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JEANETTE'S QUEST FOR MISSING SELF: AN INTERPRETATION OF  
*ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT* FROM LACAN'S MIRROR STAGE THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the experimental Bildungsroman, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, written by contemporary British woman writer Jeanette Winterson. The novel explores themes of religion, family, love, and gender politics through the protagonist's growth and development. Drawing on Lacan's Mirror Stage Theory, this paper examines the protagonist's construction of identity in different mirror stages, and the role played by others in shaping her personal growth. The paper also explores how the protagonist's desire is projected in the gaze, and how she breaks through the bondage of language to achieve unity with the outside world. Ultimately, the protagonist's quest for self begins with subverting traditional regulations and male hegemony, and pleasure serves as a means to unify the self with the outside world. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the novel's themes and the protagonist's journey towards self-discovery.

**Key words:** Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit; Jeanette Winterson; mirror stage; quest for self

I. Introduction

Jeanette Winterson (1959-) is an internationally renowned British writer considered to be one of the most brilliant contemporary authors. She has been awarded numerous accolades for her novels, including the prestigious Whitbread Prize, the Bloomsbury Prize, and the Knopf Prize. Some of her most notable works include *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), *The Passion* (1987), *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), *Written on the Body* (1992), and *Lighthouse keeping* (2004).

1. Brief Introduction to Jeanette Winterson and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Jeanette Winterson (1959- ) was born in Manchester, England, and adopted by Constance and John William Winterson in 1960. As an adult, her birth mother has always been one of her internal conflicts, and many of her works have been interpreted as a search for, attachment to, and a sense of loss of her birth mother. She was obsessed with preaching and wanted to change the worldview of pagans. After becoming a writer, her writing is full of faith and revelation, and she wants to enlighten readers with words and stories to change their worldview. As a feminist writer, Winterson continues to explore gender politics, heterosexuality, and homosexuality in literature, and in her view, people should dare to love and hate and live with courage in real life.

*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is one of the most popular novels among Winterson's books. It is a semi-autobiographical novel based on Winterson's childhood experiences. Published in 1985, this novel won the Whitbread Best for First Novel Award in 1985, and was adapted into a TV drama in 1990. Winterson portrays herself as a fictional character so that she could see herself as a different person and could experience a variety of lives. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Jeanette grows up in a traditional and religious family. Her mother treats Jeanette strictly, hoping that she could become a missionary and a servant of God in the future. As a child, Jeanette is obedient to her mother and has a precocious understanding of the Bible. Jeanette accidentally discovers her adoption documents and later realizes that her mother has altered the ending of *Jane Eyre* -- Jane Eyre is not married to a missionary. She begins to carefully examine her mother's words and her teachings, and then doubts theology. Her love with the same sex forced Jeanette to revolt. She finds the hypocrisy of the pastor and the oppression of women by the male-dominated church. At the same time, she also finds that her mother stands against her and becomes the spokesperson of the patriarchy. Jeanette realizes that if she continues to crave the protection of the church, she would have to give up her love and freedom. Jeanette doesn't want to give up her lesbianism so that she chooses to break away from the Evangelical church. Finally, she is cast out from her home by her mother and goes to a city for freedom. A few years later, she returns to her hometown and makes a reconciliation with her mother.

## 2. Literature Review

Over years of study, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* has fueled arguments among research scholars both at home and abroad, which are reflected in the study of narrative techniques, feminist themes, biblical themes and gender theory.

### 1) Studies Abroad

Firstly, studies on the languages and styles in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Winterson is always regarded as a postmodern writer because of her writing features. In her book *Contemporary Lesbian Writing: Dreams, Desires, Difference* (1993), Paulina Palmer argues that Winterson creates multifaceted subjectivity or sliding selves through the interplay of narratives. Laurel Bollinger (1994) focuses on the inter-textual references of The Bible and she argues that the parody of biblical stories subverts oppression and marginal position effectively for gender minority. Heta Pyrhonen (2008) makes analysis of its intertextuality with *Jane Eyre*. He states that Winterson uses the text of the predecessor in a creative way and forms her own distinct writing style.

Secondly, studies on the feminist themes. Winterson focuses on feminism in this novel, making some contradictions under the male-dominated society. Patricia Duncker (1998) argues that feminism is the basic theme of this book, in which the oppressed mother-daughter relationship is also reflected. Lauren Rusk (2002) believes that Winterson constructs the binary opposition in the novel, she does not choose heterosexuality or homosexuality, but shows a sense of queerness. Chloe Taylor Merleau (2003) uses the expression "differend" of the French philosopher Lyotard, exposing erasure of the gendering, describing the oppression to the lesbians from society and history, which surely causes rebellion from these marginalized population.

Thirdly, studies on the biblical themes. Winterson uses parody in this novel. She re-contextualizes the Bible with playful manner to subvert the patriarchal discourse and uses many fairy tales and legendries to create fantasy and imagination. Laurel Bollinger (1994) analyzes the biblical models of this book. Amy Benson Brown (1997) analyzes the intertextuality between the novel and the Bible, stressing the prominence of the Bible in the structure of this novel. She also shows that the presentation of the lesbian subject image in the novel is closely related to her parody of the Bible.

Fourthly, studies on the gender theories. Lynne Pearce (1994) argues that Winterson shows an universalizing lesbian love and different combinations of love-relationship in her work, indicating that love transcending all those social conventions. Özge Yakut (2011) mainly analyzes the categories of patriarchal concepts based on the Judith Butler's queer theory and Helene Cixous's écriture feminine, stating Winterson's deconstruction of patriarchy. Alexandra Mattsson (2018) analyzes Jeanette's homosexual relationship with

Melanie. He thinks that Winterson deconstruct the internal relationship between the biological sex and social desire.

## 2) Domestic Studies

The Chinese version of this book was first published in 2011, achieving positive receptions among Chinese readers. The main research angle is roughly the same as the four of foreign scholars mentioned above. Luo Wenlin (2009) argues that Winterson rebels against the heterosexual hegemony based on a radical perspective of lesbian feminism. Ding Dong (2012) focuses on Winterson's success of writing style, showing a striking standard in its subject and the form to narrative. Wang Feifei (2013) analyzes the divergence between common practice and the norms in Bible from the perspective of intertextuality, which demonstrates Winterson's rebellion against the male-dominated society. Lin Shaojing's (2014) "Analysis of Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*" argues from the perspective of postmodernism, observing the unique way Winterson employs in her novel to strike patriarchal discourse. With the addition of research on ethics, Miao Xuehua (2016) believes that Winterson expresses her own ideal morals, ethical appeals and emotional pursuits. Xiong Miao (2018) analyzes Jeanette's ethical confusion, conflict and selection from the perspective of Nie Zhenzhao's ethical literary criticism. She believes that Jeanette achieves her ethics, dignity and independence in this book. To sum up, there is still room for the study of this book. This paper analyzes the growth of the protagonist based on Lacan's Mirror Stage Theory, and explores the relationship between self and others as well as the quest for self.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

Jacques Marie Émile Lacan is a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist. Described as "the most controversial psycho-analyst since Freud", Lacan gave yearly seminars in Paris from 1953 to 1981, and published papers that were later collected in the book *Écrits*. His work made a significant impact on continental philosophy and cultural theory in areas such as post-structuralism, critical theory, feminist theory and film theory, as well as on the practice of psychoanalysis itself.

According to Lacan, the mirror stage consists of three stages, including the Pre-mirror Stage, the Mirror Stage and the Post-mirror stage. These three stages are also known as "Need, Desire, and Demand", corresponding to the three stages of human development, "The Real, The Imaginary and The Symbolic". Specifically, the pre-mirror stage shares the same concepts of "Need" and "Real", followed by the mirror stage, which shares the concepts of "Desire" and "Imaginary", and the last is the post-mirror stage, which includes "Demand" and "Symbolic". For a child, these three mirror stages have their own function to form his or her unity. Though these stages are extracted from the psychological process from the infant, they can also be applied in the self-search for an adult. Therefore, the concept of Lacan's Mirror Stage will be employed to analyze the procedure of Jeanette's search for her missing self.

The pre-mirror stage refers to the time when the infant is born to six months. At that time, the baby is controlled by diverse feelings and perceptions around him. During this period, the infant needs to be cared for and supported by others, and the infant does not have a sense of "self". In Lacan's Mirror Stage Theory, the mirror stage refers to the duration from a child's six months to eight months, in which the self will be structured. The infant is looking at himself in the mirror, he will soon recognize the image in the mirror, and he may be attracted by his own image in the mirror. At this stage, the concept of "gaze" arises, and he may confuse reality with illusion and become obsessed with the mirror image of the self. He cannot escape the influence of others on him, but he is looking forward to be treated as an integrated form so that he can achieve self or ego. It happens at the age of eighteen months when the child steps into the realm of the language as well as understands the disciplines or rules of this social environment. In this stage, the child totally recognizes that the reflection in the mirror is himself. When he tries to do something, the mirror will reflect the same actions. In this stage, he will promote self-perfection through mirror observation, projecting the desire of the self through gaze, and anticipating to complete self-construction.

The other plays an important role in the construction of human "self-consciousness", which is a central point of Lacan's Mirror Stage Theory. The self is constructed in relation to the other, the self is the other. Based

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on Lacan's Mirror Stage Theory, this paper aims to provide a thorough study of the protagonist Jeanette's self-seeking in her rebellion against authority and deconstruction of homosexual norms, analyzing the growth of the protagonist Jeanette from a young girl lacking self-awareness and confined by religion to a new woman with independent thought.

## II. Pre-mirror Stage: Confinement from the Other

The pre-mirror stage is the preliminary stage of self-identity exploration. At this stage, the individual has no sense of wholeness and unity, but only fragmented body experience. Individuals still feel confused about everything. And the care and guidance of others have a great impact on the composition of individual's worldview.

### 1. Mother-Daughter Relationship

Parents play a vital role in the growth and development of the individual. The family is the child's first experience of the world. It is in the family that the child first learns knowledge, norms of behavior and experiences of love. Thus the family is the first to contribute to the emergence of an individual's consciousness and to shape his or her social behavior.

Jeanette lives in a family with a "phallic mother" and a weak father. According to the concept of "phallic mother", it describes a mother or a woman "attributed with a castrating power, endowed with the imaginary powerful penis" (Arikan, 79). In her young mind, her mother always did the right thing, as written at the beginning of the book "She was in the white corner and that was that" (Winterson, 1). Her mother lived a regular life and was strict with Janette. She wanted Janette to be a missionary, just as she had originally hoped for her daughter: "My mother, out walking that night, dreamed a dream and sustained it in daylight. She would get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the Lord: a missionary child, a servant of God, a blessing" (Winterson,6). This mother-daughter relationship carries with a mission and a mother's expectation of her daughter; Jeanette, confused at an early age, establishes herself through others' perceptions of her, and through the image of others in the mirror she comes to know what a person she should be, thus she understands that the meaning of her existence is to preach. Jeanette had no doubt in her mother's mind that everything in the world is either black or white. "I discovered that everything in the natural world was a symbol of the Great Struggle between good and evil" (Winterson, 11).

So in the pre-mirror stage, Jeanette submits to her mother's upbringing and understands the world in the way her mother wants her to understand it. The mother's strong output inhibits Jeanette's free will. Such homeschooling is thus the source of her doubts when she is really exposed to the world. When she really experience the world, everything is different from what her mother said.

### 2. Repression of Religion

Jeanette's curiosity and questions about the world are interpreted by her mother in terms of religion. When she begins her education, her mother teaches her to read from the Book of Deuteronomy, and her mother tells her all about the lives of the saints, how they were really wicked, and given to nameless desires. When Jeanette begins to understand all things in nature from a theological perspective, her mother teaches her that Heathen places will accept natural punishment, and that pagans are no exception (Winterson,11-12). Her mother never intend to send Jeanette to go to school. The school is called the breeding ground by her mother. And in Jeanette's mind, she thinks it was a bad thing, like Unnatural Passions. They'll lead you astray (Winterson,12). As a child, Jeanette loses her desire for new things. She clings to her mother and understands school with theological teachings, which she interprets as something bad. Therefore, when she has to go to school, she even feels afraid and thinks that the real suffering will come. When Jeanette is frightened by her deafness, all she could think of is what her mother has said: "If Lord brings you back, it's because he's got a work for you to do." So Jeanette devoutly hoped that she would be brought back by Lord (Winterson,19). In her limited understanding, Lord is in control of human life and death, and the law of everything, she should become a devout believer in Lord. Because of the omnipresence of religion, she fails to accept scientific knowledge and form her own speculation. "As Jeanette recalls her early childhood since she was born, she has assumed that the world

ran on very simple lines, like a larger version of church. Now she is finding that even the church is sometimes confusing" (Winterson, 18).

Jeanette's tragedy at school is mainly attributed to her religious knowledge. At first, Jeanette struggles to adapt to her new environment, but she is treated as an outcast by her teachers and other students. Deeply influenced by religion, Jeanette always tells Bible stories to her classmates who are intimidated by the question of heaven and hell. Jeanette tries to write a masterpiece full of religious activities. Her English teacher was unsatisfied with her work. Her teacher stops her from reading the article for fear that she would frighten the other students (Winterson, 38). Faithfulness to religion does not actually bring her glory; on the contrary, it makes her alien and incompatible. For a small child, that sense of isolation is oppressive.

Sexual love and desire are considered as unholy in rigid doctrines of the Old Testament. Santiago points out in the paper "Issues in Human Sexuality" that sex is forbidden. "Because love making is an authentically ecstatic experience, excluding everything else from consciousness, the church has tended to see sexual attraction and activity as particularly hostile to God" (Santiago, 55-56). So in the evangelical church, everyone should be silent about sex and ashamed of it. In fact, it becomes a way for religion to control human. In this novel, Jeanette describes her mother as someone who has a long-lasting struggle with sex. Her mother adhered to church admonitions that sex was evil and lived a sexless marriage. That's an important reason for adopting Jeanette. In the chapter "Leviticus", it describes a series of exaggerated actions by mother and Mrs White when they hear the sounds of sex next door. They start to sing hymns and play piano in order to drown "the noise". When Jeanette is curious about this and ask her mother, her mother replies in a whisper "whatever it is, it's not holy" (Winterson, 38). With the rigid religious environment, Jeanette has no chance to get knowledge about sex, which is not helpful for her to make sense of her body. The incorrect understanding of sex combined with her parents' dysfunctional relationship led to Jeanette's confusion and pain in love.

According to Lacan's pre-mirror stage, children are in the stage of hazy awareness of things. Jeanette cannot understand the world through her own perception in her childhood, and everything she comes into contact with is filtered by religion. Religion, as Jeanette's "the other", gazes at and regulates her behavior. Mother, as the spokesperson of religion, further constrains Jeanette's will. Jeanette, as the subject herself, also tries to imitate and learn from "the other" at this stage. Her language and behavior are infinitely close to others, and in this process, she forms her original self.

### III. The Mirror Stage: Jeanette's Search for the Self

The mirror stage is a critical time in the growth of the subject. In the mirror stage, Lacan believes that the child is able to form an initial knowledge of himself by identifying the image in the mirror. The child will make a series of movements that will demonstrate the relationship between the image in the mirror and the environment, that is, the relationship between his body and his surroundings. The ego succeeds in forming a complete self through the help of the mirror image, but this self is not in the real world, it's only a part of the imagination. Just as Jeanette's family education and religious study convinced her that she would become a missionary, but this was only part of her imagination based on the mirror image, she will be suspicious of the mirror image when she comes in contact with the real world.

#### 1. Quest for Self-Consciousness

As Jeanette grows up, she will have her own thoughts when she realizes that she has been mesmerized by the mirror image of the people around her, clocking the formation of a self similar to it. And this is illusory in nature, the real self is thus suppressed. She begins to doubt things around her, especially people and things that she had believed in without question. She wants to find out the truth about the world on her own. When an event triggers an understanding that is not previously acquired, a sense of epiphany will arise spontaneously.

For Jeanette, in this mirror stage, she begins to have doubts about religion. "The sermon was on perfection, and it was at this moment that I began to develop my first theological disagreement" (Winterson, 44). She begins to understand that the religious pursuit of human perfection could not really be achieved. Winterson uses the fairy tales to express Jeanette's epiphany: the prince seeks the perfect princess, but

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perfection is impossible. If you cling to perfection, you will only fall into pain. Just like in the fairy tale, princess' quest for perfection ends in evil. The pursuit of perfection should actually be the pursuit of balance and harmony.

Another turning point for the protagonist is that when Jeanette knows that her mother had altered the ending of *Jane Eyre*. On that terrible day, Jeanette finds in the inner corner of the library that *Jane Eyre* does not marry St John, in fact she runs back to find Mr. Rochester. She feels betrayed and hates this feeling, so that she won't read *Jane Eyre* any more (Winterson, 56). She begins to understand that the only way to find the answers she wants is by herself. Before the discovery, Jeanette's dream is to become a successful missionary. When Jeanette finds her mother has rewritten the ending of *Jane Eyre* intentionally just to make her great and holy plan come true, she comes into the epiphany that the different version of *Jane Eyre* created by her mother aims at deceiving her into accepting the normative religious lifestyle.

According to Lacan's mirror phase, Jeanette is exposed to the brutal truth, and her original imagination and illusory perception of "the other" are shattered. She is forced to re-examine herself and to be skeptical of her surroundings. Compared to the pre-mirror stage, she has a new perception and grows further.

## 2. Jeanette's Queerness

When the subject makes a connection with the external world, there is a certain overlap or deviation from his or her own imagination. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Winterson conveys the idea that heterosexual love is not the only way of life and marriage is not the only pursuit for female. As the title implies, oranges are not the only fruit. Butler reinterprets the theory of Freudian psychoanalysis and criticizes that the heterosexual hegemony plays an important role in gender construction. Besides, she emphasizes that "body bears on language all the time" (Butler, 68). Power and discourse construct our social norms in which our bodies fall into them as meaningful, in contrary, they will be regarded as irrational and challenging to authority. But Butler emphasizes the materiality of our bodies. It is through self-exploration that Jeanette realizes the hypocrisy of her mother and pastor. She recognizes that society is male-dominated.

Jeanette's affection for lesbian couples is initially hinted in the book. In her village, there are two women who are not married but live together for a long time. Jeanette likes them and always buys things in their paper shop. Jeanette is invited to the seaside by the couple, but her mother persuades her to give up acquaintance with these two women because they "[deal] in unnatural passions" (Winterson, 6). In fact, lesbians expose their sexuality to the public. They are calm and optimistic, while the homophobes around them remain silent. The more they are ashamed to talk about it, the more it means that the heterosexual hegemony is imprisoning their minds.

Jeanette has been influenced by the thought that men are unreliable. She also remembers a woman tells her that marrying a man is just like marrying a pig. These have profoundly affected Jeanette's sexual orientation. At the age of fifteen, Jeanette meets Melanie when she and her mother are shopping in a local market. For the first time, she feels the beauty of women. When Jeanette tells her mother about her secret emotions, she doesn't get her mother's understanding. Instead, her mother turned to the pastor to "save them". 'These children of God,' began the pastor, 'have fallen under Satan's spell.' His hand was hot and heavy on my neck. Everyone in the congregation looked like a waxwork. 'These children of God have fallen foul of their lusts' " (Winterson, 78). Boswell argues that "the world where Christian was born, to claim that homosexuality was abnormal or undesirable" (Boswell, 19). There are strict rules about sex in Evangelical church. Initially, Jeanette admits her secret feelings for Melanie, but she remains faithful to God. However, Jeanette's queer tendency is not accepted in the Evangelical church. According to pastor Finch, individuals who fall in love with the same-sex defy the God and should give up His love. Their love is regarded as demon-possessed. Madsen argues that "lesbian existence challenges not only the strategies of male power through compulsory heterosexuality but also the underlying assertion of the male right of sexual, emotional and economic access to women" (Madsen, 173). Under the power discourse, Jeanette's lesbian orientation could not be accepted because heterosexual hegemony was actually challenged. It was a rebellion against a male-dominated society.

Jeanette accepts their arrangement for a confession ceremony. She knows her body is imprisoned, but from now on, her mind is free. "In her head she was still queen, but not my queen any more, not the White Queen any more. Walls protect and walls limit. It is in the nature of walls that they should fall. That walls should fall is the consequence of blowing your own trumpet" (Winterson, 86). Jeanette has been completely disappointed in her mother, her sense of independence begins to sprout. Those "walls" could not imprison her mind.

For Jeanette, in this mirror stage, she cannot get the approval of others, and she begins to doubt the rationality of existing social norms. Her queerness refers not only to her inclination to be a lesbian, but also to her desire to deconstruct the norm when she is in such a marginal, oppressed, excluded situation. Under the gaze of her mother, pastor and many others are protected by "walls", Jeanette makes a confession ceremony, but from this moment on, the construction of the self is no longer an illusory image in the mirror. Jeanette is no longer guided by others to establish herself as a subject, she breaks the bonds of spirituality and really quest for what she wants. Jeanette's rational analysis of herself leads to her self-worth, and then begins her extension of mirror image and the reconstruction of self-identity.

#### IV. The Post-mirror Stage: Reconciliation in the Final Choice

External factors, such as the evaluation and attitude of others in the society, are a "mirror" to reflect a person's "self". To a large extent, individuals guide their actions through this "mirror." But when one breaks through the mirror and realizes the deviation between illusion and reality, one will begin to construct the real self. In the post-mirror stage, when the subject has been able to distinguish the difference between self and others and confirm the real self in the mirror, it is successful to construct the self-identity.

##### 1. Compromise Between Janette and Her Foster Mother

After being expelled from her family, Jeanette makes every effort to build a strong will and achieve emotional independence. She begins to pay more attention to her inner feelings, to get rid of her attachment to her mother, and to identify herself. Typical bildungsroman emphasizes on an exile of the hero who will achieve success and reconcile with the society finally. After his exile, "he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice" (Buckley, 18). In this book, Jeanette is forced to leave her home and finally returns home for seeking of a reconciliation with her mother who cannot accept her queer identity. Jeanette has mixed feelings about her mother. She believes there is a huge cognitive difference between her and her mother. Her mother's constraint and lack of understanding also suffocated her. When she is expelled from home, she leaves and doesn't return home because she thought the past has not gone away and she doesn't want to be under such pressure again. As in the book, there is a psychological description "Going back after a long time will make you mad, because the people you left behind do not like to think of you changed, will treat you as they always did, accuse you of being indifferent, when you are only different" (Winterson, 121).

After the trials of life, when she feels that she has grown up and could face all this calmly, she chooses to return home. Her mother treats her as if nothing had happened, but when her mother talks about a cousin's boyfriend, "she's deliberately not looking at me" (Winterson, 124). Jeanette realizes that her mother still has difficulty in accepting her queer identity. Jeanette was no longer attached to her mother's opinion of her. In Jeanette's eyes, she seems to be the same girl who wants to be a missionary and runs away to rebel against social norms. The freedom she feels now is not to leap into a new life, nor a willingness to return to the old. She exists as she pleases, without forcing change or compromising.

The Evangelical church is dismissed because of its corruptions. "Most of the money put aside for the fishermen's missions had gone to pay the secretary's gambling debts..." (Winterson 123). The corruption of church members actually exposes the wickedness and hypocrisy of these "believers of God", who hold the power to judge others' behavior, but have distanced themselves from the essence of Christianity. The corruption of the church members gives Jeanette's mother a spiritual shock. Although she still cannot accept Jeanette's queerness, she doesn't insist on changing Jeanette, and they both chose to forgive each other.

## 2. Reconciliation Between Individual and the External World

In the post-mirror stage, the image of the other and the true self have slowly merged together. As Jeanette experiences blind worship of religion, and then has doubts and rebellion. Finally, she can rationally understand religion and still love God. She has established self-awareness. In her state of mind "I want someone who is fierce and will love me until death and know that love is as strong as death, and be on my side for ever and ever. I want someone who will destroy and be destroyed by me" (Winterson, 127). She is in pain and disappointed at Melanie's betrayal, but until this day, she still has the passion and desire for love.

The monologue in which Jeanette returns to her hometown and stands on the top of the mountain is deeply moving. A little girl, after a tortuous growth and inner struggle, gradually becomes mature. In the process, she endures loneliness, failure, betrayal and rebellion, and is finally willing to reconcile with the world. She still cannot let go of many things, such as Melanie's choice, but she chooses to understand the rationality of the existence of all things. The nightmare of her childhood: "the orange demon", will finally become a memory of the past. Winterson doesn't want to eliminate binary oppositions but urges to establish a harmony or balance between heterosexuality and homosexuality. For Jeanette, she returns to the home, where everything is the same as it was in the past, as if she had never left. But in fact, she is not the same as before. "Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of joining one, and no means of dismissing my own; she had tied a thread around my button, to tug when she pleased" (Winterson, 131).

## V. Conclusion

*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* holds a significant place as an experimental Bildungsroman. Based on her own life experiences in Accrington, Winterson recreates many crucial events from her early life. The novel provides an account of Winterson's personal journey towards finding the truth and her true self, from childhood to adolescence, as she learns to think independently and pave her own way in life. Winterson argues that although the characters are rooted in reality, they have the ability to convey more than what the author can express. Jeanette's growth and transformation mirror the experiences of anyone on a journey of self-discovery. Her confusion and struggles also reflect the experiences of marginalized individuals in society. The most noteworthy aspect of the novel is the transformation of Jeanette's inner world: how she gains independence, develops her own thoughts, liberates her sense of awareness, and ultimately embarks on a quest to discover her true self.

This paper employs Lacan's Mirror Stage theory to analyze Jeanette, which suggests that individuals construct and understand their sense of self through the reflection of the mother or others. Lacan emphasizes that independence and dependence coexist within the self, and that the true nature of the self cannot be revealed through mirrors alone. Rather, individuals must engage in self-alienation and struggle between the self and the other to achieve recognition from their surroundings and move towards the truth. In the novel, the protagonist Jeanette experiences confusion and eventually achieves epiphany as she strives to discover her authentic self and break free from her adoptive mother and the Evangelical community. Through three mirror stages, she establishes her identity.

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