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From Constraint to Adaptive Flexibility: Transgressive Utopia in Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*

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Abstract

It is a truism that Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* has been extensively studied as a feminist, postmodern, and queer text; however, little if no ink has been spilled on its exploration from a Sargissonian perspective as a transgressive utopia. Taking my cue from feminist theorist Lucy Sargisson's perception of transgressive utopia as "an intentional act of will" geared towards the "creation of something other than the known and familiar" (154), I analyse *Written on the Body* as a narrative that queries hardheaded perceptions of gender and prescriptive notions of female corporeality. Transgressive, as it is, the novel subtly shatters long-standing power systems that constrain and coercively shape our existence. To elaborate this claim, I argue that Winterson's deployment of a narrator whose gender lingers in enigma and a female body that defies normative expectations clears much space for subversive and alternative possibilities, giving considerable leeway for thoughtful critique and progressive transformation.

Keywords: Jeanette Winterson, *Written On the Body*, Lucy Sargisson, Transgressive Utopia, Critique, Transformation

I. Introduction

When asked about the real motive for putting down words in black and white in an interview with Catherine Bush, Jeanette Winterson pensively replied: "I think the concerns of a writer are how to make things new, how to shock, how to revive the commonplace, how to take the banal, everyday experience and make it into something which has resonance" (Winterson). Resolute and groundbreaking as they might read, these lines equally record Winterson's commitment to breathe new life into the mundane and the vapid in her literary opus. Throughout her artistic career, Winterson busies herself with inveighing against the battery of hackneyed clichés and phallocentric discourses. Giving ready-made answers to vexed and vexing questions is what Winterson is not adept at. Her fiction abounds with reckless rovers and outspoken mavericks who rarely, if ever, abide by conventional rules. In setting their faces against social normativity,

these narrative voices act on their own terms, taking sanctuary in a space far removed from the stultifying space they were incarcerated in. *Written on the Body* is no exception. Published in 1992, *Written on the Body*[1]is a rumination on the intricacies of love, the vicissitudes of the self, and the ever-shifting shape of identity. The narrative chronicles the story of a reckless bohemian and compulsive flirt who, in his/her quest for genuine love, continuously falls in and out of love. Leading a debauched life and undergoing a series of unfortunate mishaps, the protagonist revels in jumping from one romantic liaison to another. Upon finding true love with a woman named Louise, the narrator, by a quirk of fate, loses her. Particularly interesting is Winterson's construction of a narrator who does not fit into a particular gender and the exploration of the female cartography in ways which defy authoritative androcentric discourses. While much ink has been spilled on interpreting such a subversive move as a postmodern strategy and as responding to the fundamental tenets of queer theory, construing it as a transgressive gesture that builds on Feminist theorist Lucy Sargisson's deep cogitation on the utopian spirit has often been underexplored, if not muted.

The present paper presents Winterson's *Written* as a transgressive utopia that conveys the writer's sullen resentment not only against final interpretations, but also against what is deemed as the 'right' way of experiencing the world and relating to others. Riveting attention on the ungendered narrator and the female body, the aim of this paper is also to shake to the core threadbare platitudes and inveterate beliefs. In refusing to ascribe the narrator a fixed gender and identity, *Written* makes room for deliberate obfuscation, dynamic fluidity, and transgression. Similarly, in disengaging the female body from a voyeuristic gaze, the narrative repositions it beyond the pale of prescriptive normativity, thereby transgressing social mores. These two subversive gambits, I argue, epitomize Lucy Sargisson's theorization of utopia as a transgressive practice of being and becoming. Utopia, here, is read in terms of its function as a critical and transgressive tool for change. Likewise, utopianism is not understood as the supreme desirability of perfection, but rather as a method, a tactical ploy of dreaming up alternative possibilities.

II. Reading Winterson through Sargisson: Gender, the Body, and Utopian Possibility

In her informative *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*, Lucy Sargisson rejects the mainstream definition of utopianism as blueprint while preserving it as a political tool that initiates constructive critique and catalyzes change. Advising against interpreting utopianism in terms of its form, Sargisson suggests amalgamating a content-based approach with a function-oriented one as a better way to address utopian thinking. In joining forces, these two outlooks trigger a noticeable shift in how we think up utopianism. Reconceiving utopianism, Sargisson suggests, is badly needed to grapple with contemporary social and political issues. Inextricably intertwined

[1] Jeanette, Winterson. *Written on the Body*. Jonathan Cape,1992. Further reference to the novel will appear in the article abbreviated as *Written*, followed by page number.

are the "critical" and the "creative" (63) functions of the utopian spirit, as Sargisson pronounces. That is, finding fault with the present is not about proposing closed-off visions or implementing radical changes, but rather about propelling progressive movements and keeping the desire for evolutionary change alive. In a sharp move from the colloquial understanding of utopian mindset, Sargisson describes it as such:

> Utopian thought creates a space, previously non-existent and still 'unreal', in which radically different speculation can take place, and in which totally new ways of being can be envisaged. In this space transformative thinking can take place, and paradigmatic shifts in approach can be undertaken.

Of particular importance here is Sargisson's construction of the utopian thought as a paradigm shift in the way we reflect on things, and a "space" that catalyzes "transformative thinking." Using this new conceptual framework as the basic premise of her argument, Sargisson contends that feminist theory is in dire need of this new mode of utopian thinking. In giving prominence to the transformative nature of utopianism, Sargisson highlights the curious confluence and dynamic synergy between the feminist ethos and utopian orientation. On Sargisson's part, there has been a burgeoning discontent among feminists with regards to a hot-button issue: the difference vs. equality debate. While some feminists articulate an overpowering urge to engage wholeheartedly in the pursuit of gender equality, another enclave commits fully to rallying against man-centric power structures, with the last clique arguing for the transgression of the either-or dyad. On reflection, Sargisson takes a nuanced stand, espousing a vision that extends beyond the binary logic. Critical and transformative by turns, the utopian thought, as Sargisson propounds, creates new speculative paradigms where two-tier classifications are whittled down, if not expunged. In the same breath, Sargisson argues that the equality versus difference dispute has been approached from different, sometimes contrasting viewpoints. Whether it be patriarchal, socialist, or colloquial, an approach to difference that pins it down to stereotypes, naturalizes the hierarchical logic, or congeals gender differences into two mutually exclusive entities runs the risk of being too parochial in its outlook. Attempts to construct a social order that forces patriarchal assimilation or gender essentialism put the desire to outgrow these perceptual processes in the shade. Weighing these perspectives against a poststructuralist interpretation, Sargisson draws inspiration from Derridean deconstruction in her re-conceptualization of difference as socially constructed and flexible. More so, she goes one decisive step further by extending the concept of difference far beyond theoretical texts into the political realm. Sargisson contends along another line that feminists may inadvertently end up ensnared in discriminatory practices they have been waging war against, giving the example of black and white women who, instead of foregathering in a body for a common cause, may go astray and lose sight of what has initially pulled them together. To solve this fundamental conundrum, Sargisson floats the idea that feminist scholars must depart from what may cause political cleavage, and worse still, what may dash the feminist dream. As these plans may

backfire, black-and-white thinking needs to be reconsidered. Moving away from dualistic constructions, she advances an argument grounded in the conceptual realignment of difference and equality in a way which flouts dichotomous thinking. Rethinking the difference vs. equality polemic, as Sargisson submits, compels us to reconceive equality and difference as more than two competing forces vying for prominence. The very act of reconceptualizing these anachronistic views is deemed a utopian gesture by Sargisson. Probably nowhere is Sargisson's conceptualization of utopian thinking better described than in the following statement when she defines it as

> a way of thinking that begins from dissatisfaction or disaffection with/in the political present as perceived and experienced by the writer concerned. It is critical of the present, destroys certainties, challenges dominant perceptions and, in the process, creates something new. It is therefore critical utopian thinking in the sense described by Tom Moylan. Transgressive thinking of this kind is transformative thinking. (76-77)

If anything, these words encapsulate Sargisson's elaborate framing of the utopian spirit as a means by which to disrupt traditional axioms, cast doubt on core beliefs, and revitalize the impulse for "transformative thinking." In keeping with Sargisson's remarks, I will contend that Winterson, by constructing an ungendered narrator, follows in her footsteps by transcending restrictive binaries and exploring new, nay transgressive utopian, possibilities.

In her seminal *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression*, Lucy Sargisson takes up where she left on in her previous monograph. Leading off with the premise that the concept of transgressive utopianism rejigs the way we perceive and relate to the world, she limns it as "an approach to the world that is at once utopian and pragmatic" (1). It is utopian as it catalyses change and pragmatic insofar as it runs counter to traditional precepts and conventional logic. Transgressive, as it is, the utopian thinking, Sargisson maintains, acts in defiance of definite order and finality. Spelling out the reason why the utopian spirits is transgressive, Sargisson argues that the utopian thinking is "subversive" (2), shifting, and conducive to "process and dynamism" (2). She, in the same breadth, holds that the utopian aspect of contemporary feminism lies in the act of transgressing, gainsaying, and obliterating antiquated beliefs and long-standing convictions. For Sargisson, steering towards transgressive utopianism involves, to a large degree, a movement towards constant change and developmental progress. On this note, Sargisson characterizes transgressive utopianism as what "breaks rules and confronts boundaries, challenges paradigms, and creates new conceptual and political space" (4). It is noteworthy to mention, in this regard, that this conceptualization applies to Winterson's take on dreary platitudes and bedrock principles. I will argue in the next section that in disentangling characters, mainly the protagonist, from the harbinger of strict divisions and rigid hierarchies, Winterson contests gender categories and pushes past the prescribed limits that partition the world into two oppositional constructs. As Sargisson proposes, clear-cut divisions very often result in a lopsided

relationship between a 'potent' and an 'enfeebled' entity, the implication of which may engender othering those who are deemed different and inferior. Worse still, this may well foster exclusion and dramatic wind-ups. To hold these parochial visions in abeyance, there must be a complete reworking of old perceptions, most notably those appertaining to the way we experience the world and relate to others. In doing so, a new conceptual paradigm gains traction, fittingly labelled by Sargisson as transgressive utopianism. While discussing the importance of de-ideologizing emotional and intimate relationships, Sargisson emphasizes the need to transcend simplistic binaries in human connections, advocating for a more subtle, layered, and transgressive utopian perspective, in which

> boundaries are deliberately transgressed and a new space is created amongst things previously kept separate. In this space (this new place which was no place) radically new and creative thought and activity can, perhaps, occur. (67)

Aligning myself with Sargisson's argument, I will explain in the section on the female body how the body cartography is looked upon as a utopian possibility, a "new place" where new forms of emotional engagement transpire.

IV. The Ungendered Voice: Mapping a Transgressive Utopia

One distinctive, yet striking, feature of *Written* is the construction of an ungendered narrator. Though the novel has drawn fire from many critics for portraying the narrator as such, it has been lauded by some others as a bold move and a sharp departure from the heteronormative gender framework. In fashioning an autodiegetic narrator who has an exquisitely androgynous look, Winterson rocks the foundations of the reader's habitual thinking and traditional preconceptions. As readers, we are driven by the desire to find clear-cut answers to the questions that keep gnawing at us while reading the novel. However hard we try, any endeavour to pin down the narrator's gender in *Written* dies on the vine. Contrary to all expectations, there is no shred of evidence as to whether the narrator is male or female. Introduced to the reader as an "emotional nomad" (*WB* 38) and an eccentric oddball, the narrator leads an off-centre life far removed from societal norms. At loggerheads with a paint-by-numbers lifestyle and cookie-cutter beliefs, the ungendered narrator puts his/her heart and soul into finding his/her way out of the onus of socially prescribed heterosexual responsibilities. In her refusal to disclose the gender of the narrator, Winterson engagingly invites the reader to become an active participant who contributes to generating meaning, the outcome of which is the multiplicity of interpretations. The act of reading is, thus, transmogrified into a transgressive engagement that defies closure and complicates ultimate readings. Revolutionary, as it is, this dynamic interaction reads as a utopian encounter, meshing well with Sargisson's conception of utopianism as a space that is at once critical and transformative: it is critical of the reader's prevailing assumptions, and transformative of time-worn interpretive habits. In this connection, in "Narration and Gender: The Role of the First-Person Narrator in Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*," Ute Kauer

elucidates Winterson's real motive behind casting the narrator as an ungendered persona. She writes:

> The refusal to admit the gender of the narrator is based on a play with stereotypes which the reader is supposed to have. The stereotypes are to be deconstructed in the minds of the readers just as the language of love is to be deconstructed in the text. (46)

In keeping with Kauer's remarks, Winterson ventures to say in her interview with Catherine Bush that she deliberately constructs the narrator as such, as she states, verbatim: "I wanted to create a character who could act in ways that were stereotypically male and predictably female" (Winterson). Here, Winterson tantalizes the reader, destabilizing his/her deep-seated convictions regarding gender attributes, inciting him/her to reconsider his/her deeply entrenched biases. In a manner redolent of Sargisson, Winterson emphasizes the rejection of binary thinking as a prerequisite for emancipatory thinking. In keeping the narrator's gender under wraps, Winterson devotes herself to contravening what Sargisson appositely terms "the limitations of patriarchal binary oppositionality," (77) thereby cultivating a "profoundly utopian" (77) space in which alternative modes of thinking are visualized.

Unnamed and of unspecified gender, the narrator is categorized as a cunning rogue who wiggles out of social responsibilities, a hopeless romantic who embarks on a frantic quest for true love, and a philanderer who plays the field. Much to the reader's surprise, he/she is endowed with masculine and feminine traits. Sparing the reader reliable and enough information about the narrator's biological and physiological characteristics, Winterson keeps obfuscating important details about his/her identity. There are instances in the novel where the reader accidentally interprets the narrator's behaviour as feminine and girly. When enmeshed in some botched relationships from which he/she emerges emotionally bruised and spiritually wounded, the narrator shows a great deal of emotional vulnerability, a trait that is attributed mainly to a woman. Wallowing in despair and self-pity, he/she, at some intervals, exhibits pathetic frailty and exquisite fragility. For instance, as one of his/her numerous paramours left him/her in the lurch, the narrator, devastated and grief-stricken, mopes around, feeling downhearted and low-spirited. After Bathsheba, a married woman who cuckolds her husband with the narrator, storms out of their intimate relationship, the narrator sinks into despair, confessing that he/she was cajoled into satisfying her "stray desires" (*WB* 78). On another occasion, he/she spends the best part of "the first six months" (*WB* 76) afflicted by love fever, contemplating where he/she has gone wrong in his/her torrid tryst with one of his/her lovers whose "theory in life was sex and friendship" (*WB* 93). On several occasions, he/she displays particulars that clue the reader in his/her masculine behavioural patterns. There are key moments in the novel where the narrator shows little, if no compassion to some of the ill-matched lovers he/she was entangled with in a melodramatically whimsical affair. In his/her litany of complaints about Jacqueline, his/her fleeting companion, the narrator grumbles: "I didn't love her and I don't want to love her. I didn't desire her and I could not imagine myself desiring her" (*WB* 26). At certain points in the narrative, he/she demonstrates masculine features the more so as he/she reveals an indomitable spirit and strength of character

in the face of considerable hardships. In remaining stoic and asserting full command over his/her path, the narrator demonstrates male machismo. Interestingly, Winterson goes one tentative step further when she, every now and then, describes the narrator as a "Lothario" (*WB* 20) and, on occasion, identifies him/her as someone wearing a female garment. Particularly interesting in this context is how critics and reviewers appraise Winterson's conflation between masculine and feminine traits. Reviewing Written to *The Independent*, Joan Smith unequivocally asserts that the narrator is "anything but female" (26). The same reading finds a warm welcome in Michael Hardin's elaborate treatise on novels written by Sylvia Molloy, Helena Parente Cunha and Jeanette Winterson, respectively, in which he argues that a close inspection of *Written* reveals that the narrator is undeniably female (86). On a par with Smith's and Hardin's snap judgements is Catherine Bush's partisan categorization of the narrator as "decidedly gay and female" (55). At odds with the above-mentioned assertions are the postulations that several reviewers spell out. Looking deeper into the novel and assessing it on its own merits, Jennifer J. Gustar puts forward a rather curious comment, contending that Winterson's construction of an ill-defined narrator whose gender is cloaked in mystery "is a serious play, primarily with the reader's self-conceptualization" (28). Coming down in favour of Gustar's stance, Paulina Palmer argues that Winterson manages successfully to transgress the restrictive norms of the man box and blur the rigid dividing line between hetero- and homosexual dichotomy. In resonance with Palmer's remark is Brian Finney's conceptualization of Winterson's tactical ploy as an "innovative move" (26). Too much concentration on determining the narrator's gender, it is feared, might serve, as Finney opines, to "foreclose a text that Winterson's has deliberately left open" (26). I find Gustar's and Finney's remarks to be the most cogent arguments for the purpose of the study, as they converge on such key concepts as open-endedness and indeterminacy, considerably echoing Sargisson's theorization of transgressive utopianism as endless becoming, a horizon that recedes. My aim here is not the mere, humdrum recital of the critical appraisal of Winterson's subversive move, but rather to advance a new perspective grounded in a "utopianism that is not marked by closure and finality of end" (Sargisson 97). By refusing to divulge the narrator's gender, Winterson enacts what Sargisson identifies as a utopian endeavour, one that resists closure and embraces indeterminacy. More so, she deftly diverts the reader's attention from what gender the narrator performs to what shapes his/her identity as a reformed rake. All things considered, it is only fitting to wrap up the section with a quote from Sonia Front, which sets the stage for what follows:

> Love, desire, and pain are universal emotions, not contingent upon gender, orientation, race and other features. Nevertheless, this way of perceiving the world is alien to the patriarchal society that finds the categories of gender and name indispensable in establishing boundaries and giving labels. (23)

V. The Female Body as a Utopian Transgressive site in *Written on the Body*

As much as it is about the destabilization of gender norms and fixed sexual identities, *Written* is a quest for genuine love and an exploration of the unplumbed depths of the female body. After

experiencing many star-crossed relationships, the ungendered narrator meets a married woman named Louise. Availing him/herself of the opportunity to act as a devoted lover, the narrator reveals an eagerness to set his/her life to rights. Totally smitten, he/she falls deliriously, "helplessly in love with Louise" (*WB* 91). Interestingly so, his/her deep emotional tie with Louise unlocks a new, nay unique way of loving. Over the course of his/her romantic liaison with Louise, the narrator experiences, in Sargisson's words, "the gift economics" (111). In his/her previous amorous entanglements, the narrator articulates a philosophy of love grounded in an economy of exchange, in which lovers are treated as commodities and merchandise. Bartering empty words with fleeting moments of physical intimacy, the narrator sustains emotional detachment. Stacked up against these transient flings, the narrator experiences the first flush of heartfelt devotion with Louise. Stirred by inordinate passion, as much as by fierce desire, the narrator, realizes, to his/her amazement, that romantic love is more about agape, less about eros. Blossoming into love, their encounter unfolds as a gift. The narrator, whose life motto before meeting Louise reads "looking for the perfect coupling, the never sleep non-stop orgasm. Ecstasy without end" (*WB* 21), realizes that love is not so much "an economy we had to practice" (*WB* 16) as it is "not something that you can negotiate. Love is the one thing stronger than desire and the only proper reason to resist temptation" (*WB* 77). Equipped with a better grasp of what true love is, the narrator journeys through the maze of love, plumbing its sacred recesses. His infatuation with Louise reaches fever pitch as he/she depicts her body as the sea that engulfs him/her with "fresh tides of longing" (*WB* 73), the boat that ferries him/her into a la-la land, an inn that shelters him/her from all menace, and more than anything an uncharted land and a landscape of intimacy whose curves are shaped by the narrator's sensitive romantic touch. Though besotted with burning desire, the narrator makes it clear that he/she claims no authority over Louise's body, nor does he/she seek to control or possess it, avowing: "I had no dream to possess you, but I wanted you to possess me" (*WB* 52). More so, he/she depicts the physical intimacy with her as the one where all differences between lovers are pruned, if not obliterated. Submerging into Louise's body, the narrator intones: "we were equally sunk in each other" (*WB* 91). Here, love making is elucidated as a genuine encounter where lovers, instead of counting differences, magnify sameness and equally honour and dote on each other. This calls to mind Andrea L. Harris argument in her *Other Sexes: Rewriting Difference from Woolf to Winterson* according to which she propounds that the narrator's warm reunion with his lover aims at breaking through all kinds of prescribed limits (143). In advancing, in Sargisson's terms again, "alternative economies" (106) of love, Winterson promotes a new way of perceiving the other whose warps and wefts are informed by a transgressive utopian ethos of hospitality and harmonious integration. This idea is best captured in Sargisson's comprehensive *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression* where she duly opines:

> Letting go of the desire to possess the Other is a utopian and a transgressive approach to the world. It breaks with 'normal' and taken-for-granted patterns of behaviour. It creates a

> space in which the Other can be Other: different and strange without becoming a threat to us, to our integrity or our identity, because we do not need it to affirm our identity. (145)

In *Written*, Winterson doggedly departs from "the taken-for-granted patterns of behaviour" customarily exhibited in intimate connections where one partner assumes a position of control and the other, looked at as "different and strange," is (mis) judged to have a vassal status. In doing so, she embraces a "utopian and a transgressive approach" to the other, in specific, and to the world, in general. Winterson, it is interesting to note, not only disrupts dominant patriarchal narratives of the female body but also rings the changes on how a 'diseased' body is perceived and recognized.

No sooner had the narrator savoured the stirrings of passionate love with her than Louise disappeared. After being diagnosed with a terminal disease, Louise has gone missing without a trace. Torn asunder, the narrator makes every effort to know her whereabouts, but to no avail. To reclaim Louise, so to speak, from the ravages of leukemic blasts, the narrator applies him/herself to romanticizing her decayed body. In a section of the novel titled "The Cells, Tissues, Systems, and Cavities of the Body," Winterson interpolates a deeper emotional exploration of Louise's body into the anatomical dissection of her body. In interspersing each clinical description of Louise's body with a romanticized corporeal mapping, Winterson transfigures the medical inspection into an expression of passion and affectionate warmth rather than control and sheer apathy. Indeed, the objectified male gaze is interchanged with the opulent, sumptuous look of the lover. Enthusing over Louise's innards, the narrator, at some point, observes that "TISSUES, SUCH AS THE LINING OF THE MOUTH" which once "CAN ONLY BE SEEN WITH THE AID OF A MICROSCOPE" (*WB* 117), capitalization in original) is now filtered through the "lascivious naked eye" of the narrator (*WB* 117) who soon limns it as a chest, a vault of magical secrets, as he/she vividly expresses: "the tissues of the mouth and anus heal faster than any others but they leave signs for those who care to look. I care to look. There is a story trapped inside your mouth" (*WB* 117). The intricate interplay between the clinical and intimate knowledge of Louise's body testifies to the transmogrification of an emaciated body into a site of transgressive intimacy. Though haggard, her body is construed as the driving force, the umbilical cord that fastens the narrator to his/her memories, his/her romantic story and utopian existence. Multitudinous are the ways in which the narrator lodges him/herself into Louise's body and so is the way he/she relates to her. "Myself in your skin, myself lodged in your bones, myself floating in the cavities that decorate every surgeon's wall" (*WB* 120) is how the narrator recognizes Louise's body. Curiously, her body is not flattened into a clinical case, nor despised for being scourged by an incurable disease, nor dissected and deformed by a side gaze, but rather celebrated as a space of containment and (be) longing. In placing intimacy beyond the pale of well-oiled androcentric discourse, Winterson situates utopia in the lived, embodied body, concurring with Sargisson's conception of transgressive utopia as relational, embodied, and

disruptive. It is by undermining the paradigms that structure dominant self/other relations that Winterson proposes a utopian form of human connection, one which is transgressive of all manner of boundaries, whether physical, emotional, or ideological.

VI. Conclusion

Oscar Wilde once wrote, "Progress is the realization of utopias" (1891) —a statement to which Winterson seemed to have fully ascribed to as she put pen to paper in 1992. *Written on the Body*, as has been observed, can be categorized as a transgressive utopia where alternative forms of being and becoming are enacted and prevailing norms abrogated. This is effectively conveyed through Winterson's deliberate construction of a narrator whose gender remains a sealed enigma and a female body that eludes pathological definition. The kind of fiction she fashions is purposely open-ended, inviting multiple readings rather than effectuating interpretive closure. In withholding final resolution and envisioning a world that destabilizes gender binaries and resists fixed categorization, Winterson emulates Sargisson's idea of transgressive utopia, which privileges critique, versatility, and change over inflexible dogma and stale clichés. This way, the narrative morphs into a transgressive utopian space where, as Sargisson aptly expresses, "there is no utopia of perfection here. There is only space for further exploration" (152).

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Khaoula Hmidi holds a PhD from the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities of Manouba, Tunisia. Her thesis probes into the deft interplay between feminism and utopianism in Jeanette Winterson's magnum opus. Her research interests include feminist theory, utopian and dystopian studies. She is a member of Gender, Diversity and Global Justice Lab of Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She has published a book and articles on Winterson's novels as queer heterotopias, as well as other works in utopian studies.