

**THE LESBIAN BILDUNGSROMAN: THE PROCESS OF
SELF-DISCOVERY IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S
ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT (1985)¹**

Lucía Morera²

El Bildungsroman lesbiano: el proceso de auto-descubrimiento en *Las naranjas no son la única fruta* de Jeanette Winterson (1985)

Resumen: Debido a la proliferación de editoriales de carácter feminista, a finales de los años ochenta muchos colectivos de mujeres lograron finalmente visibilidad gracias a la literatura postmoderna. Autoras feministas y lesbianas como Jeanette Winterson utilizaron la escritura como un marco artístico donde exponer sus propios procesos de identificación e individualización al rebelarse contra la feminidad heterosexual y normativa impuesta por la sociedad. El objetivo de este artículo es ilustrar como la novela de Winterson *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) reelabora el concepto original de la novela de aprendizaje y desarrolla una perspectiva lésbica de la novela de formación.

Palabras clave: lésbico, *Bildungsroman*, identidad, homosexual, autobiográfico, auto-descubrimiento, Winterson, postmodernismo.

The Lesbian *Bildungsroman*: The Process of Self-discovery in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985)

Abstract: Due to the proliferation of feminist publishing houses, such as Pandora Press or Virago, during the late eighties many oppressed female groups finally achieved visibility by means of postmodern literature. Female lesbian and feminist authors, like Jeanette Winterson, used their texts as an artistic framework in which they described their own processes of identification and individuation while rebelling against normative heterosexual femininity as imposed in Western societies. The aim of this paper is to illustrate how Winterson's novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) reworked the original genre of the "coming-out" novel and developed the concept and practice of the "lesbian *Bildungsroman*".

Keywords: lesbian, *Bildungsroman*, identity, homosexual, autobiographical, self-discovery, Winterson, postmodernism.

The decade of the nineteen sixties was the origin of profound social, cultural and artistic transformations which affected Western society as a whole. From a social point of view, there was a series of relevant changes, such as the economic upturn or the female

¹ Date of reception: 30/10/2014.

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² PhD candidate, Programa de Estudios Ingleses, Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana, Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain; ✉ lucia_morera@hotmail.com.

acquisition of a more independent and active role in society that marked a turning point in the challenging of the dominant ideology imposed by Western patriarchal hegemony. These social changes contributed to the loss of belief in traditional values and institutions. As Jane Flax states in her book, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*, in the nineteen sixties:

Western culture is in the middle of a profound transformation; a “shape of life” is growing old. The demise of the old is being hastened by the end of colonialism, the uprising of women, the revolt of other cultures against white Western hegemony shifts in the balance of economic and political power within the world economy, and a growing awareness of the costs as well as the benefits of scientific and technological “progress”. (5)

As this quotation suggests, this was the period in which a new perception of reality based on the questioning of the validity of past models and on their revision was developed. According to Linda Hutcheon, this change in world view “has certainly meant a rethinking and putting into question of the bases of our western modes of thinking” (1998: 8). During the last decades of the twentieth century, this apparent lack of confidence in reality has been reflected in the artistic, philosophical and literary areas within the cultural current known as “postmodernism”.

Postmodernism was not an easy concept to define given that its assumptions were not precise; in fact, they were focused on the analysis of reality from a vague and confusing perspective. Hans Bertens stated that “critics have characterised postmodernism in terms of its ontological instability or indeterminacy [...]” (qtd in McHale 1986: 26). Another way of considering postmodernism is to see it as an artistic process which sought to overcome the modernist values of renovation and originality.

From a modernist perspective, artistic expressions like literature cannot express reality objectively because reality is by nature subjective; it is based on the individual’s perception and, thus, the author can only express symbols and imagery in accordance with the interpretation established by the society to which the author pertains. That is, although

the author can create his/ her own vision of the world, this will always be influenced by society's symbols and imagery. Postmodern authors supported this modernist perspective and based themselves on it to claim for the inclusion and visibility of minority interpretations of reality that have been marginalized because of the influence of the mainstream view imposed by society. As regards the question of the representation of women, the lack of legitimacy or visibility given to females beyond traditional stereotypes was denounced by feminist and lesbian writers as a form of repression and manipulation. According to Patricia Waugh, "postmodernism is usually presented as an art of the marginal and the oppositional and as such would seem at last to offer women the possibility of identity and inclusion" (1989: 3). Postmodernist and feminist currents had notable issues in common given the fact that the rise of postmodernism coexisted with second-wave feminism.

Even so, both currents also showed features that made them different, such as the need of women to develop a sense of self and become political agents, which worked against the deconstruction of the bourgeois individual subject characteristic of postmodernism. Anyhow, the combination of postmodernism and feminist currents in the literary area gave as a result the rise of feminist writing. This new kind of literature was published in small, specialised publishing houses of mainstream publishing companies whose editorial policy was different from supermarket bookselling. The British novelist and academician Patricia Duncker enumerates some of these feminist publishing houses in her chapter "Jeanette Winterson and the Aftermath of Feminism": Pandora Press, Virago, Onlywomen, Sheba Feminist Publishers and the Women's Press (1998: 77). Regarding lesbian literary representation, postmodernist literature also provided an artistic framework in which female lesbian authors could use literature in order to become visible and to describe their own processes of individuation in rebellion against normative heterosexual femininity imposed by Western society; a system that Kathy Davis, Mary Evans and Judith Lorber argue, underlies institutionalized society and "constitutes the dominant paradigm in Western society" (2006: 307).

The literary genre devoted to represent a process of self-learning or a quest for identity is referred to in German terminology as *Bildungsroman*, a genre that Sonya

Andermahr has defined in the following terms: “[t]he *Bildungsroman* genre conventionally inscribes a myth of origins, delineating the formation of the hero/heroine’s identity” (2008: 50). More precisely, this German term was coined in the eighteenth century so as to refer to a literary genre conceived and developed as a growth process based on an apprenticeship of life and a search for meaningful existence within society. Paying attention to this plot structure, it can be suggested that the literary pattern followed in this kind of novel shows striking affinities with Joseph Campbell’s theory of the hero’s quest (1949)³.

Although the new scheme proposed in these early feminist novels maintained the concept of the heroic subject, in contrast to the classical *Bildungsroman* lesbian authors redefined the original pattern of the novel of development so as to revise the heterosexual discourse of the *Bildungsroman* and, thus, to highlight the search for their true sexual identities. In this sense, it could be affirmed that the lesbian *Bildungsroman* has an explicit pedagogic content. According to Sally Munt, the reworking of the traditional *Bildungsroman* pattern “has an explicit pedagogic function, to instruct the reader in the complexity and contemporaneity of lesbian identity” (1988: 17). The outcome of refocusing the apprenticeship novel’s process on subversion from a lesbian perspective was the creation of a postmodern literary genre known as “lesbian *Bildungsroman*” (Andermahr 2009: 51).

As previously stated, the development of this postmodern version of the novel of development called “lesbian *Bildungsroman*” has striking traits in common with the pattern of the hero’s quest and this similitude is evident in the development of its structure: at the beginning the heroine is not happy due to her lack of self-hood. Indeed, in some cases she is not conscious of her lack. Subsequently, there is a change in her life, which may be positive or negative, but which helps her to start a process of self-reflection which ultimately leads to the development of her own identity and her liberation. As Andermahr remarks, “[t]he acquisition of selfhood is structured as a quest or journey in which the heroine must pass through a number of stages, in the process negotiating gender

³ On this, see Joseph Campbell (1972).

difference and heterosexual femininity” (2009: 50). Echoing this, the lesbian *Bildungsroman* novel portrays the psychological acknowledgment of the protagonist’s sexual orientation; after a period of confusion she finally accepts her lesbian condition.

Within the group of female writers who have portrayed in their novels the process of discovery of a lesbian sexual orientation, also traditionally known as “coming out novels”, it is possible to recognize prominent authors such as Jeanette Winterson, Marilyn French, Sarah Waters, Emma Donoghue or Michelle Tea, all of them belonging to the second half of the twentieth century. In spite of the importance of these authors in the development of the postmodern *Bildungsroman*, I would contend that Jeanette Winterson was one of the first writers who adapted the original *Bildungsroman* pattern in her autobiographical work *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985)⁴, as this essay will subsequently attempt to demonstrate. By means of this literary technique, the author subverts the original novel of development and, thus develops the lesbian *Bildungsroman*. More specifically, the novel maintains the essence of the traditional canon describing the main character’s process of self-discovery, whilst at the same time employing postmodern literary strategies of revision and questioning in order to break the heterosexual bias of the classical *Bildungsroman*.

The aim of this essay is to focus on the elements in Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, that transform it into a lesbian *Bildungsroman*. In doing so, I seek to illustrate how Winterson describes in her autobiographical novel her own process of internal self-discovery from childhood to adulthood. In this novel, Jeanette, the heroine, passes through different vital stages that have a progressive influence on her process of learning, as happens in the classical *Bildungsroman*, until she acknowledges her emotional and sexual feelings for other women (Melanie, Miss Jewsbury and Kathy); overcomes a number of obstacles (the patriarchal imposition of heterosexuality represented in the figure of her mother); and eventually makes public her lesbian condition.

⁴ Subsequent references to the novel will be to the 1996 Vintage Edition.

As mentioned above, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* develops a series of strategies that place the work within postmodernist literature. First of all, the novel is a portrait of Jeanette's life from her childhood to her adulthood; from the nineteen sixties, when Jeanette is a six-year old girl and lives with her parents, to her last visit to her mother's house in Lancashire when she is twenty years old. Jeanette's story is organized in eight different chapters that follow the Biblical structure of the Octateucus, the first eight books in the Old Testament. This kind of structure has a double purpose: on the one hand, to show the immersion of the protagonist in a process of learning divided into different levels of acquisition of self-knowledge and, on the other, to compare specific moments of Jeanette's life with the life of Biblical figures as a way to critique religion by means of parody and intertextuality.

Narrative strategies such as the use of the first-person narrator foster the figure of the heroine as "the teller of her own story". Little Jeanette is the focaliser of the story which is being narrated by the adult Jeanette in the first person. Thus, the combination of little Jeanette's innocent perspective and the ironical narration of her childhood and adolescence by the older Jeanette, creates a comic vision of the events. On occasions, during her childhood, it is evident how the rigidity of the Church conflicts with Jeanette's childish mentality, as when Pastor Spratt talks about the "seven seals": "(Seven seals? I had not yet reached Revelation in my direct reading, and I thought he meant some Old Testament amphibians I had overlooked. I spent weeks trying to find them, in case they came up as a quiz question)" (11).

As the heroine grows up she becomes more and more conscious of her emotions and starts to develop a more independent way of thinking. Indeed, the use of the first-person narrator that tells the story from her point of view as internal narrator helps readers to identify with the protagonist; the inexperienced way of expressing feelings such as confusion, doubts, indecision and her incipient love for Melanie makes Jeanette visibly more human:

We read the Bible as usual, and then told each other how glad we were that the Lord had brought us together. She stroked my head for a long time, and then we hugged

and it felt like drowning. Then I was frightened but couldn't stop. There was something crawling in my belly. I had an octopus inside me (86).

This sum of feelings shows that she is far from responding to the prototypical misrepresentation of the lesbian woman imposed by patriarchal ideology. As Kathryn Simpson argues, “[t]his narrative technique [the use of internal narrators] is crucial in disarming any hostility or negative response to her lesbian sexuality” (1988: 63). Furthermore, it is necessary to remember that Jeanette is also the creator and teller of fairy tales that she herself invents. The use of fairy tales can be understood from a didactic perspective; under the protection of an allegorical and fantastic framework it might be suggested that Jeanette feels freer to explain those specific aspects of her identity that she does not understand or those experiences that she does not know how to handle. The creator of the stories includes tales about certain events that she wants to emphasise and they are integrated in the novel as interpolations; the collection of all fairy tales put together can be qualified as *mises en abyme éclatées*. Each fairy story only repeats part of the novel whereas the collection of *mises en abyme éclatées* can be interpreted as a repetition of the whole story which breaks the narrative progression of the *Bildungsroman* and calls for the attention of the reader. Mieke Bal supports this statement affirming that “allegorical passages may be said to function as a *mise en abyme éclatée*, that is to say, a *mise en abyme éclatée* whose elements appear scattered within the main story, reflecting it as a whole” (qtd in Onega 1995: 142).

Thus, fairy stories like that of the prince and the goose, in which her first theological disagreement on perfection is presented metaphorically, shows the emergence of her own criteria. Another relevant fairy story is the tale of Winnet and the wizard, in which the strange relationship between Jeanette and her mother and her subsequent exile from Lancashire is parodied. Both tales are allegorical representations created by her imagination so as to escape from the boundaries of her everyday life. According to Susana Onega, “[l]ike a fairy tale heroine, the only weapon Jeanette has to console herself is the power of her imagination” (2006: 20).

Turning to the structure of the *Bildungsroman*, it is worthwhile focusing on those aspects or experiences that, despite having been represented by means of realistic devices, are highly influential on Jeanette's process of self-discovery. Some of these aspects are the impact of the religious community in her life, the relationship between Jeanette and her mother and the atmosphere of sexual repression that always surrounds the protagonist. The influence of the Church is probably one of the aspects that most strongly affect Jeanette's behaviour.

At the beginning, the heroine seems to be quite comfortable as a member of the Pentecostal Evangelical community and she is even really valued as a future missionary: "It was very obvious where I belonged. Ten more years and I could go to the missionary school" (42). But, as the protagonist's knowledge of herself increases, her disagreement with the Church community also grows until it reaches a turning point when Pastor Spratt calls her love for Melanie "unnatural passion" and she rebels against that definition: "'To the pure all things are pure', I yelled at him. 'It's you not us'" (103).

According to Evangelical Christian assumptions, Jeanette is sinful because of her lesbian condition and because she is a woman who is challenging the authority of a male priest by quoting the Bible to justify her romantic love for Melanie. As Andermahr (2009) suggests, "[t]he real problem it seemed was going against the teachings of Saint Paul and allowing women power in the Church" (2009: 55). Although the representation of women as powerless and voiceless members of the Church has been encouraged by a patriarchal institution, there are women in the novel such as Louie, Jeanette's mother, who support this portrayal: "My mother stood up and said she believed this was right: that women had specific circumstances for their ministry, that the Sunday School was one of them, the Sisterhood another, but the message belonged to the men" (131). It is quite uncommon that a woman who supports the submission of women to men within the Church should be precisely one of the most powerful members of the Evangelical community, and that she has educated her daughter with a view to her continuing religious labour and to achieving full power as missionary within the Church.

Jeanette's mother is a controversial character whose behaviour will be analyzed henceforth in terms of sexual repression. The influence of her relationship with her daughter seems to be another relevant point with regard to Jeanette's process of self-discovery. The relationship between the heroine and her mother is not the typical binomial mother/daughter relationship. It is not based on love, because her mother has renounced that feeling, as will be analyzed later on. Rather, as I will try to show, their connection can be analyzed from two different perspectives: the relationship between artist and masterpiece and according to Kristeva's theory of the "abject".

From the moment she was adopted, Jeanette started to be prepared by her mother to become a powerful figure. Throughout her childhood, she was conscious of the idea that she was an outstanding girl who was fated to carry out remarkable actions, instead of the typical female fate of matrimony and childbirth: "We stood on the hill and my mother said, 'You can change the world'" (10). Even Jeanette's origins are described as a mystical revelation from the Lord: "And so it was that on a particular day, some time later, she followed a star until it came to settle above an orphanage, and in that place was a crib, and in that crib, a child. [...] 'This child is mine from the Lord'" (10). Her mother's ambition exerted a constant pressure on Jeanette, forcing her to submit her behaviour to her mother's expectations.

In this sense, it might be stated that the relationship between mother and daughter is similar to that existing between an artist/creator and his/her masterpiece/creation. Nonetheless, as Jeanette acquires more and more knowledge about herself, she is increasingly conscious that she does not want to be the mirror image of her mother, if this fact implies renouncing what she actually is. Silvia Antosa defines Jeanette's mother as "the defender of patriarchal/heterosexual values (against her daughter's lesbian sexuality)" (2008: 37). Jeanette cannot avoid rejecting her mother's figure after her betrayal – her mother reveals Jeanette's love for Melanie to the members of the community – and she compares her with these patriarchal figures that are attacking her sexual condition.

The male dominance exerted by the mother over Jeanette should be explored in relation to the abject as defined by Julia Kristeva:

[The abject is a]n extremely strong feeling, which is at one somatic and symbolic, and which is above all a revolt of the person against an external menace from which one wants to keep oneself at a distance, but of which one has the impression that it is not only an external menace but that it may menace us from the inside. So it is a desire for separation, for becoming autonomous and also the feeling of impossibility of doing so. (Kristeva 1982: 135)

According to Kristeva's theory, in order to grow up a child has to abandon the unsymbolised realm of the feminine (the semiotic): in other words, the subject must be separated from his or her mother in order to integrate himself or herself in the symbolic order of language and society governed by paternal law; therefore, Jeanette has to abandon her creator so as to preserve all the fragments that compose her personality and, thus, be able to integrate herself in another society beyond her mother's dominance. This reasoning is very similar to one proposed by her friend, Elsie Norris, several years before:

'This piece of fruit cake' — she waved it between bites— this cake doesn't need me to eat it to make it edible. It exists without me'.

That was a bad example, but I knew what she meant. It meant that to create was a fundament, to appreciate, a supplement. Once created, the creature was separate from the creator, and needed no seconding to fully exist. (45)

In keeping with this, at the end of the novel, Jeanette has left home to make her own way in the world. Experiences such as her mother's betrayal and the absence of her mother's influence make the heroine change her outlook on her mother and start considering her as another human being with her virtues and vices. Even so, Jeanette recognizes that her mother continues to be the centre of her life: "Perhaps it was the snow, or the food, or the impossibility of my life that made me hope to go to bed and wake up

with the past intact. I seemed to have run in a great circle, and met myself again on the starting line” (168).

Finally, there is another relevant issue that influences Jeanette’s process of self-discovery: the atmosphere of sexual repression that surrounds her from childhood to adulthood. Sexual repression has been a constant presence in Jeanette’s education. It has been promoted by the congregation and, above all, by her mother. At first glance, Louie could be described as a relevant member of the religious community, who has, apparently, fulfilled her expectations of becoming wife and mother in accordance with the traditional values that ground the Evangelical Pentecostal community. She can also be described as a controversial character with an outrageous behaviour prone to neurosis regarding sexuality. Her refusal to fulfil her sexual desire is the origin of an obsessive and neurotic behaviour. Indeed, it could be argued that aspects of her behaviour such as her authoritarian attitude, lack of empathy and total inability to express affection are general psychological effects of this repression, which has a determining influence on her identity. More specifically, it is possible to observe how the combination of all these factors also influences her actions and relationships in her everyday life.

Every day Louie goes to bed at six o’clock in the morning. She is married to a man who never complains about her odd behaviour and is virtually invisible to his wife, as Jeanette explains: “Poor Dad, he was never quite good enough” (11); and, apart from that, she has preferred to adopt a child instead of having her own children in order to be similar to the Virgin Mary. All these obsessive traits in her behaviour are aimed at evading marital sex. This horror of sex can be interpreted as a way of expressing her repulsion after a traumatic experience. However, paying attention to Louie’s past and her evasive answer when Jeanette discovers the picture of a girl in the section of the photo album entitled “Old Flames” (35), one might conclude that Jeanette’s mother is hiding her unacknowledged sexual preference for women. Her alleged *affair* with Pierre, which “was nearly her downfall” (16) may be suggested as an invention so as to hide her true relationship with the girl whom she calls “Eddie’s sister” (36).

In order to control her sexual impulses she has had to renounce other impulses and feelings, mainly affection. Louie is not able to love anybody and it is highly probable that

her fixation on religion and community life is a way of sublimating her sexual repression. In fact, it might be asserted that all the little obsessions attributed to Jeanette's mother regarding sex, religion and her Manichean vision of the world (dividing her acquaintances into friends and enemies) are the result of a fragmented personality because of the lack of acceptance of her homosexuality.

Similarly, at the beginning of the novel, her mother's behaviour logically influences Jeanette. Like her mother, the heroine rejects the idea of love, more concretely romantic love with a man, using an excuse, in this case, her need of preparation and devotion to be a missionary: "It was a good thing I was destined to become a missionary. For some time after this I put aside the problem of men and concentrated on reading the Bible. Eventually, I thought, I'll fall in love like everybody else. Then some years later, quite by mistake, I did" (75). However, the difference between her mother and Jeanette is that the latter will decide not to repress her true feelings as her mother did.

In fact, her mother has repressed her emotions so much that she is unable to empathise with those feelings that are not related to religion. Thus, when Jeanette describes a series of nightmarish dreams in which she appears wearing a white wedding dress and next to a bridegroom who transforms his appearance depending on the dream, the reader is not surprised by the lack of importance attributed to them by her mother: "I told my mother about it, and she said it was because I ate sardines for supper" (69). After all, Louie has organized her life in such a way that love and sex do not have any relevance for her.

So, Jeanette's incapacity to identify clearly the reason why she does not feel attracted to men and the idea of becoming a mother and wife is to a certain extent logical; the only person who once provided information to her about what she actually was, was a gipsy fortune teller, an individual external to her community, and Jeanette was too young to understand her:

She looked at my palm and laughed a bit. 'You'll never marry', she said, 'not you, and you'll never be still'. She didn't take any money for the peas, and she told me to run home fast. I ran and ran, trying to understand what she meant. (7)

As the heroine does not receive more information, she finally thinks of herself in the same way as her mother; she is fated to be a missionary and devote her life to God and the community, thus relinquishing the traditional female roles. Therefore, it could be affirmed that the atmosphere of emotional repression is so rigid that it prevents Jeanette from acquiring knowledge about her own feelings and sexuality. It will not be until many years later, when she meets Melanie that the heroine will begin to question her feelings.

Jeanette's relationship with Melanie is portrayed in the same way as the typical heterosexual first love: an incipient and innocent puppy love based on an idealised concept of romanticism and characterised by the lack of any sexual contact. In fact, what the heroine considers "her mother's betrayal" (110) might be interpreted as the fact that triggers Jeanette's decision to cross the threshold from heterosexuality to homosexuality. The heroine tells about her true feelings for Melanie to her mother, thinking Louie will understand them: "[s]he's a woman of the world, even though she'd never admit it to me. She knows about feelings, especially women's feelings" (104). But Louie betrays her and tells what her daughter has told her to the rest of the community. This fact causes resentment and rage in Jeanette. The heroine's rage against her mother triggers the decision to cross this metaphorical threshold and have her first sexual experience with Miss Jewsbury, the only person who accepts her as she is. This first sexual relationship is described as a combination of rage and desire by Jeanette, as opposed to her subsequent sexual relationship with Melanie: "We made love and I hated it and hated it, but would not stop" (104).

Her subsequent *liaison* with Kathy is based on the same feeling of rebellion against her mother's will because Louie symbolises the patriarchal authority that tries to submit her to the traditional heterosexual canon. Moreover, this last relationship allows Jeanette to reaffirm her lesbian identity. The acceptance and reaffirmation of her homosexuality is tremendously important in order to avoid the fragmentation of her personality, as the orange demon, which symbolises her unconscious, warns her: "We're here to keep you in one piece, if you ignore us, you're quite likely to end up in two pieces, or lots of pieces,

it's all part of the paradox" (106). Still, the fact of accepting her homosexuality means breaking the bonds with her mother and community.

This severance of bonds will prove extremely difficult. At the end of the novel, Jeanette returns to Louie's home to spend Christmas holidays and there is a certain atmosphere of reconciliation. As in Winnet's tale, Jeanette's mother has tied an invisible thread between them. The positive interpretation of this thread is a maternal bonding, similar to an umbilical cord, between mother and daughter. Thus, Jeanette can always find her way back home. However, taking into account the relationship between mother and daughter, the most plausible interpretation has to do with the idea of possession: Jeanette will be always in the possession of her mother. Although she is now far from her mother's influence, Jeanette will always be strongly connected with her: "There are threads that help you find your way back and there are threads that intend to bring you back" (155).

Given the fact that the author has deliberately subverted the traditional perspective of the novel of development to represent the coming out of a lesbian heroine, it can be concluded that Jeanette Winterson's novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a postmodern adaptation of the traditional *Bildungsroman* and, therefore, can be labelled as a 'lesbian *Bildungsroman*'. Originally, as pointed out above, the *Bildungsroman* focused on the description of a hero's apprenticeship of life from a male and heterosexual perspective. Winterson's "coming out novel" has been her attempt to give legitimacy and visibility to lesbian identity in literature. Thus, the author has adapted a traditional male text to describe her own process of internal discovery and learning within a postmodernist framework, all the while keeping the essence and structure of the original novel of development.

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