



HETERONORMATIVE TECHNOLOGY: JEANETTE WINTERSON'S OUTLOOK FOR PROGRESS

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In the last two decades, Jeanette Winterson has shown a growing interest in the limits and consequences of the evolution of technology, which have a political and ethical impact. Winterson sees in bodily modifications through the use of technology the perpetuation a social model that preserves the objectification of women, the subordination of bodies to the sexual preferences of the heterosexual male, and the reinforcement of heteronormativity. Faced with this reality, Jeanette Winterson cannot help but wonder about the impact that heteronormative technology is going to have on women, especially on the younger generation, who is going to grow in a society with such sexist standards. In her sci-fi novels, Jeanette Winterson predicts a future that is already part of our present: the cosmetic surgery industry lives off physical changes fuelled by a social pressure driven by male desire, and the creation of *sexbot* prototypes further reinforces said aesthetic patterns. In her essays she strengthens these ideas on the basis of current technological development and predicts future developments based on what the big enterprises are currently working on and what their short-term goals are. Needless to say, none of these projects seem concerned about the gender inequality in their developments. Thus, the author takes a pessimistic

perspective on technological evolution as she faces a society whose pillars promote inequality, making it rather hard to eradicate them.

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1. With Technology Comes (D)Evolution

Although Jeanette Winterson is well known for writing stories that tackle love, sexuality, and gender, she also has several novels and texts that deal with the use of technology in a society that is in constant progress—progress and technology being indivisible in the 21st century. What is more, although some of these texts are fiction novels, as Donna Haraway states: “the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion” (1991, 149). For that reason, Winterson uses fiction to make a critique of the turn that the evolution of technology is taking, especially as regards its implementation on the creation and modification of bodies.

In *Art & Lies*, Winterson equals progress and technology, and claims that human beings dislike that which is artificial except when it is related to technology (2014, 185). According to her, that is because the technological is socially perceived as a sign of development. She discusses the idea of science and technology being regarded as progress and says: “I will admit that we have better scientists, if by better, we agree that they are more sophisticated, more specialised, that they have discovered more than their dead colleagues” (2014, 107). And then goes on to say: “Genetic control will be the weapon of the future. Doctors will fill the ranks of the New Model Army. And of course you will trust me, won’t you, when I tell you that with my help, your unborn child will be better off? The white coat will replace the khaki fatigue as the gun gives way to the syringe” (Ibid.). Thus, progress through technology and science also works as a tool for social control, given that both are a reference for progress and the population has a blind belief in those that work for the scientific and technological

development, even though the ethical limits of those are often questionable.

On the other hand, in *The Stone Gods* Winterson questions said idea by presenting the notion that, as technology evolves, there is a regression in the human species¹. In the novel, the capabilities of human beings are reduced, and their brains shrink due to a lack of use of those. That is because, in the novel, technology has evolved so much that machines and robots that can carry out most of the tasks that used to be carried out by human beings.² Technology, then, causes human beings to become *interpassive* in relation with technology; as Slavoj Žižek defines it, “[i]nterpassivity, like interactivity, thus subverts the standard opposition between activity and passivity: if in interactivity [...] I am passive while being active through another, in interpassivity, I am active while being passive through another” (1999, 105).

In relation to that, Marina Garcés claims that we live in a society that has incorporated gadgets which can make up for the intelligence we are supposed to have, but because human beings now delegate intelligence to technology, there is no need to hide human stupidity (2021, 10-11). Being fully aware that machines are programmed to be more efficient and make less mistakes than human beings —despite the fact that these robots are only set to complete specific tasks and it is currently impossible to have one that carries out as many jobs as a human being can—, machines are thus perceived as stronger and smarter than people. What happens, then, is that the utopia that is *solutionism* becomes the goal towards which society moves, aiming at delegating intelligence to machines in the hope that doing so will solve all problems —thus, expecting a perfect society as an outcome (Garcés 2021, 55). The result of this, however, would be far from perfect, leading to a complete loss of

¹ To which Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu adds that when it comes to posthumanism destruction is also part of the equation in some cases (2016, 158).

² In her analysis of the novel, Patrycja Podgajna reads it as “a dystopian vision of technological progress, in which excessive cosmetic surgeries, genetic manipulations and robotic enhancements lead to dehumanization and social disintegration” (2018, 88).

responsibilities for human beings while, at the same time, there would also be a growing loss of cognitive skills as a consequence of the increasing delegation of functions to artificial intelligence.

2. Technology Applied to Bodies

Artificial intelligence is not only an external complement for human beings but can also be merged with their bodies. With the implementation of technology on bodies, the role of the human being has changed in society, and body modifications have become another tool to boost this capitalist society: “[n]o longer physically driving the machinery of capitalist production, the body has assumed a different role within the free market: it has become the centerpiece of capital acquisition. It is an entity not only to be adorned, but to be worked on and transformed through self-reflexive body projects” (Dolezal 2015, 91). On top of that, with the partial robotisation of the body, the line between human and mechanical is becoming increasingly blurred. However, the gender binary is largely present when it comes to the perception of human bodies, as well as in the modification of those bodies through the use of technology, the implementation of pieces of technology onto the body, and the creation of fully mechanical bodies.

Historically, human beings have performed the role appointed to them according to their sex. As Judith Butler claims in *Bodies That Matter*, gender performativity is neither constructed nor determined, but much more complex given all the social determiners that play a role in the process of that performativity (1993, 94-95). Butler continues to say that:

“performance” is not a singular “act” or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance (95).

Thus, performativity entails constraint as regards the way one looks, acts, speaks, and moves so that the being interiorises the gendered behaviour that has been assigned to them. Gender performativity is

still greatly imposed on people —despite the great efforts that are being made to break with stereotypes and the gender construct—and body modifications help *perform* one's gender more easily, as one's looks are modified to better fit the stereotype.

In *Metamorphoses*, Rossi Braidotti discusses the posthuman body,³ and states that the posthuman body is perceived as an Other given that it is hybrid, as there is a part of it that is cyborg.⁴ For that, as she claims, the body has a monstrous element, as it is both frightening and fascinating (2002, 216). Júlia Braga Neves uses the term “monstrosity” when discussing Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* and claims that, while in novels like *Frankenstein* this monstrous quality is placed in the physical appearance of the character, Winterson goes one step further and places said monstrosity in the human ambition to transcend (2020, 158).

Nonetheless, body modifications tend to vary depending on the person's gender, and that is because body stereotypes of male and female bodies are different —and, in this binary-based society, non-binary bodies are not very much contemplated by the patriarchal power. Despite the shared monstrosity of hybrid and modified bodies, the unattainable stereotypes created for female bodies lead to a higher pressure to fit those stereotypes, as their bodies tend to be further away from that stereotype than male bodies are. Thus, the chances of having more *monstruous* female bodies are higher, which just adds another layer to the fact that a sexist society like ours already labels women as Others.

³ By that we refer to a body that transcends nature through modifications done with the help of technology.

⁴ That hybrid, monstrous, posthuman body does not necessarily have to be a body with a bionic arm, for instance; cosmetic surgery does imply a modification of the body through surgery and the use of technology. Following this idea, Rosi Braidotti claims the following: “with their silicon implants, plastic surgery operations and athlete-like training, the bodies of Dolly Parton, Michael Jackson, or Jane Fonda, Cher and many other ‘stars’ are no less cyborg, or monstrous, than anything out of the *Aliens* film series” (2002, 244).

What Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* presents are the sexist and binary beauty standards of a futuristic society that enhances bodies through technology in order to fit those stereotypes; Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu describes it as a text where “[m]ale and female corporealities in this posthuman society are still objectified, sexualized, medicalized, programmed, controlled, oppressed, and technologically engineered” (2016, 151). Winterson presents the physical appearance of the people in the first chapter of the novel by saying that “[a]ll men are hunk like whales. All women are tight as clams below and inflated like lifebuoys above. Jaws are square, skin is tanned, muscles are toned” (2007, 19). So, she presents a humanity that has very different standards of beauty for men and women, but where everyone turns to surgery and implants to be able to fit those unnatural standards. Thus, body modifications and enhancing appear to be unavoidable in a future where beauty standards become completely unnatural.

3. Social Pressure

When discussing the modification of bodies, one has to bear in mind that in many cases the choice of modifying one's body comes from the pressure exerted by social stereotypes. It is essential to be aware that this social pressure is a reality for all types of gender, as our society imposes fitting into the gender binary. Nonetheless, cosmetic surgery is generally applied to more female bodies than men's due to the greater difficulty that women have to attain those unnatural stereotypes. As Anne Balsamo claims, the feminine body is culturally perceived as imperfect by nature and needs body modifications to become perfect according to the stereotypes (1996, 71).

Those stereotypes that generate pressure on the population appear due to the demands and requirements of the heteronormative power, which, as Rosi Braidotti claims, builds people's identities (2002, 33). Men are on top of the social scale, and “[m]asculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into the family; masculinity represents the power of inheritance, the consequences of the traffic in women, and the promise of social privilege”

(Halberstam 1998, 2). Thus, the preference of the male is always going to prevail, as gender norms are made to “represent a binary caste system or hierarchy, a value system with two positions: maleness above femaleness, manhood above womanhood, masculinity above femininity” (Reilly-Cooper 2016).

Nonetheless, it is the heterosexual man who has the most power —on top of other representations of the male gender— because “what we call “dominant masculinity” appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power” (Ibid.). Because of that, heterosexual men are the ones that build the prototypes of the ideal body. When they do that, they aim at satisfying their own desires and fantasies, and not those of the people who want —or feel the need— to fit into these stereotypes.

The description we find in *The Stone Gods* of men and women’s physical appearance fits with the patterns of a patriarchal society like ours; Michaela Weiss highlights this issue in Billie, who she sees as “trapped within the imposed understanding of femininity, even though she, as a lesbian, does not fit the heteronormative system” (2013, 183). The novel presents the posthuman body through cosmetic surgery, modifications, and body implants that make men muscular so that they project an image of strength and power over women, whose big size is focussed on their breasts. But despite the differences, in both cases they seek perpetual youth.

Thus, the heterosexual man creates an image of himself that allows him to perpetuate his powerful and dominant role while he builds an image of women that satisfies his own sexual desires. It becomes clear, then, that any sexuality other than heterosexuality and any non-normative gender representation —as well as any body that does not fit the standardised pattern (Marks de Marques and de Carvalho Krüger 2018, 160)— will be segregated and labelled as Other.

On the other hand, as claimed by Braga Neves, in *Frankissstein* the mechanised and sexualised female body appears with the development of *sexbots*, which are robots that satisfy their users sexually and whose designs are strongly influenced by the porn industry (2020, 166). The different designs present different

types of sexualised women, like sporty and Asian, and perpetuate a sexist and objectifying view of women. The same type of *sexbot* is discussed in Winterson's essay book *12 Bytes*; in it, she examines body stereotypes and the consequences of those being present in the creation of sex dolls. She says that “[love] dolls show off tiny waists, elongated legs, and big, or bigger boobs [...]. The porn-star babe is the default doll” (2021, 147). These models are unattainable and therefore a harming stereotype for women to have, given that they will never be able to look like them without modifying their bodies through surgery. This also occurs in our current society with photo editing through Photoshop, which creates impossible standards for and high pressure on women who think those body features are attainable and *normal*.

Moreover, the *sexbots* presented in *Frankissstein* are solely and exclusively created to guarantee male pleasure. Most of these *sexbots* are female, except for one male model designed, which is intended for the use of clergy men. The reason given for that is a functional one: Ron Lord, the character that designs the *sexbots* in the novel, claims that it is impractical to create a male robot to satisfy women, which perpetuates the assumption that the whole female population is heterosexual. Further, the reason why he sees that as impractical is because he assumes that *sexbots* always have to be passive subjects, and he does not contemplate the idea of a woman being the active subject in interaction with a *sexbot* —nor with another person, for that matter.

As regards the heteronormative pattern of said technologies, Luna Dolezal highlights the roles imposed on each gender within the gender binary. In her words,

Biotechnologies do in fact often reproduce and reinforce negative heterosexual patriarchal dynamics, where women are figured as passive, receptive, and dominated, while men are active, self-determining, and productive. Not only are these stereotypes reinforced when considering women's motivations for undergoing cosmetic surgery, but they are also realized in the surgeon-patient relationship, which is overwhelmingly a male-female dynamic (2015, 99-100).

This statement refers to the discourse that Winterson presents in *The Stone Gods*, but it also applies to the other works discussed thus far, where the patriarchal heteronormative power has a strong influence in the creation and modification of bodies. Dolezal continues to say that this patriarchal structure is not only present in the willingness of women to follow these standards set by men, but also in the hierarchical relationship created in the operating room, where, according to statistics, it is mostly women getting surgery and men performing the surgery (2015, 100).

In Winterson's texts, women—given that there are no *sexbots* designed for them—have another way of satisfying themselves through technology: *teledildonics*. Howard Rheingold introduced this concept in his book *Virtual Reality* in 1991 and presented it by saying:

The first fully functional teledildonics system will be a communication device, not a sex machine [...]. Thirty years from now, when portable telediddlers become ubiquitous, most people will use them to have sexual experiences with other *people*, at a distance, in combinations and configurations undreamed of by pre-cybernetic voluptuaries. Through a marriage of virtual reality technology and telecommunication networks, you will be able to reach out and touch someone—or an entire population—in ways humans have never before experienced (345).

Thus, *teledildonics* is not about creating robots that satisfy the genitals that cannot enjoy the technology of *sexbots*, but about creating a technology that allows long-distance communication to satisfy one's sexual desires without missing the shared experience of sex. While the *sexbot* technology offers limited communication with an AI, *teledildonics* maintain human-to-human communication. The fact that Winterson's texts present *sexbots* as a tool for men and *teledildonics* as a tool for women once again perpetuates the gendered component in technological development.

In *Metamorphoses*, Rosi Braidotti supports the idea of *teledildonics* and sees it as an addition to our body, a technology which complements our physical abilities and limitations:

On a more philosophical level, in relation to the embodied subject, the new technologies make for prosthetic extensions of our bodily functions: answering machines, pagers and portable phones

multiply our aural and memory capacities; microwave ovens and freezers offer timeless food-supply; sex can be performed over telephone or modem lines in the fast-growing area of ‘teledildonics’ (2002, 18).

It is interesting to acknowledge that this definition refers to technology as an extension of human capabilities, which is precisely transhumanism’s function nowadays —technology is implanted in the body to enhance human capacity. Then, according to Braidotti, *teledildonics* would be as much of a complement to the body as transhuman Neil Harbisson’s antenna is.⁵

Furthermore, Winterson borrows this idea of *teledildonics* and starts including it in her novels as early as 1992, when she discusses this concept in her novel *Written on the Body*. There, she presents *teledildonics* as an alternative reality for humans, a virtual world within the real world where everything is virtual, even sex, but is still experienced through the human senses:

As far as your senses can tell you are in a real world [...]. If you like, you may live in a computer-created world all day and all night. You will be able to try out a 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. Why hesitate when you could simulate? And sex? Certainly. Teledildonics is the word. (Winterson 1993, 97).

Eight years later Winterson publishes *The PowerBook*, which is a novel based on this idea of *teledildonics*. The concept is not explicitly mentioned in the novel, but the whole virtual relationship between the two characters, grounded on virtual communication for sexual purposes —one offers the sex narrative and the other one consumes it—, is indeed based on that idea. She explicitly discusses the concept again in *Frankissstein*, this time offering a definition

⁵ Neil Harbisson became the first transhuman when he had an antenna implanted on his brain in order to perceive colour frequencies. Harbisson has a very high degree of colour blindness and sees in black and white, and this antenna allows him to hear the frequencies of a wide spectrum of colour, including ultraviolets and infrareds. This antenna is viewed as tool that enhances the capabilities of his human body.

that is closer to the one that Howard Rheingold proposed in 1991: “the idea [...] is sexplay with your partner, or partners, from separate locations. It feels like they are in the room – doing things to you” (Winterson 2019, 34). The interesting idea presented in *Frankissstein* as regards *teledildonics* is that, in the society that Winterson presents in the novel, *teledildonics* are already a thing of the present, not just a theoretical concept.

Further, Artificial Intelligence and its many different purposes are thoroughly discussed in *Frankissstein*. Apart from discussing *sexbots* and *teledildonics*, the novel criticises that Artificial Intelligence is programmed with a sexist and heteronormative perspective. In a given moment in the text, Winterson writes: “[w]e know already that machine learning is deeply sexist in outcomes. Amazon had to stop using machines to sift through job application CVs because the machines chose men over women time after time. There is nothing neutral about AI” (2019, 76).

Thus, the social pressure that unrealistic stereotypes, body modification, and binary gender difference—and inequality—exert on people, and especially women, is deeply rooted in society. It is through Jeanette Winterson’s discussion of those in her novels and essays that she points out the faults of this developing heteronormative technological system and helps the reader realise how much one has interiorised these ideas.

4. Satisfying the Heterosexual Man

The main purpose of designing bodies according to the standardised stereotype is to reach the heterosexual man’s pleasure, whether it is the self-satisfaction of maintaining their position of power or sexual pleasure through a body tailored specifically for them to find sexually arousing. It is for that reason that—both in *Frankissstein*’s fiction and the real-life models that Winterson describes in *12 Bytes*—*sexbots* are equipped with huge breasts and tiny clothes. Further, the robot must adapt to the sexual preferences of the male user, and it is for that reason that fetishes are contemplated when

making them, as well as physical appearance, the type of clothing, the vocabulary they use, and the length of said vocabulary.

In *Frankissstein*, Ron Lord claims that a vocabulary of only 200 words is extensive enough for a man that also seeks company in their interaction with the robot. The text says:

Deluxe [the model that is being described] has a big vocabulary. About 200 words. Deluxe will listen to what you want to talk about – football, politics or whatever. She waits till you're finished, of course, no interrupting, even if you waffle a bit, and then she'll say something interesting (Winterson 2019, 45-46).

Thus, it becomes clear that the goal is achieving the gratification of the male, even if in doing so the perception of the female figure is degraded.

Further, *Frankissstein* regards the nature of technology as sexist, never as neutral. However, how could technology not be sexist when compulsive heterosexuality and the heteronormative patterns have been socially implanted on people's minds since they were born? Sexism has been chiselled on human brains and individuals have accepted and normalised these behaviours and patterns. For that reason, these will unfortunately arise when creating new models of human and mechanised bodies.

Further, it is in *12 Bytes* that Winterson finally claims what she was hinting at in several of her previous novels:

Love dolls are different because they are designed and made to look like the male-gaze stereotype, of an unlined, underweight, cosmetically enhanced version of the female form. Then, they are programmed to behave in a way that is the absolute opposite of everything that feminism has fought for; autonomy, equality, empowerment (2021, 158-159).

This idea was also pointed out in Luana de Carvalho Krüger's analysis of *The Stone Gods*, where she claims that all the issues that transhumanists see in the development of these mechanised—and partially mechanised—bodies could be prevented by taking these limiting factors into account in the (re)construction of those (2019, 80).

However, the question is: would these products sell if these mechanical bodies were made according to feminist principles? Would they still please the heterosexual male consumer? The answer is that if these products do not exist and these issues were not brought to the table when *sexbots* were being developed, then it is the heteronormative discourse that prevails when developing new technology. If the heterosexual man, who is at the top of the social pyramid, is the one who establishes social rules, then his preferences, desires, and internalised patterns will be forged not only into social rules and the collective imagination, but also human-made creations and developments.

Donna Haraway claims that the male-gaze is deeply unequal and seeks self-satisfaction, which has been strengthened with the appearance of technological apparatuses of vision. Her stance is the following:

Vision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all perspective gives way to infinitely mobile vision, which no longer seems just mythically about the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice. And like the god-trick, this eye fucks the world to make techno-monsters (1991, 189).

Indeed, the male-gaze is very much present in the creation of technology and cyborgs, not only for its intention to achieve the male's self-indulgence in being in a god-like position, like in Michel Foucault's panopticon, but also in that it also satisfies the sexual desires of that who bears that male-gaze. Nonetheless, shifting from the male-gaze to a feminist gaze would involve destroying the hegemonic power and their dominating gaze, which seems rather challenging.

5. Consequences of Heteronormative Technology

Undoubtedly, there are several consequences when it comes to living in a sexist and heteronormative society that supports and encourages the modification of bodies in order to achieve one that fits the stereotype fixed by the most privileged member of the social scale: the heterosexual man. These consequences affect all members

of society, but especially those who are viewed as Others by the hegemonic power.

Firstly, it results in the objectification of the feminine subject and its perception solely as an object of desire. As Jeanette Winterson claims, “the sexbot question is not about a new technology as it is about backward-looking sexism and gender stereotyping” (2021,155). Thus, these stereotypes portrayed in technological creations perpetuate and even aggravate the pressure there is to fit those stereotypes and the sexist filter within the male gaze that affects how humans create and interact with each other.

In this manner, as Winterson suggests, technology is not about evolving towards a more advanced and skilled society, nor about creating something that was unthinkable before. Instead, it is about the damaging effects that it has on our society and the fact that it reflects a conservative and neoliberal mindset. Winterson’s idea hints that we should not be celebrating scientific and technological progress if people’s ideas remain outdated and encourage an unequal relationship with other members of society. What should be expected, then, is a relatively simultaneous evolution of both science and collective morality.

On the other hand, and as a consequence of this objectifying view in the heterosexual man, the perception of women as an Other is perpetuated. As Rosi Braidotti claims, “clearly, the woman occupies a troubled area in this radical critique of phallogentrism: in so far as woman is positioned dualistically as the other of this system, she is also annexed to the Phallus - albeit by negation” (2002, 79). So, within the gender binary, women are bound to men in that men are the ones to label women as Others; without the hegemonic male figure, women would have a completely different identity in not being the Other. Further, the hegemonic power builds their own identity in having an Other, as the oppressor would not be who they are without the figure of the oppressed. This link is tight and hard to break because both parts of the gender binary would lose their long-lived identities if said binary dissolved.

In building mechanised female bodies, the hegemonic power finds a new Other. According to Jeanette Winterson “AI-enhanced love dolls are being marketed as *alternatives*. Alternatives to sex

workers. Alternatives to a relationship with a woman. Alternatives to women” (2021, 145). What she suggests is that women and *sexbots* have an equal position as Others, whether they are human women or programmed ones. Winterson had already given thought to that in *Frankissstein* when she presented a debate as regards a real robot that was developed by Hanson Robotics: “the Hanson robot, Sophia, was awarded citizenship of Saudi Arabia in 2017. She has more rights than any Saudi woman” (2019, 74). These two statements go hand-in-hand for if a cyborg is given more rights than a woman in a country where the hegemonic power is strongly sexist, then this supports the idea that women and *sexbots* are equal alternatives for the heterosexual man. The fact is that women do not have the same level of rights everywhere in the world, and the same is beginning to happen with cyborgs. Moreover, both are seen as having the same purpose —satisfying the heterosexual man’s desires— and so they become equal alternatives in his view.

Lastly, there is a normalisation of certain artificial aesthetic stereotypes or patterns that are clearly unethical. As for the former, in Winterson’s texts we find bodies that are shaped through the use of technology, depicted through the huge size of breasts in *Frankissstein* and *The Stone Gods*, and a perpetual youth in *The Stone Gods*. The novels portray that through genetic or technological modification, which helps achieve a perpetually young body. The age that people seek for the female body is increasingly younger, which normalises such a terrible and immoral subject as paedophilia.

It is also important to bear in mind that the consequences of the production of technology based on heteronormative ideas are undoubtedly harmful. In the case of the male —not only the heterosexual man—, he might subconsciously create sexist behaviour patterns that might affect the way he treats non-male people and perpetuate the rooted sexism that exists in society. For women, however, it might create patterns of beauty and behaviour that are impossible to achieve, for a human being has limitations that a machine is programmed not to have. Thus, that would lead women to engaging in a competition with cyborgs, a contest that is impossible for women to win due to their inherent biological limitations.

Winterson reflects on this idea when she says that “[i]f the woman of choice is a programmable babe who never ages, never puts on weight, never has a period, never rips the face off him for being an arse, never asks for anything, or needs anything, and can never leave, are we really saying that will have no real-world impact on real-world women?” (2021, 149). As presented thus far, the negative impact that this has on women is evident: women cannot avoid having a personality nor a changing body, so they struggle when compared on an equal level to robots made in the image and likeness of the ideal women for the heterosexual man.

Further, it seems highly problematic that the perfect female body for the standard heterosexual man has neither a personality nor is a changing organism, for —according to what we have seen thus far— he desires a subject that is not human nor has human traits other than the external appearance of the mechanical body that portrays the image of the stereotypical female. What Jean-François Lyotard proposes in the introduction to *The Inhuman* is that human beings have a consciousness and the ability to reason thanks to the education they receive as children, for “they are not completely led by nature, not programmed” (Lyotard 1998, 3). Thus, if the perfect female model is based on a woman that has none of that —as well as having an unchanging body, which goes against the natural process of organic bodies— and is, in fact, a programmed machine, then it seems that the heterosexual man would want to claim humanity only for himself and not for their object of desire.

On the other hand, those who do not identify with the gender representation within the gender binary are bound to feel discriminated as they are not even contemplated within these patterns. Our society is based on a binary system as regards gender, which makes it easier for the man to identify himself when he only has one Other, and not many. Given that the hegemonic power is clearly conservative, it is built on binary oppositions that allow the heterosexual man to identify what he is and what he is not within the binary —male or female, organic or mechanic, good or bad. What he is not will become the Other, and anything can fall within that category. However, in the perception of a subject —whether organic or mechanic— as an object of desire, the criterion is simply

fitting into the hegemonic stereotypes of a desirable body, and that is where everything that is external to the gender binary is segregated.

Thus, the perspective of technological evolution that Jeanette Winterson presents is quite hopeless. That is because she believes it would be hard to eradicate the inequality from which our society has been built and that still remains, and sees technology as a tool that has only aggravated and magnified that situation. Therefore, Jeanette Winterson does not predict the egalitarian and ethical future that we so much want to achieve and in which we would like to live, but one where technology follows and perpetuates conservative heteronormative patterns. From Jeanette Winterson's viewpoint, heteronormative technology—as problematic as it is—is the past, the present, and the future of this society.

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