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SUMMARY

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REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FEMALE BODY IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S FICTION

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This analysis has been directed at aspects of female corporality in Winterson's novels, advancing an interpretation of bodily identity from the perspective of transgression and border dissolution. We have argued that Winterson envisions a return to the primordial, lost wholeness of being and, by doing so, she questions the meaning of culturally-imposed boundaries: the body is the displacement of an "anxiety of limit", the locus of a negotiation between conflicting discourses. The restoration of the initial state of completeness is made under the auspices of a belief in the hermaphrodite and the everlasting power of love, which is why the most important boundary to overcome is the one between genders. The fragmentation of self evokes monstrous corporalities, which both undermine and assert integrity. There are various forms of fragmented bodily constructions in Winterson's novels, which have been tackled in the individual chapters of the thesis. Of particular interest was the concept of transgressive femininity, therefore we chose to study the grotesque, maternal, diseased body, the "othering" of the female body through religion, the relationship between female writing, body and textuality and the interface body/space. Theories from different fields of study have been applied, but the focus has been centred on feminism, queer theory, psychoanalysis and anthropology.

The starting point of this analysis was a theory that Derrida puts forward in an interview called "Choreographies"; he advances the idea of a sexual difference that goes beyond sexed bodies, a primordial sexuality which precedes the binary opposition of the sexes. Using Heidegger's concept of the *Dasein,* he argues that the sexual neutrality of *Dasein* is the key to evading the dualities which subordinate women to men (Derrida in Holland and Huntington Eds. 2001, 36-37). "Thinking difference" implies the necessity for a chorus of multiple voices, where "sexual marks would no longer be discriminating" and where the relationship "would not be asexual, but sexual otherwise" (Derrida in Holland and Huntington Eds. 2001, 39-40). The body in Winterson's work is also analyzed from the perspective of a boundary movement, as Butler postulates in her 1993 study*, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*: "not only did bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies "are" (Butler 1993, ix). While it has been argued that Winterson has a penchant for downgrading the body at the expense of the soul, we have also followed the idea that her novels are populated by a utopian vision of the hermaphrodite residing in the same body, since most of her characters use their bodies as repositories of several gender and sexual identities. This vision of the

hermaphrodite, of "the one", is not ultimately an expression of gender or sex, but goes beyond, to a more abstract projection of unity and a transgression of the limits imposed by both biology and culture.

In the first chapter, entitled "Avatars and Configurations of Female Corporality", the theories which structure the argument have been outlined: the chapter begins by sketching a history of philosophical ideas about the body, starting from antiquity and proceeding to contemporary feminist and queer lines of thought. Some key ideas about how female bodies are theorized in relation to male bodies have been introduced in the following subchapter.

The idea of a "Myth of the Woman" as related to the female body has also come under focus, by comparing the different views of Simone de Beauvoir, Monique Wittig, and the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*. These theories have been applied to *Sexing the Cherry* (1989)*, Art and Lies* (1994)*, Gut Symmetries* (1997) and *Written on the Body* (1992), where this myth of the "eternal feminine" articulates gender conflicts and structures the need to assume femininity as an individualized, active principle. As already mentioned, the border between genders is a central theme in Winterson's work. Theories of sex and gender are fundamental to the understanding of her fiction, which is why we have included a section in the theoretical chapter which outlines some of the key concepts needed to operate with. While Judith Butler asserts that gender is culturally constructed through repeated stylized acts and it is performative (Butler 1999 xv), Irigaray puts forward the same idea that woman is a "non-sex", a void, impossible to represent (Irigaray 1985b, 23), drawing on Lacan's concept of *jouissance* which refers to "an order of the infinite" (Evans 1996, 222).

Since clothes are an important part of gender construction, the notions of cross-dressing and drag in Joan Riviere's, Marjorie Garber's and Richard Ekins's works have been discussed. The emphasis on borders can also be found in Bakhtin's and Kristeva's works. The concept of the grotesque body in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* gives shape to chapter two of this work. The grotesque body is a trope of death and birth, growth and becoming (Bakhtin 1984, 24). For Bakhtin, the most relevant image of the grotesque is that of a female, as he claims that the grotesque body is best represented in the figurines of pregnant old hags (Bakhtin 1984, 25-26). The grotesque exaggerates and caricatures the negative, the inappropriate, which is why it acquires an extreme, fantastic character (Bakhtin 1984, 306). The abject, Julia Kristeva's concept is also connected to ambiguity, but it triggers horror rather than laughter, being a reminder of the

horrifying struggles for self-differentiation of the unformed ego in the womb of the mother (Kristeva 1982, 4). A small section has been dedicated to theories of disease and the body, which have been applied to *Written on the Body*. In the last part of this chapter, theories of female writing have been tackled, focusing on Cixous's notion of *écriture feminine*, Irigaray's concept of *womanspeak*, and Gilbert and Gubar idea of *anxiety of authorship*.

In the second chapter, "Bodies Out of Bounds in *Sexing the Cherry, The Daylight Gate* and *Written on The Body*", issues of bodily boundaries and monstrous femininity have been dealt with, highlighting the material aspects of the body as revealed in the three novels under scrutiny. The concepts of the grotesque body, the abject and transgression have been instrumental in the examination of three aspects of transgressive femininity: the grotesque body of Dog Woman in *Sexing the Cherry*, the body of the witches and of the sorceress Alice Nutter in *The Daylight Gate* (2012) and the diseased body of Louise in *Written on the Body*. Dog Woman's body is an instantiation of hybridity: she is sexed female, but possesses the astounding strength of a man. However, she is interested in performing female gender and is very much aware of what is expected of a woman. In *The Daylight Gate*, female bodies also suggest ambiguous cultural meanings: while the old Demdike and the other witches illustrate aspects of negative femininity because of their repugnant physical appearance, Alice Nutter tends towards the opposite end: she is the beautiful sorceress In this novel, Winterson draws attention to female corporality as a locus of magic and the irrational and as an impossible negotiation of power.

Both Dog Woman and the Demdikes may be interpreted as representations of the grotesque body, as defined by Bakhtin. It has also been argued that Dog Woman and her bulimic alter ego, the environmental ecologist, conjure up incongruity and are simultaneously represented as positive and negative instances of femininity, as sites of both cleanliness and dirt. Dog Woman's body, which she admits to be unclean, is a synecdoche of the need for social delimitation of boundaries; with Mary Douglas's theories as a critical background, Dog Woman's body may be read as a model and symbol of the seventeenth century Puritan society, in which social structure is reproduced on the body and uncleanliness suggests a connection with sin. Her ambiguous status as a mother has also been included in the analysis. Dog Woman's body is located at the crossroads of "good" and "bad" projections of femininity: on the one hand, she is repeatedly posited as a corrupt embodiment, and on the other, she possesses the respected status of a nurturing mother. In *Written on the Body,* Louise's cancerous body can also be read as

an excessive body, a positive (beautiful) and negative (unhealthy) female body, which proliferates at cellular level. Unlike the surreal body of Dog Woman and the ugly bodies of the witches in *The Daylight Gate,* the diseased body of Louise is embellished by the narrator, who rewrites the stark language of anatomy into a love poem. The surface of her body is conformist, while her inner body is attacking itself, being perceived as a foreign body. When Louise's body is absent and dying, the narrator restores her healthy body through erotic language. Therefore the bodily invasion of cancer is paralleled by a textual invasion of eroticism.

In *Written on the Body,* attention has been directed to the metaphors of eating the body: the narrator experiences eroticism mainly through the senses. The longing to break bodily boundaries between lovers is a mantra of this narrative, an internalization of the desire to overcome the closure of the self and to avoid mortality. Food, eating and the idea of consuming the lover's body conjure up mortality. The narrator is cannibalistic, linking food to Louise's flesh as an act of erotic possession, which we have connected to the Lacanian passion for the Real. Ultimately, the diseased body of Louise represents a breakage which must be solved through love: the imperfect state of the body is restored through erotic discourse and the desire to engulf the other, to return to a unified and ungendered consciousness.

There is a form of disease in *Sexing the Cherry* as well, but it is a psychological one. The bulimic woman activist imagines herself as a monster trapped in a small body, threatening to burst. She could be read in relation to the displacement of the outside and the inside. In Dog Woman's case, the ferocity of her inner self matches her outer appearance, whereas the present-day ecologist is a fluctuating embodiment, whose inside does not parallel the outside. It has been argued that both in *Sexing the Cherry* and in *The Daylight Gate* women exist in a mirroring relationship; *Sexing the Cherry* presents two women who are alter egos of each other, but at different times: the point is to emphasize the lack of boundaries between past, present and future. However, in *The Daylight Gate,* Alice and Elizabeth inhabit the same time and are also engaged in a "Dorian Gray" type of relationship: it seems that they are necessary for each other, trapped in a narcissistic relationship, shadows of their love lingering even when Alice is in love with a man, Christopher Southworth. Elements of lesbian Gothic in the novel have been pointed out, with strong focus on the two women's ghostly sexuality.

Since Puritanism is also the backdrop of *The Daylight Gate,* a few similarities between this novel and *Sexing the Cherry* regarding the politics of body control have been underlined.

Just like Dog Woman and the bulimic ecologists are feared or marginalized, the witches in *The Daylight Gate* are muted through the discourses of religion and medicine. Witch hunt was a means of controlling women purging society of these transgressive and unwanted femininities that did not conform with men's interests. As Mary Daly claims, the witches were the "indigestible elements" (Daly 1978, 118). Drawing on Ehrenreich and English's ideas, it has been argued that women were witchified and relegated to the inferior position of nurses in medicine because they threatened male supremacy. From ancient times, women were seen as healers. Witch hunts were therefore a political struggle to assert male supremacy and monopolization over the very profitable domain of medicine. Thus, in the *Daylight Gate*, those who deal with herbs or healing pertain to the domain of superstition, especially if they are women, as Alice Nutter points out. The Church is also an instrument of sowing contention. Puritans believed that the female body was weak and prone to the Devil's lure. The monstrosity of witches lies in their active dealings with the devil, imagined in the form of a pact or sexual coupling. The "marriage" with the devil exists in both a metaphorical and literal sense in *The Daylight Gate* in which Satan is depicted as a "Dark Gentleman" who has intercourse with both Alice and Elizabeth (the old Demdike) in an obscene orgy. Women's changing bodies are marked with a predisposition for magic, which is why they are relegated to the dark aspects of medicine, irrationality and superstition. In the novel all girls are baptized twice in Pendle Hill, as if to show that women's bodies are twice as impure and evil than men's.

Chapter three, entitled "The Physical Body and The Rhetoric of Religion in *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* and *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*" has focused on the rhetoric of religion and the position of the female body in connection to Christian discourse in two autobiographical works by Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985) and *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011). We were mostly interested in aspects of female sexuality and lesbian identity. The two novels have been dealt with on equal grounds, despite the fact that *Oranges* is a fictional work, whereas *Why Be Happy* is Winterson's official autobiography. Following the writer's confessions in *Why be Happy,* the chapter argues that she replaces a belief in the traditional form of divinity, represented as a supreme God, with a more complex belief in meaning: God is actually whatever we find meaningful in our lives. However, she does not imply that "God is dead", nor that the concept is hollow, but that it should be reconsidered depending on each individual. The two co-ordinates, love and loss, place her at the

intersection of humanism and postmodernism; having been raised in a deeply religious family, she wants to keep the idea of God in her life, which can only be done with sacrifice and loss: the old God must die in order to be reborn into several individual, subjectivized Gods. The question which has been addressed in this part of the chapter is whether this replacement of God has entailed a revival of carnality. The crux of the writer's life is the reconciliation of her lesbian identity with the stern dictates of Pentecostal faith. In order to embrace her sexuality, she must eliminate the idea that the body is a burden and that sexuality itself is a sin. She must actually come to terms with the fact that God is "empty" and that he is not her loyal, loving companion. The religious meanings that the fictional character's mother projects on the body of her adopted child have been discussed. The beginning of *Oranges* grounds on the opposition between the two women: whereas the mother has a binary worldview, Jeanette undermines it by introducing third terms. She is associated with carnality, the flesh and the devil from early infancy, while the mother is the illustration of a stern, aloof, Old Testament God.

In the subsequent subchapter, Jeanette's struggles to "come out" as a lesbian in the very conservative community she lives in have been examined. This whole process is equivalent to an exorcism: lesbian desires are regarded by the Pentecostal community as an evil force independent of Jeanette, and they must be purged through Christian discourse. The orange demon who visits Jeanette illustrates a rite of passage in Jeanette's life, which allows her to grasp the arbitrariness of moral values and the real brutality of heterosexuality. Oranges themselves are a symbol of conformity: whenever Jeanette is confused, her mother offers her oranges and tells her that they are the only fruit. The title of the novel implies Jeanette's break from binary thinking and the oppressive force of heteronormativity.

It has also been shown that women's bond in *Oranges* may be read from the perspective of Adrienne Rich's concept of the *lesbian continuum*. Thus, the novel subverts family values and ridicules gender assumptions according to which women are weak and men are powerful through the depiction of her own family: following this idea, a psychoanalytic grid has been used to analyze Jeanette's lesbian identity. It has been revealed that she lacks a true paternal model since her own father is a powerless person with virtually no influence on her life. The mother, however, is overbearingly strong and controlling. The other men that she depicts in *Oranges* or *Why Be Happy* do not enjoy her respect either: they are too weak, too aggressive, physically disgusting or simply unimportant. Using Freudian theory, it has been suggested that Jeanette

identifies with her phallic mother, rejecting the Law of the Father. Thus, she develops an active libido and orients it towards the same sex. Both Jeanette and her mother are governed by death-drive; because Jeanette asserts her lesbian identity, she refuses reproduction, much like her mother does, a decision which subliminally conveys an anti-social message. Jeanette's mother is also a figure of incongruity: her bodily size fails to parallel her inner emotional and spiritual energy, and this often gives rise to comic episodes. Jeanette hyperbolizes her mother as an illustration of the mutability of truth and perception.

The last part of the chapter has focused on the representations of the two women as the principles of order and chaos. Jeanette lacks a story of origin, being an adopted child. The narrative starts by subverting the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, and continues by mixing pagan Greek myths with the New Testament birth of Jesus. The mother is equivalent to paternal spiritual figures such as Zeus or God, and the daughter has a missionary function, and is a metaphorical illustration of Athens or Jesus. The question raised at the beginning of the chapter has found a possible answer in the following conclusion: the assertion of a female homosexuality is not incompatible with the idea of God, but with the idea of duality – the body of the lesbian is a conceit, a paradigm of plurality and malleability.

Chapter four, "The Discourse of The Body: Gendered Authorship in *Written on the Body, The Powerbook* and *Art and Lies*" has tackled issues of gendered authorship and the connection female writing/female body in the three novels mentioned. The critical background has included Foucault's theory of the body as a blank surface waiting to be inscribed by history, Hayles's and Haraway's concepts of the posthuman and the cyborg, and also Cixous's and Irigaray's feminist poststructuralism. The investigation of the gender indeterminacy and narratorial identity of *Written on the Body* has been set up with a view to shedding light on the conundrum of the genderless narrator of the novel. The purpose has been to reveal whether the gender of the narrator had any bearing on the narrative itself, whether the idea of a lesbian or heterosexual narrative offers different reading grids. In doing this, we have referred to clues in the text which suggest that the narrator is female or male. From another point of view, the text may be seen from a radical lesbian perspective. The absence and demeaning of men in the narrative point to Mary Daly's theories. The constant sliding of narratorial gender suggests an abyss of representation which may be seen as a token of lesbianism. However, Winterson's declarations in various interviews that gender is irrelevant directed our focus to the queerness of

Written on the Body. We have argued that the text's lack of gender implications suggests a movement beyond gender classifications. It is here that we have returned to the starting point, to Derrida's dream of a "a choreographic text with polysexual signatures" (Derrida in Holland and Huntington Eds. 2001, 40). The use of gender and erotic clichés conveys the unrepresentability of love and it is an innovation which distances from the traditional man-woman love story.

The genderless narrator could also be seen in relation to virtual space – both *Written on the Body* and *The Powerbook* (2000) encourage the idea that the confines of the body may be transcended by undermining the importance of gender, which is a feature of cyberspace. However, the difference between them lies in their degree of conservatism: whereas *Written on The Body* preserves a hint of skepticism regarding disembodied virtuality, claiming that cyberspace brings about a loss of intimacy, *The Powerbook* underscores the positive connotation of the virtual. The suggestion is that the flesh can be disposed of; ultimately, this is the Romantic goal of the novel – to dissolve the body and to show that love breaks the boundaries of the self.

In *The Powerbook*, it has been argued that Winterson explores the possibilities of gender play through a narrative which is organized around an e-mail conversation between two lovers. The two essential co-ordinates, "meatspace" and cyberspace" structure the conflict: bouncing between flesh and disembodied cyber reality, the narrator prefers the freedom of cyberspace because it allows endless prospects of change and disguise. By erasing the borders between body and cyberreality, Winterson technologizes the body, turning it into what Donna Haraway has called a *cyborg* and Hayles's defines as the *posthuman*. We are not suggesting that Winterson completely dismisses gender as irrelevant; the characters outside cyberspace are grounded in their physical senses and they perform gender roles. Ali(x) believes that her own body is a form of disguise, evoking the idea that the body is a surface upon which cultural meanings are written.

The Powerbook asserts the need of writing the body in the text. Given the novel's structure, similar to a computer menu, the non-sequentiality of the narrative, the insistence on freedom of choice, the novel has been interpreted as a hypertext, grounded on Ted Nelson and Vanevar Bush's original theories and Roland Barthes's reinterpretation of the term. As a hypertext and "writerly text", the novel questions the relation the between printed text and the electronic text, without suggesting that the development of science and electronic literature will actually lead to the death of the literature itself.

The necessity of writing the body is one of the major tenets of *Art and Lies* (1994), another novel that we analyzed in the fourth chapter. *Art and Lies* has been studied through the lens of Foucault's theory of docile bodies. We have shown how each one of the three characters resists categorization and illustrates a rebellion against bodily discipline: Handel is a castrated man, whose bodily handicap is reflected on his de-sexualised masculine voice, Picasso represents the victim of incest, silenced through the discourse of madness, and Sappho is a lesbian, the advocate of a sexual, revivified language. Sappho's discourse is the best illustration of the connection between body and text: her *ars poetica* consists in the equivalence between sex and words, because she asserts her belief that art can only be revitalized by sexualizing discourse. She echoes Cixous's and Irigaray's notions of *écriture féminine* and *womanspeak*. Picasso is the character who illustrates criticism against patriarchal oppression: she is prevented from reaching her artistic potential by her father and by her abusive brother. In order to escape the family trauma and express herself as an artistic voice, she reconfigures her body into a painting canvas. She illustrates Gilbert and Gubar's point in *The Madwoman in the Attic* and typifies the woman who is silenced and hysterized. As regarding the male character, we have argued that he also expresses a non-phallocentric point of view, due to the fact that he is castrated. Engrossed in deep philosophical thoughts, Handel has a propensity for a scholarly, secluded life and unlike Sappho, he is repelled by the thought of human closeness, because sexuality is a form of boundary loss. Textuality is a reflection of his own bodily handicap; the abstract, detached tone alludes to the objective, unsentimental type of discourse which has been typically ascribed to men, but at the same time, his lack of a phallus prevents him from assuming a patronizing voice.

The fifth chapter, "The Space of the Body: Geopolitics and Bodily Topographies in *The Passion* and *Gut Symmetries*", was concerned with the correlations between space and the body in *The Passion* (1987) and *Gut Symmetries* (1997). The analysis has been grounded on Anne McClintock's theories of gendered geographies and also approached the novels have been approached through Lacanian and Freudian lenses. We have examined the analogy between Venice and the female body in *The Passion* and the parallel between the body and the cosmos in *Gut Symmetries.* In *The Passion*, we have argued that Winterson depicts Venice as a trope of female corporality: it is a city of unstable borders, a mazy and ambiguous configuration of water and land which evokes the changeable body of a woman. Using Ackroyd's well-documented study on Venice, we have discussed the representations of Venice as a living city, similar to a

body, where the upper parts are situated on land (stable, masculine), and the lower bodily parts are watery (fluid, feminine). Venice is a fickle, dangerously misleading space which functions as the spatial metaphor of Villanelle: she is born a woman, but has webbed feet, which is a typical male characteristic. Just as Venice resists mapping, Villanelle is a liminal corporality, a female masculinity which opposes any form of alteration.

In *Gut Symmetries*, ambiguity is also associated with women: Stella and Alice believe in the provisionality of matter and are willing to apply the principles of quantum theory quite literally, while Jove rejects the idea that there can be significant shifts in the matter. The structure of the novel itself poses a challenge to the notion of border: it is a mosaic of theories from physics such as superstring theory, quantum physics, the Heisenberg principle and mysticism, Kaballah, Tarot and ancient philosophy. This amalgamation suggests that the limits between "real" science and pseudo-science are provisional and that both strive towards the same ideal: wholeness. Winterson begins the novel with the idea of Paracelsus that "the galaxa goes through the belly" (*GS* 2). She also asserts her faith in an initial, primordial state of completeness, evoking Plato's fantasy of the hermaphrodite in *The Symposium*. Winterson implies that representing the world in dualities is a repetition of the primordial drama of fragmentation. That is why she privileges either the number three or what Derrida called "a sexuality without number" (Derrida in Holland and Huntington Eds. 2001, 40). The title of the novel itself indicates a border paradox: the word gut, which refers to the interior of the body and is juxtaposed to the word symmetries, which indicates order and balance. The title is also a reference to Grand Unified Theories (GUT), which study the unification of the three major forces of the universe: the weak force, he strong force and the electromagnetic force. Winterson moves from the general to the particular, from the public to the private, creating a parallel between this theory in physics and the love triangle of Jove, Stella and Alice. Like the three essential forces of the universe, the three lovers move towards unification: after Jove cheats on Stella with Alice, the two women also become involved with each other.

It has been argued that Henri and Villanelle approach space differently, depending on their gender. Henri describes Venice as a "city of madmen", a space governed by magic and superstition, which cannot be rationalized by France, an Imperial "other". France displays the attributes of masculinity: power, rationality, hegemony, while Venice is pictured with the assets of femininity: marginality, irrationality, passion. Anne Mc Clintock's ideas provided an

important tool for my analysis. She argues that the act of conquering is a form of feminizing space; it is linked to male paranoia, a dread of boundary loss (implosion), associated with fears of impotence and infantilization but also by and fantasies of unlimited power and excess of boundary order (McClintock 1995, 26). Jove's cannibalistic act on Stella in *Gut Symmetries* can also be accounted for as a manifestation of border loss coupled with an excess of power; he perceives his wife's inability to distinguish between borders as madness and as a sign of the "eternal feminine". His sense of border distinctions is disordered and this blurring of boundaries activates aggressive, cannibalistic tendencies. His ingestion of Stella's flesh can be read as a trope of abjection, a regression to the womb of the mother and a hunger to ingest the "other" from which the subject originates, but also as a form of power control.

Mc Clintock's theory sheds light on the Imperial undertones of the book. Venice has been configured as an individualistic space which mirrors Villanelle's rejection of male control. Unlike Henri, who travels in the traditional sense of the word, Villanelle's travelling involves a "journey of the interior", a psychological mapping of her own persona. The interface Venice/Villanelle is also comprised in the meanings of cross-dresing: Venice is the city of disguises, and Villanelle's masquerade suggests that the borders of gender identity can be crossed as easily as putting on or taking off clothes. We have also referred to the Lacanian concept of desire with reference to the obsessive idea of "the passion": the passion represents the lost object of love and the impossible wholeness of being which the characters crave for. The fragmentariness of being is the conundrum that both novels seek to resolve. In *Gut Symmetries*, the model of the "one" is promoted through the dissolution of borders, achieved at different levels: intertextuality (the erasure of fictional boundaries, especially as the novel blends with the world of *Moby Dick*), the levelling of "real science" and pseudo-science, the insistence on the fluidity of the time-space continuum, the questioning of identity, cannibalism as the urge to ingest the primordial "Other" and most importantly, love. The body is like the cosmos, longing for the same primordial lost unity. In *The Passion*, the correlations between sexed bodies and urban, geopolitical spaces have deep psychological implications: "the passion", just like the "gut symmetry" are instantiations of the impossible, the void, the object of love that can never be retrieved, the locus of a complete obliteration of borders.

This final idea of border disruption reveals the new perspectives on Winterson's work which the study on hand has opened. The female body has been examined as a site of conflict

and transgression, exceeding its boundaries, moving towards an invalidation of femininity as such. Femininity, just like masculinity, has been represented as a fiction, a concept tied arbitrarily to the body. What the analysis has shown is that Winterson's depiction of the female body targets an annihilation of gender hierarchies, the liberty to enter a certain gender identity and leave it at will. The stable element in her fiction is not the physical body, which is subject to cultural construction, but the abstract principle of love, since it can destroy the limits between self and other, and reunite the sexes through the ultimate border transgression: the hermaphrodite

Key Words: body, border, liminality, transgression, gender, the abject, the grotesque, identity, queer, feminism, patriarchy, other, fragmentation, motherhood, witch, disease, desire, loss, void, discourse, womanspeak, cyberspace, virtual, cyborg, the posthuman, hypertext, cross-dressing, topos, geopolitics, psyche, power, the Real.

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