

Loss of Innocence in *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by George Eliot and Jeanette Winterson

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Abstract

Childhood is a very crucial period in the life of any human being. It is a moment of great innocence and naivety. Young men face various societal situation that often transform them for life. The main objective of this paper is to identify the reasons behind the abrupt loss of innocence of the protagonists Silas and Jeanette in the novels under study. Using Historical Criticism, this paper tries to situate the literary work within its historical and cultural context, and draws connections between the text and the respective author's life experiences or the socio-political climate in which each novel was written. At the end, the research has illuminated the multifaceted underlying causes of the protagonists' loss of innocence, revealing the profound impact of societal norms, power dynamics, and unconscious desires on the human experience of innocence and its erosion.

Keywords

Innocence, Naivety, Experience, Life, Literary Works

1. Introduction

The journey from innocence to experience is a fundamental rite of passage that countless literary protagonists undergo. In the novels *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the central characters Silas Marner and Jeanette embark on transformative arcs that strip them of their innocence and naivety. While the specific circumstances differ, both narratives explore the underlying societal, religious, and interpersonal factors that precipitate this loss of childlike purity.

Eliot's *Silas Marner* depicts the title character's descent from a respected member of a Puritan community into solitude and misanthropy after being falsely ac-

cused of theft. Winterson's semi-autobiographical novel chronicles a young girl's struggle to reconcile her burgeoning sexuality with the rigid doctrine of the Pentecostal church in which she was raised. Though set in vastly different eras and contexts, these works unveil the myriad forces that can disrupt one's innocence. Silas Marner's descent begins after he is falsely accused of theft (George, 1861), while Jeanette struggles with her identity within a rigid religious environment (Winterson, 1985). Though set in different contexts, both narratives reveal how societal, religious, and psychological forces disrupt innocence.

This analysis examines the overarching question: What are the underlying causes of the protagonists' loss of innocence in *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*? By delving into the thematic representations of disillusionment, oppression, trauma, and identity formation, it elucidates the complex interplay of internal and external factors that shape Marner's and Jeanette's respective descents into experience. Ultimately, an understanding of these fictional narratives offers profound insights into the universal human condition. To reach the main objective of the current research, that is identifying the reasons behind the abrupt loss of innocence of the protagonists Silas and Jeanette, this research uses Binary opposition as a tool of analysis, New historical criticism and Freudian-Lacanian Psychoanalysis to appraise, scrutinize and explore the underlying causes of loss of innocence in the novels under analysis. All these aspects considered, this work is divided into three parts, namely the theoretical background of the study, the exploration of loss of innocence in the novels with historicism analysis and finally, Psychoanalytic view of the protagonists Silas and Jeanette.

2. Theoretical Background of the Study

2.1. Problem Statement

Exploring loss of innocence in classic works of literature offers valuable insights that transcend the fictional narratives themselves. An analysis of the underlying causes behind Marner's and Jeanette's respective initiations into experience illuminates the countless social forces, religious doctrines, and interpersonal dynamics that can strip individuals of their childlike state and candidness. The metaphorical losing of one's innocence represents a crucial juncture in the journey of self-discovery and identity formation. As most of the protagonists have undergone special transformations at the level of personality, this work sets to discover the reasons behind the loss of their innocence. The main question that research sets to answer is: What are the underlying reasons of Silas and Jeanette's loss of innocence?

2.2. Significance of the Study

On a deeper level, this examination carries profound significance for understanding the nuanced factors that catalyse psychological maturation and disillusionment in the real world. The symbolic shedding of innocence that Marner and Jeanette undergo parallels the lived realities of those who confront oppression,

trauma, societal pressures, and crises of faith. By unravelling the intricate threads that fray the fabric of innocence in these fictional constructs, a more empathetic awareness emerges of the harsh but transformative processes that shape the human psyche.

Moreover, interrogating the interplay between innocence and experience is imperative for cultivating a more compassionate society that fosters psychological well-being while still preserving a sense of childlike wonder. Deconstructing these literary exemplars ultimately sheds light on the universal truth that some degree of disillusionment is an inescapable facet of the human condition, a bittersweet realization that can imbue deeper meaning and resilience into the lives of whoever embrace it.

2.3. Limitations

While analysing the loss of innocence in classic literary works like *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* can yield valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge potential limitations of such an examination. The first to be acknowledged is the gaps between Fictional Narratives and Reality. The novels present fictionalized accounts constructed by their authors. While they may reflect real-world experiences and societal conditions, the protagonists' journeys are ultimately artistic representations rather than factual case studies. Drawing broad generalizations about human nature from fictional works alone runs the risk of oversimplification or lack of empirical nuance.

The second is the literary distance between Cultural and Historical Contexts. In fact, these novels are products of their respective eras, 19th century England for George Eliot and late 20th century Britain for Jeanette Winterson. The specific religious, social, and cultural contexts that shape the characters' experiences may have limited applicability to other times and environments. Extrapolating modern psychological concepts from historically-bounded literary works requires careful contextualization.

The third one relates to Subjectivity of Literary analysis. Literary criticism is an inherently subjective endeavour. Different readers may interpret the same text through contrasting philosophical, cultural or theoretical lenses. An analysis centered on loss of innocence represents just one of many potential readings and thematic focuses. In the same logic, that work's close reading is based on the protagonists Silas and Jeanette, other characters if explored, will be minimised on the literary level. By acknowledging such limitations, literary scholars can properly situate their investigations within reasonable boundaries while still deriving meaningful philosophical and psychological insights from canonical works of fiction. A nuanced approach recognizes both the illuminating potential and inherent constraints of literary analysis.

2.4. Methodology of Research

When conducting a literary analysis, there are several suitable methodological

approaches that scholars can employ. The choice of methodology depends on the specific research questions, theoretical frameworks, and critical lenses being applied. In the current analysis, two literary criticisms and a tool of deconstruction, binary opposition are used. As far as the two mentioned criticisms are concerned, they are new historicism and Psychoanalysis. Using Historical Criticism this paper tries to situate the literary work within its historical and cultural context, and draws connections between the text and the respective author's life experiences or the socio-political climate in which each novel was written. Using Psychoanalytic Criticism, the current study explores the psychological dimensions of characters, symbolism, and the author's psyche as reflected in the text. Using binary opposition, this paper contrasts different binary pairs so as to construct meaning.

In a nutshell, examining loss of innocence in novels like *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, a combination of close reading, binary opposition, historical, biographical criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism could yield a rich, contextualized understanding. Historical and Biographical exploration of loss of innocence in *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*.

3. Exploring Loss of Innocence in *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

3.1. Loss of Innocence in *Silas Marner* with Binary Opposition

George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner* is a profound exploration of the loss of innocence experienced by the titular character, Silas Marner. His journey from a state of pure, unwavering faith to a hardened, miserly existence, and ultimately towards redemption and renewal, serves as a poignant meditation on the fragility of innocence and the transformative power of human connection. Silas Marner's initial innocence is firmly rooted in his membership within a close-knit religious community in Lantern Yard. His trust is shattered when he is falsely accused: "God will clear me" (George, 1861).

His life is defined by an unwavering belief in the principles of his faith and a deep trust in the integrity of his fellow believers. This innocence is shattered, however, when he is falsely accused of theft and subsequently exiled from the community. This betrayal by those he trusted most represents a profound loss of innocence, as Silas's worldview is irreparably altered, and his faith in the goodness of humanity is severely shaken.

Seeking refuge in the isolated village of Raveloe, Silas's loss of innocence is further compounded by his descent into a life of miserly obsession with material wealth. Having lost his connection to his spiritual roots and disillusioned by the cruelty of human betrayal, Silas finds solace in the accumulation of gold coins, which become his sole focus and the embodiment of his newfound cynicism towards the world. This fixation on material possessions represents a stark contrast to the purity and simplicity of his former existence, symbolizing the depths to which his innocence has been eroded by the harsh realities he has encountered.

However, Silas's journey towards the loss of innocence is not a linear path, and George Eliot masterfully weaves in moments of potential redemption and renewal. The arrival of the orphaned child Eppie into Silas's life serves as a catalyst for his gradual restoration of innocence. Through his nurturing of this innocent child and his burgeoning role as a father figure, Silas begins to reconnect with the fundamental human experiences of love, compassion, and selflessness—virtues that had been eclipsed by his miserly existence.

Eppie's presence in Silas's life represents a return to the simplicity and purity of innocence, as her childlike wonder and unconditional love challenge the hardened shell that Silas has built around himself. Her influence prompts him to re-evaluate his priorities and to rediscover the value of human connection and community—elements that had been sacrificed in his pursuit of material wealth.

As Silas embraces his role as Eppie's guardian and begins to reintegrate into the fabric of Raveloe society, he undergoes a profound transformation, shedding the cynicism and bitterness that had consumed him in the wake of his exile. This journey towards redemption and renewal is not without its challenges, as Silas must confront the lingering scars of his past betrayals and the deeply ingrained patterns of isolation and mistrust that had defined his existence for so long.

Ultimately, Silas Marner's loss of innocence serves as a powerful allegory for the human condition, exploring the fragility of faith, the corrupting influence of materialism, and the restorative power of human connection and love. Through Silas's journey, George Eliot invites readers to contemplate the complexities of innocence, the indelible impact of life's trials, and the enduring capacity for redemption and personal growth that lies within us all. Examining Silas Marner, some binary pairs are to be considered in the frame of this work.

God's Devoutness versus Gold's Devoutness

In *Silas Marner*, one notices how at the beginning of the plotline that Silas Marner was devoted to God. The first pages have described him in the following terms:

Marner was highly thought of in that little hidden world, known to itself as the church assembling in Lantern Yard; he was believed, to be a young man of exemplary life and ardent faith; and a peculiar interest had been centered in him ever since he had fallen, at a prayer-meeting, into a mysterious rigidity and suspension of consciousness, which, lasting for an hour or more, had been mistaken for death. (George, 1861)

The use of "ardent faith" is to show how constant and burning he was to the divine cause. Everybody in Lantern Yard was convinced that he belonged to the close sphere of people who are spiritually pure. His faith to God was absolute and every time he had the opportunity to go through the inquiry concerning the church's money which has been stolen, he confided his fate to God. This deep trust can be found in:

Silas turned a look of keen reproach on him, and said, "William, for nine years that we have gone in and out together, have you ever known me tell a lie? But God will clear me." [...] The other persons present, however, began to inquire

where Silas meant to say that the knife was, but he would give no further explanation: he only said, "I am sore stricken; I can say nothing. God will clear me." (George, 1861)

The fact of repeating constantly the same assertion, "God will clear me" implies that he was fully convinced of his innocence and later on the sense of God's justice. Unfortunately, he was declared guilty by the lots. This hurtled him in deep soul and his faith in God fainted.

Silas knelt with his brethren, relying on his own innocence being certified by immediate divine interference, but feeling that there was sorrow and mourning behind for him even then—that his trust in man had been cruelly bruised. The lots declared that Silas Marner was guilty. (George, 1861)

This false accusation had two consequences. The first leads Silas to be deceived by the religious authorities (men). The second implies the rejection of his faith in a "God of lies". This assertion shows that he questions God's sense of justice:

You stole the money, and you have woven a plot to lay the sin at my door. But you may prosper, for all that: there is no just God that governs the earth righteously, but a God of lies, that bears witness against the innocent. (George, 1861)

When he has left Lantern Yard for Raveloe, he has changed. He devoted all his time to weaving. He was broken to work; his senses were sharpened just for his work and the golden coins that will be the outcomes.

He seemed to weave, like the spider, from pure impulse, without reflection. Every man's work, pursued steadily, tends in this way to become an end in itself, and so to bridge over the loveless chasms of his life. Silas's hand satisfied itself with throwing the shuttle, and his eye with seeing the little squares in the cloth complete themselves under his effort. (George, 1861)

From the above, one notices clearly how his life has turned to be. He perceives now the great place golden guineas had in his life. The taste of money has spread over his devotion for God in whom he once believed in.

Now, for the first time in his life, he had five bright guineas put into his hand, no man expected a share of them, and he loved no man that he should offer him a share. But what were the guineas to him who saw no vista beyond countless days of weaving? It was needless for him to ask that, for it was pleasant to him to feel them in his palm, and look at their bright faces, which were all his own: it was another element of life, like the weaving and the satisfaction of hunger, subsisting quite aloof from the life of belief and love from which he had been cut off. (George, 1861)

From the above, we easily remark that he has started devoting his time and energy to his work and the benefit from it, gold, started being one of his greatest joy, replacing the life of 'belief' he has been forced to leave. Gradually when he was working, the coins he earned accumulated and sooner he found himself being in "love" with the golden guineas.

Marner wanted the heaps of ten to grow into a square, and then into a larger square, and every added guinea, while it was itself a satisfaction, bred a new

desire. (p. 13)

His only passion, purpose and joyful moment was now the time he spent with his gold. The obsession was growing up till the moment those coins became his companions.

He handled them, he counted them, till their form and colour were like the satisfaction of a thirst to him; but it was only in the night, when his work was done, that he drew them out to enjoy their companionship. He had taken up some bricks in his floor underneath his loom, and there he had made a hole in which he set the iron pot that contained his guineas and silver coins, covering the bricks with sand whenever he replaced them. (George, 1861)

Besides, while reading the novel, one also perceives how a whole community has been unfair to Silas. Like all the believers, he worships God, believes in the power he couldn't see. He was even ready to follow the practices reflecting faith in a supernatural power (God). Besides, he believes that prayer was sufficient, and that he didn't need medicine. In short, his faith in God was at that time unshakable. Unfortunately, he loses his faith when he was accused of stealing Church funds, first, by his friend William Dane, who was in love with his girlfriend Sarah. Secondly, by his religious community, who instead of making an inquiry, drew lots. The very act of drawing lots far from being normal bears a hidden meaning which is related to the practices of that epoch. In a short note, English people relay on physical objects to believe in the divine's power.

Despite the accusation, he still believes that God will save him from shame. But when the lots declared him guilty, he lashes out at William Dane, his friend, and accuses God of being God of lies. Reading that passage, one understands as a reader, his shame and his moral state of being. The hurt is further unbearable when he is innocent, and that has stretched on his psychological shape. In that way, he was brought to reconsider God. In his blasphemy, he asserted "God of lies". But what should be firstly understood is how a fervent God worshiper can be brought to such extreme. Yet, the answer is simple, and it is religious flaws. When things should be done in the right way and it is not. When rational actions should be carried, but instead, "stupid religious" ideologies are developed. After his blasphemy, Silas moved to Raveloe. There, he lives alone, far from neighbouring social life, where he hoards and covets his money, disillusioned with human relationships. The fact that he became non-social is the negative impact of the false accusation he was victim of. This lasted until he adopted Eppie. God by his power and his desire, does or does not what human beings want. He is the moving force that is not moved. He watches his sons with care, when the situation is a bit supernatural, he walks in and when he demonstrates his power, he goes silent again. The main reasons behind Silas' disillusion is human's wickedness and religious stupidity. As such, I can say that Religion is pure, but, dogmas and adepts are the impure who make it impure through their misdeeds and wrong minds. From this interpretation of Silas Marner's misfortune one understands better how his psychology has worked.

3.2. Loss of Innocence in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* with Binary Opposition

3.2.1. The Embodiment of Truth and Innocence: Jeanette's Virtuous Beginnings in Genesis

Truthfulness is a cardinal virtue, intrinsically linked to qualities such as innocence and purity. In Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the reader is initially presented with a seven-year-old Jeanette who exemplifies virtue through her unwavering honesty. This virtuous nature is most evident in the opening chapter, Genesis, which establishes Jeanette's inherent truthfulness.

The narrative introduces Jeanette's truthful disposition through her interactions with two elderly gypsy women who occasionally offer her sweets. Without hesitation, Jeanette confesses to her mother, "*I liked them a lot*" (Winterson, 1985), demonstrating her candour and lack of guile. Furthermore, Jeanette consistently recounts these encounters to her mother, revealing her inclination to share every detail, no matter how seemingly insignificant—a hallmark of childhood innocence and purity.

Another instance that underscores Jeanette's virtuous truthfulness is her response when asked about Pastor Finch's whereabouts. Rather than providing a simple answer, Jeanette offers a vivid description: "*He's in the Sunday School Room playing with the Fuzzy Felt*" (Winterson, 1985). This fanciful embellishment highlights her artless nature and her inability to conceal or withhold information, further reinforcing her virtuous qualities. In these early chapters, Jeanette's truthfulness is portrayed as an innate attribute, intrinsically linked to her innocence and virtue. Her candid confessions and forthright recollections establish her as a paragon of virtue, untainted by the complexities and deceptions that often accompany maturity.

3.2.2. The Descent into Deceit: Jeanette's Loss of Virtue in Joshua

In contrast to the virtuous and truthful Jeanette portrayed in Genesis, the Joshua chapter unveils a profound shift in her character, as vices gradually erode her once virtuous habits of honesty. This transformation is marked by a growing propensity for deceit and concealment, not only towards her mother but also her entire community. The catalyst for this change is Jeanette's burgeoning sense of self-discovery, particularly her realization of her lesbian identity. Anticipating a lack of understanding from her mother, Jeanette begins to withhold information, confessing, "*I had told my mother as much as I could, but not everything. I had a feeling she wouldn't really understand*" (Winterson, 1985). This deliberate act of concealing her experiences with Melanie represents a pivotal moment, as Jeanette consciously departs from her once virtuous path of complete transparency.

Emboldened by this initial act of deception, Jeanette's behaviour becomes increasingly rebellious and vicious. She openly defies the church's teachings, exclaiming, "*These children are full of demons...I'm not, [...] and neither is she*" (George, 1861). This defiant proclamation starkly contrasts with the calm, obedi-

ent demeanour of her younger self, revealing the emergence of a new, rebellious facet of Jeanette's personality.

Jeanette's descent into dishonesty intensifies as she blatantly lies about her whereabouts, responding to her mother's inquiry with the dismissive "*I can't remember*" (Winterson, 1985). When challenged, she vehemently denies having stayed at Miss Jewsbury's house, further compounding her web of deceit. Even her eventual repentance is tainted by falsehood, as she fabricates a story about spending the night in the church, solely to alleviate the pressure she faced (p. 99).

These instances of rebellion and outright lies serve as a poignant reminder of Jeanette's profound transformation from the innocent, virtuous child of Genesis to a more complex and deceitful individual in Joshua, a transition that represents her loss of innocence and the erosion of her once virtuous nature:

I told my mother I had to spend the night in the church. She seemed to understand, and so I made Miss Jewsbury drive me the twenty-five miles across to where I needed to be. (George, 1861)

3.2.3. The Path of Deceit: Jeanette's Transition from Innocence to Depravity

Truthfulness is the hallmark of virtue, while deception, whether intentional or unintentional, stands in direct opposition to virtuous conduct. Jeanette's increasing propensity for dishonesty signals a profound shift in her character, as she gradually strays from the virtuous path she once embodied. Through her escalating lies and the emergence of vicious tendencies, one bears witness to Jeanette's transformation from an embodiment of innocence to a complex individual grappling with the temptations of vice.

This metamorphosis is not confined to the specific instances of deceit highlighted earlier; rather, it is a multifaceted journey that unfolds through various revelatory moments and subtle nuances. Each lie, each act of rebellion, and each concealment serves as a stepping stone in Jeanette's loss of innocence, as she sheds the pure, uncompromising truthfulness that once defined her nature.

Beyond the overt acts of dishonesty, Jeanette's evolution is further evidenced by the shifts in her demeanour, attitudes, and worldview. The once obedient and unquestioning child now exhibits a rebellious spirit, challenging societal norms and religious dogma with a newfound sense of agency and self-awareness. This transformation is not a linear path but rather a complex tapestry woven from the threads of self-discovery, rebellion, and the inevitable loss of innocence that accompanies the journey toward adulthood.

Jeanette's progression from innocence is a poignant reminder of the complexities inherent to the human experience. Even the most virtuous individuals can succumb to the temptations of deceit and vice when confronted with the harsh realities of life. Her journey serves as a testament to the intricate interplay between innocence and experience, virtue and vice, as she navigates the turbulent waters of self-discovery and personal growth.

3.2.4. Jeanette's Spiritual Journey: From Unwavering Devotion to Godless Disillusionment

The concept of devotion is intrinsically tied to the realm of virtue, and in the early stages of the novel, Jeanette is portrayed as a pious, devoted, and innocent child whose thoughts, actions, and words are entirely guided by the religious precepts instilled in her. Her life is a dutiful adherence to the rules and teachings of her church, and she is raised with the singular purpose of "being the servant of the Lord." Jeanette's devotion to God is absolute and unwavering, a testament to the fundamentalist worldview that shapes her existence.

This uncompromising devotion manifests itself in various ways, from her participation in religious activities such as preaching, reading, and Bible quizzes, to her unwavering belief that the world operates on the simple, unambiguous lines exemplified by her church. Her steadfast faith is so profound that she even incorporates religious themes into her academic pursuits, much to the consternation of her mother, who laments Jeanette's abandonment of "*biblical themes*" (George, 1861).

However, as the narrative progresses, a profound shift occurs within Jeanette, one that challenges her once unwavering devotion and ushers in a state of godlessness and disillusionment. The certainties that once anchored her existence begin to crumble, and she finds herself questioning the very foundations of her faith.

This transition is marked by a series of pivotal moments and realizations that chip away at Jeanette's devotional fervour. Her encounters with those who do not share her fundamentalist beliefs, coupled with her own burgeoning sense of self-discovery, ignite a spark of doubt that ultimately engulfs her once unshakable faith.

Jeanette's journey from devout servant of God to a state of godlessness is a poignant exploration of the complexities of faith, the human capacity for change, and the inevitable collisions between belief systems and personal growth. As she sheds the shackles of her religious indoctrination, Jeanette embarks on a path of self-discovery, one that challenges the very foundations of her existence and forces her to confront the disillusionment that accompanies the loss of unquestioning devotion.

"I still don't think of God as my betrayer. The servants of God, yes, but servants by their very nature betray. I miss God who was my friend. I don't even know if God exists, but I do know that if God is your emotional role model, very few human relationships will match up to it" (George, 1861).

3.2.5. The Dichotomy of Passion: Natural versus Unnatural

The concept of virtue encompasses moral implications, and within the realm of passion, a distinction is drawn between what is deemed "natural" and "unnatural." This dichotomy has been historically used to differentiate between heterosexual and homosexual orientations, respectively.

In the novel, heterosexuality, or "natural passion," is portrayed as the accepted

norm within Jeanette's immediate environment, particularly within the confines of the church's values. However, this representation of heterosexuality is not without its complexities and contradictions. The narrative subtly hints at a skewed power dynamic within heterosexual relationships, where men are often depicted as subordinate figures, lacking in agency and authority.

This hegemonic reality, which subverts traditional gender roles, is most evident in Jeanette's family dynamic. Within her household, it is her mother who wears the proverbial "pants," assuming the dominant role and wielding the majority of the decision-making power. She dictates the family's standards, establishes boundaries, and even exercises control over their reproductive activities. Jeanette's father, on the other hand, is conspicuously absent throughout the narrative, representing the diminished status of men within this societal structure.

This trend extends beyond Jeanette's immediate family, as the husbands and men in her broader community are similarly depicted as marginalized and undervalued figures. In essence, the portrayal of heterosexuality, or "natural passion," is fraught with contradictions, challenging traditional gender norms and hierarchies.

Despite this unconventional representation of heterosexual dynamics, Jeanette's community remains steadfastly opposed to homosexuality, which is referred to as "unnatural passion." This sentiment is exemplified by the interrogative statement posed to Jeanette: *"Do you deny you love this woman with a love reserved for man and wife?"* (George, 1861). The phrase "reserved for man and wife" serves as a symbolic representation of the gender binary and the societal expectation of heteronormativity.

Through this exploration of "natural" and "unnatural" passions, the narrative delves into the complexities of gender roles, societal expectations, and the inherent contradictions that arise when rigid norms are challenged by the fluidity of human experience.

3.2.6. The Fundamentalist Shackles and the Path to Perversion

An integral aspect of the narrative's exploration of "unnatural passion" lies in the fundamentalist worldview espoused by Jeanette's church leaders. When confronted with emerging realities that challenged their established beliefs, these leaders remained steadfastly entrenched in their dogmatic perspectives, refusing to open their hearts and minds to change. This fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar became the catalyst for a form of religious psychological oppression that ensnared Jeanette, shaping her perception of self and identity.

Furthermore, the narrative's unconventional depiction of heterosexuality, characterized by the marginalization of men and the subversion of traditional gender roles, exerted a profound influence on Jeanette's sexual attraction and desire. The underrepresentation of men and the distortion of conventional power dynamics within heterosexual relationships ultimately impacted Jeanette's ability to forge meaningful connections with the opposite sex, further fuelling her exploration of alternative forms of intimacy.

Amidst this turbulent landscape of societal norms and personal desires, one positive aspect of Jeanette's upbringing shines through: her unwavering commitment to truthfulness. This virtue, instilled in her from an early age, served as a guiding principle in her interactions with the world. However, as she ventured deeper into the realm of "unnatural passion," this once-cherished quality began to erode, replaced by a propensity for deception, concealment, and even theft. It is as though her newfound desires and the allure of the forbidden corrupted her intrinsic nature, leading her down a path of perversion that stood in stark contrast to her virtuous beginnings.

Jeanette's journey, characterized by the clash between societal expectations and personal yearnings, illuminates the complexities of identity formation and the consequences of suppressing one's authentic self. The narrative suggests that the rigidity of her church's fundamentalist beliefs and the distorted representation of heterosexual norms ultimately contributed to her descent into "unnatural passion," a path that brought with it the erosion of her once-cherished virtues.

4. Historical Appraisal of *Loss of Innocence* in *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and Psychoanalysis of the Protagonists Silas and Jeanette

4.1. Historical Appraisal of Loss of Innocence in *Silas Marner* and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Loss of innocence as portrayed in these works reflects changing in 19th and 20th century views on childhood itself. Eliot's characterisation of Silas as a disciplined, industrious weaver aligns with Victorian notions that *children should be ushered swiftly into the responsibilities of adulthood to become productive members of society*. His unjust ousting belies the underlying fragility of such innocent piety in the face of an unforgiving moral code.

In contrast, Jeanette's wrenching conflict over her sexuality exemplifies the 20th century's greater attachment to protecting and extending the "innocence" of childhood and adolescence. Psychologists were reimagining childhood as a distinct developmental stage requiring sensitivity. Winterson poignantly captures how the mores of Jeanette's church community disrupt this fragile passage by subjecting her to harsh moral proscriptions misaligned with her burgeoning self-identity.

The authors' contrasting depictions speak to evolving attitudes across the century separating their works. What remained constant, however, was the power of entrenched social and religious institutions to shatter youthful naivety through inflexible codes of conduct. Silas and Jeanette become crucibles for larger ideological battles waged between traditionalist religious rigidity and modernizing cultural forces.

By contextualizing the narratives within the overarching currents of 19th and 20th century British life, a historical criticism approach fundamentally links the experiences of these protagonists to broader societal tides rebuffing and reshaping

conventional boundaries of innocence and experience. Their wrenching awakenings spotlight the existential tensions of each era as new paradigms of thought collided with long-established belief systems to upend what constituted the novitiate's appropriate indoctrination into the disillusioning realities of the adult world.

Also, in *Silas Marner*, Eliot depicts the harsh realities of 19th century rural England, where Puritanical religious doctrine governs social customs. Silas's expulsion from a rigid Calvinist community after being wrongfully accused represents a shattering disillusionment with the very system of faith and communal belonging that had given his life structure. His retreat into misanthropic isolation mirrors the tenuous socioeconomic position of the newly urbanized working class separated from traditional agrarian life. Eliot's novel emerges from an era of rapid industrialization destabilizing the fabric of English provincial life.

Similarly, the loss of innocence moving Jeanette in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* stems from the fundamentalist Evangelical Christian movements permeating 1960s/70s working-class Britain. Winterson draws from her own experience in the oppressively dogmatic Pentecostal church to capture Jeanette's psychological turmoil of reconciling her burgeoning sexuality with a faith demanding compulsory heteronormativity. The novel reflects a post-war climate of conflicting liberalism and religious traditionalism tearing at societal mores.

Both works dramatize how the era-specific ideological currents of their settings—Puritanical Calvinism and fundamentalist Evangelicalism—wielded immense power in shattering childlike naivete. Through historical criticism, the thematic links between loss of innocence and the religious/cultural contexts of 19th century England and 20th century Britain are laid bare. The protagonists' existential journeys serve as microcosms for their respective societies' seismic philosophical shifts.

Moreover, by demonstrating how social upheaval breeds psychological disillusionment, these novels transcend their temporal bounds to speak to the universally disruptive experience of having one's guiding beliefs and securities dismantled. Historical criticism evinces how Marner and Jeanette embody the perpetual tug-of-war between tradition and progress that has defined the evolution of human societies.

Another critical layer that historical criticism can unpack is how the socioeconomic circumstances informing these novels shape the type of innocence that is ultimately disrupted. *Silas Marner* emerges from Eliot's realist literary tradition depicting the harsh economic realities facing the rural working class. Silas's innocence is grounded in the virtues of honest labour and spiritual piety expected of his station—qualities that are shattered when he is persecuted by the very religious community that should uplift such humble righteousness.

In contrast, Winterson's semi-autobiographical novel emerges from a late 20th century cultural landscape where attitudes towards gender and sexuality were being radically upended, particularly among the urban working and middle classes.

Jeanette's lost of innocence centers on her gradual understanding and embrace of her lesbian identity, an existential journey reflective of the era's dawning awareness of LGBTQ+ experiences that had long been suppressed.

The divergent economic backdrops of 19th century provincial life versus 20th century working-class Manchester foster different loss of innocence to then be dismantled. Eliot's protagonist represents the rural poor's moral innocence in the face of an increasingly urban, industrial economy. Winterson's young heroine experiences the loss of sexual/gender innocence emblematic of more progressive social currents breaching traditional social hierarchies and cultural mores.

Historical criticism reveals that while the protagonists' journeys are deeply personal, they also gave voice to the grand upheavals reordering the conventional boundaries between childhood and maturity, belief and disillusionment, societal tradition and progressivism. Eliot and Winterson immortalized their era's most visceral existential tensions through the profound symbolic power of lost innocence.

4.2. Psychoanalysis of the Protagonists Silas and Jeanette

4.2.1. Psychoanalysis of the Protagonist Silas Marner

Silas Marner, the protagonist of the novel, has been a victim of a serious injustice, which has prompted a significant transformation within him. In *The Strategy of Desire* (Dichter, 1960), Dichter writes:

Whatever your attitude toward modern psychology or psychoanalysis, it has been proved beyond any doubt that many of our daily decisions are governed by motivations over which we have no control and of which we are often quite unaware. (Dichter, 1960)

Through the lens of psychoanalysis, one can posit that Silas is a product of his unconscious mind. This assertion is supported by the fact that he decides to relocate from Lantern Yard to Raveloe, effectively starting a new life. To psychoanalyze Silas, this research paper employs Freud's structural hypothesis of mental functioning, namely the Id, Ego, and Superego. As Brenner explains:

The Id comprises the psychic representatives of the drives, the ego consists of those functions which have to do with the individual's relation to his environment, and the superego comprises the moral precepts of our minds as well as our ideal aspirations. (Freud, 1927)

For this psychological analysis of Silas Marner's loss of innocence, this paper uses Freud's concepts of the unconscious mind, defense mechanisms, and psychosexual stages of development. According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the human psyche is divided into three components: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id represents the primitive, instinctual drives and desires, while the superego embodies the moral conscience and societal norms. The ego acts as a mediator between the id and the superego, striving to satisfy the desires of the id in a socially acceptable manner.

In the early stages of the novel, Silas Marner's psyche appears to be dominated

by a strong superego, stemming from his rigid religious upbringing and his adherence to the community's moral codes. However, the traumatic betrayal he experiences at the hands of his closest friend and the subsequent false accusation of theft by the community represent a profound violation of his superego ideals, shattering his trust in the moral frameworks that had once guided his life.

This trauma triggers a regression to a more primitive, id-driven state, where Silas seeks solace in the accumulation of gold and the repetitive act of weaving. These obsessive behaviours can be interpreted as defense mechanisms, serving to protect his fragile psyche from further hurt and providing a sense of control and security in the face of overwhelming emotional turmoil.

Silas's isolation and detachment from society can be viewed as a manifestation of the defense mechanism of repression, where he unconsciously suppresses his desire for human connection and emotional intimacy in order to avoid the pain of past betrayals. This emotional repression contributes to his psychological regression and the stunting of his emotional development, causing him to retreat into a childlike state of dependence on his routine and possessions.

The theft of his gold, which had become the symbolic representation of his id-driven desires, plunges Silas into an existential crisis, forcing him to confront the emptiness of his isolated existence and the futility of his obsessive pursuit of material wealth. This crisis can be seen as a conflict between the id and the superego, as Silas's unconscious desires and coping mechanisms clash with the emerging recognition of the moral and spiritual void in his life.

Moreover, the arrival of Eppie serves as a catalyst for Silas's psychological transformation and the resolution of this internal conflict. Through his nurturing relationship with Eppie, Silas is able to rediscover his capacity for love and human connection, representing a reintegration of his superego ideals and a reclamation of his lost innocence.

Ultimately, Silas's journey can be interpreted as a process of psychic restructuring, where he comes to terms with his past trauma, reconciles the conflicting forces within his psyche, and achieves a more balanced and integrated sense of self. This transformation is facilitated by the restorative power of love and human connection, which allows Silas to transcend the psychological defenses that had once shielded him from further emotional pain. In conclusion, even though Silas has lost his innocence, he regained something much more valuable in the person of Eppie who has showered all sorts of blessings on him.

4.2.2. Freudian and Lacanian Psychoanalytic Approach to Jeanette

1) Freudian Psychoanalytic approach to Jeanette

(i) Dreams' interpretation

Interpreting dreams offers a potent avenue to psychoanalyze a character's unconscious desires. Jeanette's unconventional dream about marriage, as depicted in the novel "Numbers," provides an opportunity to closely examine and unravel her inner feelings towards heterosexual marriage. In the dream, Jeanette describes several symbolic elements. The first is "purity," symbolized by "My dress was pure

white” (Winterson p.71), representing goodness and Jeanette’s innocence. The second element is “a golden crown” where “gold” signifies “richness,” and the “crown” represents “royalty”. Together, these symbols allude to Jeanette’s “royal richness.”

However, Jeanette’s narration takes a decreasing tone as she states, “As I walked up the aisle, the crown got heavier and heavier, and the dress more and more difficult to walk in” (Winterson, 1985).

Two distinct realities emerge here. The first is “the crown got heavier and heavier.” This imagery suggests that the weight of the crown is too burdensome for her to bear. In other words, she does not align with the royal symbol of the crown. And since the crown represents “royalty” in a marriage, one can interpret that Jeanette unconsciously expressed her inability to embody the “royal” character of marriage. The second reality is “the dress [got] more and more difficult to walk in” (Winterson 1985). Across traditional and contemporary cultures, the wedding dress holds immense significance. In Western cultures, it symbolizes “deep feminism,” and in other cultures, the bride’s dress should remain a secret until the wedding day. If the groom catches a glimpse of it before the big day, rumours suggest the marriage will not last. Therefore, the bride’s marriage is of paramount importance to her and her family. However, Jeanette experiences difficulties walking in her marriage dress, symbolizing her inner rejection of “heterosexual feminism.”

In contrast to lesbian feminism, heterosexual feminism has a singular significance: “the carving up of the wife’s role.” Indeed, the wife is expected to bear children, cook, take care of her husband and children, and most importantly, satisfy her husband. On the other hand, lesbian feminism allows a woman to choose being either “a role man/husband” or “a wife”. This distinction is crucial because in lesbian relationships, the liaison involves “two women,” with one taking the role of the husband and the other the woman. And as they are both fundamentally female, they understand how women think, how they build, and how they can be satisfied. It is this deep female nature that created the “lesbian movement.” This is because while some women fully embrace their “womanhood,” others experience it in a lesser way. Some turn to lesbianism due to love disappointments. And as they were completely broken in their inner being, they decided to turn toward lesbianism, which is a flesh-to-flesh love. In essence, Jeanette’s difficulties in walking in “feminism” testify to her inner disgust at heterosexual feminism.

When further scrutinizing the passage, one notices: “Somehow, I made it to the altar. The priest was very fat and kept getting fatter like bubble gum you blow” (George, Winterson). The first part, “Somehow I made it to the altar,” exemplifies her efforts to still operate within heterosexual norms. Let us recall that in “Numbers,” she had not yet made her coming out, which is the formal assertion of her lesbianism. But this chapter somehow paves the way to the culminating act. Here, despite her rising disgust at “manhood,” she makes efforts to follow the prevailing social standards. The other reality is “The priest was very fat and kept getting fatter

like bubble gum you blow.” This serves to emphasize the changing character of the “ecclesiastical role.” The qualification “very fat” means “obese.” And in modern terms, obesity signifies illness, or overeating. In clear words, overfeeding. When someone overfeeds themselves or doesn’t pay attention to their eating habits, they become obese. And the use of “like bubble gum you blow” is to mention the fact that it is “the community which creates ecclesiastical obesity.” It is the community which “blows” the “ecclesiastical people,” allowing them to get fatter and fatter.

The last issue to tackle is “You may kiss the bride.” This is the customary formula to materialize the “union of the married.” It is the most important moment of a marriage as it represents the couple’s first “act of unity.” When the relationship is desired by both parties, the kissing moment is glorious. And it is remarkable in the couple’s ways of “touching each other,” “taking their hands,” “kissing each other,” and finally “looking deeply into each other’s eyes.” To summarize, it is the moment which unifies the families and makes the issue of marriage relevant. To resort to Genesis 2:23-24:

“Then the man said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of a man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.’”

The following words provide intricate details on the importance of the moment witnessing the union of a man and a woman. On the one hand, when the romantic feeling is shared by the parties, the moment is pleasurable and beautiful. Nonetheless, when it is not, one witnesses a deplorable scene. In Jeanette’s case, one could say that the romantic feeling was not shared. Moreover, this is the reason why at this solemn moment she would see different abnormal things.

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. (George, 1861)

Each face she saw relates to a specific idea attached to ideologies, conceptions, and fears. The first, “he was blind,” is to mean the loss of light in the man’s eyes. When someone perceives a lack of lightness in someone else’s eyes, it means that the first person has psychologically lost the light. Additionally, it may relate to the fact that she could not see in the man’s eyes what she was searching for in a relationship. Thus, the issue of the man’s blindness.

The second, “a pig face,” is to notify the repulsive face of her new husband. This issue is quite psychological because, in a logical sense, a man could not have a “pig face.” The fact of seeing a “pig face” is according to Jeanette’s inner beliefs about heterosexuality. In some cultural traditions, the pig is a taboo, representing horror, impurity, and a symbol of dirtiness. Here, Jeanette considers her new husband to be sexually dirty because she nourished disgust for men.

The third is “sometimes my mother.” Jeanette’s mother is, for her, the strong personality who maintains order and rules over household matters. She also ap-

pears to be the strictest character Jeanette knows. She also depicts her mother as a strong holder of heterosexual ideology. And the determinant point is that Jeanette considers her mother not to be her heroine but to be the person she would not resemble when grown up. This is the reason why she could perceive her new husband as her mother.

The fourth is “sometimes the man from the post office.” He is a character depicted as “bald and shiny with hands too fat for the sweet jars” (George, 1861). The principal trait I could see relating Jeanette to the man from the post office is that he qualified Jeanette as “Sweet hearts for a sweet heart” (George, 1861). But Jeanette had almost “strangled her dog with rage” and later asserted, “Sweet I was not” (George, 1861). What is noticed here is the rejection of sweetness, which is a criterion of feminism. Besides, for this reason, Jeanette despised this character (the man from the post office).

The last issue is “Just a suit of clothes with nothing inside.” The suit represents for a man what the marriage dress represents for a woman. It is then important. In actual fact, Jeanette sees nothing in the “suit.” The sense bound to that is the fact that Jeanette could not see the core values, the primordial aspects that could push her to belong to her man. In other words, she doesn’t notice the “manhood” of her new husband.

In conclusion, from Jeanette’s dream, one can say that this dream expresses her efforts to walk in the social standards around heterosexuality. It also expresses, at the same time, her rejection of heterosexuality and her desire to discover a sexual way that could better fit her. The last point to mention is her disgust at manhood.

(ii) Jeanette Psychological Persona

The persona is the psychological representation of a character. It can be either an Id, Ego or a Superego persona. An Id persona is characterized by the expression of primitive desires. Those impulses are principally negative, with hunger, anger, and hatred being predominant. On the other hand, an Ego persona is most of the time identified as the product of the unconscious but submitted somehow to conscious realities. An Ego persona is regulated by conscious realities because of moral standards of society and how we have already been raised by our parents.

The Superego is most of the time considered to be the conscience of the individual. Its main function is to decide whether an action is real or not. It retains facts and struggles for perfection or realization. A Superego persona will be more recognized in their clever choices. They will be more tempted to search for perfection and the realization of their own desires. However, sometimes a character can be recognized as having two personas. In this case, we talk about a mixed psychological persona.

In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Jeanette can be identified as having a mixed persona between Ego and Superego. The first, Ego, is because she was raised by a fundamentalist mother and a religious congregation. At seven years old, she was already playing an important role in the church, and at home, she was expected to be an excellent devoted Christian. This pushed her most of the time to be the first

in religious competitions. As a seven-year-old girl, the stimuli she received were beyond her understanding. This justifies her rhetorical questions at times. Being a product of her mother and her community, she was bound to certain realities. One of these is the preaching realities. She was also partaking in religious outreach for conversion, and as a pure Christian, her mother and community expected her to act differently. From her mother, she learned many things, including Bible study. Her mother taught her to reason through the Bible's references, to think in a fundamentalist mindset, and to be a remarkable person. She finally taught her to have a dominant charisma, which is a man's domain and demonstrates masculinity. She perfectly understood it, and her actions exemplified it later. The first is the raincoat episode. Her mother wanted her to have a bright pink mac, but she refused because it was too feminine. The second is her disgust at men. She thought them useless because at home, her mother was the predominant figure. She thought women were capable of everything possible, superior to men, and as such, no need to have a husband. This belief pushed her to develop a masculine character. And later, because of her masculine character, she did a 360° sharp turn from virtue to vice. The second persona one can recognize in Jeanette is the Superego. A Superego persona struggles to realize their desires, even though they are in contradiction with social realities. That reality relates to Jeanette's discovery of lesbian realities and sticking to them.

2) Lacanian Psychoanalytic approach to Jeanette

In addition to Freudian Psychoanalysis, this paper finds it important to explore Jeanette through the lens of Lacanian Psychoanalysis because of the multi-faceted aspects that Jeanette has shown. Using Jacques Lacan, this paper is interested in his concepts of the mirror stage, the Symbolic Order, and the formation of subjectivity.

Through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Jeanette's journey in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* can be understood as a complex negotiation of subjectivity, desire, and the constraints of the Symbolic Order imposed by her religious and social environment.

In Lacanian theory, the mirror stage is a crucial phase in the development of the child's sense of self. During this stage, the infant recognizes its own image in the mirror, leading to the formation of the Ideal-I, an idealized and unified self-representation. However, this image is inherently alienating, as it contrasts with the fragmented and incomplete nature of the child's actual experience.

Jeanette's upbringing in the strict, fundamentalist household of her mother and the Pentecostal church can be seen as a symbolic mirror, reflecting back to her an idealized image of what it means to be a "true believer." The rigid religious doctrines and gender norms imposed upon her serve as the Symbolic Order, the realm of language, law, and social structures that shape her subjectivity.

As Jeanette navigates her burgeoning sexuality and her attraction to another girl, Melanie, she encounters a fundamental conflict between her desire and the Symbolic Order of her religious community. Her non-heteronormative desires

challenge the rigid gender norms and heterosexual ideals upheld by the church, threatening to fracture the carefully constructed image of herself as a “true believer.”

Jeanette’s struggle can be understood as a resistance to the alienating effects of the Symbolic Order, which seeks to impose a fixed and idealized identity upon her. Her transgressive desires represent a rupture in the Symbolic, a refusal to fully submit to the socially sanctioned norms and expectations placed upon her.

Through her experiences and her eventual expulsion from the church, Jeanette embarks on a journey of self-discovery and the construction of a new, more authentic subjectivity. This process involves a confrontation with the limitations of the Symbolic Order and a recognition of the inherent lack or absence at the heart of her desire.

Jeanette’s embrace of her non-heteronormative identity and her pursuit of a life outside the confines of the church can be seen as a radical act of subjectivization, a rejection of the alienating ideals imposed upon her, and a reclamation of her own desire and agency.

Throughout the novel, Winterson masterfully explores the complex interplay between desire, language, and the construction of subjectivity. Jeanette’s journey resonates with Lacanian themes of alienation, the limitations of the Symbolic Order, and the constant negotiation of desire and identity within the constraints of social and cultural norms.

In this Lacanian reading, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* becomes a poignant exploration of the human struggle to forge an authentic sense of self amidst the conflicting demands of desire, social expectations, and the ever-present lack that lies at the heart of our subjectivity.

5. Conclusion

This study has set out to explore the underlying causes of the protagonists’ loss of innocence in George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* and Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. To address this problematic, the research employed a multifaceted theoretical framework, drawing upon new historicism, deconstructive analysis of binary oppositions, and Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

The new historicist approach illuminated how the socio-cultural contexts of the respective eras shaped and contributed to the characters’ loss of innocence. Silas Marner’s betrayal by his religious community and Jeanette’s oppression under heteronormative societal norms were products of the historical power dynamics and belief systems prevalent at the time.

Deconstructive analysis, through the lens of binary oppositions, challenged the simplistic dichotomies often associated with innocence and its loss. The study deconstructed binaries such as God’s devoutness Versus Gold’s devoutness, Truth and Innocence, innocence versus Depravity, Unwavering Devotion versus Godless Disillusionment, Natural versus Unnatural, revealing their inherent instability and interdependence, thereby complicating the very notion of innocence itself.

Furthermore, the application of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories delved into the unconscious dimensions of the protagonists' experiences. The study explored how the loss of innocence was inextricably linked to the negotiation of desire, the constraints of symbolic orders, and the fragmentation of identity within the protagonists' psyches. Silas loses innocence through betrayal and isolation (George, 1861), while Jeanette loses hers through identity conflict and repression (Winterson, 1985). Psychoanalytic theory reveals that unconscious desires and societal constraints play a central role in this transformation (Freud, 1927; Lacan, 2001).

The historicist analysis traced the socio-cultural roots of Silas Marner's loss, stemming from the betrayal of his religious community's rigid moral codes, and Jeanette's loss, arising from the oppressive gender norms and heteronormative ideals of her Pentecostal upbringing. The psychoanalytic exploration unveiled the unconscious forces shaping their desires, defense mechanisms, and subjective experiences, shedding light on the intrapsychic conflicts underlying their loss of innocence.

Ultimately, this study has demonstrated that the loss of innocence experienced by Silas Marner and Jeanette is a profoundly complex phenomenon, shaped by the interplay of historical, cultural, and psychological forces. By employing new historicism, deconstructive analysis, and psychoanalytic theory, the research has illuminated the multifaceted underlying causes of the protagonists' loss of innocence, revealing the profound impact of societal norms, power dynamics, and unconscious desires on the human experience of innocence and its erosion.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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