Winterson’s Orange Essay, Research Paper

ORANGE as a lesbian novel

It is hard to definite ‘lesbian novels’. Some concern about the writers’ background, some concern about the content…but we think Oranges has lesbian flavour, it is related to lesbianism in a sense that Winterson puts lesbian issue in an explicit, expressive and direct way. She describes her intimate relations with female figures–Melanie, Katy, before that with Elsie, her mother and the church community (female-oriented), male figures seem to be excluded.

But yet Oranges is not merely talking about lesbianism, it is about choices, just as the title suggests. Here ‘choices’ refer to several issues :

1) Self & Sociey–the identity

If we take Kristeva’s words that male-dominated society discourages multiple forms of selfhood, Winterson is acting as the counter-force to bring out the choices, possibilities and multiplity of one’s identity. Choices also imply differences, but people tend to regard ‘differences’ as ‘disorder’ or ‘chaos’, that’s why when people make a totally different choice from the majority group will become the outcast in society, those people are alone. In Oranges, Winterson is facing some kind of pressure/tension in searching her own identity issue, not just because her sexual approach, but also her various social roles.(e.g. church and her mother as authority, conventions, social norms, etc.)

For this part, Ruth mentions Foucault’s Madness & Civilization which gives insights to the issue, considering ‘madness’ , ‘choices’, ‘determinism vs. free will ‘ in the search of one’s identity.

2) Truth–the world views

As mentioned above, choices means differences and multiplity. For this, Winterson voices out the fact that there is no absolute truth/single meaning to a pacticular issue, people see things differently with their own perspectives. We cannot assume certain perceptives are better or ‘correct’, for right and wrong is always without a clear-cut boundary. It also reminds me of Baudrillard ’s ’simulation’, even we may not all agree the reality is created by simulation/ the illusion of truth, it does give some ideas on it. The fairy-tale that talks about ’searching perfection’ and then ‘discovering the impossibility of perfection’ (p.60) can somehow be compared with the way we find truth in the world.

3) Oranges–the writing style

Just as Winterson comments Oranges as experimental (see introduction), it is something different or new in her writing style. The book is different in the way that it doesn’t follow linear pattern and it rewrites history, draws references from fairy-tales, its intertextuality makes the book postmodern, and again, it’s Winterson’s choice to make her novel one of a kind.