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A BITTEN APPLE AND A BLOODY KEY:
FEMINIST REVISIONISM AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE EDEN MYTH AND
THE BLUEBEARD TALE

BY
JACOB FORD

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

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This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Sharon Smith
Advisor

Date

Jason McEntee
Department Head

Date

Nicole Lounsbery, PhD
Director, Graduate School

Date

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ABSTRACT

A BITTEN APPLE AND A BLOODY KEY: FEMINIST REVISIONISM AT THE
INTERSECTION OF THE EDEN MYTH AND THE BLUEBEARD TALE

JACOB FORD

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This thesis investigates the feminist revisionism of the Bluebeard fairy tale through a focus on its relationship with the Eden myth. Past studies have examined the remarkable feminism of Bluebeardian literature and history, but this thesis is the first to interrogate the tale's evolution from and alongside the Eden myth and to argue that the Bluebeard tale's feminism is exceptional because of its ties to the Eden myth. I argue that the evolution of the intersecting revisionism of the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale is characterized by the changing morals of the two myths—morals that, depending on the author's handling, alternately celebrate or condemn misogyny, feminism, Christianity, female curiosity, oppressive structures of heterosexual marriage, female agency, patriarchal power, and the recognition of trauma caused by patriarchal oppression. An examination of the history and content of Edenic and Bluebeardian revisions reveals a persistence in women authors to follow the example of Bluebeard's wife and to tell their own stories despite the condemnation and oppression of patriarchal Bluebeards who attempt to bury their stories and keep them silent.

By first defining the “original” Eden myth as a fusion of three texts—the *Book of J*, the King James Bible (1611), and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667)—I propose the original oral version of the Bluebeard tale was a feminist revision of the Eden myth and that Charles Perrault's revision of the oral tale into the canonical “Bluebeard” (1697) was

a return to the misogynistic morals of the Eden myth. I then interrogate how Charlotte Brontë revised both the Eden and Bluebeard myths in her novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) according to her unique feminist Christian ideology. Finally, I examine Laura Riding's "Eve's Side of It" (1935), Ursula K. Le Guin's "She Unnames Them" (1985), Luisa Valenzuela's "The Key" (1993), and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), feminist revisions that highlight the symbolic difference between the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle and reveal the emancipatory potential of the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale.

INTRODUCTION:

PLANTING THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE: FEMINIST REVISIONISM AND THE
“ORIGINAL” EDEN MYTH

This thesis investigates the evolutionary revisionism of one of humanity’s most influential myths. Indeed, it is the one that implicitly claims to be our first myth: the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Eden myth has been revised in countless directions and this thesis focuses on one avenue of the myth’s evolution. That avenue is its evolution into and alongside the Bluebeard fairy tale. Beginning with the earliest and most influential versions of the Eden myth—the *Book of J*, the King James Bible (1611), and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667)—I investigate its revision into the original oral tradition of the Bluebeard tale and its subsequent revision into Charles Perrault’s now-canonical fairy tale “Bluebeard” (1697). I then interrogate how Charlotte Brontë revised both the Eden and Bluebeard myths into her novel *Jane Eyre* (1847). Finally, to examine the vast proliferation of feminist revisions of the Eden and Bluebeard myths that occurred during the twentieth century, I focus specifically on Laura Riding’s “Eve’s Side of It” (1935), Ursula K. Le Guin’s “She Unnames Them” (1985), Luisa Valenzuela’s “The Key” (1993), and Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985). By examining each of these texts, I argue that the evolution of the intersecting revisionism of the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale is characterized by the changing morals of the two myths; morals that, depending on the author’s handling, alternately celebrate or condemn misogyny, feminism, Christianity, female curiosity, oppressive structures of heterosexual marriage, female agency, patriarchal power, and the recognition of trauma caused by patriarchal oppression.

In chapter 1, I argue that the Eden myth was first revised into the Bluebeard tale sometime before the seventeenth century and originated in the oral tradition of women as an “old wives’ tale.” Though we don’t know precisely what this tale looked like, we can consider it a revision of the Eden myth because it certainly resembled the Eden myth and likely carried a feminist moral that disagrees with the misogynistic moral of the Eden myth. Perrault’s now-canonical “Bluebeard” was a revision of the old wives’ tale that erased the names of the women who originated the tale from history and imbued the tale with a misogynist Christian perspective that condemns women’s curiosity. In chapter 2, I interrogate a major intersecting revision of the Eden and Bluebeard myths in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, one that draws on the Bible to justify her protagonist’s Christianity and draws on fairy tales to justify her feminism, resulting in a reconciliation of the morals of both myths and exemplifying Brontë’s unique feminist Christian ideology. And in chapter 3, I examine twentieth-century revisions from Riding, Le Guin, Valenzuela, and Winterson that highlight the differences and similarities between the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard’s castle, revealing that in order to heal from the traumas of patriarchal oppression, women must recognize that patriarchal institutions have traditionally depended upon the trauma and suffering of women.

The most obvious similarities between the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale are its inciting incidents. In both tales, a woman is told by a powerful masculine figure not to do something. And in both tales, that woman does exactly what is forbidden. The history of the intersecting evolution of the Eden and Bluebeard myths is driven by a similar rebellion. Throughout their history, the canonical and “popularly” accepted versions of both myths have been those with a misogynistic leaning: those that condemn female

curiosity and ambition. But the reason the history of these myths is a revisionary evolution is because women authors have repeatedly done what they were not supposed to do by revising and reclaiming these myths to instead celebrate female curiosity and ambition. Simply put, there is no evolutionary history of the Eden and Bluebeard myths without women writers who are determined to liberate these tales from misogynistic identification. Indeed, there is no Bluebeard tale without feminist revisionism.

Feminist Revisionism

The popular definition of the literary act of revising is to see something anew. The lexical structure of the word “revise” makes this definition literal, leading to many popularly quoted explanations of revision. For example, Adrienne Rich writes that revision is “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction” (35). Perspective, then, is key. And perspective, in literary terms, is determined primarily by the identity, background, and experience of the one speaking. A work of revisionism is simply one that gives voice to a different perspective on a story, typically a perspective that has not been heard before.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar begin *The Madwoman in the Attic* by discussing the perspective that dominates the literary world: that of men. They reference Edward Said’s observation that even the word for a writer, the “author,” is the same word in which “writer, deity, and *pater familias* are identified” (4). They note that the supposedly masculine identity of a writer is ubiquitous not only in our vocabulary but also in our understanding of the act of writing. They write, “[T]he patriarchal notion that the writer ‘fathers’ his text just as God fathered the world is and has been all-pervasive in Western

literary civilization” (4). By this notion, the male writer as father not only attempts to preside over women but also works to align himself as a deity, marking himself as god or creator of femininity. Gilbert and Gubar explain, “Like the metaphor of literary paternity itself, this corollary notion that the chief creature man has generated is woman has a long and complex history. From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward, after all, patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from, and for men” (12). In such a tradition, woman is not only made from man’s rib, but also from his frontal cortex.

Gilbert and Gubar note that these early and longstanding ideals that the writer is a role designated primarily for men are emphasized by “the coercive power not only of cultural constraints but of the literary texts which incarnate them” (11). Throughout history, men have exercised an undue influence over both what is said about literature and what is said in literature. Since, according to this masculinist literary tradition, men are the creators of both woman and the stories about her, “before women can even attempt the pen which is so rigorously kept from them they must escape just those male texts which ... deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them and kept them from attempting the pen” (13). Women, then, are not only prohibited from the act of creation through writing but, because they themselves are man’s creation, to begin writing they must overcome a foe on the level of a mythic deity.

It comes as no surprise, then, that discussions of revisionism often occur alongside discussions of feminism. Paraphrasing H  l  ne Cixous, Alicia Ostriker suggests the woman writer is not only working against a male-dominated hierarchy whenever she writes but the words she is given to write with also enforce such a hierarchy: “The language we speak and write has been an encoding of male privilege” (69). Ostriker

provides as examples some traditional literary images for the female body: flower, water, and earth. She observes that traditional male literature has associated the flower with frailty, water with death, and the earth with passive generativeness. She writes, however, that many feminist poets practice “retaining the gender identification of these images but transforming their attributes” (71). The transformation that takes place is one where the flower now connotes power, water connotes safety, and the earth connotes creative imagination. The feminist poets she discusses invert these traditional male images of woman, images that support the notion that “the true *woman* signifies submission” (69). In doing so, they liberate, reclaim, or revise such images associated with women, transforming them into celebrations of women and female power.

These reworkings of the images of the flower, water, and the earth represent what Ostriker dubs feminist revisionism. Ostriker focuses her application of feminist revisionism on the genre of the myth in particular. She writes, “[T]he core of revisionist mythmaking for women poets lies in the challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth” (73). In practice, a writer “simultaneously deconstructs a prior ‘myth’ or ‘story’ and constructs a new one which includes, instead of excluding, herself” (72). Ostriker emphasizes that in literary works of feminist revisionist mythmaking, “the old stories are changed, changed utterly, by female knowledge of female experience, so that they can no longer stand as foundations of collective male fantasy” (73). In the practice of feminist revisionist mythmaking, then, women writers are not only subverting masculinist and misogynist literature, but they are at the same time creating feminist literature. Ultimately she claims, “[T]hey are corrections; they are representations of what women find divine and demonic in themselves; they are retrieved

images of what women have collectively and historically suffered; in some cases they are instructions for survival” (73). Ostriker believes, then, that feminist revisionist mythmaking is not only a significant and noteworthy subset of feminism but also a vitally important one. This is perhaps no truer than in the feminist revisionism of the Bluebeard tale, a fairy tale about a woman who does what is forbidden in order to survive.

The history of the feminist and misogynist revision of the Bluebeard fairy tale spans more than five centuries: from the earliest mentions of the old wives’ tale around the turn of the seventeenth century, to Perrault’s misogynistic revision into the now canonical “Bluebeard” in the seventeenth century, to Brontë’s feminist Christian revision in nineteenth century, to the proliferation of feminist revisions in the twentieth century from writers like Valenzuela and Winterson. However, since the specific focus of this thesis is the revisionist history of the Bluebeard tale as it intersects with the revisionist history of the Eden myth, we must look back even further. Before discussing the feminist revision of the Bluebeard tale, it is important to first examine the earliest and most culturally significant versions of the Eden myth in order to establish an understanding of what one means when they refer to “the Eden myth.” An examination of the *Book of J*, the King James Bible, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is paramount to understanding how the origins of the myth and the cultural direction of its revisions inform our reading of the Eden myth as it evolves into and alongside the Bluebeard tale.

Defining the Eden Myth

In the West, the Eden myth is best known for its place at the beginning of the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. The Bible is, of course, not an original text, but rather a

compilation of ancient documents, including, among others, the Greek Septuagint (c. 3rd century BCE). The Septuagint was not an original document either, but was translated to Greek from several Hebrew texts, including the Book of the Yahwist, which is commonly referred to as the *Book of J*. The *Book of J* accounts for most of the Biblical book of Genesis (from 2.5 onward), as well as significant portions of Exodus and Numbers (Bloom 9). The *Book of J* might have been written in either the tenth or the sixth century BCE, but it nevertheless contains the earliest known written version of the Eden myth: the narrative that chronicles the creation of man and woman, their temptation by the serpent, and their exile from the Garden of Eden (Bloom 5; Levin 230). Though the *Book of J* is the earliest version of the Eden myth, it is not solely significant. When it comes to defining the Eden myth for the purposes of this study, I argue one must examine not just one text, but three: the *Book of J*, the King James Bible (KJV), and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Each of these three texts bears some characteristic that might be used to define it as containing the "original" Eden myth, at least as we understand the myth today: the *Book of J* contains the earliest written version, the KJV contains the most-read version, and *Paradise Lost* contains a version that most closely resembles popular cultural and religious interpretations and teachings of the myth. By understanding each of these texts and the relationship between them, one might construct an understanding of the "original" Eden myth that future revisers have built upon.

As the ancestor of both the KJV and *Paradise Lost*, the *Book of J* is significant not just for the fact that it is likely the origin of the Eden myth but also because of how it was written and who might have written it. Harold Bloom proposes that the author "was no theologian and rather deliberately not a historian" (13). Instead, Bloom, in analyzing

the literary elements of the book, compares the author of the *Book of J* to figures like Homer or William Shakespeare, writers who created great stories, characters, and myths, rather than a philosopher, prophet, or priest who set out to create a religion. Bloom claims that the greatest irony of the *Book of J* is that the author “was not a religious writer,” despite the text now serving as a foundation for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (31). Instead, by examining the ways the author constructs their characters and plot, Bloom argues the *Book of J* was written as an epic and not intended to be a religious text.

In easily the most ambitious element of his work on the *Book of J*, Bloom argues that its author was a woman. Bloom acknowledges that “[w]e simply do not know whether J was a man or a woman,” arguing that the assumption the author was a woman is just as reasonable as the assumption that they were a man (10). He rationalizes this assumption by emphasizing the author’s apparent affinity for their female characters. Bloom argues that the *Book of J* has “no heroes, only heroines” and that of the characters in the book, the “women are more clearly heroic, and certainly more vitalistic. They are also craftier than the men” (32, 311). For example, Bloom argues that the Yahwist’s depiction of female characters like Sarai, Rachel, and Tamar are “wholly admirable” and “vivid” while male characters like “Abram, Jacob, and Moses,” characters who in the Christian tradition have typically received far more attention than their female counterparts, “receive a remarkably mixed treatment” (32). To Bloom, the *Book of J* consistently favors its female characters, granting them power and agency. Bloom makes clear, however, that such a perspective did not carry over to the Christian Bible. Bloom’s suggestion that such a foundational text was written by a woman could have vast implications; however, John Phillips objects to such a feminist interpretation of the Eden

myth. Significantly, Phillips points out that it is not the *Book of J* but the King James Bible that contains the most culturally significant version of the Eden myth and holds an unparalleled position of infallibility among its most faithful readers, a point that Bloom also acknowledges: “[T]he Hebrew Bible ... is more important in its revised form as the Old Testament than it can now be as itself” (11-12).

Interestingly, the King James Bible does not have the same tendency as the *Book of J* to favor its female characters but instead participates in or otherwise reflects a practice of revisionism that removes women from the more central position they held in many stories as they appeared in the *Book of J*. Determining how the King James Bible revises the *Book of J* is complicated by the fact that it has no single author. The text was translated and compiled by approximately forty-seven male members of the Church of England, commissioned and approved by King James I. Though the KJV is but one of many revisions of the Hebrew Bible, and thus of the *Book of J*, the cultural significance it holds throughout the world, and indeed throughout every text examined in this thesis, is of utmost significance. One concentrated example of the apparent masculinist revisionism that takes place, however, can be found in the way the *Book of J* depicts Eve’s giving birth to Cain versus its representation in the KJV. In David Rosenberg’s translation of the *Book of J*, Cain’s birth is written thus:

Now the man knew Hava (Eve), his wife, in the flesh; she conceived Cain: “I have created a man as Yahweh has,” she said when he was born. (65)

Compare this with the KJV’s revision:

And Adam knew Eve, his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. (Gen. 4.1)

The KJV's revision eliminates Eve's observation that she too possesses God's power to create life; indeed, such a statement might be viewed as blasphemous in many sects of Christianity. Cain's birth, originally characterized as Eve's creation in the *Book of J*, is revised in the KJV to be a gift from God and thus his creation. As is the case here, it is the general tendency for revisions of the Eden myth, and other stories originated in the *Book of J*, to gradually remove women from a central position and replace her with male figures, in this case God. This pattern is particularly apparent in Milton's revision of the Eden myth in *Paradise Lost*—the third text that holds a significant position in the tradition of the Eden myth.

Milton published *Paradise Lost* in 1667 and was most likely constructing his version of the Eden myth upon the version found in the KJV. Milton is unquestionably liberal in his revision of the Eden myth, transforming the short prose of Genesis 2 and 3 into twelve books of epic poetry. In his revision, Milton continues the pattern of displacing or removing Eve's central and heroic role in his narrative, instead granting her primary blame for the fall, or otherwise removing her entirely. For example, in Milton's brief depiction of Cain and Abel in the vision that the archangel Michael shows to Adam, Eve is removed from the narrative entirely, and Michael simply refers to Cain and Abel as "brethren, Adam, and to come / Out of thy loins" (11.454-5). Not only is Eve removed from the act of creating her sons, but the one who replaces her is not God but rather Adam, who is described as the sole birther of Cain and Abel. This continues the pattern of women in positions of power being replaced by men, as it is no longer Eve nor even the male God who is credited for creating Cain but the man Adam. This is one of the tamer masculinist revisions Milton performs in *Paradise Lost*, while his other more

liberal revisions—like that of the prelapsarian relationship between Adam and Eve—have prompted feminist critics like Deborah W. Rooke to call *Paradise Lost* a “manifesto for women’s subordination” (161).

While it might be convenient to blame Milton alone for such masculinist revisions, it is worth noting that Milton’s implicit and explicit commentaries on women and marriage in *Paradise Lost* reflect both the society he lived in as well as the then culturally dominant take on the Eden myth. Bloom suggests that “no one in the West can now hope to read the Bible without having been conditioned by it, or by the various misreadings it has engendered” (15). These “various misreadings” are significant, as they represent significant revisions of the Bible that hold a status of canonicity that must be acknowledged in any study of the Eden myth. Without question, the most significant of these is *Paradise Lost*. Rooke argues that Milton’s work “accords so much with the patriarchal worldview that has been both shaped and supported by Christianity over the centuries, that the world-view and the Genesis narrative are viewed as reinforcing each other” (161). Milton’s work is significant because it is a textual reflection of the ways people understand the Eden myth and thus the ways that the myth has become ingrained in many cultures, particularly Christian ones. While it is tempting to turn to the *Book of J* or the KJV since they are older versions of the myth, Milton’s revision is important because it reflects how much of Western literature and religion has understood, or perhaps misunderstood, the Eden myth. Phillips argues that “examining the history of the misinterpretation of Eve is more important” than simply studying how she appears in the earliest or “original” versions of the Eden myth (xiv). While the Eve and the Eden of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* might differ from the Eve and Eden of the *Book of J* and the KJV,

since the “misreading” of them that Milton’s text reflects was and is so prevalent, “it is more important to set the Eve of Western religion in her place as a part of the history of an idea than to rescue the real Eve from the misreading of her story” (Phillips xiv).

Milton’s version differs drastically from the two that came before it, but since it reflects such a widely popular understanding of the myth, it too holds a status of “originality” in future conceptions of the Eden myth.

It is for these reasons that an examination of all three of these versions of the Eden myth is an important groundwork of this study; each of them is in a sense the “original” Eden myth that so many future revisers have built upon. The *Book of J* is the earliest written version of the Eden myth that we have available and is thus our best guess at what might be the true origin of the myth—the ancestor that all others have directly or indirectly revised; the KJV is the most prominent and easily the most read version of the Eden myth; and the Eden myth has been intentionally and unintentionally interpreted and applied in ways that vary from both the *Book of J* and the KJV and in ways that are best represented in print by *Paradise Lost*. Each of these versions of the Eden myth possesses such a degree of originality and cultural significance that to disregard any of them as foundational texts for later revisions of the Eden myth would be to study an incomplete picture. For the purposes of this study, it is vital to acknowledge that no version of a myth, especially of the Eden myth, is more authoritative than another. Instead of valuing one version of the myth over the others, I compare these texts in order to characterize the direction of the evolution of this myth, a direction that has for centuries privileged men, promoted misogyny, and rationalized the subordination of women.

Gender and Its Revision in the “Original” Eden Myth

Defining or even generalizing the Eden myth as it is represented in the *Book of J*, the KJV, and *Paradise Lost* is an endlessly complex process. In order to contextualize my discussion of the Eden myth with the fairy tale Bluebeard throughout the rest of this thesis, then, my interest is narrowed to Eve and how she and her relationship with Adam evolve across these three foundational versions of the Eden myth. There are three specific elements I focus on. The first concerns the differences between Eve’s sin(s) and Adam’s sin(s) in each of the three texts; the second concerns how each of the three texts characterizes Eve and Adam’s prelapsarian versus postlapsarian union; and the third concerns Adam’s physical location during the temptation scene in each text, as this most drastic revision emphasizes the effects of the previous two elements. By examining these three aspects of the Eden myth, I characterize the evolutionary tendency of revisions of the Eden myth from the *Book of J* to the KJV to *Paradise Lost* to provide a foundational understanding of the “original” Eden myth. That tendency is to gradually remove Adam from blame in the initial act of eating the forbidden fruit and to characterize the man and the woman’s prelapsarian relationship as unequal, where the woman served the man according to God’s original design.

The first point of the Eden myth I examine in order to understand the woman and the man is the climactic act of sinning. In the Eden myth, the sin committed is famously to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, an act strictly forbidden by Yahweh or God. A close reading of these three versions of the Eden myth, however, reveals that there are more sins committed than just Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit. Significantly, there is a difference between the sins that the woman commits and the

sins that the man commits. In each of the three versions of the myth, there are two places to look for the sin committed: the narrative depiction of the sin itself and Yahweh or God's summary of that sin when stating his curse against Adam and Eve.

The *Book of J* and the KJV describe the sins of the man and the woman with only slight variation. In the *Book of J*, the narrative action of the "first sin" is condensed into a single sentence: "To its fruit she reached; ate, gave to her man, there with her, and he ate" (63). Here, the act of sinning is synonymous with eating the fruit. Later, when he is preparing to state his curses upon the man and the woman, Yahweh does not summarize the woman's sin nor mention a second sin, so she is guilty only of the sin of eating the fruit. The man is guilty of this sin as well; however, he is also guilty of a second sin. When Yahweh states his curse upon the man, he notes: "You bent to your woman's voice, eager to eat," making clear that the man's obedience to his wife in place of his obedience to God was a sin of equal offense (64). The KJV is nearly identical to the *Book of J* in this regard but further emphasizes the man's sin in obeying the woman before God. In the narrative action, their sins are stated thus: "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3.6). When God is summarizing sins to justify his curse upon the woman and man, he does not bother stating what the woman's sin is, but just as in the *Book of J*, he does explain what the man's sins are: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree ..." (Gen. 3.14). The inclusion of the word "because" may provide an extra emphasis on this first sin that the *Book of J* does not seem to carry. Nevertheless, the sins in the *Book of J* and the KJV are largely the same: the woman sins once by eating the fruit, and the man sins twice by obeying the woman before God and by eating the fruit.

Paradise Lost greatly revises the sins of the man and the woman. In the narrative, Eve's first sin is still to eat the fruit, but a second sin is attributed to her that is not present in the *Book of J* or the KJV (9.780-84). *Paradise Lost* revises the line from Genesis which states that Eve "gave also unto her husband with her" into several pages (3.6). Where in the *Book of J* and Genesis the woman's act of giving her husband the fruit is depicted as communal, Milton's revision makes that action a premeditated one. After Eve eats the fruit, she recognizes nearly instantly that she sinned and knows what the consequences of her actions will be:

But what if God have seen,
 And death ensue? then I shall be no more,
 And Adam wedded to another Eve,
 Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
 A death to think. Confirmed then I resolve,
 Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe. (9.826-32)

Here Milton reframes Eve's action of giving Adam the forbidden fruit as an intentional ploy to have him fall with her. Driven by her jealousy of other women who don't yet exist, Eve fears being alone and that Adam will wed "another Eve," so she chooses to drive him to fall in sin with her. This design can be framed, then, as a sort of temptation, making Eve, not the serpent, the temptress who causes the fall of the man, a framing that the language of the text confirms. When Eve places the fruit in Adam's hand, Adam hesitates because it goes "against his better knowledge," but ultimately he does eat because he is "fondly overcome with female charm" (9.995-99). When Adam and Eve confess to God, God asks of Adam, "Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey,"

providing a damning interpretation of Adam's second sin from the *Book of J* and the KJV (10.145). Milton places so much emphasis on the second sin of Adam that one might forget Adam ate the forbidden fruit at all. In Milton's revision, it is clear that Adam's greater sin is his obedience to Eve, of whom Adam makes a god and whom the text revises into a sinister temptress who intentionally causes Adam's fall.

This difference in the sins committed by the man and the woman is perhaps the reason versions of the Eden myth depict the man and the woman's union differently. Indeed, in some versions of the Eden myth, their union takes a different shape before and after they eat the forbidden fruit. In the *Book of J* and the KJV, Yahweh's and God's curse upon the woman clearly marks a change in her relationship with the man. In the *Book of J*, this part of her curse reads, "To your man's body your belly will rise, for he will be eager above you" (64). While Rosenberg's translation to the word "eager" may complicate an understanding of her curse, a hierarchy between the woman and the man is nevertheless established in this curse that was not present previously in the myth, one that places him "above" her. The KJV's version makes more apparent the woman's curse of being reduced to a lower hierarchical position in relation to man henceforth: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3.16). While this is by all means a revision of the *Book of J* that seems to emphasize and potentially increase the power the man is granted over the woman here, it is nevertheless consistent with the *Book of J* in that part of the woman's curse states her position will henceforth be below that of the man.

At the same time that the KJV makes clearer the difference in the man and the woman's postlapsarian relationship, it also suggests their prelapsarian relationship was

similarly unequal, unlike the *Book of J* which depicts them as equal companions in the garden before the fall. For example, in the KJV, when God decides to create the woman, he states: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2.18). The word “help meet” is used again in the next verse and is the best description of the woman’s role in prelapsarian Eden. Phyllis Tribble has taken issue with the KJV’s translation to “help meet,” however. The term “help meet,” sometimes translated as “helper,” comes from the Hebrew word “ezer” in earlier versions like the *Book of J*. Such a translation, Tribble suggests, “is totally misleading because the English word *helper* (or help-meet) suggests an assistant, a subordinate, indeed, an inferior, while the Hebrew word ‘ezer’ carries no such connotation” (90). Instead, Tribble suggests, “ezer” translates better to the word “companion.” Tribble argues that this characterization, as well as how their relationship is depicted elsewhere in Genesis, suggests that Adam and Eve were equals. For example, Rosenberg’s translation of the *Book of J* reads thus: “‘It is no good the man be alone,’ said Yahweh. ‘I will make a partner to stand beside him’” (62). Rosenberg’s translation uses the words “partner” and someone to “stand beside him” one other time in the text, characterizing the relationship between the man and the woman as equals. Tribble and Barbara Deutschman both prefer this sort of translation in pre-King James Versions of the Eden myth, one that depicts the two as equals rather than depicting the woman as someone who is there to help or to serve the man. The KJV, then, differs significantly from the *Book of J* in how it depicts the man and woman’s union, suggesting that the woman was second to man even before the fall, a sort of helper to his primary agency.

Paradise Lost, of course, revises this relationship even further. Milton borrows some of the KJV's language, as God refers to Eve as Adam's "fit help" (8.450). In *Paradise Lost*, the fact that Eve, as a helper, is lesser than Adam is made clear. Shortly after Eve's creation, Adam reflects on Eve, stating,

For well I understand in the prime end
Of Nature her th' inferior, in the mind
And inward faculties, which most excel,
In outward also her resembling less
[God's] image. (8.540-44)

This observation that Eve is "inferior, in the mind" is made evident as the plot plays out. When Eve comes to Adam after eating the fruit, Adam suggests that had he been with Eve when she was tempted, he might have stopped her (9.1134-39). While Eve argues against this, saying Adam would have also been tempted by the serpent, the reader is more inclined to believe Adam here considering God has established him over Eve and at this moment, it is Eve, not Adam, who has sinned (9.1148-50). Some critics, like Diane Kelsey McColley, have argued that Milton's Eve possesses an intelligence and agency evidenced by moments like these or by her rationale in suggesting she and Adam split up to get more work done in the Garden (17). Whether Eve possesses this sort of intelligence and whether Adam simply does not recognize it is less important than the fact that there is a clear hierarchical gender construction in Milton's version of prelapsarian Eden. Christopher Hill argues that Milton "thought that the subordination [of women] antedated the Fall of Man," a position made clear by the picture of Eden he paints in *Paradise Lost* (118).

To Milton, as evidenced in *Paradise Lost*, the woman's subordination and obedience to the man was part of God's original design for marriage, made apparent by the line "[h]e for God only, she for God in him" (4.299). According to the *Book of J* and elements of the KJV, this line would accurately characterize the relationship between the man and woman only after the fall. However, Milton writes this line of a prelapsarian Adam and Eve, claiming that the woman's subordination to the man, in matters of obedience and faith, was God's original design for marriage. As a result, when *Paradise Lost* reiterates the text of the KJV, stating that part of God's curse upon the woman is "to thy husband's will / Thine shall submit, he over thee shall rule," it is less a curse, and more a redundant description of what she already endures (10.195-6). Whereas the KJV quietly suggests Adam and Eve were unequal even before the fall—a subtle tone that allows for some feminist Christians like Brontë to ignore this suggestion—*Paradise Lost* explicitly states that at no point were the man and the woman equals. Milton's revision of the man and the woman's prelapsarian relationship has had immense cultural impact and is a matter many feminist authors, like Brontë, have taken issue with.

While the passages examined so far present a debate as to whether the man and the woman were equals in prelapsarian Eden, it is worth noting that the circumstances of the woman's creation almost certainly suggest that in every version of the Eden myth, each author's intention was to depict men as superior to women. Bloom argues that the woman is Yahweh's finer creation because she was made after and made less crudely than the man was, but Phillips makes clear that such a reading is rather optimistic (Bloom 180; Phillips 33). Phillips also notes that Eve's creation from Adam's rib is actually the second reference to the woman's creation in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1 (which

does not come from the *Book of J*), God is said to create “male and female” “in the image of God” on the sixth day, leading to confusion as to whether the woman was created after or at the same time as the man (1.27). Tribble reads this passage as evidence of the man and the woman’s equity as they are both equally created in God’s image, an opinion apparently shared by many feminist authors, including Brontë (18-19). Phillips explains, however, that theologians and scholars have largely avoided the contradiction of the woman’s two creation scenes by simply ignoring the first one, instead favoring the second account where she is created after and from the man. He explains that “Christian theology has always accepted the second of the creation stories more comfortably” because if the woman is created after the man, “she is somewhat less perfect and belongs to the realm over which [the man] exercises lordship” (27, 30).

The derivative nature of the woman’s creation (by God and from man) is only confirmed by the man’s subsequent act of naming the woman, one element of the Eden myth that is consistent across every revision. In the *Book of J*, the KJV, and *Paradise Lost*, the man names the woman just as he names all the animals, a practice that is difficult to read any other way than as an exercise of the man’s supremacy. Most feminist authors, like Le Guin, have focused on this element of the Eden myth to prove its misogynistic motivations, while Christian feminists like Brontë have struggled to know what to do with it, instead relying on Genesis 1.27 in order to stand by their interpretation of the Eden myth which holds man and woman as equals in the garden. There will always be variation in how the Eden myth is interpreted, but at least when it comes to Adam’s act of naming Eve, Phillips is correct in noting that all versions of the Eden myth “are nonetheless almost unrelievedly misogynist” (29).

Finally, I wish to address the apparent tendency in revisions of the Eden myth to move the man away from the scene of temptation. In the *Book of J*, when the woman is tempted by the serpent, the text states clearly that the man is “there with her,” as does the KJV: “with her” (Rosenberg 63; Gen. 3.6). This prepositional phrase is translated from the Hebrew word “immah,” a word that has been liberally mistranslated in order to remove Adam from the scene, as Milton does in *Paradise Lost*. Julie Faith Parker notes that the first revision of the Eden myth to suggest Adam was not “with her” is Jerome’s *Vulgate* (383). Instead, Jerome translates Genesis 3.6b to “*deditque viro suo qui comedit* (she gave to her husband who ate)” (Parker 736-37). However, both Tribble and Bloom observe that the original Hebrew has the serpent address the woman with plural verb forms, regarding her as the spokesperson for the human couple (Tribble 108-9; Bloom 183). It is impossible to read any of the earliest versions of the Eden myth in a way that does not have Adam and Eve standing side by side during the temptation scene, which is a stark contrast to the arguably more popular version where Eve is alone by the tree when the serpent tempts her.

The tendency of Jerome, Milton, and others to remove Adam from the scene of temptation reveals a desire to put more blame for the fall on Eve and to characterize their relationship as unequal. First, greater distance and time between Eve’s fall and Adam’s fall implies that Adam is less guilty than Eve. Milton frames Adam’s fall not as a desire to eat the forbidden fruit but as a desire to remain with his beloved Eve (9.908-16). Since it was part of God’s design that Adam love Eve, his falling for Eve rather than falling for the sake of disobedience seems a less offensive sin. The second reason is that if the man and woman were standing side by side during the scene of temptation and the woman ate,

there is a further implication that their relationship was equal. As McColley notes, “Since it seems unlikely that Adam would stand idly by and watch Eve fall, writers have devised various accounts of his conduct or explanations of his absence,” as Milton does (140). Reading the *Book of J*, Bloom suggests that the woman and man standing together during the temptation scene also suggests that “she is the active child, the more curious or imaginative, while Adam’s role is that of the child who imitates” (183). If the man truly were the woman’s master, then it makes no sense that he would stand idly by and not intervene as she does what they know to be forbidden. The tendency to move the man away from the scene of temptation, the most liberal narrative revision of the Eden myth, thus works to emphasize the apparently misogynistic intentions of such revisions that wish to place blame for the fall primarily on the woman and to characterize the man and the woman’s prelapsarian relationship as unequal.

I focus on these elements of the Eden myth to emphasize the importance of gender and gendered power dynamics in the origins of the myth. While *Paradise Lost* is without question a far more liberal revision of its precursors than the KJV is of the *Book of J*, the character of the woman and her relationship to the man evolve between each of the three texts. The trajectory of that evolution is one that gradually removes her from positions of power and into positions of subservience, and subservience under the man as much as under God. The fact that the Eden myth is found in the Bible and contains Christianity’s conception of God’s original design for marriage makes this evolution of the myth vastly important as it has served as justification for millennia of religious misogyny. Christian writers like Tertullian have used the image of Eve as the one primarily responsible for the fall of humankind as their basis for misogynistic teachings,

teachings that endure centuries after their writing and influence later writers, including Perrault. Since that image is based on revisions of the Eden myth, it is important to recognize that even the plot of the Eden myth has varying forms and that applications of the myth are vast.

Throughout the rest of this thesis, I examine the evolution of revisions of the Eden myth as it is revised into and alongside the Bluebeard fairy tale. In these revisions, the central themes of gender and the religiously justified subordination of women are variously inflated, condemned, rewritten, and manipulated to revise the Eden myth to match the agendas of those authors that handle it. I reiterate that for all practical purposes there is no single “original” version of the Eden myth that these future authors revise. Indeed, in most cases, we cannot be sure which of the three texts various authors work from when constructing their Edenic scenes, or if they simply recall a version of the Eden myth that had been told to them in church or as a bedtime story. For example, my analysis of *Jane Eyre* in chapter 2 suggests that Brontë wrote with copies of both *Paradise Lost* and the KJV (or some other version of the Christian Bible) in hand, applying varying aspects of both versions of the Eden myth—the KJV’s version of the man and the woman’s prelapsarian union and *Paradise Lost*’s version of the temptation scene(s) both appear in her novel. This is but one example of why it is important to understand that the Eden myth is not a monolithic text with limited applications. Instead, the Eden myth and its multiple versions can and have been variously applied and revised depending on the motivations of each author that handles it. It is such various applications of the Eden myth, specifically in tandem with the Bluebeard tale, that drives the curiosity behind this study. In the next chapter, I turn to the origins of the Bluebeard

fairy tale: both Perrault's written version and the original oral version which I argue was itself a feminist revision of the Eden myth.

CHAPTER ONE:
COURTING BLUEBEARD'S WIFE: THE ORIGINS OF THE BLUEBEARD TALE
AND PERRAULT'S CANONICAL REVISION

The descendant of the Eden myth that this thesis focuses on is the Bluebeard fairy tale, which was first put to paper by French nobleman Charles Perrault in 1697. Perrault is the sole credited author of “Bluebeard,” which appears in his famous collection, *The Tales of Mother Goose*. Indeed, Perrault is who wrote what one might consider to be half of the most popular European fairy tales today. Along with Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Perrault’s name is synonymous with the fairy tale. And yet, fairy tale scholar Marina Warner writes that “the ultimate origin, in time and place, of a fairy tale can never really be pinned down,” while Maria Tatar is a bit more blunt: “When it comes to folktales, there is no authoritative, original version” (Warner, *Beast* 16; Tatar 15). The issue, of course, is that these tales, from Bluebeard to Sleeping Beauty, began and for many years existed only in an oral tradition. But because of the canonicity of Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” the oral versions of these tales have been lost to literary history.

This chapter investigates the origins of the Bluebeard fairy tale—both Perrault’s canonical written version as well as the oral tale that he revised. I argue that in his revision, Perrault not only appropriated the story from the women who created it, subsequently erasing their names from history, but also imbued the tale with a misogynistic Christian perspective that the oral tale did not have. While it’s impossible to know exactly what the oral tale looked like, an investigation into its descendants, its most prominent images, and Perrault’s motivations in revising reveals that the oral tale can be

considered a revision of the Eden myth, one that carries a feminist moral the Eden myth did not have and that Perrault tried hard to write away.

The Origins of the Bluebeard Tale

The Bluebeard tale existed in different forms for at least a century before Perrault wrote his version in 1697. Sidney Hartland writes that Perrault's "Bluebeard" "is probably not an early development of the myth: indeed, reasons are not wanting for supposing that it may be one of the latest" (194). Heta Pyrhönen explains that "[t]he textual identity of the [Bluebeard] tale cycle is a complex matter. Typically for fairy tales, there is no single authoritative version but a shifting constellation of stories gathered under this label," and Casie E. Hermansson writes that "the bluebeard fairy tale is a nexus of variants related by themes: curiosity, forbidden chambers, punishment, wife murder" (Pyrhönen 5; Hermansson 3). Indeed, Perrault's "Bluebeard" belongs to a tradition of fairy tales that includes Bluebeard, Fitcher's Bird, The Robber Bridegroom, and Mr. Fox, among others. Each of these tales follows a similar plot, each of them features the duo archetypes of the murderous husband and the curious wife who discovers his crimes, and each of them includes symbolic objects equivalent to the forbidden chamber and the bloody key. Mr. Fox is the earliest known version of the tale, as it is referenced in both Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in 1590 and William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1600. In the latter, it is referred to as "the old story," suggesting that by 1600 the tale had already been around for some time (Hermansson xi). There is no doubt, then, that Mr. Fox, some other variant, or perhaps even Bluebeard itself, existed well before Perrault was born in 1628.

Warner explains where the tale likely originated: among nursemaids and other women who are popularly referred to as “old wives.” In fact, practically all European fairy tales have this origin. Warner tells us that “the predominant pattern reveals older women of a lower status handing on the material to younger people, who include boys, sometimes, if not often, of higher position and expectations, like future ethnographers and writers of tales” (17). What we see, then, in the case of most great fairy tales are female nurses of a socioeconomically lower class telling the tales to boys of a higher class (like Charles, Jacob, or Wilhelm). Those boys then grow into men, aristocrats, and authors who write down those same stories and have their legacies born.

In the case of many of these fairy tales, Perrault’s and the Grimms’ work of appropriation is historically significant as the tales themselves likely would have never achieved canonical status had they not been appropriated. In their original form in the oral tradition, fairy tales were commonly referred to as “old wives’ tales,” a derogatory term. Warner writes that the term “is still, in English, an ambiguous phrase: an old wives’ tale means a piece of nonsense, a tissue of error, an ancient act of deception, of self and others, idle talk” (19). The term has consistently negative, and thereby misogynistic, connotations and has since its origin, which resulted in seventeenth-century literary critics viewing fairy tales as uncivilized or unsophisticated (Warner 18). Warner notes that the earliest recorded use of the phrase was George Peele’s 1590 play *The Old Wives’ Tale*, featuring a protagonist who is “fair of face but evil-tongued” (12). In *Dr. Faustus* (1604), Christopher Marlowe equates old wives’ tales with trifles and, in the King James Bible, St. Paul warns Timothy to “refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (Warner 19; 1 Tim. 4.7). The old wives’ tale was

considered “the lot of ignorant folk and women,” seen to have no use or value and equated with uselessness, lies, and corruption (Warner 19).

The aristocrat that he was, Perrault was by all means taking a risk by writing and publishing a collection of tales whose very genre had become a figure of speech for immoral talk. Additionally, Perrault’s longtime adversary, the poet Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, was critical of nearly everything Perrault did, particularly of Perrault’s affinity for prose over poetry, which was at the time considered a lesser literary form (Barchilon and Flinders 82-83). Perrault’s decision to publish a collection of old wives’ tales written in prose was sure to receive thorough criticism from Boileau, as well as countless other contemporary critics. As a result, Jacques Barchilon and Peter Flinders explain that “Perrault took all possible precautions to ensure that the real author could deny he ever wrote the book” (83-84). Perrault elected to publish the book under the pseudonym “Mother Goose” “in order to stress the pristine source of the tales, in the nursery, among women and children, far from the sophisticated regulations and constraints of the formal academician’s rhetoric” (Warner, *Brides* 122). Like Horace Walpole pioneering the Gothic novel, Perrault attempted to avoid authorial responsibility for *Mother Goose* to save face in case the work was poorly received.

Ultimately, of course, the work was celebrated, and Perrault claimed authorship. And though he is frequently quoted as attributing the tales to the nurses and “old wives” from whom he first heard them, the fact remains that no biography nor autobiography of Perrault mentions the names of any of Perrault’s nurses and neither do any contemporary scholars of Perrault’s work (Warner 18). Warner writes that, when it comes to the fairy tale, “their female origin was not really contested” (19). And yet, in an 1892 collection

housing Robert Samber's original 1729 English translation of Perrault's tales, William H. Whitmore writes, "Perrault was the true founder of the art of telling fairy stories ... his name was a household word in thousands of nurseries" (76). Whitmore is careful not to claim that Perrault was the creator of the tales, merely that he was the "founder" of "telling" them. His implication of Perrault's authorial role, however, seems clear enough, an idea corroborated by his accurate claim that Perrault's name was and still is the one recognized in nurseries around the world.

In writing the Bluebeard tale down as what is now the canonized fairy tale "Bluebeard," Perrault did more than simply record the story as he heard it from his childhood nurse. Perrault believed himself to be a defender of women—particularly when it helped him in his feud with Boileau—and would have likely argued that he remained faithful to the feminist spirit of the tale (Barchilon and Flinders 55). Warner writes that Perrault consistently "presented himself as a mere conduit of past wisdom" ("Brides" 122). Being the master of precision he was, however, Perrault's words when doing so were always carefully selected. He wrote in the *Parallèle* (1688-1697):

These kinds of fables . . . have a way of delighting all sorts of people, the greatest of minds as well as those of the lower classes, the older men and women as well as children: these wonderful fictions, when they are artistically handled, entertain and put to sleep the powers of reason, even though they may be contradictory to it, and they can charm this reasoning mind far more than the most true-to-life works of art. (qtd. in Barchilon and Flinders 82)

Perrault stresses not only the appeal and impact of the stories but also includes a significant and damning qualification to his claim: "when they are artistically handled."

By qualifying his statement so, Perrault implies his imperative role in the fairy tales' becoming literature. It is clear Perrault thought his was the artistic hand that transformed the "wonderful fictions" from the lowly old wives' tales they were into salient and now canonical literature.

That Perrault thought he was the one who elevated these old wives' tales into literature is consistent with the masculinist literary tradition that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar critique. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar discuss the notion of literary paternity—the belief that an author "fathers" his text. As a father, the author is a "progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (6). This "pen," Gilbert and Gubar write, "has been defined as not just accidentally but essentially a male 'tool,' and therefore not only inappropriate but actually alien to women" (8). This masculinist belief held not only that women were incapable of creating literature through the written word but also that, by wielding the pen, men take full ownership of the texts they create: "Because a writer 'fathers' his text, his literary creations ... are his possession, his property. Having defined them in language and thus generated them, he owns them, controls them, and encloses them on the printed page" (12). In such a masculinist literary tradition, then, not only are the words of men privileged over women since women are incapable of possessing the phallic pen but the same gendered theory is also used to grant priority to the written word over the orally exchanged one.

The "artistic handling" Perrault exercised in writing down the fairy tales originated by women was little more than the act of wielding the phallic pen, thus taking ownership of the tales as the "father" of their textual version. As a result, the names of

the women who originated the tale in the oral tradition are excluded from a masculinist literary history so that “Perrault” is the sole name recognized and celebrated for “Bluebeard” and the *Tales of Mother Goose*. Sigmund Freud wrote that “[t]he distortion of a text is not unlike a murder. The difficulty lies not in the execution of the deed but in the doing away with the traces” (64). In the case of “Bluebeard,” Perrault’s revision of the old wives’ tale was an effective distortion and an authorial murder. The traces that Perrault and masculinist history have done away with are the names of the women who created the earliest versions of Bluebeard. As a result, the true authors of the Bluebeard tale will never be known.

Perrault’s Misogynistic Revision

The line between revision and appropriation is one that is easily blurred if only because appropriation is itself an act of revision. Since discussions of revisionism are most often tied to feminism or postcolonialism, most existing definitions we have of revisionism typically view it as an act of righteous liberation. To “view something anew” implies that perspective has never been given before. What it doesn’t account for, however, is that a revision may come from a familiar perspective; in this case, a masculine one. In the case of the Bluebeard tale, the oral version belonged to a unique genre which the masculinist perspective did not dominate: the “old wives’ tale.” And since we know Perrault believed himself to have elevated these stories from their lowly female origins, a belief driven by the masculine tradition he occupied, it is a safe assumption that the same masculine tradition impacted the direction of his pen as he wrote Bluebeard onto paper, thus revising it into the version we have today.

That version, Perrault's version, centers around a young woman who is nameless apart from her title as Bluebeard's wife. Soon after they marry, Bluebeard leaves the castle in which they live; before he leaves, however, he presents his wife with a key to a forbidden chamber, telling her she may go in any room in the house except that one. Overwhelmed with curiosity, Bluebeard's wife immediately ventures into the forbidden chamber and discovers the corpses of Bluebeard's previous wives inside. In her shock, she drops the key, which becomes stained with blood that won't wash off. Bluebeard then returns to the castle and demands the key. Seeing the bloodstains that prove his wife has disobeyed, Bluebeard grants her a few minutes to say her prayers before he will murder her. But instead of praying, Bluebeard's wife calls out to her sister, Anne, to go to the top of the castle to see if anyone is coming. Anne sees their two brothers, who then storm into the castle and slay Bluebeard, saving their sister's life. Bluebeard's wife inherits Bluebeard's wealth, part of which she gives to her siblings, and uses the rest to remarry.

Though we can't know the precise content of the original oral version of the Bluebeard tale, there is evidence that Perrault made two significant revisions in his version. The first revision is the addition of two morals to the end of the tale: one a general condemnation of female curiosity and the other a clarification that men like Bluebeard no longer exist. The second revision is the eponymous blue beard (Barchilon and Flinders 93; Ruddick 346). By considering these additions, the intrinsic anomalies of the tale, and Perrault's opinion of women as influenced by his misogynistic application of Christianity, I argue that Perrault's "Bluebeard" revises the old wives' tale in a way that exonerates men, despite featuring a villainously murderous man, and condemns women and their curiosity, despite featuring a heroically curious woman.

A first-time reader of Perrault's "Bluebeard" is often struck with the contradictory hermeneutical duplicity of the tale. The plot and its protagonist seem to be at war with the antagonist, the narrator, and Perrault himself. As a story about a young woman who disobeys her husband and follows her natural curiosity to discover he is a serial murderer, then exposes his crime, makes him pay, inherits his wealth, and remarries, it's easy to initially interpret "Bluebeard" as a tale that celebrates women's agency and curiosity. But then Perrault appends to the tale two morals that argue just the opposite, calling curiosity a "mortal bane" (86). Warner observes that "[o]ne of the many peculiar aspects of the familiar story of 'Bluebeard' is that the narrative concentrates on [Bluebeard's wife's] act of disobedience, not on Bluebeard's mass murders" (243). And Tatar notes that, through his narrator, "Perrault devotes a good deal of space to judgmental asides about the envy, greed, curiosity, and disobedience of Bluebeard's wife and her intimates, but he remains diffident about framing any sort of indictment of the man who has cut the throats of his wives" (20). As one reads "Bluebeard," this apparent and blatant contradiction is indeed surprising since the condemnation of curiosity and disobedience over serial murder seems oddly inapposite in every known era and culture throughout history. And yet, "Perrault appears to side with Bluebeard and his strictures," even managing, arguably, to frame Bluebeard's wife as the true villain of the tale (Warner 243).

The morals that Perrault contributed to the Bluebeard myth in no way attempt to disguise Perrault's insistence that the one primarily at fault in "Bluebeard" is not the serial murderer but the curious wife who finds him out. The first moral is an emphatic condemnation of curiosity, stressing not only its immorality and pain but also the futility of its rewards. He names it a "fleeting pleasure," one that "always costs" as it did for Eve

and almost did for Bluebeard's wife (86). The second moral Tatar describes as "less a moral than a disavowal of any lessons transmitted about husbands" (24). In the moral, Perrault writes, "[T]his a story is of long time pass'd, / No husbands now such panic terrors cast" (86). In an infinitely jarring move, Perrault claims that (at least regarding the villain) this is a story of "once upon a time" and therefore, according to Perrault, Bluebeard's murderous tendencies are not representative of contemporary husbands and men. Tatar effectively summarizes Perrault's morals thus: "While the wife's curiosity is seen as a quintessentially feminine trait, Bluebeard's behavior is framed as exceptional, deviating from the norm of masculine behavior" (24). Perrault's framing of the moral applicability of the tale is paradoxical, at once claiming that Bluebeard's wife is a warning for present day women but Bluebeard himself is set too far in the past for him to be a catalyst for readers to learn from. In this way, the phenomena of the man with the blue beard is an appropriately fantastical image as it provides a visual obstacle for any reader attempting to connect the serial murderer with men in the real world.

The blueness of the eponymous character's beard is significant not only in its function as a fantastical element but also for how Perrault employs it as a pathetic device. In the first sentence of the tale, before Bluebeard has courted and married his new wife, Perrault elaborates on and praises Bluebeard's wealth. The second sentence reads: "But this man had the misfortune of having a Blue Beard, which made him so frightfully ugly, that all the women and girls ran away from him" (83). With the character's introduction, Perrault victimizes Bluebeard, thereby encouraging the reader to sympathize with him before Perrault ever reveals his status as a serial murderer. The narrator reveals that people in the land knew of the mysterious disappearance of Bluebeard's "several"

previous wives, and credits in part the girls' hesitation with this knowledge: "And what besides gave them disgust and aversion, was his having already been married to several wives, and no-body ever knew what became of them" (83). However, this information and the attribution of their disgust of Bluebeard to the disappearance of his wives is framed in addition to their repulsion of his strange-colored beard. By prioritizing the color of his beard in this way, Perrault's narrator stresses that it is primarily the blueness of his beard, a natural characteristic that Bluebeard cannot change, that accounts for their repulsion, not his murders. In other words, for the reasons that the people hate Bluebeard at the start of the story, Bluebeard is blameless, despite being guilty of serial murder. By doing so, Perrault encourages the reader to sympathize with Bluebeard while configuring Bluebeard's wife as the antagonist. The blue beard, the most prominent visual contribution Perrault makes to the tale, thus serves a double function of distancing the villain from any readers who wish to associate him with the contemporary husband while also creating sympathy toward him for any readers who might succeed in associating him with seventeenth-century husbands.

By inventing the central image of the blue beard and appending the two morals, Perrault attempts to change the moral of the earlier oral tale. When comparing the distortion of a text to murder, Freud clarifies that distortion "should mean not only 'to change the appearance of,' but also 'to wrench apart,' 'to put in another place'" (64). Perrault's distortion or appropriation of the oral tale was not merely an effort to muffle the feminist voices of seventeenth-century nursemaids but also to repurpose their stories to fit into his masculinist perspective, a perspective that considered feminine curiosity and wifely disobedience to be the greatest of sins.

Though this perspective is blatantly misogynistic, some scholars read Perrault as a “champion of womankind” (Warner 169). Warner, for example, argues that Perrault was “defending women’s tales” by drawing up their oral tradition and that Perrault was “eager to espouse the woman’s cause” (169, 266). These scholars base this view largely upon Perrault’s *L’apologie des femmes* (1694), the English translation of which, *The Vindication of Wives*, has an inappropriately Wollstonecraftian ring to it. *L’apologie des femmes* was written in response to Boileau’s *Satire X* (1694), itself a thoroughly misogynistic text. Barchilon and Flinders note that Boileau was “a notorious misogynist who never had shown any love for women” (54). That Perrault chose to write against Boileau’s misogyny is often cited as the primary reason for Perrault’s purported feminist perspective. However, reading *L’apologie des femmes*, one finds that Perrault’s writings about women “vindicated” them only as far as their singular role as the wives of men prescribed. Anne E. Duggan writes, “Perrault proposes so many means for domesticating women (and all that this implies) in order to make them suitable for marriage and reproduction, and nothing more. Whereas Boileau rejects women altogether in his satire, in his writings Perrault advises men on how they might *manage* women” (213; my emphasis). Perrault’s vindication of women pertained solely to their role as wives and specifically as wives who are obedient to their husbands.

Despite being frequently celebrated as a liberator of women, Perrault might be more accurately described as a disciple of one of history’s most notorious misogynists: Tertullian. Duggan claims that “[m]any critics have taken Perrault’s defense of women, best displayed in *L’apologie des femmes*, at face value” and fail to understand the context of his rivalry with Boileau and to take into account “the importance of religion in

Perrault's oeuvre and how religion impacted his conception of women" (211). Duggan argues that Perrault "is drawing from a social and religious discourse that relegates women to subservient, domestic roles in the family and society" (213). The specific religious discourse that Perrault draws from is a Christian one and one which is closely associated with the ideologies of the Christian writer Tertullian. Duggan tells us that around 1643, Perrault was one of two translators to work on a French edition of Tertullian's *The Apparel of Women*, a text that Duggan describes as "scathing, to say the least" (216). In this text, Tertullian addresses to women the following:

The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on even in our times and so it is necessary that the guilt should live on, also. You are the one who opened the door to the Devil, you are the one who first plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, you are the first who deserted the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not strong enough to attack. (qtd. in Duggan 216)

Tertullian notoriously blames all of womankind for the fall of man and believed that women should abandon all pleasures in life as recompense for this eternally damning sin. Whether Perrault shared the same extreme attitude as Tertullian is potentially debatable, but his devotion to studying Tertullian and his willingness to translate such a text implies, at the very least, a complicity toward such ideas (Gant 6).

Duggan argues that Perrault expresses the same opinion of women found in *L'apologie des femmes* and in his translations of Tertullian in his tales and morals. Significantly, Perrault's misogynistic reading of the Eden myth permeates his fairy tale revisions. Duggan notes that in Perrault's *Pensées chrétiennes* (1694-1703), "Perrault comments on the sin of Adam as residing precisely in his failure to conform his will to

that of God,” specifically in that Adam was not able to control his wife (214). While there’s no confirmation that Perrault read *Paradise Lost*, this perspective is directly reminiscent of what John Milton emphasizes Adam’s greater sin to be: not eating the fruit, as I note in the introduction, but forgetting his role as Eve’s master. Indeed, in *L’apologie des femmes*, Perrault invokes the Eden myth, blaming Adam as Milton did for submitting to his wife and forfeiting his role as her master, stating that when a man’s wife “acts with high imperious hand, / ‘Tis the weakling husband who can’t command,” making clear that husbands are to blame when women act up, just as Adam was (156-65, 139-40). While Perrault believed the root of woman’s sin was in man’s failure to control her, Duggan argues that Perrault also believed that “wifely disobedience [was] a sin on par with that of Adam and Eve’s transgression of God’s will. Consequently, wifely disobedience is a micro-manifestation of the Fall” (214). If, in Perrault’s mind, wifely disobedience is equal to the sin that brought about the fall of humankind, then the morals Perrault appended to the Bluebeard tale begin to make sense. If Eve’s failure to obey Adam is just as sinful as her eating the forbidden fruit, then it is by all means more sinful than when her son Cain (or Bluebeard) committed the sin of murder. Perrault’s misogynistic Christian perspective is evident in all his fairy tale revisions and perhaps in “Bluebeard” most of all. Not only does Perrault’s Christian misogyny infect each of the tales he revised, but that misogyny is typically based upon the image of sinful Eve (Duggan 219). From this perspective, Perrault’s perspective, the true villain of “Bluebeard” is not the serial murderer but rather the disobedient wife.

Addressing this perspective and reexamining the morals that Perrault appended to the tale, it is clear that Perrault’s perspective of his Eve-figure is consistent with the

morals present in the Eden myth as told in *Paradise Lost*. Perrault condemns women's curiosity outright, suggesting that women should remain subservient to their husbands completely. Additionally, Perrault's perspective of Adam is consistent with the one Milton presents in his Eden revision. Where Milton and others try to acquit Adam of the sin of eating the fruit by removing him from Eve's side when she first eats the fruit, Perrault similarly displaces his Adam by suggesting that men like Bluebeard no longer exist. Perrault and Milton would have shared a similar seventeenth-century Christian ideology which dictated that the proper place for women was in subservience to their husbands. I argue this same misogynistic ideology is responsible for how Milton and Perrault revised the Eden and Bluebeard myths.

Envisioning the Lost Bluebeard Tale

By imbuing the Bluebeard tale with Edenic morals, Perrault's revision was in many ways a return of the tale to its Edenic roots. These morals, of course, contradict the plot of the story, creating a sort of cognitive dissonance within the tale. Recognizing this cognitive dissonance, one must wonder why Perrault wrote a story where a woman's curiosity is so clearly justified when his intention was to write a tale that condemned female curiosity. Here it is useful to remember that this story was not originally Perrault's but rather belonged to "old wives." Since Perrault depended upon their authorship both to market the collection and to use as a scapegoat if *The Tales of Mother Goose* was panned, he had to remain faithful to the story as he likely heard it from his own nursemaid, at least to a certain degree. To understand the disagreement between plot and morals, then, it is helpful to attempt to envision what the Bluebeard tale may have looked like in the

oral tradition. In order to piece together the lost version of Bluebeard that was likely told to Perrault by his nurse and told by countless other nurses for an unknown number of decades or centuries prior, the most practical method is to consider what Perrault's "Bluebeard" looks like, consider Perrault's misogynistic motivations in revising, and compare his "Bluebeard" to other tales belonging to the Bluebeard tradition. Doing so reveals that the original Bluebeard tale almost certainly resembled the Eden myth but carried a moral that disagrees with the Eden myth, and to such a degree that the oral tale can itself be considered a revision.

It is generally agreed that two of the tale's most significant images, the forbidden chamber and the bloodstained key, are elements retained from the oral tradition, as those two images appear in varying forms in each of the other three most significant Bluebeard variants: *The Robber Bridegroom*, *Fitcher's Bird*, and *Mr. Fox* (Barchilon and Flinders 94). While the Grimm brothers didn't pen the first written versions of *The Robber Bridegroom* and *Fitcher's Bird* until 1812, and the earliest version of *Mr. Fox* wasn't written until 1890 by Joseph Jacobs, they remain useful examples of the recurring themes in these tales, despite being revisions themselves. In all these Bluebeardian fairy tales, two images are always present; there is always some sort of forbidden chamber in which resides the secret of the male villain's murder victims, and there is always some object to evidence the heroine's discovery of what lies inside. By always including these two images, all Bluebeardian tales feature the themes of forbidden knowledge and guilt. How revisions of the Bluebeard tale handle these two themes, forbidden knowledge (symbolized by the forbidden chamber) and guilt (symbolized by the bloody key), indicate the misogynistic or feminist degree of the text.

It is also important to note that the purposes of the forbidden chamber and the bloody key likely indicate that the old wives' tale was itself a sort of revision. Both images bear direct links to the Eden myth through the themes that they symbolize: forbidden knowledge and guilt. In the Eden myth, the forbidden fruit hangs from the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" and is strictly forbidden to Eve and Adam, with the clear warning that if they eat from it, they will die (Gen. 2.9). The forbidden room of the Bluebeard tale parallels the forbidden fruit, as the knowledge of Bluebeard's victims is gained only upon entering the forbidden room and is a knowledge that comes at the costly price of death. In the Eden myth, despite the dangers of eating the forbidden fruit, God places the tree in the center of the Garden where it is easily accessible. Bluebeard similarly presents his wife with the key to the forbidden chamber, making it more easily accessible to her. After Eve and Adam are tempted by the serpent and eat the fruit, they feel guilty, and in their guilt they become aware of the fact that they are naked. In the Bluebeard myth, the bloody key likewise represents the guilt of Bluebeard's wife, which she cannot wash away, just as Eve and Adam become aware of their nakedness and haphazardly try to cover it up but are nevertheless unable to hide the evidence of their disobedience (Warner 244-5). Finally, when God next sees Eve and Adam, he indicates their awareness of their nakedness as evidence of their guilt in eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge, just as Bluebeard points to the blood on the key as evidence of his wife's entrance into the forbidden room. Therefore, the two central themes that scholars generally agree were present in the oral version of the Bluebeard tale—*forbidden knowledge and guilt*—are also central themes of the Eden myth and the narrative development of those themes occurs in a similar pattern in both myths.

However, where the forbidden fruit and nakedness serve to betray Eve, resulting in her condemnation and banishment from the Garden of Eden, the forbidden chamber and the bloody key serve to liberate Bluebeard's wife, which in turn rids her of her murderous husband and brings her great wealth. It is the repurposed function of the forbidden room that makes the oral tale operate as a revision of the Eden myth, one where Eve is rewarded for eating the forbidden fruit. This revision subverts the inherently misogynistic moral of the myth and its far more misogynistic canonical interpretations, like the one found in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as I outline in the introduction. The sinister nature of what lies inside the forbidden room and the fact that Bluebeard's wife is ultimately justified in entering the forbidden room through her liberation verifies the apparently revolutionary feminist perspective and intention of the "old wives." When so much misogyny is based upon the image of sinful Eve, suggesting that Eve was right to eat the forbidden fruit is radically feminist—this is exactly what the Bluebeard tale does.

The symbolic significance of the bloody key makes even clearer the bold feminist thinking of the creators of the tale. However, since variations of the Bluebeard myth change the object used to evidence guilt, it is uncertain whether the version of the Bluebeard myth that Perrault revised even utilized a key. There are three most common objects that Bluebeard variants have employed for this purpose: a bloody key, a bloody egg, or a severed appendage of one of the villain's previous victims—typically a finger or hand. While a key, an egg, and a severed appendage might carry different symbolic meanings, the consistent symbolism that each of them carries concerns the blood which stains the object rather than the object itself. The narrative and symbolic function of each of these objects is to evidence guilt. This guilt is duplicitously symbolic, as it indicates

both the guilt of the heroine for entering the forbidden room as well as the guilt of the villain for murdering his victims. It is the addition of this second symbolic function that makes the Bluebeard tale a feminist revision of the Eden myth rather than a reiteration of it. In the Eden myth, Eve's awareness of her nakedness is the symbolic equivalent of her guilt in doing what was forbidden. The bloody key, bloody egg, or bloody severed appendage does the same. However, where Eve's nakedness only indicates her own guilt in disobeying God, the bloody key, egg, or severed appendage also indicates the guilt of the one who spilt the blood and did the forbidding. By adding this second symbolic function, therefore suggesting that the forbidders are at fault, and by rewarding Bluebeard's wife with a happy ending, the oral tale revises the Eden myth in a blasphemous and unquestionably feminist way. As a revision, the oral tale revises the Eden myth in a way that grants Eve honorable agency by justifying her disobedience and curiosity through her happy ending and condemns God by turning him into a murderous villain proved guilty by the blood on the key. In envisioning what the lost Bluebeard tale may have looked like, it is unclear whether the villain was an aristocrat, an ogre, or a robber, or if the bloody object that the heroine holds as she flees the forbidden chamber was a key, an egg, or a severed appendage. What is clear, however, is that the "original" version of Bluebeard, as it existed in the oral tradition of women, not only resembled the Eden myth but revised it in such a way that liberated Eve from masculine oppression and the belief that her curiosity and agency was a flaw.

The forbidden room and the bloody key are what ultimately account for the happy ending that Bluebeard's wife receives. Had she not used the key and not entered the forbidden room, Bluebeard's wife would not have known her husband to be a murderer,

he would have never been killed by her brothers, and she would have never inherited his wealth and remarried. Since these images, their themes, and the woman's consequential happy ending operate at the center of the plot, it would not have been possible for Perrault to omit them and still retain the tale's status as a revision of the old wives' tale, an appropriated authorship upon which Perrault depended. This is what necessitated his two morals, as their primary function is to undo the symbolic significance of the forbidden chamber and bloody key as they existed in the oral tradition.

In Perrault's "Bluebeard," the central images of the forbidden chamber and the bloody key are not done away with but rather transformed to serve a different purpose. Freud writes that in textual distortions (which are a kind of revision), the work of doing away with traces is not always complete: "[I]n so many textual distortions we may count on finding the suppressed and abnegated material hidden away somewhere, though in an altered shape and torn out of its original connection" (64). For example, the oral tale revised Eve's nakedness (evidence of her guilt) into the bloody key (evidence of Bluebeard's guilt). But in Perrault's version, he revised the bloody key so that it may once again indicate the guilt of Bluebeard's wife (the new Eve), a return to the original symbolic function of the object as present in the Eden myth. However, the symbolic meaning and purpose that the oral tale attributed to the bloody key (to serve as evidence of Bluebeard's guilt) is not done away with, but instead becomes latent material. As a result, the bloody key in Perrault's "Bluebeard" indicates the guilt of both Bluebeard and his wife. Once a symbolic meaning has been attributed to an image, that meaning remains attached throughout future revisions. The blood doesn't wash off.

This is the reason why Perrault's "Bluebeard" is hermeneutically duplicitous. When Perrault wrote "Bluebeard" in the *Tales of Mother Goose*, he was revising not one but two stories: the old wives' tale and the Eden myth. As a result, there are two sets of morals and symbols within the same tale and even within single images like the bloody key. The occurrence of an image carrying two symbolic meanings is not in itself exceptional, as it is likely to happen when a myth is as repeatedly and dramatically revised as this one is. What makes Perrault's "Bluebeard" noteworthy, however, is that the two morals which the tale carries and the two symbolic functions the bloody key serves—to simultaneously condemn and celebrate female curiosity—so drastically contradict one another. One is driven by misogyny while the other is driven by a desire for feminist liberation.

As a result, the study of Bluebeardian revisionism is at once the study of how both Bluebeard and Eden are revised. Both feminist and misogynist authors have been attracted to the Bluebeard tale because the plot and images within the tale have been attributed such drastically different meanings. Perrault's revision is one that works (arguably unsuccessfully) to prioritize the morals of the Eden myth, condemning women's curiosity and agency. But far from all revisions take such a masculinist approach. In the following chapters, I skip ahead in time to see how Charlotte Brontë attempts to mediate both morals in *Jane Eyre* and to see how Luisa Valenzuela and Jeannette Winterson attempt to prioritize the moral of the oral tale in "The Key" and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*.

CHAPTER TWO:
 ENTERING THE FORBIDDEN ROOM: FAITH, FEMINISM, AND FAIRY TALES IN
JANE EYRE

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* features a cornucopia of scriptural and fairy tale references. Not only does Jane as narrator make constant references and allusions to scripture, Bible stories, and fairy tales, but the plot of *Jane Eyre* also frequently parallels Biblical and fairy tale elements. Catherine Brown Tkacz catalogues 176 direct allusions to the Bible in the novel, not counting the many more indirect invocations of God or Christian thought (3). At the same time, Maria Tatar suggests that since "fairy tales play a powerful role in Jane's childhood" they "continue to exercise a hold over her imagination through adulthood" (70). Jane also thinks of fairy tales and Bible stories similarly. Marianne Thormählen argues that Jane reads the Bible in much the same way she does fairy tales: as a sort of storybook from which to divine lessons and morals (162). By featuring Bible stories and fairy tales during Jane's formative years and including frequent allusions to those stories throughout the rest of her life, it becomes clear that it is through these childhood stories from the Bible and fairy lore that Jane interprets the world and events and persons she encounters.

In nearly all criticism surrounding *Jane Eyre*, however, a divide exists between those critics who discuss how Brontë uses the Bible in the novel and those who discuss how she uses fairy tales. Rather than separate them, I argue that an understanding of how Brontë uses the Bible and fairy tales together provides valuable insight into the novel's uniquely feminist Christian mindset. Understanding this relationship reveals how Brontë attempts to reconcile her feminist ideology with her devout Christianity. Her resolution is

that a woman's obedience to God is paramount while her obedience to man should be questioned in order to determine the true will of God. Whereas this first notion accords with the patriarchal Christian society that Jane lives in, questioning male authority does not and is by all means an indication of feminist thought. Since the Bible provides unsatisfactory female characters who are justified in challenging male authority, Brontë turns to fairy tales to find a role model for such feminist thinking. As a result, Brontë's reconciliation of Christianity and feminism in *Jane Eyre* is reflected in and indicated by the way she turns to fairy tales to find answers the Bible does not provide. Of the many fairy tales Brontë employs, the Bluebeard tale is the one with the most influence regarding Jane's feminist ambition, an ambition that works against the patriarchal institutions that surround her and that ultimately leads Jane to the Eden she seeks. That Eden represents Brontë's ideal reconciliation of Christian and feminist thinking, one where Christian men and Christian women are equal under God.

Jane's and Brontë's Feminist Christianity

The simultaneous influences of the Bible and fairy tales are apparent throughout Jane's journey. As a little girl at Gateshead, the Bible and fairy tales are the two main sources of literature that Jane has access to; she reads the Bible for herself and hears fairy tales from her nurse Bessie. After standing up to the abusive John and Mrs. Reed at Gateshead, Jane is sent to the boarding school at Lowood, where the sinister supervisor of the school, Mr. Brocklehurst, emphasizes Bible reading as part of the girls' education, even testing Jane's knowledge of the Bible before bringing her to the school. As a young adult, Jane then leaves Lowood, accepting a position as a governess at Thornfield Hall, a

place she compares to “some Bluebeard’s castle” (126). At Thornfield, Jane falls in love with Mr. Rochester, who playfully refers to her as a fairy throughout. After discovering on their wedding day that Rochester has a wife whom he keeps locked away in a secret chamber, Jane leaves Thornfield and finds herself at Moor House, where she unites with her lost cousins, including the missionary St. John. Believing Jane to be the one God designed for his wife, St. John proposes to Jane, asking her to travel to India with him as a missionary’s wife. Jane rejects this proposal, instead migrating back to be with Rochester. The novel then concludes at Ferndean, an Edenic paradise where Jane and Rochester live happily ever after.

Heavily influenced by fairy tales and the Bible, *Jane Eyre* is a novel that is both feminist and Christian. Keith A. Jenkins argues that with the novel, “Charlotte Brontë sought to subvert patriarchal authority” (71). He observes that the novel opens with Jane rebelling against the masculine authority of John Reed, beginning a trend of rebellious feminism in Jane that continues throughout the novel as she later subverts or openly rebels against masculine authority figures including Mr. Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John (71). Jenkins suggests that “Jane constructs nothing less than an alternative to that patriarchal view of the world, in revolt against which she begins, carries out, and ends her self-creation” (71). Jane’s bildungsroman is characterized by her growing up and her growing in faith, but a consistent and characteristic tendency Jane has from the very start of the novel is to reject the masculine authorities that attempt to control her.

While critics such as Susan Gallagher have recognized the symbiotic relationship between Jane’s feminism and Christianity, a longstanding critical trend argues an apparent contradiction between these two elements of Jane’s character and the novel as a

whole. In her 1848 review of *Jane Eyre*, for example, Elizabeth Rigby acknowledges Jane's unique ability to act for herself: "One feels provoked as Jane stands before us ... she seems accountable for all done in her name" (167). While Rigby initially appears compelled by Jane's ambition, her praise for that ambition instead evolves into a condemnation that Jane is acting out of place. Where at first Jane is respectably accountable for her actions, Rigby adjusts this claim to instead argue that "Jane Eyre is throughout the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit. ... [I]t is the strength of a mere heathen mind which is a law unto itself. No Christian grace is perceptible upon her" (173). The claim that Jane has "no Christian grace" is surprising as, throughout the novel, Jane not only references scripture but also consistently consults God whenever faced with a major decision. Rigby is by all means correct that "it is by [Jane's] own talents, virtues, and courage that she is made to attain the summit of human happiness," but her conclusion that Jane acts in such a manner because she has no regard for Christian thought or principle is unfounded (173). Rigby reveals that her objection to Jane's ambition is tied at least in part to Jane's sex: "We acknowledge her firmness—we respect her determination," but "the impression she leaves on our mind is that of a decidedly vulgar-minded woman" (174). The only evidence Rigby presents of Jane's supposed vulgar-mindedness are those "un-Christian" characteristics related to her feminist ambition. Whatever the Christian doctrine might be that Rigby absently draws upon to make her argument, it is clear that Jane's "firmness" and "determination" are incompatible with it. More recently, feminist thinkers like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have argued that the novel's "'anti-Christian' refusal to accept the forms, customs, and standard of society" are synonymous with its "rebellious feminism" (338). For

Gilbert and Gubar, as for Rigby, to be anti-Christian and to be feminist are one and the same, a claim to which Brontë would have vehemently objected.

On the contrary, Brontë's specific form of feminism, as displayed in *Jane Eyre*, is not only symbiotic with her Christianity, but Christianity is the central element of it. Jane's feminism is always driven by a pursuit of what she understands to be God's will. Gallagher notes that, throughout *Jane Eyre*, "God's providential care encourages Jane's movement toward freedom and equality" (67). Jane consistently believes God is acting in and directing her life so that with every major decision she makes, she seeks out God's divine authority in order to determine his will for her. This pattern is evident throughout the novel, particularly during scenes when she decides to migrate, and is first established when she makes her decision to leave Lowood. Praying to God, she asks first for liberty, but she adjusts her prayer to asking for change and then to asking for a new servitude as she gradually gauges what God's will for her is (101-2). It is true that Jane consistently rejects the masculine authorities that attempt to control her. But in recognizing that Jane's feminist thinking rebels against male authority, it is all too easy to ignore the fact that she does so while seeking out and obeying the instruction of a divine authority. Gallagher writes that "as a Christian feminist bildungsroman, *Jane Eyre* suggests that a strong, free, and self-determining woman who follows God's commands has achieved true maturity" (68). This is a fundamental moral of *Jane Eyre*.

Pursuing a personal understanding of God's will for oneself is something Brontë's novel heavily advocates, even (or perhaps especially) if it means challenging male authority. This stance is surely what has led to such frequent accusations that *Jane Eyre* is anti-Christian, certainly due in part to elements of the novel like Jane's rejection of the

religiously perfect St. John. Indeed, accusations like Rigby's were pervasive enough upon the novel's release that Brontë felt compelled to address them in her preface to the second edition. In the preface, Brontë draws on the image of the Pharisee to clarify that her novel challenges those individuals who interpret Christianity for their benefit, rather than following the word of "the world redeeming creed of Christ" (6). Brontë is certainly addressing critics like Rigby who accused her novel of being anti-Christian, but I argue she is also referring to those men of the church who presume to know and speak on behalf of the will of God—men like St. John. Despite the irony of Brontë being the daughter of a clergyman and eventually marrying a curate, her letters and novels showcase a consistent criticism and lack of affinity toward men of the profession. In addition to characters in her novels, *Shirley* (1849) in particular, expressing distaste for clergymen, Brontë's personal letters frequently feature critical language concerning clergymen: "They *seem* to me a self-seeking, vain, empty race;" "I regard them, one and all, as highly uninteresting, narrow and unattractive specimens of the coarser sex;" "Ministers, indeed, I do not regard as infallible personages. I have seen too much of them for that" (Shorter 301, 333, 377). Brontë consistently represents clergymen as self-serving and too presumptuous in their belief that the words they preach are the true words of God.

It is this final criticism, the presumed infallibility of these men's interpretations of God's will and word in sermons or Christian literature, that I argue Brontë took the greatest issue with. For example, the revision of the Eden myth by male clergy and authors would have, and likely did, disturb Brontë. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the popular interpretation of the Eden myth (best represented by John Milton's

Paradise Lost) was a revision designed to place blame for the fall primarily on Eve and to characterize Adam and Eve's prelapsarian relationship as unequal, where Eve served Adam according to God's original design. While in Genesis Adam does have some degree of authority over Eve by virtue of naming her, Eve's subservience to Adam is explicitly described as an element of her curse and thus not part of God's original design for marriage (3.16). Milton, however, accepted the idea that God intended for woman to serve man from the beginning and wrote it into *Paradise Lost*, leading to his concept of an ideal and Edenic form of marriage, characterized by the line "[h]e for God only, she for God in him" (4.299). In this marital structure, wives did not pursue God for themselves but rather learned of God through their husbands, just as Milton's Eve prefers to hear what the angel Raphael has to say secondhand through Adam (5.443-45). Following this design, Brontë's evangelical contemporaries "championed the liberty of discernment and conscience for *all* believers, but *also* prized a model of marriage in which wives were spiritually subordinate to their husbands" (Lamonaca 247). This latter point Brontë passionately disagreed with. In *Shirley*, Brontë uses her bold protagonist to voice this disagreement by accurately claiming that Milton's revision had mischaracterized Eve: "Milton tried to see the first woman but, Cary, he saw her not" (*Shirley* 252). Through *Shirley*, Brontë argues that Milton's reading of Eve was simply wrong—he had misinterpreted that character, and so his claims about her were flawed. James Diedrick argues that Brontë may be reiterating feminist claims similar to those Mary Wollstonecraft made in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), specifically those that criticize male authorities of the church and not God: "Wollstonecraft acquits God of the charges of misogyny she levels against her culture and enlists his authority in

seeking to transcend it. She locates one culturally enshrined source of this misogyny in *Paradise Lost*” (24). Following in the steps of Wollstonecraft, Brontë refutes the misogyny in Christian texts and teachings like *Paradise Lost*, not criticizing Christianity but rather attempting to adhere to what she believes to be a more faithful form of it.

Brontë’s criticism of clergymen and her singling out of Milton here are significant because they make clear that her disagreement was not with God but rather with the men whom she argues have misinterpreted God’s will and word, a criticism present in *Jane Eyre*. For example, both proposals of marriage that Jane receives are framed by the proposer as being God’s will for her. Maria Lamonaca observes that “[b]oth Rochester and St. John cloak their agendas in religious language—that is, both presume that their desire to control Jane is compatible with God’s will” (247). When Rochester first proposes, still secretly married to Bertha Mason, he appends his proposal with the claim, “my Maker sanctions what I do” (299). St. John takes the matter even further than Rochester. St. John not only attempts to speak for God in insisting Jane come with him to India but also presumes to speak for Jane as God (Lamonaca 250; Searle 50). Stunned by the proposal she anticipates, Jane is speechless and tells St. John, “My heart is mute.” In response, St. John uses the authority of his masculine and religious position to say, “Then I must speak for it” (465). He quite literally speaks for Jane, claiming what he says to be God’s will, but later reveals that what he demands is merely “what I want ... it is just what I want” (473). Rochester and St. John are, of course, not the only men in *Jane Eyre* who claim God’s authority in commanding Jane; such a practice is Brocklehurst’s primary pastime (Tkacz 6; Diedrick 25). Indeed, at nearly every stage of her life, Jane encounters men who claim divine justification in demanding what they want.

Jane's rejection of Rochester's and St. John's proposals is a significant indication of how Brontë rationalized her feminism and Christianity because they depict Jane rejecting the will of man in an effort to seek out the will of God. It is true that the Bible makes clear that wives should refer to the authority of their husbands—in postlapsarian Eden, God explicitly states that part of Eve's (and subsequently womankind's) punishment for sinning is subservience to their husbands: "[T]hy desire shall be for thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3.16). Jane, however, questions whether Rochester and St. John actually know God's will for her and essentially refuses to receive God's instruction secondhand, exercising a uniquely feminist ambition in refuting what men tell her to do and rejecting the subservient role of Milton's Eve. These proposals are also significant for the way they parallel the temptation scenes in versions of the Eden myth, a parallel that reveals Brontë's disagreement with the notion that men were greater than women in matters of religion.

It is important to note that the temptations Jane encounters during these proposals are not the same temptations Eve receives in the Garden but instead align more closely with Adam's temptations. Clay Daniel argues that, in *Jane Eyre*, "Rochester and Jane's love affair is structured by a comprehensive rewriting of the love of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*" and specifically a rewriting where the typical gender-based associations between Eve and Jane and Adam and Rochester are reversed (94). As the one willing to commit the sin of adultery and deceive Jane into sinning with him, Rochester's temptations and sins mirror that of Milton's Eve (Daniel 99). Conversely, Jane is tempted in the same ways as Milton's Adam—Milton's text emphasizes that Adam's sin is not that he ate the forbidden fruit but that he made a God out of his wife and ate the fruit

because of his idolatrous love for her: “Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey ...?” (10.145). Jane’s sin is not adultery, of intending to marry a man who is already married—her ignorance of Rochester’s living wife, Bertha Mason, absolves her of this sin—but rather that she had placed her love for Rochester above her love for and obedience to God. However, rather than falling into sin for the one she loves after finding out Rochester is already married, Jane consults God, receives instruction through a divine communication and, upon hearing God’s command, refuses the unholy union and flees Thornfield, proving herself to be more obedient than Milton’s Adam. Later, Jane even recognizes and repents her sin of making an idol out of Rochester: “I could not, in those days, see God for his creature, of whom I had made an idol” (320). By fleeing temptation, she does what Adam could not.

Upon fleeing, Jane finds herself at Moor House, where, after living with her newfound cousins for some time, she is presented with her second proposal of marriage and her second temptation. This time, however, the proposer is her cousin St. John, who, unlike Rochester, is a near-perfect Adam. Daniel observes that, like Jane, St. John has withstood Adam’s temptation, not falling for the Eve-like Rosamond Oliver (104). Being a near-perfect Adam, the proposal that St. John offers to Jane is one which Adrienne Rich accurately identifies as “the destiny of Milton’s Eve: ‘He for God only, she for God in him’” (103). The language of St. John’s proposal makes this clear: “Jane, come with me to India; come as my help-meet” (465). This invocation of the canonized mistranslation of the Hebrew word *ezer*, noted earlier in my introduction, signifies the Miltonesque marriage that St. John intends. While with Rochester’s proposal Jane is tempted like Adam, St. John’s proposal tempts Jane with the life of a subservient, postlapsarian Eve.

However, as with every decision she makes, Jane once again exercises her characteristic feminism, attempts to divine God's will for herself and, after another divine communication, rejects St. John and the role of subservient woman and leaves Moor House.

It is significant that, in these two scenes of temptation, Jane is identified with both Adam and Eve. By doing so, Brontë refutes the notion that Adam and Eve fell because they were tempted in ways specific to their gender or that Eve and subsequently women are somehow weaker when faced with temptation. Instead, Jane withstands the temptations of both Adam and Eve, and she does so by seeking guidance from God. This suggests that men and women are equally flawed in the eyes of God and are thus tempted the same. And since they are tempted the same, men and women must both work to determine God's will for themselves. Rochester and St. John both presume to know God's will, but only Jane actually seeks it out. Emily Griesinger writes, "For women of faith, then and now, Jane's rejection of St. John is one of the highlights of the novel ... because her decision so clearly challenges traditional views of women's religious authority" and "their ability to discern the voice and the will of God for themselves, and make their choices accordingly" (52). As Griesinger notes, this moment is a highlight for Christian women because it shows a woman going against male authority, discerning God's will for herself and being right.

Jane's Fairy Tale Feminism

The fact that Jane acts in this manner—that is, to actively determine God's will for herself instead of trusting men to know God's will for her—is worth investigating, as

it goes against what she surely would have been taught. A common teaching of subservience for women in Brontë's time would have been consistent with Milton's concept of Edenic marriage, rationalized by God's curse on Eve, specifically that women are beneath men. In conduct books like Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Daughters of England* (1842), which circulated during Brontë's time and which Brontë likely read, women were instructed to "be content to be inferior to men—inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength" (3). While in such conduct books women were also instructed to pursue knowledge of scripture, they were more frequently warned against being "jealous of their rights as intellectual beings, aspiring to be the companions of rational men" (Ellis 17-20). While a pursuit of Christian knowledge was encouraged, women were taught never to challenge the intellect of man, including in matters of religion. The influences of Jane's childhood, particularly her upbringing at Lowood, should have made her complicit toward this sort of doctrine. The girls at Lowood were taught that Mr. Brocklehurst was an ultimate authority, second only to God. But Jane challenges much of what Mr. Brocklehurst tells her, going against the doctrine laid out in conduct books like Ellis's. Instead of Brocklehurst or other superiors at Lowood, Jane's primary religious influence appears to be Helen Burns (Thormählen 61). However, Helen's more complacent and stoic Christianity is not the kind Jane practices anywhere in the novel and, if anything, it would only work to subdue Jane's rebelliousness (Lamonaca 253; Griesinger 48). On the contrary, Jane refuses to receive God's instruction secondhand and she exercises a uniquely feminist ambition in ignoring or refuting what men tell her to do, instead seeking out God's will for herself. It is clear that Jane learned rebelliousness neither at Lowood nor from Helen Burns, which prompts

us to look elsewhere for influences that might lead her to challenge the masculine authorities that attempt to control her.

From the emphasis on scripture in Jane's formative years at both Gateshead and Lowood and the sheer volume of Biblical allusions in her narration, we know that one of Jane's major sources of inspiration is the Bible. However, I argue that the parts of the Bible that Brontë tells us Jane has read do not provide for Jane a clear role model for her repeated refutation of male authority. The first of very few candidates the Bible provides is Eve, but Eve's rebellious actions have unquestionably negative results, particularly when her story is read from a Christian perspective like Jane's. The only other two candidates from the Bible whom Jane might take as a role model for rejecting male authority are Vashti and Esther from the book of Esther, who disobey and question their husband, King Ahasuerus (also called Xerxes). Three allusions to the book of Esther are made in *Jane Eyre*, though all three of them do so in order to compare Rochester to Ahasuerus (165, 306). One could argue that Jane is therefore compared to Esther and/or Vashti indirectly. However, the sparseness of allusions and parallels to the book of Esther limits the connections to be made. Furthermore, with the three allusions to Esther in the novel, it is Rochester, not Jane, who prompts the comparison. Additionally, while Jane does seem to be familiar with the book of Esther, it is not one of the books of the Bible that young Jane tells Brocklehurst are her favorites (4). As Tkacz observes, these favorite books contain the most significant Biblical allusions in the novel (4). I argue, then, that the parts of the Bible with which Jane expresses familiarity contain no female role models for the unique feminist thinking that leads Jane to challenge male authority.

It is here that the influence of fairy tales in the novel becomes apparently necessary. Bruno Bettelheim's landmark work on the fairy tale, *The Uses of Enchantment*, has as a thesis, "We read fairy tales to discover models for facing the challenges of our own lives," a take on the fairy tale that Jessica Campbell suggests "would have seemed perfectly natural to Charles Dickens or Charlotte Brontë" (234). The reason fairy tales matter in an investigation of Jane's feminist ambition is because, surely due to their origin as "old wives' tales," fairy tales are a unique kind of myth in that the primary heroic figure of most fairy tales is female and actively thinks and acts of her own volition. Explicit and implicit allusions to fairy tales in *Jane Eyre* are frequent and numerous, so much so that critics have argued the novel is a combined retelling of several different tales. The most frequent comparisons are made to Beauty and the Beast and/or Bluebeard, while Robert Martin is the most ambitious, arguing that *Jane Eyre* is "first a childhood Cinderella, then a Sleeping Beauty, a wife in Bluebeard's castle, and finally Beauty wed to Beast, Rapunzel healing the prince" (94). Indeed, according to Campbell, "*Jane Eyre* teems with more fairy-tale and supernatural elements than a single article could ever do justice to" (235). Such language is similar to that of critics who catalogue the influence of the Bible in *Jane Eyre* (Tkacz, Lamonaca, etc.). Since my concern is determining from where Jane receives the feminist attitudes that equip her to challenge male authority, I focus specifically on the influence of Bluebeard, a fairy tale with a heroine who is more active than any other and whose ability to act against male authority directly parallels Jane's similar tendency in *Jane Eyre*.

To justify the influence of the Bluebeard tale in *Jane Eyre*, we must first confirm the tale maintains a presence throughout the narrative that is significant enough to impact

its events or influence its protagonist. As previously noted, Jane makes explicit reference to Bluebeard in her narration, just as Brontë does in all but one of her major works (Campbell 237). Significantly, Jane's observation that Thornfield's hallways and corridors are like "some Bluebeard's castle" is immediately followed by Jane hearing Bertha's laugh for the first time (126-27). The arrangement of Bertha's first felt presence in the novel immediately following a reference to Bluebeard's castle is not a coincidence as Brontë surely intends for her reader to consider the locked attic where Bertha is held captive in a similar vein to the forbidden chamber that contains Bluebeard's dead wives. Additionally, immediately following Jane's oft-quoted feminist monologue on what women are and are not permitted to do, she hears Bertha's laugh again, suggesting there is a link between the novel's feminist thinking and the forbidden chamber (130-31). If there indeed is, then Rochester's history of past relationships is consistent with him playing the part of Bluebeard and Jane playing the part of his next wife. In addition to Bertha Mason and Blanche Ingram, Rochester names Celine Varens, Giacinta, and Clara as past lovers (363). That Jane is Rochester's sixth woman (seventh, if we include his daughter Adèle) continues the parallel to Bluebeard. Though the language of Charles Perrault's "Bluebeard" makes no explicit reference to how many corpses Bluebeard has in his forbidden chamber, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century illustrations of Bluebeard typically depict the chamber as having five or six corpses inside (Tatar 17; Hermansson 130A, 130B, 130D).

The idea that Jane, in the process of being courted by Rochester, might be Bluebeard's next victim relies on Rochester playing the part of Bluebeard, a parallel made almost explicit during the charades scene in chapter 18. During the game, Jane

watches as Rochester and Blanche Ingram act out three scenes. The first scene depicts a typical wedding ceremony, with Rochester playing the part of the groom and Blanche playing the part of the “Bride”—the correct answer of the charade. The next scene depicts the Biblical tale of “Eliezer and Rebecca.” The primary action Jane highlights in the scene is Rochester’s Eliezer showing off “magnificent bracelets and ear-rings,” “treasures” which “astonish” Blanche’s Rebecca and convince her to follow him to be wed (216). This action is directly reminiscent of Bluebeard, who in the tale seduces his wives with his great wealth. Additionally, over the course of the eighteenth century, Bluebeard took on a Turkish—or more broadly an Islamic—appearance in many Christian traditions, which might explain the emphasis Jane places on Rochester’s “Paynim” features when describing his costume (Hermansson 51; Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 217). Finally, the third scene is the least elaborate, featuring Rochester in disheveled clothes and shackles. It is easy enough to determine that Rochester is playing some sort of prisoner, but the correct answer, guessed with unwarranted precision, is a specific prison called “Bridewell.” That Bridewell Palace was originally a women’s prison, and that the word “bride” is embedded in its name, should be taken as no coincidence. Reading these three scenes together, one can piece together the possible story of one of Bluebeard’s previous wives, played in the first two scenes by Blanche Ingram. Bluebeard proposes to his Bride, wooing her with his riches like Eliezer does Rebecca, only for her to find herself trapped in a sort of Bridewell, a locked cell where women are sent for committing crimes. Indeed, the fact that Rochester plays the prisoner in the final charade may also foreshadow Bluebeard’s (and Rochester’s) eventual downfall.

The greatest significance of the presence of the Bluebeard tale in *Jane Eyre*, however, concerns the villain's masculinity. Having a beard be his defining and eponymous characteristic emphasizes the character's masculinity. The fact that he is *Bluebeard* means that he cannot be a woman nor be read as a woman but is definitively a man. Even those variations on the tale that replace the blue-bearded aristocrat with an ogre or robber always have the villain be the husband or suitor of the heroine. It is an integral element of the Bluebeard narrative that the villain be a male husband who wishes to control the heroine, who is always his female wife, or at least the woman he is courting. This rivalry between man and woman, between husband and wife—one that finds the man in the wrong and the woman in the right—is why the presence of the Bluebeard narrative in *Jane Eyre* is significant. Bluebeard is the only myth with a clear influence in *Jane Eyre* where the female protagonist's actions work against the wishes of her husband and where her actions are ultimately justified. Many women of fairy tales and Bible stories are ambitious and act upon that ambition, but Bluebeard's wife is unique because her ambition specifically works against her husband, a man who restricts knowledge from her and who is proved by the end to be villainously wrong.

Heta Pyrhönen and Sandra Gilbert argue that all the men in *Jane Eyre* play the part of Bluebeard at one point or another, but the most obvious candidates are John Reed, Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John. There are, of course, no murderers in *Jane Eyre*, but there are Bluebeards throughout. Pyrhönen argues that, in *Jane Eyre*, "Bluebeard annihilates a woman's psyche and soul instead of killing her physically" (30). When one recognizes that the Bluebeards in *Jane Eyre* commit this more psychological form of murder, the number of Bluebeards in the novel becomes apparent. John Reed's abuse of

Jane at Gateshead results in her traumatic experience of being locked in the Red Room, and Brocklehurst oppresses Jane and all the girls at Lowood through “strict rules governing the girls’ appearance” which “connect sexual repression with a masculine and judgmental form of Christianity,” in addition to the harsh physical conditions that result in the deaths of many of the girls (Gallagher 65). Rochester attempts to subdue Jane’s passions by forbidding from her the knowledge of his previous marriage (not to mention that he psychologically murders Bertha by locking her away), and had Jane accepted St. John’s proposal, not only would her passions have been similarly subdued by becoming his subservient Eve, but the possibility of love would also be forbidden to her. Each of these men plays the part of Bluebeard in slightly different ways as each of them constructs a slightly different chamber from which Jane is forbidden. Pyrhönen argues that in depicting Bluebeard’s forbidden chamber, Brontë “links its gradual construction with the patriarchal system” (34). The direct relationship between Bluebeard and masculinity becomes most apparent in *Jane Eyre* because, in Brontë’s novel, Bluebeard’s forbidden chamber is not an attic or any other specific place but rather a patriarchal system that restricts women from curiosity, investigation, and the ability to determine truth and to divine God’s will for themselves. As someone who is determined to discover God’s will on her own terms, Jane is constantly entering this forbidden chamber. By following the lead of Bluebeard’s wife and challenging the men who presume to know what’s best for her, Jane repeatedly divines God’s will for herself, escapes the fate of Bluebeard’s previous wives, and ultimately finds for herself a happy ending.

It must be acknowledged, however, that despite Jane taking after Bluebeard’s wife in her continued repudiation of male authority, she is not a very good Bluebeard’s

wife when it comes to her relationship with other women. Not only are active women a key feature of Bluebeard tales but so is the example of women helping other women (e.g., Anne helping Bluebeard's wife or sisters saving each other in Bluebeard variations, like Mr. Fox), a characteristic most feminist revisionists have latched onto. But in *Jane Eyre*, Jane is suspiciously reluctant to help the one woman who, occupying the novel's most conspicuous forbidden chamber, is a living version one of Bluebeard's previous wives: Bertha Mason. Jane not only refuses to extend a helping hand toward Bertha, but she even benefits from Bertha's loss. Instead of helping her to escape the chamber, Jane's success in the novel comes at the cost of Bertha's life, a price Jane and Brontë are happy to pay and a payment made possible by Brontë's problematic characterization of her. Susan Meyer argues that, in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë includes allusions to people of color in order to compare their oppression, marked by the British empire's recent role in the slave trade, to the oppression experienced by women in patriarchal societies (496). This synchronizes with Gilbert and Gubar's argument that Bertha is Jane's double but further emphasizes that her function as Jane's double is to highlight Jane's oppression, not her own (360). If she is Jane's double, however, we must ask why she is not also liberated by the novel's end. Instead, rather than liberation, Bertha's efforts to rebel against male authority lead to her own demise.

The differences between Jane's cool consultation of and obedience to God's will and Bertha's unrestrained burning of Thornfield Hall further emphasize the type of feminism that Brontë endorses. Through the character of Bertha, Brontë includes a warning against an ambition, feminist or otherwise, that does not consult God before acting. Each of the ways Brontë characterizes Bertha—an insane woman, the dark side of

Jane, a foreigner, a racial other, etc.—relies on a problematic and prejudiced method of depicting a character who is unquestionably not Christian. As Gilbert and Gubar note, Bertha resembles Jane in her tendency to challenge the male authority that restricts her (360). But since Brontë consistently characterizes Bertha as animalistic and calls her a “savage” and a “lunatic,” the reader can be sure that in all Bertha’s actions, be it in tricking Rochester into marriage, escaping her chamber, wreaking havoc, or trying to burn Rochester alive, she does so not because God told her to but because she wants to. Bertha’s feminist ambition is presented as a heathen form wherein she acts according to her own desires. Like her critic Rigby, Brontë also condemns “mere heathen minds” who act with no perceptible Christian grace, and she crafts the character of Bertha for that singular purpose (Rigby 173). Brontë includes this corrupted feminism in the novel and condemns it in order to contrast Jane’s Christian feminism, which prioritizes understanding and obeying God’s will before personal desire. It is Jane’s Christian feminism that the plot rewards and the novel celebrates, not feminism more broadly.

Redeeming Bluebeard and Returning to Eden

As a revision of the Bluebeard tale, the conclusion of *Jane Eyre* is of course concerning as Jane ends up marrying one of her Bluebeards. Concluding with a happy marriage is true to the Bluebeard narrative as is the fact that the marriage occurs after Jane has inherited great wealth, a fortune that she chooses to split between herself and her two “sisters” and “brother,” just as Bluebeard’s wife splits her new fortune between herself and her two brothers and sister. Like Bluebeard’s wife, Jane has successfully subverted the patriarchal system so that she does not need to marry but marries

presumably because she wants to. Those who read *Jane Eyre* strictly as a fairy tale, however, are often discontented with Jane and Rochester's reunion because, as Pyrhönen suggests, "In order to achieve a happy ending, this narrative must resort to the narrative logic of the fairy tale, glossing over any ramifications" of Jane's and especially Rochester's actions (60). That Rochester is the one Jane marries should raise eyebrows because it suggests that Brontë has echoed Perrault's practice of arbitrarily redeeming Bluebeard in a sort of epilogue. One must keep in mind, of course, that *Jane Eyre* is a Christian tale, even before it is a feminist one, and that the purpose of the influence of the Bluebeard tale in *Jane Eyre* is to establish in Jane an agency that allows her not to choose her own path but to seek out God's will for her. The final chapters of *Jane Eyre* make clear that to marry Rochester is God's will for Jane, thereby justifying his redemption and evolution beyond playing the part of a Bluebeard.

To understand Rochester's redemption in terms of its identity as part of a fairy tale, it is helpful to remember that Bluebeard fits uneasily into a category of fairy tales called "animal groom tales." In such tales, a young woman is romanced by an ugly male (e.g. the Frog Prince, Beast, Bluebeard). According to Bettelheim, in order for the romance to work in these tales, "it is mainly the female who needs to change her attitude about sex from rejecting to embracing it" (286). In other words, the woman must change her perception of the man in order for the union to work, just as Beauty's mind changes toward Beast (Ralph 57). Where Bluebeard differs from all other animal groom tales is that Bluebeard's wife realizes that the man's ugliness is not just external but also internal. Rather than altering her perception of him, she instead investigates and finds her suspicions confirmed, then uses her new knowledge to save herself from his oppression

and cruelty. This is exactly what Jane does. Rather than forgiving Rochester and agreeing to be his mistress or accepting St. John's proposal and being forced to "endure all the forms of love" in a loveless marriage, she rejects their internal ugliness and saves herself (469). Rather than submitting to the patriarchal system which states that to be Rochester's mistress or to be St. John's wife is the best Jane can do, she instead rejects such ideas and finds a better future for herself according to what she determines to be God's design.

True to how tales from the Bluebeard tradition are different from other animal groom tales, *Jane Eyre* is unique as its own animal groom tale in that Jane does not have to change her perception of Rochester's internal ugliness but is instead able to marry him at the novel's conclusion because he has changed the part of him that was ugly by repenting and restoring his relationship with God. Jane does not return to Rochester because Bertha is conveniently no longer in the picture. Instead, she returns following the supernatural communication from Rochester, which is later confirmed to be an act of God, prompted by Rochester's conversion. That conversion is a long process, one which Tkacz describes as a "purgation," like the one Nebuchadnezzar goes through in the Biblical book of Daniel (12). Rochester endures great suffering before he is ready for repentance, and many elements of that suffering parallel Nebuchadnezzar, a parallel that Jane herself recognizes (505). In order for Rochester to repent, he must first be broken down as Nebuchadnezzar was. Each of the ways Rochester is degraded, from his blindness, to his stumped hand, to his disheveled appearance, parallels the ways Nebuchadnezzar is reduced from his position of greatness, like some Babylonian Job (Dan. 4; Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 505, 516-17; Tkacz 12). Like King Nebuchadnezzar, Rochester is reduced from the greatness of a king to a madman wandering the fields like

a beast. In order for this animal groom to change into a beautiful prince, he must first recognize his place as a beast. Thormählen argues, “The blissful reunion at Ferndean, prompted by the strange occasion on which Jane Eyre had heard Rochester summoning her, was preceded by his independent recognition of ‘the hand of God’ in his predicament” (58). Indeed, the order of events is precise: when Rochester has fully repented, to the extent that he asks of God to “be taken from this life and admitted to that world to come,” he recognizes his death is not God’s will and instead asks God for Jane (516-17). It is at this moment that the supernatural communication between Jane and Rochester occurs, which is therefore confirmed to be a miracle from God. The miracle makes clear what God’s will is: that Jane and Rochester, both now fully devoted to God, may marry (Tkacz 14).

In the final chapters, both Jane and Rochester are fully devoted to God and to each other, which is confirmed by the characterization of their home at Ferndean as an Edenic paradise. Jenkins argues, “In Jane’s world, however, the biblical orientation toward the *eschaton*, or end times, is reversed, and the redemptive movement of history resolves itself in an earthly re-creative act that returns to the primal state of innocence in the ‘paradise of union’ ... preceding the fall” (71). At Ferndean, the married Jane and Rochester are equals and fully devoted to God, just as prelapsarian Eve and Adam are in the Eden myth. Gilbert and Gubar argue, “That Rochester and Jane are now, in reality, equals, is the thesis of the Ferndean section,” equals not only to each other, but under God (368). The equality of their relationship is of course complicated by Rochester’s physical dependence upon Jane. Both blind and without a hand, Rochester relies on Jane for many basic needs. Jane recognizes this and even draws on Milton’s language,

referring to herself as Rochester's "prop and guide," just as Milton's Adam is Eve's prop and guide (Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 368; Milton 10.433). Jane and Rochester's relationship, then, seems unequal, simply reversing the unequal gender roles of Milton's Eden. However, it is worth noting that Jane uses the same language to refer to Rochester. When Rochester complains about his disability, comparing his uselessness to the splintered chestnut at Thornfield, Jane draws again on Nebuchadnezzar's dream, comparing Rochester not to the stump, but to the "green and vigorous" tree before it was hewn down. She assures him "plants will grow about your roots" and flourish "because your strength offers them so safe a prop" (515). To Jane, then, Rochester is also a prop on which others depend and grow, a picture made complete in the final chapter as Rochester holds their child (523). Indeed, despite Rochester's relying upon Jane in many respects, though these become increasingly fewer as his vision restores, Jane repeatedly describes their relationship as one of equals. In her final comments on their relationship, Jane states, "No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh," recalling the same metaphor Adam uses to refer to Eve in Genesis 2.23 (522). Daniel suggests, "Jane's statement is not merely indebted to Genesis 2.23; it alludes to Adam's purported decision to disobey God because of his love for Eve. ... In Milton's poem, these lines signal disaster, for man but especially for 'woman.' Jane rewrites them to celebrate Christian, feminine love" (107). As a revision of the Eden myth, then, *Jane Eyre* concludes not with Adam and Eve being sent from the garden but rather with their happy return to God's original paradise, bound together not in a Miltonesque marriage but in a true prelapsarian Edenic one: God's original design.

That *Jane Eyre* concludes in this Edenic paradise suggests that all of Jane's actions that led to her happy reunion with Rochester at Ferndean were done according to God's will. Her feminist ambition as a Bluebeard's wife who challenges masculine authority and instead works to determine God's will for herself is thus divinely justified. It is in this way that *Jane Eyre* is an example of feminist Christianity because "Jane has subverted 'the old mythology,' enabling a fusion of feminism, Evangelical Christianity, love, and heroism" (Daniel 107). Unlike the patriarchal forms of Christianity that condemn feminist thinking, Jane's feminism is decidedly Christian (Lamonaca 246). While much criticism has held that Jane's Christianity and her feminism are incompatible, deeper investigation reveals that the relationship between them is instead symbiotic. Brontë accomplishes this symbiosis by drawing upon Biblical myth and scripture to affirm Jane's devotion to God and by drawing upon fairy tales to justify her feminist ambition. Scholarship that fails to consider how Brontë employs scripture and fairy tales together simply overlooks the important way that Brontë reconciles Christianity and feminism by bringing these two types of myth together. Through the influence of Bluebeard, a rare myth and fairy tale that justifies feminist ambition and the subversion of patriarchal authority, Jane, as a consistent Bluebeard's wife, is equipped to challenge those men who wish to control her in order to pursue what she determines to be God's will. If *Jane Eyre*, as a work of feminist Christianity, has a single thesis, it is that Christian women should challenge male authorities who state women must subject themselves to blind subservience to men in matters of marriage and religion. Instead, they should exercise the feminist ambition of Bluebeard's wife for the purposes of divining God's will for themselves, just as Jane Eyre does. Brontë's resolution relies upon the idea

of a divinely created and uncorrupted Edenic paradise; however, in the next chapter, I look toward the twentieth century to see how feminist revisionists question the notion of an Edenic paradise and, in the case of Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, challenge religious as well as patriarchal authorities.

CHAPTER THREE:
 ESCAPING PARADISE: THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE
 IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FEMINIST REVISIONS

In the sense that the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale are parallel narratives, the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle are the same place: they are where the respective heroines find themselves and they are where the forbidden fruit and forbidden room are located. However, in nearly all literary traditions, the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle have taken on two vastly different roles. Throughout English literature, the Garden of Eden is consistently alluded to as a symbol of paradise. *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, for example, states that "[i]n English literature, Eden is usually equated with a lost Paradise, whether mythic, metaphoric, or historical," a definition consistent across essentially all literary encyclopedias and dictionaries. Even those writers who do not adhere to the standard Biblical form of paradise still maintain the association between Eden and paradise. For instance, Emily Dickinson's poem "Come slowly—Eden!" utilizes the symbol of Eden to characterize the idyllic sensation of an orgasm. Though this erotic revision of Eden may not have been looked upon favorably by members of the clergy, the association between Eden and paradise remains. Conversely, the image of Bluebeard's castle is consistently associated with horror and terror, as well as trauma, to the extent that the symbol itself is a foundational component of the genre most closely associated with those themes. Victoria Anderson and Gero Bauer have argued that the Bluebeard tale is an origin of the gothic genre and that practically every gothic novel takes place in some sort of Bluebeard's castle, be it *Jane Eyre*, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), or the novels of Anne Bancroft. In

the gothic tradition (and thus one of the most significant evolutions of the Bluebeard tradition), Bluebeard's castle is a place of supernatural haunts and horrors. As a result, authors who draw on the image of Eden use it as a symbol of paradise, while nearly all authors who include a Bluebeard's castle in their work do so to construct a place that is the opposite of paradise.

Many feminist revisionists of Eden and Bluebeard have considered this apparent contradiction in the symbolic associations of the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle. Over the course of the twentieth century, feminist revisions of Eden and Bluebeard proliferated, and many of these revisions focus on the places of the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle to interrogate these mythical conceptions of paradise and hell. In this chapter, I argue that there are three avenues to examine when investigating these revisions: feminist revisions of the Eden myth alone, feminist revisions of the Bluebeard tale alone, and intersecting feminist revisions that directly confront the antagonistic relationship between the idyllic Garden of Eden and the hellish Bluebeard's castle. I first consider how two feminist revisions of the Eden myth—Laura Riding's "Eve's Side of It" and Ursula K. Le Guin's "She Unnames Them"—maintain the association of Eden with paradise but reveal this paradise to be a patriarchal one that does not benefit women; women, therefore, must leave to discover their own paradise. I go on to explore how Luisa Valenzuela's "The Key," a feminist revision of the Bluebeard tale, rejects the notion that a patriarchal paradise is a paradise at all since its existence depends upon the oppression of women. Valenzuela suggests that women who find themselves in Bluebeard's castle should not only leave but also acknowledge their trauma in order to condemn those men who built the castle. Finally, I demonstrate how Jeanette Winterson's

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit revises the two myths together to acknowledge how similar Gardens of Eden and Bluebeard's castles can be. Like Valenzuela, Winterson asserts that healing after leaving such places depends upon the recognition that patriarchal paradises have traditionally depended upon the trauma and suffering of women.

Feminist Revisions of the Eden Myth

The universal familiarity of the Eden myth and its important place in the foundational texts of the world's largest religions paradoxically makes it an authoritative narrative and ripe for revision. Phyllis Tribble has stated that "[T]hroughout the ages people have used [the Eden myth] to legitimate patriarchy as the will of God," a notion John A. Phillips has also argued (Cornell 93; Phillips 29, 30, 36, 42, 45, 59). At the same time, however, M. Doretta Cornell observes that "contemporary scholars are finding that Eve's story as told in Genesis does not necessitate such an interpretation" (94). In fact, in her book *Feminist Revision and the Bible*, Alicia Ostriker suggests that the reason for this might be because within the Eden myth there is already latent material for feminist revisionists to draw upon. She suggests that "the biblical story of monotheism and covenant is ... a cover-up" and "an obsessively told and retold story of erased female power" (30). She argues that inherent in the myth itself are implications of a suppressed female divinity and that Eve herself is related to early goddess figures (34-35). Her observation that Christianity is a constantly reforming tradition further suggests that stories of women in the Bible are ripe for feminist revision (60).

One need not know why feminist revision of the Eden myth is possible, however, to see that it has taken and is constantly taking place. To attempt to catalogue the revisions feminist authors have written using the images of the Garden, the tree, the fruit, or Eve herself, would be futile; entire studies could be devoted to specific authors' several uses of those images. Instead, I focus on Riding's "Eve's Side of It" and Le Guin's "She Unnames Them," which revise the Eden myth to have Eve's intuition be the driving force behind her refuting Godly or masculine authority by eating the forbidden fruit or rejecting the name given to her. Recognizing that the Garden of Eden and her marriage to Adam are not paradises that benefit her, Eve rejects the role of subservience under Adam and God and leaves of her own accord.

As its title suggests, Riding's "Eve's Side of It" provides a first-person account of Eve's motivations surrounding the central event of the Eden myth. Rather than a traditional plot-based narrative, "Eve's Side of It" spends its twelve paragraphs deliberating the relationship between the narrator Eve and another woman called Lilith. The Lilith in "Eve's Side of It," however, cannot necessarily be taken to be the same Lilith as Adam's demonic first wife from Judaic myth. Instead, the narrator Eve describes Lilith as "someone else, who was really the same person as myself" (544). Eve reveals that Lilith is someone who makes her do certain things, including eating the unripe forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. She says, however, "[Y]et the acts were mine, not Lilith's. For Lilith did nothing. She had no body. Nor could I feel that I was Lilith's victim any more than a hand feels itself the victim of the person who makes it do certain things" (544). Eve also explains that Lilith "did not really feel, she only thought," in contrast to Eve herself who has "never really thought, only felt." She explains, however,

that though she has never thought, “there has always been Lilith there behind me, thinking.” Lilith’s role as Eve’s thinking mind is important. She explains that, in contrast to women, “men do not really think: they make thoughts out of feelings, and you cannot make very good thoughts out of feelings,” suggesting that the natural intuition of women is not suitable to a life of subservience to the males Adam and God (546).

The fact that Lilith has no body synchronizes with this description of her as Eve’s thinking mind and lends to the reading that Lilith is not a person or entity at all but rather a part of Eve that motivates her. As the agent that makes her do things, Lilith commands Eve, but as her thinking mind, Lilith is an extension of Eve and therefore an extension of herself that she is obedient to. In this story, then, the name “Lilith” becomes interchangeable with Eve’s own instinct and volition. Lilith’s “commands” for Eve are rooted in Eve’s capacity to think and to make decisions, so Eve’s obedience to those commands is the same as her acting upon her own intuition. In the final paragraph, Eve clarifies that “[i]t must not be thought that I was tempted by the Serpent. The Serpent was Lilith’s way of encouraging me to do what I would have done in any case” (548). With these lines, the narrator Eve removes any and all male agency from Eve’s act of eating the forbidden fruit, be it God’s, Adam’s, or the Serpent’s. Instead, it is purely through the power of her agent Lilith that Eve disobeys Adam and God and eats the fruit. “Eve’s Side of It,” then, is Eve’s attempt to define and understand her own agency, personified through the character Lilith, an agency that enables and empowers her to eat the forbidden fruit and ultimately escape the Garden of Eden.

Le Guin’s “She Unnames Them” also has Eve as narrator, is also preoccupied with Eve’s ability to think and act for herself, and also transforms that characteristic into

a symbol. The symbol here is not a person or entity, but the act of naming. Rather than focusing on the forbidden fruit, Le Guin looks earlier in the Eden myth to where God grants Adam dominion over all animals, as well as over Eve, by giving him the responsibility of naming them. “She Unnames Them” begins not with Eve but with a group of yaks who determine that “though the name [Yak] might be useful to others,” they didn’t have much use for it themselves, and subsequently return it to Adam. After the yaks, most other animals follow suit, departing from the names Adam had given to them. Then it is Eve’s turn. She approaches Adam and returns her name, telling him, “You and your father lent me this, gave it to me, actually. It’s been really useful, but it doesn’t exactly seem to fit very well lately.” Gilbert and Gubar consider this act to be Eve “redefining and thereby liberating Adam’s world” (*No Man’s Land* 270). But Adam does not recognize the weight of Eve’s decision, that this is her act of rebellion, and simply responds; “O.K., fine, dear. When’s dinner?” Eve departs, leaving Adam and the name he gave behind her. Though these events seem to take place after the fall, Eve’s final rejection of the name Adam gave her while they were in the Garden of Eden repudiates not only the postlapsarian picture of marriage where woman’s “desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee,” but also the idyllic prelapsarian marital structure in paradise where woman is nevertheless underneath man by virtue of his having the power to name her (Gen. 3.16). By returning the name given to her, Le Guin’s Eve rejects both oppressive structures of marriage so that Eve’s departure at the story’s conclusion is at once a departure from Adam’s house and from the Garden of Eden.

In both “Eve’s Side of It” and “She Unnames Them,” the bulk of the short texts is devoted to constructing, rationalizing, and executing Eve’s decision to leave Adam,

thereby explaining her act of rebellion, be it eating the forbidden fruit or returning the name given to her. At the same time, both stories conclude the same way: with Eve's departure. This is a significant revision of the Eden myth as every canonical version of the myth, whether from the Yahwist, the King James Bible, or John Milton, concludes with God sending Eve (and Adam) away. Eve's intentional departure from paradise is a very different matter than her being sent out of paradise by a divine male authority. Riding's and Le Guin's Eves see that their home with Adam, both inside Eden and out, is a place they must escape because the men they live with do not benefit them and serve only to frustrate and anger them (Riding 546). To Riding and to Le Guin, leaving the Garden to unite with "Lilith" is a more worthwhile endeavor than repairing the home with Adam since there is nothing left in the Garden that is good for Eve. This is perhaps the most ambitious revision of Riding's and Le Guin's already bold feminist revisions. Riding's and Le Guin's stories go against the longstanding application of Eden as a perfect paradise that one must strive toward, instead transforming Eden into a place that women must escape because it does not benefit them. Neither Riding nor Le Guin tell us if Eve finds a new paradise after leaving, but that is less important than the victory of leaving.

Feminist Revisions of the Bluebeard Tale

Martine Hennard Dutheil De La Rochère argues that the story of Bluebeard is one that "serves different purposes depending on the perspective from which it is re-presented" (153). Since the perspective we receive from the canonical Bluebeard is that of a man (and a fairly misogynist one in Charles Perrault), the question arises of what

happens when the Bluebeard tale is told from a woman's perspective. When this occurs, Rochère suggests that

the denouement of the tale is the main focus of interest insofar as it puts an end to Bluebeard's deathly dominance over women. This suggests that traditional tales cease to be carriers of a patriarchal ideology when they are reinterpreted against the grain of dominant readings. The act of rewriting thus reveals the emancipatory potential of old stories and images, which can be used to perpetuate conservative myths and values but which also provide the practical and intellectual means to subvert and escape them. (54)

Rochère argues that the feminist revision of fairy tales has an "emancipatory potential," one that emancipates both the tales as well as the perspectives and voices that have been held back from speaking. Rochère's focus on the tale's denouement is also important. The tale's conclusion, where Perrault included his misogynistic morals, is not only an important location for the feminist revision of those morals but it is also where feminist revisionists determine what to do with Bluebeard's castle after the villain is defeated.

As I discussed in chapter 2, the feminist revisionism of Bluebeard was already occurring during the nineteenth century when writers like Charlotte Brontë revised the murderous Bluebeard into men who represent oppressive patriarchal institutions. However, the greatest number of feminist revisions of the Bluebeard tale come from the twentieth century, when Bluebeard revisions proliferated in every literary genre, granting the tale a female voice and perspective to a degree that it had never previously held. In the process of cataloguing these revisions, Casie E. Hermansson argues that "[t]he feminist revisionist use of the Bluebeard tale is typified through the contemporary work

of both Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood, who both have made repeated use of the tale in various ways and across a range of genres” (173-74). Atwood is by far the most prolific feminist revisionist of the Bluebeard tale. In addition to her poems “Hesitations Outside the Door” (1970) and “The Robber Bridegroom” (1984), Atwood has written three novels that either revise or make significant use of the Bluebeard tradition: *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Bodily Harm* (1981), and *The Robber Bride* (1993). Out of all of Atwood’s oeuvre, however, the work that receives the most attention in Bluebeard criticism is “Bluebeard’s Egg” (1983), which depicts a woman taking part in the feminist revisionist practice of rewriting one of the most popular Bluebeard variants, “Fitcher’s Bird.” Carter’s “The Bloody Chamber” (1979), however, marks one of the most ambitious and influential feminist revisions of the tale. “The Bloody Chamber” typifies a few of the most significant trends of feminist revisions, including emphasizing Bluebeard’s sexual violence. In “The Bloody Chamber,” Carter transforms Bluebeard into the Marquis, a man whose sexual violence toward the protagonist is made clear not only through a graphic scene of marital rape but also through the symbol of the blood-red choker he has his wife wear. Carter makes explicit the long-held suspicion that Bluebeard’s violence is also a sexual violence, thus opening the door wide for a reading of the tale that liberates women whose husbands are not murderers in the strictest sense.

Rather than any of Atwood’s or Carter’s works, it is Valenzuela’s “The Key” that I argue best highlights the most significant feminist themes of Bluebeard revisionism, particularly that of trauma. Unlike many revisions of Bluebeard, including Carter’s, Valenzuela’s story takes place centuries after Bluebeard’s wife entered the forbidden room. Valenzuela’s story is less focused on escaping the violence of a murderous

Bluebeard as the narrator has already entered the forbidden room and defeated Bluebeard (145). Instead, opening with the line, “[o]ne dies a thousand deaths. I, for one, die almost daily,” “The Key” revises the Bluebeard tale to focus on its legacy, to consider trauma as violence, and to emphasize female camaraderie and voice when facing patriarchal oppression and abuse (145). Ostriker writes that “[a] more central set of preoccupations [of feminist revisions] concerns female-female relationships and the relation of the female to suppressed dimensions of her own identity” (74). As a feminist revision of the Bluebeard tale, these are the central concerns of “The Key.”

The protagonist of “The Key” is a motivational speaker who holds seminars for “fairly large audiences, almost entirely female,” where she tells her story of escaping Bluebeard and his castle and helps other women to tell theirs (145). Her story is in the distant past, at least three hundred years in the past, as she mentions Perrault by name as the “first to tell my story.” She clarifies, though, that Perrault told it wrong and that “now I tell my own story” (146). She reveals that in his telling of the story, particularly in the first of his morals, Perrault emphasized her “defect” or her “sin,” which we know to be her curiosity or agency. The narrator reclaims ownership of this “defect” explaining, “I have made a virtue of a sin” (147). Maria Tatar writes of the protagonist, “This is a woman who recognizes that ignorance is not bliss” (23). The narrator of “The Key” makes clear that it was her curiosity and her agency that saved her own life, clarifying that she was not saved by her brothers but rather “I saved myself, perhaps in order to save all women a little” (147). Consistent with the tradition of the feminist revisionism of Bluebeard, Valenzuela’s narrator revises Perrault’s notion of cursed curiosity to an inquisitiveness and agency that all women must possess in order to save themselves.

The narrator of “The Key” has left behind Bluebeard’s castle but nevertheless carries it with her as a symbol of her past traumas and proof of her courage and endurance. It is this latter element that is significant—the act of revising those things designed to condemn and curse women, turning them into objects that empower and liberate them. The symbol of the key is central to this. As I argued in chapter 1, the key of the Bluebeard tale, with its blood that does not wash off, is a complicated artifact because of what it represents: significantly, that it can represent either the guilt of Bluebeard’s wife or the guilt of Bluebeard. The blood on the key at once evidences the wife’s disobedience for entering the forbidden room and Bluebeard’s murders, for it is he who spills the blood that stains the key. Perrault’s version of the tale, of course, prioritizes the former representation, but Valenzuela rejects such a reading.

In “The Key,” the narrator constructs a test for the women at her seminar by providing them with a set of keys to take home overnight. On the chain is a golden key to a secret room, which the narrator forbids them from using. The next day, she asks the women to report on what they did with the keys. Inevitably, the women are reluctant to reveal the golden key, now stained with blood from the forbidden room that they all, like Bluebeard’s wife, tried to wash off. In telling the women not to use the golden key, the narrator knows that they will because “they know that they have to” (151). They must enter the forbidden room in order to understand their traumas and the men who cause them. This is the same moral from the oral version of the Bluebeard tale. What Valenzuela’s story contributes is the insistence that women must stand by and embrace their decision to enter the forbidden room. After all the other women at the seminar sheepishly reveal that they entered the forbidden room, the narrator tells of one woman

who “raises her arm as high as the mast of a ship, and in her hand the blood on her key shines more brightly than the key itself” (151). This woman’s pride stands apart from the rest and the narrator applauds and cries a tear of joy. This woman has revised her key and the blood that stains it from the symbol of guilt that Perrault and others turned it into and instead transformed it into something empowering. The woman holds up her bloody key “with a pride that is not without sadness” as powerful evidence that she embraced her curiosity and exercised her agency and that the result of doing so saved her life (151).

With her seminars, the narrator’s goal is not simply to comfort women trapped in abusive relationships, married to Bluebeards. Her goal is instead to reveal that doing what Bluebeard forbids is necessary to survival and that women should stand by those actions with pride. In chapter 1, I suggested that the way an author of a Bluebeard tale depicts the bloody key is often an indication of the feminist motivations of the story. In Valenzuela’s story, the idea that the bloody key indicates the guilt of Bluebeard’s wife is eradicated, transforming it into an empowering symbol that might encourage more women to follow the lead of Bluebeard’s wife. Rather than guilt, the blood on the key now symbolizes courage, femininity, or the importance of curiosity. The narrator’s claim that she “dies almost daily” emphasizes the trauma that her time spent in Bluebeard’s castle caused. But by acknowledging that trauma and the violence of Bluebeard, the narrator of “The Key” is able to not only escape Bluebeard and his castle and the patriarchal institutions they represent but also empower other women to do the same. The narrator does not merely need to escape Bluebeard’s castle like Riding’s and Le Guin’s Eves escape Eden and Adam. She also needs to remember the castle and its traumas and condemn both

Bluebeard and Perrault—the man who tried to kill her and the man who tried to tell her story—so that she can help other women to escape similar oppression.

The Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's Castle in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

The fact that these images of the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle are symbolically incompatible yet frequently play a similar part in revisions raises the question of what happens when an author revises the Eden and Bluebeard myths together. As I explored in chapter 2, Brontë revises both myths in *Jane Eyre*. However, Brontë cleverly avoids depicting Eden and Bluebeard's castle as the same place. Instead, she separates the two locations—Jane finds herself in Bluebeard's castles at Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, and Moor House, the same places she encounters Bluebeards in John Reed (and Mrs. Reed), Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester, and St. John. Jane's Eden is an entirely separate location at Ferndean, where Rochester is no longer a Bluebeard. This geographical distinction between Bluebeard's castle and Ferndean allows Brontë to separate the usefulness of the Bluebeardian influence from her application of Eden. This effort is of course driven by Brontë's faithful devotion to her religion—for her to suggest that Eden is at all like Bluebeard's castle would disrupt her Christian ideal for heterosexual marriage and would be potentially blasphemous. Brontë's solution to the problem of Eden and Bluebeard's castle, paradise and hell, being the same place is to put literal geographical distance between them so that they are, quite simply, not the same place. In other words, Brontë cleverly avoids the question, despite her novel including revisions of both the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale.

For an example of a truly intersecting revision of the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle, I turn to Winterson's semiautobiographical novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. *Oranges* is a multifaceted bildungsroman, following not only young Jeanette's evolution from child to young adult but also her deconstruction of her inherited religion and her realization and controversial embrace of her sexuality as a lesbian woman. Jeanette is raised in a strict Pentecostal Christian community, one that carefully manages all its behaviors in a way that adheres to the rules dictated in the Bible, or at least according to the way the leaders of that community have interpreted the Bible. One of the most prominent leaders in this community is Jeanette's mother, who adopts Jeanette with the goal that Jeanette will grow up to be a missionary. From the start, then, Jeanette's mother designs her daughter's life around this religion, creating obstacles for the different elements of Jeanette's bildungsroman. Following in the tradition of twentieth-century short fictionists like Riding, Le Guin, and Valenzuela who emphasize place and departure in their Eden and Bluebeard revisions, Winterson revises the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle together, transforming a perceived notion of a patriarchal paradise into an intensely homophobic religious community. The elements of Jeanette's bildungsroman, whether growing up, growing away from faith, or coming out, are characterized by her gradual recognition that the home she thought was paradise is actually a Bluebeard's castle. Driven by her desire for free sexual expression, Jeanette rejects the teachings that her forbidden sexuality is sinful. But in order to heal and move on from the trauma caused by the oppression she has experienced, she must recognize her home is not the Edenic paradise she believed it to be but rather a Bluebeard's castle.

The first act of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* constructs a fascinating and unusual setting—a deeply religious Pentecostal Christian community where women hold most positions of authority, even to the point of preaching in the church. This makes Bluebeard difficult to locate. Because there are few male characters in the novel, *Oranges* differs from most of the Bluebeard tradition in that Bluebeard himself does not initially appear to take the shape of patriarchy or masculine authority. Instead, Bluebeard is more closely linked to God or this version of the Christian religion. Heta Pyrhönen notes that, in the novel, “God is associated with Bluebeard, whose self-appointed representative is the protagonist-narrator’s (step)mother” (160). As a result, Jeanette’s mother is the primary stand-in for Bluebeard, doing most of the forbidding and determining some of Jeanette’s punishments. This, combined with the general absence of male characters in the novel, complicates the novel’s identity as a potentially feminist text. However, the bond between religion and patriarchy is ultimately reestablished by the novel’s end. To find Bluebeard in this novel, one must look first to what is forbidden, who has forbidden it, and why it was forbidden.

To find what is forbidden, one does not have to look very far. Jeanette’s natural tendency toward forbidden things is the driving force behind the novel’s inciting incidents, which grants the Eden myth a secure place in the novel. Like *Jane Eyre*, the presence of the Bible is felt throughout *Oranges* thanks to its setting in a religious community. Unlike *Jane Eyre*, however, the majority of Biblical allusions and references comes from the New Testament, likely due to the fact that the New Testament is where the Bible’s homophobic quotations are most easily accessible for evangelicals (Bollinger 365). In the Pentecostal Christian community Jeanette is born into, lesbianism is strictly

forbidden. Zaydun Al-Shara observes that the novel's use of fruit as a symbol for sexuality suggests a use of the Eden myth: "Winterson draws a clear and direct connection to Adam and Eve and the Lost Paradise ... [Jeanette's] lesbianism is violating the strict orders to stay away from the fruit" (241). Indeed, at a pivotal point when Jeanette is about to begin her first sexual relationship with a woman while having the knowledge that doing so is forbidden, the novel's narration draws on an image of a "secret garden" that is "on the banks of the Euphrates," at the center of which is an orange tree—a clear allusion to the idyllic garden from Genesis (125). Alluding to Eden at such a point in the novel makes clear that this narrative is concerned with doing what is forbidden, and in this case what is forbidden is Jeanette's sexuality.

Jeanette's first independent attempt to understand sexuality creates the clearest presence of the Bluebeard tale in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Repeatedly told she will one day find "the right man," Jeanette is puzzled because she has generally found men gross and uninteresting. Elsewhere in the novel, Jeanette's Christian devotion has her draw upon scripture to find most of her answers but, like Jane Eyre, she turns to fairy tales to find answers that the Bible does not seem to provide. She goes to the library and discovers a version of Beauty and the Beast. While reading it, however, Jeanette is confused by the part of the tale where the ugly beast transforms into a beautiful prince after the young woman kisses him. Thinking of people like her Uncle Bill, she recognizes that that transformation doesn't always take place. She asks, "What do you do if you marry a beast? Kissing them didn't always help" (73-74). In interrogating this point, Jeanette is questioning the tradition of animal groom tales. Significantly, she is asking the same question of them that the Bluebeard tale asks: what happens when the beast is

actually a beast? This apparent presence of the Bluebeard tale, one where Winterson puts Jeanette in the position of the original writers of the tale, allows Jeanette to rationalize her lack of affinity for men outside of her lesbianism. I argue, however, that this signal to Bluebeard, alongside the clear presence of the Eden myth, rationalizes the influence of the Bluebeard tale in this story about a young woman who does what is forbidden.

Ultimately, Jeanette is not bothered by her lack of affinity for men as she is confident it is yet another sign that she is destined to be fully devoted to God in a life of celibate missionary work, according to her mother's design. "Born" and raised in such a setting, Jeanette is at once Eve and Bluebeard's wife. As Eve, Jeanette is raised in this setting and is subsequently devoted to it at the novel's start. She preaches, she believes her destiny is to be a missionary, she has an inflated sense of righteousness, she views this community as her entire world, and she loves her life. She is in a sort of paradise. As she gets older, Jeanette moves about this paradise doing God's work, like Eve does in the Garden. Following her mother's wishes, Jeanette preaches and trains to be a missionary, aligning her more closely with Eve than with Bluebeard's wife. Like Eve, Jeanette is initially content to enjoy the Garden and do what she is told to do, unlike Bluebeard's wife, who instantly ignores the treasures for the forbidden chamber. The circumstances of Jeanette's "birth," however, more closely align her with Bluebeard's wife. As an adopted child, Jeanette's mother brings Jeanette in from an outside world and for a specific purpose: to become a missionary and to do the work that Jeanette's mother "cannot" do.

Jeanette's adoption is significant because it allows her mother to have a child through "immaculate conception," thus shielding her from the one thing that she forbids above all else: sex. The first page of the novel reveals that sex is one of the mother's

great enemies, a position that carries over to her view of the conception of children. The mother's distaste, even hatred, for sex is further emphasized by her treatment of *Jane Eyre*. *Jane Eyre* is the mother's favorite book and so she reads it aloud to young Jeanette. When doing so, however, she alters the ending so that Jane does not return to Rochester but instead accepts St. John's proposal of a loveless marriage and goes with him to India. Pyrhönen argues that Jeanette's mother does this to "support her notion of sexuality and sexual passion as sin" (161). According to the mother, "[T]he body and sexuality are altogether sinful, as they are also for St John" (Pyrhönen 163). Apparently electing to ignore Jane's suspicion that St. John would make Jane endure "all the forms of love," Jeanette's mother views St. John's proposal to Jane as ideal because a loveless marriage, one existing solely to glorify God, is also a sexless marriage (Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 469). Her attitude toward the body and sex becomes particularly apparent during the comical scene when Jeanette, her mother, and Mrs. White hear the next-door neighbors "fornicating." Jeanette's mother immediately sends Jeanette out to get ice cream so her daughter won't hear the neighbors' activity, then begins to play and sing hymns loudly in an attempt to drown out the noise. Jeanette's mother considers many worldly things evil, but in particular, as Laura Doan puts it, "sex, even in marriage, must be avoided at all costs" (143). She remains faithful to this belief, herself part of a sexless marriage.

The mother's treatment of sex is one of extreme abstinence—not only abstaining from engaging in it but also from discussing or acknowledging it. The combination of sex being forbidden and the degree of even conversational abstinence that the mother practices results in sex being forbidden in much the same way that Bluebeard's chamber is forbidden. Bluebeard forbids his wife from entering his secret chamber and does so

without telling her what is inside, but he gives her the key that would unlock the door: circumstances designed to pique her curiosity. Jeanette's mother's treatment of sex is much the same. Jeanette has a natural capacity for sex, but her mother forbids Jeanette from it, does not tell Jeanette what it is, and yet frequently does things that would certainly make Jeanette even more curious. For example, her mother keeps a photo album of past romantic flings and tells Jeanette about the individuals in much the same way that Rochester tells Jane about his previous lovers, even to the point of implying that the mother herself might be a repressed lesbian (Backus 136). What results is Jeanette's curiosity and natural attraction toward sex but without any knowledge of it that might allow her to recognize sex when she inevitably encounters it.

I focus on sex rather than lesbianism to acknowledge that it is the former that Jeanette's mother forbids above all else. In this case, Jeanette's lesbianism is only a modifier to that part of her that is already forbidden, though it is of course a significant one. Having Jeanette be a lesbian intensifies the forbidden nature of her relationship with sex and potentially makes Jeanette's story applicable to more versions of Christianity (and other oppressive religions) than the mother's strict Pentecostal variety. Lesbianism, of course, receives a similar treatment to sex in the way that Jeanette's mother and those in her community discuss it: significantly, they don't. When those in Jeanette's community are forced to confront lesbianism in some way, like with the two women who run the local paper shop, they opt to refer to it vaguely, using the phrase "unnatural passions" but without any further discussion of what such a phrase entails, either sexually or relationally (6). Pyrhönen observes that Jeanette's mother "warns Jeanette against 'Abominations and Unmentionables' (41), 'unnatural passions' (O 7, 83), and the like.

Yet in a manner similar to Bluebeard, she continually piques Jeanette's curiosity" (Pyrhönen 164). Like sex, lesbianism is avoided in such a way that may prompt curiosity but ultimately results in ignorance.

Because information regarding sex and lesbianism is as forbidden as the things themselves, Jeanette does not recognize sex and lesbianism when she encounters them firsthand. Pyrhönen notes that "Jeanette does not intentionally break her promise not to explore sexuality. Thanks to the mother's reticence, Jeanette does not even know exactly what is forbidden" (166). When Jeanette falls in love and begins having sex with her first partner, Melanie, she does not understand her behavior to be any of the things her mother has forbidden. Instead, immersed in a religion that credits God for any blessings, Jeanette believes Melanie to be "a gift from the Lord" and figures "it would be ungrateful not to appreciate her" (104). Not only does Jeanette reconcile her sexual relationship with Melanie with her faith but she even "understands her love for Melanie to be closely bound up with her love of God" (Pyrhönen 167). Jeanette's narration describes her first sexual encounter with Melanie by quoting the Biblical creation story: "And it was evening and it was morning; another day" (92). Shortly after, Jeanette asks Melanie if she thinks what they do together is "Unnatural Passion," and they both agree it isn't because what they're doing doesn't feel wrong (92). Jeanette is taught that good things come from the Lord, and since her sexual relationship seems in every way to be a good thing, and since she has not been told what sex or lesbianism are, she believes her sexual relationship with Melanie to be a gift from God. In both the Eden and Bluebeard myths, it is made explicit to Eve and Bluebeard's wife that eating the fruit and entering the secret chamber are forbidden. Reading this novel as a revision of Eden and Bluebeard, then,

Jeanette's first sexual encounter with Melanie does not align with Eve's eating the forbidden fruit nor with Bluebeard's wife's entering the forbidden chamber because at this point Jeanette does not recognize that what she does is forbidden.

Jeanette does eat the forbidden fruit and enter the forbidden chamber later when she decides to pursue her sexuality after it is made explicit that doing so is forbidden. Shortly after her sexual relationship with Melanie begins, Jeanette's mother and the church learn about it, publicly humiliate the two girls in front of the congregation during a Sunday service, and subsequently perform a days-long exorcism to free Jeanette of her "demons." In a wonderful bit of ironic writing, it is during this exorcism that Jeanette first acquires her demon, as well as the brown pebble it gives to her. The demon Jeanette meets is described as the "orange demon." According to lore that Winterson here invents, the orange demon is the "demon that beguiles" (108). As a beguiler, we can immediately relate the orange demon to the serpent from the Eden myth, a relationship further emphasized by some advice the orange demon gives to Jeanette. After Jeanette cites the Bible to contradict something the orange demon has said, it blasphemously challenges the word of God by telling her, "Don't believe all you read," recalling the serpent's questioning of God's claim that Adam and Eve will die if they eat the forbidden fruit (109; Gen. 3.4). Additionally, during this interaction with the orange demon, the demon gifts Jeanette a brown pebble. For the rest of the novel, at any point when Jeanette must face judgement from her mother and the pastors and fight in order to embrace her sexuality, the brown pebble appears, with Jeanette clutching it tightly in her pocket. The brown pebble thus becomes a symbol of Jeanette's justification in doing what was forbidden, just as feminist revisionists of Bluebeard have revised the bloody key to be a

symbol of women's righteous agency in opposing those who oppress her. It is after this exorcism, after it is made clear to Jeanette that sex and lesbianism are forbidden, and after she receives the brown pebble, that Jeanette first eats the forbidden fruit and enters the forbidden room by embracing her sexuality and returning to Melanie.

By eating the forbidden fruit and entering the forbidden room, Jeanette first begins to question whether her home is actually a Bluebeard's castle, but her mother is careful to affirm its Edenic identification. Initially, happy pages follow Jeanette's encounter with the orange demon and her gift of the brown pebble. Though Melanie is sent away, Jeanette redeems her position as a leader in the church, starts preaching again, and begins her "most uncomplicated love affair" with Katy (126). Jeanette lives in quiet disagreement with her mother and church, believing there to be nothing wrong with her lesbianism and engaging with that side of herself in secret, with the help of her brown pebble. Eventually, however, Jeanette's mother and church find out about her relationship with Katy and Jeanette is ordered to repent and reject her lesbianism. "[Holding] on tight to the little brown pebble," Jeanette instead tells her mother and the pastor that she is leaving the church (138). She initially intends to remain at home since she has nowhere else to go, but her mother instead kicks her out (139). Like God angry with his children for sinning, Jeanette's mother sends Jeanette out of Eden to fend for herself. This action is significant because it reinforces the mother's perception that her home, church, and community are a sort of paradisiacal Eden. Since Jeanette is a sinner and "not holy," she has no place in this Eden and must be kicked out. By identifying her place as an Eden, Jeanette's mother fights against the idea that her home and church is a Bluebeard's castle. Winterson begins this chapter with a quote from *Alice in Wonderland's* Queen of Hearts,

who tells Alice: “Either you or your head must be off” (128). If her church and community were a Bluebeard’s castle, then Jeanette’s head must be off. But instead, Jeanette’s mother reaffirms the Edenic identification of her home by doing as God does and sending Jeanette out of Eden. Doing so establishes for the mother that Jeanette is the one at fault and that the mother’s way of life can remain holy if she simply sends the sinner out of the Garden.

Upon leaving Eden, however, Jeanette’s life improves, much like Riding and Le Guin suggest happens for Eve. She finds work, has financial success (like Jane Eyre and Bluebeard’s wife), pursues her sexuality, and ultimately creates a better life for herself. Like Eve, she is cursed when sent out, but unlike Eve and like Bluebeard’s wife, Jeanette’s life improves after she does what was forbidden. Once out, she is able to embrace her sexuality. Her work driving an ice cream truck recalls when she was sent to the ice cream truck to escape the first time she encountered the idea of sex, and it is implied that Jeanette has found a new partner, someone to walk with in the city (163). Her other job, working at the funeral parlor, is significant because it means Jeanette often finds herself in a room of corpses, like Bluebeard’s wife. The parlor is also called Elysium Fields, named after the pagan paradise, implying that Jeanette has found a new paradise away from the one that her home religion had conceived. Simply put, she discovers that the Garden of Eden was not in fact a paradise because after she leaves that supposed paradise, her life improves. By entering the forbidden chamber, Jeanette receives knowledge that leads her to a better life, one where she can embrace her sexuality. Pyrhönen suggests, then, that “what Jeanette finds in the forbidden chamber is

not violence and murder, but beauty and fulfilment,” because the knowledge she acquires there allows her to escape the Bluebeard’s castle where she was held prisoner (166).

Beyond her realization that life is better away from home, home also begins to reveal itself to be something other than a paradise, and specifically, a Bluebeard’s castle. Miss Jewsbury, a closeted lesbian woman who plays oboe at the church, is an indication of what would happen if Jeanette had not left. As a woman who has spent her life in this community with her lesbianism forcibly suppressed, that part of Miss Jewsbury has been trapped and murdered, like Bluebeard’s previous wives. Furthermore, the traditional identification of Bluebeard with patriarchy is reestablished after news spreads of what has happened with Jeanette. After consulting the higher up council on what to do with Jeanette, Pastor Finch is told that “the real problem ... was going against the teachings of St Paul, and allowing women power in the church” (135). Even Jeanette’s lesbianism is blamed on this. Speaking with a certain sarcasm, Jeanette narrates, “So there I was, my success in the pulpit being the reason for my downfall. The devil had attacked me at my weakest point: my inability to realise the limitations of my sex” (136). As a result, women are removed from their positions of authority in the church. Pyrhönen writes that when “the mother and the congregation find out about Jeanette’s lesbianism ... they all wholeheartedly submit to patriarchal law in accusing Jeanette of usurping male prerogative” (165). Even the objection to lesbianism becomes a misogynistic one because, by being with another woman, Jeanette is taking the rightful place of a man in much the same way she has taken a man’s place by preaching from a pulpit. Along with all the other women in the church, Jeanette’s mother stands by this resolve so firmly that, in addition to condemning her child, she is willing to give up her position of authority.

That patriarchy and masculinism secure a foothold in this church community is the final evidence that Jeanette's first home was not the paradisiacal Garden of Eden she initially believed it to be but rather a Bluebeard's castle where women are deceived into believing they are in a treasure-adorned paradise only to find themselves trapped and murdered in a secret chamber for venturing where they should not have. The novel concludes with Jeanette's mother, having forfeited all her religious authority, waiting obediently to receive religious instruction from a radio broadcast. Though the mother still condemns Jeanette's sexuality, the novel concludes in a way that shifts the identity of Bluebeard away from the mother and back onto a more clearly patriarchal institution. This is, perhaps, what justifies Jeanette's desire to reunite with her mother, exercising the faithfulness of the old testament Ruth (Bollinger 364). Indeed, at the novel's conclusion, Jeanette's mother seems yet another victim of Bluebeard, unwavering in her Christian beliefs but now without her power—believing herself to be in the Garden of Eden, but trapped in Bluebeard's castle, unwilling or unable to enter the forbidden chamber.

Jeanette's recognition of the difference between the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle, that what she thought was paradise is instead a castle of dungeons and murder, is the defining aspect of her bildungsroman. With the recognition that her home is a Bluebeard's castle, she is able to understand and begin to heal from the trauma this home caused. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a story about growing up, coming out, and deconstructing religion, but Jeanette is unable to do any of these until she realizes the difference between the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle. Like Riding's and Le Guin's Eves, she recognizes that her home is not a paradise that benefits her. And, like Valenzuela's narrator, she recognizes the violence she endured when trapped inside

Bluebeard's castle. With this recognition, she is able to leave that home behind her and revise it into a symbol of her past traumas. Once this is done, she can use her story, perhaps in the form of this novel, to inspire and encourage other women to do the same. Twentieth-century feminist revisions of the Eden myth and the Bluebeard tale like Riding's, Le Guin's, Valenzuela's, and Winterson's emphasize the importance of recognizing the differences between the Garden of Eden, a patriarchal paradise, and its more explicitly violent brother, Bluebeard's castle. It is through this recognition that women like Eve, Bluebeard's wife, and Jeanette can escape, heal from the traumas caused, and share their stories to help other women do the same.

CONCLUSION:

RAISING THE BLOODY KEY: THE EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF FEMINIST
 REVISION OF THE EDEN MYTH AND THE BLUEBEARD TALE

In my discussion of Luisa Valenzuela's "The Key" in the previous chapter, I vaguely implied that the narrator is Bluebeard's wife, an implication that can be read as both true and false. It is true in the sense that the narrator recounts being "married off to a huge, powerful man," that she used a key to "uncover the mystery of the locked room," or that she inherited "my husband's fortune" and distributed it among her family (146, 148-49). What complicates a reading of the narrator as merely Bluebeard's wife, however, are pragmatics. The narrator mentions Perrault by name as "the first to tell my story" around "the end of the seventeenth century," meaning her story, and she herself would have to be more than three hundred years old (146). Simply viewing the narrator as a mortal human, then, is impossible, which prompts the reader to consider exactly who or what she might be.

I argue "The Key" encourages a reading where the narrator is not necessarily Bluebeard's wife but rather the Bluebeard tale itself. The narrator explains that "I owe the fact that I am still around to tell the tale (or so that the tale can be told) to the very circumstance for which I have so often been and still am condemned" (145). If the narrator is Bluebeard's wife, then the circumstance for which she has been condemned might be her curiosity or the simple fact that she dared to enter the forbidden room. But if the narrator is also a personification of the Bluebeard tale, then the circumstance for which she has been condemned is the fact that like Bluebeard's wife she dared to do what was forbidden by telling a story where a woman challenges patriarchal authority, acts of

her own volition to save herself, and is justified and rewarded for doing so. The history of the feminist revisionism of the Bluebeard tale shows that women have for centuries used this tale and the role model of Bluebeard's wife to empower other women to embrace their curiosity and view the bloody key as a liberating symbol, just as it was for the woman who raised the key high in the air "with a pride that was not without sadness" (Valenzuela 151). Valenzuela's "The Key" personifies the Bluebeard tale to show the incredible influence the tale can have and has had for women and for feminists, an influence which recognizes the trauma caused by oppressive patriarchy but provides hope for liberation and a key to escape.

By personifying the Bluebeard tale as a woman who holds what are essentially feminist liberation seminars, "The Key" emphasizes the "emancipatory potential" of the Bluebeard tale as something which has had and continues to have the ability to empower women to challenge those patriarchal institutions that oppress them (Rochère 154). In acknowledging the longevity of the tale, the narrator suggests that "I must have done something right to survive to the end of the twentieth century" (145-46). The Bluebeard tale has lasted to the end of the twentieth century and beyond because it dares to do what few other tales have done. The "something she did right" is to tell a story about a woman who subverts patriarchal authority and is right to do so. Like the narrator who uses her story to inspire women to challenge the men who abuse both women and their stories, the Bluebeard tale has similarly been used as a source of inspiration for women authors wanting to challenge the patriarchal authorities that oppress them. Through her protagonist, Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë sought to challenge patriarchal authorities that attempt to control women in matters of religion and marriage by painting such men as

Bluebeards, as I argued in chapter 2. And through her protagonist, Jeanette, Jeanette Winterson sought to challenge a patriarchal Christianity that condemns homosexuality by depicting such religious communities as Bluebeard's castles, as I argued in chapter 3.

The purpose of this thesis is to show the radical emancipatory potential of the Bluebeard tale as a work of feminism: both the tale itself as well as its history. One of the primary reasons the tale has such emancipatory potential and carries such a resounding feminist message is because of its relationship with and origins in the Eden myth. In chapter 1, I argued that the oral tale is an early example of feminist revisionism, specifically one that revised the Eden myth. That revision is one which repaints Eve as Bluebeard's wife and celebrates her for her rebellious act of eating the forbidden fruit. Since the Eden myth, which implicitly claims to be humanity's first story, has for millennia been used to condemn women for causing the "fall of man," it has also been used for just as long to rationalize patriarchy and subsequently oppress women (Cornell 93, Phillips 30, 36). In the Christian tradition alone, for example, this reading of the Eden myth—one that condemns all women and justifies patriarchy by condemning Eve—has been taken by writers considered to be more extremist, like Tertullian, as well as by writers who are more broadly accepted and have earned placement in the Christian Bible, like St. Paul (Duggan 216; 1 Tim. 2; Eph. 5). Considering the Eden myth's historical ties to misogyny, then the feminist revisionists who revised the Eden myth into the original oral version of Bluebeard—a tale that praises its heroine for her curiosity—must have done so as an act of rebellious feminism, one that rejects the Eden myth and all the misogyny that has resulted from it. The Bluebeard tale rewrites the Eden myth to not only reward Eve for her actions but to celebrate her and all women who challenge patriarchal

authorities and institutions. Celebrating Eve's curiosity and disobedience by transforming her into Bluebeard's wife, the oral tale also recognizes that the Garden of Eden, which is man's paradise, is the same place as Bluebeard's castle, which is women's hell.

These symbolic identifications between Eden and paradise and Bluebeard's castle and hell occur because the Garden of Eden and Bluebeard's castle share an identification with patriarchal institutions, a shared identification that makes intersecting revisions of the two possible. The Garden of Eden, or Paradise, has a traditional association with heterosexual marriage. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton's Satan acknowledges this association: "Those two / imparadised in one another's arms / The happier Eden" (4.505-07). Brontë's *Jane Eyre* maintains this association between heterosexual marriage and paradise as revealed by the novel's conclusion in the paradisiacal Ferndean, a paradise made possible by her marriage to Rochester. As a work of feminist revisionism, what Brontë objects to is not heterosexual marriage broadly, but heterosexual marriage when it operates as a patriarchal institution that benefits men before it does women, which is why she rejects St. John's and Rochester's proposals (see chapter 2). Similarly, in many versions of the fairy tale, after Bluebeard has been eliminated and Bluebeard's wife inherits his wealth, she remarries to "a very worthy gentleman," implying not all marriages are bad, just marriages to Bluebeards (86). Heterosexual marriage has the capacity, perhaps even a tendency, to oppress women, yet it bears a traditional identification with paradise, which is likely why it has been such a prominent focus of feminist revisions of Eden and Bluebeard. Whether it be heterosexual marriage or something else, however, what the original oral version of the Bluebeard tale, *Jane Eyre*, "Eve's Side of It," "She Unnames Them," "The Key," *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*,

and countless other feminist revisions of Eve and Bluebeard's wife all object to are those patriarchal institutions that construct a paradise that depends upon the oppression of women.

Past studies of the Bluebeard tale have acknowledged the remarkable feminism that the Bluebeard tale models and inspires. My thesis, however, is the first investigation into the Bluebeard tradition to focus on the tale's relationship with the Eden myth and to argue that much of the reason that the Bluebeard tale's feminism rings so clearly and so loudly is because of its ties to the Eden myth. If the original oral version of the Bluebeard tale was modeled after the Eden myth, then it is by all means a feminist revision of the myth since it so profoundly rejects the misogyny traditionally associated with the Eden myth. If this is true, then the tale's uniquely feminist messages have not only been around since the tale was conceived, but its rejection of patriarchy and celebration of female curiosity and agency were in fact the purpose behind the Bluebeard tale's conception. One can still embrace the feminism of the Bluebeard tradition by investigating the tale alone. But only by recognizing the close ties that the Bluebeard tale has to the Eden myth can one understand just how powerful the tale and its history are as works and acts of feminism.

APPENDIX A
CHARLES PERRAULT'S "BLUEBEARD"

Translation by Robert Samber (1729)

There was a man who had fine houses, both in town and country, a deal of silver and gold plate, embroidered furniture, and coached gilded all over with gold. But this man had the misfortune to have a Blue Beard, which made him so frightfully ugly, that all the women and girls ran away from him.

One of his neighbours, a lady of quality had two daughters who were perfect beauties. He desired of her one of them in marriage, leaving to her the choice which of the two she would bestow upon him. They would neither of them have him, and sent him backwards and forwards from one to another, being not able to bear the thoughts of marrying a man who had a Blue Beard. And what besides gave them disgust and aversion, was his having already been married to several wives, and no-body ever knew what became of them.

Blue Beard, to engage their affection, took them, with the lady their mother, and three or four ladies of their acquaintance, with other young people of the neighbourhood, to one of his country-seats, where they stayed a whole week. There was nothing then to be seen but parties of pleasure, hunting, fishing, dancing, mirth and feasting. No-body went to bed, but all passed the night in rallying and joking with each other: In short, every thing succeeded so well, that the youngest daughter began to think, the master of the house not to have a Beard so very Blue, and that he was a mighty civil gentleman.

As soon as they returned home, the marriage was concluded. About a month afterwards Blue Beard told his wife, that he was obliged to take a country-journey for six weeks at least, about affairs of very great consequence, desiring her to divert herself in

his absence, to send for her friends & acquaintances, to carry them into the country, if she pleased, and to make good cheer where-ever she was: "Here," said he, "are the keys of the two great wardrobes, wherein I have my best furniture; these are of my silver and gold plate, which not every day in use; these open my strong boxes, which hold my money, both gold and silver; these my caskets of jewels; and this is the master-key to all my apartments: But for this little one here, it is the key of the closet at the end of the great gallery on the ground floor. Open them all; go into all and every one of them; except that little closet which I forbid you, and forbid it in such a manner that, if you happen to open it, there's nothing but what you may expect from my just anger and resentment." She promised to observe, very exactly, whatever he had ordered; when he, after having embraced her, got into his coach and proceeded on his journey.

Her neighbours and good friends did not stay to be sent for by the newmarried lady, so great was their impatience to see all the rich furniture of her house, not daring to come while her husband was there, because of his Blue Beard which frightened them. They ran thro' all the rooms, closets, and wardrobe, which were all so rich and fine, that they seemed to surpass one another. After that, they went up into the two great rooms, where were the best and richest furniture; they could not sufficiently admire the number and beauty of the tapestry, beds, couches, cabinets, stands, tables and looking-glasses, in which you might see yourself from head to foot; some of them were framed with glass, others with silver, plain and gilded, the finest and most magnificent which were ever seen. They ceased not to extol and envy the happiness of their friend, who in the mean time no way diverted herself in looking upon all these rich things, because of the impatience she had to go and open the closet of the ground floor. She was so much

pressed by her curiosity, that, without considering that it was very uncivil to leave her company, she went down a little back-stair-case, and with such excessive haste, that she had twice or thrice like to have broken her neck.

Being come to the closet door, she made a stop for some time, thinking upon her husband's orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her if she was disobedient; but the temptation was so strong she could not overcome it: She took then the little key, and opened it trembling; but could not at first see any thing plainly, because the windows were shut. After some moments she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over with clotted blood, on which lay the bodies of several dead women ranged against the walls: (These were all the wives whom Blue Beard had married and murdered one after another.) She thought she should have died for fear, and the key, which she pulled out of the lock, fell out of her hand.

After having somewhat recovered from her surprise, she took up the key, locked the door, and went up stairs into her chamber to recover herself; but she could not, so much was she frightened. Having observed that the key of the closet was stained with blood, she tried two or three times to wipe it off, but the blood would not come out; in vain did she wash it, and even rub it with soap and sand, the blood still remained, for the key was a Fairy, and she could never make it quite clean; when the blood was gone off from one side, it came again on the other.

Blue Beard returned from his journey the same evening, and said, he had received letters upon the road, informing him that the affair he went about was ended to his advantage. His wife did all she could to convince him she was extremely glad of his speedy return. Next morning he asked her for the keys, which she gave him, but with

such a trembling hand, that he easily guessed what had happened. “What,” said he, “is not the key of my closet among the rest?” “I must certainly,” answered she, “have left it above upon the table.” “Fail not,” said Blue Beard, “to bring it me presently.”

After several goings backward and forwards, she was forced to bring him the key. Blue Beard, having very attentively considered it, said to his wife; “How comes this blood upon the key?” “I do not know,” cried the poor woman, paler than death. “You do not know,” replied Blue Beard, “I very well know, you was resolved to go into the closet, was you not? Mighty well, Madam; you shall go in, and take your place among the ladies you saw there.”

Upon this she threw herself at her husband’s feet, and begged his pardon with all the signs of a true repentance, and that she would never more be disobedient. She would have melted a rock, so beautiful and sorrowful was she; but Blue Beard had a heart harder than any rock! “Thou must die, Madam,” said he, “and that presently.” “Since I must die,” answered she (looking upon him with her eyes all bathed in tears) “give me some little time to say my prayers.” “I give you,” replied Blue Beard, “half a quarter of an hour, but not one moment more.”

When she was alone, she called out to her sister, and said to her, “Sister Anne (for that was her name) “go up I beg you, upon the top of the tower, and look if my brothers are not coming; they promised me that they would come to day, and if you see them, give them a sign to make haste.” Her sister Anne went up upon the top of the tower, and the poor afflicted wife cried out from time to time, “Anne, sister Anne, do you see any one coming?” And sister Anne said, “I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass, which looks green.”

In the mean while Blue Beard, holding a great scimitar in his hand, cried out as loud as he could bawl to his wife, "Come down instantly, or I shall come up to you." "One moment longer, if you please," said his wife, and then she cried out very softly, "Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see any body coming?" And sister Anne answered, "I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass looking green." "Come down quickly, cried Blue beard, "or I will come up to you." "I am coming," answered his wife; and then she cried, "Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see any one coming?" "I see," replied sister Anne, "a great dust that comes on this side here." – "Are they my brothers?" "Alas! no, my dear sister, I see a flock of sheep." "Will you not come down?" cried Blue Beard. "One moment longer," said his wife, and then she cried out, "Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see nobody coming?" "I see," said she, "two horsemen coming, but they are yet a great way off." "God be praised," replied the poor wife, joyfully, "they are my brothers; I will make them a sign, as well as I can, for them to make haste." Then Blue Beard bawled out so loud, that he made the whole house tremble.

The distressed wife came down, and threw herself at his feet, all in tears, with her hair about her shoulders: "This signifies nothing," says Blue Beard, "you must die;" then, taking hold of her hair with one hand, and lifting up his scimitar with the other, he was going to take off her head. The poor lady turning about to him, and looking at him with dying eyes, desired him to afford her one little moment to recollect herself. "No, no," said he, "recommend thyself to God," and was just ready to strike. – At this very instant there was such a loud knocking at the gate, that Blue Beard made a sudden stop. The gate was opened, and presently entered two horsemen, who drawing their swords, ran directly to Blue Beard. He knew them to be his wife's brothers, one a dragoon, the other a

musqueteer; so that he ran away immediately to save himself; but the two brothers pursued so close, that they overtook him before he could get to the steps of the porch, when they ran their swords thro' his body and left him dead.

The poor wife was almost as dead as her husband, and had not strength enough to rise and welcome her brothers. Blue Beard had no heirs, and so his wife became the mistress of all his estate. She made use of one part of it to marry her sister Anne to a young gentleman who had loved her a long while; another part to buy captains' commissions for her brothers; and the rest to marry herself to a very worthy gentleman, who made her forget the ill time she had passed with Blue Beard.

THE MORAL.

O curiosity, thou mortal bane!
 Spite of thy charms, thou causest often pain
 And sore regret, of which we daily find
 A thousand instances attend mankind:
 For thou, O may it not displease the fair,
 A fleeting pleasure art, but lasting care;
 And always costs, alas! too dear the prize,
 Which in the moments of possession, dies.

ANOTHER.

A very little share of common sense,
 And knowledge of the world, will soon evince,
 That this a story is of time long pass'd,
 No husbands now such panic terrors cast;

Nor weakly, with a vain despotic hand,
Imperious, what's impossible, command:
And be they discontented, or the fire,
Of wicked, jealousy their hearts inspire,
They softly sing; and of whatever hue
Their beards may chance to be, or black, or blue,
Grizeld, or russet, it is hard to say,
Which of the two, the man or wife, bears sway.

APPENDIX B

NOTEWORTHY FEMINIST REVISIONS OF THE BLUEBEARD TALE

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