

Alexandria Rowe (2018)

“Genderless Criticism: Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*”

Jeanette Winterson’s 1992 novel, *Written on the Body* manages to enter into a discourse of gendered language, representing marginalized individuals who are often harmed by labels. Critical conversation surrounding the novel does not focus on the way Winterson uses her novel to rewrite how gender is perceived. However, this project argues that Winterson positively “others” the main character in order to show that individuals do not need to be confined within the standard gender binaries. Winterson uses first person narration, clichés, and gendered language to criticize and deconstruct the female/male binary by forgoing the main character’s gender, problematizing gender as whole. The body is an equalizing medium at best that parodies distinctions or a superficial cultural construct at worst that is taken as an inherent difference and source of identity. The main character exists as an individual who is described on a spectrum that does not follow the hegemonic principles of femininity and masculinity; thus, Winterson critiques society by exemplifying the imperfection of language in relation to gender.