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**GENDER AND IDENTITY IN THE  
POSTMODERN NOVELS *SEXING THE CHERRY*  
AND *MR LOVERMAN***

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## ABSTRACT

Rewriting has been a recurrent technique in fields such as feminism and postcolonialism. Therefore, feminist writers have used it as a strategy to deconstruct gender and identity, representing these issues through complex non-normative characters in the contemporary novel. The aim of this BA thesis is to examine how gender and identity issues can be rewritten in postmodern literature, by relying on the existing feminist theories about feminine writing and confirming they are both socially constructed. In order to do this, two postmodern novels have been selected: *Sexing The Cherry* and *Mr. Loverman*. In both of them rewriting is employed with the goal of questioning some patriarchal concepts such as heteronormativity and gender binarism, while simultaneously striving for diversity on gender and identity matters. Among this, other methods introduced by the authors of the novels will be explored with the purpose of showing the multiple ways in which these two concepts can be approached.

**Keywords:** Rewriting, Gender, Identity, Postmodern literature, Feminine writing, Heteronormativity

La reescritura ha sido una técnica recurrente en campos como el feminismo y el poscolonialismo. Por ello, las escritoras feministas se han servido de ella como estrategia para deconstruir el género y la identidad, representando estas cuestiones a través de personajes complejos no normativos en la novela contemporánea. El objetivo de este trabajo fin de grado es examinar cómo se pueden reescribir las cuestiones de género e identidad en la literatura posmoderna, apoyándose en las teorías feministas existentes sobre la escritura femenina y confirmando que ambas se construyen socialmente. Para ello, se han seleccionado dos novelas posmodernas: *Sexing The Cherry* y *Mr. Loverman*. En ambas se emplea la reescritura con el objetivo de cuestionar algunos conceptos patriarcales como la heteronormatividad y el binarismo de género, al tiempo que se busca la diversidad en materia de género e identidad. Entre ellos, se explorarán otros métodos introducidos por las autoras de ambas novelas, con el fin de mostrar las múltiples formas en que se pueden abordar estos dos conceptos.

**Palabras Clave:** Reescritura, Género, Identidad, Literatura posmoderna, Escritura femenina, Heteronormatividad.



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## **Introduction**

### **Rewriting in postmodern literature**

Postmodern literature emerged in the 1970s as a counterpoint to traditional literature, rejecting the idea that reality is natural and objective. Hence, this form of literature argues that reality is subjective and that human conduct and thinking do not depend merely on reason, but rather on sensibility. Postmodern literary styles serve to question, mock, revise and reject the principles of modernist literature. Thus, the postmodern novel, poem or story is presented as a parody in which the author denies the boundaries and differences between various genres and forms of writing. Postmodernism emerged as a reaction to modernist ideology. This way, this movement could be defined in general terms as:

In the arts, architecture, and humanities, it signifies recent aesthetic developments that challenge conventional modernist conceptions of structure, meaning, beauty, and truth. [...] Postmodernism refers to a new form of society, one that has been radically transformed by invention of film and television into a visual, video culture. This transformation introduces a series of new cultural formations that impinge upon, shape, and redefine contemporary human group life. (Denzin 233).

That said, since the history of literature was influenced by the great catastrophes of the 20th century caused by constant battles and wars that in turn triggered several changes in society, contemporary novels gained ground in representing the complexity of the world and, consequently, of human thought. Novels have always been influenced by the current historical and social context, evoking the perceptions of the world at that time. Therefore, the contemporary novel also does this by criticizing, modifying and exemplifying various theories and ideologies such as feminism, postcolonialism, realism and many others using different literary genres and techniques.

One of the most recurrent literary techniques is rewriting, which notably challenges the perception of traditional literary canons. In this way, feminism and

postcolonialism make use of critical rewriting as a strategy to rearrange their identities giving space to intersectionality and fluidity and allowing us to reconnect with the past through a textual metamorphosis. According to Coste in his work *Rewriting, Literariness, Literary History*: “Rewriting is, at least in the West and in South Asia, indeed as old as the literary system itself” (2004:8). This is so because every literary work is influenced by others, repeating and imitating the actions and experiences of life itself and thereby defining writing as a form of rewriting. However, this definition reduces the value of rewriting and it is necessary to elaborate further on this in order to understand the purpose of this thesis.

The aim of this research is to carry out a detailed and exhaustive analysis of the deconstruction of identity and gender through rewriting in the novels *Sexing the Cherry* and *Mr Loverman*. To justify the selection of these works it should be noted that both have been written by feminist writers, Jeanette Winterson and Bernardine Evaristo, who consistently reflect in their novels their concern for these controversial issues, trying to disrupt traditional stereotypes established by a heteronormative and patriarchal society. In this way, both writers set out to rewrite identity and gender from completely different perspectives, depicting these issues through complex characters, innovative stories and employing a variety of literary techniques while simultaneously challenging the pattern of the traditional novel.

The feminist rewriting of identity has become very popular as it focuses not only on the physicality of the self but also on the psychological aspects, questioning reality and history in the process. Evaristo and Winterson portray identity as a social construct without limits, offering not only a new perspective on women within society but also on men. To substantiate this argument, the term of rewriting will be discussed from a feminist perspective and there will be presented some of the fundamental theories that shed light on rewriting gender identity. After this theoretical background, this thesis will focus on how gender and identity are approached in both novels guided by the peculiarities, tendencies and characteristics of the main characters, as well as unraveling the methods used by the two authors to rewrite both concepts.



## Chapter 1. Rewriting literature

### A. Rewriting from a feminist perspective

Feminist criticism started a new phase in Western studies during the Civil Rights campaigns of the 1960s (Taylor 761). This was when feminist theory had already gained more ground and began to be applied to literary and linguistic issues. Since then, feminist literary criticism has taken a number of different forms and today it is a universal and wide-ranging subject (Fallaize et al. 1). Feminist literary criticism has dramatically transformed literary studies, influencing a variety of fields such as linguistic, religious, historical, sociological, anthropological, or cultural. Yet most importantly, through feminist literary criticism, women have been the subjects of a vast number of re-configurations, each of which has ingrained the need for re-reading (Fallaize et al. 2).

Feminist criticism owes much of its inspiration to Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* published in 1949 (Fallaize, et al. 9). In general terms, de Beauvoir contends that the fact that man is associated with humanity, which is common in all cultures, confines women to a subordinate position in society. Later, in the 1970s, many critics within the feminist movement agreed with her and chose to focus further on how the linguistic aspects of writing were used as a tool that fostered male dominance (Blaubergs 135). They argued that there were many novels which were portrayed from a male perspective, and which therefore implanted a sexualized stereotypical perspective in society. Consequently, they resolved to change this by searching for a feminine language and writing that could give rise to a new literature. In this way, female writers began to play an important role in society with the aim of combating inequality, discarding what became known as “phallic critique” by detecting, exposing and suppressing sexist practices within literature (Sánchez 9).

From the 1980s onwards, Elaine Showalter dared to establish two different types of criticism within feminism (Sánchez 9). The first one, called “feminist critique”, was based on the approach to literature and the contextualization of texts from the point of view of the woman as reader (Sánchez 9). Hence, critics analyzed the role of women in the classics by exposing the patriarchal ideology reflected in the texts. And, on the other hand, there was "gynocritics", which was based on the analysis of works written by women (Sánchez 9). This was mostly concerned with the perspective of female writers on reality. In any case, both critical branches demonstrated and agreed that women had a universally accepted inferior position compared to men. Thus, one can affirm that feminist criticism emerged as a political necessity to create an alternative canon of literature, in order to provide new paths of thought and reflection (Sánchez 10).

These days, critics refer to a more comprehensive and less superficial feminist criticism of women's position in society. Actually, women are not only defined by their womanhood, they are also defined by a number of attributes, such as religion, class, sexual orientation, culture itself, among others. Therefore, feminist studies have a tendency to deal with issues such as gender, sexuality, and language, emphasizing equality between men and women and continuously challenging the patriarchal ideology and its structure.

According to the French feminists, the best way for women to obtain independence is by discovering their own sexuality and identity. This is why it is worth asking, what is the relationship between women's sexuality or identity as a model of displaced subjectivity and the feminine as an oppositional tool in textual practice? (Harris 4). Feminists like Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray agree that there is a connection between feminine subjectivity and feminine textuality, and as a result, they mention *écriture féminine*. This term introduced by Cixous opposes the traditional patriarchal structure of writing as she believes that “binaries -Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Logic/Passion, Active/Passive- can be traced back to the root binary: Man/Woman. She calls for women to subvert binary oppositions by writing their bodies as texts into existence, and ultimately writing a new history” (Crawford 42). This means

that the concept of *écriture féminine* serves as a disruption of *mastery*; defining *mastery* after Cixous as “a discourse within which she can operate yet prefers a “feminine” discourse” (Crawford 42). The mastery discourse conveys knowledge and power; an idea that would be supported by the Lacanian sense since the master is the one who possesses power and knowledge, and thereby, in turn, these two become his principal means of transmitting knowledge and power (Crawford 43). Feminists who endorse *écriture féminine* claim that “the very structures of Western language exclude women and can function only through the silencing of women and the repression of feminine sexual drives” (Rabine 23). As a form of resistance against this Western language, they invent another one with a feminine syntax, capable of altering the structures of patriarchy by incorporating the connection of the feminine body with language. Kristeva explains that the reason for this connection is that the history of the twentieth century have demonstrated that one cannot be transformed without the other (Crawford 2004: 46).

For a better understanding of this, it is relevant to consider Saussure's theory in which he says that language is a system of signs that are constructed culturally and arbitrarily, reflecting the ideology of the society in which it is used. The meaning of a word is determined by associative relations at an individual level and at a collective level. This is, aside from the fact that each individual employs a set of associative relations to define a word, some words may have another connotation apart from their main meaning (Crawford 44). It depends on the context in which they are uttered and that is why "Larger cultural/societal constructs are at work in language and influence denotative and connotative meaning. Thus, it is possible to have collective associative relations" (Crawford 45).

Due to the great complexity of language, Helene Cixous concentrates primarily on its linguistic structure, reassigning significance to meanings. Hence, the body is rewritten within a set of new associative relations, becoming "a political revolution"(Crawford 46). Thus, if language is a representation of society, then it is reasonable that for Cixous language is the starting point of disruption. Irigaray joins

Cixous by pointing out that women have been reduced to being mere sexual objects of men, who receive significance from male perspective (women: wives, mothers, prostitutes). In this way, the body is culturally constructed, depriving women of the ability to express their sexuality freely. According to Verena Conley in her book *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine*:

Everything is language, and the body is always written, never a 'natural' body. The (political) economy of masculinity and femininity is organized by different needs and constraints which, when they become socialized and metaphorized, produce signs, relations of power and production, a whole immense system of cultural inscription (57).

For this reason, it is important for women to rediscover their sexuality, which is much broader than that of men (Crawford 47). As a result, the rewriting of the body is structured by the eruption of feminine sexuality, liberating it from patriarchal significance (Crawford 47). That women reject the fact of being mothers offers them a powerful place in society, which is exactly what they need to write out of their own experience and not out of the male perspective. To quote Luce Irigaray: “woman has sex organs just about everywhere...feminine language is more diffusive than its “masculine counterpart”. That is undoubtedly the reason... her language...goes off in all directions...” (Irigaray 43). Then, the fact that there are female writers who are very conscious of their sexuality, bursts with the expressions of a patriarchal ideology, ending at the same time with the oppression that it exerts on women. All this entails a rewriting of language and literature.

## B. Rewriting gender identity

When referring to rewriting from the point of view of feminism, one must recognize gender as an essential theme to be rewritten. Sara Salih in the book *Sexualities and Communications in Everyday Life* introduces Judith Butler's concept of *Performativity*, which will be a key point to understand how gender can be rewritten.

According to Salih, Butler refers to the distinction between sex and gender, claiming that all bodies have a gender inscribed on them since they are born into society (Salih 55). The body is influenced by this social existence, because there is no existence, if it is not social; and there is no “natural body” that pre-exists before such social existence (Salih 55). Thus, she defines gender as something which is not intrinsic to the individual. Gender is not something that one is, but rather, a set of acts that are repeated within a regulatory framework that is also restrictive (Salih 56). Therefore, gender is a social construct because social discourse affects the individual's choice of sexual identity. One could conclude that biological sex is an invariable category because people are born with it, while gender is a variable category. Then, is it possible for an individual to be driven by his/her instincts without being affected by his/her sex or by the imposed socio-cultural rules? Butler affirms that it is. Indeed, in her book *Gender Trouble* she argues that: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1990:29).

The point Butler is making here is that there is no identity that precedes language, rather language constructs and constitutes that identity, for there is no “I” without language. This is why gender identity is performative. The subject is the result of the application of that language, of those “expressions”. Owing to this, feminine does not have to be associated with a female body, nor does masculine have to be related to a male body. Kristeva supports this idea and states that gender is also shaped by “gestures, act, speech and clothing” (Kristeva, 176). Therefore, feminists believe that it is possible

to rearrange and rewrite the concepts of feminine and masculine. Given these assertions, it is important to keep in mind that a woman's femininity is not constrained by her female body, instead, a woman can rewrite her body through what she truly wishes to express in accordance with her nature, that is, her instinctual desires.

According to Nagore Gartzia Fernández (2015) one of the most important arguments when referring to the concept of writing is developed from an erotic dimension of language related to subjectivity and the sexed female body. She argues that this political-erotic dimension of writing consists in locating the female body in a place of vulnerability where it is not visualized and perceived as a burden, but as a gender awareness and political position (Fernandez 2015). As for the abject bodies, she mentions that they have been vindicated from the *queer*, fighting against the homonormatized identities of gays and lesbians; and, opposing the ethics of the "good queer", the one who assumes and accepts the heteropatriarchal life (Fernández 2015). Thus, it gives rise to the visibility of non-normative activities and experiences that transgress the binary categories of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual.

All this is echoed by those feminist writers who use their bodies to rewrite literature, seeking to challenge patriarchal stereotypes by offering diverse identities. Nevertheless, one must know that male writers can also join this practice. Some examples are Joyce, Artaud, Genet, who are male writers that are willing to "practice difference" and disrupt the phallographic discourse, (Bordo 62).

The novels *Mr. Loverman* and *Sexing the Cherry* have a direct connection with the history of feminism and the concept of *écriture féminine*. This is not only reflected in the female characters, but also in the male ones; where, both Winterson and Evaristo, take these previously mentioned approaches as their foundation for the deconstruction of their characters' gender and identity. While both are female writers, they rewrite male characters from their experience and perception. The term "performativity" is consistently included, in such a way that the characters offer a wider concept of gender which questions patriarchal ideology and, simultaneously, rewrite notions related to masculinity and sexuality.

## Chapter 2. Rewriting in *Sexing the cherry*

The postmodern writer Jeanette Winterson has influenced in the literary culture of England, starting with her first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. The story that begins with an adopted child named Jeanette who in order to defend her homosexuality confronts her fervent mother fits quite well with the real life of the writer. This fictional character and the author, apart from sharing a name, also share life experiences. Therefore, it is not surprising that some readers think that *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is an autobiography rather than a fictional novel. Winterson didn't make that very clear either when asked if it was just fiction.

Traditional autobiography and the autobiographical mode of fiction has always privileged the patriarchal point of view and discourse, for which the category of “subject” has always been seen from a male point of view. The feminine is missing and can only be accessed through *Otherness*. This sense of *Otherness* is part of the patriarchal domain, being an obstacle to feminine emancipation. According to Simone de Beauvoir's “He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other” (2007:76), to be the Other is then, to be a non-subject. Postmodernism problematizes this and attempts to make no such distinction. The postmodernist subject is a social and cultural construct which is in constant change; and that depends on the changes made in discourses of religion, race, gender, or sexuality. For this reason, many of the contemporary writers who are women or queer seek and employ new ways to represent those identities of women, gay and lesbian through performance rather than paying too much attention to the notion of the “subject”. That said, Winterson questions the function of autobiography and insists “There is as much of me and my life on everyone of my books as there is in *Oranges*” (Miller 1997:5). Winterson's perception and understanding of the self is non-categorical as it is always in process, being constructed without limits. Hence, she chooses to make use of literary characters who relate to each other and deny the self as fixed. In addition, she is especially interested in the deconstruction of gender binarism, making gender fluidity and “other sexes” possible. Thus, Winterson is located somewhere between the masculine and the feminine.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, identity and gender are rewritten and represent through the main characters, Dog-Woman and Jordan. However, I will focus only on Jordan's journey of self-awareness.



## 2.1. Background and plot summary of *Sexing the cherry*

*Sexing the Cherry* is a novel written in 1989 by Jeanette Winterson, which narrates the journey of a mother named Dog Woman and her adopted son, Jordan. The first part of the story is set in the seventeenth century and the second part refers to the twentieth century. The main characters are the ones who shape both space and time, as well as the boundaries between reality and fiction. The novel itself plays with history and explores the unconstrained nature of imagination by creating a subjective fragmentation of time.

*Sexing the Cherry* presents a dual narrative story. At first Jordan is a person who likes to travel, he is very reflective and is concerned with the course of time, reality, love, and many other scientific issues relevant in the seventeenth century. However, he and Dog-Woman have alter-egos who belong to the twentieth century.

The tale begins with Dog-woman, who has forgotten her real name and earns a living by breeding fighting dogs. Her appearance is unpleasant and grotesque since she is enormous, has a flat nose and plenty of smallpox scars. Once, she finds a baby by the river and decides to take him home, raise him and name him Jordan. The Dog-woman, despite being physically strong, stands out for her innocence and ignorance, which is reflected in her speech and her confusion regarding human body parts and sexuality. One could say that Dog-woman is a rather mythical character because of her figure, but in reality, her narrative is more realistic in comparison to Jordan's. Dog-woman is set in the midst of the Puritan Revolution of 1641, and the civil war after King Charles I is beheaded, and Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector. The Dog Woman struggles through this period and decides to behead her enemies and take revenge on the Puritans as soon as Charles II is put on the throne.

On the other hand, Jordan's narrative is replete with fantastical voyages. When Jordan is a child, he is enthralled with the sea, and loves boats. Therefore, he meets Tradescant, King Charles I's gardener, who decides to teach him botany and take him on a trip abroad to fetch new exotic plants for the king. One of the first fruits that these two bring is a pineapple, which shocks the local English because they consider it to be sexually connoted, recalling the first time Jordan saw a banana and the Londoners were astonished when they found a resemblance to male genitals.

After Tradescant dies, Jordan embarks on several voyages that are uncertain as to whether they are real or part of his imagination. This ambiguity is constant throughout the novel. In one of his trips, he meets a dancer whose name is Fortunata and completely captivated by her, decides to pursue this mysterious woman. Along the way, he meets Zillah and her sisters, who are called the Twelve Dancing Princesses, like the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. Eleven of them explain to Jordan the reasons why their arranged marriages have failed and how after getting rid of their husbands, they have lived happily by doing what they truly desire.

In the chapter "Some years later" two new characters are introduced: Nicholas Jordan and the ecologist, who are the alter-egos of Jordan and Dog-woman. Towards the end, both stories overlap, giving rise to a new beginning for both characters.

## 2.2. Fluid gender identity

Winterson presents Jordan as a complex and enigmatic male character, rejecting the reproduction of stereotypical masculinity and challenging the dominant role of men in society. In other words, she questions masculinity, which is inherently toxic and unrealistic.

Men are men to the extent they are not women: masculine, independent, invulnerable, tough, strong, aggressive, powerful, commanding, in control, rational, and non-emotional. "Real women" (that is, middle- or upper-middle-class white women) are dependent, vulnerable, pliant, weak, supportive, nurturing, intuitive, emotional, and empathic. "Real women" and "real men" are essentially different in patriarchal culture. (Becker 27).

Certainly, patriarchal society oppresses women but it also circumscribes the role of men and grants them dominance and control. As a result, failure to accomplish this may cause them frustration and dissatisfaction. Patriarchy forces men to be strong and not to be ruled by emotions or show vulnerability. They are usually given the role of women's protectors, placing them above their female counterparts, whilst bestowing them with heroism. Winterson tackles this matter by assigning her characters abnormal roles that do not fit with the expectations imposed by patriarchal ideology. She presents male characters as complex beings and offers a picture of men's experience in terms of understanding their identity and sexuality. Thus, she succeeds in deconstructing masculinity and manhood by portraying controversial characters such as Jordan, who is notable for his great sensitivity, imagination and creativity. Such traits free him from fulfilling conventional values.

In *Sexing the Cherry* the female characters such as Dog-Woman or The Twelve Dancing Princesses murder male figures in order to reverse the roles. The place occupied by most male characters in the novel is that of being fragile, weak and

feminine. Instead, the role of the women is to be fierce, violent and powerful. This role reversal is also present in the identification of the main characters with exotic fruits: The pineapple is associated with femininity and is assigned to Jordan since he is in quest of his true nature, questioning his masculinity; whereas, the banana is attributed to Dog-Woman, which alludes to the male genitals and conveys her phallic features.

Jordan is concerned with issues such as love and the meaning of life. He is not afraid of being driven by his instincts, something that creates a major dilemma since his behavior is not that of a "real man". Indeed, when he is looking for Fortunata, he does not hesitate to dress like a woman. Throughout this experience, he becomes aware that there is a hidden language between women and according to the Twelve Dancing princesses men are perceived as controlling and insensitive. The author rewrites these insights through Jordan's imaginary world challenging the perspective of men in society.

Furthermore, what makes Jordan especial is that he opts to write his own story through fanciful voyages and adventures in which he assesses his physical limitations: "To escape from the weight of the world, I leave my body where it is, in conversation or at dinner, and walk through a series of winding streets to a house standing back from the road" (Winterson 28). Jordan wishes to escape from the real world, leave his body, cross the space-time boundaries and embark in the wonderful world of fantasy in order to find his essence. In this way, he seeks love and tries to explore his feminine self by creating bonds with female figures. Hence, he stands in the middle of the masculine and feminine drawing a blurred line, blending genders. This desire to create his own life and his decision to search for "The dancing part" of himself are clear examples of *écriture féminine*. This is a term coined by Hélène Cixous where she describes that women's *jouissance* and writing have been repressed and that the role of women is being the unconscious of a male dominated society. In this way *L'écriture féminine* refuses coherent narrative techniques, paving the way for the poetic, the unconscious. As a consequence, Cixous urges women to rediscover language and desire in order to dismantle the structure of phallogocentrism. Thereby, Jordan's narrative comes in contrast

with that of Dog-woman, who would be a satirical representation of the symbolic Father described by Lacan. (Wacelak, 2005).

On the other hand, the title of the work *Sexing The Cherry* refers to the moment when Jordan is working in the king's garden, trying to combine different botanical species in a cherry tree to create a new one. This horticultural technique called grafting consists of joining the tissues of different plants in order to make them grow together. This method is used as a metaphor by Winterson, referring to the constant challenge of gender issues since grafting makes it possible for someone's sex or gender to lose their characteristics. By doing so, the author implies that just as gender and sex are changeable, one's identity is too. This practice, which coincidentally is carried out by Jordan, could refer to the character's attempt to remake an improved version of himself. Besides, it is also related to the aforementioned concept of a fluid identity and the creation of "other sex" with an undefined gender, thus disrupting and mocking conventional gender categories.

Winterson conveys a diversity of gender-blurred characters to make readers question these matters. The fact that Jordan is found by Dog-woman in a river, means that no one knows his true origin. Hence, this event adds to his fluid identity, which is represented metaphorically by the river in which he was found, and it is not mere coincidence that the character is named after the river Jordan mentioned in the bible. The image of flowing water is permanent in the novel as far as Jordan is concerned, it is part of his life. This idea, together with grafting, shape Jordan as that third sex, that infinitely changing gender.

### 2.3. Identity through symbolism

According to the definition of online *Encyclopedia Britannica*, a symbol is “a communication element intended to simply represent or stand for a complex of person, object, group, or idea” (2013). Another definition of a symbol is presented by Shaw:

Something used for, or regarded as, representing something else. More specifically, a symbol is a word, phrase, or other expression having a complex of associated meanings; in this sense, a symbol is viewed as having values different from those of whatever is being symbolized... Many poets have used the rose as a symbol of youth and beauty; a flag is a piece of cloth which stands for or is a symbol of a nation. (1881: 367)

Fadaee mentions Rokni who provides a classification for symbols:

Significative: Arbitrary symbols which are common in each particular field of study. For instance, @ is a symbol used in email addresses.

Metaphoric: Significant symbols used for natural phenomena, like lion which is a symbol of courage.

Commemorative: Symbols which add a real event to a memory.

Sacramental: Symbols used in myths and customs. (2009:22)

Having said this, symbols in literature are usually words, characters, objects, places or ideas that suggest something beyond their literal meaning evoking a range of additional significance. In *Sexing the Cherry*, symbolism takes the form of a literary tool called allegory, which is the continuing use of metaphors, as Rokni's classification shows. Winterson uses allegory to rewrite and explore several issues related to self-awareness. This exploration is presented in the “mysterious” relationship of Jordan and Fortunata. Therefore, it is important to analyze through symbolism the process of self-discovery of both characters. To this end, this section is mainly focused on the following selected fragment, which is from the chapter called *THE NATURE OF TIME*, when

Jordan finds the dancing princess, Fortunata and she starts narrating her story to him: "My name is Fortunata," she said, "This is the first thing I saw. It was winter[...] 'Are there not such places?' she said, and I fell silent, not knowing how to answer." (37). (Annex 1).

Fortunata presents herself the same way Jordan did at the very beginning of the novel: "My name is Jordan. This is the first thing I saw, It was night,..." (9) This could be a clue to think that Jordan, who is the one paraphrasing Fortunata's words and relating their encounter, might not be trusted and could be inventing the whole story. In the next lines after Fortunata's speech, Jordan confirms that she is lying: "LIES 8: It was not the first thing she saw, how could it have?"(37). He even bothers to admit that he lies too: "And so what we have told you is true, although it is not" (38). Apart from this, Jordan says that he does not know when he met Fortunata and he is still trying to figure out whether she exists or is just part of his imagination. This is rather confusing but at the same time it makes sense since he clarifies that they are "like those who dream". Jordan admires Fortunata for her way of living and it seems that she has captivated him but, is he just expressing his dependence on an ideal image of a woman or is Fortunata his own projected image?. Thus, he says: "Was I searching for a dancer whose name I did not know or was I searching for the dancing part of myself?"(18). Dancing here is no longer an activity to share with another person, not like one of princesses and princes, who are matched while dancing, but one that signifies heterogeneity. Dancing seems to have another connotation such as the representation of freedom. Hence, Fortunata may be Jordan's alter-ego, that better version of himself that he is so desperate to discover.

Several other symbols express freedom and oppression in Fortunata's speech. For instance, she says that the first thing she saw was winter, which is a cold season where snow is present and things freeze. Snow usually symbolizes a freezing point in life and this could be referring to how Fortunata felt when she was about to marry. She probably felt as sunken as the robin that she helped out of the snow. This bird has different meanings depending on the culture but one thing is for sure, a robin represents

hope, renewal and rebirth. Consequently, the red wild roses, the blazing berries and the dark green of the holly tree, go together with what Fortunata desires and with who she is. On the other hand, red is the color of extremes as it means passionate love, adventures, violence, fire and blood. This color together with the blazing berries might be representing Fortunata's braveness, and the green holly tree could be another symbol of hope and progress. Additionally, in Christianity, the Virgin Mary is recognized as the "rose without thorns" and according to Mid-Mediterranean folklore, berries are Jesus' blood (Courtney, 2007). All these ideas share a value that both, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, showed at the time, courage.

Another example of symbolism is how Fortunata and her sisters were getting married: "On New Year's day, in blood-red roses and black hair"(37). Again, New Year's Day represents renewal but their dresses and their hair colour could represent either two things, power or destruction. Black and red together are colours that convey dominance, and for the Twelve Princesses, this could be a way of expressing anger towards the situation in question. Marriage then, is portrayed as a negative act, almost like imprisonment or a living death. This idea is all over Fortunata's words when she describes how they have to close their windows, hiding from the world. Psychologically, this instance symbolises the uncovering of the shadow, the discovering of the inner self. (Green, 2009).

The silver city that Fortunata mentions also plays an important role because it is the place where she danced. Silver is a gemstone that is believed to be a mirror to the soul, the metal of the psychic mind and emotions. This is connected to the journey of the self Winterson represents through Fortunata. The boat she takes to escape on her wedding day is part of that journey, a place to discover what she is as Jordan does throughout the novel. The boat goes with the fluidity of the water, which is known as a universal symbol of the unconscious mind (Cirlot 2006), and, as mentioned previously, the act of dancing attaches to this idea. Oceans are ungovernable and that is why they represent freedom.



Finally, Fortunata reveals to everyone in the church that she flies and instead of descending like in the original Fairy tale, where the Dancing Twelve Princesses used to hide their desire for freedom in the underground, she elevates herself unashamed.

Fortunata is the clear representation of self-awareness and that is why she asks Jordan: “Are there not such places?”(37) because she is trying to tell him that she is just a product of himself. A person or a place that is in him, his alter-ego, his mirror of the soul, his desire for freedom, his silver city, and his fortune and destiny, as her name indicates.

### Chapter 3. Rewriting in *Mr Loverman*

As Evaristo describes in her thesis *Mr Loverman and the Men in Black British Fiction: The Representation of Black Men in Black British Fiction*, in 1980, there began to be a community of women writing about race, sexuality, class and gender (Evaristo 336). In this way, their position of exclusion and invisibility in the British mainstream was dissipating as they were creating a feminist culture based on the productive and beneficial exchange of different cultures and thoughts. This “provided a creative space for, by, and about black women” (Evaristo 336). Indeed, this caused a major upheaval in black British literature, which was generally dominated by male writers; since black women had found their voices as literary writers, affecting the way in which black men were represented (Evaristo 336).

At the time, black women suffered oppression not only because they were women but because of their race, class, and sexuality, which could be reflected in every aspect of their lives. It was mainstream white feminism that also silenced the voices of black women, hence the beginning of black political activism (Evaristo 337). According to Evaristo, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is an Indian philosopher and expert in literary criticism, was one of the first postcolonial theorists to question her feminist hegemony as a white, middle-class woman. She asserted that women themselves were perpetrators of the marginalization of other women; making them responsible for silencing others because of existing class and racial differences (Chakravorty, 257). Nonetheless, due to black feminist literary activism, a black British literature has emerged and today it can be observed in the prevalence of fictional novels written by black women in Britain (Evaristo 338). With this in mind, Evaristo agrees with Alison Donnell by confirming that Caribbean literature from the 1950s onward, written by both women and men, always has its focus on childhood; and although the protagonist or third-person narrator is an adult, this literary genre usually has as principal characters a child or a young woman (Evaristo 341). As such, other characters, like the mother or father, are only perceived through the main character's perspective, thereby not realizing

them in depth (Evaristo 341). However, there are always few exceptions where the main character is a young boy as in the novel "Lazy Eye" (2005) by Donna Daley Clarke (Evaristo 343).

Evaristo clarifies that her protagonist, Barrington, is part of the "West Indian Generation", a first migrant generation formed mainly by Caribbean communities, who arrived in Britain after the Second World War (Evaristo 300). However, she declares that she did not want "to recreate another version of the many novels published over the past fifty years about the early years of arrival" (Evaristo 351). Rather, she wanted to do one of the variations of such novels by taking "a familiar archetype and subvert it" (Evaristo 352). Evaristo gives voice to Barrington by conveying him as a first-person narrator because she believes it is a way of providing more authenticity to her story. In order to disrupt patterns depicted in other novels similar to hers, she creates an elderly homosexual character who feels comfortable enough in his adoptive country and does not display nostalgia for his past. In an interview with Jennifer Gustar, the writer reveals that for Barrington there is no longing for childhood, as he has built a home in Britain and prefers to remain there (Gustar, 2015). Thus, this does not fit with the Windrush generation because the majority of them did have a desire to return to their home country (Gustar, 2015). Apart from this, "by inscribing a queer narrative into this founding generation of Caribbean immigrants, *Mr Loverman* disrupts the "clean straightforward sexuality" that remains an unresponded condition of belonging in the Caribbean diaspora in Britain" (Newns 142).

In conclusion, Bernardine Evaristo rewrites and gives voice to that first generation "Windrush" through through Barry; presenting identity as irremediably intersectional as well as interrogating assumptions about black British identities. In other words, *Mr Loverman* contributes to the inclusion of marginal perspectives into identity narratives set in a black queer British context. It is important to bear in mind that performativity is also brought into place to define identity and comprehend the difficulties faced when someone does not comply with certain sociocultural norms established in society.

### 3.1. Background and plot summary of *Mr Loverman*

*Mr Loverman* is a postmodern literary work that was written in 2013 by Bernardine Evaristo. It explores the cultural myths of the older British Caribbean community and painstakingly shows through the story of Barrington the consequences of not being honest with oneself.

Barrington Jedidiah Walker is a husband, father and grandfather, but also a 74-year-old self-educated man who lives a double life. He is in love with his gay best friend, Morris, with whom he has an out-of-wedlock relationship. Barrington has been married to his wife, Carmel, for 50 years, although the marriage has increasingly deteriorated over time. His secret relationship with Morris began in Antigua, more specifically in Hackney, when they were still in their teens and has been ongoing through decades of their adult life in London. In order to explain to his wife why he does not have sex with her, Barry lies claiming that he has a low sex drive when in fact, he has an energetic sex life with Morris. Morris is a sweet and compliant man who has always wanted to live together with his lover and unlike Barry, is not afraid of disclosing his sexual orientation. The problem is that Barrington's family and his wife's judgmental friends indirectly stand in the way of the two old men's happiness, making it difficult for Barry to take such a decision. Meanwhile, Carmel, who is deeply religious, believes that her husband has been sleeping with other women for a long time and is completely disappointed with her marriage. Little does she know that Barry is a homosexual and that she is part of a cover-up, a life her husband has contrived to hide his true self and avoid any kind of judgement.

Barrington or Barry is a peculiar character, he is a man who loves to read and uses an unconventional language in which he mixes different dialects and languages, thus showing off his knowledge. In contrast, Carmel's language is much more poetic, with rhythmic sentences plagued by strong emotions and memories in which she

describes her frustrated erotic desires for her husband, her ups and downs throughout their relationship, and her long road to education and self-reliance.

Overall, this is a novel out of the ordinary as it is a tale of two gay black Caribbean characters, who break social and historical standards, as it is well known that in Antigua and Jamaica sex between two men is still illegal and there is great social opposition to sexual diversity. Apart from this, the novel leads us to question issues such as gender, class, race and so on, depicting identity as an intersectional queer social construct.

### 3.2. Identity through an intersectional view

Intersectionality is a term that has been introduced in a range of academic disciplines and that was created by Kimberlé Crenshaw. She describes the term as “a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytical tool” (Crenshaw 312). “She originally proposed intersectionality as a way of changing policies and activist practices to address Black women’s unique needs” (Corlett and Marvin 260). According to the Oxford Dictionary, intersectionality is “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise”. This term has developed very well in legal studies when exploring oppression in different disciplines. The issue is that this idea makes it harder to think about, for instance, sexual orientation as a homogenous and singular category, since this theory takes into account people’s overlapping identities in order to comprehend the complexity of the prejudices they have to face. Intersectionality confirms that people are often subjected to multiple sources of oppression. However, there are some ambiguities surrounding intersectionality and “precisely the vagueness and open-endedness of ‘intersectionality’ may be the very secret of its success” (Davis, 2008, p. 69). It is not clear for theorist if intersectionality must be approach as a heuristic device, a theory, a framework or as a concept (Corlett and Marvin 261). Nevertheless, those theorist that employ intersectionality as a framework or as a theory explore how social identities intersect and are constructed socioculturally; besides, examining these social identities at the micro-level of individual experience revealing multiple interlocking social inequality at the macro-social-structural level (Bowleg, 2012). In *Mr Loverman*, intersectionality between gender, sexuality and ethnicity is found through Barrington. Bernardine Evaristo affirms that “In attempting to write against stereotype, I created a protagonist with what I consider to be these self-same multiple, intersecting identities. There is the intersection between what Barrington appears to be to most people and what he actually is.[...] At every turn I wanted Barrington to defy expectation”. (Evaristo 361).

From the beginning of the novel, Barrington's dilemma and dramatic need to be with Morris is introduced and he does not waste time in identifying whom he loves. The rest of the novel revolves, mainly, around his self-acceptance, and how he copes with the different factors that stop him from leaving his wife Carmel to finally move in with Morris. His greatest concern is that he is afraid of revealing himself as a homosexual person due to what his family might think about him, as well as the cultural and social condemnation he might suffer. Throwing away fifty years of marriage and thinking about the reactions his daughters and grandson might have, paralyzes him. Not to mention, some of Carmel's closest friends, who are not hesitant to show their disdain for gay people; and the rejection he may get from members of his local community. For Barrington, Hackney is his home since he has lived there for many years and it is where all his Caribbean generation lives. The idea of moving to another place is not of his liking but Hackney has become one of his obstacles for not coming out of the closet. This might be a good example of how ethnicity is one of the factors that oppress Barry.

Although in the novel he has a problem with identifying himself with other people, and feels unique and superior to others, he does have the need to belong to a group, or a community. Moreover, he may have married Carmel out of the fear of discovery, but his ability to use her to hide his true self while demonizing her points out his privilege as a man. Barry wants to keep this kind of advantage in the relationship he has with Morris, which is built on an old-fashion male chauvinism. Furthermore, his refusal to be labelled a “pooftah”, brings the discrimination he underwent when being young back to life and explains why he wants to conserve his masculinity. In fact, Barry accepts being a man in the sense of being masculine no matter his sexuality. It is also important to highlight how the title of the novel makes a reference to Shabba Ranks’s *Mr Loverman*, a song that hyper-sexualized masculinity of Caribbean men, which is full of homophobic and sexist content. These allusions help to emphasize and understand how stereotypical sexuality fuels Barry’s fear of being an “antiman”, which is shown in the novel several times:

“Morris, I am an individual, specific, not generic. I am no more a poofteh that I am a homo, buller, or antiman I start to quietly hum “I Am What I am”.

“You homosexual, Barry” he says, goin’ po-faced on me”. (108)

Apart from this, Barry uses language to reinforce race and class prejudices. An example of this is when Barry is speaking to his grandson, who is jealous of him since his mother, Donna, does not allow him to speak patois:

But you got to treat patois as a separate language that you slip into when it’s socially acceptable to do so. I can speak the Queen’s when I feel like it. But most of the time I just do me own thing. Fear thee not, though, I know my syntax from my semiotics, my homographs from my homophones, and don’t even get me started on my dangling participles. (135).

In addition, it is explained how gender roles of black men must be followed by them regardless of their sexual orientation. Thus, race is more important than sex when speaking about gender performance but Barry does not think the same: “The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities” (100). Barry believes that gender is an inherent part of human nature and that women have a deficiency that men need to compensate for. This conveys his misogynistic side, which is related to what is mentioned above about his relationship with Carmel. He pours out his frustration by teasing and taunting his wife. However, that is just a demonstration of the disapproval and self-denigration he feels for himself. Therefore, that men need to complement women, is another idea that affects and hinders Barry's self-acceptance and contributes to his prejudices about homosexuals. After all, that is what he has learned from his culture.

To conclude, Barry is a good example of intersectionality between ethnicity, sexuality and gender, as his problem of self-acceptance illustrates how all these aspects overlap to the point where one depends on the other, thereby simultaneously contributing to his identity construction, his behavior and his perception of the rest of the world.



### 3.3. Queer lifestyle in *Mr Loverman*.

Queer uses of space and time develop in opposition to the institutions of heterosexuality, family and reproduction (Halberstam, 2005). These institutions are influenced by heteronormativity, a term that was coined in 1991, by Michael Warner. Some scholars provide numerous definitions for the concept but all of them agree on the fact that it is an ideological social structure and more specifically, “a societal hierarchical system that privileges and sanctions individuals based on presumed binaries of gender and sexuality; as a system it defines and enforces beliefs and practices about what is “normal” in everyday life” (Toomey, McGuire, & Russell 188). Thus, heteronormativity does not only assume that heterosexuality is “superior” to another sexual orientation, but it also sets the gender-specific behaviors that people need to accomplish. This is, men and women are taught to follow complementary behaviors that are scripted according to their gender; “problems arise when one's individual needs begin to jar with cultural norms, and when the expectations resulting from one particular marker of identity (for instance race) cannot be reconciled with those stemming from another (for instance sex)” (Karschay and Rostek 125). Consequently, people who do not act within this male/female gender norms suffer discrimination and are denigrated, assaulted or in extreme cases, murdered. In his article published on January 28, 2021, Juan Ignacio Cortés, contributor to the Amnesty International Spain, mentions a report carried out by The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), which confirms that 69 UN member states still punish and criminalize sexual acts between people of the same gender. The report also highlights that in six of these states death penalty is a legal procedure when sanctioning these acts; while in another five states, the imposition of this type of punishment is also under consideration. In addition, he claims that LGTBI people are often exposed to hatred crimes due to their sexual orientation and gender.

In contrast to the heteronormative system, queerness itself is the result of different and strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and unconventional economic practices. In *Mr Loverman*, this use of queer time and space can be clearly appreciated. The protagonist of the story, Barrington, employs this without realizing it,

for he is a person who does not merely live within the expected standards established by society. While it is also true that in certain aspects he seeks to preserve those standards, there are many others in which he does not. This creates a sort of ongoing struggle with his own self, which is linked to the sense of belonging as well as to his journey on self-identity. The most recognizable means by which Barry expresses his queerness is the language he uses, as he does not stick to a single dialect. Barry is an autodidact and he is constantly showing off how he goes from speaking standard English to Patois, and sometimes to French or even Latin; queering language. Evaristo asserts that her main objective with Barrington's use of patois was to offer readers that enriching experience of him as a black Caribbean man, whereby his language, diction and syntax are strategies to create a much more realistic figure who can step outside the pages of the book (Evaristo 353). She also indicates that “writing a novel in patois then becomes a political act of literary insurrection” (Evaristo 353).

Another of the means Barry uses to express his queerness is his behavior. From the very first chapter of the novel, *The Art of Marriage*, Barrington, despite being a seventy-four-year-old man with a family, continues going to parties as a young person would do. This is quite shocking since he is not sticking to the conventional slots. Moreover, Barry is accompanied by his lover Morris, who, along with him, is disrupting heteronormative timeframes. In fact, Barry refuses to be just a grandfather, who must live an old man's life. Although he is perceived as a husband, father and grandfather by his community, Evaristo confirms that he is “a homosexual reconstruction of these fathers, grandfathers, great-great grandfathers” (Evaristo 361). The dancehall where Morris and Barrington are, offers them a sense of freedom and provides them with an alternative escape from reality (Newns 143).

Barry is not only a married man who likes to party, but also a gay man who has not publicly come out of the closet. His wife Carmel thinks that, like any heterosexual man, Barry is cheating on her with another woman, which is not true. This renders him non-compliant with the scripted gender behaviors because as a black Caribbean man, his secret lover must be a woman. Barry's peculiarity is that unlike Morris, he does not identify himself as homosexual; actually, he feels rejection towards these people. Barry

remains faithful to this idea throughout most of the novel, and although on certain occasions he may show a slight degree of empathy towards homosexuals, it is just at the very end when he finally changes his perspective. The reason for his denial is due to an inner conflict, because for him to place himself in the shoes of gay people would mean admitting that he is one too. In other words, Barry is well aware that he is attracted to men, but he does not feel represented by the “antimen”. This is another example of queerness for he refuses labels to define him. Lucinda Newns states that “Barry asserts that his sexual activities with men have nothing to do with any lessening of his masculinity” (Newns 148). He is an hypermasculine figure yet, he constantly alludes to the limited modes of identification available to him since he is a queer black man, who rejects the traditional gay discourse, which promotes “coming out” and embrace gay brotherhood (Newns 148). On the other hand, Evaristo mentions in her thesis Fred D’Aguiar’s essay called ‘Home’, where he describes that “Unbelongingness is that condition: a nervous disposition coupled with a psychic tremulousness or sense of inadequacy in relation to time and place” (Evaristo 358). She claims that Barry’s “sense of inadequacy is not racial, but it shows itself in an unwillingness to fully identify as homosexual, a self-denial of his own sexuality” (Evaristo 358). Therefore he prefers to believe that he is a “Barrysexual” creating his own category.

Another very important aspect is that, at the beginning, Barry did not see a future with Morris but as the novel progresses, he changes his mind, which again leads to the failure to adhere to the schedules established by heteronormativity. Nevertheless, before this was in Barry’s mind, he was afraid of getting out of his comfort zone because the idea of leaving his home and his community was considered a traumatic event:

‘Morris,’ I replied slowly, ‘I don’t know if I can jump into the great abyss of social alienation with you’” (Evaristo 31).

“This is some heavy crap we dealing with, Morris. You asking me to turn my life upside down. I don’t know if I can take the upheaval. (Evaristo 32).

In both statements, there is a sense of belonging. According to some psychologists the sense of belonging is fundamental to humankind since if it was unimportant people would live solitary lives only coming together for procreation and kicking the children out of their sight. The main problem is that people cannot separate the importance of a sense of belonging from their mental and physical health because social ties are a protective factor that help to manage stress. When people feel that they have the support from others, they cope better with difficult situations. The fact that Barry does not want to say openly that he is gay is because he believes that he will not be supported by his family, and will be rejected by his community. All these factors provoke him stress since “Man haf fe do wha man haf fe do”. In addition, he really likes his home, and according to him his “feet are cemented to its foundations”. Leaving would be “like desmanting and remantling” himself “in some strange, cold place”. Barry states that “houses don’t turn into homes straightaway. They need years of life live to feel comfortable”. What he is conveying by this is that leaving his house would be similar to letting part of himself go and he is not prepared for that. It is important to take into account Caroline Koegler contribution about this situation, where she says that “Housing” and “home-making” are “metaphors for including marginalized voices into the novel genre” (Koegler 2). Moreover, Barry alludes that one of the issues that stop him from moving out is that he is used to Carmel cleaning and cooking. What is discernible from this is that there is great apprehension and uncertainty about leaving the heteronormative domestic place. Thus, Barry doesn't seem to care about his wife being depressed or about their hostile relationship.

I turn the key in the lock, push open the door and wait, cock-eared. In the old days, Carmel sometimes used to bolt it, forcing me to haul my arse over the side-gate and sit on the lawn mower in the shed, waiting for the dawn to rise and for her wrath to descend. Until I kicked the garden side-door down one time to show her that she can’t keep the king out of his castle any more. (Evaristo 9).

Barry does try to behave like a “real man”, as he rebels against his wife to show who is in charge. He is the head of the family and therefore, he will not allow his wife to leave him sleeping outside the house. Both behaviors are within the gender stereotypes. On the one hand, Barry is displaying how a man uses violence and his power to get what he wants, which in this case would be entering the house. On the other hand, Carmel loses authority because her punishment does not work. She is not the real owner of the house, but Barry. In any case, as time goes by, Barry realizes that there is something far more overriding motive that would be worth leaving home for, and that is to put an end to a miserable marriage in which neither he nor Carmel are happy.

When Barry is seriously starting to contemplate the possibility of asking Carmel for the divorce, it is when he truly creates in his imagination a queer home, a seeting outside the heteronormative ideological social structure: “Imagine it. We can live anywhere we so-to-choose. How about Miami? I hear that place is full pooftahs. Maybe we can live in a luxurious bungalow in Florida with sprinklers on the lawn and half-naked butler serving up our evening aperitif” (Evaristo 39). Yet, Barry is still biased against homosexuals since he considers Miami to be the appropriate destination for him and Morris just because a significant number of homosexuals live there. It is noteworthy that indirectly, he is including himself in the “pooftahs” community as he derogatorily puts it. This is connected to self-acceptance since his sexuality is part of his identity.

Apart from this, Barry is confronted with religious beliefs which contribute to the establishment of heteronormative behaviors. For instance, there is a time when Carmel's religious friends enter the house and he feels uncomfortable because they are invading his private space and judging homosexuals: “Does it not say in Romans that if man lies with man as he lies with woman, he will surely be put to death? Same goes with woman-woman business...” (Evaristo 48). Barry tries to keep his composure refraining from intervening in their homophobic conversation. But, there comes a point where Donna, Barry's eldest daughter, decides to give her opinion, which Carmel's

friends disapprove of. For this reason, they start questioning Donna about whether she would like her son Daniel to be an “antiman”, to which she does not give a succinct answer. It is then, when Barry, instinctively, replies to their questions:

A voice wades into the conversation: ‘Look how you upset this young boy.’

Is this me talking?

‘You should be ashamed ... insinuating things. How do you think that makes him feel?’

And my daughter don’t need to justify herself to anyone in this room. (Evaristo 51).

Barry cannot believe that he had the courage to bring to an end such a controversial conversation. He is unconsciously reacting against homophobia because he certainly feels attacked by their severe remarks. Additionally, Barry reacts to this “attack” when he is at home, a home he identifies with and is part of his queer behavior. He has been repressed for a long time and is not going to allow people in his house who speak about queer people in such a way. This is a normal reaction since his house, as has been mentioned, represents his queer identity.

Eventually, once Carmel returns from her trip and demands a divorce, he is no longer afraid to leave her, because she has been the one who has taken the decision and is moving to Antigua. This means that Barry has the possibility of matching his homosexuality with his still heterosexual behavior without moving out of his house. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind, that Barry’s previous refusal to leave his house and life behind in order to enter a fully queer life could be a way of locating himself in spaces *between* different communities (Newns 154). This is, as there is discrimination from the part of the black community as well as from the white gay community, one might relocate himself/herself in a place in between this two. However, Carmel’s decision provides Barrington with an opportunity to live in and belong to a queer black diasporic culture (Newns 154).

According to Newns, “both of these new “homes”, the queer black diasporic space and the queer domestic space suggest a “coming out” narrative that is not “moving out” in the sense of rejecting one’s previous identity in favor of a new one”. She refers to the *reprocessing* of home, which “makes space for the queer body within” (Newns 155). There is a scenario that alludes to this “coming out” narrative in which Barry wants to buy a Lamborghini. Referring to his “late-life crisis”, he insists to Morris that he wants to purchase it, but Morris convinces Barry to fix his old car. The metaphor Evaristo is conveying here is that instead of forgetting about the past, Barry needs to embrace it and carry on transitioning while recognizing his homosexuality. Barry wants to buy a new car just like he wants to start a new queer life but it is not about that, it is about being who he really is without forgetting who he was. Thus, Morris and Barry are both a combination of the past and the present and they don't have to forget about the past to “fix” themselves.

## Conclusion

The act of rewriting is used by writers for different goals and in different fields. However, the two major areas in which this practice is highly useful are gender and identity issues. Women writers and more specifically, feminists, consider that just as society undergoes changes in the real world, these changes should be portrayed in literature as well. In this way, these writers use fiction to challenge the structure and basis of a patriarchal society in which men and women must adhere to certain pre-established norms.

Simone de Beauvoir along with other French feminist introduced the *écriture féminine*, offering women the possibility to write from their true nature, detaching themselves from the significance given by the patriarchal language. Hence, female writers have the opportunity to offer new perspectives in literature by recognizing themselves and writing from their most instinctual needs. Considering that identity and gender are social constructs and can be performed, they can also be rewritten in literature through the positioning of the “natural body” in a place of vulnerability in which the body is perceived from a feminist gaze instead of a male one. From this position, new flexible and diverse identities are produced, characterized by non-normative experiences, thus breaking away from the stereotypical identities reflected in patriarchal literature.

Winterson and Bernardine are among these writers who wish to deconstruct the ideological patriarchal perception through their stories *Sexing The Cherry* and *Mr. Loverman*, using their “natural body” to rewrite other bodies.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson questions men's masculinity and virility through her male characters, especially, through the story of Jordan. She endows Jordan with a personality full of feminine qualities in contrast to the masculine qualities of the female



characters in the novel. Hence, Jordan is a being who is not afraid of questioning his gender and sexuality whilst trying to build his true identity. To this end, the author employs symbolism and metaphors, introducing the character of Fortunata as the inner feminine part of Jordan's self that he has yet to discover and as an example of *écriture féminine*. With all this, and including the metaphor of Grafting, the author enables the creation of a "third sex" and presents a character that is not placed within the binary codes, and rather, is the product of a blend between the feminine and the masculine, shattering patriarchal expectations.

On the other hand, in *Mr. Loverman*, Evaristo rewrites black British identities through her character Barry. Although in this case, unlike Jordan, her character is afraid of stepping out of the conventional norms imposed by society. The author questions identity and gender by depicting a Caribbean homosexual character with a queer personality and lifestyle. Therefore, Barry stands out for his chauvinistic qualities, yet simultaneously, he is an unconventional figure who lives an "abnormal" life and does not comply with heteronormative expectations. Through his complex choice of language and his peculiar behavior, Barry does not fit into the statement of "being a real man". Moreover, he performs his identity by positioning himself in the middle of the black Caribbean community and the white gay community creating a queer black diasporic space. Furthermore, Evaristo uses intersectionality to illustrate that identity is a social construct, the result of a set of beliefs and social practices that are intertwined and mutually dependent.

To conclude, both characters show how identity and gender are indeed flexible and can be rewritten without being fully defined and fixed.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1.

My name is Fortunata,' she said. 'This is the first thing I saw. It was winter. The ground was hard and white. There were late roses in the hedges, wild and red, and the holly tree was dark green with blazing berries. It snowed every day, dense curtains of snow that wiped out the footprints coming to and from the house, leaving us to believe that no one ever came here or ever had. One day a robin landed on my windowsill and sank immediately. I dug it out with a teaspoon and it flew away, the snow falling like fetters from its wings. Because the snow was so deep it muffled the noise we made, and we crept about like a silent order, exchanging glances and surprising one another in the garden, where we moved in slow motion, each step shifting feet of snow like sand-dunes.

'As it grew colder and the snow hardened we carved statues from it, scenes from the Bible and the Greek heroes.

'It was the winter of our marriage, my sisters and I. We were to be married all together, all twelve of us on the same day. On New Year's Day, in blood-red dresses with our black hair.

'We decided to build a church in our garden. We built it out of the ice, and it cut our hands and the blood stained the snow like the wild red roses in the hedges. We worked without speaking, only pausing twice a day for meals and lighting up the dark with flares so that we could continue in spite of the shortness of the hours. It was finished the day before the ceremonies. The night before, our last night together as sisters, we slept as always in a long line of single beds beneath the white sheets and blankets like those who have fallen asleep in the snow. From this room, in the past, we had flown to a silver city that knew neither day nor night, and in that city we had danced for joy thinking nothing of the dawn where we lived.

'When it was dawn on our wedding day we dressed in our red dresses and unplaited our hair, and when we were ready we closed and locked the great windows that had been our means of escape and walked in single file from our bedroom down the marble staircase to the frozen church. We were married one by one under branches of mistletoe, but when it came to my turn, and I was the last, I looked at my husband to be, the youngest prince, who had followed us in secret and found us out, and I did not want him.

'At the last possible moment I pushed him aside and ran out of the church through the crowds of guests, mouths open like fishes.

'I took a boat and sailed round the world earning my living as a dancer. Eventually I came here and built this school. I never advertise. People find me because they want to, as you have.'

'I have met your sisters/ I said, and told her how they were all living together again in one place, and related the story of their various divorces.

'But the story they told me about you was not the same. That you escaped, yes, but that you flew away and walked on a wire stretched from the steeple of the church to the mast of a ship at anchor in the bay.'

She laughed. How could such a thing be possible?

'But,' I said, 'how could it be possible to fly every night from the window to an enchanted city when there are no such places?'

'Are there not such places?' she said, and I fell silent, not knowing how to answer.