

**T.C.
FIRAT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**



**JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN *BEDENDE YAZILI*
ADLI ROMANINDA FEMİNİST ETİK**

Lizge ÇETİN

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

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**BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI**

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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**Temmuz 2022
ELAZIĞ**

BEYAN

Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimleri Enstitüsü tez yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırladığım “**JEANETTE WINTERSON’IN *BEDENDE YAZILI* ADLI ROMANINDA FEMİNİST ETİK**” başlıklı Yüksek Lisans tezimin içindeki bütün bilgilerin doğru olduğunu, bilgilerin üretilmesi ve sunulmasında bilimsel etik kurallarına uygun davrandığımı, kullandığım bütün kaynakları atıf yaparak belirttiğimi, maddi ve manevi desteği olan tüm kurum/kuruluş ve kişileri belirttiğimi, burada sunduğum veri ve bilgileri unvan almak amacıyla daha önce hiçbir şekilde kullanmadığımı beyan ederim.

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ÖZET
JEANETTE WINTERSON’IN *BEDENDE YAZILI* ADLI ROMANINDA
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Lizge ÇETİN
Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, Jeanette Winterson’ın *Bedende Yazılı* (1992) adlı romanını, yirminci yüzyılın sonlarında önemli bir teori haline gelen feminist etik ışığında incelemektir. Feminist etik, temel olarak Batı dünyasının erkek egemen etik teorilerine tepki olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu erkek egemen etik teorilerin ve ahlaki uygulamaların bir sonucu olarak, kadınların deneyimleri, değerleri, düşünceleri ve erdemleri ataerkil alanla sınırlandırılmıştır. Kadınlar geleneksel olarak ev içi mekânlarla, ilişkisel rollere bağlılık, özen, şefkat ve uysal özelliklerle ilişkilendirilirken, aynı zamanda ataerkil “rasyonel düşünme” tanımlarının dışında tutulmaktadır. Bu nedenle feminist etik, erkek egemen teorilerin önyargılı varsayımlarını ve ahlaki teoride kadınların eşit olmayan temsillerini değiştirmeyi amaçlamıştır. *Bedende Yazılı*, önceki ilişkilerinde yaşadığı başarısızlıklar nedeniyle derin bir pişmanlık duyan ve ölümcül hastalığı olan sevgilisi Louise’in yokluğunun acısıyla iç çatışmalar yaşayan cinsiyetsiz ve isimsiz bir anlatıcının hikayesine dayanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, romanı etik değerler ve anlatıcının ahlak gelişimi bağlamında incelemektir. Winterson, cinsiyetsiz ve isimsiz bir anlatıcı aracılığıyla cinsiyet ayrımcılığı olmayan bir etiği ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlarken, romanın kapanışı ortak insani değerlere odaklanmıştır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, Winterson’ın *Bedende Yazılı* adlı romanını erdem, sevgi, özen, özerklik ve özgür irade gibi etik kavramlara atıfta bulunarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminist Etik, Özen, Erdem, Cinsiyetsiz Etik, Jeanette Winterson, *Bedende Yazılı*

ABSTRACT

FEMINIST ETHICS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *WRITTEN ON THE BODY*

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The aim of this study is to examine Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992) in the light of feminist ethics, which has become a significant theory in the late twentieth century. Feminist ethics mainly deals with the male-biased Western ethical societies. As a result of these male-biased ethical theories and moral practices, the experiences, values, thoughts, and virtues of women are confined to a patriarchal space. While women are conventionally associated with domestic spaces, dependency on relational roles, care, compassion, and docile characteristics, they are excluded from patriarchal definitions of "rational thinking". Therefore, feminist ethics sets out to alter the biased assumptions of male-dominant theories and unequal representations of women in moral theory. *Written on the Body* is based on the story of a genderless and nameless narrator, who deals with the deep feeling of regret due to her/his moral failures in her/his previous relationships and the pain of the loss of Louise, her/his fatally ill beloved. The study analyses the novel in the context of feminist ethical values and the moral development of the narrator. As Winterson aims to reveal non-binary ethics through a genderless and nameless narrator, the novel closes with a focus on common humane values. This study aims to analyse Winterson's *Written on the Body* by referring to ethical notions such as virtue, love, care, autonomy, and free-will.

Keywords: Feminist Ethics, Care, Virtue, Genderless Ethics, Jeannette Winterson, *Written on the Body*

1. INTRODUCTION

Feminist ethics emerged in the 1980s in order to investigate the main reasons for gender inequality in moral theories and in order to offer inclusive solutions for the oppressions of women. It mainly deals with the established moral assumptions of patriarchy and biased gender representations. For this reason, feminist ethics is an extended field of study that deals with traditional ethical theories. It advocates the moral values and personal experiences of oppressed groups, especially women and homosexual people, are not represented properly in male-dominated moral theory. As a result, feminist ethics attempts to handle the biased assumptions of traditional ethics in order to produce practical theories and represent the experiences of the people who are oppressed because of their gender choices.

Ethics is accepted as the scientific study of moral values. The essential aim of ethics is to offer theories on the moral goodness of individuals. While ethics offers a set of theories and practices on how individuals should live their lives, morality stands for external rules and norms to regulate moral practices. Western ethical theories are mainly formed by the ideas of male-dominated philosophy, which goes back to Plato, Aristotle, Baruch Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, and Lawrence Kohlberg. In this regard, feminist ethics advocates that the ethical theories are predominantly gender-biased. Rosemarie Tong notes that traditional moral philosophy is basically grounded on universal notions such as “right,” “duty,” “good,” “bad,” “benefit,” “permission,” and “justice,” and thus, it is “prescriptive,” “universalizable,” and “overriding” (1995: 14).

Traditional ethical theories and moral practices have prioritised “ration” which is mostly associated with masculinity. Thus, they have undervalued the experiences and values of women systematically. Alison Jaggar explains that feminist ethics was coined by the time second-wave feminism became popular in North America in the late 20th century when ethical and philosophical concerns about the status of women were conceptualised (2013: 433). Therefore, the main aim of feminist ethics was to deal with gender biases in male-dominated ethics and philosophy. To do that, feminist ethicists handle the daily lives of women to focalise their personal experiences within ethical theories. Accordingly, Carol Gilligan’s well-known theoretical book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Movement* (1982) brought a new perspective to the field of moral theory. In her work, Gilligan notably discusses that women have lost their authentic voice due to male oppression, and because of this, they do not have the ability to speak of their own lives. Moreover, she advocates that women are not represented in a proper way in moral theory, and thus, women’s experiences should be re-examined. In this sense, feminist critics started to focus on new discussions on moral theories.

Traditional ethics accepts the values of men as a reference for moral theory. Therefore, feminist ethics rejects defining the moral status of women by acknowledging the values of men as the reference point. Accordingly, Iris Marion Young explains the situation of women: “The culture and society in which the female person defines woman as Other, as the inessential correlate to men, as the mere object and immanence” (1980: 141). By referring to Beauvoir’s concept of immanence, Young aims to discuss that the values of women are constructed on the sense of potentiality, in other words, the potentiality to complete the values of masculinity. Accordingly, feminist criticism argues that women are confined to the moral roles of femininity with their thoughts and desires, which can never be equal to the moral limits of masculinity. In this sense, Luce Irigaray elucidates

the moral status of woman in relation to the ideals of masculinity, “His ‘super-ego,’ teeming with ideals and moral rules and self-reflective and self-representative gazes, will have taken woman away from him in exchange for an idea of woman, ‘femininity’” (1985: 82). As it can be inferred from these lines, women have been mostly described by masculine values and experiences. For this reason, feminist ethics persistently stands up for a moral theory which represents the personal experiences and emotional status of women.

Feminist ethics is derived from the idea of an equal moral theory and rooted in the ideas of different feminist theories such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, separatist and radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and intersectional feminism. By including different perspectives into the agenda, feminist ethics aims to establish an extensive conceptual framework to analyse the exclusion of female point of view from moral theory. Feminist ethicists advocate that they do not only stand up for the rights and values of white, middle-class, heterosexual women, but they also represent the experiences of other oppressed groups, such as homosexual people and gender-neutral people. In this sense, feminist ethicists endeavour to correct the problem of representation within feminist theory besides male-dominated philosophy.

One of the most important concepts of feminist ethics is care ethics, which emerged as a reaction to the ethics of justice. Some of the significant names of care ethicists are Virginia Held, Annette Baier, Eva Feder Kittay, Sara Ruddick, and Joan Tronto. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) was written by Nel Noddings in order to discuss the aspects of caring relationships as relational ethics. Virginia Held defines the ethics of justice as a moral theory that assumes individuals as “autonomous beings who are expected to obey prescribed moral rules,” nevertheless, she notes that care ethics addresses “human beings’ relational experiences, especially the experience of being cared for” (2015: 22). While the concept of justice is generally linked to the notions such as deliberation, prudence, and ruling abilities, care is defined within the context of dependency, relatedness, and emotionality. On the other hand, male-dominated ethical theories assumed caring as a feminine notion, and they have not credited care as a valuable virtue. However, feminist ethics highlights that care is not essentially a feminine virtue because all human beings should adopt care as an attitude to maintain their lives within a relational context.

Feminist ethics focuses on the moral values and experiences of women. It has started to discuss gender-neutral feminist perspectives recently since feminist ethicists believe that overemphasizing gender differences does not lead to productive results. In this regard, feminist ethics has started to underline non-binary perspectives which can provide a negotiation between feminine and masculine values. Male-dominated ethical theories prioritise universal virtues such as courage, justice, honesty, prudence, and autonomy. However, the aim of feminist ethics is to deconstruct the stereotyped definitions of moral theories. For this reason, they started to highlight “blurred” and “fluid” gender identities to underline that all human beings share common virtues such as honesty, justice, courage, love, care, autonomy, and free-will. These virtues are labeled by patriarchal society as feminine or masculine virtues, nevertheless, feminist ethics criticises the assumptions that gender affects virtues. They underline that human nature is complicated because it is shaped by psychoanalytic processes, emotions, and external conditions.

Within this theoretical framework, this study aims to analyse Jeanette Winterson’s novel *Written on the Body* (1992) in the context of feminist ethics because Winterson reveals different perspectives on feminist ethics in the novel. Winterson’s earlier works generally represent the

experiences and values of lesbian people; therefore, s/he focuses on gender binaries in these works. Nevertheless, Winterson exhibits a gender-neutral approach in *Written on the Body* with a genderless and nameless narrator. In this sense, the novel wanders through the borders of gender-neutral ethics as well as feminist ethics.

Traditional ethical theories represent women as submissive, docile, and emotional human beings. Winterson changes the definitions of femininity and masculinity within a relational context. Leslie Rabine explains the traditional romantic heroine as follows: “The dominant masculine voice of traditional narrative imposes a totalising structure on the romantic narrative and represses an independent feminine other” (1985: 7). Nevertheless, Winterson creates an “untraditional” romantic heroine with Louise who is portrayed as a semi-stereotyped female character with legendary beauty. Nevertheless, Winterson deconstructs the fixed representations of femininity through the personal experiences and moral values of Louise, who is also a stable, autonomous woman who resists the established values of patriarchy. In traditional narratives, female characters are expected to follow the values and rules of the male hero. Correspondingly, Rabine states, “Reducing the heroine to a reflection of himself, the hero makes of her an ‘intermediary,’ through whom he can realise his desire to turn back to a mythical union with himself” (1985: 7). However, *Written on the Body* presents a different moral story with a genderless, morally immature narrator and an autonomous female character with unexpected moral values.

This thesis has three chapters apart from the Introduction and Conclusion parts. The second chapter, “Gender and Ethics,” offers an insight into the relationship between gender and ethics. It addresses a general portrayal of traditional ethics in comparison with feminist ethics in order to display the shift of ethical theories from a male-dominated perspective to genderless approaches. It further focuses on the basic notions of ethics such as moral value, virtue, justice, and care.

The third chapter “Jeanette Winterson and *Written on the Body*” deals with Jeanette Winterson’s life as a postmodern, gender-conscious writer, and it presents an overview of her novel *Written on the Body*. The novel is based on the romantic love story of a genderless and nameless character who shows moral development due to the abandonment of the beloved. In this novel, Winterson aims to subvert gender-biased moral assumptions by the genderless narrator, her/his previous lovers, and her beloved Louise.

Finally, the fourth chapter “Feminist Ethics in *Written on the Body*” examines the novel in the context of feminine, masculine, and genderless values because the novel includes several ethical dilemmas and moral attitudes of the characters from different sexes and genders. Winterson has a universal, non-binary ethical approach in *Written on the Body*, in which she focalises the dynamics of relationships in the sense of general human experiences and virtues. By doing so, Winterson synthesises feminine and masculine values and virtues so that she displays the complications, limitations, and failures of human nature without referring to a specific gender. Therefore, this chapter revisits the feminine and masculine virtues with references to the novel.

This chapter examines the shift from the binaries that Winterson exhibited as feminine and masculine towards genderless representations in *Written on the Body*. Winterson blurs the roles and identities of the characters to show that gender does not have a primary role in moral behaviour, but the conditions of being human force people to construct different identities. In order to represent the different moral identities of the characters, Winterson reveals a romantic story and various

ethical dilemmas. In terms of dilemmas, she underlines the moral behaviour of the narrator and Louise.

The fourth chapter also examines the concept of the body in *Written on the Body* in relation to moral theories. Elizabeth Grosz defines the body as a “cultural raw material,” for it is not only limited to the physical or biological processes, but is also constructed as a historical and cultural product (2003: 200). In this conceptual framework, body and sex are viewed as instruments of power by feminist critics, as Michel Foucault explains the power on the body as a “mode of specification of individuals” (1978: 47). Therefore, the bodies of the individuals are defined, labeled, and shaped by the male-dominated authorities. Winterson focuses on the moral aspect of the overemphasis on the female body. On the other hand, s/he subverts the moral assumptions about the body by creating a genderless narrator.

Consequently, this thesis portrays different ethical theories in relation to gender through an analysis of Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*. Thus, it focuses on the relationship between gender and ethics. The study re-examines the moral frameworks of femininity, masculinity, and gender-neutral possibilities. By doing so, it handles essential notions of ethics such as moral action, deliberation, virtue, love, autonomy, justice, free-will, and care. The study focuses on how Winterson deals with genderless ethics as well as giving various perspectives from feminist ethics.

2. GENDER AND ETHICS

Ethics can be defined as the general conceptual study of morality. Henry Sidgwick refers to ethics as a science with “a special and primary object to determine what ought to be” (1962: 1). In this sense, ethics is generally related to the ultimate good of a person that could be attained by actions or by a certain disposition. In this sense, traditional ethics or moral theories have dealt with formulations on the moral well-being of human beings. However, these traditional ethical values and social norms have been established by patriarchal authorities. For this reason, feminist ethicists started to discuss ethical practices within the context of gender. Feminist ethics investigates different moral values and practices of women and men, the traditional definitions and concepts in ethical theory, the norms and standards set by society, and tries to offer new ethical perspectives for equal values and practices. In this respect, it is stated that feminist ethics emerged as “a way of doing ethics,” and for this reason, it should not be regarded as a branch of ethics (Lindemann, 2019: 7).

By the 18th century, the ideas of the Enlightenment underpinned modern Western philosophy by acknowledging “rationality” as the fundamental source of morality, and so, it shaped the dynamics of social relationships and values. The importance of complying with the universal rules has been overemphasised by modern moral theories; however, women have been mostly excluded from the field of rationality, and their experiences have not been represented properly. In this respect, gender and ethics began to be discussed in the same theoretical context in order to investigate the outcomes of universal moral practices on gender and offer new inclusive ethical principles by the 1970s.

Women and men have certain different biological characteristics; however, these characteristics are not regarded as equal. In this respect, women have been defined as “not a man,” and their characteristics are evaluated by acknowledging men as the reference point (Lindemann, 2019: 9). Furthermore, women have been treated as “immature” human beings who need to be cared for, protected, looked after, and governed by men. Their experiences such as giving birth, breeding, menstruation, and menopause have not been valued, and besides, these characteristics have been considered to negatively affect the rational abilities of women. On the other hand, care and compassion are culturally linked to women; however, these characteristics have not been considered valuable as much as reason and justice, which are generally attributed to men. In this respect, feminist ethics emerged as a rejection of ethical or moral practices which undervalue women’s experiences. Thus, feminist ethicists started to focus on the prospects of inclusive ethical approaches. Alison Jaggar pointed out that in an “ideal” and “adequate” ethical theory, gender and related characteristics such as age, ability, class, and race should be taken into consideration with “a more complex conceptual apparatus reflecting the inevitable differences among people” (2013: 436). Thus, feminist ethics offered new theories on how to regard personal differences.

The main focus of feminist ethics has been the “ethical priority” assigned to men by the male-biased Western philosophy (Jaggar, 2013: 434). It is stated that a problem of representation comes out since women do not have a “voice” in their daily moral practices and in their relationships, but rather, they are resounded by others (Gilligan, 1993: 17). Therefore, just as feminist theory, feminist ethics is composed of different approaches and solutions regarding the issue of inequality, particularly arising from moral practices. On the other hand, Lindemann

questions the problem of inequality by pointing out that feminists should ask, “Why equal to men?” because accepting men as a reference point for equality causes women to focus on the values of men (2019: 7). In order to provide equal representations, feminist ethics deals with the unbalanced gender roles both in theory and in practice such as decision making, setting and obeying rules, fitting moral judgments and social values, and expressing personal values and free-will.

The relationships of human beings are intertwined with ethical and moral practices. Although the origins of both ethics and morality are related to the concept of “well-being,” these two terms have equivocal definitions in terms of social roles (Annas, 1992: 119). Ethics is a broad term that regulates general principles to encourage individuals to internalise the proper attitudes. With respect to the concept of “well-being,” it may be concluded that morality is mostly related to social values and external regulations while ethics applies to personal values and internal motivation to reach the state of “well-being” (Williams, 2006: 6). Accordingly, the extent of “goodness” or “well-being” may be arising from internal sources such as a person’s virtuous character or from external sources such as duties, rules, and laws. It is stated that ethics functions as a guide or a formula for the individual to apply moral practices (Tong, 1995: 14). Therefore, moral practices are mainly accepted as regulators which help the individual keep up with the rules of the outer world. Consequently, both ethics and morality rely on universal rules, which have been formed by patriarchal authorities. Nevertheless, universal ethical and moral practices result in the exclusion and subjection of individuals who are not holding the power, especially such as women and homosexual people.

Feminist ethicists question to what extent women are included in the regulations of the outer world, which has been mostly shaped by male authorities. From ancient times, ethical theories have been established on the basis of rationality, and moral practices have been turned into power relations. Therefore, power is a substantial effect on the constitution of gender roles. Accordingly, Lindemann states that feminist ethics deals with “the moral meaning of the relations of unequal power” (2019: 15). Power is both related to the individual’s relationship with the outer world and her/his independence in the world because the individuals are affected by all the regulations around them. Power affects both the ability to make decisions and to act. Thus, the ones who hold the power determine norms, standards, moral values, rights, and responsibilities.

Carol Gilligan, one of the most prominent names in the theory of feminist ethics, has pointed out that she views the issue of feminist ethics as the “rights and responsibilities problem” since “autonomous thinking, clear decision-making and responsible action” are generally attributed to masculinity (1993, 17). In the sense of the “rights and responsibilities” problem, women have been regarded as incapable of choosing moral acts, which causes gender inequality in every field of society. Consequently, Carol Gilligan offers a new kind of normative ethics named “care ethics” that embraces “equal” but “different” values of women and men. Care ethics advocates that the moral values and practices of different genders may differ from each other due to the cultural effects on the nature of women and men. However, it is claimed that the “different” values should still be regarded “equal”. Care ethics mainly derives from the notion of caregiving, nonetheless, it deals with the relational aspects of ethics. As the role of caregiving is generally associated with women, caring is also confined to femininity.

Feminist ethics involves a set of different theories regarding the morality of women and men, and it especially focuses on the notion of inequality. As feminist ethicists believe that women and

men are associated with different moral roles, values, and virtues, they started to discuss the relationship between virtue and gender.

2.1. New Directions in Virtue and Gender

Virtue ethics is a kind of normative ethics that offers a set of principles to conduct a morally “better” life. Feminist ethics deals with virtue ethics because feminist ethicists believe that the notion of virtue is gender-biased due to male-dominant ideas of philosophy. On the other hand, feminist ethicists aim to reinterpret the notion of virtue on the grounds of seeking new ethical frameworks. Accordingly, feminist ethics is considered to be both normative and descriptive, for it addresses both theoretical and practical aspects of morality. As it is normative ethics, it attempts to investigate concepts such as “value,” “worth,” “right,” “good,” and “bad” by using the language of “ought,” and it is descriptive because it displays how social power currently operates (Lindemann, 2019: 17). In this respect, the analysis of virtue in feminist ethics is expected to evaluate the current conditions of women and offer solutions for their well-being.

Many modern ethical theories focus on duties, outcomes, and benefits of actions, which have been defined as deontology, consequentialism, and utilitarianism, respectively. On the other hand, virtue ethics is based on morally good characteristics of a person in general. Accordingly, virtue can be defined as the whole disposition of a person to choose her/his actions with “deliberation” for “beneficial outcomes” (Williams, 2006: 11). Every good characteristic cannot be categorised as a “virtue,” for it should lead to the development of one’s life. In addition, being virtuous does not depend on a particular situation, but rather, it is related to the individual’s general inclination towards daily incidents. Bernard Williams explains that a courageous person does not choose courageous acts in order to be appreciated because virtuous actions are not conducted by considering them, but rather they happen instantaneously as they are related to the nature of the person (2006: 11). As for deliberation, the subjectivity of the individual is highlighted since virtue is related to the “knowledge” of individuals in choosing the most beneficial act to maintain a good life. Having the knowledge of choosing good is based on Socrates’s theory of moral intellectualism, which is in contrast with Aristotle’s “akrasia”. Aristotle explains that morally corrupted souls choose the wrong action in spite of the knowledge of the “good”. Besides, Aristotle defines virtue “as a result of a habit,” and he points out that habits do not come by nature, they require certain deliberation and regular actions (1910: 20). Finally, “beneficial outcomes” are necessary for being acknowledged as virtuous since the actions of individuals are expected to lead to an ideal life for everybody.

Virtue ethics is mainly based on the ideas of Aristotle, who highlights the significance of “autonomy” and “reasoning”. When virtue ethics emerged in ancient philosophy, women were not directly referred to as unvirtuous, but they were represented as human beings who require men’s power to manage a virtuous life due to their irrationality and lack of ruling competency. On the other hand, the characteristics attributed to women such as care, compassion, self-sacrifice, dependency, and sentimentality have been undervalued since antiquity. Men are assumed as the regulators and executors of the rules of the outer world; thus, they are assigned to protect women as well as to improve women’s lives since women are considered to be incapable of managing on their own or choosing the good actions. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle points out that there is an inequality between the virtues of women and men, and he asserts that a man is a better leader

than a woman “by his nature,” and thus, he should rule women and children in the household (1910: 135). The power relation between women and men is compared to the relationship between the ruler and the citizen rather than the master and the slave by Aristotle. Women are recommended to be like citizens in a state, but it is claimed that they should not be given an executive power, because even though they have the power of deliberation, they still lack the power of authority (Hall, 2016: 36). In Aristotle’s definition, a woman’s place has been determined as “wife” and “mother,” and her relatedness to the man and her family is significant for the well-being of society.

In Aristotle’s definition of virtue, the virtuous person is defined as the one who is aware of her/his feelings in a certain situation and who chooses the right action through the moderation of her/his feelings. According to Aristotle, the man who fears everything becomes a coward, and the man who does not fear anything becomes a fool; however, the man who feels fear in a proper way becomes a virtuous person (1910: 91). Therefore, he advises that people should live their feelings in moderation. However, women are generally associated with excessive feelings, which leads them to moral deficiency.

In modern ethical theories, virtue ethics has still been discussed under the titles of eudemonism and agent-based approaches. Eudemonism refers to an idealised life that offers various ways to flourish; however, those who cannot comply with the determined ideals may feel themselves as the outsider (Tessman, 2009: 50). As male-dominant philosophy has set a framework for an ideal life, it has established certain characteristics to exclude feminine values from the sphere of rationality. On the other hand, agent-based approaches emerged to evaluate moral actions on the basis of aretaic characteristics of the person, which are related to the virtuous nature of humans (Slote, 1995: 653). The aretaic theory of virtue focuses on the essence of actions regardless of their external effects.

In his well-known work *The Ethics*, Baruch Spinoza sets out to explain the relationship between virtuous actions in line with other factors such as human psychology, emotions, and external effects. He defines virtue in the context of the individual’s control of emotions and desires. Baruch Spinoza discusses the emotions and virtuous actions as follows:

All emotions are related to desire, joy, or sorrow, as the definitions show which we have given of those emotions. But desire is the very nature or essence of a person, and therefore, the desire of one person differs from the desire of another as much as the nature or essence of the one differs from that of the other. Again, joy and sorrow are emotions by which the power of a person or his effort to persevere in his own being is increased or diminished, helped, or limited [...] we understand appetite and desire, and therefore joy and sorrow are desire or appetite in so far as the latter is increased, diminished, helped, or limited by external causes, that is to say they are the nature itself of each person. (1949, 171)

Accordingly, Spinoza asserts that unfulfilled desires lead to sorrow in the human soul; however, those who can control their emotions and desire are the virtuous ones. On the other hand, Spinoza defines “bondage” as the impotency of human beings to control their emotions, which forces human beings to follow the worse (1949, 187). He defines virtue in the context of the power and strength of human beings, especially in the respect of the individual’s ability to control her/his emotions, desires, and actions. Thus, s/he states:

By virtue and power, I understand the same thing, that is to say, virtue, in so far as it is related to man, is the essence itself or nature of the man in so far as it has the power of effecting certain things which can be understood through the laws of its nature alone. (1949, 191)

Accordingly, Spinoza handles virtue by contemplating a particular essence, which has the potential to achieve excellence for the prosperity and well-being of the individual. On the other hand, he focuses on self-interest in virtuous actions. Spinoza deals with the link between emotions and virtues. However, women are generally considered unable to balance their emotions and actions.

The modern ethical theories of virtue are more inclusive of experiences of the individuals in terms of the definition of virtue. However, they continue to represent universal ideas that do not give an overall portrayal of the female experience. Therefore, feminist ethicists started to focus on feminine virtues, which have been disregarded and even despised within male-dominated philosophy. In this sense, feminist ethics aims to revalue the female experience by advocating that male-biased ethical theories are overemphasizing rationality by disregarding female capabilities such as care, compassion, maternity, and emotionality started to gain much more appreciation.

2.2. Feminist Criticism on the Practice of Morality

Moral rules are mostly defined as external regulations in the lives of individuals. It has been stated that morality is a “universal compelling force” which affects our “deliberation” (Annas, 1992: 120). According to the definition of Julia Annas, it can be stated that modern moral practices are based on “universal rules,” which are imposed on individuals. Modern moral theories are grounded in the ideas of Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, and Kohlberg. Accordingly, Annette Baier explains, “The great and influential moral theorists have in the modern era taken *obligation* as the key and the problematic concept, and they have asked what justifies treating a person as morally bound or obliged to do a particular thing” (1994: 4). Thus, feminist critics underline that male-dominated moral theory predominantly focuses on absolute rules, which ultimately leads to ignorance of different moral points of view.

The practices of modern morality have become controversial since they bring out unequal gender representations. When feminist ethics emerged as a subject in the 1970s, feminist critics were discussing the issues of inclusion and equal representations. In accordance with this, Alison Jaggar refers to modern moral theories as the “universalistic discourse of human rights against postmodernism which represents local experiences” (1998: 8). Those universalistic discourses reflect the moral values and moral actions of women and men in a biased way. In this regard, feminist ethicists advocate that moral actions should be reconsidered by humanitarian approaches; however, they are still evaluated in a gender-biased way. Therefore, moral practices began to be dealt with by feminist ethicists for a number of reasons: to question how moral practices come out and which experiences are not acknowledged as morally correct by the society, to determine to what extent the individuals are excluded from the definition of moral, and to highlight the effects of moral practices upon the individuals. Feminist ethicists seek for a new moral understanding which provides a balance between reason and emotion, justice and care, universality, and personal experiences. Finally, in order to offer solutions, feminist ethicists attempt to enlarge the frameworks of moral practices by incorporating the moral experiences of both women and men.

Feminist ethics discusses the ideas of Immanuel Kant within the context of morality. Kantian ethics is mainly based on the ideas of “duty” and “law”. Moreover, Kant defines the doctrine of the categorical imperative, a fixed principle to define the moral actions which are allowed and not allowed (1965: 23). When he determines the limits of those actions, Kant defines duty and reason as the preconditions of morality. Besides, Kant is also known for his ethics of justice, which has been criticised by feminist ethicists for excluding women from the field of rational thinking. On the other hand, Kant defines the status of women as “passive citizens who lack civic personality within the mode of inherence,” nevertheless, he offers that women should be encouraged to be active citizens (1965: 79).

Another moral philosopher that feminist ethicists address is David Hume. Hume does not define morality in the context of obligations or external forces, but he focuses instead on virtues. He refers to morality as “inward peace of mind, a consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct” (2006: 267). Feminist critics mostly advocate that Hume has an essentialist attitude towards the virtues of women and men because they believe that Hume introduces women as naturally fragile and weak creatures. On the other hand, feminist ethicists believe that Hume is one of the male philosophers who appreciated the emotionality of women. Thus, he is thought to have contributed to care ethics.

David Hume underlines that there is a natural distinction between the virtues of women and men. Accordingly, he states, “Courage, which is the point of honour among men, derives its merit, in a great measure, from artifice, as well as the chastity of women; though it has also some foundation in nature [...]” (2006: 150). However, Hume believes that society’s perception on the virtues of women and men is biased. Hume explains his ideas about the moral condition of women and men as follows:

Perhaps, this consideration is one chief source of the high blame, which is thrown on any instance of failure among women in point of chastity. The greatest regard, which can be acquired by that sex, is derived from their fidelity; and a woman becomes cheap and vulgar, loses her rank, and is exposed to every insult, who is deficient in this particular. The smallest failure is here sufficient to blast her character [...] If a man behaves with cowardice on one occasion, a contrary conduct reinstates him in his character. But by what action can a woman, whose behaviour has once been dissolute, be able to assure us, that she has formed better resolutions, and has self-command enough to carry them into execution? (2006: 236)

Thus, Hume advocates that women and men have different virtues by their nature, besides, society is inclined to judge the moral failures of women and men in a biased way. When Hume identifies women with emotionality, he does not present it as a negative characteristic. Nevertheless, while some feminist critics criticise Hume for being essentialist in terms of the moral status of women and men, feminist ethicists believe that Hume’s theories about emotionality constituted care ethics. Nel Noddings asserts, “Care ethics recognises the centrality of emotion or feeling in moral life. In this, we might trace our philosophical roots to David Hume and the moral philosophers who emphasised the role of feeling in moral motivation” (2015: 75).

Carol Gilligan states that she thinks of morality as a concept of “obligations and conflicts between personal desires and social considerations” (1993: 65). Accordingly, Gilligan aims to

underline morality as a personal experience as well as a universal regulatory force. In this sense, she focuses on different aspects of morality such as love, emotion, care, and compassion. Annette C. Baier asserts that women aim to construct a different moral theory that “mediates between reason and feeling, and also between obligation and love, which is mostly neglected in men’s theories” (1994: 10). Therefore, Baier’s statement on women’s need for a new moral theory is also related to Gilligan’s care ethics. Gilligan deals with the issue of morality within the context of the conflict between the self and the other since it is actually the dilemma between compassion and autonomy, respectively care and justice (1993: 71).

The moral theory that is based on relationships and responsibilities is defined as care ethics, which is in contrast with the ethics of justice. According to Lawrence Kohlberg, one of the important names of ethics of justice, men regard moral values in the context of rules and regulations (1993: 10). However, women mostly regulate moral values on the basis of their responsibilities in order to maintain relationships properly (1993: 10). When Kohlberg’s ethics of justice and Gilligan’s care ethics are compared, one might claim that care ethics can be explained in the context of personal and specific experiences, on the other hand, ethics of justice takes its roots from universal and patriarchal considerations.

The role of caring for is generally linked to the role of care-giving, which is generally associated with women. However, care ethicists claim that both caring for and care-giving are regarded by society in a gender-biased way. Nel Noddings defines care ethics and ethics of justice as follows:

Another important difference between the two types of ethics is that care ethics is a relational ethic, whereas the justice approach is anchored in the individual, in his/her rights, duties, and liberty. In part, this distinction arises from the roots of care ethics in women’s experience, the long history of responsibility for the welfare of children and the maintenance of caring relations. This history is clearly important, but overemphasis on it sometimes causes confusion between caring and caregiving. Caregiving as an activity—paid or unpaid—can be engaged in with or without the care described in care ethics. (2015, 73)

Although the definitions of “care-giving” and “caring” are not completely the same, the concept of caring takes its roots from the relational dynamics of motherhood. Consequently, care becomes a characteristic that is generally attributed to women. Moral practices and moral behaviour of women and men are not evaluated in equal conditions. In this sense, feminist ethics questions the reasons for biased moral practices towards different genders.

Care ethicists discuss the moral aspect of care by defining caring as a virtue. Nel Noddings propounds that caring is considered a virtue; however, it contains different moral aspects for the carer and the cared-for (2002: 12). In this sense, she questions the moral roles of the carer and the cared-for, besides, she refers to the goal of caring in the context of virtuous behaviours. Noddings also deals with the notions of “harm” and “moral wrong”. According to Noddings, “harm is generally regarded as physical or material hurt,” and because of this, the emotional needs of people are often neglected (2002: 32). Noddings advocates that when a carer aims to protect a cared-for from the physical harm, s/he may cause “moral wrong” by disrespecting to the emotions and free-

will of the cared-for. Therefore, Noddings deals with “failures to care” by referring to “the miseries people inflict on others because they do not know how to care” (2022: 32).

As the virtues and moral actions of women and men are not regarded in an equal way, feminist ethicists discuss gender-biased moral assumptions. In this sense, the aim of feminist ethics is defined as offering new ethical approaches in order to find out solutions for the systematic subordination of women, which comes about due to traditional ethical practices. In order to offer new ways out, feminist ethics represents controversial views regarding the values of women and men.

In the traditional definition, the concept of value has a large framework and various definitions. In its most known meaning, value has been defined as the “measurable degree of importance” which is attached to a particular object. It is also defined as the “beliefs” and “assumptions” of the individual regarding a subject. In the context of social relations, the concept of value is mostly defined as “desirable goals,” which are ranked according to “different degrees of importance,” and the aim of values is to function as “guides” in maintaining life goals (Schwartz, 1995: 93). Although values are related to the subjective judgement of individuals, they are mostly shaped and categorised by the social norms of society. Thus, values can include both collective and personal “priorities,” “attitudes,” and “assumptions” towards particular meanings, signs, and concepts. In gender studies, it has been questioned whether certain values are imposed upon women and men systematically, or whether they are assumed by individuals based on their personal choices.

Values are mostly labeled, prioritised, and discredited according to gender differences. Therefore, feminist ethicists have been questioning which values have been obliged to women and men by society and which values have been assumed by women and men naturally. In the traditional theory of value, Shalom H. Schwartz has created a table that presents values under ten basic categories: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security (1995, 96). In this table of values, he relates the values to four concepts: openness to change, self-transcendence, self-enhancement, and conservation. In this respect, studies have been conducted to find out the value priorities of different sexes. While men are pointed out to be identified with values of power, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and self-direction, women are stated to assume values such as universalism, benevolence, and security; however, no sex difference has been identified for conformity and tradition (Schwartz and Lifschitz, 2009: 171). From the value table of Schwartz, it can be inferred that women and men are claimed to maintain different values. While men are linked to “openness to change” and “self-enhancement,” the values such as “conservation” and “self-transcendence” are mostly attributed to women. The values of “conservation” and “self-transcendence” include preserving the welfare of a group, continuation of relationships, harmony, understanding and toleration, and attachment to nature. The values of “openness to change” and “self-enhancement” are related to independence, dominance over a group, desire for success, and self-centeredness. According to the theory of Schwartz, “self-transcendence is related to benevolence and universalism while self-enhancement is related to power and achievement; therefore, these values are motivationally opposed” (Schwartz and Lifschitz, 2009: 171). The value theory of Schwartz is in line with Kohlberg’s theory of justice because both theories underline the different natures of women and men. While women are mostly

related to the maintenance of relationships, dependency, and passivity, men are linked to independence, autonomy, and individuality.

In feminist ethical theory, feminist ethicists advocate the ethical values of women and men may differ because of their biological differences; however, women and men should be acknowledged and treated “equally” in spite of these “differences”. The traditional value theories which underline different natures of women and men are linked to essentialist feminism. In essentialist feminism, it is advocated that women and men have “different” essences, but the values of both sexes should be considered equally.

The other approach in terms of value studies of feminist ethics derives from constructionist feminism, and it argues that there is no difference between the values of women and men. Values differ because of personal characteristics, life conditions, and social constructs; therefore, values develop differently in their own social environment. They advocate that values should be judged according to the unique conditions of individuals. It has been stated that different genders are “differently valued” due to their “psychological tendencies,” “the ways of reasoning,” and “biological activities” (Diquinzio, 1993: 3). On the other hand, it has been underlined by the social constructionists that differences in values derive from “human experience,” and they are not directly related to gender. Judith Lorber elucidates the notion of differences and social construction as follows:

Through interaction with caretakers, socialization in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gendered work and family roles, people are divided into two groups and made to be different in behaviour, attitudes and emotions. The content of the differences depends on the society’s culture, values, economic and family structure, and past history. (2000, 82)

Lorber underlines that people are constructed differently due to their social conditions. However, different values should not lead to oppression of different groups. The aim of feminist criticism should be to highlight “humanitarian” approaches, which is a way to blur the differences between different sexes and genders. Therefore, feminist ethics starts to highlight the definitions of gender, different gender experiences, and the right to express gender.

2.3. Gender Experience

In feminist theory, finding out clear definitions for the concepts of “gender” and “sex” has been a longstanding discussion. Sex and gender are mostly defined as related to biological features and social factors, respectively. Besides their stereotypical definitions, both sex and gender contain various meanings, signs, and attributions which derive from social factors.

The word “sex” is generally explained as the “biological division” of human beings as females and males by considering their “reproductive potentials” (McConnell-Ginet, 2014: 3). On the other hand, Greville Corbett states that gender derives from Latin “genus” and Old French “gendre,” which means “kind” (2014: 89). In this context, gender is mostly linked to “femininity” and “masculinity,” which have been constituted as the categorisation of social roles, traits, and attitudes. In this mostly acknowledged definition, sex is mostly addressed as a “fixed” term that is affiliated with the biological divisions of “female” and “male” bodies. However, the definition of the body cannot merely be confined to “pre-determined” features of individuals. Although the body

is mostly linked to biological features, feminist critics reject the definition of the body as a non-social and separate being. They assert that it is important to consider the relationship between the body, the mind, and emotions. Accordingly, it is stated that the “sense of self” is generated from the mind, which is created by the brain (Ferrè, Lopez, & Haggard, 2014: 2106). Therefore, the body is a whole entity that belongs to the individual who encounters various experiences during her/his lifetime. Since the body is a living organism which is combined with internal and external processes, it can be pointed out that sex and gender are interrelated concepts. Besides, it can be pointed out that individuals are born as sexed, and then, constructed as gendered by a number of factors. Thus, gender experience can be explained as the “subjective identity” of the sexed bodies, which have undergone social construction practices, and consequently, become gendered. When individuals become gendered, they are inevitably treated in a biased way. In terms of gender-bias, Lindemann points out that the important point is not gender difference, but the difference which creates a hierarchy between the top and the bottom (2019: 33). Thus, feminist ethics attempts to remove this gender hierarchy through new gender-neutral approaches.

The environment in which individual is born is a significant factor in terms of the construction of gender. Girls and boys are born with certain different biological features. However, they are surrounded by recurrent and stereotyped social signs, images, and ideas which have a strong effect on gender construction. Accordingly, in social construction theory, an individual’s development from “sexed” to “gendered” identity can be explained as a social orientation process from “being somebody” to “becoming somebody”. Thus, Simone de Beauvoir’s statement “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” refers to the social adaptation of the females to their “gendered” identities (2011, 330).

Beauvoir also deals with the process of social adaptation using the notions of “transcendence” and “immanence”. By these notions, she refers to the construction of masculine and feminine values, respectively. Beauvoir explains these notions as a matter of morality:

The perspective we have adopted is one of existentialist morality. Every subject posits itself as a transcendence concretely [...] Every time transcendence lapses into immanence, there is degradation of existence into “in-itself,” of freedom into facticity; this fall is a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if this fall is inflicted on the subject, it takes the form of frustration and oppression [...] But what singularly defines the situation of woman is that being, like all humans, an autonomous freedom, she discovers and chooses herself in a world where men force her to assume herself as Other. (2011: 37)

Beauvoir accounts for the women’s process of being defined as the other in relation to production and reproduction. While transcendence is predominantly associated with production and activity, immanence is defined in the context of reproduction and passivity. Therefore, she underlines that women are forced to be passive objects which maintain a system of production. They are expected to maintain the values, ideals, and norms of patriarchy. Accordingly, she notes, “men have always considered woman precisely as the immanence of the given; if she produces harvests and children, it is not because she wills it; she is not subject, transcendence, or creative power, but an object charged with fluids” (2011: 217). Consequently, it leads women to be passive and dependent objects. In this regard, Iris Marion Young elucidates, “as a human, she is a free subject who participates in transcendence, but her situation as a woman denies her that transcendence and

subjectivity” (1980: 141). According to Young, women are not aware of their subjectivity, and because of this, they unconsciously continue to produce and maintain the moral values of the patriarchy.

The gendered roles of individuals are adopted by the social signs in infancy by the effect of primary caretakers and relatives. This process continues with the effects of other social institutions such as schools, political structures, economic conditions, religion, and media. When people start school, they become a part of a community, and they try to imitate or fit into the social behaviours that are present in their social environments. While girls are mostly taught to be passive and submissive, boys are generally expected to be active and dominant, especially in highly patriarchal societies. If they do not fit into the social norms, they are labeled as misfit. Thus, females and males are implicitly or explicitly encouraged to be a part of already established categories. The individuals are born into a world in which they are imposed upon the roles that the society offers for each sex. Accordingly, Gayle Rubin explains gender as a “product” by stating that gender is the outcome of certain social signs and meanings attributed to female and male bodies by a “set of arrangements,” which is called “sex/gender system” (1975: 159). In relation to “sex/gender system,” Rubin explains that one is born with a pre-determined biological feature as a “raw material,” and gender is processed as the outcome of certain social factors. In Rubin’s “sex/gender system,” the emergence of genders has been regarded as a systematic process of oppression. The individuals are affected by all elements of social structure including language, cultural signs, and political relations, and they are encouraged to choose certain values which have been imposed upon them by the society.

The effect of the social environment on the construction of gender cannot be ignored. Some critics and philosophers reject the idea that gender is only a product of the social environment. They advocate that the psychological processes of individuals should also be highlighted because human beings have active minds, spirits, and personal experiences. Nancy Chodorow points out that gender cannot be defined only in the context of “culture,” “linguistics,” and “political relations,” but it is also related to the “personal meaning” of the individual, which is constituted by “psychological” factors (1995: 517). Chodorow’s psychoanalytic theory is mainly based on Sigmund Freud’s Oedipus complex; however, she has interpreted Freudian ideas with a feminist voice. In Freud’s theory, girls develop anxiety and affection towards their fathers when they discover that they do not have a penis. Similarly, boys are stated to have a fear of castration and an attraction towards their mothers. Therefore, Freudian theory explains gender development in the context of rivalry with the opposite-sex. Contrary to penis envy and castration complex, Chodorow has linked gender development to the dichotomy between “relatedness” and “separateness”. She emphasises the role of “mothering” on the development of gender by referring to the importance of human subjectivity with “emotions” and “unconscious,” which are shaped by “caregiver” during the infancy period. According to Chodorow, “mothers” are primary “caregivers,” who contribute to adopting the primary characteristics of femininity and masculinity. Consequently, in Chodorow’s theory, girls develop some kind of “connection” and “attachment” to their mothers, which leads to the continuation of femininity and feminine values (1978: 114); however, boys are raised by the “idealised” masculinity, and they are encouraged to become “separate” beings (1978: 181).

Given that feminist ethicists discuss the issue of gender differences, they also focus on the individual’s right to express her/his gender in order to create equal moral theories.

2.3.1. The Right to Express One's Gender

Feminist ethics deals with gender categorisation in the aspect of moral practices. Therefore, “naming” and “defining” gender have become controversial issues in feminist theory. Naming means attributing a certain definition to a particular object, referring to the existence of the object, and relating it to other objects. Similarly, defining is related to identifying or determining the features and distinctions of something. Therefore, meanings and relations that are attributed to an object are mostly determined by the ones who name and define it, and consequently, the concepts of “naming” and “defining” can be influenced by power relations.

In feminist ethics, gender theories are mostly based on essentialist and constructionist ideas as mentioned before. The essentialist feminist critics believe that defining the differences between different sexes does not lead to inequality. In contrast, they advocate that underlining differences may bring about categories, but this categorisation is “natural” since women and men have their own unique “features” and “essences,” and being “different” does not necessarily mean being “inequal”.

Radical feminism and gender separatism are two categories of feminism which reject male supremacy by favouring female supremacy. Although they include controversial views within themselves, in a broad sense, they assert that women's independence cannot be achieved under the influence of male dominancy. Women and men have different essences both naturally and culturally. In this sense, they are expected to create their own moral values apart from men. In addition, separatist feminists advocate that male dominancy has undervalued women's experience; therefore, women should constitute their own category of womanhood, in which all the values are separated from men. However, some feminist ethicists point out that differences may occur for several reasons such as biological factors, psychological processes, environment, and personal conditions. Therefore, feminist ethicists advocate that instead of underlining differences, feminist criticism should focus on the reasons for oppression. V. Spike Peterson states that social relations are constructed by hierarchal dichotomies (1992: 183), accordingly, feminist ethicists offer to deconstruct these dichotomies without polarisation. Therefore, they try to create new conceptual frameworks that can surpass the personal differences beyond gender binaries. However, they support the idea that difference can be a matter of choice. Thus, it should not lead to another kind of categorisation or polarisation. Women and men may have different moral values, and because of this, their experiences should be regarded in the context of multiple identities. Therefore, feminist ethics aims to adopt intersectional and androgynous approaches, which embrace “multiple identities” and “blurred gender categories”.

Gender separatism is a feminist concept that underlines essential differences between women and men. Separatist feminists advocate that women have different natures, and consequently, their ethical values, moral practices, and personal experiences may also be different. Radical feminists and separatist feminists acknowledge that women and men have differences; however, they reject being defined as the “inferior opposite” of men. Contrary to masculine superiority, they also underline the superiority of women and the experiences of women. In this respect, separatism is criticised for creating the polarisation in ethical values. Instead of a separatist approach, feminist ethicists offer a multitude of differences; therefore, the position of the woman is not defined simply as “the other” against the man. Audre Lorde points out that European society systematically forces people to see “human differences as a simple opposition to each other,” and accordingly, Lorde

explains that there is an “institutionalised rejection” towards differences (1984: 845). In the same manner, accepting different genders as exact binaries has been criticised by some feminist ethicists for it causes “relatedness” of the woman to the self, namely to the men. Therefore, it is asserted that the ethical practices and moral values of women are constituted by the influence of the doctrines of the patriarchal center. Judith Butler points out that the subjects are “formed,” “defined,” and “reproduced” in accordance with the structures which regulate them (Butler, 1990: 4). Butler refers to women’s subjection as a “productive” process in which gendered subjects are shaped by regulating structures. In this process, the values and experiences of the women are affected by the conditions which they are born in. On the other hand, she criticises some feminist critics for causing “different kinds of problems” by overemphasizing gender differences. In terms of production of subjects, Butler implies that emphasizing polarisation between different genders causes inequality regarding gender values (1990: 10). In this respect, the structures by which the subjects are “defined” and “named” have been criticised by Butler. Accordingly, instead of gender categorisation, feminist critics offer multiple “personal” definitions. They assert that defining a person simply as “a girl/a woman/a mother” means accepting them as “not a boy/not a man/not a father” since woman and man are constructed as opposite binaries.

In “The Necessity of Differences,” Marilyn Frye deals with “A/ not-A” (self/other) dichotomy between women and men by referring to the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir and Jacques Lacan. Frye describes Beauvoir’s concept of “becoming a woman” as “not becoming a man,” and she points out that Beauvoir’s “becoming” results in a continuous struggle against the subjection to the self and “becoming the absolute other” (Frye, 1996: 993). Thus, Beauvoir’s concept of “becoming a woman” has been criticised by Frye due to the position of the woman who becomes the other, an object of male subjectivity. In this sense, the woman can only construct their ethical values by opposing to the male values. Therefore, the values of women can only derive from the values of men. In her rejection of Lacanian ideas, Frye asserts that a female enters the symbolic order by becoming “nameless” and “meaningless” due to the “absence of phallus,” and systematically, the woman has always been posited as the opposite to the man as “not a self,” “not a man,” and “not a phallus” (1996: 996). Frye advocates that the position of the woman can be changed only by being separated from the man, namely the self. In this regard, separatism supports that women should create their own spheres, institutions, organisations, and communities in which they can construct “a new positive category of woman” (Frye, 1996: 998). Thus, separatist feminists advocate that male supremacy can only be overruled by the rejection of all the institutions constructed by male dominance. In this respect, separatist feminist ethicists state that women have been confined to male-dominant structures including politics, psychoanalysis, philosophy, language, and ethics, and thus, they need to create independent organisations in order to have independent ethical values.

Another separatist feminist, Mary Daly, describes women’s separation as “the journey of women becoming” by “breaking through Male Maze” (1978: 8). Daly’s description is linked to a dark fairy tale in which the “heroine” is able to free “herself” from patriarchal meanings and signs (1978: 8). On the other hand, it displays the history of women that has been embroidered by patriarchal experiences. In this respect, Daly advocates that creating independent ethical values can only be achieved by the constitution of authentic female experiences including their own identity, mind, and morality.

Separatist and radical feminist theories have been criticised for not being inclusive and integrative. According to some feminist ethicists, creating a new woman's culture, which is not affiliated with male practices, values, and experiences, is unrealistic. Besides, they point out that overemphasizing femininity and female dominancy may cause different kinds of discriminations towards men. Thus, new feminist ethical approaches underline "fluid," "blended," and "blurred" gender identities which reject attributing a defining characteristic to a "sexed" individual. Instead, they acknowledge the existence of multiple and intersected identities which individuals can adopt in their lives. The term intersection, which was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, literally refers to "crossing of different lines" and "the point where two things come together and affect each other". The term of intersectionality is actually related to the issue of racism, and it is mostly handled in the context of identity politics. Crenshaw states that ignoring the differences among groups brings out different kinds of problems in terms of identity politics (1991: 1242).

In the theory of intersectionality, identities are expected to cross, come together, and affect each other. When intersectionality is considered in the context of ethical theory, it should be questioned how the differences among moral values and experiences are regarded biasedly. Therefore, it aims to minimise the inequality between the two binaries by representing the experiences of women in an inclusive environment. Intersectionality is mostly dealt with in the context of the cases of the victims of race and sexual harassment. In such cases, the impartiality of the ones who judge and compensate for the damage is substantial for the well-being of the victims. For example, it is pointed out that women who are victims of rape generally need strong shreds of evidences to prove their innocence or moral character (Crenshaw, 1991: 1270). In this sense, "silencing the voice of the other" is underlined in the context of ethics and intersectionality. Chloe Merleau asserts, "Some voices are excluded and silenced, and gendering turns out to be a way of sorting out whose voice is signifiable and whose is not" (2003: 86). When the victim does not have the right to speak up, her/his voice is not heard, and as a consequence of this, the violation becomes morally legitimate. Consequently, intersectionality is discussed to offer solutions to the biased perspectives regarding the experiences and values of people.

Another concept in the context of feminist ethics is gender neutrality, which supports treating people as if they were neither women nor men (Lindemann, 2019: 25). It is discussed that gender neutrality may start from birth or can be chosen by the individuals in their adulthood. In this respect, androgyny is being introduced as a gender-neutral approach, which is derived from the Greek words andro (male) and gyn (female), and is still linked to mythological narratives, psychological theories, and literary texts (Ryan, 2013: 58). In mythological texts, being androgynous is associated with splitting from one body, hermaphroditism, and having the ability to disguise. Accordingly, it can be stated that Yin and Yang in Chinese mythology as well as Adam and Eve in the story creation are the archaic motives of androgynous culture, which symbolises "wholeness" and "being complete" (Masetti-Miller, 1982: 12). Carl Gustav Jung's archetypes of anima and animus are also known as related to androgyny in human psyche. In definitions of anima and animus as archetypes that are found in women and men, respectively, Jung points out that the men are compensated by a feminine element while women are compensated by a masculine one (1959: 14). Therefore, androgyny is a concept that connotes that women and men are not dichotomous beings, but rather they are parts of a whole, splitting and merging in harmony, not in conflict.

June Singer states that androgyny can be the oldest archetype “representing ‘unity’ and ‘oneness’ before any separation was made,” and she describes androgyny as a way of “arising from within” in women’s struggle for independence (1976: 20-24). Both in mythological narrations and in literary works, androgynous characters are represented by the theme of disguise, multiple sexual orientations, and ambiguous physical features. In gender studies, androgynous culture rejects the attributed roles of femininity and masculinity, and it attempts to blur the stereotyped gender roles. Therefore, it combines the elements of both femininity and masculinity. Androgynous identities are put as contra responses against the binary categorisations of sexes/genders. They aim to show that all genders can represent similar characteristics since they are completing each other.

As stated earlier, the body can be described as the physical being or presence of a person, and it is mostly considered a material being. In this respect, the bodies are mostly identified with biological distinctions, especially in terms of different sexes. However, the distinctions between sexes do not only include physical features, but they also hold certain cultural meanings and signs attributed to them by society. Therefore, the biased approaches regarding the female and male body are criticised, besides, new neutral approaches to the body are offered in feminist ethics.

The relationship between the body and the mind has been a controversial issue in philosophy since ancient times. The body has been viewed as the home of mind and moral thinking. In this respect, the body’s presence and its relationship with other people are substantial. Aristotle describes the body as a “substance” or “matter” including “actuality,” and he divides the soul into three parts, which dwell upon the body (1907: 53). As for actuality, Aristotle refers to the aliveness and relationality of the body. Within Aristotle’s approach to the body, materiality is a notion that entails the maintenance and reproduction. Acknowledging the body only as a living creature has been criticised by many philosophers since they advocate that the body grows in a context which include different discourses, histories, politics, and other social dynamics. Therefore, it can be pointed out that the moral practices on the body and perceptions regarding the body have been affected by social processes.

The bodies of the individuals become properties of a system in which they are constructed, reproduced, shaped, and maintained. Although the body is expected to be a unique entity that belongs to the individual, it is divided into multiple categories and culturally labeled. Therefore, the issue of the body is mainly considered as a process of construction by feminist critics. Judith Butler refers to Aristotelian materiality by questioning how the bodies “matter” and how the bodies are accepted as “valued” and “valuable” (1993: 22). While doing this, she highlights the notion of sex as not simply a natural or biological feature, but a “normative” and “regulatory” force which affects “production of gender” (1993: 11). In this respect, besides its status as a living being, the body becomes an object being placed, produced, and reproduced in a system, in which some bodies are regarded “more valuable” and some bodies are “excluded” or “devalued”. However, valuing the body is a subjective regulation, which depends on power relations. While some bodies are labeled as “inferior,” “fragile,” “sensitive,” “different,” “unusual,” and “freak,” others are defined as “beautiful,” “well-built,” “smooth,” and “unearthly”. By these definitions, it can be pointed out that the body is not only categorised by simple biological differences, but it is defined in the context of power relations. Accordingly, the male-dominated authorities produce stereotyped discourses of the body. The girls and the boys enter into the system in which their bodies are defined and labeled according to pre-determined standards. As a consequence of this, the ones who are able to define

and categorise the bodies do not only determine the “proper” features of them, but they also determine the values, ideals, and moral practises of the owners of these bodies.

The body is the most private and crucial possession of the individual; nevertheless, it can be shaped by cultural and historical processes. Therefore, it can be reviewed in terms of moral practices, which have been dominated by power holders in society. In this sense, Michel Foucault deals with the body’s relationship with history by highlighting that “sexuality is not excluded, but instead body is saturated, determined and specified” throughout history (1978: 47). In the definition of Foucault, body politics can be viewed in terms of production because several types of bodies have been generated throughout history, and the body categorisation is not simply divided as “female” or “male,” but it also includes different gender identities constructed by cultural attributions. Foucault emphasises that controlling the body is one of the ways of applying power since it categorises and specifies the individuals. Thus, some bodies have been excluded and punished by certain social groups.

Judith Butler refers to the performativity of the body in *Gender Trouble* as one of the categories of identity which holds the cultural meanings and constructions (1990: 14). In Butler’s definition, bodies perform the roles attributed to the individuals; therefore, they cannot be considered different from the social construction process. In this sense, deconstructing the body means removing external power regulations on the body and highlighting the subjectivity of the body. According to gender-neutral approaches, the body is a subjective entity; therefore, it should be shaped by personal choices. In order to remove the binaries, fixed images of the body can be deconstructed.

Because the body is constructed by established cultural images and attributions, feminist ethicists discuss the exclusions and oppressions of the body. In this sense, feminist ethicists deal with the deconstruction of the body, which can be enabled by subverting the fixed images of sex and gender. Definition of the body starts with naming the sex/gender of a person. By being named and defined by the other, the person loses her/his deliberation to determine her/his position, and the body becomes an object, and an instrument of imagination. When there is no obvious gender definition, the body image of the individual is deconstructed, and consequently, moral actions, emotions, and life experiences of the individual become more important than her/his material being in the world.

2.3.2. Towards Free-will, Deliberation, and Dialogue in Feminist Ethics

Feminist ethics deals with free-will and deliberation of the oppressed groups such as female, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual people due to systematic “exclusion” and “silence”. Free-will can be defined as the individual’s power to make free choices or to act independently. Moreover, feminist ethicists handle deliberation by referring to the individual’s consideration and intention on actions. Both free-will and deliberation are notions that have been discussed since ancient philosophy. However, deliberation and free-will are mostly related to the notions such as prudence, executive power, and rational thinking, which are attributed to men. Male-dominated philosophy has determined “rational thinking” as the precondition of existing. At the same time, women have been considered to lack the ability of rational thinking; for this reason, they have been considered to be deprived of free-will and deliberation.

Aristotle points out that an act is involuntary if it is done under compulsion or through ignorance (1910: 58). In this sense, he underlines that moral actions should be implemented without any pressure or external force. Accordingly, he defines free-will as “voluntary actions” by asserting that involuntary actions should not be “praised” or “blamed” (1999: 60). In this respect, free-will and deliberation are mainly related to the subjective judgment of the individuals in their moral actions. Within Aristotle’s definition of free-will, the moral actions of women are generally involuntary because they are considered to be affected by the social conditions in which they are born. Therefore, their choices and experiences are unavoidably affected by their free-will which is systematically restricted by the patriarchal system.

Women are mostly unable to have free-will and deliberation in their actions due to the fact that they are surrounded by cultural signs and meanings. Accordingly, they are usually forced to follow the established social norms. In such a world, they become voiceless in their actions. As for being voiceless, Carol Gilligan asserts that women have lost their authentic voice, and consequently, the issue of the female voice became a crucial point in feminist ethics. She points out that women internalised the idea that it would be selfishness if they want or think anything or they may upset others with their personal desires and decisions (1993: 9). Since women are restricted in their relationships, they have lost their link with the external world and their subjectivity. They cannot prioritise their feelings, aspirations, and plans because they need to think about the needs and expectations of other people around themselves. On the other hand, they do not know how to express their own experiences and desires within patriarchal language. Similarly, Alison Jaggar refers to the essay of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak?” by explaining that subaltern women cannot speak because they do not have a conceptual framework in a language to express their feelings, experiences, and needs (1998: 11). Therefore, silencing the voice of women becomes a crucial issue in feminist ethics.

The notion of voice in feminist ethics has been discussed in order to underline the power of subjectivity because women lose their subjectivity and autonomy due to their position in their relationships. Gilligan’s work focuses on the concept of care and relatedness with references to Chodorow and Freud. According to Freud, women’s pre-Oedipal attachment to their mothers results from a developmental failure, nevertheless, Chodorow elucidates this difference in attachment as a result of early childcare, which makes girls develop more “empathy” and “care” than the boys (Gilligan, 1993: 7). Furthermore, women are generally considered to be related to their mothers, and later the network of relatedness enhances by social connections and structures including other members of their families, friends, neighbours, teachers, and working environments. These constructions are generally male-dominated, and the girls are unable to pass beyond this link of relations. Therefore, women cannot act independently and take the risk of ruining their relationships for the sake of maintaining this social order. However, men prioritise the rules which they have determined according to their own authority. In this sense, Gilligan compares the roles of women and men in the relationship. According to Gilligan, when boys play with their friends, they quarrel several times, but they do not quit the game because of their quarrel because for the boys the rules of the game are more important than their interests or desires (Gilligan, 1993: 9). On the other hand, the girls tend to behave emotionally and quit the play in order not to ruin their relationships with their friends (Gilligan, 1993: 9). In this respect, women feel the burden of dependency in their relationships, and it affects their will to power.

Since women feel a high sense of responsibility and compassion for others, their own desires are affected by their expectations of them. The feelings of responsibility and compassion shape their moral behaviour as they are expected to assure the well-being of everybody by behaving morally good. They feel the need to consider the results of their actions in the context of relationships. The sense of high responsibility and compassion become a burden for women due to the fact that women become selfless and dependent. As male dominancy has produced pre-determined moral rules for women, women have been experiencing difficulty in their deliberative acts. Accordingly, women's deliberation inevitably remains confined to the feeling of responsibility to others. In this context, feminist philosophers discuss new definitions and limitations of ethical values and moral practices.

Free-will is a significant notion in terms of moral actions. Accordingly, Henry Sidgwick refers to "volition" in terms of free-will, which is validated through intention or thought of the results of an action or awareness of oneself while choosing an action (1962: 59). Free-will is generally assumed as a masculine characteristic because it is traditionally believed that men are more rational than women. In accordance with this, men are expected to assume a godlike manner by which they can implement their decisions. From early ages onwards, boys are taught to look after female members of their families such as their mothers, sisters, and female partners. Apart from that, in their childhood, they are encouraged to play with cars, guns, and swords and to be active outside. On the other hand, women are taught to be submissive when they are children. Contrary to the boys, girls are encouraged to play with dolls, clothes, and kitchen toys, and they are usually criticised when they become active outside. For this reason, while boys assume the role of godlike protector, girls are made to learn to maintain the present order inside.

Free-will and deliberation are significantly discussed in terms of daily moral actions. Many philosophers state that free-will and deliberative acts do not necessarily result in heroic movements, or they do not derive from revolutionary acts, but rather they are related to simple intentions and decisions. In order to have free-will and deliberation, the person is expected to have the power of taking responsibility of her/his actions. In this respect, free-will and deliberation refers to the individuals motivation to take action. The actions do not have to lead to positive outcomes for everybody; however, they should be conducted by rational thinking and strong motivation.

Feminist ethicists believe women are represented as passive creatures who lack free-will. Since women are surrounded by patriarchal social regulations, the people around them mostly affect their decisions and ideas. In the earlier period of their lives, their ideas are shaped by their caregivers and they continue their bonds with their mothers. They become unable to restrict their relatedness to the others including their parents, relatives, friends, and partners. Thus, their decisions are affected by a chain of relations, and they start to confront problems in their deliberative acts. In this sense, feminist ethics aims to create a woman's voice which leads to deliberative actions deriving from her subjective decision and affecting her life.

Care ethics significantly addresses free-will and deliberation because women are mostly considered to have more tendency to care for others. This caring attitude may lead women to lose their free-will and autonomy. Virginia Held explains that care ethics deals with the individual's relation to other people and the individual's position among other people (2004: 143). In this sense, care ethics is based on the relational aspect of ethics because when the individual is surrounded by others, s/he is made to lose her/his subjectivity and individual voice.

Emotionality is considered to affect deliberative actions and free-will. Women are stated to develop emotional ties with the people around them in a negative way. Besides, they are acknowledged to be more inclined to develop relatedness than men because men are generally expected to be separate from their mothers. When the boys are separated from their mothers, they start to construct male-dominated cultural codes in the context of laws, social norms, justice, and reason. These distinctions cause a negative representation of women in the context of autonomy. As universal ethical approaches such as Aristotelian and Kantian ethics are mainly based on fixed norms and absolute rationality, they generally advocate that emotionality negatively affects free-will and deliberation. According to Aristotle, being virtuous or morally good cannot be linked with emotions, but it requires a habit, reasoning, or training (1910: 43). On the other hand, Aristotle advocates that only if a person can control her/his emotions, s/he can be defined as a virtuous person. In this sense, emotionality has been undervalued in a biased way in the Western society because it has been regarded as a weakness.

As the universal ideas of ethics result in favouring absolute rationality, they do not value women's ethical experience. On the other hand, care ethics appreciates the power of emotionality, compassion, and responsibility (Held, 2004: 144). In this respect, care ethics emerged to advocate the idea that the conditions of the individuals can be shaped differently, nonetheless, every experience and emotion should be regarded as valuable. Thus, emotionality plays an important role in care ethics because they support that emotions should be regarded as important as rationality.

Carol Gilligan suggests a new female voice, which includes woman's experiences, decisions, and emotions. The voice is expected to represent free-will and deliberative acts of women; however, it should not be set as a binary against men. Instead, the voice has been suggested to contribute to the concept of dialogue, which offers multiple identities and brings different voices together. Dialogue means mutual communication, and it results in a process of exchange. It also includes communication of different genders, standing up for one another, and representing experiences of different genders. It has also come out as a non-binary concept. It is stated that the subjection of women is a result of hierarchal state between the center and the margin. Feminist critics offer to expand the margins without "affecting the centre" (Peterson, 1992: 185). Accordingly, they do not exclude male experience from feminist theory. Rather, they support the constitution of an androgynous and humanistic approach through dialogue among different genders.

Alison Jaggar referred to "practical moral discourse" as an alternative for "classical ethical discourse," which results in universal ideas (1998: 9). Jaggar points out that feminist moral discourse is disrupted for two reasons: "excessive moral commitment to their own groups" and "exclusion of other individuals from a group" (1998: 9). By voice and dialogue, feminist critics believe that women do not have to behave like men or they do not fight against the men in order to find a place in moral theory for themselves. New androgynous and humanistic approaches are mostly affected by the diversity of poststructuralism, and they advocate that imagining a world without feminine and masculine experiences is not realistic. For this reason, the new ways of negotiations have been offered by asserting that women need to be encouraged to create their own voices and enter into a dialogue with patriarchal structures in order to embrace their different identities. The dialogue between femininity and masculinity includes the unity of multiple identities. It does not refer to a simple dichotomy or binary between opposing ideas, rather it seeks to find endless signifiers. Jeffrey Nealon points out that postmodern ethical approaches have

become dialogic and intersubjective instead of monologic voices (1997: 130). Therefore, new ethical approaches can be considered as a collection of different orientations, values, and identities, which aims to offer solutions for the exclusion of different identities from moral theory.

2.3.3. The Ethics of Becoming Genderless

“The future is female” is one of the best-known mottos of feminism, which derived from the separatist feminist movement in the 1970s. On the other hand, feminist critics advocate that favouring the female and the feminine may lead to different kinds of discrimination. Therefore, the motto of “The future is genderless” began to be discussed as a non-binary approach. The new genderless attitude remarkably rejects the binaries of feminine and masculine by the inclusion of various identities. Alternatively, it focuses on equal representations of various human experiences.

The concept of becoming genderless is discussed in the context of postgender theories, which is mostly related to postmodernism and poststructuralism. Accordingly, feminist ethicists advocate that overemphasizing gender differences is not a solution for removing gender binaries. The individuals should follow a different path which includes the components of different sexes and genders. In this regard, a gender-neutral identity can be constructed by the representation of different gender components. The aim of gender-neutral approaches is to highlight personal choices in terms of constructing non-binary gender identities. Thus, it is based on the individual’s right to deconstruct her/his attributed identity and to establish new personal values. Judith Butler handles gender as a constructed identity when she questions whether gender can be “constructed differently” in *Gender Trouble* (1990: 11). Accordingly, it can be implied that becoming genderless is a process of gender deconstruction through which the individual constitutes a new identity by the fluidity of feminine and masculine elements. Therefore, the ethics of becoming genderless attempts to subvert the fixed roles of femininity and masculinity by offering universal humane values.

The notion of becoming genderless is compared to Simone de Beauvoir’s definition of “becoming a woman,” which defines the position of the woman as a binary against the man by accepting the man as the reference point. The gender-neutral approaches attempt to construct the identity and values of the individual on the basis of psychological, emotional, and personal meanings. Therefore, they do not offer a set of attributions and assumptions against specific sex or gender, nor do they determine a set of fixed characteristics. Rather, they embrace differences and multiplicities without focusing on gender binaries. In this respect, becoming genderless can be defined as a non-binary concept that emerged in the context of postgender theory, which offers multiple gender identities against constructed and fixed gender identities. Gender-neutral approaches advocate that becoming genderless is not against “maleness, manhood, masculinity or patriarchy,” rather, it combines the elements of all gender categories.

Feminist critics advocate that people are not merely constituted by their gender identity, but they have other identities as human beings. In this sense, feminist critics state that when they are defined merely by their sex or gender, they are inevitably trapped by being a woman/a man/a lesbian/a transsexual, and these definitions surpass their all other characteristics. Therefore, being

named and defined can be considered in the context of Lacanian theory. Jacques Lacan asserts that the subject enters the symbolic order that exists prior to the subject's being by acquiring language; accordingly, the symbolic order includes social structures, laws, and moral values (2006: 371). The subject also assumes feminine and masculine roles which are given by language when s/he is named and defined; thus, s/he adopts the norms and values which are pre-determined by society. In this respect, by creating a genderless identity, the individuals can be emancipated from the cultural signs, meanings, attributions, and moral responsibilities.

In terms of the ethics of becoming genderless, fixed gender roles are rejected, instead, different personalities, choices, and living conditions are embraced. As there is no clear definition for any gender, a person is not defined with a gendered pronoun in gender-neutral approaches. Defining a person with a gendered pronoun may lead the person to move from the center and it places her/him into the object position. In this sense, becoming genderless starts with an attempt to remove gendered pronouns.

Becoming genderless can be discussed in the context of Deleuzian concepts of *being* and *becoming*. While *being* refers to the subject's essence, *becoming* can be explained as the possibility of the subject moving towards endless multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari point out that within the notion of becoming there is no imitation or resemblance, but only "exploding of heterogeneous signifiers" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 237). Accordingly, becoming genderless can be defined as the individuals' self-knowledge of their essence and the process of creating a unique identity of their own. When the individual's unique identity or experience is constructed based on a non-binary approach, the sex or gender loses its importance. Consequently, the individual experiences a move from essence towards the possibility of choosing among different identities. The individual possesses both a biological essence and a constructed self; however, s/he might choose to become different through a process of self-consciousness. In this sense, the subject's attempt to become different corresponds to moving towards multiple possibilities. Besides, the notion of "choice" is one of the most significant factors in becoming genderless because the individual who becomes genderless chooses to reject all the binaries, and consequently, s/he produces a new set of moral values. In this respect, "choice" is acknowledged as the essence of being a human with an authentic voice, especially in terms of creating new ethical values.

Moral choices and ethical reasons of the individuals are inevitably affected by their social conditions. Lisa Rivera explains that our ethical reason to act and choose mostly depends on the "circumstances of oppression" and "social location" (2009: 37). Rivera notes, "social location just is necessary to understand our ethical reasons. It is not merely the thing that gives me the opportunity to act, it is the very grounds for my action" (2009: 38). Therefore, the ethical reasons of human beings for their actions are generally affected by their conditions. In this sense, it is significant to focus on different aspects of moral behaviour such as rationality, deliberation, emotionality, free-will, and autonomy. Feminist ethicists discuss these notions in terms of gender-neutral ethics.

3. JEANETTE WINTERSON AND WRITTEN ON THE BODY

3.1. Jeanette Winterson, Her Life, and Literary Career

Jeanette Winterson, one of the most prominent writers of the British fiction, was born on 27th of August 1959, in Manchester. Her first novel *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, a semi-autobiographical work, was published in 1985, and since then she has been known with her distinctive style in literature. Her works have the characteristics of postmodern fiction including historiographic elements, which transcend and subvert social values. The environment where she was born and raised significantly affected the identity of Jeanette Winterson. Therefore, Winterson frequently emphasises that she is telling stories, which are mostly autobiographical reflections of her own life. Thus, she underlines her desire to alter the “solid” conditions in her story: “I can change the story. I am the story” (Winterson, 2000: 4).

Winterson was adopted by a religious, working-class family living in Lancashire in 1960 and raised to be an evangelical missionary in Elim Pentecostal Church. While Manchester, the city she was born in, is an industrial and active city, Lancashire is a non-metropolitan county. Therefore, both cities stand as two binaries that shaped the identity of Winterson. Winterson defines Manchester as an industrial city that has “the spirit of contrariness” and is home to various social theories such as Marx, Engels, utilitarianism, feminism, socialism, and communism: it is such a city that visitors of it are both “admired” and “appalled” (2011: 17). However, Lancashire is a rural region that is associated with tradition and conventions. For this reason, Winterson frequently emphasises that she feels the duality of these cities in her identity.

As a writer who started her writing career in the 1980s, Winterson witnessed many social changes in Britain. The period is known to be affected by “the riots in British cities, Thatcherism, over racism, poll tax, monetarist policies, unemployment, Falklands War, Miners’ Strike, and IRA bombing attacks” (Andermahr, 2009: 15). In this respect, Winterson’s life has been shaped by opposing binaries and instability that are found in her family as well as her country. According to Winterson, social location is crucial for identity construction, besides, she emphasises that the individual needs to know her/his place in the world. In this sense, she uses historiographic elements of her environment in her fiction by linking these elements with the spatial identity of the individuals. Correspondingly, she states, “what you are born into, the history mates with what you are” (2011: 18). According to Winterson, the individual is constituted by the accumulation of different experiences, values, and memories. Therefore, she emphasises that “the past has been gathered up, melted down, and reformed differently” by fiction writers (1997: 55). In this sense, Jeanette Winterson’s literary experience has also been formed by the desire to rewrite the history which has mated with her identity.

Winterson frequently underlines the religious identity of her adoptive family. In her autobiographical works, she says that Constance Winterson, her adoptive mother, was regularly reading the Bible aloud at home and church. For this reason, Jeanette Winterson expresses that the Bible and the religious stories have given her some kind of relief and hope for the afterlife, which have also intensified her imagination as a child (2011: 23). Andermahr states that Jeanette Winterson could read the gospel and write sermons at the age of eight, and it has a “positive, creative effect” on her literary skills (2009, 33). On the other hand, Winterson notes that she was

raised in a religious and conventional family in the countryside; however, it was not a peaceful environment since Mrs. Winterson was a strict parent. Furthermore, Winterson defines the working-class north of England as “a routinely brutal world” (2011: 40). She refers to the place in which she grew up as “brutal” when she describes the people’s attributes towards one another (2011: 19). She was surrounded by uneducated people, who were rigidly devoted to their beliefs without applying them to their daily lives sincerely (2011: 19). Thus, Winterson states that people have lost their feelings and values as human beings, and as a consequence of this, they used to treat each other as “objects” by hitting, swearing, hurting, and not respecting each other (2011: 19). In this sense, Winterson points out that she is so accustomed to the violence that she grew up “without caring about physical pain,” and she internalised violence within herself (2011: 40). As a child who grew up in such an environment, Winterson could not feel a sense of belonging. Hence, she states that she never felt attachment towards her family and she never felt safe at home because she never had a key to enter her home; thus, she only waited to be “let in or not” (2011: 50).

When Winterson fell in love with a girl at sixteen, her identity was marginalised both as an adoptive child and a lesbian girl in a strict and religious family. Jeanette Winterson points out that Mrs. Winterson was intruding into her private life in every aspect and showing no respect for her choices, which made Jeanette Winterson feel “betrayed” to her family (Winterson: 2011, 50). Therefore, she had to leave home and find temporary jobs to survive. Her leaving home can be interpreted as a search for new possibilities to construct her own identity. In this respect, her literary works are characterised by the tension which she has experienced due to her being excluded from society. As she was trapped between the traditional values and her own desires, she needed to reflect on her conflicts. Thus, her works include some characters who aim to find their own values within the conventions of society.

As a lesbian writer, Winterson is always pleased to reflect lesbian values and experiences in her works. Nevertheless, her gender has been mostly identified with her fiction, and consequently, she is known as a “lesbian writer”. Winterson asserts that homosexuality is foregrounded in a discussion of the art and the artist, nevertheless the ability of the artist is generally ignored (1997: 76). For this reason, Winterson refuses to prioritise her sex or gender over her artistic ability. In this respect, Winterson adopts the idea of Judith Butler, who supports that the identity categories maintain “regulatory regimes,” and consequently, she does not prefer to define her art on lesbianism (Andermahr, 2009: 22). Although Winterson acknowledges lesbianism as a part of her identity by reflecting its values completely, she does not define her art solely on lesbianism. In accordance with this, Sonya Andermahr states that Winterson has used lesbianism as a device of fantasy to emphasise different possibilities existing for those who have been constrained morally by society (2009: 23). Accordingly, Winterson rejects the ideal values imposed by metanarratives such as heterosexuality, marriage, family and femininity, and alternatively, she aims to promote humane values such as love, compassion, care, commitment, responsibility, sharing, and freedom.

3.2. *Written on the Body*

Jeanette Winterson’s novel *Written on the Body* (1992) is based on the love stories of an unnamed protagonist whose sex is undefined. Including an unnamed and ungendered protagonist reveals a new narrative technique in Winterson’s novel since she does not prefer to underline lesbianism and gender binaries as she did in her earlier works such as *Oranges are not the Only*

Fruits. Therefore, she encourages us to consider the possibilities of different identities, all of which are reflected in terms of humanitarian values. In this sense, Winterson's purpose is not only to depolarise the traditional gender roles but also to elicit humane values which are possible to be adopted by both females and males.

Anna Fahraeus states that lesbian fiction frequently emphasises heterosexuality as the social norm and external heterosexual structures as the authorities which should be struggled by the lesbian protagonist (2008: 81). In this struggle, the lesbian protagonist generally focuses on the world of binaries. On the other hand, Lisa Moore underlines the problem in the fiction of Winterson, for it includes "virtual" lesbianism after her pre-texts *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *Passion* (1995: 105). In *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, Winterson underlines the subjective values against the fixed categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality. In this sense, Jeanette, the protagonist of the novel, views the world within the context of rigid binaries such as "mother and father" (1987: 3), "friends and enemies" (3), "enemies and me" (3), in a broader sense, within the context of "good and evil" (16). However, in *Written on the Body*, Winterson offers a non-binary approach towards both personal values and the values of society. Sonya Andermahr states that Winterson highlights the "sameness" rather than "difference," thus, she can deconstruct both "fixed and natural (hetero) sexuality," and "essentially stable lesbian identity" by preferring to hide the gender of the protagonist in *Written on the Body* (2009: 78). For this reason, the undefined gender of the protagonist opens up new possibilities for gender norms. Although she directs the novel with the ungendered protagonist, other genders and gender possibilities are also represented in the novel. Rinawmi explains the gender possibilities in *Written on the Body* as follows:

The narrator is not part 'she' and part 'he,' but rather is something other, which perhaps could be described as the slash between her and him rather than as the words on either side. Hence the narrator's body is indeed invisible to any objectifying gaze because it can be seen as male, female, hermaphroditic, transgender, differently abled, from any culture in the world. (2014: 43)

Winterson manipulates the perceptions of the reader in the context of gender norms; in this way, she creates a world of multiple genders. She tries to show that there is no such a thing as "female" or "male," but personal choices assumed by the individuals.

Winterson is considered to leave her lesbian perspective because she does not want to underline the fixed categorisation of gender anymore. Accordingly, Moore elucidates Winterson's rejection of heteronormative culture as follows:

In the world of her novels, culture doesn't have to and doesn't always operate to assure the successful 'rule' of heterosexuality; representations do not depend on the centrality of 'heterosexual paradigm,' nor on the inevitable duality of femininity in relation to masculinity [...] She offers neither a critique of heterosexual culture nor a salvific account of lesbianism, largely because she refuses to accept the conventional distinction at the first place. (1995: 107)

In this respect, Winterson aims to deconstruct the notion of normality, which has been defined by male-dominated authorities. For this reason, she refers to different possibilities of sexes/genders in *Written on the Body* when the genderless narrator reads Playboy magazine (1997: 30), plays a sailor

and has a wife in every port (31), and feels like the girl in the story of Rumpelstiltskin (35) and as well as like a virgin (71). Within these descriptions, the narrator refers to the images of both femininity and masculinity; however, Winterson aims to show that these images belong to humane categories. In this way, Winterson questions and deconstructs the fixed gender identities. Andermahr asserts that her narrative strategy leads to defamiliarisation in terms of the gender norms by making the reader to question “what is normal for each sex” (2009: 77). Hence, she tries to break the attributed traits of femininity and masculinity. Similarly, Winterson tries to escape from gender dichotomies through the ungendered and unnamed protagonist (Rinawmi, 2014: 44). In this regard, she praises human experience through an androgynous resistance to male authority by revisiting “humane values” such as honesty, love, care, compassion, autonomy, and free-will.

In the novel, the narrator loves a woman named Louise, who is married to Elgin, a cancer specialist. When the narrator learns that Louise has leukaemia, s/he decides to leave her because s/he believes that only Elgin can heal her. However, nobody asks the opinion of Louise about the deal between the narrator and Elgin. When Elgin tells the narrator that the illness of Louise can be treated, s/he replies, “You mean I can look after her” (77) and Elgin answers, “I mean I can” (77). As nobody asks Louise’s opinion about the fate of their relationship or her treatment, both the narrator and Elgin become autonomous figures who intentionally or unintentionally attempt to silence the female voice. Therefore, the illness creates an opportunity both for the narrator and Elgin to exercise power over Louise. At that point, Winterson starts to question the importance of setting boundaries in a relationship by focusing on different ethical dilemmas in *Written on the Body*.

The novel presents an ethical problem because of the identity crisis of the narrator, who evaluates her/his moral behaviour through her/his memories of previous lovers and Louise. When the narrator thinks about her/his past relationships and tries to find out her/his failures, her/his story is reflected as a process of moral development. Within the narrator’s questioning of previous lovers, Winterson deals with the moral values in these relationships. The novel begins with the protagonist’s question, “Why is the measure of love loss?” (9) by referring to the past failures in her/his relationships to show her/his care and compassion for the beloved. In this sense, Vickroy explains that the plot recounts several former relationships to reframe the ideas of love (2008: 13). The first sentence of the novel refers to the sense of responsibility in a relationship that the protagonist mostly fails to maintain. The roles of the characters within the loving relationship can be viewed in terms of the ethical responsibilities because everybody has a moral responsibility in a loving relationship. Thus, Winterson poses a problem in the context of relational ethics, which deals with the question, “What is my duty to others?” (Shaw, 2011). Similarly, Vickroy points out that love is important in terms of ethical dilemmas of human action since it includes the responsibility towards each other (2008: 15). In this sense, Winterson aims to show that the ethical correctness is not only related to the personal justice or reason, but it is also related to their sense of responsibility towards the beloved. Therefore, the narrator’s question, “Why is the measure of love” actually corresponds to “What was my responsibility in love?”.

It has been stated that the first sentence is highlighting the “physical absence” of the protagonist, who yearns for the loss of Louise (Rinawmi, 2014: 43). In the context of loss, Winterson questions both material and transcendent meaning of love. The body is one of the most important entities that is represented in *Written on the Body*. As the body of the protagonist is not

defined, s/he becomes a transcendent and autonomous figure who can reach every possibility. However, Louise's name and gender are determined, and her physical appearance has been depicted in detail. Judith Butler points out that sex becomes "one of the norms by which the one becomes viable," and she explains three domains for body materialisation: "recasting of the matter as the dynamic of power," "the power of discourse to produce phenomena that it regulates," and "the process of assuming a sex by identification" (1993: 4). In this respect, Louise's body becomes an area for the protagonist to express her/his inner world and imagination, and thus, it can be deconstructed and reconstructed by the power of discourse. The description of Louise's body can be viewed in terms of power relations because Louise has been named and defined, and consequently, she has entered the linguistic and historical context. However, we have no imagination about the protagonist since s/he is not described, and s/he holds the power as an invader or coloniser when s/he says to Louise, "I will explore you" (16). After the protagonist leaves Louise, s/he investigates everything about cancer and Louise's body, and every point of her body is referred to by the protagonist like reading a map. She is depicted as a beautiful woman, who can easily attract anyone. Thus, the protagonist explores Louise's body when s/he has left her, and the imagination of the body becomes a device for reconstructing Louise's existence. Vickroy points out that imagining Louise's body becomes "a journey from the ego to comprehension of another's existence," and this image does not only consist of scientific description of the body, but also Louise's emotional condition (2008: 23). Therefore, it can be stated that the protagonist underlines the importance of thoughts and feelings in a body when s/he maps it. Consequently, s/he identifies herself/himself with these emotions and thoughts.

The first-person narrator of *Written on the Body* functions to create a genderless narrative. The protagonist directs the plot; however, her/his judgment is not reliable since s/he gives the sense of uncertainty and subjectivity when s/he states, "I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator" (20). In terms of the ethical aspect, the protagonist is also against traditional values because it has been stated that all the past lovers of her/him have been married women, and s/he feels no regret for this. The narrator defines marriage as "a plate-glass window just begging for a brick" for "self-exhibition" (12). The narrator uses the metaphor of glass and window several times to express her/his observations about the society. Thus, s/he posits herself/himself out of the "glass window" witnessing many marriages. Besides, s/he thinks that s/he is not responsible for their commitment. By the protagonist's relationships with married women, Winterson not only challenges the notion of marriage, but she also questions how people label other people's emotions and values as immoral when the values have already been dissolved.

Consequently, Winterson tries to bring a different perspective on fixed gender identities in *Written on the Body*. While doing so, she especially deals with moral actions and ethical dilemmas of the characters by referring to different aspects of romantic relationships.

4. FEMINIST ETHICS IN *WRITTEN ON THE BODY*

4.1. An Ethical Approach from Binaries towards Humanity

As a lesbian writer who was raised in a traditional community, Winterson's moral practices and ethical understanding have been affected by the binaries between traditional values and personal desires. In this sense, her earlier novels are mostly characterised by lesbian approach. Markovic states that traditional feminist approaches regard gender as a universal, fixed and unchangeable category, though current conditions in the roles of women and men require a world beyond binaries (2003: 404). Similarly, Winterson directs her attention towards a world beyond binaries in *Written on the Body*.

As Winterson's identity has been constructed within the binary oppositions of the community in which she grew up, she attempts to deconstruct binaries in her novels through the autobiographical reflections starting with her first novel *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*. It has been stated that Winterson sets out on a journey through these reflections from her familiar community to decentred and unfamiliar spaces, and this journey especially serves as "a symptomatic of reclaiming femininity and woman" (Stowers, 1996: 72). It has also been claimed that *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* is a novel that is based on the binaries because it focuses on lesbianism and "othering" heterosexuality (Front, 2009). However, Winterson's ethical understanding shifts from binaries towards humane values in *Written on the Body*. Hence, she has presented a postmodern, hero-based romance, in which the gender roles are ambiguous and fluid. Thus, Winterson aims to make the binaries fall apart with this novel.

Winterson's novels generally handle a process of "becoming different". Therefore, she highlights the irresistible desire to create her own values against the clashing identities which she has come across in her life. As for appreciating difference and reconstructing different values, Winterson tries to find a way to search out new possibilities for the oppressed identities that are accepted "different". In this sense, she questions all the values which have been systematically imposed upon the individuals by the society. She deals with the sense of "becoming different" by especially concentrating on gender identity, and thus, her novels are generally marked with an overemphasis on lesbian and feminine values. On the other hand, Winterson also uses gender as an instrument to resist the fixed values of society. Susan Lanser notes that binaries and deconstructing them lead to "queering" as a narrative technique in the novels of Winterson, and she explains three aspects of "queering" as follows: "transgressing normative sexualities," "dismantling sexual fixities," and "dismantling all fixities" (2018: 923). By doing so, Winterson uses "queering" that functions as an instrument of dismantling all the fixities about sexuality and gender and presenting different possibilities of gender identities in *Written on the Body*.

Andrea Harris explains that Winterson aims to show the complexity of gender, however this complexity is not adequately conveyed by femininity or masculinity; in this sense, Virginia Woolf's suggestive phrase "other sexes" is present in *Written on the Body* (2000: 126). For this reason, Winterson aims to enlarge the frameworks of femininity, masculinity, and lesbian identity, which have been considered fixed, divided categories by society. Therefore, she deconstructs these categories by highlighting the power and potentiality of human beings. In this sense, she frequently emphasises "visual reality" of the world in which everything exists only through the perception of

human beings (73). Accordingly, the narrator of *Written on the Body* explains the notion of visual reality as follows:

At present to enter a virtual world you would have to put on a crudelooking diving helmet of the kind people used to wear in the 1940s and a special glove rather like a heavy gardening gauntlet. Thus equipped you would be inside a 360° television set with a three-dimensional programme, three-dimensional sound, and solid objects that you could pick up and move around. No longer would you be watching a film from a fixed perspective, this is a film-set you can explore, even alter if you don't like it. As far as your senses can tell you are in a real world. The fact that you are in a diving helmet wearing a gardening glove won't matter. (73)

According to the narrator the world is only experienced through the senses of human beings, and because of this, nothing is fixed. Winterson aims to show that sex is not fixed in such a world, either. For this reason, the narrator defines the possibilities of this virtual world as follows: "Virtual life with a Virtual lover. You can go into your Virtual house and do Virtual housework, add a baby or two, even find out if you'd rather be gay. Or single. Or straight" (74). Thus, Winterson displays that people have the potential to change these definitions, meanings, and signs in this virtual world; for this reason, the meaning and framework of gender can also change easily. Lisa Moore points out that Winterson's definition of virtual reality refers to the "ambiguous status of lesbianism" because even though it addresses the "deferral of sexual identities such as gay, straight, single," it represents these identities imaginatively.

Winterson offers different possibilities of gender by manipulating narrative elements such as narrator, time, and space. She questions the stability of time and space by showing that all kinds of differences may exist, and the moral values of the individuals are not fixed because human experience is not constant. Winterson prefers to create a spatially and temporally ambiguous atmosphere in which nothing is named and defined, so the signs, meanings, and values become ambiguous and fragmented. In this ambiguous space, the protagonist questions the correctness of her/his behaviour in relationships, so the paradoxes of the protagonist regarding the values and responsibilities in love affairs lead to different possibilities. Winterson frequently stresses upon that these possibilities derive from human experience. The narrator states, "human beings are a part of exist in a universe of possibility" (48). Thus, Winterson highlights the importance of human experience by referring to the existence of numberless possibilities. In this way, she justifies that moral experiences cannot be restricted by certain deontological rules or limitations. Accordingly, Ellen E. Berry states that Winterson encourages the reader to think of endless "possibilities" rather than restricted "contradictions" (2007). When Winterson plays with the perceptions of the reader on morality by causing an uncertainty in gender roles, the readers cannot have any sense of approval or rejection of moral experiences. Due to the sense of instability, the narrator undergoes a dilemma between clashing values, and s/he underlines the artificiality of the definitions of these values. Therefore, Berry explains it as follows:

[...] this pervasive sense of instability is reinforced again by the narrator's thematic tacking between that which is deemed real, authentic, sincere, present, and singular on the one hand and that which is considered a sham, inauthentic, reproduced, translated, simulated and virtual on the other hand. (Berry, 2007)

Accordingly, *Written on the Body* is mainly based on the narrator's perspective, for her/his subjectivity is constructed in between the possibilities of past and present, self and the other, real and virtual.

In traditional ethical theories, the moral practices of women and men have been regarded as binary oppositions, and the moral experiences of different genders have been valued in a biased way. In *Written on the Body*, different gender possibilities have been offered with the genderless narrator, her/his beloved Louise, Elgin, and the former lovers of the narrator. These characters give the sense that the moral values of women and men derive from their personal experiences, rather than their gender identities. Thus, all gender identities are represented on an equal level for humane values. For this reason, it is stated that Winterson aims to negotiate for "humane values" by "invoking an array of mixed referents" to different genders (Andermahr, 2009: 77). Consequently, the fixed definitions of feminine and masculine values are aimed to be subverted.

In *Written on the Body*, Winterson attempts to uncover the real meanings of moral actions by engaging in dialogues on the artificiality of social values and restrictions. In this sense, Winterson questions the moral practices of people in a different space. She depicts the characters from different perspectives with their positive and negative features by displaying their moral actions and behaviours. She shows that these moral roles cannot only be confined to their gender identities. Besides, Winterson aims to emphasise that the moral actions of people are affected by several reasons such as their environment, age, and profession. Judith Lorber states, "People create their social realities and identities, including their gender, through their actions with others – their families, friends, and colleagues" (2000: 83). Correspondingly, the narrator of the novel tells, "we touch another, bond and break, drift away on force-fields we don't understand" (48) and stresses the role of social identity of people in their moral practices. For this reason, Winterson brings a genderless narrator, female and male characters together to offer a wholistic representation of social actions.

Susan Lanser underlines the importance of narrative voice which is shaped by an expression or attitude, and she focuses on "corporeality of social action" (2018: 913). It is related to the real meaning of the actions, especially moral actions because society tends to judge the actions of individuals according to their genders. In this regard, Winterson prefers to offer different relationship dynamics with several characters in order to lay stress upon their subjectivity and personal conditions. In this way, she aims to prove that people undergo similar conditions; however, their feelings and thoughts can alter these conditions. Winterson supports that love is one of the most ordinary actions, but it becomes valuable with special feelings and actions of individuals:

You said, 'I love you.' Why is it that the most unoriginal thing we can say to one another is still the thing we long to hear? 'I love you' is always a quotation. You did not say it first and neither did I, yet when you say it and when I say it we speak like savages who have found three words and worship them. (9)

Winterson desires to reconceptualise the frameworks of feminine and masculine virtues and moral values. To this end, she emphasises that human beings are sharing common values and virtues such as responsibility, logical thinking, love, care, compassion, and autonomy. It can be inferred that the stereotyped values, which are traditionally labeled as feminine or masculine, can be interchanged. Therefore, Winterson deals with certain experiences, attitudes, and emotions of human beings by

referring to the concepts of “love, loss, desire, and anatomy” in *Written on the Body* (Winkle, 2013: 1). When the concepts of love, loss, desire, and anatomy are considered, human beings can reconcile on an equal level since all genders resemble each other with their similar feelings and experiences.

Winterson underlines that attitudes and assumptions of human beings are considered to be regulated by the social institutions in order to impose morally pre-determined actions, yet neither social institutions nor cultural values are enough to regulate human behaviour. Gender is considered as one of the factors which operate on the moral practices of human beings; however, Winterson particularly stresses the role of emotions and free-will of human beings to invalidate the norms and practices of social institutions. According to Winterson, social institutions try to confine emotions and values; however, people should prefer to follow their human desires, thus, social rules and norms inevitably become invalid. In the novel, this situation has been expressed as follows:

No one can legislate love; it cannot be given orders or cajoled into service. Love belongs to itself, deaf to pleading and unmoved by violence. Love is not something you can negotiate. Love is the one thing stronger than desire and the only proper reason to resist temptation [...] Marriage is the flimsiest weapon against desire. (59)

Winterson points out that church and state are entitled to validate marriage; nevertheless, they are insufficient to control the feelings of people in a relationship. It has been offered that people pretend to fulfil their moral obligations due to the oppression of society; however, they continue to follow their desires secretly. For this reason, Winterson shows that the moral actions of the people cannot be controlled by the social institutions:

The most reliable Securicor, church sanctioned and state approved, is marriage. Swear you'll cleave only unto him or her and magically that's what will happen. Adultery is as much about disillusionment as it is about sex. The charm didn't work. You paid all that money, ate the cake and it didn't work. (60)

The narrator underlines that people believe that social institutions impose morality upon individuals; however, people are not stable creatures. Therefore, even though they are not satisfied with their decisions, they continue their immoral actions by hiding them in order to maintain their social status, consequently, they become unhappy with disillusionment.

Winterson does not completely ignore the effects of gender/sex and culture on the constitution of moral values, but she underlines that the human identity cannot be constructed by simple dichotomous concepts, but by sophisticated experiences and conditions which the individuals undergo in their lives. In this regard, she emphasises people are compared to other living creatures, they tend to be tempted and to give morally wrong decisions because of their emotions and thoughts. In this sense, Winterson points out that animals never attempt to cheat on their mates, but all human beings are likely to be unfaithful. Thus, the narrator questions the failure of human beings in terms of giving decisions and being faithful. The narrator refers to the general characteristics of robins as faithful creatures by comparing them to human beings. S/he states that all human beings need to improve themselves in terms of ethical decisions because they are prone to be unfaithful by their nature:

Robins are very faithful creatures who mate with the same mate year by year [...] Homo Sapiens. Blind Nature. I don't feel wise. Why is it that human beings are allowed to grow up without necessary apparatus to make sound ethical decisions? (34)

The narrator frequently underlines the flawed nature of human beings. According to the narrator, human beings do not have a natural sense of morality. For this reason, they are easily tempted by their desires.

The narrative technique of *Written on the Body* is substantial to underline the imperfection and partiality of human beings in a general sense. The narration is in the present time, yet the narrator thinks retrospectively about her/his past relationships. This narrative act causes to break the reliability of both the text and the narrator since the narrator frequently emphasises that s/he may remember the past vaguely, so s/he can be mistaken. The narrator tells, "We all make mistake. Look at Adam" (50) in order to underline that all human beings can make mistakes regardless of their genders. Winterson frequently reminds us that all people are bound by certain emotions and thoughts, yet they are expected to be controlled by rationality. It is mostly claimed that women are incapable of controlling their emotions and thoughts, so they can be led to immoral acts. However, Winterson rejects the idea of pure emotionality as well as pure rationality, and she thinks that fixed rules or restrictions cannot be applied to all human beings. Accordingly, she does not introduce emotionality as a sole factor that disrupts the intellectuality or morality of women, but as a general condition of human beings.

The novel has different aspects in terms of underlining the transition from gender binaries to general humane values. The first aspect of transition is presenting a genderless character, which is defined as "undermining the supremacy of gender over other differences between people such as age, race and social status" (Schabert, 2010: 72). In this sense, sex and gender are stated to be useless to define all the characteristics and experiences of people. The gender possibilities in *Written on the Body* offer that the differences exist in the context of humanity, and human beings cannot be simply divided into two fixed categories as female and male. In the novel, Winterson undermines and emphasises the significance of multiple gender identities in order to manipulate the perceptions of the reader regarding gender values. In this sense, the ambiguity in relation to the identification of the gender of the protagonist neutralises her/his moral responsibility, besides, the actions of the protagonist are not labeled in a gender-biased way. On the other hand, Winterson explicitly designates the gender of the other characters, nonetheless, their moral decisions and values are not specifically linked to their gender identity. Accordingly, Judith Lorber states that feminist writers are criticised for "either minimizing the differences, or maximizing and valorizing them," and she points out that overemphasizing differences legitimates the inequalities (2000: 83). Thus, Winterson offers a different approach to mediate between feminine values and masculine values.

Winterson's focus on different aspects of genders and sexes in the context of humanity illustrates that the femininity or masculinity of individuals does not affect the moral experiences of human beings. Therefore, she presents both female and male characters who conduct the same moral failures. The narrator is known to have relationships generally with married women. On the other hand, Winterson does not focus on their gender in their marriages, but rather she refers to cheating in marriages. In this sense, Winterson aims to reach a universal standpoint in evaluating moral actions of the individuals regardless of their gender identities. To do that, Winterson displays

different characteristics and moral actions of different women and offers a comparison of different female characters.

When the narrator refers to her/his previous lovers, s/he indicates their names and genders in detail as “Bathsheba the dentist” (14), “Catherine, she wanted to be a writer” (46), “a Dutch girl called Inge, a committed romantic and anarcha-feminist” (18). In the novel, it is frequently stated that almost all of her/his lovers are married women; thus, the inconvenience of their relationships is intentionally emphasised. However, the narrator relates this inconvenience to the institution of marriage, so s/he does not take any responsibility for this moral failure. Besides, s/he does not relate this moral failure to the gender of the lovers. On the other hand, the narrator refers to different genders of her/his previous lovers, thus, s/he creates another ambiguity for her/his gender identity. S/he states that once s/he had a boyfriend named Crazy Frank (70), however, s/he still refers to her/his female partners. Thus, Winterson gives references to the different gender possibilities of the narrator.

The narrator focuses on her/his relationship with Bathsheba, another married woman who does not want to change “her peaceful life” (14). The narrator defines their relationship as a “world of double meanings” since Bathsheba has two different lives with her husband and with the narrator. This relationship hurts the feelings of the narrator because s/he wants Bathsheba to divorce from her husband and to be only with her/him. However, Bathsheba cannot put her “peaceful life” aside, and consequently, she breaks up with the narrator. When their confusing relationship ends, the narrator meets Jacqueline in a depressed mood. Jacqueline is the only single lover of the protagonist. She is defined as a good-natured and single woman who provides safety for the narrator. The narrator emphasises the ordinariness of Jacqueline as follows:

She worked nine to five Monday to Friday, drove a Mini and got her reading from book clubs. She exhibited no fetishes, foibles, freak-outs or fuck-ups. Above all she was single and she had always been single. No children and no husband. (21)

The narrator cannot find any extremities or negative points in their relationship with Jacqueline. However, s/he questions the comfort that Jacqueline provides in their relationship in a sarcastic way. Thus, s/he states, “I wanted the clichés, the armchair. I wanted the broad road and twenty-twenty vision. What’s wrong with that? It’s called growing up” (21). The narrator undergoes an inner conflict despite all the positive aspects of their relationship. In this sense, s/he tries to justify their relationship as a peaceful relationship. Even though the narrator underlines that their relationship is normal and morally correct, s/he admits that it is not what s/he desires. Their relationship with Jacqueline is defined as “a marriage made in heaven” (22). Although it seems like a proper relationship, the narrator feels a sense of imperfection. They are not officially married, but their relationship reminds the narrator of stereotypes of marriage, thus, the narrator constantly questions what is wrong in their relationship, which also shows the conflict between the narrator’s values and the society’s values.

The protagonist meets Louise before she breaks up with Jacqueline. Louise is depicted as a perfect heroine who has all the characteristics of stereotyped femininity. Contrary to Jacqueline, the depiction of Louise reflects extremities both regarding Louise’s identity and her relationship with the narrator. The narrator depicts Louise as follows:

If I were painting Louise I'd paint her hair as a swarm of butterflies. A million Red Admirals in a halo of movement and light. There are plenty of legends about women turning into trees but are there any about trees turning into women? Is it odd to say that your lover reminds you of a tree? Well she does, it's the way her hair fills with wind and sweeps out around her head. Very often I expect her to rustle. She doesn't rustle but her flesh has the moonlit shade of a silver birch. Would I had a hedge of such saplings naked and unadorned. (23)

The narrator compares Louise to a tree with red hair. In the depiction of Louise, the narrator underlines her/his excessive feelings towards her. Besides, s/he depicts her body in detail, and her beauty is also remarkably emphasised. On the other hand, the depiction of Louise includes contrariness since Louise's femininity is combined with her strength, autonomy, and free-will. It is stated that the overemphasis on Louise's femininity shows Winterson's sympathy for female values (Berry, 2007). However, Louise's femininity is also combined with her strong nature, that is mostly associated with masculinity. She is compared to a "Gothic Victorian heroine" as a classical married woman, but her strength is compared to a volcano:

She was more of a Victorian heroine than a modern woman. A heroine from a Gothic novel, mistress of her house, yet capable of setting fire to it and fleeing in the night with one bag [...] It did occur to me that if Louise were a volcano then I might be Pompeii. (38)

The depiction of Louise shows that Winterson creates a powerful image of femininity. In this sense, Louise is depicted as a beautiful woman, who seems like a mistress of a Gothic house and a Victorian woman, but at the same time, she is so powerful to leave this domesticity to start a new life and accept the burden of all moral failures. For this reason, the narrator states that Louise is capable of setting fire to her house. In line with this comparison, Louise is brave to abandon her house for the narrator.

In *Written on the Body*, the scope of femininity is enlarged by the embodiment of emotions. Emotionality has been widely regarded as a feminine characteristic. Contrary to this traditional perspective, Winterson handles emotions in a universal approach for all human beings. Accordingly, Winterson refers to "humane" feelings of individuals by pointing out that love justifies all the actions since it is stronger than all other feelings. It is stated that love is presented as a transcendent value that is independent of social institutions in Winterson's novel (Andermahr, 2009: 25). For this reason, Winterson rejects to restrict the concepts of love and desire by social institutions such as marriage and religion. Apart from that, Winterson advocates that these institutions do not regulate the moral actions of people, but they only destroy the emotions in a relationship. Therefore, the narrator's concerns about emotions and morality urge the reader to think that moral practices do not correspond to human nature.

Winterson underlines the role of emotions in terms of ethical decisions because all human beings are equally affected by similar emotions. Correspondingly, love is stated to be "one of the most important means" to redefine ethics since it displays the roles and responsibilities of the individuals in a relationship (Vickroy, 2008: 15). Winterson offers love as a condition in which individuals assume their moral values. In this context, the novel discusses the roles of the individuals in taking responsibility in a love affair, and it rejects the traditional moral roles of femininity and masculinity in a relationship. It is stated that Winterson's aim is to deconstruct the

stereotypical assumptions regarding love and gender by considering feminine and masculine behaviour and actions.

To conclude, it can be stated that Winterson exhibits a different ethical approach in *Written on the Body*. In her new ethical understanding, she introduces the values which are attributed either to femininity or to masculinity such as love, care, compassion, emotionality, responsibility, autonomy, and free-will as general humane values. By doing that, she aims to deconstruct the established gender-based ethical approaches.

4.2. Feminine and Masculine Virtues Revisited in *Written on the Body*

In traditional ethical approaches, women and men have been considered to have different ethical values and moral virtues. Due to this universal ethical approach, the moral experiences of women and men have been evaluated in a system of binaries. Within this system of binaries, the virtues such as justice, courage, autonomy, and honesty have generally been attributed to men. On the other hand, women are generally related to care, compassion, and emotionality. In this sense, Winterson presents a new non-binary system of values in *Written on the Body*, in which she attempts to explore the space between femininity and masculinity (Harris, 2000: 129). By doing so, she offers a new perspective regarding feminine and masculine virtues by recasting the established definitions of “womanly” and “manly” thoughts, ideals, behaviours, and values by revisiting the virtues of honesty, care, love, autonomy, and free-will.

Honesty is one of the virtues which has been questioned in *Written on the Body*. As the narrator retrospectively narrates her/his past relationships with married women, s/he expresses her/his observations regarding the virtue of honesty. In this respect, Winterson aims to emphasise that although honesty is one of the most important virtues that people should adopt in a relationship, they mostly do not possess this virtue. On the other hand, Winterson does not highlight the genders of people while s/he evaluates whether they possess honesty as a virtue or not. Rather, she advocates that this virtue is negatively affected by the conflict between human desires and social norms.

Winterson gives the sense of unreliability and dishonesty with the first-person narrator who frequently emphasises that s/he is not sure about the past and s/he may not be telling the truth. However, Winterson presents the instability of the narrator as a general human condition. She aims to show that false promises and deceptive behaviours of people may affect the reliability of relationships, which poses a problem in the context of relational ethics that deals with the individual's duty to the beloved in a relationship. The narrator emphasises that everybody can be dishonest because it is a general characteristic of human beings. S/he points out that being honest is a rare characteristic which can be found in human beings by stating, “Telling the truth, she said, was a luxury we could not afford and so lying became a virtue, an economy we had to practise. Telling the truth was hurtful and so lying became a good deed” (14). According to the narrator, being dishonest is easier than telling the truth. For this reason, s/he states, “Cheating is easy. There's no swank to infidelity. To borrow against the trust someone has placed in you costs nothing at first” (59). Therefore, Winterson reminds us that all human beings have the capacity to deceive their partners because telling the truth is difficult. People think that they may hurt other people by telling the truth, so they prefer to be dishonest. By displaying the unvirtuous nature of the characters, Winterson also underlines the weakness of human nature. She tries to prove that people prefer to

create illusions for their happiness and in order to achieve happiness and maintain their social relations.

It is stated in the novel that the narrator used to give promises to her/his previous lovers, yet s/he did not abide by these promises (11). The self-awareness of the narrator about her/his dishonesty is frequently highlighted. In accordance with this, the narrator acknowledges honesty as one of the preconditions of love, but s/he cannot fulfil this precondition. Therefore, s/he states, “I don’t like to think of myself as an insincere person but if I say I love you and I don’t mean it then what else am I?” (11). Thus, the narrator describes the virtue of honesty as a requirement in a relationship. She continues to explain this as follows:

When I say ‘I will be true to you’ I must mean it in spite of the formalities, instead of the formalities. If I commit adultery in my heart then I have lost you a little. The bright vision of your face will blur. I may not notice this once or twice, I may pride myself on having enjoyed those fleshy excursions in the most cerebral way. Yet I will have blunted that sharp flint that sparks between us, our desire for one another above all else. (60)

The narrator emphasises the role of honesty in a relationship because s/he respects the nature of love. For this reason, s/he states that s/he does not want to destroy the romance in their relationship due to lies and other moral failures.

The narrator frequently emphasises that people are used to cheating each other. In line with this, s/he tells, “In Wonderland everyone cheats, and love is Wonderland, isn’t it?” (9). The metaphor of Wonderland is a reference to the illusions of people. It is stated that people prefer illusions to realities. In this sense, they generally suppose that they maintain their lives with these illusions. As a consequence of this, they lack the virtue of honesty in their relationships. In the same way, the narrator thinks that marriage is regarded as a “blessed state,” nevertheless, it has lost its real meaning and become a space for betrayal. Thus, s/he states:

You were still married and although I don’t have many scruples I’ve learned to have some about that blessed state. I used to think of marriage as a plate-glass window just begging for a brick. The self-exhibition, the self-satisfaction, smarminess, tightness, tight-arsedness. (12)

The narrator asserts that marriages are not blessed states as it is generally accepted by society. Although people attribute divine meanings to marriage, it has actually lost its meaning. In this regard, the narrator compares marriage to an “exhibition” and a “public display” in which nothing is real.

The narrator refers to the hypocrisy in marriages when s/he states, “Odd that marriage, a public display and free to all, gives way to that most secret of liaisons, an adulterous affair” (14). In her/his definition, s/he compares marriage to a gateway that encourages immoral acts. When s/he states that it is “free to all,” s/he tries to underline that it is not a private space, for it can be intruded on by anyone. In this public display, people need to prevent showing their real feelings; however, they are not able to do it completely. Therefore, they eventually betray their partners. In spite of their betrayals, they pretend to have happy marriages in order to maintain their social status. Thus, Winterson aims to prove that people are encouraged to be dishonest due to their fear of hurting others and their wish to maintain the social system. The narrator tries to find a valid reason to justify infidelity. In this sense, s/he utters, “Perhaps that’s where God is, then God will understand the

conditions of infidelity” (55). According to the narrator, even God may tolerate some moral failures due to conditions of human beings.

In *Written on the Body*, Winterson offers love as a humane virtue against traditional ethical virtues. Love is presented as a feeling which evokes real humane values. Annette Baier explains, “Love is always subject to frustration and rejection, and commonly bound together with such dangerous emotions such as jealousy, hate and fear” (1994: 33). According to Baier, due to the emotions in a loving relationship, a person needs to fulfil certain ethical responsibilities. In this sense, Winterson proposes love as a point of unity for feminine and masculine virtues by highlighting love as a transcendent value that goes beyond fixed categories of identity. Accordingly, the narrator underlines that love is such a strong feeling that it can change the identity and fixed values of a person. In this sense, s/he defines love as follows:

Love it was that drove them forth. Love that brought them home again. Love hardened their hands against the oar and heated their sinews against the rain. The journeys they made were beyond common sense; who leaves the hearth for the open sea? especially without a compass, especially in winter, especially alone. What you risk reveals what you value. In the presence of love, hearth and quest become one. (62)

The narrator depicts love as a divine feeling which makes human beings courageous. Accordingly, Winterson aims to represent love as an ethical concept that leads people to take certain actions, to be brave in taking actions and to take responsibility for the beloved.

In *Written on the Body*, the narrator depicts her/his excessive love towards Louise. In spite of the excessive feelings, the reader can show empathy towards the narrator’s love for Louise. In this sense, the theme of love is stated to bring a “consideration on ethical dilemmas of human action” (Vickroy, 2008: 5). The characters in the novel display their different attitudes and approaches in their relationships, and thus, love is presented as a distinctive measure to evaluate the actions of individuals. *Written on the Body* includes a romance, thus, Winterson normalises the excessive feelings of the characters in order to make the reader realise the real meanings of their own actions through love. In this sense, Martha C. Nussbaum explains the concept of love in relation to the tragedy genre by claiming that it is an opportunity for people to “embody their ethical truth” by identifying themselves with the characters in the play (1990: 17). In this sense, the relation between tragedy and love has been defined as follows:

[...] the form sets up in audience’s responses, particularly those of pity for the characters and fear for oneself, that presuppose similar sets of beliefs. It feeds the tendency of the spectator to identify with a hero who weeps uncontrollably over the body of the loved one, or goes mad with rage, or is terrified by the force of an insoluble dilemma. (Nussbaum, 1990: 17)

In accordance with the definition of Nussbaum, the relationship between the narrator and Louise is compared to a romance that has a tragic end. Accordingly, one of the narrator’s friends consoles the narrator by stating, “At least your relationship with Louise didn’t fail. It was the perfect romance” (133). The narrator questions, “Was it? Is that what perfection costs? Operatic heroics and a tragic end? What about a wasteful end? Most opera ends wastefully. The happy endings are compromises. Is that the choice?” (133). In this sense, the narrator asserts that they have learned moral lessons with love, but they have lost each other tragically.

In the novel, love is mostly defined in terms of the narrator's love for Louise. Although Louise's femininity and body are remarkably depicted, the intensity of the narrator's love for Louise reveals that their relationship goes beyond physical love. Rather, their relationship gives a realistic portrayal of human feelings. It is stated that in all literary texts, love provides "a human being with human virtues and human heroism" (Nussbaum, 1990: 366). Similarly, in this novel, love is compared to a heroic act by which the narrator attempts to become a hero who pursues a quest; nevertheless, s/he fails to fulfil her/his romantic quest. According to Nussbaum's approach to love, Winterson offers a new perspective on love since love requires taking responsibility for certain actions. According to Winterson, individuals are expected to bear the consequences of their actions if they love someone. For this reason, the narrator questions the "measure of love" in her/his relationship with Louise. Winterson underlines the ethical roles of the people in a relational context, and she displays that love cannot be conducted with the help of fixed rules because people are affected by emotions, consequently, they become fragile. In this regard, Carol Gilligan deals with the ethical behaviour in a relationship by referring to Freud's account of connection:

Although Freud, claiming that "we are never so defenceless against suffering as when we love," pursues the line of defence as it leads through anger and conscience to civilization and guilt [...] Since for her love also creates the possibility of disappointment and loss, the answer would seem to lie in a different experience of connection and a different mode of response. Throughout Freud's work, women remain the exception to his portrayal of relationships, and they sound a continuing theme of an experience of love which, however described-as narcissistic or as hostile to civilization-does not appear to have separation and aggression at its base. (1993, 47)

In accordance with Gilligan's definition, Winterson deals with ethical behaviour against the fear of loss and separation; thus, the narrator refers to her/his fear of attachment. Therefore s/he says, "I'm addicted to the first six months. It's the midnight calls, the bursts of energy, the beloved as battery for all those fading cells" (58). However, the narrator's relationships do not last over six months due to her/his fear of attachment. The narrator changes the rule of six month with Louise, so the rules of the relationship are rewritten by getting a new understanding of some virtues that should be adopted in a relationship.

The narrator frequently states that people try to obey ethical rules in order not to hurt other people. Accordingly, Winterson's understanding of the ethics of love is based on humane values; therefore, she deals with hypocrisy in traditional ethical values and social institutions. She asserts that people seem to love and care for each other; however, their moral actions and words are not coherent. In line with this, the narrator states that s/he has had affairs with many married women, though most of them tell they love their husbands. S/he views her/his position in others' marriages as a spectator. Therefore, the narrator states:

The way married couples go out in fours like a pantomime horse, the men walking together at the front, the women trailing a little way behind. The men fetching the gin and tonics from the bar while the women take their handbags to the toilet. It doesn't have to be like that but mostly it is. I've been through a lot of marriages. Not down the aisle but always up the stairs. "I've been through a lot of marriages. Not down the aisle but always up the stairs. I began to realise I was hearing the same story every time. (12)

According to the narrator, marriage is thought to be completed with the existence of two people, who are called “great lovers,” however, these people are prone to escape from their responsibilities. Thus, s/he defines this situation as “limp and unused, the shell of marriage, its inhabitants both fled” (13). For this reason, the narrator assumes that marriage is not suitable for the nature of people. Marriage is thought to regulate the actions of people, yet it actually covers the hidden immoralities of people like a “shell”. Winterson advocates that people fulfil the responsibilities of love instead of maintaining the rules of an artificial system. S/he emphasises that s/he prefers ingenuous feelings instead of stereotyped marriages when s/he states:

Opposite me, the relaxed smart houses built on the park showed yellow at one window, black at another. A figure pulled the curtains, someone opened the front door, I could hear music for a moment. What sane sensible lives. Did those people lie awake at night hiding their hearts while giving their bodies? Did the woman at the window quietly despair as the clock pushed her closer to bed-time? Does she love her husband? Desire him? When he sees his wife unlace herself what does he feel? In a different house is there someone he longs for the way he used to long for her? (45)

The narrator gives the sense that s/he is watching the values and experiences behind a window, which implies that s/he is too close to observe these experiences and values, but s/he is separated from those values by a glass, which determines the place of the narrator. In this sense s/he defines her condition in as follows:

I like to pass by bare windows and get a sighting of the life within [...] Only half an inch of glass separates me from the silent world where I do not exist. They don't know I'm here but I have begun to be as intimate with them as any member of the family (46).

Therefore, the condition of the narrator in the society is portrayed as “separated with a glass”. When s/he feels that s/he fell in love with Louise, s/he utters, “Condensation ran down the windows. Nothing was clear any more” (49). Therefore, love causes her/him to change her/his subjectivity once again. When the love between the narrator and Louise intensifies, their boundaries become fluid, and consequently, the glass between the narrator and the social values becomes more transparent.

Lindenmeyer points out, “the deeply romantic love causes a threat to the self-contained subject” (1999: 7). According to Lindenmeyer, love may encompass the subjective self and destroy the self-autonomy of the beloved. Similarly, in the novel, the love between Louise and the narrator leads them to lose the limits of the boundaries of the self by turning into a play of power through care and compassion. On the other hand, the love of Louise makes the narrator revisit her/his personal values.

Winterson examines the ethical aspect of love in terms of the moral well-being of people. For Winterson, love is a way of improving the lives of people. Therefore, the narrator questions the qualities of love stating, “Will I cherish you, adore you, make way for you, make myself better for you, look at you and always see you, tell you the truth? And if love is not those things then what things?” (11). Although the narrator's definition of love points to the well-being of the beloved, Winterson underlines the necessity of determining the boundaries of love in ethical aspects. Leslie Rabine states that romantic love reveals different perspectives of ethics because it combines sexual desire with spiritual love, and consequently, makes the lovers more self-conscious (1985, 12).

Similarly in the novel, Winterson portrays a different aspect of ethics by using the narrator's relationship with Louise and her/his earlier lovers. Finally, the narrator starts a moral journey in which s/he questions her/his own values and the norms of the society.

Traditional ethical approaches have defined virtues as certain features to conduct a good life. On the other hand, Winterson's approach to the virtue is based on love, care, and responsibility, for they contribute to the moral development of the narrator in a relational context. On the other hand, Winterson does not highlight the role of gender to define the virtues of love, care, and responsibility. By telling a different love story, she presents the general portrayal of humane values. However, Winterson underlines the roles which people assume in their relationships by focusing on details. In this sense, love does not only include excessive feelings, but it has also moral aspect. For this reason, the narrator questions her/his moral behaviour in their relationship when s/he states, "You said, 'I love you and my love for you makes any other life a lie'" (16). The narrator refers to Louise's conscience when she cheats on her husband. In this sense, Winterson questions to what extent a loving relationship can be regarded as a morally good act.

The narrator continuously refers to her/his love for Louise. Louise expostulates on the narrator saying, "You've loved other people but you still left them" (41). Louise's question is related to maintaining a relationship. Accordingly, Winterson shows the real meaning of love in terms of feeling a sense of responsibility. Louise states that she does not believe in the narrator when s/he says s/he loves Louise. Thus, she states, "Never say you love me until that day when you have proved it" (42). Louise's statement about proving love is a reference to her expectation about holding responsibilities of the beloved.

The relationship between the narrator and Jacqueline is like a replica of an unhappy marriage as s/he frequently underlines that s/he does not love her, and s/he does not want to love her (21). Nevertheless, s/he wants to be peaceful with her. In this sense, she defines their relationship as a "marriage made in heaven" (22). However, the narrator's betrayal of Jacqueline is in contrast with the metaphor of heaven. Accordingly, the narrator points out that s/he has the feeling of imperfection in her/his relationship with Jacqueline in spite of all the benefits of their relationship. In this sense, Winterson reminds of hypocrisy in relationships. The narrator shows her/his feelings regarding their pseudo-peaceful relationship with Jacqueline:

Over the months that followed my mind healed and I no longer moped and groaned over lost love and impossible choices. I had survived shipwreck and I liked my new island with hot and cold running water and regular visits from the milkman. I became an apostle of ordinariness. I lectured my friends on the virtues of the humdrum, praised the gentle bands of my existence and felt that for the first time I had come to know what everyone told me I would know; that passion is for holidays, not homecoming. (22)

The narrator underlines that s/he needs peace, and because of this, s/he starts a relationship with Jacqueline. S/he constantly highlights her/his desire to come to terms with the norms of the society. For this reason, s/he tries to be an "apostle of ordinariness" with this relationship. However, s/he realises that this relationship does not fit in her/his nature and love cannot be attained compulsorily.

Winterson handles the concept of love as an instrument of power and manipulation as well. Both the narrator and Louise do not want to be led by someone else. Thus, Louise utters her hesitation by stating, "you try and regain control by telling me you love me. That's a territory you

know, isn't it? That's romance and courtship and whirlwind" (41). Thus, love has been questioned as an instrument of power that is exercised on the beloved. The narrator's excessive love and desire for Louise risk Louise's autonomy in her body and identity. It is clear when the narrator asserts the following statement:

I didn't only want Louise's flesh, I wanted her bones, her blood, her tissues, the sinews that bound her together. I would have held her to me though time had stripped away the tones and textures of her skin. I could have held her for a thousand years until the skeleton itself rubbed away to dust. (62)

The narrator turns into an oppressive figure who tries to hold control over Louise's body. In this respect, she asserts, "Louise was the woman I wanted even if I couldn't have her" (48). When s/he depicts her desire, s/he states that s/he wants to possess her. Besides, s/he tells Louise: "You are still the colour of my blood. You are my blood. When I look in the mirror it's not my own face I see. Your body is twice. Once you once me. Can I be sure which is which?" (75). Winterson underlines that love is a strong instrument which can dominate a relationship. However, she regards dominating people as an immoral action even though it is based on love. When Winterson questions the notion of love in *Written on the Body*, she aims to show that the excessive feelings of the narrator may be deceptive. Although the narrator depicts love as the most valuable virtue, s/he leaves Louise for her treatment. In this sense, Winterson questions whether the narrator achieves the moral quest in her/his loving relationship.

Another virtue Winterson questions in *Written on the Body* is care, one of the most important notions of feminist ethics. Care ethics is grounded on the idea of taking care of the ones who need to be cared for. In its deep meaning, the concept of caring corresponds to giving voice to the oppressed and silenced identities. Care has mostly been discussed for women, children, elderly people, and homosexual people. On the other hand, care has been discussed as a moral virtue in the context of feminist ethics. Eva Feder Kittay explains the notion of care as follows:

Care is sometimes treated as a moral value; the term used in this way has a normative content [...] It is the virtues, obligations, and consequences of good care that are delineated by an ethic of care and which derive from practices in which care is done well. (2015, 52)

Similarly, Winterson deals with care as a notion which should be fulfilled in relationships, especially in a romantic relationship. Thus, Winterson focuses on the narrator's role of caring by focusing on the humane side of caring rather than defining it in terms of gender roles. The narrator attempts to show a caring attitude, nevertheless, s/he fails in her/his responsibility of caring for the beloved.

Nel Noddings asserts that care ethics is based on needs, which should be distinguished from wants and desires (2015, 72). It generally corresponds to the mutual relationship between the carer and the cared-for. Furthermore, care is stated to be linked to the notion of mothering which has two aspects: providing the well-being of a child and nurturing (Lindemann, 2019: 105). On the other hand, these roles are mostly assigned to women by society, and correspondingly, caregivers and carers are mostly expected to be female. Sara Ruddick propounds, "Although in many cultures most kinds of caring labor are performed by women, caring is not tied in any way to particular activities of female bodies, as mothering is mistakenly taken to be" (1990: 46). Thus, Ruddick states that women are culturally forced to provide caring services (1990: 46). As a rejection to this traditional

approach, Winterson shifts the role of caring from females to all genders by enhancing the concept of care through a sense of compassionate responsibility in the relationships. She also highlights the role of care in relation to love relationship in the novel.

Although Louise is represented as a symbol of femininity, she shows a different caring attitude because she does not have a longing for being a mother. The narrator says that Louise tried to have a baby; however, she miscarried the child and never tried again because she feared that the child may take after Elgin. In this sense, Louise's idea about motherhood is different from the traditional representations because she displays a different kind of caring attitude. Winterson aims to enhance the framework of care in relation to Louise, a woman who shows compassion to her lover, but still does not want to be a mother. The narrator states Louise shows her/him compassion and cares for her/him, so s/he feels like a child next to her. The narrator explains this feeling of compassion as follows:

I put my arms around her, not sure whether I was a lover or a child. I wanted her to hide me beneath her skirts against all menace. Sharp points of desire were still there but there was too a sleepy safe rest like being in a boat I had as a child. (61)

In this sense, Winterson addresses compassion, another important point in terms of care. Compassion is a characteristic that is mostly attributed to women because of the role of care-giving. However, Winterson focuses on the feeling of compassion in a romantic relationship through Louise and the narrator. Winterson underlines the feeling of compassion without considering the genders of the characters. At this point, Winterson portrays two aspects of compassion: compassion coming from the beloved and compassion from the caregiver. Within the relationship between Louise and the narrator, the narrator assumes the role of compassionate beloved, yet s/he does not take the responsibility for Louise and becomes a care-giver for her. Thus, the narrator decides that Elgin should be the care-giver of Louise as she is ill without asking her consent. In this sense, Winterson criticised her/his irresponsibility and ignorance of Louise's autonomy to decide for herself. Winterson focuses on the risk of silencing the voice of the feminine by victimizing her with the oppressive voice of a patriarchal care-giver. Accordingly, Marilyn Friedman asserts that patriarchal authorities generally present women and children as "victim," "dependent," and "vulnerable". Thus, care ethics should underline the importance of the free-will of the cared-for (2015: 112).

Winterson aims to display that care is a gender-neutral virtue; nevertheless, she underlines that the patriarchal voice may use care as a power of domination. Thus, she remarks on the risk of silencing the voice of the feminine by the patriarchal care-giver. Therefore, she underlines the importance of free-will in a caring relationship. Accordingly, she raises the question of how Louise should be cared for both as a woman and as a patient with leukaemia. Nevertheless, the genderless narrator and Elgin assume a patriarchal role in deciding the way how Louise should be treated without asking for her consent. In accordance with this, Anna Fahraeus points out that Winterson alludes to the traditional romances through the portrayal of two patriarchal figures within the theme of "rescue" (2008: 85). However, Fahraeus asserts that if Louise returned to Elgin, masculine structure would be maintained, but on the contrary, she rejects even the narrator's potential to rescue her (2008: 85). In accordance with this, it can be stated that Winterson portrays a female resistance against patriarchy when Louise rejects to be cared for, namely, to be rescued.

Susan Sontag deals with the risk to lose autonomy during cancer treatment by using military terminology. She asserts that the notions such as “invasive,” “toxic,” “scanning,” “infiltrating,” and “destroying” can be used both in cancer treatment and in a warfare (1978: 64). Therefore, those who treat a patient and those who lead a war show similar domineering characteristics. As a result of this, caring for Louise turns into an opportunity for the narrator to decide the right thing by rescuing her and for Elgin to gain control over his wife. Thus, Winterson attempts to question the risks of being cared for by a patriarchal authority when the narrator addresses the well-being of Louise. Accordingly, Virginia Held highlights that good care should be respectful to avoid being domineering (2015: 20). Therefore, it can be stated that Winterson does not disregard all the benefits of care to provide well-being, though she emphasises the risk of silencing the voice of the cared ones.

In the novel, the narrator is considered to assume a patriarchal role in deciding the way how Louise will be treated. Although her/his gender is not named, s/he shows a domineering attitude. In line with this, Anna Fahraeus argues:

The narrator grows as a person in the novel as s/he becomes aware of ‘his’ own masculine drives and feminine characteristics. Yet, patriarchal masculinity is never eradicated and interpreting the ending as happy in the traditional sense of an actual reunion between the narrator and Louise requires transcending the materiality of their relationship. (2008: 95)

According to Fahraeus, the relationship between the narrator and Louise becomes an oppressive caring relationship because the narrator makes a deal with Elgin, who represents the patriarchal surveillance in the novel.

The narrator’s friend Gail asserts, “Honey, if there’s one thing I can’t stand it’s a hero without a cause” (113). When Gail compares the narrator to a hero without a cause, she aims to underline that rescuing Louise is not the duty of the narrator, it should be Louise’s own decision. On the other hand, Gail refers to the necessity of care in a loving relationship, by underlining that care should be completed with true actions. Accordingly, Joan C. Tronto notes, “Care is not simply a sentiment, a disposition or simply a set of actions” because care includes different moral qualities such as “attentiveness, deep reflection on responsibility, solidarity, and trust” (2015: 262). Although these characteristics are mostly accepted as feminine, Winterson aims to show that it is related to a genderless sense of responsibility in love. In this sense, Gail discusses that the narrator never cared for Louise and s/he did not hold any responsibility for her. Thus, she states, “Maybe you didn’t love her” (113). As the narrator does not fulfil ethical responsibilities in their relationship, Gail thinks that the narrator may not love truly.

When the narrator leaves Louise to be treated by Elgin, she disappears physically, but she continues to exist in the narrator’s imagination:

Two hundred miles from the surface of the earth there is no gravity. The laws of motion are suspended. You could turn somersaults slowly slowly, weight into weightlessness, nowhere to fall. As you lay on your back paddling in space you might notice your feet had fled your head. You are stretching slowly slowly, getting longer, your joints are slipping away from their usual places. There is no connection between your shoulder and your arm. You will break up bone by bone, fractured from who you are, you are drifting away now, the centre cannot hold. (76)

The absence of Louise's body is described with the metaphor of subsiding, which gives the sense of losing control and autonomy. The narrator imagines Louise as a decomposed object. The reference to the loss is not only about the loss of Louise's body, but also her spiritual and moral existence.

In the novel, it is stated that nobody knows where Louise is. After the narrator has not seen Louise for a long time, s/he thinks that the treatment of Louise is probably carried out by the help of Elgin, or s/he may have died. In this sense, Winterson aims to show that care does not only consist of medical treatment but is also related to showing consistent love and compassion towards the cared-for. The narrator advocates herself/himself by stating that s/he does not care for Louise for the sake of her well-being. In this sense, the narrator's friend Gail underlines the narrator's failure in her/his uncaring attitude. Although the narrator speaks of compassion and care as the preconditions of love, s/he disregards the free-will and emotions of Louise.

The narrator expresses her/his concerns about Louise's well-being only after s/he leaves her. However, Winterson presents these concerns in the context of Louise's autonomy because they lead Louise to lose her free-will as a woman. The narrator's thoughts about Louise's health lead to feminine passivity because the narrator implicitly assumes a patriarchal role. Thus, the narrator states:

But I wanted someone to have care of her. To visit her and comfort her. To be the cool wind and the deep stream. I wanted her to be protected and I would have boiled cauldrons of stuffed newts if I'd been convinced it would have done any good. (109)

Accordingly, s/he portrays Louise as a defenseless and fragile being who needs to be protected and cared for. While doing this, s/he underlines her/his feeling of love and care. However, the narrator fails to constitute a mutually caring relationship with Louise because s/he does not regard her free-will and emotions.

When Gail argues that the narrator does not show a proper caring attitude, the narrator asks, "Hadn't I sacrificed myself for her? Offered my life for her life?" (113), and Gail answers, "She wasn't a child" (113). S/he utters, "Yes she was. My child. My baby. The tender thing I wanted to protect" (113). The narrator's response shows that s/he assumes Louise as a person who needs help and care like a child. S/he also tries to get control over Louise by assuming that she is like her/his child, s/he wants to protect and care for her. On the other hand, Winterson presents a contrast between caring attitudes of Louise and the narrator because Louise becomes responsible for the narrator as her beloved. Besides, the narrator tries to arouse pity for herself/himself due to her/his misery, and s/he rejects the responsibility in terms of caring for Louise.

The narrator does not know the present condition of Louise, and s/he tries to console herself/himself thinking that Louise is well, besides, so s/he tries to justify her/his decision to leave Louise. In this sense, s/he again thinks about the well-being of Louise. S/he explains her/his feelings as follows:

Louise safe somewhere, forgetting about Elgin and about me. Perhaps with somebody else. That was the part of the dream I tried to wake out of. None the less it was better than the pain of her death. My equilibrium, such as it was, depended on her happiness. I had to have that story. I told it to myself every day and held it against my chest every night. It was my comforter. I built different houses for her, planted out her gardens. She was in the sun

abroad. She was in Italy eating mussels by the sea. She had a white villa that reflected in the lake. She wasn't sick and deserted in some rented room with thin curtains. She was well. Louise was well. (124)

The narrator points out that s/he feels good when s/he thinks of the well-being of Louise. However, s/he ignores the truth that s/he has left Louise, and it may affect her health negatively. In this sense, even though the narrator aims to heal the illness of Louise by the help of Elgin, s/he does not actually provide the well-being of Louise through a mutually caring relationship.

Feminist ethics remarkably addresses the notions of autonomy and free-will, which are mostly attributed to men in traditional ethical theories. Jean Keller notes, "Autonomy has been thought of as the pinnacle of human achievement, the source of human dignity, the mark of moral maturity in Western tradition" (1997: 54). Winterson addresses autonomy and free-will in a relational context. By doing this, she aims to display that these concepts are not affected by gender, but they are related to the personal conditions of the individuals and the power relations within relationships. In this sense, Winterson especially questions the role of emotions to affect autonomy and free-will and the ethical grounds of caring without the consent of the individual.

In *Written on the Body*, the narrator is depicted as an irresolute and inconsistent person. As the gender of the narrator is unknown, his irresolute personal traits cannot be related to her/his gender identity. On the other hand, Louise is represented with her feminine beauty, though it is also highlighted that she is a stable and determined person. Therefore, Winterson deconstructs stereotyped images of femininity and masculinity by undermining the role of gender on personal traits. On the other hand, both the narrator and Louise are self-conscious characters, for they are mostly aware of their conditions and they deliberately choose their actions. When they cannot choose their actions, they feel the urgency of getting control of their actions. When Louise explains the details of her relationship with Elgin, she states, "I knew he was safe, that I could control him, that I would be the one in charge" (27). Thus, the relationship between Louise and Elgin is based on the autonomy of Louise. However, it is stated that Louise is forced to lose her autonomy to Elgin when she is left by the narrator for cancer treatment (Vickroy, 2008, 13). In this sense, at first, Elgin is represented as a weak person who is controlled by Louise. However, the illness of Louise makes him a godlike figure who can heal and gain control over her.

At the same time, the narrator underlines her/his desire to get control. In this sense, s/he defines her/his fear of attachment stating, "Congratulations on your Engagement'. But I am not engaged I am deeply distracted. I am desperately looking the other way so that love won't see me. I want the diluted version, the sloppy language, the insignificant gestures" (11). S/he is afraid of an attachment; thus, s/he ends her/his relationships after six months. The narrator evaluates her/his situation, "I'm in another rented room now trying to find the place to go back to where things went wrong. Where I went wrong. You were driving but I was lost in my own navigation" (15). When s/he is in love, s/he feels that s/he loses the sense of control, which is depicted as "navigation". Thus, the narrator states:

It horrifies me to think about that madness, I've always had a wild streak, it starts with a throbbing in the temple and then a slide into craziness I can recognise but can't control. Can control. Had controlled for years until I met Louise. She opened up the dark places as

well as the light. That's the risk you take. I couldn't apologise to Elgin because I wasn't sorry. Not sorry but ashamed, does that sound strange? (124)

The narrator establishes a self-critical relationship with herself/himself to judge her/his actions. S/he states that s/he is a free-spirited person who does not accept any responsibility in her/his life. However, s/he states that s/he could control her/his actions before s/he met Louise. As Winterson deals with love as an ethical condition, she questions the feeling of self-autonomy throughout the novel. In accordance with this, Fahraeus explains the sense of control in the relationship between the narrator and Louise as follows:

In Winterson story of the narrator and Louise, loss is connected to separation and possible death, but it is also connected to the sense of control the narrator loses over his/her life. Love in *Written* is an obsession that invades everything one does and in which the loved one becomes part of everything. (2008: 95)

In accordance with this, Winterson gives the sense of integrity, which risks self-autonomy and sense of control. The narrator's fear of attachment ends with Louise because they become as the same person. For this reason, when their relationship ends, s/he starts to experience loss in her life, especially, in terms of her/his moral values and spiritual integrity. Winterson underlines the risk of losing autonomy and free-will in a relationship.

The narrator states that s/he feels ashamed when s/he thinks of Elgin. The narrator does not take responsibility for having a relationship with married women due to their marital status. However, s/he feels sorry for damaging an emotional relationship. Similarly, the narrator feels the same guilty when s/he cheats Jacqueline, for s/he thinks that s/he hurts the feelings of another human being. In this regard, Winterson actually does not necessarily deal with the subject's responsibility towards the society, but she actually proposes constructing ethical values which are based on the subject's interpersonal actions:

[...] the grand excuse of passion. You had no choice, you were swept away. Forces took you and possessed you [...] In the late twentieth century we still look to ancient daemons to explain our commonest action. Adultery is very common. It has no rarity value and yet at an individual level it is explained away again and again as a UFO. I can't lie to myself in quite that way any more. I always did but not now. I know exactly what's happening and I know too that I am jumping out of this plane of my own free will. No, I don't have a parachute, but worse, neither does Jacqueline. When you go you take one with you. (31)

The narrator compares her/his decision to leave Jacqueline to "jumping out of plane without parachute" (31). In terms of this decision, the narrator questions her/his free-will by considering the results of her/his actions.

In contrast with traditional ethical theories, Winterson presents Louise as a reasonable woman. For this reason, she needs evidence of their love, and she wants the narrator to prove her/his love. Besides, she wants the narrator to forget about her/his previous relationships and to act reasonably. Thus, Louise says:

I want you to come to me without a past. Those lines you've learned, forget them. Forget that you've been here before in other bedrooms in other places. Come to me new. Never say you love me until that day when you have proved it. (42)

In this sense, Louise is depicted as a self-confident and reasonable person. She asks for faith and proof of love in their relationship. However, the rationality of Louise causes the narrator to feel confused, so s/he depicts her/his situation as a maze:

The maze. Find your own way through and you shall win your heart's desire. Fail and you will wander for ever in these unforgiving walls. Is that the test? I told you that Louise had more than a notion of the Gothic about her. She seemed determined that I should win her from the tangle of my own past. (42)

While Louise tries to act reasonably, the narrator does not take responsibility for their relationship properly. Besides, s/he approaches their relationship as a love game that should be won. However, Louise leaves all possessions behind when s/he comes to the narrator.

Winterson remarkably emphasises the gender of Louise. As a female and a fatally ill patient, Louise is forced to lose her autonomy to Elgin and the narrator for the sake of being cared for. Thus, Winterson aims to show that being cared for may lead to losing self-autonomy. On the other hand, she shows that intimacy and romantic relationships may impose on the free-will of human beings. Thus, Louise states, "So you try and regain control by telling me you love me. That's a territory you know, isn't it? That's romance and courtship and whirlwind" (41). Louise thinks that the narrator uses love as a way of getting control over the relationship. She refers to love as a territory in which the rules are set to ruin the boundaries of the other. In this respect, Winterson implies that love can be a way of holding autonomy. For this reason, the narrator's love for Louise ends in an implicit patriarchal control over femininity.

In addition to all these, in the novel, it is portrayed that the love of Louise contributes to the narrator's moral development. The narrator accepts that s/he is not a proper lover by confessing, "As a lover, I was lethal" (42). In this respect, both the love for Louise and their separation lead the narrator to be a morally better person. The narrator asks, "Am I hoping for a saviour in Louise? An almighty scouring of deed and misdeed, leaving the slab clean and white" (59). The narrator thinks of Louise as a saviour because she would make her/him a better person by compensating for the failures in her/his earlier relationships. When the narrator questions the role of Louise in her/his life, s/he asks, "Would Louise lead me so? Did I want to be led?" (42). On the other hand, the narrator constantly questions their roles in the relationship. S/he does not want to be led by Louise, for s/he feels that love causes her/him to lose his autonomy. In this sense, s/he questions:

Why did I find it hard to accept that we were equally sunk? Sunk in each other? Destiny is a worrying concept. I don't want to be fated, I want to choose. But perhaps Louise had to be chosen. If the choice is as crude as Louise or not Louise then there is no choice. (69)

The narrator questions the individual's right to choose freely in a romantic relationship since love is depicted as a strong feeling which affects the ability to choose. While the narrator feels that love causes her/him to lose autonomy, Louise has been portrayed as a rational person as well as passionate. In this sense, Winterson combines stereotyped feminine characteristics with autonomy. The narrator explains her/his situation before Louise stating, "I had a steady heart before I met you, I relied upon it, it had seen active service and grown strong" (68), but after meeting Louise s/he questions, "Why is the mind incapable of deciding its own subject matter? Why when we desperately want to think of one thing do we invariably think of another? The overriding arch of

Louise had distracted me from all other constructs” (72). Thus, love affects the narrator’s ability to choose freely.

The narrator seems not to assume a dominant role in her/his relationships because s/he is mostly directed by her/his emotions. However, s/he approaches the relationships like a game that can be played by following certain steps. On the other hand, Louise is more capable of taking responsibility for her actions in terms of starting and ending relationships. When Louise confesses that she saw the narrator two years ago in the park and followed her/him to find who s/he is, she is portrayed as a strong and determined woman who fulfils her desires:

I saw you in the park, you were walking by yourself, you were talking to yourself. I followed you for about an hour and then I went home. I never imagined to see you again. You were a game in my head. (64)

Louise states that she visits the library where the narrator goes, then she notes the seat number which the narrator is seated (64). It is revealed that Louise has planned every detail of meeting the narrator. However, she waits to be sure about her love for the narrator. In this sense, she is depicted as a determined person, who takes the responsibility for her/his actions. On the other hand, the narrator’s love for the narrator is portrayed as an instant and excessive feeling. The narrator defines her/his love for Louise as follows:

Louise, I would gladly fire the past for you, go and not look back. I have been reckless before, never counting the cost, oblivious to the cost. Now, I’ve done the sums ahead. I know what it will mean to redeem myself from the accumulations of a lifetime. I know and I don’t care. You set before me a space uncluttered by association. It might be a void or it might be a release. Certainly I want to take the risk. I want to take the risk because the life I have stored up is going mouldy. (62)

The narrator seems like a brave person who can risk everything for her/his love; however, s/he leaves Louise when s/he learns that s/he is fatally ill. Although s/he justifies her/his action by underlining the well-being of Louise, the narrator actually fails to fulfil the moral responsibilities of a relationship.

The narrator states that s/he respects for Louise. Thus, s/he underlines how Louise is precious for her/him throughout the novel. Accordingly, Lindenmeyer states that the narrator actually highlights the integrity of Louise’s identity (1999: 54). Although the narrator tells s/he respects Louise’s decisions from the beginning of the novel, s/he does not show true respect for her. The narrator states: “No-one whom Louise had loved could be worthless, if I believed that I’d have to accept that I might be worthless too. At least I had never pressured her to leave. It would be her own decision” (70). Even though the narrator underlines the importance of Louise’s decision, s/he does not respect her free-will when it comes to decide about her treatment.

The narrator regrets leaving Louise, and so s/he questions, “What right had I to decide how she should live? What right had I to decide how she should die?” (111). At that point, the narrator begins to question the ethical correctness of her/his behaviour. By deciding on the treatment of Louise, the narrator becomes a patriarchal figure who tries to obtain the free-will of a woman. S/he does not show a proper caring attitude. Only at the end of the novel, s/he understands her mistake, and s/he affirms Louise’s presence as an independent being from herself/himself, and s/he decides to find her in order to care for her.

After the narrator leaves Louise, s/he realises that Louise is an independent person, she cannot be defined only by her love or illness. Therefore, she points out, “To think of Louise in her own right, not as my lover, not as my grief. It helped me to forget myself and that was a great blessing” (109). Eventually, at the end of the novel, the narrator decides to find Louise, but Louise disappears. When the narrator tells her agony for Louise, s/he states, “I couldn’t even get near finding her. It’s as if Louise never existed, like a character in a book. Did I invent her?” (134) The narrator’s friend Gail responds, “She wasn’t yours for the making” (134). In her response to the narrator, Gail echoes Winterson’s thoughts on the autonomy of women. Winterson wants to show that people are not the objects which are invented or made by the others. They are independent to sustain their own free-will autonomy as well as their emotions and personal experiences.

Consequently, Winterson attempts to revisit the virtues which have been earlier attributed to femininity and masculinity. In this way, she subverts the traditional roles and assumptions about gender identities by referring to common humane values such as care, love, autonomy, and free-will.

4.3. The Ethics of Becoming Genderless in *Written on the Body*

In *Written on the Body*, the ethics of becoming genderless brings out gender-neutral ethics because Winterson does not stress the gender of the narrator, alternatively, she deals with emotions and moral behaviour of her/him. Winterson attempts to neutralise the ethical values and moral practices which are generally identified with sexed and gendered bodies. Therefore, she creates a genderless/nameless narrator who questions humane values in terms of the ethical dilemmas such as falling in love with married women, cheating on their lovers or spouses and caring for the fatally ill beloved, which consequently leads her/him to reveal different possibilities of being human.

On the first page of the novel, the narrator’s moral journey starts with her evaluation of the earlier relationships, which implies that the narrator is about to set out on a moral journey to correct her/his mistakes. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator is depicted as a reckless person who does not take any responsibility for her/his relationships. This implies that Winterson aims to present genderless and relational ethics throughout the novel. The narrator compares herself/himself to a “savage” who does not know the language of love; however, s/he learns this language from the relationships in the course of time. In this sense, s/he refers to the process of reconstructing her/his values through love. S/he asserts, “I say it we speak like savages who have found three words and worship them. I did worship them but now I am alone on a rock hewn out of my own body” (9). The narrator expresses that s/he feels isolated and alienated like a savage on an island, nevertheless, s/he is made to learn the rules and norms of the relationships in society. In this regard, s/he implicitly compares herself/himself to Caliban in Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* in the context of adopting new values through relationships. Thus, s/he quotes from the play, “You taught me language and my profit on’t is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you for learning me your language” (9). Learning the language of love made the narrator alter her/his moral values because s/he is also made to learn the notions such as care, attachment, and responsibility through the new language. Accordingly, when the narrator’s ex-lover Bathsheba defines the narrator’s attitude as “monstrous,” the narrator quotes Caliban again, “The red plague rid you for learning me your language” (14). Learning the language of love also corresponds to the narrator’s stepping into the symbolic order through a web of relationships. Correspondingly, the narrator refers to her/his

resistance to new values and experiences which are learned within a relationship; for this reason, s/he avoids being attached to a person longer than six months (58). However, the narrator starts to change her/his attitude towards these new values with Louise.

Elizabeth Grosz states, “Sexual difference entails the existence of a sexual ethics, an ethics of the ongoing negotiations between beings whose differences, whose alterities, are left intact but with whom some kind of exchange is nonetheless possible” (2003: 192). Contrary to sexual ethics, the genderless ethics in *Written on the Body* leads to reconsider the embrative humane values without considering binaries. The genderless narrator enables us to think about non-binary ethics which proposes universal humane values. Accordingly, it has been stated that Winterson has degendered the narrator to create a “universalised” and “featureless” subject (Harris, 2000: 130). Nevertheless, the “universalised” subject does not reflect the traditional ethical values, but s/he stands for representing the authentic nature of human beings. Therefore, it can be stated that the ethics of becoming genderless is related to human nature in *Written on the Body* since the narrator particularly expresses her/his fears and anxieties regarding her/his moral values. As the ethics of becoming genderless is based on the nature of humans, Winterson underlines the status of human beings within the context of “human” and “inhuman” conditions. The narrator undergoes an inner conflict between constructing her/his own values and adopting the values of society. For this reason, s/he evaluates her/his moral failures by referring to all human beings. She addresses the true nature of human beings with certain characteristics. By doing so, she frequently compares the flawed nature of human beings with other creatures in nature. The narrator states:

I went to look at my sunflowers, growing steadily, sure that the sun would be there for them, fulfilling themselves in the proper way at the proper time. Very few people ever manage what nature manages without effort and mostly without fail. (34)

Consequently, s/he refers to all human beings as flawed creatures. In this sense, s/he addresses moral “failure” as a general characteristic of human beings. S/he also explains the moral status of human beings as follows: “We don’t know who we are or how to function, much less how to bloom. Blind nature. Homo sapiens” (34). Contrary to other living things such as animals or plants, s/he claims that failure is related to the blind nature of human beings. For this reason, she underlines that all people need to learn how to be morally mature by undergoing different experiences.

When the narrator attempts to construct new moral values, s/he exhibits a contradictory attitude towards the values of the society. Winterson underlines the narrator’s inner conflict between being a member of society or fulfilling her/his desires. For this reason, the narrator first tries to come to terms with the norms of society. Although the narrator does not love Jacqueline, s/he chooses to be with her only because Jacqueline is a single woman who leads a calm life. When s/he is in a relationship with Jacqueline, s/he feels comfort and discomfort at the same time. S/he explains it as follows: “It was Jacqueline’s job to make everything bright and shiny again. She was good with parents, good with children, good with animals, good with disturbed things of every kind. She was good with me” (21). Jacqueline is not only the morally decent girlfriend of the narrator, but she is also a representative of the values of society. For this reason, having a relationship with Jacqueline is expected to make the narrator a morally good person. However, the narrator refers to the feeling of discomfort as follows:

The worm in the bud. So what? Most buds do have worms. You spray, you fuss, you hope the hole won't be too big and you pray for sunshine. Just let the flower bloom and no-one will notice the ragged edges. I thought that about me and Jacqueline. I was desperate to tend us [...] She treated me like a big cat in the Zoo. She was very proud of me. (23)

The narrator defines her/his feeling "as the worm in the bud" and s/he compares herself/himself to "a big cat in the zoo" by taking the advantages and disadvantages of a relationship that society finds proper. S/he wants to come to terms with the values of society to be a morally good person. However, the narrator has the feeling of discomfort in their relationship because s/he does not love Jacqueline. S/he also identifies their relationship with the norms of society. Although s/he feels the urgent need to adopt the values of society, s/he still resists these values, which are represented through her relationship with Jacqueline.

The narrator's moral development shows that her/his essence is not based on a fixed and hopeless state of being, actually, it stands for her/his desire to resist the values of society. Thus, the narrator's inner conflict between human nature and her/his own values is represented throughout the novel. In this sense, Fahraeus notes, "Dominance, passivity and resistance can all exist within the same subject" in the fiction of Winterson, especially in *Written on the Body* (2008: 81). For this reason, Winterson displays both the essence of the narrator which is shaped by her/his relations, and her/his subjectivity. The narrator does not only reveal an irresistible desire to alter her/his essence, but s/he also shows a resistance to the oppression that has been imposed by the society. In this regard, Winterson predominantly portrays the conflict between the narrator's personal desires and the moral values of the society. She presents the deconstruction of the established norms through ambiguous name and fluid body of the narrator.

As mentioned before, the narrator's name is not revealed in the novel. However, being nameless is not completely related to the resistance to the norms of the society, but it refers to the narrator's potential to exist within these norms. Deleuze and Guattari explain the notion of domesticity in the context of having a name, "The proper name can be nothing more than an extreme case of the common noun, containing its already domesticated multiplicity within itself and linking it to a being or an object posited as unique" (1987: 27). In terms of the duality between subjectivity and domesticity, it can be stated that having a name corresponds to having an essence and belonging to domesticity, which indicates that the narrator is not a nameless or bodiless being, nonetheless, s/he resists domesticity or the essence which the patriarchal society imposes upon her/him. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator is trapped between the norms of the society and her/his subjective values. In line with this, her/his moral journey starts with questioning both the norms of society and her/his own values. Correspondingly, the language which the narrator speaks both refers to her/his subjectivity and to the domesticity when s/he deals with the values that s/he rejects. Thus, s/he clarifies her decision about possessing the opportunities which the society offers for people as follows: "Perhaps I'm not meant to have any worldly goods. Perhaps they are blocking my spiritual progress and my higher self continually chooses situations where I will be free of material burdens" (58). Accordingly, the narrator conceives the materiality, namely the body, as a burden; thus, s/he attempts to adopt different values that are based on a different understanding of the body. However, the narrator's subjectivity is not an isolated status because it is merged into domesticity. It can be implied that the narrator is not a rootless being due to the fact that her/his

identity is constituted within a set of relations and cultural organisations. In accordance with this, Butler elucidates the constitution of the subjectivity within these relations as follows:

My position is mine to the extent that “I” -and I do not shirk from the pronoun-replay and resignify the theoretical positions that have constituted me, working the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities that they systematically exclude. But it is clearly not the case that “I” preside over the positions that have constituted me [...] The “I” who would select between them is always already constituted by them. The “I” is the transfer point of that replay, but it is simply not a strong enough claim to say that the “I” is situated; the “I,” this “I,” is constituted by these positions, and these “positions” are not merely theoretical products, but fully embedded organizing principles of material practices and institutional arrangements, those matrices of power and discourse that produce me as a viable “subject”. (1992: 9)

Accordingly, Butler underlines that the “I” is not completely separated from the center, because its existence is inexorably related to the pre-determined conditions, and so, the “I” contains both passivity and a manifestation of new values. In this sense, Winterson emphasises the instability regarding the self and the other.

The genderless narrator continually questions and criticises the norms of society. According to the narrator, the social norms and rules cannot regulate moral practices, but they only dissemblingly cover the true feelings and experiences of people. In this sense, s/he rejects feeling guilty for having relationships with married women. S/he thinks that it is not her responsibility for being loyal because s/he is not bounded by marriage. In this sense, as the gender of the narrator is not revealed, s/he does not become involved in social norms and regulations in a gender-biased way. Besides, the narrator’s consciousness in her rejection of the norms of the society is frequently underlined. The narrator chooses to become genderless in a conscious way. S/he determines her/his moral position of herself/himself, and s/he states:

You think I’m trying to wriggle out of my responsibilities? No, I know what I did and what I was doing at the time. But I didn’t walk down the aisle, queue up at the Registry Office and swear to be faithful unto death. I wouldn’t dare. I didn’t say, ‘With this ring I thee wed’, I didn’t say, ‘With my body I thee worship’. (14)

Thus, the narrator concentrates on the social institutions that are expected to regulate the moral practices of people; however, s/he discusses that people find dishonest ways to fulfil their desires. In this sense, the narrator states that s/he rejects being a part of this corrupt system through self-consciousness. On the other hand, Winterson focuses on the subjectivity and free-will of the narrator who states her/his decisions as follows: “I know,” “I wouldn’t dare” (14) and “I didn’t say” (14). In this sense, Carolyn Allen states that the subjectivity of the narrator is emphasised in the context of “palimpsestic recording of the past which is layered in narrative with unspecified sex of the ‘I,’ who has affairs with married women, the ‘I,’ who settles down with Jacqueline, the ‘I,’ who falls in love with Louise and leaves Louise” (1996, 47). When the narrator’s subjectivity is highlighted in terms of her/his moral actions, the narrator undergoes a moral development though s/he experiences several ethical dilemmas. In terms of these dilemmas, s/he constantly alternates between the norms of the society and her/his desire. Similarly, Levinas asserts, “To be an I then signifies not to be able to slip away from responsibility [...] To discover in the I such an orientation is to identify the I and morality. The I before another is infinitely responsible” (1986: 353). Thus,

the genderless narrator who speaks as the “I” does not renounce her/his identity, but s/he begins to get a moral awareness after different experiences.

Monique Wittig addresses gender as a category of language by stating that pronouns are “instruments of activating the notion of gender,” and she notes that when someone says ‘I’, this is an act of supreme subjectivity into consciousness (1985: 80). Accordingly, the narrator is a self-conscious subject referring to her/his existence. In this sense, there are implications regarding that the narrator actually has a name when s/he states, “My name was called” (37), or when s/he refers to the confession of Louise stating, “When I had your name I found your address” (64). Consequently, these implications about the name of the narrator evoke the narrator’s resistance to exist in the patriarchal order.

Andrea Harris asserts that *Written on the Body* deals with the ethical dilemma between “respect for the other” and “violation of the other” within the context of a passionate and loving relationship (2000: 130). For this reason, the narrator’s moral development starts specifically with the question of “where I went wrong” (15), and it continues with her/his desire to be a better person stating: “For the first time in my life, I want to do the right thing more than I want to get my own way” (34). Therefore, Winterson underlines the process of creating a better self in terms of moral consciousness. In terms of creating a moral identity, Emmanuel Levinas states, “but everything that is an *attitude* of consciousness, that is, valorization, feeling, action, labor, and in general commitment, is in the last analysis self-consciousness, that is identity and autonomy” (1963: 353). In this respect, the narrator evaluates her/his moral failures considering her/his earlier relationships. S/he aims to settle down with a proper relationship, and consequently, with the loss of the beloved, s/he aims to construct new moral values.

As the narrator is portrayed going through the process of moral development, s/he indirectly compares herself/himself to a child. Therefore, s/he refers to herself/himself saying, “Into the heart of my childish vanities” (58) and “I was a lover or a child” (61), and “Lover and child, virgin and roué” (62). When s/he defines herself/himself as a child, the narrator actually addresses her/his moral immaturity, and s/he begins to attain new moral values. Therefore, Winterson focuses on the process of moral development through the experiences of the narrator. Accordingly, the narrator’s mood and decisions are constantly changing like a child, who learns through her/his failures and needs to be cared for, consoled, and guided by an autonomous figure. The autonomous figure who guides the narrator becomes Louise, for s/he is depicted as a morally mature person. Moreover, Louise is depicted different from the earlier lovers because she contributes to the moral development of the narrator through love and care. In this respect, Carolyn Allen points out that Louise, different from the previous lovers, could read the secret code of the narrator’s identity through a process of “decoding” (1996: 47). The narrator explains the change in this code as follows:

The pads of your fingers have become printing blocks, you tap a message on to my skin, tap meaning into my body. Your morse code interferes with my heartbeat. I had a steady heart before I met you, I relied upon it, it had seen active service and grown strong. Now you alter its pace with your own rhythm, you play upon me, drumming me taut. (68)

By changing this secret code, Louise leads the narrator to question her/his moral identity. Before the narrator meets Louise, s/he pursues her/his desires without considering the results of her/his

actions. In this sense, Winterson underlines the ethical aspect of the unconditional love which comes from Louise. Louise is like a parent who contributes to the moral development of her child through love. Thus, Winterson creates a superiority of moral maturity in the relationship of the narrator and Louise which resembles the relationship between the child and the parent. Within this relationship, Winterson does not focus on distinct gender identities. Rather, she aims to highlight the moral immaturity of the narrator and her/his moral development through a romantic relationship.

Louise defines the narrator as “the most beautiful creature male or female I had ever seen” (64) by underlining the ambiguity of sex and gender of the narrator. Therefore, this ambiguity opens up the possibility of “a third sex” or “many sexes” within the patriarchal order as noted by Sonia Front (2009). The narrator can be a female, male, or trans partner; thus, their relationship can be evaluated both in the context of homosexuality and heterosexuality. Accordingly, the third sex or the possibility of many sexes constitutes ethics of multiplicities due to the relationship between the narrator and Louise. In this regard, the narrator highlights the endless possibilities when s/he states, “But molecules and the human beings they are a part of exist in a universe of possibility” (48). While the narrator celebrates being a part of these endless possibilities, s/he also underlines that there is no fixed definition, value, or experience within these possibilities. Furthermore, s/he proposes the significance of these possibilities and rejects fixed moral approaches.

The narrator’s moral values are addressed within the context of humane values and subjectivity. These two notions can be discussed in terms of Deleuzian concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The narrator moves from domesticity towards a different self; for this reason, s/he frequently refers to the center and to her authentic self. The notion of deterritorialization has been explained by Deleuze and Guattari as follows: “Nomadic waves or flows of deterritorialization go from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new center to the new periphery, falling back to the old center and launching forth to the new” (1987: 53). The narrator feels the inner conflict because of her/his own values and the norms of the society. As a consequence of this inner conflict, s/he feels her/his identity as a fragmented being, which turns into a completely different experiences and values. In this sense, her/his attempts to create new ethical values means taking a journey from the old center to a better self, through which s/he constantly presents comparisons between her/his values and those of the society.

While the narrator discusses whether s/he should reject the values of the society, s/he underlines her/his place in the society. Actually, s/he oscillates between general values of the society and her/his personal values, as s/he explains her/his condition as follows:

I put my head in my hands and cried. This ugliness was my doing. Another failed relationship, another hurt human being. When was I going to stop? I pulled my knuckles along the rough brick. There’s always an excuse, a good reason for behaving as we do. I couldn’t think of a good reason. (66)

As the narrator experiences an inner conflict between her/his values and the values of the society, s/he evaluates her moral failures by referring to other human beings. According to the narrator, human beings tend to hurt each other due to their morally flawed nature. Thus, the narrator refers to her/his moral actions by identifying herself/himself with all human beings by saying “as we do”

(66). In spite of her/his identification with the society, s/he begins to be responsible for her/his moral action when s/he states “ugliness was my doing” (66).

While the narrator questions the rationality in her/his moral actions, s/he refers to femininity and masculinity in the context of heroic action. Therefore, s/he asks, “Who do I think I am? Sir Launcelot? Louise is a Pre-Raphaelite beauty but that doesn’t make me a mediaeval knight. Nevertheless, I desperately wanted to be right” (113). When the narrator compares herself/himself to a medieval knight who pursues a quest, s/he feels the urgent need to find right values. In this sense, although s/he evaluates her/his moral actions by comparing herself/himself to a medieval hero, s/he still questions her/his right to rescue Louise. Despite the patriarchal references such as medieval knight and beautiful woman to be rescued, Winterson prefers to focus on the burden of moral action of the narrator, by which s/he profoundly underlines her/his desire to be morally right. In this sense, Louise functions as a prominent figure who leads the moral actions of the narrator. Leslie Rabine argues, “in legends and myths, feminine characters have greater power and wider range of actions than romantic narratives” (1985: 29). On the contrary, Winterson creates a postmodern narrative with multiple perspectives, and thus, s/he deconstructs omniscient male power as well as passive female representations in romantic narratives. In this sense, Louise is portrayed as an unordinary mythical figure, who contributes to the moral development of the genderless narrator.

In *Written on the Body*, emotionality has great importance in the context of creating a genderless ethics. In a male-dominated Western society, emotionality is a characteristic that has been generally attributed to women. On the other hand, emotionality is mostly considered to affect rational thinking negatively. In accordance with this, it is significantly linked to “moral failing, a surrender or a passionate detour into vice” (Corcoran, 2004: 2). Contrary to that male-dominant thinking, Winterson introduces emotionality as a genderless virtue by intensely focusing on the relationship between emotions and actions. The ethical approach in *Written on the Body* can be evaluated within the relation of emotions and moral virtues. It provides an ethical space to focus on the subject and the subject’s relation to the world, which is surrounded by universal norms. In this ethical space, the complexity of the human soul is highlighted so that the material being of the human becomes insignificant. In this sense, the concept of emotionality in *Written on the Body* is not purely romantic, but emotions are actually reflected as the essentials of certain actions. Martha Nussbaum states, “emotions are mostly believed to be ‘blind animal reactions,’ on the contrary, they are discriminative reactions, for they reflect ‘how things are’ and ‘what is important’” (1990, 41). In this sense, Nussbaum underlines the ethical aspect of emotions for human beings because it forces people to certain actions. Accordingly, Nussbaum asserts that a particular emotion such as love, anger, hate, fear or pity occurs as a result of a belief (1990, 41). Thus, the narrator emphasises that the emotions affect our actions when s/he states, “A precise emotion seeks a precise expression. If what I feel is not precise then should I call it love?” (9) Besides, s/he underlines the importance of her/his feelings by stating, “I’m not the kind who can replace love with convenience or passion with pick-ups [...] That’s how it’s done isn’t it? Package up your life with supermarket efficiency, don’t mix the heart with the liver” (55). The narrator underlines that emotions are important in terms of determining their actions. Although s/he sometimes tries to be a person who makes reasonable decisions, s/he continues to be affected by her/his emotions.

In *Written on the Body*, the emotional and psychological aspects of moral actions are reflected in different ways with respect to different genders. Correspondingly, Nancy Chodorow refers to “personal meaning,” which is related to the effects of emotions and psychological experiences on the identity of the individual. Chodorow states, “By personal meaning, I refer to psychological experience as it is constituted by the psychodynamic processes described by psychoanalysis and in particular by emotion or affect and by unconscious fantasy” (1995: 57). In this sense, Winterson presents the narrator, Louise and Elgin with different emotional and psychological conditions. Contrary to the narrator and Elgin, Louise is represented as a determined woman who constitutes a balanced bound between her emotions and reason. Thus, Winterson aims to deconstruct the negative representation of female emotionality by showing that emotionality and emotional instability are general features of human beings. The traditional male-dominant ethical theories assume that women are driven by their emotions, so they tend to be morally corrupt. On the contrary, Louise is a strong woman who is responsible for her moral acts by accepting her failures and using both her emotions and reasons. In this sense, the narrator explains Louise’s strong personality when she leaves Elgin as follows:

We went home to my flat and you brought nothing from your other life but the clothes you stood up in. Elgin had insisted that you take nothing until the divorce settlement had been agreed. You had asked him to divorce you for Adultery and he had insisted it was to be Unreasonable Behaviour. (75)

It is stated Louise leaves all her possession behind for the sake of her love, but she also accepts that their relationship is an act of adultery. Therefore, contrary to the traditional representations of women, Louise is a self-determined person who can be the judge of her own actions in a rational way. She portrays a balance between her emotions and reason by taking responsibility for her failures. In contrast, the genderless narrator and Elgin are depicted as irresponsible and irrational people. Winterson aims to deconstruct patriarchal assumptions about the morality of women and men by representing different attitudes, and consequently, she tries to show that these characteristics cannot only be confined to a particular gender.

While Louise is represented as a responsible person, the narrator and Elgin are portrayed as an irresponsible people. The narrator states, “It will help him to save face,’ you said. ‘Adultery is for cuckolds. Unreasonable Behaviour is for martyrs. A mad wife is better than a bad wife. What will he tell his friends?’” (75). Thus, the narrator underlines that Elgin rejects the truth of being cheated by his wife, for he thinks it causes him to lose his prestige and respect in society. In this sense, he prefers to present Louise as a “mad wife”. According to Elgin, the image of a mad woman is more tolerable than the image of a man who is cheated on by his wife, so he tries to show Louise as a weak person who needs the help and care of others. The ethical perspective on the mental health of women can be viewed in the context of the phallogocentric perspective of the patriarchal society on “madness” or “irrationality”. Accordingly, women are made dependent and forced to feel a sense of insufficiency by the patriarchal system. Luce Irigaray claims, “The ‘subject’ will thus be able to exploit the other, fragment her, speculate her-and find in her nothing but the same sameness? This male other will serve only to duplicate his own identity in a different way” (1985: 235). In this sense, Louise’s self is attacked by Elgin as she attempts to get free from the male dominancy. The madness which is attributed to Louise is also an attempt to make her lose her

personal identity. However, Louise shows a feminine resistance to the authority of both the narrator and Elgin.

Winterson examines different perspectives of emotions and behaviours not only within femininity and masculinity, but also within genderless identities. Contrary to Louise, the genderless narrator is depicted as an emotionally unstable person; therefore, emotional weakness is depicted as a general human characteristic. In the context of emotional instability, Winterson not only manipulates the physical being of the narrator, but also deconstructs her/his fixed emotional status. The narrator is stated to be “displaced” not only physically but also emotionally, therefore, s/he defines herself/himself as an “emotional nomad” (31). In this sense, the emotional instability of the genderless narrator against a self-assured, determined female character shows Winterson’s attempt to deconstruct the fixed definitions of female emotionality and emotional instability. While doing this, she purposefully presents an emotionally unstable genderless narrator to assume a gender-neutral approach. At that point, the narrator compares her/his emotional condition and moral development to the new house which s/he moves into:

I had bought a new flat to start again from a nasty love affair that had given me the clap. Nothing wrong with my organs, this was emotional clap. I had to keep my heart to myself in case I infected somebody. The flat was large and derelict. I hoped I might rebuild it and myself at the same time. (20)

The narrator’s moving into a new house can be regarded as a metaphor for her/his desire to settle in a peaceful life; however, the house has been depicted as ruined. In parallel with this depiction, the narrator’s moral condition is also fallen apart. Nevertheless, s/he seeks to construct a better self by compensating for the failures in her/his past relationships and the loss of the beloved. In this regard, Winterson addresses the present emotional status of the narrator in terms of moral actions, and s/he underlines her/his desire to adopt new moral values by “rebuilding” the ruined house.

It has been stated that in Winterson’s novel “truths such as the nature of love are revealed in a dialogue,” which encourages the reader to consider the same “emotional experiences and insights” (Hansen, 2005: 368). Many dialogues in *Written on the Body* reveal the communication of binaries such as feminine and masculine values, care and reason and self-autonomy and dependency. As a result of these dialogues, the reader can witness the moral development of the narrator, in which Winterson proposes genderless ethics, by focusing on the desire to be a morally good person. This ethical perspective is in accordance with Foucault’s definition of ethics:

And there is another side to the moral prescriptions, which most of the time is not isolated as such but is, I think, very important: the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rappor a soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions. (1984: 352)

Foucault’s definition of ethics underlines the importance of self-knowledge in producing and applying new ethical values. According to Foucault, ethics requires a moral evaluation of personal conditions, actions, feelings, and desires. In this way, a person can find the ways to construct true moral values. Similarly, Winterson exhibits the moral development of the narrator and presents the moral development of a character against a set of stereotyped values.

When the narrator's moral development continues, s/he seeks the ways of being a moral human being; for this reason, s/he refers to the characteristics of living things as follows:

What are the characteristics of living things? At school, in biology I was told the following: Excretion, growth, irritability, locomotion, nutrition, reproduction and respiration. This does not seem like a very lively list to me. If that's all there is to being a living thing I may as well be dead. What of that other characteristic prevalent in human living things, the longing to be loved? No, it doesn't come under the heading Reproduction. I have no desire to reproduce but I still seek out love. Reproduction. Over-polished Queen Anne style dining-room suite reduced to clear. Genuine wood. Is that what I want? The model family, two plus two in an easy home assembly kit. I don't want a model, I want the full-scale original. I don't want to reproduce, I want to make something entirely new. Fighting words but the fight's gone out of me. (82)

The narrator underlines the differences between being a living creature and being a human. While society emphasises the importance of reproduction as a precondition of being a human, the narrator focuses on the desire to create something new. The narrator first wants to come to terms with the values of society by adopting the established norms. However, s/he decides that s/he wants to create new values, and at the end of the novel, she understands that the only value to be possessed is love. For this reason, s/he constitutes her/his new values on love by learning the language of it. By doing so, s/he eventually turns into a moral person from a "monster" or a "savage," as her previous lover Bathsheba says at the beginning of the novel (14).

In this sense, the narrator questions her/his place within the established values and norms of the society; nevertheless, s/he ultimately becomes the subject who desires to move towards a better self. For this reason, the concept of becoming genderless corresponds to deconstructing the existing moral values through self-knowledge. The narrator's retrospective moral journey started when s/he met Louise, and it continued with her/his regret due to their breakup. The narrator becomes a more responsible person due to love and the regret for the loss of the beloved. When s/he starts to undertake the responsibility of her/his moral actions, s/he points out, "THINGS HAD CHANGED, what an arsehole comment, I had changed things. Things don't change, they're not like the seasons moving on a diurnal round. People change things" (44). Based on statement of the narrator, it can be claimed that s/he starts to be a person who feels responsible for her/his moral actions.

As the narrator's gender is not revealed deliberately, s/he does not become involved in social norms and regulations. Thus, the narrator focuses on new values which are related to emotions and experiences of human beings rather than social norms. The narrator's consciousness in constructing genderless values is deliberately emphasised. In this sense, s/he is not depicted as an outcast person, in contrast, s/he declares her values explicitly and praises her/his moral actions within the established values and norms of the society. In this regard, the narrator asserts, "I'd always prided myself on being the superior partner, the intelligent sensitive one who rated good manners and practised them" (66). When s/he comments on the moral position of herself/himself, s/he believes that s/he is not a morally corrupt person in the context of social norms, yet s/he has failures that derive from just being human, especially in her/his relationships. Within the ethics of becoming genderless, Winterson prioritises the personal story of the individual to eliminate the power of society on the individual. The narrator constantly thinks retrospectively to evaluate the

earlier moral actions, so s/he creates a system of values that has been formed by her/his personal experience. While doing that, s/he does not reject the effects of the society's values on her/his identity.

As the narrator underlines her subjective values, s/he frequently refers to the general moral status of human beings. While doing this, s/he frequently alludes to Adam and the first sin. When the narrator assumes the role of Adam, s/he compares Louise to God:

But you are gazing at me the way God gazed at Adam and I am embarrassed by your look of love and possession and pride. I want to go now and cover myself with fig leaves. It's a sin this not being ready, this not being up to it. (16)

Accordingly, the narrator defines her/his ignorance of the values such as love, possession, care, and pride as a result of being human, namely being defective. In this sense, Louise is compared to God because she leads the narrator to realise different kinds of moral values, which the narrator has not adopted before. Thus, s/he criticises herself/himself for not being ready to adopt these new values. While the narrator compares herself/himself to Adam, s/he compares Louise to God. In this sense, it can be implicated that Winterson again highlights the moral immaturity of the narrator as a human, and she refers to Louise as a mature figure who contributes to the moral development of the narrator. By doing this, Winterson tries to subvert the negative representation of female morality.

Carolyn Allen states that the narration in *Written on the Body* creates "a sense of ever-present affect by moving back and forth between recent and distant recollections" (1996, 48). Accordingly, this affect enables the narrative to emancipate the narrator's existence from being a product of fantasy; in contrast, it gives the sense that the narrator is living in a world of different truths. Within these truths, the narrator tries to find a mediation between her/his desires and society's values. Nevertheless, s/he realises that s/he is not inclined to adopt these truths and values.

As mentioned before, the absence of the body contributes to creating genderless ethics in *Written on the Body*. In the novel, Winterson does not offer a fixed perspective on the body and morality. On the other hand, her overemphasis on the female body by a genderless and bodiless narrator brings different ethical questions. Lindenmeyer states that the postmodern concept of the body in Jeanette Winterson's novel brings out many possibilities for feminist theorizing (1999, 49). In accordance with this, the narrator is depicted in a way that s/he is out of time and place without a material body. As a consequence of this, s/he is disembodied from ethical values, moral practices, and social norms. Judith Butler explains the construction of bodies by stating, "bodies only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas" (1993, 11). Accordingly, Winterson attempts to show how a body is named, defined, and constructed by masculine domination with Louise's body because her body becomes an instrument of physical desire, imagination, and medical treatment without consent. On the other hand, Winterson tries to deconstruct these regulatory schemas through the bodiless/nameless narrator so that the narrator becomes present in an unmaterial world. For this reason, s/he becomes free from ethical regulatory systems. The absence of the body of the narrator, thus, emancipates her/him from being "she" or "he". Consequently, s/he becomes a fluid, intersectional being, who bears the traces of femininity and masculinity at the same time. The narrator has the power over her/his absent body, nevertheless, her/his existence starts to be defined through the body of the beloved.

Foucault notes, “power’s hold over sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated” (1978: 83). The narrator’s body is hidden by the speech of the first-person narrator. In this way, the narrator can constitute an authentic language by which s/he can hide her/his sex and gender. On the other hand, when the narrator hardly depicts her/his own body, s/he excessively addresses Louise’s body by highlighting her femininity. Therefore, within the context of the presence and the absence of the bodies, Winterson aims to show the role of body in constructing a moral identity. As the narrator is not defined by any physical characteristics, s/he is not confined to regulations, rules, and norms, nevertheless, s/he only exists within the embodiment of human feelings and values such as love, loss, passion, and desire. On the other hand, the lack of the body entails the narrator to exist within bodies of the beloveds. Hence, s/he states, “We shall cross one another’s boundaries and make ourselves one nation” (17). The narrator feels the need to compensate the lack of her/his with the body of the Louise. Therefore, their boundaries become invisible, and consequently, the narrator’s perception of Louise’s body has been compounded with her/his perception of the self. Thus, s/he utters the following sentences:

Your hand prints are all over my body. Your flesh is my flesh. You deciphered me and now I am plain to read. (80)

If I could not put Louise out of my mind I would drown myself in her. (84)

I turn a corner and recognise myself again. Myself in your skin. (88)

If you are broken then so am I. (92)

Flesh of my flesh. To remember you it’s my own body I touch. (94)

In this sense, it can be stated that the narrator assumes the body of Louise as her/his own body, which can be linked to the feminine body through love and desire.

The genderless narrator is represented through the sense of incompleteness because s/he feels that s/he has several moral failures, especially in terms of relationships. The narrator tries to compensate for this sense of incompleteness by the body and the image of Louise. Hence, love is represented as an instrument of enhancing the boundaries of the self by emotions. When Louise is absent, the narrator feels herself/himself incomplete; thus, s/he states, “I no longer know what to trust or what is right. I get a macabre comfort from my worm. The worms that will eat you are first eating me” (128). As the narrator is deeply affected by love, s/he loses the sense of confidence and reality when s/he loses Louise. The narrator’s self is fragmented as s/he feels that Louise is a part of her/him. In the absence of Louise, the narrator starts to feel like a dead person; that is why, s/he states the worms will eat her/him before they eat Louise. The metaphor of worm not only stands for the decay and loss of the body after death, but it also refers to the narrator’s feeling of fear and hesitation, which comes out with the absence of Louise. Consequently, the loss of Louise causes to return to the state of instability and incompleteness. In this sense, Winterson underlines the complexity of the human soul, which prevents holding on the fixed definitions of morality.

Winterson questions the ethical aspects of the body in this novel. Accordingly, Foucault deals with the concept of “docile bodies” as “the object and the target of power, which is manipulated, shaped, and trained” (1977). Consequently, the body of Louise becomes an object of power by the narrator and a place of medical investigation due to leukaemia. In this way, her body is depicted

with surgical terms, which can be considered as a way of surveillance or invasion of the female body. Foucault defines this surveillance as “hysterization of women’s bodies” which refers to three steps of “analyzing, qualifying and disqualifying the feminine body” through sexuality, medical practices and socialisation (1978: 104). Thus, the body of Louise is addressed in such a detailed way that it becomes available not only for moral practices of male-dominancy, but also by the power of imagination. As for the historicity of the body, Foucault states that historians have written the history of the body in the context of needs and appetites, physiological processes, metabolisms, and the attacks of germs and viruses as well as in the context of power relations (1977). Thus, Louise’s body has undergone these processes of surveillance throughout the novel.

Winterson shows how power is exercised on the gendered bodies; however, she also addresses the body of Louise as a living being with her mind and emotions. Thus, the narrator states:

No-one could take Louise with animal inevitability. It was necessary to engage her whole person. Her mind, her heart, her soul and her body could only be present as two sets of twins. She would not be divided from herself. (52)

Although Winterson stresses Louise’s feminine body, she also depicts her as a whole person having body and mind at the same time so that she should not be regarded as a passive being. Despite the excessive depiction of Louise’s body, the narrator wants to clarify that she is actually a human being who has emotions, thoughts, and values. However, the overemphasis on her body leads to different moral practices, which the narrator does not experience as a genderless person.

In *Written on the Body*, love and desire cause a sense of blurring in the boundaries of the self, which is especially underlined by the deconstruction of the body. Accordingly, the narrator shows that s/he loses control of her/his body by defining herself/himself with the body of the beloved. For this reason, s/he becomes sceptical about her/his consciousness and memory when s/he depicts her/his feelings as follows:

I was holding Louise’s hand, conscious of it, but sensing too that a further intimacy might begin, the recognition of another person that is deeper than consciousness, lodged in the body more than held in the mind. I didn’t understand that sensing, I wondered if it might be bogus, I’d never known it myself although I’d seen it in a couple who’d been together for a very long time [...] The odd thing about Louise, being with Louise, was déjà vu. I couldn’t know her well and yet I did know her well. Not facts and figures, I was endlessly curious about her life, rather a particular trust. That afternoon, it seemed to me I had always been here with Louise, we were familiar. (63)

The narrator’s imagination of Louise gives a sense of familiarity in the context of consciousness. S/he focuses on the feeling of déjà vu, for s/he feels that s/he has known Louise for a long time. The feeling of familiarity implies the narrator’s familiarity with femininity through the body of Louise. The sense of familiarity and encompassing the limits of the self can be viewed in terms of knowing the other. Therefore, the narrator’s identity and personal meaning have been reconstructed by love and desire for Louise. In this sense, Winterson proposes an intersectional sense of self that has been affected by double-consciousness since the narrator has been embodied by both feminine and masculine ideals, values, thoughts, and desires.

The narrator refers to the unity of the body and her/his intent to attain this unity when s/he refers to the “boundaries which are formed by the bones of the skull” (87). As the narrator asserts that Louise has a soul and mind besides her body, s/he feels that she also enters her soul and her mind symbolically. For this reason, she tries to recover the memory of their relationship through her/his imagination when s/he states, “Let me penetrate you” (87) and “As I embalm you in my memory” (88). When the narrator introduces the body of Louise as a place that has been investigated several times both physically and imaginatively, her body becomes a place to be settled in. The narrator attempts to become the owner of Louise’s body beside her thoughts and emotions. Thus, s/he quits being a first-person narrator, but s/he also assumes the role of an omniscient narrator who represents both the body and the inner world of the beloved from a genderless point of view. In this sense, the narrator’s subjectivity has been layered by multiple perspectives of feminine and masculine, and correspondingly, it is shaped by the effects of multiple genders. Thus, the narrator speaks within different subjectivities.

Besides the body of the beloved, the narrator identifies herself/himself with Louise spiritually. In this regard, the narrator starts to perceive the world through the eyes of Louise. Vickroy explains that the narrative device in *Written on the Body* requires the reader to look beyond the lens of one gender through “a rhetorical stance,” which invites us to take a broader than usual position on the topic (2008: 14). Thus, the subjectivity of the narrator becomes blurred by the thoughts, ideals, and values of the beloved. For this reason, the narrator explains the change in her/his identity and values by invoking the title of the book:

Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. (68)

The narrator refers to a secret code, which is symbolically written on the body. The narrator seems to define the intimacy of the bodies in the context of decoding; nevertheless, not only the limits of the body, but also the narrator’s thoughts, ideals, and moral values are rewritten with love and desire. Through the intimacy of their bodies, the narrator changes her/his understanding of love, care, compassion, and autonomy. Thus, while s/he is depicted as an irresponsible person in the beginning of the novel, s/he changes her/his identity and values through a process of “decoding”. Therefore, the process of decoding does not only mean getting to know somebody physically, but it also encompasses the psychological and moral aspects. Accordingly, the body of the narrator is synchronised with the body of the beloved as well as her/his emotions and memory.

While Winterson does not focus on the spatial being of the narrator by giving details, she creates a transcendent character who refers to different gender experiences and values. Accordingly, the narrator gives the sense that she lives through her/his perception of the world. In this respect, Lisa Moore explains the gender of the narrator as follows:

The narrator is not an androgynous figure, neither is the narrator sometimes a man and sometimes a woman. Rather, this is a figure (or a narrative space or category) that appropriates the experiences and investments of variously gendered and sexualized beings in a structural enactment of Winterson’s particular Virtual Reality. (1995: 110)

In this sense, Winterson actually creates a virtual reality by the experiences, feeling, and values of the narrator in *Written on the Body*. To do that, she focuses on both memories of the narrator and her/his current observations of the society in the process of constructing her/his own values.

The narrator represents the process in which her/his moral values are reconstructed by love and desire. Thus, s/he asserts, "I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book" (68). The narrator underlines the effect of Louise on her/his new moral values by referring to her "overriding power" (72) through love and care. Thus, Winterson presents care and love as a genderless value, which contributes to the moral identity of the narrator.

When the narrator loses Louise, s/he synchronously feels the loss of perception of time, place, and subjectivity. Moore notes that Winterson's fiction is characterised by "historically specific ways of addressing the felt sense," "incoherence and fragmentation of human life," "reliance on the personal history," and "the bounded and knowable body" (1995: 106). For this reason, the narrator refers to general human life, and s/he always returns to her/his subjectivity. S/he questions her/his condition as follows: "Where am I? There is nothing here I recognise. This isn't the world I know, the little ship I've trimmed and rigged" (76). When the narrator first meets Louise, s/he enters into a new space of feminine values, with which s/he had been unfamiliar before. However, the loss of Louise also leads her/him to feel a sense of unfamiliarity again because her/his truths and values change with the love of Louise, and they are subverted by her loss. In this regard, losing Louise does not only correspond to losing the beloved, but it also means losing the virtues that a relationship brings. When the narrator feels the pain of loss strongly, s/he states, "There was only the weight of wrong-doing. I had failed Louise and it was too late" (111). S/he refers to her/his mistake as "failing Louise," for s/he regards their relationship as a moral duty, which s/he fails to accomplish.

As mentioned before, Winterson focuses on the moral action of the narrator in terms of taking responsibility. The narrator explains her/his sense of responsibility and conscience as follows:

'You made a mistake' said the voice. The voice wasn't a piping sly voice now it was a strong gentle voice and I heard it quite clearly more and more. I did hear it out loud and I was not sure that my wits were still mine to command. What kind of people hear voices? Joan of Arc yes but what about all the others, the sad or sinister ones who want to change the world by tambourine power. (109)

The narrator suffers from her/his mistake about leaving Louise. When s/he refers to her/his moral actions, s/he questions what kind of people listen to the voice of their conscience and judge their moral actions. S/he refers to "Joan of Arc" as a universal representative of virtue and benevolence, nevertheless, s/he discusses that virtue or good act should not be confined to fixed definitions or representations, for all the people have their own moral practices and experiences. The narrator shows that s/he starts to think about the burden of her/his moral failures.

In contrast to the traditional ethical theories, the narrator portrays a different ethical approach to ration and reasonable behaviour. Although s/he appreciates the reasonable actions of Louise, s/he admits that s/he is unable to solve her conflicts through reason. While trying to continue her/his relationship with Jacqueline and leaving Louise for her treatment, s/he believes that she acts reasonably. However, "reasonable" actions do not bring positive results for the narrator. S/he states, "Reason. I was caught in a Piranesi nightmare. The logical paths the proper steps led nowhere. My

mind took me up tortuous staircases that opened into doors that opened into nothing” (70). S/he realises that the reasonable decisions may lead to negative consequences. Accordingly, Fahraeus asserts, “Winterson dismantles the masculine ideal and protective armour of knowledge and logic as the narrator resigns to the fact that reason becomes “a Piranesi nightmare” (2008: 94). For this reason, Winterson aims to show that masculine rationality is not the precondition of moral behaviour because it does not work in a relational context. When the narrator questions the different perspectives on moral choice and failure, she refers to the fragmentation of her/his reason because s/he is affected by the loss of the beloved. In this sense, the narrator portrays that all human beings tend to deviate from rational thinking easily because they are emotionally unstable fragile creatures. Thus, s/he refers to human beings as, “Fragile creatures of a small blue planet, surrounded by light years of silent space. Do the dead find peace beyond the rattle of the world?” (111). The narrator states, “We seem so silly, not a part of nature at all” (132). Thus, Winterson offers a balance between reason and emotions by not linking these notions to a particular gender.

At the end of the novel, the narrator tries to find Louise and care for her; however, s/he cannot find her. This action shows that the narrator feels regret for her/his behaviour, s/he tries to correct her/his moral failure. Besides, it shows that the narrator becomes a morally mature person who can take responsibility for her/his actions. However, s/he cannot find Louise. The narrator states, “She came out of the air and now she’s returned to it. Wherever she is I can’t go there” (134), and Gail asks, “And if you could?” (134). The narrator replies: “I would. If I believed in the after-life I’d throw myself in the trout-marked river tonight” (134). The narrator underlines her/his regret for losing Louise by stating that s/he would take responsibility if s/he could find her.

Consequently, Winterson offers genderless ethics by concentrating on humane values. To do that, Winterson uses emotionality, subjectivity, and genderless body as the main concepts. She handles moral development of the genderless character within different ethical dilemmas. The narrator shows a moral development from the beginning of the novel towards the end. In this development, s/he refers to her/his moral failures, ethical dilemmas, and conflicts with social norms. In this moral development, Winterson prefers to focus on humane values and emotions instead of gender binaries. By doing so, she presents a gender-neutral ethical perspective that includes common humane values and virtues.

5. CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored new ethical perspectives by analyzing Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*, which exhibits a different non-binary ethical approach. In this sense, the study mainly addresses the relationship between gender and ethics with references to traditional male-dominated ethical theories and feminist ethics. Furthermore, it focuses on how Winterson reflects her criticism of ethical theories from male-biased binaries, as well as her support of genderless and humanitarian concepts.

Ethics is defined as the scholarly study of morality, which aims "to understand, justify, criticise and correct people's moral beliefs and attitudes" (Lindemann, 2019: 4). Accordingly, ethics and morality basically concentrate on the moral well-being of individuals and societies. Nevertheless, feminist ethicists argue that traditional ethical theories of Western societies are dominantly male-biased. As these ethical approaches and moral practices systematically stigmatise the experiences, beliefs, and values of women, the definitions of femaleness and femininity are confined to a restricted set of values, images, virtues, and ideals. While women have been mostly defined with submissive, fragile, emotional, and docile characteristics, men are identified with reason, power, and autonomy in a privileged way. In this sense, feminist ethicists reject being posited as the binary of the men. As a consequence of this, feminist ethics has emerged to alter the unequal representations of femininity and masculinity and to revisit traditional ethical perspectives in the context of gender by proposing alternative ethical aspects instead of traditional moral practices. In this sense, they revisit several notions such as moral behaviour, virtue, autonomy, free-will, and responsibility with different perspectives.

Traditional ethical theories define the notion of morality in the context of duties, obligations, and benefits; therefore, they propose a set of fixed and universal values and practices. Nevertheless, women and men are not equally judged within the context of those values. Male-dominated philosophy has advocated that morality is related to the power of reasoning, which is predominantly attributed to men. On the other hand, women are considered to show moral failures because they are assumed to lack the "logos" or "divine reason," which affects their ability to deliberate about moral actions. In this sense, feminist ethics encourages reconsidering the notion of morality without regarding gender biases; thus, it underlines the humanitarian aspects of moral behaviour. Accordingly, Winterson reveals her ideas about ethics in general, and feminist ethics in particular, by displaying different aspects of morality in *Written on the Body*. The genderless narrator of the novel functions as a "universal" character who poses different ethical questions due to the ethical dilemmas about the previous relationships. Thus, it culminates in the moral development of the narrator. The narrator's values mostly clash with the norms of the society, nevertheless, s/he poses the following question: "What are the obligations of being a human in this society?". According to Winterson, morality is not restricted to fixed gender roles, but moral practices are related to being human. In this sense, she aims to display that people can have different moral practices due to different reasons, nevertheless, oppressive social institutions and universal rules do not contribute to the moral development of a person because failure derives from human nature. Although social institutions, laws, religion, and moral obligations are expected to regulate moral actions, people prefer to fulfil their desires in a dishonest way. In this sense, Winterson emphasises that people ought to act by their own will in order to become morally better.

Male-dominated ethical theories explain the notions such as virtue, moral action, subjectivity, relatedness, and autonomy in the context of prescriptive rules and norms. The universal definitions of ethics and morality have mostly excluded the voice of women. Thus, feminist critics reframed their agenda to deal with the notion of categorisation. Sally Robinson notes, “The problem with which feminist theory is grappling at this particular historical juncture is how to theorise ‘identity’ without falling into exclusionary practices and falsely universal or ‘global’ generations” (1991: 4). In this sense, feminist ethics addresses false categorisations by looking for new solutions to eliminate the categories of gender. For this reason, it focuses on the processes of “engendering the subject” and “undoing gender”. In accordance with this, Winterson displays a neutral ethical standpoint by undoing gender, so she reveals the roles of different genders in a relational context.

Winterson, a postmodern writer who has experienced oppression by society due to her lesbian identity, is known to reflect feminine values in her novels. On the other hand, in *Written on the Body*, she exhibits a different, non-binary ethical approach by using a genderless and nameless narrator and her beloved Louise, who is defined as a beautiful “pre-Raphaelite heroine” (75). Louise and the genderless narrator of *Written on the Body* embody different ethical values and moral practices. Louise is depicted as a strong feminine character whose moral values and virtues are different from the definitions of male-dominated ethical theories. On the other hand, the genderless and nameless narrator functions as a universal character who represents general moral status of all human beings. For this reason, although the narrator has moral defects, s/he reveals a moral development throughout the novel. In this moral development, the narrator undergoes an ethical dilemma between her/his moral values and the values of society. Therefore, s/he criticises the values of the society, and s/he tries to come to terms with them. In this process, Winterson focuses on the importance of emotions in the construction of moral values because her/his love for Louise has contributed to the moral awareness of the narrator.

Virtue is a basic notion that has been discussed in this study. Virtue is generally considered as an absolute disposition that ultimately leads to the well-being of the individual. According to traditional virtue theories, virtuous people choose the right actions in every condition because their nature entails a morally good standpoint. However, feminist ethics advocates that human nature is complicated and people can be manipulated by different conditions and personal experiences, because of this, nobody can be labeled as completely virtuous or vicious. Nevertheless, traditional virtue ethicists generally refer to virtues as feminine virtues and masculine virtues. For this reason, while women are related to submissive and benevolent virtues such as chastity, kindness, gratitude, fidelity, and modesty, men are defined with more active virtues such as courage, prudence, honour, patriotism, and autonomy. On the other hand, Winterson exhibits a different perspective on virtue regarding the genderless narrator and Louise. She aims to show that moral virtues are not related to gender divisions, but they derive from human experience. In this sense, she proposes that virtues such as honesty, care, love, autonomy, and free-will are genderless.

In this study, the notions of care and justice have been discussed because they are significantly addressed within the conceptual framework of feminist ethics. Traditional ethical theories are known to prioritise justice over care. The notion of justice is generally associated with men, and correspondingly, men are considered to be more independent, powerful, and autonomous. The theory of justice is firmly linked to the laws, ruling abilities, and benefits of moral actions. On

the other hand, care is considered to be notably related to emotionality and dependency. In traditional ethical theories, care, dependency, and emotionality are some characteristics which are attributed to women. Therefore, women are thought to be morally immature and fragile. As females are generally raised with a high sense of responsibility and care towards others, they are expected to maintain their domestic relationships. Thus, care and emotionality are mainly perceived as culturally discredited features.

Given that theories assume a biased approach towards care and justice, Winterson handles care as a superior virtue that develops moral behaviour. She supports that care is one of the preconditions of a loving relationship, nevertheless, she presents care as a genderless virtue contrary to the traditional ethical perspectives. At the same time, she remarks on different aspects of the notion of care because a caring relationship may turn into a domineering relationship. In this sense, the narrator, Louise, and Elgin reveal different aspects of care in *Written on the Body*. First of all, Winterson displays care as a crucial virtue that comes from the beloved. For this reason, she investigates the relational aspects of care. Winterson deals with care in the context of illness, which turns into an “invasive” instrument of power when the narrator and Elgin intend to determine the treatment of Louise. After the narrator and Elgin agree on the treatment of Louise, the narrator leaves her for Louise’s well-being as s/he claims. By doing so, the narrator turns into a masculine subject who leaves Louise regardless of her desire, and Elgin aims to take care of Louise for a good treatment of cancer. At that point, Winterson underlines the domineering aspect of a caring relationship, as Nel Noddings notes, “In care ethics, a carer’s act must be evaluated with respect to its effects on the relevant web of care, but there is no caring relation—no matter how hard the carer works—if there is no acknowledging response from the cared-for” (2015: 74). Thus, Noddings emphasises that the notion of care is based on the mutual consent of the carer and cared-for in order to maintain an equal relationship of caring. However, in *Written on the Body*, as the narrator and Elgin do not ask the opinion of Louise for her treatment, a mutual caring relationship is not fully established. On the contrary, the narrator and Elgin assume the role of rescuer, and consequently, they victimise Louise as a vulnerable woman. Thus, Winterson underlines the domineering aspect of care should be refrained from and a mutual relationship should be based on free-will of the cared-for.

As Winterson presents ethical dilemmas in terms of romantic relationship and illness, she portrays the ways of exercising power on the other. The traditional ethical theories are mostly based on power and autonomy that are generally associated with masculinity. In this sense, Winterson underlines power relations in terms of caring relationships. As the narrator’s gender is ambiguous, there is no gender hierarchy in the relationship between the narrator and Louise. Moreover, the bond between Louise and Elgin is not based on masculine authority, either. In contrast, Louise states that she is with Elgin because she can control him easily (27). The narrator also states, “Louise’s control was a crackling power” (38). However, the narrator and Elgin aim to get the control of this feminine power through care, nevertheless, Louise rejects the power of masculinity by rejecting the cancer treatment and the accompaniment of Elgin. Thus, the rejection of Louise corresponds to rejecting surveillance of masculinity which is given in the name of love and care.

In *Written on the Body*, Winterson manifests her own feminist ethics because she creates an unfamiliar female character, Louise. The novel excessively focuses on the beauty and femininity of Louise by defining her as a “Victorian lady” (38) and “a mistress of her house” (38).

Nevertheless, her virtuous disposition is different from the fixed definitions of a lady. She is an autonomous person with free-will and a true sense of justice, besides, she has other virtues such as love, honesty, care, and compassion. Moreover, Louise is portrayed as an unordinary epic heroine who contributes to the moral development of the narrator through love and compassion. In this way, Winterson deconstructs the roles of moral hero and heroine by subverting the ideas about ethics and virtues in *Written on the Body*.

Winterson presents ethical dilemmas in terms of romantic relationships and illness as a way of exercising power over the other. The traditional ethical theories are mostly based on power and autonomy which are generally associated with masculinity. Therefore, Winterson underlines power relations in terms of caring relationships. As the narrator's gender is ambiguous, there is no gender hierarchy in the relationship between the narrator and Louise. In this regard, Winterson highlights feminine power and autonomy through Louise. The narrator and Elgin aim to get control of this feminine power through care, nevertheless, Louise rejects the power of masculinity by rejecting the cancer treatment that will be accompanied by Elgin.

Winterson presents a portrayal of general human nature by the genderless narrator. According to the narrator, human nature is completely flawed, for this reason, human beings are expected to correct their moral actions through rules, norms, and social bonds proposed by traditional ethical authorities. Nevertheless, the narrator aims to show that these attempts to fit into the ideals of society are useless because people always find hypocritic ways to fulfil their personal desires. In this sense, Winterson prioritises personal values and desires over the norms of the society by a narrator who gets a moral awareness with love and care.

This study also focuses on the role of the body in constructing a moral identity in *Written on the Body*. For this reason, this study addresses the notion of the body in terms of power on which is imposed upon bodies. While doing this, this study refers to the ideas of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault in the analysis of *Written on the Body*. Winterson presents two aspects of the body through excessive references to the female body and the absence of the genderless body. As the name and gender of Louise are known, her body becomes an object of the narrator's imagination and an instrument of moral practices. The narrator defines, analyses, and deconstructs the body of Louise both physically and in her/his imagination. However, the narrator's body is hardly depicted. For this reason, her/his moral identity is not affected by a material body. Besides, s/he is not affected by the moral practices of society. Alternatively, Winterson underlines the overriding power of love and desire on the body of the narrator so that the narrator constructs a new moral identity with the body and the moral values of Louise.

Winterson, as a gender-conscious writer, exhibits a gender-neutral attitude in the novel. Thus, she offers characters from different genders, but she does not focus on their gender differences. Winterson aims to underline the values and emotions that the characters adopt in their moral actions. By presenting them in romantic relationships, Winterson questions the ethical aspects of these relationships. The genderless narrator in the novel starts as an irresponsible, morally failed person. However, s/he undergoes a moral development throughout the novel, and eventually, s/he attains a moral awareness by accepting the significance of love and care.

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