformation and does not negate the presence of alterity.

In reflecting on essence, Malabou suggests that through its essence, something can perceive itself as foreign. Alterity, therefore, is the strangeness within the self, not something beyond or external. Defining alterity as an unexplored dimension of self-identity, Malabou dismisses the idea of transcendental alterity and posits that transformation itself is the origin of otherness. She explains that the plasticity of existence, characterized by the impossibility of an exit, means that alterity can be found wherever change or metamorphosis occurs. It distinguishes Malabou’s view from the other philosophers when she expresses that alterity is not grounded in a transcendent realm yet the ‘materiality’ of being.

In *A Conversation with Catherine Malabou*, Malabou discusses trans-subjection, explaining that the subject “trans-subjects itself constantly” (Malabou, 2008, 4). However, she clarifies that “trans-subjection does not mean that you become different from what you used to be” (2008, 5). She outlines that trans-subjection involves the difficulty of fully absorbing the other’s diversity. Malabou highlights the internal space between two forms of self and describes trans-subjection as the experience of opposing forms of the self within oneself. She characterizes this process as an inward journey, suggesting that plasticity and trans-subjection might be two facets of the same concept. Consequently, her idea of a plastic self has political and emancipatory implications, as it allows the subject to transform its mode of being. In *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, Malabou connects the ideas of subjectivity and plasticity, asserting that “between the upsurge and the explosion of form, subjectivity issues the plastic challenge” (2008, 82). In this sense, she argues that the journey from one self to another is shaped by transformation, which she refers to as trans-subjection. Malabou believes that ‘the material’ plays a substantial role in plasticity and she defines the material not merely a substance but the potentiality and formation per se.

5. Methodology

This study is library-based and follows a descriptive-analytical method. The data (quotations) have been collected from *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson, scholarly articles, and books. First, the theoretical foundations and key concepts related to the

topic were reviewed to establish the theoretical framework. Then, through the analysis of the selected texts, the research aims to examine the proposed hypotheses.

6. Investigating *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*: A Malabouean Reading

6.1. Seeing Through the Self: From the External Gaze to the Alterity without Transcendence

The present section aims to meticulously analyze Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* via Catherine Malabou's notions of alterity without transcendence, plasticity, and trans-subjection. The process of Jeanette's trans-subjection would be illuminated through the Malabouean concept of plasticity and the presence of plasticity within the other or the gaze of the other would be elaborated. The affinity of alterity without transcendence and the gaze of the other as the catalyst in the procedure of identity formation would be expounded in the novel. Moreover, gaze of the other as presence in the nucleus of absence or the absence in the core of presence would delineate Malabou's conceptualization of plasticity as concomitant giving and receiving. Jeanette's transition from destructive plasticity to her emancipatory trans-subjection would be explicated as the liberating aspect of plasticity.

Jeanette as the teenage character of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* struggles with gaining her identity through recognizing her sexual orientation. Yet, she encounters with feelings, emotions, and thoughts which are not definable for her. In her quest to achieve self-realization, Jeanette finds herself spending days after days gazing at Melanie while she is not aware of Jeanette's presence. In the absence of language, when Jeanette does not communicate with Melanie, Jeanette's presence for Melanie is absent. This absence brings about the condition in which Jeanette discovers herself as an open space which plays the role of watching and being watched by herself at the same time.

Commencing with the plasticity of gaze, it could be asserted that gaze serves as the manifestation of the other and the self concurrently. Being infatuated with Melanie, Jeanette endeavors to approach her; yet, the mere thing she is capable of performing appears to be 'watching.' "Week after week I went back there, just to watch" (Winterson, 1985, 65). Considering 'observation of the other' as concomitantly possessing and not possessing the other, it could be delineated that the boundaries of I and the other become gradually blurring. The act of

staring per se spotlights the plasticity of presence and hence the plasticity of being. In other words, 'gaze' plays the role of presence of the other in the 'I' while in fact it is merely the consequences of the absence of the other which produces the gaze. It means that gaze occurs when the person being stared at is passive, unaware, and absent. Gazing is not a communication, it takes place when there is a type of absence in the object of watching. Expressing 'gaze' profoundly, Jeanette narrates the time when she encounters with the absolute absence of the other while the act of staring happens to be unattainable.

Then one week she wasn't there anymore. There was nothing I could do but stare and stare at the whelks [...] But they have a strong sense of personal dignity. Even lying face down in a tray of vinegar, there is something noble about a whelk. Which cannot be said for everybody" (Winterson, 1985, 65).

Whelks, similar to the gaze, are supreme emblems of absence/ presence at the same time. While they could be absent and hidden in their shells, they are present inside their shells. Whether a whelk is or is not separated from its shell precisely represents the issue of the I and the other. Juxtaposing the whelks and the absence of the other, Jeanette line lights the plasticity of presence which covers absence. The evolution of Jeanette's gaze, from Melanie to the whelks, expresses the way she has internalized the gaze. The internalized gaze ultimately ends in trans-subjectivation in which Jeanette is able to observe herself as the subject and object of the gaze at the same time. While there is another observer of the process it seems that the third self between the observer and the observed is perceiving them. The absence of the beloved or the other reminds her of the other of the self in the self.

The point that whether I is or is not separated from the other and the boundaries between I and the other are the subjects of contemplation for Jeanette. As a whelk's life could be threatened by losing its shell, 'I' is not able to exist apart from the other which is in fact the other of the I in the I. the gaze paves the ground for Jeanette to have a journey from desire to recognition when she shifts her gaze from Melanie to the whelks. Gaze as the absence of presence or the presence of absence elucidates itself as the inseparable notions of I and the other. Regarding the shell of a whelk without the whelk, it could be expounded that 'I' without the 'other' is ever-impalpable. Catherine Malabou in *The New Wounded* presupposes that "it is a matter of the other of the self in the self; but, here, it is the self, and not the other, who never lets

itself be encountered when traumatized. It is the self who is lacking, without specular recuperation” (Malabou, 2012, 140). Elucidating the other as the I inside me, Jeanette articulates that the separation of the other from I could be unfeasible as the separation of the whelk and its shell is. Malabou carries on the issue that “between “my” brain and myself there is a sort of opaque wall, an absence of mirror, even as it is the most intimate part of myself, the “me” who thinks and feels within me” (Winterson, 1985, 140). Interpreting the gaze of the other not as the entrance of the subject into the mirror stage, Malabou claims that the Lacanian triad of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary lacks the Material.

Eliminating the likelihood of the “reception of the self in the other” (Winterson, 1985, 140) in the cerebral level, Malabou provides further details about the Material and asserts that “On the cerebral level, there is not really any “reception of the self in the other”—if one thereby understands the movement that Lacan calls the “Imaginary.” There is no line of sight, no constitution of subjectivity in “seeing oneself in the gaze of the other,” no struggle for recognition.” (Malabou, 2012, 141) she explicates that “The regulation and organization of the brain, in fact, cannot be accounted for either in terms of the “Real” or the “Imaginary.” We take the risk of introducing a fourth instance into the program of Lacan’s Real-Symbolic-Imaginary: the “Material.” The Material would constitute the sense of an affective economy that solicits itself *without seeing itself* (Malabou, 2012, 141). Malabou boldly intervenes in Lacan’s tripartite structure of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic by proposing a fourth instance of the Material. In fact, Malabou shifts the focus toward the brain and the body as active forces in the constitution of subjectivity.

In Malabou’s perspective, the static and deterministic views of materiality and body have been challenged. Consequently, Malabou offers a dynamic interpretation of the material emphasizing on change, transformation, and adaptability. The material for Malabou is not merely inert substance; yet, an active realm of potentiality and formation. This is the point where the boundaries between biology, thought, and social structures blur. This reimagining and reconfiguring the material transcends traditional and classical materialism. It presents a fresh perspective on the interplay among identity, matter, and body.

Regarding the gaze of the other parallel to the gaze of the I, Malabou insists that the mirror stage could not be the consequence of the gaze of the other. It could be in fact the gaze of

the I on itself which provides another form of materiality expressed in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. After being caught red handed of having queer feelings, Jeanette is forced to review her deeds or to gaze at herself. The outcome of Jeanette's gaze at herself is the materiality of her illusion, a rough brown pebble "Catch," called the demon and vanished. In my hand was a rough brown pebble (Winterson, 1985, 88). Struggling with her destructive plasticity or trauma, Jeanette seeks refuge in gazing at herself and observing herself as the other. Opening up a space within herself to mull over her deeds, Jeanette experiences the gaze of herself at herself while she is aware of this process. Tracking the labyrinth of subjectivation, Jeanette ends up in the realm of trans-subjectivation monitoring herself as I and the other. After Jeanette finds that intimacy is disturbing, she delves more profoundly into herself. "We were quiet, and I traced the outline of her marvelous bones and the triangle of muscle in her stomach. What is it about intimacy that makes it so very disturbing?" (Winterson, 1985, 77) Transforming the gaze of the other into the gaze of her own, Jeanette undergoes a transition from her destructive plasticity or trauma to trans-subjectivation. Malabou contemplates on the notion of gaze and merges psychoanalysis with neuroscience when she clarifies that:

The activity revealed by brain imaging [...] is what makes narcissism possible to the extent that such photographs of *my* brain are necessarily offered, without any possible internalization, to *the gaze of the other*, even if this gaze is *my own*. However, the eye of the other upon my most living intimacy, the eye of the other upon my thinking and feeling connections, [...] the eye of the other does not give birth to any mirror stage. *Cerebrality does not gaze at itself* (Malabou, 2012, 141).

The awareness or understanding of the brain's working (cerebrality), lacks self-reflexivity. In other words, Malabou reinforces the distinction between the material operation of the brain and the subjective, reflective nature of consciousness. Unlike Lacan, Malabou believes that identity formation is not exclusively dependent on external recognition and the other is not the primary shaper of one's identity. In this point instead of Lacan's term of 'alienation' which occurs in the mirror stage, Malabou uses the term 'plasticity' which expresses the subject's openness to transformation. This ability of the brain and the self to continually transform could be seen as an alternative to the notion of alienation.

6.2. The Untranscended Other and the Multiplicity of the Self

This section aims to meticulously explore the process in which Catherine Malabou's alterity without transcendence leads to trans-subjectivation. The procedure by which Jeanette achieves self-realization would be lime lighted and the multiplicity of the selfhood would be analyzed in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson.

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For Malabou the notion of alterity without transcendence rests in the fact that in destructive plasticity the brain and self are not the damaged version of the previous ones; yet, they are new-fangled brain and identity which are quite unrecognizable for others. Presupposing that “the brain in no way anticipates the possibility of its own damage” (Malabou, 2012, 142), Malabou claims that “when damage occurs, it is another self who is affected, a new self, unrecognizable” (2012, 142). Not only Jeanette’s hallucinations, but also her multiple narratives take place after she faces traumatic events. When she is told to leave the house by her mother due to Jeanette’s love for a girl, Winnet appears in the novel. The narratives of Winnet, the Prince and other religious and non-theological chronicles are generated separated from the main account of Jeanette. In other words, after each trauma the narration transforms into a unique style of storytelling due to the process of destructive plasticity. It seems that Winnet serves as the other of Jeanette inside Jeanette when she experiences trauma. Nonetheless, each narrative independently exists and persists with its own plastic evolution to the extent that they provide a realm in which Jeanette encounters trans-subjection. Approaching the Real, Jeanette wonders whether she is on the verge of insanity or not. “‘I’ve gone mad,’ I thought. ‘That may well be so,’ agreed the demon evenly. ‘So make the most of it’” (Winterson, 1985, 82). Seeking refuge out of the realm of psychosis, Jeanette uncovers the point that through language and via naming, her flee would be achievable.

It could be mentioned that Jeanette experienced trans-subjection via the gaze. First it was Jeanette’s gaze when she stared at Melanie for days; however, by Melanie’s absence it became the internal gaze. It means that in Melanie’s absence, Jeanette stared at the whelks which represent the presence of Melanie’s memories in Jeanette’s mind. Yet, the whelks which express absence and presence at the same time, resemble the absence of Melanie as a person in Jeanette’s life. The memories of Melanie in Jeanette’s mind provides a sort of internal gaze for Jeanette when she attempts to reconsider (gaze at) the memories of Melanie. It is exactly at this point that Jeanette experiences the trauma of being forced to leave home due to the fact that her mother’s religious beliefs were against Jeanette’s love for a girlfriend. The traumatic event splits Jeanette into Jeanette and Winnet who narrate their stories in diverse styles. However, the gaze remains inside as the third part of their identity in trans-subjection. It is the internal gaze which enables Jeanette to observe Winnet, as well; while narrating her own story as Jeanette.

Being aware of the power of language and naming, Jeanette endeavors to take a position between wisdom and lunacy. To put it into plain words, Jeanette expresses the liminality between two selves within herself. The one which represents mental illness or the Real, the other which accords with the Symbolic (naming and being named in the realm of father/ king), and the observer or the Materiality which/who dominates both of them while it is in fact a space between them. Malabou firmly believes that identity is not just an abstract construct; yet, an entity embodied and materially shaped by history, trauma, and external influences. It could be elaborated that Malabou's the material gives a concrete dimension to the Lacanian gap in the split subject. In Lacan's idea of the split subject, the division between the ideal I (as seen in the mirror) and the fragmented, real self becomes a material and neurological gap in Malabou's standpoint. In other words, "perceiving the self, results in comprehending the gap as the center of the self" (Niknezhadferdos & Sadjadi, 2020, 254). Juxtaposing the world of language and overthinking, Jeanette reasons that "naming meant power. Adam had named the animals and the animals came at his call" (Winterson, 1985, 105), "but words in the head are like voices under water. They are distorted. Hearing the words as they hit the surface is sensitive work. You will have to be a bank robber and listen and listen to the little clicks before you can open the safe" (Winterson, 1985, 121). Putting the issue another way, Jeanette illustrates the space between two facades of language in which observing both the hallucinatory and constructive characteristics of language is plausible.

Manifesting language as being, the narrative of *Winnet* spotlights the power of words equal to being and doing. In a conversation the sorcerer addresses Winnet and mentions that he knows her name; yet, later when Winnet asks him how she can trust him the sorcerer expounds that, "I don't know your name. If I did, I'd have spirited you over here already. It's so disappointing dining alone, don't you think?" (Winterson, 1985, 106). The sorcerer (the father) emphasizes on the significance of language, particularly names, and mentions that "there is just one small thing; unless you tell me your name, you'll never get out of the circle, because I can't release you, and you don't have the power" (Winterson, 1985, 107). Moreover, the sorcerer warns Winnet that she is not able to get out of the forest (The Symbolic) without him. Ignoring the sorcerer, Winnet heads for her destination out of the forest and by dawn when she is exhausted she confesses that "she realized she had hardly travelled at all" (Winterson, 1985, 105). After winning the competition by guessing Winnet's name (making Winnet the subject of

language in the Symbolic), the sorcerer took her into his castle where Winnet “forgot how she had come there or what she had done before, she believed she had always been in the castle and that she was the sorcerer’s daughter. He told her she was” (Winterson, 1985, 109) (the impossibility of entering the Real). The appearance of a nameless stranger and Winnet’s love for him made the sorcerer furious to the point that he imprisoned the stranger; however, Winnet set him free and became aware that she ought to leave or her heart will turn into a stone by sorrow. Winnet’s encounter with the other and the traumatic event of losing him made her escape from the realm of father. It is of paramount importance to recall that Winnet is Jeanette at the same time while Jeanette’s gaze inside narrates the story of Winnet. Winnet’s story ends mentioning that “One thing is certain; she can’t go back” (Winterson, 1985, 120). It could be asserted that as Malabou emphasizes, in some massive traumatic events the identity goes over destructive plasticity and wipes itself. Winnet’s story remains finished yet unfinished when she decides to cross the river; however, Winnet’s narration chooses in-between-ness and liminality when she firmly mentions not yet reaching the other side of the river and the impossibility of returning. While Jeanette endeavors to wrap up her narration in a logical order, Winnet’s narrative remains liminal as she has escaped the realm of the father. The one who narrates both stories could be labeled as the internalized gaze. The one who is both Jeanette and Winnet; yet, none of them completely. Winterson expresses trans-subjection in the narratives which could be called trans-narrativization.

Jeanette confesses that she is “in the sphere of enchantment and everything is possible” (Winterson, 1985, 122), and she enlightens that “it is not one thing nor the other that leads to madness, but the space in between them” (Winterson, 1985, 122). Considering the space as the internal gaze, it could be elaborated that both Jeanette and Winnet distinguish the space between two things as both infuriating and exasperating; therefore, they attain the wisdom that “you might mutate” (Winterson, 1985, 121). When it comes to the power of language and words, Winterson clearly argues that “naming is a difficult time consuming process; it concerns essences, and it means power” (Winterson, 1985, 128). It could be explicated that through the plasticity of language Jeanette and Winnet are able to observe the plastic space between the constructive and destructive aspects of language and hence they become capable of altering their destructive plasticity into a constructive one which could be entitled as trans-subjection. It could be asserted that while gaze in Lacanian view could be the gaze of the other in identity

formation and results in alienation, in Malabou's perspective gaze is not necessarily related to estrangement since it is more mutable and adaptive. The gaze in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* serves as the cornerstone of trans-subjection in Jeanette. Unlike what Lacan asserts, Jeanette has not completely trapped in the symbolic; yet, her identity transforms or reforms in response to destructive plasticity (trauma). In other words, Jeanette experiences trans-subjection in existential level of being.

7. Conclusion

It could be concluded that Catherine Malabou's framework of the materiality renovates the patterns of desire and the other in Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Additionally, in the novel the outer gaze evolves into the inner gaze the clash between the self and the inner gaze leads into trans-subjection. Likewise, the divergence between Malabou's definition of trauma (destructive plasticity) and the model of trauma by Lacan (rupture in the Symbolic) was clearly expressed in Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. The process by which the gaze could be both the producer and the product of the other in this novel was meticulously elaborated.

While Lacan's the unconscious is structured like a language, Malabou introduces a more materialistic notion of the unconscious as shaped by neural plasticity. This shift could pave the way for a various understanding of desire and change; moreover, Malabou's engagement with trauma suggests that radical changes in subjectivity are material which could be contrasted with Lacan's view of trauma as a rupture in the Symbolic order. Malabou's concept of plasticity provides a way to rethink materiality beyond rigid structures. Unlike the fixed framework of the Imaginary, plasticity suggests that identity and material reality are malleable and transformative. Gaze as the producer and product of the other paves the ground for experiencing trans-subjection in Jeanette in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. The constructive aspect of language, the multiplicity of narration, and the presence and absence of the beloved provide an opportunity for Jeanette to be able to open up a space within and detect the other of the self in the self.

Discovering the ultimate other of the self within, which could be named alterity without transcendence, Jeanette manifests the svelte process of identity formation which is never closed; yet, it is mutable and inconsistent. Jeanette juxtaposes sanity and insanity and

delineates a realm in which experiencing the in-between-ness accords with Catherine Malabou's notion of plasticity and trans-subjection. The other, as the catalyst of destructive plasticity or trauma, transforms the subject into a trans-subject who incessantly is in the space of monitoring two selves within as an internal gaze. Obviously, Jacques Lacan's triad of identity formation lacks 'the material' in Malabou's perspective. On the other hand, gaze as the first step of desire paves the ground for experiencing simultaneous absence/presence which provides the contradictory state of producer/product for the subject. In this regard, the owner of the gaze is concomitantly in the place of giver/receiver which discloses the subject as merely an open space between the actions of giving and receiving. Experiencing the plasticity of the gaze commences a new-fangled realm of self-realization in which the subject could be detected as a trans-subject in constant observing of two selves within.

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