

Returning to the garden: the Garden of Eden and the subversion of metanarratives in Lewis Carroll, Salman Rushdie and Jeanette Winterson

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Tese de doutoramento UDC / Ano 2023

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UNIVERSIDADE DA CORUÑA

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Acreditación de directores

Resumo

Esta tese explora como cada autor utiliza a simboloxía do Xardín do Edén para expor críticamente as metanarrativas como ilusións creadas por estruturas de poder co propósito de exercer o control. Este estudo achégase ás dúas interpretacións principais enfrontadas da historia do Xardín do Edén: unha Gnóstica, pre Igrexa Católica Romana, a interpretación positiva dos acontecementos como transmisión esclarecedora do coñecemento pola sagrada figura feminina da muller e a serpe, e a metanarrativa creada pola Igrexa Católica Romana que conta unha historia de pecado e castigo. Esta investigación revela se a crítica dos autores se basea na metanarrativa creacional como o pecado orixinal ou a versión Gnóstica. As implicacións son que se o punto de partida é a metanarrativa do Xardín da caída do home, aínda que críticos coas metanarrativas do seu tempo, axudan ademais á naturalización da metanarrativa que promove e xustifica as crenzas que desafían.

Palabras clave: Crítica, metanarrativa, Xardín do Edén, Gnosticismo, estruturas de poder.

Resumen

Esta tesis explora cómo cada autor utiliza la simbología del Jardín del Edén para exponer críticamente las metanarrativas como ilusiones creadas por estructuras de poder con el propósito de ejercer control. Este estudio explora las dos interpretaciones principales contradictorias de la historia del Jardín del Edén: una interpretación Gnóstica pre Iglesia Católica Romana de los eventos como una transmisión esclarecedora de conocimiento por parte de la sagrada figura femenina de la mujer y la serpiente, y la metanarrativa creada por la Iglesia Católica Romana que cuenta una historia de pecado y castigo. Esta investigación también pretende averiguar si la crítica de los autores se basa en la metanarrativa creacionista del pecado original promovida por la Iglesia Católica Romana o si aluden a la anterior interpretación Gnóstica de la historia. Las implicaciones son que si el punto de partida es la metanarrativa del Jardín de la caída del hombre creada por la Iglesia Católica Romana, aunque los autores son críticos con las metanarrativas de su tiempo, ayudan aún más en la naturalización de lá metanarrativa que promueve y justifica las creencias que desafían.

Palavras clave: Critica, metarrelato, Jardín del Edén, Gnosticismo, estructuras de poder.

Abstract

This thesis explores how each author uses the symbology of the Garden of Eden in order to critically expose metanarratives as illusions created by power structures with the purpose of exerting control. This study approaches the two conflicting main interpretations of the story of the Garden of Eden: a Gnostic, pre Roman Catholic Church, positive interpretation of the events as an enlightening transmission of knowledge by the sacred feminine figure of the woman and the snake, and the metanarrative created by the Roman Catholic Church that tells of a story of sin and punishment. This research reveals if the authors' critique is based on the creational metanarrative as the original sin or the Gnostic version. The implications are that if the point of departure is the metanarrative of the fall of man, although critical of metanarratives, they further assist in the naturalization of the metanarrative that promotes and justifies beliefs that they challenge.

Key words: criticism, metanarrative, Garden of Eden, Gnosticism, power structures.

Preface

The present thesis, “Returning to the Garden: The Garden of Eden and the Subversion of Metanarratives in Lewis Carroll, Salman Rushdie, and Jeanette Winterson,” results from the requirements for the doctoral programme in Advanced English Studies: Linguistics, Literature and Culture Studies at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Coruña. It has been written under the direction of Professors María Jesús Lorenzo Modia and José Manuel Estévez Súa. This work is original, has not been published, and has not been submitted for defence at any other teaching institution.

Having read the three novels, one of which (*Midnight's Children*) for the purpose of my masters degree, I was drawn to study how a combined analysis of all three, very different, critical stances can reveal crucial facts about contemporary criticism, namely, how some perspectives can further naturalize the same metanarratives they are critical of.

Andrea Toste,

Porto, May 29, 2022

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1. Introduction

The present thesis analyses three novels that are part of the English literary canon, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and focuses on how each uses the symbology of the Garden of Eden in order to question the truths imposed by their respective cultures. These novels can give a clear account on how an ingrained story such as the story of the Garden of Eden is used to communicate a critical perspective by writers that, although influenced by English culture, come from completely different cultural milieus. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is first published in 1865 Victorian England amidst the flourishing Romantic period not only characterized by idealism (when often ideals like truth, love or justice are the topic of poetry, essays and novels) but also by the beginning of writing critically about social issues like poverty, the treatment of women and children, or the conditions of exploitative factory work. Another focus of criticism in Victorian England is the role of the Church due to the controversy caused by Charles Darwin's 1859 *On the Origin of Species*, the many confronting Catholic denominations and the fact that high Churchmen revive rituals and paraphernalia that have not been used since the Reformation leading Carroll to question the increase of ritualism in the Church and its closeness with politics. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, first published in 1981, depicts Indian culture and traditions in a postcolonial setting revealing how the influence of the British is still felt and that the idealized independent India is still dealing with corruption, poverty and violence after the British are gone. The novel not only questions the official version of historical events put forward by the British who try to wipe out of history the violence of colonialism but also the

official version of equally ruthless acts committed by the Indian government after independence. And in Winterson's semi-autobiographical novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, first published in 1985, the action takes place in the rigid cultural environment of an Evangelical community from the Elim Pentecostal Church. It is in this environment that Jeanette starts to question what she has been taught by her mother and her strict religious community, again, by resorting to the symbology of the Garden of Eden, more particularly to the symbol of the fruit.

References to the Garden of Eden in literature abound. From William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* in which he criticises corruption (the main character says the garden of the world is smothered by weeds, Old Hamlet is poisoned in his orchard and Shakespeare refers to Claudius as a serpent) to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In the novel Ralph easily takes his snake-clasp belt off, while Piggy (who has eaten the fruit) is ashamed about taking his clothes off and, as the action unfolds, readers increasingly perceive the island as a paradise that is corrupted by the arrival of the boys. John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* features opposing brothers and a ruthless female seducer while establishing parallels with the stories of the Garden of Eden and Cain and Abel in order to approach themes such as guilt and freedom, self-destruction or love. Ernest Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* approaches the themes of androgyny, relationships between men and women, and gender roles reversal: the protagonist couple fall both in love with a French woman with the pet name of Devil. Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is considered a re-narration of the Eden story in which the author deals with history (the repetition of history), Spanish imperialism, and reality versus illusion. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton recreates the story of the Garden of Eden to denounce the construction

of buildings for worship as leading to idolatry, and in the twelve cantos poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley, “The Revolt of Islam”, the romantic poet deals with ideas of duality and unity and the symbolism of the serpent is associated with something as positive as the Morning Star. In Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* the garden is the setting of the seduction of Tess and functions as a prelude to Tess’s love story, appearing soon after overgrown with weeds that have a foul smell. The garden is also a place of loss of innocence and sexual experimenting in *Sons and Lovers*, the 1913 novel by D. H. Lawrence. In her 1998 novel *Paradise*, Toni Morrison depicts an isolated, all-black town that is, like the Garden of Eden, closed to the outside world but this attempt at recreating paradise ends up being a place where violence and discrimination flourish. In Kurt Vonnegut’s 1973 novel *Breakfast of Champions* the references to the Garden of Eden story abound: the character Kilgore Trout talks about the apple given to Eve by the snake “what was the apple which Eve and Adam ate? [. . .] Symbols can be so beautiful, sometimes” (201), there are visual descriptions of an apple (two drawings), the author has the other main character, Dwayne Hoover, lean on an old apple tree and remark that there had once been an orchard on those lands, and at the end of the novel Kilgore Trout is given an apple. Also, C. S. Lewis’ *Perelandra* uses imagery of Eden and depicts a plot of a story of temptation and fall in the planet Venus.

Imagery of the Garden of Eden is often invoked in social conflicts or changes in boundaries and is used sometimes by those who have instigated conflict between social groups or on other occasions for ending the conflict. This is the conclusion of “Freedom and Domination: The Garden of Eden and the Social Order”, Professor Lester Kurtz’s research on the use of the imagery of the Garden of Eden for social purposes. He divides the use of

Eden imagery in two main situations: as a compensatory aspect of culture (compensating for social issues) or as a reflective aspect of culture when it reflects the interests of certain groups. In a similar line of research, Associate Professor and Religious Studies Program director, Brian Britt explores the connection between the story of the Garden of Eden and critical theory through the works of Theodor Adorno (whom, the author notes, exalts the use of the Eden story by the culture industry and late capitalism) and Walter Benjamin. Britt gives examples of when the story of the Garden of Eden is used throughout history, from America being depicted as a new Eden to attract European settlers to making spaces people are exposed to seem attractive, including those created by media such as cartoons like the Teletubbies.

1.1.1. Research objectives

The overall objective of this thesis is to explore how Victorian *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the postmodern novels *Midnight's Children* and *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* feature the symbology of the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden. How this intertextuality with the Garden of Eden serves to critically expose metanarratives within their culture as illusions created by power structures with the purpose of exerting control. As this study explains, there are two conflicting main interpretations of the story of the Garden of Eden: a Gnostic, pre Roman Catholic Church, positive interpretation of the events as an enlightening transmission of knowledge by the sacred feminine figure of the woman and the snake, and the metanarrative created by the Roman Catholic Church that tells of a story of sin and punishment. As a result of the main analysis of the trope of the Garden of Eden, this research intends also to ascertain if the authors' critique is based on the

creational metanarrative of the original sin promoted by the Roman Catholic Church or if they allude to the earlier, Gnostic interpretation of the story. The implications are that if the point of departure is the Garden metanarrative of the fall of man created by the Roman Catholic Church, although critical of the metanarratives of their time, they further assist in the naturalization of the metanarrative that promotes and justifies beliefs that they challenge.

1.1.2. Relevance of the study

The significance of the present research lies, not only on the innovative comparative reading of the three novels, but also on how it helps to clarify how metanarratives are contested and how, even with a critical perspective, some metanarratives are so ingrained that they are further solidified. Although some research has focused on the critical perspective in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Midnight's Children*, and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, research is lacking when it comes to linking these critical perspectives with the use of Edenic imagery. For this research it is relevant how Carroll criticizes the growing ritualism of his day by resorting to the image of the garden to refer to the initial simple and direct connection between man and God of the Garden of Eden, how Rushdie punctuates the narrative with gardens and places the story within two Aadam characters to question historical metanarratives of colonial and post-colonial India, and how Winterson begins the novel with Genesis and uses the motif of fruit throughout in order to be critical of her community. The three novels are chosen, not only for their different use of Edenic imagery and references, but also because each are representative of the different cultures that have molded the authors: Victorian culture, Indian and British cultures, and the culture of a closed Evangelic

community of 1970s rural England. As a product of these cultures, a comparative reading of these novels can also potentially reveal how each cultural ambiance can influence the authors' view of the metanarrative of the Garden of Eden and which version of the metanarrative they subvert or solidify.

1.1.3. Methodology

In order to best provide a clear basis for the present research, the theoretical orientation chosen is that of new historicism/cultural studies because it helps reveal the underlying critique in the novels. The theoretical perspective of cultural studies considers how consciousness is constructed by social, cultural and historical elements and is concerned with how elements of culture promote meanings that reflect specific ideologies and condition how we apprehend the world. It reveals the ideological interests of dominant ideological systems and the opposing ideologies operating through literary texts because “culture is both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination, a way of articulating oppositional points of view to those in dominance” (Rivkin and Ryan 1233). Born out of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964 with Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams, cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field that takes into consideration fields such as sociology, political science, cultural expressions like film and mass media, anthropology, philosophy, art history, and history. An example of such studies is Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* in which he researches the customs of everyday working class life in Britain. Another example of cultural studies criticism is Dick Hebdige's 1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* which deals with the speech, graffiti, music and fashion choices of

the post-war youth subcultures (namely the punks), and how they resist the social roles society accepts and promotes. Cultural studies looks at a text from the perspective of those that are marginalized or not part of the dominant culture. It analyses how power systems operate through cultural practices, hence, its key concerns are how culture can be an instrument of social and political control and how meaning is generated, disseminated and contested.

New historicism considers literary and not literary texts equally in order to discover the power-relations the text reveals. This theoretical perspective is influenced by Stephen Greenblatt, who gave this school of literary criticism its name in 1982, Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. Greenblatt studies the relationship between literature (Shakespeare) and culture researching what establishes something as fictional or as legitimate, how this distinction between the two often relies on various powers and narratives such as historical narratives intended to dominate such as how state entities like museums give the stamp of authenticity to objects with their stories but without determining proof. New historicism is also influenced by nineteenth century philosopher Nietzsche, who rejects the existence of an absolute truth because what is accepted as truth is merely perspective and philosopher, philologist and literary critic Michel Foucault who researches the connection between power and knowledge and the role they play as social control by social institutions. He is interested in practices and rules that establish what is true within a determined historical context and that can be untrue in the future. Hence, new historicism considers political, cultural, social or historical events when interpreting a literary text and non-mainstream narratives because there are always different perspectives for the same event. For this theoretical perspective history is a narrative that can be influenced by the cultural context or

the perspective of the one registering it who is usually in a position of power. It analyses power or the lack of it and the resistance to it in a text in discourses that disrupt power narratives that are ignored, disapproved or unrecognized by dominant cultural discourses.

Therefore, applying this critical theoretical perspective reveals how each novel subverts the dominant ideology: Carroll's novel reveals a concern for the state of affairs of the Church in England and how, instead of promoting spirituality, it is promoting ritualism, in *Midnight's Children* Rushdie subverts the official historical account imposed by the dominant political power by showing how fake it is and how it serves the interests of its creators, and in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* Winterson's main character resists the ideology that her restrictive community imposes on her. According to this theoretical perspective even something many consider reliable such as history can be a mere culturally influenced interpretation of events. Hence this critical interpretation helps to reveal how Carroll addresses the difficulty in finding an ultimate truth because of social conditioning, how Winterson reveals the totally bias and subjective history Jeanette is fed by her religious community while growing up and how Rushdie's narrator re-narrates his own family's history and India's historical events while recognizing that even his interpretation of them is subjective and may not necessarily correspond to reality but it is how he remembers it. This theoretical perspective enables the reader to see the subversive discourses circulating, how the novels subvert the dominant ideological norms and reveal that what is established as truth can be a political construct, a means used by power structures (like the church or state) to disseminate and establish a dominant ideology.

1.1.4. Structure of the Study

Apart from the theoretical approach chosen, and in order to provide a clear basis for the present research, this work has been structurally divided into five main sections: the present introduction; followed by a second chapter dealing with the definition and context of terms; a literature review chapter; a fourth chapter that comprehends the analysis of all three novels; the conclusion; and the final works cited section. The introduction starts by addressing the purpose of this thesis, its relevance within scholarly research, and the reason for the theoretical approach chosen, how it serves the objectives of this research, and provides an outline of the overall structure of this work. The second chapter, “Definition and Context of Terms”, provides the historical, cultural and etymological background for the terms Metanarrative, Roman Catholic Church, Gnosticism, and Garden of Eden which are fundamental for this research. The following literature review chapter deals with significant scholarly research on the the Garden of Eden and also considers the most significant lines of investigation scholars have used to study each of the novels chosen for this thesis: *Alice`s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Midnight`s Children* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. After a brief introduction that presents a synopsis of the novels and a summary of how each uses the imagery of the Garden of Eden, the fourth chapter, “Metanarratives Unravel: Analysis of the Novels”, is subdivided into three main sections that explore how the authors appropriate the imagery of the Garden of Eden in their critique of the “truths” normalized by metanarratives created by religious power, the ruling power of the state, and a sub section that intends to determine how, amidst the normalization of self-serving “truths” established by cultural, political or religious discourses in the interests of ruling powers, each of the novels considers the possibility of reaching an ultimate or objective truth. This is

followed by its own conclusion that focuses on summarizing the differences between the novels regarding how they allude to the Garden story. If their point of departure is the Augustinian version of the story as the fall of man. The overall concluding chapter intends to provide a summary of the importance of this critical perspective of the novels and what it can signify for critical thought. This structure concludes with the “Works Cited” section that lists all works that have been cited throughout all the previous chapters.

1.1.5. Conclusion

Concluding this introductory chapter, it should be clear what are the objectives of this study, how the theoretical framework chosen will assist in attaining these objectives, and the relevance of the study within scholarly research. This research strives to show how the authors use the symbology of the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden to be critical of the metanarratives produced by the power structures within their cultures and the knowledge they promote. This includes depending on certain rituals to attain the favor of God, the belief that women are subservient to men or the creation of an historical truth that is convenient for the ruling power. The objective of this research is clarified by the new historicism/cultural studies theoretical orientation chosen. It considers political, socio-cultural, or historical events while revealing how the perspectives in the novels operate an opposition to dominant ideological interests through literary texts. Together, the theoretical approach and the aim chosen to review these three novels attest to the relevance of this study as an unexplored perspective. The three novels have never been comparatively studied nor has there been a research on the trope of the Garden of Eden in all three. The topics of the Garden of Eden and gnostic ideology in the three novels have yet to be researched thoroughly

since research on the subject has only focused on such traits in the Bible and on the work of some classic figures of literature or philosophy like Melville, Yeats, Pound, Kafka, Nabokov, Milton, Blake or Lessing. A comparative study helps the reader realize how knowledge of a previous meaning of the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden molds how metanarratives are contested and how this contestation progresses, how the authors communicate their critique: why Carroll, living in the restrictive Victorian society has to put his ideas forward in a much more veiled (and even complex) manner than Rushdie, and how Winterson`s novel, the latest novel to be published, takes the liberty to rewrite stories and asserts its critique openly.

2. Definition and Context of Terms

2.1.1. Introduction

In order to have a clear reading of this research, it is necessary to define its main terms, hence, this section clarifies the terms “metanarrative” (which is part of the title), “Gnosticism”, “Roman Catholic Church”, and the denomination of “Garden of Eden”. The intention of defining “metanarrative” is to establish that these, such as the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden, can be used by power structures to exert control and as a strategy of legitimization of their own interests. This is followed by the definition of Gnosticism, how it is widespread throughout the ancient world among Middle Eastern civilizations and many Asian philosophical currents and later on reaches Greek philosophical schools that help spread these ideas in the west. Due to its relevance, there is an explanation of the connection between Gnosticism and heresy and the differences in the definitions of these terms before and after the creation of the Roman Catholic Church. The specific designation of “Roman Catholic Church” is used instead of just “Catholic Church” to avoid confusing early Christians that exist before the Roman Catholic Church is created. These early Christians although not officially unified as one church, since they already belong to different Jewish sects, share common beliefs and mythology of which is part the story of the Garden of Eden.

The cultural context in which the “Roman Catholic Church” is created explains its creation by Constantine I. For the political reasons of unifying the Roman Empire to better control it, emperor Constantine I appropriates ancient religious mythology deeply

ingrained in the peoples under Roman rule only to institutionalize an interpretation that suits the purposes of Roman imperialism. This is followed by an explanation of how the newly created Roman Catholic Church changes the original definition of heresy as *choice* into something with a sinful and negative connotation that becomes applied to anything or anyone that does not conform to the rulings of the Roman Catholic Church. This section proceeds to disclose the cultural context of the story of the Garden of Eden: its etymology, how this Mesopotamian myth has a different meaning before the creation of Roman Catholic Church and why this myth can be considered gnostic.

2.1.2. Metanarrative

The term is created by philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and the prefix “meta” means “about” or “going beyond” and is also interchangeable with “grand narrative” or “master narrative” which implies that this concept refers to a universal narrative. McLean and Syed have defined metanarratives as “culturally shared stories that guide thoughts, beliefs, values, and behaviors” (323). Metanarratives are totalizing social theories or philosophies of history that convey culturally held ideas that explain and legitimize issues such as the American dream, the scientific perspective of evolution through natural selection, periodizations of history such as Renaissance or the Dark Ages, Freudianism (which explains the world and human behavior through sexual impulses and desires), or religious worldviews such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity which all have stories to explain the workings of the world and mankind. One such story of Christian theology is the story of the Garden of Eden which intends to explain the creation of mankind.

In *The Postmodern Condition* Lyotard chooses the Enlightenment as the example of a modern metanarrative that praises progress as an overall benefit for mankind. In it Lyotard also refers to “the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation” (356) noting that metanarratives are used to legitimate perspectives which reveals they can often be legitimization strategies to maintain the status quo or social control. Scientific discourses, along with historical or cultural ones, often support metanarratives that normalize determined interests and condition our knowledge about the world, history or culture. Metanarratives play a part in the dynamic of the creation of knowledge in society, as metanarratives can be a tool of power structures that naturalize them as knowledge to promote and normalize a determined perspective. Metanarratives are intimately linked with the production of knowledge as exemplifies the definition of metanarrative by Emeritus Professor John Stephens as “a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience” (6). Complementarily, one of the most noted philosophers whose work has been influential for the critical school of New Historicism, Michel Foucault, in *Power, Truth, Strategy*, establishes a close nexus between knowledge and power. For him what metanarratives create as established knowledge, more than being truthful or not, is the product of those in power. Similarly, for Lyotard all forms of legitimation involve the creation of legitimating narratives of a larger (universal, global, national) broad scale context and the more universal, the stronger they are, the more legitimized and the more stable they are. And, although in postmodern times metanarratives have been replaced or contested by smaller narratives that bring forward the perspective and experiences of the common man, some metanarratives still have a foundational role in many societies. They can become invisible and this invisibility that characterizes metanarratives, according to

McLean and Syed, describes how they are perceived as natural, which makes them go unnoticed.

2.1.3. Gnosticism

Scholars have long studied Gnosticism: its mark on philosophy and literature, its definition, or even if it is accurate to classify it as a separate category or if it is a perspective present in several different theosophies and mythologies. Scholar Kirsten J. Grimstad's research on the influence of Gnosticism in modern European literature and thought through the works of Jacob Boehme, Hegel and Thomas Mann is an example of the interest the subject of Gnosticism still produces in twenty-first century scholars. The connection between the Gnostic perspective and literature has also been approached by Thomas Pfau and A. D. Nuttall who have researched Gnosticism and the defiance of authority, control, or convention in the works of Marlowe, Coleridge, Blake and Milton. And Cyril O'Regan, theology Professor at the University of Notre Dame, researches the connection between Gnosticism and modern literature (its influence in aesthetic movements such as Romanticism, or philosophical currents like German Idealism) through the perspectives of theorists like Gérard Genette and critics such as Harold Bloom.

The first known use of the term has no moral judgement and can be traced back to section 258e of Plato's *Statesman* (when the Stranger refers to the two arts, the practical and the intellectual/*gnostikos*) with the the word *gnostikos* being relative to knowledge or leading to knowledge. Various scholars believe that the negative meaning attached to Gnosticism of a false and deviant creed comes from the influence of *Exposé and Overthrow of What Is Falsely Called "Knowledge"*, also known by its Latin title *Adversus Haereses*, or Against

the Heresies. A work of Christian theology written in circa 175-185 A.D. by second century A.D. Roman Catholic bishop Irenaeus of Lyon, in which the term is connected with falsehood. According to Irenaeus any other religious/spiritual manifestation that is not determined by the rules of the Roman Catholic Church is false. This view of Gnosticism established by the writings of early Roman Catholic Church Fathers who are motivated to have people follow their views has, according to Professor of Divinity at Harvard University Karen King, influenced present research on the term because it is often still based on the definition of Gnosticism as linked with “the erroneous, the heretical, the schismatic as well as all things threatening, anomalous, esoteric, and arcane” (18). The concern of modern world scholars regarding the definition of Gnosticism is that it has inherited the definition given by its detractors. This concern that the term “gnosticism” is attributed by the heresiologists (the persecutors of Gnostic sects is shared by scholars of many fields. In her work *What is Gnosticism?* scholar Karen L. King reveals the definition of the term is more complex and its meaning can be difficult to discern as it is also used in many different contexts (politics, philosophy, literary studies, psychology) with changes in meaning. She explains that much of this difficulty lies in two facts: firstly, written works against Judaism, heresy, and apologetic works addressed to Roman authorities are often adapted to contemporary social and intellectual conditions and discourses, secondly, defining Gnosticism according to its characteristics may be problematic since defining characteristics like cosmological dualism are present in non-Gnostic literature and are not present in all Gnostic works.

Gnosticism is used to refer to a set of religious and philosophical ideas that are present in various Asian and Middle Eastern cultures from time immemorial and become popular in the West in late first century A.D. through the teachings of early Christian sects which have, in

turn, inherited it from Jewish sects. The etymology of the word reveals how intrinsically linked to knowledge it is. Etymologically, the term comes from the Proto-Indo-European root *gno* (to know) from which Late Greek has evolved *Gnostikos* the noun of the adjective *gnostikos* (able to know, good at discerning). Both words derive from *gnostos* (to be known) which, in turn, comes from *gignoskein* (to learn, to come to know). It is of relevance the fact that Greek language distinguishes between theoretical knowledge and knowledge acquired through direct experience (*gnosis*). The term has, hence, come to be applied to several early Christian and Jewish sects that emphasize a more individual spiritual path of direct personal knowledge of the divine instead of obedience to orthodox rules and ecclesiastical authority. According to Elaine Pagels' work *The Gnostic Gospels*, Gnostics use the term as something of an insight that comes from self-knowledge and knowledge of divine realities instead of mere ordinary textual or conceptual knowledge.

If initially “gnosis” or “gnosticism” is determined based on a probable self-definition found in the records of those who persecute them (the heresiologists) today modern scholars go beyond self-definition and take a set of characteristics into consideration to establish if something or someone is gnostic. The present thesis refers to the definition of Gnosticism accepted by the scholar community of which is an example Karen L. King, who explains Gnosticism as “the thought and practice esp. of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis” (5). Scholarly research concludes that Gnosticism can roughly be defined by its common characteristics: the belief that there is a spiritual world beyond the sensory world; the belief that the material world is a world of illusions; and the emphasis on the importance of knowledge (gnosis) of man as a spiritual being and the workings of this

world as the way to reach salvation out of the material world of illusions. Gnostics believe that this world is not created by the universal God but by another entity that permits evil and tries to illude humans into thinking that this world is all that exists so they remain imprisoned in the material world. Hence the importance of *gnosis* (knowledge) for these sects because, in their perspective, humans have divinity within them and it is only through knowledge (*gnosis*) regarding how divine beings are trapped in matter that man can be free from the entrapment (created by an evil entity) of believing that this world of matter and its passions (such as greed, lust, jealousy) are the ultimate reality. To escape being enslaved by illusion Gnostic theology emphasizes knowledge through personal experience, a direct experience between the individual and God that is not mediated by doctrinal formalities, an individual connection with the divine spark within every man and God. This is in direct opposition with Roman Catholic Church in which people depend fully on intermediaries of the Church (such as priests) to know about God and to have the chance to reach God after death.

Defining Gnosticism according to its characteristics has been considered problematic by some scholars since defining characteristics like cosmological dualism are present in non-Gnostic literature and are not present in all Gnostic works. Today scholars are cautious about classifying something with the term “gnosticism” because the theological movement it refers to has a variety of Christian ideologies existing within and there are also a wide variety of ideas displayed in gnostic scriptures. According to some scholars the definition of the term as an independent category in today’s scholarly research must be the subject of further study since one cannot count on a clear self-definition of being gnostic in the surviving texts of some sects (such as the case of the Naassenes) or, some scholars suspect, the term may have been sometimes used as we use today the term “intellectuals”. Michael Allen Williams’

research focuses on asserting if Gnosticism can be considered a distinct religious tradition only to conclude that it cannot because Gnosticism is present in numerous religions since ancient world. For Williams the establishment of Gnosticism as an independent category is not accurate and is created by early Roman Catholic Church Fathers and later on established as an independent category by modern scholars. This leads scholars such as King to consider “gnosticism to be merely ‘a structural possibility within a number of religious traditions’” (9). In fact, the philosophy of valuing knowledge to overcome the physical world is common in pre-Christian Asia and Middle East and is shared by Hebrew, Egyptian and Persian mysticism and later adopted by Greek philosophical schools such as Stoicism and Platonism.

Though at a first glance the connection between a Gnostic perspective and Jewish theology may be lost to some, what further research reveals is that there is also a Gnostic perspective in Jewish theology itself. For instance, the Old Testament and other texts of Jewish theology about the story of creation in Eden refer to *Elohim* as being involved in the creation of this world. The relevance of this for the present discussion is that *Elohim* is often wrongly translated to *God* but, in reality, means *Gods* (plural) as it is the plural word for *Eloah*. Jewish texts never refer to the universal God in the plural, only the singular form is used for *the* almighty God. One can see in this the Gnostic belief in a duality between the Gods that have built man and Eden, the physical world of man, and *the* universal God. Yet another characteristically Gnostic cultural trait that surfaces in ancient Jewish texts and Gnostic texts alike is present among many Jewish sects even before the creation of the Roman Catholic Church: snake cults. Or the appreciation for the transmission of knowledge they imply. Shared by most Middle Eastern peoples, these snake cults go back to a pre-Roman Catholic Church era and are based on the appreciation for the snake that has given Eve (and

consequently Adam and mankind) knowledge. They venerate the symbol of the giver of knowledge to the point that some sects call themselves sons of the snake. From the second to fourth centuries A.D. these sects, such as the Christian Gnostic sect called Naassenes (which etymology scholars agree comes from *na ash*, Hebrew for snake), are collectively called Ophites, from Greek *ophis*, snake. Snake imagery as a metaphor for Gnosticism permeates works written long after Jesus' death such as *The Gospel of John*. Written possibly earlier than 70 A.D. and being finalized around 90 or 100 A.D. *The Gospel of John*, as early as the one found in the Nag Hammadi Scriptures, presents a discussion between Jewish teacher Nicodemus and Jesus and the latter compares the lifting up of the serpent by Moses in order to heal the Jewish people to the lifting up of the Son of Man. Moses makes a copper figure in the shape of a serpent that heals the Israelites called Nehushtan, a proper noun that most scholars agree comes from "snake" or "brass". This figure of a snake on a pole described in 2 Kings 18:4 and Numbers 21:4-9 is a venerated icon until the 8th century B.C. when King Hezekiah destroys it due to his religious reform. The snake imagery remains as a metaphor for the role of knowledge in the healing and salvation of man and the connection between the serpent and Jesus is often established as both come to represent salvation through the passing on of knowledge.

The passage in the *Gospel of John* has led James H. Charlesworth, George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and director and editor of the Princeton Dead Sea Scrolls Project, in a nearly decade long research on the serpent symbology. Charlesworth's research reveals all the archaeological discoveries of evidence of snake cults connected to feminine deities and secret knowledge in several places of Israel and all across the Ancient Near East: the serpent, a positive symbol in Greek and Roman literature, can still

be seen in Pompeii in the walls of the House of the Vettii; Agathadaimon (from Greek *Agathós* meaning *good* and *Dáimon* meaning *spirit*), which for the Greeks is a serpent-like entity and a good spirit that brings health, wisdom and good luck; also in Ancient Greece, the serpent Python is charged of guarding the secrets of the Delphi oracle, the Greek Asclepius has a serpent staff and Athena is often accompanied by serpents; Egyptians have gods depicted as serpents (such as Niut-Aesh or Isis, which Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch identify as *Sophia*, the Hellenistic term for wisdom, knowledge) and Pharaohs choose them for their head garment; Minoans depict serpent goddesses; Canaanites have serpent cults; and the serpent iconography that appears in many synagogues is also featured in the form of the caduceus (the symbol of two serpents facing each other) in buildings in Amman and Jerusalem to guarantee health or healing. The figure of the serpent, the sacred feminine (or the figure of the goddess) and the garden are deeply intertwined in the theology of several peoples in ancient Middle East.

Apart from archaeological artifacts, this connection between the serpent, the sacred feminine (the figure of the goddess) and the garden can still be found in language as remarks theology Professor PHEME PERKINS: “the strongest arguments for a connection between Gnostic mythologies and a Palestinian environment are linguistic” (22). In fact, upon linguistic and historical research, the story of the Garden of Eden seems to be a story about the appreciation of the sacred feminine (goddess) and knowledge. Scholarly research by many linguists and historians of ancient Israel seems to have reached a consensus when it comes to interpreting Eve’s name as coming from the Hebrew root *hwy* which means “snake” in some Semitic languages other than Hebrew: Professor PHEME PERKINS remarks that “the puns on the name Eve (*hwh*) allude to the cognate terms “snake” (*hwy*) and

“instructor” (*hwh* or *mhwh*)” (22) and, similarly, specialized in Biblical Studies and Associate Professor of Religion and Humanities Shawna Dolansky also notes that “a widely accepted derivation for Eve’s name, first suggested in the Talmud, is from the root *hwy*, cognate to Old Aramaic *hwh*, later Aramaic *hewya* and Arabic *hayya*: all words for “snake”” (18-19). Artifacts found support the association between trees, femininity and serpents until, at least, Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550-1200 B.C.) as exemplified by the cult of Asherah. Asherah is the wife of El, the God of Canaanite theology but Asherah is venerated throughout all Middle East (particularly in 7th century B.C.) and among Jewish people existing written records that mention an Asherah pole in front of Solomon’s Temple. This goddess is represented by trees or wooden poles (stylized trees), sometimes with a snake, and associated with fertility and the role of women in creating and maintaining life. Because the goddess has power over vegetation and life its devotees worship in natural settings and gardens. They represent the goddess through gardens of crops sanctuaries and outside Jerusalem this cult is often celebrated in a natural setting, and the wood pole is replaced by a living tree. It is also relevant, considering the linguistic interpretation of “Eve” and the fact that Asherah is associated with trees and crop gardens, that, as the research of Professor of Religion Susan Ackerman reveals, Asherah is called “lady of the serpent” on Sinai inscriptions dated from the second millennium B.C..

The Hebrew Bible has been the subject of linguistic study in order to determine if “Asherah” is a mere object of cult or is referred to as the sacred feminine principle counterpart to Yahweh with most scholars agreeing with the latter. In the Hebrew Bible the word “Asherah” is applied to a kind of wooden object, a grove, a sanctuary and a tree. While there are scholars such as André Lemaire (who defends it refers to a living tree) and Lipinski,

who interprets Asherah as referring to the equivalent term in Aramaic, Phoenician and Akkadian meaning of sanctuary, most scholars (notably Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge University John Adley Emerton, and Old Testament scholar John Day) are consensual in interpreting “Asherah” as a goddess. Both Emerton and Day defend that, rather than a shrine, “Asherah” refers to the goddess either directly or to her symbol and, more specifically, Day believes that Asherah is considered the mother of the gods in Ancient Israel. As a result of their research on translations of the original texts, linguistic analysis, and study of the iconography of Asherah, many of today’s scholars believe Asherah is intrinsically linked with Jewish theology. Such is the case of Judith Hadley who concludes that there seems to be evidence that “Asherah was an intimate part of the Yahwistic cult” (Hadley 208). In fact, in the Hebrew Bible there are over forty mentions of Asherah, either symbolized by a tree (1 Kings 16:33; 2 Kings 13:6; 2 Kings 21:2-7; Jer. 17:2; Deut. 16:21) or references to goddess Asherah (Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 15:13; 1 Kings 18:19) but these references have a seemingly negative tone. Asherah is referred to as a foreign influence of other people’s theology (such as the Canaanites) in Hebrew theology even though modern scholars recognize that many of the inhabitants of Israel and Judah seem to have originated from Canaanites whose cultural identity changes throughout time merging with the Jewish communities. Goddess Asherah seems to have been a victim of politico-religious reforms based on the desire of Jewish leaders to detach themselves from other neighboring peoples. Scholars also consider that the cult of Asherah is probably a victim of the consolidating of priestly powers. Hence, around 620 A.D. Josiah, king of Judah (the Israelite kingdom of the south), starts a religious reform that leads to the symbol of the goddess being taken from the Temple and burned. With the Persian rule of the territory after the fall of Babylon, the Temple

priests want to consolidate religious unity and extirpate anything that could have once been seen as having a different origin. From then on Yahweh is the only accepted religious figure of devotion and, although for some time after many remain devout to Asherah, the cult and knowledge of the cult fades with time.

When analyzing how the symbolism of the serpent is conveyed in the Old Testament, Charlesworth reveals that the negative characterization of the serpent “causes a misreading and a misinterpretation of New Testament Passages” (367) and concludes that it is a mere construct decided by the Roman Catholic Church in its first council: “the time of the first Council of the Church – at Nicea in 325 A.D. – seems to be a barrier that separates a period when the serpent was predominantly a positive symbol from one in which it is almost always a negative symbol” (367). It is this perspective of appreciation of knowledge, common before the appearance of the Roman Catholic Church that can be detected in the story of the Garden of Eden after a reading that considers this cultural context. Such a reading gives the story a very positive and completely opposite meaning to the one later imposed by the Roman Catholic Church that has linked the story of the Garden of Eden with sin and the fall of man and has given a negative connotation to *choice* (*haeresis* or *heresy*) instating instead a blind obedience to Church hierarchy.

2.1.4. Roman Catholic Church

In early Christianity, before Constantine I determines the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church, varied views are more easily accepted and it is not uncommon for people to “design” their religious practice according to individual beliefs. For example, it is possible for a person to identify with some aspects of Egyptian mythology, other aspects of a Greek

philosophical school and aspects of Hebrew theology. At the beginning of the first century, early Christian sects are Jewish sects that believe in Jesus as the Messiah and his teachings and any non Jewish people who want to join early Christian sects are to convert to Judaism. They are increasingly persecuted by the Romans who rule Judea at the time and see them as Jewish insurrectionists because they follow Jesus' teachings. This is considered subversive by the Romans because Jewish Christians believe in a man that dares to be critical of the religious/political authority: the Jewish Temple's high priests who have political and religious power and who cooperate with the Romans. It is in this panorama that the numbers of early Christians rise exponentially. Emperor Constantine I who, like his predecessors continues to persecute early Christians, realizes that the deep devotion many reveal under torture or before being put to death shows that he will have problems converting and controlling those people by force. Not only that, the number of early Christians is steadily increasing (even after the death of first century Jewish religious leader Jesus of Nazareth) so Constantine I "realized that the traditional worship of the old Roman gods simply did not arouse the kind of commitment that it had in the past . . . [and sees] the potential for Christianity to provide a unifying element for the Roman world that the old imperial cult no longer could offer" (Kidner et al 176). Intending to unify the empire he is emperor of, and in order to better control it, he decides to create the Roman Catholic Church:

[. . .] like his predecessors, Constantine believed that religion could be used to unify the empire, but he also felt that Christianity was a better choice than the imperial cult. If Christian support could be acquired, the organizational structure, standardized doctrine, and public services of the Christian church could be mobilized on behalf of the empire (Kidner et al 182)

In 325 A.D. Constantine I chooses for bishops men favorable to the Roman Empire and convokes the First Council of Nicaea in which the creeds and canons to adopt are established. They go through the strongly rooted traditions of early Christians and Middle Eastern peoples and mold them into the declaration of a Creed (a summary of the new Christian faith) containing what all Christians are expected to believe in and establishes the Roman Catholic Church as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The military hierarchy the Roman empire chooses to rule conquered peoples also comes across in the governing structure of the new Roman Catholic Church as the Nicean council “also adopted for the church an administrative hierarchy based on the Roman model. Each city in each province was placed under the spiritual authority of a bishop and each province under the oversight of a higher-ranking bishop called arch-bishop” (Kidner et all 183). Scholars further note the connection between Roman imperialism and this new Roman Catholic Church when referring to the power of segregation exercised by the state through the church: after Arianism is condemned as heresy by the Church the government has the power to prohibit it, “a prohibited form of Christian belief as defined by church councils and the imperial government” (Kidner et all 183).

While for Gnosticism matters the freedom to make one`s choices in an individual search for knowledge and an individual connection to the divine, for the Roman Catholic Church the only freedom that matters is freedom from what the Church determines to be a sin. Its notion of sin is viewed by many scholars, such as Elaine Pagels, to be a tool of the Roman Catholic Church for enforcing its views because, “by insisting that humanity, ravaged by sin, now lies helplessly in need of outside intervention, [. . .] could not only validate secular power but justify as well the imposition of church authority – by force, if necessary – as

essential for human salvation” (Pagels, *Adam* 125). The Roman Catholic Church creates and promotes the idea that a doctrine or opinion that differs from the standards established by Constantine’s new church is a sin and develops “a few distinctive and powerful rhetorical strategies to argue that they, and they alone, understood the revelation of Christ and interpreted Scripture correctly” (King 23). And to these sins that fall in the category of having a different perspective to the one imposed by Roman rule, the Roman Catholic Church as named “heresies”. From the Greek word αἵρεσις (*haeresis*), which originally means overall *choice* or choice of a school of thought or philosophical sect. Heretic (*hairetikos*) originally means “able to choose”. The term has been purposefully charged with a negative connotation that still remains. Scholar Marcel Simon explains that originally heresy does not have a value judgement and it simply has the etymological meaning of *choice*: “in principle, they [heresies/choices] are neither good nor bad, since there existed no universally recognized criterion of authority by which to classify them in two opposing categories and to distinguish truth from error” (104). The freedom of individual choice proves to go against the political aspirations of Roman Emperor Constantine I as individual choices can oppose the conformity and compliance with Roman rule. At this point (first two centuries A.D.) the term *heresy* (choice) is transformed into a nefarious non conformity with the established religious beliefs, an opposition to what is correct according to the authoritative norm of Roman Catholicism. As the Roman Catholic Church establishes itself as the ecclesiastical authority, it appropriates the term and gives heresy a negative and pejorative connotation that lingers to the present day:

[. . .] the representation of heresy as a general and timeless notion became such a powerful tool in this cause [the consolidation of the Roman

Catholic Church], that merely invoking it was sufficient to produce reprobation and exclusion. [. . .] Their tenacity demonstrates the success of Christian rhetoric in dominating the politics of religious identity up to our own day. Rather than assume that such categories represent historical givens, we need to ask how they were formed, what work they did, in whose interests they operated, and what was at stake. (King 22)

From the original meaning of choice, heresy is now commonly defined as in the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus: as the “(act of having) an opinion or belief that is the opposite of or against what is the official or popular opinion, or an action that shows that you have no respect for the official opinion” (*dictionary.cambridge.org*). Or, as defined by the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, as “a belief opposed to the official belief of a church and that is considered wrong, or the condition of having such beliefs” (*dictionary.cambridge.org*). The generalized use and meaning of the word is still the negative one created by the Roman Catholic Church in order to make people conform to the dogmas of the Roman Catholic theology. Unlike the Gnostic texts that refer to the concepts of illusion versus enlightenment, the Roman Catholic Church institutionalizes the concepts of sin and repentance and heresy is a sin one must repent of. *Haeresis* (choice), or the choice of an individual path, is no longer accepted under the domination of Roman imperialist culture. From the fourth century on, as the Roman Catholic Church increasingly establishes its power, the Gnostic perspective of an individual connection with God without the need for mediation by an institutionalized church is seen as a threat and the Roman Catholic Church progressively intensifies the persecution and burning of people and books alike. The Roman Catholic Church as the mediator between people and God takes upon itself the monopoly of

conveying to people how to obey God in order to reach salvation and also to punish those who disobey. From then on the only meaning accepted for the story of the Garden of Eden is that it is a story of disobedience with the message that not obeying God leads to punishment.

2.1.5. Garden of Eden

While scholars such as A. R. Millard favour the view that, etymologically, the word *Eden* comes from the Semitic root *'dn* (meaning “lush”, “abundant” or “fruitful”) it is highly probable this root is a linguistic adaptation of Sumerian words that have been taken by Akkadian language and later on borrowed by Semitic languages including Hebrew. According to most scholarly research, and following Professor Jan N. Bremmer, this study recognises that Garden of Eden (also known as Paradise), etymologically, comes from the Sumerian *edin* (for Eden) plus the Persian *pari-daeza* which gives rise to the meaning of garden. The oldest reference to the Garden of Eden is the Sumerian myth of the Garden of the Gods (Sumerian paradise) which is later adopted by Babylonians when they conquer Sumer. The Sumerian *edin* (meaning “plain” or “steppe”) is borrowed by the Akkadian empire (which rules Mesopotamia after the Sumerian civilization) as *edinnu*. The Persian *pari-daeza* (meaning enclosure) is formed from *pairi* (around) and *diz* (to make a wall). The linguistic term and the concept enter Jewish culture, at the latest, in 539 B.C. when Persia conquers Jerusalem. The term is adopted in New Babilonian as *pardesu* and into Late Biblical Hebrew as *prds* as it starts to mean garden or orchard because many Jews raise walls to protect small crops. In fact, in Hebrew the connection between the concept of garden and an enclosed area, a walled garden, is preserved etymologically because the word used for garden, *gan* (masculine noun) or *gannah* (feminine noun), comes from the

root *ganan* meaning to surround or to defend. The garden comes to symbolize a place where all the good things men need (such as food, water, shade) are surrounded by walls, enclosed, protected from the outside. It reappears in the literature of the Middle Ages as *Hortus Conclusus*, a Latin name with the same literal meaning of enclosed garden that also maintains the same figurative meaning. The enclosed garden is a place of duality as it exists in opposition to a space outside that is its contradictory because it is never as good. A metaphor for things enclosed in secrecy (such as *gnosis*), it resurfaces in literature as the perfect metaphor to use when addressing subjects of importance in a veiled way.

The story of the Garden of Eden is part of Mesopotamian mythology and common to many civilizations presenting some variations according to the civilization it can be found in. However, of further importance than all these lesser variations are the two main readings of the story of the Garden of Eden: one that is pre Roman Catholic Church and another that is the post Roman Catholic Church metanarrative of the creation of man. The latest, and the prevalent interpretation to this day, sees the story of the creation of mankind as a story about sin and disobedience. According to this metanarrative God creates Adam in the Garden of Eden to tend to it and soon after creates Eve out of his rib to be his helper and companion. They are forbidden by God to eat the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil but then Eve is tempted by the snake to eat the fruit and succumbs by not only eating from it but also persuading Adam to eat too. Their disobedience of God's command is a grave sin and the reason why Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden and condemned to a mortal life of hardships toiling the earth. Women, particularly, are to expiate Eve's sin by being submissive to men and suffer through labor. This interpretation of the story has institutionalized the idea that, because of Eve, from then on all mankind is

born with the original sin and must not disobey the Church's rules (or God's rules as the Church claims to be the intermediary and representant of God on earth) to have the opportunity to be saved.

From the beginning of its creation up until late nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church clergy openly uses Eve's actions as the example that women are to be submissive to men because they have a natural penchant for sin and betrayal or a facility to become instruments of the devil. Such is the example of Saint Augustine (354 to 430 A.D.), one of the most important theologians of the first centuries of the Roman Catholic Church, who states: "what difference does it make whether it is in a wife or in a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman" (Letter, 169). Also Tertullian (c. 155 A.D. – c. 220 A.D.), who is considered the founder of Western theology or the father of Latin Christianity, speaks passionately both against heresy and Christian Gnosticism and on the importance of maintaining the belief that all women are sinners. His distaste for heresy and Christian Gnosticism is based on the fact that he wants to replace the Gnostic individual connection to the divine with the following of the orthodox teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that has people relying on priests to intermediate their connection to the divine. In his foundational writings Tertullian alludes to the metanarrative of the Garden of Eden in his explanation that women are to forever expiate their sinful nature:

you would have dressed in mourning garments and even neglected your exterior, acting the part of mourning and repentant Eve in order to expiate more fully by all sorts of penitential garb that which woman derives from Eve – the ignomy, I mean, of original sin and the odium of being the cause of the fall of the human race. In sorrow and anxiety, you will bring forth, O woman,

and you are subject to your husband, and he is your master. Do you not believe that you are an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on even in our times and so it is necessary that the guilt should live on, also. You are the one who opened the door to the Devil [. . .] you are the one who persuaded he whom the Devil was not strong enough to attack. All too easily you destroyed the image of God, man (78)

It is this version of the story of the Garden of Eden (in which the woman bears the guilt of the fall of mankind), more specifically the part when God questions Adam and Eve to ascertain their guilt, that the inquisition presents as validation for their “inquiries” (torture) of anyone suspect of dissent. In her research of the motives for the Inquisition, “The Spiritual Foundations of Christian Heresy Inquisitions”, Christine Caldwell Ames initiates her introduction by noting that according to inquisitor Luis de Páramo the events in the Garden of Eden lay the foundation for the inquisitory way in which dissent should be dealt with: “according to Páramo, God’s queries to Adam and Eve about apple-eating and figleaf-wearing were a paradigm for all trials investigating errant belief and behavior” (19).

Yet, this interpretation of the Garden of Eden story that prevails in present theology and popular culture is the complete opposite of an earlier one in which there is no sin in eating from the tree nor there is a fall of mankind. There is no mentioning or implying that man has sinned and, hence fallen, in the creation story of ancient Jews (the writers of the Old Testament which is the source of the story for Christianity) or early Christian Gnostic sects. As in the words of Ziony Zevit: “what is not reflected in the Hebrew Bible and what was not known in ancient Israel was a Garden story that expressed the myth of a fall” (259). The creation myth of early Christian and Jewish Gnostic sects is, despite some variations, a story

about knowledge: how dangerous it can be and how it has served some to entrap mankind in this world, or how knowledge is helpful in setting man free from the illusions of the material world. For example, in *The Secret Book of John*, God, who is called *the One*, conceives a being out of itself: Barbelo, the first aeon, or a purely spiritual being. Referred to as female in the *Book of John* and in gnostic scriptures as an androgynous being, she asks that *the One* create five other aeons: Thought or mind, Foreknowledge, Incorruptibility, Life Eternal, and Truth. *The One* creates four entities to rule the four antechambers of the spiritual realm and over the three aeons in each chamber: the entity Harmozel (aeons are grace, truth, and form), the entity Oroiael (aeons are insight, perception, and memory), the entity Daveithai (aeons are understanding, love and idea), and the fourth entity is Eleleth (aeons are perfection, peace, and sophia). Sophia is the last aeon created and she has a rebel streak and wants to create, so, ignoring the wishes of *The One*, she conceives without a partner and gives birth to Yaldabaoth. The creator of this material world, Yaldabaoth, is also known as Sakla (Aramaic for “fool”) and Samael (“blind god”) because he declares he is the only god and that there is no other god but him. Yaldabaoth, and the angels he has created, create humanity and Adam. But in this interpretation of the creation myth it already exists an Adam in a higher spiritual realm and Yaldabaoth’s creation of Adam is somewhat a lower copy of a higher being. Adam is not alive yet and Sophia decides to correct her error of having given such power to a lower being such as Yaldabaoth and tells her son to breath into Adam’s face to give him life. As he did, Adam absorbs power from Yaldabaoth becoming enlightened. However, when Yaldabaoth and his angels realize Adam is enlightened and does not possess evil as they do, Yaldabaoth throws Adam into the lowest part of the material realm and makes him mortal. The story goes

on to convey that, despite being powerless in the realm ruled by Yaldabaoth, Adam still has the spark of enlightened insight in him.

Also in *The Secret Book of John*, Christ tells John that He himself has told Adam to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because He knows that Yaldabaoth is trying to take the power from Adam so that Adam would not have knowledge of the divine. Yaldabaoth forces Adam and Eve to drink the waters of the river Lethe to make them forget their divine origin but Christ comes into this world to take away the illusions Yaldabaoth wants you to believe in, the illusions of the material world. The role of Eve has also a completely different interpretation in Gnostic scriptures such as the case of the tractate “On the Origin of the World (II, 5 and XIII, 2)” which equates Eve to life, “(the Life)-Eve” (173) or to power for she “existed as a power” (173). In the Gnostic perspective of the Garden of Eden the snake and the knowledge it imparts are quite positive. Such an example is the *Gospel of Truth*, a manuscript part of the Codex IX of the Nag Hammadi Library with Gnostic manuscripts from the third and fourth centuries, which reveals the story of the Garden of Eden from the perspective of the serpent. It describes the serpent as a divine and wise creature that gives knowledge to Adam and Eve.

For the Gnostics, the fact that Eve receives knowledge first and then passes it on to Adam is a positive event that brings them the enlightenment necessary to see through the illusions created by the god of the material world. While the Roman Catholic Church depicts women as sinners who are to be punished and submissive to men, Gnostics depict Eve as a feminine power that is the facilitator of (self) knowledge that leads to spiritual awakening. For Gnostics it is this spiritual awoken state that really is to be alive:

Sophia [literally, wisdom] sent Zoe [literally, life], her daughter, who is called Eve, as an instructor to raise up Adam . . . When Eve saw Adam cast down, she pitied him, and said, “Adam, live! Rise up upon the earth!” Immediately her word became a deed. For when Adam rose up, immediately he opened his eyes. When he saw her, he said, “You will be called ‘the mother of the living,’ because you are the one who gave me life. (Pagels, *Gospels* 30)

Not only does no Gnostic text connect Eve with sin, but most Gnostic texts depict Adam and Eve as a metaphor for the psyche, or soul, (Adam) and the higher principle (Eve):

Gnostic authors loved to tell with many variations, the story of Eve, that elusive spiritual intelligence: how she first emerged with Adam and awakened him, the soul, to awareness of its spiritual nature; how she encountered resistance, was misunderstood, attacked, and mistaken for what she was not; and how she finally joined Adam in marriage, so to speak (Pagels, *Adam* 61)

The Gnostic reading of the Garden of Eden shows this story as a metaphor for the Gnostic tenets of dualism (as the garden presents an enclosed space that opposes inside/outside), of the belief that the entity that creates the material world is not divine (and therefore can be challenged or contested as Eve did by choosing to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, or to know) and the belief in salvation through knowledge because only knowing that the creator of the material world is not the divine God can humans see past the illusions created to entrap them and realize that they are ultimately a spiritual being with a divine spark. The strong connection between the givers of knowledge and the symbology of the Garden of Eden, the place where knowledge is firstly given to mankind, leads to the garden becoming symbolic

of knowledge. Many scholars, such as James Charlesworth, see as relevant the fact that in the Fourth Evangelist, Joseph (Jesus' father) and Nicodemus take Jesus' body and lay it in a garden and that the first appearance of Jesus after resurrection takes place in a garden, "the mythical abode of the life-giving, perceptive, or guardian serpent, as we have seen in Gilgamesh, the Eden Story, and the Hesperides" (Charlesworth 401). For the Gnostic interpretation of the Garden of Eden story after eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge Adam and Eve discover that, like the serpent has said, they are like God, they have knowledge, and, although from then on they suffer the consequences of their own choices, they are from then on able to choose for themselves. All the examples of texts and scholarly research approached reveal an underlying Gnostic perspective of valuing spiritual knowledge (which allows man to achieve salvation) and valuing the giver of such knowledge, that is common to many Jewish sects and early Christians that has once given the story of the Garden of Eden a completely different meaning to the one that is generalized today.

2.1.6. Conclusion

Concluding, this chapter intends to clarify the most relevant terms used in this research. When researching about the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden, how the authors use it in their work, it is necessary to further explain that this story, as most westerners know it today, is a metanarrative created by the Roman Catholic Church. The definition of "metanarrative" is fundamental because it explains how grand narratives come to be and, following the tone of this research, the interests that might exist behind it. Following the theoretical approach chosen it is necessary to define "metanarrative" in order to clearly identify how, in each novel, these grand, explanatory narratives can be a tool of

power structures to legitimize knowledge that promotes and normalizes determined interests. Also, and in order to better understand how the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden is created, it is then necessary to define “Roman Catholic Church”. This definition will help clarify why its creation by a Roman emperor with the purpose of unifying peoples under Roman rule changes the previous meaning of the story of the Garden of Eden into a story (a metanarrative) about obedience and sin. Consequently, the present section has to include the meanings of “Gnosticism” and “Garden of Eden”. Both terms are interconnected as before the Roman Catholic Church is created and the first council in which is determined the new meaning of the story of the Garden of Eden (council of Nicea), the Garden of Eden is interpreted as a Gnostic positive, sin-free story. These definitions are essential to clarify the reading of the following sections of this research, particularly the ones concerning the analysis of the novels, which explore subjects like references to Gnosticism, the Garden of Eden or the critique of metanarratives.

3. Literature Review

3.1.1. Introduction

This chapter documents the most relevant previous research on the subjects of interest for the present research, hence, it will not only focus on studies about the subject of the Garden of Eden, but will also address the most significant lines of investigation scholars have used to approach the three novels that are the subject of this study: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. The first section consists of an explanation of the scholarly research made on the story of the Garden of Eden and, considering the enormous volume of research on the subject (particularly in the field of religious studies), the choice has been made to address the main lines of research which are divided in linguistic studies, ecocriticism, feminist and gender studies. Furthermore, given that Gnostic traits in the story put forward a dissenting view from the institutionalized interpretation of the last millennia, there is also included in the literature review relevant research on Gnostic traits in the Garden of Eden story. After the literature review on the story of the Garden of Eden the following sections follow a chronological order and focus on the most relevant lines of scholarly research about each novel: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is followed by the literature review of *Midnight's Children* and, lastly, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*.

3.1.2. Literature Review of the Garden of Eden

Critical discussions about the story of the Garden of Eden are proficuous in academic and theological contexts and an analysis of the overall relevant critical literature goes well beyond the limits of this thesis. Hence, this section gives an overview of the main lines of research that are prevalent: linguistic studies, ecocriticism, and feminist and gender studies. Lastly, due to their relevance, some scholarly studies into Gnostic traits in the Garden of Eden story will be addressed. Linguistic analysis of Garden story encompasses a wide and interesting range of perspectives from research on what, if anything, has been changed in the translation from Hebrew into Greek or English, to analysis of the narration. Scholar Robert D. Holmstedt focuses his linguistic analysis on the initial sentence of Genesis (which starts by explaining what God creates in the beginning) and arguments that this beginning of the Genesis narrative has been repeated countless times because, according to the syntax of the verse, it is not a unique event. Holmstedt puts forward a linguistic reading that defends that there are more "beginings" in God's creation of the world of which the one described in the Garden of Eden is just a stage. Ellen van Wolde's work *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11* specifically addresses the Garden of Eden part of Genesis and notes how a strong connection between human beings (represented by Adam and Eve) and the hearth is explicit in the text. She notes how, when the distinction between man and woman is not linguistically explicit, the plural forms of the verbs reveal that man and woman are mostly considered a unit. The semantic similarity between the words for man and woman in Hebrew seems to represent both similarity and difference or unity and distinction in terms of gender. Her analysis of the Hebrew terms for *naked* and for the word that dominates the following verse, *shrewd* (referring to the snake)

concludes that there is a connection between *shrewd* (or knowing) and naked represented in the storyline as man becomes aware when naked.

The role of the narrator in the story of the Garden of Eden is also the focus of study by some scholars such as Hugh White who, in *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis*, analyses how the narrator uses representative language and the third person to describe the creation of the Garden and mankind. According to White the symbolic terminology such as the name of the tree (tree of knowledge of good and evil) is an example of symbolism which the author sees as addressing something that lacks in the human being. White argues that the frequent use of this conceptual language serves the narrator's purpose of creating an ideological foundation that is a closed viewpoint that the characters have so interiorized that they cannot escape. The motif of trees, fruit trees, and illegitimate sex are, according to the research of Helen Phillips, common to English and French medieval texts that reveal a connection between the garden of the Song of Songs, the fourth book of the Hebrew bible (the Old Testament), and the Garden of Eden.

In her linguistic analysis *The Story Teller and the Garden of Eden*, lecturer of Hebrew Bible in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Johns Hopkins University, Ellen Robbins researches the original Hebrew language and syntax when compared with the subsequent translations and concludes that many of the misinterpretations of what is written in the Old Testament is the result of a bad translation. Robbins stresses the fact that the Storyteller would be distraught that "the ambiguities that he left in the story would provide the occasion for radical misreading" (Robbins 144). According to her reading the Storyteller's narrative does not reveal a patriarchal speech and whenever he seems to do so it is as a way to be critical of patriarchy. For Robbins one of the tools of the Storyteller in

order to achieve his/her social critique is the use of irony such as the irony that for going against God's command they would be expelled, punished, but they also become like God, or the irony that God does not approve Adam and Eve being like God yet God is portrayed in human terms. Regarding the snake she challenges the interpretation of it as having been originally written as something evil and explains that the word used to describe the snake (*arûm*) can be simply interpreted as judicious, as forming correct opinions and having discernment.

Considering the linguistic aspects and the overall writing of the nostalgia for an earthly paradise in Western texts from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, French historian specialized on the history of Christianity, Jean Delumeau finds these texts are written to portray the garden of paradise as a physical place. He explores how, for millenia (especially during Middle Age), most writers refer to the Garden of Eden as paradise and many in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries believe it is an historical place. For Delumeau the texts are written to stress the Christian belief in the Garden of Eden as an earthly paradise and a place one would wait for the resurrection and final judgment. He remarks that while in the sixteenth century with the increase of sea voyages the stories about paradisiac islands out of reach of most and only glimpsed by sea travelers, the earthly paradise assumes the geography of an island and by the time of the Enlightenment the Garden of Eden is not written as an earthly option but as a literary manifestation of the nostalgia of the initial paradise.

Similarly, the attention given to how the Garden of Eden is written as a physical space also extends to the following major line of scholarly research of the Garden of Eden: ecocriticism. Ecocriticism pays special attention to how the text treats the subject of nature

and the interaction between the natural world of the Garden of Eden and its animals and the first man and woman. Such is the case of Lynn White's ecocritical perspective of the story of the Garden of Eden first published in 1967 and viewed as a foundational essay on the subject of ecocriticism. In "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" White's view is that the environmental problems are rooted in the anthropocentric ideology expressed in the story of the Garden of Eden and reinforced by Christianity:

man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image. (L. White 9)

According to Lynn White this belief that man is superior and has a God given right to rule the natural world and subjugate animals has legitimized throughout time the ill treatment of animals and the destructive misuse of the natural world. Backing Lynn White's work is 2009 *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics* by biblical scholar Hilary Marlow. Studying the works of the biblical prophets Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah, Marlow follows Lynn White's view that the anthropocentric perspective in the Garden of Eden story has been used to fundament the exploitation of the natural world. She initiates her work by reflecting on the definition of nature for Christian theology only to reach the same conclusion as Lynn White. So, in order to induce some reflection and initiate change, she notes that the lack of studies of nature in the creation/fall narrative (and general Bible) from an ecocritical perspective should be addressed.

Contrarily, the ecological reading Mark G. Brett makes in his “Earthing the Human in Genesis 1-3” essay published in 2000 argues that the text does not depict a hierarchical relation between mankind and other animals. He presents as proof the fact that both man and other animals are created from the ground and that, before the creation of the woman to help Adam there might have probably been an animal created or given to Adam to be his helper. In the naming of the animals by man the Brett sees a way for the author of the text to enumerate the variety of beings created and not an act of dominion by man. According to Brett’s perspective the text dates to the period Jewish people are colonized by the Persian empire, hence the author or editor(s) of Genesis merely intends to criticize colonial authority by satirizing the incapability of man, who believes himself to be in charge, to dominate all other created creatures. Another, yet different, ecocritical view of the Garden of Eden which combines ecocriticism and feminism, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* by Carolyn Merchant is published in 2013. In her perspective, since the time in Eden to the present day, there are two historical narratives she calls “Recovery Narratives” (Merchant 11) that explain the path of man from Eden to the present. The first is the Garden of Eden narrative: man is expelled from the Garden but “can be redeemed through Christianity” (Merchant 11) or man can recreate the Garden of Eden on Earth through the scientific advances that give man the ability to control the Earth. The second narrative corresponds to the story of the decline of the unpolluted natural world in which Adam and Eve live in harmony into a world extremely polluted and in which there is no equality between genders. Still, Merchant believes that, because of the direct correlation between woman and nature “the end result is a poorer state of both nature and human nature. The valence of woman is bad; the end valence of nature is bad” (Merchant

12) a recovery is possible through positive environmental actions and feminists making their voices heard. Also approaching the association between the determination of gender roles and the natural world is Arthur Walker-Jones. Walker-Jones begins his work in “Eden for Cyborgs: Ecocriticism and Genesis 2-3” by explaining the importance Donna Haraway’s 1985 article “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” has for the study of the Bible. She defends that contemporary origin stories (she refers to as Eden stories) often reinforce a dualist perspective that feminists fight against and explains that there are figures that subvert these dualisms such as the figure of the cyborg. A figure that originates in stories of how capitalism and technology destroy the Earth, this figure can also be used to subvert this because it is a figure that blurs boundaries. In his article Walker-Jones proposes that the snake of the Garden of Eden is such a figure as it blurs the boundary between male and female and the boundary between humanity and nature. Walker-Jones’ reading subverts the patriarchal and anthropocentric interpretations of the story of the Garden of Eden.

Because the woman is one of the main characters in this story, feminist criticism of the Old Testament has produced readings that research the role of the woman in the creation narrative. Her association with sin and her, apparently, submissive status in relation to the man are the focus of the interest of many scholars. In her foundational 1978 work *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Phyllis Trible argues that Genesis permits interpreting God as both male and female or as sexually undifferentiated (there are sections where God is described using feminine imagery) and that it is only with the creation of Eve as Adam’s companion that firstly appear the words *man* and *woman*. Trible’s logic is that although Adam is created from the ground he is not expected to be submissive to the Earth, hence

Eve who is created from Adam is also not expected to be submissive to him but to be an equal companion. She bases herself on this perspective to defend that women are equal to men and that people have internalized an erroneous meaning of the creation story: “this misogynous reading has acquired a status of canonicity so that those who deplore and those who applaud the story both agree upon its meaning” (Trible 73). She believes the text itself is not sexist but the subsequent translations and interpretations are and she gives the example of when the man is standing by the side of Eve when she is talking with the snake. Trible notes the text makes no remarks on his thought process and he passively accepts what he is told or given and seems not to have much critical capacity: “if the woman is intelligent, sensitive, and ingenious, the man is passive, brutish, and inept” (Trible 113). Similar perspective has cultural theorist and Professor Emerita in Literary Theory Mieke Bal who states that, although one would expect the supposedly egalitarian Western society of today to have changed from the characteristically misogynist societies of the past, most readings of the Genesis story (particularly the creation of Eve) have remained mostly unchanged. For Bal the origin of the first woman as being below the first man and having a morally questionable character leads to the female body being written and interpreted in a negative manner she compares resorting to Freudianism “the boy’s discovery that the idealized and monopolized mother is a sexual, and, hence, publicly available being, inspires the little future patriarch with contempt for her as a moral being” (Bal 155). Bal interprets the description of the creation of Eve as “taken from” (Bal 156) as “differentiated from” (Bal 156) in the sense of differentiation of the sexes that are from then on to be unified by sexuality and not as proof that the woman is somewhat less than the first human created who happens to be the man. Also according to her interpretation the text reveals a positive

association between the woman and knowledge as “‘the woman saw that good was the tree’” (Bal 165) and that in “the Hebrew of the Bible, the verb ‘to see’ has a strong connotation of truth: to see is to have insight into what really is, behind false appearances or incomplete information” (Bal 165). For the theorist, the patriarchal views of Eve in the creation myth as submissive and sinful are based on the initial construct of the character of Eve as a mere sexless creature made from the earth with no name or agency, a “character-to-be” (Bal 156), and the Western cut between body and soul that permits Eve to be interpreted as an alluring body but an evil soul prone to corrupting man. Bal argues that the creation of the myth of male superiority is merely based on the interpretation of another myth which is the story of the Garden of Eden itself. When researching the role of Eve, biblical scholar Ziony Zevit notices that it is misinterpreted: “the conversation with the snake is often labeled “The Temptation of Eve” or “The Seduction of Eve.” Such loaded terms are inappropriate, since most of what took place occurred within Hawwa’s head as she processed cognitive information” (170). He remarks that, unlike Eve, it is only after eating from the fruit that Adam is capable of abstract thought.

Another scholar, Ronald Simkins, researches the construct of gender by ancient Israelites and how their understanding of gender is expressed in the creation myth through references to agriculture and procreation that explain the patriarchal readings of the story of the Garden of Eden. In his 1998 essay “Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth” Simkins researches the use of agriculture as a metaphor for procreation and the creation of man (which he believes comes from the Mesopotamian myths of man being made out of the soil) and concludes that the perspective of the text is not a patriarchal one. In the text man is created from the soil to take care of the Garden and work its soil and is

just as dependent of women to be born, hence he names the woman Eve (hawwa: giver of life): “the woman’s relationship to her husband is analogous to the man’s relationship to the arable land. Although the man comes from the land, the arable land is dependent upon the man to bring forth vegetation” (Simkins 49). Simkins acknowledges that, while sex is a biologic difference, gender is a cultural construction which can easily lead to asymmetries between genders. According to this study, in ancient Israel gender is based on reproductive biological differences (women are the only ones capable of birthing another human being) which the author notes does not explain the text’s description of the man as a farmer or being superior to the woman. The study concludes that man’s role as a farmer and the woman’s role as a mother is the ancient Israelites’ interpretation of gender roles and that Adam and Eve are not cursed but told the implications of becoming knowledgeable about the world and themselves as sexual creatures: toiling the earth for sustenance and suffering to give birth/procreate.

Just as Simkins research that reveals the text is not fundamentally patriarchal, some scholars consider that a patriarchal interpretation is used to exert control such as Gale Yee’s study of the Old Testament that reveals the text of Genesis as a means of social control. President of the Society of Biblical Literature and researcher of the Hebrew Bible, scholar Gale A. Yee chooses a Marxist approach to the male-female relation in Genesis. Yee sees the male-female dynamic of the Garden of Eden as a subterfuge to address class relations because the conflicting way genders are written in Genesis is the result of class conflicts stemming from the social change from the tribal period to the monarchical period when social classes become more distinct. For Yee the creation story is the product of an authority trying to assert its will through the fear of punishment for disobeying.

A yet different perspective within gender studies is brought forward in Dennis Olson's "Untying the Knot? Masculinity, Violence, and the Creation-Fall Story of Genesis 2-4" in which the Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament Theology and Chair of the Biblical Studies Department at Princeton Theological Seminary researches the image of masculinity in the story of the Garden of Eden in light of recent social sciences research on masculinity. He explains that definitions of masculinity (what is part of being a man and how a man should act) are diverse as they change according to cultures or even cultural milieux or historical contexts and explores the diverse masculinities of the first man: he is subservient, a servant of God that is to work the soil and take care of the Garden, he is also a God-like co-creator because he names the animals, a task the author underlines as of the utmost importance in ancient biblical world as the name defines the creature, and Adam is also passive as God decides he should have a companion and puts man to sleep in order to create Eve. In his analysis of the dialogue that occurs at the time of the fall, or the temptation and sin of Eve, Olson concludes that the back and forth movement between man and woman (in the first verses 1-7 it is Eve who speaks and takes action while Adam is a passive and silent bystander, on verse 8 both are in an equal situation hiding from God and feeling ashamed, and next verses 9-19 God addresses Adam first and Eve next followed by the serpent and the woman and the man again) means that the depiction of masculinity in Genesis involves either taking the initiative to speak or allow someone else to be heard. Olson then proceeds further than the section of the expulsion from the Garden and analyses the violence between the sons of Adam and Eve (the killing of Abel by Cain) in order to argue that the connection commonly made between violence and masculinity (biological predisposition towards violence) only leads to violent crime and is not

supported by current studies which show that masculinity has no relation with biological markers of innate violence such as hormones.

Apart from these major lines of research of the story of the Garden of Eden (linguistic studies, ecocriticism, and feminist and gender studies) it is also relevant for the present work to present an overview of scholarly research that argues that the creation story is not about the original sin but about knowledge. Hence, the following research presents the characteristics these scholars believe make the story of the Garden of Eden a Gnostic story with the overall message that knowledge is positive. For many scholars, such as Mark S. Smith (*The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible*), the story of the Garden of Eden is not a story about sin and, if any, one can only see references to sin in Genesis in the story of Cain and Abel. Also, according to James Barr, Old Testament scholar and Oriel Professor of Interpretation of Holy Scripture at the Oxford University, there is no sin attached to Eve's actions and the gaining of knowledge. Barr asserts that the themes are knowledge and immortality (the punishable aspect): Adam and Eve, after having knowledge of good and evil, are about to eat from the tree of life and achieve immortality and that is why they are expelled from Eden. Philosophy Professor and author, Kerry T. Burch emphasizes the malevolent results in civic life of an education based on the story of the Garden of Eden as a story about sin:

as a pedagogical text, the dominant interpretation of the Garden of Eden is a prescription for developing *heteronomous* modes of being; that is, modes of being in which one lives according to rules set by an external authority. The normalization of these cultural codes function to construct identities informed by a readiness to obey, a chronic absence of curiosity, a lack of

passion, and thus a general restriction of both human agency and democratic forms of culture. (Eros Denied 92-93)

According to Burch, whenever this dependency on an exterior authority (promoted by the Augustinian interpretation of the Garden of Eden) becomes internalized it expresses itself as “a chronic absence of curiosity, as a readiness to locate the source of knowledge outside oneself, and as a devaluation of the body and of feminine qualities generally” (*Democracy* 83). Burch also remarks that the Gnostics interpret Eve as a positive symbol of spiritual knowledge and that this Gnostic perspective of the Garden of Eden is valuable because it reveals that the prevailing idea of Eve and sin so ingrained in the West does not correspond to most earlier interpretations of the story: “the dominant but not hegemonic interpretations during the first centuries tended to emphasize the idea that the Book of Genesis in general, and the Garden of Eden in particular, signified moral freedom and responsibility. [. . .] The idea that Eve was a sinister figure had not yet gained wide acceptance” (*Democracy* 82). As an example Burch mentions the Gnostic text *The Secret Book of John* where Eve is referred to in a positive light, as a teacher of mankind and linked to knowledge. Similarly, so does Elaine Pagels conclude that there is a fundamental change in the meaning of the story of the Garden of Eden and that,

for nearly the first four hundred years of our era, Christians regarded *freedom* as the primary message of Genesis: freedom in its many forms, including free will. [. . .] Augustine came to read the story of Adam and Eve very differently than had the majority of his Jewish and Christian predecessors. What they

had read for centuries as a story of human freedom became, in his hands, a story of human bondage. (*Adam* xxii)

Also, in “The Ambivalence of Human Wisdom: Genesis 2-3 as a sapiential text”, Konrad Schmid (who firstly notes that up to the eighties, scholarly literature on the Garden of Eden does not deepen the story’s connection to knowledge) remarks that neither one of the words *sin* nor *fall* appear in Genesis 2-3 and even the identification of the forbidden fruit as an apple is wrong as it comes from a wordplay between the Latin translation word *malum* that can refer to both apple and evil. After analyzing the dialogue between Eve and the serpent, Schmid finds eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge has no connection with the concept of sin. He concludes that the Garden of Eden story represents all humanity and the responsibility that comes with dealing with the consequences of knowledge.

Another relevant study of the Garden of Eden story is the critical reading by Harold Bloom of *The Book of J*, an Old Testament book written between 950 and 900 BCE containing the oldest and most referenced stories of the Bible: the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Bloom defends that the text gives no reason to interpret the snake as an evil creature and notes that when it is described as shrewd it is referring to its intelligence and not that it is shrewdly leading Eve and Adam to commit an evil deed. Regarding the common perception of seeing Adam and Eve in the condition of sinners after eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, Bloom explains that it should be considered as one of the frequent examples of wordplay from the part of the writer of *The Book of J*. This wordplay relies on the similarity between the Hebrew word for being shrewd, *arum*, and the Hebrew words for naked *arom* (singular) or *arummim* (plural) which literally means to be without clothes and is often used to express lack of concealment. So

when the writer of *The Book of J* says that after eating the fruit both Adam and Eve are *naked* they have, in fact, gotten shrewd because they now have knowledge and they do not conceal that they are now knowledgeable. In Bloom's perspective there is no reason to blame Eve for bringing about a grave sin. That is a later creation cemented by the Roman Catholic Church: "normative commentary, particularly Christian exegesis, has made the woman the culprit" (Bloom 182). Bloom is quite critical of the fact that the Old Testament has been, purposefully or not, misread as it has endured "twenty-five hundred years of institutionalized misreading, a misreading central to Western culture and society" (16) and there has been a "long, sad enterprise of revising, censoring, and mutilating J" (22). A woman sinning because of being knowledgeable is not part of this reading and, in fact, here Bloom puts forward his most polemic view of his study of *The Book of J*: he considers the hypothesis that the writer of J, who Bloom considers to have been "barricaded from us by normative moralists and theologians" (16), is a woman. The literary critic and Sterling Professor of the University of Yale uses the pronoun *she* to refer to the author who he believes might be a woman that is part of or close to the royal court of King Solomon and, after an extensive study of Middle Eastern literature of the time, Bloom writes about the author of *The Book of J* that

when we compare J to the other strands in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, or when we compare J to all other extant literature of the ancient Middle East. What is new in J? Where do J's crucial originalities cluster? What is about J's tone, stance, mode of narrative, that was a difference that made a difference? One large area of answer will concern the representation of women as compared with that of men; another will concern irony, which seems to me the element

of style in the Bible that is still most often and most weakly misread, even by the latest-model literary critics of the Hebrew Bible. (10)

Other scholars whose research concludes that the story of the Garden of Eden is a Gnostic story include Orthodox Jewish scholar Alexander Altmann who, in his 1945 essay “The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends”, reviews rabbinic traditional texts for depictions of Adam and concludes that many of the depictions of Adam (such as God reducing Adam’s size or making him fall into a slumber just to prove who is God) are the result of the rabbis feeling threatened by Gnostic mythology in the story of Adam and Eve. Lastly, it seems worth mentioning a study that stresses the connection between the creation story of Genesis and Gnosticism by Religious Studies Professor Peter Lanfer. In *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3:22-24*, Lanfer analyses biblical texts for sections that are remnant of ancient texts and connects the expulsion narrative with the exaltation of knowledge: “for example, Prov. 3:19 exclaims, ‘The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.’ This proverb may be related to the statement in Jer. 10:12 and 51:15 that God ‘established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.’” (68). For Lanfer the story of the Garden of Eden is a story about knowledge.

3.1.3. Literature Review of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Critical approaches to Carroll’s novel, plentiful since its publication, have increased considerably in postmodern times and focus on three main theoretical perspectives: psychoanalysis, cultural/historical studies, and Carroll’s use of language. Psychoanalytical studies include analysis of identity, death and violence, critical perspectives regarding

identity that focus on “Alice as love-object” (K. Leach 190) or, like Hugh Haughton, interpret the fall down the rabbit-hole as an identity crisis metaphor and research how “her adventures test her sense of identity” (194). In “Love and Death in Carroll’s Alices” Donald Rackin interprets Alice’s quest as “a failed search for the warm joy and security of love” (136) and the narrative itself as an act of love and arguments that death, “the approaching, inexorable ‘bedtime’” (143) is always present in Carroll’s writing. Some psychoanalytic studies try to reveal Carroll’s psyche through the way characters are constructed so psychological approaches include psychoanalyzing characters’ symbolism to better understand the two separate identities of the author, research on what “seems to be a connection in Dodgson’s mind between the death of childhood and the development of sex” (Empson 49) or the novel’s depiction of children as nature-like beings. Comparably, Anthony M. E. Goldschmidt applies Freudian theories and sees in Alice entering the Rabbit’s hole and the doors and keys and locks symbols for sex. He characterizes the imagery of Alice in the hallway of doors as a symbolism for coitus. Goldschmidt interprets the little door as representing a little girl, the normal size doors adult women, and the lock and key represent sex. For Goldschmidt this exemplifies Carroll’s apparent repressed sexuality. Other scholars see in Carroll’s work the subject of ego and interpret the novel as an allegory for the growing up process and its development of ego and identity. Such is the case of Phyllis Stowell who sees in Alice a child learning about herself and the world (going through the process of growing up): “like all children, Alice must separate herself from identification with others, develop an ego, become aware of aggression (her own and others’), and learn to tolerate adversity without succumbing to self-pity [. . .] In other words, Alice has to grow up” (5). For Stowell, it is only when the growing process

stabilizes, or only when Alice's body and self image has ceased to change uncontrollably, that she is able to be empowered to deal with the nonsensical world of Wonderland. There is also some research on the psychological dimension of other characters such as psychoanalyst Géza Róheim's study on the behavior of the Dormouse, particularly its way of falling asleep often which is interpreted as a symptom of withdrawal or William Empson's research of the Queen of Hearts as "a symbol of 'uncontrolled animal passion'" (345).

For Phyllis Greenacre the novel is an allegory of the childhood stage when the child's language skills increase more than the motor skills and the child starts to manifest less physically and more linguistically and starts to grasp what is socially permitted of her/him: "about as close a portrayal as can be accomplished in language of that realm in childhood's development when the child is emerging from its primitive state of unreason, to the dawning conception of consequences, order and reason" (418). Lastly, Flair Donglai Shi's original perspective seems worth mentioning as he fundamentals his psychoanalytical reading with elements of postcolonial and historical theory. Donglai Shi explains his belief that the novel is anti-feminist as it reveals Carroll's misogynistic mourning for the loss of innocence of the little girl that becomes corrupted as an adult woman. He also remarks that Carroll makes Alice complying with the ideologies of British imperialism which further oppresses her as a woman. Critics such as Florence Lennon and Richard Kelly also link the psychology of the child with the novel's connection with the Garden of Eden. For Lennon, the garden of the novel is a symbol for the desire the child has to become a grown up, the way the child sees the world of adults, and also the view the adults have of childhood as a paradisiacal state, a: "rich symbol if we call it adult life viewed by a child, or vice versa"

(123). Kelly sees the garden as a metaphor for desire, as the garden represents a nostalgic view of childhood as a state when man knows no malice: “a longing for lost innocence, the Garden of Eden” (18). For Kelly the garden of Wonderland also represents the duality between an Edenic childhood and the sinful and sexual world of adulthood (22). Christine Roth also sees a connection between the garden of Wonderland and a longing for the lost innocence of childhood as Alice longing to get into the garden (which looks marvelous to her unlike the dark hall she finds herself in) mirrors Carroll's own longing for childhood innocence and the golden key she needs to enter the garden recall “the golden colors of childhood in the story's prefatory poem” (29). Similarly, Francesca Arnavas proposes that Carroll explores issues of childhood and innocence as “Alice is at an age still dominated by a “pre-conventional level” of morality” (47). Hence, because she has not reached a mature moral development she still does not grasp the concept of sin as adults do and is free to be openly curious. Arnavas adds that the novel establishes a link with mythology that deals with the subject of curiosity, particularly the story of the Garden of Eden: “a curious girl, a snake, a garden – Alice is a little unpunished Eve” (47).

Cultural studies and bibliographic research have also been two of the most explored lines of scholarly analysis of Carroll's novel and focus on historical influences on the novel or the influence of Carroll's cultural milieu such as his perspective as a mathematician or photographer. Bibliographic research such as Morton Cohen's has focused on historical accounts of Carroll's life, how he starts the novel and his relationship with the Liddells. In “The Unreal Alice,” Karoline Leach researches personal archives and diaries about Carroll's relationship with the Liddell's to confirm if Alice is indeed Carroll's love interest only to conclude that Carroll is not in love with Alice and explains how the perpetuation

of this idea arises. The importance photography has throughout his life is evidenced by researchers like Christopher Hollingsworth and Stephen Monteiro and even the bibliographical facts that support the importance Carroll gives to eating and breathing and his relation to animals (Phyllis Greenacre's "From 'The Character of Dodgson as Revealed in the Writings of Carroll'") are researched. Professor Rackin focuses on the novel's rapidly changing historical context and sees Carroll's use of fantasy as a device to better convey the rapid changes happening in Victorian England. Rackin's study reveals the novel's search for meaning in a time of transformation brought upon by industrialization, capitalism, and religious skepticism. Other critical interpretations extend to Carroll's mathematical/logical skills and include critic Helena Pycior ("At the Intersection of Mathematics and Humor: Lewis Carroll's 'Alices' and Symbolical Algebra") who focuses on the logic and mathematics in Carroll's writing to justify his mathematical genius, or logic driven critic Katleen Blake who applies game theory to Carroll's novel revealing how the novel functions as a game. Lastly, concerning cultural studies, it seems relevant to mention Daniel Binova's "Alice the Child-imperialist and the Games of Wonderland" in which he defends a different and influential interpretation of Alice's adventures as a metaphor for Victorian imperialism. He sees Alice forcing her rules on the creatures she meets as imperialist behavior. Considering Victorian society, Catalina Balinisteanu-Furdu associates the garden with Alice trying to overcome patriarchal enclosures (like the kitchen or the tea party) in a society that makes nineteenth century women feel "oppressed, submitted, trapped" (170). For her, Victorian society is not a safe place for girls so Alice is looking for "an idealized place for safety, comfort, and innocence" (170) a place where she

is not restricted or oppressed, hence, her desire to enter the garden symbolizes her desire to, instead of passive, be active and have the freedom to be opinionated.

Language is also a frequent topic of study. In *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: Bloom's modern critical interpretations*, Harold Bloom concludes that the enigmas and allegories of the novel work to assert "Alice's freedom from her own phantasmagoria" (5), and Winfried Nöth researches semiotic aspects in the novel and argues that the semiotic anomalies make the reader aware of the functioning of signs. Carroll's linguistic subjectivity resonates with postmodern thinkers because the very facts that shape postmodern culture reinforce a reading of the novel's language as subversively subjective. The importance of Carroll's pioneer use of imaginative devices like literary nonsense, "a genre of narrative literature which balances a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of meaning" (Tigges 47), is recognized by Gilles Deleuze, who develops *The Logic of Sense* "by means of an interpretation of the prototypical nonsense books of Lewis Carroll" (Menninghaus 4). In *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, the postmodern philosopher reflects on the concept of meaning and how the nonsense in Carroll's writing works as a language of depth, and Derrida, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, reflects on communication through a study of the animals' dialogues in Carroll's novel. These postmodern thinkers base their foundational texts of postmodern criticism on Carroll's work, which they see as sharing the same subversive nature, and resort to Carroll's nonsense play to explain the indeterminacy and the individual freedom that characterizes postmodernism.

3.1.4. Literature Review of *Midnight's Children*

The treatment of identity and history in *Midnight's Children* and Rushdie's writing style, namely his use of the narrative resources of magical realism, satire, allegory or fantasy, have often been the focus of theoretical perspectives. Pradip Kumar Dey's research of *Midnight's Children* highlights the constructedness of identity: the identity of the characters overall is characterized by indeterminacy. Such is the case of Saleem who is not an Indian but is an Anglo-Indian instead and his parents are not really his parents. For Dey this is an example of how identity is depicted as unreliable or as a mere social construct as characters recreate themselves by choosing new names to assume new lives. Dey's study also considers the importance of ancient binomies in the form of legendary lovers such as Radha and Krishna, Rama and Sita, or Laila and Majnu. Focusing on dualism, M. Keith Booker's research "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism as Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie" proposes that Rushdie addresses oppositions or dual thinking only to conclude that things are not just dual in nature but ambiguous and multiple. For Booker the multitude of voices and contradicting views in Rushdie's narration are expressed through dual oppositions and exemplifies the dualistic perspective in the novel with Rushdie's reference to the game of snakes and ladders and the authors' use of paired characters. Booker also compares the dual oppositions in *Midnight's Children* with those in other novels by Rushdie such as the duality between God and the Devil represented by the characters of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* in which Rushdie deconstructs these dualities by expressing that these characters are not opposite. According to Booker "the deconstruction of dualities and concomitant questioning of authority present in Rushdie's fiction are so powerfully subversive that Khomeini has declared that Rushdie must die" (253). For Dey these binaries

in the form of “primary mythical figures” (138) reveal the underlining influence of myths, such as the story of the first man, in Rushdie’s novel. The connection between the novel and the story of the Garden of Eden is the focus of Indira Karamcheti’s study “Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and an Alternate Genesis” in which she explains her belief that, like story of the Garden of Eden, Rushdie depicts beginnings: Saleem’s life and the Birth of the Indian nation.

Similarly to critics Neil Forsyth and Martine Hennard who apply to *Midnight’s Children* Roland Barthes’ idea that every novel can be read as a quest for origin to discover one’s identity, Sajad Ganie’s analysis of characters like Saleem Sinai, who loses his sense of identity after discovering he has been switched at birth or after suffering from amnesia, concludes that loss of identity is the basic theme of the novel. For Julian Droogan, the fact that Saleem’s notion of self is constructed based on his perception of past historical events, solidifies the novel’s perspective that identity is a product of history. In *Stranger Gods: Salman Rushdie’s Other Worlds* Roger Clark analyzes how identity is constructed through references to other cultures by studying the meaning of names and places and their symbolic meaning taking in consideration Persian poetry, the Quran or even Norse myth. This reinforces M. K. Naik’s perspective that the novel shows identity as something far from defined and hybrid, influenced by everything including historical influences: “the permanent plight of individual identity in the hostile modern world which makes it impossible for anyone to remain an island but compels everyone to be part of a continent, with the result that the individual is inevitably ‘handcuffed to history’” (Naik 54). The novel’s emphasis on hybridity and multiplicity of identities helps establish identity as a

construct and is supported by the research of Ahmad Abu Baker who considers that, like Saleem, rethinking of one's identity is a common process in the postmodern world.

For some scholars Rushdie's depiction of identity as closely connected with culture and nationhood is seen as a statement on the nature of cultural and national identity in the postcolonial era. Critics such as Josna Rege see the novel's treatment of identity and hybridity as a celebration of "the creative tensions between personal and national identity" (Rege 145). Saleem's quest for identity through his reconstruction of family life in his memories of historical events serves, according to Dieter Riemenschneider, the purpose of exploring the identity fragmentation of every generation of Saleem's family in a still hostile post-colonial India. In the essay "Presentation of a Wounded Civilization: A Cosmopolitan Perspective of *Midnight's Children*" Suhaina Bi defends that the rootlessness in the novel (which echoes the authors' own rootlessness because Rushdie has often moved in his childhood) and the cosmopolitan perspective of someone that has no roots makes it easier to have a critical perspective. According to Bi it is the cosmopolitan perspective of the main character Saleem (a rootless and displaced individual that tells the story of his life and of other rootless and/or cosmopolitan individuals) that makes him able to have a detached critical voice about the oppression exerted by the British colonial power.

Rushdie establishes his critique not only through his characters but also through his writing as he appropriates the colonizer's language and transforms it into what has become known as "Masala English", an Indianization of English he achieves by mixing English with Hindi and using Anglo-Indian expressions, malapropisms and multilingual portmanteau words. The fragmentation of Saleem's identity and that of India itself fragmented in many ethnicities mirrors the fragmentary structure of the novel established by Saleem's narration

going back and forward, never following a timeline but being subjected to how Saleem's memory recalls past events in a fragmented manner. Wimal Dissanayake's research reveals that the structural innovativeness in Rushdie's writing is due to the strong influences of Asian traditional literature namely the Indian traditional narrative techniques and stylistic resources from Indian epics like the *Ramayana*, *Panchatantra* or *Mahabharata* or the *One Thousand and One Nights*. When researching the novels' connection with the *Arabian Nights*, academics such as Nancy E. Batty have recognized that it plays a fulcral role in the narrative. She compares the narrator to Scheherazade suiting his narrative to the demands of Padma (like Scheherazade suits her narrative to appease the demands of King Shahryar) and believes the narrative has a retardatory structure that serves to create suspense. According to critic Rustom Bharucha the uniqueness of Rushdie's writing with its hybridized English that borrows Indian words into English assumes such an enormous proportion that he compares it to those of a whale. Indian traditions permeate Rushdie's writing to such degree that for some critics *Midnight's Children* can be interpreted as an elaborate portrait of India: the myths of India's past, the capitalism of the present and the oppressive movements of both past and present. Because of Rushdie's interweaving of Indian mythology, history and Saleem's family life in a carnivalesque or grotesque manner, K. Raghavendra Rao proposes that the novel is written like a Bollywood film. According to Arun P. Mukherjee's essay "Characterization in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*: Breaking Out of the Hold of Realism and Seeking the 'Alienation Effect'" the novel's narrative strategies of allegory, mimicry, exaggeration and parody serve the purpose of revealing a particular perspective of history. Similarly, postmodern critics Ronald Blaber and Marvin Gilman study if the picaresque in the novel is intentional or a result of Rushdie's employment of magical realism.

The relevance of this is that they see the intentional use of carnival grotesque in the narrative as leading to conclude that the novel is a good example of postmodern and postcolonial literary use of the picaresque. The mixing of the fantastic or magical realism with historical facts is, in critic David Lipscomb's opinion, an artifice that enables characters to reveal their version of historical events and to, according to Jean-Pierre Durix, put forward a serious political critique.

Critical studies of Rushdie's writing style, such as Jaina C. Sanga's book *Salman Rushdie's Post-Colonial Metaphors: Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy, and Globalization*, also reveal the subversive undercurrent in the novel. In her book Sanga studies the reimagining of political metaphors in the novel and concludes that they are subversive of the colonialist message because they question colonial discourse by offering another account of reality. Sanga finds Rushdie's novel subversive of colonial power and sees the metaphor as a stylistic tool that allows Rushdie to establish a counter discourse in which nation, culture and identity have different definitions than those established by the British colonial power. Similarly, in his work *Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children*, Neil ten Kortenaar considers the use of hybridity, allegory, mimicry and cosmopolitanism as tools to convey a subversion of conventions and authority that is set to correct the misappropriation of history by either the British or by Indians such as Indira Gandhi who try to wash their crimes against the Indian people out of history. For John Clement Ball the satire and humor in the novel are narrative strategies that are used to oppose injustice and totalitarian discourses in post-independence India and that are comparable to Bakhtin's theory of carnival as a subversion of what is institutionalized as appropriate, of social convention and authority. Ball sees in the prevalence of the fantastic and the abnormal psychological states

and dream states as characteristic of Menippean satire employed for testing a truth. Although varied, critical reviews of *Midnight's Children* conveys in recognizing the role and importance of ancient myths and fantasy and orality in conveying history and the situation of the under-privileged. In fact, it is the preserving of memories of events such as The Emergency (in which history is retold from the perspective of the ones that have been attacked) that, according to Raita Merivirta, gives the novel a political dimension. This disrupting characteristic of the novel of giving a voice to the ones that are silenced by the imposition of a version of historical facts by the powers that be is reinterpreted by Matt Kimmich who considers *Midnight's Children* to be a family novel. He defines family novels by comparing children with texts: children are texts parents write and children need to disrupt, to get out of this control of parental figures of authority and take control of the narrative like Saleem who recognizes that “giving birth to parents has always been one of [his] stranger talents” (Rushdie, *MC* 34). Also worth mentioning is the research of the irony and parody in the novel by Ana Cristina Mendes on how Rushdie's linguistic choices reveal that the high/low cultural divide is an artificial divide. She further analyses how Rushdie has been built as a brand since the fatwa and how western academia legitimizes and regulates what is included in the postcolonial canon.

3.1.5. Literature Review of Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

Regarding Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the critical readings of the novel have focused mainly on two angles: the novel as a product of a lesbian writer and its display of patriarchal and heterosexual oppression and challenge of gender expectations, and the novel as the result of a postmodern writer establishing intertextual references to the Bible

and fairytales. In “Acts of Defiance: Celebrating Lesbians” Gabrielle Griffin compares Winterson’s depiction of lesbianism with Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Radclyffe Hall’s three novels *The Well of Loneliness*, the title story from *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself*, and *The Unlit Lamp*, and *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown, examining how the communities they depict oppress lesbian characters and notes the changes in the representation of lesbianism and the reaction of the communities to the reveal of a lesbian character. While contemporary literature presents characters that are unapologetic of being homosexual and assert their identity as lesbians, in Radclyffe Hall’s work characters are constructed as tragic characters because they are lesbian and are depicted as an anomalous being permanently conflicted for being different and constantly trying to reach normalcy. Laura Doan’s “Jeanette Winterson’s Sexing the Postmodern” explores the interpretation that the novel is based on duality: the opposition between Jeanette’s lesbianism and her mother’s points of view and her mother’s oppressive and domineering personality while her father is meek and passive. The mother herself also displays a binary logic: for her one is either friend or enemy and the world is a battleground between good and evil. Doan further notes that Winterson’s mention of orange marmalade serves as a metaphor used to destroy binaries as it fuses the opposites of inside/outside.

The novel’s intertextuality with the Bible and fairy tales is also the subject of scholarly research and the focus of Isabel Anievas Gamallo’s study in “Subversive Storytelling: The Construction of Lesbian Girlhood through Fantasy and Fairy Tale in Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*”. Professor Anievas Gamallo concludes that “establishing one particular narrative as official History becomes a strategy to impress and reinforce dominant ideological discourses” (128). For Susana Onega the novel follows the hero’s quest

pattern that is expressed through the heroine's journey of self discovery while segregated within her culture because she does not identify with the values of the patriarchal society she is in: she does not want to be a wife or a mother. Onega compares the view of history present in the novel to that of T. S. Eliot and Proust in *In Search of Lost Time (À la Recherche du Temps Perdu)* because the novel reveals the defense of the right to subjectivity in history. In Winterson's novel history is made of the memories of the female protagonist not what is dictated by a male perspective and notes how Winterson rewrites "the most totalitarian, patriarchal but also the most unquestionable history of all: sacred history, written, according to Jewish and Christian doctrines, by God himself and containing both history and revelation" (140). Also studying the intertextuality with the Bible, Amy Benson Brown considers in her essay "Inverted Conversions: Reading the Bible and Writing the Lesbian Subject in Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*" that this story is also about Jeanette's progress as a lesbian writer and how she rewrites and reinterprets the biblical texts. According to Benson Brown the author uses narrative strategies like certain narrative types such as fable (common in feminist works, the fable allows a subjective interpretation of events other than what is already determined such as what is set in the Bible) or the ontological narrative which is centered around the issues that serve to establish an identity (such as sexuality). Benson Brown also explores how the novel's narrative style changes from parodic in a moment to serious the next, or vice-versa, mirroring the stylistic strategy of abruptly changing from poetry to prose in the Book of Genesis. Stephanie Day Powell focuses on the last chapter of the novel "Ruth" in order to reveal that Winterson's appropriation of the biblical figure of Ruth is quite relevant because, while other chapters establish a general connection to the Bible, the Ruth chapter refers specifically to her life and

her complex relationship with her mother which dominates the narrative. Day Powell also mentions Winterson's use of the image of the garden and the chalk circle to convey the concepts of separation and connection.

3.1.6. Conclusion

As the sample of literature review intends to make clear, critical approaches of all three novels, although varied, lack in considering a more in-depth analysis of the garden motif and its relation with the underlying critique of metanarratives. The literature review of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has mostly focused on the three main theoretical perspectives of linguistics, psychoanalysis, and cultural and historical studies. Linguistic approaches tend to focus on Carroll's use of literary nonsense and, like Harold Bloom's linguistic research, on the enigmas and allegories of the novel. Psychoanalytic research has been mostly on the subjects of death, violence, and identity (such as the research of Hugh Haughton who interprets the novel as an identity crisis metaphor). Freudian theories such as A. M. E. Goldschmidt's study which considers the symbols for sex, have also been applied to the novel. The most explored lines of cultural and historical scholarly analysis include Carroll's mathematical and logical skills (such as the research by Helena Pycior), the historical influences on the novel and the influence of Carroll's cultural milieu such as his perspective as a photographer, which has been the focus of study of scholars Christopher Hollingsworth and Stephen Monteiro. Theoretical perspectives of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* have focused on how the novel depicts identity, history, and the relevance of Rushdie's writing style, though there is a restrict number of works on the connection between the novel and the story of the Garden of Eden. The treatment of identity in the novel is mostly directed at how

identity is constructed through references to other cultures such as Roger Clark's research in which he considers Persian, Islamic, or Nordic influences, or the indeterminacy and constructedness of the identity of the characters. A good example of this line of research is Pradip Kumar Dey's study in which he explores how characters recreate themselves by choosing new names to assume new lives and how Saleem turns out to be an Anglo-Indian instead and his parents are not really his parents. Regarding how the novel addresses history, scholars focus mostly on how the British colonial power is treated. As exemplary of this line of research are the works of Suhaina Bi that addresses how the rootlessness of the narrator enables his detached critical voice about the oppression by the British colonial power, and Jaina C. Sanga's study on the role of political metaphors in the subversion of colonialist discourses. Sanga's research is also an example of studies that consider the relation between Rushdie's writing style and the subversion of colonial power. Rushdie's use of magical realism, satire, allegory or fantasy has often been a scholarly object of study being that many scholars, such as Jean-Pierre Durix and John Clement Ball, have stressed that the author's writing style serves a serious political critique. Much like Wimal Dissanayake, many other critics have also looked at Rushdie's innovative use of language as the result of the influence of Indian traditional narrative techniques, particularly the influence of Asian mythology such as Indian epics like the Ramayana, Panchatantra, Mahabharata or the One Thousand and One Nights. When it comes to the critical readings of Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, they have mostly dealt with the lesbian writer motif (particularly how heterosexual oppression and gender expectations are depicted) and intertextual references to fairytales. The manner in which lesbianism is depicted in the novel has been compared with other novels, as in the work of Gabrielle Griffin, and the binary between Jeanette and her mother

when it comes to seeing lesbianism is also objective of research by scholars such as Laura Doan. Others, like Susana Onega, focus on how the plot approaches the hero's quest pattern represented by Jeanette's struggle against the values of a patriarchal society in her journey of self-discovery.

While these and similar lines of research have been plenty, a restricted number of studies has considered the connection between the novels and the story of the Garden of Eden or their intertextuality with the Bible. Regarding *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, critics such as Florence Lennon and Richard Kelly and Christine Roth see in Wonderland's garden a symbol of the innocence of childhood as opposed to the world of adults and the longing for this state of innocence when the mind is not yet influenced and conditioned by the morality of adults. Following the same interpretive perspective, Francesca Arnavas also compares Alice's curiosity and presence in the garden to Eve's curiosity in the Garden of Eden. Also, according to the research of Catalina Balinisteanu-Furdu the garden symbolizes the place where Alice is not restricted or oppressed. Regarding *Midnight's Children*, though not establishing the link between the story of the Garden of Eden and a critical perspective, scholars such as Mujeebuddin Syed and Indira Karamcheti have focused on how Saleem mirrors the story of the first man depicts and, like the story of the Garden of Eden, depicts the creation of Saleem's life and the Indian nation, respectively. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, scholars have mostly considered how Winterson reinterprets the biblical texts. For Amy Benson Brown the connection of the novel and the Bible resides in the use of fables as a narrative strategy that enables the subversion of what has been determined as ultimate truth such as the Bible. The appropriation of the biblical figure of Ruth is another connection to the Bible that has been the focus of study such as the research of Stephanie Day Powell which

also recognizes Winterson uses, along with the image of the chalk circle, the image of the garden to convey the concepts of separation and connection.

Hence, it seems fair to conclude that this review of the scholarly research of all three novels and the story of the Garden of Eden helps to clarify that the present research brings an innovative perspective to the study of the novels. The bulk of critical studies on each of the novels reveals a gap when it comes to the research of how the references to the Garden of Eden serve the overall criticism of metanarratives in each of their cultures such as the Victorian metanarrative that promotes the need for a priest as the intermediary and sole interpreter of the divine message and the need to comply with prescribed rituals to live a true spirituality; the metanarrative that a free and independent India is the end of racism, poverty, and violence; and the metanarrative of patriarchy.

4. Metanarratives Unravel: Analysis of the Novels

4.1.1. Introduction

This section aims to demonstrate how Lewis Carroll (in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), Salman Rushdie (in *Midnight's Children*) and Jeanette Winterson (in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*) appropriate the image of the Garden of Eden in order to subvert discourses of power and privilege. This section focuses on how the novels use the garden motif to present alternative perspectives that reveal that what is often established or interpreted as “truth” is a mere construct of a power structure. It also considers the perspectives of Lyotard and of one of the most influential philosophers of the theoretical perspectives chosen, Michel Foucault, according to which metanarratives are created and reinforced by power structures that establish normative social customs (such as religious or social rules) in order to legitimize their power and authority. Metanarratives are also considered in light of Foucault's perspective that power and knowledge are interconnected. For Foucault power structures produce knowledge to suit their needs just as the novels reveal how the powers that be produce knowledge of history (the political power in Rushdie's novel creates its versions of history) of the self (Winterson's novel reveals how patriarchal ruling figures define women and determine their role) or of a higher power such as the ritualism by Victorian religious power seen in Carroll's novel which emphasizes the need for priests to be the intermediaries between man and God.

Hence, for reasons of clarity, the present section is divided into an introduction (in which there is a synopsis of the novels and the main metanarratives they address) followed by two sections each for the two power structures the novels depict as the main creators of

metanarratives: religion and state. And, finally and before the conclusion, a third sub-chapter analyses how, or even if, each of the novels considers possible for man to see beyond the constructs and truly know an objective or ultimate truth. After the present introduction a section focuses on how each of the three novels depicts how religious metanarratives can be created in order to influence (including as a means to exert political influence), and control the individual just to solidify a power system. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* ritualism is shown to sustain the power of the priestly class by solidifying the monopoly it has on the connection of the individual and God. Ritualism emphasizes the dependency on following the rituals prescribed by the priests because the priests are the only ones with the right to interpret the message of God. In *Midnight's Children* the great religious metanarrative of the time politicizes Islam and Hinduism forcing Muslims and Hindus apart and into wars against each other through the Islamic metanarrative of Jihad. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* the dominant religious metanarratives promote separation (between the members of the congregation who see themselves as the elect and outsiders) and a sense of superiority that also extends to a generalized gender divide that is based on a patriarchal interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden. After the explanation of how each of the novels exposes and subverts religious metanarratives, the following section focuses on socio-cultural metanarratives created by the ruling powers of the state. It is divided into three subsections, one per each novel, in which it is analyzed how each novel employs the symbology of the Garden of Eden to question and contest metanarratives created to solidify a view of events that serve the ruling power structure. Carroll's novel reveals the counter discourses subverting the norms and rules of Victorian society, themselves a reflection of the monitoring and ruling powers of the state. *Midnight's Children* is critical of constructs with political interests (such

as the national metanarrative that an independent India is a better India) even if they are frequently written as history. And in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* readers realize how socially engrained the metanarrative of patriarchy is. These two sub-chapters are followed by a third sub-chapter that analyses how, or even if, each of the novels considers possible for man to truly know an objective or ultimate truth. In it is argued that, all three novels argument that true knowledge of the self, an ultimate divine reality or an objective truth is difficult to reach because people are conditioned by the “truths” of their respective culture. Carroll uses Platonic philosophy to reflect on the nature of knowledge and the role of perception in knowing only to conclude that truth, or reality, has an elusive, or unreachable character. Similarly, Rushdie notes that, from the history of a family to the history of a nation, what appears to be an unshakable truth can be an erroneous fact. And in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* Winterson considers the possibility that objective truth is often only a mere perspective so she arguments information must be processed in order to reach one`s own conclusions.

In all three novels the plot leads the main characters to uncover a different perspective to what is commonly acknowledged as the truth while being critical of some of their respective leading metanarratives of the cultural microcosms of Victorian England, post-independent India, and a Pentecostal community in rural northern England. Lewis Carroll`s Victorian novel *Alice`s Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, reveals the adventures of a girl named Alice who, in a warm summer afternoon, drifts off to sleep and into the fantasy world of Wonderland. While chasing a white rabbit, Alice falls down a rabbit hole and into a world of wonders in which animals can speak and put forth riddles and the laws of physics do not apply: time stands still; there is no consistency of size (Alice continuously grows or shrinks)

nor defining form (the Cheshire Cat keeps disappearing, pebbles turn into cakes and a baby into a pig). Alice`s adventure concludes with Alice`s older sister imagining how, as an adult, she is going to have such interesting stories to tell other children that will “make their eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 160). This is, perhaps, Carroll`s reflection on how his novel will influence future generations. Indeed, his work, more precisely this novel, continues to be a reference in the twenty-first century thus reinforcing the importance of Carroll`s contribution to literature. Underlining the novel`s apparent simplicity is Carroll`s denouncing of the draining of spiritual values of the Church that has replaced a simple daily spirituality with an emphasis on ritual, a devaluing of the content and valuing of the form. Carroll achieves his critique through the trope of the garden: from Alice initiating a search for the garden she sees a glimpse of when she first enters wonderland, to, in the final chapter, entering the long searched for garden. The motif of the garden is very much present as it is the reason for plot development as Alice goes through all this adventures to get into the garden. The garden Alice first has a glimpse of and that seems quite idyllic and the reality of the garden Alice encounters when she finally gets in enable Carroll to criticize the religious metanarrative of Victorian England and expose the cultural or social conditioning by the ruling powers of his time. Much like *Alice`s Adventures in Wonderland*, which puts forth a subversive perspective by establishing references to the story of the Garden of Eden, so does *Midnight`s Children* resort to the same image to subvert what is given as truth (from the personal identity of the protagonist to the historical metanarrative imposed by the British colonial power and the political metanarratives of independent India) by putting forth a new version of events that have been set as truth. In *Midnight`s Children* the protagonist and narrator Saleem Sinai narrates the story of his family starting with his

grandparents' story in Kashmir in 1915, thirty-two years before his birth, and establishes a connection between his family and his life and the historical events that lead to India's independence. In retelling the story of his grandparents he gives their account of the historical events they have witnessed including the massacres and violence perpetrated by the British colonialist power. He tells how he is born on midnight, August 15, 1947, at the exact moment India gains its independence from the British colonial power and has been given the powers of telepathy and a superhuman sense of smell because of his extraordinary birth. Saleem says that there are 1001 children born around midnight on the same date that have special powers that get stronger as closer their time of birth is to midnight. Throughout the novel readers discover that Saleem has an opposing and equally powerful counterpart with whom Saleem has been swapped at birth: Shiva. Saleem hides the switch from the other children of midnight but they revolt against him when they find out he is blocking their access to the parts of his mind that guard the truth of events. By the end of the novel readers find out about Saleem's demise and Shiva's social glory and success in fathering hundreds of children (including the child Saleem adopts) that are going to be the future of India.

The dissenting perspective of *Midnight's Children* is expressed through the imagery of the story of the Garden of Eden achieved not only by placing key moments of the narrative in gardens, and setting the period of the story between two characters named Aadam who are present in the beginning and the end of the novel, but also through the character of the narrator, Saleem Sinai. The story is placed in between two Aadam's as a circle, an enclosed space like the enclosed Garden of Eden of the creation story, as if the novel is about what is created in its gardens: imperialism, revolt, violence, metanarratives of nation, of cultural

superiority and politics. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem is on a quest to unite the children of midnight and to write the story of his family (which he starts with his grandfather in the gardens of Kashmir) all the while revealing the truth about his own identity and the official version of historical facts by hinting or describing events connected with gardens in India and Pakistan. Rushdie also emphasizes the connection with the Garden of Eden by placing the story between two Adams (Adam Aziz and his great grandson Adam Sinai) and features the figure of the snake as a savior and giver of knowledge while revealing how false "truths" are constructed to benefit political interests and achieve power. Also with references to the Garden of Eden, Winterson sets the beginning of the novel in the Garden of Eden as she chooses to name the first chapter "Genesis". It is here that the narrator gives her account of her birth and early life and where Jeanette starts her tumultuous path to discover her identity as a lesbian revealing along the way the illusory and even false aspects of the belief system she is brought up in. Winterson's novel denounces how communities can use religion to dominate the individual. Written in England in 1983-84 and first published in 1985 but set in the 1960s, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is partially autobiographical: author and protagonist are both adopted, share the same sexual orientation, first name, religious denomination, both wish to become a missionary, and both leave home at sixteen as a result of a punishment by their parents and community for their love affair with a woman. The setting of the story is also common to both the main character and the author. The plot of the novel is about Jeanette who is adopted by a Pentecostal Evangelist family and raised by an absent father and a fundamentalist Christian mother who conditions her behavior by controlling her education and what she reads. At home there are only allowed three books: the Bible, *Jane Eyre* and Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Although Jeanette hides other books

beneath her, her mother discovers it and burns the forbidden books. When Jeanette becomes a teenager she finds a Saturday job at the local library and reads every book she can further opening her mind about the world and herself. So soon after she admits she is a lesbian and has fallen in love with a woman makes her question why loving someone is as wrong as everyone around her says it is. This leads to conflicts with her congregation that culminate in a forced exorcism. Despite the social pressure her belief that she is not the one who is wrong grows and when she turns sixteen her mother expels her and she leaves home struggling to support herself through various temporary jobs. Much like the story of the Garden of Eden, after accessing knowledge she also has to leave her familiar comforts of home only to visit her family later on to see how the strict religious community she grows up in has unraveled.

The recurrent biblical imagery in the novel focuses on the trope of the fruit, through which she establishes references to the story of the Garden of Eden via the story of the Garden of the Hesperides. The gift of oranges, repeated throughout the novel after the first chapter (Genesis), establishes a direct link with the story of the Garden of Eden via the story of the Garden of the Hesperides. The myth of the Garden of the Hesperides has key similarities with the story of the Garden of Eden and many scholars believe it is, indeed, a retelling of it. According to the Greek myth, Greek hero Hercules is tasked by King Eurystheus the eleventh labor of fetching some Golden Apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. This is the garden of Hera and has nymphs and the Hesperian Dragon (a hundred-headed serpent named Ladon) that zealously guard the golden apples. Instead of alluding directly to the Biblical Garden of Eden, Jeanette chooses the Garden of the Hesperides because it mirrors her family life: Hera, the Olympian queen of the gods, and goddess of

marriage, the sky and the stars, conceives Hephaistos without a father (she gets pregnant of him by herself) as Jeanette's mother has done by becoming a mother by her own decision and agency, but casts him from Mount Olympus because he is born crippled, like her mother who sees Jeanette as faulty and expels her from home. The connection Winterson establishes with the story of the Garden of Eden, not only by initiating the novel with a chapter titled Genesis but also by a frequent allusion to the Greek myth of the Garden of the Hesperides. The realistic and linear narrative is crossed by mythical, biblical and popular tales as Winterson adopts what T. S. Eliot, one of her preferred writers, calls the mythical method. It consists of establishing a continuous link between contemporaneity and antiquity which adds extra depth and significance to the contemporary writer. The novel's link with antiquity is the trope of the fruit. There is the fruit as representing conformism, the forbidden fruit of her lesbian affairs, and the fruit as desire for something else, which comes from a secret walled garden with an orange tree at the center that if you eat from you will aspire for different things. The novel is divided into eight chapters with the names of the first eight Books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges and Ruth) and, by situating the beginning of her novel in Genesis and using the motif of the fruit (via the Garden of the Hesperides) throughout the rest of the novel, the author establishes an undeniable link with the story of the Garden of Eden.

4.1.2. Religion and Metanarratives: gardens overgrown with dogma, discord, and materialism

This research considers religion as a ruling power since it can create its own metanarratives and condition individuals often through mechanisms of indirect coercion such as the social stigmatization of those who do not comply. A major influence of New Historicism, for philosopher, philologist and literary critic Michel Foucault, ecclesiastical authority is an example of a model of power that works through indirect coercion: “in the Western world I think the real history of the pastorate as the source of a specific type of power over men, as a model and matrix of procedures for the government of men, really only begins with Christianity” (Foucault, *Security* 147-148). Foucault sees the directing the pastor exerts over his religious community so that they do not stray as creating an environment where people monitor each other to guarantee other members of the community do not stray from what is expected of them. Hence, this regulatory strategy, with its mechanism of exclusion of those who do not comply, means that this pastoral form is a model of power. This perspective of religion is corroborated by the present analysis of all three novels as all three depict how religion can be used to exert power over individuals and condition their behavior. As the analysis of the novels will show, religious power can be an extension of the interests of the ruling power. The very base of this research, the metanarrative of the Garden of Eden, reveals how a religious metanarrative can be created by someone with clear political, economical, and military interests such as a Roman emperor who legitimizes a determined interpretation of the Garden of Eden that instills obedience to authority.

4.1.2.1. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

The religious metanarrative increasingly prevalent in Victorian era is that ritualism is essential for knowing God and for salvation. Ritualism is a movement within the Church of England defended by the Tractarian movement that wants to approximate the Church of England to the Continental Church, as before the reformation, though not under the authority of the Pope. This movement wants to restore drama to the mass, hence, it has an extreme preoccupation with and attention to gestures and postures and attributes an extreme importance to the ornaments of the church that the priests have used before the Reformation, such as incense, Eucharistic vestments, candles burning, and also the custom of the celebrant priest facing east with his back to the congregation. For Victorian society only those who comply with every ritual of the Church can expect to be forgiven for their sins. Instead of living a daily life morality based on their spiritual precepts, Victorians are to comply with a religious routine: they are expected to be seen attending Church, to attend confession, or recite the prayers that have been prescribed by the priests, and those who do not follow the rituals are stigmatized by society.

Carroll's novel reveals that his critique of the merely ritualistic role of the Church, though a product of Victorian England, is also quite subversive. Many Victorian intellectuals question both the state of the English Church and its fundamentals, and this is often reflected in their work as exemplify the novels *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* and *Robert Elsmere*. The 1881 novel *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* by William Hale White mirrors the loss of faith of the author and depicts religious conflict through going from Protestant Christianity to a sort of Pantheism. A 1888 success in sales, *Robert Elsmere* by Mrs Humphry Ward is inspired by Victorian clergymen such as the author's own father

and is about an Oxford clergyman who, after reading German rationalists, begins to question the doctrines of the Anglican Church. They exemplify the critical interpretation of Anglo-Saxon theology among Victorian intellectuals who come to see in it some degree of religious decay or moral weakness of the English Church. A valued intellectual of his time, Carroll speaks of his disillusionment with the artifices of ritualism which take from a spontaneous and personal manifestation of spirituality and, in a letter to a friend, admits to feeling let down by what men are doing to religion: "I [. . .] have always felt repelled by the yet higher development called 'Ritualism'. [. . .] As I read of the Christian religion, as Christ preached it, I stand amazed at the forms men have given to it and the fictitious barriers they have built up between themselves and their brethren" (Amor 120). In her research of Neoplatonist traits in Carroll's work, scholar Sherry Ackerman (affiliated with the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies) concludes that High Church "with its accompanying doctrinal disputes, served as a barrier to, rather than facilitator of, any actual knowledge of Divine Nature. [and adds that] It is quite likely that this is the reason that Carroll failed to find compatibility with [. . .] the High Church" (23). Indeed, Carroll's personal life backs the idea that he is disillusioned with the Church because, as part of his work contract as a Christchurch Deacon, Carroll is expected to take holy orders . . . which he decides not to take. Although giving the justification of stuttering, that never proves to be a great impediment when he is lecturing or engaged in conversations with friends or acquaintances and no one has any recollection of his stuttering being that bad to justify not being able to sermon.

Being a Deacon, the novel's critiques of Victorian society and particularly the Church are veiled in a web of levels of meaning that Carroll starts to weave right at the beginning.

Right at the start of the novel appears the White Rabbit which Alice follows into a rabbit hole and into Wonderland. Carroll's choice of initiating the novel with a rabbit that leads the main character underground is not arbitrary. Symbolic language using the image of the rabbit has long been used: the earliest occurrences of the symbol that appear in cave temples in China date from the sixth to the seventh centuries and spread along the Silk Road making the symbol of the rabbit or the circular motif of the three hares (or three rabbits) appear in sacred sites from the Middle and Far East to the synagogues and churches of Europe with hares sometimes occurring in illuminated manuscripts and European paintings of the Virgin and Christ Child. See, for example, Albrecht Dürer's painting *The Holy Family with Three Hares*.

The symbolic meaning associating the rabbit with the heavens and concealment starts at the linguistic level. Although modern scientific philology does not accept the simplistic etymology of *caelum* as the heavens or the sky, ancient Greek and Roman philosophers have popularized these linguistic connections. For ancient Greek and Roman philosophers *caelum* refers to being engraved with the stars (the firmament) as Pliny the Elder notes about the word *caelum*, that "it undoubtedly has the signification 'engraved,' as is explained by Marcus Varro" (175). To this association of *caelum* with heaven has been popularly added the association of *caelum* with *celum* which derives from *celare* (close, enclose, conceal). When thinking about the name for the heavens, or firmament, Varro considers:

Caelum, Aelius writes, was so called because it is *caelatum* 'raised above the surface,' or from the opposite of its idea, *celatum* 'hidden' because it is exposed; not ill the remark, that the one who applied the term took *caelare* 'to raise' much rather from *caelum* than *caelum* from *caelare*. But that second

*origin, from celare 'to hide,' could be said from this fact, that by day it celatur
'is hidden,' no less than that by night it is not hidden. (17-19)*

Adding to the associations between exposure of what is above the ground, the firmament, or heaven, and concealment so does popular imagery link concealment to the image of the rabbit because of its concealing ways. The animal is known to use shrewdness to avoid stronger predators in an artful and cunning manner by running in zigzag to increase the difficulty for the animal chasing it, by hiding in burrows underground and constructing countless escape tunnels, of which even fake ones, to confound a predator and give them time to escape. Not coincidentally, the three hares motif appears often as an optical illusion or as a puzzle. In Judaism rabbits are also seen as a symbol of the Jewish diaspora which often, within other cultures, has had to take their traditions and perspectives “underground” as a form of protection. Many different Native American traditions feature a trickster rabbit or hare. In the Panchatantra tales of India, the hare’s cleverness and cunning makes it win over the elephant and the lion, while in Tibetan folktales, the hare outsmarts the tiger. North America’s Br’er (Brother) Rabbit and its Cajun (French Creole) equivalent Compeer Lapin outwit their more powerful opponents and get out of trouble through cleverness. To this association of *caelum* with heaven has been popularly added the association of *caelum* with *celum* which derives from *celare* (close, enclose, conceal). So within this symbology that somehow connects heaven with concealing, one can interpret Carroll’s use of a rabbit leading the action of the novel underground, that he is going to be talking of the heaven, or what is higher (religion), in an underground (hidden) manner that will only be relatable to the educated intelligentsia of the day and not the general public that, disagreeing with his perspective, may not have received the novel so well. Also adding to the connection

between the rabbit and the religious element (the religious text) are the medieval rabbit drolleries. These are drawings of rabbits on the margins of medieval religious manuscripts (particularly in the period from 1250 AD to the fifteenth century), such as the "Smithfield Decretals", that depict rabbits performing acts that go against social rules, doing jokes, and acting by the concept of the world upside-down, according to which the real life meek prey (rabbit) is now the predator and appears killing other animals, humans or even hunters.

This perspective that Carroll expresses his opinions of the theological scenery of Victorian England in a veiled manner is reinforced by his conscious choice of the pen name of Lewis Carroll, under which he writes poetry and the Alice Books while using his given name for logic, mathematical and other scholarly works. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines *carol* as "a Christian religious song sung at Christmas [. . .] to sing something in a cheerful way" (178). Because of Carroll's penchant for phonetic play and his religious background, more than a latinization of his given name, by applying a phonetic interpretation to his pen name one may interpret Carroll as a phonetic representation of *carol*, the Christmas hymns typical of Victorian era. Because these hymns are a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ one can read in the author's choice of signing his literary work as Carroll (Lewis) instead of his given name an intention to celebrate Christ's teachings by speaking of the need of a simpler and more authentic manner of living Christ's message (like the jolly Christmas carols sang by children) which he believes is threatened by the importance given to ritualism. Carroll's theology seems to be contrary to the dogmas of the Church and stand on a childlike simplicity needed to know the teachings of Jesus Christ: "this knowledge was not confined to a ritualistic Anglicanism. It appeared more gnostic in

substance, having a direct bearing on the welfare of the individual human being and on the development of a more harmonious social order” (Ackerman 34).

The interest of Carroll’s cultural milieu in early Christianity is also inferred from Carroll’s private library as he is also a product of his time. As a Protestant deacon, Carroll has access to the original *King James Bible* which contains (until the late nineteenth century) apocrypha that has already been removed from most other bibles. Such is the case of *The Apocalypse of Peter*, an early Christian text of the second century which is not in the Bible today but is mentioned in the Muratorian fragment, the oldest surviving list of New Testament books. It can still be found in a Greek original manuscript unknown until its discovery in 1886–87 in Upper Egypt but, before that event, it has been known through partial copies in early Christian writings. Carroll, not only has *The Apocalypse of Peter* in the Anglican Bible, but must have also read one of the circulating translations of the early Christian writings which have been recorded by Greek philosophical schools. Even though, as an Anglican reverend, Carroll has access to some Apocryphal texts because “the inclusion of the Apocrypha was common enough in Anglican bibles” (Kidd and Wallace 238), as his private library proves, his knowledge seeking goes beyond the cannon. In the descriptive catalogue of his library one can find a book titled *The Akhmim Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter*, edited by Henry Barclay Swete and published in 1893 and the *The Apocryphal New Testament*, edited by William Hone in 1820, a volume about the suppressed gospels and epistles attributed in the first four centuries to Jesus Christ, His Apostles, and their companions and not included in the New Testament by its compilers. Also among Lewis Carroll’s books one finds several volumes by John Blunt commenting on the holy scriptures with the “King James version with the Apocrypha” (Lovett 47), in

which is included *The Book of Peter*, once banned by the Roman Catholic Church, or a work by Alexander Cruden which studies the concordance between the scriptures of the old and the new testaments “to which is added a concordance to the books, called Apocrypha” (Lovett 93). As part of the list is also a scripture and prayer book glossary of “obsolete words and phrases in the bible and Apocrypha” (Lovett 49). In the words of scholar Sherry Ackerman, Carroll is “interested in investigating the possibilities of immaterial realities beyond the phenomenal world and of a truth that transcended ordinary perception” (27). Carroll refuses to stay within the dogmas of the Church, hence his reading choices are not resumed to the readings the Church prescribes and approves.

Adding to the interest of Carroll’s cultural milieu in early Christianity is the knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy and theosophy of which the allusion to the Delphi oracle when describing the figure of the Duchess is a clue to how much Carroll resorts to Greek philosophy to put his perspective forward. The Duchess is the personalization of the Church. The Church of England gives rise to the Anglican Church and it is known as Mother Church which solidifies Carroll’s choice of a feminine figure, plus, the Duchess and the Queen are named after their social title and the only two that share the power to demand other characters’ heads be cut off representing the two main powers in Victorian society. Studying Carroll’s work, scholar August A. Imholtz, Jr. concludes that, although the lists of Carroll’s personal library do not contain any volume of classical Greek philosophy, those listings are incomplete and that Carroll is bound to have had knowledge of Greek philosophy as his fellow Oxford scholars of the time who have written about and studied Greek philosophers such as Plato. All great Victorian scholars and intellectuals have a solid education in Greek philosophy: it is known that in 1815, by the time Poet Alfred Tennyson

enters school at six, he has already memorized Horace and by the time he is 15 already writes poetry in fluent Greek and Latin; at eight John Conington (Corpus Professor of Latin at Oxford) has already read the *Aeneid* while by 12 he has read Homer; and historian James Anthony Froude before eleven has already read both Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Also, because civil employees are classically educated, many who become prominent at the service of the state are also authorities in the Greek classics such as historian and politician, member of parliament for the city of London between 1832-41, George Grote who is known as the authority in classical history of the time (1845-1856) writing several works on Greek philosophy or Gladstone who writes profusely on Homer between 1847 and 1892. The Victorian university system itself places great emphasis on Greek philosophy as confirms M. R. Stopper who, in his research "Greek Philosophy and the Victorians" goes on to review the lists of lectures in Oxford in the academic year 1889/90 to find undergraduates have six courses on *The Republic* alone. Stopper also reviews the work of other scholars Richard Jenkyns (*The Victorians and Ancient Greece*) and Frank M. Turner (*The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*) and notes that Jenkyns finds "Plato was the major object of Victorian study, and Platonism – or, more particularly, Plato's moral and political thought – was taken for the centrepiece of Greek philosophy" (268) and for Frank Turner "Plato enjoyed a splendid revival in the middle of the century and came to dominate the Victorian scene" (268). All converge in finding Greek philosophy, particularly Plato, central to Victorian cultural life. This seems to be a valid reasoning for Imholtz who finds that there are "passages in Carroll's most famous work that sound very much like direct echoes of Plato and contextual details, both in the Alice books and Carroll's Oxford life, that further support this unlikely source of inspiration" (61). Imholtz sees references

to Platonic philosophy in Alice's dialogue with the caterpillar and, particularly, in the rhymes the Mock Turtle sings entitled "Turtle Soup" which Imholtz compares to the "beautiful soup" in Plato's *Hippias Major* dialogue used when talking about what is beautiful. Carroll shares the great interest in Hellenistic theosophy and gnosticism of nineteenth-century England that privileges, like the gnostics, a direct/individual path to the knowledge of God:

[. . .] mystical currents within nineteenth century Christianity [which] were opposed to the notion that ritualism was the custodian of the knowledge of God. These currents maintained that every individual, regardless of creed, had access to the knowledge of God. Where ritualism demanded slavish obedience to creeds and dogma, theosophy pointed the way to knowledge through direct experience. (Ackerman 23)

It is this appreciation for a direct or simple path to the knowledge of God, or an ultimate spiritual reality, somewhat based on Hellenistic theosophy, such as the cult of the child, that is behind Carroll's choice of a child to convey his opinion on spirituality/religion. The cult of the child views "children as good, innocent and in some way connected with spirituality" (Ackerman 7) and this view of children, very much present in the Victorian literary movement of Romanticism, is inherited from Orphic theogony. Orphic theogony displays the belief in a divine child and the existence of a cult that has its followers offer children toys similarly to other cults make offerings to divinities. Scholars such as Miguel Jáuregui and Sherry Ackerman have found evidence of the connection between Orphism and Gnosticism. Regarding the extent of this connection, Jáuregui explains that "many scholars have noted the numerous correspondences between Orphic and Gnostic theogonic,

cosmogonic, and anthropological myths and in the central religious imagery of both movements” (107). According to Sherry Ackerman “concurrent with Victorian England’s revival of interest in Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, we see a resurgence of Gnostic themes in literature from the period” (4) and she observes that the Romantics exhibit a Neoplatonism that mirrors Gnosticism in the belief of a world beyond the physical world of the senses, of communion with the divine. The perfect translation of this applied to a view of childhood is William Wordsworth’s poetry, namely his poem “It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free”:

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquility;
The gentleness of heaven broods o’er the Sea;
Listen! The mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder – everlastingly.
Dear child! Dear girl! That walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham’s bosom all the year;
And worshipp’st at the Temple’s inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

The poem by Wordsworth, one of the central figures of English Romanticism, is an example of the movement's perspective that children have a divine nature. Contemplating the rambling sea, the author feels closer to God but he realises that while he is immersed in such philosophical thoughts it is the seemingly careless child who has intimacy with God and is closer to true spirituality.

One example of Carroll's belief in the connection between children and God can be seen in the middle quatrains of Carroll's poem "Christmas Greetings from a Fairy to a Child" written to celebrate Christmas in 1867 which is part of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* since it is first named *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*:

We have heard the children say –
Gentle Children, whom we love –
Long ago, on Christmas Day,
Came a message from above.

Still, as Christmas-tide comes round,
They remember it again –
Echo still the joyful sound
"Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Yet the hearts must childlike be
Where such heavenly guests abide;
Unto children, in their glee,
All the year is Christmas-tide! (Carroll, *Wonderland* X)

Children are the ones to receive the message of Christ because of their pure hearts and guard within and all year round the good will and love of Christmas carols and greetings. About children, Carroll writes that “their innocent unconsciousness is very beautiful, and gives one a feeling of reverence, as at the presence of something sacred” (Carr 10).

Hence, Carroll chooses the figure of a child, a girl, which he places in a search for a garden, in order to represent the value of a simple spiritual connection in the search for an ultimate spiritual reality as opposed to the slavish obedience to creeds and dogma demanded by ritualism. Alice can be seen as a version of Sophia. Common to early Christians and Jews alike, Sophia (Greek for wisdom) is to the Gnostics a feminine figure that embodies the divine spark in all humans, the knowledge of the divine, and is comparable to the human soul and which many Gnostics represent as the divine twin of Jesus. Most gnostic mythologies depict Sophia as doing something wrong such as trying to contain the unknowable (the supreme being) and as consequence she falls from a higher spiritual world into the world of matter. Once in the material world, while the creator of the physical world (the Demiurge) creates the physical beings, Sophia manages to infuse some spiritual quality into the creation. In Jewish Alexandrine religious philosophy she is responsible for creating the natural universe and passing on knowledge to mankind. The supreme being sends Christ to bring Sophia out of the material world and back to the spiritual realm and after this is accomplished sends Jesus again into the physical world in the form of a man (Jesus of Nazareth) to impart knowledge on the functioning of these worlds in order to enable mankind to be free from being entrapped in matter forever. According to this gnostic perspective the fall of man is not about disobeying God in the Garden of Eden by choosing to know but it is instead being ignorant (not knowing) because

ignorance maintains humans entrapped in the belief the material world and its passions are all there is. The common characteristics between Sophia and Alice further solidify a reading of Carroll's novel as approaching gnostic subjects such as the self-transforming search for spiritual knowledge that Alice seems to embody. Alice's adventures while trying to get into the garden mirror the gnostic myth of the fall of Sophia (wisdom) since both have many coinciding parallels: both face several challenges in order to obtain more knowledge (while Sophia must make some discoveries and say prayers in order to know about the spiritual world she comes from, Alice must solve riddles and ponder on her identity in her search for the garden); both Alice and Sophia are depicted as being part of a dream of almighty beings (in the novel's sequel we find that Alice is dreamed by the Red King and Sophia by Bythos, the spiritual supreme being of the Gnostics); both find themselves in different worlds (Alice in Wonderland and Sophia in the material world) in which both have to overcome challenges and need some help in finding their way. Alice receives hints/directions by some Wonderland beings, namely the Cheshire-Cat, and Sophia is aided by a spiritual Jesus that takes her back to the spiritual world. Hence, Alice works as a version of Sophia, or as a representation of spiritual knowledge which, for Carroll, can be more easily achieved by returning to the initial state of Christianity far from the ritualism of Victorian age.

Carroll defies the chain of belief in ritualism within his cultural milieu and transmits his subversive perspective through characters like the Cheshire-Cat. The canons of Christ Church college are called the Ch. Ch. Cats by students because the coat of arms of the college has four leopard heads. Unlike Wonderland's Cheshire-Cat, many of those cats (the canons of Christ Church) are part of a chain of shared ideology that promotes ritualism.

Such is the case of Carroll's mentor Edward Bouverie Pusey, an Oxford Regius Professor of Hebrew who nominates Carroll for a Fellowship at Christ Church. Pusey has worked together with Carroll's father, Charles Dodgson, who has translated works by Church Fathers edited by Pusey and befriends Carroll when he goes to Christ Church. Pusey, however, is one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement which defends an approximation to the Roman Catholic Church and the need for ritual, placing importance in details like the robes of the clergy, candles, or incense use. Like other members of the Oxford Movement, Pusey writes several of his theological publications known as tracts and in 1836 writes a famous tract titled *Catena Patrum No. IV. Testimony of Writers of the Later English Church to the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, with an historical account of the changes made in the liturgy as to the expression of that doctrine*. A Catena (Latin for chain) is a type of biblical commentary that takes in consideration the analysis of earlier Bible commentators, particularly by the early Roman Catholic Church Fathers, like the links on a chain that form an unbroken and connected interpretation of a religious text. As a mathematician, Carroll is familiar with the concept of catenary in mathematical language: the curve that a hanging chain assumes when it is supported at both its ends sagging in the middle due to the force of gravity which can be perfectly described as a grin, a grin without a cat. Wonderland's cat seems to also be short for catenary and represent the different chain, when compared to Pusey, Carroll is on.

Carroll intends to reveal that the ritualistic aspect of religiosity, though to the liking of some for its spectacle, is deceptive as it creates illusions that make it impossible for people to attain a simple, unmediated connection to the divine. Such a situation is exemplified with the rhyme "How Doth the Little Crocodile" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 20) in which Carroll

emphasizes the deceptive character of the crocodile. Carroll's full poem reads: "How doth the little crocodile / Improve his shinning tail, / And pour the waters of the Nile / On every golden scale! / How cheerfully he seems to grin, / How neatly spreads his claws, / And welcomes little fishes in, / With gently smiling jaws!" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 20). Considering the symbolic meaning of the Rabbit, one can but to see in the presence of the White Rabbit hurrying by and muttering about the Duchess right before Alice tries to say the rhyme, as a clue that the following crocodile rhyme is a veiled comment regarding religion. To further reinforce this is the fact that, before saying the rhyme, Alice picks up the fan and gloves the Rabbit has left behind and, as previously mentioned, the fan and gloves the Rabbit has to take for tea with the Duchess or he will be punished (executed) represent complying with social conventions. Hence, the rhyme is a comment about the Duchess (Church) made in a veiled manner and complying with social conventions. Hence, the rhyme's reference to *little fishes* can be seen as a reference to Christians who have often been referred to as fishes in the Old and New Testaments and other theological scriptures. Carroll emphasizes the difference in size between the *little fishes* and the crocodile, a mighty powerful creature (especially when compared to little fishes) that translates the power of the Church and also emphasizes the deceptive aspect of the crocodile, how he seems to be so friendly, a characteristic that is not associated to its nature, only to eat the *little fishes*. The *little fishes* establish an intertextual connection between Carroll's poem and a passage in the poem of the Song of Songs: "take us the foxes, / the little foxes / that spoil the vines / (Harper 17). In the Song of Songs we have the metaphor of the marriage to convey the union of man and spirit. The Shulammitte bride tells her betrothed to be wary of anything that can harm their union and uses the image of a fox. At the time foxes are

known for being crafty and able to be quite destructive of the vines even going as far as chewing the young plants and killing the vine. Carroll uses the Biblical metaphor that compares fish to the Christians, and, while in the Song of Songs the focus is on the caution to have so that the little foxes do not attack and destroy that spiritual connection, in Carroll's poem the focus is on the little fishes needing to be defended (or warned) because they are being tricked into annihilation. While in the Song of Songs one knows who the enemy is (the foxes) and there is the chance that, even if the foxes attack, there might sprout some new shoots, in the time of Carroll the situation is far worse. Now, in Carroll's Victorian England, the fishes are being tricked into annihilation: the Church's proliferating empty ritualism and close links with politics are the crocodile that is annihilating the chance of a real Christian spirituality while sparing no expense (pours the waters of the Nile on every scale) into making itself more appealing and benign by looking friendly and welcoming.

The novel's criticism of the state of the Church of England also extends to the connection between Church and state, or the use of the Church for political reasons. One example of Carroll's critique can be found when the Mouse is talking with other animals:

'Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable-
'Found WHAT?' said the Duck. 'Found IT,' the Mouse replied rather
crossly: 'of course you know what "it" means.' 'I know what "it" means
well enough, when *I* find a thing,' said the Duck: 'it's generally a frog,
or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?'. (Carroll,
Wonderland 31)

Stigand is an historical figure that is remembered as a good example of the entwining of Church and political power and intrigue in Norman England. He is first consecrated bishop of Elmham in 1043 but, because of his influence on political affairs during his role as advisor to Queen Emma (mother of Edward the Confessor whose succession Stigand's political influence plays a role in negotiating), he is deposed when she falls into disgrace. Stigand generates controversy because later on when he holds the position of Bishop of Winchester he also maintains the position of Archbishop of Canterbury, the chief title of the Church of England. By law he cannot hold more than one position in the Church and Pope Alexander II, being against this, refuses to consecrate Stigand as Archbishop of Canterbury. Nevertheless, Stigand's enormous power helps him to maintain both positions while serving six kings consecutively and amass a great personal wealth. Alexander Rumble, in his research of the clergy in Normand England, "From Winchester to Canterbury: Aelfheah and Stigand – Bishops, Archbishops and Victims", describes Stigand as "the epitome of a very rich, secular ecclesiastic" (176) who, in Norfolk alone, has "more land than the king and about the same as him in Suffolk and Dorset" (176). *It* refers to the spiritual ultimate truth that, as the leader of the Church of England, Stigand is supposed to have found yet the Duck recognizes that the *it* archbishop Stigand has found is different and seems to contrast with the simplicity of what the Duck finds (frogs or worms). The fact that the Duck knows what *it* means to him but not what it means to Stigand and the simplicity of what the Duck finds when he finds *it* parallels the simplicity the individual connection with the divine defended by Carroll.

Carroll wants the church to go back to a more spiritual and simple state without the emphasis being placed on the formality of ceremony that entraps people in the ritualistic

part of religion and does not let them reach their spiritual potential. For Carroll religion seems to be more of a “revelation of love, rather than a prescribed list of ritual” (Ackerman 34). About ritualism, in the preface of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, although Carroll admits that ritualism has fulfilled the need to bring people back to Church, he thinks that “it has gone too far in the opposite direction” (379) and poses a great danger to spiritually, explaining:

for the Congregation this new movement involves the danger of learning to think that the Services are done for them; and that their bodily presence is all they need contribute. And, for Clergy and Congregation alike, it involves the danger of regarding these elaborate Services as ends in themselves, and of forgetting that they are simply means, and the very hollowest of mockeries, unless they bear fruit in our lives. (379)

In his critique of the state of the Church, Carroll uses language to convey just how much it has changed: after starting to narrate her adventures at the request of the Mock Turtle, just when Alice is trying to repeat the same unchanging words from the old rhyme, “You are Old, Father William”, she notices that the words coming from her mouth are different. New words come out and give the old rhyme a different meaning or, perhaps, no meaning at all: “‘That’s different [. . .]’ said the Gryphon [. . .] ‘it sounds uncommon nonsense’” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 158). The “father” in the rhyme assumes also a religious connotation in order to convey how the old spirituality of the first Christians has been replaced by the new empty words of ritualism. It is the search for this older form of Christianity, an original unmediated connection with the divine (represented by the garden Alice tries to enter) that Alice embodies.

The search for the garden leads Alice to the house of the Duchess where Carroll reveals in a veiled manner, and through the use of parody, why he cannot help but to criticize the Church. The personification of the Church, the Duchess along with the Queen, which represents the power of the state, are the only characters named after their social title and the only two that share the power to demand other characters' heads be cut off. They represent the two powers in Victorian society with the Queen as the chief of the state and, second in command, the Duchess representing the second power in command: the Church. Again Carroll initiates the chapter with the focus on the Rabbit. Considering the interpretation of the Rabbit's symbology this thesis proposes, it can be seen as a clue to interpreting the following action that concerns the Duchess as a veiled critique to the state of affairs of the Church of England. The Rabbit has to have tea with the Duchess but has to find his fan and white gloves or she will have him executed. The veiled manner in which the subjects are approached (Rabbit) has to comply with the social conventions of the time (fan and gloves for tea) or he will be punished (executed). This connection between the Rabbit and the Duchess both establishes a link and functions as a clue to the following passage about the Duchess which takes place at her house. After the encounter with the Rabbit and changing size, Alice bumps into different characters that make her run or move further into Wonderland in the direction of the house of the Duchess until she finds herself at her front door. When Alice enters the smoke-filled house she finds the Duchess sitting on a three-legged stool carelessly cradling a baby. The detail of the three-legged stool that Carroll finds worth mentioning is relevant to establish an analogy between the Duchess as the figure of the Church of England and the figure of the prophetess of the Oracle of Delphi. The prophetess would sit on a three-legged seat positioned above a natural rock fissure out

of which would rise vapours to induce the priestess into a trance. While once people have relied on the advice of the prophetess to transmit messages from God Apollo, now the intermediate between people and God is the Duchess (the Church). More than an oracle, this is a position of undisputed authority for the Duchess (the Church) and she expects unflinching acceptance of her statements, so when the Duchess realizes Alice is questioning her by thinking about what she has said the Duchess is not too pleased: “‘thinking again?’ the Duchess asked [. . .] ‘I’ve a right to think,’ said Alice sharply, for she was beginning to feel a little worried. ‘Just about as much right,’ said the Duchess, ‘as pigs have to fly’” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 135). Alice’s comment that she has the right to think about what she has been told, can be seen as Carroll making a stand against the blind acceptance of the ritualistic elements imposed by the Church. And, although *Wonderland* does not feature a flying pig, in order to put forward his critical thoughts on the rising of ritualism in Victorian English Church, Carroll has the baby the Duchess cradles turn into a pig.

The Duchess is cradling the baby (who can be interpreted as Carroll himself because, as a Deacon, he is a son of the Church/Duchess) and singing a lullaby while shaking the baby violently. The lullaby, a parody of a poem written around 1850 to inspire parents to rule by love instead of fear, shows that, although it is a lullaby (a song or rhyme meant to calm and soothe children) the Duchess sings, it is the contrary of what it should be and that she rules by fear instead of love:

Speak roughly to your little boy,

And beat him when he sneezes:

He only does it to annoy,

Because he knows it teases. (Carroll, *Wonderland* 85)

The Duchess` house is full of pepper and everyone in it sneezes but the Duchess and her cook. What is cooked in the house of the Duchess (Church) is provocative to Carroll and he cannot help but to have a reaction to it (sneeze). However, the Duchess orders to “speak roughly to [. . .] and beat” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 85) those who sneeze because she (the Church) feels they are teasing her (challenging the authority of the Church). Carroll gives the idea that the Duchess (Church) wants everyone to endure the pepper without even so much as sneezing. But like the tiny bits of pepper in the air all around that stimulate such a visceral answer (the baby boy cannot help sneezing), so does Carroll cannot help criticizing (teasing). Carroll annoys because he dares to tease with his critique which, compared to the overbearing power of Victorian culture`s institutions such as the Church (the Duchess), is but little sneezes from a little boy . . . but that *do* annoy.

Yet, the same pig establishes a parallel with another work representative of Platonic philosophy, *The Republic*, in order to fundament Carroll`s argument that by shunning the artifice of ritualism man can also become a better man and contribute to the creation of a better society. In *The Republic* Plato presents a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon in which they attempt to define the ideal republic. For Socrates it is a simple city in which society recognizes that individuals have different habilities with which they contribute to the society by providing for his/her own moderate needs. It has a simple structure of three main social classes of laborers, merchants, and the specialized craftsmen (groups of farmers, craftsmen, sailors, herdsman, builders) that produce quality goods in the right amount, or moderately. Socrates` city displays simplicity regarding material possessions where there is no poverty because people`s basic needs are met and people do not desire more, and where there is no war because it has no riches to be lusted for by a foreign

invader nor do the people of the city lust to augment their possessions by going after someone else's. Socrates defends that when this moderation is broken it gives rise to injustice because some want more at the expense of others. Glaucon, however, defends the ideal republic should have luxurious excesses, engage in the enlargement of territory to feed a growing population because there are more social classes, and it would then need a warring class to defend the city and its luxuries and wealth. Glaucon finds Socrates' ideal city too simple down to the food and when Socrates describes a simple diet that includes little more than boiled roots and acorns, Glaucon says that it is so simple it should be called "city of pigs": "Socrates, said he, if you had been making a city of hogs, on what else but these would you have fed them?" (Plato, *Republic* 79). The Socratic ideal city has since been famously called "the city of pigs" but, although nowadays this is not perceived as a positive epithet, Joel de Lara defends that "the city of pigs" is not, as some would interpret, a deficient attempt at defining the Kallipolis (Greek for beautiful/perfect city) because it is a just city-state that is the perfect home for the development of the just man. According to de Lara's research the city of pigs is as just, if not more, than the ideal republic (Kallipolis) because it is unified (a defining condition of virtue for soul and city) and that is why Socrates describes it as "healthy" (hugiês), "complete" (telea), and "true" (alêthinê). Through the caricature of the pig, Carroll establishes a link with the ideal of simplicity of Platonic philosophy in order to defend the simplicity, void of ritualism, of the religious practice. Because pepper, as ritualism, is an excessive artifice so the annoying boy that keeps reacting to it (interpreted as Carroll himself) turning into a pig shows that he is for the Platonic ideal of simplicity represented by what has become known as "the city of pigs". Carroll opposes his city of pigs to Saint Augustine's *The City of God*. *The City of God*

Against the Pagans, full title, is seen as a cornerstone of Western thought and approaches the themes of the existence of evil, the suffering of innocents, free will versus divine omniscience and the original sin. In it Saint Augustine develops the doctrine of the original sin through the metaphor of the City of God. In his theology, God's prohibition is meant to bestow obedience on Adam and Eve which Saint Augustine sees as a good attribute to have. For him sin is inherent to all human beings and he sees all human maladies as a punishment for the disobedience of Adam and Eve. He uses this perspective to justify suffering by children. Contrastingly, Carroll defends a simplicity reminiscent of early Christianity (a simpler and pure state like that of when mankind first lived in the Garden of Eden), which he represents through the search for the illusive garden. In Carroll's novel the garden is not a place of sin but represents a simple spiritual connection with the divine that has been increasingly lost due to the focus on ritualism of Victorian times. This state of affairs Carroll is critical of, leads to a lacking spirituality that, among other things, can escalate to the religious violence found in the gardens of postmodern *Midnight's Children*.

4.1.2.2. Midnight's Children

Although written in the eighties, *Midnight's Children* approaches the deeply political nature of the religious metanarrative circulating in the forties in pre and post-independence India and the events that have resulted from it. The great religious metanarrative of the time is referred to as the two-nation theory and defends that the, once characteristic, religious diversity of India (particularly the existence of Muslim and Hindu groups sharing the same space) is a threat to the future of India. Influential philosophers like Syed Ahmad Khan and Sir Muhammad Iqbal defend that Hindus and Muslims are radically different and that after

the departure of the British the two groups would fight for power and there would be no more peace. Because Hindus are the majority, Muslims fear that, after the British leave, a government with a democratic system based on majority rule would mean the Hindus would decide on every aspect of Muslim life. This metanarrative ultimately leads to political division as it defends that religious identity is the most important because Muslims have a far deeper connection with another Muslim even if (s)he is in another country than with a non-Muslim living in the same country, hence, a political party is created to push for a religious division between Hindus and Muslims. The All India Muslim League is a political party created in 1906, in then British India, born out of the need to represent the interests of Muslims, proposed by Khwais Salimullah, the Nawab of Dhaka, in 1906 and created by prominent Muslim leader Sir Mian Muhammad Shafi who proposes its name. It is immediately approved when it is proposed at the All India Muslim Education Conference annual meeting of 1906 and it starts openly pushing what will become known as the two-nation theory in the 1930s. This two-nation theory defends the partition of India between Hindus and Muslims and is further, and irretrievably, set in motion on March 23 of 1940, in a speech by Muhammad Ali Jinnah (born Mahomedali Jinnahbhai), the leader of the Muslim League from 1913 to the independence of Pakistan in 1947 and then the first general governor of Pakistan. In it Jinnah defends that (despite hundreds years of peaceful closeness) Hindus and Muslims have conflicting perspectives on a social, religious, and philosophical level, and should be countries apart so that the general social wellbeing of both groups is achieved. Though this could be seen to be in the interest of the religious wellbeing of the Muslim community, *Midnight's Children* reveals other interests behind the creation of this metanarrative. While establishing a link with the creational metanarrative of

the Garden of Eden, the novel shows how different are the gardens of pre-independence and post-independence India in order to show how much the initial depiction of a peaceful spiritual communion between man, other animals and God is gone.

Rushdie chooses to start the novel with a link to the first man of the story of the Garden of Eden, Adam, by choosing to name Saleem's grandfather (the first generation of the novel) Aadam and ends the novel with Saleem's son, also named Aadam. This mirrors the image of the enclosed Garden of Eden but, from creating a false image of Jesus to attract devotees to using religion as the basis for political division, in the novel's garden(s) Rushdie exposes the use of religion as a tool in the creation of self-serving metanarratives on the part of both the English colonizer and the Indians. Rushdie's Aadam, however, reveals that the theological perspective the author departs from is, at the very least, somewhat gnostic which gives him a different reading of the story of the Garden of Eden. A devout Muslim with a European education, Aadam Aziz (the first Adam) reflects the same merging of Eastern and Western that Rushdie also does himself and which is present in the novel. The narration of Saleem employs elements from the various religions present in his life as characters are Muslim, Hindu and Catholic and, at certain moments of the narrative Saleem, whose birth is prophesized like the birth of Jesus Christ, compares himself with Ganesh, Moses, Mohammed and the Buddha. Saleem is the son of Aadam Aziz and he also acknowledges he is fathered and mentored by snakes, which makes Saleem to be a representation of the son of Adam, with the knowledge of the Gnostic perspective represented by the snake of the story of the Garden of Eden. Born in Bombay on June 19, 1947 to an affluent family of devout (but liberal) Muslims, Rushdie is formally educated in England: first his secondary studies in Rugby and university in Cambridge's King's College from 1965 to 1968. While at

university he is influenced by the anti-Establishment spirit of the 1960s with the cultural characteristics of his generation such as the hippie style, the peak of British rock (The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Animals) and the anti-Vietnam war movement he later refers to in *The Satanic Verses*. Yet, Rushdie is also greatly influenced by Eastern literature, mythology and philosophy. Rushdie's last name, alone, can attest for his family's appreciation of Eastern thinkers: his father, businessman Anis Ahmed Rushdie, after the death of his own father (who is named Din Khaliqi Dehlavi) breaks from the Muslim tradition of having his father's first name be his last name and renames himself Rushdie after his admiration for twelfth century Spanish-Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd. Known in the West as Averroes, a corrupted form of his name in Latin, Ibn Rushd (AD 1126-1198) is a prominent Cordovan Muslim philosopher and physician known in the West for his work on Aristotle. Not only being raised and educated in an appreciation for eastern philosophy and mythology but also his Islamic upbringing seems to have contributed to Rushdie being aware of Gnostic perspectives such as the earlier Gnostic interpretation of the Garden of Eden story. Islam, according to many scholars, has Gnostic influences. According to Professor Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, Muslim cosmology combines "esoteric visions on the basis of Neoplatonic and Gnostic theosophy and mysticism" (530) with scientific theories. Similarly, other scholars such as religion scholar Marvin Meyer defend that "features of prophet Jesus in Islam recall aspects of Jesus in Christian traditions, particularly in the wisdom traditions and wisdom gospels" (659-660) and prominent Gnosticism scholar Kurt Rudolph sees Islamic theology and mysticism as closely linked with Gnosticism:

some gnostic ideas are to be met with in Islamic mysticism and in the literature influenced by it. But especially it is the extreme Shi'ite sect of Ismailism

which can be related in its beginnings (ca. 850) with gnostic traits and therefore has been called “Islamic gnosis” by modern scholars. Manichaeism, which flourished longer in the Orient, found its reflection in early Islamic theological trends, apparently most effectively in the book of the Arab prophet himself. Mohammed, according to the Koran, advocates the same cyclic theology of revelation as the gnostic prophet Mani (376)

Hence, it is not far-fetched to see Rushdie’s intellectual intimacy with Gnosticism surface in Gnostic symbology in the novel. The narrator himself solidifies the reading of the novel as a Gnostic interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden as an achieving of knowledge story (instead of a sin story) because of how he establishes a link with the figure of the snake. The connection between the narrator Saleem with snakes is reaffirmed at key points in the narrative: when Saleem falls ill as a baby and is close to dying, while no doctor knows what is wrong with him, it is the family neighbor and Doctor Schaapsteker who saves his life by administering him snake venom; Schaapsteker who is described as “the incarnation of snakehood” (Rushdie, *MC* 356-357) whose “tongue flicked constantly in and out between his papery lips” (Rushdie, *MC* 188) like one of his many snakes, is considered one of Saleem’s fathers as he gives Saleem life; and while talking about his last name, Saleem explains that Sinai contains Sin “the letter S, as sinuous as a snake; serpents lie coiled within the name” (Rushdie, *MC* 423); and later on, after losing his memory in the Sundarbans jungle, Saleem is bitten by a snake which restores his memory. The narrator also lets the readers know how Schaapsteker, “the last of a line which began when a king cobra mated with a woman who gave birth to a human (but serpentine) child” (Rushdie, *MC* 357) teaches him about the way of the snake: “for several weeks, I sat at his feet, and he revealed to me

the cobra which lay coiled within myself” (Rushdie, *MC* 357). Saleem is the child of the snake because he has been given knowledge about other Eastern philosophical, often Gnostic, perspectives which have enabled him to preserve (his pickles) and reveal (his telling of the events) other perspectives of the events in his life and history of India. Much like the Gnostic view of the story of the Garden of Eden in *The Gospel of Truth* (one of the early Christianity manuscripts from the Nag Hammadi Codices that tells the story from the perspective of the serpent as the benevolent giver of knowledge) so is Saleem telling this story from a dissenting perspective. Saleem also hints that this story he tells has a secret (or not obvious) level of meaning as he is instructed by Schaapsteker: “be wise, child. Imitate the action of the snake. Be secret” (Rushdie, *MC* 358). In the words of Roger Young Clark, Saleem is “seduced by the logic of the snake-man, [and] adopts a reasoning reminiscent of the serpent in the Garden of Eden” (74).

At the beginning of the story, in the Kashmiri gardens of his grandfather’s youth in 1915, as an Indian with a Western education, Saleem’s Adam, Aadam Aziz, is already corrupted by Western culture making him “uncertain and unwary” (Rushdie, *MC* 6) about the old rituals of his faith. Although he tries to pretend nothing has changed, after taking his prayer mat to a lakeside garden he is left alone with his thoughts while trying to pray and all the prejudices Westerners have shown towards him come flooding into his mind:

‘In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful . . . ’ - the exordium, spoken with hands joined before him like a book, comforted a part of him, made another, larger part feel uneasy- ‘. . . Praise be to Allah, lord of the Creation . . . ’ - but now Heidelberg invaded his head; there was Ingrid [. . .] her face scorning him for his Mecca-turned parroting;

here, their friends Oskar and Ilse Lubin the anarchists, mocking his prayer [. . .] ‘. . . The Compassionate, the Merciful, King of the Last Judgement! . . . ` [so there he was, despite their presence in his head, attempting to re-up it's himself with an earlier self which ignored their influence (Rushdie, *MC* 6)

Aadam is forever changed by living among the prejudice westerners have towards Muslims and his western rational education leads him to, despite never fully abandoning his belief in the God of Islam, be self-conscious of his religious practices, “knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. Permanent alteration: a whole” (Rushdie, *MC* 7). Though in these Kashmiri gardens (which represent the genesis of Saleem Sinai’s family story) there is already the genesis of the religious conflict that will become rampant later, there is still a level of religious tolerance that has characterized India for hundreds of years. An example of the peaceful relations between different religions is the description Tai, the boatman that ferries people to the many gardens, makes of Jesus. Wrinkled and leathery Tai, who represents the continuity of old Indian beliefs and is described as “the living antithesis of Oskar-Ilse-Ingrid’s [Aadam’s European friends] belief in the inevitability of change” (Rushdie, *MC* 11), seems to be so old he has no idea of how old he is and, therefore, remembers when Jesus visited Kashmir. Tai tells Aadam Aziz “that Isa when he came, beard down to his balls, bald as an egg on his head [. . .] And what an appetite! [. . .] Saint or devil, I swear, he could eat a whole kid in one go” (Rushdie, *MC* 13). Tai describes Jesus in the current terms he would use for everyone else, giving the impression that for someone almost as old as India (in India’s history) Jesus is, though not belittling his relevance, just another of the many prophets to

have lived in India. Tai's description of Jesus is revealing of the all-inclusiveness and accepting normalcy of living in a country characterized by hundreds of different faiths. The religious peace and harmony in the time of Aadam Aziz manifests itself in every circumstance of daily life back then as when Aadam is at a hotel with new wife Naseem when a fire breaks out and when he screams for help "about thirty-five Sikhs, Hindus and untouchables" (Rushdie, *MC* 39) rush into the room to help.

After describing Aziz's return to the gardens of Kashmir, the narrator follows Aadam Aziz's life as a newlywed further on in time and describes the walled garden of the house Aadam and Naseem live with their children in Agra. This garden, though, is already rife with religious intolerance. Saleem begins the description of the garden by mentioning that the rickshaw boy who rents a house at the back of the garden and is a fan of eastern Western movies has seen the poster of a movie with his favorite actor. The Western is adapted to Hindu audiences and features a hero cowboy who, single handedly, protects cows by setting free the ones being driven to slaughter, and a beautiful Indian girl that performs songs and dances in a cowboy hat. The atmosphere of religious intolerance in Delhi at the time of the movie's exhibit is such that Muslims drive cows to slaughter past cinemas to taunt Hindus which results in riots. This religious unrest is the result of the belief in the metanarratives of either side that explain their faith as the right one as opposed to the other. By the time Dr. Aziz is married and has young children religious unrest has permeated Indian society and has even reached his young children. So when Aadam Aziz finds out the tutor of Islamic law chosen for the children is teaching them to hate and disrespect other religions he fires him much to the discontentment of his wife who accepts the situation. Society is already being divided into those who agree with the "us (the good) versus them (the bad)"

religious situation while some, such as Aadam Aziz's friend the Rani of Cooch Naheen, are critical of it. She says about the Muslim League and its religious division: "that bunch of Toadies! [. . .] Landowners with vested interests to protect! What do they have to do with Muslims? They go like toads to the British and form governments for them" (Rushdie, *MC* 55). Like many other Indians, she perceives the political interests behind the religious speech of the time that emphasizes the difference between the Hindu and Muslim religions and the impossibility of a peaceful and just society if the two groups remain together.

This seeps through society and by the time Aadam Aziz's daughter, Amina, marries Ahmed Sinai and moves into her husband's house in Delhi the religious division and intolerance have escalated and people are already separated in neighborhoods according to religious faith. The narrator describes how Amina's home is in a Muslim neighborhood of the old city where there is "no greenery and the cows kept away, knowing they weren't sacred here" (Rushdie, *MC* 89). Then it emerges the Ravana Gang which presents itself as an anti-Muslim movement but creates social unrest with its violent actions such as painting hate slogans about Muslims, or burning down Muslim businesses. This group reveals how it is possible to create an environment of fear and intimidation based on religion in order to profit, because the main objective of the Ravana Gang is profiting from blackmail: "behind this façade of racial hatred, the Ravana gang was a brilliantly-conceived commercial enterprise. Anonymous phone calls, letters [. . .] offered the choice between paying a single, once-only cash sum and having their world burned down" (Rushdie, *MC* 93). The religious hatred in Delhi makes it possible for any situation to escalate into violence and social unrest amongst all classes and all ages as the situation that happens when Hindu Lifa Das goes to a Muslim neighborhood with his peepshow displaying pictures of India. A girl, described

as having one continuous eyebrow and a lisp, comes over to watch the peepshow among a crowd of children, and, although there are already other children watching and in line to watch the show, she demands to watch it: “Me firht! Out of the way . . . let me thee! I can't *thee!*” (Rushdie, *MC* 98). Because Lifafa Das does not let her bypass all other children to watch the show and tells her she has to wait her turn, she gets infuriated and uses their religious difference in order to stress his inferiority as a Hindu threatening the Hindu that has dared to come to a Muslim neighborhood (a muhalla): “you`ve got a *nerve*, coming into thigh muhalla! I know you: my father knows you: everyone knows you're a Hindu!” (Rushdie, *MC* 98). The atmosphere of religious intolerance makes the situation escalate quickly and when the little girl starts chanting “Hindu! Hindu!” (Rushdie, *MC* 98) all other children join in, people come to windows and the father of the girl starts shouting at Lifafa: “Mother raper! Violator of our daughters!” (Rushdie, *MC* 98). The Muslim community is further fuelled by the existence of some reports of attacks on Muslim children, which are used to fuel the rage towards Muslims and when a woman shouts “Rapist! Arré my God they found the badmash! There he is!” (Rushdie, *MC* 98-99) the whole muhalla turns against him and boys are shouting “ra-pist! Ra-pist! Ray-ray-ray-pist!” (Rushdie, *MC* 99) and he is addressed to as “Mister Hindu, who defiles our daughters? Mister idolater, who sleeps with sister?” (Rushdie, *MC* 99). The crowd is ready to beat him and possibly kill him but he his helped by Amina who shelters him and, showing some sense and temperance, tells the crowd off.

Though not as violently, sensible Amina is also influenced by this religious divide which manifests in other daily non-violent situations such as in the distrust Saleem`s mother, Amina, feels towards someone who she perceives as having a different religious

perspective. Amina, when pregnant, goes to a seer to have a reading of her unborn child's future but, when there, her fear of what she considers to be a pagan establishment makes her see images of feral creatures in the ceiling shadows:

Amina, blinking in the dark at the brightness of lanterns, makes out insane shapes on the roof: monkeys dancing; mongeese leaping; snakes swaying in baskets; and on the parapet, the silhouettes of large birds, whose bodies are as hooked and cruel as their beaks: vultures (Rushdie, *MC* 109).

The narrator's realistic description of the creatures reinforces the fact that, although they are only shapes made by the shadows cast by men walking around, for Amina they are real enough to fear. Amina's fear and distrust of those who do not share her religious beliefs leads her to have her own reality. Revealing how "reality" can be merely individual perspective and, hence, unreliable because the meaning someone attributes to things or events is not necessarily what it *is* but what someone is conditioned to perceive. When Saleem, the narrator, is still in the womb the religious distrust Amina displays grows into religious intolerance within both Muslim and Hindu communities and starts manifesting in violent riots so when Ahmed's fabric factory is burned in the religious riots he decides to move the family to Bombay where Saleem is born. Saleem's parents buy a house to leaving British William Methwold in Methwold Estate, characterized by its European style houses amongst manicured gardens.

It is directly in these gardens or indirectly related to Saleem's childhood neighborhood that the action unfolds to reveal how much people can adapt religion to their perspective or personal intentions. Characters such as Mary Pereira, Saleem's Catholic live-in nanny, and her lover Joseph D'Costa show us how religion can be used to sustain racial prejudice.

When Mary Pereira and her lover Joseph D'Costa argue about the conflicts between Muslims and Hindus she tells Joe that “even if it's true about the killing, they're Hindu and Muslim people only; why get good Christian folk mixed up in their fight?” (Rushdie, *MC* 139). Mary promotes a divide among religious lines and cannot empathize with Muslims or Hindus because they are not Christian while Joseph D'Costa uses religion to justify a racial divide. For him there are the white people, the enemy, and Indians and there are *the* gods and then the gods of the white people: “you and your Christ. You can't get into your head that that's the white people's religion? Leave white gods for white men. Just now our own people are dying. We got to fight back; show the people who to fight instead of each other” (Rushdie, *MC* 139). So Mary Pereira goes to ask a Catholic priest about the color of Jesus and when the father answers blue, “the most beautiful, crystal shade of pale sky blue” (Rushdie, *MC* 137), Mary is left in shock. The simple mention that the priest is left perplexed “because this is not how she's supposed to react” (Rushdie, *MC* 137) reveals the power the Church has to create metanarratives that are uncontested. Because he is a priest and religious authority he is not used to people questioning him, even if what he says is obviously not possibly true for most.

To make the transition from Hinduism to Catholicism easier for recent converts the priest has been ordered by the Bishop what to answer, which shows how easy it is for those with religious authority to create their metanarratives, this time about Jesus:

[. . .] when they ask about colour they're almost always that . . . important to build bridges, my son. [. . .] 'God is love; and the Hindu love-god, Krishna, is always depicted with blue skin. Tell them blue; it will be a sort of bridge between the faiths; gently does it, you follow; and besides

blue is a neutral sort of colour, avoids the usual colour problems, gets you away from black and white. (Rushdie, *MC* 137-138)

The truth is that in India sometimes there are blue people. People like homeless Resham Bibi dead of cold who has “turned bright blue, Krishna-blue, blue as Jesus” (Rushdie, *MC* 578) but they are not seen by the church. The Bishop is only interested in attracting and keeping new converts, not the truth, and does not mind lying to achieve his purposes, exemplifying how religious beliefs can be used in order to create self-serving metanarratives based on illusions. Illusions such as the one Aadam Aziz suffers when he believes the ghost with wholes on his hands and heel he sees is God. But Mary Pereira believes it is her former lover Joe D`Costa who has died nearby. Aadam Aziz` s ghost scare seems to show that even a political radical communist such as Joe D`Costa can be mistaken for God. Who or what is worshiped as a God seems to often be the product of personal interest such as the case of Cyrus the Great, the son of Saleem childhood neighbors the Dubashes, who passes himself as the guru Lord Kushro Khusrovand in order to obtain wealth and social prestige. As Lord Kushro he profits from being “hailed by crowds half a million strong, and credited with miracles” (Rushdie, *MC* 374) enabling him to acquire “accountants, and tax havens, and a luxury liner called the Kushrovand Starship, and an aircraft” (Rushdie, *MC* 374).

However, because Saleem`s family is Muslim and the Indian government is seizing Muslim property, they decide to move to Pakistan but what motivates this move and Saleem`s experiences in Pakistan further reveal how, during and after partition, religion is closely linked with financial profit. In India Hindus expect to profit by appropriating the properties Muslims that have moved to Pakistan have left behind. In the words of Narlikar:

“freeze a Muslim’s assets, they say, and you make him run to Pakistan, leaving all his wealth behind him” (Rushdie, *MC* 185). Saleem finds himself in other gardens after moving with his family to Pakistan, to the house of uncle Zulfikar in what Saleem calls the Zulfikar Estate. It is in these gardens of Zulfikar Estate that the eleven-year-old Saleem witnesses the reality of the politicizing of the partition of India into its two main religious groups. He distracts himself trying to “spot the Army security officers, the military police, who arrived that afternoon to lurk secretly behind every garden bush” (Rushdie, *MC* 399) before witnessing a dinner-party in which the military high echelons are plotting a coup in order to secure their power. Knowing how ambitious Major Zulfikar describes Pakistan as a paradise, an eden of profit “a goldmine” (Rushdie, *MC* 108), Saleem soon realizes that, instead of the official intentions of protecting Muslims, the power players of the new nation of Pakistan aim only to profit. Major Zulfikar intends to profit from the creation of Pakistan after the divide along religious lines officialized by the British Parliament as the Indian Independence Act, an agreement that recognizes India as an independent and sovereign country and divides India into the two independent states of India and Pakistan. Muslims from India leave homes and most possessions behind and flee to Pakistan and Sikhs and Indus living in what would be Pakistan flee to India creating a refugee crisis and countless deaths from sectarian violence. As the narrator describes it: while “the partitioned nations are washing themselves in another’s blood, [. . .] a certain punchinello-faced Major Zulfikar is buying refugee property at absurdly low prices, laying the foundations of a fortune that will rival the Nizam of Hyderabad’s” (Rushdie, *MC* 150).

Further than being an instrument of personal interests, religion is even shown to be a political instrument in the wars between newly independent India and Pakistan through the

Islamic metanarrative of Jihad. This metanarrative defends that a sacrificial death that involves killing infidels guarantees you a place with God and social recognition. Saleem tells us the story of Shaeed Dar, a fifteen-year-old boy in Saleem's platoon in the Pakistani army, whose father, struggling to provide for nineteen children, tells him the meaning of his name (martyr) and that he hopes his son makes his name justice and become the first in the family to enter "the perfumed garden" (Rushdie, *MC* 490). Religion is the instrument the father uses to make his son enlist in the army and serves the father's personal interests as this way the father has one less mouth that he cannot feed and, furthermore, his son's martyrdom will improve the status of the family in society. When the boy's body is torn in two by a grenade Saleem takes him to the top of a mosque and, as he bleeds out to death, his screams echo through the loudspeaker on the mosque's rooftop. A strong image of the connection between religion and war in which, instead of calls to prayer, what comes out of the loudspeaker are the screams of someone dying torn by war. In this war between Hindus and Muslims the imagery of the garden is used to convince young men into martyrdom and is so effective that even when one side agrees to surrender and an agreement to end the war is reached, Saleem believes there are most likely some who are distraught they are not martyrs: "what is not known: whether the last man was grateful to be spared or peeved at missing his chance of entering the camphor garden" (Rushdie, *MC* 524). In the "Modern Islam has glamorised jihad: Rushdie" interview with CNN-IBN Deputy Editor Sagarika Ghose, Rushdie notes that holy war is growing amongst underprivileged youth and how alluring jihad can be to young people who cannot find a job and do not have hope in a stable and productive future. He finds this worrisome and believes "something has gone seriously wrong" with Islam mostly due to Saudi money and the rise of Ayatollahs

and Shia Islam creating a situation in which religious extremism is backed by an endless money source.

Midnight's Children reveals the unscrupulous use of religious metanarratives in promoting illusions that serve various purposes that are less spiritual and more materialistic in nature. Saleem exemplifies the perspective that if there is such a thing as the word of God it is rearranged by man giving the example of his father, Ahmed Sinai, a bitter man who mistreats his servants and whose original ambition is rearranging the Quran in its accurate chronological order because “‘when Muhammed prophesied, people wrote down what he said on palm leaves, which were kept any old how in a box. After he died, Abubakr and the others tried to remember the correct sequence; but they didn't have very good memories’” (Rushdie, *MC* 107). Although the novel does not question if the Quran or any other canonical book contain any fundamental truth, it reveals that, even if they do, man's interpretation and handling of it is flawed. This is also the perspective of Jeanette, the main character and narrator of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* who believes her religious community has a skewed interpretation of the word of God and Christ's teachings.

4.1.2.3. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

Although published in 1985, the plot of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* concerns the 1960s and early 1970s in a poor industrial town in rural northern England in which, despite the social changes of the time, religion has an important social role in helping people handle life in a poor northern town. These are the decades of a cultural revolution that questions the role of the church as exemplified by the uproar and public debate created by *Honest to God*, the book by John Robinson in which the traditional image of God taught by churches

is challenged. The book even causes many, at the time, to question their religiosity. Mostly in the bigger cities of England, there is a social revolution that includes a change in fashion, music and sexual behavior. For instance: particularly from 1963 on there is increasing social criticism and ridicule of churchmen referring to pre-marital sex happening amongst youth as *fornication*. Youth feels an increasing detachment from traditional religion and wants the freedom to choose their spiritual path which, then, generally gravitates towards eastern philosophies as exemplified by The Beatles, in 1967, becoming followers of the transcendental meditation mystic Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The exchange of ideologies and contact with other perspectives due to the increasing numbers of young people going to university further influences youth to challenge the metanarratives of institutionalized religion, particularly those that promote a complete rejection of different perspectives and those that promote patriarchy. This distancing from established religion that universities, unwillingly, promote is exemplified by the research of historian, specialized in secularization, Callum G. Brown, who notes how “one woman recalled her experience at a central London Catholic teacher-training college in the mid- to late 1960s, where she ‘dropped off quite a bit’ from the routines of saying of novenas (prayers) that had been instilled in her in convent” (226). Much of the urban youth in the 1960s and 1970s shuns religious rituals such as the baptism and religious marriage and challenges the established and accepted theology advocating, instead of the morality determined by religion, for an individual choice of moral behavior.

Despite the fact that in these decades urban churches experience the highest and most rapid attendance decline in Britain, the Church of England remains quite closed to change and can still count with high numbers of devotees in rural, secluded areas. Small towns,

particularly industrial northern ones like Accrington, secluded and with a difficult living, have a higher church attendance as concludes C. G. Brown: “church attendances and membership remained higher in northern Britain” (226). It is in these communities that the religious metanarratives that promote a “the chosen ones” or patriarchal perspective are still determining and uncontested. The perspective of “the chosen ones “ refers to the emphasis the different denominations of the Church of England put in the belief that they are the ones that follow a true spirituality and are, therefore, the ones whose prayers God listens to and the only ones protected against any apocalyptic judgement by God. The non-acceptance of difference is so ingrained that, although professing the same faith, black Christian immigrants to England in the 1960s “from a mostly Anglican English-speaking Caribbean felt rejected by English Anglicanism” (C. G. Brown 255). Victims of racism, the black Afro-Caribbean migrants form their own independent churches opening numerous Afro-Caribbean Pentecostal Churches throughout the UK. The “us versus them” perspective promotes social and racial elitism that the novel reveals in the treatment of outsiders and other ethnicities by the congregation, even when sharing the same faith, like the prejudices of Jeanette's mother about a black pastor. This perspective stems from the feeling of being religiously superior because theirs is *the* true religion. So much so that Pentecostal Evangelicals (from Greek *euangelion* meaning gospel or good news) attribute extreme value to converting missions because they believe they are preaching *the* message of salvation. The Pentecostal Evangelical view of being an integral part of a community that has sided with God as opposed to everyone else, extends to their view of historical events. Pentecostals follow a literal interpretation of the Bible regarding it as the ultimate authority and, hence, follow the scriptures which they apply to their interpretation of

current events writing about historical or current events as part of a universal battle between good and evil.

This disregard for difference is accompanied by a sexist divide between men and women based on the interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden by a patriarchal ruling elite of the Roman Catholic Church that interprets it as women being weaker because they are prone to sin and to deviate from the teachings of God. As late as the 1960s, although the Church of Scotland finally grants women the right to be teaching and ruling elders, in the Church of England leaders strongly oppose the ordination of women. An Anglican document of 1966 exemplifies the arguments against the ordination of women presented by all English Church denominations of the time:

Sex differences have erotic effects, which differ according to whether men or women are in public positions. There are many spheres of activity in which men and women meet and cooperate without sexual arousal; they are the relatively impersonal spheres of shop, factory, farms, regiments, schools and laboratories where the sexes meet en masse. But where women perform personal services as secretaries to businessmen or assistants to professional ones, in a setting where privacy is long and frequent, erotic factors come into play leading, if not frequently to adultery and fornication, at least often to possessiveness and heartbreaks. The pastoral office brings a closeness of spiritual intimacy which easily spills over into incipient love relationships. A two-sex priesthood would multiply this problem between ministers and between lay folk and ministers (Brown, C. G. 253)

These are the overall values still in place in the Pentecostal Church Jeanette is a member of, which, despite the substantial social transformations (anti-establishment protests, sexual liberation, clash of traditional versus new values) 1960s and 1970s British society goes through, is still a strong presence rising in numbers in rural industrial towns like Accrington.

Pentecostal spirituality is based on a Christian lifestyle different from general contemporary society and a celebratory expression of spirituality. It focuses on thanking God for blessings by dancing, praying or singing in tongues which is viewed by some scholars such as Gordon Mursell as also influenced by the times: “this charismatic, physical and uninhibited spirituality was undoubtedly stimulated by the free and counter-cultural spirit of England in the 1960s” (407). More than the specificities of a mass in which the liturgy is spontaneous and according to the desire of the pastor and is characterized by music, dancing, personal testimonies and where speaking in tongues may occur, other of its main characteristics are the belief in the need for all Christians to have a baptism with the Holy Spirit. This baptism concedes the baptized the gift of speaking in tongues, speaking in a language not known to the speaker but known to others (xenoglossy) or speaking in an unknown language for speaker and audience (glossolalia). This baptism is also believed to concede the ability to heal and prophesize, have visions, perform miracles and exorcisms as described in scripture. This places the male pastors of this community in a very powerful leading role within it because they are, basically, blessed with holy powers given by God and are able to choose what is communicated to the congregation in liturgy. This creates an environment that permits the creation or promotion of metanarratives that incentivize sexism, racism or elitism. The all-male religious ruling elite perpetuates the

patriarchal view of the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden as proof that men are superior to women because the latter easily succumb to sin. This perspective is the reason that, for example, until 1998 the conference that rules the Elim Pentecostal Church only allows men as members.

This environment, of a 1960s and early 1970s rural Pentecostal Evangelical community, is the focus of Winterson who takes hold of religious language in the form of an intertextuality with the story of the Garden of Eden to express her critical perspective. The same story the pastors of the community invoke to determine the behavior of its members, and condition women in particular, using the notion of sin based on a patriarchal interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden. The narrator starts the novel in Genesis, the name of the first chapter, to tell the story of her creation, or, how she is adopted into that religious community. Although Jeanette starts her narration with Genesis and all the next chapters have the names of the following books of the Bible, she places most of the novel in a version of the Garden of Eden of which she is later on expelled from: the Garden of the Hesperides. The intertextuality with the Garden of Eden via the myth of the Garden of the Hesperides is assured by the overbearing presence of her mother who, as the powerful goddess Hera, the Olympian queen of the gods and goddess of the sky and the stars, is an active enforcer of religious metanarratives of the Pentecostal Evangelical congregation. The golden apples are the oranges with which her mother comforts Jeanette into being accepting of the circumstances set by herself or the congregation. In this garden the fruit offered is not knowledge or dissent, it is conformism and submission instead. Unlike the Garden of Eden where the snake offers the possibility of dissent (fruit offer), here we have a garden that is such a controlled environment that she is only offered a way to conform.

In the first chapter, Genesis, Jeanette introduces the reader to her family and congregation and, much like the biblical story, reveals how she is adopted as a baby and comes to be in a Pentecostal Evangelical community and is educated in its belief system. As in the Garden of Eden, Jeanette tells the reader the story of her “creation”. It is all decided by her mother, whose view on having children seems mysterious to Jeanette since her mother is able to have children but decides to adopt. Jeanette humorously says that her mother is jealous of the immaculate conception and “very bitter about the Virgin Mary getting there first” (Winterson, *Oranges* 6) because she decides she wants a child to raise to be a missionary: “she followed a star until it came to settle above an orphanage, and in that place was a crib, and in that crib, a child. [. . .] She said, ‘This child is mine from the Lord’.” (Winterson, *Oranges* 14). Through this humorous description of her adoption as a way for her mother to recreate the immaculate conception one can see the importance of religion for her, and it also lets the reader foresee how much her mother is influenced by the church’s metanarratives. In Winterson’s Genesis, Jeanette’s description of her mother’s combination of harshness and religious zeal not only gives readers an idea of how Jeanette is brought up or a sense for how the congregation lives their spirituality, but also sets the tone for what is to come in terms of the plot: Jeanette’s separation from the congregation.

Jeanette’s description of her mother’s ways regarding religion, such as her offerings of oranges to Jeanette that represent her insistence in Jeanette conforming to the values of the congregation or the church campaigns she gets involved in, exemplify the religious views of the whole congregation. Jeanette’s religious life at home is determined by her mother and consists of a ritualistic routine of listening to the Light Programme and the World Service about the church’s missionary work on Sundays and assisting her mother’s

ritualistic, and far from spontaneous, manifestation of her faith: she always prays “in exactly the same way. First of she thanked God that she had lived to see another day. Then she spoke of her enemies, which was the nearest thing she had to a catechism” (Winterson, *Oranges* 7). This is such a mechanical process that when Jeanette hears “‘Vengeance is mine saith the Lord’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 7), she knows it is time to put the kettle on because “she was very regular. I put the milk in, in she came, and taking a great gulp of tea said one of three things” (Winterson, *Oranges* 7). Her mother's religiosity comes across as quite mechanical and not genuine. This lack of genuineness connected with religion is reinforced in the same first chapter (Genesis) with Jeanette telling how her family keeps a parchment from Lebanon in a drawer with a tablecloth with biblical scenes embroidered that they believe is part of the Old Testament but turns out to be “the lease to a sheep farm” (Winterson, *Oranges* 15). This alerts early on in the novel for the incongruent and false constructs easily created in her congregation.

Jeanette's mother puts the interests of the congregation first, so much so that, despite knowing her husband cannot cook well and feed young Jeanette properly, she often does not cook if things are not well in the church or if she is working on something for the church. When she listens to The Missionary Report she, according to the news, either cooks lunch for the family if there are many converts and no deaths or she does not cook at all if “the Godless had proved not only stubborn, but murderous” (Winterson, *Oranges* 8). Another example that her focus is not on nourishing her child but on fitting in with the expectations of the group occurs when she is chosen to write the script for the Nativity play and “she bought typing paper and a new dictionary and told my dad and me to do as best we could. She had the Lord's work to do” (Winterson, *Oranges* 152). Her mother's

religious zeal and authoritarian stance come across in the description of how she always prays “standing up, because of her knees, just as Bonaparte always gave orders from his horse, because of his size” (Winterson, *Oranges* 6). She is compared to a military leader who has plunged Europe in war and is also portrayed as rigid in her beliefs, dividing people in either friends or enemies: “my father liked to watch the wrestling, my mother liked to wrestle; it didn’t matter what. She was in the white corner and that was that” (Winterson, *Oranges* 5). This description of someone who believes to be on the right side of conflict without having the capacity to consider other perspectives reveals the strict attitude of the fundamentalist Pentecostal Evangelist congregation Jeanette grows in.

They believe that their perspective is God’s given truth and all those who are different, from animals to other cultures, are species apart that either need help into accepting the truth of the congregation or are beneath them. As an example of the views of the congregation, when Jeanette's mother hears on the radio about the family life of snails she cannot help to remark that that is “‘an Abomination, it’s like saying we come from monkeys’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 30). She does not recognize that any other creature that is so different from them can also have any similarity such as having a family. She believes the creational metanarrative of the church about God creating man, Adam and Eve. So, even if Darwin's evolution theory applies to other species, mankind is above it because mankind is created by God without any relation to other species. This view of themselves as a species created by God and as part of a congregation chosen by God fuels a sense of superiority that opposes them to anyone different, including other cultures. The congregation looks at other cultures as primitive, with primitive beliefs, that need to be converted: they have a Missionary Map with the countries on the front and, on the back, a

listing of tribes and their “Peculiarities” (Winterson, *Oranges* 6) and Jeanette notes that her favorite is the Buzule of Carpathian because “they believed that if a mouse found your hair clippings and built a nest with them you got a headache. If the nest was big enough, you might go mad” (Winterson, *Oranges* 6). Jeanette further remarks that “as far as I knew no missionary had yet visited them” (Winterson, *Oranges* 6). Her view of others as humorously primitive is conditioned by her religion. The books of her church such as *Where White Man Fears to Tread*, Pastor Spratt’s new book about the tribes he has met during his conversion missions, condition her view of different cultures as inferior and in need of conversion. Reading Pastor Spratt’s book, Jeanette’s mother comments: “‘do you know, [. . .] they fed these white mice on the same food as Injuns eat and they all died.’ ‘So?’ ‘So it just shows the Lord provides for Christian countries’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 147). “Injuns” is a pejorative term that comes from a seventeenth century variation of *Indian* and stresses her view of others who do not share the same religious beliefs as inferior to their church of God’s chosen. This negative view of difference comes up even in her ignorance regarding members of the congregation of a different ethnicity such as the new black pastor. The only time her mother acknowledges oranges are not the only fruit is as an excuse for her prejudices becoming so obvious when she is working on a mission for “coloured people” (Winterson, *Oranges* 219). Her mother is responsible for sourcing the food and, because for her they come from a warm exotic place, she believes they eat pineapple and stocks on pineapple cans. So when the first black pastor goes to her house she tries to explain him parsley sauce later finding out “he had lived most of his life in Hull” (Winterson, *Oranges* 219). But everyone suffers the consequences of their prejudices as, at the time, everyone at the mission has “to eat gammon with pineapple, pineapple upside-down

cake, chicken in pineapple sauce, pineapple chunks, pineapple slice. 'After all,' said my mother philosophically, 'oranges are not the only fruit'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 219).

Jeanette's mother embodies the congregation's lack of consideration for others which extends to other Englishmen who do not share the same faith which is perfectly exemplified when the congregation goes to the holidaying town of Blackpool and set up a conversion and prayer tent. They pray and sing throughout the night and five men from the nearby boarding house storm in to tell them that they are making too much noise, that they work all year at a factory and go there to have their only time of rest. But the congregation does not care about respecting their sleep and are, instead, furious they cannot praise the Lord as they see fit: "'the Lord strike you down,' spat Mrs Rothwell [. . .] 'on the last day the dead will walk, and you'll be with goats,' Mary said scornfully" (Winterson, *Oranges* 147). The congregation does not accept other interpretations and when they are preparing to sing Christmas carols and have rehearsals with the Salvation Army, when the General suggests they sing without the tambourines, and suggests the psalm that says to "make a joyful noise" (Winterson, *Oranges* 151) should not be interpreted literally "there was uproar. For a start it was heresy. Then it was rude" (Winterson, *Oranges* 151). Their belief in a literal interpretation of scripture and that they are favored by God and religious zeal also sustain social elitism as Jeanette's mother exemplifies by belittling the poor: she speaks about their neighbors' poverty as the result of doing something against God (drinking), she sees them as "the work of the Devil" (Winterson, *Oranges* 18), and refuses to shop in the warehouse the "desperate, the careless, the poorest" (Winterson, *Oranges* 18) shop in. However, Jeanette's narration lets readers know that the gypsies her mother belittles and calls "fornicators" (Winterson, *Oranges* 9) are the ones capable of turning "a blind eye to toffee

apples going missing” (Winterson, *Oranges* 8) and sometimes let children ride for free in the fair rides even if they do not have enough money.

Jeanette also reveals the proximity between the religiosity of the congregation and business telling the reader that what has drawn her mother and many other women to the congregation is the good looks of pastor Spratt whose “charisma stemmed from his time spent as an advertising manager for Rathbone’s Wrought Iron. He knew about bait. ‘There’s nothing wrong with bait,’ he said” (Winterson, *Oranges* 11-12). He tells people who assist his conversion speeches that upon converting they will receive gifts such as pot plants. The vocabulary used to describe the congregation’s conversion campaigns is the same used for a business marketing campaign. When speaking of her church’s campaign plans for rural Devon, Jeanette speaks of how they have always “used the same techniques” (Winterson, *Oranges* 46) and always choose the same types of place for the event because they follow the guidelines from the “action kit from Headquarters” (Winterson, *Oranges* 46) that their campaigns secretary has received emphasizing that they must put every effort into saving souls. Jeanette’s details of the kit reveal just how much the religious activities of the congregation can be taken as mere marketing campaigns:

the action kit, which had been specially designed by the Charismatic Movement Marketing Council, explained that people are different and need a different approach. You had to make salvation relevant to them, to their minds. [. . .] when talking to individuals, you determined as soon as you could what they most wanted in life, and what they were most afraid. [. . .] The Council set us training weekends for all those engaged in the Good Fight, and

gave out graphs so that we could monitor any improvements (Winterson, *Oranges* 46)

Her own mother mirrors these business-like conversions and, as with many modern marketing campaigns, uses her feminine seduction of a woman that is “plump and pretty” (Winterson, *Oranges* 47) to convert men at the pubs by playing religious hymns at the piano, becoming known among the male pub goers as “the Jesus Belle” (Winterson, *Oranges* 47). She is also described as a religious hypocrite and a great business woman who prioritizes the achievement of new converts as businesses do new clients putting it before her religious belief that they should not associate with other faiths because they are ungodly. She is capable of looking the other way when convenient as a conference to arrange new converts to their church proves. Jeanette’s mother “campaigns for weeks” (Winterson, *Oranges* 77) to guarantee the success of the event but they are having it at the only space available which is the Rechabite Hall. When asked by another member of the congregation if that is a good thing, if they are as holy as their congregation is so that they can be in that place her mother merely says that they will not review the suitability of the place any further and, regarding how holy they are “‘that’s for the Lord to decide’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 77). She is depicted as a great business woman because, as the treasurer of the Society for the Lost, a church group that intends to recruit more members to the church, the society “almost doubled in membership” (Winterson, *Oranges* 73). She runs it like a business and, as such, she creates discount offers for every newcomer and

every subscription form carried with it a number of tempting offers: discount on hymnbooks, and other religious accoutrements; a newsletter with a free

gift every time, and a free record at Christmas, and, of course, the discounts available at the Morecambe guest house” (Winterson, *Oranges* 73).

Although in an environment totally controlled by her mother and the leaders of the congregation, Jeanette is presented like someone that from early on does not fully fit her congregation weather because of some of her personal characteristics or because she also does not agree with some of the perspectives defended by that community. When a young Jeanette visits Elsie’s house she is charmed by her collage of Noah’s Ark with several animals including a detachable chimpanzee and she likes playing with it: “I had all kinds of variations, but usually I drowned it” (Winterson, *Oranges* 33). Keeping it to herself, she plays with creating different and alternative versions to the metanarratives of her church. When Jeanette is playing with Fuzzy Felt of her Sunday School room and decides to rewrite the story of Daniel in the lions’ den by putting the figurines of the lions as if they are eating Daniel, pastor Finch sees it and quickly exclaims that “‘that’s not right’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 17) and feels he must correct it himself and show her how the story has to be told. The leaders of Jeanette’s congregation do not let anyone stray from the established interpretation. And, although her needlework depicting the punishment of the damned is not accepted by her school and it is welcome in her religious community, it is also misinterpreted or misunderstood, for when she gives it to Elsie, and Elsie hangs it on the wall, Jeanette has to tell Elsie it is upside down. More than being a bad needlework, this reveals that Jeanette is also misunderstood in her congregation and works as an anticipation of what is to come, namely, Jeanette's confrontation of the metanarratives of her congregation.

The beginning of Jeanette's disbelief and questioning of the rules and metanarratives of the congregation, starts when Jeanette falls sick as a child. Jeanette goes deaf for three months and no one notices because everything that happens within the congregation is seen or depicted as conforming to the metanarratives of the congregation, so, even when Jeanette is sick that situation is seen as Jeanette being in a state of rapture as talked about in church. Initially Jeanette herself believes it because her mother thinks the same: when asked why her daughter is not answering she merely says “‘It’s the Lord’ [. . .] ‘Working in mysterious ways’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 31). When she writes on a piece of paper that she cannot hear her mother “nodded and carried on with her book. She had got it in the post that morning from Pastor Spratt. It was a description of missionary life called Other Continents Know Him Too. I couldn’t attract her attention, so I took an orange and went back to bed” (Winterson, *Oranges* 33). Her mother is focused on church matters and not on her so when she does not have any help with her situation, Jeanette comforts herself by having an orange, the only fruit her mother offers her. The only choice of fruit she has means the only choice she has is to conform. It is only when she encounters Miss Jewsbury during a walk that she works out that Jeanette is not hearing and needs medical care but, she is only able to do so because she has not been to church in a long time due to her musical tour in an orchestra “so she didn’t know that I was supposed to be full of the spirit” (Winterson, *Oranges* 34). Due to being away traveling, Miss Jewsbury is not influenced by the congregation’s depiction of Jeanette’s sudden deafness as a state of rapture so she calls for a doctor. Still, after being told by Miss Jewsbury that Jeanette needs medical attention, the rest of the congregation, the “Faithful had gone back to their chorus sheets as though nothing was happening at all” (Winterson, *Oranges* 35). Jeanette is hospitalized and,

finding herself being left in a hospital environment, starts to cry so her mother gives her an orange which she peels “to comfort” (Winterson, *Oranges* 36) herself. But, despite Jeanette’s apparent conformism of always having an orange being the only safe choice she knows, she starts to question the church and its “gifted” pastors, none of which realize there is something wrong with her and that she needs medical care: “since I was born I had assumed that the world ran on very simple lines, like a larger version of our church. Now I was finding that even the church was sometimes confused. This was a problem” (Winterson, *Oranges* 36). Her mother is emotionally detached, and does not visit every day nor stay long when she does because she is too busy with the church. Either she brings Jeanette a bag of oranges whenever she visits her in hospital, or she sends Jeanette’s father with some oranges instead. Her mother, although distant, is still able to make Jeanette conform. But Jeanette has started to realize that there are other fruits (other options) and not just that one option her mother presents her with: “‘the only fruit,’ she always said. Fruit salad, fruit pie, fruit for fools, fruited punch, Demon fruit, passion fruit, rotten fruit, fruit on Sunday. Oranges are not the only fruit” (Winterson, *Oranges* 39). While it is instilled in her that “uncertainty was what the Heathen felt, and I was chosen by God” (Winterson, *Oranges* 128) by her mother and congregation which do not accept Jeanette’s doubt or questioning, from early on Jeanette shows her disbelief in the stories told within the Church. Stories such as the conversion stories the church promotes of the “‘converted sweep` a filthy degenerate [. . .] who suddenly found the Lord [whose face] shone like an angel`s. He started to lead the Sunday School and died some time later, bound for glory” (Winterson, *Oranges* 11) or the conversion story of the “‘Hallelujah Giant`, a freak of

nature, eight feet tall shrunk to six foot three through the prayers of the faithful” (Winterson, *Oranges* 11).

As a physically detached observant of the congregation from a higher lookout point at church, Jeanette notes that “the elect have always been this way. Getting old, dying, starting again. Not noticing. Father and son. Father and son” (Winterson, *Oranges* 113). Like an outsider looking in, she is observant of the two unchanging foundational aspects of her religious culture: the passing on of constructs generation after generation and the patriarchal nature of her religious community. The congregation emphasizes the same patriarchal view that expects a twofold obedience from women to their husbands or fathers and to their male-led Church. Leading men of Jeanette's religious community such as Pastor Finch, believed by the congregation to be an expert in demons, establish an absolute dependence on the pastors of the congregation (because only they have the God given task of determining if someone is possessed and are capable of healing the possessed) by instilling distrust in women, even as infants. They enforce the submission of the feminine within the congregation with the justification that the pastors see them as more easily possessed by evil than men:

‘the best can become the worst,’ – he took me by the hand – ‘This innocent child, this bloom of the Covenant.’ [. . .] ‘This little lily could herself be a house of demons.’” [. . .] ‘It has been known for the most holy men to be suddenly filled with evil. And how much more a woman, and how much more a child. Parents, watch your children for the signs. Husbands, watch your wives. Blessed be the name of the Lord’. (Winterson, *Oranges* 16-17)

Anything that comes from these figures of authority of her church has a generalized uncritical acceptance because the congregation blindly accepts those in a power position within the church (pastors) self-defining as saviors: “‘I’m not one to boast,’ he reminded us, ‘but the Lord has given me a mighty gift.’ We murmured our agreement” (Winterson, *Oranges* 108). This uncritical acceptance of what the leaders of the congregation say results in a blind belief in what is said even when they do not fully understand it. Such as when Pastor Finch addresses the community after a conversion expedition through England. The pastor tells the congregation that there is an epidemic of demons in the north west region of England all due to “Unnatural Passions” (Winterson, *Oranges* 109) and, although not all know what he means, they accept it is a bad thing just as the pastor conveys.

In Jeanette's congregation the pastors invoke the story of the Garden of Eden to condition the behavior of its members, particularly to determine the behavior expected of women. The sermon of the much anticipated conference given by the pastors of the congregation in town is on perfection, which for the pastor is “a thing to aspire to. It was the condition of the man before the fall” (Winterson, *Oranges* 78). From this perspective, women are seen as the cause of mankind's fall that carry a propensity to sin and, therefore, need the guidance of men/Church if they want to reach or get as close as possible to that initial perfection. The narrator, humorously, hints at the hypocrisy of the spiritual perfection ideal the congregation promotes with the example of Mrs. Rothwell, who while at Blackpool has “gone off by herself to commune with the Spirit” (Winterson, *Oranges* 149) and because she is half deaf she does not realize the tide is coming in and nearly drowns but tries to pass her signaling for help for an welcoming of death because she is meeting the Lord: “‘I thought I would be in glory this time.’ ‘But you were signalling for help.’ ‘Nay, I were

saying goodbye.’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 150). Other members of the congregation mimic the zeal of the pastors in maintaining the metanarratives of the church, and many also mimic their hypocrisy by being publicly accepting of the rules of the congregation but going against many of those rules privately. Jeanette's own mother is such an example. In order to mold her to the expectations of the congregation, Jeanette's mother instills in her a distrust in her feelings towards Melanie when she suspects her daughter is infatuated. Her mother tells her the story of meeting Pierre when she is working in Paris as a young girl: he tells her she is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen, and during that time she believes she is in love with Pierre because she feels, like never before, “a fizzing and a buzzing and a certain giddiness [. . .] anywhere, at any time” (Winterson, *Oranges* 111), only to find out at a doctor's appointment that she has a stomach ulcer. Jeanette is led to conclude that “she had given away her all for an ailment” (Winterson, *Oranges* 111-112) as she encourages Jeanette to be careful because sometimes what one believes is love is something else, less poetic or noble and more . . . prosaic. Her mother instills in her that what Jeanette thinks is love is, in fact, a disease. Her mother's view of romantic love between two women shows how much of a hypocrite she is, and is an example of how the pressure from their religious leaders leads many in her congregation to become hypocrites. While she forbids Jeanette from buying her comics from the paper shop ran by two lesbians Jeanette befriends because they are kind to their young regular customer arguing that they deal “in unnatural passions” (Winterson, *Oranges* 10), it is insinuated her mother has had a lesbian romantic relationship. For her mother, lesbian romantic relationships go against the metanarrative of heterosexual love accepted by her church. Hence, for her, they are a sin. Yet, when looking at a photo album, Jeanette finds the photo of an attractive

woman she cannot identify and whom her mother describes as “‘just Eddy’s sister, I don’t know why I put it there’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 48) and the following time Jeanette takes a look at the album it is gone, insinuating that her mother has had a lesbian love affair. Jeanette also remarks how her mother, although saying that “he was a devil” (Winterson, *Oranges* 100), takes advantage of the fact that the butcher is her former sweetheart, and goes to him to get her meat cheaper, “she still took the mince” (Winterson, *Oranges* 100).

The pressure the congregation exerts on its members to follow its rules leads many to be hypocritical and deceitful in order to better manage their true nature and the pressure to conform to the rules of the congregation. Miss Jewsbury, Jeanette’s support, tells her she should never have told her mother about her feelings for Melanie, that no one would have found out. Miss Jewsbury is a lesbian, but hides it from the congregation and tells Jeanette her mother is “‘a woman of the world, even though she’d never admit it to me. She knows about feelings, especially women’s feelings’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 135). Jeanette herself, after her fifteen-hour forced exorcism ordeal, says she has repented her actions only to survive group pressure. From 8.30 a.m. to 10 p.m. the elders of her church and the pastor perform an exorcism on Jeanette after which they tell her mother to lock her in a room without food for two days because “she needs to lose her strength before it can be hers again” (Winterson, *Oranges* 137). In her forced imprisonment Jeanette has time to think if love can “really belong to the demon? What sort of demon? (Winterson, *Oranges* 138). However, although she sees herself to be so controlled and made to conform to the views of her congregation that she sees an orange demon that tells her it is orange because it is the color of her aura, she also starts to question. She also questions if those she has been told all her life that are evil, really are so: “‘Demons are evil, aren’t they? (Winterson,

Oranges 138). She concludes that those who, like herself, are called demons are “just different, and difficult” (Winterson, *Oranges* 138). Despite realizing that the congregation calls demons those who are different from the congregation and are considered difficult, still, at that time, Jeanette also succumbs to group pressure. She lies to the pastor, and says she is ready to repent and accepts to testify at church. After being let out of the room Jeanette lies to her mother saying she needs to spend the night in the church but has Miss Jewsbury take her to see Melanie instead. She feels she has to hide herself and be deceitful in order to survive the pressure of the group. Jeanette continues with her preaching at church and the congregation still finds her a gifted speaker, seeing it as a triumph of the congregation that she acts and thinks how they believe she should. Jeanette explains her situation with a story of how a woman finds a helpless Winnet in the forest and takes her to her village. She teaches Winnet her language but Winnet learns “the words but not the language. Certain constructions baffled her, and in a discussion they could always be used against her, because she could not use them in return” (Winterson, *Oranges* 195). This reflects her adoption by her mother who takes Jeanette to her religious community and how Jeanette learns what things mean in the community (knows meaning of the words) but is baffled by their values which can, for example, turn on her by defining her as a demon. The villagers of the story are “simple and kind, not questioning the world” (Winterson, *Oranges* 195-196) and they do not expect Winnet to talk much but she wants to “talk about the nature of the world, why it was there at all, and what they were all doing on it” (Winterson, *Oranges* 196) but she adds that if she did so the villagers would consider her to be mad, so she has “to pretend she was just like them” (Winterson, *Oranges* 196). While her

congregation is accepting, Jeanette is questioning but, knowing that they do not understand her perspective, she chooses to pretend to conform.

Bubbling deeper than her superficial conformism is an increasing disbelief in her church's definition of sin and, consequently, in the metanarrative of heterosexuality of her congregation. From earlier on, Jeanette's perception of sin is not the same of her congregation. Especially in what refers to love as sin. Jeanette does not understand as sin what the congregation defines as sin and, despite her upbringing, has different values. What she considers to be wrong (a "sin" in the religious language of her community) is her mother's betrayal for denouncing her intimate feelings to the congregation, and the betrayal of the people of the congregation, among which she grows up, that shun her as if she is evil. From the time Jeanette is a child she does not understand sin as her Church does. One Sunday morning, returning home from church, Jeanette hears strange noises from their neighbors (Next Door) and her mother screams that the neighbors are fornicating. Jeanette does not know the meaning of the word and her rational thinking leaves her puzzled because she hears it is a sin but the circumstances lead her to think it is not: "I knew it was a sin. But why was it so noisy? Most sins you did quietly so as not to get caught" (Winterson, *Oranges* 70-71). Also, when Jeanette asks Melanie if what they have is what the pastor means by "Unnatural Passions" (Winterson, *Oranges* 113) Melanie believes it is not because "'according to Pastor Finch, that's awful'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 113) and they conclude it must not be because, for Jeanette, there is nothing bad about their relationship. Jeanette thinks "'Melanie is a gift from the Lord, and it would be ungrateful not to appreciate her'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 133). Jeanette's view of love or sexual attraction is alien to the rules of the congregation: she views love or a sexual partner and companion as

a gift from God to be thankful for. Jeanette feels that there is nothing wrong in what they are doing and fails to recognize that the congregation is seeing them as outside the metanarrative of heterosexual love promoted by the church, and, therefore in sin.

While Jeanette pretends to conform and goes about her life she has a romantic affair with Katy, whom she meets while heading the Bible study, which determines her physical and final cut with the congregation. Jeanette is caught with Katy and is the only one blamed because she is a repeat offender but she is relieved she will be the only one to suffer the consequences because she recognizes Katy cannot “cope with the darker side of our church” (Winterson, *Oranges* 167). After experiencing imprisonment, hunger and a forced exorcism, Jeanette knows the treatment of those who do not comply with the rules of the congregation can be so brutal that many cannot cope with it. Since her love affair with Melanie, Jeanette feels betrayed by her mother, a devout believer in the definition of love of their church, because Jeanette confides in her about how she likes to be with Melanie, though not openly revealing her sexual attraction. The pastor, with her weeping mother by his side, starts talking about how Jeanette and Melanie have fallen to Satan and are full of demons and the proof is their love “reserved for man and wife” (Winterson, *Oranges* 134). Jeanette's mother is adamant Jeanette conforms to what she and the congregation expect of her (to marry a man and be active in church) and does not accept when Jeanette says she is not becoming a missionary, responding: “oh, you`ll get married and get involved” (Winterson, *Oranges* 165). Mirroring her offering of oranges, her mother does not give Jeanette any options and involves the whole congregation in order to change Jeanette's mind. While, initially, Jeanette feels the congregation is “our family. It was safe” (Winterson, *Oranges* 113) and sees as acceptance the fact that people in the congregation

smile or nod when they face her, she soon discovers that she is not accepted by the congregation. Jeanette feels betrayed and mentally out of the grip of her mother as she acknowledges that

there are different sorts of treachery, but betrayal is betrayal wherever you find it. [. . .] In her head she was still queen, but not my 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, *Oranges* 143)

Jeanette uses a metaphor that is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden as a walled garden, in which Jeanette has been kept all her life by her mother, and the congregation in what they (particularly her mother) see as protection from the evil influence of the outside world, Jeanette finds limiting because she craves a different life. She extends the metaphor of the enclosed garden to the also walled forbidden city, which mirrors her choice of going against the church and into forbidden territory where she has dared to go with her lesbian love affairs. As she is mentally, finally, out of her mother's influence, she dreams the "Forbidden City" (Winterson, *Oranges* 143) has been ransacked, mirroring the public scrutiny within the congregation whose members have appropriated her intimacy and are passing all sorts of judgments. In the same dream she also sees the "City of Lost Chances" (Winterson, *Oranges* 144) where those who choose the wall over themselves are. This place represents the restrictive existence of those who lose the chance to be their full selves or reach their full potential. But Jeanette is not even allowed to dream of two different possibilities (the Forbidden City and the City of Lost Chances) and is further pressured to conform. Her mother wakes Jeanette up with a bowl of oranges. Except now, although Jeanette accepts

them, she has her mind set on other possibilities and thinks “what about grapes or bananas?” (Winterson, *Oranges* 144).

Regarding Jeanette's homosexuality, the pastor reaches the conclusion that “the real problem, it seemed, was going against the teachings of St. Paul, and allowing women power in the church” (Winterson, *Oranges* 171). As only one of a few women that preach at her church, Jeanette fills the church and everyone loves her sermons. She manages to, within the rules of the church, go against her mother's stricter belief that “women had specific circumstances for their ministry, that the Sunday School was one of them, the Sisterhood another, but the message belonged to the men” (Winterson, *Oranges* 171). Although a woman, Jeanette's mother is such a devout follower of the teachings of her church's leaders that she promotes and maintains the patriarchal belief that women are inferior to men even in a spiritual context. The pastors forbid Jeanette to preach or teach Bible classes in order to cut any “‘influential contact’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 172) and tell her she is expected to go through another exorcism. When Jeanette announces she is leaving the church, and when the pastor realizes neither he nor the congregation have any control in Jeanette's choices, they appeal to her ingrained notion of sin about which she should repent: “finally the pastor shook his head and declared me one of the people in Hebrews, to whom it is impossible to speak the truth. He asked me one last time: ‘Will you repent?’ ‘No.’ And I stared at him till he looked away” (Winterson, *Oranges* 174). Asked if she regrets her choices as if she has chosen a mistake, a sin, they accentuate the fact that, not only they consider her actions a sin, they do not even consider her view as truth, that only their perspective is the truth. The pastors use the notion of sin in order to control her so she will not leave and instead conform. Jeanette contrasts the constrictive views of her congregation exemplified by the

pastor, who tells Jeanette she is “afflicted and oppressed” (Winterson, *Oranges* 168) and has “deceived the flock” (Winterson, *Oranges* 168) and her mother saying that Jeanette makes her and the house ill, and has “brought evil into the church” (Winterson, *Oranges* 163) with a description of her dog and how much she supports her and shows her unconditional love. While her mother and the pastor have a discussion trying to determine if she is a victim or an evil person, Jeanette suddenly realizes that there are seven oranges on the window sill so, to establish a conversation, Jeanette offers them an orange. Her mother reacts as if she is insane, and the pastor as if she is possessed by an evil spirit, saying that Jeanette’s offer of the oranges is “her master speaking” (Winterson, *Oranges* 169). From giving Jeanette a box of oranges to stand on in the street to publicize a religious conference to repeatedly offering her the fruit, oranges are the only option of fruit her mother gives Jeanette. Her only option of fruit is representative of the fact that, in the community she is brought up in, there is only one choice for Jeanette, which is to follow what the church dictates, to submit to her circumstances, to conform to the rules of the congregation. So, when she, after clearly choosing a path not approved by her church, puts herself in the place of those who are used to make the choices for her and offers the oranges herself, neither the pastor nor her mother (an avid enforcer of Church rules and metanarratives) tolerate that.

Jeanette’s security in what she is and what she has done are not a sin culminates with her return to her parents’ house for a Christmas visit after leaving the congregation, when she confirms how corrupted the congregation is, and how happy she is with her choice of leaving it. Jeanette establishes a parallel between Winnet’s tale and her own life, telling how Winnet goes to live in the sorcerer’s castle where she is introduced to three ravens Shadrach,

Meshach and Abednego. These are the names of characters from the Book of Daniel who are condemned to a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar II (then the ruler of Israel) for being Jewish and refusing to worship the golden statue of the king, but God protects them from the flames and they are unharmed. Likewise, Jeanette refuses to submit to the ideal of her community and is stigmatized by the group, which does not consider Jeanette to be of God like them. But, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, her belief in her own spirituality, and that she is not the wrong one help her, in the end, not to succumb to the pressure of her congregation to conform. Her certainty of having done the right thing for her is confirmed when Jeanette returns home for Christmas. She discovers that many members of the congregation have revealed the hypocrisy in their midst. They preach one thing, yet do another, such as saying that the establishments of the congregation are for a connection with God only but, for financial gain, have started offering “those recently bereaved the services of ‘Morecambe’s most famous medium’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 210) every Friday. Still her mother remains as dedicated and active as before Jeanette has left the congregation. She now tours the area with Pastor Finch in his “demon bus” (Winterson, *Oranges* 221) preaching to other parents whose children have, like Jeanette, been possessed and broadcasts on the radio. On her radio broadcast Jeanette’s mother calls herself “Kindly Light” (Winterson, *Oranges* 224) depicting herself as kind and benevolent and practicing good. The irony in her mother’s broadcasting name exposes the general hypocrisy of the congregation which preaches the love of Christ but, engulfed in the religious elitism of feeling superior as God’s chosen, are often unable to empathize with anyone else. This is a community, after all, that has shown no empathy for someone else’s emotional pain of losing a child as reveals the talk between Jeanette’s mother and her friend at a regular weekend

meeting of their congregation. Her mother's friend, who makes most of the funerary wreaths for the area, talks about how there has been an epidemic at the local boarding school and many students have died and she is making the wreaths: "well, the money won't go amiss, will it?" said my mother. 'It'll pay for my bathroom that's what. A woman of my training without a bathroom, it's shocking'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 75). There is no sympathy for the pain the families of the young students are most likely going through at the time with their unexpected deaths. Just as they do not acknowledge the suffering of those who are not part of the congregation, so does Jeanette's mother not acknowledge that she may have been cruel and inhumane towards her daughter, and does not have much empathy in general. For her, the church mission is more important than lives as shown when she has to explain to the families of some missionaries that they have been eaten by some tribe they have been trying to convert, saying that "it's not easy'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 62) but "it's for the Lord'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 62). She can also be mostly emotionless towards the visiting Jeanette blaming her for something that clearly is not her fault as she blames Jeanette's ungodly nature on such a holly festivity for Mrs. White's uncontrollable hiccoughs: "it's all your fault [. . .] And on Christmas Eve too'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 222). Because Jeanette's mother puts the Church above everything else, Jeanette does not even see much of her when she goes home, because she spends a lot of time at church and on Christmas night, the time to unwrap the presents reveals the inadequacy between mother and daughter. Her mother loves (getting so emotional that she cries) the present from Pastor Spratt: an elephant's foot Promise Box with two scrolls with biblical excerpts. And she is also eager to unwrap the present her husband has for her because she has asked for it: a catapult to shoot dried peas at the next door cats. And with all this enthusiasm, excitement and emotion

Jeanette is certain her present will not be so well received. She does not know how to tell her she has “only bought her a cardigan” (Winterson, *Oranges* 223). She has bought her mother the most valuable and useful gift, but her mother only sees value in the gift from a head of their church.

When Jeanette thinks of what would have happened if she had stayed in the congregation she remembers Melanie, her first lesbian lover, whom she has first brought into the congregation and has since been influenced by the pastors into marrying a man that Jeanette believes will not be good to her. Jeanette describes Melanie the last time they meet as “serene to the point of being bovine. [. . .] she had left her brain in Bangor” (Winterson, *Oranges* 157). Jeanette believes, if she had stayed in the congregation she

could have been a priest instead of a prophet. The priest has a book with the words set out. Old words, known words, words of power. Words that are always on the surface. Words for every occasion. [. . .] They do what they`re supposed to do; comfort and discipline. The prophet has no book. The prophet is a voice that cries in the wilderness, full of sounds that do not always set into meaning. (Winterson, *Oranges* 205)

While the priest`s words addressing and about God are not even his own because he follows an institutionalized and formulaic sequence reciting someone else`s words, the prophet has a simple and direct connection to the immaterial world. Like a prophet, Jeanette speaks from the heart. Being in the outside world means she is not forced by the congregation to follow its institutionalized rules for living her spirituality and is, instead, able to live her spirituality and connection to God in a natural, unmediated way. This freedom to live her

own spirituality makes Jeanette thankful for leaving her restrictive former congregation where she has had to conform to the normativity it required of her.

4.1.3. State and Metanarratives: cultural and political constructs establish normativity in the garden

In each novel the power structures of state are represented differently: in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* the ruling power of the state is represented by the King/Queen and the institutions that enforce the values of the power structures of the state such as the educational and judicial systems that are criticized through the rhymes. In *Midnight's Children* the ruling power is, firstly the British colonial power, and, after independence, the Indian government and Pakistani government particularly in the form of the prime minister and military leaders. In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* the ruling power of the state is represented by the institutions of the state such as school, and the cultural values assimilated and maintained by a rural small-town community. Regarding the powers of the state, in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault explains that people of Western democracies have internalized the control that society maintains on the individual and act accordingly being their own jail-keepers:

this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the “privilege,” acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions – an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them. (26-27)

For Foucault the control of the state continues even if state institutions are destroyed because the self-regulation is so internalized it continues. Foucault exemplifies this with the concept of panopticism from eighteenth century social theorist Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*. The Panopticon is an architectural mechanism of submission: an institutional building with a tower in the middle surrounded by a ring of cells with windows that align with those of the tower where a guard is watching. Even though one guard cannot watch all cells at the same time the people in the cells do not know when they are being watched and feel motivated to act as if they are always being watched. Foucault uses the Panopticon effect to illustrate how effective systems of social control are. Subjects act according to what is demanded of them because they believe they can be monitored or socially reprehended or excluded at any time. Hence, there is no need for bars, chains or locks because the individual monitors him/herself and others maintaining the subjection to what is expected of them. Bentham exemplifies the state mechanisms of internalization of rules and disciplinary action through his architectural design of the Panopticon which can be used for prisons as well as schools, hospitals, asylums and sanatoriums, and Foucault defends that society has institutions (such as hospitals, the police, schools, or penitentiaries) that function as disciplinary mechanisms that moderate behaviors by having a disciplinary role and reinforce the mechanisms of power.

The present analysis considers that metanarratives can serve the disciplinary mechanisms of the ruling powers of the state by helping construct normative thinking, making people internalize what is good/acceptable and what is bad/unacceptable as part of their internalization and disciplinary role. This perspective makes it possible to view metanarratives as mechanisms of indirect coercion. The Victorian metanarrative of

progress implies a feeling of superiority and instills in society a rigid division between what is good and acceptable, and what is not acceptable, which Carroll subverts by, for example, finding value in what Victorian society does not, such as a genre that is considered minor by Victorian society and a marginal nonsense language. In *Midnight's Children*, for example, the metanarrative of cultural superiority, promoted by the British colonialists, serves the purpose of helping to legitimize their colonial rule of India and seeps through Indian society manifesting itself in a continuity of racism based on skin color even after independence. And *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a testimony of how cultural discourses naturalize patriarchy, to the point that even women maintain its gender inequality, due to the belief in the creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden as a story of sin and punishment. Readers can see how cultural and political discourses naturalize some things and sanction others, and infer from it how the ruling power of the state legitimizes authority from the postmodern *Midnight's Children* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* to the Victorian *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

4.1.3.1. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

In Victorian England the ruling powers are the Church and state. Regarding the state, Victorian England is a constitutional monarchy in which the government is made of the monarch and the two Houses of Parliament, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The House of Lords is composed of aristocratic men and bishops and archbishops and the House of Commons is composed of representatives of landholders and property owners of counties and towns. Although the House of Lords loses some of its power in the Victorian era and by the end of the seventeenth century and the House of

Commons has gained more power (including the right to implement taxation measures), it is clear that the members of both parliament Houses are all wealthy men. These wealthy men and the queen dispose of the British constitution, which is not fully written and is made by some written laws and unwritten accords. The fact that the power is in the hands of a wealthy elite is supported by the all-pervasive Victorian metanarrative of progress. Victorian belief in progress stems from the advances in scientific knowledge and technology and leads to the appearance of social movements such as Positivism. Auguste Comte starts the movement called Positivism which defends that social history progresses towards perfection through the application of science. Charles Darwin proposes that progress is also applied to biology and species evolve to better suit their environment. This leads to social Darwinism, the idea that those who are powerful in a society are so because they are innately better than others or have better qualities (such as leadership or intelligence) than others, and is used to justify racism, social inequality, and imperialism. By the end of the nineteenth century almost one quarter of the world is under Great Britain's rule and appears the quote that *The sun never sets on the British empire*. Apart from economic reasons, imperialism is seen as spreading to other peoples what is supposed to be civilization. Victorians see British society and culture as the example of a fully functioning civilization while seeing the peoples they colonize as rather primitive creatures that will only benefit from contact with the great British culture. The underlining idea that this metanarrative promotes among the British is that Victorian society, as part of a great civilization that has even taken economic and social progress to other countries, functions as it should, and there is no need to change or contest it. This further solidifies an elitist,

stratified, patriarchal society where there is little hope for the common man to contest the norm.

Carroll's subversive discourse regarding norms and rules of Victorian society (which reflect the ruling powers of the state) reveals the counter discourses present in Victorian society. As, for example, finding value in what Victorian society does not such as a genre that is considered minor by Victorian society and a marginal nonsense language that does not intend to dictate norms, transfers the power of determining meaning to the readers and makes the marginal and individual perspectives acceptable. Carroll's choice of genre, children's literature, seems suited to convey what seems to be his philosophical and religious perspective and, although this choice is a product of his time, it is also subversive in itself. The Victorian cultural scene witnesses the birth of the writing style of social realism with which writers criticize or denounce socio-political issues such as Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837-39). Dickens paints a realistic portrait of the deplorable living situation of Victorian orphan children, criticises the social system, and reveals the poor and unfair treatment of the British working class. In such a cultural atmosphere that welcomes the intellectual critique of social issues it is only natural that writers like Carroll want to put their critical point of view forward. The Subversion in Carroll's marginal genre choice lies in the fact that Carroll breaks with the concept of high versus low in literary genres by choosing a genre that is considered minor by Victorian society. If Victorian literature is credited with establishing children's literature as a recognized genre, much of it seems due to Carroll's geniality, which changes the perception about children's tales and initiates "what is generally considered the Golden Age of children's literature in English" (B. Clark 44). Although there are examples of popular children's stories as far back as early

seventeenth century, those are typically compilations of folk tales with a didactic or moralistic tone that teach children to comply with social norms, and remain a less important category not seen as the work of a recognized author. After Carroll, children's literature is no longer limited to tales aimed at directing children's conduct, but rather a rightful literature genre containing complex philosophical ideas. Critics see Carroll's choice of the fairy tale/fantasy genre as consolidating the acceptance of a formerly marginalized genre with characters that, unlike the usual didacticism of Victorian children's literature, are not intended to impose conventions and this encourages readers "to reflect critically upon the conditions and limits of socialization" (Zipes 179).

Carroll's genre choice seems to be rooted in a subversion of the discourses of power and privilege of Victorian society and this transformation of the perception of children's literature that Carroll operates due to his choice of genre can be attributed to a possible influence the Victorian cult of the child has in Carroll's ideology. The reverence for the child's mind-set behind Carroll's choice of genre reveals his appreciation for imagining all possibilities, and questioning what is established and what seems obvious. An unbiased child-like open mind ready to consider what may seem mad to a rigid Victorian society is necessary. In fact, Carroll stresses that only those who possess such a frame of mind can enter Wonderland: "'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad' [. . .] 'or you wouldn't have come here'" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 90). The "mad" Cheshire-Cat explains Alice that it is only because she is "mad" that she gets to enter Wonderland. Or, in other words, because she has the right frame of mind to go beyond the social formatting of Victorian England. She is described as "trustful, ready to accept the wildest impossibilities with all that utter trust that only dreamers know; and lastly, curious" (Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*

12). An analysis of this mind-set suggests how subversive it can be since children`s minds predispose them to be inquisitive and have the elasticity to play with different and imaginary perspectives and question the norm while adults are often conditioned by social constructs that dictate which perspective is valid: “mental flexibility (or amplitude) is something that we typically think of as characteristics of children rather than adults” (Billings and Roberts 54). The processes involved in pretend play seem to make children`s minds capable of thinking creatively, play with uncertainty and question the norm while considering and accepting other possibilities, and this is the general mind-set that predisposes questioning. This characteristic of the child`s brain is now established in the scientific and academic communities as part of the processes related to critical thinking as educational experts establish that “the ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive [. . .] open-minded, flexible [. . .] willing to reconsider” (Facione 2).

Readers recognise this view of the importance of children`s mental plasticity in Alice`s character as she has to shed her preconceived ideas and what she has been taught because “her ordinary preconceptions about what`s possible and impossible may actually impede her discovery of successful strategies for coping with the bizarre situations she encounters” (Dunn and McDonald 63). In fact, when Alice encounters a mouse she considers speaking to it as she quickly concludes that “everything is so out-of-the-way down here, that I should think it very likely that it can talk: at any rate, there`s no harm in trying” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 24). Accepting of other realities,

she doesn`t hesitate for a moment to discard her preconceptions . . . In doing so, she displays an admirable readiness to encounter reality on its own terms, a receptive cast of mind that many philosophers would

include among the most important “intellectual virtues” or character traits. (Dunn and McDonald 63-64)

This perspective of the value of mental openness or plasticity is essential for realising that at the basis of Carroll’s choice of genre is an appreciation for this frame of mind that allows questioning Victorian ideology and is accepting of different, individual perspectives. In the novel all individual perspectives are valid, making “truth” and “reality” relative to the individual: the Cheshire Cat tells Alice she is sure to get somewhere regardless of the road she takes and characters set their own rules in the race as “they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 33).

Apparently, Carroll’s appreciation for the subversive characteristics of children’s minds has also contributed to his choice of a language that is “appropriate only to the everyday discourse of the socially purposeless, those on the peripheries of everyday life; the infant, the child, the mad and the senile” (Stuart 5): nonsense language. It equals the child’s mind in terms of considering all perspectives/possibilities and allows Carroll to develop ideas based on an original and unconventional approach because the playful nonsense and the “riddles with no clear answer remind us that our knowledge is incomplete, but they also force us to think about familiar things in new and unusual ways” (Mayock 162). Carroll’s choice of nonsense language seems to further reinforce the reading of his novel as having a subversive intent in depicting “grave travesties of most of the institutions which govern her [Alice] and her author’s life- the monarchy, the rule of law, grammar and social etiquette” (Haughton 198). The author plays with meaning empowering readers to reach their own conclusions instead of conditioning their perspective and uses language to make a parody of the pedagogical morals enforced by Victorian England. A strong component

of Victorian teaching, particularly for girls, consists of instilling into children the behavior values accepted often through memorization, including the memorization of poems and rhymes that are used as a teaching method. This educational system further legitimizes the ruling power through an uncritical acceptance of whatever is established as normativity through social customs. When the Mock Turtle tells Alice about his education he says that he has been given the best education at his school at sea and tells Alice class hours diminished from day to day. As the Gryphon explains: “That’s the reason they’re called lessons, [. . .] because they lessen from day to day” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 145). The eleventh lesson is a holiday and when Alice enquires about the twelfth lesson the Gryphon cuts the conversation with “That’s enough about lessons” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 146). Carroll plays with the semantics of “lesson” and “lessen” and the notion of negative numbers as the lessons diminish until the eleventh lesson, a holiday that represents the number 0, and, consequently, the twelfth lesson is a negative number (-1) and the opposite of lesson 1, or the contrary of a lesson or unlearning what has been learned in the school system. So, although as part of its subjects the school has washing, an example of a useless subject as they live under the sea, (which exemplifies Carroll’s critical perspective of some of the subjects of Victorian education as being useless), he has had a good education because he has unlearned what he has been made to learn.

Making a parody of Victorian children’s rhymes, Carroll’s language challenges Victorian morality and convention. The Caucus Race can be interpreted as a parody of the political power that does a lot of running around during their caucuses without getting nowhere, the Mad Tea Party seems to also parody the rituals and the etiquette imposed by Victorian society and The Lobster Quadrille parodies the Victorian institution of ballroom

dancing while being critical of Victorian society's pressure to conform. In the novel the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon dance and sing The Lobster Quadrille lyrics which somewhat pressure listeners to "join the dance" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 151). You either abide by the invitation or you get closer to the opposite shore, France, which has been the political enemy of England for the past centuries. Recalling the rebellion against the institutionalized power of the French monarchy, those who do not conform become more apart from Victorian England and closer to a world where rebels have overthrown the ruling power and are, therefore, enemies of the Victorian power structure. The first sentence of the Lobster Quadrille "Will you walk a little faster!" said a whiting to a snail" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 151) mimics the meter and rhyme scheme of Mary Howitt's poem "The Spider and the Fly" in which the first line is: "Will you walk into my parlour? Said the Spider to the Fly" (168). The opening line of the poem becomes quite popular and comes to exemplify entrapment. The link to this popular poem emphasizes the uncritical acceptance of things that become custom. Such as a popular rhyme or a dance like The Lobster Quadrille that requires one follow a series of set movements or comply with set norms. For Carroll, this seems to exemplify the innocuous looking strategies of power structures to condition by establishing normativity.

Another example of parodying the beliefs power structures promote through popular rhymes is "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! / How I wonder what you're at!" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 103), the author's parody of a poem by the Taylor sisters who publish under titles like *Hymns for Infant Minds*, or "How Doth the Little Crocodile" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 20), a parody of Isaac Watts' moralistic poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" which is a metaphor for Carroll's critique of moralistic children's rhymes that

lure children with a cheerful appeal only to shape them according to social rules. Adding to this critical perspective of what is socially normalized and uncritically accepted, Carroll also presents the story of the Mouse's tale in the form of a visual poem. In it the mouse tells Alice it has met a dog that tells him he will put him through a trial without a jury. The dog tells the mouse he will be the jury and will condemn the mouse to death. Although entertaining for children, the mouse-tail shaped poem conveys how the strong (the dog) use power structures such as the judicial system against weaker ones (mouse). Furthermore, the dog is a cur, a dog breed used to drive cattle forcing them to go wherever its master wants. The perfect representation of an overbearing power that makes the powerless feel they have no other way but to comply and feel helpless even before an injustice of such proportion like being condemned without a fair trial.

Through the language of nonsense Carroll can dare to subvert the repressiveness and ideological intolerance of Victorian era while at the same time remaining "silent", for each person makes their own interpretation of what the author means. Carroll plays with the interpretation of the reader creating portmanteau words like "Reeling and Writhing [. . .] Uglification, and Derision" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 143), and words like "Curiouser" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 15), as if language itself reflects the unconventionality and endless possibilities of Wonderland. Carroll's novel shows how language can have a subversive role because it has the ability to register different perspectives that give an alternative account to totalizing discourses. This is exemplified by the conversation the Duchess (personification of the Church) has with Alice and in which she starts by saying one thing but the final meaning reverts to the opposite meaning that is in agreement with the gnostic perspective. The Duchess wants Alice to let her identity be defined by the socially

established norms that others follow. She starts by telling Alice to “be what you would seem to be” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 134). In other words, one should perceive one’s self exactly like others perceive you: your identity is how society (others) defines you. But as she continues her long and confusing sentence she ends up giving the opposite advice: “never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 134). Meaning changes to: never accept you are what others say you are or how they define you. She ends up by advising the opposite of what she intends. This apparent nonsense in the Duchess’ speech suggests that, for Carroll, although the Church of his day (Duchess) tries to enforce a different message, the initial and contrary perspective of early Christianity can still be found in religious language. Carroll defends the importance of language as Alice trusts language to guide her in life and death situations: “if you drink much from a bottle marked ‘poison’, it almost certain going to disagree with you sooner or later. However, this bottle was not marked ‘poison’” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 10). As noted in his careful use of names, Carroll’s linguistic choices are never arbitrary hence the “‘innocent’ language of nonsense associated with Alice, ‘the child of [his] dreams’, gives expression to more things than are dreamed of in Dodgson’s conscious philosophy- or his culture’s dream of order” (Haughton 202). Carroll’s focus on a marginal language that does not intend to dictate norms, transfers the power of determining meaning to the reader and makes the marginal/individual perspective acceptable, results in the subversion of the Victorian totalizing discourse of the literary canon. Carroll seems to defend that language has the ability to subvert the totalizing discourses of power structures. In fact, in the novel, nonsense seems to be the only thing capable of shutting the Queen up because she does not know what to do before something she did not quite expect: “as the

Queen screams 'off with her head!' 'Off with-' 'Nonsense!' said Alice, [. . .] and the Queen was silent" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 117-118).

Complementing Carroll's language of play, paradox and invention that questions attributed formal meaning and, therefore, questions what is taken as "truth", is Alice's questioning of what Victorian society determines to be an essential, immutable truth: identity. Overall, Wonderland characters' identity is depicted as fluid, and even experimental to the point of enabling a character to be a baby one minute and a pig the next. Its inhabitants are liminal creatures that are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony" (V. Turner 95). Many are something in between human and animal (like the March Hare or the White Rabbit), or do not even have a visual identity like the disappearing Cheshire-Cat. Alice's identity in particular is unstable and marked by indeterminacy regarding what is most commonly associated with identity: the physical aspect of identity such as shape, size and overall form. She exhibits mental detachment by thinking about her identity as if she is someone else. Her dissociation of her own self is cleverly exemplified when Alice talks about her feet as being disassociated from her as she imagines how she "must be kind to them [. . .] or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 16). Alice's dissociation leads her to question herself and think about her identity: "Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? [. . .] But if I'm not the same, the question is "Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 19). "Fond of pretending to be two people" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 13), Alice's experimental identity makes her capable of thinking about her reactions and thoughts from so many different perspectives that she often feels dual, divided, and multiple. This

parallels the journey of the gnostic hero of the myth of Sophia in his/her search for knowledge which typically involves a questioning of concepts that many consider as set and unchangeable, such as identity, that are put through a state of fragmentation in order to reach a state of knowing, enlightenment or consciousness. Alice`s search for the garden leads to questioning regarding her identity and unable to answer the Caterpillar`s question: “‘Who are you?’ [. . .] ‘I hardly know, Sir, just at present- at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then’” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 60).

Considering Alice as a personification of the Gnostic Sophia, Alice`s questioning of her identity can be seen as subversive of totalizing discourses of Victorian society. In Gnosticism Sophia represents the knowledge, including self-knowledge, needed to return to the heavenly/spiritual realm all beings in the material world come from. And Alice, while gaining self-knowledge, undergoes changes (including physical changes in size) in order to be able to enter the garden. Alice`s questioning regarding her identity mirrors the *God within* perspective which facilitates the questioning of social or cultural foundational truths. In her search for the garden, Alice`s questioning regarding her identity mirrors the gnostic idea that “to know oneself, at the deepest level, is simultaneously to know God” (Pagels, *Gospels* xix). This *God within* perspective poses a great threat to both the orthodoxy of the established church and to the ruling powers of the state. The consequence of the belief that man has a divine spark within is that it does not recognize priests or any other intermediary between man and divinity and it sets man free from a submissive position of following orders from an exterior authority. This Gnostic perspective considers that what people seek is within them, or within their reach to discover themselves, as exemplifies *The Dialogue*

of the Savior in which the disciples of Jesus ask him who is the one who seeks and who is the one who reveals, only to be told they are one and the same: “His [disciples said, “Lord], who is it who seeks, and [. . .] reveals?” [the Lord said to them,] “He who seeks [. . .] reveals [. . .]” (247-248). This is a spiritual path promoted by early Christians that has been adopted by many Greek philosophical schools which often have their maxima *know thyself* engraved above the main entrance. Quoting gnostic teacher Monoimus: “look for him by taking yourself as the starting point. Learn who it is within you who makes everything his own and says, ‘My God, my mind, my thought, my soul, my body.’ Learn the sources of sorrow, joy, love, hate [. . .] If you carefully investigate these matters you will find him in yourself” (Pagels, *Gospels* xix-xx). The Gnostic path to the knowledge of an objective truth or higher reality is, more than a rational process, also an insight one must have in order to *know* and, according to the Gnostics, to *know*, one must know himself because in this process of self-discovery one can identify the cultural, social, or psychological aspects that condition the way one *knows*.

Alice questions and tests her identity trying different identities as she does when she tests the probabilities of being someone else by playing freely attributing her friends’ names to herself only to consider their other characteristics and decide she cannot be any of them. She ponders if she could be any of the children she knows and “if she could have been changed for any of them” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 19): “I’m sure I’m not Ada [. . .] for her hair goes in such long ringlets [. . .] and I’m sure I can’t be Mabel for I know all sorts of things” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 19). Losing her name and trying someone else’s can be interpreted as a critique of the imposition of a fixed identity (the name) on someone, by another, often according to social or cultural beliefs and with no regard for the individual’s

opinion. The fact that power structures define identity as something stable and permanent, is viewed by cultural studies theory as an attempt to control the individual by directing his/her conduct according to an exterior determination. According to this perspective the concept of a defined identity is “constructed with a regulatory purpose in mind: systems of power offer the placebo of selfhood to their subjects, thereby ensuring self-regulation according to the invisible rules of disciplinary being” (Hiebert 27). Apart from one’s physical appearance, one’s name is a fundamental part of identity (and of how societies identify someone) and most people have it chosen for them by someone else and imposed on them for life without being able to change it. Identity, as Cultural Studies views it, is a product of what has been normalized within a determined culture:

[. . .] the world of norms, values, ideals, roles, and the like that shape us from day one of our existence. . . . [through which we] learn how to dress “properly”, how to behave in accordance with reigning norms, how to speak and even to think in ways that ensure success in life. Within those prescribed patterns and forms, we develop an identity and a way of being that is our life. (Rivkin and Ryan 154)

Alice’s play with identity can be seen as subversive as she is playing with what society deems essential and unchanging, in other words: “What greater purpose does Alice’s uncertain, elusive identity serve? [. . .] renders names and expected roles created by society meaningless” (A. Leach).

Considering identity as something that can be an imposed construct of a determined culture (the result of a social or religious group’s interpretation that is accepted and becomes a consensual “truth”), it seems easy to see how Carroll’s novel can also be

interpreted as a critique of the grip totalizing discourses have on individual identity. By defining itself as the opposite of an animal that society defines as obedient (a dog), the Cheshire-Cat jokingly reveals: “[. . .] a dog growls when it’s angry, and wags its tail when it’s pleased. Now I growl when I’m pleased, and wag my tail when I’m angry. Therefore I’m mad” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 91). He is not mad but a different creature altogether that follows different behavioural rules. This can be interpreted as a critique of the fact that Victorian society assigns strict and generalized behaviour rules that are not based on what an individual truly is, but serve only to condition the individual. A “very direct symbol of this ideal of intellectual detachment” (Empson 52) from cultural formatting, the disappearing Cheshire-Cat portrays itself as a creature that does not obey the generalised behaviour rules and is, therefore, marginalised (“mad”). An example of how easy it is for cultural formatting to occur, or for the interpretation of a group (social, religious, cultural) to be accepted and become a consensual “truth” happens when Alice shows how social pressure makes people accept that the simplest of things (a thimble) can take on a different proportion or meaning. When the Dodo asks Alice what she has in her pocket Alice responds she has only a thimble:

‘Hand it over here,’ said the Dodo. Then they all crowded round her once more, while the Dodo solemnly presented the thimble, saying ‘We beg your acceptance of this elegant thimble’; and, when it had finished this short speech, they all cheered. Alice thought the whole thing very absurd, but they all looked so grave that she did not dare to laugh . . . she simply bowed, and took the thimble, looking as solemn as she could. (Carroll *Wonderland* 34-35)

Although she finds all of it absurd, because everyone else is quite serious about it, Alice plays along and tries her best to fit in and give the situation the seriousness everyone else is giving.

This perspective that what power structures establish as social customs or normativity (from the truth of a permanent identity to what is accepted as literary language) is a means to legitimize authority seems to have been, at least to some degree, influenced by Carroll's fascination with photography, the latest technological advancement of Victorian society that "probably marks the most decisive shift in paradigms of perception" (Meier 117). This is the beginning of the recognition that the "real" is difficult to grasp being that it is often only interpretations of someone else's interpretation. What seems to be a representation of the real self is an illusion because photographers like Carroll stage their photographs and construct their interpretation of the individual. Carroll's very much appreciated photographs are his interpretation of a subject, and are made available to a Victorian society that is going to interpret Carroll's depiction as "real". He is someone for whom both literature and photography are equally important to the point that both seem to influence each other hence why this novel is also seen by some scholars as "a work undoubtedly influenced by photography's ability to manipulate through focus and framing, blowing up or shrinking its subject" (Ljungberg 348). Carroll's perspective as an avid photographer seems to reinforce his critique that what is accepted as "truth" is often something that is a mere construct engendered by Victorian power institutions represented by the figures of the Duchess and the Queen and King. This awareness seems to further Carroll's opinion that his fellow Victorians should have a critical stance towards the leading powers. Not coincidentally, when he places Alice in the space where the Queen rules, the Queen's

Croquet-Ground, when faced with the prepotency of the Queen and King who is very bothered the Cheshire-Cat is looking at him and does not want to kiss his hand, Alice says that “a cat may look at a king, [. . .] I’ve read that in some book, but I don’t remember where.” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 125). Carroll is referring to the 1652 book *A Cat May Look Upon a King* in which *Sir Anthony Weldon* satirizes King James I and also critically approaches former monarchs from the Conquest onwards. From then on “a cat may look at a king” has become a popular proverb implying that those who are socially inferior can, at least, critically observe those who are socially superior and are part of the ruling powers of society. The overbearing grip power structures have on society is well exemplified at the trial. Although Alice has never been to a court of justice she has theoretical knowledge from books she has read and can identify the judge, the jury-box, and the jurors. Yet, the theoretical knowledge is quite different from the reality of the place she is in: the King is the judge and pressures the court to give a verdict even before the trial begins; the Queen demands a sentence before the verdict; everyone called to testify is terrified they will have their heads cut off; and the jurors do not act as required for an impartial trial. When Alice notices the jurors are all writing their names so they do not forget them by the end of the trial she exclaims “stupid things!” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 165) out loud they proceed to write “how stupid” with one of them needing help spelling “stupid”. Also, after Alice manages to take a pencil that squeaks away from one of the jurors, he keeps writing with his finger. This depiction of the court emphasizes just how much it all is a travesty of justice. The only verdict they would ever reach is what the will or whim of the King and Queen dictates. The trial reveals how much society’s institutions like the judicial system work as vehicles for the whims and control of those in power positions. This is clear in Carroll’s choice of the

verb “(to) suppress” to describe how many of those present in court are kept quiet. A guinea-pig dares to cheer in court and is “immediately suppressed by the officers of the court” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 172) and when another guinea-pig does the same it is also “suppressed” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 173). When the King is cross-examining the cook and the Dormouse also words his opinion on the content of the pies, the Queen immediately orders to “collar that Dormouse! [. . .] Behead that Dormouse! Turn that Dormouse out of court! Suppress him! Pinch him! Off with his whiskers!” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 174-175).

The King and the Queen seem to work as one entity in representing the powers of the state, with the Queen standing out as the more authoritarian character that is reminiscent of a head of state (Queen Victoria) and personifies institutionalized power and its creation of simulacra. When Alice finally manages to enter the garden and finds herself “among the bright flower-beds and the cool fountains” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 111), right at the entrance of the garden she comes across gardeners painting naturally white roses red. The Queen has decided that there should be a red rose tree at the garden’s entrance. She decides the landscaping of Wonderland and shapes nature to her desires and what she determines is to be considered a “fact” (reality): “the fact is [. . .] this here ought to have been a red rose-tree [. . .] and, if the Queen was to find out, we should all have our heads cut off” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 114). Soon after Alice finds the garden when the Queen makes her entrance in the garden the White Rabbit is also part of the procession and is the only one Alice recognizes, which, considering the symbology of the White Rabbit is a clue for the interpretation of this passage as a veiled critique of what Victorian power structures have made of the Garden of Eden or the simple, unmediated spirituality of early Christians. This garden is no longer the Garden of Eden, it is the territory of the Queen (in fact, this passage

is titled “The Queen’s Croquet-Ground”) in which she exerts her power with no limits by ordering the chopping off of heads as she pleases and where she determines the rules of her own game of croquet and the court of law. From the colour of roses to branding someone a criminal on the spot, the Queen decides what is a “fact” according to her intentions or disposition. Carroll seems to have the notion that what people accept as stable, permanent or defined, can be a mere product of the power structure of one’s culture. That “truth” is “shaped by conventions [. . .] a performance or rehearsal of those conventions, codes, and agreements, which means, of course, that it is not really something ‘in itself’” (Rivkin and Ryan 261). Coming from such point of view one sees reflected in Carroll the suspicion that much of what Victorian society, or this world in general, promote to be “truth” and “reality” are the white roses the Queen’s soldiers are painting red to please her: a construct to serve the purposes of power structures.

4.1.3.2. Midnight's Children

The metanarratives promoted by the ruling powers of the time span the novel refers to (from 1915, two generations before India’s independence in 1947 to 1977) are the result of economic and political interests and are promoted by both the Indians and the British. The Hindu political majority promotes the metanarrative that India is a Hindu country and the British promote the metanarrative that the white British colonizer is culturally superior to the Indians. Both of these views promote racism and intolerance towards a different other. As the colonizers of India, the British rely on and, more or less openly, promote the metanarrative that they are intellectually, militarily, and culturally superior, in order to normalize the idea that having the white British people being in charge of India brings a

level of civilizational order and progress that the natives are not capable of. Ever since the British have colonized India in the Victorian era they have had the mindset of emphasizing the distinction between “us” and “them”. Such is the example of Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, third Marquess of Salisbury, who has served as His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India in the conservative government of Lord Derby 1866-1867 and 1874-1877 under Disraeli and is three-time prime minister of England (1885-86, 1886-92, 1895-1902). He states that Indians should not be admitted to public administration and that “if the number of well-educated Indians [. . .] should increase, the government would face the [. . .] necessity of closing that avenue to them” (Gascoyne-Cecil). All throughout their colonization up to India’s independence, the British feel it is necessary to maintain a separation from the natives in order to remain in power. The main avenue for this is to emphasize racial differences as notes Elizabeth Collingham, who has analysed the social rituals British colonialists use to demarcate themselves from the Indians and how they relate to their bodies, their strategies to remain white throughout the generations, concluding that the British “legitimized their rule by recasting themselves as the embodiment of racial superiority” (8). The British construct the metanarrative of their superiority on physical difference because of the obvious skin color difference between many Indians (particularly Hindus) and the British, using skin color as a differentiating characteristic of racial superiority.

This reflection of the racism exerted by the white British colonizer towards the mostly dark skinned natives incentivizes the discrimination among light skinned and dark skinned Indians in Indian society. It also brings new aesthetic standards such as an appreciation for anything Caucasian which, as one can see in the novel, lasts even after India’s

independence. Also, another metanarrative that is created shortly before independence but endures even after independence is the metanarrative that India is a Hindu nation. Initially supported by Indian parties, the idea that India is a Hindu country is supported by the Indian government after independence. In post-independence India there is an increase of Hindu rhetoric in nationalist politics that glorify a Hindu historical past of India. In order to depict themselves as a unified country and establish a collective identity the government erases all other religio-ethnic groups (such as the Arabs, Sikhs, Jains, or Buddhists) that have always been part of India which is, after Africa, the second geography with the biggest cultural, linguistic and genetic diversity. Although seemingly empowering, the metanarrative of a uniformly Hindu India is, not only false but results in a society that mimics British customs. Indian upper classes mimic those whom they have seen having power, the British colonialists, adopting and normalizing mannerisms, speech, house décor, and even destructive habits like alcohol intake. This spreads through society as many mimic this state of affairs that is being patronized by the upper classes. It is with these two metanarratives as its backdrop that the novel approaches the racial conflicts in Indian society, firstly, at the time of the narrator's grandfather before the overwhelming British presence of the time of the narrator's father and in post-independence India, by alluding to the symbol of the garden.

Saleem starts the narration by introducing his family's story starting in Kashmir with his grandfather Aadam Aziz whose first name is also given to Saleem's son, Aadam Sinai. Aadam, the first name of the characters that open and close the story and the fact that it starts in Kashmir, known for its famous Mughal gardens, that follow a layout adapted from the Persian gardens, establishes a clear reference to the Eden story. The story begins in

Kashmir with the narrator's grandfather, Aadam Aziz, who comes back to Kashmir that he describes as "Paradise" (Rushdie, *MC* 6) after studying medicine in Heidelberg, Germany. The fact that the author gives this character the last name of Aziz and the professional occupation of medical doctor establishes a link with the character of Doctor Aziz from Edward Morgan Forster's 1924 novel *A Passage to India*, who is mistreated by the colonial system. Right at the beginning of the novel there is a nod to the influence of colonization in the course of the story. As in the Garden of Eden, the story of the beginning of mankind, so does the narrator take the reader to a time of beginnings: of the beginning of his family's story. Although the war has not yet reached the garden state of Kashmir back then, there is already the presence of the British colonizer in the narrator's initial description which already reveals the seed of conflict in this garden:

[. . .] in those days the radio mast had not been built and [. . .] there was no army camp at the lakeside, no endless snakes of camouflaged trucks and jeeps clogged the narrow mountain roads [. . .] travellers were not shot as spies if they took photographs of bridges, and apart from the Englishmen's houseboats on the lake, the valley had hardly changed since the Mughal empire. (Rushdie, *MC* 5)

Although back to the Kashmiri gardens in India, when Aadam Aziz gets lost in his thoughts his mind goes back to his life in Europe where he has been studying medicine, particularly to the prejudices the Europeans have about Indians. He is confronted with the European metanarratives about history when he hears from his European friends that Europe has discovered India as if the history of India worth mentioning starts with the arrival of the Europeans:

he learned that India – like radium – has been ‘discovered’ by the Europeans; even Oskar was filled with admiration for Vasco da Gama, and this was what finally separated Aadam Aziz from his friends, this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors.

(Rushdie, *MC* 6)

The appropriation of history by Westerners makes them see India as the product of Western discovery. Despite the Western rational education of Dr. Aziz, he is still able to be critical of Western domineering views because “his German years, which have blurred so much else, haven’t deprived him of the gift of seeing” (Rushdie, *MC* 8). Unlike Aadam Aziz who, despite his European education is still able to see, there are many blinded by Western influence in the garden Aadam Aziz as returned to (the garden state of Kashmir) making it a different place from the one he has left. This difference brings Aziz some surprises such as the one that comes when he first meets his future wife Naseen. Aadam Aziz is called to tend to the sick daughter of Ghani, the landowner, and when he arrives at the stately home he sees Ghani with dark glasses standing beneath a gold framed painting of Diana the Huntress and Ghani promptly engages in an art discussion: “I purchased it from an Englishman down on his luck, Doctor Sahib. Five hundred rupees only – and I did not trouble to beat him down. What are five hundred chips? You see, I am a lover of culture” (Rushdie, *MC* 16). For Ghani, to display success and even a certain degree of sophistication is to have and discuss what he considers art, which for him means Western art. Aadam Aziz suddenly realizes, to his amazement, that Ghani is blind. In Aadam’s realization that the lover of European art is blind, readers can recognize a critique of the Indians who, as a

product of the influence of British colonialism, think highly of European culture while not caring nearly as much for their own.

Now as a Westernized Indian in India he also suffers some prejudice from the Indians who are critical of the Western ways such as Tai, the old ferry man who is quite critical of Aadam, a “wet-head nakkoo child goes away before he’s learned one damn thing and he comes back a big doctor sahib with a big bag full of foreign machines” (Rushdie, *MC* 17-18) and shows a particular hatred towards Aadam’s Western doctor bag: “Sistersleeping pigskin bag from Abroad full of foreigners’ tricks” (Rushdie, *MC* 19). The Western influence that is already felt in the generation of Saleem’s grandfather also extends to the official version of events such as the ones that happen in Amritsar, particularly at the Jallianwala garden. When newlywed Aadam Aziz travels to Amritsar for his honeymoon he finds people spreading pamphlets calling people for Hartal, a day of mourning or silence, to, as Aadam puts it “mourn, in peace, the continuing presence of the British” (37). The peaceful revolt is the influence of Mahatma Gandhi as a response to the British rule passing the 1919 Rowlatt Act (the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act) legislated by the Imperial Legislative Council against political agitation which approves the indefinite extension of the emergency measures of incarceration without trial and preventive indefinite detention. This is the response of British rule to the Indian struggle for independence. And, although the original intention to have a peaceful demonstration is distorted and some punctual riots arise, on April thirteenth the thousands of Indians who gather in a peaceful gathering in the Jallianwala garden are massacred by British forces. The narrator describes how doctor Aadam Aziz is at the Jallianwala garden where people gather socializing in a peaceful protest and have picnics when, at the command of British

Army Brigadier R. E. Dyer, fifty-one men with machine-guns enter and take positions opening fire on the crowd: “they have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd. [. . .] ‘Good shooting,’ Dyer tells his men, ‘We have done a jolly good thing’” (Rushdie, *MC* 41-42). So brutal is this event that Aadam Aziz only escapes because he gets covered by the bodies of the many people who are shot to death. This is a completely different version of the events than the one the British establish as the official: that the Indians are armed and have engaged in a violent protest leaving British troops no other way but to respond by shooting in order to defend themselves and maintain social order.

The violence and political power plays of the time of newlywed Aadam Aziz seep into society and, by the time he is raising his daughters, deceit and intrigue settle in the family garden. After the Kashmiri gardens the narrator next describes the walled garden of the house where Aadam Aziz and Naseem live with their children in Agra. Here their familial paradise is tainted by political schemes, murder, and westernization. This garden is described as the place in which lives the rickshaw boy who rents a house at the back of the garden and who lets Nadir Khan, a poet and personal secretary to the Muslim politician Mian Abdullah, into the garden and hides him inside a large laundry-chest in the “thunderbox room” (Rushdie, *MC* 65), the outdoor toilet, following Abdullah’s assassination. After Aadam Aziz goes to the toilet and is scared out of his constipation by hearing Khan’s voice coming out of the chest, he decides to help Khan and hides him in the cellar of the house “because concealment has always been a crucial architectural consideration in India, so that Aziz’s house has extensive underground chambers” (Rushdie, *MC* 65). This comment about concealment and reformulation of truth in the time of Saleem’s grandfather when his

mother is a young girl, works as an introduction to the events in the gardens by the time of Saleem's childhood.

Saleem's childhood home, where he is brought to as a new-born, is Buckingham Villa, part of the Methwold's estate characterized by its four European style stately villas and by its gardens where a lot of the events of his childhood take place. These gardens of Methwold's estate where Saleem grows up and are his Garden of Eden have one difference from the gardens his grandfather Aadam Aziz finds upon returning to Kashmir: although the British have chosen to leave, there is still the influence of British colonialism now perpetuated by the ruling classes of India. The illusion is that with the English gone the racism, violence and greed would be gone and Indian society would be a free, just society and an overall better place for all Indians. The truth is that the inheritance of colonialism is still present in the newly independent India as the place names all over the city exemplify (such as Victoria Terminus, Crawford Market, Flora Fountain, or Churchgate Station), and the villas of the estate which bare names after European palaces and are called Buckingham Villa, Versailles Villa, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci. In this Garden of Eden Indian families move to after buying the houses from leaving Englishmen, the influence of British colonialism is still strongly felt. On the days leading up to the Independence of India the villas are sold on the terms Methwold, still holding on to the little power he possesses, imposes: with the condition that the new owners keep all the content as it is at least to the date of the official transition of power. Methwold invites Ahmed for a cocktail in the garden while he reminisces about how British ritual has never changed in twenty years "Six o'clock every evening. Cocktail hour. Never varied in twenty years.'" (Rushdie, *MC* 126). In the garden, Scotch drinking Methwold tells Ahmed

Bad business [. . .] Never seen the like. Hundreds of years of decent government, then suddenly, up and off. you`ll admit we weren`t all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains, parliamentary system, all worthwhile things. Taj Mahal was falling down until an Englishman bothered to see to it. And now, suddenly, independence (Rushdie, *MC* 126-127)

Methwold`s feelings of racial superiority are met by the sheepish acceptance of Ahmed, who, trying to calm Amina says Methwold is just a bit eccentric “‘can we not humour him? With our ancient civilization, can we not be as civilized as he is? ’” (Rushdie, *MC* 131). Ahmed is accommodating of Methwold`s belittling of the much older and culturally rich Indian civilization which already has palaces with ventilation systems, toilets, sewage and running water thousands of years before Britain is even a nation. The culture shock is expressed through Amina`s own culture shock when she sees all those pictures of old English ladies on the wall leaving no room for her own photographs and is shocked at the carpet stains and that the British clean themselves with paper and do not wash after going to the toilet.

Since he can no longer hold on to India, Methwold holds on to the feeling of superiority and continues: “‘Did you know my ancestor was the chap who had the idea of building this whole city? A sort of Raffles of Bombay. As his descendant, at this important juncture, I feel the, I don`t know, need to play my part’” (Rushdie, *MC* 128-129). His justification to enact a smaller scale transition with the sale of Buckingham Villa seems a ridiculous attempt to cling to the power he thinks he is owed. Methwold is leaving but before that he

formats Indians according to the British ways making sure that this garden in which Saleem will grow up remains a British construct even after the British are gone:

Methwold's Estate, is changing them. Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls; and they are learning, about ceiling fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars, and Methwold, supervising their transformation. (Rushdie, *MC* 131)

This garden is further revealed to also possess the seed of deceit and seduction. When Wee Willie Winkie enters the gardens of Buckingham Villa during Methwold and Ahmed's meeting joking with his accordion, talking about his about-to-give-birth wife, he comments "ladies, gentlemen, how can you feel comfortable here, in the middle of Mr Methwold sahib's long past? I tell you: it must be strange; not real" (Rushdie, *MC* 136). Ahmed thinks he is going too far and starts to reprimand him but, strangely, Mr. Methwold defends Wee Willie Winkie saying he is acting according to the tradition of the fool which normally involves teasing and is due respect because of its social role. But "it is guilt" (Rushdie, *MC* 136) because Mr Methwold knows that nine months before he has invited Wee Willie and his wife, the now about-to-give-birth Vanita, to sing at his home and has sent Wee Willie to get a prescription while he seduces and is seduced by Vanita. Much like the notion of original sin many attribute to the story of the Garden of Eden in which a sin changes the future of all mankind, the deception being displayed in this garden will forever change the unborn Saleem's life. Methwold's deception is exposed on the day of the transition when Methwold goes to the gardens of the estate and in the middle of a circus ring, at four

o'clock, salutes and afterwards with the countdown to India's independence closer, runs his fingers through his hair but keeps his grip a little too long (like the grip on India he does not want to let go of) and ends up with a hairpiece in his hand. The product of the deception he used to seduce Vanita who loves running her fingers through his hair.

Much like Methwold's hairpiece which is part of the visual identity he is trying to project, the novel presents identity, which often seems a fundamental and unchangeable truth, as something that is not a permanently established truth either due to changes brought by self-discovery or to the influence of a construct. Establishing a parallel with Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Saleem believes "a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of everywhichthing are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another the next" (Rushdie, *MC* 328). While Alice's deconstruction of her identity parallels Sophia's quest for knowledge in a strange world, the narrator's retrospective reveals that Saleem is also in a quest to preserve an unofficial version of history and to know more about himself through the telling of his family's history. Saleem is seen by others as being different, as having the "blue eyes of a foreigner" (Rushdie, *MC* 515) which hints at what the narrator slowly uncovers: that his identity is based on lies and deceit. At the start of the narration readers think Saleem is the son of Ahmed and Amina Sinai only to find later on that he has been switched at birth with Shiva by Mary Pereira and is the son of poor Vanita but not her husband street singer Wee Willie Winkie. It turns out Saleem's father is the departing Englishman Methwold, who has had an affair with Vanita. And Shiva, Ahmed and Amina Sinai's biological son, is raised by poor widowed Wee Willie Winkie (who thinks he is the father) in the slums of Bombay. Saleem describes in detail all the care his parents employ to, almost like keeping a religious relic, carefully keep his umbilical cord

preserved in a pickle-jar in order to show that sometimes what is preserved as truth is nothing but a construct based on deceit.

And these constructs regarding personal identity also occur with national identity. The belief that India is born at midnight on August 15, 1947 is an example of how a political agreement can determine the construct of a national and cultural identity because it is from this political agreement on, and not India's previous five thousand years of history, that most people will define India by. A country which

[. . .] although it had invented the game of chess and traded with Middle Kingdom Egypt, was nevertheless quite imaginary; into [. . .] a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will. (Rushdie, *MC* 150)

How people see India seems to be influenced by the construct created by the partition that results from the independence agreement drawn by British the colonizer and will induce many to see India as a homogeneous Hindu nation born in 1947. People can be led to believe and accept someone else's profit driven construct about India just as in the case of Lifafa Das' proto-cinema peepshow box where one can peep in and see various colourful images promoted as showing the reality of India "Come see everything, come see everything, come see! Come see Delhi, come see India, come see!" (Rushdie, *MC* 93-94). Yet, it displays its own version of reality as "inside the peepshow of Lifafa Das were pictures of Taj Mahal, and Meenakshi Temple, and the Holy Ganges [. . .] untouchables being touched; educated persons sleeping on railway lines; a publicity still of a European actress with a mountain of fruit on her head" (Rushdie, *MC* 97). The idyllic images of

untouchables being touched have no correspondence with reality and none of the other images gives a fair knowledge of the reality of India.

And, in reality, the world created by the British is a racist world that separates on the basis of colour or culture but the reality of postcolonial India is no better. Indians have absorbed the English metanarrative of cultural superiority based on visible signs of ethnicity, such as skin colour, and now use it to sustain class demarcations among themselves. If before independence a young Mumtaz Aziz (Saleem's mother) is "the blackie whom she [her mother] had never been able to love because of her skin of a South Indian fisherwoman" (Rushdie, *MC* 69), long after independence things remain the same as even Padma has skin colour bias commenting about Mumtaz: "'Poor girl,' Padma concludes, 'Kashmiri girls are normally fair like snow, but she turned out black. Well, well, her skin would have stopped her making a good match, probably'" (Rushdie, *MC* 71). Many Indians' views of themselves are conditioned or the result of the influence of colonial power either being ashamed for being the offspring of British colonists like Emil Zagallo who is ashamed of being the bastard son of a European or Ahmed Sinai who seems embracing of other lighter skin ethnicities like Europeans or the Mughals. Some characters construct an identity as result of colonial influence and mimic colonialist behavior such as Saleem's geography and gymnastics teacher, Mr Emil Zagallo. He calls his Indian students "'savages'" (Rushdie, *MC* 318), or "'feeltth from the jongle'" (Rushdie, *MC* 320) and "'sons of baboons'" (Rushdie, *MC* 321). He enjoys diminishing Saleem calling him a "'primitive creature'" (Rushdie, *MC* 320) and "'ugly ape'" (Rushdie, *MC* 321) and asking "'what are you?'" (Rushdie, *MC* 321), forcing Saleem to answer "'sir an animal sir!'" (Rushdie, *MC* 321) while all the class, out of fear of being beaten too if they disagree, acts

amused and accepting: “‘absolute master joke, sir!’” (Rushdie, *MC* 321). Mr. Zagallo claims to be Peruvian and talks often about the Pacific Ocean, llamas and conquistadores in a forced Latin accent but the boys know he is the son of a Goanese mother and an English man and, most likely a bastard. Another example of the construct of personal identity is Ahmed Sinai, the narrator's father. When the English William Methwold visits Saleem's father in his childhood garden of Buckingham Villa and tells him stories of his ancestor who has done great things, Ahmed Sinai, “lubricated by whisky, driven on by self-importance” (Rushdie, *MC* 147), feels the need to impress the Englishman and says he has Mughal ancestry which, when he is senile later on in life, he comes to believe in and confuse with his real ancestry confirming that “sometimes legends make reality” (Rushdie, *MC* 57). Ahmed Sinai's fabrication of his ancestry is an example that all constructs, even those which are the most outrageously false have the possibility of, with time, being seen as irretrievably linked with truth as is the case of a senile Ahmed who talks both about his real and fictional ancestry. Even the Sinai dog, Baroness Simki von der Heiden, has a false pedigree, “a pedigree chock-full of champion Alsatians, [. . .] as imaginary as my father's forgotten curse and Mughal ancestry” (Rushdie, *MC* 283) fuelled, like the dog's European name with a European title, by Western influence.

The connection with the Mughals that Saleem's father tries to establish mirrors the connection Rushdie's father establishes with Eastern philosophy by changing the family name in honour of Avicenna. Both the author and Saleem, the narrator, are heirs to Eastern philosophy. The Mughal empire, which dominates the seventeenth century extending from today Afghanistan to India and Bangladesh, is influenced by a vast number of Asian theologies and mythologies including Gnosticism. An example is Dara Shukoh, the eldest

son and heir of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. He spends most of his life studying the different Islamic and Hindu mystical schools, including Muslim Gnosticism, and meets with several exponents of the different theologies that he admires such as Dharmic-Gnostic saint Bawa Lal Dayal. Famous for its gardens, which cement garden symbology throughout Asia, the Mughal empire exteriorizes its theological ideas in architecture being the Taj Mahal its most famous still existing example. The Taj Mahal depicts, through the symbolism of the garden, one of the fundamental beliefs of Gnosticism: the duality between the material world and an ultimate immaterial reality. Not widely known as the building itself, it presents a white Taj Mahal and a black Taj Mahal. Archaeological discoveries have found written records and physical evidence that opposite the white Taj Mahal everyone knows there are, on the other side of the river, the remnants of a construction of gardens with water mirrors on which, depending on the moon, one could have seen reflected the Taj Mahal which would look darker, hence the popular name of the black Taj Mahal. The white stone physical Taj Mahal represents the material world, and its reflection represents its existence in the immaterial world. This representation of an immaterial world is quite ethereal and exemplifies in itself the difficulty of seeing beyond our material world because the Taj Mahal of the immaterial world, although its reflection is always there, can only be fully seen by human eyes occasionally, according to the cycle of the moon and provided atmospheric conditions such as wind allow it.

On the road to Saleem's childhood garden of Methwold Estate is the white only Breach Candy Swimming Club "where pink people could swim in a pool the shape of British India without fear of rubbing up against a black skin" (Rushdie, *MC* 124-125). During British occupation Mr. Pushpa Roy, India's first swimmer of the English Channel, fights for the

right to frequent the pool going there practically daily only to be literally thrown out by Indian keepers but after the British are gone segregation still remains now perpetrated by the Indians themselves: “today the Pools permit certain Indians - ‘the better sort’ to step into their map-shaped waters. But Pushpa does not belong to the better sort” (Rushdie, *MC* 172). Higher social class Indians emulate European leisure habits such as the Indian “businessman-playboy, who is to be found on most days tanning himself [. . .] I ask you: an Indian, sun-bathing? But apparently it's quite normal, the international rules of playboydom must be obeyed to the letter” (Rushdie, *MC* 633). The narrator alerts for the reality of post-independence India in which there is racism, violence, and corruption that were once blamed on the British colonizer:

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history, in my version, entered a new phase on August 15th, 1947 – but in another version, that inescapable date is no more than one fleeting instant in the age of Darkness, Kali-Yuga, in which the cow of morality has been reduced to standing, teeteringly, on a single leg! [. . .] the worst of everything; the age when property gives man rank, when wealth is equated with virtue, when passion becomes the sole bond between men and women, when falsehood brings success. (Rushdie, *MC* 269)

The greatest illusion in independent India is that the violence, injustice, racism and corruption have left with the British but the truth is quite the opposite. Newly independent India is a country that has embraced illusion, like the fantasist Bollyhood movies in which any unveiling of the truth is only but temporary: when Hanif Aziz (Saleem’s prominent film director uncle who wants to produce realistic movies) ends up financially ruined because his realistic perspective is not welcome, he kills himself by jumping off the roof of his apartment

building and falling down on the street by the beggars that, frightened, “gave up pretending to be blind and ran away yelling . . . in death as in life, Hanif Aziz espoused the cause of truth” (Rushdie, *MC* 376). After the event they go right back to doing the same thing, to deceiving others for a living. The “cause of truth” in India seems to be a lost cause. Able to see through the illusion of newly acquired independence, Saleem notices how the Westernization of India is corrupting some intellectuals such as the Rani of Cooch Naheen, who is “going white in blotches, a disease which leaked into history and erupted on an enormous scale shortly after Independence” (Rushdie, *MC* 53), and among the economic elite:

[. . .] all over India I stumbled across good Indian businessmen, their fortunes thriving [. . .] businessmen who had become or were becoming very, very pale indeed! It seems that the gargantuan (even heroic) efforts involved in taking over from the British and becoming masters of their own destinies had drained the colour from their cheeks [. . .] The businessmen of India were turning white. (Rushdie, *MC* 248)

The world of Saleem’s childhood is more Westernized than ever: in the gardens of Methwold estate the cocktail hour is “already a habit too powerful to be broken” (Rushdie, *MC* 175) and every time Wee Willie Winkie comes around the estate to sing for spare change, he sings the same songs he used to sing for the British such as “Good Night Ladies [. . .] The Clouds Will Soon Roll By [. . .] How Much Is That Doggie In The Window?” (Rushdie, *MC* 175). The Edenic surroundings of Methwold’s estate are, by Saleem’s own admission when Padma asks if he has had a globe as a child, a mimicry of England: at first

he answers negatively but right after lets the reader know that he did and that “it was a world full of labels: Atlantic Ocean and Amazon and Tropic of Capricorn. And, at the North Pole, it bore the legend: MADE AS ENGLAND” (Rushdie, *MC* 369). He also remembers when his mother and nanny have had made the same tunic and collar of the British painting that has been left on the wall of Saleem`s room just so he could imitate the painting: “‘how chweet!’ Lila Sabarmati exclaimed [. . .] ‘It`s like he`s just stepped out of the picture!’” (Rushdie, *MC* 167). Lila Sabarmati`s reaction is revealing of an uncritical acceptance of everything western that Saleem classifies as a vulnerability. This same vulnerability is uncovered when an American girl, Evie Burns, arrives at Saleem`s school and, suddenly, the school program includes every Western classic the school can cram in:

‘In India, we`ve always been vulnerable to Europeans . . . Evie had only been with us a matter of weeks, and already I was being sucked into a grotesque mimicry of European literature. (We had done *Cyrano*, in a simplified version, at school; I had also read the *Classics Illustrated* comic book.) Perhaps it would be fair to say that Europe repeats itself, in India, as farce . . . Evie was American. Same thing.’ (Rushdie, *MC* 256)

Indians seem as blind to the nuances of other ethnicities as the colonizing foreigners are of all the ethnicities and nuances of the peoples of India. Because they are used to the white European British colonists and because Evie is a white foreigner they revert to what they identify as part of white foreigners` culture: European literature. Independence is an illusion because Indian society remains under the influence of the British metanarrative that Europeans are more advanced culturally so Indian society fully embraces Western culture. Hence, Saleem refers to India`s independence in harsh terms: “disillusion, venality,

cynicism . . . the nearly-twenty-one-year-old myth of freedom is no longer what it was” (Rushdie, *MC* 640).

When Saleem moves to Pakistan temporarily, it is at a garden party of his aunt Emerald that he hears generals discussing about the state of national finances, rigged elections and plans for a coup and there he learns that the outcome of independence is also “violence, corruption, poverty, generals, chaos, greed” (Rushdie, *MC* 405). At the garden party he meets Alauddin Latif, a retired Major who has left the army to be a show-business impresario. Saleem’s mention of this character is used to stress the connection between a leading military role of the ruling elites with show-business, further emphasizing that the ruling class is dedicated to maintaining or promoting illusions much like show-business. By the time Saleem is a teenager society is so putrid that he associates gardens with stench noting the “decaying fumes of animal faeces in the gardens of the Frere Road museum” (Rushdie, *MC* 440). The events that happen at gardens at that time reveal how the basic democratic rights, such as voting, are only officially guaranteed while in reality they are at the mercy of the ruling elite: during election time the Nawab has soldiers guard the door of some members of the Combined Opposition Party to keep them from voting. The men confront him in the Nawab’s rose garden where they call him, among other things, an antidemocratic tyrant to what he explains “‘My friends, yesterday my daughter was betrothed to Zafar Zulfikar; soon, I hope, my other girl will wed our President’s own dear son. Think, then – what dishonour for me, what scandal on my name, if even one vote were cast in Kif against my future relative!’” (Rushdie, *MC* 452). When the Nawab enforces his selfish logic, elections are maneuvered and democratic rights are annulled for the sake of personal interests. In these gardens the one thousand and one possibilities the children of

midnight represent are matched by “an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies” (Rushdie, *MC* 453). This is a country in which the powerful decide reality and, according to Saleem’s reasoning, “in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist” (Rushdie, *MC* 453).

This control extends to the press which is often far from reality with newspapers quoting foreign economists “PAKISTAN A MODEL FOR EMERGING NATIONS” (Rushdie, *MC* 464) while the truth is completely different. The reality is that the country is not prosperous, it is in financial ruin and it is run by corrupt leaders. Often the press transmits the version of the truth that suits the ones in charge such as the case of the headline “DASTARDLY INDIAN INVASION REPELLED BY OUR GALLANT BOYS” (Rushdie, *MC* 468) that distracts from the death of General Zulfikar at the hands of his own son and “INNOCENT SOLDIERS MASSACRED BY INDIAN FAUJ” distracts from his bribing of border guards while smuggling. Saleem’s account shows us a press governed by political interests and, consequently, not concerned with the truth. It is used to transmit a message that serves other interests than those of the truth. Saleem remembers how the newspapers revealed the conflict between India and China with an Indian newspaper writing “UNPROVOKED ATTACK ON INDIA” (Rushdie, *MC* 414) while the official Peking statement announces that “In self-defence, Chinese frontier guards were compelled to strike back resolutely” (Rushdie, *MC* 414). Saleem believes that the constructs of the information mediums affect everyone as it is something that “no literate person in this India of ours can be wholly immune from” (Rushdie, *MC* 273). The connection between the press, politics and economy (represented by the advertising) and how they can be manipulated for other dark and personal purposes is exemplified by the story of Lila

Sabarmati's affair. Saleem wants to unmask the affair of Commander Vinoo Sabarmati's wife, Lila, because he believes it will scare his mother and stop her from meeting her former husband. In order to achieve this Saleem decides to cut letters, words and syllables from important political news and advertising from the newspaper to create a letter to Commander Sabarmati. This shows just how easy it is to rearrange the facts to fit an individual purpose. And the devastating consequences of Commander Sabarmati killing his wife depriving his sons of her nurturing and surrendering to the police shows how easily anyone can be a victim: "Commander Sabarmati was only a puppet; I was the puppet master, and the nation performed my play – only I hadn't meant it!" (Rushdie, *MC* 363).

The constructs the ruling elites put forth as realities lead people to take the illusions for reality and, like someone following a mirage in the desert, the result can be fatal. Saleem exemplifies this with the inhabitants of the desert city of Karachi in which "the hidden desert retained its ancient powers of apparition-mongering, with the result that Karachiites had only the slipperiest of grasps on reality, and were therefore willing to turn to their leaders for advice on what was real and what was not" (Rushdie, *MC* 428). Saleem goes further and suggests that even what one thinks is a fundamental truth such as time, is, sometimes, just something that has been institutionalized by political will. Because of the independence agreement India is divided in India and Pakistan and politicians decide each country should have a different time:

time has been an unsteady affair, in my experience, not a thing to be relied upon. It could even be partitioned: the clocks in Pakistan would run half an hour ahead of their Indian counterparts [. . .] 'If they can change the time just

like that, what's real any more? I ask you? What's true?'" (Rushdie, *MC* 102-103)

Another example of a construct that creates an illusion for both Indians and Pakistanis is the metanarrative of "us versus them" that each country, India and Pakistan, has created and in which each country promotes the other as barbaric and uncivilized. As a young man living in Pakistan Saleem is in the army when war breaks between India and Pakistan. When the ceasefire is declared Saleem, who has just witnessed his friend's death on the rooftop of the mosque, uncovers yet another level of instrumentalization and political cover up as he is a witness to what has truly happened and differs from what is the accepted version of the events:

Shaheed and I saw many things which were not true, which were not possible, because our boys would not could not have behaved so badly; we saw men in spectacles with heads like eggs being shot in side-streets, we saw the intelligentsia of the city being massacred by the hundred, but it was not true because it could not have been true, the Tiger was a decent chap, after all, [. . .] lady doctors were being bayoneted before they were raped, and raped again before they were shot. Above them and behind them, the cool white minaret of a mosque stared blindly down upon the scene. (Rushdie, *MC* 524-525)

According to Saleem's recollections, on December fifteenth of 1971 when Tiger Niazi, the commander of the Pakistani troops, surrenders to Sam Manekshaw, the commander of Indian troops, both get together for a friendly talk. The language which Saleem attributes to both men reveals their behavior is learnt from the British they look up to, hence they

mimic British accent and expressions and also mimic the violence perpetrated by the British colonizing power and its tendency to conceal the truth:

[. . .] that night, Sam and the Tiger drank chota pegs and reminisced about the old days in the British Army. 'I say, Tiger,' Sam Manekshaw said, 'You behaved kolly decently by surrendering.' And the Tiger, 'Sam, you fought one hell of a war.' [. . .] 'Listen, old sport: one hears such damn awful lies. Slaughters, old boy, mass graves, special units called CUTIA [. . .] . . . no truth in it, I suppose?' And the Tiger, [. . .] Never heard of it. [. . .] No, ridiculous, damn ridiculous, if you don't mind me saying.' 'Thought as much, ' says General Sam, 'I say, bloody fine to see you, Tiger, you old devil!' And the Tiger, 'Been years, eh, Sam? Too damn long.' (Rushdie, *MC* 530)

Rushdie also uses the setting of the Indo Pakistan war to reinforce the connection between the novel's plot (Saleem's journey of recording history and the history of the discovery of his identity) with the Gnostic search for an ultimate truth for which is necessary to achieve self-knowledge. Mirroring the Gnostic myth of Sophia descending to the material world and enduring hardship in her quest for knowledge, so Saleem, who has joined the army, deserts the Indo Pakistani war into the rain forests of the Sundarbans where he endures countless hardships. Here, the safe, peaceful and all-providing Garden of Eden is transformed into a jungle to depict his interior turmoil and the exterior confusion and dangers of the war. At this time Saleem has lost his memory and his fellow soldiers give him the nickname buddha because in Urdu it means old man as he is older than the boy soldiers. But Rushdie remarks that pronouncing buddha with soft ds means "he-who-

achieved-enlightenment-under-the-bodhi-tree” (Rushdie, *MC* 487) and this is what eventually happens when Saleem is bitten on the heel by a translucent snake and recuperates his memory, or acquires the knowledge of who he is. Like Sophia, he achieves gnosis after enduring a trying place (the jungle) alone and after becoming knowledgeable he is able to tell the story of his ancestors and his life “because he was reclaiming everything . . . all lost histories, all the myriad complex processes that go to make a man” (Rushdie, *MC* 364-365).

This idea that truth is found within man and that reaching enlightenment and discovering oneself are interconnected and necessary to have a clear, illusions-free perspective of others and the world (like Saleem who remembers his family and his country’s history) is an example of how the Gnostic perspective in the novel is firmly rooted in Rushdie’s Eastern background, as *Grimus* exemplifies. Rushdie’s novel *Grimus* is inspired by twelfth-century Sufi narrative poem *The Conference of the Birds* by Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar in which all characters are birds. They do not have a king but they are told by a hoopoe bird (which is a messenger of a bird god) that they do have a king and the hoopoe suggests they go in search of the king, Simorgh. They go, then, on a quest in search of a king. However, at the end of their arduous journey, by the time they arrive at the court of the king, there are only 30 birds left and then they find out that the king (what they search for) is non other than themselves. The story is a pun on si (thirty), morph (birds) or thirty birds (si murg) in Persian, revealing the Gnostic “God within” perspective that what they are looking for is in them. Similarly, in *Grimus* the main character, Flapping Eagle, is named after a bird who becomes immortal after drinking a magical fluid and goes searching for his immortal sister. He roams the earth for 777 years, 7 months and 7 days and arrives at an island where other

immortals live. On the island he meets Virgil Jones whose two Christian names are Virgil, like the Roman poet writer of the *Aeneid*, and Chanakya, like the ancient Indian philosopher known as a great thinker and diplomat. A fictionalization of Rushdie's cultural basis where East mythology and philosophy meets West philosophy that he explains as a way to make Eastern philosophy available to the West: "although the plot of *Grimus* is not that of the poem, it has it at its centre, and that gave me something to cling on to. I was trying to take a theme out of eastern philosophy or mythology and transpose it into a western convention" (qtd. in Goonetilleke 6).

When Saleem returns to India he returns to a Civil Service garden where he stays with his uncle Mustapha. His telling of the historical events that ensue exposes the Indian political metanarrative of India as this new, problem-free, independent country as false. Saleem reveals that the metanarrative the Indian politicians have created that an Independent India is free from the oppression it once endured under the British colonialist regime is an illusion. A yet different garden from that of his childhood, here he finds again corruption, hunger, inflation, homelessness and illiteracy and when a coalition of students and workers of Gujarat starts rioting against Indira Gandhi's government, Mrs. Gandhi declares a state of Emergency allowing the suspension of civil rights and censorship of the press. At this time "all over India policemen were arresting people, all opposition leaders [. . .] and also schoolteachers lawyers poets newspapermen trade-unionists, in fact anyone who had ever made the mistake of sneezing during the Madam's speeches" (Rushdie, *MC* 585). Much like its creator, Indira Gandhi, who has a streak of white hair on one side while the other side is all black, so does the Emergency has two sides according to Saleem: "a white part – public, visible, documented, a matter for historians – and a black part which,

being secret macabre untold, must be a matter for us” (Rushdie, *MC* 588). Part of the dark side of it is that, due to the power of the declaration of emergency, Gandhi, with the help of armed troops, enforces a sterilization campaign that sterilizes hundreds of Indians by force and bulldozes slums for aesthetic reasons while ordering “‘all persons will follow orders without dissent’” (Rushdie, *MC* 599). According to Saleem, the intent behind it is “the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight” (Rushdie, *MC* 597) or, to eliminate the one hundred and one alternatives the children represent. Saleem is imprisoned and sterilized but adopts Shiva’s son (born at the exact same time the Emergency is declared) that he acknowledges will be “the child of a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together again” (Rushdie, *MC* 586) meaning, truth about what has happened is difficult to reach because of all the cover-ups and the passing of time which solidifies the acceptance of illusions as facts enabling the truth to remain largely unreachable.

The first word his son, Aadam Sinai, says is “abracadabra” which is also the title of the last chapter, the name Saleem chooses for his last pickle jar, and the word he hears in the rhythmic noise of the train taking him and the magician Picture Singh to a snake charmer duel. An ancient word used on amulets against harm or illness, there are no certainties as where the word comes from and scholars support mostly three different etymological roots: the Hebrew etymology of *ebrah k`dabri* meaning *I will create as I speak* (from the kabbalistic belief that words can create new realities), or *ab, bem, ruach hakodesh* meaning *fater, son and holy spirit*; the Aramaic phrase *avra kadavra* or *kehdabra* meaning *I will create as I speak*; and the Chaldean *abbada ke dabra*, meaning *perish like the word*. Rushdie connects the word with the Gnostic beliefs of the Basilideans, a Gnostic sect whose philosophy (like

Rushdie's writing) combines Western (Greek) and Oriental points. It is founded in the second century by Basilides of Alexandria who is commonly believed to have been taught by a disciple of St. Peter or Simonian Menander depending on the sources. Its doctrine has similarities with what has become known as Jewish Kabbalism and with the teachings of the Gnostic sect of the Ophites. The Basilideans that Saleem feels necessary to mention reveal, again, that the common thread for interpreting the novel lies on the knowledge of Eastern philosophy conveyed in Western form. Saleem explains that *abracadabra* is

not an Indian word at all, [it is] a cabbalistic formula derived from the name of the supreme god of the Basilidan gnostics, containing the number 365, the number of the days of the year, and of the heavens, and of the spirits emanating from the god Abraxas (Rushdie, *MC* 642).

For *abracadabra*, the common thread of all the etymological roots is the connection between language and the power of creating. The belief that humans can be God-like co-creators that can use their given knowledge of something, such as language, to create and are free to make their own choices and deal with the consequences of their creation is fundamental to Gnostic beliefs. According to these beliefs Abraxas, depicted with serpents for legs, is a reference to the walking (conducting yourself in life) according to the knowledge the serpent has given man, or according to the search for knowledge (Gnosticism). It is the acquisition of knowledge that helps break the spell of illusions as both Saleem and the magician Picture Singh are aware of. By the end of the novel both Saleem and the magician Picture Singh are traveling to Bombay with snakes to face another snake charmer or, in other words, to establish who has the knowledge necessary to control illusions. This knowledge that allows them to detect illusions and know their workings also

allows them to create illusions themselves so the one that can master it the best (make the snakes behave a certain way) wins the title of the best magician. The “abracadabra” title of the last chapter is a “cabbalistic formula” (Rushdie, *MC* 642) both Picture Singh and Saleem seem to know because when it comes to the conflict between illusion and truth both come out as winners. As a magician (and leader of the ghetto of magicians filled with fakirs and illusionists) Picture Singh can recognize an illusion when he sees one and when confronted with the illusions of another magician he wins the title of the greatest magician. Though without anyone to see it because the confront and mastery of illusions takes place in the dark, or inside the individual. And just as unassuming is Saleem`s fight to preserve the truth against illusions with his pickles which “possess the authentic taste of truth” (Rushdie, *MC* 644) and the telling of his view of historical events and family history. Saleem`s questioning of the truth of official versions and the need to tell his perspective of events, his story, is also shared by another narrator: Jeanette, the main character of Jeanette Winterson`s novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. She questions the reality her culture imposes on her and concludes that, in the history and the stories she is told and allowed to read there is, not simply a fundamental *truth*, but a self-serving construct by the power structures of her community.

4.1.3.3. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

The 1960s and early 1970s, the time frame of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, is a time when metanarratives are contested, particularly metanarratives which promote notions of racial, religious or gender superiority. The Christian history of Britain as the basis of national and moral identity is rejected and more and more young people revive and take

into account the history of Britain before the arrival of Christianity. Hence, there is a reappropriation of the "sacred feminine" of pre-Christian England for the liberation of women. There is also the rejection of gender stereotypes as they are seen as promoting sexual inequality and the rejection of metanarratives that promote racial discrimination such as European imperialism or the apartheid in South Africa. 1960s and 1970s British society, particularly in big cities, goes through substantial transformations with anti-establishment protests and sexual liberation as a consequence of women starting to control their own fertility (due to the creation of the contraceptive pill) and sexuality due to the increasing numbers of women going to university and entering the workplace and gaining more independence. Women start to subvert the gender roles and other dogmas of the metanarratives of patriarchy. However, the clash of traditional versus new values happening in big cities (the change of fashion, what is socially acceptable to wear, the rise of pop music, student revolts, change in sexual behavior) and overall challenge of conventional authority including parents, church, and government is not felt in rural, secluded towns like Accrington is at the time. Rural populations are still not so liberal (or not liberal at all) and a great number of the population who lives in smaller towns and villages is still very closed off to different ideas and different people which means that a considerable part of society offers resistance to anything new or different. This includes offering resistance to different people such as the immigrants from former British colonies who move to England in the 1960s only to find "that England was not the modern home of Christianity that they had been led to believe in colonial schools" (Brown, C. G. 255). There is a considerable amount of racism in British society then and it is also still a deeply patriarchal society particularly in rural industrial towns.

The government has created a metanarrative of progress for industrial towns that leads people to believe that they have been given an opportunity to improve their lives through all the job opportunities industry offers. The difficult working conditions in factories, particularly in small towns like Accrington, give rise to a culture of working-class masculinity. Men create bonds between themselves when working in a difficult and dangerous place and when pay day arrives men go to the pub and women stay home. Men are seen as hardworking, being fit for working, and also having the right to have a good time to take from the stress of being the breadwinner which is a view that further pushes women into the home environment. Also, the relationship between factories' management and workers helps to solidify the society's compliance with the actions of those with power. Management has all the power and workers have to comply because of the scarcity of jobs in rural areas. Most of the households in industrial towns are dependent on factory work, forcing a great number of people to comply with the ruling structures out of fear of losing their livelihood. The reality is that most industrial towns are quite poor. In the 2009 article "On Neighborhood Sharing in 1960s Accrington", in *The Guardian*, in which Winterson reminisces about her childhood Christmas, she explains that the whole community is quite poor: "no car, no phone, an outside loo and a coal hole [. . .] we were poor but so was everyone else, so Christmas was not competition or consumerism but an unlikely communism – practical, not political". It is also this spirit of community of a rural small town that increases social pressure to comply with what is socially and religiously established as correct and acceptable as people judge each other's behavior constantly.

Accrington, where the story takes place, is a good example of the hard life of the working class and the educational limitations of a typical industrial northern rural town. In

Accrington even the library is built with funds from the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie and the town's Mechanics Institute created by the trade union movement is the education provider. In this town being educated is resumed to being able to work in its factories. In a 2018 article in *The Guardian*, Winterson talks about Accrington and its

famous Nori brickworks – the world's hardest bricks, used for the base of the Empire State Building and Blackpool tower. Nori is iron spelt backwards – nobody really knows whether it was a mistake or a branding brainwave – but the idea that things could be backwards, or upside down, and still rock-solid appealed to me.

Despite being in a place she finds limiting, Jeanette has some good memories of the industrial small town and from it came some good such as the bricks that have built many relevant buildings worldwide exemplify. Like the bricks, Jeanette's background in Accrington has made her more resilient and strong, given that she has to overcome the strict conditioning of her upbringing.

In “Genesis”, the chapter that represents the Garden of Eden of her childhood, Jeanette tells the reader how there are only six books in the house: “two of those were Bibles and the third was a concordance to the Old and New Testaments. The Fourth was *The House at Pooh Corner*. The Fifth, *The Chatterbox Annual 1923* and the sixth, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*” (Winterson, *Oranges* 153). And, out of the six, she reads *Morte d'Arthur* repeatedly which, as remarks scholar Susan Onega in *Jeanette Winterson*, her bibliography of Winterson, shows how her childhood reading of *Morte d'Arthur* sets the ground for Winterson's plot being structured as the archetypal quest which is so common in her novels. In the introduction to the 2014 Vintage edition of *Oranges*, Winterson writes:

Oranges works with fairy stories and in particular the Grail Legend because I am drawn to this fundamental truth about how situations can be transformed – and why they are not – which is what tragedy is all about. [. . .] That it does end the way it does – and often badly – need not be the final answer. Even those words, ‘final’ and ‘answer’ are faulty. (xiii)

Although that place is limiting Jeanette likes and identifies with northerners, their toughness, humor and way of speaking. Still, both the author and the character Jeanette leave Accrington with the latter in search of a place where she can live freely and make her own choices.

Jeanette establishes a parallel with the Garden of Eden by illustrating the restrictive environment of her community through fruit imagery. The garden is used once as a symbol of a place where she is free to live her sexuality and cultural curiosity. It is used to depict what she aims to and how that is different from the expectations of her culture. It is indirectly mentioned, for example, through a reference to Adam naming the animals, to stress the importance of language in both the creation or the questioning of cultural constructs such as those in her community. The occasional direct reference to a garden is used to convey her critique of the uncritical acceptance of metanarratives. Such as the metanarrative of history as the ultimate truth and the metanarrative of patriarchy. Winterson sees both metanarratives of history and patriarchy as promoted by the social ruling powers to legitimize themselves. As representing the state in the novel one can see, not only institutions of the outside world such as school or the outside society, but also Jeanette's mother who enforces social and cultural values. Much like the goddess Hera, who is the queen of the gods and the goddess of marriage, Jeanette's mother is a figure of

great authority that enforces the patriarchal metanarrative of heterosexual marriage and gender inequality. This is represented by her mother giving her only one choice of fruit (oranges) making Jeanette conform to having only the one choice she is presented with. More than what she is subjected to in her religious community, the motif of fruit reveals how Jeanette is made to conform also in the society of the outside world. Hence, when she goes to school she remarks how children there also have orange but as juice, and when she is hospitalized she is made to conform to playing with the peels from the oranges her mother gives her instead of plasticine, and oranges are also used to exemplify how patriarchy creates the idea of feminine perfection. These oranges are the golden apples of the enclosed and guarded Garden of the Hesperides that Jeanette chooses as a representation of her restrictive life.

Jeanette's life is molded by the values of her community and her secluded social environment. Growing up, her education is based on learning the metanarratives of her congregation. Her initial schooling consists of reading from the Book of Deuteronomy and being told about life morals by her mother through examples from the lives of the saints. So, Jeanette learns about horticulture through her mother's seed catalogues and learns that

it rains when clouds collide with a high building, like a steeple, or a cathedral; the impact punctures them, and everybody underneath gets wet. This was why, in the old days, when the only tall buildings were holy, people used to say cleanliness is next to godliness. The more godly your town, the more high buildings you'd have, and the more rain you'd get. 'That's why all these Heathen places are so dry,' explained my mother. (Winterson, *Oranges* 21)

And her knowledge of history is based on and shaped by the beliefs of her congregation, as Jeanette reveals, she develops “an understanding of Historical Process through the prophecies in the Book of Revelation, and a magazine called *The Plain Truth*, which my mother received each week” (Winterson, *Oranges* 22).

Yet, after Jeanette is forced by governmental law to go to school, the place her mother describes as a “Breeding Ground” (Winterson, *Oranges* 22), she begs her mother not to because she soon discovers that she is also oppressed and suppressed in that community. After telling her mother she does not want to go back to school her mother says “‘you’ve got to go,’ she said. ‘Here, have an orange’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 51) as she tries to console Jeanette and make her accepting of the new circumstances of having to go to school. Jeanette notes that at school, too, most children, though envying the ones drinking canned drinks, have orange squash. At school, Jeanette and most other children are also having oranges (juice this time), they are also being made to conform to the school’s values system. Jeanette notes that the shoebag room at school is always smelly but that they “didn’t really notice [it] after a week or so” (Winterson, *Oranges* 44), meaning that, just like at home, at school you also get used to things and start not noticing them. This getting used to something leads to accepting uncritically and is the mechanism of acceptance of metanarratives. Also, the fact that the teacher calls the children *lambs*, can be interpreted as revealing that, much like her religious community, the school is also a space in which it is exerted another formatting. Jeanette notices that social conditioning occurs both within her congregation and in the outside world.

In both her congregation and the outside world of school Jeanette starts by trying to conform and does her best “to fit in and be good” (Winterson, *Oranges* 49) but never

manages to do so. At school, Jeanette has to write an essay about what she has done in her last summer holidays and while her class mates read their essays in class she notes how repetitive they are: they all mention “fishing, swimming, picnics, Walt Disney” (Winterson, *Oranges* 49). After reading about her church camp, her aunt Betty’s loose leg, her mother healing the sick, and testifying on the beach, the teacher tells her there is no time to read it all and the class giggles. The reality Jeanette lives in her religious community is not accepted in this community and, after causing distress to her class mates with stories about hell, she is questioned at school about her choices (which are not the usual for a child her age) such as writing about different animals like rock badgers or shrimps. At this point Jeanette notes how even the best can be stigmatized by general society by establishing a comparison with someone with talent but misunderstood: “this tendency towards the exotic has brought me many problems, just as it did for William Blake” (Winterson, *Oranges* 54). While a gifted poet and painter who challenges social and religious beliefs in his writing, nineteenth century Blake is seen as a mad man by many because he says he sees visions. Jeanette soon finds out that she does not fit in the school community, that her preferences upset them, and, for being different, she is bullied by her peers and punished by the authority figures of that community, the teachers. At recess, the children pretend to play tag just to hit her at the playground and whenever she catches one they all tell the teacher she has hit someone and she is the one punished. When it comes to sewing class, Jeanette wants to sew a cross stitch text with a doomsday religious slogan in black which upsets the teacher but, believing in the quality of her work, Jeanette enters her all-black lettering work with the terrified damned in a corner for the needle work prize. Again, through Mrs. Virtue who lets her know that it is not what the judges expect and that the terrified damned look

like a blob, the school community makes it known to Jeanette that her work is not accepted. Mrs. Virtue represents what the school community of the outside world accepts. But, still, Jeanette further criticizes how the expectations of the teachers leave no room for individual expression:

'just because you can't tell what it is, doesn't mean it's not what it is.' [. . .]
My needlework teacher suffered from a problem of vision. She recognized things according to expectation and environment. If you were in a particular place, you expected to see particular things [. . .] most likely, she'd do what most people do when confronted with something they don't understand: Panic." (Winterson, *Oranges* 58)

Jeanette realizes her needlework is right in Elsie's room (in her congregation) but wrong in her school's sewing class. At school Jeanette tries to fit in and win a prize but her biblical themes always miss the mark so when she turns to other themes (a potato sculpture of Henry Ford, Bette Davis, William Tell, and even *Streetcar Named Desire*) not only her work keeps being rejected at school, but she infuriates her mother for abandoning biblical themes. Because at school Jeanette is an outsider who does not understand the social rules she tries to fit in by "always rearranging their version of the facts" (Winterson, *Oranges* 62). So, when she learns about the tetrahedron at school she creates the story of emperor Tetrahedron who watches, with his many faces, the simultaneous play of "all the tragedies and many of the comedies" (Winterson, *Oranges* 63). Then, she states that "no emotion is the final one" (Winterson, *Oranges* 63). Writing in retrospective, through this story the narrator addresses the transient nature of emotions because later on she will be perplexed by feelings she does not belong and that she is not accepted in the religious community she

feels safe at during her early school years, and will also find the outside world she has yearned for can be just as restrictive as her community.

Jeanette's early school years are her first contact with the outside world, her first opportunity contrasting the historical discourses of her congregation to those of her school and the start of Jeanette's questioning of the metanarrative of history as the ultimate truth. After knowing the world outside, she comes to conclude that history can be a construct both in her community and in the world outside. Going outside the restrictive culture of her religious community, Jeanette discovers that the outside world can also be restrictive and a place where people also believe in false constructs. During the hospital stay for her sudden deafness, Jeanette discovers that the outside world further beyond her school can also be restrictive and limiting and not understand her. It happens when she wants to play with plasticine in her hospital bed but the nurse takes it away writing in a piece of paper that it is dangerous because she might swallow it. And, although Jeanette argues that she does not want to swallow it but build with it, it is clear that “nothing would change her mind” (Winterson, *Oranges* 37). People in the outside world have their minds made up and do not consider her perspective. Jeanette is still restricted and made to conform to playing with the peels from the oranges her mother gives her instead of the plasticine she really wants. And, after leaving home, when talking with a co-worker who has “heard it [the Eiffel Tower] had been built by acrobats, and that a troupe of trained monkeys had put up the last and highest girders” (Winterson, *Oranges* 197), she realizes people outside can have false beliefs and can also be as limited as her co-worker who has sailed across the Channel to Dieppe but would not go there again because it is “too far” (Winterson, *Oranges* 197). The outside world can be, not only as restrictive as her secluded community, but can

also promote the belief in metanarratives such as history as the ultimate truth which, Jeanette concludes, sustains the various interests of the state. The belief in history as truth, for Jeanette, reflects a mere need to believe in something that is true as opposed to something that is not true. Winterson equates history to story-telling, arguing that people do not necessarily believe in story-telling but believe in history which only serves a social, political or monetary purpose and it is often only the molding of past events according to someone's intentions. So, she argues that instead of this, it is far more honest to do as the dictator Pol Pot has done by erasing the past altogether:

people like to separate storytelling which is not fact from history which is fact. They do this so that they know what to believe and what not to believe. This is very curious. How is it that no one will believe that the whale swallowed Jonah when every day Jonah is swallowing the whale? I can see them now, stuffing down the fishiest of fish tales, and why? Because it is history. Knowing what to believe had its advantages. It built an empire and kept people where they belonged, in the bright realm of the wallet . . . Very often history is a means of denying the past [. . .] to suck out the spirit until it looks the way you think it should. We are all historians in our small way. And in some ghastly way Pol Pot was more honest than the rest of us have been. Pol Pot decided to dispense with the past altogether. To dispense with the sham of treating the past with objective respect. [. . .] People have never had a problem disposing of the past when it gets too difficult. [. . .] And if we can't dispose of it we can alter it. (Winterson, *Oranges* 120)

Jeanette's strict religious community believes in the constructs of the pastors and the Bible and interprets historical events through the religious perspective of a battle between good and evil. Similarly, much of what the outside world determines to be truthful beliefs does not necessarily correspond to the truth. However, for Jeanette, while in the outside world no one believes that Jonah has been swallowed by the whale and see themselves as free to choose and to question, in their everyday lives people believe false constructs presented as historical facts. For Winterson history is malleable, not to be taken seriously and it is nothing more than stories rearranged as historical truths to fit a determined purpose:

history should be a hammock for swinging and a game for playing, the way cats play. Claw it, chew it, rearrange it and at bedtime it's still a ball of string full of knots. Nobody should mind. Some people make a lot of money out of it. Publishers do well, children, when bright, can come top. It's an all-purpose rainy day pursuit, this reducing of stories called history. (Winterson, *Oranges* 119-120)

Equating history to story-telling, Jeanette appropriates the fairytale and popular tale genre (which have been mostly written by men for the past centuries and has had a moralistic tone regarding the behavior of girls and women) revealing how she is empowered to tell her own story instead. Jeanette uses fairytales often rewriting them to convey that people have an active role in outcomes. A story that is told with the same ending for centuries can be changed and have a new ending thanks to human agency. She depicts this with the story about Sir Perceval who, like Jeanette, chooses a different ending to his story than the one that is chosen for him by his mother. In her story of Sir Perceval she notes that “other

knights have been this way, he can see their tracks, their despair, [. . .] even his bones. He has heard tell of a ruined chapel, or an old church, no one is sure, only sure that it lies disused and holy, far away from prying eyes. Perhaps there he will find it” (Winterson, *Oranges* 173). Like Sir Perceval, one of the knights of the round table that participates in the quest for the Holy Grail, so is Jeanette in a quest to find a place where to live her spirituality freely. She sees herself as part of a group as she acknowledges that others have been in her situation as outcasts of a community and, perhaps like them, she will find what she is looking for elsewhere, away from the prying eyes of the congregation. The connection with Perceval gives Jeanette’s reasons for leaving her community a fatalistic character because Sir Perceval seems fated to become what his mother does not want him to be: a warrior. As in most older versions of the tale, after the death of Perceval’s father, his mother moves with him to an isolated forest so that he does not become a warrior but in the forest he meets knights and, wanting to be one himself, he moves to the court of king Arthur to become a knight. Much like Sir Perceval, even though Jeanette is taken by her mother into the community, raised to keep her from aspiring to something else and destined to become a missionary, Jeanette leaves the congregation in search of something else.

To further tell the story of her life, Jeanette uses the fairytale of Winnet Stonejar, a respelling of Jeanette Winterson. The story narrates how Winnet gets lost in the forest and sees a sorcerer on the opposite bank of a fast flowing stream. The sorcerer argues that Winnet can trust him and the proof is that he does not know her name, hence has no power over her, or otherwise he would have made her cross the stream to his side already. After a while he reveals his intention: he wants her to be his apprentice and tricks Winnet because he says she has to tell him her name to be able to leave the chalk circle that protects her.

This mirrors how Jeanette, at first, believes to be protected in her community but how she is tricked by the education her mother (enforcer of the values of patriarchy) gives her and the social pressure from her peers into being entrapped by the patriarchal view of her as inferior because she is a woman. The sorcerer tells Winnet he knows her name and Winnet believes that “if this were true she would be trapped. Naming meant power. Adam had named the animals and the animals came at his call” (Winterson, *Oranges* 182). Winterson stresses the importance of language in the creation of cultural constructs such as identity, that is also defined by the name. This direct reference to the Garden of Eden, of Adam naming the animals, echoes the use of the word abracadabra in *Midnight’s Children* as both refer to the power language has in defining things and shaping reality. Winterson explains how her upbringing reading from the Bible has emphasized the importance she gives language: “I grew up not knowing that language was for everyday purposes. I grew up with the Word and the Word was God. Now, many years after a secular Reformation, I still think of language as something holy” (Winterson, *Art Objects* 153). The author believes “it is the poet who goes further than any human scientist in the pursuit of knowledge” (Winterson, *Art Objects* 115). Meaning that through the creative aspect of language, such as storytelling, it is possible to reach a more complete knowledge because creative writing gives a great amount of information well beyond what is obviously stated. The sorcerer does guess her name and Winnet goes to live in the sorcerer’s castle with the tale continuing as a parallel story to Jeanette’s life as it tells of a time in which Winnet “believed she had always been in the castle, and that she was the sorcerer’s daughter. He told her she was. That she had no mother, but had been specially entrusted to his care by a powerful spirit” (Winterson, *Oranges* 187). This refers to Jeanette’s adoption into the congregation, and

how in her earlier childhood she believes in the metanarratives of her community, including her own creational metanarrative that her adoptive mother tells her hiding the truth about Jeanette's biological mother, and telling her she has been sent to her by God. The following part of Winnet's tale mirrors key points in Jeanette's life such as how her friendships with women who become love interests are disruptive, how she gains some confidence in herself and more mental independence from the grip of the metanarratives (sorceries) of her community, how she takes the blame instead of her female lover when pressured by her congregation, being expelled, and what would have happened if she stayed. In the tale a boy comes to live in the kingdom and befriends Winnet, but the sorcerer declares the boy an enemy who has spoiled his daughter and the boy was jailed in the castle until Winnet sets him free through her own magical arts and tells him he must deny her to the sorcerer (that he is not her friend and it is all her fault, he should blame her). The sorcerer says she has disgraced him and tells her she must leave, but finally gives her the choice of leaving or staying. Being that if she stays she will have her future determined for her: to live in the village and care for the goats much like Jeanette, who, if she stays in the congregation has a life of missionary work and heterosexual marriage destined for her. The crow Abednego warns her about the dangers of staying, telling her that if she stays she will be "destroyed by grief" (Winterson, *Oranges* 189), and gives Winnet a pebble to take away with her revealing that it is his heart that has turned to stone because he chose to stay and his heart "grew thick with sorrow, and finally set. It will remind you" (Winterson, *Oranges* 189).

If Jeanette stays and conforms to what the congregation wants her to be it would destroy her because she would wonder what could have been if she left, and her most ardent desires of being free to discover her sexuality, to know more of the world and herself, would be

stifled by social pressure and she would become a numb follower of the rules of the congregation. Jeanette recognizes this in her former lover, Melanie, who has stayed in the congregation while she has left. At first Jeanette, a seemingly promising member of the congregation and future missionary, is the one who introduces Melanie to the congregation but, while Jeanette leaves, Melanie remains further engrossing herself in its activities and accepting its metanarratives. She believes the metanarrative about spirituality that the congregation promotes (that they are the only people chosen by God and that the pastors, as God's representants on earth, are the only link to God) and, although a lesbian, she abides by the congregation's metanarrative of heterosexuality and marries a man. When Jeanette bumps into Melanie she notices that "if she had been serene to the point of bovine before, she was now almost vegetable" (Winterson, *Oranges* 218) so much so that, when Melanie asks Jeanette what she is doing, Jeanette feels tempted to shock her awake and say she is "sacrificing infants on top of Pendle Hill or dabbling in the white slave trade. Anything to make her angry. Still, in her terms, she was happy" (Winterson, *Oranges* 219).

Jeanette discredits the metanarrative of heterosexual love promoted by her patriarchal society in which women are meek and sweet and achieve fulfillment (or live happily ever after like in the fairy-tales) by marrying a man who is then the head of the family. She exemplifies how, because she is a girl, she is only accepted as sweet (meek) with the fact that the man who runs the post office gives her sweets: "sweet I was not. But I was a little girl, ergo, I was sweet, and here were sweets to prove it" (Winterson, *Oranges* 92). She sees the reality of the love relations between men and women in her neighborhood as completely different from the official narrative that for every woman there is the right man: "everyone always said you found the right man. My mother said it, which was confusing.

My auntie said it, which was even more confusing. The man in the post office sold it on sweets” (Winterson, *Oranges* 92). Her reality is that her mother avoids her husband and, although they live together, they lead separate lives as Jeanette reveals when she remembers that “as long as I have known them, my mother has gone to bed at four, and my father has got up at five” (Winterson, *Oranges* 20). This is also the reality outside of her congregation, of the town community and, when talking about men, a woman tells her she has married a pig. Jeanette also overhears the neighborhood women (Nellie and Doreen) talking and Doreen, complaining about her husband, concludes he is having an affair. Through their conversation Jeanette learns Doreen, although back then, does not know her suitor that well and when he goes to court her he ends up drinking with her father instead, has felt somewhat pressured to marry him because her father likes him. Doreen feels she has to accept marrying because the other man whom she sees as the authority in her life, her father, has explicitly or implicitly arranged the marriage. Doreen resumes her marriage to “the children helped. I ignored him for fifteen years” (Winterson, *Oranges* 97). Yet, according to Nellie, there are other women in worst situations such as Hilda, whose husband spends all the money on drink and is, apparently, abusive because Nellie remarks that Hilda does not dare to go to the police. This conversation also reveals that the women believe the metanarrative of marriage and continue to perpetuate the values of patriarchy so when they talk about Doreen’s studious seventeen-year-old daughter, Jane, they worry that “if she doesn’t get a boyfriend folks with talk. She spends all her time at that Susan’s doing her homework” (Winterson, *Oranges* 98). Doreen is worried people will start gossiping saying the girls are lesbian, and when Nellie tells her that Jane is studious and can go to college and get a better life, Doreen answers that “Frank won’t put up with that,

he wants grandchildren, and if I don't get a move on there'll be no dinner for him and he'll be back with pie and peas in the pub. I don't want to give him an excuse'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 98). He decides the future of their daughter because, as a man, he is the head of the family and has to be obeyed and Doreen is, ultimately, the one to blame for his cheating because she is not cooking like he likes or keeping the home as he likes so he has to go out. Jeanette's own aunt accepts this, telling Jeanette how "'there's what we want, [. . .] and there's what we get, remember that'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 95) and how when she got married she has cried for one month before settling down. Both advice and personal example carry the message that Jeanette must submit to these patriarchal values.

Jeanette appropriates a fairy-tale in her dismantling of the metanarrative of heterosexual marriage as, after overhearing the women, she then goes to the library and reads the fairy-tale of the Beauty and the Beast. A beautiful young woman is given in marriage by her father to a beast and "because she is good, she obeys" (Winterson, *Oranges* 93) when, out of pity, she gives the beast a kiss, it turns into a handsome young prince and they live happily ever after. This story is so different from the marriages and husbands of the women around her that, after reading the book, she concludes: "it was clear that I had stumbled on a terrible conspiracy. [. . .] Why had no one told me? Did that mean no one else knew? Did that mean that all over the globe, in all innocence, women were marrying beasts?" (Winterson, *Oranges* 93). When she tells her mother she has to talk to her about her theory on beasts and men, her mother agrees but tells her promptly "'let's have an orange'" (Winterson, *Oranges* 95). Again, the fruit her mother offers is used to comfort Jeanette and does not represent knowledge or dissent that have been previously associated with the fruit of the story of the Garden of Eden, but conformism instead. When Jeanette asks her mother

why did she marry her father she basically says it has happened out of the need to have a family to give Jeanette, the child she has dedicated to the Lord to be a missionary. When Jeanette tries to explain her mother her theory about men, about the men she knows being monsters, and asks her mother if she has time to talk she answers that she does but follows with “let’s have an orange” (Winterson, *Oranges* 95). And while Jeanette explains, her mother is peeling her an orange. Again, Jeanette's mother offers her an orange, the only fruit she ever gives Jeanette, meaning: the only choice she gives her is to conform with the situation. However, when her mother, as an answer to Jeanette's question of why she has married her father, tells Jeanette to remember the story of Jane Eyre she used to read Jeanette, she does not know that Jeanette’s mind is already in a state of dissent. Jeanette already sees many of the beliefs her mother and the community instill in her as mere constructs, because she already knows her mother altered the ending of Jane Eyre. That in her mother’s rewriting Jane Eyre marries St John but in the novel she does not. She goes back to Mr. Rochester. Jeanette compares the rewriting of the end of Jane Eyre by her mother to finding out she has been adopted, as it is equally life-shattering and makes her determined to know more: “she thought I was satisfied, but I was wondering about her, and wondering where I would go to find out what I wanted to know” (Winterson, *Oranges* 96).

The discovery that she has been kept from knowing the truth, including from basic and self-defining matters such as being denied by her mother the basic right of knowing where she comes from (she does not let Jeanette see her biological mother when she goes to the house) or the story of how her now parents have formed a family, lead Jeanette to question the authority figure in her life. Jeanette's challenging and inquisitive nature, however, does not fit into the behavioral rules accepted as feminine behavior in such a patriarchal society.

Jeanette does not fit her society's definition of a perfect woman which she illustrates with a story about how patriarchy applies perfection to women. The story is about a woman who lives in a forest and is so perfect physically that the mere sight of her beauty heals the sick, and how this woman crosses the path of a prince who wants a woman “without blemish inside or out, flawless in every respect. I want a woman who is perfect” (Winterson, *Oranges* 79). The prince, who represents the ruling patriarchal power, is admonished that what he wants does not exist but he insists “it must exist, [. . .] because I want it” (Winterson, *Oranges* 80) which reflects how the metanarratives of feminine perfection are but the result of a construct of masculine desires. One way these desires become established and become metanarratives is exemplified by the prince of Jeanette’s story who, as the years go by in his search, decides to write a book titled *The Holy Mystery of Perfection* that includes his philosophical views on perfection, its impossibility, and the need to create perfect beings. The title of the book reveals how the definition of feminine perfection by patriarchy is grounded in the religious creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden by establishing a connection with religion through the holy mysteries. The holy mysteries are either religious beliefs and practices that are kept secret from the general public, implying that the creation and reasoning behind a metanarrative is kept secret, away from public scrutiny, or religious beliefs that cannot be explained by rational means, implying that the metanarrative the prince creates with his book is something that is to be accepted uncritically, without rational means. The advisors of the prince are given the task of finding the perfect woman and when they find her and take the prince to her he tells her he wants to marry her but, to the horror of the court, she does not want to marry him, so the prince argues “but you must, I’ve written all about you” (Winterson, *Oranges* 82). The

prince's response reflects how patriarchy does not even conceive that a woman can choose to behave differently than what they have determined in their metanarratives. The woman invites him in and tells him that perfection is indeed, balance or harmony and tells him that "there are two principles, [. . .] the Weight and the Counter-weight" (Winterson, *Oranges* 83) so when the prince goes back to his advisors he admits that his book is wrong, that he has to write another book and apologize publicly to his goose friend. His advisors, however, say that he should not because "as a prince you cannot be seen to be wrong" (Winterson, *Oranges* 83), his chief advisor convinces the prince the only possible action needed to secure his kingdom is to address his people and what to tell them. When the prince says that no one will believe him the advisor says "they will, they must, they always do" (Winterson, *Oranges* 84). Jeanette's story exposes how systems are set in motion to establish a metanarrative just so that some individuals do not to lose their grip on power and just how much the creators of metanarratives expect them not to be contested.

So, the prince delivers a speech to his people. He starts by saying that there is no such thing as perfection, that the woman has sought to convince him that perfection is different from flawlessness and that, all the trouble she has taken to explain this to him only proves that she, herself, is flawed. The woman replies that it did not take much to explain him that and that he is the one who has come to her. The crowd reacts and one man shouts "but she healed you!" (Winterson, *Oranges* 85), because seeing her gives the prince the use of his legs back, to which the chief advisor shouts an order to arrest the man "and the man was bound, and taken away" (Winterson, *Oranges* 85). Then the crowd shouts that she has no blemish, but she replies that she does, and that what the prince wants does not exist. To these two arguments the chief advisor to the prince shouts "proof from her own lips"

(Winterson, *Oranges* 85). This culminates with the prince shouting “‘off with her head’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 85), and the blood from her killing drowns the advisors while the prince thinks “‘at least I have stamped out a very great evil. Now I must continue my quest’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 85). He then sees a man selling oranges, buys some and goes on to continue with his quest for perfection. The woman tries to teach him another perspective and, while the prince comes to recognize she is right and he is wrong, he cannot allow it. The intertextuality he establishes with the Queen of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* with his power to demand someone’s head be cut off reveals the totalitarian power of patriarchy. So, the woman, in reality a savior because she heals the prince, is painted as evil in order to be also socially condemned so that the death condemnation by the prince is accepted. The assessment of the prince’s advisor that people have always believed the stories they are told by those in positions of authority proves correct. Those, like the man in the crowd who speak in favor of the woman, or, in other words, the dissenting voices that go against metanarratives are repressed. His choice of oranges in the end, much like when they are the only option presented to Jeanette to make her conform, represent the only choice he sees as a possibility: to make people conform to whatever is required to sustain the metanarratives he has created. If people do not find out his book is wrong (or what he endorses is wrong), they will not question it and will not challenge his grip on power.

Jeanette also establishes a parallel with the garden of the Queen of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Much like Wonderland’s powerful Queen who decides what is real (the color of the roses) or if the characters live or die, Jeanette explains that her mother “had painted the white roses red and now she claimed they grew that way” (Winterson, *Oranges* 174).

Her mother decides that the reality is that Jeanette is choosing to be a lesbian and is, therefore, a demon that has to be expelled and is no longer her daughter. When her mother is talking to the pastor she has already made up her mind to expel her daughter even knowing she has nowhere to go.

Although scared, Jeanette leaves in the pursuit of her quest to discover herself and is determined to find a place in the outside world where she is accepted. The narrator approaches this through the fairytale of Winnet who imagines another place must exist, “some called it a nonsense, and told her she’d still be unhappy even if she managed to find it. She thought how everyone must be strong and healthy. She thought of their compassion and wisdom. In a place where truth mattered” (Winterson, *Oranges* 202), Jeanette longs for a place where she can be herself and be accepted, where she does not have to play the role her church and small town community require. Winnet is determined to find such a place and goes on a quest following a map, crossing rivers and navigating the sea with “no guarantee of shore. Only a conviction that what she wanted could exist, if she dared to find it” (Winterson, *Oranges* 203). This mirrors Jeanette leaving home with no guarantee she will find such a place in the outside world and only a belief that there is the possibility of finding it if she dares to go. At the time Winnet studies every aspect of sailing and boat building in order to continue her search by sailing the seas. She is initiated by a blind man in Wu Li’s principle of organic energy according to which everything is alive, like the boat’s rope she needs to learn how to use properly. So, for Winnet, “all the familiar things were getting different meanings” (Winterson, *Oranges* 203) as her knowledge of different perspectives and self-knowledge grows. Jeanette's quest for self-knowledge is reflected in Winnet’s dream in which

her eyebrows became two bridges that ran to a bore-hole between her eyes [. . .] and a spiral staircase starts, and runs down and down into the gut. She must follow it if she wants to know the extent of her territory. She must pass through the blood and the bones [. . .] under her skin. Then she finds a roundabout horse, and that gives her a chance to look at things more than once, and she thinks she doesn't change anything as she looks, but she must, because every time she goes round, the same things are different. (Winterson, *Oranges* 203-204)

Winnet's self-reflective knowledge makes her think about everything that makes her who she is, and, consequently, allows her to see things from different perspectives. Jeanette's reflections on herself and who she can be in her restrictive community leads her to believe in the possibility of living freely somewhere outside the congregation. She uses the symbolism of the garden to represent this place in her quest:

on the banks of the Euphrates find a secret garden cunningly walled. There is an entrance, but the entrance is guarded. There is no way in for you. [. . .] Close to the heart is a sundial and at the heart an orange tree. [. . .] All true quests end in this garden [. . .] To eat the fruit speaks of other things, other longings. So at dusk you say goodbye to the place you love, not knowing you can never return by the same way as this. It may be, some other day, that you will open a gate by chance, and find yourself again on the other side of the wall. (Winterson, *Oranges* 155-156)

This is not the Garden of Eden of the Book of Genesis, located by the source of the four rivers Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates, this garden is Jeanette's Garden of Eden, the

place she aims to find. The mention of the one river Euphrates means it is a reference to the gardens of the city of Babylon, believed to be placed on the margins of the Euphrates which cuts through the city. The high standard of living and material abundance of the ancient Babylon come to represent lust or the forbidden in many religious communities that defend a more ascetic life. The mention of this garden comes in a sequence in which Jeanette remembers her love affair with Katy, and when they plan a weekend together, as this garden is a place where she is free to live her homosexuality and cultural curiosity. For Jeanette this is a place that is difficult to reach, and she only expects to reach it occasionally like when she does when she gets together with Katy. When you do reach it and go inside this garden, the fruit offered is not the oranges (golden apples) her mother gives Jeanette that symbolize conforming to only that one choice. When one eats the fruit from the orange tree in the middle of this garden, instead of feeling satisfied, it only makes you desire to know more and about other things.

After leaving her small town community, the narrator establishes in the last chapter an intertextuality with the biblical story of Ruth and appropriates the popular tale of King Arthur to stress the difference between those who remain members of the congregation, like her mother versus herself. Appropriately, Ruth, the Biblical character, moves to Judah after the death of her husband instead of remaining with her own people. Although a Moabite, a nation hostile toward Israel, Ruth accepts the Israelites as her people marrying into Israelite society and becoming King David's great-grandmother. So does Jeanette move out of the congregation into the foreign outside world that she adopts as her own, and that gives her the opportunity to discover herself. When Jeanette visits her parents back in her childhood community, despite some nostalgia for their lives together she and her

mother share, she illustrates their difference by invoking the figures of Sir Perceval and Arthur in the garden:

Sir Perceval curses himself for leaving the Round Table, leaving the king, and the king's sorrowing face. On his last night at Camelot, he found Arthur walking in the garden, and Arthur had cried like a child, and said there was nothing. [. . .] Now Sir Perceval lay on the bed and fell asleep. [. . .] When Perceval awoke, the sun was sinking. [. . .] My mother woke me with a cup of hot chocolate. (Winterson, *Oranges* 212)

This garden establishes a direct connection with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, as Jeanette is expelled from her congregation. However, although Jeanette feels sorry for the familial breakup and hurt for leaving on bad terms, she compares herself with Sir Perceval. She has vowed to seek and get a “full view” (Winterson, *Oranges* 212) of the Holy Grail, meaning: she is, unlike her settled mother, a warrior on a quest, in search of something else better for herself.

4.1.4. Resisting Normalized Constructs: is it possible?

In their criticism of metanarratives and what they normalize as objective knowledge, all three novels develop the plot as a quest for knowledge undertaken by the three main characters that is frustrated by the powers that be. This section focuses on assessing what each novel conveys regarding the possibility of escaping what has been normalized as knowledge by metanarratives. The novels reveal three very different cultural worlds (Victorian England, a transitioning and newly independent India, and a Pentecostal Evangelical community in 1980s rural England) where “truth” and “reality” are mediated

by interests of each society's ruling structures. Such a relationship between power and knowledge is, for philosophers like Foucault, natural and unavoidable:

power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.

(Foucault, *Discipline* 27)

The novels expose how, through metanarratives, power structures normalize determined perspectives about the individual and the world as factual knowledge in order to suit their own interests. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, for example, the religious metanarrative of the time legitimizes the knowledge of God through ritualism, guaranteeing the power of the clergy as the mediators between man and the divine. In *Midnight's Children* the British promote the self-serving metanarrative of racial superiority in order to maintain and normalize the colonial occupation of India. This metanarrative normalizes the knowledge of the white British colonizer as intellectually, militarily, and culturally superior to the Indians. And, in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, readers discover a rural community and congregation in which it has been normalized the knowledge of women as inferior to men, maintaining the values of patriarchy that allow an uncontested male dominance. It is from this perspective that, often, what individuals are being fed as objective knowledge is subjected to interests of those in power that the authors consider if it is possible to escape the conditioning metanarratives exert through the creation of what seems to be objective knowledge.

4.1.4.1. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Carroll seems to defend that what sometimes is taken as a fundamental truth is a mere construct, and that the true knowledge of the self, an ultimate divine reality or an objective truth, if it is possible, is difficult to reach because people are immersed in and conditioned by the “truths” of their respective culture. Carroll seems to want to convey his belief in an ultimate higher reality with universal laws one cannot understand but that is still, nevertheless, present in a world overrun by the interests of ruling powers. Even though the garden Alice finds is run by the Queen (a representation of the ruling power) the gardeners are the 2, 5, and 7 of spades playing cards. Not casually chosen, these numbers also attest to the belief in an ultimate spiritual reality even though the garden one enters is a place where, from rules to nature, everything seems to be a product of the power structure. Two, five and seven are prime numbers (integers higher than one which are divisible only by one and by themselves) which have long fascinated mathematicians and artists alike who see them as enigmatic or unpredictable with many poets having written about them. Arithmetic states that all natural numbers are a product of prime numbers, yet, though the basis of all natural numbers, mathematicians cannot find a pattern in their distribution nor create a formula for when a prime should appear. At the same time, mathematicians such as Don Zagier argument that the opposite, that primes seem to follow laws that govern their behavior, can also be verified. In the words of mathematician and retired scientific member of Max Planck Institute for Mathematics, Don Zagier: “there is no apparent reason why one number is prime and another not. To the contrary, upon looking at those numbers one has the feeling of being in the presence of one of the inexplicable secrets of creation” (8). Attached to prime numbers is the concept of primality and the term “primitive” as prime

numbers have primitive roots and the state of being a prime number is called “primality”. Also of note is the fact that, beyond mathematical language, in nineteenth century England and prior, “primitive” does not have the pejorative sense it often has today and refers to something that has come first, earliest, or an original condition of an institution. Hence, often nineteenth century Anglicans write about the primitive Church when referring to what they believe is the beginnings of Christianity which for some is the Roman Catholic Church while for others it is the religiosity of early Christians that surfaces before the creation of the Roman Catholic Church. Such is the case of reverend William Palmer who, in 1832, publishes *Origines Liturgicae or Antiquities of The English Ritual and a Dissertation on Primitive Liturgies* in which he exposes what he sees as the continuity of the primitive Church within the English Church through the liturgy which maintains a lot from the primitive Roman form. Carroll's use of prime numbers as the gardeners of the Queen's garden supports his belief in an ineffable higher power one cannot fully grasp or explain. To further expose his belief in a higher reality that is difficult to grasp, Carroll reverts to the Gnostic perspective conveyed in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, an apocryphal gospel considered heretical by most Christian Churches for being outside of the religious cannon. The disappearing Cheshire-Cat on a tree of which one often sees only the smile is reminiscent of the passage in *The Apocalypse of Peter* in which Jesus sits laughing in a tree at all the mourners down below who think he has died. Peter is the only one to see Him, and He explains Peter that He is alive, and that the world of the spirit is real, but the world of the mourners in which His body has died, is a mere illusion. In the spiritual world there is but life, whereas the material world is a world of illusion where most people are so under

the control of the physical senses that the spiritual world escapes them, hence, they cannot see Him alive by their side.

Although Carroll seems to want to convey his belief in an ultimate spiritual reality, he also recognizes that the physical world difficulties being aware of an ultimate spiritual reality. Although the Cheshire-Cat still exists and is fundamental in Alice's search for the garden by raising philosophical points and directing her, it is invisible and illusive most of the time. As Carroll stresses in the concluding chapter "Alice's Evidence" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 176), the evidence that comes with the acquisition of knowledge is that what is often seen as an ultimate truth or reality can be illusive. Alice, as Sophia representing the journey of the Gnostic hero, faces a trial in the court of Wonderland (which represents the trials one goes through in such a search) and overturns the jury-box by growing while in court. She cannot help to remark how it all looks like the globe of gold-fish she has accidentally once overturned. All the creatures in the jury-box are like the gold-fish thinking the globe they live in is the whole world, all there is, when all they do is play out a creation of the King and Queen of Wonderland while believing they live in and grasp an ultimate reality. But, as an outsider looking in on a fish bowl, Alice has another perspective and when she disturbs the jury creatures by presenting a different perspective they are like the gold-fish that agonize outside the globe. They cannot grasp the reality of the outside world, that they are living in a controlled and limited fraction of a much larger reality. Readers can infer that this is Carroll's way of saying that, perhaps the reality most can apprehend is circumscribed to a perspective just as limited as the view of the world as the distorted shapes the gold-fish see through the glass bowl.

This belief in the difficulty of reaching an ultimate spiritual reality/truth is reinforced by Carroll's choice of naming Wonderland's main character Alice, like the daughter of Henry Liddell. The friendship between Carroll and the Liddell family is often presented as the only reason for Carroll's choice. However, Alice seems to be "a symbol . . . unquestionably overwhelmingly important to Dodgson" (K. Leach 171). Its significance seems to rely on the knowledge of Greek shared by Carroll's inner circle:

Henry George Liddell, editor of the foremost Greek lexicon of his day. He named his daughter *Alice*, a name of unquestionable Greek derivation, though its exact source is unknown. Speculation runs through *ali* "abundant", *aletheia* "truth", *alysoo* "to wander in mind" akin to L. *hallucinor*, *allistos* "inexorable", *allos* "strangely", . . . or even *aleon* "a land of wandering" (Burstein 9).

Given these lexical hypotheses, it seems possible that, despite being acquainted with Alice Liddell, his choice of the name Alice reinforces the idea that the story Carroll is telling his readers is also about the knowledge of truth or an ultimate spiritual reality as something that (as Carroll concludes in the sequel of the novel) may be elusive and, perhaps, unreachable: "Still she haunts me, phantomwise, / Alice moving under skies / Never seen by waking eyes" (Carroll, *Looking-Glass* 189). Alice can be seen as the Gnostic Eve, "Eve, that elusive spiritual intelligence" (Pagels, *Adam* 61). Furthermore, Alice's name suggests that a free and independent mind capable of grasping the ultimate "truth" may very well be something elusive because of all the cultural conditioning exerted on the individual. About this perspective critic Donald Rackin observes that Alice "becomes for many modern

readers what she undoubtedly was for Dodgson: a naive champion of the doomed human quest for ultimate meaning and Edenic order” (BR 18).

Carroll is seen by many scholars as exhibiting “deep influences of Neoplatonism and Gnosticism” (Arnavas 18) in his beliefs because he uses elements of Platonism and Gnosticism to communicate this perspective on the difficulty or, perhaps, impossibility of knowing an ultimate spiritual reality. Hence, a complementary reading of Carroll’s use of the image of the Greek prophetess Pitia is also a clue to the connection between *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the philosophy of Plato present, not only in the already approached *The Republic*, but also in another of his most recognised works: *Taethetus*. The physical transformation of the baby into a pig brings to the surface an intertextual nod to Platonic philosophy in the dialogue about the nature of knowledge in *Theaetetus*. In it Plato ponders on what knowledge is, proves what knowledge is not and leaves it up to the reader to form an opinion on knowledge. It is written as a dialogue between Socrates, Theaetetus and Theodorus and, when Socrates asks Theaetetus what is knowledge and the young man struggles to find a satisfying answer, Socrates compares himself to a midwife because Theaetetus’ discomfort means he is in intellectual labour. Theaetetus puts forward knowledge as perception but Socrates arguments with the example of cold wind saying that some people feel the wind as cold and others not so much or not cold at all. Through Socrates’ dialogue Plato arguments people perceive things differently. In the dialogue, Socrates criticises Protagoras’ work on truth and says that perhaps Protagoras is being ironic or playing with the public when he proposes knowledge as perception. For Plato’s Socrates if truth is individual opinion acquired through sensation no man can contest another man’s truth. Further, if knowledge is so subjective he questions which perceptions

are representative of truth being that some animal perceptions, such as smell or sight, are better than humans' and he cannot accept that a pig or a Baboon "or some yet more out-of-the-way creature with the power of perception" (Plato, *Theaetetus* 27) is the "measure of all things" (Plato, *Theaetetus* 27). The sneezing baby boy that symbolizes Carroll is described as a queer, strange creature as it changes further and further until a pig is born revealing that even Carroll is not "the measure of all things" (Plato, *Theaetetus* 27) and he, like Plato's pig character, is limited by his perception when it comes to knowing an ultimate truth.

In order to express how in this world knowledge can be conditioned or mere perception, right at the beginning of the novel Carroll seems to call attention to the relevance of what is not clearly stated in the text, by placing Alice peaking into her sister's book and wondering what is the use of a book without pictures. Readers find meaning in what is not explicitly stated in a text such as symbolic language, either in textual metaphors or images, but true knowledge of the meaning of a text is questionable when that meaning is the result of a reader's perception. Because, as explained by Plato's *Theaetetus*, perception can be conditioned and induce in error or illusion. Such is the case in chapter eleven, "Who Stole the Tarts?", where there is a trial to find out who has stolen the Queen's tarts. At the trial when the Queen and King want to behead the Cat it disappears and they are left puzzled and searching for it everywhere. This can be interpreted as the belief that the ritualistic constructs of man (in this case a farce of a proper trial in which the Queen decides the sentence should be given first and the verdict afterwards) do not help to know what the cat (a higher spiritual reality, or ultimate truth) is, nor reach it. When the accusation is read in court it consists of an old popular British nursery rhyme originally published in a magazine

in 1782 that tells of a knave of hearts that steals the Queen's tarts: "The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts, / All on a summer day: / The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts, / And took them quite away!" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 166). Based on the knowledge of the rhyme, readers assume the one standing before the court being trialed is the Knave of Hearts, and heart symbols appear in the illustration reinforcing that perception. The narrator subtly reinforces this by mentioning that in the garden are the King and Queen of Hearts and the Knave. Readers assume it is the Knave of Hearts because the knave is mentioned following two Hearts characters and it would not be necessary to mention Hearts again. But the narrator does not say if the knave is the Knave of Hearts. Moreover, the readers' belief that they know who is being trialed is based on their knowledge of the rhyme. However, the text never says the prisoner is the Knave of Hearts and the original full page illustration by Sir John Tenniel is not clear about which knave is on trial. Furthermore, the Knave of Hearts clearly depicted in the illustration of the eight chapter is a different character. Considering that Carroll is quite particular with the illustrations, one can see in the fact that a culturally engrained rhyme which conditions readers to believe they know who is on trial is another parallel with Plato's argument that perceptions can be conditioned and false. And, in this case, one can see how a false or unfounded perspective can be taken as truthful knowledge. When speaking about false judgements, Plato considers the difference between potential and actual knowledge and chooses an aviary of wild birds like pigeons (the birds being pieces of knowledge) to exemplify that the possibility of a false judgement happens when someone intends to catch a pigeon but catches a dove instead. In the novel when the Pigeon first sees Alice (who has had her neck grow exponentially) it thinks she is a snake because of her long neck and, even after Alice tries to explain, the

Pigeon remains convinced she is a snake. The false judgement of Carroll's Pigeon is an example that perception (what Alice *is* to the Pigeon) is not necessarily knowing what something truly is. Additionally, when Alice mentions her cat to the Mouse it goes into panic. Both can perceive a cat, but their understanding of it is different, for them the truth about the animal is completely different.

The author manipulates phonetics and semantics throughout to play with linguistic meaning and makes the characters reflect on language itself: "'You should say what you mean' [. . .] 'I do,' Alice hastily replied [. . .] 'I mean what I say- that's the same thing' [. . .] [to what the Hatter replies:] 'you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 98). Carroll is never clear about all the layers of meaning in the novel but he, purposely, leaves it up to the reader to derive meaning from his work. Carroll suggestively writes that what is most interesting is, not the formal meaning of words, but the freedom of attributing meaning to them: "words mean more than we mean to express when we use them: so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant" (Hunt 41). He plays with different interpretations but which interpretation is correct is a knot Carroll does not clearly undo: "'I had not!' Cried the Mouse [. . .] 'A knot!' said Alice [. . .] 'Oh, do let me help undo it!'" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 38). The purpose of what is being said is never clear. When speaking with the Mock Turtle, Alice noticed it keeps saying "purpouse" so Alice asked it: "'Don't you mean 'purpose'? [. . .] 'I mean what I say' the Mock Turtle replied" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 155). Carroll uses characters to convey that he will not reveal if there is a predetermined meaning in the nonsense text or not: "'I don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it'" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 184), says Alice about the note that is read in court., or "'If there's no meaning

in it [. . .] that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we didn't find any. And yet I don't know'" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 185) says the King. Carroll seems to defend the freedom of interpretation through his linguistic play and, although he plays with logic, especially when giving some clues to the possible interpretations, Carroll leaves the layers of meaning up to the interpretation of the reader.

The awareness of the difficulty of knowing an ultimate or objective truth that can be perceived in the author's approach to language can also be detected in the overall plot. This is a world of illusion, of false realities created by society, "a great huge game of chess that's being played –all over the world- if this *is* the world at all" (Carroll, *Looking-Glass* 34) as Carroll's Alice herself exclaims in *Wonderland's* sequel. This illusive, or unreachable character of reality/truth is evidenced by the fact that this story is a creation of Alice's mind while asleep. She moves so effortlessly between the "real" and dream worlds that her entry into the world of dreams is almost unnoticeable: "So she was considering, in her own mind [. . .] whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble [. . .] when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her" (Carroll, *Wonderland* 2). The "real" world of when Alice is awake at the beginning, right before falling asleep, seems to be a brief transition, and the world she dreams of is the main story. Like early gnostic sects which believe the spiritual world is what is ultimately real and this world entraps humans in an illusion, Carroll seems to defend the same illusory perspective of the world. Readers may question which world (Alice's dream of *Wonderland* or the Victorian world) is the illusory one because Carroll gives more relevance to the world of *Wonderland* than to the world of an awake Alice in Victorian England. One of the best examples Carroll uses to emphasize that it is often difficult to grasp another world (a different perspective, an

ultimate spiritual reality or objective truth) because we are conditioned by social constructs is the scene at the end of the novel. After Alice awakes and tells her sister her story she goes away for tea and her sister is left day dreaming about Wonderland but she knows “she had but to open them again [her eyes], and all would change to dull reality [. . .] the rattling teacups would change to tinkling sheep-bells, and the Queen’s shrill cries to the voice of the shepherd-boy [. . .] and all the other queer noises, would change (she knew)” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 191-192). Alice sister’s world is Victorian England and she can only briefly grasp Wonderland in her imagination and right away it is all replaced by the sounds of the surrounding man-altered agricultural landscape, a social construct. The perspective that knowledge of an ultimate truth may be unreachable or that what mankind knows as truth may be a culturally conditioned construct reinforces the novel’s relevance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This perspective encounters acceptance in postmodern society and literature and is found in postmodern novels such as Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children*. The novel establishes parallels with the story of the Garden of Eden in order to reveal that what is often considered an unquestionable truth, such as family history or historical truth can be nothing but a construct that serves personal or political purposes.

4.1.4.2. *Midnight's Children*

The novel alerts for the fact that, from the history of a family to the history of a nation, official metanarratives are riddled with erroneous facts making truth difficult to reach. These untruths that are being sold to the Indian people are the reason Saleem alerts for the vendors of notions: “I am Deshmukh by name; vendor of notions by trade. I sell many so-fine thing. [. . .] The vendor of notions chattered on, offering for sale item after item, such as a magical belt which would enable the wearer to speak Hindi” (Rushdie, *MC* 519). From personal and historical narratives to individual and collective identity, the novel questions the validity of what most people consider to be an unquestionable truth and reveals it can sometimes be a construct like any other. One such example given is the authenticity of the culture of Bombay that the Bombayites believe creates their unique Indian identity and that Saleem's account reveals to be a false belief, because Bombay is a mix of different cultural influences. From the first settlers, the kolis who sail in dhows (a clear Arab influence) to the name of the city itself which is believed to come from Portuguese “Bom Bahia for its harbour” (Rushdie, *MC* 122) and to, later on, the arrival of the East India Company, the constant contact and influence between different cultural groups means that the idea of cultural authenticity is flawed and impossible to define because there are no original authentically individual cultures. From a larger national scale to a family nucleus, the novel reveals how metanarratives are easily constructed.

The author plays with the meaning of the word *Buddha* which, he notes, can mean someone who has achieved enlightenment or can also simply mean old man. He shows us how easy it is to mix both as they are differentiated only by a minor phonetic change. How easy it is for an enlightened one to be a simple old man. How easy it is to, even for some of those who

object the West the most (like Tai), those who are educated (like Rani of Cooch Naheen) or those with super powers (like the Midnight's Children), to be influenced. Tai can be seen as a victim of the European colonization of India as he is an alcoholic addicted to brandy, a European import and one of the colonizer's drinks of choice:

'I have watched these mountains being born; I have seen Emperors die.
Listen. Listen nakoo . . .' - the brandy bottle again [. . .] Smile, smile, it
is your history I am keeping in my head. Once it was set down in old lost
books. [. . .] Even my memory is going now; but I know, although I can't
read'. (Rushdie, *MC* 13)

Tai represents the masses victim of colonization that, although destitute and unable to read, still keep the memory of the greatness of India's history even when the records (books) are gone and another version is accepted as truth. And, at the same time, he also represents how people, although critical of Western ways, still fall victim to Western influence just like Tai who, although critical, is a brandy drinking alcoholic. The Rani of Cooch Naheen suffers from an unknown illness that makes her skin get progressively lighter until she turns completely white by the time of her death, and, even the powerful Children of Midnight can be muffled.

Rushdie establishes a connection with the *Arabian Nights*, the Arabic collection of folk and fairy-tales that displays many elements of Gnosticism (such as the Gnostic perspectives on knowledge of God in the tale of Abu L-Hassan with Abu Ja'far the leper) to argument that an Eastern perspective could provide other possibilities in attesting what is real, illusory, true or false. And, yet, the narrator tells us that adopting or trying a new perspective is not so simple due to cultural pressure and conditioning. Such is the case of the children

of midnight. The 1001 alternatives to the established metanarratives represented by the 1001 perspectives of the children of midnight do not come true because even the children of midnight are socially conditioned. Each of these one thousand and one children with superpowers represent, according to the narrator, a possibility for an alternative reality: “1001, the number of night, of magic, of alternative realities – a number beloved of poets and detested by politicians, for whom all alternative versions of the world are threats” (Rushdie, *MC* 300). Not fully understood by the West and not fully accepted by the Islamic religious leaders, *Arabian Nights* can be seen as challenging political and religious power and can be seen as subversive by the ruling powers because it depicts control over a ruler: “Rushdie’s *Nights* represents an alternative tradition in Islamic literature, something to set against the dour decrees of the mullahs of the Middle East and the dictators of the Indian subcontinent” (Irwin 289). Yet, even the children of midnight, despite their talks about revolutionizing Indian society, with all their superpowers, are conditioned by society as “children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over their minds” (Rushdie, *MC* 353). Despite their powerful gifts and the initial unity promoted by Saleem, the children are influenced by society and begin to find their interests increasingly irreconcilable and enter in conflict with each other and drift apart: “there was nothing unusual about the children except for their gifts; their heads were full of all the usual things, fathers mothers money food land possessions fame power God” (Rushdie, *MC* 317). When even these children with super humanly powers are affected by society, this shows how easy it is to be conditioned by society in any of its components: education, family example and pressure, society’s lure of wealth and power, or religion.

Saleem gives examples of what this social or cultural conditioning can lead to in the lives of his own father, mother and the lives of the children of midnight. He notes how Homi Catrack's mentally disabled daughter, Toxy Catrack, with her outsized head and dribbling mouth, is beautiful because she is outside of social conditioning, "because she had not lost the gifts with which every baby is born and which life proceeds to erode" (Rushdie, *MC* 178) while his father, having failed in business ventures, suffers due to social expectations. Like the caged bulbul bird, his father is trapped and made to sing by society through the expectations it has of him. This is depicted in the mirror effect that takes place when the bird mimics Saleem's father: "the poor man [. . .] calling out, 'Sing, little bulbul! Sing!' . . . and it's so funny, just before it died from the paint it just repeated his line back at him, straight out like that – not squawky like a bird, you know, but in his own self-same voice: Sing! Little bulbul, sing!'" (Rushdie, *MC* 282). Saleem will also rebel against expectations later on and regret having been a passive witness: "the object of my wrath was, in fact, everything which I had until then, blindly accepted" (Rushdie, *MC* 534). More than the narrator, the writer himself is very aware of this cultural or societal conditioning as he recognizes that his British formal education has greatly conditioned his first writings, particularly his novel *Terminal Report* in which the hero, after his experiences with racism is changed into an aggressive radical. Rushdie studies in Cambridge's King's College from 1965 to 1968 and prior to that, at thirteen, he is sent to a mission school in Rugby, England. The racism he is a victim there inspires him to write the autobiographical novel *Terminal Report*, which is unpublished but referred to by most scholars who review his work, and of which Rushdie talks about in an interview ("The Art of Fiction No. 186") in the literary magazine *The Paris Review*. Rushdie reveals he does not view himself in that work because

it is very much a product of his English boarding-school education, hence, he tells his mother to keep it, only to realize after her death that it has been lost.

The narrator of *Midnight's Children* denounces how what one accepts as true, or the meaning one attributes to something can be what Rushdie describes in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* as “a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved” (12). Although alerting, Saleem also realizes that it probably will not change because, with time, the illusions or falsities become accepted and unquestioned. Much like what has happened when he reveals his sister Jamila (who is not his biological sister) his “unspeakable (and also unrequited)” (Rushdie, *MC* 458) love for her. She is horrified because all this time she has seen him as her brother and Saleem realizes that “although what he was saying was the literal truth, there were other truths which had become more important because they had been sanctified by time” (Rushdie, *MC* 451). Often, hearing the literal truth does not change someone’s perspective because over time people internalize other *truths*. Saleem defends that reality (truth) is often unreliable because it is a matter of perspective that he exemplifies with the closeness to a cinema screen:

[. . .] reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself [. . .] pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars’ faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion

dissolves or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality.
(Rushdie, *MC* 229)

The narrator admits that memory is flawed and, consequently, unreliable and it may very well be illusory as a tool to try to reach the truth:

'I told you the truth,' [. . .] 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events' [. . .] 'What is truth?' [. . .] 'What is sanity' Did Jesus rise up from the grave? Do Hindus not accept [. . .] that the world is a kind of dream; that Brahma dreamed, is dreaming the universe; that we only see dimly through that dream-web, which is Maya. Maya [. . .] may be defined as all that is illusory; as trickery, artifice and deceit'. (Rushdie, *MC* 292-293)

Hence, even his truth about the events he narrates should be questioned. What is accepted as truth must be questioned and this inquisitive perspective must be applied to everything including the narrator's version of the facts "because in autobiography, as in all literature, what actually happened is less important than what the author can manage to persuade his audience to believe" (Rushdie, *MC* 376).

Saleem summons the imagery of the garden as he remembers several happenings in his childhood garden of Buckingham Villa right after telling Padma that "It's a dangerous business to try and impose one's view of things on others. Padma: if you're a little uncertain of my reliability, well, a little uncertainty is no bad thing. Cocksure men do terrible deeds. Women, too." (Rushdie, *MC* 294). He adverts for the importance of questioning instead of

taking things as certainties and gives the example that his own truth about events is flawed. He gives some personal examples of how easy it is to believe in a false construct when he remembers facts that, even though he knows are not historically correct, he keeps remembering them incorrectly because it is how he has firstly remembered them. He assumes that in his memories there is an error in the date of Gandhi's assassination that he chooses not to correct because that is how he remembers it and, therefore, part of his story:

re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time".

(Rushdie, *MC* 229-230)

Also, when he is telling Padma about the events regarding corrupted elections and she asks the date of the elections he is talking about, Saleem responds that his memory only accepts its events as valid regardless: "it occurs to me that I have made another error- that the election of 1957 took place before, and not after, my tenth birthday; but although I have racked my brains, my memory refuses, stubbornly, to alter the sequence of events. This is worrying" (Rushdie, *MC* 308). This is worrying because it shows how easily people accept the wrong facts as truth simply because they are used to it: to remembering those facts in a certain way or simply because they have been socially or culturally conditioned to think about something or someone in a determined way.

4.1.4.3. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

Oranges alerts for the fact that what is commonly accepted as true, such as history, can be a construct, a metanarrative created for a purpose and that even the more discerning, or dissenting such as Jeanette, can believe in or be influenced by metanarratives. Hence, the novel defends it is, although often dangerous, important to question all metanarratives. Even the most established, ingrained and blindly accepted metanarratives such as history. Winterson considers the impossibility of knowing historical truth, because what becomes history is only a mere perspective. So, she believes one must interpret things and process the information in order to reach one's own conclusions: "perhaps the event has an unassailable truth. God saw it. God knows. But I am not God. And so when someone tells me what they heard or saw, I believe them, and I believe their friend who also saw, but not in the same way" (Winterson, *Oranges* 122). And when talking about long gone events, dead things, historical things, Winterson further adds that those who question established metanarratives face risks, concluding that a collector of historical artifacts, of curios, is safer than being curious: "the curious are always in some danger. If you are curious you might never come home" (Winterson, *Oranges* 121). In Jeanette's perspective it is safer to accept the official metanarratives but it is also essential to be critical of them.

Jeanette compares information given with food of which depends the health of one's teeth (first tool used to feed the body and process food and exemplify the primal defensive characteristic of the capacity to bite) advising: "too much refined food. If you always eat out you can never be sure what's going in, and received information is nobody's exercise. Rotten and rotting. Here is some advice. If you want to keep your own teeth, make your own sandwiches" (Winterson, *Oranges* 122). All received information must be critically

looked at or else, like refined food, blind acceptance of metanarratives will destroy one's capability to process information much like teeth process food. Also, in the Winnet fairytale in which Winnet learns to master the chalk circle to get out of the grip of a sorcerer, Winterson stresses the importance of protecting oneself from external influences in order to reach one's own conclusions. This fairytale addresses the importance of the chalk circle in the training of wizards because one has to protect oneself from external influences (to defend one's personal perspective) in order to be ready to make magic:

wizards have to spend years standing in a chalk circle until they can manage without it. They push out their power bit by bit, first within their hearts, then within their bodies, then within their immediate circle. It is not possible to control the outside of yourself until you have mastered your breathing space. (Winterson, *Oranges* 181-182)

The importance given to the chalk circle emphasizes that it is not possible to know the world (what is true or reality) until one maintains others away from one's circle. Meaning: one needs to always maintain some room to maneuver, to reach one's own conclusions and be in a place, mentally, that does not let others pressure or condition one's perspective.

This, however, is not easy as the novel reveals many who could have the capacity of being critical or have some dissenting views, from her mother in her youth to other members of the congregation including Jeanette, can still be influenced and conditioned by the powers that be in being accepting of metanarratives. Jeanette describes how her mother as once "a woman of great energy and resourcefulness" (Winterson, *Oranges* 13) who is "brilliant and beautiful" (Winterson, *Oranges* 13) has gone against the social rules of the time and firmly fought to have a teaching job in Paris "a very daring thing to do at the time"

(Winterson, *Oranges* 110). But, influenced by her brother's fate (a great actor but dies a pauper), she considers her dreams and what she could do with her life and chooses the safe path of marrying Jeanette's father. Instead of pursuing her dreams, she chooses to abide by the metanarrative of heterosexual marriage that dominates the lives of young women in a rural and religious community of northern England. In Elsie there is another example of someone who does not fully follow the rules of the congregation and has other interests yet helps promote the metanarratives of the pastors. Though a member of the congregation, Elsie Norris reads the Bible by casting the dice to obtain the number of the chapter and the number of the verse. She likes numerology so she throws the dice (one for the chapter and one for the line) to read the bible and when someone asks how she reads books with more than six chapters she is vague and says both she and God have their ways. Regardless of her, apparently, limiting perspective, Elsie discusses with Jeanette about the nature of perception which, for her, is all about an individual interpretation of the mind: “‘what looks like one thing,’ she told me, ‘may well be another.’ [. . .] ‘If you think about something for long enough,’ [. . .] ‘more than likely, that thing will happen.’ [. . .] It’s all in the mind” (Winterson, *Oranges* 40). Elsie defends the impossibility of apprehending the whole and gives a humorously confused explanation that an ultimate truth exists, independently of individual perception despite the human mind not being able to apprehend it. Hence, for Elsie perception is “a fraud; had not St Paul said we see in a glass darkly, had not Wordsworth said we see in glimpses? ‘This piece of fruit cake [. . .] doesn’t need me to eat it to make it edible. It exists without me’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 59). Elsie's reading habits are not circumscribed to what is allowed by the Church and it is through Elsie, who frequently visits hospitalized Jeanette bringing her more than the oranges her mother

always does, that Jeanette first discovers other perspectives that she has, until then, been denied by her mother. Through Elsie Jeanette discovers the poets Swinburne, William Blake, W. B. Yeats and Christina Rossetti. Still, though she has other interests and believes that everything is perception, she is still at the service of the pastors by providing proof for what they say. She is known in the congregation as “Testifying Elsie,” because when the pastor asks for testimonies of God’s benevolence towards the faithful she always testifies giving examples of whatever she has been provided for that day.

Jeanette's own friend and love interest, Melanie, when faced with the accusations of the pastor after the discovery of their love affair, instead of arguing against these accusations like Jeanette, she promises the pastor she will leave that sin. The next time Jeanette sees Melanie after the pastor’s sermon at church accusing them of having demons, she bumps into her when taking the same bus and now it is Melanie the one who offers Jeanette an orange that Jeanette declines, giving the excuse that she will be eating soon. The orange, the only option of fruit Jeanette’s mother gives her and a symbol of conformism, is now offered by Melanie after becoming engrossed in the church. At first it is Jeanette, the future missionary, who brings Melanie to her church but, as time goes by, Jeanette’s distrust of the metanarratives of her church grows while Melanie, who initially seems to have a more open mind, further embraces the values and rules of the church. Initially, and against Jeanette’s opinion, Melanie wants to go to university to study theology because she thinks “she should understand how other people saw the world. which for Jeanette is an absurd because “‘you know they’re wrong’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 132-133). Back then the only theological explanation Jeanette is used to accepting is the one the pastors of her congregation provide, and she does not accept to consider any other

theological perspective/ an outside world university. After a while it is Melanie who wants to be a missionary while Jeanette no longer wants it, giving the prosaic excuse of not liking hot places. This reveals how, even someone who starts out with the ability to be critical and contest the congregation's view of her as a sinner, can still fall for the congregation's metanarratives and change her life course.

Even when the deceitful nature of many members of the congregation unravels, Jeanette discovers that the community remains obedient and believing. Once at her family for a Christmas visit she finds out by a slightly embarrassed mother, that

the Society had been disbanded, that there had been corruption at the Morecambe guest house, and that the Rev. Bone was a broken man. It appeared that most of the money put aside for the fishermen's missions had gone to pay the secretary's gambling debts; the profits from my mother's memberships and sales of religious accoutrements had gone to pay his wife maintenance. His estranged wife. The woman he lived with was his girlfriend. 'Pompadour,' spat my mother. 'Living in sin with his pompadour'." (Winterson, *Oranges* 209)

The congregation is riddled with corruption, vice such as gambling, and disrespect for what the pastors preach as the divine and unbreakable bond of marriage. Time has exposed many members of the congregation as hypocrites and, also, as victims of the uncritical way of living the congregation has instilled in them. An example of a victim is Mrs Butler who, Jeanette discovers, has become an alcoholic due to a failing Morecambe guest house and finds a job at a senior nursing home only to repeat the behavior of women in the congregation of being seduced by men who claim to have God given gifts of being the intermediaries between mankind and a higher power. Mrs Butler has fallen for a "strange charismatic man who had

once been the official exorcist to the Bishop of Bermuda” (Winterson, *Oranges* 224), who has been fired for his relationship with the curate’s wife and has convinced Mrs Butler to let him practice voodoo on the nursing home’s senile elders. Jeanette, herself, even after leaving the congregation, is still a victim of her former community. When Elsie dies she is distraught, but the congregation does not allow her to go to the funeral as it is “‘for the holy’” (Winterson, *Oranges* 195) and Jeanette being a gay outsider to the congregation is not considered holy. The members of the congregation show no compassion when abruptly telling Jeanette that her friend Elsie has died and the pastor relishes in telling Jeanette Elsie has told him she does not love Jeanette. Though apart from the congregation she is still hurt by them, feeling she is the victim of the pastor’s violence describing him as the kind of “soft-voiced” (Winterson, *Oranges* 193) and “clever” (Winterson, *Oranges* 193) man that imparts a “kind of violence [that] leaves no visible mark” (Winterson, *Oranges* 193).

Jeanette is an example of how difficult it is to escape the grip of the metanarratives you grow up believing in. She knows it is difficult not being pulled back into the grip of those metanarratives, because one is often emotionally tied to good memories of the past, and past habits which may make someone go back to what is familiar. She exemplifies this in Winnet’s tale when Winnet, exhausted and hungry, is tempted to cross a stream into the sorcerer’s territory (her mother who is the enforcer of the metanarratives of the congregation and whose territory is the congregation) by the sorcerer cooking adzuki bean stew, Jeanette’s favorite childhood dish by her grandmother. Although living in the outside world, Jeanette’s mind is still influenced by the formatting of her childhood and teenage years, as she exemplifies by pondering about metaphysics when considering the possibility that she is “still an evangelist in the North, as well as the person who ran away” (Winterson,

Oranges 215). While in the outside world, and acquainted with scientific explanations for what she has once explained resorting to her religious faith, Jeanette admits to miss her previous state of belief in God, but explains that she lacks faith in people the most:

where was God now, with heaven full of astronauts, and the Lord overthrown?
I miss God. I miss the company of someone utterly loyal. I still don't think of God as my betrayer. The servants of God, yes, but servants by their very nature betray. I miss God who was my friend. I don't even know if God exists, but I do know that if God is your emotional role model, very few human relationships will match up to it. (Winterson, *Oranges* 216)

Although raised to believe God is behind all things that happen in the community and that the pastors follow God's command, Jeanette, however, does not lose her spirituality because she realizes that what has happened has had little to do with God and a lot to do with the men that run the community. Yet, Jeanette admits that her upbringing has conditioned her mind and, despite choosing to leave, she often thinks of going back:

mind turns to the pull, it's hard to pull away. I'm always thinking of going back. When Lot's wife looked over her shoulder, she turned into a pillar of salt. Pillars hold things up, and salt keeps things clean, but it's a poor exchange for losing yourself. (Winterson, *Oranges* 204)

Jeanette resorts to the story of Lot's wife in order to illustrate the fact that, if she returns to the community she will have a sense of security and support from the group, but it does not pay for the fact that she would have to pretend to be someone else if she is to be accepted in the community. Still, readers get a sense that she thinks of going back often and the example of Lot's wife is what she uses in order to convince herself not to go back to the

congregation. Summarizing Jeanette's mental pull and push, she brings up the Garden of Eden as a paradise when describing a fairytale in which she enters a walled ancient city she says is "like paradise" (Winterson, *Oranges* 205), where one might live forever if one drinks from its wells. Except, she adds that even if you do live forever "there is no guarantee you will live forever as you are. You might mutate" (Winterson, *Oranges* 205). To her, her life of self-discovery in the outside world may lead to a perfection symbolized by the garden of paradise, but she acknowledges that personal growth implies constant change so, when one reaches what one thinks is perfection, one might realize that perfection is yet something else. And this state of constant change implies the possibility of also changing into adopting ideals of the congregation that she has once abandoned.

4.1.5. Conclusion

Though the novels exhibit an equally critical stance regarding the constructs of ruling powers, and that all three choose the same motif of the Garden of Eden to achieve it, the meaningful differences they exhibit (attributable to their respective historical periods and cultural influence) reveal how the contesting of metanarratives can progress. Comparing a Victorian novel by a male author and two postmodern novels, one by a male British Asian author and the other by a British woman, allows readers to see the progress of and differences in critical approaches. From Carroll's veiled critique to the postmodern Rushdie who is free to openly criticize the state of affairs of a pre and post-independence India, and Winterson who, as a postmodern writer is not only free to exercise her critique but as a woman she is able to rewrite traditional patriarchal tales according to her feminine perspective. More than a similar critical assertiveness, though expressed more or less openly, their overall similarities

further stress the different course *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* takes. All three novels depict the same plot basis of the alien element that does not belong to or feels estranged from the world they are in. Carroll's novel features Alice's quest for the garden in the world of Wonderland where she feels like a stranger and does not fit in. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem, in a quest to reunite the children of midnight and preserve history, feels an alien in his own family and in Indian and Pakistani societies where he feels he does not belong in that world of religious conflicts and corruption. And Jeanette feels increasingly like she does not belong in her strict religious community while trying to discover the world and sexuality. But, while the first two (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Midnight's Children*) do not base their garden motif on the most popularly accepted version of the Garden of Eden created by the Roman Catholic Church, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* does.

The cultural environments of each writer have conditioned their critique, and, for Victorian Carroll, his criticism of social convention and of the emphasis on the ritualistic aspect of religion is utterly veiled. As a Deacon, Carroll has to maintain his critique of the state of affairs of Victorian Church as veiled as possible to the general public. Though understood by the intelligentsia, Carroll's novel could have not been accepted by the general public, and particularly by the Anglican Church. His critique of ritualism, with its emphasis on going to church as social ritual instead of living by Christian morals in everyday life, could make him lose his job and he was the sole provider for himself and his unmarried sisters. This concealment is seen as adding to the novel's subversiveness, hence, Carroll's novel can be seen as a reaffirmation that "most of the great works of juvenile literature are subversive [. . .]: they express ideas [. . .] not generally approved of or even recognized at the time; they make fun of [. . .] piously-held beliefs; and they view social pretenses with clear-eyed

directness” (Lurie 4). Carroll's concealment is aided by the unassuming genre choice of a children's tale. This results in a subversion of what the ruling powers determine as “high” or “low” within a culture that is important for the recognition of children`s literature (and its devices like the fantastic or nonsense) as “a means of resistance to [. . .] domination, a way of articulating oppositional points of view to those in dominance” (Rivkin and Ryan 1233).

Hence, postmodern writers and philosophers often establish references to Carroll`s work to cement a perspective that dismantles the boundary between “high” and “low” culture and allows marginal perspectives to be heard. Postmodern thinkers like Jacques Derrida draw on Carroll`s work to argue that language`s lack of a stable meaning is the perfect example of the inexistence of one absolute “truth” and that, therefore, there are no marginal perspectives. To the postmodern reader like Jean Baudrillard (who develops Carroll`s *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* map metaphor to argue his perspective on hyper reality in postmodernism), Carroll also seems to recognize that, in the material world, what is conveyed as reality is either the subject of individual perspective, or merely a hyper reality, a false reality established by culture. Postmodern philosophers like Derrida, Deleuze, or Baudrillard, choose Carroll`s work to establish their critique of totalizing discourses. Carroll comes across as a man ahead of his time who “saw twice as much as other people did” (Gopnik 90). Still relevant in the twenty-first centuries, Carroll`s work inspires many writers in their choice to subvert what is accepted as reality in the form of fantastic literature and innumerable artists, philosophers, writers, and even scientists, allude to or quote from Carroll`s work. Carroll`s novels

transcend . . . children's fiction . . . [and] deconstruct our fondest and deepest beliefs of all: in truth, certainty, and predictability. By so doing they reveal their author as a man over a century ahead of his time: . . . a premature post-modernist, whose suspicion of the validity and rationality of our social and intellectual justifications for ourselves leads inexorably to the decomposition of our entire trustworthy universe. (Lakoff 369)

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* one can detect a Gnostic perspective that parallels the Gnostic views of earlier Christians posteriorly adopted by many Greek philosophy schools. This perspective seems to have reached Carroll via his studies of apocrypha and Greek philosophy and is reflected in Carroll's view of ritualism and Alice's quest for the garden. The narrative is constructed around one of the main elements common to Gnostic literature: the spiritual man as an alien in this material world that goes on a knowledge quest to find a way out of the illusions of the material world. Wonderland is unlike the Augustine creational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden that conveys the value of obedience and the terrible consequences of disobedience while stressing the feminine role as an evil that must be subdued. Not only there is no idea of sin, but Carroll instills the need for a disobedience of the status quo (at least on a mental level exemplified by Alice's inquisitive mind) and chooses a quite positive feminine figure for the main character. The choice of a girl for the main character, a little girl that is wilful and adventurous at a time when women are, since little girls, socially constrained to be silent and obedient to social rules and the male figures in their lives, places the feminine figure highly. Alice is the spunky little girl that embodies the mental qualities needed for a critical perspective, the sacred figure that represents the search for knowledge and Eve. But this is not the Eve of the Augustinian version of the

Garden of Eden who becomes aware of having sinned against God and becomes ashamed of being naked. At the end Alice embodies the Gnostic Eve with her eyes open after following the instructions of the snake that “you shall not die [. . .] [your] eyes shall open, and you [. . .] shall come to be like gods, recognizing evil and good” (Layton, Hypostasis 39). Alice wakes up to distinguish the nature of the reality of the Victorian world from Wonderland. The garden is depicted as a desirable place, as, implicitly, the primordial place of a natural harmony between man and the divine representing the initial form of Christianity. The search for the garden undertaken by Alice as the embodiment of the Gnostic Sophia (or knowledge) expresses what for Carroll is essential in order to attain, or even grasp, the knowledge of a higher spiritual reality: a natural, simple and unmediated connection with the divine.

A postmodern writer, Rushdie can be as open in his critique as he chooses and, despite the thick style of writing, he is openly critical and uses an imagery of the garden that has none of the idyllic traces found in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In *Midnight's Children* the imagery of the garden punctuates the plot, but always in relation to the social problems of a pre and post-independence India. Rushdie is critical of the political use of religion and the historical metanarrative of both the British colonial power and the government of independent India. He reveals a version of history that both powers have intended to hide. It shows readers how religion has been politicized in order to create a divide among the population, or how, much like the British colonial power produces an historical metanarrative detached from reality, in which their superior British civilization is civilizing India, so do the ruling powers of the newly created India and Pakistan create a false and self-serving historical metanarrative. Both Indian and Pakistani governments create the historical metanarrative that

these countries are far better after independence, that they have become peaceful and just societies after escaping the control of British colonial power. Rushdie also reveals how these constructs regarding national identity are replicated at the level of personal constructs with characters inventing their ancestry or discovering their familial identity is an illusion. Gardens here are places in which, or around which, conspiracies to usurp or maintain power, corruption, assassination, political unrest, racism, and colonialism reign.

This depiction of the garden as a place where both good and evil confront each other, more than a way to be critical, can be seen as a product of an Eastern education. As a British Asian author from an intellectual family, Rushdie seems to be knowledgeable of different eastern interpretations of the story of the Garden of Eden, namely Gnostic ones. Many Eastern interpretations see the garden of creation as a place where there is already a diversity of opinions and include a version where Satan, portrayed as evil by the Roman Catholic Church, is not seen as evil but simply as disobeying because it chooses to stay with Adam and Eve. In Rushdie's novel the Gnostic perspective is present through Asian mythology and literary and popular stories that preserve many Gnostic views that have flourished all throughout Asia. The novel features heavily the Gnostic tenet of the importance of knowledge. Of passing down knowledge and the narrator, and protagonist, is concerned with preserving the knowledge of the version of historical events of the common man, which often goes against the officially accepted versions. The Eastern Gnostic perspective present throughout the novel in references to Eastern philosophy is personified by the protagonist, Saleem, who is educated, in his own words, in the ways of the snakes. The protagonist of the novel as the Gnostic hero, the son of snakes, is reminiscent of the Gnostic view of the story of the Garden of Eden as told from the perspective of the serpent in *The Gospel of Truth*. Similarly,

so does the narrator expose events from a new perspective. He reveals how those one may expect to be good, are not, and what you believe to be a fundamental truth, from one's identity to time, can be a mere construct. Again, the main plot of the narrative is constructed around one of the main elements common to Gnostic literature: the spiritual man as an alien in this material world that goes on a knowledge quest to find a way out of the illusions of the material world. The protagonist goes on a quest to, not only know more about his own obscure family history, but also preserve it, along with national history, for the future. It is in the jungle (interpreted as a wild garden that mirrors his state of interior turmoil) where the protagonist achieves some kind of enlightenment via a snake.

This is not the Garden of Eden of the fall of man promoted by the Roman Catholic Church where there is a superior entity and its priestly representatives on earth who possess the truth and others, who are deemed spiritually or morally beneath them, are expected to obey the first for their own spiritual and moral salvation. *Midnight's Children* does not feature a disobedience (sin) versus obedience dichotomy or exclusively connect the feminine figure to evil, temptation, or sin as does the metanarrative of the fall. From being a guiding influence in Saleem's denouncing of the self-serving constructs of power structures to actively perpetuating them, women are depicted as equally capable of being good or bad as men and often more powerful. Women are capable of being ideological tools used to promote a political agenda like Jamila or the powerful and evil Widow who uses her political power to murder and destroy. And there are women who are essentially good and essential, such as Padma who, like Scheherazade, is the one Saleem relies on to guide his narrative. The novel's representation of the feminine during the childhood years of the protagonist, when little girls are not yet as molded by society as adults, features girls who are unapologetically

strong. Explanatory of how strong the women in the novel are, the protagonist admits: “women have made me; and also unmade. From Reverend Mother to the Widow, and even beyond, I have been at the mercy of the so-called (erroneously, in my opinion!) gentler sex” (Rushdie, *MC* 565). There is no parallel with the notion of sin and disobedience of the Augustinian version of the Garden of Eden. Instead, it instills the need to defy official, accepted and established truths as the imagery of the Garden of Eden in *Midnight's Children* is used to preserve the anonymous individual's perspective of historical events while inculcating a critical stance towards these events.

The also postmodern *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* approaches the imagery of the Garden of Eden in a yet differently manner while openly and humorously criticizing her congregation and her small-town community. Unlike Carroll and much like Rushdie, Winterson is free to be critical in whichever way she chooses. Postmodernism allows those who once did not have a voice and were written about (such as women) the opportunity to write about their perspective themselves. The protagonist herself exemplifies with the Garden of Eden story how powerful it is to be able to use language: “naming meant power. Adam had named the animals and the animals came at his call” (Winterson, *Oranges* 182). Hence, Winterson is free to rewrite traditionally patriarchal narratives such as fairytales and the very story of the Garden of Eden, which has been used to justify patriarchy. And the novel is mostly critical of the hypocrisy amidst her religious community, and about what is given as objective truth such as gender bias metanarratives that sustain patriarchy and historical metanarratives which Jeanette equates to stories that sustain the various interests of power structures. The critical tone of the novel is supported by a parallel with the story of the Garden of Eden via the Greek myth of the Garden of the Hesperides. It is perfect to establish a parallel between the almighty

goddess Hera and Jeanette's overbearing mother. In Winterson's novel the gift of oranges as the only choice Jeanette is allowed to have emphasizes this garden as a place of submission from where she increasingly feels more alienated from.

The novel interprets the metanarrative of the Garden of Eden as the version of the Roman Church, hence, the author alludes to it as a story about sin and temptation (the forbidden fruit) using fruit as an allegory for temptation or submission. Submission because she is only given one fruit (only one option) throughout the novel, particularly when she is distressed or upset about her current situation. Temptation because she yearns for different fruits, sexually she wants something else than what she is forced to accept by her community and, personally, she desires to know about the outside world. The references to the Garden of Eden concern the Roman Catholic Church version of the story. Though one reference to the garden as a place she yearns for, where she can fulfill her desire of openly be herself, this Garden story is mainly about sin, about obedience versus disobedience. This is exemplified by a sermon Jeanette hears about perfection, how man is perfect until eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Because Jeanette is critical of this perspective she is seen as disobeying God's commandments and, therefore, sinful. Her notion of sin is not the pastor's notion of sin. And the novel's plot functions around the dichotomy between what is seen as sinful and what is not, or between obedience and disobedience. Jeanette's love interest, Melanie, conforms to the pressure of the congregation and becomes convinced she has committed a sin. But, while she regrets her "sin" before the pastors, Jeanette does not see it as sinful and, according to the congregation, remains a sinner being ultimately punished for it. Two of the chapters of the novel, "Joshua" and "Judges", exemplify the dichotomy between good (obedient) and bad (disobedient), present throughout the novel, that is

emphasized by the congregation and small-town community Jeanette lives in. In “Joshua”, Joshua is obedient to God so has many blessings bestowed upon him for his obedience including the conquest of the promised land, and the Book of Judges exemplifies all the punishments that can come from disobeying God by narrating, for example, how people are defeated in battle for disobeying God’s commandments.

Apart from being based on the Roman Catholic Church interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden, another fundamental difference from the previous novels regards the trope of the quest. Even though all three novels have this plot structure trait in common, while Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* can be read to display the quest-like search for knowledge of the Gnostic hero, the quest trope in Winterson's novel has different influences. It is influenced by the quests of classical Greek literature such as the quest of Heracles for the golden apples, and a much more recent and reduced set of popular culture fairytales and medieval literature such as Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Jeanette's quest is that of a woman who, while recognizing her mind is still influenced by her restrictive upbringing, wants knowledge of the world. The novel's quest trope intersects with the account of the Garden of Eden story as the fall of mankind because it ends with Jeanette being expelled from her congregation. Just like in the story of the fall, which presents Adam and Eve being expelled from Eden after having committed the sin of disobeying God and eating from the Tree of Knowledge, so is Jeanette expelled. Her sin, for the congregation, is disobeying God by being homosexual and not repenting.

5. Final Conclusions

While the present research reveals the novels as subversive in their use of the symbology of the creational story of the Garden of Eden to criticize metanarratives produced by the power structures within their cultures, it also reveals that even after postmodern times, when many metanarratives are challenged by individual perspective, some can become invisible, normalized, go largely uncontested and condition how individuals know or perceive the world. Overall, the postmodern awareness of conflicting metanarratives and the perspective that an objective or ultimate truth is difficult or impossible to reach is mostly supported by science. It is now scientifically established that something seemingly irrefutable and inescapable can be questioned. Such is the case of time, which is being questioned on a quantum level or the very fabric of the universe (that we understand as reality) which is seen by some theoretical physicists as being composed of code. Scientific work on extremophiles has even led scientists to reconsider the definition of life. Today individuals know that when they look at the Pleiades they are not seeing the reality of the universe of today, they are seeing what they looked like about four hundred years ago. What has once been considered “reality” is now accepted as a mere perspective that is often debunked by science. Some foundational narratives are seen in a new light due to recent discoveries such as the case of the research being made on the *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Gospel of Philip*, and *The Gospel of Thomas* scrolls from Nag Hammadi library, that has revealed Jesus as closer to and more trusting of the women who follow his teachings than the men. These are times when the very fabric of reality is being questioned and individuals are also aware of how easy it is to be conditioned in their perception of reality. Such an

example are the linguistic studies that consider the capacity of certain linguistic communities (despite fully functioning color receptors) to distinguish colors or nuances of color is directly dependent of the names of colors included in their respective language. The product of one`s culture, language, is even seen to influence the way in which one experiences time, as divulged by the research of Professors Panos Athanasopoulos and Emanuel Bylund, linguists from Lancaster University and from Stellenbosch University and Stockholm University respectively.

It can, however, be argued that despite its characteristic overall disbelief towards metanarratives and scientific questioning of reality, postmodern and contemporary societies are still being conditioned by metanarratives. For Foucault the scientific knowledge which is supposed to liberate the mind of the modern man from the ignorance of the past can still be a vehicle of domination and control. This is the conclusion of his research on the concept of mental illness in *Madness and Civilization: The History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. In it he argues that, for example, the change from labelling people as “mad” to the modern science label of “mentally ill” is still a cover for exclusion (in this case of those who do not conform to the definition of normalcy of the middle-class) and concludes that knowledge in the postmodern era does not lead to liberation but, instead, is often a means to gain control over people. Metanarratives, particularly the foundational metanarrative of the Garden of Eden, are still able to directly influence the way Western cultures perceive the world, themselves and others. The Augustinian view of this metanarrative as the story of the fall of man is strongly rooted in Western culture. From commercials to movies, the association between the Garden of Eden and sexuality, temptation (the forbidden fruit), the devil, sin and lust is ingrained in popular

imagination. In the children's Walt Disney story of Snow White the evil queen tempts Snow White with an apple establishing a link with the popular idea of the fruit as a tool for temptation by evil. Another example is Mel Gibson's 2004 movie *The Passion of the Christ* in which snakes represent the devil. In the opening scenes Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane and is tempted into doubt by an evil hooded figure that tells him no one man can save mankind from sin and a snake emerges from the place this figure stands and slithers towards Jesus who crushes the snake under his foot.

The predominant Augustinian interpretation of the Garden of Eden story has functioned as a metaphor for a morality based on obedience to an exterior higher power that has profoundly influenced Western society. Exemplifying how the belief in obedience to a higher power of this Augustinian version of the Garden of Eden has, since its creation, influenced every aspect of Western society, is nineteenth century doctors' opposition to anaesthesia for women. By the first applications of anaesthesia in the nineteenth century some doctors defended it should not be used in childbirth because of God's command that women pay for their sin with a painful childbirth. For them their suffering must be accepted as it is the outcome of disobeying an exterior power that knows what is best for mankind. The influence of the Garden metanarrative as the story of the original sin, Kerry T. Burch proposes, continues. It

shapes and informs contemporary educational and political thought and practice far more than we may realize. However, because this mythic structure refers to the deep past, it is difficult to identify its active presence and influence within our educational and political culture. (*Eros Denied* 80)

The Garden story as the story of the original sin promotes a morality based on obedience to an exterior higher power thus undermining Western society's critical ability. The belief in Augustine's perspective that humans are sinful by nature makes it easy for people to accept and even feel necessary the guidance of an external authority that provides a source of knowledge outside the individual. This is the conclusion of scholars such as philosophy Professor Kerry T. Burch who, in his research of the role of the Augustinian perspective of the myth of the Garden of Eden in civic identity (its assumptions regarding human nature, what it is to be a man, a woman and a citizen), reviews the Garden story in terms of critical pedagogy. He finds the message of the need for the guidance of an exterior authority in the Augustinian version of the Garden story becomes internalized and manifests in a cultural absence of curiosity. He goes on to argue that those who have held institutional power throughout American history have encouraged passivity and that even public school education promotes this passivity remarking that a survey of texts about public education reveal the prevailing themes of authority and obedience.

Unlike the Gnostic path to knowledge, or the Gnostic development of morality and spirituality, which is an interior and individual process in which the individual makes her/his own choices, according to the Roman Catholic perspective of the story of the Garden of Eden knowledge is found outside the individual and (s)he must be passively taught about moral and spiritual issues. The sinful, unknowing individual receives knowledge of what is considered important by the ruling powers. These two conflicting views are present in the novels. When comparing their use of the imagery of the Garden of Eden the more recent novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, differentiates itself from Victorian *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the other postmodern novel, *Midnight's*

Children: it considers only the Roman Catholic version of the Garden of Eden. Winterson's references to the Garden of Eden are about sin, temptation, obedience, or disobedience. The sin of the forbidden fruit of her lesbian affairs, the temptation of her crushes and wanting to know about the world, and Jeanette's struggle with obeying the rules of her congregation and industrial rural town culture. Consequently, as this research proposes, this further assists in the normalization of knowledge that suits the interests of the ruling powers, even in postmodern times. And, though this does not affect her ability of being critical, it is relevant because it exemplifies a situation in which even though critical, the individual helps to consolidate the interests of power structures that go against his/her own. Basing her criticism on the version of the metanarrative of the Garden of Eden created by the Roman Catholic Church, Winterson is further assisting in the naturalization of the metanarrative that promotes and justifies the spiritual and patriarchal beliefs she challenges in her novel. One can argue that awareness of a different version of the Garden metanarrative challenges the engrained Roman Catholic version of the fall of man and facilitates the recognition of how power structures create metanarratives that normalize what seems to be objective knowledge but that will legitimize power structures and serve their interests instead.

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Appendix I - Resumo da Tese

Volvendo ao Xardín: o Xardín do Edén e a Subversión das Metanarrativas en Lewis Carroll, Salman Rushdie e Jeanette Winterson

A presente tese pretende demostrar como Lewis Carroll (en *As Aventuras de Alicia no País das Marabillas*), Salman Rushdie (en *Os Fillos de Medianoite*) e Jeanette Winterson (en *As Laranxas Non Son a Única Froita*) se apropian da imaxe do Xardín do Edén co fin de subverter os discursos de poder e privilexios. Estas novelas poden dar conta clara de como unha historia arraigada como a historia do Xardín do Edén se utiliza para comunicar unha perspectiva crítica por parte de escritores que, aínda que están influenciados pola cultura Inglesa, proceden de ámbitos culturais completamente diferentes. Como explora este estudo, hai dúas interpretacións principais en conflito da historia do Xardín do Edén: unha interpretación Gnóstica positiva (ante a Igrexa Católica Romana) dos acontecementos como transmisión esclarecedora do coñecemento pola sagrada figura feminina da muller e a serpe, e a metanarrativa creadas pola Igrexa Católica Romana que conta unha historia de pecado e castigo. Como resultado da análise principal do tema do Xardín do Edén, esta investigación tamén pretende comprobar se a crítica dos autores se basea na metanarrativa creadora do pecado orixinal promovida pola Igrexa Católica Romana ou se aluden á anterior interpretación Gnóstica da historia. As implicacións son que se o punto de partida é a metanarrativa do Xardín da caída do home creada pola Igrexa Católica Romana, aínda que os autores son críticos coas metanarrativas do seu tempo, axudan ademais á naturalización da metanarrativa que promove e xustifica as crenzas que desafían.

A importancia da presente investigación reside, non só na lectura comparativa innovadora das tres novelas, senón tamén en como axuda a clarificar como se disputan as metanarrativas e como, aínda desde unha perspectiva crítica, algunhas metanarrativas están tan arraigadas que se solidifican aínda máis. As tres novelas son escollidas, non só polo seu diferente uso de imaxes e referencias edénicas, senón tamén porque cada unha é representativa das diferentes culturas que moldearon aos autores: a cultura Vitoriana, as culturas India e Británica e a cultura dunha comunidade evanxélica pechada da Inglaterra rural dos anos 70. Un estudo comparativo axuda ao lector a darse conta de como o coñecemento dun significado previo da metanarrativa creadora do Xardín do Edén moldea como se disputan as metanarrativas e como avanza esta contestación, como os autores comunican a súa crítica: por que Carroll, vivindo na restritiva sociedade Vitoriana, ten expor as súas ideas dun xeito moito máis velado (e mesmo complexo) que Rushdie, e como a novela de Winterson, a última novela publicada, tómase a liberdade de reescribir historias e afirmar a súa crítica abertamente. Como produto destas culturas, unha lectura comparativa destas novelas tamén pode revelar como cada ambiente cultural pode influír na visión dos autores da metanarrativa do Xardín do Edén e que versión da metanarrativa subverten ou solidifican.

Metodoloxía

Co fin de proporcionar mellor unha base clara para a presente investigación, a orientación teórica escollida é a do novo historicismo/estudos culturais porque axuda a revelar a crítica subxacente nas novelas. A perspectiva teórica dos estudos culturais considera como a conciencia se constrúe por elementos sociais, culturais e históricos e preocúpase por como os elementos da cultura promoven significados que reflicten ideoloxías específicas e condicionan a forma en que apreendemos o mundo. Revela os intereses ideolóxicos dos

sistemas ideolóxicos dominantes e as ideoloxías opostas que operan a través dos textos literarios. Os estudos culturais analizan un texto desde a perspectiva dos que están marxinados ou non forman parte da cultura dominante. Analiza como funcionan os sistemas de poder a través das prácticas culturais, polo que as súas principais preocupacións son como a cultura pode ser un instrumento de control social e político e como se xera, difunde e impugna o significado. O novo historicismo considera os textos literarios e non literarios por igual para descubrir as relacións de poder que revela o texto. Esta perspectiva teórica considera acontecementos políticos, culturais, sociais ou históricos á hora de interpretar un texto literario e narracións non convencionales porque sempre hai diferentes perspectivas para o mesmo acontecemento. Para esta perspectiva teórica a historia é unha narración que pode verse influenciada polo contexto cultural ou pola perspectiva de quen a rexistra que adoita estar nunha posición de poder. Analiza o poder ou a súa falta e a resistencia a el nun texto en discursos que perturban narracións de poder ignoradas, desaprobadas ou non recoñecidas polos discursos culturais dominantes. Polo tanto, a aplicación desta perspectiva teórica crítica permite ao lector ver os discursos subversivos que circulan, como as novelas subverten as normas ideolóxicas dominantes e revelan que o que se establece como verdade pode ser unha construción política, un medio empregado polas estruturas de poder (como a igrexa ou estado) para difundir e establecer unha ideoloxía dominante.

Estrutura do Estudo

Ademais do enfoque teórico elixido, e co fin de proporcionar unha base clara para a presente investigación, este traballo dividiuse estruturalmente en cinco apartados principais: a introdución; seguido dun segundo capítulo que trata da definición e contexto

dos termos; un capítulo de revisión da literatura; un cuarto capítulo que comprende a análise das tres novelas; a conclusión; e a sección final de obras citadas. A introdución comeza abordando o propósito desta tese, a súa relevancia dentro da investigación académica e o motivo do enfoque teórico elixido, como serve para os obxectivos desta investigación e ofrece un esquema da estrutura global deste traballo. O segundo capítulo, "Definición e contexto dos termos", proporciona os antecedentes históricos, culturais e etimolóxicos dos termos Metanarrativa, Igrexa Católica Romana, Gnosticismo e Xardín do Edén que son fundamentais para esta investigación. O seguinte capítulo de revisión da literatura trata sobre investigacións académicas significativas sobre o Xardín do Edén e tamén considera as liñas de investigación máis significativas que os estudosos utilizaron para estudar cada unha das novelas escollidas para esta tese. Despois dunha breve introdución que presenta unha sinopse das novelas e un resumo de como cada unha utiliza a imaxinería do Xardín do Edén, o cuarto capítulo, "Metanarratives Unravel: Analysis of the Novels", subdivide en tres seccións principais que exploran como o Xardín do Edén. os autores apróbanse do imaxinario do Xardín do Edén na súa crítica ás "verdades" normalizadas por metanarracións creadas polo poder relixioso, o poder gobernante do Estado e unha subsección que pretende determinar como, no medio da normalización das "verdades" das metanarrativas establecidas por discursos culturais, políticos ou relixiosos en interese dos poderes gobernantes, cada unha das novelas considera a posibilidade de chegar a unha verdade última ou obxectiva. A isto segue a súa propia conclusión que se centra en resumir as diferenzas entre as novelas en canto a como aluden á historia do Xardín. O capítulo final global pretende ofrecer un resumo da importancia desta perspectiva crítica das novelas e do que pode significar para o pensamento crítico.

Conclusións

Para concluír, esta investigación achégase a como, a pesar de mostrar unha postura igualmente crítica respecto dos construtos dos poderes gobernantes e de elixir o mesmo motivo do Xardín do Edén para conseguilo, as diferenzas significativas que presentan as novelas (atribuíbles aos seus respectivos períodos históricos e á influencia cultural) revelar como pode progresar a contestación das metanarrativas. Comparar unha novela vitoriana dun autor masculino e dúas novelas posmodernas, unha dun autor británico asiático e outra dunha muller británica, permite aos lectores ver o progreso e as diferenzas nos enfoques críticos. Desde a crítica velada de Carroll ata a Rushdie que é libre de criticar abertamente o estado de cousas dunha India anterior e posterior á independencia, e Winterson que, como escritora posmoderna, non só é libre de exercer a súa crítica senón que, como muller, é capaz de reescribir os contos patriarcais tradicionais segundo a súa perspectiva feminina. Máis que unha asertividade crítica similar, aínda que se expresa máis ou menos abertamente, as súas semellanzas xerais subliñan aínda máis o diferente curso que segue as *Laranxas Non Son a Única Froita*.

Os ambientes culturais de cada escritor condicionaron a súa crítica e, para Carroll, a súa crítica á convención social e á énfase no aspecto ritualista da relixión está totalmente velada. En *As aventuras de Alicia no país das marabillas* pódese detectar unha perspectiva gnóstica que é paralela ás visións gnósticas dos cristiáns anteriores adoptadas posteriormente por moitas escolas de filosofía grega. Esta perspectiva parece chegar a Carroll a través dos seus estudos sobre apócrifos e filosofía grega e reflíctese na visión de Carroll do ritualismo e da procura de Alicia polo xardín. Non só non hai idea do pecado, senón que Carroll inculca a necesidade de desafiar o status quo exemplificado pola mente

inquisitiva de Alicia. O xardín é representado como un lugar desexable, como, implicitamente, o lugar primordial dunha harmonía natural entre o home e o divino que representa a forma inicial do cristianismo. A procura do xardín emprendida por Alicia como encarnación da Sofía (ou coñecemento) gnóstica expresa o que para Carroll é esencial para acadar, ou mesmo comprender, o coñecemento dunha realidade espiritual superior: unha conexión natural, sinxela e sen mediación con o divino. Escritor posmoderno, Rushdie pode ser tan aberto na súa crítica como elixa e é abertamente crítico e utiliza unha imaxe do xardín que non ten ningún dos rastros idílicos que se atopan en *As Aventuras de Alicia no País das Marabillas*. En *Os Fillos de Medianoite* a imaxinería do xardín puntúa a trama, pero sempre en relación cos problemas sociais dunha India pre e posindependencia. Este non é o Xardín do Edén da caída do home promovido pola Igrexa Católica Romana onde hai unha entidade superior e os seus representantes sacerdotais na terra que posúen a verdade e espérase que os demais, que se consideran espiritual ou moralmente inferiores a eles, obedezcan. os primeiros pola súa propia salvación espiritual e moral. *Os Fillos de Medianoite* non presenta unha dicotomía desobediencia (pecado) versus obediencia nin conecta exclusivamente a figura feminina co mal, a tentación ou o pecado como fai a metanarrativa da caída. Non hai paralelismo coa noción de pecado e desobediencia da versión agostiña do Xardín do Edén. Pola contra, infunde a necesidade de desafiar as verdades oficiais, aceptadas e establecidas, xa que as imaxes do Xardín do Edén en *Os Fillos de Medianoite* úsanse para preservar a perspectiva do individuo anónimo dos acontecementos históricos ao tempo que se inculca unha postura crítica cara a estes eventos.

O tamén posmoderno *As Laranxas Non Son a Única Froita* achégase ás imaxes do Xardín do Edén dunha forma aínda diferente mentres crítica aberta e con humor á súa congregación e á súa pequena comunidade. A diferenza de Carroll e moi parecido a Rushdie, Winterson é libre de ser crítica de calquera forma que elixa. A posmodernidade permite a aqueles que antes non tiñan voz e foron escritos sobre (como as mulleres) a oportunidade de escribir sobre a súa perspectiva eles mesmos. A novela interpreta a metanarrativa do Xardín do Edén como a versión da Igrexa romana, de aí que o autor alude a ela como unha historia sobre o pecado e a tentación (o froito prohibido) utilizando a froita como alegoría para a tentación ou a submisión. Dous dos capítulos da novela, “Josué” e “Xuíces”, exemplifican a dicotomía entre o bo (obediente) e o malo (desobediente), presente ao longo da novela. Pero, aínda que isto non afecta á súa capacidade de ser crítica, é relevante porque exemplifica unha situación na que aínda que sexa crítico, se contribúe a consolidar os intereses das estruturas de poder que van en contra dos propios intereses. Baseando as súas críticas na versión da metanarrativa do Xardín do Edén creada pola Igrexa Católica Romana, Winterson está a colaborar aínda máis na naturalización da metanarrativa que promove e xustifica as crenzas espirituais e patriarcais que desafia na súa novela. En consecuencia, como propón esta investigación, isto axuda aínda máis á normalización do coñecemento que se adapta aos intereses dos poderes gobernantes, mesmo nos tempos posmodernos.

Aínda que a presente investigación revela que as novelas son subversivas no seu uso da simboloxía da historia da creación do Xardín do Edén para criticar as metanarrativas producidas polas estruturas de poder dentro das súas culturas, tamén revela que mesmo despois da época posmoderna, cando moitas metanarrativas son cuestionadas desde a

perspectiva individual, algunhas metanarrativas poden facerse invisibles, normalizarse, pasar en gran medida indiscutibles e condicionar a forma en que os individuos coñecen ou perciben o mundo. A metanarrativa fundacional do Xardín do Edén aínda é capaz de influír directamente na forma en que as culturas occidentais perciben o mundo, eles mesmos e os demais. A visión Agustiniiana desta metanarrativa como a historia da caída do home está fortemente arraigada na cultura occidental. Desde anuncios publicitarios ata películas, a asociación entre o Xardín do Edén e a sexualidade, a tentación (o froito prohibido), o demo, o pecado e a luxuria está arraigada no imaxinario popular. Esta investigación conclúe que a interpretación Agostiñana predominante da historia do Xardín do Edén funcionou como metáfora dunha moral baseada na obediencia a un poder exterior superior que influíu profundamente na sociedade occidental e minou a súa capacidade crítica. Facilitou que a xente acepte e mesmo se sinta necesaria a orientación dunha autoridade externa que proporciona unha fonte de coñecemento allea ao individuo.

Appendix II - Resumen de la tesis

El regreso al jardín: el Jardín del Edén y la subversión de las metanarrativas en Lewis Carroll, Salman Rushdie y Jeanette Winterson

Esta tesis pretende demostrar cómo Lewis Carroll (en *Las aventuras de Alicia en el País de las Maravillas*), Salman Rushdie (en *Los hijos de la Medianoche*) y Jeanette Winterson (en *Las naranjas No Son la Única Fruta*) se apropian de la imagen del Jardín del Edén para subvertir discursos de poder y privilegio. Estas novelas pueden dar cuenta clara de cómo una historia arraigada como la historia del Jardín del Edén es utilizada para comunicar una perspectiva crítica por parte de escritores que, aunque influenciados por la cultura inglesa, provienen de entornos culturales completamente diferentes. Como explora este estudio, hay dos interpretaciones conflictivas principales de la historia del Jardín del Edén: una interpretación Gnóstica positiva (antes de la Iglesia Católica Romana) de los eventos como una transmisión esclarecedora de conocimiento por parte de la sagrada figura femenina de la mujer y la serpiente, y la metanarrativa creada por la Iglesia Católica Romana que cuenta una historia de pecado y castigo. Como resultado del análisis principal del tema del Jardín del Edén, esta investigación también tiene como objetivo comprobar si la crítica de los autores se basa en la metanarrativa del pecado original promovida por la Iglesia Católica Romana o si aluden a la anterior interpretación Gnóstica de la historia. Las implicaciones son que si el punto de partida es el metanarrativa del Jardín de la Caída del Hombre creado por la Iglesia Católica Romana, si bien los autores son críticos con los metanarrativa de su tiempo, también ayudan a naturalizar el metanarrativa que promueve y justifica las creencias que desafían.

La importancia de la presente investigación radica, no solo en la innovadora lectura comparativa de las tres novelas, sino también en cómo ayuda a esclarecer cómo se cuestionan las metanarrativas y cómo, incluso desde una perspectiva crítica, algunas metanarrativas están tan arraigadas que se solidifican incluso más. Las tres novelas se eligen no solo por su diferente uso de las imágenes y las referencias edénicas, sino también porque cada una es representativa de las diferentes culturas que dieron forma a los autores: la cultura Victoriana, las culturas India y Británica, y la cultura de una comunidad evangélica cerrada en la Inglaterra rural de los años 70. Un estudio comparativo ayuda al lector a darse cuenta de cómo el conocimiento de un significado previo de la metanarrativa creativa del Jardín del Edén configura cómo las metanarrativas son contestadas y cómo avanza esta contestación, cómo los autores comunican su crítica: por qué Carroll, viviendo en la restrictiva sociedad Victoriana, tiene que expresar sus ideas de una manera mucho más velada (e incluso compleja) que Rushdie, y al igual que la novela de Winterson, la última novela publicada, se toma la libertad de reescribir historias y exponer sus críticas abiertamente. Como producto de estas culturas, una lectura comparativa de estas novelas también puede revelar cómo cada entorno cultural puede influir en la visión de los autores sobre la metanarrativa del Jardín del Edén y qué versión de la metanarrativa subvierten o solidifican.

Metodología

Con el fin de brindar una mejor base clara para la presente investigación, la orientación teórica elegida es la del nuevo historicismo/estudios culturales porque ayuda a revelar la crítica subyacente en las novelas. La perspectiva teórica de los estudios culturales considera cómo los elementos sociales, culturales e históricos construyen la conciencia y se preocupa por cómo los elementos de la cultura promueven significados que reflejan ideologías

específicas y condicionan la forma en que aprehendemos el mundo. Revela los intereses ideológicos de los sistemas ideológicos dominantes y las ideologías opuestas que operan a través de los textos literarios. Los estudios culturales analizan un texto desde la perspectiva de quienes están marginados o no forman parte de la cultura dominante. Analiza cómo operan los sistemas de poder a través de las prácticas culturales, por lo que sus principales preocupaciones son cómo la cultura puede ser un instrumento de control social y político y cómo se genera, difunde y cuestiona el significado. El nuevo historicismo considera textos literarios y no literarios por igual para descubrir las relaciones de poder que revela el texto. Esta perspectiva teórica considera hechos políticos, culturales, sociales o históricos al interpretar un texto literario y narrativas no convencionales porque siempre hay diferentes perspectivas para un mismo evento. Para esta perspectiva teórica, la historia es una narración que puede ser influenciada por el contexto cultural o por la perspectiva de quienes la registran, quienes suelen estar en una posición de poder. Esta perspectiva teórica analiza el poder o la falta de él y la resistencia a él en un texto en discursos que perturban las narrativas de poder ignoradas, desaprobadas o no reconocidas por los discursos culturales dominantes. Por tanto, la aplicación de esta perspectiva teórica crítica permite al lector ver los discursos subversivos que circulan, cómo las novelas subvierten las normas ideológicas dominantes y revelan que lo establecido como verdad puede ser una construcción política, un medio utilizado por las estructuras de poder (tales como la iglesia o el estado) para difundir y establecer una ideología dominante.

Estructura del Estudio

Además del enfoque teórico elegido, y con el fin de proporcionar una base clara para la presente investigación, este trabajo se ha dividido estructuralmente en cinco secciones

principales: la introducción; seguido de un segundo capítulo que trata sobre la definición y el contexto de los términos; un capítulo de revisión de la literatura; un cuarto capítulo que incluye el análisis de las tres novelas; la conclusión; y la sección de trabajos citados. La introducción comienza abordando el propósito de esta tesis, su relevancia dentro de la investigación académica y la razón del enfoque teórico elegido, cómo sirve a los objetivos de esta investigación y proporciona un resumen de la estructura general de este trabajo. El segundo capítulo, "Definición y contexto de los términos", brinda los antecedentes históricos, culturales y etimológicos de los términos Metanarrativa, Iglesia Católica Romana, Gnosticismo y Jardín del Edén que son centrales para esta investigación. El siguiente capítulo de revisión de la literatura se ocupa de la investigación académica significativa sobre el Jardín del Edén y también considera las líneas de investigación más importantes que los académicos han utilizado para estudiar cada una de las novelas elegidas para esta tesis. Después de una breve introducción que brinda una sinopsis de las novelas y un resumen de cómo cada una usa las imágenes del Jardín del Edén, el cuarto capítulo, "Metanarrativas reveladas: análisis de las novelas", se subdivide en tres secciones principales que exploran cómo los autores adoptan el imaginario del Jardín del Edén en su crítica a las "verdades" normalizadas por las metanarrativas creadas por el poder religioso, el poder del Estado y un inciso que pretende determinar cómo, en medio de la normalización de las "verdades" de las metanarrativas establecidas por los discursos culturales, políticos o religiosos en interés de los poderes gobernantes, cada una de las novelas considera la posibilidad de llegar a una verdad última u objetiva. A esto le sigue su propia conclusión, que se centra en resumir las diferencias entre las novelas en términos de cómo aluden a la historia del Jardín. El capítulo final general tiene

como objetivo proporcionar un resumen de la importancia de esta perspectiva crítica sobre las novelas y lo que puede significar para el pensamiento crítico.

Conclusiones

Para concluir, esta investigación indaga cómo, a pesar de mostrar una postura igualmente crítica respecto a los constructos de los poderes gobernantes y elegir el mismo motivo del Jardín del Edén para lograrlo, las diferencias significativas que presentan las novelas (atribuibles a sus respectivos períodos históricos ya la influencia cultural) revelan cómo puede progresar la contestación de las metanarrativas. Comparar una novela Victoriana de un autor masculino y dos novelas posmodernas, una de un autor Asiático Británico y otra de una autora Británica, permite a los lectores ver el progreso y las diferencias en los enfoques críticos. Desde la crítica velada de Carroll hasta Rushdie, que es libre de criticar abiertamente el estado de cosas de una India anterior y posterior a la independencia, y Winterson, quien, como escritora posmoderna, no solo es libre de ejercer su crítica, sino que, como mujer, ella es capaz de reescribir cuentos patriarcales tradicionales de acuerdo con su perspectiva femenina. Más que una asertividad crítica similar, aunque expresada más o menos abiertamente, sus similitudes generales subrayan aún más el curso diferente que toma *Las naranjas No Son la Única Fruta*.

Los ambientes culturales de cada escritor condicionaron su crítica, y para Carroll, su crítica a las convenciones sociales y el énfasis en el aspecto ritual de la religión está completamente velada. Se puede detectar una perspectiva Gnóstica en *Las aventuras de Alicia en el País de las Maravillas* que es paralela a los puntos de vista Gnósticos de los primeros cristianos adoptados más tarde por muchas escuelas de filosofía Griega. Esta perspectiva parece haber llegado a Carroll a través de sus estudios de la filosofía apócrifa y Griega y se refleja en la

visión de Carroll del ritualismo y la búsqueda del jardín de Alicia. No solo no hay idea del pecado, sino que Carroll inculca la necesidad de desafiar el status quo ejemplificado por la mente inquisitiva de Alicia. El jardín se representa como un lugar deseable, como, implícitamente, el lugar primordial de una armonía natural entre el hombre y lo divino que representa la forma temprana del Cristianismo. La búsqueda del jardín emprendida por Alicia como encarnación de la Sophia Gnóstica (o conocimiento) expresa lo que para Carroll es esencial para alcanzar, o incluso comprender, el conocimiento de una realidad espiritual superior: una conexión natural, simple y sin mediaciones con lo divino. Un escritor posmoderno, Rushdie puede ser tan abierto en su crítica como elija y es abiertamente crítico y utiliza una imagen del jardín que no tiene ninguna de las huellas idílicas que se encuentran en *Las aventuras de Alicia en el País de las Maravillas*. En *Los hijos de la Medianoche* la imaginería del jardín puntúa la trama, pero siempre en relación con los problemas sociales de la India anterior y posterior a la independencia. Este no es el Jardín del Edén de la caída del hombre promovido por la Iglesia Católica Romana donde hay una entidad superior y sus representantes sacerdotales en la tierra que sostienen la verdad y se espera que obedezcan otros que se consideran espiritual o moralmente inferiores a ellos para su propia salvación espiritual y moral. *Los hijos de la Medianoche* no presenta una dicotomía de desobediencia (pecado) versus obediencia ni conecta exclusivamente la figura femenina con el mal, la tentación o el pecado como lo hace la metanarrativa de la caída. No hay paralelo con la noción de pecado y desobediencia en la versión Agustiniana del Jardín del Edén. Más bien, inculca la necesidad de desafiar las verdades oficiales, aceptadas y establecidas, ya que las imágenes del Jardín del Edén en *Los hijos de la Medianoche* se utilizan para preservar la perspectiva

del individuo anónimo de los eventos históricos al tiempo que inculca una postura crítica hacia estos eventos.

La obra *Las Naranjas No Son la Única Fruta*, igualmente posmoderna, aborda las imágenes del Jardín del Edén de una manera aún diferente, ya que Winterson critica abierta y humorísticamente a su congregación y su pequeña comunidad. A diferencia de Carroll y al igual que Rushdie, Winterson es libre de criticar de cualquier manera que elija. La posmodernidad permite a aquellos que antes no tenían voz y sobre los que se escribía (como las mujeres) la oportunidad de escribir ellos mismos sobre su perspectiva. La novela interpreta la metanarrativa del Jardín del Edén como la versión de la Iglesia Católica Romana, por lo que el autor alude a ella como una historia sobre el pecado y la tentación (el fruto prohibido) utilizando el fruto como alegoría de la tentación o la sumisión. Dos de los capítulos de la novela, "Josué" y "Júices", ejemplifican la dicotomía entre el bien (obediente) y el mal (desobediente), presente a lo largo de la novela. Pero, si bien esto no afecta su capacidad crítica, es relevante porque ejemplifica una situación en la que aun siendo crítico uno contribuye a consolidar los intereses de estructuras de poder que van en contra de intereses propios. Al basar sus críticas en la versión de la metanarrativa del Jardín del Edén creada por la Iglesia Católica Romana, Winterson está contribuyendo aún más a la naturalización de la metanarrativa que promueve y justifica las creencias espirituales y patriarcales que ella cuestiona en su novela. En consecuencia, como propone esta investigación, esto ayuda aún más a la normalización del conocimiento que conviene a los intereses de los poderes gobernantes, incluso en tiempos posmodernos.

Aunque la presente investigación revela que las novelas son subversivas en su uso del simbolismo de la historia de la creación del Jardín del Edén para criticar las metanarrativas

producidas por las estructuras de poder dentro de sus culturas, también revela que incluso después de la era posmoderna, cuando muchas metanarrativas son cuestionadas desde la perspectiva individual, algunas metanarrativas pueden volverse invisibles, normalizarse, quedar en gran medida incuestionadas y condicionar la forma en que los individuos conocen o perciben el mundo. La metanarrativa fundacional del Jardín del Edén todavía es capaz de influir directamente en la forma en que las culturas occidentales perciben el mundo, a sí mismas y a los demás. La visión Agustiniana de esta metanarrativa como la historia de la caída del hombre está fuertemente arraigada en la cultura occidental. Desde comerciales hasta películas, la asociación del Jardín del Edén con la sexualidad, la tentación (el fruto prohibido), el diablo, el pecado y la lujuria está arraigada en la imaginación popular. Esta investigación concluye que la interpretación Agustiniana predominante de la historia del Jardín del Edén funcionó como metáfora de una moral basada en la obediencia a un poder externo superior que influyó profundamente en la sociedad occidental y socavó su capacidad crítica. Ha facilitado que las personas acepten e incluso sientan la necesidad de orientación de una autoridad externa que proporciona una fuente de conocimiento fuera del individuo.