



Homosexuality in Jeanette Winter Son's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*: a Critical Exploratory

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Résumé: Le travail de cette recherche porte sur une exploration critique de l'homosexualité dans *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* de Jeannette Winterson. Ainsi, l'homosexualité est connue comme un acte illégal contraire à la loi de Dieu d'après la Bible. De nos jours, de nombreuses personnes sont impliquées dans cet acte et finissent finalement leur vie en devenant gay ou lesbienne pour plusieurs raisons, mais la plupart de ces raisons reposent sur le désir naturel ou et l'amour que chacun porte envers son prochain. Malgré le fait de savoir que cette pratique est contraire à la loi naturelle, elle est bien légale dans certains pays occidentaux comme les USA, la Grande-Bretagne, la France, l'Allemagne et bien d'autres. Et cette légalisation donne la plupart du temps aux jeunes d'aujourd'hui la confiance d'être libres de faire leur choix d'être lesbienne ou gay sans tenir compte des conséquences que cela pourrait avoir sur leur vie. Ainsi, pour cette raison, une recherche exploratoire devrait être utilisée afin de clarifier les différentes raisons ou motifs qui rendent cet acte plus attrayant pour les personnes concernés.

Mots-clés: Homosexualité, sexe, société, addiction, relation

1. INTRODUCTION

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit by Jeanette Winterson being a semi-autobiographical novel which express a view on the practicing of homosexuality through the religion aspect. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* was published in 1985 and is made up of 146 pages (Vintage edition) which are subdivided into 8 parts. The novel is based on Jeanette lifestyle and how she started to acquire the practice of homosexuality which led her life to end up as a lesbian. The main problem that the novel tackled are exorcism, hypocrisy, religion and society and finally homosexuality. The present work focus on homosexuality in the *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* of Jeanette Winterson's. In this framework, it explores characters homosexuality and make a critical analysis of the latter. The present study is divided into three sections, section one sets the theoretical background of the study, while the section two present a general overview on the novel clearly and finally the section three which makes an analysis of the novel by laying emphasis on an exploration of homosexuality in the novel.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1. Problem Statement

The present research work focuses on the homosexuality in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* written by Jeanette Winterson's. The feeling of writing on that topic arose while reading the novel. So many events that occurred in some parts of the novel made us wonder how a human being can be so much addicted to homosexuality from her childhood to adulthood without considering the bad consequences. The problem this research raises is to know the different reasons that conduct and make people linked to the practice of homosexuality widespread in the novel of study. Thanks to some advice, the sharpening of this wonder brought us to engage in homosexuality throughout the novel.

2.2. Significance of the Study

This work is an initiative to study more carefully the question of homosexuality as depicted by Jeanette Winterson. Furthermore, through her novel *Oranges Are Not the Only*, she has addressed many social aspects like religion, Family relationship and we also have homosexuality.

The present research project is significant in the logic that it can serve as a literary source for scholars and maybe as an inspiration for some students while in search of writing their dissertation in the area of British literature or civilization.

2.3. Research Purposes

The reasons accounting for the choice of this topic are personal, social, relational and professional. Since one secondary school, one has always been fascinated by English as a language of communication but what amazed one's at that time was all the interesting short story which gave one's an opportunity to acquired new words.

This work arises the awareness of readers on homosexuality as an unlawful and ungodly act that shouldn't be accepted in the human society, it also shows how religion contributes to the ending and banding the ungodly practice. And for professional reason, I think this novel can be used as a teaching material in English literature classes by providing learners with elements to debate and discuss more vividly in British literature and civilization.

2.4. Research Methodology

The present work is exploratory research; It has been conducted to explore the characters of Homosexuality in the Novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette. To collect the needed data, one made online research to have access to information on the author, the novel and to identify the different works that have been previously done on the subject. Secondly, one also used literature research to broaden the data from online research. After gathering the needed data, some analysis has been performed on the basis of the novel.

2.5. Conceptual Clarification

In order to better understand the subject, the concept homosexuality must be clarified.

Oxford dictionary version 11.7.712 (2020) defined homosexuality as a state of being attracted to the people of the same sex.

Mariam Webster defined it as sexual or romantic attraction to others of one's same sex, the quality of being a gay or lesbian.

2.6. Limitation of the Study

This work is only focused on the character homosexuality. The conflict between the binary factors passage is cited as evidence to sustain the ideas given in the frame of this work.

2.7. The Literature Review

The present work deals with semi-autobiographical genre which is a fictional account of the author's life and also known as roman à clef, it is any work or fiction where in central element of both the narrator and the plot are based on the author themselves. The "semi" exists in the definition because the author may explore fictional hypotheticals, introduce fictional characters, or else distress from what happened in real life. An autobiographical novel is a form of novel using auto fiction techniques, or the merging of autobiographical and fictive elements. The literary technique is distinguished from an autobiography or memoir by the stipulation of being fiction. Because an autobiographical novel is partially fiction, the author does not ask the reader to expect the text to fulfill the autobiographical pact. Named and location are often changed and events are recreated to make them more dramatic but the story still bears a close resemblance to that of the author's life. While the events of the author's life are recounted, there is no pretense of exact truth. Events may be exaggerated or altered for artistic or thematic purposes.

The literary genre of the novel has been clarified, now we explore the different author and works which relate to the book of study.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit being not the only semi-autobiographical genre that dealing with homosexuality. In *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* by Lillian Faderman, First published in 1991, this historical account of lesbianism throughout the twentieth century is, admittedly, a little dated. Faderman tracks America's attitude toward women loving women from the time when –romantic friendship was a normal, even admirable trait, through the experimental roaring twenties, to the terror-driven McCarthy years, and beyond. Also, in *Rubyfruit Jungle*, by Rita Mae Brown, many queer female writers see Rita Mae Brown's 1973 coming-of-age book as an iconic work of LGBT literature and as a semi-autobiographical novel, *Rubyfruit Jungle* follows Molly Bolt's amorous adventures from childhood to adulthood, including a stint in swinging New York City. While Molly has sexual adventures with men, her true love is women, and Brown never shies away from describing Molly's insatiable for the ladies. The title perfectly captures Molly zeal for female anatomy and we can say that it relates to our novel of study because our narrator also narrates her childhood and her sexual adventure. In England in the 1920s, Virginia Woolf struggles dispersion and writing *Mrs. Dalloway* a novel to which Cunningham pays homage, in mid-20th century Los Angeles, housewife Laura Brown, discontented with her life, confront her attention to women, and in 1990s New York city, Clarissa Vaughan, who is a lesbian plans a party or her best friend, Writer Richard Brown, a gay man dying of AIDS.¹

3. GENERAL OVERVIEW ON THE NOVEL

3.1. The Novel

The novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is one of the most original British novels written by Jeanette Winterson's. The book is made up of 145 pages and was published on 21st march 1985 by Pandora press. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* takes place in Great Britain and it's about the story of a teenager named Jeanette that was adopted and brought up in an English Pentecostal community and her lesbianism journey.

3.2. General Conception on the Novel

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit being a coming-of-age story about a lesbian who grows up in an English Pentecostal community. Published in 21 march 1985 by Pandora press and made up of 145 pages. This novel written by Jeanette Winterson's addresses many religion and societal issues.

4. EXPLORING HOMOSEXUALITY AND PERSPECTIVE

4.1. Exploration of Homosexuality

The opening of the novel starts with an introduction of the novel and everything the author had experienced while writing the novel. The English author Jeanette Winterson relates the semi-autobiographical tale of her up ringing as a fundamentalist Pentecostal Christian who experiences a sexual awakening when she discovers she is a lesbian. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a 1985 Bildungsroman centered on the life of Jeanette, a girl who is adopted and raised by a woman who happens to be a fundamentalist Christian. Jeanette's mother believes in a literal translation of the Bible and she freely uses religious rhetoric to accommodate her black and white fashion of viewing the world as the narrator mention earlier in the novel, her mother " had never heard of mixed feelings, there were friends and there were enemies " (page 17). The novel focuses most of its attention on the tension and friction that sparks when Jeanette's sexual life clashes with her religious life of " unnatural passion " away from her. Her mother desperately tries to shield Jeanette from going to the store because there was a rumor that " they deal with unnatural passion" (page 25). But for Jeanette, she believes that " unnatural passion " are referring to the fact that the couple puts chemicals in their sweets. This desire to protect Jeanette from evil, in addition to the mother's penchant for explaining phenomena using religious rhetoric, makes it increasingly difficult for Jeanette to adjust to the outer world for example, her mother sees her to be " in a state of rapture " (page 36) when Jeanette goes deaf for three months in the novel. But fortunately for Jeanette, Miss Jewsbury, a closeted lesbian brings her to be treated for her condition. Throughout the novel, the only fruit Jeanette's mother will

¹ from <https://www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/psychology>

give to her is the orange, for her it is " The only Fruit "(page 41). However, the meaning behind the orange is not necessarily based on the fruit itself but rather on how the fruit is used. Furthermore, in the novel, Jeanette starts her first homosexuality relationship with Melanie, but unfortunately for them, they were caught in the church and their church member feel that Jeanette and her girlfriend Melanie have engaged in homosexual activity because they are possessed by demon and they accused her. This accusation makes Jeanette to escapes the church and goes to Miss Jewsbury home who is also a lesbian and the two of them finally have sex " We made love and i hated it, but wouldn't stop " (page 96). So, despite the fact that Jeanette was threatened to stop homosexuality, she refused and she sees it as a natural feeling for herself. Although, she has broken up with her first love which is Melanie but she later found another one named Katy and she continues her lesbianism journey with her. Contrary to the beliefs of her congregation, Jeanette firmly believes that her spiritual and sexual life are able to coexist. She is soon caught in a compromising situation with Katy and her mother proceed to kick her out of their home. Finally, Jeanette moves to a city and start a new life which unfortunately being deprived of her family and her history. As for Jeannette's mother, she starts a mission with black people and serves them pineapple because " she thought that's what they ate " (page 142). Because of this, Jeannette's mother ends up eating many dishes with pineapple in it, while claiming, philosophically that " oranges are not the only fruit " (page 143). Many homosexuality actions realities have been described in the novel and as such we could not explore all of them.²

4.2. Critical Interpretation of Homosexual Behaviours

The *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson's is one of the most widely recognized novels which is mainly about homosexuality and religion. The present critical analysis is focused on the homosexuality. The novel starts with the kind of life that her mother wants her to live through religion because Jeanette's mother believes that " the world contains enemies and friends" (page 17). Throughout the novel, it is so clear that there are symbols presents that carry the overall meaning in this piece. Jeanette the protagonist discover she is a lesbian, which is complicated by the fact that she came from a strict religion background. Jeanette sees herself special from her very young age and this specialness relates her future as a lesbian, as an example we can see the gypsy's woman's that predict that " Jeanette will not marry " (page 25). All the more in the novel, Jeanette first sex relationship starts with Melanie which is one of her church members. Her love for Melanie develops easily and wide openly. Winterson's depiction shows that Jeanette's love to be simply natural process that has no appearance of sinfulness often associated with love affairs. She doesn't see any sort of contradiction in her loving both the church and being a lesbian and she didn't see her relationship as what can drive her away from God because she said in herself that " she loves both God and Melanie " (page 77). She doesn't think that she is doing anything wrong because the Pastor and her mother were telling her to repent from the practice of homosexuality. In fact, Jeanette confesses her love for Melanie to her mother because she feels so happy about it. Soon, her pure love comes face to face with the rigid regulations of the church and this make her to face thirty-six hours confinement which demonstrate the coldness and cruelty of her religious. So, Winterson's documentation on Jeannette's persecution broadly testifies to the prejudicial treatment that homosexuality suffers in the society. Moreover, Jeannette being a lesbian seen herself to make it by eating from the garden of her wish and she has at least found her promised land by being true to her desire. She didn't give up in her lesbianism journey and she start a relationship with a new lesbian named Katy despite that she was threatened by her mother to be sent away from house. She sees herself having a natural passion of being a lesbian and she accepts to face all the calamity that might block her lesbianism journey. Jeanette homosexuality also challenges the binary system of good and evil she learned from her mother. In a strict division of good and evil, Jeanette should be evil because she has become a lesbian. Seen she can no longer be seen as good, but is not truly evil, she stands in a gray area between the binaries.³

² from <https://www.coursehero.com/lit/>

³ from [https://www.diffnotes.com./literature/WINTERSON, J. \(1997\). Oranges are not the only fruit. New York, Grove Press.](https://www.diffnotes.com./literature/WINTERSON, J. (1997). Oranges are not the only fruit. New York, Grove Press.)

4.3. Personal Stand and Perspectives

Homosexuality has been defined as a sexual attraction or sexual behavior between member of the same sex or gender. As pictured in the novel, homosexuality has been seen to be more developed by the author through the protagonist. Jeanette grows up in an English Pentecostal community and finally end up to be a lesbian and she refused to repent despite all what her adoptive mother and church did to her. So, there is no accurate reason to give for non being guilty of being adapted to this practice because it is strictly contrast to natural law.

4.4. Perspectives

Homosexuality as the act of being attracted to the same sex relationship either gay or lesbian is a troubling moral and social phenomenon. It is a behavior that has existed throughout all the eras on human societies and most of the youth are often exposed to anti-homosexual attitudes. In consequently, those that are addicted to this practice are naturally exposed to different kind of diseases like HIV, STDs, Cancer that can strictly lead them to death. The victims should know that it's against the nature and it's a wicked and sinful lifestyle that can easily damage their life. They should reconcile and make friends with people who are helping them to quit it, and finally, they should believe in God and respect the law of the nature.

4.4.1. Professional Domain

In this domain, the same sex relationship is considered as the act of being empowered by forms of agency to self-identity as a professional in lesbian or gay work context. They are by no means affected by dominant professional norms and therefore they are all free in any professional domain.

4.4.2. Social Domain

In the social aspect, especially in human society, although those involved in the act of homosexuality have the same rights as the heterosexuality since it has been legalized by the government in some Western countries but still brings danger to the society because they more frequently exposed themselves to biological hazards such as fisting, bestiality and ingestion of feces. So, participating in homosexual activity could be viewed as dangerous to society and incompatible with full health due to some of its negative consequences that will not be any value to any valuable respect expected from the society.

4.4.3. Economic Domain

In this domain, the LGBT people are denied fully participation in society because of their identities, their human rights are violated, and those violation of human rights are likely to have a harmful effect on a country's level of economic development. Several theoretical frameworks argue that the inclusion of LGBT people is linked to a stronger economy and they can be used strategically to promote and expand economic development and opportunities.

4.4.4. Environmental Domain

There has been a study published in the October 2006 on the issue of archives of sexual behavior by Danish Morten. This study suggest link between environmental factors and the probability of marrying a same sex partner and it shows that the number of brothers and sisters in an environment can really affect the probability of marrying heterosexually. Danish researchers found no evidence that having older brothers increased the likelihood of men " marrying" homosexuality. On the contrary, they found that the older siblings increased the probability of heterosexual marriage. The choice of homosexual versus heterosexual marriage serves as an obvious, although not perfect, assessment of sexual preferences.

5. CONCLUSION

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit being a semi-autobiographical novel which has developed the fact of homosexuality and religion in the human society. Jeanette Winterson's has narrated her own life story on her journey of lesbianism from her childhood to adulthood throughout the novel. The research work concerned the knowing what caused or lead the narrator to be a lesbian. We have adopted an exploratory research methodology and we conduct accordingly literature research to gather information on the author but also on the novel. We also used the Freytag's analysis and the stylistics analysis which helped us in better exploring and analyzing critically of the novel.

After exploring the novel and analyzing the novel, we discovered that the protagonist Jeanette doesn't consider the act of being a lesbian as an unlawful act and unholy act that is against the will of God.

She sees it as a natural feeling. Although Jeanette's mother gives her oranges every time and everyday Jeanette feel alone and this orange represents the ideology that pervades the world in which Jeanette lives. She doesn't give her chances to discover the world outside religion, she associates Jeanette to religion, she doesn't let her know how to have a good feeling for the other gender . So, her mother and the society in which Jeanette lives contribute for her to develop her lifestyle as a lesbian. So, throughout the study, the reality that we perceived is that the act of being a gay or lesbian has a root. The first one found in the novel is through the religion concept and the second one is parent concept because they really make her realize that there is no biological role for men and women. So, as homosexuality is seen as a natural phenomenon that cannot be easily stop or repent from, we found wise to recommend some actions to be taken in the framework of stopping or repenting from it. firstly, the victims should know that it is an unlawful act that is not welcomed in any domain of the society, they should be advised to make friends either male or female and should be fully granted a full freedom of friendship by their parent or family. Secondly, they should be well motivated by elderly and wise people. And lasts they should have the fear of God and believe in his existence.

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