

The Advice is: Get Born

Post-modern novelist offers you food for thought and entertainment

What does "being normal" mean to you? Today it generally refers to he/she who follows the mass, the norm, what people see as ordinary. When you meet a Rastafarian, or a rapper you probably think he is strange, un-usual. Someone may even think he/she is out of place. Isn't it funny he probably considers YOU a common, boring, meaningless chap.

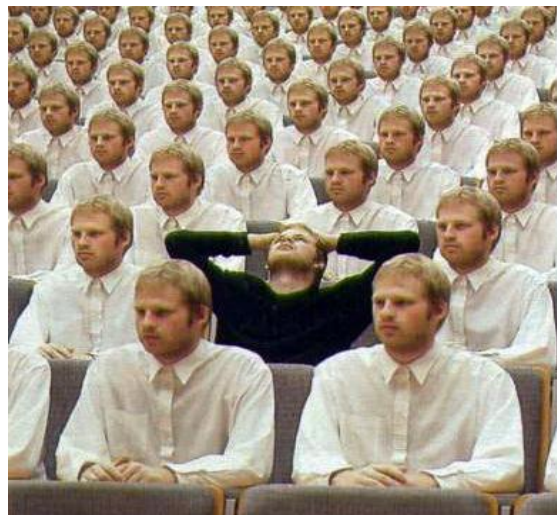
Being different, outside the norm is a way of self expression. But what does really need to be expressed? Dis-covering one's identity is a long and hard process of self-discovery. The Post-modern novelist Jeanette Winterson says "*in a system that generates masses, individualism is the only way out*". In *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*, she compares life to a map: there is more than one route and plenty destinations and they aren't clear right from the start. You only know your present but to find out who you really are, you are expected to find out the multifaceted nature of your different identities. It is a long way,...it could be an adventure or mysterious maze where finding your own way is not that easy.

Trans-formation is a steady process, sometimes hard and difficult. And your point of departure is always



Jeanette Winterson (1959) relevant. Manchester city perfectly knows that. You can see it in its gradual trans-formation. Jeanette is perfectly aware of all that: the way people think depends on their culture, on the place they come from. People are the prints of where they live, they are what they eat or wear... "*Where you are born – what you are born into, the place, how that history mates with your own – stamps who you are, whatever the pundits of globalization have to say*"

This is exactly *what* Mrs Winterson tells her readers about Manchester. She considers it a good place to be born because of the various trends of thought like Quakerism, feminism, anti-slavery movement and So-



cialism this is how she could perceive Manchester in the Sixties. The critical side of the matter, she seems to say is that in cities like Manchester, industrialization produced "*ordinary people*", people who consider each other *as a useful object* and life was mainly based on the mean question "*does it work?*". The idea is rooted in Utilitarianism. One working even today.

Jeanette Winterson has written a memoir to be given a chance for self-expression: she confesses she did not "*want to be in the teeming mass of the working class*", a factory manufacture. She invites her readers whatever their gender to "Get Born" again!" This is the only escape to be experimenting one's true identity. Her words unveil the effort "[this]... *is why I am a writer – I don't say decided to be or become. It was not an act of will or even a conscious choice. To avoid the narrow mesh of Mrs Winterson's story I had to be able to tell my own... I wrote my way-out*" The title of the novel itself underlines such effort. Writing and memoirs then become something magic. "*A book is a magic carpet. A book is a door. You open it. You step through*" and "*when we write we offer the silence as much as the story. Words are the part of silence that can be spoken*" are quotations that epitomize the message besides offering you food for thought and entertainment.