

Chapter Three

Subversive Simulation and Implosion

Things lie [...] in order to conceal their origin.
(Lefebvre 81)

It is still arguable when the postmodern age first emerged, what the major difference postmodernity has in opposition to modernity, and which fundamental appeal postmodernists coherently agree on. Take French theorists in the 1970s as an example. They are inclined to attack “modern theories rooted in humanist assumptions and Enlightenment rationalist discourses” (Best 27). Foucault claims the death of man and advances new perspectives of theory, politics, and ethics; Lyotard’s postmodern condition indicates the end of the grand narrative; Deleuze and Guattari advocate schizoanalysis and rhizomatics so as to mark the repressive territorializations of desire in society and everyday life. Among those postmodern theorists, Jean Baudrillard “has achieved guru status throughout the English-speaking world [...] as the ‘talismán’ of the new postmodern universe, [...] as the supertheorist of a new postmodernity” (Best 111). Born in 1929 in the northern French city of Reims, Baudrillard published his thesis after being slightly modified as his first book *The System of Objects* in 1968, which was inspired by “the sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* and the semiotician Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*” (Butler 3). Since then, there were three principal periods in the transformation of Baudrillard’s thought: before the 1970s, Baudrillard demanded that “the classical Marxism critique of political economy needed to be supplemented by semiological theories of the sign” (Kellner 1994, 3), provocatively interpreting objects, signs, and codes of a consumer’s society in his early writings; around the mid-1970s, Baudrillard provided alternative and postmodern analyses on contemporary society by proclaiming that “we live in a ‘hyperreality’ of simulations in which images, spectacles,

and the play of signs replace the logic of production and class conflict as key constituents of contemporary societies” (Kellner 1994, 7); between the 1970s and the 1980s, Baudrillard radically moved toward metaphysics and nihilistic cynicism, with which his apocalyptic vision of the world is “without joy, without energy, without hope for a better future” (Kellner 1994, 12).

Because of Baudrillard’s remarkable and highly influential connotation of postmodernity, his theory will be applied to Winterson’s *The Passion* for the purpose to elucidate how the latter aptly glorifies the essence of the former and thus becomes more than simply an experimental novel, particularly through the examination of a postmodern microscope. While utilizing Baudrillard’s praiseworthy theory to scrutinize the ways Winterson exhibits her unique face of postmodernity, this chapter aims to focus on two essential elements of Baudrillard’s theory, simulation and implosion, as a double-dimensional approach to probe the significance of postmodern implication Winterson personally enriches in the novel. Specifically speaking, this chapter attempts to penetrate into five respective dimensions, including war, map, madhouse, story, and gender, in order to demonstrate how the boundaries of reality and simulacrum are challenged and later shattered in the novel. Baudrillard, under my interpretation, does highlight the importance of blurring the limits between the real and the simulated rather than stresses the antipode of reality and simulacrum, with a view to constructing his own unique theory of oscillation, which is suitable to illustrate the close relations between Winterson and Baudrillard.

Although Baudrillard first presented his developed theory of simulation in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*¹ in 1976, “the concept did not really begin to gain the attention of

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976. Trans. Iain Hamilton Grant. London: Sage Publications, 1993.

social theorists and artists until the publication in 1981 of *Simulacra and Simulations*”² (Levin 196), partly because the concept of the simulacrum has already existed in the Western metaphysics for a long time. But there is no denying that Baudrillard plays “a significant role in putting it [the concept of the simulacrum] into circulation in contemporary social and political theory” (Genosko 28). As a matter of fact, his notion of simulation derives from the map-without-territory metaphor:

Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory—**PRECESSION OF SIMULACRA**—it is the map that engenders the territory [...]. (1983, 2)³

Influenced by Saussure’s theory of sign-system that the relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary and unstable, Baudrillard tends to call into question the demarcation between the real and the simulated, claiming, “[t]he real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models” (1983, 3). Paying his attention to the technology in the era of media reproduction, Baudrillard emphasizes “the reign of the ‘simulacra’ (the copy without an original) and the world of ‘hyperreality’ [...] in which imitation or ‘fakes’ take precedence over and usurp the real” (Selden 205).

However, feigning or dissimulating differs from simulation in Baudrillard’s definition. According to his argument, “[t]o dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has, [while] [t]o simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t” (1983, 5).⁴ The distinction

² Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*. Paris: Galilée, 1981. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1994.

³ All subsequent parentheses with only publishing years and passage references in this chapter are from Baudrillard’s works.

⁴ Take Baudrillard’s analysis of faked illness as an example. If a patient pretends to be sick, which suggests that any symptom can be produced, then “every illness may be considered as simulatable and simulated, and medicine loses its meaning since it only knows how to treat ‘true’ illness by their objective causes” (1983, 5-6). In Baudrillard’s opinion, the same situation takes place in the army and religion too.

between reality and feigning or dissimulating still remains perspicuous despite being masked, but the operation of simulation evidently menaces the divergence between real and imaginary, between true and false, thus completely opposed to representation which “starts from the principle that sign and real are equivalent” (1983, 11). Moreover, how to distinguish representation from simulation lies in the fact that the former begins to absorb the latter by regarding it as false representation, whereas the latter “envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum” (1983, 11).

Due to the influence of Marx’s schema of feudalism/capitalism and Foucault’s schema of epistemes in *The Order of Things*, Baudrillard develops a special theory concerning three orders of simulacra:

—The *counterfeit* is the domination scheme in the ‘classical’ period, from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution.

—*Production* is the dominant scheme in the industrial era.

—*Simulation* is the dominant scheme in the current code-governed phase.

(1993, 50)

Furthermore, the first order, based on the natural law of value, consists of the opposition between nature and counterfeited nature, and is exemplified by the model of human automation, which is “the counterfeit human, a mechanical double built on the principles of the clock” (Gane 1991, 95). On the basis of the commercial law of value, the second order manifests an antithesis between the natural and produced counterpart, and is dominated by efficiency and function, in which “the robot is not only produced but belongs fundamentally to a different order of productivity and work” (Gane 1991, 96). Unlike the first order playing on the demarcation between representation and nature, the second order focuses on the efficient technical logic of operation instead. Finally the third order, in accordance with the structural law of value, exhibits the difference between the produced model and the simulated hyperreal model. The latter escapes from any function

or purpose, takes the place of the real, the reference, and turns out to be the signifier of reference. In this new order of simulation, there is no superior code of higher meaning governing the code itself; in fact, “[t]here is no purpose or meaning at all” (Gane 1991, 97).

It is in this third order of simulacra that Baudrillard unremittingly puts much emphasis on the particularity of simulation: “We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons” (1983, 32). In this sense, the operation of simulation insinuates a sort of subversive function to some extent. Baudrillard audaciously announces that “law and order themselves might really be nothing more than a simulation” (1983, 38). Once what we think of as reality is acquiescently faced with the impetus of simulation, the real becomes volatile and collapses into the hyperreal, “perfectly characterized as ‘a sign of infinite possibilities of difference’” (Grace, 84). In Baudrillard’s perspective, contrary to realism and surrealism, the hyperreal “represents a much more advanced phase insofar as it effaces the contradiction of the real and the imaginary” (1993, 72). In other words, hyperreality belongs not to “the dream of the phantasm, [not] to a beyond or a hidden interiority, but to *the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself*” (1993, 72). As Baudrillard acknowledges, “The hyperreal is beyond representation [...] only because it is entirely within simulation, in which the barriers of representation rotate crazily, an implosive madness which, far from being ex-centric, keeps its gaze fixed on the center” (1993, 73-4). Therefore, the space of hyperreality signifies the room where the notion of binary opposition between reality and simulacra is interrogated, and where the function of simulation successfully works, particularly by means of the process of implosion, which serves as one major energy in hyperreality.

The prerequisite process to disturb reality and simulacra, in light of Baudrillard’s theory, must go through the phase of implosion, which peculiarizes one of the

postmodern social components. For a long time the Western industrial world has been characterized by explosion, “by expanding production of goods, science and technology, national boundaries, and capital, as well as by the differentiation of social spheres, discourse, and value” (Best 120-21). But Baudrillard’s implosion, a term borrowed from Marshall McLuhan, subsumes a process of social entropy⁵ heading toward a devastation of boundaries; in other words, “social classes, genders, political differences, and once-autonomous realms of society and culture collapse into each other, erasing previously defined boundaries and differences” (Kellner 1994, 8). Whereas explosion connotes a pressure, force, energy, outward movement, implosion in contrast “is an inward movement of collapse, falling away, disintegrating in on itself, dissipation, enervation, disappearance, and silence” (Grace91). In this sense, each of social domains, including politics, economics, culture, and sexuality, implodes into each other, to such an extent that all meanings or messages seem to be absorbed into a black hole. Eventually in Baudrillard’s universe, precedent boundaries and categories of social theory implode and dissolve altogether with the effect of simulation. As Kellner describes the aftermath of Baudrillard’s simulation, “All dichotomies between appearance and reality, surface and depth, life and art, subject and object, collapse into a functionalized, integrated and self-reproducing universe of ‘simulacra’ controlled by ‘simulation’ models and codes” (Kellner 1989, 77). Accordingly, “the social has imploded into the masses,⁶ and no longer exists as a self-sufficient domain of reality” (Kellner 1989, 87).

Speaking of the most representative example⁷ to expound the prodigy by which

⁵ The term entropy originated in the field of thermodynamics about 1865 in German and “was coined by Rudolf Clausius to represent a measure of the amount of energy in a thermodynamic system as a function of the temperature of the system and the heat that enters the system” (Fang 1). Later in 1948, Claude Shannon introduced this term to the domain of physics and used it to indicate a measure of information. So that the concept of “Shannon’s entropy,” penetrating a wide range of disciplines, “is closely tied to the concept of *uncertainty embedded in a probability distribution*” (Fang 2).

⁶ Baudrillard’s theory of the masses, known as the “silent majority,” belongs to another famous issue in the realm of social theory and will not be further discussed in this paper.

⁷ By the same method, Baudrillard examines the fiction of Watergate scandal, Algerian war, Vietnam War,

Baudrillard astounds us, we shall never skim without carefully digesting his alternative but impressive interpretation of Disneyland. As a place constructed by illusions and phantasms, Disneyland displays a miniature and a comic-strip form of the objective profile of the United States, ostensibly panegyricizing American way of life, American values, and more importantly, the existence of an idealized paradise. Nevertheless, “Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation” (1983, 25). The case of Disneyland reinforces again the concept of hyperreality where the United States, a reality, has imploded into Disneyland, a simulacrum, so that the very definitions between the real and the simulation have become vaguer and vaguer. As a result, “the hyperreal is not the unreal but the more than real, the realer than real, as when models of the United States in Disneyland appear more real than their instantiations in the social world, as the United States becomes more and more like Disneyland” (Kellner 1989, 82). The moment when an implosion of meaning works, Baudrillard alleges, “[t]his is where simulation begins” (1983, 57).

More importantly, the reason why Baudrillard makes efforts to underline the process of implosion is not to aggrandize the antipodal feature between the real and the simulated but to foreground the dialectic relation between them as the cardinal relation that two processes in hyperreality, simulation and implosion, both focus on. Baudrillard on the one hand interrogates the ostensibly recognized boundary of reality and simulacra with the help of simulation and implosion, and on the other hand presents the exigency of oscillating between two spaces, reality and hyperreality, as a need to comprehend this postmodern epoch. Rather than favoring either side of two seemingly contradictory spaces, Baudrillard muddles the limits of them by imploding the fundamental binary

and nuclear system as well.

oppositions that the process of simulation aims to challenge. He claims, “All reality then becomes the place of a semiological manipulation, of a structural simulation” (1975, 7). Meanwhile it is more important to point out the irreplaceability and indispensability between the real and the simulated, both of which are no longer differentiated from each other after the implosive operation exclusively occurring in hyperreality. On account of the fact that Baudrillard’s theory is appropriate to be applied to Winterson’s novel, this chapter aims to interpret *The Passion* from an interesting postmodern perspective, particularly from the analysis of war, map, San Servolo, story, and gender, and then to unearth the similitude of artistic insistency that Winterson and Baudrillard both hold.

To begin with, since the *mise-en-scène* of the novel is arranged in the age of Napoleon, it is inevitable to witness the happenings of the relentless war. But did any war really happen? Is it possible that the dominator, like Napoleon, propagandizes the necessity of war for the purpose of consolidating his legitimated power but *de facto* there is no war or enemy outside of his kingdom? Is it true as Henri says: “These wars will never end. Even if we get home, there’ll be another war. I thought he’d end wars for ever, that’s what he [Napoleon] said. One more, he said, one more and then there’ll be peace and it’s always been one more” (86). In the novel, Henri, one of the narrators,⁸ serves in Napoleon’s army as a cook’s assistant, who spends most of his time “learning how to stuff a chicken and slow down the cooking process” (15) rather than learning how to fight or kill the enemy. Moreover, from the beginning to the end, Henri is portrayed as indifferent to those unremitting battles though he admires and loves Napoleon personally, saying, “We are in love with him [Napoleon]” (8). Even after Napoleon fails in riskily crossing the Channel due to an unexpected storm, Henri mechanically and mercilessly writes down, “July 20th, 1804. Two thousand men were drowned today” (24). Not only is

⁸ There are mainly two narrators uttering the story in the four different sections of the novel: one is Henri; the other is Villanelle. But in the last section they take turns articulating their viewpoints so frequently that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish which passage belongs to whom.

a soldier like Henri nonchalant to the death of soldiers, but also a leader like Napoleon gets “used to losing that number in battle” (20). Apparently the denotation of war to Henri has been twisted and no longer refers to a legal means of terminating opponents or to a utopian slogan of achieving freedom. Even if Henri himself might not have been aware of this transformation of signification, yet subconsciously he has substituted words for wars; in other words, his discourse has simulated the verisimilitude and cruelty of war by words. From Baudrillard’s angle, representation begins to absorb simulation by regarding it as false representation, whereas simulation includes the whole structure of representation as itself a simulacrum. Therefore, Henri’s representation of the war in words can be seen as the effect of simulation that implodes the distinction between reality and simulacra. When saying, “Words about war that are easy on the eye” (5), Henri implies that simulation lies in the function of words to delineate what has genuinely happened during the wartime. Sometimes he even questions, “Would soldiers become numbers? Would battles become diagrams?” (13). In other words, only in words can Henri as well as readers recognize the fact that those wars Napoleon inaugurates for the sake of his exorbitant ambition are proceeding.

In the progress of simulation, Henri does not perceive or witness with his eyes any battlefield but can only read words about war, about devastation, and about holocaust. What matters for Henri is not where and when another battle will take place, but the consequence that his words have simulated the real war, so that his linguistic descriptions about war implode into the war itself. Under the effect of implosion, a collapse of boundaries between war and word results in the doom of meanings and messages, an inferno where a signifier no longer refers to a fixed signified but to a number of possible signifiers. For Henri, the occurrence of war is submitted to the discourse of war by the power of implosion; as a result, whenever he outlines a war in words, it does happen somewhere. After the dissimilarities between the real war and the discourse of war

implode into each other, the latter will certainly simulate the former, thus becoming much realer and bloodier than the former. Judging from Henri's discursive approach to deal with the cruelty of war, we can observe how he swings between the sanguinary battlefield with which he is reluctant to be faced and the discourse of war in which he constructs a sense of reality. Henri, under Winterson's manipulation, undergoes the process of oscillating between the real and simulated wars, which, as Baudrillard believes, every modern man in postmodern society must go through without exception.

Secondly, the notion of map is also suitable to be interpreted from Baudrillard's spectrum of simulation and implosion. Similar to Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, Henri needs a direction guide like a map which can give him a sense of visual territory especially when Villanelle takes him back to her hometown, Venice, a mercurial city of mazes. Once Henri has been used to the features a normal city should possess, such as roads, streets, and buildings, Venice, city of disguises, appears a bit grotesque to him, for its canals and alleyways seem to change overnight as a living creature does. For example, once Villanelle tells Henri,

This city enfolds upon itself. Canals hide other canals, alleyways cross and criss-cross so that you will not know which is which until you have lived here all your life. Even when you have mastered the squares and you can pass from the Rialto to the Ghetto and out to the lagoon with confidence, there will still be places you can never find and if you do find them you may never see St Mark's again. (113)

Traditionally a map is used to demonstrate the limited boundaries of an area, a kind of certificate by which the ruling class manifests his overwhelming power over the restricted sphere. On the contrary, in Baudrillard's perspective, the importance of the map precedes the importance of the territory; that is to say, a map is not made according to the boundaries of a real territory. It is the map that creates the sense of territory through

simulation and implosion, just as Disneyland becomes more American than the United States does. In Henri's case, as the map implodes into the territory, the former will simulate the latter and further replace the latter. As he describes, "I have lain with the priest on an old and impossibly folded map of the world looking at the places he [Napoleon] had gone and watching the frontiers of France push slowly out" (16). For Henri, the map has replaced the sense of territory in the process of simulation and implosion. Nevertheless, on the basis of Villanelle's words above, a simulacrum like a map functions invalidly in the world of Venice, a watery city, not to mention instructing people or evincing authority. Accordingly, the map tells no correct roads, streets, or buildings in Venice, for the city of uncertainty contains its own theorem and invalidates the function of the map that those in power manipulate. It is no wonder that Henri exaggeratedly comments on the city of madmen after getting lost for five days, "Not even Bonaparte [Napoleon] could rationalize Venice" (112).

In Villanelle's view, it is the city of Venice that implodes into the map while simultaneously providing the boatmen⁹ with a sense of space. Different from Paris, which is in need of a map to re-construct a sensation of direction and bounds for people, Venice, as a simulacrum imploding the borders of map and city, reveals more than any map on earth its routes, so that only living in it can one begin to comprehend how it organizes itself. As Villanelle says, "The city I come from is a changeable city. It is not always the same size. Streets appear and disappear overnight, new waterways force themselves over dry land" (97). The function of map¹⁰ thus means nothing to Villanelle, who has imploded the differentiations between the abstractively connotative territory and

⁹ According to what Villanelle tells Henri when they meet, her father is a boatman, and those boatmen never take off their shoes in their life because they do not want others to see their webbed feet. But Villanelle is the only one female with webbed feet in the history of boatmen. As boatmen, they rely not on a map to tell the direction but on their inborn instinct to reach wherever they want to go. So does Villanelle.

¹⁰ Although Villanelle does not rely on the function of map at all, according to Henri's impression, she is definitely skilful with the compass and map, saying, "it was one of the advantages of sleeping with Generals" (101). This indicates that Villanelle persuades Henri to accept the invalidity of map not because she does not know how to use it but because she knows how useless it is in the space of Venice.

the artificially enacted map, whereas it still means a lot to Henri, who remains subject to the traditional way of consulting the map to find where he is. As Henri recites the bewildered feeling of seeing Venice for the first time, “Arriving at Venice by sea [...] is like seeing an invented city rise up and quiver in the air. It is a trick of the early light to make the buildings shimmer so that they seem never still. It is not built on any lines I can fathom but rather seems to have pushed itself out, impudently, here and there” (109-10).

Oscillating between the simulative map and the real city, in Baudrillard’s sense, empowers Villanelle with a singular ability to adjust herself to a postmodern space¹¹ so autonomously that she becomes the only one female protagonist in *The Passion* potent to reach wherever she wants to go. For instance, one time Villanelle took Henri to see a fortune-teller in Venice, Henri remembered: “When I suggested to Villanelle that she was being deliberately mysterious and taking me a way I would never recognize again, she smiled and said she was taking me down an ancient way that only a boatman could hope to remember” (113). It is this power that makes Villanelle unique, representing a kind of articulation of femininity to some extent. Consequently Villanelle, aware of the effect of simulation and implosion, becomes the only one adaptable to live in an unusual city like Venice.

As to the notion of madhouse, San Servolo signifies a space full of fantasies which Henri cannot distinguish from reality. One day when Villanelle’s fatty husband threatens and takes advantage of her again, our brave hero Henri, out of his instinct to protect his beloved Villanelle from being abused, thrusts a Venetian knife into the cook’s body, into his belly, and eventually “cut[s] a triangle in about the right place and scoop[s] out the

¹¹ The postmodern space mentioned here exclusively indicates the city of Venice, which is not oligarchically rationalized or pervasively industrialized like the city of Paris. Distinguished from the traditional city valorized by a centralized authority, Venice is mainly composed of watery alleys, which connect one another loosely and randomly. That explains why Venice, in the novel, should be regarded as a postmodern space replete with the fluid images, rather than as an orthodox city constituted for a certain purpose. For the further spatial analysis of Venice, please see chapter four.

shape [the heart] with [his] hand, like coring an apple” (128). After committing a bestial crime of homicide, Henri is charged with murder by the lawyer of Villanelle’s husband, Piero, who wholeheartedly wants Henri’s life in compensation for his client’s life. Even though Villanelle endeavors to procure his release afterwards, Henri is still sent to the madhouse called San Servolo and imprisoned with other lunatics. It is in the madhouse that Henri begins to hear strange voices of “the dead themselves, walking the halls and watching [him] with their hollow eyes” (142). Staying a while in a space corrupting a person’s mind, Henri has illusions, such as seeing some of the dead, inclusive of the cook, Patrick, his mother, and Napoleon. Gradually he even deems San Servolo as his home, saying, “This is my home, I can’t leave. What will mother say” (149), and resolutely refusing Villanelle’s help when she spares no effort to rescue him from the prison.

Evidently Henri has suffered from incapability of demarcating reality from illusion after being jailed in San Servolo, but without question, it is the simulation of the madhouse that initiates the operation on him as soon as he enters. Functioning as a simulacrum, San Servolo simulates the external world, implodes into reality, and then becomes a hyperreality empowering Henri to see some dead people. As Baudrillard affirms, “Hyperreality thus points to a blurring of distinction between the real and the unreal in which the prefix ‘hyper’ signifies more real than real whereby the real is produced according to a model” (Best 119). Similarly San Servolo works as a hyperreality in which its process of simulation interrupts Henri’s understanding of the real macrocosm and the simulacrum, so that he seeks his comfort and existence in a simulated model—San Servolo. Once the confines between reality and simulacrum implode altogether, Henri obtains sufficient satisfactions in the madhouse where he is free to hate Napoleon and love Villanelle. As Henri says, “I think now that being free is not being powerful or rich or well regarded or without obligations but being able to love. To love someone else enough to forget about yourself even for one moment is to be free” (154).

For Henri, the power to hate and to love is not allowed in the real world, just as Napoleon does not commence to possess the freedom of making mistakes until entering the realm of death. In a sense, what Venice is to Villanelle, San Servolo is to Henri. The changeable city offers Villanelle an opportunity to retreat from rationalized Paris, while the madhouse bestows on Henri a space to break through obstacles in reality. Most important of all, Henri is able to acknowledge in San Servolo “the difference between inventing a lover and falling in love” (158), for one is about oneself but the other about someone else. For a soldier obsessed by the passion for Napoleon, the madhouse awakes Henri to find out how it differs to invent a lover¹² and to fall in love with Villanelle. But sad to say, Villanelle, who cannot fully realize the reason why Henri shows reluctance to leave the madhouse, concludes with arbitrariness that “[p]erhaps he has lost himself” (150). In Henri’s and Villanelle’s cases, two lovers inhabiting two different realms are doomed to be separated.

For Henri, not until he is bathed with the room of hyperreality does he inaugurate the breakthrough of the borders between the real and the simulacrum, thus able to oscillate between two spaces. This faculty of dialectical oscillation imposes on Henri an aptitude to exhibit the creation of his own art—his notebook—as a metafictional technique¹³ to deal with this simulated cosmos. Similar to Villanelle, whose ability is to live in Venice, Henri is another living exemplar with the power of articulating his subjectivity due to the practice of crossing back and forth the boundaries between the real society and the simulation-oriented madhouse. In accord with Baudrillard’s assertion that the contrast of binary opposition between reality and simulacra is interrogated in hyperreality, Henri,

¹² In Henri’s case, the lover he invents should be Napoleon, but the relation between Henri and Napoleon is not that of traditional lovers. Rather, it is Henri who single-mindedly admires Napoleon so much that he assumes he loves Napoleon. As Villanelle describes Henri’s excessive obsession, “I have heard that when a duckling opens its eyes it will attach itself to whatever it first sees, duck or not. So it is with Henri, he opened his eyes and there was Bonaparte” (147).

¹³ As for the detailed analysis of Henri’s notebook, please see chapter two.

sojourning in San Servolo without restriction, is immune from the violence of dichotomy and develops his own artistic creation in the realm of hyperreality, despite at the cost of forsaking Villanelle and their daughter forever. As Henri confesses after being imprisoned for a while, “It’s easier not to see her [Villanelle]. I don’t always wave to her, I have a mirror and I stand slightly to one side of the window when she passes and if the sun is shining I can catch the reflection of her hair” (152). Apparently Henri has indulged himself in the world of hyperreality where though physically shackled, he feels the power of being free for the first time of his life, thus able to write his notebook and manage the garden with wholehearted attention.

When it comes to the notion of story, we should highlight the preface of the novel, in which Winterson has reinstated her opinion: “*The Passion* is not history, except in so much as all our lives are history. *The Passion* is not romance, except in so much as all our lives are marked by the men and women with whom we fell in love...” (Winterson Preface). Although the novel’s *mise-en-scène* is set in Napoleon age, basically it contains few descriptions of his sanguinary invading history but is mainly narrated through Henri’s standpoint to mold their relations instead. Furthermore, in this postmodern society, there is no legitimated History any more but a large number of stories, so the most famous refrain in the novel—“I’m telling you stories. Trust me.”—totally appears nine times. Forcing her protagonists to repeat this sentence incessantly, Winterson strives to instill on the reader her postmodern speculation that truth is always behind or beyond discourse. In other words, according to Baudrillard’s interpretation, stories simulate the truth or the authorized History to such an extent that simulation shatters the limits, replacing the real. Either Henri’s diary or Villanelle’s memory constitutes the characters’ circumstances that leave them nothing but discourse. For instance, at the moment when Patrick dies of catarrh, a Venetian disease, Henri retrospectively comments, “Stories were all we had” (107). The paradoxical refrain “I’m telling you stories. Trust me” is indeed full of

contradictories; for one thing, the speaker honestly tells the reader he is only stating unauthorized stories, while for another, he asks the reader to trust what he says. Applying Baudrillard's theory to the dissection of the repetitious sentence, we would observe the proceeding of implosion, by which the distinctions between truth and story dissolve. As Foucault indicates,

[D]iscourse is always inseparable from power, because discourse is the governing and ordering medium of every institution. Discourse determined what it is possible to say, what are the criteria of 'truth,' who is allowed to speak with authority, and where such speech can be spoken. (Selden 154)

According to Foucault's logic, we can infer that the discourse of History surrenders in the novel to the discourse of the story on account of the success of simulation and implosion. Consequently the discourse of the story fabricates a simulated reality in which protagonists only have discourse to rely on, to believe in, and to live in.

Only by constantly repeating the indispensability of the story can Winterson's characters discover a way to adjust themselves to this man-constructed world, which seems ostensibly obedient to, but fundamentally at odds with, the ideology of western decorum. During the period when the function of discourse works, those characters do not "feign not to have what they have" but "feign to have what they have not," that is, a sense of reality. The way they pretend to grasp a certain kind of sense of reality in their stories agrees with the definition of Baudrillard's simulation rather than that of feigning. Take Patrick, a priest with a telescopic eye, as an example. Disillusioned by the real world, he utilizes the language of discourse as a simulacrum, by which he attempts to comprehend the illogic or absurd parts of this society, such as the occurrence of the war or the violence of the dictatorship. As Henri says, "He [Patrick] was always seeing things and it didn't matter how or what, it mattered that he saw and that he told us stories" (107). So long as they pendulate between the boundaries of reality and simulacrum, Winterson's

characters are given a special power to demonstrate their respective individuality, such as Henri in the hyperreal madhouse.

Expatriating on the last issue, gender, this chapter calls for the full attention of Villanelle's ambivalent sexuality. Playing the role of the only female boatman with webbed feet, Villanelle challenges the traditional binary opposition of gender differences. For example, when she goes to work in the Casino, she prefers to dress up as a boy, not only for her own protection or amusement but also for the game in which people "[try] to decide which sex was hidden behind tight breeches and extravagant face-paste..." (54). Later, she encounters an unknown and mythical woman nicknamed the Queen of spades, with whom she maniacally falls in love and ultimately has an unusual way of intercourse—a non-phallic lovemaking.

She lay on the rug and I lay at right angles to her so that only our lips might meet. Kissing in this way is the strangest of distractions. The greedy body that clamours for satisfaction is forced to content itself with a single sensation and, just as the blind hear more acutely and the deaf can feel the grass grow, so the mouth becomes the focus of love and all things pass through it and are re-defined. It is a sweet and precise torture. (67)

After nine days of being together, the Queen of spades takes the initiative to break up with Villanelle, leaving her extremely heartbroken, for the Queen of spades admits she has to go back to the arms of her husband. Afterwards, despite still disguising herself as a boy, Villanelle is married to a meat man who decides to regard her as a woman but is later murdered by Henri at the end of "The Zero Winter" section. During the period when they flee from Paris to Venice, Villanelle actively makes love to Henri, but no sooner does Henri confess his love to her than she responds coldly, "You're my brother" (117). Moreover, Villanelle candidly admits, "He [Henri] loves me, I know that, and I love him, but in a brotherly incestuous way. He touches my heart, but he does not send it shattering

through my body” (146), as the Queen of spades has done to her. Obviously Henri still fails in making Villanelle love him as a lover in the end.

What a queer woman Villanelle is! Only by probing this protagonist’s multiple-faced connotations can we point out a large number of diverse interpretations. From Baudrillard’s perspective, Villanelle represents a fitting exemplar to be scrutinized from a postmodern position¹⁴ both physically and metaphorically. In appearance, her gender identity must be categorized into the female identity no doubt, but ironically she inherits from her boatman father a pair of webbed feet, an emblem of phallus that singularizes her power in the patriarchal society. For example, one of Villanelle’s astounding powers is to walk on water, which is typically regarded as an act of miracle exclusively performed by saints. As Henri describes after killing Villanelle’s husband, “I raised my head fully, my knees still drawn up, and saw Villanelle, her back towards me, a rope over her shoulder, walking on the canal and dragging our boats” (129). Generally speaking, being a phallic woman, Villanelle no longer acts in subordination to the suppressing patriarchal ideology, for the webbed feet can enable her to perform the power of articulation in defense of the deliberately marginalized and repressed women’s voices. However, instead of enunciating female discourse, Villanelle opts to cross-dress, that is, to apparel herself as a male person. More than that, she even has corporeal relations with man and with woman at the same time. At first it might sound bizarre to portray in the novel a phallic woman intentionally disguising herself in male identity, but it will not be strange any more if we employ Baudrillard’s deductions of simulation and implosion to illustrate her behavior. All Villanelle’s demeanor can be seen as a procedure to implode the artificial, socially constructed categorization of gender differences, just as “[q]ueer studies ‘queries’

¹⁴ The origin of Villanelle’s postmodern position comes from her ever-changing male-female identity. Unlike the traditional women oppressed by the patriarchal society, Villanelle simultaneously possesses some male and female characteristics and even acts both in masculine and feminine ways. Compared with other characters in the novel, Villanelle holds an unconventional position of border-crossing between the male and female domains, that is, a “Villanellean” postmodern position.

orthodoxies and promotes or provokes such uncertainties [...]” (Selden 255). The moment the fixed and settled binary thinking of the male and female identities implodes in Villanelle, her androgyny discloses a new, unprecedented power to subvert the rigid, privileged, and heterosexual master narrative, thus forming a counter-discourse at last. As Villanelle reveals after giving birth to a daughter without webbed feet like hers, “This [Venice] is the city of disguises. What you are one day will not constrain you on the next. You may explore yourself freely [...]” (150). And indeed it is Venice where Villanelle explores herself and demonstrates her unparalleled power of androgyny.

However, it may not be appropriate to vindicate Villanelle’s uniqueness with the term “androgyny” since her implosion of the male and female identities is not merely a mixed combination of two-sexes’ traits. Rather, what matters lies in an endlessly extensive possibility of sexuality. In addition to the physical aspect, Villanelle behaves both like a man and a woman synchronically in terms of the cultural aspect, as Sedgwick’s deconstructive postmodern assertion goes that “there is no single sexuality” (Selden 258). By simulating the constructed criteria of what a man or a woman is supposed to be, Villanelle executes the process of simulation on herself and is thus transformed into a simulacrum which reflects a chaos of male and female dissimilarities. In this regard, adjudicating Villanelle’s gender identity is second to appreciating her strength to destabilize heterosexual and patriarchal persistence of the acceptable “normal” norms. Furthermore, while biologically oscillating between the male and female spheres, Villanelle implodes the dichotomy of socially constructed gender identity in her body and then possesses a brand new power to transform the conventional women’s passiveness into the subversive androgynous and amphibious initiative. Even Henri perceives it and claims, “I will always be afraid of her [Villanelle’s] body because of the power it has” (123).

In conclusion, when he said “[w]hoever lives by meaning dies by meaning” (1984,

38-9), Baudrillard has explicitly pointed out the dawn of the postmodern ideology prevalently influencing contemporary society and its people. It goes without saying that availing his theories of simulation and implosion does help us re-evaluate the status quo we are familiar with. It is also an opportunity for us to proffer some anti-conventional but enlightening commentaries of our surroundings through a postmodern microscope. Therefore, Baudrillard's theory is apt to be applied to Winterson's novel with a view to presenting a postmodern re-reading of a multiple-dimensional fiction published in the postmodern age. After discussing how simulation and implosion effectively operate in the field of war, map, madhouse, story, and gender, we observe an unavoidability of living under the norms of simulation. As Baudrillard concludes,

We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons. Simulation is characterized by a *precession of the model*, of all models around the merest fact—the models come first, and their orbital (like the bomb) circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of events. (1983, 175)

Such a consequence inevitably functions in *The Passion* as well: the discourse of war usurps the war itself and with its detailed narration comprises actual battlefields occurring in front of language-oriented human beings like Henri; the map appropriates the status of territory which previously provides Henri with a sense of boundary, while Venice, as an organism, further supersedes the function of maps; a hyperreal madhouse called San Servolo grants Henri a new domain to accomplish what he has been forbidden to do in reality; the discursive stories preempt the authorized History on account of its lack of truth and its query of dominating power; Villanelle's "border-crossing" gender identity eradicates both heterosexual and patriarchal binary oppositions of sexuality. Besides these valuable contributions, it is more shocking to know that Winterson has conveyed in the very beginning what she determines to express in her novel: "I wanted to write a separate

world, not as an escape, as a mirror, a secret looking glass that would **sharpen** and **multiply** the possibilities of the actual world” (Winterson Preface, emphasis added). And out of question she does provide us with a discursive space entitled *The Passion*, which is not only full of multiple interpretative possibilities but also filled with much pleasure of reading.

However, Winterson’s spectrum of the possibilities of this world will be widened if Baudrillard’s theory is utilized to scrutinize *The Passion* from a postmodern perspective. To Baudrillard, it has become petty to compartmentalize the real from the simulated: “To assert that ‘We’re in a state of simulation’ becomes meaningless, because at that point one enters a death-like state. The moment you believe that you’re in a state of simulation you’re no longer there” (Gane 1993,166). Judging from his opinion above, we can infer that Baudrillard intends to obscure the boundaries of reality and simulacrum, which have been explicitly itemized by the western convention of episteme such as Platonic thoughts, and then places much emphasis on the significance of oscillating between two ostensibly conflictive realms. Again, Winterson’s novel is suitable to be interpreted from Baudrillard’s theory of oscillation, for what she endeavors to recount linguistically, under my interpretation, presents the effect of simulation and implosion on the characters on the one hand and the inevitable phenomena of oscillation between two spaces on the other hand.