Chapter Three

WRITTEN ON THE BODY: AN EMERGENCE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE AND THE POST-MODERN PORTRAYAL OF BODY.

Human body is a great mystery and is of high significance to all of us for ages together and literature has pondered on it adequately. But the understanding and implications of body have been changing from period to period. To understand the totality of both body and mind and to filter its essence in language, the writer will choose to be sexless i.e. neither man nor woman, but both at the same time. The writers like Baudelaire, Bachmann, Virginia Woolf, or Sylvia Plath proudly claims the status of androgyny a metaphor: that of the fully realized expression of genius. For a physician the patient’s body is a map of the past, present and future too. Religion has its own established notions about it. There is an important testimony to the Episcopal consensus about the formation of the body. The following statement was prepared by the bishops and theologians of Vatican Council I: in 1880.

This, our Holy mother the Church believes and teaches: when God was about to make man according to His image and likeness in order that he might rule over the whole earth, He
breathed into the body formed from the slime of the earth the
breath of life, that is, a soul produced from nothing...And
blessing the first man and Eve his wife who was formed by divine
power from his side, God said: “Increase and multiply, and fill
the earth” (Gen.1:28). 1

This passage, which presents the Genesis account of the way in which
Adam's and Eve's bodies were formed as straightforward history, naturally
suggests the traditional understanding of divine interventions in the
formation of the body. Body has acquired multi dimensioned and
philosophical magnitude in literature due to which it has invited greater
critical attention in the contemporary literature. The body is not self
revelatory; we need to dig out the meaning of it. In’ Written on the Body’
we can explore the new ways of writing about the body and the debate on
language, gender and use of ‘body’ in contemporary narratives with special
reference to the most celebrated novels like Jeanette Winterson’s Written
on the Body (1992). Jeanette winterson is the bold and fresh voice against
orthodoxy of social instructions, religion, for incriminated women for all
evils. Winterson’s ‘W0TB’ has been one of the most fascinating
contemporary novels. It is the most widely circulated and hugely read by the
readers and received considerable attentions of the critics. ‘W0TB’ (1992)
highlights the world of medical science simultaneously with the theme of comprehending the mysterious power of love in the female body. The hero of the novel is bestowed with a strong libidinal appetite and is involved in several affairs with extreme levels of irresponsiveness. The protagonist is never short of females in his life; Bathsheba the dentist, Inge the Dutch, Judith Catherine, Jacqueline, Estelle, Louise and Gail are his sexual counterparts. Casanova’s relationship with these women is only to satiate hunger of the body which leads to the self degeneration into lust. But the protagonist association with Louise is a great twist in his life and style. By this point the novel appears to have monotonous repetition of the protagonist’s sexual involvement with many women. But Winterson consciously creates a situation of dislocation, displacement when once loved and darling body decays. The heroine of the novel Louise is affected by cancer.

‘W0TB’ is about glorification of love. The protagonist in the novel is unnamed and the gender is unspecified. The novelist Winterson has been brilliant in capturing emotions in ‘W0TB’. The novel has a simple story; love found, love lost and love found again. The narrator falls for a married woman ‘Louise’ who leaves her husband for her new love but when she finds she has cancer, she leaves her new love too. ‘W0TB’ is a journey of
self-discovery made through the metaphors of desire and disease. The second half of the novel is about the disease and the vast world of medical science. Louise’s husband Dr. Elgin and her lover, the narrator converse:-

_The facts Elgin. The facts_

*Lukaemia.*

*Since when?*

*About two years.*

*She’s not ill.*

*Not yet.*

*What kind of lukaemia?*

*Chronic lymphocytic lukaemia.*

*She lookes well.*

*The patients may have no symptoms for sometime.*

*She’s well.*

*She was badly anaemic.*

*I don’t understand.*

*It’s rare.*

*Will she die? They are rubbery but painless. Will she die? Her spleen enlarged at all. That’s good. Will she die? She has too many white T- cells. Will she die? That depends. On what? On*
you? You mean I can look after her? I mean I can. (WOTB, 103)²

The one incident among many, brings in whole lot of science and medicine in the novel such as; cancer treatment, steroids, latest medico technology, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, asymptomatic etc. It so much so that there is a complete chapter in the novel named the cells, tissues, systems and cavities of the Body, the chapter has four parts in it each having beginning with one complete introductory paragraph full with description of cancer, tissues, white bloods cells, etc. The medical world is revealed to its fullest here for readers as if they are the final year medical students. The novel words are skillfully chosen and have performed convincing role. The present novel is the finest example of use of body for understanding its mystique.

JEANETTE WINTERSON AS POSTMODERNIST:-

Jeanette Winterson was born in 1959 in Manchester and adopted and raised by a typical northern, working-class and austerely religious Pentecostal Evangelists in the small English town of Accrington, Lancashire. During her maturation she eternally had to struggle between contradictory conceptions of identity, sexuality, morality, divinity, and literature. At the age of sixteen
she fell in love with a girl she had converted to the church, which led to the annoyance of the church and the denouncement by her mother. Winterson mentioned:

“It was an extraordinary self.awakening, especially if you have a romantic temperament, as I do.”

She had to learn how to support herself as soon as sixteen years old, after having left both house and church. Having failed to make an impact in an interview panel at St Catherine’s College in Oxford, she camped outside until they reconsidered and she was finally accepted to read English in 1978. Her experiences as a child and a teenager, family relationships, severe religious upbringing and a final scorn by her adoptive mother were a fuel for the fire of the first novel; Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985), which won the Whitbread Award for Best First Novel 1985 and much praise and admiration. The comic book Boating for Beginners (1985) was followed by a novel of historiographic metafiction - The Passion (1987), winner of the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize 1987 and Sexing the Cherry (1989), winner of the E.M. Forster Award 1989.

A noteworthy change in Winterson’s profession brought the apparently highly personal Written on the Body (1992), which was branded as “the Great Bad novel of the 90s”, became an international bestseller and made

Winterson’s private ancestors were high Modernists Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and T.S. Eliot but have also been thrilled by European literature, by the playful intertextuality and sensibility of Italo Calvino, Borges, Perec and Rabelais. Winterson speaks in metaphors, in simplicity, which makes every sentence unique and never repetitive. To turn every page and progress with this character is pleasure and to feel for and sympathize with. I have written previous reviews on Winterson and it should be evident from these that I already worship the writing of this incredibly talented British author. It is the most captivating to mind, body and soul. There are so many reflections of truth entangled in the fantasy of Winterson’s plots that continue to surprise and delight. Written on the Body has inspired, soothed, stirred and taught the many-faceted nature of love and passion. Winterson’s
tender poetry leads on a dance that seduces while simultaneously revealing glimpses of reality.

Written on the Body is the novel with an interesting plot in it. The protagonist is a nameless Lothario, whose sex is never revealed, and his/her obliterating passion for Louise. The first time that I read this novel I assumed that the narrator was male, but re-reading it from the perspective of a female has opened up new vistas for me in the book. The first part of the novel relates the narrator's meeting with Louise, the wife of an eminent oncologist, and their tender and passionate affair. While Louise is described in glorious and meticulous detail, all that is revealed of the narrator is his/her previous love affairs. The focus of the novel is the development of their relationship, the contrast of Louise with the narrator's many sexual encounters. Once again, Winterson's heroine is a flame-haired nymph - the ideal woman whose earthy beauty is captivating and haunting. The novel explores both the idea and the reality of love as well as sex without ever becoming vulgar or pornographic. Winterson's writing is curiously accurate and deliberate in treading the fine line between eroticism and pornography. Winterson is one of few writers who is explicit in her discussion of sexual experience while maintaining the focus of her writing on the essence and importance of love and gentleness. It is the most admiring quality
enormously found in Winterson's work as she fuses passion with tenderness and permeates her book with emotion.

The second part of the novel follows the revelation that Louise is suffering from leukaemia. Here the narrator examines the body parts of Louise as part of the analysis of her illness as well as how the body summarizes the person that she is. This part of the novel is most captivating. These descriptions of Winterson are familiar journeys through a well-known and still strangely unique writer's garden. The love and desire that infuse the description of each body part set the pages ablaze.

Written on the Body is one of Winterson's more candid novels where her deep philosophies and much of her abstract imagination is masked in more gentle tones. This is a refreshing change from some of her heavier novels that indifferently mix physics, philosophy, mythology and biology. Written on the Body is a great Winterson novel. We marvel at the writing of this inspiring author while at the same time broken between moments of intense passion and humor. It is a clever prose/poetry amalgamation. Written on the Body is a novel that leads through the maze that is love. It surprises us with moments of mad passion, pages of delicate tenderness, and situations of intense despair and leaves us with a heart raw from its bruising journey.
While the writing of this author is undoubtedly brilliant, the flashes of insight and re-arrangement of reality can become repetitive if her books are read back to back. ‘Written on the Body’ reveals philosophy of life, love and desire.

Winterson’s novel has love in a new light - love stripped of cliches and false memories. Love in all its simplicities and complexities and its power to occupy one and all. This common thread is significant, because it deals with a subject matter. Winterson has ability to make the ordinary seem at once strange and beautiful. Her ability to re-introduce all her readers to their lives and all the parts of themselves that they do not see everyday is commendable. Written on the Body is a delightful and painful book, a dichotomy that works brilliantly. Expect to experience a range of emotions and reactions when you read this book because it journeys beyond socially-created barriers. The result is a voyage through the self, allowing scrutinizing the relationships and seeing things that may never have been seen before. Winterson's books are always colourful and poignant; her subject matter is deep and sometimes confronting, her language is rich and soothing. Written on the Body is a new rhythm, enveloping in the fresh and haunting ideas of a talented and powerful story.
The language of her novels is embroidered with poetry. The main themes are usually love, problems caused by love, love triangles, dilemmas, boundaries, desire, allegorical fairytales, feminist myths, romance and very prominently a strong presence of feminine consciousness. As a novelist and controversialist, she enjoys a considerable public profile and is seldom afraid, when writing in newspapers, to take a moral view, whether of woman’s rights or global politics. In her fiction she seeks to challenge conventional thinking, to transgress gender boundaries, all her narrators are androgynous or sometimes even genderless, the style is playful and aphoristic, the form is non-linear and fragmented. Desire is the location of resistances to the norms, proprieties and taxonomies of the cultural order. Desire, needs support and efforts to legitimate sexual dissidence. Jeanette Winterson in ‘WOTB’ delineates a love story without revealing the gender of the narrator. The object of the narrator's desire is a woman, but there have been others, some of them men. Winterson's story is compelling, passionate, and lyrical. What matter, it seems to say, who is speaking, when desire is always derivative, conventional, and already written. Jeanette Winterson is tremendously choosy about her range of words and has taken lot of trouble in keeping the identity a secret throughout the novel. Love is also intensely individual, so that what is written is repeated with a difference, of sexual
preference. But it can be emphasized that the way desire in all its forms, including heterosexual desire, commonly repudiates legality; at the level of the unconscious its imperatives are absolute; in a whole range of ways, and the institutions designed to contain it. Moreover, desire imagines a utopian world, visualizing an alteration and transfiguration of the quotidian which throws into relief the cheerlessness we too easily take for granted.

Feminine urge in the protagonist of the novel has affirmed universality of the feminine characters. The feminineness of the protagonist helps to transcend cultural boundaries and historical difference, to be shared across time and space. However much sexual practices and preferences are known to differ culturally, the desire that motivates the protagonist needs to be tacitly understood. It is for this reason study of feminine aspect in the present novel is significant. Written on the Body, a novel by Jeanette Winterson, will offer through the main character and simultaneously personal narrator Lothario the samples of stereotyped masculinity and femininity, which Winterson listed to unveil the mockery between the lines for more attentive readers.

“I like to look at how people work together when they are put into stressful situations, when life stops being cozy, when it stops
being predictable, when there is a chance element which unsettles all the rules, which forces people back onto their own sources, and away from their habits.  

“Why is the measure of love loss?” (WOTB, 47)"
because it can relate to the character. Many of the things the narrator does are weird or unacceptable for a man to be doing. For instance, when the narrator is watching Louise from outside her window, and also when sleeping together in the house with her husband there. It would be much more unacceptable in both of those situations for a man to be doing those things. One may assume that the book would be a sort of translation into words of the narrator's physical experiences. However, in the anatomization section about halfway through the book, it became apparent that the narrator was reading Louise's body. At the same time, on page number 89, Louise is reading the narrator's body. This ambiguity in the title serves to unite the narrator's and Louise's bodies. Rather than the narrator possessing or controlling Louise's body, s/he actually becomes part of her body.

"I dropped into the mass of you and I cannot find the way out. Sometimes I think I'm free, coughed up like Jonah from the whale, but then I turn a corner and recognize myself again. In your skin, myself lodged in your bones, myself floating in the cavities that decorates every surgeon’s wall. That is how I know you. You are what I know. (WOTB, 120)"
The characters exchange agency throughout the story and the narrator too sometimes desires and other times the desired; this too functions to merge the two characters together. This mutuality of bodies is where this otherwise typical romance differs from a traditional love story. Their love for each other seems to grow out of an essential same-ness, rather than love-through-difference. Perhaps this could even lend itself to homoerotic interpretations, even though the narrator has no identified gender. However, the character's shared physicality and functions within the story is what pull it away from the troublesome cliched romance that the narrator and author have such a dislike toward.

"Cheating is easy. There’s no swank to infidelity. To borrow against the trust someone has placed in you costs nothing at first. You get away with it, you take a little more and a little more until there is no more to draw on. Oddly, your hands should be full with all that taking but when you open them there is nothing there. (WOTB, 162)"

is what the narrator at one point in the story says about his/her transgressions says that, when it comes to his/her married lovers. This is an outlook that is not carried into completion in the book, as it later becomes very understandable that unfaithfulness is infinitely intricate when you find
the right woman. The Narrator in the story is a mysterious, genderless character, but when it comes to emotional morality this character knows exactly what is right and what is wrong. However, that does not stop him/her from being unethical, and having few qualms about it. This is proven in the way he/she continues to become intertwined in these attractions and relationships with involved or married people. Whether this is something the narrator is aware of is unsure, but it makes for a wonderful foundation to this remarkable story of love and loss. The narrator’s involvement with, a married woman, Louise is a stunning Titian beauty married to a man who is, quite literally, married to his work. He needs her for little, as he gets most of his sexual gratification elsewhere, so when she decides to become involved with the Narrator it is of little surprise that she informs her husband of this. Whether she initially became caught up in the affair just to get back at her husband is uncertain, but it backfires when Louise and the Narrator fall into a deep, passionate love for one another and her husband becomes exasperated with it. How he gets his revenge is poignant and brilliant, he informs the Narrator that Louise is dying from leukemia and that he can help to stretch out her time to live, if the Narrator agrees to never interfere in their life again.
What happens in the remainder of the book is so heartbreaking. The Narrator declines into a session of depression so severe it makes the reader ache for him/her. The depths of longing, the proclamations of love and worship of the lost Louise, and the self deprecation at allowing her husband to have the final say are so dramatic. We are with the narrator for every second of his/her heartbreak, every painful moment and decision he/she makes as a result of his/her grief becomes our pain, our grief, our wish for release. The pain of watching someone die from cancer is hard enough, the pain of watching someone you love with every core of you being died from cancer is death ten times over and Winterson's character makes us feel as if it is our loss of love that is at stake not his/hers. Winterson's work is always wonderful; her skillful usage of classical stories and metaphors is something one relish. In this case she spoke much of Caliban from ‘The Tempest’.

"Articulacy of fingers, the language of the deaf and dumb, signing on the body longing. Who taught you to write in blood on my back? Who taught you to use your hands as branding irons? You have scored your name into my shoulders, referenced me with your mark. The pads of your fingers have become printing blocks, you tap a message onto my skin, tap meaning into my body. Your Morse code interferes with my heart beat. I had a
steady heart before I met you, I relied upon it, it had seen active
service and grown strong. Now you alter its pace with your own
rhythm, you play upon me, drumming me taut. Written on the
body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the
accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest
is so heavily worked that the letters feel like Braille. I like to keep
my body rolled away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much,
tell the whole story. I don't know that Louise would have reading
hands. She has translated me into her own book.” (WOTB, 51)”

A Russian translator speaks about the preoccupation that this person has
with women, a series of women, until Louise comes into this person's life,
transforming it forever. Their Love Story is beautifully meticulous and
devotedly chronicled in heart stopping prose. Winterson has created many
extraordinary paragraphs. Her book is lusciously put together, and she has
used profuse creativity in constructing loving passages, one after another,
written on the body or rather about the body, and the protagonist's
unquenchable longing for Louise. This book is poignant, pensive, and a
beautiful joy. The Love Story is magical and wondrous and makes one's
heart flutter to comprehend it further.
Regardless of Winterson's neat prose and fluid style, ‘W0TB’ cannot accomplish what it in the last part wants. It begins with a bang, but is followed by a whisper. The first twenty to thirty pages are lucid and witty, a play on fiction itself and a sparkling tossing around of Caliban and the storyteller in a kind of dream-meta-fiction. That this is followed by a horrid sentimentalism is somewhat shocking. Winterson's seeming point, to write a love made not by cliches but stripped bare to the core, is undercut by her rein scribing of all the clichés on a more lusty level. For a love story, it’s simply clichés in a language alienate, rather than an annihilation. The end is complete melancholy. However, an objection stems from Winterson's strong anti-Semitism, marked clearly in the "body" of Elgin. Winterson, in incorporating this component, clearly places herself in the personal-political convention of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. But unlike those venerated writers the amalgamation of these beliefs amidst her otherwise free work is upsetting. This is old-fashioned evaluation, and lovers convinced they have found true love may find it a nice ideal to try to recreate. Unfortunately, this is not Winterson at her best and it does not deserve the gross seriousness with which the rest seem to take it. Every word in the novel is completely honest and true, something which makes the book so special. “W0TB " is especially famous for it’s obviously "gender-less” narrator, but - the
narrator’s gender becomes more and more noticeable while reading the book. The heroine's sex right from the beginning is not questioned but it becomes quite clear looking at the narrator's feelings, thoughts, and reactions and so on. The most beautiful thing of this work is the way Jeanette writes about love, beauty, sex, passion, desperation and, of course, loss. No other contemporary author is able to inscribe like her, it's simply striking.

The novel ‘W0TB’ has plenty of paradoxes. As its title suggests, it mainly is about the physical. Throughout, the narrator describes body parts, which are more feminine, than relationships, sometimes in a style that unambiguously blends love poetry and an anatomy text book. Nevertheless, ironically, the narrator also maintains that the relationship which is the focus of the book is something more than mere physical lust: it is love. If there was more individuality and emotion in the story, perhaps this would ring true, but the personality never emerges.

Although the story is largely about the corporal, it is also bitter and sterile. The narrator describes his lover Louise as a pre-Raphaelite woman, but there is nothing sensuous and evocative in the story unless you're so peculiarly constituted as to get a buzz from reading the more clinical parts of the Encyclopedia Britannica. For the rest of us, from the point of view of
titillation, there is little to recommend this work. The characters in Written on the Body strike as cartoonishly polarized. The former lovers of the narrator Bathsheba and Inge and Crazy Frank with rings through his nipples and midget parents are all unreasonable in their own way. Elgin, Louise's husband is equally cartoonishly drawn an unlovable ruffian who deserves to love. We are persuaded that Winterson chose the letter L to be her Queen of letters in ‘Written on the Body’ due to more reasons – and namely, because it symbolizes human heart and love, is joined with delight and higher spirits and by its pronunciation the air gets out along two sides of the mouth. Two streams of air meet when touching the lips, as it is by meeting of the lovers. To Elgin, Louise is the gorgeous wife and is not less than a crown. Palimpsest comes from Greek roots, meaning ‘again-scraped’ and it is a technique used in postmodern literature. Palimpsest is a manuscript, originally written on papyrus or parchment, on that an earlier text has been effaced and the fine soft paper for writing or parchment reused for another. All of us have the palimpsests of our life written on our bodies and wait for someone to come and discover them, decode them and translate them into their book of life. The process of the translation is what we are searching for in the life and a goal to reach it is what really matters, which is the reason, why we have insufficient information about Lothario. We do not know the
real name, the sex, the gender, the age, the race, the institutionalized identity descriptors are misplaced. Revealed is all the information about the inner psychical world, wishes, memories and profession - a translator. S/he is not only the translator of languages, namely Russian and English, but, primarily, the translator of the code, ‘written on the body’ of Louise, and at the same time Louise is translating his/her code. The personal narrator:

“Please go with Elgin. He has promised to tell me how you are. I shall think of you every day. Your hand prints are all over my body. Your flesh is my flesh. You deciphered me and now I am plain to read. The message is simple one: my love for you. I want you to live. Forgive my mistakes. Forgive me. (WOTB, p103, 106)”

Winterson mentioned:

“All of my books are about boundaries and desire – the boundaries we should try to cross, like fear and class and skin colour and expectation, and the boundaries that seem to define us, such as our sense of self, our gender… I wanted to see how much information I could leave out – especially the kind of character information that is routine – and still hold the story together.”
The question about the sex of the narrator is answered by Winterson’s observation that it does not matter which sex the narrator is, because “the gender of the character is both, throughout the book, and changes; sometimes it is female, sometimes it is male” and there is also no need to disclose it.

“If I put in a gender then it weights my story in a way that I don’t want it to be weighted. So I didn’t.”

‘Written on the Body’ is an emotional, romantic, lyrical, postmodern novel, embroidered with deep expressions of longing. Shading of plot, action, public and social life is done in favour of more extensive insight into characters’ inner consciousness, inner thoughts and desires, passion, their common psychical and sexual attraction, leading almost too reciprocal worshipping. The whole novel is constructed as a personal story, where the untrustworthy narrator Lothario remembers and reports the tale to a second person narratee, who shifts from Louise to the reader. The narrator’s unreliability is ironical but also underlines the fact, that his/her subjective perception of the world is for Winterson much more important than what actually took place, since the scenes are becoming metaphors for Lothario’s emotions.
As Helene Cixous has said: *One cannot describe reality; only give metaphors that indicate it.*”

One of the aims of the book is to deconstruct the clichés about gender, love and society-institutionalized masculine or feminine codes of behaviour, which proves the frequently repeated statement:

“*It’s the clichés that cause the trouble. To lose someone you love is to alter your life for ever. You don’t get over it because ‘it’ is the person you loved. The pain stops, there are new people, but the gap never closes. How could it? The particularness of someone who mattered enough to grieve over is not made anodyne by death. This hole in my heart is in the shape of you and no-one else can fit it. Why would I want them to? ”* (WOTB, 103, p. 10, 71, 155, 189)”

It is an important question here that whether a gender-free narrator can imply to a narration devoid of any gender-specific categorizations. By refusing to admit Lotario’s gender, Winterson is playing with and demonstrating the stereotypes which the readers are supposed to have. The deconstruction of gender specific codes in the minds of the readers should go hand in hand with the deconstruction of the language of love, which is
written on the body. The categorizations in the reader’s mind are subject to a chain of uncertainties, as not only the narrator’s identity is not answered, but also the coded perception that constitutes the text in one’s mind. The reader of this postmodern text is forced to actively partake in creation and image of his own story, since all the milestones of the everyday perception of the world through the eyes are left out by not describing the character. Constant contradicting, satirizing and questioning of the sexual stereotypes highlights the fact, that love should be a more universal phenomenon than we have been taught to believe. It should not be reserved exclusively for heterosexual relationships, since Lothario is bisexual. The narrator switches from honest emotional self-analysis to narrating Lothario, to whom the reader has to be careful to trust. Winterson mastered in her book both – to compose a very personal confession in a highly poetic language and to satirically deconstruct the old clichés and codes. While raising up the questions about the boundaries of love and gender, using the mask of gender ambiguity, Winterson is directing our gaze to the secret code only visible in certain lights. Some critics of the feministic literature have dismissed the ungendered narrator as an eye-catching scheme, considering it as a narrative strategy to assert that gender is unimportant to lovers. For example Valerie Miner has claimed that although initially,
“The concealment of (the narrator’s) sex forecasts interesting theoretical questions about essentialism,” Winterson fails to “carry these identity questions beyond the gimmick.”

We on the contrary sustain the opinion, that the ungendered narrator conveys the idea, that gender is unimportant to the lovers in the text, but simultaneously underlines the fact that within contemporary dominant discourses, gender is not only important to lovers, it is what constitutes desire and choice of sexual object. We agree with R. Stevart’s explanation of the role of Winterson’s narrator:

“The ungendered narrator is not a trivial device, but rather it is a subversive narrative strategy that challenges traditional gender binarisms and compulsory heterosexuality, inciting readers to imagine a world in which desire has been dislodged from these regulatory regimes.”

The closer look at the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity presented on one hand by Winterson in ‘W0TB’ on the other hand being valid, existing and operating in our everyday lives,

“One does after years of playing the Lothario and seeing nothing but an empty bank account and a pile of yellowing love-notes like IOUs. I had done to death the candles and champagne, the roses,
the dawn breakfasts, the transatlantic telephone calls and the impulsive plane rides. I had done all of that to escape the cocoa and hot water bottles. And I had done all of that because I thought the fiery furnace must be better than central heating I suppose I couldn’t admit I was trapped in a cliché every bit as redundant as my parents’ roses round the door. ” (WOTB, 20)

LOTHARIO’S MASCULINITY:
To present some examples of masculinity in the narrator and the main character, we will start with introducing, thus addressing him/herself. The real name of this self-addressed Lothario remains through the whole book unknown. It is definitely a man’s name and it is highly improbable, that a female would under normal circumstances refer to herself with a name of a man, meaning by Roget’s II: New Thesaurus: A man amorously attentive to women, also amorist, Casanova…A man who seduces women, like debaucher, seducer… Lothario adopted this meaning after a character in The Fair Penitent, a 1703 play by Nicholas Rowe. The narrator choice an epitaph:

“Bigger questions, questions with more than one answer, questions without an answer are harder to cope with in silence.
Once asked they do not evaporate and leave the mind to its serener musings. Once asked they gain dimension and texture, trip you on the stairs; wake you at night-time. A black hole suck up its surroundings and even light never escapes. Better than to ask no question? Better to be a contented pig than an unhappy Socrates?” (WOTB, 13)”

Here is the reference not that clear as it was in the previous example. On one hand, we have a male name, which leads to a direct relation to masculinity, as it is not common for women to call themselves with men’s names, on the other hand, Socrates can stand for a great philosopher and in this sense Socrates is the term, covering both, men and women, if they want to mention a person excelling in philosophy, regardless of the sex.

“But you are gazing at me the way God gazed at Adam and I am embarrassed by your look of love and possession and pride. I want to go now and cover myself with fig leaves. It’s a sin this not being ready, this not being to it. You said, ‘I love you and my love for you makes any other life a lie.” (WOTB, 18-19)’

Adam was according to Bible the first man, so it hints to masculinity. But at the same time, he was also the first human being on the Earth, which then
represents both genders. Quite interesting would be to ask Winterson, at what time she intended God’s gazing at Adam. If it had been before he created Eve, it would mean, that Adam stands for both genders, because he was the only human. If it happened after having created Eve, it would directly allude to narrator’s male gender, as God in this text would have chosen to gaze at Eve, if he wanted to stress narrator’s femininity. Narrator recollects in his mind the memories of the time spent with a former girlfriend Inge, who was a romantic and a feminist.

“My job was to go into the urinals wearing one of Inge’s stockings over my head. That in itself might not have attracted much attention, men’s toilets are fairly liberal places, but then I had to warn the row of guys that they were in danger of having their balols blown off unless they left at once. A typical occasion would be to find five of them, cock in hand, starting at the brown-streaked porcelain as though it were the Holy Gral. Why do men like doing everything together? I said (quoting Inge), “This urinal is a symbol of patriarchy and must be destroyed.’ Then (in my own voice), my girlfriend has just wired up the Semetx, would you mind finishing off?’ (WOTB, 22)”
It is for sure, that a woman masked with a stocking entering a men’s toilet would attract a more serious attention. In this citation, the person did not cause too much notice by the men peeing into urinals. Above it all, narrator also mentions, that men’s toilets are ‘fairly liberal places’, the knowledge that a woman cannot get, unless she is frequently visiting them, which women do not do. The stereotypes about sex indicate, that men need to have intercourse more often than women, their orgasm is reached more easily and in a shorter time and a high percentage of perfect relationship, in which they feel superb, is achieved by great and regular sex. Women should according to some old-fashioned stereotypes prefer caressing, tenderness, feeling of protection and need.

“I was looking for a perfect coupling; the never-sleep non-stop mighty orgasm. Ecstasy without end. I was deep in the sop-bucket of romance. Sure my bucket was a bit racier than most, I’ve always had a sport car, but you can’t rev your way out of real life. That home girl gonna get you in the end. This is how it happened.” (WOTB, 21)” 20

Men are considered to treat the breasts as a symbol of womanhood, beauty and sex. By extreme exaggeration Winterson reaches with intention a ridiculous state of those stereotypes that do not correspond with reality. In
reality it seems to us highly probable, that neither man, nor a lesbian woman would stay in a relationship that does not work because of the woman’s breasts. Also in this example Winterson presents a stereotype of masculinity to make the readers think about the absurdity of these clichés.

“Why didn’t I dump Inge and head for a Singles Bar? The answer is her breasts. They were not marvelously upright; the kind women were as epaulettes, as a mark of rank. Neither were they pubescent playboy fantasies. They had done their share of time and begun to submit to gravity’s insistence. The flesh was brown, the aureoles browner still, nipples bead black. My gypsy sisters I called them, though not to her. I had idolized them simply and unequivocally, neither as a mother substitute nor a womb trauma, but for themselves. Freud didn’t always get it right. Sometimes a breast is a breast is a breast.” (WOTB, 24)"21

But there is also greater confusion in many incidents of the novel.

“I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator.” , (WOTB, 24)"22
Winterson combined in one sentence the postmodern techniques: second person narratee, unreliable narrator, and metafiction. The reader’s narrative reality is destroyed. From the beginning, the narrator’s competence to offer an authentic story is shaken. S/he immerses into the minds of the readers and supposes their wonders. Even if somebody has trusted the narrator until these lines, they get the cold shower. The readers are since now lost in the personal story, told by only one character, which they are not sure to believe and thus are forced to, be careful and pay a huge attention to whatever happens. They are standing at the crossroads, one way means to trust the character, the other one is the way of doubt and a big distance from every sentence written.

“I’ve always had a sports car, but you can’t rev your way out of real life. That home girl gonna get you in the end. This is how it happened. I was in the last spasms of an affair with a Dutch girl called Inge. She was a committed romantic and an anarchy-feminist. This was hard for her because it meant she couldn’t blow up beautiful buildings. She knew the Eiffel Tower was a hideous symbol of phallic oppression but when ordered by her commander to detonate the lift so that no-one should unthinkingly scale an erection, her mind filled with young
Which of the images occurs to us when we think about a person owning a sports car, a man or a woman? The statement reminds most of the people of a proud, wild libertine fooling around in his sports car, carefree, without any worries, which will be sooner or later captured by a home girl and forced to adapt to society manners and prescriptions.

Here are many women driving a sports car and many home boys planning to settle down and to have family earlier than their girlfriends. We do not want to suggest, that having a sports car is exclusively restricted to males. What we have in mind is, that Winterson presented this example of stereotypes for readers to ponder about their suitability, relevance and ask themselves the question; whether they are true or are just the prevailing modern myths substituting the old ones mentioned earlier J. Lipman-Blumen.

The narrator’s ex-girlfriend had a letter-box with a yellow and green serpent poking out at crotch level, set up for a postman to stop bothering her. To ring the door’s bell meant to push the private parts into the head of the snake. The narrator hesitated to reach the bell, because s/he considered it lethal and painful. Interestingly, the novel also has applied the stream of consciousness technique set forth in the dialogue of the rational ‘me’ and the
irrational, scared ‘I’, written like a theatre play. Me says, that it is a joke, the teeth are not real, while I is afraid. The male outer genitalia are exposed and therefore more liable to vulnerability. The snake’s teeth close to the genitalia probably would not cause to females, such a fear as to the males in the same situation. The dialogue between I and Me is the dialogue between the reason and the emotion. The rational side of the mind knows, that the metal head of the snake cannot harm the private parts and it could also lead to the hint, that Me stands for the female part. The snake’s teeth would not do an enormous damage to the female genitalia, because they are hidden. The stereotype of the purely female emotiveness and exclusively male reasoning is being shattered.

The cliché says, that some types of men want to get into bed as many women as they can, they boast with their numbers and afterwards throw the lovers away as a piece of a dirty cloth. In our society a myth like this, presenting the women, who would treat men the same way, is not that common. Louise says to the narrator:

“I don’t want to be another scalp on your pole.

You started this, Louise.’

‘I acknowledged it. We both started it.’
What was all this about? We had made love once. We had known each other as friend for a couple of months and yet she was challenging my suitability as a long-term candidate?

I said as much. (WOTB, 53)²⁴

The citation about the scalp on the pole could bring up the suggestion of the narrator’s masculinity. The aggression is usually attributed to the male characteristics. Men are stereotypically said to use the means of violence when they get furiously angry and as a consequence of bitter arguments. The narrator’s use of the physical power in aggression is depicted in the novel twice. When the ex-girlfriend Jacqueline damaged his/her flat after finding out, that s/he has been cheating on her.

“I slapped her across the face and tore my keys from her pocket.” (WOTB, 86)²⁵

The second time when s/he visits Louise’s ex-husband Elgin.

“I grabbed him by his tie and jammed him against the door. I’ve never had any boxing lessons so I had to fight on instinct and cram his windpipe into his larynx. It seemed to work. Unfortunately he couldn’t speak. ‘Are you going to tell me what’s happened, are you?’ Pull the tie a bit tighter and watch his eyes pop out.” (WOTB, 170)²⁶
One of the important feminine aspects Winterson focuses in this novel is an infuriated woman could be stronger than a man. Every person’s inner fury can accumulate a surprisingly immense strength. The reason of mentioning these examples is that it is quite rare for a woman to use aggression towards either another woman or man. The females in most of the cases when being provoked prefer the psychical pressure towards the object of their indignation.

**LOTHARIO AS A FEMININE CHARACTER :-**

The assumption that the personal narrator might be female is achieved by the comparison to Alice in Wonderland,

“I shall call myself Alice and play croquet with the flamingoes.”

*(ibid, p.10)*, Lauren Bacall “I stared at it the way Lauren Bacall does in those films with Humphrey Bogart.” *(ibid, p.41)* and the similes in “Why do I feel like a convent virgin?”*(ibid,p.94)* or “I quivered like a schoolgirl.” *(WOTB, 82)*

Another significant example of Winterson’s strong feminine consciousness throughout this novel is reflected here. A male narrator would probably rather compare himself to a monk than a virgin or would select Humphrey
instead of Lauren. A man can quiver like a schoolboy, if he wants to emphasize the young age, vulnerability, fear and panic. The schoolgirls’ and schoolboys’ quiver in general is caused by the same stimuli, which are usually terror, nervousness and anxiety. The reference to a schoolboy would cause no difference in meaning and therefore these examples are direct hints of It’s womanhood. These examples of self-identification contrast with those, stressing Lothario’s masculinity, which are present all over. The male and female pictures, embodiments and allusions of identity stretch simultaneously in parallel throughout the whole novel, and are thus difficult to comprehend but help to visualize Winterson’s mind and discover the veiled gender. If we consider narrator were a woman, it would mean, that her relationship with Louise is a lesbian one. It would not be surprising, because Winterson is lesbian and her partner might resemble Louise. When viewed from this perspective, the novel would incorporate a big amount of autobiographical features. The point of view and depiction of other characters seem to be a feminine one. Females are looked at with a greater insight and more developed in the field of psychology. S/he sympathizes with women rather than with men, as it is felt from their descriptions.
“At the Clap Clinic the following day, I looked at my fellow sufferers. Shifty Jack-the-lads, fat businessmen in suits cut to hide the bulge. A few women, tarts yet, and other women too. Women with eyes full of pain and fear. What was this place and why had nobody told them? Who gave it to you love? I wanted to say to one middle-aged woman in a floral print. She kept staring at the posters about gonorrhea’s and then trying to concentrate on her copy of Country Life.’ Divorce him,’ I wanted to say. ‘You think this is the first time?’ Her name was called and she disappeared into a bleak white room.” (WOTB, 46)”

All the patients, whom the narrator saw in the waiting room when diagnosed with contracting syphilis, are commonly labelled as fellow sufferers, which is neutral. Men are viewed only from the external perspective. All the words describing men in this sentence have negative and almost hateful connotation: dubious, Jack-the-lads and chubby. If one imagines a man according to this interpretation, their mental picture conveys an idea of an untruthful, squalid, plump businessman. All the men seem to be of one type, the categorization is overly restricted. Here too the sharp inclination towards women, more feminine, and seem to be prejudiced and
critical towards men. On the contrary, women are divided into two groups—
the prostitutes and the victims, although they are the minority in the waiting
room. They are classified by the feelings, thoughts and not by the
appearance. S/he deduces their emotions of pain and fear according to the
expression of the eyes and thus justifies the insight. Their looks – the figures
and the clothes - are not mentioned, the prominence is laid on the indirect
assumption, originating from their facial expression. The scorn for men
would be comprehended, if the narrator had caught the disease from a man.
But syphilis was transmitted to him/her by Bathseba, who is his/her ex-
girlfriend. Although a woman is responsible for the narrator’s misery and
men play no role in the burden, they are the ones categorized by
depreciation.

“Who gave it to you love?”…“Divorce him,” I wanted to say.

“You think this is the first time?” (WOTB, 46)”²⁹

The narrator looks at a woman and confidently forecasts that she got the
disease from her unfaithful husband. The black-and-white attitude sees men
in the critical light, as the evil-doers, while women are seen as the injured
partners, even though there is no proof for this stance. S/he does not know
the circumstances of woman’s acquiring of the disease. She could have been
the one cheating her partner and thus got infected. Nothing is mentioned
about the woman and so the judgment is exclusively in the hands of the readers, to decide, whether they agree with the narrator’s point of view in this situation, when favouring women and abhorring men. Our notion varies from the one offered by the narrator. When somebody enters the clinic, they have no reason for a divergent perception of the patients, based only on patient’s sex. We would not assume that exclusively men, and preferably flabby businessmen in the suits, are always cheating their wives and not being cheated. Simultaneously the blame can be laid on a woman and her husband does not have to be the source of syphilis. Both sexes are equally competent of deception of their partners. We regard the narrator’s prejudices about men’s untrustworthiness as misleading and thus showing his/her negative incrimination towards males. The book is narrated by a character that is never given either a name or a gender. Since it’s a love story, and the primary love object is a woman, but the narrator has had previous relationships with men and women, the fact that we don’t know whether the narrator is male or female is supposed to mess with head. For a new reader who had never read a lesbian love story before and didn’t believe in bisexuality, it is bizarre of a kind. However, initially the narrator appears to be female though there’s no way to ‘prove’ that she’s a woman, but she certainly didn't come across as a man. Readers may be less convinced, but
acknowledged that the narrator was either "a man, or a lesbian." All the points she raised about the narrator's potential masculinity would also apply to a woman who was butch enough, so that's not viable to prove. The chief purpose of this technique is, it would be unkind to call it a device because winterson does handle it pretty unnoticeably and it's really the reviewers that turned it into one is to force the narrator to describe love and sex without resorting to the familiar cliches, and once again, we have to take our hats off to her on that front. Her descriptions are often very stunning and she certainly conveys the familiarity, the power and profundity of feeling between the narrator and her lover. The interesting digressions about the narrator's previous love and, many of which are purposely absurd and amusing. The first half of the novel is really pleasant and even though the truth that the narrator has spent a lifetime seducing and being seduced by married women made for some maddening disquisitions about the association between passion and long-term commitment.

The plot of the novel ‘Written on the Body’ is about a person who has had a cord of unsuccessful, diminutive, often secret relationships (s/he says s/he is "addicted to the first six months") who at last found what s/he believes; at the moment anyway, is The Big One. The Big One is a red-haired beauty named Louise who is married to a truly heinous and hyper-annoying
oncologist named Elgin. The storyteller is involved in a one-year relationship with an assistant zookeeper named Jacqueline who specializes in counseling traumatized tiny furry animals. However, it's clear that the narrator never in actuality cared much about Jacqueline, so watching him/her go through the whole "adultery angst" thing makes us really kind of want to strike him/her for jerking this poor woman around for a year only to dump her as soon as something better comes along. Unlike all the other married women, this one is prepared and willing to leave her husband, and for the first half of the book reader may think the big calamity will be: can the narrator's love stay alive the long-term availability of the beloved, or will this one end after the first six months again?

In the second half of the novel the narrator does something that the narrator believes is A Noble And Selfless Renunciation, but that anyone with two brain cells can instantaneously see is either the most serious blunder ever made in the history of star-crossed loving, or a massive, horrific, and utterly fearful and scandalous betrayal of Louise. For the rest of the novel, the narrator wallow in grief and pain which s/he believes s/he is enduring for the sake of the beloved, but it is completely unnecessary and unjustified. This leads to an astonishing section in which the narrator becomes obsessed, preoccupied with human anatomy textbooks and uses them to write intense,
lyrical descants on Louise's body which are by turns beautiful, moving, and disturbing as hell; but because from our point of view the narrator had already forfeited her right to call what s/he was feeling for Louise love, this section also appears to be highly irritating. Meanwhile, there is some unnecessary low comedy involving the overweight, randy, sexually aggressive female boss at the narrator's new job, and when the narrator finally comes to understand--thanks to this same overweight, randy, excited, sexually aggressive, and, at the same time, drunk off her and boss that s/he has Made A Terrible Mistake, that's supposed to be a revelation. In fact it just makes you want to smack the narrator for having taken this long to figure that out. A Noble Quest undertaken after this disclosure leads to a most unimpressive ending.

The ungendered narrator in Jeanette Winterson's 'WO TB' is one of the texts most talked about features, acquiring ambivalent responses from the majority of its reviewers. One critic describes it as the "book's principal conceit, its greatest weakness, and perhaps its greatest strength" (Van Kirk 604), while another asserts that the "plot hovers dangerously on the precipice of device" (Farwell 20). Other reviewers have dismissed the ungendered narrator as a "publicity stunt," viewing it as a insignificant narrative strategy employed to emphasize the point that gender is
insignificant to lovers. These critics claim that the popular romantic notion that falling in love is a union between souls or the inner selves of two individuals is an ordinary feeling that would have been more successfully conveyed through means other than a somewhat confusing device. However, critics who dismiss the importance of the ungendered narrator, reducing its textual function to the expression of a cliche, are ignoring its subversive implications. The ungendered narrator does convey the idea that gender is unimportant to the lovers in the text, but at the same time it fully highlights the fact that within contemporary dominant discourses, gender is not only important to lovers, it is what constitutes desire and sexual object choice. In other words, contrary to popular romantic notions, the process of falling in love does not occur independently of socially constructed gender positions. Instead it occurs within systems of gender and sexuality which regulate both desire and sexual object choice. As a result, the ungendered narrator is not a trivial device, but rather it is a revolutionary narrative strategy that challenges traditional gender binarisms and compulsory heterosexuality, provoking readers to imagine a world in which longing has been dislocated from these regulatory systems.

Judith Butler's theories of gender provide insight into the subversive status of the ungendered narrator. According to Butler, gendering, or assuming sex,
is part of a complex process that constitutes subjects, ushering them into the symbolic and allowing the appropriation of the "speaking `I' (WOTB, 03)"32

If assuming sex is part of a complex process that constitutes subjects, then Winterson's ungendered narrator would belong to the category of miserable, unlivable bodies. Even the language available to illustrate the narrator excludes the possibility of an ungendered person's existence. We have no option than to use ‘s/he’ or ‘him/her’ since calling the narrator ‘it’ emphasizes the idea that such a person could not exist as a subject, but only as an abject, unlivable body. However, using she /he’ and ‘him/her’ also seems to be inappropriate since they too highlight, through language, the binary understanding of gender. The narrator is not part ‘she,’ part ‘he,’ but rather is something other, which perhaps could be described as the slash between ‘she’ and ‘he’ rather than as the words on either side. In difference to Butler's formulation, the ungendered narrator in Winterson's text is a subject, a ‘speaking I.’ The narrator is not positioned in the text as a "site of dreaded identification," but instead is shown to be a individual who attracts and is attracted to many types of people. S/he describes him/herself as a Lothario, a usually privileged subject position akin to the Don Juan character type. However, because it is theoretically impossible within current hegemonic discourses for an ungendered person, who necessarily stands
outside the domain of the subject, to occupy this narrative position, the ungendered "Lothario" can only exist within the realm of fantasy. To state that 'WOTB' is a fantastic or utopic text in no way robs it of its significance and revolutionary potential. Rather, the fantastic and utopian tendencies of Winterson's text are subversive because they imagine alternative possibilities that have been denied by oppressive discourses. Winterson imagines a character that is ungendered and a world in which the ungendered body matters.

This subversive strategy also questions the heterosexual imperative because gender is not what constitutes sexual object choice. Butler claims that the process of gendering works in the service of compulsory heterosexuality, which attempts to construct a 'natural' link between gender and sexuality. Butler explains that heterosexual logic conflates identification and desire: "If one identifies as a given gender, one must desire a different gender". In other words, both heterosexuality and homosexuality are constructed around gender difference. In this framework, lesbian and gay identities, although far from compulsory, are considered problematic in that they too reify gender difference.

(Bilger "The Art of Fiction)33. In other words, homosexuality is not only a threat to heterosexuality's domination; it also works to reinforce it. Butler
argues that the regime of heterosexuality "mandates the compulsory performance of sex" and that "the very categories of sex, of sexual identity, of gender are produced or maintained in the effects of this compulsory performance disingenuously lined up within a causal or expressive sequence that the heterosexual norm produces to legitimate itself as the origin of all sex.". According to Butler, the solution, or the way to expose heterosexuality's false claim to originality and normativity, may be a matter of working sexuality against identity, even against gender," a strategy that ‘WOTB’ employs. In addition to the text's construction of an ungendered narrator, sexual identity labels, such as homosexual/heterosexual, are conspicuously absent from the text. Terms like gay, lesbian, and heterosexual would have very little meaning in the text because sexuality has been dislodged from both gender and identity in Winterson's fictional world. In short, ‘WOTB’ deregulates desire, constructing sexuality as fluid, multiple, and nomadic.

Lisa Moore, in her analysis of ‘WOTB’, discusses the ways that gender and sexuality are constructed in the text, claiming that Winterson’s ungendered narrator is a figure that appropriates the experiences and investments of variously gendered and sexualized beings in a structural enactment of Winterson's particular Virtual Reality. This is a figure
constructed of disparate body parts, desires, identities and histories, put together in a postmodern imitation. However, Moore’s description of the narrator as "a postmodern pastiche" is inaccurate. The narrator is not Winterson's cut and paste project consisting of multiple contemporary notions of masculine, feminine, lesbian, gay, and heterosexual desires and identifications. Instead, s/he is constructed within a discursive domain in which these regulatory oppositions are no longer operable. In other words, the narrator is a product of a radically different textual world; s/he is produced and made possible through the absence of the contemporary hegemonic norms that Moore uses to describe the narrator. Although the narrator may appear to be a "postmodern pastiche" because s/he exhibits both traditionally masculine and feminine attributes and behaviors, s/he is not merely a combination of existing identities, but rather a construction that might come to exist in a world where the formation of the subject is not based on avowing and disavowing identifications. In other words, the narrator is possibility; s/he is the potential subject of a discursive area in which heterosexuality is not necessary, and gender is fluid and manifold. As a result, by refusing terms like homosexuality/heterosexuality, ‘WOTB’ avoids reproducing the logic of obligatory heterosexuality.
The very existence of an ungendered narrator, who functions as a subject within a larger domain of power, illustrates that gender and sexuality are constructed as fluid and multiple in the world of the text. The narrator does not assume a sexed position because there is no legislative norm requiring her/him to do so. Also, because the narrator does not have to claim labels like man/woman and gay/straight, s/he does not have disavow parts of his/herself, nor foreclose certain kinds of connections and experiences.

Butler points out the cost of identity, claiming that it "is purchased through the loss and degradation of connection". In this light, the narrator's confused identity can be seen as the confirmation of association. This notion is also supported by Winterson's text, in which the narrator describes having had relationships with both men and women, displaying openness to various forms of relationships and desires.

In contrast to the narrator, Louise, the narrator's lover, but is also portrayed as excessively feminine. Winterson's construction of Louise's excessive femininity can be viewed as an attempt to create a space between androgyny and extreme femininity in which multiple degrees of femininity can exist. Instead of creating two ungendered lovers, which might be viewed as the promotion or elevation of androgyny, Winterson portrays a range of gender possibilities through a variety of characters who display diverse degrees of
femininity and masculinity. There is more slippage between masculinity and femininity in Winterson's textual world than in our contemporary society. Many characters in the text that are gendered by the pronouns "he" or "she," exhibit both traditionally feminine and masculine character traits.

Winterson's 'WOTB' plays with and even exaggerates this conception of woman as multiple and heterogeneous through descriptions of the narrator's previous female lovers, all of whom complete various gender roles. The fluidity of gender reveals that in the textual world Winterson has constructed, masculinity and femininity are not configured in an either/or relationship (either one is masculine or one is feminine), nor is power and dominance associated with masculinity. Instead, gender categories are constructed as more open and less confining than in present hegemonic discourses, allowing for considerable slippage between the two. Through the construction of a range of gender possibilities, the power dynamics of gendered binarisms are diffused.

For example, Jacqueline, the woman with whom the narrator had settled into a happy though passionless association before meeting Louise, is described as a nurturing, motherly type, one who "was good with parents, good with children good with animals, good with disturbed things of all kind."
"She was good with me" (WOTB, 25)\(^{35}\)

The narrator later gives the reader more insight into Jacqueline's character,

"She never bothered me when I said 'Don't bother me,' and she didn't cry when I shouted at her. In fact she shouted back. She treated me like a big cat in the Zoo. She was very proud of me"(WOTB, 286)\(^{36}\)

In contrast to the descriptions of the narrator's other lovers, Jacqueline is clearly positioned as a motherly, somewhat submissive type. Despite the fact that the narrator leaves Jacqueline, Jacqueline's ‘femininity’ is not positioned as inferior to the narrator's androgyny, nor is it rejected by the narrator. It is the relationship's lack of passion in combination with Jacqueline's intellectual and emotional simplicity, rather than her nurturing and motherly attributes that leads to the relationship's demise.

The text's construction of Jacqueline's ‘feminine’ attributes particularly her motherly and cultivating the traits which provide a contrast to the text's other constructions of femininity. In other words, the motherly, submissive woman is just one among many ‘feminine’ positions. Most of the narrator's other lovers who are gendered by the pronoun ‘she’ seem to frequently slip
among a variety of gendered positions, exhibiting behaviors and beliefs that are in conflict with traditional constructions of femininity. The female characters, who perform various gender roles, work to denaturalize dominant conceptions of gender difference. It deconstructs the link between gendered positions and expected social behaviors. For example, Bathsheba, a dentist, was married but promiscuous, a behavior which resulted in the narrator contracting syphilis, Estelle had a scrap metal business, and Catherine was a writer who ended their relationship because she said

"It's only a matter of time before I become an alcoholic and forget how to cook" (WOTB, 60)"

While Inge was

"A committed romantic and an anarchic-feminist" (WOTB, 216)"

Who fought patriarchy by blowing up men's urinals? The extreme differences among these women function to expand traditional constructions of femininity, posing a challenge to the notion that there is, to use Cixous's words, "a general woman" (1090)"

The men in the book, including the narrator's male lovers, also exhibit various gendered positions. Elgin, Louise's husband, is closely aligned with
contemporary phallocentric discourses. He is a doctor who is comfortable with the language of science, as well as with numbers, formulas, computers, and other technical equipment, but who is without both passion and compassion. He is not capable of satisfying Louise emotionally or sexually. For him, a woman is either a show piece, or a sexual object--someone to make him look good (Louise), or someone to make him feel good sexually (a prostitute). However, he is also depicted as a small, weak man, who does not stand a chance of holding on to Louise. The text's construction of Elgin as unattractive and as lacking both physical strength and strength of character, is one of many indications that the Law of the Father is not as strong and all-encompassing in the world of the text as it is in our contemporary society.

In contrast to Elgin, Crazy Frank, one of the narrator's ex-lovers, is not aligned with phallocentric values. As a child, he was adopted by midgets, a situation made odd by the fact that he eventually grew to be over six feet tall. As an adult, he took his adopted parents with him everywhere, carrying them on his shoulders because, as he explains to the narrator, they helped him to make friends. Crazy Frank's untraditional upbringing and his refusal to separate from his adopted parents, positions him outside of the traditional nuclear family. Winterson's use of hyperbolic imagery, midget parents and a
huge son with the body of a bull, is a textual tactic that attempts to enlarge restrictive constructions of the nuclear family.

In addition to his unusual family life, Crazy Frank is also positioned outside of traditional constructions of masculinity; although he is described as having the body of a bull, ‘an image he intensified by wearing great gold jewelry through his nipples’ he is also described in feminine terms:

"Unfortunately he had joined the hoops with a chain of heavy gold links. The effect should have been deeply butch but in fact it looked rather like the handle of a Channel shopping bag" (WOTB, 93)  

The another character that deserves mention here in Winterson's construction of a range of masculinity is Carlo, another of the narrator's ex-lovers, who made the narrator shave off all body hair, and who eventually left the narrator for another man:

"We lasted six months and then Carlo met Robert who was taller, broader and thinner than me. They exchanged razor blades and cut me out” (WOTB, 43)
Carlo is the only character in the novel that is explicitly described as having a relationship with someone of the same sex. It draws the reader's attention back to the issue of the narrator's gender and sexuality. Is the narrator a man in a homosexual relationship with Carlo, or is the narrator a woman involved with a bisexual or gay man? Or, are these even the right questions to be asking?

Because the text frustrates any attempt to answer these questions, it is perhaps more productive to consider how confusion, both textual ambiguity and the readers subsequent puzzlement, itself functions in the text. The confusion over the narrator's gender and sexuality works to highlight the construction of both categories, attract readers to visualize a world in which gender and sexual object choice are not linked. As a result, the passage that describes the narrator's relationship and break-up with Carlo can be viewed as explicitly challenging both the heterosexual imperative and the notion that a coherent identity is desirable and necessary. Because it is not mandatory in the textual world to adopt identity categories, characters are not forced to affirm identification at the expense of another. Sexuality, as well as gender, is fluid and multiple, irreducible to binary oppositions, which are exposed, through their absence, as unduly regulatory and exclusionary.
The text's construction of sexual object choice as functioning independently of gender could be viewed as an affirmation of bisexuality. Although the text clearly refuses monosexuality it seems that it also goes beyond contemporary constructions of bisexuality as well. Even if bisexuality/monosexuality is configured in binarism, as opposed to locating bisexuality in some narrow range between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Perhaps Winterson is attempting to construct a way of thinking about gender and sexuality that transcends contemporary constructions of homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality. Although it is true that the narrator, as well as other characters, have relationships with both men and women, more attention is paid to each character's individual sexual idiosyncrasies, practices, and pleasures, than to differences based on gender. Each sexual experience is distinct. The novel does not draw attention to any similarities in the described sexual experiences that could be credited to the gender of a sexual partner. Instead, the disparate characters in the text, exhibiting a range of gender possibilities, work to construct a new way of thinking about gender and sexuality which approaches Derrida's formulation of a ‘sexual otherwise’
"At that point there would be no more sexes there would be one sex for each time. One sex for each gift. A sexual difference for each gift." (WOTB, 199)"42

Witting possesses a similar vision:

"For us there are, it seems, not one or two sexes but many, as many sexes as there are individuals. (WOTB, 119).43

The narrator, ungendered, androgynous, is not necessarily bisexual, but rather is at the center of a heterogeneous range of sexual differences. S/he is a foil in a sense, which highlights the multiplicity of gendered positions and sexual possibilities. Although all the other characters, apart from the narrator, are gendered, their sexual object choices, the ways in which they like to have sex, and the feelings they bring to relationships and sexual encounters, are all diverse. Each individual's different desires and needs which are constructed and working separately of gender make each sexual experience unique. The uniqueness of each sexual experience is highlighted in the novel through descriptions of the narrator's ex-lovers' individual sexual quirks. For example, the narrator explains that one ex-girlfriend only liked to have sex outdoors, while another female lover could only achieve orgasm between the hours of two and five o'clock. Carlo made the narrator
shave off all body hair, while Crazy Frank, who had a passion for miniatures, told the narrator after having sex,

"You'd be perfect if you were smaller" *(WOTB, 93)*

Through descriptions of the narrator's ex-lovers' sexual differences, the text disrupts traditional ways of thinking about sexuality. No longer configured in terms of man/woman and gay/straight, sexuality is constructed as pure difference, the coming together of unique bodies possessing different desires. In sum, the ungendered narrator in Winterson's ‘WOTB’ is not a mere gimmick, but rather is a device that challenges leading constructions of gender and sexuality. Winterson's text constructs a world in which obtaining the status of subject is not contingent upon gendering, or assuming sex. In other words, Winterson imagines a world in which the ungendered body has come to matter. In addition to the fact that gender roles are less confining and regulatory in Winterson's text than in contemporary dominant discourses, heterosexuality is no longer compulsory. The hetero/homo binary is replaced in the text by a conception of sexuality as difference, the coming together of unique bodies possessing different desires. ‘WOTB’ can thus be viewed as an imaginative attempt to deregulate desire, freeing it from the regulatory and disciplinary binary regimes of gender and sexuality.
In their place, the text imagines a freer, more elastic view of sexuality based on difference. In this way, Winterson's text not only encourages readers to reflect on oppressive discursive constructions that are so pervasive that they are often accepted as ‘natural’ or unavoidable, but also to imagine a world in which the absence of these structures allows for thrilling new possibilities.

Ute Kauer,\(^45\) recognizes that Winterson is trying to wipe out gender, rather than merge male and female. According to Ute the novel questions the reliability of the narrator because the first-person voice comes from within the story. She finds that, although the facts may not be reliable as objective truth, the emotional experience of being in love conveyed by the text remains ‘true’. For Kauer, “[t]he self creates his or her own biography by finding metaphors for experiences because those metaphors are a more precise expression of emotion than facts. When we observe that the narrator is lying to another character in the text, the distinction between reality and fiction are again thrown into doubt. Kauer also resolves that the tradition of first-person narrative is played with, as well as gender identity. Perhaps the lack of information about the narrator (name, age, gender) is another form of ironic mask. Normally, we would only be inside the narrator’s mind, and would have access to a lot of information about that person. Within Written, however, we are occasionally addressed by the narrator, so there is a
consciousness of the reader’s presence. When we look in the mirror, it is only to look within and not at the physical appearance, so that the exterior of the narrator is not shown. These facts exhibit the challenges Winterson is creating to the traditional first-person narrative position. For Kauer, the text exposes the clichés about gender and love by negating their importance in the context of the love story. But she is irresistibly drawn to prove the narrator’s gender, as others have been. For her, the stereotypes about masculinity are poked at humorously, not directly confronted, as are the ones about femininity. She also finds that the narrator sympathizes and identifies with other female characters within the text. These distinctions make it clear to Kauer that the masks assumed by the narrator are all male, and therefore the true identity must be female in accordance with the feminist questioning of feminine stereotypes. In “Fantastic Language: Jeanette Winterson’s Recovery of the Postmodern Word,” Christy L. Burns seeks to demonstrate that Winterson is linking language with the body, and in the center section of Written on the Body, attempts a restoration of both by recreating Louise’s body through memory and poetic language. The emptiness of medical/scientific language is revealed and the narrator competes with Louise’s husband, the doctor/scientist, for the right to enter her dead/dying body. Burns pushes aside the quarrel over the narrator’s gender and instead
delves into Winterson’s expansion of the limits of language. She concludes that she pushes so far as to restore Louise to life simply by concretizing memory and desire through language, by fantasizing her return: As Winterson presses on the limits of language, she hits upon its necessary mediation, the recognition that words call up visions distinctly different from those they actually present, letter-by-letter, upon the page. From the ways in which words can be sensuous and metaphors pungent, eroticism develops. The body is not a literal, scientific object in the middle section; it is only real through imagination, as it is metaphorically recalled and erotically invoked. Burns recognizes within Art & Lies Winterson’s project of using the fantastic to create a system of language in order to recover an overused and flattened language. Burns refers to Baudrillard’s simulacrum concept, a copy without original, to illustrate Winterson’s point that contemporary language use is divorced from the ‘real’. By only referring to images that have gone before and not to what “is”, language has lost its significance and its ability to move. “Art, and for Winterson especially literature provides the link between both the real and the imaginary through its medium: the Word”. By disinterring and refreshing the history of language, she seeks to infuse contemporary English with refreshed vigor and save it from being deadened by a sterile culture, so that “fantasy is no longer a vision that fills up the
imagination; it is the inspiration that arises in and through the sensuous and erotic aspects of language”. Winterson’s use of repetition, which Burns reads as musical motifs and which play out as incantations, attempts to reclaim language from consumerist repetition. By emphasizing eroticism, she wants to make the word dance on the page and in the ear; attempting, as Burns puts it, to revive “the social imaginary, which has been disrupted by postmodern media and consumerism”. Burns also finds sensation to be an important evocation: Winterson uses that which exceeds rational meaning sensation as she also uses fantasy and the imagination to mediate the rupture between a given and often harsh reality. She presses toward an erotic use of language that moves her writing away from cold and rational sense, taking it toward sensational meanings that mix reference with desire and seduce readers toward change. Burns has able linked the major opposing interpretations of Winterson’s work. She continues her study of Winterson’s composition by comparing her writing directly with that of Virginia Woolf. While her main interest remains focused on desire, she takes note of Winterson’s call for Woolf to be read as a poet as well as a feminist writer and thinker, remarking that “her feminism and experimentalism are still not always placed in the same category”. So, she tracks Winterson’s attempt to “conspicuously combine this visionary aspect with devoted social critique”.

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She finds within the essays in Art Objects that, “for Winterson, Woolf is both artist and feminist” and this is what she, as Woolf’s literary heritor, seeks to carry on in her own work. For Burns, “the problems that trouble Winterson’s work and its reception are continuously at the center of feminist discussions about the lace of sexual desire, of righteous anger, and of the split consciousness that often defines us”. Burns reflects on Woolf’s use of a severely delineated world in which Woolf’s characters moved, noting that they are more realist than her prose and structure might suggest, as she “was still enmeshed in developing a critical awareness of women’s realities in her context” and did not make imaginative leaps into fantasy worlds in which things might be different. Winterson, on the other hand, “has available to her more secure histories and can enable multiple approaches, from realism to fantasy, in contemporary fiction”. Burns notes that Winterson’s use of an “alliance of literariness and social re-visioning” seems to be that which bothers her critics most, arguing that they are quite content to recognize the value of each, just not in combination with each other.

This novel is a kind of glamorous manifestations, suitable subject for art. And Winterson creates that art in depicting Louise’s stricken physiognomy in ‘WOTB’. Perhaps the most important, aspect of Woolf’s work in ‘WOTB’ is the question of gender. Written on the Body demonstrates that,
while there may be legal and social boundaries upon one’s gender, there are no such limitations in love. Winterson has taken a lover and replaced him/her with a distinctly genderless lover. While much of the debate on the work has focused on discovering the gender of this protagonist from believed clues in the novel, the significant point is gender is irrelevant to love. About it the most widely accepted view that the extensive range of critics and scholars have expounded on postmodern themes and facets within her works. The work has been very well received, highly read and succeeded in capturing the critic’s attention. The way of narration without revealing the gender or identity of the narrator is one of salient aspects of the novel. The story progress, reaches to its peak, finds complex but we get no clue regarding the identity of the narrator. Philosophize of the body and its post modern way of exploration is the other significant aspect of the novel. The fact that the protagonist of Written on the Body is never given an explicitly gendered identity which was seen by many as a retreat from the out and proud characters she had created before. This unknown, ungendered one was widely regarded as a lesbian, and that was viewed as a step backward in the march toward equality and acceptance. As the focus of her subsequent works moved even further away from the sexual identity of their characters, the critics have raised many more objections against the novelist
and her techniques. But undoubtedly Winterson as a writer of post modern fiction have continued to be most fascinating, and captivating especially her use of language, gender and sexuality, time and space, lack and desire, form and themes. Winterson has reflected acute feminine consciousness while engineering the characters and the entire happening in the novel.
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