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**A LACANIAN READING OF JEANETTE WINTERSON'S
ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT AND ZADIE SMITH'S
*WHITE TEETH***

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JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN *ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT* VE ZADIE SMITH'İN *WHITE TEETH* ROMANLARININ LACANCI İNCELEMESİ

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ETHICS DECLARATION

I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of this MA thesis entitled “**A Lacanian Reading of Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth***”, which I have prepared in accordance with Dicle University Institute of Social Sciences Thesis Writing Directive, and I have diligently cited all sources to which I have made references in my thesis. I hereby acknowledge that my thesis and its electronic copies will be stored in the archives of Dicle University Institute of Social Sciences.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine two contemporary British novels, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson and *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The self-discovery processes of the female characters in both novels render it possible to carry out this study in the light of Lacan's psychoanalytic criticism. In this respect, Jeanette, the protagonist, from *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and Irie, one of the major characters, from *White Teeth* are to be analysed within the framework of Lacan's key concepts: the Mirror Stage, unconscious desire, the theory of sexualisation, and his three Orders called the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Within their Lacanian journeys of self-discovery, both Jeanette and Irie undergo similar conflicts and challenges in the course of their identity formation. Living through complex familial relationships and romantic entanglements, both female characters struggle to achieve their desired identities in spite of the constraints imposed by their respective symbolic discourses. While Jeanette explores her sexual identity as a lesbian woman despite her strictly religious environment, Irie discovers her racial identity as a mixed-race woman in a multicultural environment predominantly shaped by white British culture. Hence, for this study, these two young women's individual experiences as Lacanian subjects in different symbolic discourses are considered distinctive examples to reveal the Lacanian psychological identity construction process.

Keywords

Lacan, Psychoanalysis, identity, culture, conflict, desire

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Jeanette Winterson'ın *Oranges Are the Only Fruit* ve Zadie Smith'in *White Teeth* adlı iki çağdaş İngiliz romanını Lacancı psikanaliz perspektifinden incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Her iki romandaki kadın karakterin kendi benliğini keşfetme süreci, bu çalışmanın Lacan'ın psikanalitik eleştirisi ışığında yapılmasını mümkün kılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, *Oranges Are the Only Fruit*'un ana karakteri Jeanette ve *White Teeth*'in başlıca ana karakterlerinden Irie, Lacan'ın temel kavramları olan Ayna Evresi, bilinçdışı arzu, cinsiyetlenme kuramı ve Lacan'ın Üç Düzen olarak bilinen İmgesel, Sembolik ve Gerçek kavramları çerçevesinde incelenecektir. Lacancı öz keşif yolculuklarında hem Jeanette hem Irie kimlik oluşumları sırasında benzer çatışmalar ve zorluklar yaşarlar. Karmaşık aile ilişkilerinin yanı sıra romantik ilişki çatışmalarıyla da yüz yüze kalan her iki kadın karakter, ait oldukları sembolik söylemlerin dayattığı kısıtlamalara rağmen arzu ettikleri kimliklere ulaşmak için mücadele ederler. Jeanette, katı dini dayatmalara rağmen lezbiyen bir kadın olarak cinsel kimliğini keşfederken; Irie, baskın beyaz İngiliz kültürüyle şekillenen çok kültürlü bir toplumda melez bir kadın olarak ırksal kimliğini keşfeder. Dolayısıyla, Lacancı özne olarak bu iki genç kadının ait oldukları sembolik söylemlerdeki deneyimleri, bu çalışmada Lacan'ın kimlik inşa süresini yansıtmak adına özgün örnekler olduğunu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Lacan, Psikanaliz, kimlik, kültür, çatışma, arzu

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INTRODUCTION

Jacques Lacan (1901-81), a nontraditional psychoanalyst known for his innovative and radical ideas in psychoanalytic criticism, is considered one of the key thinkers of the 20th century. Lacan is viewed as the most significant thinker in France since René Descartes, and the most groundbreaking and wide-reaching thinker in Europe since Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud (Ragland, 2004, p. ix). More than forty years after his death, Lacan still influences a broad range of research fields, from humanities, literature, and arts to politics. Regarded as the most important psychoanalyst after Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Lacan initiates a new era in psychoanalytic studies with his reconsideration of Freud's work through the lens of structuralist views. Lacan's revolutionary ideas on the relationship between language and the unconscious to interpret the human psyche and behaviours offer novel insights into classical psychoanalysis, mainly associated with Freud, who is accepted as the founding father of psychoanalysis.

Lacan studies medicine and begins his career as a psychiatrist, working with psychotic patients in the 1930s and 1940s. He completes his doctorate with his study on 'Paranoid Psychosis and Its Relations to the Personality' in 1932. Lacan's interest in psychoanalysis, however, sparks up with his two encounters in the early 1930s: one with his reading of an article by the Surrealist painter, Salvador Dali on 'paranoia', and the other is the time he begins to read Freud (Homer, 2005, p. 4). These two encounters lead Lacan to a lifelong engagement with the field of psychoanalysis (p. 4). Around the same year of the 1930s, Lacan starts to be trained as an analyst by Rudolph Loewenstein, the respected training psychoanalyst of the mainstream of France, the Société Psychanalytique de Paris (SPP) even if Lacan and Loewenstein have, later, followed completely opposite paths in their psychanalytic studies. Lacan continues his training in analysis for six years until he is accepted as a training analyst in Paris. With his presentation of his first paper, 'The Mirror Stage' at a conference organised by the International Psycho-Analytical Association (IPA) in 1936, Lacan is thought to have given the first signals of his version of psychoanalysis. Lacan's process of developing his own theory, in fact, starts with his movement 'Return to Freud' in the 1950s, claiming that the original aim of psychoanalysis, shaped around Freudian thoughts, is deserted by post-Freud thinkers, who founded Ego Psychology, which

emphasizes “the ways of strengthening the defence mechanisms of the conscious mind rather than the unconscious motivation of our actions, as in classical psychoanalysis” (Homer, 2005, p. 5). In a way, through his provocative critiques of the discipline of Ego Psychology, the prevailing psychoanalytic paradigm during the 1950s, developed by the post-Freud psychoanalysts like Heinz Hartmann, Erns Kris, and David Rapaport in 1939, Lacan opposes the idea of the conflict-free-zone of ego, which refers to an ego capable of functioning autonomously, free from internal conflicts between the id and superego. Nobus (2002) indicates that “Lacan’s main ambition during the 1950s consisted in the recovery of the roots of psychoanalysis, in order to tailor its contemporary practice to the sphere of the subject” (p. 1). To assert the necessity of a return to Freud and Freud’s texts, Lacan, in the 1950s, begins his public seminars, which would last almost thirty years and constitute ground resources for Lacanian studies. Lacan, in his annual seminars held in Paris from 1953 to 1981, does a close rereading of Freud’s basic terms and concepts in the light of his innovative and revolutionary ideas shaped around linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy. However, Lacan’s emphasis on the structuralist aspects of Freud’s work along with his practices of short sessions and a new analyst training programme is not welcomed and causes long-term conflicts and disagreements with the established institutions of psychoanalysis, the SPP and the IPA. Even though he splits from his SPP’s members and is banned from training analysts by the IPA, Lacan remains adamantly on his path to formulating his theory, joining new psychoanalytic organisations and in the following years founding his schools of psychoanalysis in Paris. For Lacan, the regulations forced by the IPA are fundamentally wrong because the field of psychoanalysis, still young and evolving, should not be confined to the strictures imposed by any group of people (Bailly, 2012, p. 16). Thus, Lacan might be said to have declared his independence as a radical psychoanalyst and persisted in his studies, ignoring his non-recognition by the IPA.

Despite those disagreements about his innovative ideas and practices in psychoanalytic theory, Lacan has reached a wide range of audiences thanks to his annual public seminars in the 1960s and 70s. With his excommunication from the ‘mainstream’ psychoanalysis, Lacan, in the 1964s, has moved his seminars, with the invitation of the French historicist Fernand Braudel and the Marxist theorist Louis

Althusser, to the Ecole Normale Superior, one of the most prestigious institutions of French education, from Sainte-Anne Psychiatric Hospital, where he gave his seminars for ten years to mostly clinicians and practitioners of psychoanalysis. On the other hand, moving his seminars becomes a sort of turning point for Lacan since he, now, starts to address a different group of audiences ranging from students, philosophers, educators, and writers to political activists. Hence, the influence of Lacan and his thinking has spread beyond the field of psychoanalysis. For this reason, today, Lacan's teachings are seen to be "extensively used in many parts of academia, from literature, cinema, critical theory, gender studies, to politics and philosophy" (Bailly et al., 2012, p. xvi). Moreover, moving his seminars is thought of as an indication of a shift in the direction of Lacan's work. In his 11th seminar, his first seminar held under the roof of the École Normale Supérieure, Lacan signals the development of his own model of psychoanalysis, abandoning the explanation of Freud's basic terms and ideas. Homer (2005) states that the seminar delivered in 1964 was a crucial moment in Lacan's career and the evolution of his thoughts. ... Seminar XI, was, in a way, the first declaration of his new direction (p. 10). That is why, Lacan, in his seminars held for the next 18 years until his death in 1981, is observed to have formulated his model and evolved his thoughts in psychoanalysis. In this respect, Lacan's seminars are "the arena in which he expounded his theories, and became the basis of the Lacanian canon" (Bailly, 2012, p. 15). Today, his seminars, many of which are compiled into books, and his cult book *Écrits* are consulted by various psychoanalysts and thinkers to elaborate the depth of Lacanian thinking for literary and academic studies.

Lacan's psychoanalytic model of theory might be considered a ramification of his intellectual circles. Undoubtedly, Lacan is influenced by some notable figures in developing his theory. "You might think of Lacan as Freud plus Saussure, with a dash of Levi-Strauss and even some seasoning of Derrida" (Klages, 2006, p. 74). Lacan, with his initial attempt to return to Freud, has generated his thoughts and ideas, rethinking psychoanalysis from a structuralist perspective. Influenced by the structuralist views of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, he emphasises the relationship between language and the unconscious in understanding the human psyche. That is to say, "Lacan made language and speech the cornerstone of his approach to the psyche" (Yadlin-Gadot et

al., 2023, p. 4). Theorising the idea that “the unconscious is structured like a language” (Seminar XX, p. 56), he indicates that our psychic world is shaped by linguistic structures, and language has an essential role in defining unconscious desires and thoughts, which help to shape the subject. In a sense, Lacan regards the unconscious not as a dark place of unresolved conflicts and repressed desires, but rather as the discourse of language, which the subject is born into. Barry (2009) expresses that the unconscious is not a chaotic mix of unrelated elements, but an organised network, as complex as the structure of language: what psychoanalysis finds in the unconscious is the complete structure of language (p. 106). Placing language at the centre of his theory, Lacan, therefore, tries to clarify the function of the unconscious in relation to the ‘Lacanian’ subject. Affected by the structuralist idea of the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss about the kinship system, Lacan also offers a new way of thinking to Freud’s notion of the Oedipal process through his innovative concept of *the Name-of-the-Father*, which symbolises all sorts of rules and restrictions the subject is expected to obey. In Lacan’s process of formulating his theory, we confront other prominent figures as well. The French philosopher and psychologist Henri Wallon, known for his mirror test on six-month-old babies and similar-aged chimpanzees, is one of those prime thinkers who influenced Lacan in developing his psychoanalytic theory. With his concept of the Mirror Stage, accepted as his first innovation in psychoanalysis, Lacan presents his ideas on how the infant forms a sense of the unified ‘self’ through its identification with the image reflected in the mirror. Lacan’s ideas, as indicated above, shaped mainly around structuralist views, have presented novel insights into psychoanalysis through his reinterpretation of Freud’s work. Lacan, however, in his process of theory formulation, has created key concepts and terms special to his model of psychoanalysis as well. Lacan’s work is much more than a reflection of Freud’s thoughts. Likewise, Bailly et al. (2012) state that “in his examination of the fundamentals [of Freud], Lacan coined new terms and ideas of his own (p. xxvi). Among his innovative formulations are seen some concepts like *object a*, *the Other*, *the Name-of-the-Father*, and *the subject of the unconscious*, which are primarily associated with Lacanian psychoanalysis today. Particularly, Lacan, after transferring his seminars to the École Normale Supérieure, has added a new dimension to his psychoanalytic studies. His seminars for the years 1964-1973

focus on “the elaboration of concepts and terms peculiar to Lacan’s work, such as the object a, the barred subject, the Other, and, increasingly, jouissance” (Clark, 2014, p. liii). The final phase of Lacan’s career, which refers to his seminars during the years 1974-1981, illustrates his other innovative move in psychoanalysis called ‘the theory of knots’ to explain the relationship between his three Orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, which he already developed in his early seminars in the 1950s. On this account, Lacan’s theory is said not to be static but changing and evolving throughout his life, providing new perspectives to psychoanalytic studies. In regard to this introductory information about Lacan’s life and career, the context in which Lacan developed his thoughts, and the notable figures who influenced Lacan have been thought of great importance to elaborate Lacanian psychoanalysis for this study.

This thesis aims to discuss two contemporary novels, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson and *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The self-discovery process of the female characters in both novels renders it possible to carry out this study in the light of Lacan’s psychoanalytic criticism. In this respect, Jeanette, the protagonist, from *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and Irie, one of the major characters, from *White Teeth* are to be analysed in relation to Lacan’s theory of sexuation, unconscious desire, the Mirror Stage, and his three Orders called the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Within their Lacanian journeys of self-discovery, Jeanette attempts to explore her sexual identity as a lesbian woman despite her strictly religious environment whereas Irie struggles to discover her racial identity as a mixed-race woman in a multicultural environment, which is predominantly shaped by white British culture. For this reason, these two young women’s individual experiences as Lacanian subjects in different symbolic discourses are considered distinctive examples to reveal the Lacanian psychological identity construction process.

This thesis, through a Lacanian reading of these two young female protagonists, attempts to offer an illuminative insight into both *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *White Teeth* compared to previous studies largely carried out within the fields of feminism and postcolonialism. In earlier studies conducted on *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the novel has been analysed mostly through a feminist lens to explore how traditional gender and sexual identities are deconstructed against a

patriarchal structure. Besides its common feminist scholarship, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* has also been intertextually analysed due to its rich engagement with biblical texts and fairy tales within its narration. Through its presentation of contemporary debates on identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, race, and immigration, *White Teeth*, in its previous studies, has mostly been examined within the context of postcolonial studies. The novel's portrayal of characters from diverse cultural and social backgrounds has positioned *White Teeth* as a central text in postcolonial discussions. However, this study, by bringing together these two novels under the scope of Lacanian psychoanalysis, presents a novel perspective on the identity construction processes of these two young female protagonists beyond the frameworks of feminist and postcolonial studies.

The thesis presents three main chapters to examine the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *White Teeth*. The first chapter of the thesis introduces the theoretical information of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, elaborating on the details of Lacan's three Orders called the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, which form the basis of this study. Lacan's ideas on the theory of sexuation will be expanded in relation to the notions of phallus and jouissance to show the sexual difference in the subject. His theory of the Mirror Stage will be analysed regarding the function of the reflected image in constructing the initial sense of self of the subject. Moreover, the issues of trauma and unconscious desires will be clarified in the context of Lacan's Real.

The second chapter discusses the literary importance and background of the contemporary British author, Jeanette Winterson. In the following part of the second chapter, the Lacanian analysis of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is to be proposed in relation to Jeanette's identity development process in her symbolic discourse shaped around religious doctrines.

The third chapter, in the same way, argues the other British contemporary author, Zadie Smith's importance for literary studies, giving details about her life and works. In the following part of the same chapter, the Lacanian analysis of *White Teeth* is to be studied to illustrate Irie's identity formation process in her symbolic discourse, a multicultural environment, predominantly structured by white British culture.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. THREE ORDERS IN LACAN'S PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Lacan has formulated the psyche in terms of three Orders, known also as three Registers: *the Imaginary*, *the Symbolic*, and *the Real*. People familiar with classical psychoanalysis often tend to compare Freud's model of psyche (*id*, *ego*, and *superego*) with Lacan's three Orders. However, Lacan's three Orders need to be evaluated with their own merits even if Lacan is known to be mostly affected by Freud's thoughts while developing his psychoanalytic theory. Lacan's three Orders is not similar to Freud's model of the psyche. Lacan's formulation "does not represent the psyche but a system of interacting realms, orders, or registers in which the psyche functions" (Bailly, 2012, p. 85). These three Orders, regarded as the fundamental structure of the Lacanian psyche, work interrelatedly. This interconnected relationship of the three Orders plays a crucial role in developing the human psyche and the psyche's function in constructing the 'Lacanian' subject. Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) assert that "The interactions among the orders are dynamic and volatile throughout life and their conjoined effects constitute the subject and his realities" (p. 4). Lacan's three Orders, in this sense, indicate the infant's psychic development in its process of becoming a subject. Lacan's three Orders are going to be explained in the following order: first the Imaginary Order, second the Symbolic Order, and finally the Real.

1.1. The Imaginary Order

For Lacan, the infant's psychic development starts with the Imaginary Order, in which the infant perceives the world through images rather than words. The Imaginary Order, as a preverbal stage shaped around the infant's perceptions, refers to the period of a satisfying dyadic connection between the infant and its mother. In its early months, the infant does not have a sense of itself and experiences both its body and its environment as a random, fragmented, formless mass (Tyson, 2006, p. 27). For the infant, there is no distinction between itself and its environment. It cannot differentiate itself from its environment as a fragmented being. However, between six and eighteen months, the infant begins to experience the Mirror Stage, where the infant recognises its reflected image in the mirror and identifies itself with it. In other words, "[t]he child ... finds ... in the mirror a gratifying unified image of itself" (Eagleton,

1996, p. 143) and thus forms a sense of self as a whole. As specified by Homer (2005), “it is the image that provides him/her with a sense of unification and wholeness” (p. 25). Lacan (2006) states that the child, who encounters his mirror image starting in the sixth month, experiences triumphant jubilation and playful self-discovery (p. 91). In this sense, the Mirror Stage, which occurs between the periods of 6 and 18 months, indicates the time “when the child sees its own reflection in the mirror and begins to conceive itself as a unified being, separate from the rest of the world” (Barry, 2009, p. 109). For this reason, the Mirror Stage possesses a fundamental role in the development of the infant’s initial sense of self and is viewed as a first and foremost condition for the infant to enter the Imaginary Order.

The concept of the Mirror Stage is first proposed by Lacan in 1936 at the 14th IPA Congress in Marienbad, arguing that the child’s initial sense of self occurs through its identification with the reflected image in the mirror. In the following years, Lacan reconceptualises his ideas and formally presents his refined version of the Mirror Stage at the 16th Zurich IPA Congress in 1949 with his paper called ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’. In his second version of the Mirror Stage, Lacan emphasises the role of the image in the formation of the ego through a dialectic relationship between the infant and its image in the mirror. Lacan’s theory of the Mirror Stage, as his initial attempt in psychoanalytic studies, forms the fundamental structure of Lacanian thinking. However, the idea of the Mirror Stage does not begin with Lacan. He is considered to have borrowed the idea of the Mirror Stage from the French Marxist Psychologist, Henri Wallon. Roudinesco (2003) claims that Lacan revised Wallon’s terminology and changed the mirror test into the mirror stage (p. 29). In the same way, Bailly (2012) says that Lacan “borrowed and modified the Wallonian concept of the mirror test” (p. 22). Wallon, in 1931, conducted an experiment of the mirror test on six-month-old human babies and similar-aged chimpanzees. In his mirror test, he realised that the human babies and chimpanzees responded differently to their images in the mirror. While the human babies remained fascinated by their reflections, the chimpanzees lost their attention to their reflections (Buchanan, 2018, p. 261). Wallon also published a study titled *Les Origines du caractère chez l’enfant* in 1934 and his ideas there about the baby and the image became central to Lacanian thinking (Bailly, 2012, p. 21). On this account,

Lacan is thought to have been affected by Wallon's thoughts and developed his theory of the Mirror Stage, which initiates the psychological development of the infant.

The infant, with its unified sense of self through experiencing the Mirror Stage, enters the realm of the Imaginary, where the infant shares a feeling of completeness and wholeness due to its satisfying union with the mother. Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) express that "the logic of the Imaginary is dyadic" (p. 17), referring to the mutual connection between the infant and its mother during the Imaginary Order. This dyadic bond is so strong and delightful that the infant lives in a world of fantasies and perceives itself as an inseparable part of its mother (Tyson, 2006, p. 27). In a way, the infant's step into the Imaginary Order means entering the world of illusions. Bailly (2012) states that "the Imaginary is programmed from the start to be a realm of illusion" (p. 89), referring to the infant's joyful fascination with its reflected image during the Mirror Stage. Likewise, the infant's idealised identification with its mother creates an illusionary world, in which the infant senses that it possesses complete mastery over its environment and feels a sense of power and fulfilment. In its perception, the infant is the mother's sole desire and the infant's sole desire is the mother. In this mutually gratifying union, there exists no third party between the infant and its mother. Lacan defines the Imaginary as a realm where the pre-Oedipal infant, as a preverbal being, is exposed to impressions, fantasies, and all sorts of drives and has no sense of limitations and boundaries (Bertens, 2002, p. 160). For this reason, in Lacan's Imaginary Order, in the realm of fantasies and illusions, this strong feeling of complete union provides a bilateral existence both to the infant and its mother. In this respect, Lacan calls this experience *the Desire of the Mother*, which signifies the two-way of desire, "the desire of the mother for the child and the child's desire of the mother" (Tyson, 2006, p. 27). For the infant, this feeling is so intense and satisfying that it always wishes to maintain its Desire of the Mother throughout its whole life. The mother symbolises the infant's ultimate sense of happiness and joy, which it once possessed during the Imaginary Order. Guerin et al. (2011) describe the Imaginary Order as the Realm of the Mother because there exists nothing to repress for the child (p. 208). In a sense, the mother is the infant's entire world, offering a sense of unity and completeness. The infant remains in the realm of the Mother and continues to experience this delightful feeling until it acquires language.

1.1.1. The Mirror Stage as the Ego Formation

The process of the Mirror Stage begins with the infant's identification with the image in the mirror and continues with the act of the infant's ego formation within the Imaginary Order. Namely, the Mirror Stage, including the periods of 6 and 18 months, refers to a more complicated process beyond the infant's recognition of its reflected image. Shevchenko (2023) says that "The reflection of the infant's body provides a unified image to the initially fragmented mental-physical complex. This reflected image becomes the basis for the imaginary entity known as the "ego," the object of identity for human consciousness" (p. 108). For Lacan, the infant's unified sense of self through its identification with the image is based on a 'misrecognition', which means that the infant develops a whole self, not through an authentic bodily experience but rather through an image external to itself. Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) note that "the first marking of Lacanian identity does not the experience of the actual *body*, but rather on an *externally-driven body image*" (p. 27). Likewise, Terry Eagleton (1996), the Irish literary theorist, mentions that the image the child encounters in the mirror is alienated: the child misrecognizes itself in the image and discovers a satisfying sense of unity, which is not its actual bodily experience (p. 143). Hence, during the process of the Mirror Stage, the infant becomes alienated from itself and forms its unified self in place outside of itself. It is the reflected image that helps the subject to perceive himself as a complete and whole 'self'. That is to say, the ego, as a primary form of identity, is created through misrecognition and alienation during the Mirror Stage. Explaining the crucial function of the external image in the infant's ego formation, Homer (2005) emphasises that:

For Lacan, the ego emerges at this moment of alienation and fascination with one's own image. ... the ego is based on an illusionary image of wholeness and mastery and it is the function of the ego to maintain this illusion of coherence and mastery. The function of the ego, in other words, one of *mis-recognition*; of refusing to accept the truth of fragmentation and alienation. (p. 25)

On the other hand, Freud defines the ego as a reasoning agency of the psyche between two opposing forces: the id and the superego. The ego works as a mediator to balance the demands of the id and the imperatives of the superego. Lacan (2006) says

that Freud described the ego as the perception-consciousness system, ... through which an organism is adapted to the reality principle (p. 146). However, in Lacan's theory, the ego represents the infant's primary sense of 'self' through its identification with the reflected image, based on a misrecognition. Lacan's notion of the ego, in this regard, is more similar to Freud's notion of narcissism as indicated by Roudinesco (2003): "Lacan bases his idea of mirror phase on the Freudian concept of primary narcissism" (p. 30). On one side, the reflected image constitutes the infant's ego, on the other side, that image is not actually the true self of the infant. To exist, the infant creates mastery over its image and recognises it as its true self. This act of misrecognition, thus, contributes to the development of the infant's initial sense of 'self'. Bertens (2002) claims that "... that misrecognition is the basis for what we see as our identity" (p. 161). For this reason, Lacan's concept of the Mirror Stage is important to understand the development of the subject's 'self' in relation to *others*. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the mirror image is also associated with Lacan's concept of *the small other* called *petit autre*, which signifies how the subject forms his sense of 'self' through interactions with other people in society. That is to say, the small other does not just refer to the reflected image in the mirror but also represents other people, who influence the subject to develop his 'self'. The subject relates to small others like siblings, peers, or any other external figures in society, which helps to shape his understanding of himself. Bailly (2012) shares that "Apart from the small other in the mirror, the individual comes to recognise all other people as 'little others', and to treat them as suitable objects of projection and identification" (p. 63).

1.2. The Symbolic Order

The Symbolic Order, initiated by the child's acquisition of language, possesses a significant role in shaping the 'Lacanian' subject. "[I]t is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject" (Lacan, 2006, p. 7). When the child acquires language, it leaves the Imaginary Order and steps into the realm of the Symbolic, which refers to a structure, which pre-exists, consisting of laws and regulations. This symbolic structure, in a sense, shapes the subject while forming his self. The Symbolic Order, according to Lacan, is closely associated with language. When the child enters the Symbolic, it enters the world of language (Bertens, 2002, p. 160). For Lacan, there exists a close relationship between the function of the Symbolic Order and language.

While formulating his concept of the Symbolic Order, Lacan is influenced by the structuralist views of Ferdinand de Saussure. According to Saussure, language consists of elements and rules that we are not aware of while speaking and writing, but they exist there and determine what we can and cannot say (Homer, 2005, p. 37). This means, the child is born into a pre-existing language and unconsciously abides by that language's rules and system. In some way, language is always there, in the world, outside of the child, waiting for the child to be moulded around its established rules. Within the limits of that language system, the subject creates his own experiences and subjectivity. Guerin et al. (2011) state that "Entering the field of the Symbolic means attaching to the rules of language and subjugation by law" (p. 208). Lacan, in this respect, emphasises the importance of language in comprehending the function of the Symbolic Order to construct the subject. When the child enters the realm of the Symbolic, he is, therefore, subjected to the laws of the Symbolic Order, as with the child's experience during its acquisition of language. For Lacan, the Symbolic Order represents all sorts of laws and regulations the child is expected to follow. Homer (2005) indicates that "To be fully human we are *subjected* to this symbolic order – the order of language, of discourse; we cannot escape it, although as a structure it escapes us" (p. 44). For this reason, the Symbolic Order holds a key role in the formation of the child's self. The child, experiencing the laws of the Symbolic Order, comes to realise its roles and relations in society, which helps to shape its self.

In formulating the Symbolic Order, Lacan has proposed his innovative concept of *the big Other* called *Le grand Autre*, which signifies the hypothetical eye, observing our actions and making us behave according to linguistic and social rules (May-Hobbs, 2023, para. 5). Compared to the small other, *petit autre*, appearing as the reflection of the ego during the Mirror Stage in the Imaginary Order, the big Other manifests as an authority figure in the Symbolic Order. The big Other represents the Society, the Law, Language, and cultural norms. In a sense, the big Other is the Symbolic Order itself. Bailly (2012) expresses that "[t]he Law, societal rules, taboos, mores, and expectations, and even Time are different faces of the Other" (p. 67). Likewise, Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) share that the Other as an object of the Symbolic Order consists of language, law and social structure (p. 15). [The subject] lives in this realm of law and language and he is shaped by the social forces and structure, reflecting the

Other's demands (p. 9). In this context, any structure that contributes to the subject to develop his subjectivity, in other words, his 'self', refers to the Other in the Symbolic Order. The subject is obliged to the Other to construct his 'self', and therefore, the subject is constituted in the discourse of the Other. Lacan argues that "... the subject is subject only from being subjected to the field of the Other" (Seminar XI, p. 188). He also adds that we depend on the field of the Other, which precedes our existence and determines us as subjects through its circulating structures (p. 246). The child's first big Other is actually embodied in its mother. Through its (m)Other, the child acquires language. Accordingly, the child, in this process, adopts its (m)Other's attitudes, rules, and beliefs. This situation signifies that the child is not an independent self, but rather one constructed by the Other in the Symbolic Order. This corresponds to Lacan's claim, "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Seminar XI, p. 235). Through its first experience of the Other via its mother and, then, its encounters with various big Other(s) in life, the child lives the desire of the Other and thus forms its subjectivity. Our 'selves' are not "the result of our unique personalities, our own wills and judgements. ... what we desire is what we are taught to desire" (Tyson, 2006, p. 31). That is to say, "our desires are always inextricably bound up with the desires of others" (Homer, 2005, p. 70). For this reason, the Symbolic Order, the discourse of the big Other, consists of ideologies, which refer to beliefs, values, cultural norms, laws, systems and religious doctrines in societies. Unaware of the impacts of society's ideologies, the subject unconsciously develops his own self, believing that he is the one who has created it. In fact, those ideologies shape the understanding of the subject's sense of self. Carter (2006) states that "Ideology is ... part of The Other and provides a 'misrecognition' of the self, a false interpretation, which nevertheless part of the self" (p. 75). In the same way, Bertens (2002) explains that "Ideology might be seen in Lacanian terms as 'the Other' whose 'misrecognition' of us becomes incorporated in our identity" (p. 163). Therefore, Lacan emphasises the function of language in creating the discourse of the Other during the Symbolic Order, which refers to a fundamental structure that shapes the subject's self.

1.2.1. Lacanian Oedipus Complex

Lacan, through his radical re-reading of Freud, redefines the Oedipus Complex. For Freud, the Oedipus Complex refers to the process where the child resolves its

unconscious desire for its opposite-sex parent and identifies with its same-sex parent as an individual. On the other hand, the Oedipus Complex, for Lacan, represents a symbolic structure, which signifies the child's transition from the Imaginary Order to the Symbolic Order. When the child enters the realm of the Symbolic, through its acquisition of language, it encounters the laws of the Symbolic Order. The first law the child encounters is the father's prohibition, which prevents the satisfying mutual connection between the child and its mother, experienced during the Imaginary Order. Through the presence of the father in the Symbolic Order, the child is bound to quit its fantasy union with the mother. Eagleton (1996) says that "this 'dyadic' structure is destined to give way to a 'triadic' one: and this happens when the father enters upon and disturbs this harmonious scene" (p. 143). For Lacan, the father signifies the law. The father, as an authority signifier in the Symbolic Order, "mark[s] the psychic separation of [the child] from the maternal realm" (Feher-Gurewich, 2003, p. 196). Therefore, the child, losing its blissful union with its mother, experiences the biggest separation of its life. This separation, unfortunately, causes a lack in the child. For this reason, the child's entry into the Symbolic Order means "entering a world of loss and lack" (Tyson, 2006, p. 30). Now, the child, as a lacking being, unconsciously strives to complete its sense of fulfilment, searching for substitutes for its loss in the Symbolic Order. However, despite its struggles to compensate for its loss, the child could not reach the sense of completeness, experienced through its delightful connection with the mother during the Imaginary Order. Eagleton (1996) states that "We move among substitutes for substitutes, metaphors of metaphors, never able to recover the pure ... self-identity and self-completion which we knew in the imaginary" (p. 146). Similarly, Tyson (2006) indicates that our feeling of completeness, fullness, and union with our mother disappears when we enter the Symbolic Order through our acquisition of language and we seek that sense of fulfilment even if we do not realise it (p. 28). In a sense, the child, throughout its entire life, unconsciously desires to sustain its idealised union with the mother, which it has lost through the law of the father in the Symbolic Order. Lacan identifies this lost object of desire as *objet petit a*, which represents the child's satisfying union with the mother. It is the *objet petit a* that keeps the child desiring and filling the lack in the Symbolic Order even if its sense of fulfilment always remains incomplete. For this reason, "refinding of the object of our desire throughout

life will never be entirely separable from illusion’’ (Luepnitz, 2003, p. 225) because the Desire of the Mother remains unreachable to the child through the law of the father in the Symbolic Order.

Upon entering the Symbolic Order, the child confronts *the Name-of-the-Father*, the symbolic signifier, which regulates all sorts of rules and prohibitions for the child to follow. In a sense, the Name-of-the-Father takes the place of the Desire of the Mother in the Symbolic Order. Unlike Freud’s physical figure of the father in the relationship between the child and the mother, the Name-of-the-Father, for Lacan, “refers not to the real father, nor to the imaginary father ..., but to the symbolic father’’ (Sheridan, 1997, p. 281). In this sense, the Name-of-the-Father is regarded as the authority and prohibitive signifier of the Symbolic Order, which imposes the laws on the child. The first law imposed on the child, as mentioned before, is the law of the father, which breaks the dyadic bond between the child and its mother. Lacan’s Name-of-the-Father, however, functions in a much broader perspective, embodying all rules of the Symbolic Order, where the child shapes its ‘self’ around these established rules. That is to say, the Name-of-the-Father determines the child’s roles and relations in society, which helps to construct the subject’s self. Bailly (2012) remarks that “the father’s very existence in their lives implies the functioning of mother and child within a wider sphere governed by social rules’’ (p. 76). This shows that Lacan, affected by the structuralist idea of the anthropologist Levi-Strauss about the kinship system, has expanded the dimension of his model of the Oedipus Complex. Levi-Strauss argues that “A relationship ... concerns not just the two people involved but also a whole social network of friends, relations and institutions. Thus, personal relationships situate men and women in a symbolic circuit of social meanings’’ (Homer, 2005, p. 53). Namely, when the subject enters the Symbolic Order, he steps into a social structure, which functions through its own rules and constraints. That is why, this social structure regulates the subject’s interactions and relations with other people in society without his being aware of it. In this respect, we could say that “[i]n our society the primary structure that defines our symbolic and unconscious relations is the Oedipus Complex’’ (p. 53). The child, experiencing the process of the Oedipus Complex, enters this social structure – that is, the Symbolic Order. For Lacan, the child’s entry into the Symbolic Order is only possible through its acceptance of the

law of the father. “In order for the human being to be able to establish the most natural of relations, ... a third party [the father] has to intervene ...” (Seminar III, p. 96). Otherwise, the child remains in the world of fantasy, in the Imaginary Order, and cannot adjust to the social realities of its world, which “renders [it] incapable of functioning in society” (Tyson, 2006, p. 32).

1.2.2. The Lacanian Subject

The Lacanian subject, with its transition from the Imaginary Order to the Symbolic Order through its acquisition of language, experiences a lack through the existence of the law of the father and is constituted in the Symbolic Order. Clark (2014) expresses that for Lacan, any subject, regardless of gender, is constructed around lack, inherent in its relation to the Symbolic (p. lvi). In the same way, Homer (2005) states that “... the subject ... is determined by the symbolic order and language and is constitutively split or divided” (p. 71). For this reason, Lacan’s concept of the subject refers to the divided and unstable nature of human identity. For Lacan, “the subject is born divided” (Seminar XI, p. 213) and continues to live his life as divided. Lacan refers to this subject as the ‘split’ subject, which is constituted through two operations called ‘alienation’ and ‘separation’.

For the subject, alienation occurs on two occasions. His initial alienation is experienced during the moment the child forms its ego through its misrecognition of the reflected image in the mirror in the Imaginary Order. The subject, however, undergoes the second alienation in the discourse of the Other with his entry into the realm of the Symbolic and language. These two alienation processes hold an important role in constructing the subject’s subjectivity. The subject, doubly alienated, with his entrance into the field of language, creates his selfhood in relation to the rules of the Other. In a sense, the subject’s thoughts are determined by the Other, and he speaks the discourse of the Other. The subject, therefore, lives the realities of the Other and is constructed as split, alienating from his ‘self’ in the field of the language. On this account, Homer (2005) maintains that “we cannot escape from language and language inscribes us in a certain position within the symbolic” (p. 72)

The second operation through which the subject is constituted is separation, which is associated with desire. The subject, through separation, steps into the realm of desire and seeks out what exists “outside structure, and beyond language and the

Other'' (p. 72). In a sense, through separation, the subject comes to realise that he is not just the subject of language but rather a separate being from the (m)Other. The (m)Other, here, is different from the Other of alienation. It refers to a desiring being, which signifies that the (m)Other itself is a lacking Other. For Lacan, 'desire' appears in absence and lack. Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) claim that "Desire ..., by definition, a form of lack. When one lacks nothing, one desires nothing" (p. 28). So, it could be said that the (m)Other desires something lacking in itself. As indicated before, the child, in its early months, is fully dependent on the mother and perceives itself as the mother's sole desire. However, in time, the child, in its mother's absence, notices that the mother desires something, not provided by it. Feher-Gurewich (2003) mentions that "This situation presupposes ... that the mother is a desiring being, in other words, she wants something she does not have" (p. 194). The desire of the mother is the *phallus*, which is the symbolic signifier of absence and lack. Luepnitz (2003) says that the phallus, ironically, stands for the opposite of completeness, namely lack (p. 226). Realizing that the mother desires something else, not dependent on it, the child experiences a dilemma and questions its meaning for the mother. In a sense, the child's status as an object of its mother's desire disappears, and thus the child becomes a desiring subject and, at the same time, a lacking subject just like the m(Other). Homer (2005) claims that separation occurs precisely when the subject could ask, 'What am I in the Other's desire?' and thus can distinguish itself from the desire of the Other (p. 73). This shows that the interaction between the child and the (m)Other in relation to desire allows the subject to construct his 'self'. Now, the subject is in pursuit of his lost object of desire, objet petit a, which helps the subject to maintain his sense of completeness and fulfilment.

1.3. The Real

Lacan, before formulating the realm of the Real, had already been using his concepts of Symbolic and Imaginary Orders in his studies. Even if he integrated the Real in his tripartite structure, the three Orders, in the early 1950s, the realm of the Real was not fully developed and emerged gradually in Lacan's seminars and writings. During the periods of 1950s and 1960s, Lacan, heavily influenced by structuralist linguistics, primarily focused on the function of language in the formulation of his Symbolic Order. From the 1960s, Lacan, however, mostly devoted his attention to

developing his concept of the Real. The Real, by its definition, is indescribable and unknowable. It is considered one of the most difficult concepts to explain in Lacan's theory. That is why, the Real remains one of Lacan's most debated concepts in his psychoanalytic studies. For Lacan, "The 'real' emerges as a third term, linked to the symbolic and the imaginary: it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from ... an experience of speech" (Sheridan, 1997, p. 280). The Real, in this sense, cannot be fully captured or represented by either of these orders. The Real exists in the interaction or tension between the Symbolic and Imaginary Orders. In the course of these two orders' interaction, "something was always being 'left out'" (Bailly, 2012, p. 94). What is 'left out' in that interaction represents the Real. In other words, the Real appears in the gaps, ruptures, or absence between the Symbolic and Imaginary Orders. Even though we cannot articulate what it is, because it is beyond our comprehension, the Real has a profound impact on our lives. In some way, we feel that gap or absence inside of us but we cannot name it. Sarup (1992) describes the Real as "the domain of the inexpressible, of what cannot be spoken about, for it does not belong to language" (qtd. in Selden et al., 2005, p. 158). Similarly, Eagleton (1996) defines the Real as an "inaccessible realm which is always beyond the reach of signification, always outside the symbolic order" (p. 145). The Real resists symbolization and refers to the unrepresentable core of experience that lies beyond language. It is not represented by social realities experienced in the Symbolic Order or by the preverbal fantasy union attained in the Imaginary Order. But rather, the Real is "everything in mental life that does *not* fall in the realm of the Symbolic and Imaginary" (Yadlin-Gadot et al., 2023, p. 20). Therefore, the Real, beyond reach and existence, refers to the gap or emptiness that will complete the core of our being.

Lacan's Real is associated with the concept of 'trauma'. For psychoanalysis, traumas are usually psychic events which deeply affect human mental life and behaviours. Psychic trauma emerges when an individual encounters an external stimulus and cannot fully understand and control its disturbing impacts (Homer, 2005, p. 83). Lacan's Real might manifest itself during the moment we experience traumas. Namely, the traces of the Real could be found in our psychological traumatic experiences. Lacan, in this context, has introduced the notion of *the trauma of the Real* in his theory. The trauma of the Real indicates "a certain blockage or fixation in the

process of signification (Homer, 2005, p. 84), implying that we confront an unfiltered reality, beyond symbolization, which causes a sense of anxiety and discomfort. In this respect, the trauma of the Real might be thought of as a sort of existential encounter. We begin to realise our limitations in creating our own realities in a predetermined society. Tyson (2006) explains that the Real stays outside the world of ideologies, through which society explains existence. The Real is “‘existence without filters and buffers’”. We come to realise that those ideologies, which refer to our values, beliefs, or truths, are not actually our own creations, and we see the world from their perspectives. This realisation, unfortunately, makes us terrified and causes anxious feelings we cannot control (p. 32). This is a sort of unexpected spark in the gap we feel inside of us. Or, it is “‘a little like throwing paint in the direction of the Invisible Man in order to make him out’” (Bailly, 2012, p. 94). Those moments are the manifestation of our experience of the trauma of Real. Put in other terms, the trauma of Real makes us see that the [real] reality hidden behind ideologies is beyond our capacity to comprehend and control (p. 32). That pre-existing structure we are born into, in a sense, embodies realities beyond our comprehension. This traumatic situation, therefore, destabilises our sense of self as well as our relationship with the world. In pursuit of a ‘meaning’ for our existence in life, we constantly try to fill out the gap or emptiness, only accessed through the Real.

2. SEXUATION IN LACAN’S PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Psychoanalysis regards sexuality as an inseparable part of human identity. The origin of sexual beings is rooted in the sense of self that is formed during childhood. That is why, sexuality is considered one of the most crucial indicators of people’s psychological status and development. Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) state that “‘Sexuality is foundational for psychoanalysis because ... it is a general force of life, an innate drive and an element of the unconscious’” (p. 67). Freud formulates his theory of sexuality on the basis of anatomical differences in men and women. He introduces the Oedipus Complex to explain the sexual difference. In the process of the Oedipus Complex, a little boy gives up his mother as a love object and identifies with his father for fear of castration, losing the ‘phallus’, which signifies the male organ, the penis. On the other hand, for a little girl, this process is much more complicated and presents no satisfactory resolution. The little girl, in Freud’s thought, is already castrated,

undergoes a process called penis envy and resolves her Oedipus Complex through a compensatory fantasy, desiring to have a baby from the father. On this point, Freud's thoughts about sexual difference are seen to be shaped around the notion of phallogentrism. For Freud, to possess the phallus or not is the main indicator of the sexual difference in men and women. Soler (2006) shares that for Freud, the subject's sexed identity is formed through a fear of losing and an envy of having the phallus. ... Woman's femininity is derived from her 'castration': she is considered a woman only because she lacks a phallus (pp. 24-5). That is to say, in Freud's theory of sexuality, an individual's gender identity is reduced to anatomy, namely, his or her biological sex.

Lacan develops his theory of sexuation in the early 1970s. He elaborates on the details of his theory first in his article *L'Étourdit* (1972) and then in his seminar XX, *Encore* (1972-73). His focus is primarily on what determines masculine sexuality and feminine sexuality in the subject. In formulating his theory of sexuation, Lacan reconceptualises the Oedipus Complex and takes a different path from that of Freud, who views that the phallus determines sexual identity. For Lacan, sexual difference is not about biological sex but rather about how the subject positions himself in the Symbolic Order in relation to the phallus as a signifier. As stated before, the phallus is, for Lacan, a signifier, the signifier of lack, which refers to the object of the mother's desire, beyond reach and satisfaction. Ragland (2004) remarks that "Lacan's distinction between masculine sexuality and feminine sexuality is not on gender but on ... the phallus and castration" (p. 38). In Lacan's view, the subject, male or female, as a lacking being, is symbolically castrated through the existence of the Name-of-the-Father. Castration, in this sense, refers to a fundamental loss for which the phallus is the signifier (Homer, 2005, p. 99). During the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, the subject's position in relation to the phallus determines masculine and feminine sexualities. "Boys can 'pretend' to *have* the phallus, while girls must *be* the phallus" (p. 99) to complete their fundamental lacks in the realm of the Symbolic. These two forms of identification with the phallus regulate the sexual difference in the subject. In other words, the subject develops his masculine and feminine sexualities according to his position to the phallus through the mediation of the Name-of-the-Father within the Symbolic Order. Ragland (2004) indicates that Lacan's distinction between having the

phallus and being the phallus allowed him to view masculinity and femininity as more fundamental divisions to existence, beyond the biological difference of male and female (p. 82). During his experience of the Oedipus Complex, the little boy comes to understand that the mother is lacking and seeks the phallus. He, therefore, identifies with the father, believing that he possesses the phallus. In this way, he assumes that he has reached the phallus and situates himself as the object of the desire for the mother. However, this is just a pretence because he never possessed the phallus, which is beyond accessible, always somewhere else (Homer, 2005, p. 99). That is to say, the male subject's sexual difference in regard to the phallus is determined in the discourse of the Symbolic and does not go beyond the perception of pretence. On the other side, the little girl, however, experiences a more complicated process. Before identifying with the mother, the little girl first identifies with the father. She positions herself as being the phallus and becomes the object of desire for the father. In a sense, she masks her lack by transforming herself into the object of desire. This is a sort of disguise for the female subject to compensate for her lack in the realm of the Symbolic. Lacan refers to this feminine sexual attitude as 'masquerade' and says that it works at the symbolic level (Seminar XI, p. 192). Homer (2005) claims that Lacan associates this process of masquerade as a way of women's giving up their essential part of themselves in order to be the phallus (p. 99). For this reason, the masquerade is considered to represent feminine sexuality, and thus women exist disguised under the sign of the masquerade in the realm of the Symbolic. This situation indicates that the female subject's sexual difference is constructed as a masquerade through her position of being the phallus in the Symbolic Order.

In the early phase of formulating his theory of sexuation, Lacan emphasises that the subject's sexual difference, masculinity and femininity, is determined by his position to the phallus through his being or having the phallus in the realm of the Symbolic. However, in time, Lacan further develops his theory of sexuation through his innovative thoughts on feminine desire, especially in his seminar XX, *Encore*. Lacan, now, defines the sexual difference through the types of jouissance called *phallic jouissance* and *Other jouissance*. That is to say, for Lacan, the subject's sexual difference, masculinity and femininity, is determined by his position to jouissance. Soler (2006) says that Lacan's logical formulas of sexuation identify man and woman

by their modes of jouissance (p. 177). Lacan, thus, reframes his theory of sexuation beyond the process of the Oedipus Complex. The subject, male or female, as a lacking being, experiences phallic jouissance, which refers to a sort of enjoyment or pleasure shaped by the laws of the Symbolic Order. Phallic jouissance, in a sense, is “the jouissance that fails us, that disappoints us” (Homer, 2005, p. 104). Therefore, the subject is not fully satisfied and feels incomplete. Phallic jouissance is destined to fail. It always makes the subject sense that there is something else to look for to reach ultimate satisfaction. Because of such characterisation, phallic jouissance is associated with masculinity. This masculine structure of phallic jouissance makes the subject believe that he, avoiding the law of the Symbolic, has possessed object petit a, which is actually beyond his access. However, since phallic jouissance is structured in the field of the big Other within the Symbolic Order, it, unfortunately, causes disappointment and does not provide a satisfying sense of completeness to the subject. On the other hand, feminine structure is linked with a jouissance that Lacan calls Other jouissance. For the concept of Lacan’s Other jouissance, some various terms are also used such as supplementary jouissance, surplus jouissance and feminine jouissance. This Other jouissance refers to a kind of jouissance which is unsymbolized and unspeakable. The subject feels it but cannot articulate what it is. In a way, it is impossible to describe it. This is “a type of jouissance associated with the feminine one ... beyond the phallus” (Clark, 2014, p. lvi). That is to say, Other jouissance “grants [the subject] desire the freedom to reach beyond phallic jouissance and extend its limits” (Yadlin-Gadot et al., 2023, p. 79). Because of its characterisation of femininity, Other jouissance is, mostly, associated with women. In a sense, women might experience an Other, supplementary jouissance than men. On this matter, Lacan introduces two terms called ‘whole’ and ‘not-whole’, in another saying, ‘all’ and ‘not all’, which respectively represent men and women in his theory of sexuation. In this regard, Colette Soler (2006), the French psychoanalyst, presents a good summary of Lacan’s second phase of thinking on sexuation:

Lacan reformulates the difference between the sexes both by the opposition between two kinds of logic, that of the phallic whole for men and of the phallic not-whole for women, and two types of jouissance, one of which is phallic and the other is called supplementary. (p. 12)

For Lacan, woman is not-whole and [in a structure called the Symbolic] “everything revolves around phallic jouissance, in that woman is denned by a position ... as ‘not whole’ (pas-tout) with respect to phallic jouissance” (Seminar XX, p. 7). Attributing the characteristics ‘whole’ to men and ‘not-whole’ to women in relation to jouissance, Lacan is thought to indicate that a woman’s experience of the Symbolic Order is different from a man’s. Woman, as a not-whole, through her experience of Other jouissance, is not fully subjected to the phallic function, namely, the law of the Symbolic Order. Ragland (2004) states that “The female is defined ... as *not all* within the order of the symbolic, *not all* under the phallic law” (p. 41) whereas “a man is *all* under the symbolic law” (p. 15). Likewise, Lacan says that “... woman is not-whole -there is always something in her that escapes discourse” (Seminar XX, p. 33). In a sense, women might avoid the symbolic law through their experience of supplementary jouissance, which exists beyond symbolisation. This situation might give women the opportunity to escape from the rules and restrictions imposed by the Symbolic Order and to create their own realities outside the field of the big Other within the Symbolic Order. In this respect, Lacan’s Other, supplementary jouissance is associated with the Real, which remains unsymbolized and unrepresentable.

Lacan, in generating his theory of sexuation, proposes a provocative claim, “there’s no such thing as a sexual relationship” (Seminar XX, p. 12). With this claim, Lacan does not mean that sexual relations do not exist. He is saying that there is no complete harmonious sexual connection between two people. To make it clearer, it is said that man and woman are two separate subjects with their own desires and lacks with their entry into the Symbolic Order. Their togetherness does not mean that they perfectly complete each other’s lacks to reach their objet petit a. That is to say, one’s lack is not the lack of the other. Or, one’s desire is not the one the other desires. Yadlin-Gadot et al. (2023) state that “Man is not necessarily the object of Woman’s desire and vice versa” (p. 77). Likewise, Bailly (2012), based on the subject’s desires, shares that “the object of the man is different from the object of the woman” (p. 147). For this reason, subjects, male or female, feel dissatisfied with their relationships because their completeness is impossible in the realm of the Symbolic. In other words, there is no “existential fit between the desires of sexuated humans (Yadlin-Gadot et al., 2023, p. 77) when subjects step into the field of the big Other within the Symbolic Order.

CHAPTER TWO

ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT

2.1. JEANETTE WINTERSON AS A CONTEMPORARY AUTHOR

Jeanette Winterson, one of the prominent living authors of Contemporary British Literature, was born in Manchester, England in 1959 and raised in the small industrial town of Accrington, Lancashire, by her adoptive parents, Constance and John Winterson, who are members of a Pentecostal Evangelical church. From an early age, Winterson was educated with strict religious tenets and trained as a missionary to spread the teachings of the Evangelical faith. Namely, her family had already planned a missionary life for Winterson. Her presence in the life of her parents is just for a purpose as indicated by McClellan (2012): “She understood from an early age that her parents had wanted a child, not to start a family, but because they thought it would be good to dedicate a child to God” (pp. 227-28). Due to her rigid religious upbringing, since her early childhood, Winterson wrote sermons and preached within her mother’s church community. Her adoptive mother, as a strict practitioner of the Evangelical faith, expected Winterson to pursue a life as a devoted missionary. For this reason, “she was destined to undertake missionary work, and she became a preacher at the age of twelve” (Onega, 2006, p. 4). However, when she turned sixteen, Winterson’s life took a new unexpected direction. She was banished from her church and community because of her love affair with another girl, which was strictly forbidden in her evangelical upbringing. She ended up being thrown out of her family home as well because she kept on living her life as a lesbian. Unfortunately, she turned out to be a big disappointment to her mother as Winterson mentioned in an interview with the Canadian broadcaster Eleanor Wachtel on her programme, *Writers and Company*:

She really believed that I would be the person who would change her life. The sad thing is, I could have done it. Just like *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, I could have been that golden ticket that took her out of that life that she hated. But I came in the wrong package.
(Wachtel, 2012)

After leaving her family home, Winterson took on several temporary jobs to afford her education, ranging from selling ice cream to working at a funeral parlour and a mental hospital. Upon completing her BA in English at St Cathrine’s College in

Oxford in 1981, Winterson moved to London, finding a job at the Roundhouse Theatre (Makinen, 2005, p. 1). In her following years in London, she worked as an editor at Brilliance Books as well as at Pandora Press, which published her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* in 1985 (p. 1).

Jeanette Winterson, with her step into the literature world with her debut novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, draws attention with her challenging and thought-provoking way of writing. Today, several decades later, she is a highly respected author with her more than thirty published books, including novels, short stories, essay collections, and children's books. Among her some notable works could be named her novels *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), *The Passion* (1987), *Written on the Body* (1992), *The Stone Gods* (2007), and *Frankissstein* (2019) in addition to her short stories *The World and Other Places* (1998) and *Tanglewreck* (2006). Winterson, with her vast fictional universe, is considered not an ordinary writer, going beyond boundaries, through her subversive approach to creating nontraditional characters, radically provocative themes, and experimental narrative structures. In some way, Winterson offers an unusual and demanding reading experience to her readers. She challenges her readers by engaging them to think from different and unconventional perspectives. Burrell (2004) states that "Her work has gained an international audience for its dazzling language and wickedly subversive play on traditional narrative structures" (p. 101). Winterson possesses a distinctive writing style, which is embellished intertextually from other literary resources such as the Bible, myths, fairy tales, or history. Her work is mostly layered and fragmented through her inset rewritings. In this respect, her narratives do not present a linear structure, which refers to a traditional sequential order in telling stories. About her narrative style, Winterson, herself, has made a valuable explanation as well:

A spiral narrative suits me very well ... I really don't see the point of reading in straight lines. We don't think like that, we don't live like that. Our mental processes are closer to a maze than a motorway, every turning yields another turning, not symmetrical, not obvious. (Winterson, 2001, p. xiii)

Winterson's subversive approach in her books extends beyond form into content as well. Presenting unconventional characters, who challenge heteronormative

social constructions with their preferences of gender and sexuality, Winterson, in a sense, subverts the notions of identity and the body in her literary works. For her, identity is something blurry and exists beyond the traditional gender and sexual constructions. Through her different types of fictional characters, from lesbians to bisexuals, or even to ungendered, Winterson offers alternative models for identity. McClellan (2012) argues that “Winterson’s writing provides a way of seeing beyond the traditional binaries of Western thought and civilization, binaries that often constrict and limit individuals’ existence and right to happiness” (p. 225). Whereas this vision may feel threatening to some, many readers find her work dazzling and revolutionary with her alternative perspective of the world (p. 225). Winterson, due to her characteristic way of writing regarding her unconventional characterisations and themes along with the non-linear experimental narration, is mostly regarded as a postmodernist or lesbian feminist author. However, Winterson “rejects both qualifications and, particularly that of ‘lesbian writer’, and insists that she expects to be called simply ‘writer’” (Onega, 2006, pp. 2-3). Even if she thinks that writing is a political act, she refuses that her works are to be evaluated in a limited field of interest. In her essay collection, *Art Objects*, Winterson says that she is “a writer who happens to love women ... not a lesbian who happens to write” (1996, p. 104). She emphasises that her art of writing embraces and addresses any reader who likes to read her works as she indicates in the following pages of *Art Objects*: “Literature is not a lecture delivered to a special interest group, it is a force that unites its audience” (1996, p. 106). Obviously, Winterson’s work, breaking the boundaries of class, culture, gender, or sexuality, reaches a wide range of audiences thanks to the vastness of her fictional universe. Onega (2006) remarks that Winterson’s novels, which once gained popularity with lesbian readership in the 1980s, are now read, enjoyed and hotly discussed by a wider audience, including the general public and academia (p. 226).

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, published in 1985, is a semi-autobiographical novel of Jeanette Winterson. It won the Whitbread Prize for best first novel in 1985 and was adapted into a BBC television drama in 1990, whose screenplay was written by Winterson herself, for which she received the best screenplay award. Makinen (2005) states that “*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* has remained the most popular and most written-on of Winterson’s novels” (p. 1) and “has proved one of her most long-

standing achievements’’ (p. 5). In *Oranges*¹, Winterson has named the central character ‘Jeanette’ like her first name. The life of the central character mostly goes parallel with Winterson’s own life. Over the discussions about whether her novel is autobiographical or not, Winterson has, however, responded: ‘‘No not at all and yes of course’’ (Winterson, 2001, p. xiv) and left the final decision to her readers. In an interview held by Winterson, she says that she wanted to invent herself as a fictional character. Seeing herself as a fiction is rather comforting. Fictions can change unlike the facts that trap us. People would be much happier if they could read themselves as fictions (Reynolds, 2003, p. 12). Winterson characterises *Oranges* both as a threatening and comforting novel. It is threatening because it challenges conventional values and norms by exposing that ‘‘the sanctity of family life as something of sham’’ and also illustrating that ‘‘what the church calls love is actually psychosis and ... what makes life difficult for homosexuals is not their perversity but other people’s’’ (Winterson, 2001, p. xiii). The novel, on the other side, is comforting because ‘‘[i]ts heroin is someone on the outside of life’’, who becomes a voice for the unspoken burdens of many people through her quest for individuality and sexuality (Winterson, 2001, p. xiv). *Oranges*, besides her unconventional content, offers a different reading experience with its intertextual writing style, employing a non-linear, fragmented narrative structure. Throughout the novel, the story is seen to be decorated with ‘‘a playful intertextual reference to fairy tales and other mythical material like the Bible or King Arthur and the Round Table’’ (Makinen, 2005, p. 154). More interestingly, Winterson is seen to have presented the chapters in *Oranges* with biblical titles, referring respectively to the first eight books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, which all represent the life progression of the central character on her journey of self-exploration.

Winterson is thought to have borrowed her novel’s name from a quote by Nell Gwynn, who was a stage actress and a famous figure during the Restoration Period with her performative aspect of gender and sexuality. The interesting thing about Gwynn is that she used to work as a fruit vendor, selling oranges in the King’s Theatre before she became a renowned performer and royal mistress of King Charles II. It

¹ Hereafter, the book is referred to as *Oranges*.
Winterson, J. (2001). *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Vintage.

seems that Gwynn has taken Winterson's attention with her lifestyle and her praised witty performances as one of the first actresses on the English stage. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* holds a metaphorical aspect as a title. It refers to the central character's sexual orientation as a lesbian who challenges her mother's binary worldview, going beyond heterosexual social norms and expectations. The orange in the novel represents the repressive heterosexual law imposed on the central character by her religious mother and the church. However, the mother, with her acceptance of her daughter's sexual identity, comes to realise that there could be other truths in life. The world cannot be evaluated from just one angle: good and bad or right and wrong. There could be different perspectives to look through. In other words, there are different fruits to taste rather than oranges, as the novel metaphorically implies.

Oranges tells the story of a young girl named Jeanette, who is both the narrator and protagonist of the novel. She is adopted and lives with a working-class family in a small mill town in Lancashire, northwest of England. Her father, Jack, is a shift worker in a factory, and her mother, Louie, as an evangelical fundamentalist, works voluntarily for the church community. During the novel, Jack, as a father figure, is almost invisible whereas Louie, as a mother, possesses a dominant role in Jeanette's life. Due to her strictly religious mother, Jeanette grows up in an evangelical household from an early age. Her mother educates Jeanette in her fundamentalist faith and expects her to be a dedicated missionary to serve God. Jeanette, thus, participates in church commitments together with her mother, performing in the choir, preaching at church and travelling outside of the town with the church community to convert the heathens. Everything flows as planned by her mother in their lives. As Jeanette turns seven, she is legally expected to start school even if her mother is not pleased about it. Otherwise, she will get in jail. For her mother, school is a 'breeding ground', full of sins. During her school life, Jeanette, unfortunately, experiences hard times and stays isolated. Both her classmates and teachers regard her as a weirdo because of her education with strict evangelical rules. Whatever she does to fit in at school, she cannot manage to mingle with other children. Her only friend is Elsie Norris, an elderly church member, who always treats her kindly and understands Jeanette unlike her mother. Elsie loves literature and reads William Blake and W.B. Yeats compared to her mother who only reads *Jane Eyre* and religious books. When Jeanette turns sixteen, something

unexpected occurs in her life, and she falls in love with another girl from the church called Melanie. Therefore, their world is overturned despite all her mother's efforts to settle a missionary life for her daughter. Jeanette, seeing no conflict between loving Melanie and God, tries to mention her growing feelings for Melanie to her mother. For her mother, this is an unforgivable sin, though. To stop this sinful relationship, her mother informs the church, after which the pastor organises an exorcism ceremony for the girls to repent for their sins. Accusing Melanie and Jeanette of being possessed by Satan, the pastor asks them to give up on their sins and beg for forgiveness from God. While Melanie repents, Jeanette does not accept her love as an offence. That is why, she is locked in a room at her home without any food for days. Afterwards, Jeanette pretends to regret her sin so as to get out of that confinement. She desperately wonders what happened to Melanie. When she secretly visits Melanie in a distant relative's house, Melanie, unfortunately, does not respond to their love in the same way she feels. Jeanette, after that big disappointment, gets deeply involved in her church duties, preaching and conducting the Bible study classes even though she questions the teachings of her evangelical faith imposed on her by her mother and the church. However, after some time, Jeanette starts to have a relationship with a newly converted girl named Katy, whom she meets during the church community's summer visit to Blackpool. Even if she is more cautious about hiding their relationship to protect Katy, her mother learns everything and asks her to move out of the home as Jeanette insists on living her life the way she wants. During this time, Elsie tries to protect and support Jeanette, but she, unfortunately, cannot change the church's final decision about Jeanette. Eventually, she is exiled from the church and its community because of her immoral and wicked actions. After leaving her home, Jeanette works in various jobs, from selling ice cream to working at a funeral parlour and a mental hospital to get by. Meanwhile, Elsie's death results in deep sorrow for Jeanette. At the end of the story, some years after she leaves the family home, Jeanette is seen paying a visit to her mother for Christmas. Her mother pretends as if nothing happened and treats Jeanette the same way as in the past. They have Christmas dinner as a family and play biblical games together. Her mother, as a faithful believer, keeps on doing her duties and supports the church wholeheartedly. The story ends by depicting her mother's new duty, who starts to run a religious radio programme to reach more Christians.

2.2. A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON *ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT*

2.2.1. Jeanette's Relationship with Her (m)Other

Jeanette, as an adoptive child, was born into a predetermined life. Her mother, Louie, has already planned a path for Jeanette to follow in life. Her sole desire is to raise a perfect person, a pure and flawless Christian, to serve God. “She would get a child, train it, build it, and dedicate it to the Lord: a missionary child, a servant of God, a blessing” (Winterson, 2001, p. 10). Regarding herself as a successor of the Virgin Mary, her mother adopts Jeanette to devote her to God. “She was very bitter about the Virgin Mary getting there first. So she did the next best thing and arranged for a foundling. That was me” (Winterson, 2001, pp. 4-5). Hence, Jeanette, from a very young age, grows up in a strictly religious environment constructed by her mother and the church. She is exposed to the doctrines of the Evangelical belief and shapes her life around the religious dictates of her mother. In some way, Jeanette is regarded as a missionary plan to fulfil for her mother. In such a sinful world, Jeanette, for her mother, could change the world (Winterson, 2001, p. 10) as a faithful servant of God. Onega (2006) argues that “Louie had ‘chosen’ Jeanette, like God the Father did with his Son, to share with her her wisdom and prepare her to save the world ...” (p. 22). Brought up with these responsibilities and restrictions, Jeanette is, therefore, expected to live the life her mother has prescribed for her. Since her early childhood, Jeanette is educated in the rigid rules of her mother's evangelical faith. She is taught to read the Bible and begins preaching at the church. She is fully immersed in her mother's religious way of living and works for the church as a devoted child, as her mother has formerly planned. Jeanette's childhood memories shed light on what a sort of religious environment she is raised in. Sundays, for instance, are the Lord's Day, during which they follow a set of religious rituals at home. Her mother gets up very early for praying. Then, during breakfast time, she asks some Bible quiz questions to Jeanette. Later, they always listen to the World Service to record the process of their missionaries:

... we sat down on either side of the radiogram, she with her tea, me with a pad and pencil; in front of us, the Missionary Map. ... I had to write it all down so that my mother could deliver her church report that night. She was the Missionary Secretary. (Winterson, 2001, p. 5)

Through her religious upbringing, Jeanette's life is seen to be dominated by the teachings of her mother's faith. Her mother's religiosity surrounds every aspect of Jeanette's life. In a sense, she is forced to follow an ideological world designed for her. Her perception of the world is moulded around the impositions and constraints dictated by her mother and the church. In this respect, Jeanette's experience of such a predetermined life corresponds to Lacan's concept of the big Other, which manifests as an authority signifier within the Symbolic Order. Lacan's big Other represents the Symbolic Order, which regulates all kinds of laws and restrictions the child is supposed to obey. Homer (2005) says that "The big Other is language, the symbolic order" (p. 44), emphasising that the child is subjected to the pre-existing rules of the Symbolic Order through its experience of the discourse of the Other. In Lacanian sense, Jeanette, being born into her mother's religious discourse, steps into the field of the Other. Her mother, Louie, as a symbolic authority figure, represents Lacan's big Other, which imposes the religious norms and values Jeanette is bound to follow through her entrance into the Symbolic Order. Thus, Jeanette, as a Lacanian child, is constructed in the field of the Other, in other words, in the discourse of her mother's ideological system shaped around the Evangelical faith. "The church is my family, she [my mother] always said whenever I asked about the people in the photograph album. And the church was my family too" (Winterson, 2001, p. 36).

For Lacan, the mother is considered the child's first big Other, through which the child acquires language and learns its roles and relations in society. Rabate (2003) claims that "Lacan's big Other [is] mostly embodied by the Mother" (p. 22). Through its (m)Other, the child adopts its first beliefs and assumptions and unconsciously constructs its subjectivity within the field of the Other in the Symbolic Order. Likewise, Jeanette, through her (m)Other Louie, forms her earliest perceptions, based on the religious doctrines of the Evangelical church. Namely, Jeanette's initial sense of self is constituted in relation to her m(Other) through her entry into the Symbolic Order. Her mother, Louie, as an evangelical fundamentalist, views the world from a binary lens, believing that people are either good or evil, with no room for alternative perspectives. "She had never heard of mixed feelings. There were friends and there were enemies" (Winterson, 2001, p. 3). For her mother, "Enemies were: The Devil (in his many forms) / Next Door / Sex (in its many forms) / Slugs. Friends were: God

/ Our dog / Auntie Madge / The Novels of Charlotte Brontë / Slug pellets” (p. 3). In a sense, her mother defines everything through a religious binary opposition, governed by biblical norms and principles. Instilling Jeanette with a rigid religious discourse, Louie, as an agent of the big Other in the Symbolic Order, regulates Jeanette’s understanding of self and the world and restricts her from exploring other ways of being. O’Rourke indicates that “‘Her mother has taught her that there is only one right ‘reading’ and interpretation of the world ...’” (qtd. in Makinen, 2005, p. 45). For instance, the biblical story about ‘the mamba and the horse’ told by her mother exemplifies how Jeanette interprets herself and the world within the framework constructed by her mother:

I discovered that everything in the natural world was a symbol of the Great Struggle between good and evil. ‘Consider the mamba,’ said my mother. ‘Over short distances the mamba can outrun a horse. ... She meant that in the short term, evil can triumph, but never for very long. (Winterson, 2001, p. 15)

It is seen that Jeanette’s early perceptions of the world are confined to her (m)Other and are shaped by the demands of the Other within the Symbolic Order. Jeanette identifies with her (m)Other and develops a similar binary worldview to that of her mother during her childhood. She, just like her mother, distinguishes the world between good and evil. Makinen (2005) argues that Jeanette has been taught to view the natural world as a battle between good and evil, and this simplistic binary perspective prevents her from developing her conception of desire (p. 10). Jeanette’s dualistic perception, in this sense, reflects her m(Other)’s desires, through which she constructs her initial sense of self and reality depending on the big Other within the Symbolic Order.

As Jeanette turns seven, she begins her formal education at school. Before that, her mother educates Jeanette at home with strict religious doctrines, preparing her as a missionary for service to God. Upon starting school, Jeanette steps into a new Symbolic Order, outside her structured religious discourse. Her new Symbolic Order, however, offers new realities she is not familiar with and clashes with her initial perceptions of self and the world shaped by her (m)Other. Onega (2006) states that “‘This is her first encounter with an alternative worldview’” (p. 22). For this reason,

due to her early religious training, Jeanette faces great difficulty in adapting to school life and struggles to make connections with her friends and teachers. She is viewed as a weirdo both by her friends and teachers and is not welcomed because of her unusual lifestyle compared to other students at school:

There was a little group of them [students] by the fence, whispering. One of them pointed at me. I tried not to notice and carried on ... The group got bigger, a girl with sherbet on her mouth yelled across at me, I didn't catch what she said, but the others all screamed with laughter. Then a boy came and hit me on the neck, then another and another, all hitting and running off. (Winterson, 2001, p. 39)

In fact, Jeanette, upon entering school, attempts to engage with her new Symbolic Order according to her initial perceptions of the world induced by her (m)Other. Through the realities she was taught by her (m)Other, she strives to meet the expectations of her friends and teachers: "At first I'd done my very best to fit in and be good" (Winterson, 2001, p. 37). When her English teacher asks students to write an essay about their summer holidays, Jeanette, for example, mentions her church camp at Colwyn Bay: "I wanted to please her [my teacher], and trembling with anticipation I started my essay. ... This holiday I went to Colwyn Bay with our church camp" (p. 37). As she gives the details of the church camp, her teacher, however, gets worried and does not let her finish her essay, fearing that Jeanette might scare the other kids. "The class giggled. Slowly I sat down, not sure what was going on, but sure that something was" (Winterson, 2001, p. 38). Similarly, in the sewing class, the time she shares her idea about her sampler project, her teacher, Mrs Virtue, is dissatisfied with Jeanette's chosen motif: "THE SUMMER IS ENDED AND WE ARE NOT YET SAVED" and responds: "You might upset the others" (p. 38). As these examples indicate, Jeanette reflects the realities imposed by her religious (m)Other, which shapes her early perceptions of self-expression. This is the only reality she knows, and that is why she expresses herself at school through her initial perceptions. However, Jeanette's presence at school disturbs the parents of other students. Upon their complaints, the school's principal, Mrs Vole, holds a conversation with Jeanette. This conversation specifically shows that Jeanette's sense of self is deeply affected by her (m)Other's religiosity and causes problems for her at school:

‘And why ... do you terrorise, yes, terrorise, the other children?’

‘I don’t,’ I protested.

‘Then can you tell me why I had Mrs Spencer and Mrs Sparrow here this morning telling me how their children have nightmares?’

‘I have nightmares too.’

‘That’s not the point. You have been talking about Hell to young minds.’ ...

‘I’m very sorry,’ I said, ‘I thought it was interesting.’ (Winterson, 2001, pp. 41-2)

In Lacanian sense, Jeanette is still confined to her (m)Other’s demands and cannot understand the reactions of her teachers and other parents at school. In her perception as a child, she is doing the right thing: “I was very depressed. What was all the fuss about? Better to hear about Hell now than burn in it later” (Winterson, 2001, p. 42). Therefore, the confusion Jeanette experiences at school makes her realise that she is destined to be a servant of God: “It was obvious where I belonged. Ten more years and I could go to missionary school” (p. 42). This signifies that Jeanette, experiencing the field of the Other within the Symbolic Order, confronts her mother as her first big Other and forms her sense of self and reality around her mother’s evangelical beliefs. Regarding herself as a missionary child, she, in a sense, lives the desires of her (m)Other as Lacan claims: “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (Seminar XI, p. 235). For this reason, Jeanette, as a desired child, represents the object of desire that her mother is looking for to complete her lack in life. Namely, her mother positions Jeanette as a substitute to compensate for her lack and transform her into an object of her desire: “This child is mine from the Lord” (Winterson, 2001, p. 10). The desire of the mother, in Lacanian terms, is the *phallus*, which signifies absence and lack as stated by Homer (2005): “The phallus is the ‘original’ lost object ... it is the signifier of absence ...” (p. 56). For that matter, her mother, as a desiring subject, uses Jeanette as her desired object so as to reach her ultimate satisfaction: to raise a child to serve God as Jeanette expresses: “I had been brought in to join her in a tag match against the Rest of the World” (Winterson, 2001, p. 3). Thus, Jeanette, being a desired object of her mother, is constituted within the symbolic field of the Other and creates her subjectivity around her (m)Other’s desires during her childhood.

On the other hand, as Jeanette turns sixteen, she begins to step out of the field of the Other. She starts to explore other realities beyond her mother's religious beliefs and teachings, which are associated with the rules of the big Other within her Symbolic Order. Jeanette, falling in love with another girl, conflicts with her (m)Other and quits her role as an object of her mother's desire. Thus, Jeanette, leaving the field of the Other, begins to develop her own desires related to her sexual identity and experiences a Lacanian *separation* from her (m)Other. This separation signifies that the child realises that its mother is lacking and desires something beyond it. Thus, the child detaches from its mother and begins to seek its own lost object of desire, objet petit a, which helps to sustain the sense of completeness and fulfilment during the Symbolic Order. Likewise, Jeanette, through her Lacanian separation, comes to understand that her mother's truths are not only truths in life. For her mother, oranges are the only fruit. "Fruit salad, fruit pie, fruit for fools, fruited punch. Demon fruit, passion fruit, rotten fruit, fruit on Sunday" (Winterson, 2001, p. 29). But now, Jeanette begins to question her mother's religious prescriptions by asking "What about grapes or bananas?" (Winterson, 2001, p. 111) and strives to create her subjectivity outside her structured discourse, beyond language and the big Other. Carter (1998) argues that "the daughter's development as a subject relies on a process of separating herself from a dominating ... mother who threatens to engulf her selfhood" (p. 17). This shows that Jeanette needs to detach from her mother so as to construct her sexual identity as a lesbian, as reflected in Lacanian thought: "The infant must differentiate itself from the desire of the Other" (Homer, 2005, p. 74). Therefore, Jeanette, experiencing a desire beyond that of her (m)Other, shifts from being a desired object to becoming a desiring subject. She is now in pursuit of her lost object of desire, objet petit a, which is associated with her sexual identity. Jeanette, as a lacking subject, who desires to reach her objet petit a, sets off on a Lacanian journey to explore her sense of 'self' related to her lesbian identity.

2.2.2. Jeanette's Self-Exploration

In the development of her lesbian identity, Jeanette begins to question the religious teachings and moral norms taught by her mother and the church. By loving another girl, her self-definition challenges her religiously structured discourse, and she experiences a conflict with her mother and the church. For her mother, Jeanette's

wicked action, loving a girl, is a great sin and completely unacceptable in their belief system, which regards men and women's relationships from a heteronormative perspective, viewing a same-sex relationship as a violation to their holy faith. Onega (2006) asserts that "Jeanette's process of maturation from admiring and obedient child, to rebellious adolescent and ideologically self-assured and free adult, ... clashes with her mother's religious and moral ideas" (p. 18). For this reason, Jeanette, desiring to explore her own identity, leaves her dutiful obedience to her mother and seeks another path beyond the rigid rules of the church. She comes to realise that her earliest perceptions provide no feeling of connection to her newly explored identity. Therefore, she tries to discover her sense of identity outside the restrictive discourse constructed by her religious mother and the church. In a sense, "Jeanette's self-identification," argues French (1999), "comes at the cost of alienating her family, friends, and, most importantly, the religious community that has given her life definition ..." (p. 232). In this respect, in her Lacanian developmental journey, Jeanette, upon entering the Symbolic Order, confronts her mother and the church as the Name-of-the-Father, the authority signifier, which restricts her from obtaining her lost object of desire, objet petit a, associated with her desired identity. In other words, for Jeanette, both her mother and the church are now the Lacanian father, which regulates the symbolic law that imposes religious rules and moral norms on Jeanette's desire to explore her sexual identity as a lesbian.

In the process of discovering her identity, Jeanette is seen to search for answers about men and women's relationships. As she reaches puberty, her questions about relationships have increased noticeably. For Jeanette, to reach those answers means that she could resolve her confusion about her sense of identity. At home, she is raised by a couple who lack affection towards each other. Her parents do not have a typical married relationship. They are emotionally distant and have limited communication with one another: "As long as I have known them, my mother has gone to bed at four, and my father has got up at five" (Winterson, 2001, p. 15). Even when Jeanette asks her mother why she has married her father instead of her old flame, Pierre, her mother's response does not clarify her questions about relationships and deepens her confusion to understand the emotional basis of marriage because for her mother, marriage is based on a holy aim rather than love:

We had to have something for you, and besides he's a good man, though I know he's not one to push himself. But don't you worry, you're dedicated to the Lord, I put you down for missionary school as soon as we got you. Remember Jane Eyre and St John Rivers. (Winterson, 2001, p. 72)

In this sense, her parents' marriage does not present a satisfying answer to Jeanette, who struggles to understand love and intimacy within her religiously constructed environment. As she grows older, Jeanette's curiosity about relationships leads her to observe her surroundings carefully. She watches and asks the other couples to figure out why women get married to men. However, her attempts do not help her resolve her confusion about men and marriage. "Everyone always said you found the right man. My mother said it, which was confusing. My auntie said it, which was even more confusing" (Winterson, 2001, p. 70). Most probably, Jeanette cannot associate her sense of identity with the relationships she observes. Likewise, Reisman (2001) states that Jeanette feels confused and disappointed when her reality doesn't match with her community's cultural expectations (p. 19). Especially in her recurring dream, Jeanette is seen to experience that unsettling confusion she cannot yet overcome. In the dream, Jeanette sees herself about to get married. As she approaches the altar, she, however, feels that her golden crown is getting heavier, and she has great difficulty in walking in her white dress. When she finally manages to reach the altar, she sees that:

The priest was very fat and kept getting fatter, like a bubble gum you blow. Finally we came to the moment, 'You may kiss the bride.' My new husband turned to me, and here were a number of possibilities. Sometimes he was blind, sometimes a pig, sometimes my mother, sometimes the man from the post office, and once, just a suit of clothes with nothing inside. (Winterson, 2001, p. 69)

In Lacanian sense, in her journey of self-exploration, Jeanette is thought to experience an unconscious conflict with her sense of self and cannot internalise the law of the Lacanian father, which regulates her social roles and relations in the Symbolic Order. Her Lacanian father appears in various forms in her dream such as blind, pig-like or in her mother's silhouette, which all function as the Name-of-the-Father, representing the heterosexual norms Jeanette is subjected to while she grows

up. However, these norms seem to cause a sort of horror for Jeanette and make her have nightmares. In her dream, Jeanette is seen to resist marriage. She now feels scared to face her Lacanian father and unconsciously struggles against the law of the father. It seems that Jeanette has difficulty in identifying her 'self' with the law of the father and is forced to remain in the Symbolic Order, which represents the strict religious discourse structured by her mother and the church.

However, when Jeanette turns sixteen, she begins to form her sense of identity outside the expectations of her religious community. She falls in love with a girl called Melanie from the church. When she first sees Melaine at the fish stall in town, she is attracted to her even if she cannot name her feelings yet. After their first encounter, she cannot help but visit Melanie: "Week after week I went back there, just to watch" (Winterson, 2001, p. 80). Later, as their friendship develops, she invites Melanie to the church although she is not sure about her reaction: "Then I had to explain about our church and my mother and me being dedicated to the Lord. It sounded odd for a moment, but I knew that was ..." (Winterson, 2001, p. 81). On the day when Melanie visits the church, she is deeply appealed by Pastor Finch's sermon and seeks forgiveness through a religious service. Upon Melanie's request, Jeanette becomes her counsellor and starts to give the Bible lessons to Melanie. After that, each Monday, she goes round to Melanie's, and they read the Bible and pray together (Winterson, 2001, p. 84). As they spend time together, Jeanette's feelings continue to grow for Melanie even if she feels confused about her emotions: "I was delighted. She was my friend, and I wasn't used to that, apart from Elsie. Somehow, this was different. I talked about her all the time at home, and my mother never responded" (p. 84).

In a short while, however, their relationship goes beyond friendship, and they begin to develop romantic feelings for each other. One day, when Melanie's mother is away from home, Jeanette stays overnight with Melanie. During that time, they cannot resist their feelings and engage in sexual intercourse: "She stroked my head for a long time, and then we hugged and it felt like drowning. ... I was frightened but couldn't stop" (Winterson, 2001, p. 86). For Jeanette, these feelings are new and exciting. Not sure how to deal with her feelings yet, she decides to keep her relationship with Melanie a secret from her mother. After that time, they do everything together, and Jeanette stays with her as much as she can, not mentioning her mother about the

amount of time she has spent with Melanie (Winterson, 2001, p. 86). In Lacanian sense, Jeanette is still not ready to confront her Lacanian father, embodied by her mother in the Symbolic Order, which would force her to follow her role as a faithful servant of God. For Jeanette, facing her Lacanian father means that she must break her bond with Melanie. Moreover, Jeanette, herself, still under the influence of her (m)Other's demands, experiences a confusion and asks Melaine, "Do you think this is Unnatural Passions?" (Winterson, 2001, p. 86). It seems that Jeanette judges their relationship according to her initial realities, imposed by her (m)Other during her childhood. Tyson (2006) claims that we are not unique, independent individuals because our beliefs and desires are already constructed for us in the Symbolic Order (p. 31). For this reason, Jeannete, due to her previously constructed realities, struggles to identify with her new subjectivity, which signifies her sense of self, associated with her lesbian identity. That is to say, her initial realities do not match with her newly discovered identity and make it difficult for Jeanette to define her homosexual feelings. She is not certain about what is happening to herself, and she experiences an internal confusion: "The feeling I now had in my head and stomach was the same as on that Awful Occasion, ... I was very upset. Uncertainty was what the Heathen felt, and I was chosen by God" (Winterson, 2001, p. 98).

This suggests that Jeanette might be experiencing the Lacanian Real, where the subject feels an emptiness in deep down and cannot fill it with the realities experienced in the Symbolic Order. Lacan's Real refers to what exists beyond the realm of the Symbolic and language as he states in *Ecrits*: "... the real is ... the domain ... which subsists outside of symbolization" (2006, p. 324). That is why Jeanette cannot resolve her confusion with her 'self' through the religious and moral realities taught by her (m)Other in the Symbolic Order. What she feels for Melanie seems beyond her comprehension, and she cannot find a place in her Symbolic Order, which imposes the gender realities Jeanette is expected to follow as a woman within the field of the big Other. But now, Jeanette, feeling uncertain about her life, remains in a gap that is only completed through her access to the Real.

Over time, despite fearing to face her Lacanian father, Jeanette eventually summons up her courage and mentions her growing feelings for Melanie to her mother. "I explained how much I wanted to be with Melanie, that I could talk to her, that I

needed that kind of friend. And.... And....” (Winterson, 2001, p. 100). For Jeanette, her feelings for Melanie provide a sense of completeness she has lost upon exiting from the Imaginary Order, where the Lacanian infant experiences a sense of wholeness thanks to its satisfying bond with the mother. Likewise, Jeanette, building a blissful connection with Melanie, comes to experience an illusion of completeness she used to possess during her Imaginary Order. In a sense, she holds on to Melanie as a substitute for her lost object of desire, which helps her to construct her sense of unity with her newly discovered identity: “‘Melanie is a gift from the Lord, and it would be ungrateful not to appreciate her’” (Winterson, 2001, p. 102). On the other hand, for her mother, Jeanette’s feelings for Melanie represent Satan’s words and cannot be tolerated in their sacred faith. She believes that Jeanette, by loving a girl, commits a great sin and rebels against God. Now, her mother, Louie, transforms into the Name-of-the-Father and tries to break Jeanette’s blissful connection with Melanie, just like the child’s bond with the mother is disrupted by the presence of the Lacanian father. As Homer (2005) explains, the closed circuit of mutual desire between the mother and the child is broken through the intervention of the Name-of-the-Father (p. 53). Hence, her mother, as a prohibitive Lacanian father, organises an exorcism ceremony together with Pastor Finch, aiming that she could stop Jeanette’s wicked actions. This moment is, actually, a turning point for Jeanette, who takes a big step in the process of discovering her lesbian identity. During the ceremony at the church, Jeanette and Melanie are accused of being possessed by Satan because of their love for one another: “‘These children of God,’ began the pastor, ‘have fallen under Satan’s spell.’ ... ‘These children of God have fallen foul of their lusts.’ ... ‘These children are full of demons.’” (Winterson, 2001, p. 102). Jeanette, however, does not accept the pastor’s accusation, yelling at him: “‘To the pure all things are pure,’ ... ‘It’s you not us.’” (Winterson, 2001, p. 103). As the pastor continues to force them to repent for their sins, Jeanette challenges him, adamantly rejecting that their love is sinful or demonic:

‘Do you promise to give up this sin and beg the Lord to forgive you?’

...

‘I love her.’

‘Then you don’t love the Lord.’

‘Yes, I love both of them.’

‘You cannot.’

‘I do, I do, let me go.’ (Winterson, 2001, p. 103)

Jeanette is seen resisting the law of the Lacanian father enforced by her mother and the church in the Symbolic Order, which refers to her rigid religious discourse. She strives to cling on to her love for Melanie, which signifies her sense of identity, allowing her to attain her lost object of desire, objet petit a. In some way, she wants to protect her sense of identity against her mother and the church. For Jeanette, accepting the law of the father means that she would lose her blissful connection with Melanie, which helps her to maintain the sense of completeness and fulfilment she has experienced during her Imaginary Order. At the end of the ceremony, Jeanette, avoiding her Lacanian father, runs away from the church and stays overnight with Miss Jewsbury, the church music trainer, who is secretly a lesbian. Jeanette is deeply in shock and distress and unsure of how to deal with her Lacanian father. Her teeth are chattering, and she cannot talk (Winterson, 2001, p. 103). In the morning, when she returns home, unfortunately, nothing has changed for Jeanette. The same nightmare awaits her once again. Her Lacanian father is there to force her to remain in the Symbolic Order. Her mother and the other church members constantly pressure her to ask for forgiveness for her sin. “It was 10 p.m. ... They had spent the day praying over me, saying hands on me, urging me to repent my sins before the Lord” (Winterson, 2001, p. 105). Furthermore, her mother, upon the pastor’s demand, locks Jeanette in a room and does not give any food to her for 36 hours. However, whatever they do, they cannot persuade Jeanette to give up on her love and make her believe that her feelings are wicked and demonic. “I knew that demons entered wherever there was a weak point. If I had a demon my weak point was Melanie, but she was beautiful and good and had loved me” (Winterson, 2001, pp. 105-6). In some way, Jeanette sees no difference between her love for Melanie and God. She identifies her love for Melanie with her sense of identity, and that is why she wants to hold it tightly: “... If they want to get at my demon they’ll have to get at me. ... If I let them take away my demons, I’ll have to give up what I’ve found” (p. 106). In Lacanian sense, Jeanette is thought to refuse the impositions of the Symbolic Order so as to reach her objet petit a, associated with her lesbian identity, which gives a sense of satisfaction and happiness she has experienced in the Imaginary Order. The Symbolic Order, represented by her

mother and the church, regards her feelings as demonic and forces her to abandon her lesbian identity. However, for Jeanette, 'what she has found', namely, her sexual identity, represents who she is, and she wants to keep it even if it is seen as evil.

During her confinement without food, Jeanette, feeling trapped in the Symbolic Order, experiences a hallucination. She hallucinates an 'orange demon', which plays a significant role in Jeanette's realising her sense of identity related to her lesbian subjectivity. Likewise, French (1999) indicates that the [orange] demon is related to Jeanette's gendered identity and sexuality (p. 234). The orange demon is like Jeanette's reflected image in the mirror, which helps her to create a unified sense of self. It could be said that Jeanette experiences Lacan's Mirror Stage, during which the child identifies with its reflected image in the mirror and develops its first sense of self. Likewise, Jeanette, through the help of the orange demon, realises her real image related to her lesbian identity and begins to identify herself with it. Before that, her sense of identity cannot find a place in the Symbolic Order, represented by her mother and the church, which impose the religious and moral realities Jeanette is supposed to follow. In a sense, Jeanette finds it hard to identify her 'self' with those realities and feels fragmented. Hence, through the appearance of the orange demon, Jeanette begins to see her own reality with greater clarity. The orange demon comes to help her to decide what she wants for her life:

'Demons are evil, aren't they?' I asked, worried.

'Not quite, they're just different, and difficult. You know what auras are you?' I nodded.

... your aura, yours is orange which is why you've got me. ... We're here to keep you in one piece, if you ignore us, you're quite likely to end up in two pieces, or lots of pieces, it's all part of the paradox.

'If I keep you, what will happen?'

'You'll have a difficult, different time.'

'Is it worth it?'

'That's up to you.'

'Will I keep Melanie?' (Winterson, 2001, pp. 106-7)

When Jeanette comes out of the hallucination, she pretends to regret her sin so as to get rid of her Lacanian father. She is "calm and cheerful, and ready to accept"

(Winterson, 2001, p. 107). Her only wish is now to see Melanie. She desperately wonders about what happened to her. To avoid her Lacanian father, desiring to see Melanie, Jeanette falsely claims to repent. As the orange reappears, questioning her action, she says, ‘‘I’m not getting rid of you, this is the best way I can think of’’ (p. 107). Jeanette, in Lacanian sense, experiencing the Mirror Stage, comes to recognise her desire, related to her lesbian identity, beyond the imposed realities of her Symbolic Order. In some way, Jeanette is now a desiring subject who wishes to attain her objet petit a, leaving her role as an object of her mother’s desire.

Later, after her exit from the confinement, Jeanette secretly visits Melanie in a distant relative’s house, with the help of Miss Jewsbury. As she waits for Melanie to talk in her room, Jeanette falls asleep and finds herself in a dream. This marks a significant moment of crisis for Jeanette, reminding her to decide on a path she must follow in life. In her dream, Jeanette finds herself in an unknown, mysterious city. She witnesses a truckload of men and women being unloaded, each wearing numbers around their necks. She hears a guard saying that this is their new address. The guard commands the prisoners to march toward a massive stone turret. As Jeanette climbs up the stairs with the prisoners in the turret, she notices them disappearing one by one. As she reaches a glass door, she realises that she is the only one left. A bookshop stands before her. She gets inside and encounters an assistant. When she asks where she is, the assistant replies as follows:

Where everyone is who can’t make the ultimate decision, this is the city of Lost Chances, and this, the Room of the Final Disappointment. You see, you can climb as high as you like, but if you’ve already made the Fundamental Mistake, you end up here, in this room. You can change your role, but never your circumstance. (Winterson, 2001, p. 109)

This might be another moment Jeanette experiences the Lacanian Real, which exists beyond the reach of the Symbolic and Imaginary Orders. Lacan’s Real appears in voids or ruptures between the Symbolic and Imaginary Orders. It seems that Jeanette experiences an unconscious conflict that cannot be resolved in her Symbolic Order. She is now in a sort of limbo between her desired identity and the religious expectations she is meant to follow. She needs to decide which path to follow in her life. As reflected in the dream, this could be her last chance to embrace her identity, in

other words, to reach her objet petit a, which provides the sense of satisfaction she desires to maintain throughout her whole life. If she continues to live the life determined by her mother, she could make a 'fundamental mistake' and miss her chance to attain her objet petit a, related to her 'real' sense of identity. Burdened with such psychological anxieties and sorrows, Jeanette is thought to experience Lacan's trauma of the Real. When a subject experiences the trauma of the Real, she has a sort of existential encounter. This encounter is unfiltered and causes anxiety and fear in the subject because she experiences a feeling beyond her capacity to comprehend and control. As Melanie wakes her up from the dream, Jeanette is burning with fever, still visibly influenced by the trauma of the Real. When they begin to talk about their situation, Jeanette, unfortunately, experiences a deep disappointment. Melanie does not respond to their love the same way she feels and has already given up on their relationship. Jeanette, full of disappointment, returns home and experiences a severe fever seizure in the hours that follow. The pastor believes that this is a sign of God cleansing Jeanette of all her demons and that she will come back as recovered. "The Lord forgives and forgets" (Winterson, 2001, p. 109). However, Jeanette thinks that this is not something her mother could easily forget. "Perhaps the Lord does, but my mother didn't" (p. 109). While she lies shivering and exhausted, she experiences a big shock and re-enters the realm of Lacan's Real. Her mother burns all the letters, cards and jottings of Jeanette in a thought of destroying any remnant of her sins. For Jeanette, this is the moment of a bitter realisation in her life. All she believes is turned upside down. She begins to see what is behind the curtain. Now, there exist no filters that prevent her from seeing the 'real' reality. Her mother figure, who teaches her first realities and meanings in life, becomes a handicap in discovering Jeanette's own realities — her identity and sexuality. All those realities her mother has taught her turn into a big lie and make no sense any more. They all are torn down like a wall:

There are different sorts of teachery, but betrayal is betrayal wherever you find it. She burnt a lot more than the letters that night in the backyard ... In her head she was still queen, but not my queen any more, not the White Queen any more. Walls protect and walls limit. It is in the nature of walls that they should fall. That walls should fall is the consequence of blowing your own trumpet. (Winterson, 2001, p. 110)

Onega (2006), in this context, regards Jeanette as a mythical hero and indicates that her struggle to keep her identity, along with her severe fever and deathlike sleep, resembles the mythical hero's ritual death and rebirth (p. 25). Similarly, when the orange demon reappears, Jeanette exclaims, "I'm going to die", but the orange demon says the opposite "Not you, in fact you're recovering, ... you've made your choice now, there is no going back" (Winterson, 2001, p. 111). Then, the orange demon gives her a rough brown pebble as a reminder of who she is and vanishes. Hence, Jeanette is thought to have gained self-awareness regarding her sexuality and resolved her sense of confusion about her identity. That is to say, she now recognises her feelings and associates her 'self' with her lesbian subjectivity.

However, despite her awareness of her lesbian identity, Jeanette is seen to submit to her Lacanian father, returning to her previous life. It seems that she accepts the law of the Lacanian father, which regulates her life to live as a devoted Christian. "By that summer I was my old self again. Melanie had gone away before starting university, and I was preparing my sermons for a tent mission we had all planned in Blackpool" (p. 111). Even if she has lost her faith in her mother and the church, Jeanette, yielding to her Lacanian father, continues to live with her former realities in the Symbolic Order until she meets Katy, the newly converted girl from Blackpool. At first, their relationship is limited to their church duties. "I was too busy teaching my Bible study class ... Katy had been coming to our church ever since her conversion in the summer, ... She was a particular help to me, often typing out my sermons ..." (Winterson, 2001, p. 117). And, Jeanette seems fully immersed in the regulations of her Symbolic Order: "I hadn't seen the orange demon for ages, so I felt that my life must be back to normal" (p. 117). However, over time, Jeanette begins to develop a relationship with Katy. This time, she is more cautious about hiding their relationship so as not to confront the punishment of her Lacanian father. In a sense, she tries to create a safe zone to live her subjectivity by escaping the Name-of-the-Father within her Symbolic Order. "I had been careful to keep any letters in my Saturday job locker, and as far as I could tell, we were above suspicion" (Winterson, 2001, p. 127). Since they believe they are safe, they go away together for a week outside the town to carry out their so-called church duties. Unfortunately, at the guest house, they are caught by her mother's old friend. To protect Katy, Jeanette devises a plan. In the morning, she

tells the woman that her relationship with Melanie had never ended, and Katy helped them arrange a meeting. Afterwards, her mother, upon reading a letter from her old friend, learns everything and asks Jeanette to move out of the house. For her mother, Jeanette “made her ill, made the house ill, brought evil into the church” (Winterson, 2001, p. 125). For Jeanette, there is no way to avoid her Lacanian father any more in the Symbolic Order. “There was no escaping this time” (p. 125). Her mother is furious and accuses her of being a pervert. While her mother and the pastor are arguing about what to do this time, Jeanette just remains silent. Her silence, however, is not a submission to her Lacanian father. Rather, Jeanette comes to fully realise that she cannot accept the law of the Lacanian father, which breaks her satisfying connection with her true sense of self linked to her lesbian identity. “I lay for a long time just watching the oranges. They were pretty, but not much help. I was going to need more than an icon to get me through this one” (Winterson, 2001, p. 130). While waiting for the church’s decision about her, Jeanette is seen to pay a visit to Elsie, the elderly church member, who has been her real friend and supporter since her childhood. For Jeanette, Elsie represents flexibility and new possibilities unlike the restrictive world imposed on her by her mother. In a sense, she provides a safe space for Jeanette to explore herself in the Symbolic Order. Now they sit together like they used to, not saying much: “We didn’t talk about it, not the rights or wrongs or anything; she looked after me by giving me what I most needed, an ordinary time with a friend” (p. 130).

On the day of the Sunday ceremony, the day the church announces its final decision, Jeanette experiences the greatest disappointment of her life. In his sermon, the pastor, referring to Jeanette’s wicked actions, explains that the real problem is the danger of allowing women to have power in the church. Her mother supports the pastor, saying that “women could have specific circumstances for the missionary”, but ultimately, “the message belong[s] to the men” (Winterson, 2001, p. 131). This moment is a sort of breaking moment for Jeanette, and she immerses into the realm of Lacan’s Real, where the subject confronts a hidden reality beyond her comprehension and control. Up to now, Jeanette, as a woman, has been raised by her mother to be a devoted missionary and speaks in the name of God. Her mother makes her believe that she is chosen by God as a missionary. But now her mother, acting as the Name-of-the-Father of the Symbolic Order, completely destroys all her realities, denying Jeanette

and other women's agency in the church. "Until this moment my life had still made some kind of sense. Now it was making no sense at all" (p. 131). This is a sort of betrayal for Jeanette. Her mother, destroying her previous sense of self, causes her to experience the trauma of Lacan's Real, where she feels great anxiety and horror and finds no meaning in life. At the end of the ceremony, the pastor informs Jeanette that she must renounce any form of 'influential contact' with the church, including her preaching and Bible study classes (Winterson, 2001, p. 132). If Jeanette agrees to their decision, he will arrange a more powerful exorcism for her sins. In Lacanian sense, Jeanette is punished for her disobedience to the law of the father and is forced to conform to the regulations of her Symbolic Order. But Jeanette, eventually refusing to submit to the law of the father, leaves her home, in other words, leaves her Symbolic Order. "I'm leaving the church, so you can forget the rest" (Winterson, 2001, p. 133). She "held on tight to the little brown pebble and hoped they'd go away" (p.133). Now, Jeanette, embracing her lesbian identity, chooses a new path to follow so as to attain her objet petit a, which offers a sense of completeness and satisfaction she unconsciously seeks in her life. In a sense, she strives to preserve her identity in order to resolve her sense of lack, which cannot be filled with the realities taught by her mother in her Symbolic Order. As a result, she breaks her bond with her mother and the church and moves forward to live with her lesbian subjectivity away from the constraints of the realm of the Symbolic. "I made my bed carefully the last morning at home, ... At that time I could not imagine what would become of me, and I didn't care. It was not judgement day, but another morning" (Winterson, 2001, p. 134).

After leaving home, Jeanette works in various jobs to get by, from selling ice cream to working at a funeral parlour and a mental hospital. Despite the challenges of being alone, she somehow manages to create a life for herself away from her mother. When she lives in the city, someone once asks Jeanette, "What would have happened if you had stayed?" (Winterson, 2001, p. 156). Jeanette's inner response, in this context, marks a turning point in her understanding of self-construction. If Jeanette desires to create her own subjectivity, that is, her lesbian identity, she must step out of her restrictively constructed discourse. Ozturk (2022), in the same way, argues that Jeanette's negotiation of her 'self' and sexuality within an evangelical community entails challenging rather than conforming to heterosexual norms (p. 82). That is to

say, to find her 'true' sense of self, Jeanette needs to abandon both her mother and the church. Otherwise, she might lose her opportunity to attain her lost object of desire, objet petit a. In the following, Jeanette says:

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. (Winterson, 2001, p. 156)

Jeanette's words, in Lacanian terms, reflect her unconscious desire to reach objet petit a, which is associated with the ultimate satisfaction the subject can only access through the Real. For Jeanette, the priest represents the Symbolic Order, which restricts her from obtaining her objet petit a. That is why she has refused to continue to live with the impositions dictated by her mother and the church so as to construct her identity outside of the realm of the Symbolic. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, stepping outside the Symbolic Order indicates that the subject might enter the realm of the Real, which exists beyond the realm of the Symbolic and language. Jeanette, stepping out of the Symbolic Order, regards herself as a prophet, a symbolic signifier, who could attain her lost object of desire, which represents her true sense of self. In this context, Jeanette could be associated with Lacan's female subject, who is 'not-whole', experiencing an Other supplementary jouissance beyond the laws of the Symbolic Order. Lacan, in his theory of sexuation, states that women are 'not-whole' and always have something that escapes discourse (Seminar, XX, p. 33). For this reason, Jeanette, not fully subjected to the law of the father, seizes a chance to experience Other jouissance, which gives the ultimate satisfaction associated with the Real, which always remains unsymbolised and unreachable.

Some years later, Jeanette is seen paying a visit to her mother for Christmas. "I'm outside my front door again. ... I hover, then, mustering all my hormones, push open the front door. ... 'Hello Mum, it's me.'" (Winterson, 2001, p. 158). Her mother pretends as if nothing happened and treats Jeanette the same way as in the past. They

even talk about her mother's new church duties. It seems that her mother, as a faithful believer, continues to fulfil her duties and supports the church wholeheartedly despite her disappointment with the corruption within her community, the Society of the Lost, which has embezzled the church's financial aid. Jeanette wonders if her mother has ever changed during their years apart. Despite their past conflicts, she feels that her bond with her mother remains unbroken:

My mother was treating me like she always had; had she noticed my absence? Did she even remember why I'd left? I have a theory that every time you make an important choice, the part of you left behind continues the other life you could have had. (Winterson, 2001, p. 165)

Jeanette's return to her mother, in this sense, could be associated with Lacanian infant's inseparable bond to the Imaginary Mother, through which the child feels complete and delighted in the Imaginary Order. This bond is so strong and intense that the child instinctively desires to sustain that relationship with the Imaginary Mother. As Jeanette expresses, the part of her left behind unconsciously strives to maintain her bond with her Lacanian mother. Even if her mother rejects Jeanette's sexuality, she does not abandon her relations with her mother (Bollinger, 1994, p. 372), returning to her mother to keep that sense of satisfaction she gains through her Lacanian mother in the Imaginary Order. In a sense, Jeanette hopes to construct her true sense of self in a common space where her mother's desires could reconcile with her lesbian subjectivity. Bollinger (1994), likewise, says that Jeanette's "maturity consists in the continuation, not the elimination, of mother-daughter relations" (p. 364). Now, Jeanette does "not want to be betrayed" anymore and desires to have "someone who is fierce and will love [her] until death and know that love is as strong as death, and be on [her] side for ever and ever" (Winterson, 2001, p. 165) like as in the case of the relationship during the Imaginary Order, in which "the child perceives itself an inseparable part [of] ... its mother" (Tyson, 2006, p. 27). Despite her wish to maintain her connection with her Lacanian mother by returning to her home, Jeanette is still afraid of refacing her Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order, which prevents her from attaining her objet petit a, which helps to sustain her satisfying connection with her Lacanian mother in the Imaginary Order. While she is waiting for her mother to come from the church before she leaves for the city, Jeanette's words clearly depict her fears:

Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of joining one, and no means of dismissing my own; she had tied a thread around my button, to tug when she pleased. I knew a woman in another place. Perhaps she would save me. But what if she were asleep? What if she sleepwalked beside me and I never knew? (Winterson, 2001, p. 171)

2.2.3. Jeanette's Romantic Relationships

In her Lacanian journey of self-discovery, Jeanette's romantic affairs play an important role in developing her sexual identity. Her relationships with both Melanie and Katy help her to realise her true sense of self. Jeanette's exploration of her sexuality begins with Melanie, who represents her first encounter with her same-sex desire. When she first sees Melanie, unaware of her feelings for women yet, Jeanette is immediately attracted to her. She goes to the town again and again to see her, wondering about her emotions: "Why do I feel like this?" (Winterson, 2001, p. 81). As their relationship develops, Jeanette begins to feel a deep attachment to Melanie, which brings her great happiness. "Knowing Melanie was a much happier thing" (Winterson, 2001, p. 99). Over time, her feelings for Melanie become much stronger and deeper, as Jeanette herself expresses: "I love you almost as much as I love the Lord" (Winterson, 2001, p. 102). In a sense, her love for Melanie gives Jeanette a sense of gratification and happiness. For Jeanette, "Melanie is a gift from the Lord" (p. 102). Because of this, Jeanette strives to protect her love as it becomes known within her religious community. Especially during the exorcism ceremony at the church, when Melanie and Jeanette are forced to repent for their sins, Jeanette's refusal of the law of the Lacanian father clearly demonstrates the strong bond she feels for Melanie, which gives her the sense of satisfaction she unconsciously desires to sustain in her Symbolic Order. Even the pressure from her mother at home following the ceremony cannot break her connection with Melanie. "I still couldn't think, could only see Melanie's face and Melanie's body" (Winterson, 2001, p. 105). In Lacanian sense, Jeanette is thought to have a chance to experience Lacan's Other *jouissance*, which is a kind of happiness and satisfaction beyond symbolisation and language. Lacan, in his theory of sexualisation, mentions two types of *jouissance*: phallic *jouissance* and Other *jouissance*. While phallic *jouissance* is a *jouissance* shaped by laws of the Symbolic

Order, Other jouissance refers to a form of jouissance that exists beyond symbolisation and language. That is to say, “Other jouissance is ‘more than’ phallic jouissance; it is beyond the symbolic ...” (Homer, 2005, p. 105). Hence, Jeanette, resisting the laws imposed by the Symbolic Order, desires to experience Other jouissance rather than a phallic one, which eventually fails to satisfy the subject in the Symbolic Order. In Jeanette’s Symbolic Order, shaped by strict religious norms, she is expected to live a heterosexual love to which she feels no attachment. For her, those norms provide no sense of connection to her sexual identity. Therefore, struggling to hold on to her love for Melanie, she wishes to experience Lacan’s Other jouissance, which offers a sense of fulfilment and gratification related to her true sense of self. On the other hand, Melanie responds differently to the law of the father within the Symbolic Order. At the exorcism ceremony, she repents for her sin, thinking that her love is a great offence. In a sense, she accepts the law of the father and submits to the demand of the Name-of-the-Father, which is the authority signifier of the Symbolic Order. When the pastor asks, “Do you promise to give up this sin and beg the Lord to forgive you?”, Melanie, trembling with fear, replies, “Yes” (Winterson, 2001, p. 103). Even when Jeanette later visits her secretly at her distant relative’s house, Melanie stays distant from her. When Jeanette touches her cheek, she winces and pulls away (Winterson, 2001, p. 109). Filled with shock and sorrow, she asks Melanie what they had done to her. Her response, however, reflects her submission to the law imposed by the Name-of-the-Father: “Nothing, I repented, and they told me I should try and go away for a week. We can’t see each other, it’s wrong” (p. 109). It is seen that Melanie does not respond to their love the way Jeanette feels. For Jeanette, her love signifies oneness and completeness whereas for Melanie, it feels sinful and wicked. In Lacanian sense, while Jeanette associates her love with Other jouissance, Melanie experiences phallic jouissance shaped by the law of the Symbolic Order and thus feels dissatisfied with Jeanette’s love.

On her break-up with Melanie, Jeanette, full of disappointment, returns to her former life and carries out her church duties as a devoted Christian until she meets Katy. She, in a sense, continues to live her life according to the regulations and constraints determined by the Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order. However, several months later, during Easter week, Melanie unexpectedly reappears in town on

the day of the Nativity play during the Sunday service. Shocked to see her, Jeanette, not talking to her, runs home as soon as the service ends. “I was trembling with fear. As far as I was concerned Melanie was dead. No one mentioned her, and as her mother never came to church, there was no need to remember” (Winterson, 2001, p. 118). Later, when Melanie comes over to her home at night, Jeanette just remains silent and listens to her plans: Over the next half hour, she speaks about her studies, her friends, and her holiday plans (p. 118). Even when Melanie asks her to meet some day, Jeanette refuses her offer. As Melanie leaves the house, she gives Jeanette a goodbye kiss, but she feels nothing (p. 118). Now, her love for Melanie gives no sense of happiness to Jeanette any more. She feels disappointed and dissatisfied. For her, Melanie transforms into a phallic jouissance that fails her and disappoints her in the Symbolic Order. “... When she’d gone, I pulled up my knees under my chin, and begged the Lord to set me free” (p. 118). In some way, Melanie becomes an obstacle that prevents Jeanette from experiencing Lacan’s Other jouissance, which is associated with ultimate satisfaction, only accessed through the Real. Even in the following days of her stay in town, Melanie attempts to speak with Jeanette. However, Jeanette consistently avoids her. During their last encounter on the bus home, Jeanette clearly shows her intention to end her relationship with Melanie. On the bus, Melanie again smiles and makes casual conversation about various things, continuing until Jeanette’s stop arrives. Finally, on her stop, Jeanette, without saying anything, “jumped up, jumped off and ran as fast as [she] could ...” (Winterson, 2001, p. 119).

A year later, at Easter time, Melanie returns to town again. During her absence, Jeanette’s relationship with Katy evolves beyond friendship, and they begin an affair. She hears that Melanie is going to marry. Jeanette “didn’t object to Melanie getting married”, but she “objected to her getting married to *him* [to that man] (Winterson, 2001, p. 121). She wants to warn an old friend, believing that the man is not the right choice for her and will bring only sorrow to her. “I was so angry I tried to talk to her about it, but she had left her brain in Bangor” (p. 121). Melanie, however, remains calm and indifferent to Jeanette’s words: “... she was serene, serene to the point of being bovine” (p. 121). Then, Melanie leaves the town to stay with that man and his parents. Some years later, Jeanette runs into Melanie by accident in the city. It is Jeanette’s second year in the city, away from home, after leaving her community as

her relationship with Katy became known. Melanie seems to have settled her life: married with a kid, as expected from her by the Name-of-the-Father, to follow her life according to the societal norms imposed by her Symbolic Order. She pretends nothing happened between them and continues to talk as usual. But, for Jeanette, this moment is a crucial turning point, which makes her realise her disappointment with her phallic jouissance, which refers to her relationship with Melanie:

I kept looking at her, and wondering how we ever had a relationship; yet when she first left me, I thought I had blood poisoning. I couldn't forget her. Now she seemed to have forgotten everything. It made me want to shake her, to pull off all my clothes in the middle of the street and yell, 'Remember this body?' (Winterson, 2001, p. 166)

As Melanie continues her conversation, saying that "not much had happened between [them] ... those sorts of feelings were dead, ... she hoped [she] hadn't kept any letters, silly to hang on to things that had no meaning" (p. 166), Jeanette eventually comes to realise that Melanie's desires and expectations have never matched her own. That is why, they cannot meet on the same page to continue their relationship, which once provided a sense of completeness for the lack she desires to fill within her Symbolic Order. Melanie even mentions her contact with Jeanette's mother, sharing that "They had worked together on the town's first mission for the coloured people. ... waiting for her missionary posting ..." (Winterson, 2001, pp. 166-7). Now, Jeanette, however, comprehends that Melanie and her life are heading into different directions and will not meet at any crossroads. In Lacanian sense, Jeanette and Melanie's disappointment in their relationship could be associated with Lacan's claim in his theory of sexuation, "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (Seminar XX, p. 12), which indicates that there is no complete harmonious sexual connection between two people. Each subject is "pursuing a form of enjoyment that is distinct and irrelevant to the other's" (Bailly, 2012, p. 147) because each subject's desires and lacks are different from that of the other. In the same way, both Jeanette and Melanie are two separate Lacanian subjects with their own desires and lacks in the Symbolic Order. That is why, due to their different desires and lacks, both Jeanette and Melanie fail to complete one another and cannot become 'one' in their relationship. For Jeanette, her love senses completeness and great happiness whereas for Melanie, it

signifies fear and anxiety imposed by the Lacanian father. Since they attribute different meanings to their sense of love, their connection, in the end, dissatisfies them and fails to fulfil their desires in the Symbolic Order.

In her relationship with Katy, Jeanette, being aware of her homosexual feelings, experiences no confusion and steps into an unambiguous affair. Katy, unlike Melanie, is self-assured and comfortable with her feelings. She does not feel any hesitation to start a relationship with Jeanette. "... 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, ...'' (Winterson, 2001, p. 120). For Jeanette, her love for Katy presents a clarity and causes no conflicts, which frees her from the obligations of the Symbolic Order. It seems that Katy, as a 'not-whole' subject, not fully submitted to the law of the father in the Symbolic Order, embraces her lesbian subjectivity, which indicates that she embodies a form of Other *jouissance* that exists beyond the realm of the Symbolic and language. For this reason, to preserve the sense of satisfaction she sustains through her relationship with Katy, Jeanette strives to keep their relationship secret. In some way, she builds a safe room to live their lesbian subjectivity, hiding from the Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order. "I had no intention of telling her [Melanie] 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'' (Winterson, 2001, p. 121). Even when they are caught by her mother's old friend at the Morecambe guest house during their time away from town, she makes up a plan to protect Katy. Namely, to protect Katy from the punishment of the Lacanian father, she falsely claims that she has not yet ended her affair with Melanie. Symbolically sacrificing herself against the Name-of-the-Father, she prevents Katy from being submitted to the laws of the Symbolic Order so that she could live her lesbian subjectivity. "Katy was safe, that was the important thing. She was stubborn and angry like me, but unlike me she couldn't cope with the darker side of our church'' (Winterson, 2001, p. 121). After that moment, Jeanette, now, despite her fear, seems to be ready to face her Lacanian father. "I didn't know what to expect, but I knew I wouldn't live through any of that again. Hands in my pockets, I played with a rough brown pebble'' (p. 121). In a way, by holding tightly to the brown pebble — the token the orange demon gives her to remind her of who she is, Jeanette seems determined to

take action this time. Hence, it can be said that Jeanette, through her relationship with Katy, gains the courage to confront her Lacanian father so as to fight for her lesbian identity, which provides a sense of completeness and fulfilment she unconsciously desires to maintain in her entire life within the Symbolic Order.



CHAPTER THREE

WHITE TEETH

3.1. ZADIE SMITH AS A CONTEMPORARY AUTHOR

Zadie Smith, a renowned contemporary British author and essayist, was born in 1975 and grew up in Willesden, a multicultural suburban area in northwest London. She is of mixed origin, the daughter of a white English father and a black Jamaican mother. Her father, Harvey Smith, a veteran of World War II, was a photographer, and her mother, Yvonne Bailey, who came to the UK in the 1960s, was a former social worker and psychotherapist. When Smith was a teenager, her parents divorced, and her father lived apart from Smith and her two younger brothers until his death at age 81. Smith, in her childhood, began writing poems and stories along with her great interest in music and dancing. Her ambition, actually, was to be a performer in a musical theatre. However, over time, her interest in writing grew stronger, and she pursued a degree in English literature at King's College in Cambridge. She decided to study at Cambridge because all the writers she loved went there (Hattenstone, 2000). Smith described her university years as “the best three years of my life”, during which she wrote fiction and regularly submitted entries to the *May Anthologies*, an annual collection of works by Cambridge and Oxford students (Sharp, 2006, p. 1302). Unsurprisingly, her talent in writing was very soon discovered. With the publication of her short story ‘The Newspaper Man’ in the 1997 *May Anthologies*, Smith caught the attention of publishers and signed a contract for her first two books while she was still a university student.

Zadie Smith, at the age of 24, made her entry into the literary world with her highly praised debut novel, *White Teeth*, in 2000. With its release, Smith became a literary sensation (Augustyn, 2014, p. 322) in Britain and abroad. She was “young, black, and British” (Merrit, 2000), representing a new face of multicultural Britain in the millennium. She was considered a promising young author and took her place among the most talented writers of her generation. One of the UK's leading literary magazines, *Granta*, praised her talent in writing and named Smith among “Best of Young British Novelists” (Pendergast et al., 2005, p. 154) in both 2003 and 2013, recognising her as one of the most influential writers under the age of 40. Moreover, peer writers like Salman Rushdie, Carly Phillips and Dave Eggers and the literary

academy have appreciated Smith's talent following the publication of her debut (Walters, 2008, p. 1). Today, Zadie Smith, as a distinguished living author of 21st-century British Literature, has various works, including novels, short stories, and essay collections in addition to her book reviews and criticism in several notable publications like *The New Yorker* and *The London Review of Books*. Among her literary works, Smith is best-known for her novels *White Teeth* (2000), *On Beauty* (2005), *NW* (2012) and *Swing Time* (2016), along with her short story collection, *Grand Union* (2019) and her essay collections, *Changing My Mind* (2009) and *Feel Free* (2018). In 2023, Smith also released her first historical novel, *The Fraud*, which explores the real-life Tichborne case.

Smith, in her literary works, is mostly concerned with such issues as identity, belonging, race, immigration, multiculturalism and hybridity based on her personal experiences as a mixed-race individual growing up in an ethnically diverse environment. Meyer (2017) indicates that even if Smith's texts show slight differences in tone and style, they maintain the same focus on multicultural issues like identities, beliefs, values, and relationships across the boundaries of nations, race, class, generations, and gender (p. 482). Smith, through her insightful depiction of complex multicultural themes, has a distinctive way of writing. By portraying characters from different cultural and social backgrounds, she allows multiple voices to be heard in her works. Smith, through her common use of dialogic prose, creates space for her varied characters to express their feelings and views within her narratives. Her books, in this respect, are generally characterised as 'polyphonic', which refers to a narrative style that integrates different voices and perspectives. Smith is also seen to enrich her narratives with intertextual references related to her characters' backgrounds and the settings in which her stories unfold. For her writing style, in one interview held with Smith, she says that "a style is something you can't help but have. It's like your skin. It's not something that you can go out and buy, it's just the way you express yourself. It's so implicit to everything you do" (Wachtel, 2010). Namely, Smith's choice of characters and narrative style seems to be a natural part of her authorial identity, which reflects her unique approach to writing.

White Teeth, published in 2000, is Smith's most well-known novel, both nationally and internationally. None of her later books has surpassed the fame of *White*

Teeth. The book was an immediate huge success and received numerous literary prizes in Britain and abroad. It won the Guardian First Book Award, the Whitbread Prize for best first novel, and the Commonwealth Writers' First Book Award. It was also shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Besides this, the novel was also adapted into a television miniseries by the BBC in 2002. *White Teeth*, celebrated as the portrait of contemporary multicultural Britain, is described as "a reading of a new Britishness" (O'Leary, 2013, p. 39). Tancke (2013) shares that *White Teeth* was quickly recognised as canonical, celebrating the diversity of British urban society at the beginning of a new century (p. 27). With the publication of *White Teeth*, regarded as the modern face of multicultural London, Smith was also highly appreciated by the media and invited to give speeches about race, identity, and gender. However, for Smith, she is just a novelist who gives her opinions on social and cultural issues. She states that people seemed to expect her to be an expert on multicultural affairs, as if multiculturalism was a literary genre or something, whereas, in her view, "it's just a fact of life – like there are people of different races on the planet" (Hattenstone, 2000). For *White Teeth*, besides its central focus on family relationships, Smith accepts that the novel is very much about modern London. She says that London is now a city where the terms white and black are becoming less distinct and melding into various shades of brown. Smith, in this context, characterises *White Teeth* as the depiction of "a new generation for whom race is the backdrop to daily life rather than the defining characteristic of existence" (Hattenstone, 2000).

White Teeth is a polyphonic novel which reflects multiple voices and perspectives through its portrayal of characters from diverse backgrounds. The book is embellished with various voices, ranging from Bengali-English to Jamaican dialect and North London slang. Smith, with her extensive use of dialogue, encourages her characters to articulate their emotions and viewpoints throughout the novel. Notably, her choice to have the characters speak in their own dialects allows readers to recognise their distinct voices and perspectives more clearly. Peter Childs argues that "the vocabulary and speech mannerisms of [Smith's] characters [help] to show events from their perspective" (qtd. in Tancke, 2013, p. 29). The novel challenges a linear chronological structure in the narration. The narrative flow is interrupted by the

characters' memories, shifting between past and present, along with the use of intertextual references. In *White Teeth*, Smith also employs a humorous and ironic narrative voice through her use of omniscient narration. Even if the text's humorous tone has been criticised for shading the importance of serious issues reflected in the novel, Tancke (2013) views it as "the novel's characteristic strategy of employing dual layers of narrative" (p. 33). She maintains that the novel's surface layer of comedy and irony is combined with a profoundly deep underlying level that rises to the surface (p. 33). This suggests that beneath its surface comedy, *White Teeth*, through its second narrative level, engages with profoundly serious issues such as cultural tensions, identity conflicts, religious fundamentalism, interracial marriages, and the themes of root and rootlessness. Thus, due to its narrative duality, the novel is thought to present a distinctive reading experience to its readers. Pendergast et al. (2005) claim that thanks to Smith's confident, humorous and inventive style, *White Teeth* is an appealing read, which likely made it a defining book at the turn of the millennium (p. 155).

White Teeth consists of four main chapters, each focusing on the life of a different protagonist. The chapters are named after the central characters: Archie (1974-1945), Samad (1984-1857), Irie (1990-1907), and lastly Magid, Millat, and Marcus (1992-1999). The novel is primarily set in Willesden Green, a working-class, multicultural suburb in northwest London, and spans nearly 50 years, from World War II (1945) to the 1990s. It explores the interconnected lives of three multiracial families: the Joneses, the Iqbals, and the Chalfens. Archie Jones, a white Englishman, and Samad Iqbal, a Bengali Muslim, are old friends who first met while serving together during the Second World War. After thirty years of separation across continents following the war, these two friends are reunited when Samad decides to build a new life in England with his half-age young wife, Alsana. In the spring of 1973, Samad moves into the same London borough where Archie lives, and their wartime friendship continues from where it left off. The novel opens with the suicidal attempt of Archie Jones, who ends his thirty-year marriage at the request of his Italian wife, Ophelia. However, Archie's attempt has failed when a Muslim butcher saves his life. For Archie, this moment marks a sort of rebirth after years of disappointment in his marriage and job. While wandering the streets of London in the very early morning

after his failed suicide, he comes across a banner hanging down from the window of a house, reading: 'Welcome to the End of the World Party, 1975'. Without hesitation, Archie decides to join the party, where he meets his future wife, Clara Bowden, a nineteen-year-old black Jamaican girl. Archie is immediately attracted to this young, tall, and beautiful black woman. Just six weeks later, the middle-aged, forty-seven-year-old Archie Jones marries the young and beautiful Clara. For Clara, this marriage is not a love one but an escape from her ex-boyfriend Ryan Topps and her fanatically religious mother, Hortense Bowden, a strict Jehovah's Witness, who believes that the end of the world is very near and that a new kingdom will be built for the Witnesses after the apocalypse. After their marriage, Clara and Archie move to Willesden Green to start a new life. Meanwhile, Samad and his wife, Alsana, also settle in the same suburb so that the two old friends can maintain their contact. In the years following their marriage, Clara gives birth to a daughter named Irie while Alsana has twin sons, Magid and Millat, in the same year. Archie and Samad, indifferent to their family lives, go back to their habitual routines, spending most of their time in their favourite spot, the pub, O'Connell's. As the children grow up, Samad's anxiety starts to intensify. Raising his children in this foreign country, far away from their traditions and religion, makes Samad increasingly worried. Especially after his relationship with the sons' music teacher from the school, he begins to question his faith, feeling that he has fallen into his worldly desires and is no longer a proper Muslim. He is always busy with the same thought that his sons are becoming more English each passing day. While the twins are nine, Samad finds a solution to his concerns with the help of Archie, sending his sons to Bangladesh to be raised by his relatives with their own traditions and religious values. However, not having enough money to send both of his sons, he decides to send Magid without letting his wife know his plans. Afterwards, Alsana's efforts to bring her son back are in vain. The authorities are powerless to help. Feeling hatred and anger toward her husband, Alsana cuts off all communication with Samad, speaking with few words when necessary. During the years apart from Magid, Irie and Millat grow together, going to the same school and spending time at family gatherings. Now, Irie and Millat are fifteen. Irie Jones, who mostly inherits her Jamaican genes, is a big girl, dissatisfied with her look and envious of the standard of white beauty. She is highly interested in her schoolwork and is a good student. She has a platonic love

for Millat Iqbal. On the other hand, Millat is a troublesome boy with striking looks, not interested in courses, spending his time smoking weed and having temporary relationships with white girls. One day, during a school inspection, Millat and Irie along with the white boy, Joshua Chalfen, are caught smoking marijuana. Although Irie and Joshua are innocent, all three are grounded by the school. As a constructive punishment, Irie and Millat will attend after-school courses at Joshua's house, trained by his sophisticated parents, Marcus and Joyce. Since Joshua has romantic feelings for Irie, he is quite happy with this new arrangement. Marcus Chalfen is a scientist specialised in genetic engineering, nowadays working on a new project called FutureMouse. His wife, Joyce, is an expert in gardening, having written several books about flowers and giving speeches on the radio. Proud of their Jewish-Catholic background, they have their 'Chalfenist' way of living with their four intelligent sons. The Chalfen family seem excited about this new arrangement, ready to help Irie and Millat with their studies and even with their personal problems. In particular, Joyce Chalfen shows great interest in Millat and his struggles during his time at their home. She admires Millat's good looks. While Millat remains unhappy with this new setup and continues his rebellious behaviour, Irie is quite satisfied to be with the Chalfens, which represents the family she wishes to possess. During her time at Chalfens, Marcus mostly helps Irie with her studies. He even provides her with a part-time job where Irie organises his papers in his study. As they spend more time with the Chalfens, both Alsana and Clara start to be worried. Irie constantly talks about the Chalfens at home. Millat rarely goes home, often spending nights at Chalfens. He even begins to hang out with the fundamentalist Islamic group, KEVIN, a newly founded organisation in London. As summer comes, after four months of tutoring with the Chalfens, Irie excels in her exams, and even Millat performs better than many students at school. Now, at 16, Irie has new plans for her life. She decides to study dentistry, following the advice of Marcus. However, before starting university, she wants to take a gap year to explore new experiences and travel to Africa much like Joshua will do. This causes a crisis at her home. Both Clara and Archie oppose her decision, insisting that they cannot afford such a trip. One night, while her parents are asleep, Irie tries to wake them up to discuss it again, thinking that it is the right time to change their minds. In the room, she, however, accidentally knocks over the glass containing her mother's

false teeth. This is the first time she finds out her mother wears false teeth. Irie gets very furious, upon discovering a new mystery about her family. She is really sick of her family's secret histories and untold stories. Upon this, she packs all her stuff and leaves home. When Irie arrives at her grandmother's house, Hortense is surprised to find her granddaughter at the door in the middle of the night. Now eighty-four, Hortense lives with Clara's ex-boyfriend, Ryan Topps, after her husband's death. Like Hortense, Ryan has become a devout Jehovah's Witness and now voluntarily works for the church. During her stay at her grandmother's house, Irie begins to learn about her roots. Her grandmother is also of mixed origin, the daughter of a white British man, Charlie Durham. She even forms a reading list from her grandmother's library to learn about her Jamaican heritage. She is planning to stay there for a few months until she completes her studies for her exams in June. While at her grandmother's, Irie has two unexpected visitors. The first visitor is Joshua. Irie learns that Joshua, now a member of an animal rights group, is really angry at his father because of his new project on mice. Irie's second visitor is Samad, who is really worried about Millat, who has been missing from home for three weeks. Samad shares his deep disappointment about both of her sons. Millat is now always with that so-called Islamic organisation, KEVIN – **K**eeper of the **E**ternal and **V**ictorious **I**slamic **N**ation. Her other son, Magid, returning to England with the help of Marcus to study law, becomes more English than English. After his return to England in the following months, Magid starts working alongside Marcus on his project, FutureMouse. Marcus's project, however, draws fierce opposition from various activist groups, including Millat's Islamic organisation, KEVIN and his son, Joshua's animal rights group, FATE – **F**ighting **A**nimal **T**orture and **E**xploitation. Upon Magid's return, the Iqbal family wants the two brothers to reunite, and they ask for help from Irie to convince Millat. When Irie goes to see Millat at his home, something unexpected occurs. Irie and Millat engage in sexual intercourse. However, Irie feels humiliated when Millat, immediately afterwards, falls to his knees to pray for forgiveness. Full of anger and sorrow, Irie storms out and heads to the Chalfens, where Magid is staying and makes love with Magid too. Later, Irie learns that she is pregnant. On the day of the public demonstration of the FutureMouse project, Millat attempts to kill Marcus's mentor, Dr. Perret, whom he has invited to his public conference. However, not distinguished

because of being a twin, both Magid and Millat are sentenced to community service as a punishment. Irie, never knowing the real father of her child, builds a new life for herself far away from Magid and Millat. They are now just an uncle to her child. In the end, Irie is seen sitting on a beach in Jamaica with her grandmother, Hortense, Joshua and her little daughter.

3.2. A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON *WHITE TEETH*

3.2.1. Irie's Conflict with Her Body

Irie, the daughter of a white Englishman, Archie, and a black Jamaican immigrant, Clara, is a mixed-race individual born into a predetermined world shaped by Western beauty norms. As a young girl, who falls outside the standard of white beauty, Irie finds it difficult to locate herself within the British society she is raised in. Unlike her father Archie's expectation of a miracle to have "a child, the genes mix up, and blue eyes" (Smith, 2001, p. 69), Irie, instead, inherits the Jamaican features of her black heritage. Now, at fifteen, she is a big girl with "big tits, big butt, big hips, big thighs, big teeth" (Smith, 2001, p. 265). Skipping her mother Clara's European proportions, she takes on the Jamaican physical traits of her grandmother Hortense, "loaded with pineapples, mangoes and guavas" (p. 265). However, Irie feels discomfort with her Jamaican body image and views it as an obstacle to fitting into the society she was born into. McMann (2012) indicates that Irie perceives her racialised body as the primary barrier in her path to becoming British (pp. 629-30). For Irie, her body feels suited for another space, not for the British culture she is raised in. She describes her body form as belonging to a different culture: "... her brown bulges, ... her various ledges (shelf space for books, cups of tea, baskets or, ... bags of fruit, buckets of water) ... genetically designed with another country in mind, another climate" (Smith, 2001, p. 266). In a sense, in a society with its own beauty norms and standards, Irie feels that she comes in "all wrong" (Smith, 2001, p. 268) and cannot find a place for herself. She feels displaced and alienated because of her negative body image. Even if her mother says that she is fine and simply built like a Bowden, Irie does not feel the same and experiences an ongoing conflict with her own body. To her, she is a "Jamaican hourglass heavy with the sands" rather than an English Rose—"a slender, delicate thing not made for the hot suns, a surfboard rippled by the wave" (Smith, 2001, pp. 266-7).

In this respect, Irie's experience of such an ideological world dominated by Western beauty standards corresponds to Lacan's notion of the big Other, the symbolic authority signifier, which defines cultural norms and expectations the subject is expected to follow in the Symbolic Order. Lacan's big Other, as mentioned before, represents the Symbolic Order. To put it simply, the big Other is the Symbolic Order itself. As a symbolic structure, the Symbolic Order pre-exists and establishes all kinds of rules and regulations within a society. It consists of society's ideologies, including norms, values, beliefs, biases, laws, and so on (Tyson, 2006, p. 31). In Lacanian sense, Irie, being born into British culture with its idealised standards of beauty, steps into the field of the Other, where her subjectivity is constituted in relation to these dominant beauty norms. That is to say, the British culture Irie is raised in functions as the big Other, which ideologically structures her understanding of beauty by inscribing whiteness and Western aesthetic norms as the ideal. Hence, upon entering the field of the Other within the Symbolic Order, Irie begins to perceive herself as failing to meet the expectations of the big Other and regards her Jamaican body image as inferior and inadequate in comparison to the slender silhouette of the modern English woman. Her "mountainous curves, buck teeth and thick metal retainer, impossible Afro hair" make her believe "in her *ugliness*, in her *wrongness*" (Smith, 2001, p. 268), positioning her body as lacking, not conforming to English beauty norms within the discourse of the Other. Especially, during her adolescence, Irie's obsession with her weight and appearance intensifies and unconsciously disrupts even her dreams. In her recurring dream, Irie confronts an advert that says, "Lose Weight to Earn Money" (Smith, 2001, p. 265). She knows that the advert is directly addressing to her, "You, you, *you*, Miss Jones, with your strategically placed arms and cardigan, tied around the arse" (p. 265), implying that she does not match the British cultural ideals with her current body: "... how to diminish that swollen enormity, the Jamaican posterior? ... with your belly-reducing knickers and breast-reducing bra, with your meticulous lycra corseting ... with your elasticated waists" (p. 265). In a sense, as Alawna (2023) indicates, the English norms haunt Irie's life like ghosts (p. 93) and unconsciously shape her perception of body image. Troubled by such thoughts about her appearance in "[n]ightmares and daydreams, on the bus, in the bath, in class" (Smith, 2001, p. 266), Irie regards herself as a mismatch and clashes with the cultural norms of the big Other,

namely, the English beauty standards that structure her Symbolic Order. Failing to fulfil the demands of the big Other with her Jamaican features, Irie cannot reconcile with her body, which leads her to experience a fractured sense of identity within British society.

For Irie, she is a “stranger in a stranger land” (Smith, 2001, p. 266) and does not feel that she belongs in the country where she was born and raised. Tancke (2013) argues that Irie feels disconnected from England, her country of birth, due to the physical constraints imposed by her body (p. 35). Her internalisation of a negative body image makes Irie alienated and deepens her sense of dislocation from the British society she inhabits. “There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection” (Smith, 2001, p. 266). This suggests that Irie experiences a failed Mirror Stage, where she cannot find her reflection in the mirror and therefore fails to develop her initial sense of self. For Lacan, the Mirror Stage is a crucial period during which the child constructs a unified sense of self through its identification with the reflected image in the mirror. However, Irie is seen unable to recognise herself in the symbolic reflection of the British culture, and thus her self-image remains fragmented and alienated, which prevents her from forming a unified sense of self. More specifically, due to her Jamaican body form, Irie cannot identify herself with the idealised image that the British culture, namely the big Other, offers. For this reason, in an attempt to complete her fractured identity, Irie struggles to find her reflection in the field of the Other within the Symbolic Order. Particularly, during the English literature class, the conversation between Irie and her teacher, Mrs Roody, clearly exemplifies her struggle to locate herself in the history of British culture. While analysing *The Dark Lady* from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 127 in class, Irie asks whether the dark lady is black or not, hoping to find some historical and cultural representation of black people like herself within the canon of British literature. However, Mrs Roody responds in a way that sharply contrasts with Irie’s expectation:

No, dear, she’s dark. She’s not black in the modern sense. There weren’t any... well, Afro-Carri-bee-yans in England at that time, dear. That’s more a modern phenomenon, ... But this was the 1600s. ... it does seem terribly unlikely, unless she was a slave of some kind, ... (Smith, 2001, pp. 271-2)

Unfortunately, Irie is left feeling disappointed after her confrontation with the norms of the big Other, embodied by Mrs Roody, who acts as a representative agent of the Symbolic Order. In a moment, she “had thought ... that she had seen something like a reflection, but it was receding” (Smith, 2001, p. 272). Even as Irie, hoping to find the possibility of historical Black representation, continues to explain her argument by referencing the Sonnet, “*Then will I swear, beauty herself is black...* And the curly hair thing, black wires -” (p. 272), Mrs Roody does not let Irie finish her words and rejects her interpretation, claiming that she is reading with a modern ear and misunderstanding the context of the 1600s (p. 272). For her teacher, the sonnet refers to the contrast between natural complexion and the pale makeup fashion popular among women at that time, maintaining that it is not about a black woman (p. 272). Hence, Irie, losing her hope and facing the reality of her Symbolic Order, cannot place herself in her society and experiences a lack, which hinders Irie from connecting to her sense of identity. In some way, her efforts to locate her reflection in the past are negated through the presence of the agent of the big Other, embodied by her teacher, within her Symbolic Order. Tournay (2004), likewise, asserts that the teacher acts like a guardian of white British culture who operates through exclusion and disregards both changed historical parameters and alternative reading practices (p. 226). Now, unfortunately, for Irie, that small spark of her reflection related to her sense of identity completely disappears. “And the reflection that Irie had glimpsed slunk back into the familiar darkness” (Smith, 2001, p. 272).

Fully subjected to the Western beauty norms, Irie subsequently seeks out ways to meet the expectations of the big Other in her Symbolic Order. For Lacan, the subject becomes a subject only when they are subjected to the discourse of the Other (Seminar XI, p. 188). This suggests that the subject is constituted through social and cultural structures within the field of the Other. Accordingly, Irie, desiring to construct her sense of identity, begins to change her appearance to match the beauty standards of British culture. For her, to affirm her sense of self seems only possible by adapting herself to the norms of her society. To look thinner, for example, Irie begins to wear corsetry. Despite her mother's concern, she continues to torture her body with that uncomfortable garment. “What’s up with you? What in the Lord’s name are you wearing? How can you breathe?” (Smith, 2001, p. 266). It seems that Irie is

“unwilling to settle for genetic fate” (p. 266) and attempts to transform her body in order to place herself within British society. This indicates that Irie’s sense of self, her subjectivity, is shaped by the demands of the big Other, which signifies the ideals of English beauty in her Symbolic Order. Tyson (2006) states that if we grew up in a different culture, namely, in a different Symbolic Order, we would develop different desires (p. 31). In this sense, Irie desires what she is taught to desire by the big Other in the Symbolic Order. She desires to look like an English white woman with a tall, slim body. Desperately fighting against her genetic heritage, Irie continues her attempts to change her appearance. She is especially dissatisfied with her impossible Afro hair. She wants to have long, straight hair. “Straight straight long black sleek flickable tossable shakeable touchable finger-through-able wind-blowable hair” (Smith, 2001, p. 273). Intending to transform herself according to the desire of the big Other, Irie makes an appointment at P.K.’s Afro Hair Salon. She, in a sense, tries to reshape her image by the desire of the Other as Lacan asserts, “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (Seminar XI, p. 235). At the salon, despite being warned about losing her hair because it is too clean for straightening and dying, Irie ignores them all, driven by a deep desire to fulfil the norms of her Symbolic Order. Her attempt to straighten her hair, as noted by Watkins (2007), is emotionally draining, illustrating the depth of Irie’s discomfort with herself and her body (p. 12). Regardless of the potential harm to her body, her only desire is to be recognised by the big Other in order to feel a part of British society. When the white ammonia gloop is applied to her hair, Irie, two minutes later, begins to feel an intense burning sensation on her scalp. With no dirt to protect her skin, she screams out in pain (Smith, 2001, p. 277). Tragically, Irie ends up losing all her hair. She can only helplessly watch her hair “coming out in clumps, shimmy[ing] down the plughole” (Smith, 2001, p. 278). As she sees her new look, Irie cannot help but cry openly. Looking at “her Hiroshima reflection” (Smith, 2001, p. 279) in the mirror, she undergoes a traumatic experience, which causes her to lose all hope of meeting the demands of the big Other to fit into her symbolic discourse, which signifies the British society she inhabits. To fix her hair crisis, the hairdresser later performs another treatment on Irie’s hair, instructing her to buy natural hair from a nearby shop that sells wigs and hair extensions. Irie storms out of the P.K.’s with the instruction card: “6 Metres. Indian. Straight. Black/red” (Smith, 2001, p. 280) In the

street, full of tears in her eyes, she avoids looking at her reflection in the shop windows, fearing that she will confront the fragmented image of her 'self', an image that now completely alienates her from the discourse of the Other she wishes to belong.

After enduring over five hours of hair treatment at P.K.'s, Irie finally gets the straight hair she has long desired. With her own two inches of hair plaited in small sections with somebody else's hair and sealed with glue, she now has "a full head of long, straight, reddish-black hair" (Smith, 2001, p. 282). She stares in disbelief at her new image in the mirror and asks the hairdresser if it looks straight. "[B]ewitched by her own reflection" (p. 282), Irie, filled with joy, heads to the Iqbal house to show it to Millat, her childhood friend, for whom she harbours secret feelings. In Lacanian sense, Irie's new appearance reflects her attempt to match the ideal image constructed by the big Other, which represents British cultural norms of beauty in the Symbolic Order. With her new appearance, Irie now comes to resemble the white girls that Millat typically finds attractive. Previously, for Irie, her negative body image was the main obstacle in associating herself with the ideal image in the mirror of British culture. But now, through her transformation, she begins to feel more positive about her body, which helps her to construct a sense of identity within the discourse of the Other. When Irie arrives at the Iqbal house, she does not find Millat but instead encounters his cousin Neena, who is a lesbian, and her girlfriend, Maxine. Shocked by Irie's new appearance, Neena exclaims, "Bloody hell! ...What the fuck do you look like?" (Smith, 2001, p. 283). She disapproves of Irie's new image, thinking that she "looks like a freak" (p. 283). Moreover, Maxine expresses her appreciation for Irie's former look, remarking that she used to look gorgeous with her curly, wild hair (p. 283). However, Irie cannot understand their reactions because, for her, this new image represents the reflection she has been seeking in the discourse of the Other, through which she hopes to discover her sense of identity. That is to say, Irie believes that in order to become a part of the British culture she longs for, she must conform to the dominant ideals of English beauty by looking like everyone else. The narrator's words clearly illustrate Irie's unconscious desire: "Sometimes you want to be different. And sometimes you'd give the hair on your head to be the same as everybody else" (Smith, 2001, p. 284). However, for Neena and Maxine, Irie is already beautiful in her own way, with her unique differences. Even if it does not match the standards of English beauty, they

believe, “The Afro was cool, ... It was wicked. It was *yours*” (Smith, 2001, p. 284). It seems that Neena and Maxine present new realities to Irie beyond the demands of the big Other. In a sense, they help Irie to see an alternative form of self-definition that embraces differences rather than conformity to the ideals of English beauty. Just before leaving the Iqbal house, Irie, in a moment of inner turmoil, stands in the hallway “facing her own reflection, ... tearing out somebody else’s hair with her bare hands” (Smith, 2001, p. 289). Hence, by confronting these new realities in her Symbolic Order, Irie’s perception of self and body is seen to take on a new shape, moving away from the imposed aesthetic norms of the big Other towards a more self-defined sense of identity.

3.2.2. Irie’s Exploration of Her Roots

In the process of developing her racial identity, Irie, as a mixed-race individual, struggles with her sense of self. As the daughter of an English father and a Jamaican mother, she is caught between two cultural identities, which leads her to experience an identity crisis within the British culture she is raised in. For Irie, her hybrid status is difficult to negotiate and becomes a handicap in discovering her true sense of identity. Her father, Archie, is an old English man, stuck in the past and with “[n]o aims, no hopes, no ambitions” in life. (Smith, 2001, p. 48) Indifferent to his family’s lives, he spends most of his time with his wartime friend, a Bengali Muslim, Samad Iqbal, at an old Irish pub, O’Connell’s. His presence to help Irie to construct her identity seems almost invisible. Her young mother, Clara, has lots of secrets and untold stories about her history. At the age of nineteen, she marries the much older Archie and creates a new life apart from her fanatically religious mother, Hortense Bowden, who is a devoted Jehovah’s Witness. Like Irie, her grandmother is of mixed origin, the daughter of a white English coloniser. Clara, however, never mentions her history and roots to her daughter, keeping Irie distanced from her past. Aside from a few secret visits to her grandmother with her father, Irie has no real understanding of her family roots and history. Not fully familiar with either of her sides, Irie feels a profound dilemma and experiences a conflict with her ‘self’. As she reaches adolescence, her dominantly inherited Jamaican traits cause great confusion in her search for identity and make her alienated from the British culture in which she was born. Watkins (2007) argues that Irie’s wish to belong is complicated by the barriers of her past (p. 11). For this reason,

Irie's inherited Jamaican features overshadow her desire to belong and make her feel displaced and excluded within British society.

In this respect, in her Lacanian journey of self-development, Irie, with her entry into the Symbolic Order, faces her Jamaican roots as the Name-of-the-Father, the symbolic signifier, which restrains her from attaining her lost object of desire, *objet petit a*, associated with her true sense of self. Her Jamaican heritage, in this framework, inhibits Irie from her identification with her British side and leaves her feeling incomplete and dissatisfied with her 'self'. In Lacanian sense, through the existence of the Lacanian father, embodied by her Jamaican heritage, Irie experiences a lack and loses her unified sense of completeness, which could only be attained through the *objet petit a*. As Homer (2005) states, the Name-of-the-Father is a signifier that introduces the child into the symbolic discourse of desire and lack (p. 51). Hence, feeling the lack due to her Jamaican heritage, Irie wishes to reach her lost object of desire so as to sustain the feeling of completeness and fulfilment that she unconsciously pursues upon her exit from the Imaginary Order. For this reason, Irie is completely fascinated by the Chalfens when she first meets them. Symbolically, the Chalfens represent Irie's idealised white family, which offers the feeling of completeness to construct her true sense of identity.

The Chalfens are "not any species of parent she [Irie] recognized" (Smith, 2001, p. 318). With their well-educated background, they are a sophisticated white family living with their four intelligent sons. Marcus Chalfen is a scientist, specialised in genetic engineering while his wife, Joyce, is an expert in gardening. Proud of their Jewish-Catholic heritage, they follow a distinct 'Chalfenist' way of living. Irie and Millat get involved in their life after an incident at school: during a school inspection, Millat, Irie and the Chalfens' son, Joshua, are caught smoking marijuana. Although Irie and Joshua are innocent, all three are grounded by the school. As a constructive punishment, they are required to attend after-school courses at Joshua's house, supervised by his sophisticated parents, Marcus and Joyce. The first time Irie encounters the Chalfen family, she can't help but admire them: "[S]was fascinated, enamoured after five minutes" (Smith, 2001, p. 319). Unlike her own parents, in the Chalfens' household, people joke about Darwinism, ask about their tea preferences, and have flowing communication from adults to children, "untrammelled, unblocked

by history, *free*'' (p. 319). Irie, all amazed, observes the Chalfens like a romantic anthropologist: ''[There], she saw culture, refinement, class, intellect ...'' (Smith, 2001, p. 322). There, she sees a father living in the present unlike her father, who is stuck in the past, as she hears about the details of Marcus's scientific projects. She comes to realise that ''... there existed fathers who dealt in the present, who didn't drag ancient history around like a chain and ball ... who were not neck-high and sinking in the quagmire of the past'' (Smith, 2001, p. 326). For Irie, this encounter is unfamiliar but deeply appealing, offering a sense of contentment she has never experienced before. In a sense, she has never been this close to the strange and beautiful world of the middle class, and it makes her feel curious and fascinated (Smith, 2001, p. 321).

This suggests that Irie regards the Chalfens as a substitute to compensate for her lack in the Symbolic Order so that she can obtain her lost object of desire, identified with her true sense of self. For Irie, her parents, namely, her family heritage, make her experience a lack and prevent her from reaching her *objet petit a*. However, through her relationship with the Chalfens, Irie believes that she could resolve her conflict with her 'self' and become a part of the British culture she deeply longs for. Thus, as she spends more time in the Chalfen household, Irie's desire to merge with them becomes increasingly apparent. She simply wants to belong to their world – to share their Englishness, their Chalfishness and their purity. (Smith, 2001, p. 328). She disregards their immigrant background and sees the Chalfens as ''more English than the English'' (p. 328). When she enters the Chalfens' house, Irie feels that she is ''crossing borders, sneaking into England ... wearing somebody else's uniform or somebody else's skin (p. 328). In Lacanian sense, Irie, through the Chalfens, enters a safe zone to avoid her Lacanian father, which introduces her into the realm of lack and loss. In a sense, she holds on to the Chalfens as a substitute for her lost object of desire in an attempt to resolve her sense of incompleteness in her Symbolic Order. For Irie, entering the Chalfens' house feels as if she is peeling off her Jamaican skin and putting on the white skin she wishes to possess. This signifies Irie's unconscious desire to belong to British culture so as to construct her true sense of identity. For this reason, being a part of the Chalfens' world provides a sense of fulfilment to Irie, who unconsciously strives for completeness through her access to her *objet petit a*.

During her four passing months at Chalfens, Irie's admiration has noticeably increased. She gradually becomes more familiar with the Chalfen way of thinking. It is Marcus who mostly helps Irie with her education. For her, this is a big sacrifice for such a busy man. Even later, Marcus offers a part-time job to Irie to organise his papers in his study. (Smith, 2001, p. 335). For Irie, this is a great opportunity to spend more time with the Chalfens away from her family, who only remind her of the disappointment she feels with her mixed-race identity. She regards this offer as a great chance to preserve her safe space that allows her to hide from the Lacanian father in order to create her desired identity. In a sense, she desires to form her identity outside the constraints of her Symbolic Order. "[S]he wanted it [the job]; she wanted to merge with the Chalfens, to be of one flesh; separated from the chaotic, random flesh of her own family and transgenically fused with another. A unique animal. A new breed" (Smith, 2001, p. 342). For this reason, Irie feels the need for freedom from her heritage to redefine her identity. Jain (2016) asserts that Irie "forsakes her past and heritage to adopt Chalfenism" (p. 110). Marcus's study room, for Irie, is a new place and does not look like any place she has ever seen. Everything seems designed just purely for Marcus and Marcus's work. (Smith, 2001, p. 334). It gives the feeling of stability and certainty compared to her mother's attic space, full of "a Xanadu of crap, all carefully stored in boxes and labelled just in case she should ever need to flee this land for another" (Smith, 2001, p. 333). It suggests a sense of belonging to the country they live in. There is no confusion to deal with in this room unlike the Jones house, where everything is unclear and full of secrets. Irie also feels a similar sense of clarity when she studies the map of the Chalfen family tree. Irie immediately sees the difference between the Chalfens and the Jones/Bowdens. Everything about the Chalfens' roots is crystal clear: "[It] stretched back into the 1600s and forward into the present day. ...everybody knew whose children were whose. ... Dates of birth and death were concrete. ... the Chalfens actually knew who they were in 1675" (Smith, 2001, p. 337). Irie thinks of her parents. Her family history feels fragmented and uncertain. For her, it is a messy, impure tangle of descent, which makes her feel deeply inadequate in the face of the Chalfens' familial structure (Medovarski, 2019, p. 154). Her father, Archie "could give no longer record of his family than his father's own haphazard appearance on the planet ... circa 1895 or 1896 or quite possibly 1897..." (Smith,

2001, p. 337). Similarly, her mother, Clara, has limited knowledge about her roots. She “knew a little about her grandmother, ... could only state ... that her own mother was born at 2.45 p.m. 14 January 1907, in a Catholic church in ... the Kingston earthquake. The rest was rumour, folk-tale and myth” (p. 337). Thus, comparing the Chalfens to her parents, Irie comes to realise that the Chalfens seem perfect in every aspect unlike her complicated family, who makes her feel incomplete and fragmented in her sense of identity. In Lacanian sense, for Irie, the Chalfens keep her distanced from the Lacanian father, which makes her lack, and provides her the sense of wholeness she unconsciously seeks in the Symbolic Order. Therefore, she strives to immerse herself in the Chalfenist way of thinking and living (Smith, 2001, p. 351), which helps her to sustain the feeling of fulfilment she can only achieve through the objet petit a.

When Irie turns sixteen, she comes up with new plans for her life. She decides to study dentistry, following the advice of Marcus Chalfen. She will be the first Bowden/Jones to enter a university (Smith, 2001, p. 376), which results in great happiness in her family. However, before starting university, Irie wants to take a year off to explore new experiences and travel to Africa like the Chalfens’ oldest son, Joshua, plans to do. This causes tension in the Jones household. Both Clara and Archie oppose her decision because of health concerns and the financial difficulties such a trip would involve. But, Irie is determined to get permission from her parents. One night, while her parents are asleep, Irie tries to wake them up to discuss it again, thinking that it is the right time to change their minds. “She knew from experience that her mother was most vulnerable when in bed; late at night she spoke softly like a child” (Smith, 2001, p. 376). However, as she walks through the dark room, Irie accidentally knocks over the glass containing her mother’s false teeth. This is the first time she discovers that her mother wears false teeth. She experiences the biggest shock of her life and becomes really furious. She thinks that “this was yet another item in a long list of parental hypocrisies and untruths, this was another example of the Jones/Bowden gift for secret histories, stories you never got told, history you never entirely uncovered, rumour you never unravelled” (Smith, 2001, p. 379). She remembers Millat’s words about their parents and comes to understand that “these parents were damaged people, missing hands, missing teeth. These parents were full

of information you wanted to know but were too scared to hear'' (p. 379). This might be the moment Irie experiences Lacan's Real, where she confronts an existential encounter. For Irie, this is a sort of realisation without filters, which causes a significant sense of anxiety and discomfort. She starts to see that her whole life is based on a lie, constructed by the big Other, embodied by her parents, within the Symbolic Order. She feels no meaning but just disappointment in her life. She is "sick of never getting the whole truth" about her roots and identity (p. 379). This is a kind of being in a void, a feeling beyond her comprehension. Afterwards, Irie packs all her stuff and leaves the home. First, she thinks "about the Chalfens [to go], but she knew already there were no answers there, only more places to escape" (p. 379). In Lacanian sense, upon realising her m(Other)'s lacking, Irie is seen to experience a Lacanian separation and sets out on a journey to discover her objet petit a, associated with her true sense of self.

When Irie arrives at her grandmother's house, Hortense is surprised to find her granddaughter at the door in the middle of the night. It has been six years since they last saw each other. For Hortense, it is like looking into the mirror. She sees in Irie a clear resemblance to herself and her own mother, Ambrosia. Like them, she is big with "[h]ip and tie and rhas, and titties" (Smith, 2001, p. 385). To Irie's surprise, nothing has changed at Hortense's basement flat. It is "[s]till dark, still dank, still underground" (Smith, 2001, p. 382). The only difference is that now, eighty-four-year-old Hortense Bowden, after her husband's death, lives with Clara's ex-boyfriend, Ryan Topps, who is now a devout Jehovah's Witness like Hortense. Irie's intention is to stay there for a few months to do some quiet study and get her head together after her big disappointment with her parents (Smith, 2001, p. 384). Despite Clara's concern that Hortense will fill Irie's head with her 'nonsense religious stuff', Irie is determined not to return to her home. "Look, I'm not coming home, all right, so don't bother. I'll be back when I'm back ..." (Smith, 2001, p. 395). In fact, as she spends more time at Hortense's, she even finds it quite interesting to live with her grandmother. For her, it feels like being in hibernation or wrapped in a cocoon. She is wondering what kind of Irie will eventually emerge. This house feels not like a prison but rather an adventure (Smith, 2001, p. 399). In a sense, Irie begins to unearth the secrets about her roots. "In cupboards and neglected drawers and in grimy frames" (p. 399), the secrets have been

waiting a long time for Irie to discover. She comes across several old pictures of her great-grandparents, Ambrosia Bowden and the Englishman Charlie Durham. She also finds photo-booth pictures of her mother, smiling without her front teeth. During her stay at her grandmother's, Irie even forms a reading list from Hortense's small library and delves into various books ranging from *In Sugar Cane Land* by Eden Philpotts to *Tom Cringle's Log* by Michael Scott in an attempt to explore her Jamaican heritage (Smith, 2001, pp. 400-1) As she reads more about her roots, Irie begins to reconcile with her sense of identity. Her confusion with her 'self' seems to be getting resolved. It seems that she is gathering her fragments to construct her true sense of self:

She laid claim to the past ... this was where she came from. This all belonged to her, her birthright, like a pair of pearl earrings or a post office bond. X marks the spot, and Irie put an X on everything she found, collecting bits and bobs (birth certificates, maps, army reports, news articles) and storing them under the sofa, so that as if by osmosis the richness of them would pass through the fabric while she was sleeping and seep right into her. (Smith, 2001, p. 400)

This indicates that Irie, in Lacanian sense, enters the realm of the Imaginary, where the infant possesses a feeling of completeness and wholeness thanks to its satisfying connection with the mother. Tyson (2006) states that the Imaginary Order "is a world of fullness, completeness and delight ..." (p. 27) because the child forms a sense of unified self through mutual satisfaction with the mother. Likewise, Irie, through her discovery of her roots, begins to feel complete and unified with her sense of self. For Irie, her Jamaican heritage now transforms into the Desire of Mother, which signifies her intimate and gratifying union with her 'self'. In other words, her Jamaican heritage no longer makes her feel lacking and incomplete. Hence, Irie, with her sense of feeling as a whole, embraces her roots and turns her back on the Chalfens, which now provides no sense of delight to her. Her connection with them becomes loose: "She still did Marcus's filing twice a week, but avoided the rest of the family" (Smith, 2001, p. 399). In particular, Irie's reaction when she comes across Joyce Chalfen's interview on Hortense's neolithic radio clearly illustrates her detachment from the Chalfen family. She simply turns off Joyce, and it feels like relief and healing to Irie. Suddenly, she realises that her effort to force something out of the recalcitrant English

soil seems tiring and unnecessary (Smith, 2001, p. 402). Medovarski (2019), similarly, emphasises Irie's detachment and interprets her act of turning off Joyce's radio program as a rejection of the Chalfens' influence on her (p. 151). In Lacanian sense, this shows that Irie now becomes dissatisfied with her substitute, embodied by the Chalfens in the Symbolic Order, and looks for other substitutes to attain her lost object of desire, associated with her true self. For Irie, there is now this other place to explore, so why should she trouble herself to fit in with the Chalfens? (Smith, 2001, p. 402). That is to say, Irie's intimate connection with her roots now makes her gratified and delighted. It feels like entering the world of fantasies, the realm of the Imaginary, where she experiences no feeling of limitations and boundaries through her achievement of a sense of fulfilment with her true self. To Irie, Jamaica seems as if it is newly made, newly discovered. She sees there "[n]o fictions, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs" (p. 402). It seems that she is quite satisfied with her new discovery and experiences a sense of existence as if she were reborn:

this is how Irie imagined her homeland. ... homeland is one of the magical fantasy words like *unicorn* and *soul* and *infinity* ... And the particular magic of *homeland*, its particular spell over Irie, ... sounded like a beginning. The beginning of beginnings. Like the first morning of Eden and the day after apocalypse. (p. 402)

However, later, upon returning to her former life with her parents, the Chalfens and the Iqbals, Irie experiences the biggest trauma of her life. Following her relationship with the twin brothers, Millat and Magid, she finds herself pregnant. Now, at the age of seventeen, Irie Jones is about to have a baby whose father's identity will remain a mystery forever. She will never know it. "No test on earth would tell her" (Smith, 2001, p. 515). Initially, the situation saddens her deeply. But later, she begins to view it as a sort of freedom. In Lacanian sense, for Irie, this represents a form of existence beyond the constraints of the Symbolic Order. She starts to question whether, if her child were not somebody's child, then it could be nobody's child (Smith, 2001, p. 516). In some way, Irie's sense of belonging and identity takes on a new dimension, beyond comprehension, unspeakable and unrepresentable as claimed in Lacan's Real, where the subject experiences a sense of existence beyond symbolisation and language. When Irie sees Millat and Magid on the day of Marcus Chalfen's public

presentation of his project, she desperately tries to figure out who the father could be. However, it remains impossible to determine. She comes to understand that some things are beyond what the human eye can perceive, even with a magnifying glass, binoculars, or a microscope (Smith, 2001, p. 527). As Tyson (2006) symbolically puts it, behind the curtain exists the Real, but it is difficult to see behind that curtain (p. 32). Hence, Irie's sense of identity goes beyond the limitations of the Symbolic Order and moves into the realm of the Real, where she confronts a new reality beyond her initial assumptions and perceptions as indicated in the following:

Irie's child can never be mapped exactly nor spoken of with any certainty. In a vision, Irie has seen a time, a time not far from now, when roots won't matter any more because they can't because they mustn't because they're too long and they're too tortuous and they're just buried too damn deep. (Smith, 2001, p. 527)

In Lacanian sense, through her child, Irie's idea of belonging and heritage takes a new form, and she experiences the status of Lacan's 'not-whole' subject, who is not fully subjected to the law of the Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order.

3.2.3. Irie's Romantic Relationships

In her Lacanian journey of self-exploration, Irie's love for Millat plays a significant role in discovering her body and self as a young woman. Irie harbours romantic feelings for Millat since her childhood. As the son of her father's best friend, Millat has a constant presence in her life, and the two are brought up closely together from a very young age. Over time, she secretly falls in love with Millat. "I'm in love with a fool (stupid me)! ... I've got puppy love ..." (Smith, 2001, pp. 224-5). For Irie, her feelings remain platonic towards Millat. She cannot find the courage to confess her feelings to him. "She loved him, but he was impossible" (Smith, 2001, p. 241). As she enters puberty, Irie begins to develop deep insecurities about her body, which prevents her from forming an intimate relationship with Millat. She is deeply concerned about her kinky Afro hair and big body, believing that her black heritage makes her less attractive to boys than slim white girls (Meyer, 2017, p. 489). She regards herself as inadequate and not good enough for Millat. Unlike her, Millat has strikingly handsome features: a "broken Roman nose, tall, thin; lightly veined, smoothly muscled; chocolate eyes with a reflective green sheen like moonlight

bouncing off a dark sea; irresistible smile, big white teeth” (Smith, 2001, p. 269). At school, he is highly popular among girls because of his good looks. He is “their dark prince, occasional lover or impossible crush, the subject of sweaty fantasy and ardent dreams...” (p. 269). In Lacanian sense, Irie, seeing herself as a lack due to her Jamaican traits, regards Millat as Other jouissance, a form of jouissance she strives to attain in her Symbolic Order. For Irie, Millat represents Other jouissance, which exists outside of the realm of the Symbolic. As stated before in Lacan’s theory of sexuation, Other jouissance refers to an ultimate satisfaction and happiness beyond symbolisation and language. It is a kind of jouissance inaccessible to the subject in the realm of the Symbolic. Therefore, for Irie, gaining Millat’s love seems impossible to achieve in her Symbolic Order, which is already structured by the English beauty standards. Millat is typically interested in white girls, who are thin and tall. Millat’s words about her body clearly illustrate Irie’s inaccessibility in attaining Other jouissance, which is beyond her reach within the Symbolic Order: “You’re getting a bit big. I don’t like big. You can’t have me” (Smith, 2001, p. 229). He even asks Irie to imagine what their kids would look like to show their impossibility of having a relationship because of her genetic heritage: “Brownny-black. Blacky-brown. Afro, flat nose, rabbit teeth and freckles. They’d be freaks!” (p. 229).

However, Irie, as a lacking subject, unconsciously desires to reach Other jouissance even if it remains impossible to access within the Symbolic Order. For her, being loved by Millat would offer the illusion of wholeness, the feeling of completeness within a structure that defines her as lacking due to her unconventional body image. Gaining Millat’s love becomes the measure of Irie’s acceptance of her ‘self’ and her body in the Symbolic Order. In a sense, she associates Millat’s love with Other jouissance, which gives the feeling of gratification and fulfilment related to her true sense of self. For this reason, in desiring to access Other jouissance, Irie attempts to transform her body. Following her hair treatment in P.K. Hair Salon, for example, her only desire is to show herself to Millat. “He – Millat – need only see it once, after all, just once” (Smith, 2001, p. 282). In her mind, being accepted by Millat as a woman would validate her femininity and symbolically complete the lack she feels in her identity. In a sense, she would experience the opportunity to access Other jouissance, which provides the sense of satisfaction she unconsciously seeks in her Symbolic

Order. However, when she does not find Millat at home, Irie feels disappointed, and her chance to experience Other jouissance disappears. She learns that Millat, as usual, is out and spending time with his “new bird” (Smith, 2001, p. 284). She can’t help but sink “deeper into the ruined springs of Samad’s chair” (p. 284). Upon realising that Irie has changed herself for Millat, Neena, Millat’s cousin, urges her to face the reality that her desire for a relationship with him is unattainable. For Neena, Irie’s love for Millat will eventually disappoint her as she openly remarks, “... Ever since I’ve known you, you’ve been following that boy around like a lost dog. ... in that time he’s snogged everyone, everyone apart from you. He’s even snogged me, and I’m his first cousin, ...” (p. 284). But, for Irie, Millat finds her unattractive as a woman because she is ugly and fat with her Afro hair (p. 284). To make Irie see the reality more clearly, Neena, however, continues to challenge her as in the following:

No, fuckface, because you’re all he’s got. He *needs* you. ... You really *know* him. Look how confused he is. ... He doesn’t know who he is. But you know him, at least a little, you’ve known all the sides of him. And he needs that. You’re different. (p. 284)

In Lacanian terms, Neena implies that Millat represents phallic jouissance, which ultimately fails to satisfy Irie in her Symbolic Order. As Lacan argues, phallic jouissance, unlike Other jouissance, is destined to fail and eventually dissatisfy the subject within the Symbolic Order. In a sense, phallic jouissance, as a form of jouissance regulated by the laws of the Symbolic Order, cannot provide the ultimate satisfaction the subject seeks, which is only attained through Other jouissance. Hence, Neena tries to make Irie realise that Millat is not the embodiment of Other jouissance and cannot provide the ultimate gratification she unconsciously seeks to complete her true sense of self. The meaning Millat attributes to their relationship differs from Irie’s, which is why she would experience phallic jouissance that ultimately leaves her dissatisfied with her love for Millat. For this reason, Neena advises her to take a different path to discover her true sense of self: “You’ve got to re-educate yourself. Realize your value, stop the slavish devotion, and get a life, Irie. Get a girl, get a guy, but get a life” (p. 284).

For Millat, his relationship with Irie carries no emotional attachment. He remains largely indifferent to her feelings. In his mind, Irie is merely a childhood friend

with whom he shares a history from a very young age. As he puts it, “[Y]ou’re different. We go way back. We’ve history. You’re a real friend” (Smith, 2001, p. 270). Even if he is aware of Irie’s secret feelings for him, he chooses to ignore them. In fact, Millat is a young, growing man with his own conflicts and insecurities, still uncertain about how to resolve his in-betweenness. At home, he faces a father who tries to impose an Islamic way of living, whereas outside, he is surrounded by a dominant British culture with different values. Thus, he ends up as a trouble boy, not interested in school work, smoking weed and sleeping around with girls. As Neena points out, he is completely confused about who he is: “One day he’s Allah this, Allah that. Next minute it’s big busty blondes, Russian gymnasts and a smoke of the sinsemilla” (Smith, 2001, p. 284). During his adolescence, Millat’s internal conflict intensifies to a point that he even joins a fundamentalist Islamic group in an attempt to resolve his identity crisis and to find a sense of belonging, abandoning his former lifestyle of smoking weed and hanging around with white girls. This suggests that Irie and Millat, upon their entry into the Symbolic Order, develop different desires and lacks. Since they are two separate Lacanian subjects, each governed by their own desires and lacks, the possibility of ‘completeness’ and ‘oneness’ in their relationship becomes unattainable. For Irie, her love for Millat provides an illusion of fulfilment related to her sense of self as a woman while for Millat, it would deepen his sense of lack as it threatens their lifelong friendship. In this context, Irie and Millat’s incompleteness in their relationship can be associated with Lacan’s thesis, “there’s no such thing as a sexual relationship” (Seminar XX, p. 12). Through this claim, Lacan argues the impossibility of a harmonious sexual connection between two people due to their distinct desires and lacks. Similarly, Irie and Millat are eventually left dissatisfied with their relationship because neither of them can complete their lack through their love.

Particularly, Irie’s disappointment with her love for Millat is clearly illustrated during their sexual encounter. Irie, for the first time, comes to realise that she cannot complete her own lack through her love for Millat. After the twin brother, Magid, returns to England, Millat’s parents and Joyce ask Irie to arrange a meeting for the two brothers to reconnect and reconcile their differing opinions on Marcus’s FutureMouse project. When Irie visits the Iqbal’s house, Millat is upstairs in his room. As she enters to speak with him, she finds Millat standing in front of the mirror, confused and staring

at his naked upper body. In a moment of unexpected intimacy, they end up engaging in sexual intercourse. As the narrator describes, this result feels inevitable for the two “because of the touch of memory, the touch of ten years of love unreturned, the touch of a long, long history” (Smith, 2001, p. 461). However, it ends in a profound disappointment. “[T]hey released each other in horror for different reasons” (p. 461). Irie feels humiliated and ashamed when Millat, immediately afterwards, falls to his knees to pray for forgiveness. She can see how deeply he regrets what has happened between them. Millat takes his prayer mat and carefully points it to the Kaba. He makes sure to do everything perfectly while Irie cries, gets dressed and leaves. (p. 461). Now, traumatised with her disappointment in her love for Millat, Irie comes to the conclusion that “Millat didn’t love her because he couldn’t” (Smith, 2001, p. 462). He is too damaged to love her. In Lacanian sense, she realises that Millat is a lacking subject and unable to fill the lack she attempts to complete through her love. In some way, Millat cannot compensate for Irie’s sense of incompleteness through love. In this respect, Millat becomes associated with phallic jouissance, which fails to satisfy Irie within the Symbolic Order. However, Irie desires to keep her Other jouissance, rejecting that Millat embodies phallic jouissance. “[S]he wanted to find whoever had made him unable to love her” (p. 462). She blames Magid for the roots of Millat’s problems. In her mind, Magid, as the firstborn, has made Millat feel inadequate and lesser in life. (p. 462). Full of anger and sorrow, Irie storms out and heads to the Chalfens, where Magid stays. “[D]etermined to make Magid the second-son for once” (p. 462), Irie makes love with him. In doing so, she believes she takes revenge on him for making both Millat and herself feel incomplete. In a sense, Irie positions Magid as an obstacle in her path to attain Other jouissance, which refers to Millat’s love that makes her feel gratified with her sense of self. Unfortunately, this is not a victory for Irie because Magid immediately understands where she was before and why she is now here (Smith, 2001, p. 463). Without saying any words, they just lay in silence for a long time. However, later, Magid breaks the silence and says that Irie has tried to love a man as if he were an island and she were shipwrecked, hoping to mark the land with an X. But for Irie, it is too late now (p. 463), implying that she has already lost her Other jouissance that provides the sense of satisfaction and fulfilment related to her ‘self’. Namely, Irie’s love for Millat no longer provides any sense of completeness

to fill her lack. Then, Magid kisses her on the forehead, it feels like a blessing, and Irie cries like a baby (p. 463), bitterly realising that Millat has become phallic jouissance that eventually disappoints her by failing to offer the sense of satisfaction she unconsciously seeks in her Symbolic Order. More preciously, with her pregnancy, never knowing the real father of her child, Irie, in the end, chooses to live a life apart from the two brothers not to experience the same disappointment due to her phallic jouissance embodied by Millat.



CONCLUSION

With the application of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson and *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith, this study has attempted to reveal the Lacanian developmental journeys of two young women who struggle to explore their true sense of self within a preconstructed environment defined by social and cultural norms. Both female protagonists, Jeanette from *Oranges* and Irie from *White Teeth*, experience a profound conflict with preexisting social and cultural structures and undergo a Lacanian process of psychological identity construction in their search for a true self. While Jeanette explores her sexual identity as a lesbian woman despite her strictly religious environment, Irie discovers her racial identity as a mixed-race woman within a British society, which is predominantly shaped by white beauty norms. Despite their different symbolic discourses – Jeanette being born into a religiously constructed environment whereas Irie into British culture – both female protagonists, as two distinct Lacanian subjects, confront similar experiences and challenges in the course of their identity formation. Going through complicated relationships involving their family conflicts and romantic affairs, they both strive to attain their desired identities against the constraints of their respective symbolic discourses. In this sense, both novels illustrate the construction of two Lacanian female subjects who desire to complete their lacks through their access to the lost object of desire, objet petit a, which is associated with their true sense of self. In both novels, Lacan's three Orders, along with the Mirror Stage and his theory of sexualisation, are portrayed through a series of psychological conflicts and challenges that both protagonists experience during their Lacanian processes of identity construction.

In *Oranges*, Jeanette's Lacanian developmental journey has been analysed through three key dimensions, including her relationship with her mother in the context of the big Other; her struggle to explore her true self against the Name-of-the-Father, embodied both by her mother and the church; and her romantic relationships with Melanie and Katy in relation to Lacan's theory of sexualisation. At the beginning of her identity construction, during her early childhood, Jeanette confronts her mother as her first big Other, which shapes her earliest perceptions and realities. Through her (m)Other, Jeanette, from a very young age, is exposed to a strict religious discourse and constructs her subjectivity around her mother's evangelical faith. That is to say,

she develops her initial sense of self through the religious tenets imposed by her (m)Other within the Symbolic Order. However, at the age of seven, when Jeanette starts her formal education, she enters a new Symbolic Order that introduces new realities she is not familiar with. As she engages with this new Symbolic Order through her initial perceptions and realities, Jeanette fails to adapt to her school environment and experiences great confusion with her friends and teachers. However, this confusion does not break her earliest perceptions; rather, it leads her to reaffirm her role as a missionary to serve God in the field of the Other within the Symbolic Order. This indicates that Jeanette is still confined to her (m)Other's desires and continues to live the realities imposed by her religious mother during her childhood. However, when Jeanette turns sixteen, with her entry into puberty, she undergoes a Lacanian separation and begins to step outside the discourse of the Other. Thus, she starts to discover other realities beyond her (m)Other's religious beliefs and teachings. By falling in love with another girl, she experiences a conflict with her (m)Other and abandons her role as the desired object of her mother. In a sense, she comes to realise that her (m)Other's realities are not the only truths in life and leaves the field of Other to explore her true sense of self related to her sexual identity. Hence, Jeanette becomes a desiring subject and strives to reach her lost object of desire, objet petit a, associated with her sexual identity as a lesbian.

In the development of her lesbian identity, during her adolescence, Jeanette confronts her mother and the church as the Name-of-the-Father, which prevents her from attaining her objet petit a. Both her mother and the church, as the prohibitive Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order, regulate the law to make Jeanette abandon her wicked action – loving a girl. As her relationship with Melanie develops, Jeanette initially keeps it a secret for fear of facing the Lacanian father, which would break her intimate connection with Melanie. Since she is still under the influence of her (m)Other's demands and desires, Jeanette herself cannot yet fully define her homosexual feelings and experiences confusion, though. As she eventually takes her courage to confront the Lacanian father, she is, however, trapped in the Symbolic Order and forced to follow her duty as a faithful servant of God. Through an exorcism ceremony, the Lacanian father compels Jeanette to stop her wicked actions. Jeanette, however, resists the law of the father and takes a big step towards discovering her true

sense of self. Even when the Lacanian father continues to force her to remain in the Symbolic Order by punishing her with room confinement, Jeanette experiences Lacan's Mirror Stage and begins to construct her sense of self with the help of a hallucinated orange demon, which reflects her true image, her lesbian identity, to her. During her identity construction process, Jeanette also experiences several turning points and thus enters the realm of Lacan's Real, where she confronts existential encounters with both her self and her mother. Particularly, two moments, before her submission to the Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order, illustrate Jeanette's experience of Lacan's Real, which exists beyond the reach of the Symbolic Order. The first occurs after her exit from the confinement, when Jeanette secretly visits Melanie and, while there, finds herself in a dream due to her recent psychological anxieties and conflicts. During that time, Jeanette appears to experience the Real, where she finds herself in a sort of limbo, whether to embrace her desired identity or conform to the law of the Lacanian father. The second moment follows her rejection by Melanie. Upon returning home, while in a severe fever seizure, Jeanette re-enters the realm of the Real as a result of her mother's act of burning all her memories of Melanie and thus comes to a bitter realisation that all her realities taught by her mother are based on a big deception.

Disappointed with her love for Melanie, which was once her substitute to compensate for her objet petit a, Jeanette is eventually submitted to the law of the Lacanian father and continues to live her life according to the regulations of her Symbolic Order. When she meets Katy, the newly converted girl from the church, she, now more aware of her homosexual feelings, starts a new relationship with her. To avoid the prohibitive law of the Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order, Jeanette, this time, acts more cautiously to preserve her true sense of self related to her lesbian identity. However, later, when the Lacanian father learns that she continues her homosexual life, Jeanette refuses to obey the laws of the Symbolic Order despite the punishment of exile from both her home and the church. Hence, Jeanette, by embracing her lesbian identity, chooses a new path to follow so as to attain her objet petit a, which offers a sense of completeness and satisfaction she unconsciously seeks in her life. Living a desired life as a lesbian outside the constraints of her Symbolic Order, Jeanette prefers to be a prophet instead of a priest as she symbolically expresses in the novel.

This suggests that Jeanette becomes a Lacanian ‘not-whole’ subject, who is not fully subjected to the law of the Lacanian father, and seizes the opportunity to experience Lacan’s Other *jouissance*, which is only accessed through the Real. In her identity development process, Jeanette also experiences Lacan’s Imaginary Order, where the infant possesses an inseparable bond with the mother. Some years later, upon her return home, it is seen that Jeanette’s bond with her mother remains unbroken, and the part of herself she has left behind, as Jeanette symbolically indicates, seems to sustain her blissful connection with her Lacanian mother in the Imaginary Order. With her return, Jeanette is not submitted to her Lacanian father but rather hopes to form her sense of self in a common place where her mother’s desires could come to terms with her lesbian subjectivity. Despite her fear of refacing the Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order, she wishes to keep her blissful union with her Imaginary mother, which provides the sense of completeness and satisfaction Jeanette has unconsciously sought during her entire life.

Jeanette’s romantic affairs with Melanie and Katy during her exploration of her sexual identity have been analysed as well in the context of Lacan’s theory of sexuation. In her relationship with Melanie, Jeanette associates her love for Melanie with Lacan’s Other *jouissance*, which provides great happiness and satisfaction beyond symbolisation and language. Therefore, to preserve her love for Melanie, she refuses to obey the law of the Lacanian father during her Symbolic Order. However, for Melanie, her love is a phallic *jouissance* shaped by the laws of the Symbolic Order and, in the end, it disappoints and fails her. Submitted to the law of the Lacanian father, she does not respond to their love the way Jeanette feels and therefore ends her relationship with her. Upon her break-up with Melanie, Jeanette eventually yields to the laws of the Symbolic Order. Hence, her Other *jouissance* transforms into a phallic one, which dissatisfies her and no longer provides a sense of satisfaction and happiness. Even later, despite Melanie’s intention, upon her return to town, to start a new relationship with her, Jeanette avoids her and does not want to live another disappointment. Upon her coincidence with Melanie in the city after Melanie’s marriage to a man, as expected by the Lacanian father, Jeanette eventually realises that they could not have been ‘one’ in their relationship because neither of them can complete each other’s lacks or fulfil the desire of the other. On the other hand, during

her relationship with Katy, Jeanette feels no confusion and ambiguity. Her love for Katy frees her from the obligations of her Symbolic Order. Later, as Jeanette's continuing homosexual life becomes known by the Lacanian father, she symbolically sacrifices herself against the Name-of-the-Father to protect Katy from the punishment of the Lacanian father. Hence, Jeanette, through her love for Katy, takes the courage to confront the Lacanian father to fight for her lesbian identity. This suggests that, unlike Melanie, Katy helps Jeanette to embrace her lesbian identity and to pursue her objet petit a so as to sustain the sense of wholeness and fulfilment she unconsciously seeks in her entire life.

In parallel to Jeanette's experiences in her identity construction process, the Lacanian developmental journey of Irie from *White Teeth* has been analysed from three main perspectives, including her conflict with her body in the context of Lacan's big Other; her exploration of her roots in relation to the Name-of-the-father and the Desire of the Mother; and her romantic affairs with Millat and Magid in relation to Lacan's theory of sexualisation. In the course of her identity development, when Irie turns fifteen, with her entry into puberty, she confronts British culture as her big Other, the symbolic signifier, which imposes white beauty norms that Irie is expected to embody in the Symbolic Order. As a mixed-race individual who dominantly inherits Jamaican body image, Irie finds it difficult to locate herself in the field of the Other within the Symbolic Order. Viewing white English beauty standards as a measurement of self-definition, she deeply feels discomfort with her body and regards herself as a failure to meet the demands of the big Other. Within her Symbolic Order, namely, in British culture, Irie cannot find her reflection, which leads her to fail Lacan's Mirror Stage, where she is unable to identify herself with the reflected image in the mirror to form her initial sense of self. For this reason, in an attempt to find her reflection in the field of the Other, Irie is seen to search for her surroundings so as to discover her true sense of self. For instance, during the moment they analyse Shakespeare's Sonnet 127 in literature class, Irie strives to identify herself with the Dark Lady in the hope of finding any reflection of black people like her. However, her attempt is rejected by the big Other, embodied by her teacher, implying that she is seen as a mismatch with her Jamaican body image in the symbolic mirror of British culture. Struggling to constitute her 'self' in the Symbolic Order according to English beauty norms, Irie transforms

her body image to fulfil the demands of the big Other. To appear thinner, she wears uncomfortable, torturous corsets when going outside. She has even lost her original Afro hair at a hair salon while attempting to have straight hair like white English women. This indicates that Irie's self-definition is entirely dependent on the demands of the big Other. Thus, she is seen to form her realities and subjectivities around the beauty ideals of her Symbolic Order. However, as she visits the Iqbals to show her new straightened hair extensions to Millat, Irie comes across a new reality, represented by Neena and Maxine, who appreciate her uniqueness and differences. Hence, Irie, confronting new realities outside the discourse of the Other, tears out someone else's hair from her head and begins to form her perception of self and body image beyond the imposed beauty norms of her Symbolic Order.

In the development of her racial identity, during her adolescence, Irie confronts her Jamaican heritage as the Name-of-the-Father, which restricts her from reaching her objet petit a. Due to the Lacanian father, embodied in her Jamaican heritage, Irie is seen unable to identify herself with her British side and feels incomplete and dissatisfied with her self. Thus, through the presence of the Lacanian father, Irie is introduced into the realm of lack and loss. In an attempt to complete her lack, Irie unconsciously seeks substitutes for her objet petit a, which provides a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment to her. Therefore, as she first meets the Chalfen family, she regards them as a substitute to compensate for her lack in her Symbolic Order. Irie, avoiding her Lacanian father in the Symbolic Order through the Chalfens, has the opportunity to attain her objet petit a, which makes her feel complete and satisfied with her self. For Irie, the Chalfens provide a safe zone for her to hide from the Lacanian father to create her desired identity. During her identity development process, Irie is also seen to enter the realm of Real when she confronts an unknown bitter reality about her mother, who actually wears false teeth. This realisation makes Irie experience a Lacanian separation from her (m)Other through the discovery of her (m)Other's lacking. Upon this, she steps outside her Symbolic Order and enters the realm of the Imaginary, where she forms a blissful connection with her Jamaican roots. Through living with her grandmother, Hortense, after leaving her home, Irie begins to explore her roots, which now provide a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment she has been looking for during her Symbolic Order. For Irie, her Jamaican heritage has now

become the Desire of Mother, which signifies her intimate and gratifying bond with her self. Experiencing the Desire of Mother, Irie is seen feeling no longer lacking and incomplete. This suggests that Irie, by feeling as a whole, embraces her Jamaican roots and becomes dissatisfied with her substitute, the Chalfens, which now provides no sense of gratification to her. However, later, upon experiencing the greatest trauma of her life, Irie re-enters the realm of Lacan's Real after she finds out her pregnancy following her relationship with Millat and Magid. Having a child whose father forever remains a mystery makes Irie later realise that this could be a sort of freedom beyond the constraints of the Symbolic Order. Through her child, Irie, experiencing the Real, develops a new idea of belonging and self, which signifies that roots no longer matter. Hence, Irie is seen to experience the status of Lacan's 'not-whole' subject, who is not completely subjected to the laws of the Symbolic Order.

Irie's romantic affairs with the twin brothers, Millat and Magid during her development of her true self have been analysed in the context of Lacan's theory of sexualisation. In her relationship with Millat, Irie associates her love for Millat with Lacan's Other jouissance, which offers ultimate satisfaction and happiness beyond the realm of the Symbolic Order. Desiring to attain her Other jouissance, Irie is seen to have transformed her body image by wearing torturous corsets and having straight hair. During her development, with the help of Millat's cousin, Neena, Irie is challenged to realise that her love for Millat is phallic jouissance, which eventually leaves her dissatisfied in the Symbolic Order. Since both Irie and Millat are two distinct Lacanian subjects, the meanings they attribute to their relationship differ due to their own desires and lacks. For Irie, this realisation comes after her sexual intercourse with Millat and Magid. After her sexual encounter with Millat, Irie first refuses to see Millat as phallic jouissance and tries to preserve her Other jouissance so as to maintain the sense of ultimate satisfaction and happiness she has been seeking during her entire life. Seeing Magid as the obstacle to attaining her Other jouissance, Irie is later seen to have made love with him as an act of revenge, believing that Magid has caused both herself and Millat to feel lack. However, upon hearing Magid's words about her sense of love, Irie has eventually come to realise that her love for Millat is a phallic one and cannot complete her lack or fulfil her desire in her Symbolic Order. Thus, to avoid experiencing another disappointment with her phallic jouissance,

embodied by Millat, Irie, after learning of her pregnancy, has created a new life away from the two brothers.

Hence, through the Lacanian analysis of Jeanette and Irie during their identity development processes, it is observed that both female protagonists experience Lacan's big Other and are constituted in the field of the Other within the Symbolic Order. Jeanette's first big Other is her mother, and she constructs her initial realities around the religious teachings of her (m)Other during her childhood. For Irie, however, the big Other is British culture, which imposes white beauty ideals that Irie is expected to follow during her puberty. Even though they differ in how they experience the big Other, both Jeanette and Irie are seen to step outside the discourse of the Other to explore their true self. Coming to realise new realities beyond the discourse of the Other, they abandon their former realities imposed by their big Other and strive to construct their true sense of self outside the constraints of the Symbolic Order. While Jeanette refuses to obey her mother's strict religious norms in order to discover her lesbian identity, Irie, going beyond the white beauty norms of British culture, begins to accept her Jamaican body image as her ideal.

In the course of developing their true self during their adolescence, both Jeanette and Irie mostly remain in the Symbolic Order and confront the Name-of-the-Father, the symbolic authority signifier, which constrains them from attaining their objet petit a, associated with their desired identities. Jeanette's Lacanian father, embodied by her mother and the church in the Symbolic Order, restricts her from living her lesbian identity. Similarly, Irie's Lacanian father, embodied in her Jamaican heritage, prevents her from being a part of the British culture she longs for. In the following phases of their identity formation processes, upon experiencing turning points and traumas due to their profound conflicts with the Lacanian father, from time to time, both Jeanette and Irie enter the realm of Lacan's Real, where they confront existential encounters beyond their comprehension and control. Jeanette comes to a bitter realisation that her whole life has been structured around a big deception designed by her mother. Her realities and subjectivities are merely the creations of her mother's ideological religious world. Her mother is just an obstacle in her path to explore her desired identity as a lesbian. In the same way, Irie comes to see that her mother's unknown history deepens her sense of incompleteness and becomes a

handicap to discovering her racial identity, to which she does not yet develop any sense of belonging. After their bitter encounters during the realm of the Real, they both experience a Lacanian separation and form their subjectivities, their sense of identity, beyond the realm of the Symbolic. That is to say, during their self-discovery journeys, Jeanette refuses the law of the Lacanian father and chooses a different path to live her lesbian identity whereas Irie embraces her Jamaican heritage, which has now transformed into her Desire of Mother and provides a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction to her.

In their romantic relationships, they both undergo similar experiences in discovering their true self as women. Both Jeanette and Irie associate their sense of love with Lacan's Other jouissance, which makes them fully satisfied and pleased with their self. However, in time, they realise that they cannot be 'one' in their relationship because their partners and themselves experience distinct lacks and desires through their entrance into the Symbolic Order. Therefore, Jeanette, in her relationship with Melanie, and Irie, in her relationship with Millat, end up disappointed with their love and experience phallic jouissance, which fails to satisfy their desire to complete each other. Through her relationship with Katy, Jeanette, once more, comes to realise that her love for Melanie is a phallic one and cannot make Jeanette gratified with her self. Likewise, Irie's relationship with Magid makes her fully aware that her love for Millat is just a phallic one and will never satisfy her desire to find her true self.

To conclude, both Jeanette and Irie, by stepping outside the Symbolic Order to discover their true self, have gained the status of Lacan's 'not-whole' subjects, who are not fully subjected to the laws of the Symbolic Order as Lacan indicates, "...there is always something in [women] that escape discourse" (Seminar XX, p. 33). Therefore, Jeanette's exploration of her lesbian identity against the laws of the Symbolic Order renders her a 'not-whole' subject during her journey of identity development. Likewise, by having a child whose father forever remains a mystery, Irie's radical idea of belonging and self, which suggests that 'roots do not matter', can make her a 'not-whole' subject in the course of her identity construction.

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