Chapter Two

ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT: A BIBLICAL REWRITING OF SELF

Jeanette Winterson describes sexual passion in the language and with the understanding of a parallel and informing spiritual faith and compassion in her literary works. Winterson created narratives of romantic love and sexual passion which seek the experience of perfect union with the ecstatic practices of charismatic Christianity. From her first book, ‘Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit’ (1985) to her most recent fiction Winterson has constantly drawn on Biblical and religious experiences to produce her own exalted discourse of passion. In drawing on Biblical to express erotic passion, Winterson resists the popular cultural image of perfect rapprochment, the merging of self and other typically attributed to the lesbian couple. The Self is a complex and core subject in many forms of spirituality. Two types of self are commonly considered - the self that is the ego, also called the learned, superficial self of mind and body, or creation of ego or it can also be called as "True Self", the "I" or (“I Am”). The Self is an image of the unity of the personality as a whole, a central ordering principle. It is not only the Centre but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of the
conscious mind". Self is the essential quality that make a person distinct from all others. Jeanette Winterson in the present novel has endeavored to reveal her self by utilizing Bible as an important source. Winterson here emphasizes the challenge of union in love, using the language of faith to indicate the elusive qualities of passionate connection. The language she borrows from her Pentacostal childhood allows her to describe a kind of charismatic experience of meeting between self and lover while recognising the essential difference between partners, and the foreignness of the beloved.

‘Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit’ is a story of a young woman in a highly fundamentally religious community who falls in love with another girl and is shunned by her family and congregation. Jeanette is the protagonist who belongs to the poor, working class but she deals with the big questions that cut across class, culture and colour. That way it is a complicated picture of teenage angst, through a series of layered narratives. The novel includes fairytales, myths and presents the most lucid picture. The novel, which happens to have been Winterson's first, is written in the first person and is narrated by its protagonist, Jeanette. Jeanette tells the story from a hindsight perspective; several years seem to have passed between the events in the story and their retelling. This allows for heightened contrast between how Jeanette felt about the events at the time during which they
occurred and how she felt about them as she retold her story. Winterson has indicated that the novel is at least partially autobiographical, though she has refused to say to what extent. Many of the events in the novel parallel events of her own life, particularly the circumstances surrounding her adoption and various aspects of her relationship with her mother. Winterson was adopted, just as her fictional character was, and both adopted mothers sought to make their daughters into missionaries. The mother has devoted her entire life not only to the service of God but also to a universal conversion project. She believes that it is necessary to convert the entire world to Christianity within ten years. She has even gone so far as to adopt her daughter because she didn't want to partake in sexual activity, even for the purpose of procreation. She belongs to a highly religious community. It comes as more than a bit of a shock, then, when Jeanette meets a girl named Melanie; they fall in love and have a physical relationship, a lesbian relationship. This does not sit well with either the congregation or with Jeanette’s mother.

Jeanette is forced to deal with a heightened sense of self while attempting to come to terms with the anger and hostility her community feels. Throughout the course of the novel, she discovers who she can truly trust and who has betrayed her. The title of the novel is derived from a statement made by a mistress of a king during the middle ages. It was taken
to represent the woman's view that the 'proper sort' of woman was not the only sort. According to Anderson Linda 1 Winterson has brought it up on several occasions, and are usually taken to represent the mother or the community's ideals of the status quo. Oranges are offered to Jeanette by several people during the novel, particularly in parts where people attempt to make her conform to their standards of sexuality. It seems that Winterson might have chosen the novel's title before she came up with the use of orange imagery and it has the historical background behind the title. The use of the term ‘orange’, citric fruit as against the apple (Eve’s Fruit) is also loaded in a religious sense, as orange is a colour that is often associated with Protestantism.  *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is an example of post – modernist literature. It contains several sub-storylines, all of which parallel the main storyline in some way. Winterson breaks away from Jeanette's narrative to share stories that are almost fairy-tales like in nature. One, the story of Sir Perceval’s quest for the Holy Grail, borrows heavily from Arthurian legend. It is, like the other interjected storylines a story told in fragments, each of which bears some similarities to Jeanette's quest for understanding and self-sufficiency. The novel's eight chapters are named after the first eight books of the Old Testament. This is a direct reference to the religious overtones and themes that exist within the book, and are
particularly relevant to Winterson's apparent 'rewriting' of the Bible from an entirely new perspective. It's also interesting to note that the events or themes of each chapter do bear some resemblance to the events or themes in each corresponding biblical chapter. For instance, Exodus is the biblical chapter in which the Israelites are given God's law. In Oranges..., it is in this chapter that Jeanette's mother lays down her own laws for her household.

Narratively, the novel, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is built on a particular irony - a contradiction in which it takes some cunning delight. The Bible is the all-controlling authority to which the narrator's fundamentalist mother makes her defer, yet it is also the book on which the novel is based. The young Jeanette knows the Bible as a work of warning, prohibition and fear. (When she goes to school she duly terrifies the other children by explaining the fiery judgment that will soon be visited upon them.) Yet, though this is a story of the heroine's escape from her Scripture-obsessed mother and the Christian sect to which she belongs, the Bible gives shape and meaning to that story. The novel is divided into eight sections, with the titles of the first eight books of the Bible, from Genesis to Ruth. These make sense of the different phases of Jeanette's life, from the age of seven to that of sixteen or so. She herself looks to these Scriptural chapters for significance. After an official letter commands her mother to send her
daughter to school, Jeanette describes her confusing experiences in "Exodus". "When the children of Israel left Egypt, they were guided by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night". She, however, is led out of bondage without any guide. In Joshua, where her "Unnatural Passion" for Melanie is discovered, she rebels against her mother's tyranny. "It is in the nature of walls that they should fall. That walls should fall is the consequence of blowing your own trumpet". The narrator can hardly help using the Bible for her own story. This is her expertise.

We had a lot of Bible quizzes at church and my mother liked me to win. If I knew the answer she asked me another, if I didn’t she got a cross, but luckily not for long, because we has to listen to the World Service. It was always the same; we sat down on either side of the radiogram, she with her tea, me with a pad and pencil; in front of us, the Missionary Map.” (ORN: 5)

Her mother always has a Bible at hand. Whenever she leaves home she takes "the travel size one" with her. She reads it aloud as she and her daughter eat bacon and eggs. So the Bible becomes the medium through which Jeanette expresses her own strength of mind. As a teenager she starts teaching a Bible study class and is indignant when, as a punishment for her
sexual sins, the pastor bans her from doing so. Indeed, Scriptural congress is next to sensual congress. She and Melanie consummate their affection via the Good Book.

"We read the Bible as usual, and then told each other how glad we were that the Lord had brought us together." (ORN: 73) ³

A couple of sentences later, they are overpowered.

"And it was evening and it was morning; another day." (ORN: 75) ⁴

A neat version of the time shift that tells you of sexual satisfaction, for it alludes to the fifth verse of Genesis. "And the evening and the morning were the first day". It is, one might say, the beginning of something. The Bible is there not just in the novel's structure, but in the narrator's allusions and quotations. Quotation ,"chapter and verse", is the usual weapon of the fundamentalist. "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord" is naturally one of her mother's favourites. (Frightening Old Testament stuff, though actually from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans.) But then the beauty of the King James Bible is there for all to appropriate. Threatened with the words of St Paul by the pastor who publicly announces that she and Melanie have "fallen under Satan's spell", Jeanette yells back: "To the pure all things are pure" (which is
indeed St Paul - his Epistle to Titus). Later, the quote returns. She falls in love with Katy, who joins her church as well as shares her bed.

"We did have a genuinely spiritual dimension." (ORN: 45) 

The comment is wry, but not sarcastic.

"To the pure all things are pure (ORN: 49)"...

she observes. The novel is a story of self-liberation for a secular age, but it recalls a traditional sense that a person's story is made significant by reference to the Bible. Why should any individual's story matter, after all? Because it follows the pattern of God-given precept and God-directed narrative. Jeanette learns from the Bible (via her mother) "the signs and wonders that the unbeliever might never understand". But Jeanette's mother's indifference to her daughter reflects Jeanette's future rejection. Joan Scott believes that Jeanette Winterson’s mother offers her comfort only by leaving her with oranges. These oranges symbolize the dominant rhetoric that Winterson's mother embraces. The novel also turns to the other types of narratives. Intermittently it flies into newly imagined fragments of fairy-tale or Arthurian myth, daydreams of knights and princesses and sorcerers. These dramatise the heroine's desires and fears. But they are, literally,
detached from the tale of her youth. The Bible is its narrative essence. Jeanette is likely to escape her sect, but not the ready store of stories she has been given. The novel also utilises pebble brilliantly as Laura Doan considers that the stone pebble has a dual yet interconnected meaning in the novel.

This work is Winterson’s quite sparkling attempt to make an allegorical novel and it has paid off in full. It is a journey of self-discovery and identity, which deals with issues such as; sexuality, feminism and how our childhood development can shape our future life. The half-autobiographical style adopted by Winterson enables the reader to become completely involved with the main character Jeanette and follow her journey in its entirety. Jeanette in this work attempts to defend her (homo) sexuality and defies her zealous mother and the fundamentalist religious community of which she is an outstanding member. Author and fictional character share more than Christian names in a book that depicts familial, religious, and sexual experiences alike to those endured by Winterson herself. Not surprisingly, then, many readers and critics have taken Oranges as disguised autobiography. In the preface to the Vintage edition of the book, Winterson poses herself the question: “Is Oranges an autobiographical novel?” (1991a: xiv). Far from throwing any light on the debate about the faithfulness of the
contents of the book to her life, her playful response — “No not at all and yes of course” (1991a: xiv) — fuels a still more intemperate interest on her private world. But the impact of Bible on the novel is obviously seen. The religious overtones throughout the entire novel are related with the story of Jeanette herself. The central themes of particular books of the bible can be seen in the novel, for example, the wilderness represented in Numbers is effectively shown by the beginning of adolescence in Jeanette. There are interludes in the main text with stories, which would fit quite comfortably in the fairytale genre, that represent the different aspects of Jeanette's character and the turmoil she is facing. The themes which most stand out are those of security versus restriction. Winterson excels at showing the development of her relationship with her mother, who is very domineering and an extremely religious women. This intricate relationship begins with Jeanette never leaving the side of her mother, and progresses to an almost total split between the two characters. Here Winterson’s craft her autobiographical novel, and interweaves memoir, fantasy, fable, fairy tale, medieval romance, and an organizing biblical chapter scheme. Such an array of fictional intertextualities working with the overarching autobiographical model proves to be a complex and compelling approach to telling personal narrative. Winterson’s narrative strategy and intertextuality which explicitly
emerges at the novel’s end, which Winterson reworks the legend of Sir Perceval and his quest for the Holy Grail is very noteworthy.

In *Oranges*, the Percevalian tale functions as a mythic identity or model for Jeanette’s life—from her familial beginnings to her elected and exiled status to her quest toward selfhood and authorship. We will draw not only from the medieval myth as presented by Winterson, but also as originally introduced by twelfth century romancier Chrétien de Troyes. Percevalian medievalism serves as a means of exploring self, identity and personal psychology in Oranges, for Sir Perceval’s legendary life becomes in many respects a mirror for Jeanette’s experiences and journey. The parallelism is established early, as the mythic chevalier and Jeanette never share a noticeably similar ontological genesis. Both are molded by the influence of, on the one hand, a dominant mother figure and, on the other, an absent father. Chrétien alludes to the formative role of Perceval’s widow mother. Raised in such social seclusion, the vulnerable Perceval absorbs his mother’s Catholic imaginary and her cosmology of a world filled with angels and devils.

“Having assimilated this worldview without understanding it, the boy mistakes “king chevaliers armés” [“five armed knights”] in the forest for devils, “les plus laides choses du monde” [“the vilest
“things on earth”), and then instead for angels and even God (35-36/6-7)”.

Like Perceval, Jeanette is raised largely in cultural isolation. The girl’s mother attempts to keep her safe from the reach of the “Enemies,” a list which includes “The Devil (in his many forms),” “Next Door,” “Sex (in its many forms),” “school” (also referred to as “a Breeding Ground”), and “Unnatural Passion”. The dominating force of the mother’s character leaves no room for a father, a man who is sometimes referred to impersonally as “her husband”. The marginalization of paternal influence and authority is humorously suggested in the novel’s incipit when Jeanette explains her arrival in the family:

“We had no Wise men because [my mother] didn’t believe there were any wise men, but we had sheep. One of my earliest memories is me sitting on sheep at Easter while she told me the story of the Sacrificial Lamb. We had it on Sundays with potato” (ORN: 4)

Jeanette’s adoption further underscores the insignificance of the father who, like the biblical Joseph, has no real blood familial claim to the child.

“Her husband was an easy-going man, but I knew it depressed him. He would have cooked it himself but for my mother’s
conviction that she was the only person in our house who would
tell a saucepan from a piano. She was wrong, as far as we were
concerned, and really, that’s what mattered.” (ORN: 5)¹²

Jeanette’s father passively fades away from the central narrative
plot. Hence, as with Perceval, the mother plays the formative role,
imparting her view of a world burdened with heathens, devils, merveilles,
and enchantments as real as those of the medieval tale. In an implied
extension of the Holy Family analogy, Jeanette’s adoptive mother is paired
with Mary. The girl explains that her mother had a mysterious attitude
towards the begetting of children;

“It wasn’t that she couldn’t do it, more that she didn’t want to do
it.”(ORN: 4)¹³

The mother hence settles for the adoption and molding of a model child. The
description of Jeanette’s personal creation, emphasized by its indented
poetic form on the page of prose, is thus asexual and intellectual. Even as
Jeanette tries to gain acceptance by turning from her biblical themes, she
remains separate. Julia Kristeva ¹⁴ believes that there are a few other
references to Jeanette's future homosexuality also are seen. First is the
inclusion of a woman on Jeanette's mother's "Old Flames" page. The
eventual disappearance of this woman from the page suggests that Jeanette's
mother may have experienced same sex romantic love at one point, which
she now seeks to hide, yet another form of her hypocrisy. The biblical
narrative scheme used to make ontological sense of Jeanette’s creation,
reflected by the chapter title “Genesis,” positions the child in a charismatic
light. She is capable of, and predestined for, great things. Jeanette’s mother,
seeking to fashion “a missionary child, a servant of God,” impresses upon
the girl the gravity of her vocation: We stood on the hill and my mother said,

‘We stood on the hill and my mother said, this world is full
of sin.’ We stood on the hill and my mother said, ‘You can
change the world.’ (ORN: 10).\textsuperscript{15}

This sense of destiny, internalized early on by Jeanette, highlights a second
major point of convergence with the mythic Perceval, that is, the status as
elect. In Perceval ou le Roman du Graal, even the sheltering mother admits
to her son’s predestination or quasi-divine mission: “I am sure I’m right”]
(Chrétien 43/17). The pairing of Jeanette with Perceval further suggests that
election is not determined or limited by familial inheritance or by sexual and
gender identity. For although she may not fully understand her status as
adopted, female, and homosexual, the girl is aware of these identities early
on and insists upon her uniqueness and privilege, saying,
‘I cannot recall a time when I did not know that I was special’

(ORN: 3). 16

Nonetheless, selection does not simply imply personal glory or destined triumph, but rather risk, loss, loneliness, and exile, a third narrative parallel linking Perceval and Jeanette. The trajectories followed by Perceval in both the medieval romance and this contemporary novel reveal that author understand the implications of an elected status. The elect is drawn into an unknown world to explore not in hopes of glory, but for

“He had gone for his own sake, nothing more. He had thought that day of returning. He felt himself being pulled like a bobbin of cotton, so that he was dizzy and wanted to give in to the pull and wake up round familiar things. When he slept that night he dreamed he was spider hanging a long way down a huge oak. Then a raven came and flew through his thread, so that he dropped to the ground and scuttled away. (ORN: 5). 17

Winterson expresses the sense of regret which accompanies Perceval’s departure:

“He dreams of Arthur’s court, where he was the darling, the favourite. He dreams of his hounds and his falcon, his stable and his faithful friends. His friends are dead now. Dead or dying. He
dreams of Aurther sitting on a wide stone step, holding his head in his hands. Sir Perceval falls to his knees to clasp his lord, but his lord is tree covered in ivy. He wakes his face bright with tears." (ORN:133)

Jeanette’s narrative parallels this departure from the will of the overbearing mother and the ensuing acute loss, a development reflected by the second chapter title, “Exodus.” As critic and medievalist Carla Ann Arnell explains, Jeanette, like Perceval, “ventures out of the garden of maternal care and bibliculture”; this “later-day Eve” moves out of “a garden of innocence, where all things are named by the maternal keeper of the garden” (Arnell 51). Refusing to be the missionary her mother desires, Jeanette breaks the mold cast for her to discover her own sense of mission and identity. Her understanding of her election as “called to be apart” differs from that of her mother and church and leads to ultimate separation. Jeanette’s defiance plays on the Edenic topos since the so-called transgression causing the rupture with mother and church is her lesbian relationship with a young woman named Melanie. Winterson’s depiction shows Jeanette's love to be simply natural process that has no appearance of sinfulness often associated with such love affairs. The purity of their affection stands in contrast with the rigidity of the church. The fourth
chapter, according to Julieth Butler, utilizes a stream of consciousness technique. There have been few indications of how quickly time moves in the novel, but there is a realization that Jeanette is getting older. The fact that she is now able to work, indicates that she has reached her teenage years. The final fantastical section of the fourth chapter testifies to the change that has taken place with Jeanette loving Melanie. One particular exchange between the two characters stresses the symbolic significance of her first lover’s name:

‘Melanie,’ I plucked up courage to ask at last, ‘why do you have such a funny name?’ She blushed. ‘When I was born I looked like a melon.

Don’t worry, I reassured her, ‘you don’t any more.’

The first time that Melanie came to our church was not a success. I’d forgotten that Pastor Finch was visiting on his regional our. He arrived in an old Bedford van with the terrified damned painted on one side and the heavenly host painted on the other. (ORN: 81)

The passage likens Jeanette’s “sin” to the tasting of the forbidden Edenic apple which modern authors often transmogrify. Furthermore, the passage negates the mother’s insistence that oranges are “the only fruit,” a
leitmotiv emphasized throughout the text and by the title and epigraph. Jeanette’s desire, which in her innocence she views as “pure,” provokes an unexpected interrogation in which she affirms her love before her evangelical pastor and congregation:

‘I love her.’ ‘Then you do not love the Lord.’

‘Yes, I love both of them.’ ‘You cannot. I do, I do, let me go.’ But he caught my arm and held me fast. The church will not see you suffer, go home and wait for us to help you.’ I ran out on to the street, wild with distress. Miss Jewsbury was waiting for me.

(ORN:103)

The church’s condemnation, its attempts to heal Jeanette of her “unnatural passions and…mark of the demon,” and its ultimate rejection of the young woman mirror the reactions of Jeanette’s mother, for like her adoptive family, “the church was [her] family, too” (103, 37). Just as Perceval parts from his mother, Arthur, and the community of the Round Table, so Jeanette must part ways physically, emotionally, and spiritually with her mother and the church family. The narrator explains:

“My mother wanted me to move out, and she had the backing of the pastor and most of the congregation, or so she said. I made her ill, made the house ill, brought evil into the church. There was no
escaping this time. I was in trouble. Picking up my Bible the hill seemed the only place to go just then. On the top of the hill is a stone mound to hide behind it out; when the wind blows.

(ORN:125) 22

In distancing herself from the voice and desires of her mother, Jeanette moves into her real vocation as prophet: 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...The prophet have no book. The prophet is a voice that cries in the wilderness, full of sounds that do not always set into meaning. The prophets cry out because they are troubled by demons. Before she can step into her authorial role, Jeanette must discover her voice as speaking subject whose words cannot be pre-scribed because the prophet points to the future. Although it may seem a peculiar or incongruent detail, the act of naming has been since the days of Adam quite significant, for as Winterson explains,

“Naming is a difficult and time-consuming process; it concerns essences, and it means power. But on the wild nights who can call you home? Only the one who knows your name? Romantic love has been diluted into paperback form and has sold thousands and
Perceval, then, asserts power over his self. This act of inspired or prophetic divination is necessary because Perceval’s mother addressed him as “beaufils” (literally, “beautiful son”), thereby allowing him only to exist and be named in relation to her rather than as an autonomous being. The impact and role of Bible in the making of Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is immense and its minute study reveals the fact. Some years before Jeanette Winterson wrote in a book review:

“Imagine a work of fiction that moves through time but is unconcerned by time; that chooses its coordinates in space, not history; whose characters, because they stand for all of us, are soap opera as well as sublime. This book is bawdy, dignified, [and] painfully to the point...It is the Bible.” (New Statesman 37).

Indeed, the life and works of Winterson are deeply influenced by the Scriptures because their characters “stand for all of us” and her presentation of them as a “work of fiction” suggests that Biblical material can be easily re-shaped in order to suit her writing. In Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Bible has greater role with respect to its use as a literary construct for...
Winterson. Novel also has Biblical teachings manifesting themselves within the novel, and their use in both creating and reducing emotional distance between Jeanette and her mother. Although a wide range of texts are somehow incorporated into Oranges, the Bible itself provides the most obvious structural framework for Winterson. The chapter titles offer a very explicit example of this, as they present the first eight books of the Old Testament (Genesis to Ruth) in cycle with the plot and character development of the novel. Despite the fact that the obvious references she makes to most of these Biblical books are “reductionistic, in that she relies upon only the most general and conventional sense of each text”, the major ideas are nonetheless present: “Genesis” recounts Jeanette’s origins; “Exodus” describes her leaving home and going to school; “Leviticus” establishes a framework of religion and law, as highlighted by Jeanette’s “initiation into her mother’s brand of evangelizing” 25; “Numbers” parodies the wandering of the Israelites through the desert with Jeanette’s “wandering” from both her mother and her heterosexuality; “Deuteronomy” further establishes rules for human behaviour; “Joshua” and “Judges” both detail the pain Jeanette experiences in the public battle of her sexual orientation and also the troubles she encounters in her ministry as such; the final chapter, “Ruth”.

There are a great deal of examples that provide evidence of intertextuality amongst each Biblical chapter and its namesake in Oranges. Assuming that many of these connections are obvious to the informed reader, a more interesting analysis focuses instead on how Winterson appropriates certain aspects of the Bible to reveal a feminist perspective. Jeanette maintains extreme devout faithfulness even when she is been thrown out from the society. In addition to challenging the idea that women are biologically inferior, according to Patricia Wagh, Winterson challenges the idea that men and women have set biological roles, or that they exist in a biological binary. Patricia also argues that what should be noted about Winterson’s use of the Bible as a literary construct is “not merely the intertextuality of each chapter of Oranges with the Bible but the broader process of resignification through which the Bible becomes a vehicle in the representation of a lesbian subject”. Laurel Bollinger further supports this point by arguing that Winterson’s modification of certain Biblical themes is a result of her finding “no place in the text already constructed for her”. The “Genesis” chapter provides an important example of this resignification, as the reader finds that a predominantly female perspective of creation is presented in lieu of a male one:
“She [Jeanette’s mother] had a mysterious attitude toward the begetting of children; it wasn’t that she couldn’t do it, more that she didn’t want to. She was very bitter about the Virgin Mary getting there first. So she did the next best thing and arranged for a foundling. That was me. I cannot recall a time when I did not know that I was special. We had no Wise Men because she didn’t believe there were any wise men, but we had sheep” (ORN: 3-4).

Here, in this “female Genesis”, it is a woman, Jeanette’s mother, who does the “begetting” and is therefore responsible for the act of creation; furthermore, the mother’s insistence of the lack of Wise Men not only fits with a feminist re-telling of an otherwise patriarchal text, but also accounts for the relatively minor role Jeanette’s father plays in the formative years of her life, as well as the reason why the mother’s evangelical community is largely dominated by women for much of the novel. If there exists a disconnection between Oranges’ “Genesis” and its Biblical counterpart, it is most evident in Winterson’s decision to incorporate imagery from the New Testament in this particular chapter (consider the references to the Virgin Mary and the Wise Men above). As a result, Jeanette’s birth and initial
upbringing are reflective of both the creation of the Earth (Old Testament, the "begetting") as well as the embodiment of Christ:

“We stood on the hill and my mother said, ‘This world is full of sin.’ We stood on the hill and my mother said, ‘You can change the world.’” (ORN: 10)  

This particular passage characterizes the young Jeanette as a Christ like figure, or “saviour of the novel”, and is certainly appropriate given the strong role Christianity plays in the novel and, in turn, the fact that Christianity itself is a faith with foundations in both the Old and New Testaments. This detail notwithstanding, the chapters beyond “Genesis” are, to borrow a phrase from Jeanette about her mother, “Old Testament through and through”. This is not to say that the Gospels fail to influence peripheral aspects of the plot [consider the hymns that are sung within the community, the mother’s belief in her daughter’s ear infection as a sign of the rapture, and Jeanette’s questioning of the patriarchal composition of the Trinity but that the Old Testament is the preferred text that is used allegorically to describe the major events that occur between Jeanette and her mother and this, as can be expected, increases the emotional distance between them.
Keryn Carter describes Jeanette’s mother as being a “powerful, forbidding figure who dominates the young girl’s life” (16), and although this is true throughout the course of this novel, it does not manifest itself in a negative form for Jeanette until her realization of the incompatibility of her sexual orientation with the Church’s teachings. At first, she is quite naïve, or perhaps ambivalent, of this fact: “Do you think this is Unnatural Passion?”, she asks of Melanie before they spend the night together, a reference of course to the “sins” the mother first introduces to her daughter in “Genesis” when she speaks of the lesbian bookstore owners; Jeanette, of course, initially misinterprets this and equates “unnatural passions” to them putting “chemicals in their sweets”. As the plot unfolds, the mother becomes increasingly unforgiving of Jeanette’s “deviance” and, by the latter portion of “Joshua”, considerable attention is given to the “orange demon” that is said to possess her. She first encounters this “demon” in a hallucination when her faith community confronts her about her lesbianism:

“Leaning on the coffee table was the orange demon. ‘I’ve gone mad,’ I thought. That may well be so,’ agreed the demon evenly. So make the most of it.’ I flopped heavily against the settee.’ What do you want?’ I want to help you want decide
what you want.’ And the creature hopped up on to the mantelpiece and sat on Pastor Spratt’s brass crocodile. (ORN: 106)²⁹

Carter argues that the orange demon is “linked to Jeanette’s distinctive creativity, her humour, her lesbianism, to all those qualities that the people around her would have her hold in check” (16). Indeed, demonic imagery plays a significant role in this novel, as it is a means of legitimizing the growing separation between mother and daughter. Eventually, Jeanette is forced to leave home, and when the circumstances of Elsie’s death bring her and her mother together again, there exists an attitudinal shift from Jeanette being portrayed as a demon to all-out disownment:

“Oh she’s a demon your daughter,’ wailed Mrs. White, holding on to the pastor’s arm. ‘She’s no daughter of mine,’ snapped back my mother, head high, leading the way out.” (ORN: 153)³⁰

At this point, it is clear that although Jeanette never truly abandons her faith, her faith abandons her because of clear disagreements over her sexual identity. In contrast to this sense of abandonment and distance, the final chapter, “Ruth”, also speaks volumes to the concept of loyalty. One example
is the mother’s continued service to a Church that has both been exposed as corrupt (159) as well as insistent of the

“So there I was, my success in the pulpit being the reason for my downfall. The devil had attacked me at my weakest point: my inability to realize the limitations of my [the female] sex”

(ORN: 132)\textsuperscript{31}

but an even more poignant illustration arises from this very fact, that Jeanette returns home to find little has changed. As with all bildungsromans, this portion of the text highlights maturation, but there is a key difference in Oranges: Laurel Bollinger asserts that “conventional stories of female maturation require that the daughter leave the mother in order to experience adulthood but Winterson suggests that maturation consists in the return to, not the flight from, familial or maternal ties”. Despite the mother’s loyalty in remaining the “Kindly Light” who oppresses her daughter by not accepting her sexual orientation, Jeanette remains in solidarity with the woman who raised her:

“Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of joining one, and no
means of dismissing my own; she had tied a thread around my button, to tug when she pleased. I knew a woman in another place. Perhaps she would have saved me. (ORN: 171)\textsuperscript{32}

With respect to the Biblical influence upon the novel, this sense of connection between women in spite of adversity mirrors the pledge Ruth makes to Naomi when she refuses to return to Bethlehem to seek a new husband: “Whither thou goest, I will go…thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16, 248).\textsuperscript{33} According to Jeanette Winterson, “Whether or not you know the Bible, whether or not you believe, or how you believe, doesn’t change the fact that it profoundly affects all our lives” (New Statesman)\textsuperscript{34} In Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Winterson uses both the Old and New Testaments as a structure wherein a young, God-loving girl comes-of-age and experiences both nearness to, and separation from, a God-fearing mother. Indeed, “profoundness” can describe not only the Bible’s influence on Jeanette and those closest to her, but also Winterson’s ability to construct a unique narrative within the framework of such a conventional, and patriarchal, text. “Genesis”, “Exodus”, “Leviticus”, “Numbers”, “Deuteronomy”, “Joshua”, “Judges”, and “Ruth”. All in all, the Books of the Law account for the origins and development of the whole of (hu)man(ity) and for the foundation of the laws upon which the most widely spread
monotheistic religion in our present world, the Christian faith, rest. Winterson challenges the attempted universality of any religious creed and exposes their actual fanaticism and narrow-mindedness when she periodically rewrites the Sacred Book to tell the blasphemous story of Jeanette’s origins and of the development of her odd sexuality. Jeanette’s individual quest is leveled with Sir Perceval’s quest for the Holy Grail, which also has strong religious connotations and symbolizes the individual’s ultimate archetypal quest.

*Neither of them is, then, an “ordinary quest” (ORN: 127).*  
A special communion is seen between these two characters at the moment in which Jeanette presents the ritual of purification imposed on her by the most outstanding members of her religious community, her mother included, as a means to expel from her the devil that

*“Had attacked me at my weakest point: my inability to realise the limitations of my sex”. As a result of her “ecclesiastical quarantine” (ORN: 131).*  
Jeanette literally becomes Perceval, the Arthurian knight who eventually finds the Grail. Perceval is the icon Jeanette needs to symbolize endurance of physical torture and the overcoming of psychological anguish: Sir Perceval has been in the wood for many days now. His armour is dull, his
horse tired. The last food he ate was a bowl of bread and milk given to him by an old woman. Other knights have been this way; he can see their tracks, their despair, for one, even his bones

‘Last night Sir Perceval dreamed of the Holy Grail borne on a shaft of sunlight moving towards him. He reached out crying but his hands were full of thorns and he was awake.’ (ORN: 132)\textsuperscript{37}

In the last chapter of Oranges, which is significantly titled “Ruth”, the intertextual echoes attached to the figure of Jeanette multiply further through the juxtaposition of still another discourse, the fairy tale.

Jeanette not only shares in the features and the story of the biblical Ruth and insists on Jeanette’s mythical association with the legend of Sir Perceval but she also adopts a new, equally consistent, fairy-tale persona as the apprentice to a sorcerer, who is trained to prevent the art of magic from dying:

“\textit{The more of us there are, the better. You have gifts; you can take the message to other places, where even now they hardly know how to draw a chalk circle}” (ORN: 139).\textsuperscript{38}
Another interesting feature to be noted here is Jeanette's process of maturation from admiring and obedient child, to rebellious adolescent and ideologically self-assured and free adult, as the progressive revelation of her lesbianism clashes with her mother's religious and moral ideas. Given its subject matter and the impression under which it appeared. The novel is classified as a realistic and profoundly autobiographical comedy of 'coming out', in line with the feminist novels that had begun to emerge from the 1960s onwards.

Although apparently realistic, some episodes in Jeanette's life story in fact have a distinctive fairytale flavour. Jeanette feels for her mother the type of unquestioning love connected with fairytale heroines and she is treated by her with the harshness and cruelty of a fairytale stepmother. Jeanette's foster mother expects perfect obedience from her, never thanks her for doing all types of odd jobs and errands, and is totally blind to the child's sense of shame or self-respect. Thus, she hires her to do the washing up at Trickett’s while she is having a cup of Horlicks with her friends, and when Jeanette falls ill with an inflammation of the adenoids she leaves her unattended for days on end. When, eventually, a member of their religious community takes her to the Victoria Hospital, Jeanette is left there alone with the only comfort of a bag of oranges, while her mother busies herself 'with the Lord'
or waits at home for the plumber. Like a fairytale heroine, the only weapon Jeanette has to console herself is the power of her imagination. Thus, she attempts to overcome her fear and misery by transforming a dull and oppressive orange peel into an empty igloo, the site of a fully engaging and dramatic story about 'How Eskimo Got Eaten' (ORN: 27) 39.

Jeanette's remark, at the beginning of novel, that from the top of her hill one could see 'Ellison's tenement, where we had the fair once a year' is significant. The narrator then goes on to explain how, on one occasion when she was there alone, an old gypsy had taken her hand and told her future:

"You'll never marry," she said, "not you, and you'll never be still"

(ORN: 7). 40

This episode has a similarly proleptic function, prophesying the core in Jeanette's maturation process. 'The realism of Jeanette's autobiographical narration is further damaged by the novel's division into eight chapters called after the Octateuchus', that is, the first eight books of the Old Testament 'Genesis', 'Exodus', 'Leviticus', 'Numbers', 'Deuteronomy, 'Joshua', 'Judges' and 'Ruth'. This establishes a parodic equivalent, between, on the one hand, the stages in Jeanette's quest for maturation and, on the other, the biblical narration covering God's creation of the world, his designation of the Israelites as his chosen people, their search and struggle
for the Promised Land, coming finally to 'Ruth' — that is the story of a woman enduring threefold marginalization, as a woman, as a poor widow and as a stranger with a different religion.

What is more, the linearity of Jeanette's retrospective account is constantly interrupted by the use of fairytales and fragments of myth which recur with a difference and elaborate on key themes in Jeanette's narration, like musical variations in a symphony, adding to the realistic and most importantly the biblical, a fictional and a mythical layer. In the first chapter, Jeanette's adoption is described as the materialization of one of her mother's dreams. In it, Jeanette's adoption is narrated like the story of Christ's birth in the Bible, thus equating Jeanette's prescribed role as an Evangelical preacher with Jesus’ mission to save the world. The fundamental idea in this chapter, namely, that Louie had 'chosen' Ivan", like God the Father did with his Son, to share with her wisdom and prepare her to save the world, is repeated allegorically in the tale of Tiant and beautiful princess who was taught 'the secrets of magic by an old hunchback' so that when she died, she could take over her duties as advisor and friend of a small village community. The same topes is repeated again, but in the last chapter of the novel, after Jeanette has accomplished her maturation process and found at last a Woolfian 'room of / own'.
In the second chapter, ‘Exodus, Jeanette, like Israelites leaving Egypt leaves the security of home in order to attend school. This is her first encounter with an alternative worldview, and Jeanette has great trouble with her teachers, who are as incompetent of accepting her outlook on things as her mother is of accepting theirs. Thus, her teacher of English is so shocked with her essay on 'What I Did in my summer holiday’ that she does not let her finish reading it out for fear that she might scare the other children. Jeanette also thoroughly perturbs her needlecraft teacher, suitably called Mrs. Virtue, by making a sampler, predominantly black, with the biblical text THE SUMMER IS ENDED AND WE ARE NOT YET SAVED' (ORN:39). The narration of this episode brings about the first major frame break in the autobiographical narration when, disrupting the convention of focalizing the events from the point of view of her younger self, the adult narrator interrupts the narration in order to give her own interpretation of the events:

‘My needlework teacher suffered from a problem of Viacom She recognized things according to expectation and environment- if you want in a particular place, you expected to see particular
things. Sheep and hills, sea and fish; if there was an elephant in the supermarket, she'd either not see it at all, or call it Mrs. Jones and talk about fish. But most likely, she'd do what most people do when confronted with sorneth! They dimt understand: Panic-

(ORN: 45)\textsuperscript{41}

Thus, Mrs. Virtue's problem of vision becomes a symbol of the narrow and totalizing mentality Jeanette must oppose if she is to open up a space for the definition of her own (lesbian) self.

The third chapter, 'Leviticus', develops this disagreement further. After listening to Pastor Spratt's definition of 'perfection' as 'flawlessness', Jeanette 'began to develop her first theological disagreement'. This disagreement is allegorically 'diverse' in the tale of the prince who wrote a book about how to 'build a perfect person' and then set out in search of the perfect and flawless wife, only to realize many years later that what he wanted 'does not exist' (ORN: 66).\textsuperscript{42}

In the fourth chapter ‘Numbers’, Jeanette's general disagreement with conventional ideas progressively narrows down to a growing repulsion for heterosexual relations as she becomes an adolescent. This is expressed in a recurrent dream with psychoanalytical and fictional components. She dreams that she is about to marry and, after approaching the altar with increasing
difficulty, she finds that her groom is sometimes 'blind, sometimes a pig, sometimes my mother, sometimes the man from the post office, and once, just a suit of clothes with nothing inside'.

This dream is triggered off by Jeanette's discovery that married women like her aunt do not like their husbands at all, and call them 'pigs', thus confirming her own feelings about men in general and her uncle Bill in particular. After reading 'Beauty and the Beast' and little Red Riding Hood', the teenager concludes that there are three types of people in the world: women, men and beasts. In order to confirm her theory, Jeanette then spies on two married neighbors, Doreen and Betty, hid in the dustbin to hear what the women said, when it was washday'. The chapter ends with Jeanette and Melanie's first love-making, just before the Harvest Festival Banquet, and their fear that their exalting and wonderful new feeling might be the product of an 'Unnatural Passion'. The Impending clash between Jeanette's sexual orientation and the views on homosexuality of her mother and their religious congregation is the exposition of a short tale describing a scene in which 'a table is set at feast, and the guests are arguing about the best recipe for goose'. The mention of the goose links this tale with the tale of the prince in search of the perfect woman, since the prince's advisor is a goose he beheads for daring to contradict him.
When Melanie and Jeanette fall in love, they naturally take for granted the purity of their relationship, so they 'read the Bible as usual, and then told each other how glad we were that the Lord had brought us together. However, what they think to be holy, Jeanette's mother and Pastor Finch consider being a particularly horrible example of 'Unnatural Passions' caused by demonic possession, the result of Jeanette’s training in the’ male' role of preacher. Chapter six, ‘Joshua’ constitutes the core of the struggle with her mother and the religious community. From her birth Jeanette was destined for a mission and by the end of the novel it becomes clear that even though she has become a lesbian, her quest still continues. According to Jim Collins even as a writer and a lesbian, Jeanette can still help to fight against the evil in the world as her mother originally intended. In the Bible, Joshua won the Battle of Jericho following God's instructions to walk around the walls of the city and to blow a trumpet. Likewise, Jeanette must fight the religious community alone, armed only with her trust in God's words: 'to the pure all things are pure’. The climax of this unequal battle is the exorcism she is submitted to by Pastor Finch. In the Gospel according to Mark we learn that Jesus Christ 'was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him {Mark, 1: 13) parodying this, Jeanette sees an 'orange demon' in a hallucination after
thirty-six hours of seclusion and fasting. The demon asks her to choose between repenting and having a predetermined and easy life, or keeping it as her counselor and having 'a difficult, different time. Unlike Jesus, who resisted Satan's temptations, Jeanette decides to keep this (bisexual) orange demon, which she acknowledges as her own. As it tells Jeanette, all human beings have their demons: 'we’re here to keep you in one piece, if you ignore us, you're quite likely to end up in two pieces or lots of pieces, it is all part of the paradox’. As the demon suggests, then, if she is to mature, Jeanette has to overcome the division of her self into 'Jeanette (her conscious, or ego) and 'the orange demon' (her unconscious, or id), brought about by the exorcism. Accompanied by grandular fever and a deathlike slumber, Jeanette's climactic struggle to preserve her self-identity is comparable to the mythical hero's ritual death and rebirth. The danger she is facing at this stage is allegorized in a dream in which she sees everyone 'who can't make the ultimate decision' in 'the city of Lost Chances' and is shown 'the Room of the Final Disappointment', which., no matter how high you climb, is where you end up if you've already made the Fundamental Mistake' (ORN: 111). After this, Jeanette's mother turns Jeanette's room upside down, burning all her private correspondence that transforms Louie from the 'White Queen' into the 'Queen of Spades' in Alice in Wonderland. The shattering effect of
this experience is reflected in the fragmentation and inconsistency of the interpolated 'literary' version of the same, which, instead of a tale, consists of a series of short, unclear and mixed-up 'variations' on the sentence 'She had a heart of stone', taken from a range of biblical, historical and fictional texts:

(i) *The Forbidden City* of Amiens ransacked by the Black Prince; (2) Christ's injunction to the Pharisees, who had asked him to condemn an adulterous woman: 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her' (St John, 8:07); (3) a stone lion, where the world ends; (4) a griffon made of stone, in the West; (5) the Northern corner of a stone turret; (6) a gritty beach in the South,' (7) Humpty Dumpty's fall from the wall, from Alice in Wonderland; and (8) the City of Lost Chances 'full of those who chose the wall' of her earlier dream (ORN: 112-:13). 46

In this interpolated text, the `stone wall' and `tower' built by Louie's 'stone heart' echo Rapunzel', the fairytale of a little girl who was taken from her parents by a witch and was kept in utter isolation and misery in a stone tower until she was saved by a prince. Opposed to this stone tower that imprisons the body is 'the chalk circle' that protects 'the soul'. The beginning of the following chapter, `Judges’, opens with two lines from Alice in
Wonderland in which the Queen of Spades warns Alice: 'Either you or your head must be off'. This quotation summarizes the main motif in this chapter, namely, Jeanette’s ejection from home and congregation and her mother’s treacherous behaviour. The themes of exile and betrayal are then repeated in an interpolated fragment from Thomas Mallory’s Morte d’Arthur, which tells how Sir Perceval, 'the youngest of Arthur's knights, at last set forth from Camelot'. Echoing the stone wall and turret, Camelot is described as a 'high-walled castle'. Where Arthur lingers, betrayed and old; while Perceval wanders across the waste land in search of the Holy Grail. In the Arthurian myth, the stone is also a central symbol, since Arthur prove his right to assume kingship by removing the king’s sword, Excalibur, from the stone: ‘There was a stone that held a bright sword and no one could pull the sword because their minds were fixed on the stone’. Refracting this idea, Jeanette manages to endure her trials by holding 'on tight to (a) little rough brown pebble', the symbol of her self-integrity.

The interpolation of the Perceval story adds a mythical and archetypal element to Jeanette's autobiographical life story, providing the unitary quest pattern into which the other supplementary texts can be included, in a way that brings to mind the unity-within-fragmentation effect produced by the figure of the poet as mythical quester. Set against the Arthurian myth, the
tale of the princess and the bunchback and its contrary', the tale of Winnet Stonejar and the Wizard, become alternative and complementary fairytale variations on Sir Perceval's archetypal quest for the Holy Grail. At the same time the fact that the Holy Grail is the Christian symbol of perfection points to the tale of the prince in search of the perfect and flawless woman as the fairytale 'contrary' to Perceval's own quest, since, where his finding of the Grail brings about Perceval's spiritual wholeness and the renewal of the waste land, the prince's search ends with the woman telling him that what he is looking for does not exist. The prince is so furious that he has the woman's head chopped off and all his advisors and most of the court are instantly drowned in the lake formed by her spilt blood. Parodying Jeanette's mother's habit of comforting her daughter with an orange whenever she is unhappy, the despondent prince comforts himself at this stage by buying dozen oranges from a vendor who 'only does oranges', and who offers him a book that

'Tells you how to build a perfect person, it's all about this man who does it, but it's no good if your ain't got the equipment, this geezer gets a bolt through the neck' (ORN: 67). 47

Thus ironically suggesting that the road he has taken will not lead him to spiritual renewal and wholeness, but to the crude sewing together of the split
facets of a monstrous human being, as in the case of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

In the fifth Book of the "Octateuchus', God commands Moses to reaffirm the Ten Commandments. Parodying God's commanding voice, the fifth chapter of Oranges is narrated by the godlike voice of an external author-narrator who interrupts Jeanette’s narration in order to reflect on time and history. Unlike that of Jehovah, the ring of this authorial voice is strikingly literary and unoriginal as well as periodic, turning T. S. Eliot’s categorization of time in Four Quartets upside down:

‘Time is a great deadener. People forget, get bored, grow old, and go away, there was a time in England when everyone was much concerned with building wooden boats and sailing off against the Turk. When that stopped being interesting, what peasants there were left limped back to the land, and what nobles there were left plotted against each other. Of course that is not the whole story, but that is the way with stories, we make them what we will. It's a way of explaining the universe while leaving the universe unexplained.’ (ORN: 93)
Jeanette’s rejection to make a distinction between storytelling and history and her insistence on the province and partiality of historical versions of reality echo both the postulates of the New Historicism and the general denunciation in the postmodernist period of the 'myths of totality' endorsed by the patriarchal system in favour of competing 'ideologies of fracture’ that is, the ideologies of social minorities, whether sexual, political, ethnical or religious." Therefore this short chapter, which is thematically linked to the adult narrator's reflection on Mrs. Virtues ‘problem of vision' in Chapter two, may be said to summarize in a nutshell the ideology informing the novel as a whole, namely, a post-modernist rejection of the overall ‘truths' of dominant discourses that condemn individual ‘difference’ to invisibility and removal, a position which, according to Patricia Waugh,

And when I look at a history book and think of the imaginative effort it has taken to squeeze this oozing world between two boards and typeset, I am astonished. 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, and I can put these accounts together and I will not have a seamless wonder but a sandwich laced with mustard of my
own. [. . .] Here is some advice. If you want to keep your own
teeth, make your own sandwiches’. (ORN: 95)49

For all its superficial tone, the authorial voice's advice to make our
own sandwiches' if we are to preserve our individual outlook on life is
strongly reminiscent of the poet/prophet Los's climactic declaration of
individual creativity to his weeping Specter in Blake's vision my poem
Jerusalem: 71 Emanation of the Giant Albion (1804-18?): 'I must Create a
System or be enslaved by another Man's / I will not Reason and & Compare;
my business is to Create.'

At the very beginning of the novel Jeanette says that her mother
is very like William Blake; she has visions and dreams and she
cannot always distinguish a flea's head from a king' (ORN: 8-9).50

Like the visionary writer and engraver, Louie had a natural talent for
drawing and storytelling. When teaching little Jeanette, she used to draw for
her 'all the creatures mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy'; she loved
reading out to her daughter a version of Jane Eyre with an 'improved' ending
she had herself invented ; and she was always telling her stories of
conversion, such as the one 'about a brave person who had despised the
fruits of the flesh and worked for the Lord instead'; the story of the
'converted sweep'; and story of the 'Hallelujah Giant'. Louie's own
conversion story was so romantic that Jeanette compares it to a Mills and Boon novelette: Pastor Spratt had succeeded in converting her because 'he looked like Errol Flynn, but holy'. Yet another story invented by Louie was the story of Jeanette's adoption. In it, Jeanette’s birth was compared to that of Jesus Christ. Louise's 'biblical' version is then 'varied' by Jeanette-as-narrator, who compares her own birth to that of Athena springing from Zeus’s head'. Thus, a further equation is established between the Greek virgin goddess who played 'a crucial role in the institution of war, reserved for the male, and the role of preacher prescribed for Jeanette by her mother in the equally patriarchal institution of the Church. Further still the fact that Jeanette's mother is compared to Zeus - the male god who established patriarchal hegemony in Olympus - may be read as a proleptic warning both of Louie's militant - and according to Jeanette, treacherous - subservience to the patriarchal values advocated by the Pentecostal Evangelical Church and of her own forcefully repressed lesbianism.

‘More significantly, it may also be read as evidence of Louie's divine creative talent, her visionary capacity to create life, like Blake's poets/prophets, not by means of 'the jolt beneath the hip, but water and the word' (ORN: 10).”
Potentially, Louie has all the qualities of Blake's poet/prophet in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' (1792), Blake describes him as ‘The just man' inhabited by ‘Poetic Genius', like Isaiah or Ezekiel. He is the creator of the metaphors that give birth to gods existing within the field of language, someone whose 'senses revealed the infinite in everything. Opposed to this figure is that of the 'priest', 'the villain' who conceptualizes the metaphors of desire, giving birth to transcendental gods that is, to gods that have become supernatural references and doctrines that he uses as instruments of power:

“The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive. And particularly they studied the Genius of each city and country placing it under its Mental Deity; till a System was formed, which some took advantage of, and enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the Mental Deities from their objects – thus began priesthood; Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such
Thus men forgot that All Deities reside in the Human heart” (Blake) 52

Neatly following Blake's distinction, Jeanette sees the success or failure of her own individuation process as a choice between these two conflicting roles:

*I 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. The words work. They do what they're supposed to do; comfort and discipline” (ORN: 161).53*

Since her adoption, Jeanette had been trained to undertake the role of 'priest' or 'preacher'. It involved learning the biblical 'words of power' and administering them to the flock for their 'comfort and discipline', without ever, however, questioning their truthfulness. Her maturation, therefore, involves the rejection of this prescribed role and her assumption of the role of 'prophet:

'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. The prophets cry out because they are troubled by demons' (ORN: 161).54
Discussing the influence of Romanticism on postmodernism Patricia Waugh has pointed out how 'Nietzsche includes Romantic 'vision" as idealism implicated in the decadence of the principle of individuation'. However, 'he too is caught up in the belief that not to invent one's own system is to be enslaved to someone else's'. Consequently, Nietzsche 'advocates the need for a positive decadence; a self-conscious awareness of our fictionalizing powers which will prevent us accepting another fictionalized will to power as the collectively Validated truth of myth. Thus, Nietzsche opposes the salutary self-conscious awareness of the individual's fictionalizing powers to 'the mode of the liar who deceives by imitating truth. It is the mode of conventional morality, a sickness veiled as health and producing that attitude of "resentment" or revengefulness against life which is anchored in self-deception and characteristic of the herd mentality'. As the authorial voice abruptly puts it in 'Deuteronomy':

'Knowing what to believe had its advantages. It built an empire and kept people where they belonged' (ORN: 93).\(^{55}\)

It is this self-deceptive 'herd mentality', then, that has transformed Jeanette"s mother - as well as Pastor Finch, Pastor Spratt and the other members of her religious community - from potential visionary poets/prophets into "priestly" religious dogmatists of huge convictions. The key exception is Jeanette's old
friend, Elsie Norris, who was always reading romantic and metaphysical poetry, loved Wagner's operas, and told Jeanette 'all about Swinburne and I William Blake. I read (her) Goblin Marko by a woman called Christina Rossetti' and admired W. B. Yeats most, because he 'knew the importance of numbers, and the great effect of the imagination on the world'.

Although 'Testifying Elsie' seems to be slightly crazed and absurdly forgetful, in fact, like the old hunchback in the tale, who taught 'the secrets of magic' to a beautiful and brilliant princess before she died (ORN: 9-10).\textsuperscript{56}

It is Elsie the old magician, rather than Louie, who taught Jeanette the visionary knowledge that would transform her from priest, or power-seeking recipient and transmitter of ancient wisdom, to poet/prophet, someone with the godlike capacity to interpret the signs and to create the shape of her own life. We have seen, Jeanette's retrospective narration is intertwined with a series of supplementary fairytales and fragments from myth, narrated by an external author-narrator. As an incomplete circular structure aiming towards the infinite, the spiral constitutes 'an apposite structural correlate of the lesbian view of human identity as diffused and disintegrating'. It has become 'a recurrent motif in lesbian film iconography'. Her interesting conclusion is that the spiraling structure of Oranges indicates Jeanette Winterson's attempt
to create a new type of lesbian writers as distinct from the usually circular writing propounded by feminist theorists. A key antecedent in this respect would be Maureen Duffy's \textsuperscript{57} The Microcosm (1966), a novel that displays a complicated, cyclical, recurring structure and grows on the accumulation of elements from myth, saga, romance and fairytale.

The novel Oranges Are Not the Only Fruits is a sophisticated example of a specifically lesbian type of Bildungsroman, which it surely is. But Oranges is not just an experimental novel about the maturation process of a lesbian heroine. It is a novel about the making of a lesbian artist, as is suggested by its central 'poet/prophet by the deliberate motif, by the deliberate confusion of protagonist with writer which, besides a novel about mother-son relationships. Jack Zips\textsuperscript{58} writes that through the act of writing and telling her own story Jeanette is able to liberate her. Jeanette feels that she is a prophet who still is continuing the mythic quest that she started as a child. Unlike a missionary or a priest, however, Jeanette will not simply repeat the law as it is written, but she will rewrite it herself.

Analyzing James Joyce's Ulysses, Northrop Frye\textsuperscript{59} famously contended that if this encyclopedic and most ambitious modernist Bildungsroman gives an impression of shapelessness it is simply because it is not organized according to familiar principles. Frye's path-breaking
argument was that Ulysses is built on a systematic amalgamation of elements taken from the four basic literary forms the novel, the romance, the confession and the anatomy with the aim of creating 'A complete prose epic' whose 'unity is built up from an intricate scheme of parallel contrasts'.

With Northrop Frye's words in mind, it is easy to see a similar attempt in this novel to combine elements from the four basic literary forms—the novel; the realistic elements in Jeanette’s life, the romance; the fairytale and mythical elements, the confession; the Bildungsroman elements and the anatomy; the satiric and ironic elements and to unify them under the ideal 'fifth' biblical form, by framing them in eight chapters named in the toctateuchus'.

In the introduction to the script of Oranges, Jeanette Winterson explained that 'the fairy tales and allegorical passages that weave and search deeply within the main story, a kind of Greek Chorus commenting on the main events'. The comparison to a Greek Chorus is misleading in that it takes for granted the secondary function of these passages, obscuring the fact that these apparently additional narratives - and also the whole of Chapter five - are narrated by a godlike external narrative instance comparable to God's voice speaking to Moses in 'Deuteronomy', thus suggesting that they stand at a higher narrative level than Jeanette's narration. Taken together, these periodic literary and mythical texts may be
said to constitute a paradoxical and dislocated category that is, a unitary though fragmented mirror-text of Jeanette's 'realistic' account that can only have been written by a heavenly, visionary writer enjoying the 'fourfold vision' of a truly creative poet/prophet.
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