

# Female Subjectivity Formation in Jeanette Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*

Masoumeh Jannat Nia<sup>1</sup> , Hadi Shahi Gharehaghaji<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Candidate, English Literature. Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, Tabriz, Iran. Email: [m.janania2707@iau.ir](mailto:m.janania2707@iau.ir)

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran. (Corresponding Author)

Email: [hadi.shahi@znu.ac.ir](mailto:hadi.shahi@znu.ac.ir)

**Received:** December 2025

**Published:** April 2026

**\*Corresponding author:**

Assistant Professor  
of English Literature,  
Department of English  
Language and Literature,  
University of Zanjan, Iran.  
Email: [hadi.shahi@znu.ac.ir](mailto:hadi.shahi@znu.ac.ir)

## Citation:

Jannat Nia, Masoumeh. Shahi Gharehaghaji, Hadi. Female Subjectivity Formation in Jeanette Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*. *Critical Language and Literary Studies*. Vol. 23, No.36, 2026.  
doi: <https://doi.org/10.48308/CLLS.2026.242926.1416>

## Abstract

Jeanette Winterson, one of the postmodern, iconoclastic writers posits the concept of 'self' as the central challenge of her female characters. Her autobiographical novel, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*, depicts contemporary woman's solo quest to achieve her true self and construct her desired subjectivity. Portrayal of female subjectivity in Winterson's text goes well with the figuration of nomadic female subjectivity in Rosi Braidotti's feminist philosophy. Braidotti by employing the concept of "nomadic subjectivity" has contributed to the critique of identity, she notices the velocity of changes in the twenty first century and challenges the issue of identity and emphasizes that we need to know who we want to become rather than who we are. Winterson in her story represents a positive and prosperous image of a woman who in the search of her true self, finds out that her subjectivity is a matter of construction and becoming not an essence given to her by her biological or adopted parents. This study traces the process of becoming a free female thinking subject in Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* in Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity theoretical framework and tends to conclude that all women are at the threshold of becoming a free female thinking subject, but only women who acquire knowledge and intellectuality are apt to transgress phallogocentrism and constitute their independent subjectivity.

**Keywords:** female nomadic subjectivity, becoming, Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*, Braidotti

## Introduction

Jeanette Winterson is a great contemporary luscious storyteller, who spins new stories from trite tales. Her life story is a depiction of her second "self," not the born one but the built self. As an adopted child, Jeanette trained to be a church preacher but when she reached her teenage years, she left her adopted parents to follow her own preferences and search for her true "self" and to find her "missing part." Winterson has a deep and clear understanding of current philosophical and social thoughts and the-

ories. Additionally, she is a great reader of various books that enrich her writing and sharpens her creativity which leads to creation of astonishing texts.

As a female writing subject who lives in contemporary multi-cultural world, Winterson's primary concern and focus is on women's social and cultural position as an independent subject. She criticizes injustice and inequalities toward women then she tries to escape the traditional image of a woman throughout her female characters. Winterson is never

separated from her stories, she is the writing and the written subject simultaneously who thinks and understands women's feelings, challenges and uncertain identities. Winterson's works are considered as some of the best and rich literature which provides excellent sources for philosophical and critical feminist studies of today.

Rosi Braidotti, contemporary feminist thinker and philosopher, challenges the post-structural concept of identity and criticizes it as a result of male dominated theory and view toward the subject, then she searches for the feminine subjectivity which is not the deconstructed subject of post-structuralism which is the Other of phallogentrism but a free -thinking female subject who is the other of patriarchal Other. She believes that for the subjects of third millennium the main question is who want to become than who we are, so that in the age of huge changes and transformations, Braidotti rejects any dominant, fixed and pre-given identities and instead argues for the subjectivity which reflexes the metamorphosis and transformation of the subject, for her the conception of subjectivity is a matter of "to become" not "to situate" in a pre-determined existence.

Braidotti utilizes Deleuzian term of "Nomad" to reflex the transitory nature of subjectivity, thinking and difference. Subjectivity in her word, is constructed through a process of transitions in-between differential elements of sex, race, place, age and others. The most significant factor but for Braidotti is body, the living-body that is embodied position of "self". The distinction that Braidotti makes with post-structural philosophy especially Deleuze is the point with the body; she asks which body goes through the process of becoming to build the subjectivity of female feminist thinking subject? She argues that for Deleuze the body is an empty signifier while Braidotti gives priority to living sexed body, she emphasizes on female sexed body as an independent subject from logocentric subject. For her, the definition of female feminist subject begins with the "reevaluation of the bodily roots of subjectivity" and rejecting the established view of defining subject as neutral, universal and as a result gender-free.

Braidotti believes that feminism is the best site to portray the transformations and metamorphosis from inactive logocentric thinking to "nomadic creative thought." She integrates feminist nomadic project with three levels of sexual difference to relate the three spheres of thinking about the subject. Difference between man and woman, differences among women and differences within each woman. This difference starts with the division on the "ontological

level," and goes through the "social-political reflection" and ends with the "psychological analysis of I." Braidotti informs us that it is an ontological desire of a woman to become and to speak as a female feminist subject and this becoming only happens within a female sexed body who experiences the differences and metamorphosis.

The issue of and female subjectivity and its construction has always been one of the most pivotal questions in philosophical and literary debate especially postmodern post-structuralism has defined it completely different from previous thinkers and philosophers. As Noorollahi and Ahmad Zadeh state "Obviously now identity cannot be considered as a static concept but it is dependent to time, place, language and society" (Noorollahi and Ahmad Zadeh 2012, 231). This idea and women's constitution of subjectivity is a dominant theme in almost all female writers works that is mingled with women's desires, experiences a

*Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* reflexes Jeanette Winterson's early years of self-discovery and transformations. Throughout this text, Winterson represents a profile of a young woman who strives to build her real self and construct her own subjectivity freely and consciously which is done through reading and writing books. Transgressive women in the work of Winterson, could be considered as her ideal role model of female subjectivity construction free from imposed masculine structure. Her writing hand is a part of female body who writes for acceptance as an independent thinking subject, it is not just a writing but this is a new creation.

Due to the profound interconnection that Winterson has made between her "self" and her fictional female characters, studying her past life incidents and memories could lead us toward Winterson's main interest that is women's eminence and the way they are represented in literature and in any work of art. Self-constructed female subjects in the text of Winterson find their way through books. Books bring wisdom, courage and respect for women to stand as independent subject who is not the secondary subject of men any more.

This study questions the process of becoming a free female subject in Winterson's text and follows her life incidents and levels of transformations that she experiences and then argues that Winterson's retelling of her past that shows she is satisfied with the subject that she has become after all, is her strategy to invite women to stay connected with books and acquire knowledge is the most essential determinant

through the process of female subjectivity formation.

### Literature Review

As an outstanding figure in female literary canon, Jeanette Winterson's works have always been debated and studied from various philosophical and theoretical perspectives by scholars and critics. Some of her novels have been analyzed based on Rosi Braidotti's "Posthuman theory," also theory of nomadic subjectivity in Rosi Braidotti's feminist philosophy in contemporary discourses and analysis has an assertive position and this study has built its theoretical structure on it.

Struzziero Maria Antonietta in her essay "The Wound and The Gift: Rewriting the Wounded Self Through the Gift of Language. A Study of Jeanette Winterson's Autobiography *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*" argues that how Winterson narrates the self and the subject in constant change who finally discovers "her-self and the world." Struzziero believes that story-telling that Winterson uses as her technique to narrate the "self" has a crucial role as "the structuring principle to articulate or represent identity" (Struzziero 2019, 15). She considers language and writing are healing for Jeanette's wounded self so that Jeanette's wounded self while narrating her past life memories mixed with stories, is given shape to her identity and "heals her split self" simultaneously. Struzziero claims that writing memories in *Why Be Happy* brings a gift which is the "discovery of the self and love" for Jeanette as she states that "Writing life entails writing a story of the self in process and reading oneself as a fiction" (Struzziero 2019, 24).

Molgarzata Wronka in an article "The Problem of Identity in Jeanette Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal? Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and Passion*," investigates the issue of self and identity. It claims that with writing *Why Be Happy*, Winterson finally reconciles with her past and accepts her life and tells the story of her real self. Fantasy helps Winterson to forget the oppressive reality as Wronka says "Why *Be Happy* unveils facts about Winterson's actual psychological condition, her problems with self-acceptance and social rejection" (Wronka 2017, 198), then it is necessary to confront different possibilities for the subjectivity construction and "To determine and establish one's own self is to discover the variety of possible identities and follow the one in conformity with personal convictions and feelings" (Wronka 2017, 199).

Soumia Ghernout in his thesis titled "The Postmodern Representations of Femininity in Jeanette

Winterson's Selected Narratives" argues that Winterson's rebel against her mother and social expectations shows that she is determined to cross the sacred in order to "embark on her journey of self-discovery" (Ghernout 2019, 100). Jeanette's disobedient character helps her to change her feminine role from the "puppet woman to a transgressive woman" (Ghernout 2019, 100). Winterson is one of the most innovative novelists in contemporary Britain whose primary concern is "identity and female experience within postmodern feminist framework" (Ghernout 2019, 101). Through her autobiographical texts, Winterson believes that self-construction is possible only by transgression as Ghernout comments "She crosses the boundaries on the way to pursue her femininity" (Ghernout 2019, 129).

Maximilian Coghlan in his study "References and Repetition in Jeanette Winterson's Novels" examines the function of applying the techniques of repetition and references in Jeanette Winterson's novels which its first section deals with her autobiographical novels *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy*. The study asserts that in *Why Be Happy* through the writing process, Jeanette is constructing a new identity. Winterson admires Woolf and Stein because they are strongly connected to literature but her adopted mother lacks such an ability then she can never construct her own identity. Winterson's memoir "is her political device that transforming and fictionalizing authorities' narratives through the process of repetition and rearrangement" (Coghlan 2016, 9). This way she rejects any authority and centrality and sends the message that anyone could have his/her writing, meaning and identity free from any predetermined meaning or identity. Also, the research says that "repetition of elements in her fiction is concerned with patterns of becoming" (Coghlan 2016, 26). *Why Be Happy* is "constructed by quotations of both Winterson's other words and intertexts within them" (Coghlan 2016, 26). Winterson tries to open her text for other revisions since the process of becoming is a continuous process.

"Femininity Representation in Jeanette Winterson's Postmodern Novels," written by Soumia Ghernout, focuses on portrayal of women in literature and argues that women and their representation in fiction have been a key concern but "they have never been up to date than in today's multicultural world" (Ghernout 2022, 523). This paper states that Winterson introduces her female characters as "strong, resourceful, domineering, wise and make assertive choices" (Ghernout 2022, 523). The stereotypical image of woman as the "other, the inferior or sub-

ordinated” subject is her character’s main challenge. They try to “escape the traditional image of womanhood” (Ghernout 2022, 523).

### Theoretical Framework

#### Nomadic Female Subjectivity

For over three decades, Rosi Braidotti has been a dynamic figure on the global philosophical stage. She has a creative and critical engagement with the question of the self and the process of becoming a subject. Braidotti in her groundbreaking books, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* and its complementary book *Metamorphoses*, deeply discusses the issues of female subject and subjectivity and its various representations in postmodernism. Moreover, she elaborates her nomadic subject’s theory as the most suitable figuration of subjectivity in the rise of the twenty-first century. Nomadic subjects project, rejects the phallogocentric view of the subject in which man is the main subject and stands in the center and woman is the secondary inferior subject.

As the first step, Braidotti attempts to place women as an independent subject in theory and philosophy and suggests new modes of thought and forms toward subjectivity (Braidotti 1994, 1). As a contemporary thinker, Braidotti indicates that postmodernism is the age of huge changes in various fields from technology to business and social structures and the time of decline in masculine authority and emerging new possibilities for female subjects (Braidotti 1994, 2-3). At the top the question that has been set for the contemporary subject according to Braidotti’s theory is “not to know who we are but at last who we want to become,” and this question signifies that change and transformation is inevitable because “classical modes of Being” has been demolished now (Braidotti 2002, 2).

Accordingly, in the landscape of postmodernism no longer the subject is represented in the forms of man and woman but nomadic subject’s figuration, suggests that there are different representations of female subject due to technological, social and theoretical mutations in present era that today female subject is considered as a multi-layered and dynamic entity and identity of the subject is shaped through a permanent process of transition (Braidotti 2002, 2). Through all transformations and mutations, female embodiment or “bodily roots of subjectivity” plays a central role and the fleshed body of female subject is the site of change and metamorphoses then is an important section in becoming a subject process. Female feminist subject is an embodied and “sexually differentiated structure of speaking subject” (Braidotti

1994, 3). In postmodern feminist theory, ‘woman’ is not a “monolithic essence” but she is the ground of complex, multiple and potentially contradictory sets of experiences defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preference and others” (Braidotti 1994, 4). Then, female subjectivity is built through the interactions of different elements such as race, class, geography, gender, age and desires and the concept of nomad here refers to “simultaneous occurrence of many elements at once” (Braidotti 1994, 4).

Braidotti argues that the nomadic subject allows her to “move across established categories” and puts the notion of fixity under question that gives evidence of “the decline of metaphysically fixed, steady identities” (Braidotti 1994, 5). Although the theme of nomadic subjects is aroused by the cultures and people that are really nomadic, the nomadism discussed in Braidotti’s project refers to the “kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior” (Braidotti 1994, 5). It expresses that “some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one’s habitats,” so the essence of nomadic subjectivity is the “subversion of set conventions” (Braidotti 1994, 5). Braidotti believes that the most positive and effective task of nomadic subjects is their capability of freeing the act of thinking “from the hold of phallogocentric dogmatism,” an ability that brings thought back to its “beauty and liveliness” (Braidotti 1994, 6). Through the scheme of postmodern feminist nomadism, the process of thinking and the thinking subject are critically paid attention to and paves the way to think about “change, transformation, living transition” (Braidotti 1994, 6). Braidotti attaches the act of thinking to female nomadic subjects and claims that the new feminist thinking subject has the proper potentiality to turn from “sedentary logocentric thinking to nomadic creative thought” (Braidotti 1994, 30).

Postmodern feminism links body and mind in a unique and new set of intensive transitions, nomadic consciousness aims to rethink the unity of the subject and clarifies that no fixed identity can be considered for female nomadic subjects (Braidotti 1994, 33). It should be noticed that, “Nomadism is not fluidity without borders but rather an acute awareness of the non-fixity of boundaries. It is the intense desire to go on transgressing” (Braidotti 1994, 36).

Language is a significant factor in Braidotti’s nomadic subjects project because it is the key medium to represent nomadic female subjectivity. Linear and usual writing is not able to reflect the nomadic sub-

jectivity in literature and theory. Braidotti calls linguistic nomad as “polyglot,” one who is a “specialist of the duplicitous nature of any language” (Braidotti 1994, 8). Polyglot is between language and identities, it can be “taken as a difference within the same culture ... within any self” (Braidotti 1994, 13). The polyglot is fully aware that language is not just the means of communication but it is “the symbolic site of exchange” that connects cultures and civilizations together. Thus “the polyglot becomes the prototype of the postmodern speaking subject” (Braidotti 1994, 14). Braidotti’s figuration of “Nomadic Subjectivity” on Winterson’s female characters in her Autobiographical novel *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* has been applied which concerns female subjectivity in postmodernism and Winterson as a contemporary writer who experiences postmodernity then it could be a suitable application. The researcher through reading Winterson’s novel, firstly attempts to find nomadic subject in her work then tries to portray the quality of female nomadic subjectivity and its formation process in Winterson’s text and finally, to notice which factors are essential in becoming a nomadic subject and constructing free subjectivity of female subjects.

### Books and the Second born

Winterson’s *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* narrates Jeanette’s personal quest of self-discovery and making her own subjectivity by her-self at the heart of postmodernism. After over twenty-five years of writing numerous books and winning precious prizes, Winterson decides to re-tell her life story from her childhood to her early twenties when she is happy with her subjectivity and the subject that she has become at the end of the day. Through her life story which has been touched by different texts and stories, Jeanette acts in three roles simultaneously: she is the reader, the writer and the written subject. She is reading her memories which are full of stories and experiences and writing her story and as the protagonist of her novel, she is the written subject whose process of subjectivity construction is the main point of consideration.

Remembering and retelling the past is a conscious act through which the remembering subject has a second view toward what has already happened. Winterson in her memoir has created a strong bond between becoming a free female subject and reading and writing books. From the very beginning of the story, Winterson announces that literature makes it possible for women to follow their dreams and become a free subject, “why should a woman not be ambitious for literature? Ambitious for herself?”

(Winterson 2011, 3). This is her motto that has been affixed at the top of her work to clarify the route to her desired destination.

The notion of reading and the priority of books in this novel divides Jeanette’s life into two different parts that each has touched her subjectivity in its peculiar way. The first section deals with Jeanette’s childhood when her life was occupied with the Bible as the only book that she was allowed to read. Reading Bible was an inseparable sector of Jeanette’s obligatory daily routine since she was planned to be a preacher by her adoptive parents, “my mother read the Bible as though it has just been written” (Winterson 2011, 21). Authority of the Bible had created a rough and coarse atmosphere at home where happiness and fantasy were forbidden. Jeanette’s prejudiced mother strongly believes that reading the Bible is the only way to become an honorable person because the words are from God, but the stories written by people are based on imaginations that annihilate the human spirit. The solidity has made a space within which free will and delicate ideas have no position.

The first thing that Jeanette remembers about her mother is that she often “was angry” and she “kept a revolver in the duster drawer” (Winterson 2011, 1), her strict religious beliefs, even her physicality described as bulky and corpulent that all mirror a sense of strangeness and toughness in her mother’s character. The abnormal image that Jeanette reflexes from her mother, proves that Mrs. Winterson is stucked to a rigid outlook that never allows her to foster her imagination or think deeply and it is the result of ignoring books, “books had been forbidden in our house” (Winterson 2011, 3), then without books it is impossible to develop new ideas and create fantasy. In a house where reading books except the Bible is an unforgivable sin, fresh thoughts never will be born.

Mrs. Winterson’s grim and inflexible character and most importantly the authority of Bible in her life and thought has a masculine appearance and since Bible is the symbol of patriarchy then it could be comprehended that Mrs. Winterson is the representative of phallogocentric philosophy: “Jeanette’s mother as a stern representative of Catholicism ... is one of those mothers who raise their daughter to be the woman society expects” (Ghernout 2022, 528). Mrs. Winterson wishes her daughter to spend all her life in the service of church and be an obedient woman; she never tolerates any idea or attitude that is in opposition with Biblical account. She is deeply bound to masculine tradition and rules which deprives women from free will and keeps them limited

to one imposed identity and outlook. Jeanette was forced to accompany her mother and be the “good girl” but she tears up the band and begins her adventure by reading books in secret.

Braidotti in defining nomadic subjectivity argues that the first step for a woman in constructing her own subjectivity is to change and leave behind the firm and fixed boundaries that patriarchy has built around her. She invites women to “think” about their “Being-in-the-world” and stand to achieve a position as an independent subject that is no longer the “other” or the “second subject.” With the change she does not mean physical transformation but the metamorphosis and insight within the subject, an awareness and cognition to undo the dominant model of subjectivity. Braidotti notices that since the female body is the site of chief changes then female embodiment is a crucial element through the subjectivity construction process so women’s positive perception of their fleshed body could be the premise of female subjectivity formation. Jeanette remembers that her mother hated her body and always ignored it, “my mother only understood bodies as sinful and ugly” (Winterson 2011, 92). This negative view prevents Mrs. Winterson from thinking about a free subjectivity, Braidotti emphasizes that body always goes beyond fixed pre-given identities consequently a woman who disregards her embodiment cannot be adhered to the course of becoming a free female thinking subject.

The first image of a woman that Jeanette portrays is being “ambitious.” She affirms that it is every woman’s right to have dreams, desires and freedom. An ambitious woman has courage to change her life into her desired one and cross the limitations toward self-construction. Jeanette’s positive insight into women conveys that from the beginning she believes in women’s potency of achievement and aptitude. Jeanette’s primary opposition with her mother has been evidenced through her imaginations and inquiring spirit which make her discover new worlds and ideas through books. Unlike her mother’s dull and static character, Jeanette is eager to cross limitations and experience unknown lands: “There is a lot that you can’t change when you are a kid but you can pack for the journey” (Winterson 2011, 19). She finds out that life is a journey through which one can reach her desired destination that is a symbol of becoming a subject and composing one’s subjectivity.

Jeanette’s rebel against becoming a missionary and authority of Bible as the only needed book to read, could be comprehended as women’s protest against patriarchal supremacy and its monolithic identity that considers woman as the second inferior

of man. Jeanette desires to annihilate the fixed and firm masculine rules and norms and offer new possibilities and prospects for women in the postmodern era. She does not accept to be like her mother and live or act as the masculine grand narrative dictates to women. The gift of reading various books for Jeanette is a deep insight into her position as a female subject and her ability to constitute her subjectivity as she desires, books teach her how to inscribe the second and new version of her life story and how to become a subject that she desires to, they suggest that there are numerous ways to achieve happiness and satisfaction: “Knowing that both you and your world are not by any means fixed dimension, is a valuable clue to learning how to live” (Winterson 2011, 26). The wisdom and awareness that Jeanette obtains through involving books, does not allow her to admit any enforced thought or rule: “Jeanette realizes that everything that has been imposed on her can be called into question” (Ghernout 2022, 527). This could be perceived as the figure of critical consciousness in the nomadic subject who resists “settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior” (Braidotti 1994, 5). Jeanette is reading, becoming and constructing her “self.”

Mrs. Winterson is depicted as the victim of masculine derivative world view, a woman who lives in ignorance and never has courage to step beyond the dominant social and religious boundaries. But Jeanette stands as the indicator of new women who transgress pre-given identities and challenges to become a free female thinking subject and get rid of the imposed vagueness on women. Unlike her mother, Jeanette loves reading books and she thinks that her most valuable possession in the world are her books, for her books are “everything” and every word has a special message for the readers, they are excellent teachers “we can open the book. somebody has been there for us and deep-dived the words” (Winterson 2011, 7). Each book is an entry to a new world, a new life and a new identity.

Involving in the procedure of reading books; could symbolically represent the process of becoming a subject through which the subject experiences various phases of change and earns the needed self-awareness to build her subjectivity. Winterson in *Why Be Happy* has created a feminine space full of female writers and intellectuals who accompany Jeanette through her process of becoming a free female thinking subject but her mother is apart from this atmosphere since she does not read books and is attached to masculine phallogocentric identity. Coghlan in his study discusses the relationship between

female identity and literature in *Why Be Happy* and argues that Winterson admires Woolf and Stein because they are strongly connected to literature but her adopted mother lacks such an ability then she can never construct her subjectivity (Coghlan 2016, 8-9).

Jeanette feels a “string of guiding lights” within when she is reading a book and it leads her to begin the adventure to find her true-self, a journey to achieve love, happiness and her-self. the departure was a fly through book pages. She is assured that books are her “missing part” with which she can stand as an independent thinking woman and join the feminine flow of intellectuality. She thinks of writing her own book then she could save her ideas and emotions forever for future female readers because her mother fires her books and Jeanette discovers that the only place to protect her thought, feelings and stories is in her mind. She finds courage to write about and for women and along with female writers, through her narrative, affirm contemporary women’s independent subjectivity: “For me, fascinated with identity and how you define yourself, those books [Woolf and Stien] are crucial, reading yourself as a fiction as well as a fact is the only way to keep the narrative open” (Winterson 2011, 90). There are many untold stories about women and now this is Jeanette’s turn to add a new narration of women’s suppressed identities.

Literature is an excellent opportunity for Jeanette to create a new version of herself and become a subject that is satisfied with her subjectivity. With books she is a wise and determined woman who is capable of constructing a new version of herself through her life journey. “I understood that being twice born was not just about being alive but about choosing life” (Winterson 2011, 127). It could be understood that books introduce various possibilities and awareness for a woman and help her to constitute her desired version of her “self.”

### Becoming “Me”

The process of becoming a subject includes various changes that the subject experiences through the way of constituting her subjectivity. Braidotti argues that the essence of subjectivity is mutation and transformation because different variables interact to form a woman’s subjectivity and at the top of them is the female body that is the site of ever-changing elements. Most importantly, the central driving factor of this process is a desire “not to know who we are but who at last we want to become” (Braidotti 1994, 2). Then subjectivity is a consciously chosen process and not every female subject joins this circle.

The theme of becoming a free female thinking subject in Winterson’s autobiographical novel, is traced in the form of a journey through which Jeanette is “coming home” to celebrate her self-discovery and find her “true self”. Winterson notifies that becoming your desired subject is a life-long quest and then back home, you will recognize your real “self” like “Odyssey” and “Gulliver” that she mentions in her story. Winterson invites women to read books and stories to find out about their subjectivity and identity as a free subject, to get free from patriarchal philosophy.

As an influential female writer and reader of books, Winterson in *Why Be Happy*, in two ways reflexes the perception of becoming a free-thinking subject. Firstly, it has been done through her nomadic writing style. A nomadic writer in Braidotti’s theory of nomadic subject is an artist who narrates new stories from old tales and her text is a great mixture of thoughts and concepts without following common chronological schemes. A nomadic writer is the narrator of the “self”. Winterson texts welcome big changes in women’s lives and always in a unique and new way send the same messages of love, happiness and self-awareness for women. Her writing is never separated from her ideas and life, “I never could write a story with a beginning, a middle and an end in the usual way because it felt untrue to me. That is why I write as I do and how I write as I do. It isn’t a method, it’s me” (Winterson 2011, 118).

Winterson’s second approach is visible through her technique of repetition and referring to various resources in her story. Coghlan argues that applying repetition and referring to numerous resources in Winterson’s *Why Be Happy*, is in direct relation with identity formation in her life, it is “constructing a new identity through the writing process” (Coghlan 2016, 9). Her rich text is an opening gate of new possibilities for the “self,” all she has read is found in her story. She concerns women’s worries, hopes and desires in her texts. Although Mrs. Winterson once forced Jeanette to read and respect the Bible as the one and only book that saves humankind, Jeanette thinks that each book guides people in its unique way. Jeanette believes that the Bible is the product of patriarchy that obliges women to obey it, then she feels the necessity to break this unwritten law with writing books by female writers for not only for female readers but for all humankind all around the world.

Entering Oxford, which used to be a masculine territory, was a big victory not just for Jeanette but for women who had been deprived of having an eminent academic possession for centuries. Studying in

Oxford prepared a great chance for Jeanette to get access to the works of stunning contemporary female writers and thinkers who could create female writer's canon and be influential. "[in Oxford] we formed our own reading group... suddenly I was reading Dorris Lessing and Toni Morrison, Kate Millett and Adrien Rich, they were like a new Bible" (Winterson 2011, 108). The image of "new Bible" resembles a new identity for women. Women who could destroy masculine grand narrative and the centrality of man as the first subject.

Winterson, through narrating her different experiences of transformations to build her own identity and becoming a free-thinking female subject, informs her readers that she is not the sole traveler on the road of becoming a subject but that a large number of female authors accompany Jeanette in her life journey. Jeanette could stand as a role model for Braidotti's nomadic subject figuration who step by step challenges to make her free subjectivity and become a happy subject. As an acknowledged female writer, Winterson at the end of her life hi/story rejects any imposed identities for women and calls women to read books and get rid of phallogocentric boundaries and form their subjectivity by their own hands," I would rather be this me- the me that I have become than the me that I might have become without books, without education and without all the things that have happened to me along the way" (Winterson 2011, 173). Jeanette's souvenir for all women at the end of this journey, will be infinite wisdom, love and happiness.

### Conclusion

Winterson's hi/story is a different narration of becoming a woman, it is a portrayal of womanhood and its quality in the age of collapsed grand narratives. Jeanette Winterson as an acclaimed postmodern writer, in her text represents a new and peculiar profile of contemporary women. *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* depicts a young woman's adventure to find her true "self" and become a happy subject. This autobiographical novel corresponds with Rosi Braidotti's theory of "Nomadic Subjectivity" that concerns female free subjectivity formation on the rise of the twenty-first century when the subject's question is not "who I am" but "who I want to become". It is an awakening outlook rejects any fixed and imposed identities on female subjects and posits the issue of subjectivity at the core. Accordingly, a woman's subjectivity is constructed through a continuous process of becoming based on her differences, desires and location. Braidotti notices that the very first location of the subject is her embodiment or fleshed body where the 'self' has been located.

The term nomadic, denotes the ever-changing nature of subjectivity based on different variables that affect the process of subjectivity formation.

Since remembering is a conscious act of identity, Winterson by re-telling her past, gives evidence how women decided to transgress the boundaries to compose their free subjectivity. Jeanette and her adopted mother reflect two entirely disparate profiles of women. Mrs. Winterson, as a strict bigotry Christian, believes that the only legitimate book to read is the Bible so forces her daughter to read and learn it by heart and spend all her life in the service of the church. The Bible is the sign of masculinity and Mrs. Winterson is the representative of a phallogocentric attitude in which woman is the secondary subject and implies fixed and one-dimensional identity. Jeanette on the contrary, represents novelty, mutation and female self-awareness. Jeanette's rebel against her mother's compulsory life scheme, attests women strive to acquire their independence in the second half of the twentieth century. When Jeanette starts to read various books in secret, she finds out that her "missing part" is reading and writing books hence, she commences to write her own book. New worlds and possibilities are acquainted by books and Jeanette was determined on making a new version of her "self". Books are everything.

This study tends to conclude that through two oppositional profiles of women, Winterson attempts to say that every woman is at the threshold of becoming a free, female thinking subject but the most fundamental factor to activate this potentiality is knowledge. Pre-given imposed identities for women are due to the lack of knowledge because knowledge is the monopoly of masculinity. Knowledge dismantles phallogocentric domination and brings wisdom and self-confidence for women. By knowledge, the researcher here does not mean just the ability to read and write but it conveys the strength of deep thinking, joining to the stream of merging science and access to higher education.

Oxford in Winterson's text symbolizes knowledge. Jeanette's admission to Oxford is not a solo success but it could be comprehended as a victory in breaking masculine taboos against women since for centuries women had not been allowed to study in Oxford, now Jeanette celebrates her access to the great source of knowledge. In Oxford, Jeanette takes part in different communities of female writers and thinkers which recommend her innovative ideas, attitudes and abundant possibilities in life. Now Winterson as an intellectual woman and a rewarding writer, is happy with the subject that she has become,

Jeanette confesses that without books and studying, she never had a chance to find her true “self” and become a free female thinking subject who is able to give voice to the silenced cries of women to be seen, heard and understood. Winterson in *Why Be Happy*, represents women as achievers, wise and creative subjects. A contemporary woman is a transgressive woman whose independent subjectivity can be shaped by her own hands; she is the only generator of love and happiness for her “self.”

**Funding:** There is no funding support.

**Authors’ Contributions:** The authors have written the article in ;complete collaboration.

**Conflict of Interest:** This article does not conflict with personal and/or organizational interests.

## References:

1. Braidotti, Rosi. 2002. *Metamorphoses*. United States: Polity Press.
2. Braidotti, Rosi. 1994. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Differences in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
3. Coghlan, Mximillian. 2016. “References and Repetition in Jeanette Winterson’s Novels”. Canada: Lakehead University Press. <http://knowledgecommons/lakehead.u.com>
4. Ghernout, Soumia. 2022. “Femininity Representation in Jeanette Winterson’s Postmodern Novels”. *International Journal of Social Communication* 9 (3): 522-532.
5. Ghernout, Soumia. 2023. “The Postmodern Representation of Femininity in Jeanette Winterson’s Selected Narratives”. *The University of ABDELHAMID IBN BADIS MOSTAGANEM*. Algeria. <http://e-biblio.univ-mosta.dz>
6. Noorollahi, Mohamad Reza and Ahmadzadeh, Sheedeh. 2012-2013. “The Crux of Identity in Tony Morrison’s *Beloved*”. *Critical Language and Literary Studies*. Iran: Shahis Beheshti University Press 9 (8): 227-244.
7. Sabah, Abdul. 2023. “New Women in Jeanette Winterson’s Selected Novels”. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts* 11 (2): 111-115.
8. Struzziero, Maria Antonietta. 2019. “The Wound and The Gift: Rewriting the Wounded Self Through the Gift of Language. A Study of Jeanette Winterson’s Autobiography *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*”. *Altre Modernità* 21: 12-30.
9. Winterson, Jeanette. 2011. *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*. Canada: ALFREDA.KNOP Press.
10. Wronka, Malgorzata. 2017. “The Problem of Identity in Jeanette Winterson’s *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and Passion”. *The Grove Working Press on English Studies* 24: 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.17561/grove.v24.a8>.