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Embracing the Forbidden Fruits: Understanding Coming-of-Age Trauma Through Affection in Jeanette Winterson's Life Writings

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I declare that this is a totally original piece of work; all secondary sources have been correctly cited. I also understand that plagiarism is an unacceptable practise which will lead to the automatic failing of this assignment.

Abstract

The novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) and the memoir *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011) by Jeanette Winterson have been researched as complementary works. The unapologetic approach to sapphic identity in *Oranges* impacted the British public, especially after the release of its TV adaptation in 1990 by the BBC. Because novel and series featured fiction and some of Winterson's life experiences, the public grew more curious about what elements were real and which were invention. More than twenty-five years later, Winterson's memoir still left unsolved many of the mysteries surrounding her autofiction and her life.

The formal structure of the memoir, along with some controversial declarations of the author regarding autobiography, present *Why Be Happy?* as unconventional life writing. Indeed, its fragmentary narration and the paradoxical statements in relation to the process of understanding trauma appear to characterise the narrator of the memoir as an unreliable one, yet another construction. In this dissertation I defend that both novel and memoir narrate different stages in the progressive understanding of trauma of rejection by her mothers, as well as conveying a strong political message vindicating a happy queer life beyond normativity and normality with the help of communities, those are, interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Jeanette Winterson, Fiction, Memoir, Coming-of-Age Trauma, Interpersonal Communities, Mother-Daughter Bond, Otherness

Contents

0. Introduction

Jeanette Winterson (b. 1959) is an acclaimed English author whose oeuvre revolves around the ideas of love, affection, and identity. Although she was born in Manchester, Jeanette was raised in the town of Accrington by Constance and John William Winterson, her adoptive parents. There, she lived a troubled childhood in which physical and psychological abuse by both parents was usual, an experience that Winterson reflects in both her debut novel, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985), and her later memoir, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011). In this memoir, Winterson describes many traumatic episodes; for instance, she was locked out of the house as a child for whole nights (4), her mother burnt down all her collection of books (41) and even sold her piano the moment she showed any interest in it (79). However, young Jeanette found in literature a safe space, one of the many communities that I believe are present in her memoir. For her, literature serves as an emotional shelter, but also as a political weapon:

> Writers have a political duty in the world. We don't live in a bubble or in an ivory tower. We're not separate from the world. Now the world is a dangerous place. I think that if you have any platform whatsoever you must and stand up and say: This is what I believe in. These are my values and this is what I hate, what I will fight against. […] Wherever we are, in our public or private lives, we can make decisions every day which will allow change to happen in the world […] Everything we do is political. That's where I start from. (in Cebrián online)

Therefore, Winterson's literary production needs to be considered a political statement. As the first step towards this healing path and political loudspeaker that literature offered, Winterson published at the age of twenty-five her debut novel, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985), which, together with the already mentioned memoir, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, is the focus of this dissertation.

Winterson's first novel may be labelled as an autofiction, a literary genre that combines part of the author's real life with fictional events; usually, autofictional works feature their authors as their narrator-protagonists. Due to the mixture of reality and fiction, story and history

become a homogeneous mixture for the reader. Just like the author, Jeanette is an adopted child who lives with her emotionally unavailable and abusive parents, the Wintersons, active members of the local Pentecostal church. At first, Jeanette is the ideal believer and wants to become a missionary, following Mrs Winterson's desires; nonetheless, as she turns into a teenager, she discovers her attraction to women and these plans crumble down together with the mother-daughter bond. Although certain aspects might belong to her life experiences, these are accompanied by fictional characters and allegorical fairy tales. At its publication, when Thatcherism (1970-1991) was rampant, being homosexual was not a mere sexual preference. Anna Marie Smith identifies homophobia as one of the bases of the Thatcherite discourse, noting that homosexuality was used as a binary opposite to the traditional ideas of the family, and it was also linked to AIDS. Rather than portraying homosexuality as a mere social element, it was understood "as a threat to the very existence of other social elements" (197); the homophobic discourse was rationalised and justified under the defence of British values (189). Being a lesbian at the time meant being an enemy of the Pentecostal church Winterson belonged to, but also a foe of the supporters of this bigoted political discourse. Hence, publishing *Oranges* could be considered a rebellious and brave act, which took much courage.

Especially after the premiere of the eponymous BBC TV series in 1990[1], scripted by Winterson herself, her story became well-known all over Britain. The many autobiographical elements that both the series and the novel contain caused the audience to wonder where the line was drawn between reality and fiction. This caused an undesired effect for Winterson: suddenly, she was being asked about her personal life, not her literary work. Public persona

[1] IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098032/?ref_=ttawd_ov
Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is starred by Geraldine McEwan (Mother), Charlotte Coleman (Jessica), Margery Withers (Elsie), Kenneth Cranham (Pastor Finch), and Cathryn Bradshaw (Melanie).
The production was widely praised. It was awarded by Royal Television Society with the prizes for Best Drama Serial and Charlotte Coleman received the award for Best Actor. Furthermore, the series won the 1991 BAFTA Awards for Best Drama Series, Best Film Sound, and Geraldine McEwan was awarded in the category of Best Actress. International institutions such as Prix Italia, as well as the American GLAAD Media Awards for Outstanding TV Movie and the San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival for Best Feature in 1990.

and private self merged in the eyes of the audience, which is the opposite effect of what the author aimed for, as she declares in her memoir, "I rather go on reading myself as fiction than as fact" (*Why Be Happy* 154). Doloughan argues that "in the case of *Why Be Happy?* it seems that despite the explicit paratextual generic marking —'memoir' on the back cover— the question of identity between and among author, narrator, and protagonist is no less fraught" (93). Yet, Winterson seems to have accepted this identification when she sent her biological mother, Ann, "the DVD of *Oranges* as a kind of 'This is what happened while you were out'" (*Why Be Happy* 213). Thus, Winterson's first novel[2] could be understood as a portrayal of a real traumatic experience through the lens of fiction. Indeed, Winterson acknowledges that her work intends "to show how it is when the mind works with its own brokenness" (*Why Be Happy?* 169).

That is especially the case of *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* (2011), which could be labelled as an appendix for the original story of *Oranges* and a deep dive into the author's psyche. The memoir shares part of its content with the autofictional novel (see the Appendix at the end of this dissertation), also encompassing Winterson's traumatic childhood and adolescence in the company of her adoptive parents. Besides, Winterson elicits the readers' curiosity, referencing episodes present in *Oranges* and what events took place in her life. Still, Winterson describes other aspects of her life, such as the evolution of her political views, the importance of literature, and the reunion with her biological mother left out of the novel.

This meeting with her mother was possible thanks to the Adoption Act of 1975, and I would like to stress here the importance of policies and legislation and their contribution to the psychological wellbeing of the population. As O'Halloran explains in *The Politics of Adoption*, this act allowed "to access conditions that maintained an adopted child's continued relationship

[2] She is also known for her novels *The Passion* (1989), *Written on the Body* (1992), *Gut Symmetries* (1997), *Lighthousekeeping* (2004), *The Stone Gods* (2007) or *Frankisstein: A Love Story* (2019).

with members of their family of origin," as well as granting the "adopted person's right to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate" (20). Indeed, Winterson herself acknowledges in her memoir that this legal modification[3] allowed her to start her journey towards healing but, still, "everything has to be done visibly and formally [and that] seemed fraught to [her]" (*Why Be Happy?* 182). Hence, I claim that the distinct historical contexts in which these two literary works were written and published condition Winterson's understanding of the traumatic events, as they condition the possibility of healing or exacerbating the psychological wound. Although both *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?* were written after the Adoption Act of 1975, the previous legislation would not have supported Winterson's wish to meet her family during her upbringing. Thus, legislation is critical to comprehend the limitations that she had to face during her childhood, which were later overcome, as it is narrated in *Why Be Happy?*

Because Jeanette Winterson's literary production has been well received by readers and critics, it has been thoroughly studied by a considerable number of scholars[4], some of whom have considered Winterson's life writings through the lens of Trauma Studies. These scholars have analysed *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?* as adoption or religious trauma stories, usually separately. In the case of *Oranges*, it has been argued that it rejects the abjection of lesbians, a process which is depicted through the mother-daughter relationship. Rusk notes that

> *Oranges* as a work […] refuses otherness, or marginalization […] [due to] the fact that Winterson doesn't use the word *lesbian* in it. […] Strategically, a writer who eschews the emptiness of labels has good reason not to invoke one that tends to rivet people's attention on

[3] The Adoption Act of 1926 introduced for the first time the matter of adoption in British law. While it did not guarantee the inheritance of goods and reserved to parental consent the possibility of maintaining contact with their original family, it granted full parental responsibilities to the adopters, as well as it was necessary that birth parents provided informed consent for this decision. Overall, it was a process marked by its judicial inspection and authority. It was not until 1939 that the law required adoption agencies to be registered. Furthermore, it established that parents who wanted to put their children up for adoption were informed of their legal position. In the case of adopters, the administration had to ensure that they could sustain the children they intended to adopt through an interview carried out by a case committee and the elaboration of reports. It was not until the Adoption Act of 1949 that adoptees were granted their inheritance rights (O'Halloran 17-19). It was in this legal scenario that John and Constance Winterson adopted Jeanette.

[4] Sonya Andermahr, Margot G. Backus, Alexander Beaumont, Tyler Bradway, Mónica Calvo, Keryn Carter, Fiona Doloughan, Niloufar Khosravi, Merja Makinen, Emily McAvan, Susana Onega, Eileen Pollard, Mara Reisman, Daniela Šmardová, Maria Antonietta Struzziero, Laurie Vickroy, Emilie Walezak, David Wallace, Jonathan Alexander, Shareena Z. Hamzah-Osbourne, Małgorzata Wronka, among others.

> sex to the exclusion of all other complexity. […] Winterson embraces this gamble (writing in a less censorious era than Woolf or Baldwin), but avoids the hotbutton word that narrows many readers' attention before they have a chance to experience the fullness of the text. (112)

Therefore, even though the protagonist's queer sexuality is critical in the plot of the story, this is not mentioned for the sake of strengthening the complexity of the conflict. To this reflection, I add that Winterson does not want the readers to focus on her main character or her supposed faults, but rather on the atrocious treatment she receives from her mother and her religious community. Also, it is important to point out, as Makinen does, that Winterson's protagonists feel an "unequivocal acceptance of their sexuality" (7). The endorsement of queerness confers on the narrative a powerful tolerance message and vindication of sexual liberation.

The demonisation of lesbianism, then, always comes from an outer influence. That is, the homophobic views instilled by the Pentecostal Church, whose ideas are voiced through Mrs Winterson. Indeed, Carter identifies the process of abjection in relation to the mother: "The mother-daughter relationship depicted in *Oranges* […] may be read as dramatizing the process of abjection – the daughter's development as a subject relies on a process of separating herself from a dominating, even monstruous, mother who threatens to engulf her selfhood" (17). According to Onega, "Jeanette's individuation process was presented as an Oedipal struggle involving the heroine's separation from her monstruous mother" (44). Therefore, the mother does not embody a protective role in the relationship, but rather a negligent one. Because she cannot control and nullify her daughter's identity, she encapsulates it within the frames of monstrosity.

In order to overcome these identity constraints, Winterson chose to employ literature. Wronka emphasises writing as a process that helped the author to construct her identity aside from her mother's and her sect's values: "Winterson cuts herself off from the self and socially imposed norms and allows for the release from the emotional subjugation and constant tension

concerning her incompatibility […] as an adopted child and […] as a homosexual person in a homogeneous society" (201). Paradoxically, *Oranges* has also been considered a text that destroys binary oppositions and praises religion as an art form. Even more, McAvan identifies Winterson

> as a religious—if a/theological—writer in the following ways: first a deconstruction of binaries that scrambles the line between sacred and profane; second, she understands religion to be art and art to be a form of religion; third, a mystic attention to language; fourth, a sacramental interest in the material; fifth, an imagination of God without sovereignty or theodicy. (163)

Accordingly, Winterson proposes the binary opposition between the laws of men and the laws of God, which are being ignored by His believers. Makinen indicates that these binary oppositions "can be seen as political and potentially radical because she reverses which is natural and which is unnatural" (10). In other words, binary oppositions serve as a means to contest the set values that Mrs Winterson and the Pentecostal church instilled in Jeanette, while offering her own rereading of these morals. Similarly, the narration of *Why Be Happy?* focuses on the mother-daughter relationship and the process of individualisation of identity, while still acknowledging the contribution that her two mothers made to construct her notion of self; Winterson "thus appears to have depicted both her mothers as the people have shaped her existence. In fact, she has decided to continue living her life by looking back at these two women while simultaneously stepping forward and going beyond them" (Khosravi Balalami 179).

The comparative study of both autobiographical texts is scarce, but considered by scholars like Doloughan, Struzziero, Wronka, or Andermahr, who have reached the general conclusion that the memoir is a supplementary text written to expand on the debut novel, though the memoir has also been considered as an independent text that discusses the creation of identity and trauma from a psychoanalytical perspective. As Doloughan argues,

> *Why Be Happy?* is indeed a companion piece to *Oranges*, not simply its silent twin and painful fulfilment but a kind of residual Wintersonian myths with a view, perhaps, of making peace with the past and affording a permissive view of a future [that] […] includes self-love as well as love of and for others. (99)

The memoir does not seem to be a mere duplicate, maybe more credible, of *Oranges*. Instead, it is an independent text that offers another view of the conflict of affectivity towards the mother and others. Rage and sadness do not seem to be the dominant emotions present in the narrative but love and forgiveness. As Struzziero suggests,

> *Oranges* reveals the young protagonist's most intimate life; yet on the other, it is opaque about this crucial event and declines the memoirist's confidence that the past can be revealed […] *Why Be Happy*, instead, registers Winterson's desire to achieve an in-depth retrospective understanding of the event that hurt her psyche, and that returns even after a lapse of time of twenty-five years. She needs to transform the meaningless strings of childhood recollections into significant memories, by which the autobiographical self can be firmly secured inside a cohesive narrative, and to define herself in relation to the traumatic episode. (21)

Winterson endows the memoir with the possibility of creating a new identity, which "can be analysed in the light of psychoanalytical theories, which facilitate understanding of identity creation" (Wronka 199). So much so that Winterson describes her journey towards the healing of trauma in the stages prior to language; that, is, her trauma of rejection occurred before she could even employ language, and its starting healing point had to depart from there as well. Winterson herself describes that, at the moment in which she was handed her adoption papers, language had abandoned her: "The lost loss I experience as physical pain is pre-language. That loss happened before I could speak, and I return to that place, speechless" (191). Andermahr remarks that this "episode points to the dual meaning of trauma in Freudian theory, which can signify either a new wound or the opening up of an old one" (198).

Certainly, psychoanalytic criticism seems to have paved Winterson's way of understanding her psychological journey. For this reason, I consider Cvetkovich's queer critical approach to Trauma Studies to study Winterson's life writings, especially, the term 'insidious trauma'. By insidious trauma, Cvetkovich refers to the everyday manifestation of the

psychological wound as a social and cultural discourse even when the traumatic input is no longer present or catastrophic. Cvetkovich defines trauma as a "collective experience that generates collective responses […] [that] digs itself in at the level of the everyday, […] [this understanding of trauma can] forge new models for how affective life can serve as the foundation for public culture" (18–19). In other words, insidious trauma is the damage to the psyche that occurs during daily life, the events that condition the way in which we interact and bond with each other and that can be collective. Thus, these events can be part of our cultural representations. In order to heal this damage, Caruth proposes the exercise of comprehending trauma by placing it into our understanding rather than viewing it as a linear history:

> I would propose that […] we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential (that is, no longer based on simple models of experience and reference). Through the notion of trauma […] we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not. (11)

I suggest that both texts carry out this attempt to understand trauma aside from its linearity; it is for that reason that their correspondence with autobiography is no more significant than their fictional elements, because they seek to comprehend traumatic experiences, even if they occurred in a moment in which memory was not operating as it does now. Therefore, Caruth's concept of 'latency' is relevant as well. She argues that "[t]he experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (17). Trauma, then, despite not being remembered or fully understood, remains present throughout life and may condition the individual's experience. Since Winterson's autobiographical writings do not intend to be a faithful reproduction of the events she went through, her texts do not follow a chronological order but, instead, focus on the significance that those memories had in her healing process. For this reason, I think the term 'life writing' is the most appropriate when dealing with Winterson's texts about her life. As Sarkowsky notes,

> "traditional autobiography […] [requires] a subject in control of his (sic) […] life narrative; life narrative as coherent, temporally linear, and inevitably anthropocentric"; indeed, the opposing use of "life writing by minoritized subject as relational forms of self-narration […] served as poignant examples of refusing models of a male, Western, white and heteronormative subjectivity of selfhood" (in Batzke et al. 24)

Paradoxically, when trauma is revisited in the memoir, Winterson alludes to events and conversations in direct speech as if she were trying to grasp them as literally as possible the event, retrieving them from an archive. Cvetkovich describes this phenomenon in Derrida's words and labels this as the 'Archive Fever'; these archives "are composed of material practices that challenge traditional conceptions of history and understand the quest for history as a psychic need rather than a science" (268). Winterson's memoir, as many other autobiographical texts by other sapphic[5] authors, may respond to this need to individually express one's experience and, at the same time, to find evidence of the existence of realities similar to theirs to vindicate their identities. As Sedgwick contends, "needed progress cannot be mobilized from within any closet; it requires many people's risky and affirming acts of the most explicit self-identification as members of the minority affected" (44). Therefore, this process not only encompasses the connection between the author and readers, but also the recognition of a shared trauma among queer individuals.

Due to the importance of the collective and the individual in the psychic process of healing, the thesis statement of this dissertation is that given the different contexts of both life writings, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985) and *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011) depict an evolution in the public and private conception of sapphic identity from depravity to acceptance through the understanding of trauma. This is reflected in the importance of public and private communities and Winterson's personal healing process involving the mother-daughter bond and, consequently, in other affective relationships.

[5] 'Sapphic' is an umbrella term that refers to those women who are attracted to other women. This label includes lesbian and bisexual women.

Furthermore, because the narrative imitates the fragmentary and unreliable thoughts of an injured mind, the factuality of the memoir seems to be secondary. In other words, I argue that Winterson's life writings are examples of the presence of insidious trauma and sapphic empowerment at an individual and collective level. For this reason, I explore how insidious trauma is present in the narrative and which individual and collective communities play a role in the memoir, as well as how they contribute to a healthier coexistence with coming-of-age trauma. This trauma of rejection may be subdivided into three different traumatic events: adoption, child abuse, and homophobic rejection by her adoptive mother.

To dissect the presence of trauma and the role of community, I aim to divide my dissertation into two parts. First, I focus on the most intimate bond, the mother-daughter relationship that Winterson depicts in her memoir. This first section will be subdivided into two parts: the relationship with the birth mother and the bond with the adoptive mother. Secondly, I focus on other communities, namely, interpersonal relationships. These will be subdivided into two parts: the public and the private. Throughout this analysis, I intend to include how the self is present and affected by the influence of those communities, as well as by the mother-daughter bond.

1. The Mother-Daughter Bond

1.1. The Birth Mother

The first bond that all mammals establish is with their mother while they are in the womb. During this period, the baby enjoys the warmth and protection that the mother guarantees. When the baby is born, this secure relationship is strengthened or harmed. Through interaction with the mother, and with other adults, children develop their personalities and stimulate their skills. Thus, affection and attachment are indispensable during the upbringing of a baby; they condition the psychological well-being of the infant, as well as the successful development of the individual into a healthy and stable adult. Hence, in this first section of my dissertation, I intend to study the role that the birth mother plays in the development and understanding of her coming-of-age trauma, in which the traumas of adoption, child abuse, and homophobia. Therefore, I will consider the formation of trauma in infancy, the consequences of this wound in adulthood, as well as the contribution of the journey of finding Winterson's biological mother in comprehending the trauma and its aftermath in her work.

Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud noted that the absence of stable and present attachment to adults means that some infants will eventually "show defects in their character development and inadequate adaptation to society" (in Van Der Horst 35). Bowlby expanded on these ideas about attachment and coined the term "affectional bond," which refers to the "attraction that one *individual* has for another *individual*" (84, original emphasis). When that relationship with the mother is broken —because of separation, abandonment, or death— the child undergoes a process of grief characterised by fixation and repression. Bowlby noted that "unconsciously the child remains fixed on his (sic) lost mother: his (sic) urges to recover and to reproach her, and the ambivalent emotions connected with them, have undergone repression" (76). Whenever a child is deprived of the care of a mother, and her presence is not substituted by a stable caregiver, it will remain attached to the lost mother, and this will lead to a feeling

of loss that will be repressed. This maternal influence is also evidenced in the formation of the brain since the mother's presence is indispensable for the child's adequate physical development. As Schore observes, "the mother's emotionally expressive face […] in face-to-face interactions […] serves as a visual imprinting stimulus for the infant's developing nervous system" (91). Therefore, the mother is essential for the psychological and physical development of the baby and her absence may cause significant consequences on the child's psyche.

By disconnecting from reality, one can hide in the realm of the imagination; there, it is possible to idealise the lost mother. The struggle Winterson experienced due to being separated from her birth mother as a six-week-old baby and lacking a nurturing caregiving environment could not be expressed in any other way than through tears (*Why Be Happy?* 20). This cry for help and comfort was never answered with love; the only response to distress was aggression. Winterson's cries were perceived by her adoptive parents as the result of being "a Devil baby" (20). This early psychological neglect translated into violence against others, for Winterson "was often full of rage and despair" (21). During her upbringing she used to "beat up the other kids, boys and girls alike, and when [she] couldn't understand what was being said to [her] in a lesson [she] just left the classroom and bit the teacher if they tried to make [her] come back" (55). This unruly behaviour may correspond to an insecure-avoidant attachment. Insecure-avoidant children are not interested in adults who try to gain their attention; when the adults leave, they do not show anger or sadness, but it is common that they are enraged whenever they come back (Ainsworth et al. & Sroufe in Schore 376). In such an emotionally constraining environment, the child needs to escape, but that is physically impossible, and dissociation becomes the most feasible mechanism to escape from a hurtful reality. As the professor in psychology Ruth-Lyons Karlen suggests, dissociation is a defence mechanism that appears in infancy as a consequence of a diminished sense of safety during the early caregiving relationship (in Van der Kolk 121). Therefore, traumatised children become detached from their

reality, which will later affect the way they will create their bonds and perceive their reality, as well as how they will treat themselves and others.

Jeanette Winterson had a traumatic bond both with her biological mother, Ann S., and her adoptive mother, Constance Winterson. While Mrs Winterson is an active agent of trauma, the birth mother is a passive one. Even though her actions are not a direct attack on her daughter, her absence causes a deep wound and a gap in the conception of the self. As Winterson poses, "I had lost the warm safe place, however chaotic, of the first person I loved. I had lost my name and my identity. Adopted children are dislodged" (*Why Be Happy?* 23). Furthermore, when Winterson finds her adoption papers, she notices that she had been someone else before becoming "Jeanette Winterson":

> I had had a name —violently crossed out. The top of the paper had been torn too, so that I could not read the name of the doctor or the organisation, and the names at the bottom had been ripped away.
>
> I looked at the court order. That too had a name —my other name— crossed out.
>
> Typewriters and yellow paper. So old. Those things look like a hundred years ago. I am a hundred years ago. Time is a gap. (*Why Be Happy?* 159).

At this stage, Winterson's identity is a mystery to herself. Unlike most children who are raised by a 'conventional' family, she does not know who carried her in the womb or in what hospital she was born, she does not even know the name that was given to her when she was born, or who she had been before her name was "violently crossed out" by the Wintersons. Then, part of her identity —even as an adoptee— was denied from her. Her life prior to her adoption seemed to her ancient, detached from her identity, even though she has always known that she was adopted. Indeed, her identity and trauma had been denied to her, and the repressed state of her psyche was encouraged by her parents as well; their seemingly innocent aim to make her their 'true' daughter difficulted the intricate procedure of connecting back to her origins as an adopted child.

The process of tracing an adopted person's origins is both emotionally and materially demanding. As I mentioned in the introduction, British law did not grant access to adopted individuals to their birth certificates until the Adoption Act of 1976 was passed. In the first decade of the 21st century, when Jeanette Winterson started her journey in search of her identity, the law ensured adopted people "the right to information about the fact and circumstances of their adoption, the means for accessing that information and an entitlement to related counselling services" (O'Halloran 99). Nonetheless, Winterson describes this process as more crude and less open than what the regulation stipulates. This psychologically challenging process stirs old traumas, while it allows the understanding of these primordial scars. As soon as Winterson begins her journey of discovering her origins, she encounters many administrative difficulties, which trigger the externalisation of repressed traumatic experiences. When Accrington's court confirms that her adoption file has been located but she is denied access to it, she realises that her right to consult the papers is not enough. This has a regressive response: "I wet myself. […] There was nothing to hold on to. I wasn't Jeanette Winterson in her own home with books on the shelves and money in the bank; I was a baby and I was cold and wet and a judge had taken my mummy away" (*Why Be Happy?* 189). To protect itself, the mind represses the hurtful memories, but the body seems to gather and store this information and it emerges during vulnerable stages. The bureaucratic procedures catalyse the blossoming of a belated trauma in the form of psychosomatic symptomatology. According to Caruth, belated trauma refers to "the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it […] the repetitions of the traumatic event —which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight" (91–92). However, in Winterson's case, the traumatic event itself cannot be remembered because it took place in a moment prior to memory or language; "the lost loss I experience as physical pain is pre-language. That loss happened before I could speak, and I return to that place, speechless" (*Why Be Happy?* 191). The loss of the mother

occurs when Winterson is "between six weeks and six months old, [she] got picked up from Manchester to Accrington. It was all over for [her] and the woman whose baby [she] was" (19). Because this occurs during a formative developmental stage, such as early infancy, the individual's wound becomes a scar that potentially shapes the formation of personality and stability of their mental health. Indeed, as Judith Herman asserts, our understanding of "a meaningful world is formed in relation to others and begins in earliest life. Basic trust, acquired in the primary intimate relationship is the foundation of faith" (71). The tearing of that first bond and the subsequent absence of caring figures in the life of the child might cause that individual's distrust of the world and the loss of faith, as well as a disconnection from reality and surroundings.

Nonetheless, to keep ourselves alive, we need hope. Humans usually need an ideal to strive for, a source of solace in times when loneliness seeps into our existence and when we feel that we are unlovable. Paradoxically, the distrust in our material surroundings could transform into an intense hatred or love for those who inflicted pain on us. Winterson wonders why and whose decision was to abandon her: "What made them give me away? It had to be his [the biological father's] fault because I couldn't let it be hers [her biological mother's]. I had to believe that my mother loved me. That was risky. That could be a fantasy" (*Why Be Happy* 198). Judith Herman observes that "in her desperate attempts to preserve her faith in her parents, the child victim develops highly idealised images of at least one parent. […] She excuses or rationalises the failure of protection by attributing it to her own unworthiness" (106). Nonetheless, even as an adult, Winterson needs to maintain a positive image of her birth mother. I note that the two parents that Herman describes in her observations are both Winterson's *mothers*. Both inflicted great psychological damage on her; however, their agency is what may differentiate them. Whereas Mrs Winterson is the active agent of trauma, her birth mother is a passive one. Because the reasons why Jeanette Winterson was put up for adoption

were unknown to her at this moment, her biological mother offered the possibility of mending the broken maternal bond. This triggers the creation of motherly characters such as Elsie Norris in *Oranges*. 'Testifying Elsie' is a crucial character in the Church, but also in Jeanette's life, she instils hope both in the religious community and the little child. With her, Jeanette may share her cultural and personal interests, becoming an essential emotional support and caregiver. When the little girl started losing her hearing and her mother dismissed her symptoms, Jeanette was taken to the hospital by Miss Jewsbury, a member of the congregation. During her stay at the hospital, only Elsie visited her, she was the only person who explicitly expressed care and affection for the little girl:

> I might have languished alone for the rest of the week, if Elsie hadn't found out where I was, and started visiting me. […] Elsie came every day, and told me jokes to make me smile and stories to make me feel better. She said stories helped you to understand the world. […] A thrill of excitement ran through me because I knew my mother disapproved. (*Oranges* 39)

Rather than presenting the world as a menace, Ms Norris offered solace and explanations for Jeanette. Instead of fostering the dark and frightening conception of the world that Mrs Winterson instilled in her daughter, Elsie was a beacon of Christian redemption and hope. Despite their similarities, I believe that the memoir and the autofiction are significantly different texts for two reasons. While the memoir reproduces a different stage in trauma, it also offers the prospect of hope and imagination. The fictionality of the novel, in contrast, allows the wounded self to introduce fictional characters that would have granted comfort to the author. As Winterson explains in her memoir,

> I wrote her [Elsie] in because I couldn't bear to leave her out […] I really wished it had been that way. When you are a solitary child you find an imaginary friend. There was no Elsie. There was no one like Elsie. Things were much lonelier than that. (7)

This might be part of the defence mechanism of dissociation that I commented on previously. The wounded psyche tries to create a protective figure that will ensure the protection that

neither of the mothers granted to her. Nonetheless, this is not an effective method to heal or understand trauma but to cope with it during infancy and the early twenties. On the contrary, it is in adulthood that Winterson tries to heal a trauma that occurred during infancy. *Oranges* allows the reframing of trauma as a reinterpretation, while *Why Be Happy?* is a direct confrontation.

However, the consequences of this imbalanced affective pattern reach their zenith during adulthood. The lack of affection from the parents —those who are supposed to love us unconditionally— might cause hardships in loving oneself. The identity that was formed during childhood becomes a troubling matter, as Winterson narrates:

> In February 2008 I tried to end my life. […] I had been twice born already, hadn't I — my lost mother and my new mother, Mrs Winterson —that double identity, itself a kind of schizophrenia […] Whatever had erupted through the coincidence/synchronicity of finding those adoption papers […] It was a chance as near to killing me as to saving me and I believe it was an even bet which way it went. It was the loss of everything through the fierce and unseen return of the lost loss. The door into the dark room had swung open. (*Why Be Happy?* 168–169)

Although Winterson has always known that she was adopted, the discovery of these adoption papers in 2007 reopens the adoption wound and contests the identity she has constructed. These records remind Jeanette that she does not know who she is, the documents entail the death of the persona she had constructed until that moment and the birth of a conscious self.

It is in this liminal space between life and death that one must face trauma. The repressed anxieties that had been buried during childhood need to be confronted to continue living. Choosing life entails accepting its hurtful truths and, thus abandoning the former coping mechanisms that had protected the individual. Herman argues that the adaptive mechanisms that helped the child to survive in an abusive household begin to shatter between the ages of thirty and forty; the person realises that the conception of dual identity is not of use in an adult environment that entails liberty and responsibility; this leads to a breakdown that makes them believe that their destiny is to go insane or die (114). Therefore, this suicide attempt may be

understood as the pivotal moment in which Jeanette Winterson distances herself from the harrowing heritage of her adoptive family and strives to understand her trauma. Winterson aligns with the symptomatology that Herman describes; she declares that she "often hear[s] voices" because she believes that "the mind wants to heal itself" (*Why Be Happy?* 170), and she considers that her psychotic breakdowns are paths towards sanity and healing. It seems her recovery still consisted of the dualistic conception of the self, in which the healing adult Jeanette comforts the traumatised child: "sometimes she was seven, sometimes eleven, sometimes fifteen" (175). It is worth noting that the mentioned ages were circumscribed within the period of time in which she was still living with the Wintersons. Although her first traumatic experience occurred a few weeks after she was born, her adoptive family only deepened the wound of rejection: "all my life I have repeated patterns of rejection […] I did know that I wasn't wanted" (185). Nonetheless, in order to understand this wound, it is imperative to address its origin.

Jeanette Winterson embarks on the emotional journey of finding her birth mother, in which she understands the origin of her trauma, reconciles with vulnerability, and contests the insecurities that early trauma caused. These consequences may be observed in the conception of love that Winterson captures in her novels. As Vickroy notes, "love is traumatic […] because it frequently and violently alters the protagonist's life, and its obsessive pursuit is the measure of this character's life, and the central focus of his or her life and consciousness" (137). During this administrative process, which catalysed the revival of traumatic memories, Winterson is granted another perspective on adoption and her biological mother. The vision that Mrs Constance Winterson instils into her daughter since childhood is that she was rejected by her biological mother because she had been a despicable being since birth. Even the impersonal and ancient papers that describe the terms of her adoption acknowledge that her mother loved her and that she breastfed her:

> That [breastfeeding] was the one thing she could give you. She gave you what she could. She didn't have to do that and it would have been a lot easier for her if she hadn't. It is such a bond—breastfeeding. When she gave you up at six weeks old you were still part of her body. (*Why Be Happy?* 184)

Thus, it is through material evidence that Winterson can start undoing the deeply embedded belief of being an unwanted person, but also through emotional support. Her social worker Ria, who has counselled many women who considered giving their children up for adoption, assures Winterson that "they never want to do it. You were wanted —do you understand that?"" In spite of Jeanette's initial dismissal of this idea —"I have never felt wanted. I am the wrong crib" (185)— these words challenge the root of her trauma of rejection. Indeed, Ria's phrase will continue to haunt Jeanette, as if it were a stream of light gleaming through a clouded sky. The narration contraposes wound and trauma, employing the same narrative techniques for latency and for healing; the repetition of these phrases emphasises the emotional impact these had on her psyche. Moreover, this is later confirmed by her mother as well:

> The letter tells me how she was sixteen when she got pregnant […] How she looked after me for six weeks in a mother and baby home before she gave me up. 'That was so hard. But I had no money and nowhere to go.'
>
> She tells me I was never a secret —me— who thought via Mrs Winterson that everything had to be secret —books and lovers, real names, real lives.
>
> And then she wrote, 'You were always wanted.'
>
> *Do you understand that, Jeanette? You were always wanted.* (*Why Be Happy?* 205–206, original emphasis)

The understanding of trauma could not take place in a dangerous psychological place; it is likely that this process could not have occurred while Mrs Winterson was alive. On the contrary, at this point, Jeanette Winterson is surrounded by a safe community of friends that allows her to be vulnerable, to cry about the loss of her mothers. In contacting her birth mother, she discovers that she is capable of loving. The new, lively family she meets contrasts with the gruesome character of the Wintersons: "All my life I have been an orphan and an only child. Now I come from a big noisy family who go ballroom dancing and live forever" (217).

Still, she identifies with the darkness that her adoptive mother emanated, part of her still praises the pain that Mrs Winterson inflicted: "it was a dark gift but not a useless one" (214). I think this confirms Caruth's statement that trauma cannot be healed but just understood, for it is a "truth […] [that] remains unknown in our very actions or language" (4). The belief that parental mistreatment is useful does not come from a healthy mind. I argue that this "dark gift" is emotional detachment, an ill-identified form of resilience. In addition, part of the wounded self still feels a deep connection to the abuser and needs to justify her actions: "I notice that I hate Ann criticising Mrs Winterson. She was a monster but she was my monster. […] I am shouting at her, 'At least Mrs Winterson was there. Where were you?'" (*Why Be Happy?* 230). At the same time, Winterson breaks from the stage of idealisation she was trapped in before meeting her biological mother and realises that there is no such thing as biological bonding: "I don't want to be included [in her biological family]; that is not my hard-heartedness. […] That's not what's important to me. And I don't feel a biological connection" (229). Therefore, the synthesis of the primordial trauma has taken place; the anxieties and longing for the "real" mother have been satisfied. Winterson then realises that she only has one mother, Mrs Winterson, whom she will have to forgive eventually. In short, by rejecting the birth mother Winterson embraces and bonds with her adoptive caretaker, abuse included.

The object of idealisation has been substituted. While Ann is initially seen as a loving and victimised mother who died or was forced to abandon her child, Constance Winterson is viewed as a cruel and sadistic mother who viciously hates her daughter. However, once she is dead, the adult Jeanette can bond with her again. Only when the parent is absent, the individual with attachment difficulties finds love easy and feasible. The love object is stable during its absence, its agency while being present might turn affection into rejection. Therefore, the insecure-avoidant attachment style continues to be reproduced, rather than healed.

1.2. The Adoptive Mother

John and Constance Winterson raised their daughter in a loveless household. Whereas Jeanette Winterson's father allowed the abuse to occur, it was her mother who perpetrated the psychological and physical violence. At the same time, Mrs Winterson was her main caregiver. As a child, Jeanette Winterson had to navigate the complicated emotions that an abusive relationship with a relative entails, such as the mixture of hate and love, rejection and affection. This may have created the need to stay away from the abuse, but also the desire to forgive the abuser due to their familial status. I consider this feature a characteristic of coming-of-age trauma; that traumatic wound that occurs during infancy and adolescence and whose latency is arguably the cruellest. Although individuals who are struggling with trauma suffer from flashbacks, adults can still look back to more fond memories when innocence was intact. However, when trauma is suffered during the developmental stages, that person cannot seek refuge in the naiveté of the previous years before trauma. On the contrary, innocence is lost too early to have those positive experiences. Then, the latency of the trauma grows stronger and shapes the neurological conformation of the brain. The traumatised individual may be trapped in a paradoxical cycle of grief, in which they may remain physically distanced from their progenitor but will try to reconcile with them through forgiveness. Thus, the aim of this section is to explore the depiction of trauma both in *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?*, as well as to contend with the different outcomes that autofiction and memoir confer.

Each autobiographical writing reveals two distinct approaches to the maternal bond. *Oranges* ends with a sense of utter solitude and abandonment induced by trauma; the narrator becomes aware that her family bond is not reliable: "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 [Mrs Winterson] had tied a thread around my button, to tug when she pleased" (*Oranges* 224). Jeanette is divested of her agency; she strives to find happiness and freedom

within the family, but she is unable to do so. On the other hand, *Why Be Happy?* ends in a bittersweet tone, but with a reflection on family and affection: "Love. The difficult word. Where everything starts, where we always return. Love. Love's lack. The possibility of love. I have no idea what happens next" (230). Though similar in topic, the excerpts' undertones are opposed. *Oranges* closes bitterly, while *Why Be Happy?* is full of hope and expectation. I suggest this is provided by the new approach that the much older Winterson has on her relationship with her adoptive mother and other bonds. Indeed, the possibility to forgive Mrs Winterson is liberating, it allows her to conquer agency within trauma. That is, to gain some control over the pain suffered. Although forgiveness does not heal trauma, it may contribute to its understanding. As Alford contends, "trauma is not just an affliction; trauma is a form of knowledge. […] The inability to move forward, […] to let go of the past and live in the present tense, serves vividly to embody the memory of what must not be forgotten" (194). At the same time, when abuse survivors gain the emotional strength to forgive, "we are left with nothing at all, but friends, lovers, and the holding community" (201). Therefore, pardon entails vulnerability, but also the possibility to love and trust others again, to be supported by others, by the (public and private) communities inhabited. Nonetheless, the endings of both works, despite their formal differences, enhance their mutual purpose of understanding love and trauma.

Even so, forgiveness is only present in *Why Be Happy?* It is critical to note that Constance Winterson is only forgiven once she is dead, when she cannot be a perpetrator of trauma anymore, and not in life or because she asks to be forgiven. Even though Mrs Winterson had been the perpetrator of trauma, she was a stable caregiver. Indeed, this toxic attachment may have established Jeanette Winterson's avoidant attachment style that the autodiegetic narrator illustrates. For instance, Winterson describes how she was physically abused by her parents: "I was beaten as a child and I learned early never to cry" (*Why Be Happy?* 2). This

caused a normalisation of abuse: “I used to hit my girlfriends until I realised it was not acceptable. Even now, when I am furious, what I would like to do is to punch the infuriating person flat on the ground” (46). Despite the psychological evolution portrayed in the memoir, it seems that the footprint of abuse in one’s psyche is permanent, and a conscious willingness to change is needed to overcome its sequels. While Winterson presents herself as a person who has actively fought to understand her trauma and prevent its effects, her parents have not.

> My father started hitting his second wife a few years after they were married. […] Dad was born in 1919, he was a celebratory end–of–First–World–War baby, and then they forgot to celebrate him. They forgot to look after him at all. He was the generation reared in time for the next war. He was twenty when he was called up. He knew about neglect and poverty, and he knew that you had to hit life before it hit you. (46–48)

Winterson presents trauma as a hereditary condition, specifically, the condition she features in the narration could be labelled as a generational trauma: “I know that he used to hit my mother before they found Jesus […] [Mrs Winterson] and her own mother were knocked about by my grandad” (47). It seems that Winterson identifies his father’s trauma with her own. When he narrates the horrors that he went through on the WWII battlefield, she takes a maternal role, she understands that her father’s pain and hers are the same:

> ‘No, no,’ he nods, comforted, a little boy. He was always a little boy, and I am upset that I didn’t look after him, upset that there are so many kids who never get looked after, and so they can’t grow up. They can get older, but they can’t grow up. That takes love. If you are lucky the love will come later. If you are lucky you won’t hit love in the face. (49)

In this instance, Winterson may be projecting her experience onto his father; she recognises the wound of a loveless life, and, at the same time, Jeanette Winterson introduces the question of war trauma and its consequences in everyday life, not only for veterans but for their families too. Furthermore, when he is confronted about his violent behaviour towards his wife “he started talking about the war” (48). In this regard, Winterson’s trauma ceases to be strictly private or individual; the psychological consequences of World War II were suffered by

veterans, as well as by their families. As Winter acknowledges, "the heavy shadow of war falls on children growing up in soldiers' families" (201). It seems that the latency of traumatic experience transcends the individual; trauma, instead of inducing regeneration of the psyche, tends to be a reason why other abuses are perpetrated. The memoir offers a detailed insight into the war's aftermath and the psychological consequences it had on civilians and their descendants. Hence, Winterson offers a portrayal of a non-ideal victim, both in herself and in her adoptive parents.

In addition to the perpetuation of abuse and trauma, Mrs Winterson's legacy results in an intense fear of rejection; Winterson expresses that, "For most of my life I have behaved in much the same way because that is what I learned about love" (*Why Be Happy?* 77); these notions of love were rather scarce. Winterson states she was unaware "that love could have continuity" (77), Jeanette simply "was the Wrong Crib, everything [she] did supported [her] mother in that belief" (52–53). Thus, the dynamics of attachment become more complicated; not only her birth mother "abandoned" Jeanette but also her adoptive mother. From an early age, the child feels that she was not wanted by either her biological mother or her adoptive one, who had explicitly expressed that she was given the wrong baby. As I introduced in the previous section, Jeanette Winterson would cry and scream as a baby; according to her mother, this behaviour "was evidence in plain sight that [she] was possessed by the Devil" (*Why Be Happy?* 20). Instead of comforting their recently adopted child, the Wintersons opted for her vilification; they did not calm her rage but increased it. This lack of love impacts her in adulthood and the echoes of rejection invade the narration again: "all my life I have repeated patterns of rejection. […] I did know that I wasn't wanted. And I have loved most extravagantly where my love could not be returned in any sane and steady way" (185). These feelings and patterns correspond to Gilbert's ideas on the impact of narcissistic parenting: "[t]hese individuals feel that they cannot get close enough to others and are very sensitive to cues of

rejection or abandonment. They often worry that their partners and friends may leave or ignore them. […] They are more likely to be emotionally expressive" (in Schore 384). Therefore, constant rejection during childhood causes an intense need for reassurance and affection.

In spite of the abuse, Winterson tries to reconnect with adoptive her mother. Her need for affection and motherly love transcends the emotional barrier that Mrs Winterson builds: "I was wondering if the past could be redeemed —could be 'reconciled'— if the old wars, the old enemies, the boarhound and the boar, might be able to find peace of a kind" (*Why Be Happy?* 145). Baker and Schneider report that Winterson's memoir, along with others that they consider in their study, does not portray any kind of detachment "from their emotionally abusive parents as a defence against the pain of rejection […] [nor they express] on a fundamental level they still crave, their abusive parent's love and acceptance" (93–94). On the contrary, I suggest that Winterson detaches herself from her mother by not speaking to her after their attempted reconciliation, which took place during Winterson's university years in the late seventies and early eighties, failed: "I never went back [home]. I never saw her again" (*Why Be Happy?* 152). Still, Winterson wanted her adoptive mother to be proud of her, she wonders "*Why can't you be proud of me?*" (224, original italics). Furthermore, it was not until her mother had been dead for a few years that she reached the conclusion that "a lot of forgiveness can go on as somebody is dead" (in Cebrián online). Therefore, by reaching a stage of acceptance of the broken bond, it seems that the memoir encompasses the different stages of grief for the loss of the motherly love-object.

However, the previous contradictions lead me to consider the narrative voice of the memoir an unreliable narrator. In an interview with Mercedes Cebrián, Winterson warns her audience: "I'm a fiction writer. You mustn't believe me! […] My whole being is about making it up as I go along" (online). At the same time, Laub and Felman argue that this invention is

part of sharing a trauma testimony: "Knowledge in the testimony is […] not simply factual given that is reproduced and replicated by the testifier" (62). Therefore, the narrator of the memoir is not trustworthy, it acts as a "narrator-guide, separate from the writer, who takes the reader through the fallible memories […] The writer designs the narrative journey, the guide or 'I' persona is immersed in it" (Freeman and Le Rossignol 6). Henceforth, it is the memoir's reader's task to trust the author, "it is the notion of 'believability in a text' that makes confession a potent means of establishing a link between writer and reader" (Sala 3). The memoir's veracity remains secondary, while the exploration of trauma is principal.[6]

This comprehension of trauma and the navigation through grief first started with the cathartic writing of *Oranges* and continued to develop in *Why Be Happy?* Throughout the autofiction and the memoir, Winterson explores denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The union of both biographical writings confers a unique exploration of the understanding of trauma through the different stages of grief, but also to witness an empowering narrative against trauma. The personal agency regained in the autobiographical writings would correspond, using White and Epston's terms, to a logico-scientific narrative mode.

> The narrative mode locates a person as a protagonist or participant in his/her world. This is a world of interpretative acts, a world in which every retelling of a story is a new telling, a world in which persons participate with others in the "re-authoring," and thus in the shaping, of their lives and relationships. (82)

Indeed, through the narration of her trauma and experiences, Winterson reappropriates her wound and reclaims her identity. As Van Der Wiel remarks, "this [writing *Oranges*] was a successful attempt to liberate herself from the story of 'scripture' that Mrs Winterson and the Church had chosen for her […] The reworking of their story into her own, grants Jeanette

[6] Along with this narrative journey, I observe that Winterson produces a political message against fundamentalism and bigotry. I continue to explore on the political message of *Why Be Happy?* in the section of 'The Communities'.

agency and authority" (180). In addition, Winterson attributes her ill-understood resilience the ability to vindicate her identity in *Why Be Happy?* and achieve "relative peace, after nearly forty years […] because [she has] been through all the possible cycles of rejection, rage, hostility, denial, personal attacks, and just mean-mindedness" (in Waldman online). Moreover, I argue that these emotions may be linked to trauma and the consequential mourning that its understanding entails. The psychological journey is mimicked in the narrative style of the memoir due to its non-linearity. That is, the different stages of grief are not displayed in an ordered sequential order,[7] but they are rather repeated and explored in various instances, imitating how "the mind works with its own brokenness" (*Why Be Happy?* 169).

Even though the different phases are addressed in *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?*, denial dominates in the debut novel. Indeed, the autofiction allows Winterson to avoid facing the cruelty of trauma. By creating a character like Elsie, an adult woman who lovingly takes care of her, Jeanette can ignore the pain that growing up in a loveless family that made her feel rejected caused her. Winterson acknowledges in *Why Be Happy?* that,

> I wrote her in because I couldn't bear to leave her out. I wrote her in because I really wished it had been that way. When you are a solitary child you find an imaginary friend. There was no Elsie. There was no one like Elsie. Things were much lonelier than that. (7)

Hence, denial is also present in the memoir but in retrospective. In the opening pages of *Why Be Happy?* Winterson breaks with the previous denial of *Oranges*, "avoiding this mourning means that one remains […] the one who is despised. […] Thus [it is] perpetuate[d] intrapsychically the loneliness of childhood" (Miller 127). Contrarily, Winterson does not present herself as a lonely individual anymore, but as a person who vindicates life and interpersonal bonds. Most of these attachments in *Oranges*, such as her mother, her first lover

[7] The traditional sequence of grief is divided into five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Melanie, or the Church, turned out to be treacherous.[8] Jeanette is kicked out of her home by her mother, who argues that "`The Devil looks after his own,' she threw back, pushing [Jeanette] out"; in this instance, the main character does not face her feelings, "I knew I couldn't cope, so I didn't try. I would let the feeling out later, when it was safe" (*Oranges* 174). I suggest that that moment takes place at least twenty-five years later, and it is fully expressed in her memoir: "I was sixteen and my mother was about to throw me out of the house forever. […] I was scared and unhappy" (*Why Be Happy?* 38); still, Winterson refers to that denial explicitly. Instead of deepening into the sensations that the hurtful event had on her, Winterson starts a long digression about "going down to the library" (38) and the importance of books. These were her coping mechanisms, how she evaded reality. In a sense, it can be argued that reality is denied in this instance as well, Winterson does not talk about abuse, but about how books saved her from facing trauma. Since the author conveys through the narrative the psychological state that she found herself in, the descriptions of her feelings are vague because trauma has not been understood in detail. Due to this state of denial, I suggest that the fairy tales and the cryptical pseudo-philosophical thoughts that serve as interludes between the chapters are allegorical representations of her feelings. That way, it is not necessary to face the conflict that trauma arises.[9]

Following a process of acceptance, the fantasy short stories[10] are replaced by historical facts, documentation, and bureaucratic procedures. Their contrast is notable: reflections are

[8] These elements of reality that are present both in the autofiction and in the novel have been gathered in a comparative grid, located at the Appendix of this dissertation.

[9] In 1985, when *Oranges* was published, Mrs Winterson was still alive and even read her daughter's autofiction. Besides expressing that she felt ashamed about Jeanette's publication of a book that featured parts of their lives, Constance Winterson's reaction after reading the book is not mentioned.

[10] There are four short stories embedded in the narration of *Oranges*. The story of Sir Perceval, the youngest of Arthur's knights, is a tragedy where Perceval and King Arthur remember better times before treason and defeat haunted their company. The second story is about Winnet Stonejar, a girl who is adopted by a sorcerer, a father who opposes her love affair with a boy. Her crow friend encourages to flee from her father's castle to the woods to live freely. The third narration is starred by a sensitive princess who gives up her position to take the duties of an old commoner; by taking this simpler life, the former princess found happiness. The last short story is a coda

metaphorical and demand a careful interpretation from the reader to decipher their meaning, which usually decodes the narrator's feelings. For instance, the matter of adoption and the discovery of one's identity is depicted as a risky endeavour:

> The curious are always in some danger. If you are curious you might never come home, like all the men who now live with mermaids at the bottom of the sea. […] Curious people who are explorers must bring back more than a memory or a story, they must bring home potatoes or tobacco, or best of all, gold. (*Oranges* 121)

Rather than serving a greater purpose, these hazardous adventures should come with great (emotional) revenue. The path towards finding identity might result in death or great happiness. In opposition, the memoir features objective data regarding her adoption: "The form says Reason for Adoption. My mother had handwritten, *Better for Janet to have a mother and a father*. […] I am not ready for any of this" (*Why Be Happy?* 200–201, original italics). In this instance, Winterson's feelings are left as a secondary feature of the narration; these revolve around the 'fact', the objective data. Furthermore, the novel conceals the limit between reality and fiction to the reader because fairy tales are the only feature that is clearly fictionalised. The veracity of the characters, their names, and events is unclear. Besides the narration of other incidents, the memoir comments on the events in the autofiction. In consequence, the narration of the memoir partly strips the novel of its mysterious narrative atmosphere, and, at the same time, it exposes the hurtful truths of trauma. These short stories deal with the complicated relationship with a caregiver or a protector, whose power has hurt the protagonists or restrained their freedom. The dominant themes are nostalgia, treason, and suffocating love, mirroring the complicated feelings that Jeanette has for her adoptive mother during the development of the story. Therefore, the fairy tales' characters mirror the conflicts surrounding the troubled

of Winnet's adventures; the girl has found that life aside from her father's protection is too harsh and cruel but is resolved to never go back and takes a boat to sail away.

mother-daughter bond and their protagonist reflect Jeanette's anxieties regarding maternal love and freedom.

Anger is more explicit in *Oranges*, especially in the representation of the adoptive mother as a homophobe. Whereas in the autofiction she is presented as an evil and cruel mother, the memoir portrays her as a tortured woman who was struggling with depression and who found in God redemption. This wrath is directed towards the imposition of identity, to the ostracism Jeanette had to face for being a lesbian:

> 'Here you are,' said my mother, giving me a sharp dig in the side. 'Some fruit. You're rambling in your sleep again.'
>
> It was a bowl of oranges.
>
> I took out the largest and tried to peel it. The skin hung stubborn, and soon I lay panting, angry and defeated. What about grapes or bananas? I did finally pull away the outer shell and, cupping both hands round, tore open the fruit. (*Oranges* 144)

Despite the explicit presence of wrath, *Oranges* explores it metaphorically. The quintessential symbol of the narrative, oranges, seems to embody the imposition of identity and morals. Opposed to the forbidden fruit of temptation, the orange is offered as the only possible approach to life. I identify the complicated peeling of the fruit with Jeanette's difficulties in conforming to a normative and religious life. It is worth noting that the fruits she mentions afterward as alternatives to oranges are "grapes" and "bananas," which are either easy to peel or do not need to be peeled at all. On the contrary, oranges do need to be peeled with a knife, their taste is stronger and more bitter than grapes and bananas. In other words, oranges symbolise the limited scope that Mrs Winterson and the Pentecostal Church offered to Jeanette. In the memoir, however, metaphors are left aside, and the anger is directed toward the unresolved grief of her birth mother: "I wanted to see those records. Who was this judge, this unknown male in authority? I was angry, but I knew enough to know that I was reaching into a very old radioactive anger" (188). In both works wrath is a response to institutional coercion

either by the Church or legal powers. Thus, Winterson exposes how institutions may contribute to the psychological wellbeing of individuals by facilitating or impeding their personal life choices.

Furthermore, the stages of bargaining and acceptance in both works are paths of finding love; in *Oranges* this is a religious path, while in *Why Be Happy?* this is the journey to forgive her adoptive mother. Jeanette, the protagonist of the novel, is a deeply religious girl who cannot conceive her life without God. Her life purpose before discovering her homosexuality is to become a missionary; nevertheless, Jeanette gives up this path when she and her Evangelical community become aware of her attraction towards women. Instead, Jeanette faces her identity, solitude, and uncertainty. As she explains,

> 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. 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. (*Oranges* 205)

Jeanette finds herself in a theological crisis; she tries to negotiate between her lesbian and her religious identity. On the one hand, she craves the comfort and security that scripture offers, the fixed morals, and solutions to everyday life. On the other hand, despite the conservative upbringing that seems to limit Jeanette, her personality and sexual orientation make her a better candidate to become a "prophet," a spiritual guide with a free voice, and thus become an exceptional loudspeaker against repression. As Hollier notes, the choice of living a life with religious and spiritual harmony offers "a sense of peace within individuals, but also a greater ability for interpersonal relationships, personal growth, and often a deeper more intimate faith journey" (162). This process of bargaining and later acceptance is not without any losses. In

Oranges, the determination of identity is granted at the expense of external commodities,[11] a trait that is shared with *Why Be Happy?* Although the memoir features memories, the narrative is charged with poetic language.

> [Mrs Winterson] picked up the little paraffin stove we used to heat the bathroom, went into the yard, poured paraffin over the books and set them on fire.
>
> I watched them blaze and blaze and remember thinking how warm it was, how light, on the freezing Saturnian January night. And books have always been light and warmth to me.
>
> I had bound them all in plastic because they were precious. Now they were gone.
>
> In the morning there were stray bits of texts all over the yard and in the alley. Burnt jigsaws of books. I collected some of the scraps. It is probably why I write as I do – collecting the scraps, uncertain of continuous narrative. (41)

In spite of Constance Winterson's attempt to destroy her daughter's source of happiness, material goods do not hold a strong enough connection to maim Jeanette Winterson's vitality. While the world of Mrs Winterson is associated with obscurity, the semantic field of Jeanette's interests is linked to light. Nonetheless, in the process of bargaining, the narrator needs to resist the depressive forces of her mother. It may be argued that these depressive forces seem to overtake Jeanette Winterson when she attempts to commit suicide in February 2008: "I felt that I had been tricked […] by the dark narrative of our life together. Her fatalism was so powerful. She was her black hole that pulled in all the light" (119). This resistance against depression whilst still fighting for her happiness and self-determination is part of Winterson's process of bargaining with grief. This grief is the loss of a stable caring mother figure.

The acceptance of this grief comes with reconciliation with her mother: "I would need to find the place where my own life could be reconciled with itself. And I knew that had something to do with love. I wrote to Mrs Winterson asking if she would like me to come back

[11] These do not need to be material objects, on the contrary, the sacrifices present in *Oranges* are the family and the religious community.

for the Christmas holidays" (146). This first attempt at mending their relationship fails, for Mrs Constance Winterson's struggle with mental health prevents her from creating healthy bonds in life, resulting in solitude in death; in the cemetery "Mrs Winterson lies further off. Alone" (196). Opposing the traditional *Bildungsroman*'s structure of *Oranges,* which "culminates in the acceptance of one's constrained social role in the bourgeois social order, usually requiring the renunciation of some ideal or passion and the embrace of heteronormative social arrangements" (Smith and Watson 189), *Why Be Happy?*'s narrative defies the traditional understandings of personal fulfilment:

> But then I understood something. I understood twice born was not just about being alive, but about choosing life. Choosing to be alive and consciously committing to life, in all its exuberant chaos –and its pain.
> I had been given life and I had done my best with what I had been given. But there was no more to do there. (168–169)

By understanding trauma and grief, Winterson can rely on her psyche and values again and dispense with normativity. She offers what may be labelled a queer *Bildungsroman* or, as Andrea Gutenberg defines this term, a coming-out story, which consists of a story that "involves a quest, a mentor figure, and a journey; but it also deviates from these generic models by portraying the protagonist's entry into a subculture rather than his or her integration into heteronormative society" (73). That is, Winterson rejects the conventional understanding of family and its bonds by dismissing the presence of both her mothers in her life. Although she does not live a normative life and still coexists with the presence of trauma, the author has achieved success and full integration into society, defying the traditional conventions of the *Bildungsroman*.

Nevertheless, this is not achieved in solitude: the communities that surround the author help her to achieve this success. With the aid of private (friends and lovers) and public communities (literature, politics, and legislation), Winterson finds the necessary safety net to

let herself be vulnerable. In opposition to the tales of individual success, *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?* enhance the importance of having company when dealing with traumatic wounds. *Oranges* has a conforming ending with heteronormative values and the perpetuation of toxic bonds with the mother, while *Why Be Happy?*'s closing chapter has an uncertain but hopeful ending, characterised by the importance of secure bonds outside the family.

2. The Communities

2.1. The Private Communities

The understanding of trauma is only feasible when one has a stable supportive community. With its aid, individuals who are struggling with traumatic wounds feel safe to abandon coping mechanisms and face the complex journey of recovery. In fact, this is an established psychological treatment; according to Keith Warren, this type of communal therapy is known as Social Network Analysis, which "is a statistical methodology that focuses on the relationship between individuals. […] The fundamental unit is the connection between two people […] from momentary interaction to enduring friendships" (55). Even though Winterson does not mention having attended this type of therapy, it is critical to stress interpersonal relationships as a crucial element towards healing. Indeed, Winterson admits that her one-to-one therapy "sessions felt false. [She] couldn't tell the truth" (*Why Be Happy?* 175). Contrarily, it seems that the connection with family and friends resulted in a more therapeutic outcome that allowed her to heal her wound.

For instance, the reconciliation with her adoptive and birth families seems to have allowed her to distance herself from the patterns of rejection that she learnt with the Wintersons. Her birth family showed her a model of family aside from hurtful love and abuse: "All my life I have been an orphan and an only child. Now I come from a big noisy family who go ballroom dancing and live forever" (217). From the Wintersonian obscurity and depression, Jeanette Winterson finds herself surrounded by a non-judging family, who applaud her successes. Leaving aside the mother who was ashamed of her daughter's literary production and that "had to order a book in a false name" (225), Jeanette is welcomed by a family who praise her art. For instance, her biological mother vaunts her to the librarian: "'I ordered your book from the library […] and I said to the librarian, "This is my daughter. […] Jeanette Winterson is my daughter". I felt so proud'" (224); also, Winterson's aunt tells her that "[her] daughter has

ordered all [her] books" (218). Šmardová remarks that "[o]ur need to experience true feelings and love is closely connected to our longing for connection. […] Winterson shows [in her novels] that art is inherently inclusive and by portraying the world's richness and diversity, it helps to deconstruct the assumed boundaries separating people from one another" (188). Despite the absence of any reports about her feelings, Jeanette Winterson stresses the importance of love and acceptance by offering a contrasting image between the Wintersons and her biological family. It seems that Winterson implicitly links her lively character and love for life to genetics: "Yes, we are alike. The optimism, the self-reliance. The ease we both have in our bodies. I used to wonder why I have always felt at ease in my body and liked my body. I look at her and it seems to be an inheritance" (216–217). Then, it is implied that the psychological and physical working-class strength is what guaranteed survival in an inhospitable environment like the Wintersonian household. While Constance Winterson "had married down […] [which] meant showing everyone else in the street that even though you weren't better off, you were better" (49–50), Jeanette's biological family responded to "the old Manchester working-class way; you think, you read, you ponder" (218). The focus of the families is contrasting. The Wintersonian world places its centre of attention in the external world, whereas Ann's family prioritises internal growth. In consequence, the psychological approach to the wound in both families is radically different as well. Mrs Winterson embraces it: she "was gloriously wounded, like a medieval martyr, gouged and dripping for Jesus, and she dragged her cross for all to see" (223). Constance Winterson is presented in Gothic terms; she embodies a mysterious, dark, frightening, and hurting entity that haunts her daughter's psyche. Her Mancunian family, on the contrary, is presented as people with similar interests as Jeanette and who have transgressed generational trauma. That is, instead of holding onto their wound, they have made the effort to understand the conflicts that haunted their family. Rather than perpetuating generational trauma, Ann decided to cease this tendency:

> As a young woman Ann wasn't given much love. 'Mam didn't have time to be soft. She loved us by feeding us and clothing us.'
>
> When her own mother was exceedingly old Ann found the courage to ask the question, 'Mam, did you love me?' Her mother was very clear. 'Yes. I love you. Now don't ask me again.' (230)

Due to their similarity, part of Jeanette's struggle is understood by her biological mother and family. Their welcoming energy allows her to be in contact with her emotions and to make the decision that she does "not want to be included [in Ann's family]" (229). In this instance, Winterson does express her feelings towards her motherly reunion: "I am warm but I am wary" (228). I note that this is a manifestation of the incoherence of the traumatised mind; Winterson reproduces the rejection patterns she once learnt. Contradicting her previous desires for meeting her birth mother, and in spite of the positive impression her biological family caused on her, she decides to slit the recently restored bond. Even though the understanding of trauma is deeper now, the wound is not healed.

Regardless of the biological resemblances that they might share, environmental conditioning dominates the psyche. The latency of the coming-of-age trauma eclipses the happy memories she might make with her mother during adulthood:

> All my life I have worked from the wound. To heal it would mean an end to one identity – the defining identity. But the healed wound is not the disappeared wound; there will always be a scar. And so will my mother, whose wound it is too, and who has had to shape a life around a choice she did not want to make. (223)

The question of latency is directly addressed here. Winterson may comprehend trauma, "the wound", but she may never fully be the same ever again. The comprehension of the wound ("the scar") does not entail its entire healing, the skin (that is, the psyche) will not even regain its previous appearance. The psychological damage has impacted the individual too severely at an early age to readapt to a healthy standard. The damage caused by the rejection she suffered for being a non-biological daughter in the Winterson's household will always be present, it is already part of Winterson's identity as an adoptee and a lesbian.

Similarly, the path toward sanity could not have been successful without the help of her friends. Even in a moment of utter solitude and insanity, when she tried to commit suicide in 2008, the company of her cat saved her, by "scratching [her] face" (168). Although the deconstruction of rejection patterns can only be done by the person who suffers them, Winterson attributes to fellow writers Ruth Rendell and Susie Orbach[12] the building of healthy bonds while challenging the previous self-destructive beliefs instilled by Mrs Winterson. These two women belong to the most intimate circle of the author, despite the differences in the nature of the relationship. Both have been featured as binary opposites of those individuals who have psychologically hurt Winterson. Indeed, Ruth Rendell is described by the author as a motherly figure. Rather than being a simple friend, Rendell was "the Good Mother – never judging, quietly supporting, letting me talk, letting me be" (181). It is outside of the conventional family where Winterson finds a supportive female guide and confidant, a mother. Rendell's attitude towards Winterson's feelings and anxieties towards her adoption is radically opposed to that of Constance Winterson, who "invented many bad mothers for [her]; fallen women, drug addicts, drinkers, men-chasers" (220). Rendell "thought she could help" (181) and contacted influential acquaintances that might support Winterson in her endeavour to understand trauma by reencountering her biological mother. Furthermore, when Winterson seems to repent her decision to meet her mother, it is Rendell who encourages her to complete her quest:

> Ruth Rendell called me. 'I think you should just go and get it over with. Now that you have found your mother you must see her. Have you spoken to her on the phone?'
> 'No'
> 'Why ever not?
> 'I am scared.'
> 'There'd be something wrong with you if you weren't scared! (210)

[12] Ruth Rendell was a prolific English author of mystery novels, most known for her Wexford novels, and a member of the House of Lords for the Labour Party. Susie Orbach is a psychoanalyst and writer; she is known for being Princess Diana psychotherapist and her book *Fat Is A Feminist Issue* (1978).

Rendell validates her emotions, contesting the emotionally numbing inputs of Mrs Winterson. Her friend does not question her feelings nor tries to alter them, as opposed to Mrs Winterson's crude response to her daughter's coming out of the closet: "'Why be happy when you could be normal?'" (114). The death of her adoptive parents is both literal and symbolic, as it signifies the death of toxic environments and the embrace of healthy relationships. Furthermore, it may also be considered the final death of social commodification. As Bradway notes, "[i]n Mrs Winterson's logic, (queer) happiness and (heterosexual) normality are fundamentally opposed. […] By contrast, Jeanette's invocation of happiness is opaque—she does not fantasize a redemptive future where the self will be narcissistically satisfied" (197). The embrace of healthy bonds is aligned with the acceptance of queer identity.

If Ruth Rendell opposes Constance Winterson, I suggest that Susie Orbach contraposes Helen, Winterson's first love who inspired the character of Melanie in *Oranges*. These hurtful relationships of the past are not eclipsed by the present ones nor hold more significance. Instead, they offer a positive evolution towards a healthier psyche. Both these past bonds exacerbated the rejection wound, they left a feeling of utter abandonment. For instance, Winterson describes that at the end of their relationship "[she] held on tighter because Helen let go" (80). This contrasts with the assuring message that Orbach gives to Jeanette, despite her avoidant attachment style, which causes conflict in their relationship:

> […] our conflicts and our difficulties revolve round love. You don't trust me to love you, do you?'
>
> No ... I am the wrong crib . . . this will go wrong like all the rest. In my heart of hearts I believe that.
>
> The love—work that I have to do now is to believe that life will be all right for me. I don't have to be alone. I don't have to fight for everything. I don't have to fight everything. I don't have to run away. I can stay because this is love that is offered, a sane steady stable love.
>
> 'And if we have to part,' says Susie, 'you will know that you were in a good relationship.'
>
> *You are wanted, do you understand that, Jeanette?* (199, original italics)

Mrs Winterson's psychological violence contraposes Susie Orbach's secure attachment. Then, her empathy and sincerity oppose Mrs Winterson's depressive character, as well as they defy the early convictions surrounding love and abandonment that women like her mother or former lovers left on Jeanette Winterson. Orbach and Rendell are chosen bonds that were formed in adulthood; they accepted the Wintersonian wound and contributed to its understanding by offering the material, social, and emotional means to deal with it. Also, both present love as a stable and unconditional force, despite Winterson's fears of abandonment and distrust. The Jeanette Winterson of the memoir, in contraposition with the Jeanette from *Oranges*, is a loved person. She has found in people outside her family healthy bonds and safe spaces where she can express her fears and hopes. This attitude of resistance towards normativity confers the memoir a strong political and vindicative message, in which liberty and happiness as a queer individual are possible.

Jeanette Winterson presents in her memoir love as a healing force driven by bravery, which contests the fearful lifestyle that Helen and Mrs Winterson embraced. These two figures in her life rejected her love and aggravated her trauma, while Susie Orbach and Ruth Rendell accompany her in the sensitive journey of finding her identity after having spent many years ignoring this delicate matter. The question of identity does not entail adoption exclusively, but also Winterson's sapphism. Helen and Constance Winterson rejected Jeanette's sexuality, even their own. When Jeanette and Helen were discovered by the Church, the couple was accused of being possessed. Jeanette defended their love as legitimate, whereas Helen attributed her 'wicked' actions to a demon, "I didn't even know I had a demon whereas Helen spotted hers at once" (*Why Be Happy?* 80). In a similar way, Mrs Winterson "suppressed [her body's] appetites with a fearful mix of nicotine and Jesus" (20). Instead of living their sexuality, both women comply with the Church's impositions, embracing normality, and rejecting Jeanette's choice to vindicate her identity as a sapphic woman.

2.2. The Public Communities

The use of binary opposites is not only reserved for intimate bonds; they are also employed in public communities. Within legal, literary, and queer circles, Jeanette Winterson explores the senses of abandonment and company. These ambivalent groups have allowed her to understand her trauma, but they have also contributed to its rekindling. The impersonal bureaucratic procedures and the emotional disconnection catered to a strong critique of the insensitivity and opacity of the law when dealing with personal matters. Winterson argues that these procedures, due to their emotional impact and difficulty, should not be "a good reason to engage a lawyer; it is a good reason to make the process simpler and less insensitive" (179). Furthermore, Winterson contraposes archival coldness with humane struggle and kindness. The normativity in Winterson's narrative conveys anxiety for the oppressed and oppressors. In this anti-natural environment where "[p]eople's lives are less important than a procedure" (190), even the court manager appears "harassed and unhappy" (191) as a result of the complicated protocol that must be followed. Still, within such an inhospitable environment, the social worker Ria Hayward is the embodiment of humanity. Despite being a stranger to Jeanette, not a lover or a friend, but a worker, Ria offers the assertion that echoes Winterson's narration throughout the memoir: "You were wanted, Jeanette, do you understand that?" (185). Hence, the administrative processes that hold a significant emotional load may shape our understanding of reality. Therefore, Winterson draws no clear distinction between the personal and the public; administrative matters have a direct impact on the emotional and personal life of the citizens, who must endure the consequences of an impersonalised procedure or may be comforted by the presence of an empathetic

Following the Wintersonian tendencies, the narration presents the literary sphere with ambivalence. Despite her reservations about the public knowing about her life, Winterson finds in literature a place for finding solace but also a loudspeaker for sharing her political discourse

through her work. In addition, her position as a woman writer is a political stance in itself: "for a […] working class woman […] to want to be a good writer, and to believe that you were good enough […] was not arrogance; that was politics" (138). Rather than only exploring intimate occurrences, her autofiction and memoir hold a strong political content as well, denouncing queer abjection. In their autobiographical writings, Walker remarks how authors like Emily Dickinson or Virginia Woolf —female writers who deeply inspired Winterson in her artistic endeavour— aimed in their autobiographical writings "to assert an individuality by rejecting the "normal" role of women […]; and each makes clear that her "private" writing is addressed to some "public" with which she has an uneasy relationship" (274). Jeanette Winterson follows a similar pattern as that of her predecessors, offering a vindicative message to an audience, while still having some reservations. In other words, Winterson does not feel comfortable knowing that part of her private life is known to the public but, at the same time, she uses those same experiences in her artwork to vindicate the happy existence of queer women.

This might seem striking taking into consideration that Winterson confesses that she voted for Margaret Thatcher, a politician who could be considered the archenemy of any non-normative individual and, thus, Winterson's political enemy as a working-class lesbian. Nevertheless, her vulnerable situation made her the perfect victim of reactionary discourses, for she "was the ideal prototype for the Reagan/Thatcher revolution" (134). Nonetheless, I suggest that political personalities also mirror personal ones. Constance Winterson and Margaret Thatcher are two female figures who held great power over Jeanette, one as a castrating mother, the other as a lesbophobic conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. They both presented themselves as authoritative and conservative women who offered simple responses to a complicated world. Despite having felt a strong connection with them and regard them as intelligent women, Jeanette Winterson finally contradicts their reactionary visions. As Walezak notes,

> The mother-daughter bond has led her to rewrite time and again empathetically against confinement to a closed narrative, whether domestic or national. The later addition in *Why Be Happy* of state politics to the initial family romance of *Oranges* makes explicit the connection Jeanette Winterson makes between the personal and the political, thus contesting both Mrs Thatcher's and Mrs Winterson's absolute distinction between the two. In that perspective, her experimentation with autobiography is all the more significant as it aims to reconcile the radical and the personal, the division of which forms the basis of Mrs Winterson's profound discordance. (137)

Moreover, the autobiographical testimony contests the negative portrayal of queerness that these two women and their environment defended. The projection of a happy and loving relationship and life gives hope to queer individuals, who often struggle to find optimistic accounts of their lives. Indeed, the negative depiction of queer individuals on cultural products is habitual, linking dissident sexual orientations and gender expressions to ugliness, depression, and destruction. The representation of lesbians is usually linked to brutality or calamity, portraying sapphic desires as inviable (Bradbury-Rance 141; Howard). In contrast, Winterson's narrative distances itself from these Othering representations and embraces queer existence as legitimate.

Despite not being explicitly present in the narrative, I suggest that the Queer Community is the aimed reader of the memoir due to its assuring reflections on affection regardless of the rejection suffered during infancy. Besides its optimist ending, the narrator addresses the reader and shares her thoughts about the complicated nature of love:

> Listen, we are human beings. Listen, we are inclined to love. Love is there, but we need to be taught how. We want to stand upright, we want to walk, but someone needs to hold our hand and balance us a bit, and guide us a bit, and scoop us up when we fall.
>
> Listen, we fall. Love is there but we have to learn it – and its shapes and its possibilities. I taught myself to stand on my own two feet, but I could not teach myself how to love. (186)

Its hopeful message about affection and human nature seems to be directed towards queer individuals, those who have likely been rejected by their parents. Winterson praises vulnerability and company, then by extension, living life in freedom. This would challenge

heterosexual hegemony and, at the same time, would grant agency and empowerment to queers. Therefore, these vocatives directed towards queer people dispute the "discursive and rhetorical moves that are used to marginalize homosexuality, transgenderism, and transsexualism" that might be reproduced by acquaintances or political figures, "in doing so provides an overview of the different ways that agency operates both rhetorically and politically […] as well as suggesting the kinds of queer agency that are required to challenge the epistemology of the closet" (Wallace and Alexander 809). The rupture with the epistemology of the closet that Jeanette Winterson suggests in her memoir, I believe, is to simply live a regular happy life that serves as a living opposition to homophobic discourses. In other words, to openly live as a queer individual is in itself a revolutionary act, as it opposes dominant and repressive authorities that inhabit private and public life. Indeed, such categorisations about personal spaces are contested as well, the private and the public are intertwined: the personal is political, just as politics affect personal experiences. Furthermore, the portrayal of queer life both as feasible and dissident against the normativity that legitimises imperialism and patriarchy. Indeed, Winterson heavily criticises these systems of power, like colonialism, "Britain had colonised, owned occupied or interfered with half of the world. […] When some of the world we had made by force wanted something in return, we were outraged" (147). Thus, the memoir opposes reactionary discourses and highlights how these utilise vulnerable citizens to spread their hate discourses. In addition, the memoir expands on this anti-traditional message by rejecting the Christian view of the traditional family. Specifically, Winterson defies the fourth biblical commandment; with this memoir, she does not honour her parents (biological nor adoptive). Instead, I suggest that she honours her identity as a queer person and an adopted daughter by forgiving, yet not forgetting, the wounds that their rejection and abandonment caused her. Furthermore, in the tense political scenario that Europe finds itself in fifteen years after the publication of *Why Be Happy?*, this message gains more strength, as it directly opposes the

patriarchal, xenophobic, and LGBTphobic messages that far-right politicians have spread across the continent in the last decade. In other words, vindicative works, despite their publication date, are currently relevant to counteract the hate discoursed that invade public and private spheres. As Butler indicates in her most recent book *Who Is Afraid of Gender?*,

> The task before us is to try to understand this rapidly accelerated inflation and combination of potential and literal dangers, and to ask how we can possibly counter a phantasm of this size and intensity before it moves even closer to eradicating reproductive justice, the rights of women, the rights of trans and non-binary people, gay and lesbian freedoms, and all efforts to achieve gender and sexual equality and justice, not to mention the censorship targeting open public discourse and the academy. (9)

I argue that *Why Be Happy?* forms part of this task due to its vindicative message. It is a literary form of protest against the repressive political discourses that aim to legitimise the traditional understandings of gender and sexuality while invalidating and presenting as corrupt other lifestyles out of heteronormative Christianity. Rather than simply presenting queerness as a safe space, the life writings focus on the dangers of patriarchy and the psychological sequelae these hate discourses have. In addition, non-binary gender characters have been explored by Jeanette Winterson explored in her later fiction, in an interview with Roxy Bourdillon, the author expresses that,

> We need some trans people in fiction and we need positive models, just as we did when I was writing *Oranges*. […] The collapse of the left is really bothering me and I don't know yet what to do. […] I think I could stand up and speak and I think I should. (online)

Although she does not seem to be completely aware of it, Winterson employs her writing as a powerful tool to contest reactionary views and an opportunity to offer non-normative role models to her readers. As Gutleben considers, "[i]t is the creation of voices excluded from the received system of representation which accomplishes the ethical opening to the other […] the ethics of alterity is, then, made manifest in the attempt to represent the other and particularly the other's trauma(s)" (151). Through culture, Jeanette Winterson provides her readers with non-conforming expressions of gender and sexuality, normalising and giving voice to queer

perspectives of life that challenge the vilification of the queer community. I suggest that this is most noticeable in the contrasting depiction of homosexuality in *Oranges* and in *Why Be Happy?*; while the autofiction does not allow its protagonist to flee from the traumatic environment she was raised in, Winterson contests the pessimist ending of her novel in the memoir, conferring a happy ending to a queer narrative, regardless of its literary genre. Nevertheless, I believe that, because it is a memoir, the vindicative message is even stronger: the narrator manages to transcend the vilifying homophobic discourses and achieves a successful life both publicly and personally, while still living with trauma sequelae that may be shared by the queer public.

3. Conclusions and Further Research

I started this dissertation arguing that *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* and *Why Be Happy When You Could be Normal?* depicted an evolution in the private and the public conception of sapphic identity. Although I continue to agree with this statement, I suggest that the understanding of trauma bears a greater presence in the works. Even though sapphic identity is relevant, it is secondary in relation to coming-of-age trauma. This emotional development may be observed in the content differences conferred by the genres of the autofiction and the memoir. While *Oranges* combines fact and fiction, thus avoiding the confrontation with reality and including fantasy short stories and incidents; *Why Be Happy?* features bureaucratic procedures, objective data, and specific dates, as well as clarification for the veracity of some of the events and characters of *Oranges*. Indeed, the autofiction and the memoir gather the different stages of grief according to the understanding of trauma. These phases are not always linear; some of them are scattered throughout *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?* but they still share a common path towards sanity. Nevertheless, the narration of trauma in *Why Be Happy?* cannot be entirely trusted because she contradicts herself and makes paradoxical reflections about her trauma and the people surrounding her. Moreover, the narrative thread is neither thematic nor chronological, as it presumably strives to reflect the (lack of) structure of an agonising psyche. Therefore, it is the content of the works that differentiates the two writings, rather than its literary label.

Despite unifying paradoxical terms in paradoxical thoughts, Winterson employs binaries opposites as well. The narrative divides its characters into two categories: the rejecting and the accepting relationships. The former are those family members and lovers, such as Mrs Constance Winterson or Helen, that instil hatred and perpetuate trauma. The latter are those that, even occupying a similar affective relationship with the narrator, foster love and understanding of the psychic wound. In opposition to the individualistic discourses that raid

cultural products (mainly of American origin), Jeanette Winterson gives prominence to interpersonal relationships to maintain sanity and, in consequence, artistic production. The communities oppose the narrator's initial beliefs about the urgency of maintaining a bond with the mother; these extra-familiar bonds are sufficient to create a safety net to face the distress that grasping the implications of trauma entails.

Despite the comprehension of trauma, this is not healed by the end of *Why Be Happy?* The memoir's ending does not offer closure. Its open character offers the possibility of imagining a joyful continuation of life, but also the possibility of being hurt once again by love and its traumatic Wintersonian conception. Still, it restores agency to the narrator, who now is free to embark on the sentimental journeys that her trauma once prevented her from undertaking. Then, the broad scope of *Why Be Happy?* diverges from the pessimism of *Oranges*, while still including devastating accounts. However, the faithful reproduction of personal events does not seem to be the ultimate objective of the narrative. The memoir has two significant features that differentiate it from the autofiction. On the one hand, it portrays the process of understanding trauma, as the narrator confronts herself with her primordial wounds and finds a family in her acquaintances. On the other hand, these unconventional understandings of the family, along with the portrayal of a happy queer life, vindicate Queer lives as legitimate and feasible. The "happy", yet open, conclusion of the memoir contests the numerous tragic endings of Queer characters in fiction, in which *Oranges* could be included as well.

Its optimistic ending does not translate into a cheerful narrative. The crudity of the narrator's trip towards understanding trauma shows that the consequences of policies and the spread of othering beliefs against Queer people have personal consequences. When hate speech take hold within the family of a non-heteronormative person, this is likely to cause a psychological scar because of rejection and abuse. Then, the limits of fact and fiction are

blended and, similarly, the personal and the political converge as well. The personal ceases to be strictly private when it results in a political impact and vice-versa. In other words, there is no clear distinction between life and literature nor between law and intimacy. Therefore, it is as critical to pass laws and establish protocols that ensure respect for human rights. Likewise, it is vital to deconstruct hate narratives to contest Othering beliefs and offer a more accurate depiction of Queer lives through autobiographical accounts.

In conclusion, *Why Be Happy?* transcends the category of appendix. Despite its connection with *Oranges*, the memoir is an independent work that states a clearer message regarding trauma and queerness. The narration embraces the forbidden values that Mrs Constance Winterson rejected: happiness, sexual freedom, and emotional independence. The memoir confers on love and affection an indispensable quality for overcoming trauma and abandoning part of the limiting beliefs that the coming-of-age trauma instilled during infancy. Jeanette Winterson's most recent autobiographical writing is thus a literary balm, disproving hateful discourses that associate queer lives with marginality and unhappiness. In sum, *Why Be Happy?* is a cry for happiness and queer pride over traumatic Othering perspectives, opposing *Oranges*'s final message, portraying an evolution in the conception of sapphic identity from pessimism to hope since the publication Winterson's debut novel until her most recent work.

In a moment when the far right is rising across the globe, especially in Europe, and cultural and educational censorship becomes a reality, I believe that the study of writers who distance themselves from normative conventions is critical. Furthermore, because Jeanette Winterson is a living author who has recognised the importance of representing Queer lives in culture and has continued to include them in her work, I believe that there is still room for researching how her literary works have contributed to the normalisation of queerness, as well as the little explored presence of male characters in her works.

Still, I note that researching queer trauma might be helpful to study the personal and public implications of abjection through life writings. In this regard, there is still room for further research of sapphic authors that feature coming-of-age trauma in their life narratives. In fact, I am interested in researching the presence of coming-of-age trauma and affection in autobiographical writings by other sapphic authors. In specific, I would like to focus on trauma related to the family, most specifically, on traumatic relationships with parents. As this is an extensive research project, I intend to devote my PhD thesis to the research of coming-of-age trauma, not only from a Trauma Studies approach, but also from a Gender and Queer Studies perspective. The aim of this future research is to identify Othering narratives, both in public and intimate circles, and their effects on trauma. In addition, I intend to observe the impact of affection (or its absence) to the understanding of trauma. In sum, I aim to expand my research on coming-of-age trauma life writings, in which I will pay close attention to the role of parents in the origin of the psychic wound, as well as their later contribution to its exacerbation or understanding.

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Appendix: Comparative Grid of *Oranges* and *Why Be Happy?*

***Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985)**	***Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011)**
The church was very full as usual, and every time I caught someone's eye they smiled or nodded. It made me happy. There was nowhere I'd rather be. When the hymn was over I squeezed a bit closer to Melanie and tried to concentrate on the Lord. 'Still,' I thought, 'Melanie is a gift from the Lord, and it would be ungrateful not to appreciate her.' I was still deep in these contemplations when I realised that something disturbing was happening. The church had gone very quiet and the pastor was standing on his lower platform, with my mother next to him. She was weeping. I felt a searing pain against my knuckles; it was Melanie's ring. Then Miss Jewsbury was urging me to my feet saying, 'Keep calm, keep calm,' and I was walking out to the front with Melanie. I shot a glance at her. She was pale. 'These children of God,' began the pastor, 'have fallen under Satan's spell.' His hand was hot and heavy on my neck. Everyone in the congregation looked like a waxwork. 'These children of God have fallen foul of their lusts.' 'Just a minute . . .,' I began, but he took no notice. 'These children are full of demons.' A cry of horror ran through the church. 'I'm not,' I shouted, 'and neither is she.' 'Listen to Satan's voice,' said the pastor to the church, pointing at me. 'How are the best become the worst.' 'What are you talking about?' I asked, desperate. 'Do you deny you love this woman with a love reserved for man and wife?' 'No, yes, I mean of course I love her.' 'I will read you the words of St Paul,' announced the pastor, and he did, and many more words besides about unnatural passions and the mark of the demon. 'To the pure all things are pure,' I yelled at him. 'It's you not us.'	It was an ordinary Sunday-morning service. I was a bit late. I noticed everyone was looking at me. We sang, we prayed, and then the pastor said that two of the flock were guilty of abominable sin. He read the passage in Romans 1:26: *The women did change their natural use into that which is against nature…* As soon as he began I knew what was going to happen. Helen burst into tears and ran out of the church. I was told to go with the pastor. He was patient. He was young. I don't think he wanted trouble. But Mrs Winterson wanted trouble and she had enough of the old guard behind her. There was going to be an exorcism. Nobody could believe that anyone as faithful as I was could have had sex – and with another woman – unless there was a demon involved. I said there was no demon. I said I loved Helen. My defiance made things worse. I didn't even know I had a demon whereas Helen spotted hers at once and said yes yes yes. I hated her for that. Was love worth so little that it could be given up so easily? The answer was yes. […] I held on tighter because Helen let go. (80)

He turned to Melanie. 'Do you promise to give up this sin and beg the Lord to forgive you?' 'Yes.' She was trembling uncontrollably. I hardly heard what she said. (133–134)	
That Awful Occasion was the time my natural mother had come to claim me back. I'd had an idea that there was something curious about the circumstance of my birth, and once found my adoption papers hidden under a stack of flannels in the holiday drawer. 'Formalities,' my mother had said, waving me away. 'You were always mine, I had you from the Lord.' I didn't think about it again until there was a knock on the door one Saturday. My mother got there before me because she was praying in the parlour. I followed her down the lobby. 'Who is it Mum?' She didn't answer. 'Who is it?' 'Go inside until I tell you.' I slunk off, thinking it was either Jehovah's Witnesses or the man from the Labour party. Before long I could hear voices, angry voices; my mother seemed to have let the person in, which was strange. She didn't like having the Heathen in the house. 'Leaves a bad atmosphere,' she always said. I remembered something I'd seen Mrs White do on the fornication occasion. Reaching far back into the War Cupboard, behind the dried egg, I found a wine glass and put it against the wall. It worked. I could hear every word. After five minutes I put the glass away, picked up our dog, and cried and cried and cried. Eventually my mother came in. 'She's gone.' 'I know who she was, why didn't you tell me?' 'It's nothing to do with you.' 'She's my mother.' No sooner had I said that than I felt a blow that wrapped round my head like a bandage. I lay on the lino looking up into the face.	I am wearing my favourite outfit – a cowboy suit and a fringed hat. My small body is slung from side to side with cap-gun Colts. A woman comes into the garden and Grandad tells me to go inside and find my mother who is making her usual pile of sandwiches. I run in – Mrs Winterson takes off her apron and goes to answer the door. I am peeping from down the hallway. There is an argument between the two women, a terrible argument that I can't understand, and something fierce and frightening, like animal fear. Mrs Winterson slams the door and leans on it for a second. I creep out of my peeping place. She turns around. There I am in my cowboy outfit. 'Was that my mum?' Mrs Winterson hits me and the blow knocks me back. Then she runs upstairs. I go out into the garden. Grandad is spraying the roses. He ignores me. There is no one there. (12)

‘I’m your mother,’ she said very quietly. ‘She was a carrying case.’ ‘I wanted to see her.’ ‘She’s gone and she’ll never come back.’ My mother turned away and locked herself in the kitchen. I couldn’t think and I couldn’t breathe so I started to run. I ran up the long stretchy street with the town at the bottom and the hill at the top. It was Easter time and the cross on the hill loomed big and black. ‘Why didn’t you tell me,’ I screamed at the painted wood, and I beat the wood with my hands until my hands dropped away by themselves. When I looked out over the town, nothing had changed. Tiny figures moved up and down and the mill chimneys puffed out their usual serene smoke signals. On Ellison’s Tenement they had started to run the fair. How could it be? I had rather gaze on a new ice age than these familiar things. When I finally went home that day, my mother was watching television. She never spoke of what had happened and neither did I. (128–130)	
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 when the wind blows. […] It all seemed to hinge around the fact that I loved the wrong sort of people. Right sort of people in every respect except this one; romantic love for another woman was a sin. […] At that point I had no notion of sexual politics, but I knew that a homosexual is further away from a woman than a rhinoceros. Now that I do have a number of notions about sexual politics, this early observation holds good. There are shades of meaning, but a man is a man, wherever you find it. My mother has always given me problems because she is enlightened and reactionary at the same time. She didn’t believe in Determinism and Neglect, she believed that you made people and yourself	‘I gave you a chance. You’re back with the Devil. So I tell you now, either you get out of this house and you don’t come back or you stop seeing that girl. I’m going to tell her mother.’ ‘She knows.’ ‘She what?’ ‘Her mother knows. She’s not like you.’ Mrs Winterson was quiet for a long time and then she started to cry. ‘It’s a sin. You’ll be in Hell. Soft bodies all the way to Hell.’ I went upstairs and started packing my things. I had no idea what I was going to do. When I came down my mother was sitting stockstill staring into space. ‘I’ll go then …’ I said. She didn’t answer. I left the room. I walked down the dark narrow lobby, the coats on their pegs. Nothing to say. I was at the front door. I heard her behind me. I turned. ‘Jeanette, will you tell me why?’

what you wanted. Anyone could be saved and anyone could fall to the Devil, it was their choice. While some of our church forgave me on the admittedly dubious grounds that I couldn't help it (they had read Havelock Ellis and knew about Inversion), my mother saw it as a wilful act on my part to sell my soul. At first, for me, it had been an accident. That accident had forced me to think more carefully about my own instincts and others' attitudes. After the exorcism I had tried to replace my world with another just like it, but I couldn't. I loved God and I loved the church, but I began to see that as more and more complicated. (163–165)	'What why?' 'You know what why …' But I don't know what why … what I am … why I don't please her. What she wants. Why I am not what she wants. What I want or why. But there is something I know: 'When I am with her I am happy. Just happy.' She nodded. She seemed to understand and I thought, really, for that second, that she would change her mind, that we would talk, that we would be on the same side of the glass wall. I waited. She said, 'Why be happy when you could be normal?' (113-114)
I did remember, but what my mother didn't know was that I now knew she had rewritten the ending. Jane Eyre was her favourite non-Bible book, and she read it to me over and over again, when I was very small. I couldn't read it, but I knew where the pages turned. Later, literate and curious, I had decided to read it for myself. A sort of nostalgic pilgrimage. I found out, that dreadful day in a back corner of the library, that Jane doesn't marry St John at all, that she goes back to Mr Rochester. It was like the day I discovered my adoption papers while searching for a pack of playing cards. I have never since played cards, and I have never since read Jane Eyre. (95–96)	I think Mrs Winterson had been well read at one time. When I was about seven she read *Jane Eyre* to me. This was deemed suitable because it has a minister in it – St John Rivers – who is keen on missionary work. Mrs Winterson read out loud, turning the pages. There is the terrible fire at Thornfield Hall and Mr Rochester goes blind, but in the version Mrs Winterson read, Jane doesn't bother about her now sightless paramour; she marries St John Rivers and they go off together to work in the mission field. It was only when I finally read *Jane Eyre* for myself that I found out what my mother had done. (102)
There were two women I knew who didn't have husbands at all; they were old though, as old as my mother. They ran the paper shop and sometimes, on a Wednesday, they gave me a banana bar with my comic. I liked them a lot, and talked about them a lot to my mother. One day they asked me if I'd like to go to the seaside with them. I ran home, gabbled it out, and was busy emptying my money box to buy a new spade, when my mother said firmly and forever, no. I couldn't understand why not, and she wouldn't explain. She didn't even let me go back to say I couldn't. Then she cancelled my comic and told me to collect it from another shop, further away. I was sorry about that. I never got a banana bar from Grimsby's. A couple of weeks later I heard her telling Mrs White about it. She said they	There were many corner shops in Accrington. […] The best sweet shop was run by two ladies who may or may not have been lovers. One was quite young, but the older one wore a woollen balaclava nonetheless. And she had a moustache. But a lot of women had moustaches in those days. […] Whatever the truth of the story, there came a day when I was forbidden to go into the sweet shop. This was a blow because I always got extra jelly babies from them. When I pestered Mrs Winterson about it she said they dealt in unnatural passions. At the time I assumed this meant they put chemicals in their sweets. […] When I think about it now I wonder why it was […] all wrong for me to get extra sweets from a couple of women

dealt in unnatural passions. I thought she meant they put chemicals in their sweets. (10)	who were happy together, even if one of them wore a balaclava all the time. (94–96)
It might, mother, it might, I thought. She got up and told me to go and find something to do. I decided to go and see Melanie, but just as I reached the door she called me back with a word of warning 'Don't let anyone touch you Down There,' and she pointed to somewhere at the level of her apron pocket. 'No Mother,' I said meekly, and fled. (112)	The only sex education my mother ever gave me was the injunction: 'Never let a boy touch you *down there'*. I had no idea what she meant. She seemed to be referring to my knees. Would it have been better if I had fallen for a bou and not a girl? Probably not. I had entered her own fearful place – the terror of the body, the irresolution of her marriage, her own mother's humiliation at her father's coarseness and womanising. Sex disgusted her. And now, when she saw me, she saw sex. I had made my promises. And in any case Helen had gone away. But now I was someone who wanted to be naked with someone else. I was someone who had loved the feel of skin, of sweat, of kissing, of coming. I wanted sex and I wanted closeness. Inevitably there would be another lover. She knew that. She was watching me. Inevitably she forced it to happen. (104)
I had to head the Bible study that night, despite my sudden nervousness and the worry that I was getting ill again. Katy was there, she saw my troubled face, and wanted to help. 'Come and stay this weekend,' she offered, 'we'll have to sleep in the caravan, but it won't be cold.' I hadn't stayed anywhere for a long time. I thought it might do me good. […] 'I'll bring in the calor gas,' said Katy, 'so we won't be cold.' We weren't cold, not that night nor any of the others we spent together over the years that followed. She was my most uncomplicated love affair, and I loved her because of it. She seemed to have no worries at all, and though she still denies it, I think she planned the caravan. (155)	I went round to her house and told her what had happened and her mother, who was a decent woman, let me sleep in their caravan parked outside the house. (107)
On Palm Sunday Melanie returned, beaming with an important announcement. She was to be married that autumn to an army man. To be fair he had given up the bad fight for the Good Fight, but as far as I was concerned he was revolting. I had no quarrel with men. At that time there was no reason that I should. The women in our church were strong and	I don't know what happened to Helen, She went away to study theology and married an ex-army man who was training to be a missionary. I met them once, later. She was smug and neurotic. He was sadistic and unattractive. But I would say that, wouldn't I? (83–84)

organised. If you want to talk in terms of power I had enough to keep Mussolini happy. So I didn't object to Melanie getting married, I objected to her getting married to him. And she was serene, serene to the point of being bovine. I was so angry I tried to talk to her about it, but she had left her brain in Bangor. She asked me what I was doing. 'Doing for what?' She blushed. I had no intention of telling her or anyone else what happened between Katy and me. Not by nature discreet or guilty I had enough memory to know where that particular revelation would lead. She left the day after, to stay with him and his parents. Just as they were driving off on his horrible Iron Curtain motor bike, he patted my arm, told me he knew, and forgave us both. There was only one thing I could do; mustering all my spit, I did it. (157)	
My mother had emptied her War Cupboard of tinned pineapple, because she thought that's what they ate. She had also gone round collecting blankets so that they wouldn't be cold. When the first coloured pastor came to her house, she had tried to explain to him the significance of parsley sauce. Later she found he had lived most of his life in Hull. Melanie, still waiting for her missionary posting, had dealt with all this as best she could, but she was out of her depth. And so, for the length of the mission, everyone had 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.' (219)	'Vicky,' she said, 'sit down. I've made you cheese on toast with pineapples.' Vicky assumed this was some Lancashire delicacy. The next day there was gammon and pineapple followed by tinned pineapple chunks. Then there were pineapple fritters and pineapple upside-down cake and pineapples and cream and Chinese chicken and pineapple ands pineapple and cubes of Cheddar on cocktail sticks stuck into half a cabbage wrapped in tinfoil. Eventually Vicky said, 'I don't like pineapple.' This was a terrible mistake. Mrs Winterson's mood changed at once. She announced that the next meal would be beefburgers. We said fine, but we were going out that night to eat scampi and chips in the pub. About ten o'clock we returned to find Mrs Winterson standing grimly at the gas oven. There was a dreadful smell of burntness and oil and fat and meat. In the little lean-to kitchen Mrs Winterson was mechanically flipping over some black things about the size of buttons. 'I've been cooking these beefburgers since six o'clock,' she said 'But you knew we were going out.' 'You knew I was cooking beefburgers.' (147–148)