Tribhuvan University

Subverting Gender and Sexuality: Lesbianism and Body Politics in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

A Thesis Submitted to

The Central Department of English in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Purna Chandra Bhusal

University Campus

Kirtipur

June 2010

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

APPROVAL LETTER

This thesis entitled "Subverting Gender and Sexuality: Lesbianism and Body Politics in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Purna Chandra Bhusal has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of Research Committee:

_____ _____

Internal Examiner

_____

_____ _____

External Examiner

_____

_____

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the respected supervisor Harihar Gnawali, a lecturer of the central Department of English, Tribhuwan University. His sincere effort, helpful suggestions, continuous scholarly guidance, valuable criticism and instructions made this work complete.

I am heartily thankful to Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, the head of the Central Department of English, for providing me an opportunity to work on this project by accepting my proposal. Similarly, I heartily express my gratitude to the respected lecturers of the department who equally provided me the valuable advices and suggestions.

Furthermore, I am heavily indebted to my parents, relatives, friends and specially my respected teacher and the prime inspirer Krishna Prasad Parajuli. I would like to express heartfelt valuation to my well-wishers who encouraged and helped me regularly in my studies.

ABSTRACT

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, a literary text by Margaret Atwood, dedivinizes the traditional grand narrative of gender and sexuality via the subversive dynamics of lesbianism and body politics. Depicting a lesbian protagonist Jeanette as a mnemonic device, the text encompasses the cognitive thirst of queer politics, performativity, transpolitics, and drag culture. It also dramatizes the female body as the point of resistance rather than the site patriarchal exploitation. Jeanette's lesbianism celebrates her own body, an essential premise of gender construction in patriarchal ideology, in full-fledged form. Hence, the text is the critique of gender and sexuality that is deeply rooted in western metaphysics.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A Dynamic Interplay of Lesbian Body Politics: Denaturalizing Gendered Sexuality in Jeanette winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) is a fiction that recapitulates the life of the protagonist as well as the narrator Jeanette from the age of seven to the certain unspecified age- the time of her self-exile from the family. Jeanette, the female protagonist as well the single narrator, tells the story from her own perspective. As per the story, she lives in a Christian family with her adoptive parents as a foundling child. Moreover, her mother adopted Jeanette so as to invent her as a missionary, servant of God, and a blessing. Until the age of seven, Jeanette's mother educates her at home mostly teaching her to read the Bible. Jeanette does not know anyone aside from the members of church until she begins schooling at the age of seven.

The protagonist, though raised particularly by her Christian mother, she deviates herself from the Christian beliefs, and the boundary of gender and sexuality. She challenges the Christian community having the homosexual relations with other characters in the novel; she hates heterosexuality. The plotline of the fiction is developed with the homosexual experiences of the protagonist infused with her quest for true self- the lesbian self. Moreover, the narrator buttresses her main plot infusing some stories in many places. The invention of her lesbian identity rests on the homosexual love affairs with other characters: Melanie, Miss Jewsberry and Katy. Sometimes she gives the clues that her mother too was homosexual: her mother hates sex; her parents sleep together in the bed just for a single hour.

Though the Church members and her mother constantly threat her not to be involved in the homosexual relations, she turns deaf ears toward it. The elders of the Church firstly try to make her repent the 'sin' but she does not. At this very moment, her homosexual partner Melanie repents and gets married with a man later. Again when the lesbian affair of Jeanette develops with other characters, the Church members punish Jeanette severely to make her confess but she never confesses her 'sin' in her heart. The church members think to exorcise the 'demon' from Jeanette by laying hands on her for fourteen hours. When she denies confessing, her mother locks Jeanette in the solitary chamber for thirty-six hours with no food. After this hungry spell, she pretends to repent, but maintains her impression that she has not done anything wrong by loving both her homosexual partners and God at the same time.

Moreover, the protagonist does not receive the 'oranges' many times offered by her mother: 'oranges are not the only fruit', she believes. She also feels discomfort to put on the clothes ordered by her mother. Sometimes her mother gives the suggestions like not to allow anybody to touch her sexual organ; but Jeanette hates it. Her sole concern, she narrates, is to define herself and to play with her own bodily pleasures/desires rather than to be defined by the other members of her society. She accepts excommunication rather than curbing her lesbian tendency. At last, she accepts self-exile from the family but the time of exile is as usual for her.

The novel got immense popularity after its publication coupled with numerous book reviews, has been interpreted from different aspects both in thematic and the structural level. In this regard, the novel has been reviewed via the different interpretative frames: psychoanalysis, familial bond, multidisciplinarity and so on.

Keryn Carter reviews the text from the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and Julia Ktisteva. Jeanette's separation from mother, the critic views, is the creation of 'self'. Drawing upon Freud and Kristeva, the critic asserts:

> For Kristeva, as for Freud, the original 'not self' of any individual is the mother. As the boundaries between the child's body and the mother's gradually become more and more distinct, the child suffers an enormous sense of loss for the wholeness he or she had once experienced with the mother…the mother-daughter relationship depicted in Oranges, on the individual level, may be read as dramatizing the process of abjection-the daughter's development as a subject relies on a process of separating herself from a dominating, even monstrous mother who threatens to engulf her selfhood. (16-17)

In these lines, the critic reads the novel focusing upon the self- exile of the protagonist from her family. Jeanette, the protagonist, in the hand of the critic, is inventing her individual self disaffiliating herself from the intrinsic bond of her mother's self. Hence, the prime concern of the critic is to view the protagonist's separation from the mother as the process of psychosexual development.

Julie Elam, on the other hand, reads the novel revolving around the idea of family values. The novel, in the hand of Elam, depicts how the emotionally bound relationships are more intense than the blood relationship. The critic writes:

> *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* also considers how impossible it is to escape from constructed past where, although there is no biological tie between mother and daughter, the connection is still present even after betrayal and Jeanette's excommunication … the thread is artificial, a fiction, but is still

> described as effective as Jeanette realizes that she cannot break away from her adoptive mother simply by leaving home … the gap created by allegory and the adoption process serves to illuminate how love is realized by the narrator as an expected right. The attachment created by the [unnatural] family structure is used to heighten the child's sense of neglect as the parent is criticized for judging and betraying the child for not loving appropriately. (79-80)

These lines explicate the novel throwing light upon the relationship between the child and adoptive parents. The relationship between Jeanette and her parents, the critic argues, challenges the natural relationship. Though the protagonist is an adopted child, she has no sense of losing her biological parents.

Anne DeLong, furthermore, reviews the text as a multidisciplinary novel. The critic argues that the novel borrows the discourses from numerous disciplines. Drawing upon Luce Irigary's concept of fluidity and multiplicity of female writing, the critic praises it for challenging the monolithic masculine discourse:

> …. Luce Irigary both argues for and exemplifies a female discourse that is characterized by simultaneity, fluidity, and multiplicity. Such a discourse, she argues, can effectively battle and possibly overthrow traditional monolithic masculine concept of linearity, unity and oneness … Jeanette Winterson [in the novel] intermingles threads of autobiographical fiction, Biblical myth, and fairy tale creating an Irigarian language 'that comes from everywhere at once'[qtd.]. Winterson's text, like her metaphor for history, is a cat's cradle, an intricately, complicatedly knotted piece of string, an intermingling of

> threads that are not one but that appear to have no beginning and no end. (63-64)

The critic, in these lines, explicates the novel in terms of its multidisciplinarity and its anachronological plot lines. This characteristic of the novel, the critic claims, carries the feminist agendas constantly critiquing the chronological and uniform structure of the patriarchal discourse.

All in all, so far the reviews of the *Oranges* are concerned; different critics have their own interpretation regarding its theme as well as its structure. Caryn Carter reads it as the dynamic interplay of the psychosexual development of a child; he views that Jeanette's separation from mother is inevitable for creating her individual 'self'. But if Carter interprets the novel from the point of view of separation, Julie Ellam reads it from the perspective of union between the mother and child. She buttresses her point that the artificial familial bond is more intense than the natural one in the novel. In this way, both critics focus on the relationship between the mother and child despite their difference in the issues. Anne DeLong, on the other hand, revisits the same text from feminist perspective. If Carter and Ellam deal with the thematic aspect of the novel, DeLong's interests are more structural. The novel, in her hand, is an epitome of female writing which is zigzag, non-linear, and multidisciplinary.

In this manner, though the novel has been reviewed from multiple aspects, no critic seems addressing or analyzing why Jeanette the protagonist involves herself in homosexuality despite the constant threat from the Church community and the family. This research, hence, endeavours to trigger the issue as the practice of deconstructing gender and sexuality. The theoretical tools that encompass these aspects of the text, therefore, seem lesbianism and body politics. If lesbianism addresses the homosexuality of the protagonist,

body politics analyses the issues of the celebration of the body. Moreover, this research also reinterprets the discourse of gender and sexuality from the perspective of the protagonist.

Jeanette, the female protagonist and the narrator of the novel, deviates herself from the normal discourse of her Christian community. The Christian community, in the novel, disseminates the discourse of heterosexuality; it has strict beliefs in gender roles. Guided by the same ideology, the mother of the protagonist too is in favor of the gender roles and heterosexuality. Jeanette, despite her familial as well as the social discourse of heterosexuality and the gender roles, involves herself in homosexual relationship with other characters. She crosses the boundary of gender roles; she tries to invent her true self- the lesbian identity. Moreover, her prime concern is to be true to the bodily desires that are defined as "unnatural passions" by her mother. (4) Jeannette, during her childhood, is taught the Bible but later she disbelieves it as drilled by others; she shuns the gender roles charged in the lines of Bible. But the significant aspect is Jeanette thinks that she has not done anything wrong both being a lesbian and the lover of the God.

Jeanette, the protagonist, despite the severe punishment, continues her homosexual relation with other characters. The pastor, firstly, exploits her physically to exorcise the 'demon' from her. She narrates the incident as: "'These children of God,' began the pastor, have fallen under Satan's spell.' His hand was hot and heavy on my neck" (78). She has to undergo a severe starvation as the price of deviation from the gender roles. At this very moment, her mother, exploits her in terms of body: she has been starved in a chamber for thirty-six hours; her body has been the site of exploitation. Moreover, the church too believes only in heterosexuality: "Do you deny you love this woman with a love reserved for man and wife?" asks the pastor to Jeanette when there is the strong suspicion of homosexual love between Jeanette and Melanie. But Jeanette backfires: "No, yes, I mean of course I love her"

(78). Here, in these lines, she does not believe in heterosexuality and gender roles as defined by the church community. No sooner she comes out from the church, Jeanette has love with Miss Jewsberry: "And she [Miss Jewsberry, the homosexual] began to stroke my head and shoulders. I turned over so that she could reach my back. Her hand crept lower and lower. She bent over me; I could feel her breath on my back" (80). In these lines, she exteriorizes her inner desires that are antithetical to the patriarchal discourse of heterosexuality. Furthermore, she not only subverts the traditional role of gender and sexuality, she is obsessed with the lesbian body. She narrates: "I still couldn't think, could only see Melanie's face and 'body' [my emphasis], and every so often the outline of Miss Jewsberry's bending over me" (81). These lines of Jeanette are charged with the issues of female body which has been utilized as the site of exploration and resistance rather than the patriarchal domain of exploitation and submission. In addition to this, Jeanette negates the patriarchal 'gifts' offered to a female: a pink mackintosh or raincoat and the oranges. These offerings by her mother, she thinks, are the tokens of gendered sexuality, thereby bidding farewell to them. Oranges, for her, symbolize heterosexuality. The narration goes: "When she [Jeanette's mother] couldn't come herself she sent my father usually with a letter and a couple of oranges. 'The only fruit,' she always said. Fruit salad, fruit pie, fruit for fools, fruited punch. Demon fruit, passion fruit, rotten fruit, fruit on Sunday" (20). Here, the oranges refer to the male sexual organ which is not essential for Jeanette, the lesbian. The 'oranges are not the only fruit' for her: heterosexuality is not the ultimate option; there can be the homosexual/lesbian alternatives too.

In this manner, there are the abundant references of lesbianism and body politics in the novel. Lesbianism is related to radical feminism that came into practice toward the end of the twentieth century. Lesbianism subverts the traditional patriarchal notion of gender and

sexuality. Traditional discourse of gender and sexuality creates the hermetic boundary between the gender roles: masculinity and femininity. It also creates the discourse of performativity. But lesbianism as practiced in literary as well as in the social fields comes in opposition to the concept of gendered sexuality. It attacks the constructedness of gender which is different from sex- the biological aspect. Body politics, on the other hand, too is embedded to lesbianism. The western philosophy – Bible's secondness of Eve, Plato's rationality, Cartesian cogito, Hegelian self, Deism of Enlightenment – invented the dichotomy between the mind and body. But the problem is that women are reduced to the status of 'body', whereas males are received as 'body with the mind'. Hence, females are (mis)interpreted as being incapable of rational thinking. Female body, in this manner, merely becomes the realm of pleasure, exploitation and commoditization. But the radical feminists revisit this grand-narration. They, now, counterattack the binary opposition (masculinity/femininity) celebrating their body. The female body has been the means of resistance, freedom, and celebration - which has recently been known as body politics.

The research is divided into four chapters. Chapter I is the introductory part of the research. This chapter dramatizes the problematic issues of the text that the research endeavours to address. It gives the general background of the structural as well as the thematic aspect of the research. Chapter II deals with the methodological aspects of the research where the theoretical modalities are discussed in detail. In this chapter, Lesbianism and body politics are the inclusive tools under which queer politics, performative gender, transgendering and drag culture are discussed. The researcher is textually biased while discussing on the tools. The theoretical discussions of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Chris Barker, Louis Tyson, Chris Beasley Janet Price and Margrit Sheldrake are enhanced while elaborating the methodology. In the same manner, chapter III deals with textual analysis. In

this chapter, the tools discussed in the former chapter are applied in the text in full-fledged form. The vital incidents of the text are explicated from the perspective of the theoretical modalities. Moreover, chapter IV of the research runs the encapsulated form of the thesis in the conclusive manner. This last chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

In addition to this, the research includes some of the significant terms that are related to lesbianism and body politics. By lesbianism the research means the homosexual relationship between female and its subversive politics. By the same token, body politics refers to the utilization of the female body by the female to resist the patriarchal ideology of 'female as body'. Queer politics, in the research, means the questioning of gender, sexuality, truth, identity and other essential generalizations. Performative gender connotes the constructedness of gender in the social discourse. Transpolitics, besides this, means the transgressive radicalism of transsexuality and transgendering. Transgendering and transsexuality, hence, refer to the subversive politics of lesbianism that goes beyond the discourse of gender and sexuality roles. Drag culture, on the other hand, deals with the anti-heterosexual practice of the lesbians in the external levels like dressing.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

The Subversive Body Politics of Lesbianism: Queer Politics, Per formative Gender, Tran gendering and Drag Culture

Gender and sexuality are the two important frames of reference that lesbianism and body politics work with. Gender and sexuality, in the hand of these theoretical modalities, are revisited as the socio-cultural construct intertwined with the network of patriarchal power politics and the discursive practices. The notion of sexuality – homosexuality and heterosexuality - presupposes gender distinction at its heart. Lesbianism and body politics, hence, are the practices antithetical to the discourse of gender and sexuality that began towards the end of twentieth century. They frown at or even reject the roles of gender and sexuality assigned to every individual in the society; they subvert the dichotomy between masculinity (mind) and femininity (body), heterosexuality and homosexuality. Lesbianism and body politics blur the patriarchal boundary of gendered sexuality. If lesbian practice bilaterally ruptures the boundary of gendered sexuality, body politics deconstructs the hierarchic schematization between mind (masculinity) and body (femininity) – an essential premise for inventing gender and sexuality in western culture. In this sense, lesbianism and body politics seem explicitly the agendas of feminism; they both interrogate the patriarchal ideology inherent in the different disciplines of human cognition. At this point, the discourse of sexuality gets inaugurated with the concept of gender difference: sexual intercourse is only possible between the two gender(ed) categories - male and female.

The agendas that lesbianism and body politics come with are numerous. They work with the radical notion of queer politics, the theory of performativity, transgendering, drag culture and so forth; they also celebrate the female body rather than regarding it the secondary category. They both are anti-patriarchal in their heart. They genealogically

reinterpret the history of western philosophy and question it: the secondariness of Eve in Bible, Plato's emphasis on rationality, Aristotle's othering of women on the basis of lack of intellectuality, the one-sided eulogizing of reason during the period of Enlightenment all valorized the reasoning faculty in the human anatomical schema. But the fundamental flaw of this tradition is that females are othered as being incapable of exercising their reason: they are assigned to perform certain roles of domestic affairs rather than the tasks of public sphere. That is, they are reduced to the category of body thereby constructing gendered sexuality to receive the salvos of lesbianism and body politics at present.

Lesbianism is a version of queer politics that rejects the ironclad boundary of subjectivity, identity, gender, and sexuality constructed on the basis of heterosexual matrix. In these sense, queer politics is the radical agenda that lesbianism is embedded with. Regarding queer theory, Chris Beasley writes:

> Queer theory offers a postmodern critique of metanarratives of identity, a critique of universal homogenous and fixed identity gender/sexuality categories, which are deemed essentialist. Instead of affirming such identity categories, queer theory sees identity as socially constructed and internally unstable and incoherent. Such an assessment necessary also involves deconstructing mutually reinforcing neat divisions of identity binaries such as men/women and heterosexuality/homosexuality. (*Gender,* 162)

As Beasley argues in these lines queer theory is a recent development that interrogates or even rejects the discourse of gender and sexuality, thereby deconstructing the individual identity fabricated on the basis of gendered sexuality. Identity and subjectivity, for queer theory, is a social construction rather than the natural and the innate one as supposed to be in the traditional discourse. Moreover, if it deconstructs the concept of essential identity, it is a

critique of the binary oppositions like masculinity/femininity, men/women, and heterosexuality/homosexuality. Tuny Purvis, drawing on the idea of Eve K. Sedgwick, presents queer theory in the following ways:

> …. queer debates have often been framed within the potentially disruptive parameters … Eve Sedgwick … offers a summary of what queer theory aims to cover. Queer, she writes in *Tendencies* (1994), can refer to 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically. (qtd. in *Literary Theory*, 438)

Here, Purvis argument is that queer theory is subversive in nature. It is the outcome of the radical departure from the gender and sexuality roles defined by the social discourse. That is to say, queer theory begins when one sees the multiple possibilities, gaps, fissures, and the lapses in the human identity that is defined on the basis of essentialist notion of gendered sexuality. Hence, queer politics is antithetical to the discourse of gender and sexuality. Moreover Louis Tyson's argument on Queer politics runs as follows:

> …. queer theory defines individual subjectivity (selfhood) as a fluid, fragmented, dynamic collectivity of possible 'selves', queer theory defines individual sexuality as fluid, fragmented, dynamic collectivity of possible sexualities. Our sexuality may be different at different times over the course of our lives or even at different times over the course of the week because sexuality is a dynamic range of desire. Gay sexuality, lesbian sexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality are, for all of us, possibilities along a continuum of sexual possibilities. (*Tritical theory*, 335)

As Louis Tyson asserts in the above argument, queer politics sees the multiple possibilities of human identity and sexuality. It presupposes the contingency of human self: there can be the multiple selves within an individual. Moreover, there is the possibility of sexualities rather than (hetero)sexuality. It has open perspective towards the all practices of sexuality: homosexuality and heterosexuality. Hence, queer politics undercuts the discourse of (essential) identity and (compulsory) heterosexuality.

In this sense, queer theory is a recent development that reinterprets human identity, gender, and sexuality in the constant state of flux. For this theory, there is not any essential human identity grounded in gender and sexuality roles. Gender and sexuality are the social constructs hence vulnerable to change. Lesbianism, therefore, is inextricably related to queer theory: it deconstructs the gender and sexuality roles of traditional discourse. One of the essential aspects of lesbianism is homosexuality – a possible practice for queer theory – that has been seen as an abnormal practice in the traditional discursive formation. Hence, lesbianism is a branch of queer politics that subverts gender and sexuality.

Lesbianism, as an offspring of queer politics, reinterprets the complex genealogy that is fundamental to the fabrication of gender and sexuality. At this point, its prime concern is to fathom up the discursive practices that iterated and reiterated the gender and sexuality roles, thereby generating the theory of performativity. If queer theory subverts the false naturalization of human identity, gender, and sexuality; the theory of performativity reinterprets the discursive practices that naturalized or essentialized these categories. According to this theory, gender and sexuality are the outcome of socio-cultural performance imbued with the network of power politics and representation. Judith Butler remarks on it as: "…. Performativity is not singular act but a representation and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of the 'body', understood, in part, as a

culturally sustained temporal duration" (*Gender Troubles* xv). Here, she means to say that gender and sexuality are the social constructs that seem natural because of their repetitive deployment with the flow of time. Moreover, Butler, basing her idea on this theory, interprets gender in the following ways:

> The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through the sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what take to be an 'internal' feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain 'bodily acts'[my emphasis], at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures. (xv)

Here, Butler seems anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist since she questions the hitherto perceived notion of feminine and the masculine aspects of social discourse. Gender, for her, is not the natural category as supposed in the patriarchal discourse; it is an outcome of the discursive practices. Women in the western discourse are assigned to perform the certain tasks in opposition to the duties of men. With the repeated performance of those very acts gender is constructed: it is not essential in the human nature. So, gender is the socially constructed category and hence historically contingent.

Butler's reinterpretion of sex and gender as a performative practice is indebted to Foucauldian genealogical study of sexuality. Foucaul asserts that 'sex' is the biological aspect whereas gender and sexuality are the cultural construct. He writes:

> The history of sexuality, or rather its series of studies concerning the historical relationships of power and the discourse on sex … ceases to conceive of it in terms of law, prohibition, liberty, and sovereignty … it is a question of

> forming a different grid of historical decipherment by starting from a different theory of power … we must conceive sex without the law. (*Sexuality* 90-91)

Here, Foucault revisits the history of sexuality as a social phenomenon that repeats itself with the span of time. Sex, for Foucault, is biological aspect of human body which turns out to be gender when it enters into social discourse. Moreover, his idea on sex as biological aspect and the gender and sexuality as cultural construct comes to be problematic for Judith Butler. The category of sex, Butler argues, itself is cultural since it cannot be viewed tearing it apart from gender. She argues:

> …. sex posited as prior to construction will, by virtue of being posited, become the effect of that very positing, the construction of construction. If gender is social construction of sex, and there is no access to this 'sex' except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that 'sex' becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no access. (*Bodies,* 5)

In these lines, Butler deconstructs the sex-gender hierarchy. Sex, for her, is not the natural phenomena of human body rather it is also a gendered category: sex is only understood when one presupposes the gender difference. Hence, both sex and the gender are the perspectives towards the body which has been materialized; this is an act the materialization of body.

In this manner, the performative function of the discourse of gender and sexuality attributes certain roles to the gendered/sexed categories: men and women, masculinity and femininity. Butler writes, "…. it has been argued that women ought to perform certain social functions and not others, indeed, that women ought to be fully restricted to the reproductive domain"

(33). Her argument at this point is that patriarchal discourse invents certain 'feminine' roles to women that are different from masculine ones, thereby marginalizing them from the mainstream culture – a premise for the construction of gender roles. Regarding the argument of Butler, Chris Beasley writes:

> …. Judith Butler in some ways goes beyond Foucault in … [her] refusal of any essential, immutable, pre-existent elements of identity. This framework is a very through-going refusal of assumptions regarding the biological underpinnings of gender groupings to the far point of conceding no 'interior' or 'essential' foundation to the self. Gender does not 'express' a self, a way of being, or a bodily difference, but rather is a performance or enactment of power. (*Gender* 101)

At this point, Beaslay asserts that Butler's argument is different from that of Foucault despite some affiliation. If Foucault views sex as a natural category, Butler revisits it as cultural one. But both Foucault and Butler assume that gender is discursive and performative rather than the manifestation of the true self. In this regard, Beasley also seems against the gender roles as the essential factor of marginalizing the women. Moreover, regarding the theory of performativity, Beasley interprets Butler as follows:

> She [Butler] describes gender identity as 'performative' to stress that no interior essence, no 'real' self exists. Gender is performative because it has no 'real-ness' at all, no natural core. It is an effect of a 'decidedly public and social discourse' which requires the relentless reiteration of various gender acts/styles which make gender seem real/eternal/a deep truth of our lives, by repetition. Gender, she says, is 'a fabrication', a truth effect. Here identity is a fantasy….. (102)

Beasley, in these lines, seems appropriately revisiting Butler. Butler's idea of the theory of performativity, the critic argues, rejects any essential identity produced on the basis of gender difference. Hence, it also frowns at the hierarchic opposition between masculinity and femininity, men and women, heterosexuality and homosexuality. The same issue has been presented by Tony Purvis as: "Butler's main contention is that gender does not axiomatically proceed from sex … the relation to of gender to sex is not mimetic … identities are produced in discourse through the repetition and reiteration of various subject positions that circulate in language …." (*Literary Theory* 442). Purvis's argument at this point is that sex and gender both are the products of performance. That is, both sex and gender are the outcome of the discursive formulation on the bodily aspect.

Hence, the notion that gender and sexuality are the result of social performance, as the above critics argue, suggests that these categories can be questioned. If the category of gender and sexuality are the social constructs, they can be negated or substituted with other practice like homosexuality. In this sense, the theory of performativity seems sharing some agendas of queer theory: homosexual identity is also possible in the life of an individual for both of them. But the problem behind this alternative practice is that one who has such practice is othered and defined in opposition to the heterosexual ones; they are even out-casted from the society too. Lesbianism, nevertheless, challenges that sort of othering aspect of normal discourse and involves itself in the homosexual love affairs. In this sense, it undercuts the traditional dogma of gender and sexuality.

Lesbianism in practice, basing its argument on the performative aspect of gender and sexuality, subverts it by means of transgendering and transsexuality. This practice of transgendering and transsexuality has been recently known as "trans politics" (Beasley, 153). In other words, going beyond the discursive limits of gender and sexuality by means of

negation of gender enhanced with the homosexual affair is transgendering and transsexuality. In this context, lesbianism is undoubtedly a version of 'trans politics', thereby subverting the discourse of (hetero)sexuality and gender definition.

Chris Beasley explains the practice of transgendering as "…. transgender refers to people adopting a sexed identity different from their assignment at birth …."(152).The lines presuppose that certain gender roles are assigned to every individual at birth. But if one goes beyond the boundary of this gendered identity (man and woman), it is the practice of transgendering. At this point, homosexuality is essentially a practice of transgendering. A lesbian, in this context, does not fall under either of the category: masculine and feminine. Judith Butler in her *Gender Troubles* writes on this issue as follows:

> Indeed, a lesbian […] transcends the binary opposition between woman and man; a lesbian is neither a woman nor a man. But further a lesbian has no sex; she is beyond the categories of sex …. Indeed, the lesbian appears to be third gender or, as I shall show, a category that radically problematizes both sex and gender as stable political categories of description. (144)

These lines of Butler ascertain that lesbianism in practice is embedded in trans-politics, especially transgendering and transsexuality. To be a lesbian is surely to go beyond the discourse of sexuality. Moreover, having homosexual relation is the practice that makes the category men-women more problematic. In this sense, lesbians cross this limit; they are neither men nor women since the opposition between men and woman sees heterosexuality the only option in normal discourse. Here, the remark of Chris Beasley seems relevant: "It [transgendering] is used to distinguish those who wish to alter their gender in a permanent but less literal sense – that is, those who live as the opposite gender or as an ambiguous gender" (*Gender*, 160). In this way, sexual intercourse in the traditional discourse is possible only

between the two genders or sexed categories of man and woman. Hence, if there is homosexual relation between the same sexed categories, it definitely blurs the sexual boundary; it is transgendering.

But a significant fact is that the 'trans politics' - transgendering and transsexuality - is always defined as an abnormal practice in the normal discourse of sexuality. The heterosexual society castigates the lesbian practice of crossing the border of gendered sexuality. Judith Butler's idea on this runs as:

> …. a lesbian [in heterosexual society] is one who must have a bad experience with men, or who has not yet found the right one. These diagnoses presume that lesbianism is acquired by virtue of some failure in the heterosexual machinery …. In this framework, heterosexual desire is always true, and lesbian desire is always and only a mask and forever false. (*Bodies* 127)

Butler, at this point, argues that lesbianism is a practice of transgendering but the society defines it in relation to heterosexuality. Homosexuals or lesbians, in the traditional discourse, are abnormal individuals who have certain flaw in the process of socialization: homosexuality is the deviated form of sexuality since it is antithetical to heterosexuality – the only alternative for the normal discourse of sexuality.

In this way, practice of transgendering and transsexuality is an antithetical performance to the gender and sexuality roles. In other words, if gender and sexuality is no other than the social performance, transgendering and transsexuality are also the avant-gardist performance. In lesbian practice, to go beyond the limits of society having the homosexual relation is the practice of transgendering and transsexuality: it goes beyond the grand narration of gender difference and compulsory heterosexuality.

Lesbianism in general and transgendering and transsexuality in particular come with 'drag culture'. In practice, it comes with cross-dressing, drag balls, street walking, parade, and so on. If gender role is the outcome of the performance, drag culture is the counter performance that laughs at the false essentialization of gendered sexuality. It is also a practice of transgendering and transsexuality that attacks the constructedness of gender and sexuality. Judith Butler throws light on drag performance in the following ways:

> The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance ... then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance. (*Bodies* 175)

In these lines, Butler describes the subversive aspect of drag culture. Drag performance is what she calls the "gender parody"; it questions the far-fetched relationship between sex, gender and the performance (175). Drag performance hence is the counter performance that blurs the traditional boundary of gendered identity invented by means of performance. The same writer in *Bodies that Matter* presents her view on drag as: "…. It is important to underscore that drag is an effort to negotiate cross-gendered identification …." (235). In this way, drag culture endeavours to strike a compromise between masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and homosexuality. Is crosses the boarder of the discourse of gender; it is a live practice of transgendering. Chris Barker reads the above mentioned ideas of Butler in the following ways:

> Butler argues that drag can destabilize and recast gender norms through re-signification of the ideals of gender. Through a miming of gender norms, drag

> can be subversive to the extent that it reflects on the performative character of gender. Drag suggests that gender is performativity and as such destabilizes the claims of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity as the origin that is imitated. (*Cultural Studies*, 299-300)

Hence, as Barker explicates the lines of Butler, drag culture is the subversive act that deconstructs the gender and sexuality roles of the traditional discourse. It presupposes the performative aspect of the identity in its heart, thereby destabilizing it b y means of performance. Moreover, Hans Bertens's idea on drag culture, like that of Butler and Barker, runs as follows:

> Because of their parodic character, drag and other deviant sexualities thus come to function as the heavy artillery in the war against the fixed categorizations of 'phallogocentric' centre. They are important instruments in the development of what Judith Halberstam has called 'new sexual vocabularies that acknowledge sexualities and genders as styles rather than life-styles, as fictions rather than facts of life, and potentialities rather than as fixed identities'. [qtd. in *Literary Theory* 230)

As the above lines suggest, drag performance is one of the vital aspects of lesbian practice that undermines the fixed identities constructed as per the discourse of gender and sexuality. Moreover, it strengthens the logic that gender is not the essential factor of human identity rather it is the product of social performance. It is a fiction that can be questioned, critiqued, doubted, interrogated and even negated.

In this sense, we can generalize from the above arguments that drag culture is a sort of radical practice that blurs the boundary of gender and sexuality. It also laughs at the false

naturalization of these categories regarding them as the discursive performance. Lesbianism, in this sense, is embedded in drag culture because of the negation of the traditional dressing by the lesbians. One of the essential factors that differentiates lesbians from other people is drag culture. To be more precise, drag culture is a practice of transgendering that presupposes the performative aspect of gender and sexuality.

If lesbianism is a practice that goes against the iron-fisted boundary of gender and sexuality, body politics concerns with the exploration of 'body' that is essential for the construction of gender and sexuality in traditional discourse. Western history presupposes the secondariness of women from the time of the fall of human being from Eden to the modern history. But the defining premise for this otherness is the definition of women as the 'body'. Hence, body has been excluded from the study; western metaphysics endeavours to concretize the abstract philosophy excluding the physical aspect of human existence. Moreover, because of the same othering of body, the discourse of gender and sexuality is invented. In this manner, if lesbianism undercuts the traditional grand narration of gendered sexuality, body politics does the same by means of the exploration or the celebration of body. Here, body is the site of resistance rather than the premise of secondariness. In this context, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick in *Feminist Theory and the Body* argue against the theorization of body. They write:

> The very fact that women are able in general to menstruate, to develop another body unseen within their own, to give birth, and to lactate is enough to suggest a potentially dangerous volatility that marks the female body as out of control, beyond, and set against, the force of reason … in short, women just are their bodies in a way men are not, biologically destined to inferior status in all spheres that privilege rationality. (3)

In these lines, Price and Shildrick discern that western philosophy from the very beginning treats women as incapable of exercising rational power; they are treated on the basis of physical aspect rather than the intellectual one. From this premise, they are forbidden to play in the public spheres: they are destined to remain within the chamber house of domesticity. Hence, western history constructed the gendered identity on the basis of body. In this context, Chris Beasley's remark seems appropriate: "According to Enlightenment thinking, all those who can reason are capable of independent thought and action … In practice, however, all women and certain men were excluded from these claims as less capable of reason" (*Gender*, 30). As per Beasley, women's secondness itself is ingrained in the western philosophy of valorizing the mind reducing the female to the status of body. Foucault, in this regard, writes: "…. sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on 'bodies' [my emphasis] and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations and pleasures" (*Sexuality*, 155). Here, Foucault argues that the discourse of gender and sexuality emanates from the body itself; it is the social construction that has been formulated on the ground of the bodily difference. Chris Beasley's remark "people are not marginalized because they are different but they are different because of marginalization" seems apt in this context (*Gender* 23). Judith Butler, in *Gender Troubles*, relates the construction of gender in relation to the body:

> In the philosophical tradition that begins with Plato and continues through Decartes, Husserl, and Sartre, the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness, mind) and body invariably supports the relations of political and psychic subordination and hierarchy … [and the] uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender

> hierarchy that the distinction conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized. (17)

In these lines, Butler excavates the western history that created the dichotomy between the mind and body, thereby inventing the discourse of gender and sexuality. Here, if masculinity is supposed to be rational, femininity is reduced to the status of physicality or the mare flesh and bone. Plato's extolling of rationality over emotionality, the duality between the subject and objet in Cartesian philosophy, Husserlian valorization of consciousness in his phenomenological psychology, they all in one or other way overlooked the bodily existence over the rational existence. Hence, effacing the bodily existence is one of the defining premises for the gender performance. Londa Schiebinger, in this regard, explains how the female body has been the place of exploitation from the ancient times:

> When anthropologists did compare women across cultures, their interest centered on sexual traits – feminine beauty, redness of lips, length and style of hair, size and shape of breasts or clitorises, degree of sexual desire, fertility, and above all the size, shape, and positions of pelvis. For the anatomists among them, it was the pelvis that ultimately emerged as the universal measure of womanliness. (*Feminist Theory* 25)

In this context, the discourse of gender and sexuality inevitably views the female body as the site of pleasure and exploitation. Females are no other than the (hetero)sexual partners of a male; they are not intelligent enough to participate in any social activity because of their secondariness. Moreover, as above lines suggest, women do not have the definition that defines from their own perspective. They are defined so as to invent them as an appropriate individual for the patriarchal discourse; their purpose in life seems to be an object of beauty to draw the attention of 'intelligent' males.

In this manner, one can argue that the constructedness of gender and sexuality essentially interprets the existence of women as the body. Traditional discourse, hence, is essentially patriarchal; it rejects the existence of women. Moreover, if women are othered on the basis of bodily existence, the body itself – like gender and sexuality - becomes an outcome of patriarchal ideology.

At present, however, female body has been the point of immense exploration and the celebration rather than then the site of negation. Lesbians resist the role of gender and sexuality by utilizing their body. Margrit Shildrik and Janet Price, in this context, write: "The body, then, has become the site of intense inquiry, not in the hope of recovering an authentic female body unburdened of patriarchal assumptions, but in the full acknowledgement of the multiple and fluid possibilities of different embodiment" (*Feminist Theory* 12). In these lines, Shildrik and Price argue that female body, at present, has been the place of inquiry acknowledging its fluidity and multiplicity. And this practice undercuts the patriarchal assumption of the women as mere body, thereby subverting the discourse of gender and sexuality. In this regard, the female 'body' itself comes to be a discursive construct. And feminism questions this patriarchal discourse. The same critics' opinion, drawing upon Judith Butler, goes as following:

> It is then the forms of materialization of the body, rather than the material itself, which is the concern of a feminism that must ask always that whose interests do particular constructions serve. And what that question entails is the recognition that if the body itself is not a determinate given, then the political and social structures that take it such are equally open to transformation. Moreover, it is not simply that we can vary the meaning and significance of the body, but that the very notion of body is untenable. (7-8)

These lines assert that the reduction of the female existence to the level of 'body' serves the purpose of the patriarchal discourse. Hence, if body itself is the patriarchal fabrication, the discursive formations that rest on the female body turn out to be an illusion, a false categorization of female race. Therefore lesbianism exists to question this false essentialization; it questions this great injustice that has been iterated and reiterated from the time immemorial. But an important fact is that women exploit their own body to resist the discourse of bodily existence. The feminists' concern, especially of lesbian feminists, is that of exploring the female body undercutting the normal or patriarchal discourse; they celebrate their own body. Jeanette Winterson throws light upon the female body in the following lines:

> The smells of my lover's body are still strong in my nostrils. The yeast smell of her sex. The rich fermenting undertow of rising bread. My lover is a kitchen cooking partridge. I shall visit her gamey low-roofed den and feed from her. Three days without washing and she is well-hung and high. Her skirts reel back from her body, her scent is a hoop about her thighs. (*Feminist Theory* 91)

In these lines, one can read the nexus between lesbianism and body politics. This extract deals with how at present the female body has been the mystery of inquiry and how it has been celebrated. It also challenges the grand narration of gendered sexuality that rests on the reduction of female body at the point of negation. These lines explicate the female lover and her bodily existence. As Winterson herself is a female, her celebration of her lover's body undercuts the traditional grand narration of gender and sexuality. On the one hand, she celebrates the body that has been negated in the patriarchal discourse; on the other hand, there is the connotation of homosexuality – a practice that laughs at the construction of gender and sexuality reducing the female to the status of body.

Summing up, lesbianism and body politics are the two cognitive frames that subvert the traditional grand narration of gender and sexuality. They both are embedded in the trans politics of queer theory. Gender and sexuality, in the trap of these cognitive tools, turn out to be nothing more than the result of social performance. The performative aspect of the gendered sexuality, therefore, can be blurred via the homosexual relationship (lesbianism) and the celebration of body (body politics). In this sense, lesbianism is the practice of transgendering and transsexuality that celebrates the female body, the body which is an essential premise for the construction of gender and sexuality. Moreover, the practice of lesbianism comes to be more subversive when a lesbian laughs at the performativity of patriarchal discourse – of gender roles and (hetero)sexuality – by means of drag performance. In this manner, lesbianism and body politics are the two theoretical modalities that fire their cognitive salvos to deconstruct the discursive practices of gender and sexuality.

CHAPTER III: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Subverting Gender and Sexuality: Lesbianism and Body Politics in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* is a fiction that deals with the lesbian affairs of the protagonist Jeanette with many other characters who play with their desires and the bodily parts. The novel is guided by queer politics since the protagonist radically turns herself away from the community which defines the essential identity of every individual in relation to the discourse of gender and sexuality. It also dramatizes the performative and gendered identity that has been constantly supported by the protagonist Jeanette's mother and her Christian community. Jeanette infuses many stories breaking the linearity of her plotlines. The stories that come sporadically do have the vital role for supporting the queer politics and the performative aspect of gender. The story of a prince and a princess are significant ones because they both crystallize the discourse of gendered sexuality and its performative version. Besides this, the interruptions of the stories implicitly reflect the fictionality of the truths that are forcefully interpreted as the natural ones. Jeanette is also involved in the drag culture when she rejects the many things that her community offers her – the oranges, skirts and other dresses. She continually involves herself in the homosexual relationship with Melanie, Miss Jewsbury, and Katy despite the severe criticism and punishment from the heterosexual society community. She revolts against the society that has been guided by the discourse of gender and sexuality. Since the prime discourse of her society that constructs gender and identity is the idea of 'female as body', Jeneatte's lesbianism is more subversive since she undercuts that very politics by exploiting her own body.

Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* is the novel that proves to be an offspring of queer politics. It rejects the identity of an individual as unchangeable and stable: it amplifies the voice for multiple and contingent identity. The novel especially critiques the human identity constructed on the basis of gender and sexuality. Jeanette, the novelist, dramatizes queer politics via the protagonist Jeanette and her activities that are antithetical to her mother and the whole community that is guided by Christianity. The queer politics comes to be more subversive when the narrator buttresses her narrative thread with the intrusive stories in numerous places of the novel. The story of the prince who is in search of a perfect woman is a perfect example of the belief in an essential identity. But as the prince comes to realize that reality is to be fashioned rather than discovered, the novel is coloured with queer politics. Hence, the fictionality of the constructed identity is significant when the narrator talks about that very fictionality by means of a story. It makes the idea more striking because there is the nexus between form and the ideology that the novel questions.

The narrator in the novel infuses a story of a prince who is in search of a perfect woman. Here, the prince seeks an essential identity of his future wife that reflects his belief in the sexually gendered identity. But ironically, he can not find the women having perfect subjectivity. In this sense, the narrator enhances the idea of queer politics; there does not exist any perfect identity of an individual. The story goes:

> As he walked, he spoke aloud to his faithful companion, an old goose. 'If only I could find a wife,' he sighed. How can I run this whole kingdom without a wife?' 'You could delegate?' suggested the goose, waddling beside as best she could. 'Don't be silly,' snapped the prince. 'I'm a real prince.' The goose blushed. 'The problem is,' continued the prince, 'there's a lot of girls, but no one who's got that special something.' (45)

These lines of the narrative thread highlight how the traditional discourse valorizes the human identity. The prince, in the story, cannot see any option of the heterosexual life. But the fundamental problem in these lines is that he seeks for the 'special something'. Here, that very something, for the prince, is the personality, subjectivity, and the identity that he seems presupposing inborn and intuitive in his would be wife. At the same time, the prince also believes that he does have his own identity that is different from other common human beings. His expression 'I'm the real prince' is his claim of his stable identity. Moreover, the burning issue that imbeds this expression is that both the identity of the prince and his future wife is revolved around the discourse of gender and sexuality: the prince is in search of a female having 'feminine' qualities presupposing his 'masculine' identity. This gendered identity is more emphasized by the prince when he emphatically declares "I want a 'woman' [my emphasis], without blemish inside or out, flawless in every respect. I want a woman who is perfect" (46). The term 'perfect' is buzzing everywhere in this intrusive story. This very concept of perfection is under the severe attack at present; this is a point of departure for the queer politics. Ironically enough the prince cannot find the woman as he seeks. He merely gets satisfied by writing a book: "Three years passed, and the prince began to write a book to pass the time. It was called *The Holy Mystery of Perfection"* (46). This proves that perfection, truth, reality are the only products of fictional discourse that the prince himself is trying his hand. Furthermore, the second chapter of this very book written by the prince accepts "the impossibility of perfection. The restless search in his life, the pain …." (46). Hence, perfection is impossible; no final truth can be achieved.

If Jeanette Winterson develops queer politics by means of the story of a prince, at the same time, she also answers what human identity actuality is. The story also comes with the

idea that subjectivity, identity, truth, identity are socio-culturally constituted; it is the matter of social discourse. The narrator narrates:

> The prince swallowed hard and began his speech. Good people, all of you know of my search for perfection, and many of you I hope have read my book. I had hoped on coming here to find an end to my quest, but I know that perfection is not to be found, but to be fashioned, there is no such thing as flawlessness in this earth …." (50)

These lines argue that adequate perfection never exists in this world: it 'is not to be found, but to be fashioned.' Here, the term 'fashioned' refers that multiple identity of a single individual is also possible because it is the matter of socio-historicity; it is fabricated culturally. In this context the idea of Michel Foucault that has been presented in his essay "What is Enlightenment" seems appropriate. In this essay Foucault talks about the idea of self-constitution from postmodern perspective: modern man "is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself" (*Literary Theory* 291). In this sense, the prince also comes to be enlightened in the Foucauldian sense because he knows that what he was seeking was a mere chimera rather than perfection.

The novel also presents the significant visions of the protagonist Jeanette that are related to queer politics. As queer politics the traditional idea of essential human identity, it also sees the plurality of sexuality. The protagonist Jeanette in the novel, when her mother talks about the idea of marriage, sees numerous possibilities. She narrates her visions in the following manner:

> Somehow I made it to the altar. The priest was very fat and kept getting fatter, like bubble gum you blow. Finally we came to the moment, 'You may kiss the bride.' My new husband turned to me, and there were a number of possibilities. Sometimes he was blind, sometimes a pig, sometimes my mother, sometimes the man from the post office, and once, just a suit of clothes with nothing inside. (*Oranges* 52)

In this excerpt, the narrator laughs at the traditional grand narrative of gender and sexuality. Jeanette sees the multiple possibilities of herself; she does not like to be defined on the basis of the heterosexual matrix of her society. Her husband cannot be only a male. In her queer extremity, she even envisions the marriage between her mother and herself. In this sense, the protagonist rejects the essential identity that her mother and the society try to impose upon her; she undercuts the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity that has been created on the basis of gendered identity. The possibility of the marriage between male and female, female and female, and even between human and other animal, 'a pig', makes the novel more radical in its dramatization of queer politics. That is, lesbianism is also a version of sexuality for the protagonist though it has been defined as the abnormal practice in her society.

Homosexuality is an offspring of queer politics that undercuts the traditional notion of gender and sexuality. The novel, as a critique of the idea of gendered sexuality, deals with the lesbian affairs of the protagonist and the narrator Jeanette. Jeanette, despite the constant criticism from her mother and the Christian society involves herself in the lesbian relation with other characters like Miss Jewsberry, Melanie and Katy. Jeanette's conscience never feels that she is deviating herself from the truth that her society believes. When she has the

love affair with Melanie, the pastor of her church demands confession but Jeanette never confides in her heart. Jeanette narrates the dialogue between the pastor and herself as follows:

> 'Then go into the vestry with Mrs. White and the elders will come and pray for you. It's not too late who truly repent.' He [the pastor] turned to me.
>
> I love her.
>
> 'Then you do not love the lord.'
>
> Yes, I love both of them.
>
> You cannot. I do, I do …. (79)

As the above dialogue suggests, Jeanette proves herself as a radical figure of queer politics who faces the challenges boldly. According to the pastor on can not love the God being a lesbian. But the protagonist boldly defends herself by backfiring that she loves both. Hence, the extract subverts the traditional idea of heterosexuality: sexual intercourse, for the pastor, is only possible between the two sexed categories – male and the female.

In this way, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is the novel that runs its plotline incorporating the ethos of queer politics. The narrator disseminates queer politics in different manner: she simultaneously presents the traditional discourse and undercuts it in an artistic manner. Jeanette, the narrator, narrates many other stories different than that of her experiences of lesbian affairs. The story of the prince and his futile quest for perfection has been laughed at by the narrator. Later, the prince himself declares that human identity is the matter of social construction. Moreover, the protagonist seems legitimizing her lesbian affair by the same story; if identity is the matter of social constitution, her lesbianism is also a practice that she herself is trying to fabricate. Hence, the lesbianism of the protagonist is a version of queer politics that undercuts the traditional idea of gender and sexuality.

Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit,* in addition to queer politics, addresses the issues like performative gender and sexuality. If queer politics dedivinizes the essential truth, subjectivity, reality and human identity; performativity revisits them as the matter of iteration and reiteration. The novel has the significant incidents that crystallize how human identity of gender and sexuality has been performatively constructed. The protagonist, first of all, is the victim of this performative theory from the very beginning: her adoptive mother thinks to invent her as "a missionary child, a servant of God, a blessing" (6). That is, Jeenette, the protagonist, presents the performative aspect of human identity, gender, and sexuality that she rejects later and invents herself as a lesbian. In this sense, the performative gender is inextricably linked with Jeanette's lesbianism thereby deconstructing gender and sexuality. In the novel, Jeneatte's lesbianism gets constant threat from the society: she has to undergo many shaming activities and the severe punishment to bring her into the mainstream of gender and sexuality roles. Melanie, the homosexual partner of Jeanette, gets married after her confession in the Church. In this manner, the gender and sexuality roles are iterated and reiterated in the novel by the Jeanette's society. But the vital fact is that Jeanette's lesbianism never accepts this performative prescription as a single option. Here too the narrator invites a story of a princess, a female who has the traditional 'feminine' identity. But no sooner the environment gets changed, her mental status undergoes the dynamic change.

The performative aspect of gender definition, in the novel, has been dramatized by the story of a princess like that of the prince. The princess has been presented as a brilliant and beautiful but so sensitive that even a minor incident can touch her heart obsessively. At this point, her femininity has been presented; it is her gendered identity to be tender and sensitive. But this is no other than the socio-historically constructed identity. This can be proved from the fact that her heart problem finds the solution when she becomes busy with numerous

works in the forest. That is, her femininity of having tender heart is an outcome of her family and the society that confined her within the chamber house of domestic affairs; she does not have the knowledge of the public sphere. Her gender identity comes as "a brilliant and beautiful princess, so sensitive that the death of a moth could distress her for weeks on end" (5). Later, she meets an old hunchback in the forest who assigns her "to milk the goats, to educate the people and to compose songs for their festival" (5). The princess, after being assigned for these tasks, "agreed to stay and forgot all about the palace and moths" (5). This story avers that the fragile heart of the princess is no other than the construction of her society: she is forbidden for public sphere. In this sense, the femininity of the princess represents the gender roles supposed to be in a sexed category, the woman. Though the story of the prince and the princess are far-fetched, they both are the invention of the social performance. If the prince represents the masculinity, the princess embodies femininity of social discourse. At this point, the central line of the story of the prince that perfection is "to be fashioned" rather than searched is more significant (50).

Moreover, the novel also dramatizes how sexuality is performatively constructed. Traditional discourse believes in the sexuality roles between the two sexed categories: male and female. The homosexuality between Jeanette, Melanie, Miss Jewsbury and Katy is criticized vehemently. But if there is any fault in theme, that is no other than to have the female sexual organ. On the basis of this very difference of the sexual organ between male and female, the gender and (hetero)sexuality roles are created in the society of Jeanette. Slowly and gradually, It gets repeated and becomes a prescription in social discourse. If anybody deviates from this social discourse, one is either punished or excommunicated from the society. This sort of practice is no other than the social performance and construction rather than discovery. The situation of the lesbianism of Jeanette, in the novel, too meets the

same fate; it encounters with the essentialist discourse of Christianity that circulates the idea of heterosexuality everywhere. Jeanette, when involves herself in the lesbian affair with Melanie, her mother and the whole Christian community tries to restrict her. Her desire of homosexuality has been defined in a negative way and as "unnatural passions and the mark of demon" (78). If Melanie confides and gets married, Jeanette begins another love affair with Miss Jewsberry running away from the church. At this point, the novel simultaneously presents the performative aspect of gender and sexuality and its deconstruction. After the revelation of her affair with Jewsberry, the heterosexual society again tries to control this by means of another performance, that is, the punishment. Jeanette's mother severely punishes Jeanette:

> My mother nodded, nodded, nodded and locked me in. She did give me a blanket, but took away the light bulb. Over the thirty-six hours that followed, I thought about the demon and some other things besides. I knew that demons entered wherever there was a weak point. If I had a demon my weak point was Melanie, but she was beautiful and good and had loved me. (82)

In these lines, one can argue how heterosexual performance has been presented as natural practice and lesbianism as a defiled one. The punishment that Jeanette has to undergo is the performative aspect of sexuality; favouring heterosexuality and castigating homosexuality too is an aspect of social perforfance. In the novel, if Melanie is regarded as normal after her curbing of lesbianism and the incorporation of heterosexuality, Jeanette suffers a lot. If there is any mistake in Jeanette it is no other than to have female sexual organ. But the society has invented so many discursive practices that she can not escape in an easy manner; lastly she is excommunicated when she is in love with Katy.

In this manner, gender and sexuality are the naturalized version of social construction. But the novel presents this aspect of performance in an ironic way: it especially dramatizes the discourse of post-performance. The narrator's artistic presentation of the fairy tale that talks about the princess is vitally significant in this context. As the fairy tale itself is a made up story, the gender definition of the princess in that very story, and the iron-fisted boundary of heterosexuality and homosexuality in Jeanette's society is the result of social performance. In other words, punishing a lesbian is the social performance as well as its construction at the same time. In this sense, the novel is the critique of the constructedness of gender and sexuality.

Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, in addition to the queer politics and performative gender, subverts the traditional discourse of gendered sexuality by means of 'trans politics': transgendering and transsexuality. Jeanette the protagonist goes beyond the limit of gender and sexuality roles. She involves herself in the lesbian affairs with other characters that her society can not appropriate. Jeanette rejects the feminine roles assigned to her: she plays the role of male and female at the same time since she quenches her sexual desires with other female characters. In this sense, she is neither male nor female in traditional sense; she crosses the boundary of gender and sexuality.

In the very beginning of the lesbian affair of Jeanette with Melanie, she rejects the gender and sexuality definitions of the pastor of the Church. When there is the suspense of the homosexual love between Jeanette and Melanie, the church community gets shocked because of the subversion of the gender and sexuality. Sexual intercourse is only possible between the two gendered categories – male and female – for her society. In these contexts, the pastor asks her to define herself:

> ‘Do you deny you love this woman [Melanie] with a love reserved for man and wife?’ ‘No, yes, I mean of course I love her. I will read you the words of St. Paul’, announced the pastor, and he did, and many more words besides about unnatural passions and the mark of demon. ‘To the pure all things are pure,’ I yelled at him. ‘It’s not us.’ He turned to Melanie. ‘Do you promise to give up this sin and beg the Lord to forgive you?’ (78-79)

These lines prove the lesbian practice of transgendering and transsexuality in the novel. In the above extract, the pastor’s argument is the voice of traditional discourse. According to the pastor there can be sexual relationship between a male and female. But Jeanette involves herself in the homosexual relationship with Melanie. At this point, she rejects that her love is not preserved for a man as questioned by the pastor; it can be displayed according to the demand of bodily desire. This sort of argument of the narrator leads herself beyond the boundary of gender and sexuality; she can be neither categorized as feminine nor as masculine. Moreover, Melanie too is not a female as believed by the community when she has the homosexual relationship with Jeanette. They both, here, problematize the social discourse and its hermetic boundary between male and female, man and woman, masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and homosexuality.

The problematization of gender and sexuality comes to be crystal when Jeanette runs her relation with Miss Jewsberry too. After the divorce between Melanie and herself – because of the confession of Melanie – Jennette begins another affair with Jewsberry. But at this time too she is punished severely by her mother. Her mother locks her inside the room to exorcise the ‘demon’ that is inside Jeanette. Here, the demon is no other than the homosexual desire of the protagonist. At this point, Jeanette has the visionary dialogue in the state of trans. She presents the dialogue between the ‘demon’ and herself in the following manner:

> ‘What sex are you?’
>
> ‘Doesn’t matter does it? After all that’s your problem.’
>
> ‘If I keep you, what will happen?’
>
> ‘You will have a difficult, different time.’
>
> ‘Is it worth it?’
>
> ‘That’s up to you.’
>
> ‘Will I keep Melanie?’
>
> But the demon vanished. (83)

In this visionary dialogue, Jeanette narrates the politics of transgendering and transsexuality. The punishment that she has to undergo is the outcome of the rejection of the gender roles. Firstly, she makes an affair with Melanie. But no sooner Melanie confides and thinks to marry to a male, Jeanette begins another affair with Miss Jewsberry. In the dialogue she laughs at the gender roler; her spirit asks the ‘demon’ about the sex. But her ‘demon’ answers that it does not matter. The demon, in this sense, is no other than the lesbian self of the protagonist. Her lesbian self does not define herself as female; there is no hermetic boundary between masculinity and femininity for Jeanette. In this sense, she is neither male nor female; she is beyond the social discourse. Jeanette’s mother and the community believe in the gender roles. Gender role is essential and fundamental to the traditional social discourse. Moreover, Jeanette also hates the heterosexual marriage of Melanie: “I objected to her getting married to him” (97). At this point, Jeanette pours her disdain upon the gender and sexuality roles. She even hates Melanie because of her involvement in the practice of heterosexuality. A homosexual is beyond the category for Jeanette: “I knew that a homosexual is further away from a woman … (98).”

The practice of transgendering is also apparent when Jeanette begins another affair with Katy. She even evaluates herself from her lesbian self. After being in love with Katy she is further rejected by her mother and the community. In this context, she narrates: "So there I was, my success in the pulpit being the reason for my downfall. The devil had attacked me at my weakest point: my inability to realize the limitations of my sex" (102). Here, she means to say that her fundamental mistake if there is any is no other than the transgression of gender and sexuality roles created on the basis of her biological difference. This is her practice of transgendering and transsexuality again. Here, the limitation is no other than the gender roles and heterosexuality. But to be involved in the homosexual practice is the deconstruction of gender in itself.

In this way, the novel and its plot is abundantly infused with the politics of transgendering and transsexuality. Jeanette's primary interest in the novel is to give way out to her lesbian self. So, she constantly involves herself in the homosexual relations. On the one hand, she herself becomes an ambiguous gender because of her own sexed identity in traditional sense. On the other hand, her lesbianism makes the other sexual partners as the practitioners of transgendering and transsexuality too. She is not alone in this 'trans' politics: Jeanette, Melanie and Katy at once are neither male nor female in traditional sense. They all subvert the discourse of gender and sexuality since they perform the sexual practice that is beyond the definition of their society. Their identity goes beyond the definition of social discourse; they collectively transgress the gendered identity and heterosexuality. Hence, Jeanette's homosexuality is definitely a transgendering and transsexual practice.

Jeanette Winterson's novel also includes drag culture. The heterosexual society defines gender and sexuality on the basis of the dress of male and female that is opposite to each other. The drag performance of the protagonist in the novel laughs at the performatively

created gendered identity. Her mother and the Christian community define male and female in terms of the uniform that is iterated and reiterated in the social discourse. Jeannette the protagonist rejects everything that has defined her as female; she rejects oranges and other dresses that her mother offers her time and again. 'Oranges', for her represent the heterosexuality. When Jeanette is in the state of tension her mother offers her the oranges. In this sense, only the oranges can bring consolation to the heart of the protagonist which is essentially homosexual. That is, the oranges represent the male sexual organ or heterosexuality symbolically. The oranges that Jeanette's mother offer to her is only because Jeanette is a female in the heterosexual matrix. When Jeanette is seriously ill, her mother sends oranges with her husband:

> My mother came to see to me quite a lot in the end, bit it was the busy season at church. They were planning the Christmas campaign. When she couldn't come herself she sent my father usually with a letter and a couple of oranges. 'The only fruit,' she always said. Fruit salad, fruit of fools, fruited punch. Demon fruit, rotten fruit, fruit on Sunday. (20)

Here, oranges define what a female is in the heterosexuality society. Like the outer uniform of the femininity, orange too is a type of dress that defines performatively what a female is. But the significant fact is that Jeanette has irritation towards the fruit sent by her mother. She does not want to be defined as female on the basis of the consumption of oranges; 'oranges are not the only fruit' for her. When Jeanette is in love affair with other characters, the community continually castigates her as the deviant and her mother regularly offers her the oranges but Jeanette goes on rejecting.

Moreover, when Jeanette is suggested by her mother to be married to a male, she hates this idea relating it to the imaginative uniform she has to wear if she gets married. She imaginatively decorates herself with the bridely uniform and hates it:

> It was spring, the ground still had traces of snow, and I was about to be married. My dress was pure white and a golden crown. As I walked up the aisle the crown got heavier and heavier and the dress more and more difficult to walk in. I thought everyone would point at me, but no one noticed… My new husband turned to me and there were a number of possibilities. (52)

In this particular context of the visionary incident, Jennette performs drag culture. She rejects the dresses that are exclusively heterosexual. As oranges are hateful to her, the gorgeous clothes are also the matters of discomfort for Jeanette. The dress is not appropriate to the desires that she has in her heart; she is a lesbian. The interesting aspect is that though she feels discomfort in using the dress, no one seems noticing it. That is, the society is habituated to use the dress in relation to the gendered sexuality. Moreover, to feel irritation to the uniform of the marriage is definitely the lesbian voice that denaturalizes the gender and sexuality. Her mother informs her to wear the hat which she criticizes: "I wondered whether to drop my hat in it, but I knew she'd make me wear it just the same." Here too she is rejecting the hat that is essentially heterosexual in her society. Hence, the rejection of the hat is the counter practice of the performative gender.

Hence, Jeanette's rejection of the oranges, the clothes of bride, and the hat is the lesbian practice of drag performance. If one of the vital factors that the heterosexual society defines male and female is cloth, Jeanette undoes gender and sexuality by rejecting it. Her heart is neither feminine nor masculine; she is beyond definition. She is laughing at the discourse of heterosexuality. She never wears the skirt: "I had never shown the slightest

feeling for them, apart from my never wearing a skirt" (97). This is the counter performance of lesbianism which is subversive and revolutionary.

Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are not the Only Fruit* is a novel that deals with the body politics of a lesbian. The lesbian characters of the play are solely concerned with the bodily pleasures rather than the definition of the society. They question the patriarchal ideology of the society that others the female characters as mere body; they resist the male dominated society utilizing their body as the means of resistance. If lesbianism is revolutionary in subverting the essentializing tendency of gendered sexuality, body politics questions and constantly laughs at the false naturalization of women body. Female characters in the novel are always defined in relation to the heterosexual society and even the Christian beliefs. Jeanette the protagonist and the other characters in one or other way prioritize their bodily desires than the desires of the society; they perform what their body needs irrespective of their social restrictions. At the same time, the Christian society too tries to impose the discursive rules and regulations to the lesbian characters in relation to the bodily definitions.

Jeanette's narration from the very beginning to the end runs with body politics. Her involvement in the lesbian affair itself suggests her determination of celebrating her own body rather than being guided by the social restrictions. Other characters like Melanie, Katy, and Miss Jewsberry too are in one or another way playing with their body, the same body which was the fundamental principle of patriarchal discourse. In the very beginning of the narrative, Jeanette argues that an old woman predicts her future just touching her palm: "Once, when I was collecting the black peas, about to go home, the old woman got hold of my hand. I thought she was going to bite me. She looked at my palm and laughed a bit. 'You'll never marry,' she said, and not you, and you'll never be still" (4). At this point, the woman who touched the arm of the Jeanette is definitely playing with the body. No sooner

she touched the body of the protagonist, she came to know the hidden desires or the homosexual desires of Jeanette. Moreover, the prediction of the woman comes to be true when Jeanette later involves herself in homosexuality without being married to the male. Hence, the body of the Jeanette has been defined as the definite means of her identity for the woman; her body is more important to guide the future career rather than the mind alone. Strictly speaking, Jeanette's body is more important than her mind to define her'self'. Morerover, Jeanette's homosexual love with the other characters too is an essential premise that proves the body politics of lesbianism. Western discourse of sexuality believes in the secondariness of women that presuppose the female existence as the bodily existence; women do not have intellectual capacity for patriarchal society. But in the novel, the existence of the female characters is primarily guided by their bodily existence rather than the exercise of the mind. Female body is more important to define the female identity rather than the 'rational' discourse of the society.

Jeanette the protagonist dramatizes the body politics of the other characters in the novel. Elsie Norris too believes to define women in relation to their bodily parts with Jeanette. Jeanette presents her conversation with Elsie in the following manner:

> 'Some people say I'm a fool, but there's more to this world than meets the eye.' I waited quietly. 'There's this world,' she banged the wall graphically, 'and there's this world,' she thumped her chest. 'If you want to make sense of either, you have to take notice of both.' 'I don't understand,' she sighed, thinking what to ask next, to make it clearer, but she had fallen asleep with her mouth open …. (23)

This extract is an epitome of body politics that questions the western discourse of defining the human identity on the basis of mind rather than the physical body and the bodily desires.

Here, the principle argument is that there are numerous ways of defining the world. But it doesn't mean that one is valid and the rest of all are invalid. That is, defning oneself in relation to the body or 'breast' is also equally essential for Norris. Hence, human identity and subjectivity is not only rational but the physical and bodily too. In this manner, the lines definitely present the forceful argument in favour of the utilization of the body for defining oneself as well as resisting the patriarchal ideology. Jeanette and other character's lesbianism, hence, is embedded in bodily existence rather than the social discourse. In addition to this, Jeanette is attracted to other female characters because of their bodily organs. Melanie is interpreted on the basis of her eyes by the protagonist: "She looked up, and I noticed her eyes were a lovely grey, like the cat Next Door" (62). Here, the body is more important than the other aspects of Melanie for Jeanette.

Besides this, despite the severe punishment offered to Jeanette by the Church community for the price of homosexual love, Jeanette never defeats herself from the society. She legitimizes her lesbianism in relation to her desires that cannot be disturbed at any cast. But the problem is that her society never reads the bodily desires of woman while constructing the discourse of gender and sexuality. Jeanette's narration on her bodily desires in the novel runs as follows:

> I had a feeling she [her mother] wouldn't really understand. Besides, I wasn't quite certain what was happening myself, it was the second time in my life that I had experienced uncertainty… The feeling I now had in my head and stomach was the same as on that Awful Occasion, and that time, as I stood by the tea urn in the vestry, I had heard Miss Jewsbury say, 'Of course she must feel very uncrtain. (74)

Here, Jeanette is expressing her hidden desires that can never get the outlet in the heterosexual society. She does not have the desires as supposed by her community: her community only believes in heterosexuality that is possible only between the two gendered categories: masculinity and femininity. But Jeanette is the character of otherwise who goes beyond the boundary of gender and sexuality. Moreover, her body politics is apparent when her prime concern is her bodily desires or homosexual desires that come antithetically to her community. Despite the constant threat from her community, Jeanette plays with her bodily desires which cannot be defined in the social discourse. In this sense, the narrator is undoubtedly challenging the western discursive formation that seriously excludes the inner desires of physical body; it overlooks body and interprets it as the essential site for the formation socio-historical discourse.

Jeanette's body politics is embedded in lesbianism. Her celebration of body is not only to fulfill her own desires but it also challenges the discourse of heterosexuality and the gendered definition of the patriarchal discourse. It is not only her body that she celebrates; she also celebrates the body of other female characters that constantly haunt her every time. If society defines the other female characters on the basis of the gendered identity, what makes her to recall other characters is their body. Jeanette exploits the body of other characters too. When Jeanette is involved in the homosexual love with Miss Jews berry, she primarily narrates the dynamism of the bodily organs rather than other feelings defined in relation to the heterosexual society. She narrates:

> And she began to stroke my head and shoulders. I turned over so that she could touch my back. Her hand crept lower and lower. She bent over me; I could feel her breath on my neck. … I still couldn't think, could only see

> Melanie's face and Melanie's body, and every so often the outline of Miss Jewsbury bending over me. (80-81)

Here the nexus between lesbianism and body politics is apparent. The characters are playing with their bodily organs in the novel. Jeanette and other characters do not have the bond as defined by the society; their relation is essentially the relation of the body. That is, what makes the lesbianism possible is the body politics that is within the characters. Hence, the body politic the politics of lesbianism; Jeanette's lesbianism is lively because of her collective celebration of body with the other characters. In addition to this, Jeanette receives the punishment from the society because of her homosexual relation with the other characters. Bu the important fact is that the Christian society exploits her body as the site of exploitation: she has been severely starved for the thirty six hours in a room: "my mother nodded, nodded, nodded and locked me in, She did give me a blanket, but she took away the light bulb. Over the thirty-six hours that followed, I thought about the demon and some other things besides" (82). This is one of the examples of the western discourse that defines women as body and exploits the same body to make the gendered sexuality work effectively. Jeanette also defines body as in relation to the soul too; soul and the body are interdependent for her. She writes: "A wall for the body, a circle for the soul. Moreover, Jeanette's mother represents the western discourse of gender and sexuality that regard the female body as the significant aspect of identity. She threats Jeanette to be aware of her sexual organ. The sexual organ is not to be played for her; she tries to restrict and repress the emotional feelings that a female has. Jeanette dramatize the suggestion of her mother in the following manner:

> 'So just you take care, what you think is the heart might well be another organ.' It might, mother, it might, I thought. She got up and told me to go and to find something to do. I decided to go and see Melanie, but just as I reached

> the door she called me back with a word of warning. 'Don't let anyone touch you down there,' and she pointed to somewhere at the level of her apron pocket. (70)

The above lines of the novel suggest that women's sexual organ has the great significant value in the heterosexual society since it is regarded as the treasure for heterosexuality. Jeanette's mother, here, suggests her daughter to be more careful about her breast and other bodily parts. In this sense, women are defined in relation to those bodily parts which after repeated practice turn out to be the essential premises of discourse. But Jeanette's lesbianism shatter this chimera of defining the female as the body. She freely enjoys her organs of the body despite the social restrictions.

Hence, the novel epitomizes the body politics that comes with the subversive politics lesbianism. It reinterprets gender and sexuality from the perspective of body rather than the one-sided eulogization of reason in the western philosophy. It dramatizes the celebration of the body by the female characters who are in the homosexual relation in themselves. Jeanette, Melanie, Miss Jewsbury and Katy are in the dynamic play of their bodily pleasure that is essentially homosexual. At this point, their body politics becomes more subversive when they are being continuously defined on the basis of the physical difference rather than any other things. Ironically enough, Jeanette's mother endeavours to bring Jeanette under the succumb of heterosexual discourse exploiting the body of Jeanette defining it as 'feminine' one. Ultimately, Jeanette leaves her society rather than controlling her bodily desires being a heterosexual female. The body politics in the novel is counter-productive because it exploits the same bodily organs and desires that are the essential premises for constructing gender and sexuality roles that are deeply rooted in the socio-historical discourse. In this manner, body politics is also subverting the traditional grand narration of gender and sexuality.

Summing up, Jeanette Winterson's Oranges Are not the Only Fruit is a novel that dramatizes the lesbian body politics subverting the traditional grand narration of gender and sexuality. Jeanette, the protagonist and the single narrator, narrates the story form her own perspective. That is, it is a novel of lesbian voice since the protagonist Jeanette is a lesbian who is playing with her bodily organs and the bodily desires. The other homosexual partners of Jeanette like Melanie, Miss Jewsbury and Katy are also the significant versions of lesbianism because of their problematization of gender and sexuality roles defined by the heterosexual society. The narrator also makes the novel more forceful and striking by including some of the stories – like that of a prince and princess. The novel deals with queer politics while rejecting the essential identity, subjectivity, purity, reality and essentiality. Jeanette, the protagonist, herself represents the multiple identities rather than single one. The society of the protagonist regularly tries to repeat the roles of gender and heterosexual practice severely criticizing the homosexual practice of the female characters. That is, it performatively constructs, iterates and reiterates the heterosexual discourse. But the lesbianism of the protagonist shatters the social discourse. Jeanette can be defined neither as male nor as female at the particular point of homosexuality. This is her practice of transgendering and transsexuality. Besides this, Jeanette,s rejection of the things like oranges, bridal uniforms and the skirts is related to the drag culture of lesbianism. She rejects most of the things that are defined as feminine ones. Moreover, the bodily pleasure and the utilization female body for resisting the heterosexual society is the body politics of lesbianism in the novel. If the society is trying to define the female characters on the basis of gender and sexuality roles that rest on their bodily difference from the male, the homosexuals are shattering that very discourse by utilizing their own body.

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a fiction that dramatizes the subversive dynamism of lesbianism and body politics. It subverts the traditional grand narrative of gender and sexuality with the enhancement of the issues like queer politics, performativity, transgendering, drag culture and so on. Jeanette, the protagonist as well as the narrator, involves herself in the homosexual relationship with other characters encountering with the rigid discourse of her Christian society. The plot is infused with many other intrusive stories that are significant in many aspects to buttress the central argument of the text.

Jeanette, the protagonist, is a lesbian who is in love with other characters like Melanie, Miss Jewsbury, and Katy. Even though her community severely criticizes her lesbianism, Jeanette never feels sorry with herself. She is bold enough to tolerate the social, religious, and the physical punishment. The prime concerns of Jeanette are no other than the bodily desires and the emotional pleasure. Her utilization of own body comes antithetically to the heterosexual society. Hence, lesbianism and body politics are the thematic corners of the text that guide the other incidents.

Jeanette's lesbianism runs as a version of queer politics. Jeanette, the protagonist, does not believe in the essential truths, identity, subjectivity, individuality, and sexuality. She never accepts the patriarchal ideology prevalent in her community. If heterosexuality is the single truth for her society, homosexuality is also an option for the protagonist. In transgressing the discourse of sexuality, Jeanette is subverting the gender roles and social duties that are performatively created. Hence, performative identity of social discourse is the central point on which Jeanette's lesbianism attacks vehemently. If gender and sexuality are the matter of performance, Jeanette's lesbianism is another aspect of her individual performance that the society defines as deviated form. Besides this, Jeanette's lesbianism

runs with the transpolitics – transgendering and transsexuality and drag culture. In her lesbian extremity, she defines herself neither as male nor as female. She rejects most of the things offered by her mother and the society. That is, she does not want to be defined as female by clothes and the desire for the oranges. Her principle desire is the fulfillment of the bodily desires and defining herself in relation to her true self that is vitally lesbian.

All in all, Jeanette's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* dedivinizes gender and sexuality by means of the lesbianism and the body politics of the protagonist Jeanette. It develops as an offspring of queer politics questioning the gendered identity. Gender and sexuality are dramatized as social construction that is created performatively. If gender and sexuality are the matter of performance, the protagonist questions them with the counter performances like homosexuality and dreg culture; she has the practice of transgendering. Moreover, what makes the protagonist a lesbian is the true desires of her body; she celebrates her body in its true form rather than as defined by the heterosexually patriarchal society.

WORKS CITED

Barker, Chris. "Judith Butler: Between Foucault and Psychoanalysis." *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed. Sage Publication, London: 292-301.

Beasley, Chris. Gender and *Sexuality: Critical Thinkers Critical Theories.* London: Sage Publication, 2005.

Bertens, Hans. "Sexuality, Literature and Culture." *Literary Theory: The Basics*. London, 2001:217-234.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

---.Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routtledge, 1999.

Carter, keryn. "The Consuming Fruit: Oranges, Demons, and Daughters." *Critique* (1998): 15-22.

DeLong, Anne. "The Cat's Craddle: Multiple Discursive Threads in Jeanette Winterson's Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit." *Literature Interpretation Theory* (2006): 263-275.

Elam, Julie. "Literary Criticism." *Critical Survey* (2006): 79-88.

Price, Jenet and Margrit Shildrick. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Purvis, Tuny. "Sexualities." *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. Oxford University Press, 3rd ed. 2009: 427-448.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. London: Grove Press, 1997.