

Assemblage Theory, Gender, and Ethics in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019)

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Abstract:

Under the auspices of the Research Project “Reorienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture” (PID2022-137881NB-I00) this paper explores the complex ways in which time, gender and ethics can be addressed through the critical lenses of Assemblage Theory in Jeanette Winterson’s novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019).

While assemblage thinking was first formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in 1980, it has been consolidated as a critical theory by the work of later scholars such as Manuel DeLanda, Claire Parnet, Bill Brown or Thomas Nail, until such extent that nowadays it is relatively easy to see its influence in a myriad of contemporary literary texts. However, and as Ian Buchanan argues, there are still many ways in which this concept can offer us new understandings of contemporary culture (3-4). One such way is by embracing this theory’s underexplored rejection of both binaries and essentialism, as well as its political nature.

Taking these three aspects of Assemblage Theory as our starting points, we address Winterson’s novel from a multidimensional critical perspective. We first focus on the temporal structure of the novel, where the narrative time becomes “a multiplicity of flows” (DeLanda 14) that connects past and present in a non-linear way in constant conversation. We argue that it is through this interplay of past and present that Winterson’s novel manages to successfully depict many of the ontological difficulties that surround the constructed nature of gender (difficulties that are often related to binaries and essentialism). By focusing on Winterson’s fictionalization of Mary Shelley and its contemporary counterpart, Ry Shelley, we draw attention to how the fluidity of gender and time are related in an ethico-political way that openly rejects dualisms. This calls for an assembled orientation towards societal norms that transcends unidimensional understandings of gender and embraces a new, multilayered framework for ethical thinking.

References (Chicago style)

- Buchanan, Ian. *Assemblage Theory and Method: An Introduction and Guide*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- DeLanda, Manuel. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Keywords (between 4 and 6 – please, separate them with semi-colons)

Assemblage; Ethics; Gender; Temporality; Jeannette Winterson.