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Dialogues of Memory and Identity

Narratives of the Self in Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* and Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*.

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Abstract

The thesis investigates how two contemporary novels address the relationship between memory and identity in the process of constructing narratives of the self. This question is approached through an analysis of narrative structure in conjunction with close attention to the novels' contents. Narratology and psychoanalytical literary criticism form the theoretical framework for this analysis. It is shown how the narrators consistently structure their memories into narratives according to what meaning they would like the narrative to create, and how this strategy ultimately fails. The discussions of the novels' treatment of the topic suggest that both novels treat memories as malleable and identity as a self-interested structuring force. Nevertheless, it is concluded that they both question the individual's influence over the narratives of the self, and emphasise the role of external reality in the shaping our stories about ourselves. A desire for meaning is the primary structuring force of narrative.

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

For some time I have been curious about the connection between memory and identity. Our memories of the past are important elements in creating a sense of who we are as individuals. However, I can not say that I remember the entirety of my life so far or that the events I do remember are remembered with any objective clarity. Selections have been made and memories have been coloured, altered and organised. One of the greatest influences on the choices I make in my life is my sense of who I am, my sense of personal identity. What films I watch, what books I read, when I choose to get up in the morning, and whether I prefer my coffee black or with milk, are all choices that are in some way influenced by how I experience myself as an individual. Considering identity in this way it might also be said that it influences how I remember my past and how I interpret, find meaning in, and create myself through my memories.

In other words, our sense of who we are as individuals, our personal identities, seem to exist in a dialogue between memory and identity. Through a mutual influence these two aspects of our psyche construct the narratives we see as the stories of our lives. I wish to explore the way in which contemporary fiction addresses this dialogue, how these forces that shape the narratives of the self are envisioned. To do so I turn to two novels that are deeply concerned with memory and the desire to understand the self and its place in the world: Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* and Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*. In both of these novels the narrator is autodiegetic – he or she is the central acting character, the "hero of the narrative" (Genette 1983, 245). Together with a fixed internal focalization – a limitation of the reader's access to information to only what is conveyed through the narrator's impressions, thoughts, perceptions and experiences (ibid. 189-94) – this enables one to study how the narrators engage with memories of their past as the narratives progress. It also grants access to the narrators' thoughts and feelings about themselves, giving one the opportunity to form an impression of how they view themselves as individuals.

I approach these novels through a close analysis of narrative structure seen in conjunction with the thematic focus found in the stories they tell. In paying close attention to the structure that shapes the narratives it becomes possible to discern how the narrators influence the piecing together of memories to form coherent narratives.[1] By analysing

[1] The words narrative, story, and fiction – and their respective plural forms – will be used interchangeably throughout in the meaning “the recounting of a series of facts or events and the establishing of some form of

prominent features of the narrative structures in the light of the novels' content, some aspects of the narrators' self-perceptions are identified. These are then used to investigate what purpose the specific choices that influence narrative structure have. This approach relies on narratological tools as formulated by Gérard Genette, and on Peter Brooks' conception of psychoanalytical literary theory as set out in *Reading for the Plot*. Barnes and Winterson approach identity and memory from two quite different starting points. Barnes' narrator is confronted with evidence that he has interpreted some of his memories from the past wrong. Through his attempts at correcting the narrative he has constructed on the basis of these memories the reader is offered a meditation on the possibility of knowing the truth about the past, the role of identity in shaping one's own place in memories of the past, and about the difficulty and distress that is involved in reconsiderations of one's identity. In Winterson's novel the narrator's attempt to understand the self is conducted without the aid of memory. The narrator's refusal to engage with memories lets Winterson explore the conditions under which meaning and identity can be created, and question the extent to which one can deliberately avoid memory.

While their approaches to the topic might be different they do come to some similar conclusions. The dialogue between memory and identity as it is presented seems self-serving and utterly subjective. Barnes' and Winterson's narrators are continually grossly mistaken in their interpretations or highly manipulative of their memories and identities. However, in engaging in narration both these narrators are subject to forces that ultimately ground their narratives in a meaningful and truthful understanding of the self and memories of the past. In the dialogue between memory and identity a desire for a narrative that conveys meaning on the reality we live in is the guiding principle.

1.1 Theories of Memory and Identity

Paul John Eakin offers, based on the work of cognitive psychologist Ulric Neisser, a way to approach understanding what identity is. Neisser establishes a five part distinction of self-knowledge where each part of knowledge provides grounds for "establishing a different aspect of the self" (qtd. Eakin 22). The distinctions Neisser makes are between "The

connection between them" (Childs and Fowler 148). As regards the definition no distinction will be made between real or fictional facts and events. This use necessitates that the specific narratological use of the words narrative and story, as defined by Gérard Genette (1983, 29), are set aside. Instead the terms *fabula* and *syuzhet*, introduced by the Russian Formalists (Childs and Fowler 94), will be used when the specific narratological function is emphasised. *Fabula* then refers to the "raw story-material" (ibid.) – the "signified" content of the narrative (Genette 1983, 29). *Syuzhet* refers to the finished plot as presented (Childs and Fowler 94) – "the signifier, statement, discourse, or narrative text itself" (Genette 1983, 29).

ecological self" – the self in the physical environment, "The *interpersonal self*" – the self in social interaction with other people, "The *extended self*: the self of memory and anticipation", "The *private self*" – the self of private conscious experience, and "The *conceptual self*: the extremely diverse forms of self-information – social roles, personal traits, theories of body and mind, of subject and person – that posit the self as a category" (qtd. Eakin 22-3). Eakin identifies the parts of identity that pertain to narratives with Neisser's extended self (Eakin 102). This is the part of identity that is dependent on temporal relations. The succession of experience and memories demands a "temporal armature that [can sustain] our operative sense of who we are" which is what the narrative form offers (ibid.), not only as a literary convention, but as an integral part in the experience of identity (ibid. 137). Through constructing narratives one creates self-knowledge of the extended self, and forms the basis for that part of identity that pertains to memories and the self in time (Eakin 22-3; 102). Viewed like this identity is placed on the outside, as a product of the process of remembering.

A life story, like any story, needs a *fabula* and in the case of a life story this is largely the individual's memories. Memories, however, are not infallible representations of past experiences and do not necessarily have a "direct relation to events experienced in the past" (Henke 80). Eakin supports this view and refers to hypotheses within the field of neuroscience that argue that memories are constructed in the present every time they are recalled, rather than stored and brought back (Rosenfield, qtd. Eakin 18-9). In this view remembering is an act of reconstruction, not the bringing back of something already constructed. Furthermore, Henke stresses that memory and identity are "interdependent phenomena" (79), and quotes from John Gillis' introduction to *Commemorations* where he says that "the core meaning of any individual or group identity" is "a sense of sameness over time and space, sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity" (Gillis 3). Winterson has picked up on this as well and writes: "What I call the past is my memory of it and my memory is conditioned by who I am now" (1998, qtd. Childs 265).[2] Our life stories create self-knowledge which supports our sense of individual identity. But these life stories are built on a *fabula*, on a past, that only exists in our limited memories of it. Memories that are influenced by what has come between the time remembered and the present, and coloured by who we consider ourselves to have become – by our personal identities.

The dependency of *fabula* on the *syuzhet* is what Peter Brooks points out when he argues that the "*fabula* – 'what really happened' – is in fact a mental construction that the

[2]Childs quotes from: Winterson, Jeanette *Gut Symmetries*. London: Granata. 1998. p. 45 (Childs 273).

reader derives from the *sjužet*, which is all he ever knows" (13). After having equated *fabula* with memories the next logical step is to equate the *syuzhet* with the complete narrative formulation, the complete life story. In producing self-knowledge this forms the basis of an identity which is seemingly placed on the outside, as a product of the process of remembering. But as has been argued above, identity in itself and as a whole influences how the story of the self is formed. A possibility then is that identity's influence on the inner story is similar to Brooks' consideration of the plot and the activity of plotting as the active shaping force of a narrative (13; 37). It is in the plotting towards a complete *syuzhet* that the *fabula* takes on the form of a narrative. What ending one anticipates is important for the ongoing understanding of the *fabula* (Brooks 94). By extension the anticipated self-knowledge produced by the anticipated ending of the *syuzhet* influences the way in which the *fabula* of memories is understood, at the same time as it is predicated on the *fabula*.

Chapter 2: Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*

2.1 Introduction

Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* has on the face of it a rather simple structure. The novel is chiefly analeptic and structured through the reminiscing of the autodiegetic narrator Anthony. This reminiscing is divided into two parts: "Part One" (Barnes 2011, 2) and "Part Two" (ibid. 57).

In part one the reader is first carried back to the narrator's school days (Barnes 2011, 3-4) whereupon the narrator recounts his life up to, or close to the time of narrating. He tells of various episodes of his life: Adrian starting school with him and his friends (ibid. 4), life at school (ibid. 3-19), university (ibid. 19-42), his relationship with Veronica (ibid. 20-36), his visit to her parents in Chislehurst (ibid. 26-30), and his and Veronica's break up and her subsequent relationship with Adrian (ibid. 36-44). He tells of his time in California (ibid. 45-6), of Adrian's suicide (ibid. 46-54), and about his life afterwards (ibid. 53-56) including his marriage, career, daughter, divorce, and retirement (ibid. 54-56).

Part two traces the narrative of how Anthony has to re-evaluate the story he has presented to the reader in part one. He is faced with evidence that things did not happen as he remembers them when he receives an inheritance from Mrs Sarah Ford, Veronica's mother (Barnes 2011, 62-3). The inheritance consists of five hundred pounds, a letter from Mrs Ford, and the diary of his long deceased friend Adrian (ibid. 62-5). Veronica, however, refuses to let Anthony have the diary, so he starts a campaign to get it back while at the same time scrutinising his own memories for hints as to why Mrs Ford left all this to him (ibid. 66-150).

By tracing Anthony's reinterpretations of his memories Barnes explores how the dialogue between memory and identity shapes Anthony's narrative of his own life, and consequently also the self-knowledge this narrative produces. The novel shows that memory is fallible and that identity has an inherently self-preserving function, but that the desire for truth and meaning that motivates our narratives (Brooks 48) can lead to dramatic questioning and reconsiderations of the self.

2.2 Narrative structure

Upon close reading of the novel's two parts it becomes evident that this strictly separated structure does not hold up to scrutiny. The two parts of the novel bleed into each other. This cross-contamination is the starting point for an analysis that shows how the narrative is

structured to facilitate repetitions and re-visitations of the past. This focus on repetition reveals a double function as both a drive towards meaning, and as a tool for self-protection against an unpleasant truth.

2.2.1 The Place of the Narrator

One issue that arises when looking at the structure of the novel is the problem of the narrator's temporal relationship to the story he is telling. Part one in itself is rather straightforward. It is an instance of subsequent narration – narration in which the narrator relates events that all happened in his past (Genette 1983, 217). The narrative eventually catches up with the present day, but not necessarily with the moment of narration. The present day is described in terms of Anthony's general day-to-day activities and overall situation in life: what he does for a living, and what kind of hobbies he has (Barnes 2011, 55-6). In part two events that cast new light on previously described memories start emerging. Anthony now has to reinterpret what he thought he knew, including the information related in part one.

There are strong indications that Anthony narrates the novel's first part after the completion of the story in part two. In part one this is visible through Anthony's remarks about the photo of Veronica, Adrian, Colin, Alex and himself in Trafalgar Square: "Many years later when I came to examine this photo again, looking for answers" (Barnes 2011, 32). Here Anthony is referring to the situation in part two when he "opened an old photo album and looked at the picture she'd asked me to take in Trafalgar Square" (ibid. 108). Furthermore, there is also the mysterious statement: "And even if I were to decide, at this late stage, that she was and always had been calculating, I'm not sure it would help matters. By which I mean: help me" (ibid. 32). The statement can refer to helping in the investigative process Anthony undertakes in part two, but it can also refer to the problem he is faced with at the end of the novel, a problem which will be elaborated upon later in this analysis: to help him in solidifying his place in the narrative.

Events in part one are repeated in part two, but presented as acts of remembering. This indicates that the reminiscing that is narrated in part two is the origin of the memories presented in part one. Especially some detailed memories seem to be connected across the two parts of the narrative. A good example of this is Anthony's memory of visiting Chislehurst and meeting Veronica's father. Here it seems that the thoughts of Anthony at the time break through in the narrative: "He was large, fleshy and red-faced; he struck me as gross. *Was that beer on his breath? At this time of day?*" (Barnes 2011, 26, emphasis added). This questioning can be read as free indirect discourse where the words of the narrator and the character meld

together and "the character speaks through the voice of the narrator" (Genette 1983, 174). In this way the comment appears to be the thoughts or inner speech of character Anthony in narrator Anthony's memory. But it is a very specific memory, recalled forty years later by a narrator whose "principal factual memory" of his visit is being constipated (Barnes 2011, 27), and who admits that the "rest consist of impressions and half-memories" (ibid.). An inspirational source for this memory can be found in Veronica's email in which she refers to her father's alcoholism (ibid. 111). What appears as past Anthony's thoughts or inner speech might actually be narrator Anthony's manipulation of memory after having received more information about Veronica's father. The use of free indirect discourse masks what might easily be narrator Anthony's intervention in his own memory by removing references to the remembered speech act. It makes the comment appear less like a very detailed memory and less conspicuous in light of Anthony's poor memory.

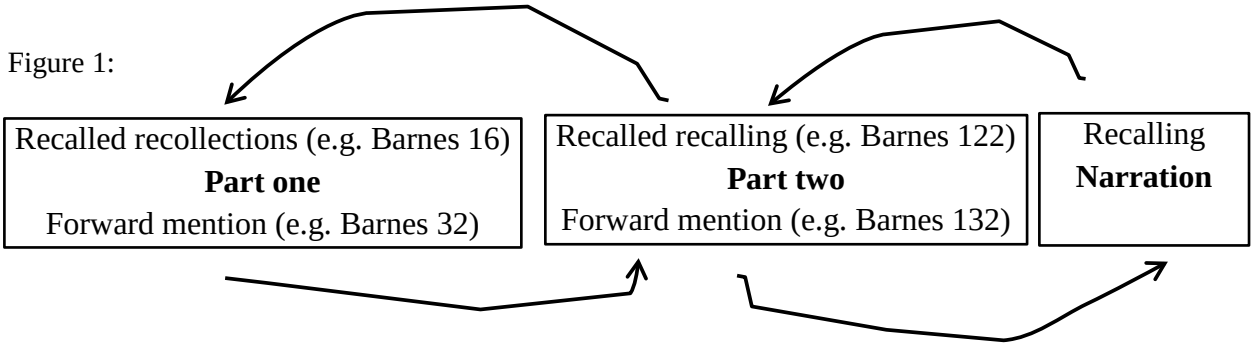
Other similar examples are memories that are called up in part two and repeated almost verbatim in part one: "What had Old Joe Hunt answered when I knowingly claimed that history was the lies of the victors? 'As long as you remember that it is also the self-delusions of the defeated'" (Barnes 2011, 122) corresponds to "'Yes, I was rather afraid you'd say that. Well, as long as you remember that it is also the self-delusions of the defeated'" (ibid. 16). Notice that Anthony is not referencing his previously presented memory, but attempting to call it up through interrogating himself. The same is true when he asks "What was that line Adrian used to quote? 'History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation'" (ibid. 59), a quotation that is given in part one as well (ibid. 17). Some further instances of remembrance in part two include Anthony's attempt "to resurrect that humiliating weekend in Chislehurst" (ibid. 63; 26-30),[3] his "finally" remembering the post card he sent to Adrian (ibid. 98; 42)[4], and the memory of Margaret being of the opinion that "fruitcakes ought to be shut up in tins with the Queens head on them" (ibid. 78), a tin which is – without any obvious significance – the focus of a short passage in part one (ibid. 35).

These cross-references suggest that Anthony is narrating the entire story, including his memories in part one, after the events in part two have taken place. Anthony's statement that Veronica's brother "never replied" to his last email (Barnes 2011, 132) supports this view as it suggests that the narrator has knowledge about the conclusion of the narrative. The implication of this is that the narrator, at the point when he narrates the story, is in possession

[3] The second reference here refers to the pages on which the same incident is related in the first part of the novel.
[4] See note 3

of more information than he gives the reader, including knowledge of the narrative's end.

Figure 1:



Events related in part two are the events in which Anthony remembers the past he presents in part one of the novel. Forward mentions in both parts indicate that the narrator knows events before they occur in the *syuzhet*. The narration takes place subsequent to the events in the novel.

2.2.2 Deliberate Omissions

Having established the narration as entirely subsequent to the story it tells requires one to acknowledge that the narrator is deliberately omitting information. Anthony knows the outcome of the narrative, but does not divulge this information to the reader. The reinterpretation of memories that Anthony engages in in the second part of the novel could in other words have been reduced to a short presentation of the final interpretation of his memories. However, this is not the case in the novel. Anthony presents the reader with a narrative that traces his process of arriving at this interpretation, including the faulty interpretations he makes along the way. The information he omits, such as delaying the revelation of his knowledge regarding Adrian's son and the child's parentage, enables the narrative to trace his faulty interpretations.

The deliberate omissions lets the narrative address the various ways in which Anthony tries to create a coherent story in which the "s*južet* has been so well formed, so tightly enchained, that the *fabula* derived from it must be right" (Brooks 322). However, when Anthony presents his narratives – his *syuzhets* – to Veronica for verification she rebukes him and indicates that the stories he has constructed are not well formed representations of the *fabula*. This knowledge of his plots' inadequacies forces Anthony repeatedly to engage in new processes of plotting. And in the structures of these various plots one finds clues to what it is that Anthony anticipates as the outcome of these plots – what kind of self-knowledge he desires that the stories will produce.

2.2.3 Analepses

Since Anthony repeatedly revisits his memories of the past there are plenty of analepses in the narrative. These analepses have the narrative that Anthony is relating about his search for answers as primary narrative – the narrative in which an analepsis is narrated and where the analepsis functions as an embedded narrative (Genette, 1990, 90).[5] Most of them refer back to his past involvement with Veronica and to his relationship with Adrian, but there are also analepses that relate details of his ex-wife Margaret and their life together (Barnes 2011, 66; 69; 109; 116; 118; 121), and of his daughter (ibid. 102-3; 107; 116). In the second part of the novel there are also internal analepses that refer back to events that took place within the time span of the novel's second part (Genette 1983, 49). These are analeptic re-evaluations of earlier narrated events in the light of new knowledge gained through the progression of the narrative; short ones, like Anthony regretting having made a lighthearted comment about alcoholics (Barnes 2011, 111) when he and Veronica met earlier in the narrative (ibid. 90), and longer ones, as he re-evaluates past situations in the light of later events (ibid. 139-40).

In addition to revealing new information and new interpretations the analepses are also part of a pattern of repetition that is central to the novel. The deliberate omissions of information enables a narrative that is forced to repeatedly construct new narratives to explain the past. The analepses, especially the internal ones, are repeated narrations of earlier events and also of earlier narrations. The function of repetition and the role of analepses in the novel will be discussed in a later part, but first the repetitive function of the novel's prolepses – its narration of future events in advance (Genette 1983, 40) – and hypothetical narratives[6] will be explored.

2.2.4 Prolepses and Hypothetical Narratives

The Sense of an Ending features an extensive use of prolepses and hypothetical narratives. In part one this takes the form of analepses back to the proleptic fantasies and expectations of Anthony's youth. "In those days, we imagined ourselves as being kept in some kind of holding pen, waiting to be released into our lives. And when that moment came, our lives – and time

[5] Genette names this *récit premier*, or "first narrative", in *Narrative Discourse* (1983, 48), but renames it *récit primaire*, or "primary narrative", in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1990, 29; 90). This is an attempt at clarifying that the term refers strictly to the structural relationship between a narrative and an anachrony without positing any judgements regarding one's thematic importance over the other (Genette 1990, 29; 90).

[6] Hypothetical narratives is here used to refer to narratives that function as explicitly presumptive configurations of a *fabula*. These do not correspond to a set type of anachrony but can be examples of what Genette terms prior narration, narrating the future through prediction (1983, 219-20), or of subsequent narrations in the form of summaries that offer an alternative version of the *fabula*. They can also appear to function as analepses or prolepses, while not actually referring back or forward to actual events.

itself – would speed up" (Barnes 2011, 9). When Adrian shows no interest in the reason behind his parents' divorce Anthony constructs a small hypothetical narrative of what he deems the appropriate response: "Adrian should have gone snooping, or saved up his pocket money and employed a private detective; perhaps all four of us should have gone off on a Quest to Discover the Truth" (ibid. 16). He does the same when Veronica's mother sends him a letter: "perhaps she had peritonitis and was asking for me from her hospital bed. Or perhaps... but even I could tell that these were self-important fantasies" (ibid. 39). Most of young Anthony's fantasies and expectations seem somewhat self-important, and, as will be shown later, this is a pattern that he sticks to as he gets older as well.

In part two these proleptic constructions are supplemented by more elaborate hypothetical narratives. After a brief email correspondence with Veronica's brother Anthony constructs a little narrative that reinvents Jack's life:

> And now I began to imagine a different life for Veronica's brother, one in which his student years glowed in his memories as filled with happiness and hope – indeed, as the one period when his life had briefly achieved that sense of harmony we all aspire to. I imagined Jack, after graduation, being nepotistically placed into one of those large multinational companies. I imagined him doing well enough to begin with (Barnes 2011, 79).

What goes into this summary of Jack's life is not as much any factual referents as it is Anthony's dislike and distrust of Jack. Another example is an imagined conversation with Alex and Colin in which they tell their versions of the day in Trafalgar Square (Barnes 2011, 108-9). Most significant of these hypothetical narratives is the one which Anthony creates to account for the new information Veronica gives him. In this he envisages Veronica becoming pregnant with Adrian's child, Adrian committing suicide on account of this, and Veronica raising their disabled son alone (ibid. 139); a narrative in which he jokingly ascribes himself the role as the reason for their son's disability – his letter to Adrian having wished Veronica pregnant, and misery upon their child (ibid. 138-9).

One section right at the beginning of part two of the novel sheds some light on the function of the imaginary narratives in the novel:

> When you are young, you think you can predict the likely pains and bleaknesses that age might bring. You imagine yourself being lonely, divorced, widowed; children growing away from you, friends dying. You imagine the loss of status, the loss of desire – and desirability. You may go further and consider your own approaching death, which, despite what company you may muster, can only be faced alone (Barnes 2011, 59).

The analepsis here, in which the narrator goes back to the expectations and imagined futures of the youth, is very general and does not seem to indicate that this is how he imagined his future. Chances are that very few in their youth imagine that their life will turn out this way, least of all Anthony and his friends who had wanted to have a life "fuller than that of our parents" (Barnes 2011, 8) and wanted life to turn out like literature (ibid. 15). However, this imagined future has a lot in common with how Anthony's life has turned out. Apart from being widowed all these characteristics can apply to his life. He his divorced and his relationship with his daughter is not very good. He is retired, which might involve a loss of status. He does not have many friends left and the female relationships he has are platonic (ibid. 55).

Neisser suggests that our "conceptions of narrative often lead us to emphasize our own 'agency'", the impact of our choices on ourselves and on the world (Neisser 9). This is very much the case with Anthony. In his narratives he would normally retain a position of importance, either as a character that is central to the narrative, as is the case with his "self-important fantasies" about Veronica (Barnes 2011, 39), or in comparison to the characters in the narrative, as with his story of Jack's disappointing life (ibid. 79). The passage above reverses – and highlights by contrast – the normal function of the prolepses and hypothetical narratives in the novel. It is presented as a look back to the expectations of the past, an analepsis about former anticipations, but, crucially, seems to be informed by the events in Anthony's later life. The reversal draws attention to the way in which the hypothetical narratives normally would be plotted to allow Anthony a position of agency, relevance, or importance. Furthermore, it alerts the reader to how Anthony might view his current life and the disappointment he is experiencing.

Peter Brooks argues that narratives are read with an anticipation that there will be an end that will confer meaning on the preceding narrative (Brooks 94). In this view events only have a temporal meaning as long as one interprets them while anticipating an ending (ibid.). What ending one anticipates will then dictate how events might be interpreted, similar to how one would interpret the evidence in a detective novel differently depending on who one

anticipates or suspects the criminal to be. Anthony's prolepses and hypothetical narratives are his inscriptions of provisional endings on his life. Through these he can interpret events in his life. The reason for the mundanity of life when he is young becomes captivity in light of the anticipated ending that will see him and his friends being "released into our lives" (Barnes 2011, 9). Adrian's suicide and Veronica's anger towards Anthony is interpreted in the light of an ending that sees her and Adrian as Adrian Junior's parents, and Anthony as the one who predicted the tragic ending. By extensive use of prolepses and hypothetical narratives Anthony is repeatedly anticipating endings that confer some measure of meaning on his life. Furthermore, these endings seem to lend themselves to the repetition of a plot structure that allows him a position of importance in the plot itself, or that elevates him by contrast to other characters.

2.3 Repetition

The two part structure necessarily entails repeating the events in order to track the changing interpretations of them. Deliberate omissions of information the narrator is in possession of is used to facilitate the repetitive structure of the novel. A frequent use of analepses, many of which are used to fill in information that the narrator has left out, enable repetition of what has been already narrated. Prolepses and hypothetical narratives serve as repeated attempts at making meaning of life, but also enable a repetition of a plot with a somewhat self-aggrandizing structure. Other repetitions are largely omitted in the text but the act of repeating it is narrated. This is the case when Anthony tells Margaret about the progress of his investigations (ibid. 75; 101; 106), and when he tells Veronica about his life (ibid. 116) – a repetition from what he has told the reader (ibid. 54). Repetition comes across not so much as a side effect of the story the narrative tells, but as central feature that the narrator deliberately engages in.

2.3.1 Repetition as Investigative Technique

> No doubt it is always the same song that goes on. If sometimes the themes blur, it is only to come back a little later, more marked, very close to identical. Nonetheless, these repetitions, these minute variants, these elisions these turnings back, can produce modifications – moving eventually quite far from the point of departure (Robbe-Grillet, qtd. Brooks 316).

Peter Brooks claims that a repetition "is both the recall of an earlier moment and a variation of it" (99-100). In repeating something, whether it be a memory, a sentence, or a narrative, the possibility of difference is always there. This brings to mind Rosenfield's theories about

memories as being constructed at the moment of recall, rather than being fixed images brought back (qtd. Eakin 18-9). If memories are constructed at the time of remembering, repeating the act of remembering might foster differences in the memories that can shed new light on them. Furthermore, repeating a narrative under altered circumstances will involve the negotiating of the narrative's truth relative to the narrative situation. So, when Anthony repeats his narrative about Adrian's suicide, but a significant change has occurred in the reality it refers to – the enigma of the legacy left him, Veronica's proofs – he has to negotiate a new narrative that corresponds to this new reality. The more repetitions, the more chances for the narrative to encounter other contexts, the more chances for new connections to be made and flaws to be discovered. In this way repeatedly narrating becomes a mode of investigating, a drive for a truth that reconciles narrative with reality.

The investigative nature of repetition is emphasised through Anthony becoming a regular at the pub and the shop that Adrian's son and his friends frequent (Barnes 2011, 145). At this point Anthony's investigations have stalled, and Veronica has rejected his latest interpretation – that she is Adrian Junior's mother – in her usual way, simply by saying that he does not "get it" (ibid. 144). So Anthony becomes a regular at the last place he had any progress, where he first recognized Adrian's son (ibid. 136-7). This is not to say that he has a conscious or unconscious drive to return to this place, merely that the narrative he has constructed does not match reality, that he does not possess the knowledge to make them fit together, and that he does go back. But in light of the structure of the novel, the repeated returns – indicated through the iterative "Occasionally, I would drive over to the shop and the pub again" (Barnes 2011, 145) – mirrors Anthony's narrative strategy. He repeats until changes appear, and the more repetitions the greater is the likelihood for change. At one point he attempts to elicit change by asking for the hand-cut chips to be cut thinner just to be told that "Hand-cut chips means fat chips" and that they do not actually cut them at the bar (ibid.). His repetitions are rewarded when he runs into Adrian Junior's group and their minder provides the lacking piece of information: that Veronica is Adrian Junior's half-sister (ibid. 146-8).

This view of repetition and remembering as more than the recalling of an established invariant truth echoes the concerns of Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction.* Kermode's "masterpiece of literary theory" (White 43) concerns not only literature but is also "a philosophy of history" (ibid.). Julian Barnes has previously treated personal history – or memories – in much the same way as national history (Henke 90-4). In *England, England* Barnes parallels the main character Martha Cochrane's distrust of

memory with the manipulative efforts of the entrepreneur Jack Pitman to rewrite English history so that it fits with the heritage centre he is building on the Isle of Wight. Here people play, and eventually become, historical characters, and Robin Hood coexists with SAS troops (Barnes 2008). The resident historian in Jack Pitman's company articulates the similarity between history and personal history when he expresses the faith that "Most people remembered history in the same conceited yet evanescent fashion as they recalled their own childhood" (ibid. 82).

Fictions, according to Kermode, are "consciously false" (White 52). They inherently "force us to remember that they are only constructions, products of our imaginations" (ibid. 53). They are "neither true nor false but instruments for multiplying the possibilities of ways we can have of relating to our world" (ibid.). The conscious falseness coupled with faith in the "truth of fact and the authority of the written document" (ibid. 49), opens literary fictions to rewriting when they no longer mirror reality. Anthony's narrative is not simply a repetitive interrogation of memories. It is also a natural use of literary fiction's inherent awareness that all meaning is invented and that this meaning "can claim authority as truth only as long as it is useful for life" (ibid. 43). He is in his repeated narration using fiction's natural drive towards truth, and in doing so he is enacting Kermode's words: '"Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change"' (qtd. White 54).

Anthony's application of fictional narratives to arrive at truth is enlightening. As argued earlier we all arrange our memories in plotted narratives, or fictions of the self, that make sense of our temporal experiences. While doing this we are, according to Kermode, acknowledging that this story might not be the true representation of our memories. Nevertheless, we let it maintain that function as long as it serves to make sense of our lives. Anthony, however, struggles to reconcile his personal narratives with reality. A reason for this can be found in the resistance to truth that some forms of repetition in the novel exhibits.

2.3.2 Repetition as Resistance

> How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but – mainly – to ourselves (Barnes 2011, 95).

Of the multiple forms of repetition in the novel, some appear not to have any value as investigative repetitions. Anthony emphasises that he has an "instinct for survival, for self-preservation" (Barnes 2011, 42), "a certain instinct for self-preservation" (ibid. 64), and draws

attention to his repetition by stating that "as I tend to repeat, I have some instinct for survival, for self-preservation" (ibid. 131). He does the same thing when talking about his relationship with his daughter: "I get on well with Susie" (ibid. 61). "Susie and I get on fine" (ibid. 62). And drawing attention to the repetition: "Susie and I get on fine, as I have a tendency to repeat" (ibid. 102). Another type of repetition happens when Anthony reminds his readers of his divorce from Margaret. This repetition can take various forms such as referring to her as "ex-wife" (ibid. 68; 106; 118), himself as "ex-husband" (ibid. 83), simply mentioning the divorce (ibid. 54; 62; 64; 118), or mentioning the marriage coming to an end (ibid. 66; 83; 100; 102). Furthermore, the repeated plot structure that is found in the prolepses and hypothetical narratives of the novel does not seem to serve a directly investigative purpose.

The act of narrating is also repeated extensively all through the narrative. Anthony narrates the story behind his memories (Barnes 2011, 3-56), and then narrates the circumstances and events that brought these memories to the surface (ibid. 59-150). As the story progresses he finds himself talking to Margaret so that he can tell her about the latest events (ibid. 75; 101; 106). Later on, after Margaret refuses to listen to him any more (ibid. 106), he still has the compulsion to phone her when Veronica agrees to another meeting (ibid. 121). He also states that he "would always tell Margaret about any new girlfriend" (ibid. 54), indicating that this kind of narrating is nothing new to him, and also informing the reader of an unspecified number of previous narratives and narrations. When narrating the story of his life to Margaret when they first got together, he leaves Veronica out (ibid. 69). Looking back on this he reflects that "The odder part was that it was easy to give this version of my history because that's what I'd been telling myself anyway" (ibid. 69). Not only is this an admission of deliberate omissions, but it also indicates that he has narrated, to himself, his life story on multiple occasions.

Peter Brooks points to psychoanalysis' interpretation of repetition as a way of attempting to subdue and master a situation that one is not in control over (Brooks 97-9). Read like this Anthony's almost compulsive need to narrate can be seen as an attempt at gaining control of his life and the meaning of it. He repeatedly mentions the divorce and frequently addresses himself and Margaret as ex-husband and ex-wife in order to try to come to terms with and master the new signifiers that now constitute his reality. The repeated claim that his relationship with Susie is fine serves to subdue his feelings that heir relationship is far from what he wishes it were. Anthony believes that his "emotions as they actually are doesn't concern her" and that she blames him for the divorce (Barnes 2011, 103). Since her emotional life is largely out of his control, he attempts to master the situation through the repetition of a

phrase that once, before they drifted away from each other, actually signified the truth.

The self-preserving instinct he mentions – a desire not to change, simply to stay the same – can be seen as the desire for the inorganic which Freud found fundamental to all organisms (Brooks 102). The idea is that if the organism could decide it would "constantly repeat the very same course of life" (ibid.). However, when external pressures threaten this course it is forced to diverge from the repeated course so that it may reach the end on its own terms (ibid. 102-3). In biological terms this end would be death with no or minimal change (ibid.). In this context, dealing with memory and identity, I would argue that the ending that is worked towards is the end of the "self-justifying 'inner story'" (Henke 80). The endings of these narratives of the self attempt to make sense of and find meaning in reality, while also attempting to do so with no or minimal change to the self-knowledge that forms the basis of identity.

Anthony exemplifies this principle very well. His self-preserving instincts drive him to repeat the same type of narration over and over again as long as external pressures do not interfere. When his narratives no longer manage to make sense of the external reality a conflict arises between the truth seeking function of fiction and the self-preserving instinct's resistance to changes in Anthony's self-knowledge. In *The Sense of an Ending* this conflict can be witnessed clearly in the prolepses and hypothetical narratives Anthony constructs. These repeat a plot structure that emphasises Anthony's relevance and importance to the plot. For Anthony this creates knowledge that he is relevant and holds some measure of importance in other people's lives. When he receives the letter and the inheritance from Mrs Sarah Ford he once again assumes that he is to figure as a central character in the plot that will make sense of the altered reality that the new evidence creates. However, all the explanatory narratives he creates seem to fail at making sense and he is forced to consider the abandonment of his carefully structured plot.

2.4 The Choice of Two Plots

As Anthony is faced with the truth that Adrian Junior is the son of Adrian and Veronica's mother Anthony has to make a choice. In an excerpt from Adrian's diary that Veronica sends Anthony one is presented with two explanatory models for what has come to pass:

$b = s - v$ +/x a^1

$a^2 + v + a^1$ x $s = b$ (Barnes 2011, 85)

The first *a* signifies Adrian, the second *a* Anthony. *b* signifies baby, *v* Veronica, and *s* her mother, Mrs Sarah Ford (Barnes 2011, 149). The first equation can be interpreted as follows: the baby results from a negative relationship between Sarah and Veronica, and Adrian's decisive involvement in this relationship. The second equation has a different focus: here Anthony's involvement with Victoria leads to her meeting Adrian, which leads to him meeting Sarah, which leads to the two of them having a relationship that results in a baby.

Interpreted like this the two equations serve as rough outlines of optional plot structures that can be used to construct meaning-making narratives. However, each of these plots will create different meanings and different knowledge of the events. The first equation results in a plot structure that emphasises personal relationships and Adrian's responsibility for his actions. The issue of personal responsibility is expressed through the unresolved issue of addition or multiplication as the link that expresses Adrian's relationship to the negative relationship between Sarah and Veronica. The second option shows an interest in the chain of events that led up to the baby's conception, and puts less focus on personal relationships. Some extra responsibility seems to be put on Sarah, on account of her being linked to the rest through multiplication. The important thing to note, however, is that the first of the equations, the first of the plots, does not involve Anthony.

The distinction between personal responsibility and chains of events brings one back to the discussion they had in school on the same topic in relation to the First World War (Barnes 2011, 10-12). In Old Joe Hunt's classroom the students are asked to discuss "the responsibility of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassin for starting the whole thing off" (ibid. 10). Adrian's opinion on the issue is interesting:

> We want to blame an individual so that everyone else is exculpated. Or we blame a historical process as a way of exonerating the individuals. Or it's all anarchic chaos, with the same consequence. It seems to me that there is – was – a chain of individual responsibilities, all of which were necessary, but not so long a chain that everybody can simply blame everyone else. But of course, my desire to ascribe responsibility might be more a reflection of my own cast of mind than a fair analysis of what happened (Barnes 2011, 12)

This can be applied to the situation expressed in the equations as well. Blaming an individual or blaming the forces involved – in this case the negative relationship between

mother and daughter – would exonerate Anthony. Arguably, Adrian has through his suicide chosen the first of the explanations, the one that that burdens him with the most responsibility, and been unable to live with the guilt.

When Anthony brings up the equations in the end of the novel it is only the one that involves him, the second *a*, that he brings up. "I looked at the chain of responsibility. I saw my initial in there" (Barnes 2011, 149). In choosing to refer only to the second equation Anthony effectively determines his position in the narrative. The sentence that is so abruptly ended in the fragment from Adrian's diary – "So, for instance, if Tony" (ibid. 86) – can in light of the second equation signify two things: firstly, that if Anthony had not in his letter urged Adrian to consult Veronica's mother (ibid. 96), Adrian would not have become involved in a sexual relationship with her. Secondly, if Anthony had not met or dated Veronica none of this would have happened. However, the significance of the broken statement takes its full form in light of the first equation, the one not including Anthony. In this case the statement, and the empty space following it, signifies the insignificance of Anthony to the relationship that was the source of Adrian Junior's conception and Adrian's demise. Anthony's desired and ultimate choice is on the explanation that includes himself, something that raises questions regarding his "cast of mind" (Barnes 2011, 12). His choice falls into a pattern of plot choices throughout the novel in which he constructs plots that feature him as a central character.

2.5 Conclusions

By tracing the way in which Anthony examines his past and tries to construct it into a narrative that can make sense of the reality he lives in, Julian Barnes addresses how the dialogue between memory and identity pushes us towards truth. Despite memory's possibility of failure and identity's self-preserving function, the narrative identities we create for ourselves constantly drive towards a truth that is at the very least functional. Our desire for truth, which Brooks finds to be the fundamental motivation for narrative (48), means that the self-preserving function of identity accepts changes to the narrative that produces it if it is necessary to make sense of the world. And while memory may be fallible the same indistinctness that makes it fallible also makes it available for reinterpretation.

At first sight it might be tempting to say that it is impossible to know the truth about past events and end up in a postmodern relativistic stance. Joanna Semeiks, in her review of *The Sense of an Ending*, seems to do this and characterises it as a "postmodern novel where increasingly one is about to step off a cliff, into pure and playful air" (244). The novel does acknowledge the impossibility of ever arriving at a factual truth of the kind that sciences like

physics and chemistry deal with. This impossibility of knowing the past in a factual manner is why Kermode maintains that fictional stories, with their conscious falseness and inherent drive toward truth, are the best way to approach the past (White). This does not lock one down in a relativistic notion of truth but emphasises "the importance of the pursuit of knowledge" (Childs 90), so that we can multiply "the ways we can have of relating to our world" (White 53). Talking about the difference between journalism and novel writing Julian Barnes says that "It's quite opposite with a novel where you are not dealing in facts but dealing in truth" (Barnes 2000). Truth is not simply fact. Meaning is also truth but "only as long as it is useful for life" (White 43). The truth value of memories and the truth value of the self-knowledge created from these is intrinsically bound up with to what extent they make sense of reality.

The self-knowledge produced by the narratives of the self, and consequently the identity that is formed from this self-knowledge, is influenced by how the plots of the narratives are structured. Anthony serves as an example of this in his constant building of plots that offer him a sense of centrality and importance. If he is an agent in the plot he has relevance. Another example is his choice to omit Veronica from his life story. By structuring the plot of his narrative with a deliberate omission as a central feature he avoids the knowledge of his "failure" and "humiliation" (Barnes 2011, 69).

Drawing on Peter Brooks I have argued that self-knowledge and the identity that it establishes aims at remaining unchanged. The narrative of the self, what Henke calls the "self-justifying 'inner story'" (80), is the story that is plotted to serve this purpose. Anthony's plots feature him as an agent and thereby uphold a self-knowledge of him as at the very least relevant. It eventually becomes clear that the enigma of Adrian's suicide can be understood as a narrative where Anthony's role in the plot is peripheral at best and possibly non-existent. Anthony, however, seems to favour the plot structure that will still offer him a sense of relevance. The shaping of Anthony's narratives is dictated by an end goal, an anticipated ending, that will perpetuate a self-knowledge of him as a relevant agent. His plots in this way reflect the way in which he struggles to uphold a fundamental piece of his identity: the knowledge that he throughout his life has had relevance and importance to other people.

But meaning and the drive for truth reign supreme. The end goal of identity is not only to stay the same but to do so while making sense of and finding meaning in reality. In the face of a reality in which he is divorced, drifting away from his daughter, lonely, and approaching death the narratives that Anthony has created are coming under pressure. His occasional lapses into self-criticism, such as when he identifies his instinct for self-preservation with an

avoidance of being hurt (Barnes 2011, 142), point towards a realisation that he has lived a life in which he has made little out of his personal relationships and been of little relevance to the people around him. Adrian's explicit offering of an alternative plot structure that excludes Anthony could offer Anthony the insight he needs to realise that more of his self-constructed narratives might be told with a similar plot structure. They can be told with a plot structure that effectively makes sense of the reality Anthony is living in and creates a self-knowledge of irrelevance that reflects the irrelevance he feels in his life. *The Sense of and Ending* becomes the sense of having ended, prior to the final ending of his life.

Chapter 3: Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*

3.1 Introduction

Written on the Body addresses the dialogue between memory and identity by having its narrator renounce both while engaging in a search for love and meaning. This leads to an interesting meditation on the possibility of escaping memories of the past, on sculpting one's life story whichever way one wants, the power of "intense relationships" to "transform both people" (Childs 259-60), and the necessary conditions for the formation of a narrative identity. The novel engages actively in discussions about the structuring power of endings and narrative's ability to produce truth. Through a three part structure the novel traces the process of anticipating and desiring meaning, failing to find it, and coming to understand the reason for this failure.

3.1.1 A Narrator Without a Face

Winterson's narrator in *Written on the Body* is genderless.[7] S/he is never referred to with pronouns that would reveal a gender, and no explicit descriptions of the narrator's body are given. S/he has sexual partners of both genders, and aspects of behaviour or personality that traditionally would be associated either with femininity or masculinity both feature so excessively that it becomes impossible to establish the gender of the narrator (Fåhraeus 85-90). The ambiguity regarding the narrator's gender has received a lot of critical attention (Rubinsond 219-20), but it is not the only feature that is missing from the narrative. There are given no indications regarding skin colour, hair colour, or other features of appearance. No age is indicated, nor is any ethnicity. Not even a name is given. With the exception of her/his work as a translator of Russian literature, the narrator is almost featureless.

The exclusion of all such categories from the narrative limits the way in which the reader can read the narrator's sense of identity. Going back to Neisser's description of identity one sees that this removes an entire category of self-knowledge, the knowledge of the conceptual self: "the extremely diverse forms of self-information – social roles, personal traits, theories of body and mind, of subject and person – that posit the self as a category" (qtd. Eakin 22-3). This denial of identity is carried further in the way that the narrator's personal history is conveyed.

[7] Since the narrator is genderless pronoun use becomes an issue in the analysis. Since I neither want to, nor can, define the narrator as male or female I will throughout the text refer to the narrator as: "s/he", "her/his", and "her/him".

3.1.2 A Narrator Without a Past

The past dealt with in the narrative is chiefly the past that revolves around the narrator's romantic involvement with a married woman named Louise. Other memories from the past are related, usually pertaining to old girlfriends or boyfriends. But these memories are narrated in a way that isolates them from a place in a larger history and distorts any independent significance they might have had for the narrator. The result is that the memories appear as nothing more than short humorous anecdotes, like the story of Crazy Frank, a bull of a man over six feet tall, who was brought up by midgets, and has a passion for miniatures (Winterson 1994, 92-3). Or like the story of Bruno, who finds "Jesus under a wardrobe" as he is being crushed by it (ibid. 152).

It is evident from how these anecdotes are worded that they are in the past, but their temporal relation to each other is lost in the narration. "I had a girlfriend once" (Winterson 1994, 19; 59; 75), "I had a boyfriend once" (ibid. 92; 143; 152), "I remembered vaguely that I had once had a girlfriend" (ibid. 12). The repetitive phrasing and the word once reminds the reader of the "'once upon a time' of folk-tales" that place the anecdotes unmistakeably in the past (Genette 1990, 81). These openings emphasise the strangely atemporal nature of the anecdotes. Their temporal relation to the diegetic universe is vague and they give the impression of existing merely as humorous asides with no particular relation to the story that is being told. In other words: what little of the narrator's personal history the reader is offered comes across as series of separate anecdotes that have little other function than to amuse.

The stories of the narrator's relationships with Bathsheba and with Inge stand out from the rest, but at the same time serve to emphasise the loss of original significance. Bathsheba is referenced multiple times throughout the novel (e.g. Winterson 1994, 16; 25; 44-8; 77) and the story of the narrator's relationship with Inge is told in greater detail than most of the other past relationships (ibid. 21-5). Both of these stories deviate strangely from their intertextual referents. In the Bible, King David's attempt at covering up his affair with Bathsheba sends her husband Uriah in harm's way and gets him killed (*King James Bible*, 2 Sam. 11.1-27). In *Written on the Body*, Uriah conceals an affair with a prostitute from Bathsheba, which puts the narrator in harm's way when Uriah contracts an STD from said prostitute (Winterson 1994, 44-5).

Inge is described in terms that signify extremes of femininity and feminism. She is a "committed romantic and an anarcha-feminist" (Winterson 1994, 21). She would blow up the lift in the Eiffel Tower so that "no-one should unthinkingly scale an erection", but is unable to do so because "her mind filled with young romantics gazing over Paris and opening

aerograms that said Je t'aime" (ibid.). Furthermore, the narrator claims that the reason s/he stayed with Inge for so long was because of her breasts which s/he describes as having "done their share of time and begun to submit to gravity's insistence" (ibid. 24). The exaggerated femininity and the mammary focus paints Inge in terms that echo the image of a fertility goddess. Ironically, the name Inge is derived from and related to the names Ing and Yngve (Hellquist 1184-5; 272), which are alternative names for the male fertility god Frey (Lindow 121; 200-1; 326). As such Inge seems to be described in opposition to the god her name echoes.

The way in which the narrator remembers and narrates her/his past relationships isolates and strips these memories of meaning. They are individual stories, without any integrated place in a larger narrative. Their function as *fabula* for the creation of a life story is neglected. Any potential for creation of meaning and self-knowledge is shrouded by narrating these memories as nothing more than humorous asides. The distortion of intertextual referents that occurs in the stories of Bathsheba and Inge strengthens this impression of stories that are being deprived of their original significance, functions, and meanings. In a short description of the narrator's ex-girlfriend Estelle, the reader is offered an insight into the narrator's troubled relationship with her/his past:

> Estelle, I haven't thought about Estelle for years. She had a scrap metal business. No, no, no! I don't want to go backwards in time like a sci-fi thriller. What is it to me that Estelle had a clapped-out Rolls-Royce with a pneumatic back seat? I can still smell the leather (Winterson 1994, 77).

Estelle's presence is both current and unwanted. The memory of her is still vivid in the narrator's mind, but s/he does not want to think about the past. Significantly it is not only Estelle that the narrator does not want to think about, but the past. S/he does not "want to go backwards in time" (Winterson 1994, 77), the implication being that s/he would rather go forward in time and thereby distance her/himself from the past. This hints at a discomfort with the past which explains the need to isolate memories from a larger context and strip them of meaning. Much like Anthony initially wrote Veronica out of his life story (Barnes 2011, 69), Winterson's narrator is trying to rewrite her memories of the past into something that does not produce unpleasant self-knowledge.

3.1.3 Introducing the Structure

For the purposes of this analysis the novel will be divided into three parts. The novel starts with a part which will be shown to be dominated by a reversed story arc, moving backwards

in time. Through its reversed structure this part establishes the novel's thematic interest in beginnings and ends. In the analysis it also serves to exemplify the complex structure of the rest of the novel. Accordingly, I refer to this part as the novel's introduction. Following this is the main part of the novel which takes the form of a forward moving analepsis and includes the section entitled "The Cells, Tissues, Systems and Cavities of the Body" (Winterson 1994, 113-39). This part picks up the introduction's interest in beginnings and ends and elaborates upon it by undermining the reader's expectations regarding endings. The third and last part begins where the dominant narrative structure breaks down and the narrated analepsis of the main part overtakes the moment in which it has been narrated from so far. The short third part serves as a meditation on the preceding narrative's failure in creating meaning, and the narrator's mistakes in her/his search for love and meaning.

3.2 The Novel’s Introduction: The Power of the Ending

The first part of the novel exemplifies the novel's overall complex narrative structure. The most prominent element in this is the frequent shifts between analepses and the narrator's present tense reflections (Winterson 1994, 9-21). The analepses are presented incoherently and it is difficult to see the connections between them. But as one approaches the end of the first part it becomes clear that many of the analepses are in fact referring to the same two people in different situations over a longer span of time. This ending creates a story arc that connects most of the analepses. Furthermore, it is clear that the movement of the story in this story arc is reversed, moving from September (Winterson 1994, 9) backwards through August (ibid. 10; 12), ending in June (ibid. 20). The narrative structure of this part is illustrated in the table below. This is not an exhaustive overview of all the shifts and elements in the novel's first part, but it covers the most important elements. A detailed description of how to read it follows the table.

Figure 2:

Page:	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**
Level 2				A0	A0							
Level 1	AS	AA	AA	AA	AA		A0	AA	AA	A0	AJ	A0
Level 0	P P	P	P	P		P		P P			P P	

P = Present tense narration. AS = Analepsis dated September. AA = Analepsis dated August. A0 = Analepsis without date. AJ = Analepsis dated June.

The horizontal position of the abbreviations in the table indicates the textual sequence on the page. An example of this is the AS, the analepsis dated to September (Winterson 1994, 9). This analepsis is couched between two instances of present tense narration, one preceding it, one following it (ibid.). The levels in the table correspond to the narrative layers in the novel. Level zero is where the narration takes place and is therefore always in the form of present tense reflections. Level one is the first level of the narrated past where all analepses have the narrative in level zero as primary narrative. Level two is the second level of the narrated past where all analepses have the narrative in level one as primary narrative. In other words, where the analepsis is narrated by a character – usually the character of the narrator in the past – that is present in the analeptic narrative in level one.

The above description and table is actually deceptively simple in its portrayal of the analepses. The only explicit mentions of months in connection with the analepses are September (Winterson 1994, 9), August (ibid. 10; 12; 17), and June (ibid. 20). Connections between the other analepses must be made through hints in the text, of which the most important is the use of personal pronouns. The characters in the analepses that comprise the reversed story arc are consistently referred to in the first and second person: I, you, and we (ibid. 10; 12; 13; 17; 18; 20). Other analepses, those that are marked as undated in the table, refer to a third person: she (ibid. 12; 13-4; 16; 19; 21). Right before the introductory part's last analepsis is reached, the lover – the "you" that has been unnamed so far – is finally named. "Louise" is spoken of in connection with a section that is rich in personal pronouns: "I will explore you and mine you and you will redraw me according to your own will. We shall cross one another's boundaries and make ourselves one nation" (Winterson 1994, 20). This naming structures and ties together the previous analepses by specifying the object of the pronoun references earlier in the text. Other hints that aid in this structuring are references to walking (ibid. 12; 13), to a rented room (ibid. 13; 17), and to plums (ibid. 17; 18).

The referent of the pronoun you is at times ambivalent and the ending of the

introductory part exploits this. Most of the time the pronoun refers to a second person, revealed later to be Louise, who acts and speaks: "You said, 'I'm going to leave.'" (Winterson 1994, 18). Other times it is used as general and self-referential: "It's flattering to believe that you and only you, the great lover, could have done this" (ibid. 15). Sometimes the narrator's statements could be read as either appeals to the reader or as past immediate speech, a short monologue uttered by the character in the past and recounted later without any explicit indication of it being the character's speech and with an absolute absence of the narrator (Genette 1983, 173-4): "Did I say this happened to me again and again? You will think I have been constantly in and out of married women's lumber-rooms" (Winterson 1994, 17). On the one hand this comment can be interpreted as a rhetorical appeal to the reader emphasising that the scenario of adultery recounted in the previous pages repeated itself several times. On the other hand it can be interpreted as an appeal to Louise aimed at correcting any impression made about the same adulterous behaviour. The revelation that some analepses are connected and that the "you" they refer to is Louise comes late (ibid. 20). As such the ambiguous pronoun use becomes extra confusing when this revelation puts the reader's previous interpretations of the pronoun in doubt.

In this introductory part of the novel the structuring power of the ending is emphasised. Not only does the ending tie the analepses together, but it also leads the reader to question previous interpretations. Ironically – or perhaps fittingly – the narrative arc of the novel's first part is moving backwards in time. The ending of the *syuzhet* is chronologically, in terms of the *fabula*, the beginning. This foreshadows the confusing treatment of ends and beginnings that will figure throughout the novel, and alerts the reader to the importance of endings for the understanding of narratives. The fragmentary narrative structure and ambiguous language use that is present in the introductory part is also present in the rest of the novel, especially the shifts between analepses and present tense reflections. Furthermore, the neat tying together of the narrative arc supports the reader's trust that the narrator, despite the somewhat erratic narration, will come to a satisfying conclusion.

3.3 The Main Part: Failing to Find Meaning

The narrative structure undergoes a significant change around the time Inge is introduced (Winterson 1994, 21). From this point forward the narrative is no longer reversed, but moving forward in time through one continuous analepsis (ibid. 20-190). Though this creates greater coherence the narrative still has the additional undated analepses, present tense reflections, and ambiguous language. The main part picks up on the topic of the structuring power of

endings from the introductory part. It elaborates upon this by tying it to a discussion of the beginning's dependence on the end, and to an exploration of the narrator's attempt and failure to reach a meaning-imposing ending.

3.3.1 Beginnings

To start off the narrator reflects on how her/his search for passionate relationships is as much a cliché as the cliché of the happy marriage, and how the threat of real love is always present (Winterson 1994, 20). This leads to an introduction of the overarching analepsis that will carry the story through the novel's main part (ibid. 20-156): "That home girl gonna get you in the end. This is how it happened" (ibid. 20). The beginning of the analepsis is placed before meeting Louise and is therefore, in terms of *fabula*, prior to most of the events in the novel's introductory part.

Right from the beginning, however, the novel's complex relationship to beginnings is evident. The declared beginning "This is how it happened" (Winterson 1994, 20), collides with previous declared beginnings. The novel's opening words, "Why is the measure of love loss?" (ibid. 9), lay claim to the function of a beginning through their placement in the text and through their format as a question that needs answering. Later, the narrator states that s/he is "in another rented room now, trying to find the place to go back to where things went wrong" (ibid. 17) indicating that the purpose of the following narrative is investigative rather than philosophical. Furthermore, starting the novel's main part with the story of Inge is a false start. Inge actually has very little to do with the "how it happened" (Winterson 1994, 20). Meeting Jacqueline is the important event, as she will figure extensively throughout the narrative (ibid. 24). For a little while it seems that Inge is the cause of the narrator's meeting with Jacqueline since the narrator met her when moving to a new flat s/he had purchased "to start again from a nasty love affair" (ibid. 25). However, this does not refer to the relationship with Inge but to the narrator's "brief addictive return to Bathsheba" (ibid.). It is also unclear whether the "home girl" that is going to get the narrator (ibid. 20) refers to Jacqueline or to Louise.

It is here appropriate to address the role of beginnings in guiding interpretation. The structuring power of the ending comes from the *syuzhet*'s role in creating the *fabula*. Our ability to "read present moments – in literature, and by extension in life – as endowed with narrative meaning" depends on the fact that we anticipate an ending that will retrospectively give them structure and significance (Brooks 94). The *fabula*, in other words, can not exist independently from the *syuzhet*. Considered like this the distinction between beginnings and

ends becomes reversible. The *syuzhet*'s end is what determines the beginning (ibid.), and the end is therefore also the time before the beginning (ibid. 103). This is something the structure of *Written on the Body* illustrates well. It is dominated by analeptic narration that carries an implicit promise or anticipation that a final end has already been reached. The beginning of an analepsis is an act of narration taken on "after the fact of an event that took place earlier" (Genette 1983, 40). The beginning of a narrative has structuring power in the sense that it is predicated on and created by the structuring power of the ending, and the reader's anticipations for the ending are therefore structured by the beginning.

This mixing of ends and beginnings echoes the discussion of the novel's introductory part. There the reversed story arc literally places the beginning at the end and the end at the beginning. This reversed structure, in which it is not really revealed how the analepses fit together until the end, coupled with the fact that some analepses are not part of this story arc at all, reduces the structuring power of the textual beginning. The beginning of the reversed analeptic story arc, "I am thinking of a certain September" (Winterson 1994, 9), is disguised in an excess of potential other beginnings. This repeats itself as the main part takes over. Between the false starts and claimed beginnings it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is the novel sets out to get an answer to. This excess, much like the excess of gender stereotypes that are used to describe the narrator (Fåraehus 85-90), results in a lack. In the case of the narrator it is a lack of an explicit gender, in the case of the narrative it is a lack of an explicit beginning. The multitude of beginnings that characterise the novel foreshadows the main part's lack of an ending, and importantly also its desire for an ending.

3.3.2 The Absence of an Ending

The main part of the novel lasts for most of the textual length of the narrative. But eventually the overarching analepsis that goes through this main part, which has recounted the story of the narrator's love affair with Louise, the narrator's abandonment of her, and the narrator's move to Yorkshire and her/his life there, overtakes the moment of narration. However, this is done very subtly and requires a close reading of the text to notice. The result is that the structuring ending that the reader anticipates at the end of the analepsis is absent, both by being buried in the text and through the lack of any explicit denouement to the plot. This effectively breaks down any explicit connections between the beginning and the end, inverting the strategy of the introductory part where the ending had a strong role in creating coherence in the preceding narrative.

In my division of the novel into parts I consider the section entitled "The Cells,

Tissues, Systems and Cavities of the Body" (Winterson 1994, 113-39) as an element of the main part. In this section the narrator has moved to Yorkshire and become obsessed with medical textbooks (ibid. 111). The narrator "mediates on her lover's leukemia [sic], and rewrites sterile medical language as something transcendently personal" (Reed-Morrison 101). The narrator her/himself describes it as finding "a love-poem for Louise" in the clinical language (Winterson 1994, 111). This part does not relate any events or conversations that take place. Nevertheless, it can be seen as a part of the analepsis. It covers a period of time that stretches between December, after Elgin tells the narrator of Louise's cancer (ibid. 100), to March, when the normal narrative picks up again with the narrator's lamentation that Elgin has not written her/him (ibid. 143). The poetic section of rewritten medical texts serves as a forceful metonymy that expresses the degree to which this obsession with Louise and anatomy takes up the time of the narrator in the period it covers. The period is not recounted through recalling its events, but through recalling something that is so intimately associated with it that it can stand in place of an explicit summary.

The second sentence in the novel places the time of narration at a point where "It hasn't rained for three months" (Winterson 1994, 9). This is brought back up when the narrator introduces a paragraph with "June. The driest June on record" (ibid. 150). The spatial description of the place where the act of narrating is conducted – "I'm in another rented room now" (ibid. 17) – corresponds to the small cottage the narrator rents in Yorkshire (ibid. 107). When the narrator later leaves Yorkshire to visit London again s/he claims that s/he stays there for six weeks, until the beginning of October (ibid. 174). That would put her/his departure from Yorkshire somewhere in the middle of August. Upon returning to Yorkshire the narrator comments that "The rain on the dry land from a dry summer hadn't penetrated through the soil to the aquifers" (ibid. 185), making any later date improbable as the moment of narration.

Taking these hints together one can assume that the act of narration that spawns the analepsis takes place in the cottage in Yorkshire sometime before the narrator departs for London. If June is completely dry, three months without rain would put the narration in the end of August or beginning of October. Since this collides with the narrator's trip to London one must assume that it has not rained since early or mid May, at the latest. Furthermore, since the rain struggles with the dry soil in October (Winterson 1994, 185) July and August must also have been dry. This places the act of narration in early or mid August. It is possible to read June as the month where the analepsis catches up to the first narrative by assuming that there has been no rain since March. However, as there is merely six pages separating June and August (ibid. 150-6) I do not see that pinpointing this point exactly is of great importance.

Furthermore, the emphasis on June as "The driest June on record" (ibid. 150) seems to suggest this as the first month with no rain whatsoever.

Figure 3:

March	April	May	June	July	**August**	September	October
?	?	*Wet/Dry*	Dry	Dry	Dry	Dry	Wet
Yorkshire	Yorkshire	Yorkshire	Yorkshire	Yorkshire	*York/London*	London	Yorkshire

Line one marks the months, line two the described weather in Yorkshire corresponding to the above months, and line three the narrator's whereabouts in each month. The emphasised fields "*Wet/Dry*" and "*York/London*" mark the decisive features that place the narration in August.

The ending that was to structure the entire preceding narrative has come. The analepsis is complete but there is no revelation to be found at its end. No meaning is made abundantly clear, and the ending itself is hidden in small textual hints. The narrator's story about her/his relationship to Louise had no definite ending when the narrating act was undertaken. However, this is not a case of a forced alteration of a previously anticipated ending, as is the case in Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*. The absent ending must be seen in connection with the excess of beginnings in the novel and the general narrative structure with its frequent shifts between analepses and present tense reflections by the narrator. The narrator does not know how to make sense of and find meaning in the loss of Louise. In the moment that the narration is undertaken, no ending can make sense of the preceding *fabula*, and since a "sense of a beginning" is "determined by the sense of an ending" (Brooks 94) no real beginning can be made. The multitude of beginnings in the novel can in the light of this be seen as feeble attempts at anticipating a structuring and meaning-imposing ending that the narrator ultimately is denied. The present tense reflections of the narrator also contribute to this impression of a narrative that searches for and desires meaning.

Peter Brooks views the middle of the narrative, the plotted distance between the narrative's beginning and its end, as "a kind of arabesque or a squiggle", an almost serpentine line stretching towards the end (Brooks 104; 59). As established during the discussion on Barnes' novel the ultimate goal of the "self-justifying 'inner story'" (Henke 80) is to keep identity unchanged. It wants to reach an end, where self-knowledge and narrative identity will be the outcome, but it "must be the right death, the correct end" (Brooks 103): an end where the outcome upholds the already established self-knowledge as much as possible. The shortest way to this end would be a direct line between the beginning and the end "which would be the

collapse of one into the other, of life into immediate death" (Brooks 104). In terms of narrative identity this would be what Brooks terms the unnarratable, the normal, where no "tension or irritability" exists that can foster a desire or a demand for narration (ibid. 103). Where there is no tension between the past and the present, when aspects of identity are unquestioned and do not need explanation, there is nothing that can be narrated. The beginning and the end have collapsed upon themselves and ceased to exist. However, where identity is challenged by external forces life is stirred "into a state of narratability" (Brooks 103) and narrative becomes a way of creating self-knowledge with which one can explain, understand, and justify one's identity in the face of reality. The plot that forms the middle, the structured connections of the narrative, "stands as a kind of divergence or deviance" that postpones the end so that the desired and anticipated end might be reached (ibid.). Anthony in *The Sense of an Ending* serves as an example. He attempts to extend the line of plot so that it makes the necessary detour, including him in the plot, that will lead to the ending he desires in the narrative: the ending that produces self-knowledge of his relevance. Plot is the squiggly line connecting the beginning to the end, making the necessary detours along the way so that the end might confer the desired meaning upon the elements of *fabula* that are connected together through the line of the plot.

Through the main part of *Written on the Body* this plotted line is unsure and searching. Various beginnings are formed in the hope that at least one of them will lead to an end that might make sense of the loss of Louise. But since the narrator at the point when s/he narrates the analepsis has no satisfying understanding of why s/he lost Louise no explanatory end can be anticipated or reached and no absolute beginning can be established to the narrative. This might seem like a circular argument, but like Anthony's plotting in *The Sense of an Ending* the narrator's plotting in *Written on the Body* must be built on a measure of self-knowledge. And when, as will be demonstrated in the following section, the reason behind the narrator's loss of Louise is to be found in this same self-knowledge that produces the plot, the failure to find meaning that characterises the main part becomes a necessary step towards the creation of a deeper understanding.

The narrative's disjointed structure, the back and forth between present tense reflections and analepses, the anecdotes' apparent irrelevance to the overall narrative, the temporal changes and the insertion of a section of prose-poetry: all can be seen as symptoms of this plotting without an end. Whether what the novel offers at this point can be considered one coherent plot is uncertain. In many ways it mixes individual stories of the narrator's past relationships and connects them together with questionable and less than obvious

significance. Inge's connection to Jacqueline, as discussed above, is a prime example of this. The narrative so far might best be described, using Brooks' image, as a multitude of arabesques that, in a total absence of sense and meaning, all stretch desperately from a multitude of beginnings towards any ending.

3.4 After the End: The Self-knowledge of Failure

The third part of the novel shows how the narrator's life continues after the failed attempt to understand the failed relationship with Louise, and how s/he comes to terms with the reasons behind these failures. Since the primarily subsequent, or retrospective, narrative structure of the novel catches up with itself there is need for a new way to organise the narration. Such a shift in narrative structure does take place, but it is difficult to notice before the sudden change to present tense in the last paragraph of the novel (Winterson 1994, 190). Like the convergence of the overarching analepsis with its primary narrative in the main part, the change in narrative organization following this merging is buried in the text.

A textual element that offers a hint of the place and nature of the shift can be found in the appearance of the word today in the narrative. "I found one of her hairs on a coat of mine today" (Winterson 1994, 154). "I went to the cemetery today and walked amongst catacombs thinking of the dead" (ibid. 176). "I had scrupulously avoided our old haunts – that's the advice in the grief books – until today. Until today I had hoped to find you or more modestly to find out how you are" (ibid. 179). This use of today ties the diegetic action, the action that takes place within the universe of the narrative, to within a day of the act of narration. It suggests that the narrating act takes place between the moments of action in the novel, a type of narration that Genette terms interpolated narration (1983, 217). The first of these references to today, the one in which the narrator finds one of Louise's hairs (Winterson 1994, 154), is situated shortly prior to a summary of the events of August: "August. Nothing to report" (ibid. 156). The proximity of this first evidence of interpolated narration to the summary of August, the month of narration, suggests that it is here the shift in narrative structure occurs. The narrator's present goes from being "a single moment without progression" (Genette 1983, 223), to a present where her/his location and activities vary. This is perhaps best illustrated during a train ride where the narrator complains that "The train has been delayed and we are sitting in a cutting with nothing but the rustle of the evening newspaper and the tired stirrings of the engine" (Winterson 1994, 183-4). This explicitly places a present tense moment of narration within an ongoing diegetic event in the novel.

The interpolated narration that structures the latter part of the novel gives the narrative

the opportunity to continue after the ending of the analepsis in the main part, and show how the narrator deals with the failure to find meaning. However, interpolated narration does not sustain the novel to its very end. In the penultimate paragraph of the novel Louise appears to return to the narrator (Winterson 1994, 190). Her return can be read as real or as imagined by the narrator, but in any case her appearance heralds the end. The last paragraph of the novel is told in present tense, what Genette terms simultaneous narration (1983, 217). "This is where the story starts, in this threadbare room. […] I don't know if this is a happy ending but here we are let loose in open fields" (Winterson 1994, 190). An end is finally offered to the narrator, an end that at the same time is a beginning.

This is also the ending that conveys meaning to the entirety of the preceding narrative. The desire for an ending that could explain and give meaning to the narrator's loss of Louise, and maybe in the explanation show the way to remedy the loss, is not merely an inability to understand that specific loss. The manifold arabesques of plot that stretch through the novel are witness to a deeper lack of meaning, one where the narrator's lack of understanding of her/himself is so fundamental that s/he does not know where to start in looking for the reason the s/he lost Louise. The narrator is presented to the reader as almost devoid of an identity. S/he has no features, no past, and seemingly no anticipations for an ending. It is here that the closing paragraph shows what the desire for Louise is: a desire for her to be the fulfilling ending to a life story, to solidify a plot through Louise's role as the ending that the narrator's life has led to. With Louise is where the story gets its ending, and consequently also where it starts. The weave of arabesques can be reduced to the one thread of plot.

3.4.1 The Lover as an Ending, The Lover as an Object

> There are others who make fools of themselves, loving widely, indiscreetly, forgetting it is themselves they are trying to love back to a better place (Winterson 1998, qtd. Childs 264).[8]

In *Written on the Body* the narrator is actively seeking out relationships for the explicit purpose of having them function as endings that will uphold her/his chosen way of remembering her/his past. The story of "how it happened" (Winterson 1994, 21), or how we met, is a temptingly straight forward narrative where the excursions and mistakes of the past life need not be remembered. Through the cliché of the love story the narrator hopes to create self-knowledge of her/himself that can conquer the narrator's perception of her/himself as a serial adulterer, a self-titled "Lothario" (ibid. 20). However, in order to keep this monopoly on

[8] Childs quotes from: Winterson, Jeanette *Gut Symmetries* London: Granata, 1998. p. 126 (Childs 273).

story creation the lovers chosen need to be unable to engage in creation of narratives themselves. In the novel this is evident in the narrators treatment of Jacqueline and Louise, in the resistance against giving in to a relationship with Louise, and in the narrator's interest in Elgin, Louise's husband.

The desire to have Louise's function as a place of origin for narrative identity is most clearly seen in the narrator's preoccupation with Elgin. A conversation between the narrator and Louise initiates an analepsis in which Elgin's past is described in great detail (Winterson 1994, 32). Even the words and actions of Elgin's parents before his birth are described (ibid. 32-4). Furthermore, the narrator recalls that after the conversation with Louise s/he "thought about Elgin" (ibid. 35) and continues with the detailed account of Elgin's past. Even here, in what the narrator claims as being her/his thoughts at the time the reader is given specific details about how Elgin's parents, who are Jewish, react when he sends them a Christmas card: "'It's her,' said Esau behind the dark counter. 'A curse on women since the sin of Eve.' And Sarah, polishing, sorting, mending, serving, felt the curse and lost herself a little more" (ibid. 35). The story of Elgin is brought up again later and again the narrator gives detailed descriptions of events and dialogue in an analepsis regarding Sarah's, Elgin's mother, disease and death (ibid. 63-7).

The level of detail with which the narrator describes Elgin's past is not something that it is likely Louise is in the position of relating to the narrator in their conversation. Arguably then, these detailed passages are largely the narrator's imagined version of events built on top of whatever Louise was able to tell her/him. In the narrator's constructed narrative about Elgin the two defining aspects of his life, what is given most prominence in this constructed life story, is his relationship with Louise and his mother's death. Not only does this treatment of Elgin reflect the narrator's view of Louise as an ending that can structure a life-story, but it also reflects her/his general treatment of Louise. Whatever Louise may have told the narrator about Elgin, it is the narrator who has shaped the narrative of Elgin's life. Louise is denied the function as the active storyteller.

The narrator's need for control over narrative construction is expressed through objectification and through denial of agency, especially when it comes to Louise. For all the attention lavished upon her throughout the narrative "we know very little about Louise: that she has red hair, that she’s Australian" (Rubinsond 226). All other descriptions of her are the narrators "subjective constructions" (ibid.). The reader never sees her as an individual subject, merely the object of the narrator's discourse (ibid.). This is perhaps more clear than anywhere else when the narrator leaves Louise so that Elgin can take care of her without caring to talk

to Louise about it, denying her any agency (ibid.). Jennifer Gustar shows how the way the narrator's "decidedly conventional descriptions" of Louise marks her as a "textual echo, a citation of earlier precedents" (29). Towards the end of the novel the narrator acknowledges this in a conversation with Gail: "'Did I invent her?' 'No, but you tried to', said Gail. 'She wasn't yours for the making'" (Winterson 1994, 189). For the narrator Louise has until the end been a desired object.

The resistance to giving in to a honest relationship with Louise, where Louise herself is allowed agency, is expressed in the narrator's hesitant speculations: "Shall I submit myself sundial-wise beneath Louise's direct gaze? It's a risk; human beings go mad without a little shade, but how to break the habit of a lifetime else?" (Winterson 1994, 80). The reference to a habit of a lifetime is telling. The narrator has previously described how s/he is "addicted to the first six months of a relationship" and the passion involved (ibid. 76). This addiction needs breaking so that a lasting relationship can be established and the identity of the serial adulterer left behind. This wish is also evident in the narrator's thoughts about her relationship with Jacqueline. The narrator does not love her or desire her and counts this as points in her favour (ibid. 26). S/he wants to get out of the "slop bucket of romance" and find a lasting relationship based on "friendship and getting along" (ibid. 20-1). The narrator desires "the soggy armchair" of marital clichés where generations have sat safely before her/him (ibid. 10). The relationship with Jacqueline is an attempt at reaching this end. In the same way that the narrator will later pursue a relationship with Louise, the relationship with Jacqueline is not being pursued for Jacqueline's sake. It is the promised safe ending that the narrator sees in her which is important.

3.5 Conclusions

For Winterson's narrator in *Written on the Body* memory is the obstacle to a desired identity. For her/him, to find meaning in a life story composed of memories is to establish self-knowledge that s/he is trying to avoid. The narrator would prefer to construct her/himself out of the defining power that a relationship – figured as a significant ending to a life story, the point in life that one has been moving towards – might provide. But Winterson questions this refusal to engage with memories and shows how this narrative strategy fails.

In the narrative that the narrator creates to explain the loss of Louise s/he carefully isolates unpleasant memories and attempts to hide their original significance and meaning by making them into amusing anecdotes. Winterson, however, seems to suggest that while memories might be malleable they are not so easily escaped: "The physical memories

blunders through the doors the mind has tried to seal" (Winterson 1994, 130). Whatever constructions the narrator attempts to impose on her/his memories of the past, they can not be completely disregarded. Furthermore, this strict plotting of the past requires that a full control of the narrative is maintained. Louise can not be allowed to put the pieces of the narrator's story together in her own fashion:

> Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book (Winterson 1994, 89).

Louise's reading powers, her ability to construct her own plots on the basis of the memories of the narrator, removes the narrator's control of how to interpret her/his past. The objectification that the narrator has to subject her/his lovers to in order to retain this monopoly does not work in a reality where people have personalities and are agents in their own right. The breach with Louise is the ultimate expression of this objectification. The narrator ignores her completely and leaves her. The reason why s/he fails to make sense of the loss of Louise in the first two parts of the narrative is simply because the loss of Louise was a product of the same strategy of objectification that the narrator subjects her/his narrative to. The self-knowledge the narrator desired required a plotting that objectified not only memories, but also objectified people s/he got close to. The narrator's realisation that this is what s/he has done comes in the third part of the narrative: "What right had I to decide how she should live?" (Winterson 1994, 157). In response to Gail's claim that s/he ran out on Louise the narrator reflects: "Run out on her? That doesn't sound like the heroics I'd had in mind" (ibid. 159). The heroics the narrator had in mind never took into account the role of Louise as a subject. Like the narration of her/his memories, s/he objectified her/his anticipations for an ending. S/he sacrifices her desired object, while Louise could not, in the narrator's objectifying mind, lose or desire anything.

The failure of the narrator's first attempt at explaining the breach between her/him and Louise is a necessary stepping stone to a deeper understanding of the self. As the first attempt at finding meaning fails, an alternative model of explanation needs to be found. In granting Louise agency and considering her as a self-governing subject able to form an opinion about the narrator's behaviour, the narrator is able to understand why the relationship came to an end: s/he left Louise. The narrative of her/his abandonment of Louise creates self-knowledge

of the objectifying view she subjected Louise to, a self-knowledge which can be the used to see the recurring pattern of objectification in her/his self-narration, and to understand the reason for these objectifying tendencies.

Winterson's novel suggests that while one might attempt to influence how one perceives one's own memories, there are limitations to this influence. Memories not only form the basis for our existence in time but they are also in some way physically part of us. While Winterson seems to emphasise their bodily presence, it might well be possible to retain a more traditional position of Cartesian dualism and argue memory's unavoidable presence in the mind. Deliberate forgetfulness is not an option. Furthermore, in trying to form a narrative identity that avoids the unpleasant self-knowledge created by unflattering memories it does not work to adopt severe narrative strategies. Rather than produce functional truths that create meaning of temporal reality, these strategies might alienate the individual not only from her or his past, but also from a sense of the present and the future.

In *Written on the Body* love for another person functions as the force that enables one to abandon such a project. Whether Louise's return at the end of the narrative is real or not is irrelevant. In loving Louise the narrator is forced to give her the status of an independent subject so that s/he may arrive at a meaningful ending. Louise's return is the ending that is the beginning of the narrator's narrative about finding meaning in the loss of Louise. But it is also the ending that opens up for new beginnings, as the self-knowledge gained by the narrator dismantles the rigid construction of her/his life story and lets her/him engage in a freer meaning making: "I don't know if this is a happy ending but here we are let loose in open fields" (Winterson 1994, 190).

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Underlying the creation of narratives of the self lies a complex dialogue between memory and identity. In the stories we create about ourselves memory serves as the *fabula*. But it is not only *fabula* we are trying to make sense of and understand in these stories. Though it is the past that is being dealt with it is also the present and the future we are attempting to understand. The place of the past in the present self, and the present self's place in reality is in question. Our "refusal to allow temporality to be meaningless" (Brooks 323) leads us to attempt to impose meaning on time, but the meaning of individual events can only be understood if we have an idea of what they in the end will amount to, a sense of an ending. In order for us to be able to interpret the *fabula* of memories we need to anticipate an ending where it has amounted to some sort of meaning. Our identities, what our lives have made of us so far, is one such end. Therefore, how we view ourselves in the present and what we anticipate ourselves becoming in the future necessarily becomes an important element in the construction of our life stories.

But if identity has such an influence on how we remember our past, and memories are inherently fallible, there seems to be a risk that we trap ourselves in narratives that are solely self-serving. The narrative might only produce self-knowledge that upholds the current view of one's identity because this view is the one that shapes the interpretation of memories. It seems possible that if an identity is formed on faulty memories this same identity will attempt to fortify and defend the faulty memories in order to avoid change. In its extreme form this logic leads us to the conclusion that the identity I have in this moment may very well have influenced my memories of my past to the extent that I might only remember myself being the same yesterday because that stability of interpretation is what my identity creates.

Julian Barnes addresses these issues of false memories and the self-preserving function of identity in his novel. Anthony is faced with indications that he has interpreted some of his memories in ways that do not reflect truthfully upon the past. Furthermore, the element of self-knowledge that is most important to him and which is central to his interpretations is also the element that makes his interpretations diverge from Veronica's view of the matter. Anthony needs the plotted narrative to offer him a role that can create self-knowledge of his relevance. But while the necessary "chain of individual responsibilities" leading up to Adrian's suicide does contain his name it is "not so long a chain that everybody can simply blame everyone else" (Barnes 2011, 12), and in this situation he is among the

people that can not be blamed. His impact on Veronica and Adrian's lives was coincidental and minuscule. No real responsibility lies with Anthony.

What Barnes seems to suggest is that though memory is fallible and identity so self-serving that it may uphold false memories, our self-narrations still need to relate to an external reality. Designating something as a false memory indicates that it at the very least is not entirely true (White 53). But since knowing our past in a factual manner is, in most cases, problematic the falseness of memory must be measured in a different kind of truth. Meaning is one such truth. A memory may in other words be false when it no longer contributes to the process of making meaning that the narrative it is part of tries to achieve. The first step in attempting to correct the faulty memory is to restructure the *syuzhet* it is a part of in a way that lets the self-knowledge and the meaning it creates remain largely unchanged. However, when this is not possible the preservation of self-knowledge must be sacrificed so that the end goal of meaning making might be reached. If our narratives do not arrive at a meaningful end they can not create any self-knowledge and one's position in the narrative becomes irrelevant.

Winterson offers some insight into how the meaning created by our narratives is judged in meeting external realities. The narrator of *Written on the Body* attempts to escape unpleasant self-knowledge by creating a narrative in which memories are isolated and seemingly without any function as meaning bearing constituents. This necessitates that the narrator has full control over her/his narrative. In reality, Winterson suggests, this is not a possibility. We exist in space, in time, and in relation to other people. These other people have their own ability to create stories, not only of their own lives but also of ours. Our memories are inescapably present in our bodies and in our minds, and they are present in the ending that is our identities. The closer people are to us the better they will read us and in the process narrate us themselves. Sometimes these narrations may be completely new translations, like Louise's interpretation of the narrator in *Written on the Body* or Veronica's interpretation of Anthony's narrative in *The Sense of an Ending.* Other times they may conform nicely with our own narrations. However, these repeated narrations will never be the same narrative. Repetition returns with a difference. The result is that we live in a sea of narratives, all vying for the role as the dominant meaning creator. Clinging to one specific variation of the *syuzhet* that the world around one does not accept alienates one from the world.

Our desire for meaning, what Brooks identifies as the driving force of plot and the motivation for narrative (48), is, in the case of the narratives we construct about ourselves, not only a desire that we should find meaning in our own lives but also that other people should find meaning in us. Our desire for meaning is also a desire to have meaning. This desire is

what makes Anthony cling to his plot structure, and makes Winterson's narrator abandon hers/his. The idea that we in part create ourselves through the narratives we construct about ourselves seems to suggest that we could influence these narratives and take part in this construction of the self-knowledge of the extended self. But what both Barnes and Winterson suggest is that such attempts at self-creation might well be futile and ultimately alienating. Our desire to have meaning in the eyes of others means that our narratives need to make sense to others who see them as well. As such, the narratives of our lives are outside of our control. We live with them, but we do not create them. They create us.

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