

UNHEARD VOICES: THE LOCATION OF WOMEN AS *OTHERNESS* IN JEAN RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Saz Hersh Mohammed, Zanyar Kareem Abdul

Department of English, College of Education, University of Charmo, Iraq

E-mail: saz.hersh@charmounivesity.org

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Abstract

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is a postcolonial story in which Antoinette, the Creole lady, is portrayed as the crazy woman in the attic. Thus, it is possible to see why Antoinette as a protagonist misses her identity and how madness works in a colonial and patriarchal culture by examining the connections between race and gender in Rhys' novel in light of Ania Loomba's ideas about colonialism and postcolonialism and linking it to psychoanalytic feminism with Julia Kristeva's *notion of the abject*. Race and gender are employed as metaphors for one another and to dehumanize *the other* among us, driving it insane. Postcolonial critics have debated Antoinette's *otherness* as a result of colonial rule; whereas, feminist theorists have frequently emphasized the patriarchal aspect of society and the connection between madness and the mother-daughter relationships of the novel. This study focuses on otherness and lunacy, which contains not only colonizer-colonized, male-female, and mother-daughter connections but also self-repression in a patriarchal and colonial culture, leading to Antoinette's alienation and loss of identity. Overall, black women as being enslaved are pictured as ugly, something without an owner.

Keywords: *alienation; female suppression; lunacy, madness; patriarchy*

1. Introduction

Rhys classifies the *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) into three sections. The first and second sections are set in the British West Indies: while, the third takes place in England. The first section is spoken by Antoinette, who recalls her youth in Jamaica as being replete with racial tension. Antoinette and Mr. Rochester narrate the second half. Mr. Rochester and Antoinette's marriage takes place in this section of the novel, and both characters reveal their affection for one another. The third portion is primarily narrated by Antoinette in England, where she is imprisoned in Mr. Rochester's attic. The tale concludes with Antoinette jumping to her death in a dream. Although Rhys never names Mr. Rochester, the reader familiar with *Jane Eyre* thinks he is Brontë's, Mr. Rochester. Rhys also changes the name of Bertha, the female character in *Jane Eyre*, to Antoinette.

After the slaves are freed, Antoinette is then a white Creole woman living in nineteenth-century, British-owned Jamaica. She and her mother represented the island's white minority and are disliked by black Jamaicans according to their family's history as slave owners. Antoinette's family has been mocked and tortured by the people around them since

she is a toddler. They disliked us and referred to us as *white cockroaches*. "She may be a Creole of full English blood, yet they are neither English nor European. Thus, Antoinette and her mother were *white niggers*, who belonged neither to Jamaican nor English culture but were stuck in the middle: "And I've heard English ladies call us white niggers (Rhys, 1966: 39)."

Antoinette's role is nearly as bad as that of the traditionally colonized. She is not just the "other" to black Jamaicans but also to white English, and her uncertain status as a white Creole in Jamaica becomes her personal sorrow (None of you understand about us, "I thought"). In addition, she is a Creole woman. In *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, Loomba (1998: 159-161) outlines how race and gender serve as metaphors and pictures for one another in the colonial arena: In short, lower races denoted the female type of the human species, and females the lower race of gender. Loomba illustrates how, in colonial textbooks (and therefore in popular opinion), non-Europeans and women were portrayed as either weak, childish, and in need of guidance, or sexually abnormal, emotional, wild, and beyond society.

Furthermore, Loomba emphasizes how the connection between women's enslavement and colonial subjects readily excludes the issue of colored women since the colonial subject is defined as male and the female as white. As a result, colored women who suffer from both racial and gendered forms of oppression concurrently (Loomba, 1998: 163) are forgotten, as is Antoinette. Despite her white skin, others do not perceive her as European or Western, and she is of a lower race and gender. Antoinette is obliged to construct her identity and become a member of the symbolic order in this neglected category, and she finally fails in her efforts.

As a result, Antoinette distances herself from Mr. Rochester. Loomba explains how the concept of *the other woman* frequently conveyed colonial ideas of flawless feminine behaviors and of the Western male caring for and protecting the local woman. Although Antoinette wants to think that Rochester will save her from her misery, Mr. Rochester is unable to see this and remains unmoved: "You're safe, I'd say." She'd appreciated being assured, "You're secure." [...] "I had very little affection for her; she was a stranger to me, a stranger who didn't think or feel the same way I did" (Rhys, 1966: 55). As a result, as Mr. Rochester discovers his isolation and lack of capacity to genuinely comprehend and own this Creole woman; he begins to choke her individuality by failing to capture the secrets and magic within Antoinette and her homeland.

Antoinette, Mr. Rochester, and Grace Poole all perform as protagonists throughout *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as contrasted to Jane Eyre's first-person narrative, giving readers the chance to understand the problematic reality from three separate points of view. As a result, while conveying the history of the other, Rhys effectively moves between several points of view instead of focusing on just one, which increases the readers' knowledge of the previously neglected and newly centered side. Even though the reality is that, the tale retold in *Wide Sargasso Sea* appears to be a depressing romantic story of a Creole woman who goes insane due to her beloved in her marriage to an English man, several crucial cultural and political orientalist attitudes towards Creole people, Europe's substitute, and the ability to be "other" are denoted through a close postcolonial reading of the novel. *Orientalism*, in its formulation, is said to be essentially a technique of identifying and locating Europe's others. As a result, the other version of the tale of *the othered* will be analyzed from a post-colonialist perspective through the representations of the characters, particularly Mr. Rochester, in the context of this study. His orientalist and "othering" attitudes toward

Antoinette and the Creole way of life in the Caribbean, as well as Antoinette's corresponding critical identity concerns, will be examined in the context of this postcolonial interpretation of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

According to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, throughout history, Europe's colonized power reduced the histories of the colonized nations, classifying those histories as pre-civilized void space, and from then on, the history and culture of the related nation were marked by the arrival of the European colonizers through their imposed educational systems (1961: 43). A nation's history is nothing more than the colonizer imposing a new, limited identity on the colonial people. As a result, as a white superior Englishman tries to force a new, more English name on Antoinette, he also imposes an identity, a constructed past, and a culture on her, pushing her deeper into insanity, the only place where she could find peace, away from the dominant oppressors. However, it is difficult not to agree with Spivak that, when Rhys relates the narrative of the silenced *other* Creole lady in the *Wide Sargasso Sea*, even with her post-colonialist viewpoint, she fails to resist othering the black population in the West Indies. She has the same problem with her representation of black characters, seeing them as undifferentiated groups with no individual characteristics. Absolutely all of the novel's ex-slaves or salaried servants are presented as revengeful, devilish, and wicked figures of corruption with almost no good ambition. The minds of the readers, even Christophine, Antoinette's loving black counselor, generate suspicion owing to her commitment to Obeah and her partial misuse of Antoinette's mental tension. As a result, even when Jean Rhys responds with a new narrative from the perspective of the oppressed Creole people, she *others* them. The socioeconomic position of Creole society is another aspect that is essential to the story in identifying Antoinette's in-betweenness in between the more inferior black community and the much "superior" white English society. The social despair that Antoinette and, of course, other Creole characters experience in the novel derives from her mixed racial background, which is named by Bhabha (1994) *hybridity*, and the effect of this hybrid culture appears as in-betweenness.

The Creole culture into which Antoinette is born is no exception to Bhabha's described cultural hybridization. She is divorced from the "superior" context culture since she does not belong to the dominant common English culture in the West Indies. She does not belong to the perceived inferior black community, a culture that she and her mother Annette regularly dislike and mock in the novel. This feature of Antoinette's hybrid culture forces her to experience all of the pains of in-betweenness. However, a new detached Creole style of life grows that does not fit well into either mainstream white or black society. Antoinette's mixed race might be listed as the main cause of her inability to come to terms with her identity, which is typically presented as unclear. Antoinette's feminine position also hides her realization of a strong identity. Throughout the novel, the public refers to the character of Antoinette as Annette's daughter, Mrs. Rochester's wife, or Bertha, a name and identity completely imposed on her by her husband. Antoinette is unable to achieve balance with her own self due to the identities forced on her by other power holders. Antoinette's in-betweenness and placelessness are central to her identity issue.

In addition to Antoinette's identity crisis, her sexuality is also worth mentioning. Black women are typically associated with sexual freedom in literature. Thus, Antoinette is presented as a female character who, like those black people, has a desire for sexual freedom, which is a literal reflection of her mixed race, which is why the focal point of this work addresses issues of colonial authority, oppression, subordination, lunacy, and identity. This novel may be viewed as both feminist and postcolonial literature. Mr. Rochester's

marriage to Antoinette might be viewed as oppressive, as a husband seeking to rule his wife. He treats Antoinette like a colonial object, confusing her identity. Antoinette and Mr. Rochester's marriage never approaches a joyful state. Mr. Rochester and Antoinette struggle to comprehend each other since they come from different cultures, and their relationship is dominated by Mr. Rochester. Their marriage exemplifies how men use their power and control to exclude and oppress women. Mr. Rochester attempts to assert his dominance over Antoinette. Mr. Rochester's dominance and power are clearly based on patriarchal and colonial ideology, making him a double colonizer. So, let us talk about how Mr. Rochester, with his patriarchal and colonial ideals, handles Antoinette and her family and becomes the source of their relationship problems. The central subject of this study is how patriarchal authority and colonial oppression are represented in the novel, particularly in Mr. Rochester and Antoinette's marriage.

2. Literature Review

Postcolonial studies are significant in the critical examination of history, culture, and literature. These types of debates are unique to England's, Spain's, France's, and other empire European powers' old colonies. The research focuses on developing countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean islands. John McLeod's work may be chosen because he offers an explanation of colonization and then goes on to discuss the reasons and consequences of it, which lead to post-colonization. To avoid ambiguity in terminology, either post-colonialism with a hyphen or postcolonialism as one word is important in the study. Post-colonialism with a hyphen alludes to a historical periodization of the literary world, but postcolonialism as a single word refers to postcolonialism in terms of various types of representations, reading practices, and values (McLeod, 2000: 5). Because this study is about broad representations of critical values, the term postcolonialism is presented as a single word. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of colonialism and postcolonialism, as well as their expressions and impacts in Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is also intended to educate readers about the key terms of postcolonial literature.

It cannot be defined in a narrow manner since the concept may be seen from many different perspectives. Postcolonialism, according to Smith (1996: 291-292) and certain authors, maybe a sign of freedom for all new nations. Meanwhile, for neo-Marxists and other opponents, postcolonialism demonstrates the true impact of future fantasies. This is a fight among these organizations, and there are currently continuing arguments over whether additional postcolonial thought should be included. Postcolonialism, in any situation, demonstrates how the past informs the present and, therefore, portrays colonialism in both old and new forms. Bhabha's concept from *The Location of Culture* provides a very clear explanation from an optimistic viewpoint: Postcolonial ideas develop from Third World colonial experience and minority speech inside the geographical boundaries of East and West, North and South. They participate in modernity's ideological discourses, which seek to offer a hegemonic natural state to the marginalization and varied, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, groups, and peoples (Bhabha, 1994: 171). The focus here is on Bhabha's perspective on postcolonialism, with a specific section later in his detailed discussion. He used terms like "third world" and "geopolitical division" of a country. Post colonialism shapes political divisions, social histories, and cultural issues in this way.

3. Research Method

The preparation of this paper has entailed close reading and a hybrid approach to critical accurate analysis of the novel by Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The main themes address power discrepancies in the context of a white patriarchal society, especially class, race, and sex. By means of in-depth analysis, we demonstrate the significance of underrepresented voices and how they are often misread in a white male-dominated society. This recognition leads to more profound understanding of what Rhys wishes to convey and the valuable impact of their writing on society. Bhabha (1994) and Kristeva's concepts (1982) are taken into consideration in analyzing the novel.

4. Results and Discussion

While Mr. Rochester is disturbed by Antoinette's free sexuality and openness (disgust was rising in me like sickness), he allows himself to commit adultery by sleeping with someone other than his wife (Rhys, 1966: 80). Mr. Rochester believes that Antoinette will defend Victorian morals, while he will not. As a male in a patriarchal culture, he allows himself to be unfaithful and attend to his sexual demands while refusing women the same freedom. Mr. Rochester uses his colonial power and native Amelie for his oral sex performances, knowing full well that his actions would harm Antoinette. "I had not one moment of remorse," Mr. Rochester said of his actions, "Nor was I anxious to know what was happening behind the thin partition that divided us from my wife's bedroom (Rhys, 1966: 89)." According to Jackson and Jones, having sexual interactions with indigenous people is also a means for invaders to demonstrate their dominance and the patriarchy's authority (Jackson & Jones, 1998: 100–106).

Women's postcolonial experiences vary because of the complex relationships between characteristics such as race, gender, class, and culture. As a result, postcolonial feminist theory provides colonized women with a real voice to express their story. This theory also investigates the history and battles of combination women against patriarchy, racism, and sexism, with a focus on how sexuality and lunacy have been depicted in many colonial works in the past. It is critical to emphasize that researching crucial issues such as cultural identification, hybridity, and creolization gives a better understanding of how these women experience various oppressions in order to develop a distinct sense of identity, particularly a cultural one. Throughout history, various kinds of colonialism and patriarchal dominance have banished women and colonized subjects to the status of "other." As a result, they both have direct experience of injustice and repression.

Because of its association with colonialism, the term *postcolonial women* has proven to be problematic. Some thinkers consider it to be a type of oppression. For some, racism and sexism are interchangeable, resulting in a conflation of the image of postcolonial women in the context of *feminism and colonialism*. Relatively, Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1998) is regarded as one of the most important writings in postcolonial feminist theory. She introduced the term *subaltern*, which refers to a person who is marginalized and oppressed, particularly women. Women are frequently depicted as playing secondary roles to the larger males who drive the story forward. They only play a supporting role in the middle of the action (Patki & Dodal, 2020: 371). Women in historically colonial cultures were eventually colonized twice by empire and patriarchal ideas.

Because the purpose of this article is to examine Antoinette and Mr. Rochester's marriage, it will attempt to expose the central theoretical concepts of postcolonial feminist theory as well as identify patriarchal tendencies by highlighting events and scenes in which

Mr. Rochester exercises power and dominance in his marriage. The article will mostly focus on Mr. Rochester's acts and behaviors in key moments and events to show how elements of postcolonial feminist theory are applied to Antoinette and Mr. Rochester's marriage. When examining literature, feminist theorists pay close attention to how characters are depicted in literary texts. They investigate how men and women are positioned in a patriarchal culture ruled by males. They also emphasize the power disparity between men and women, in which males are dominating and females are slaves.

Postcolonial and feminist ideas are concerned with how women and men are portrayed in colonized and western societies. McLeod states that feminism and postcolonialism share the shared purpose of opposing systems of oppression since they are both concerned with power, inequality, and women's oppression (McLeod: 2000, 174). It is made successful by the postcolonial feminist viewpoint which demonstrates how characters such as Antoinette and Mr. Rochester are positioned as a woman and a man in their marriage.

The term *patriarchy* is an important idea in postcolonial feminist thought. The phrase refers to those systems—political, material, and imaginative—which invest authority in males and exclude women. While the term can refer to a number of different social structures, patriarchy refers to a social structure in which the male is the dominant figure in a social organization. In this system, the man in the home realm can physically or mentally control women. Women are isolated and enslaved by a patriarchal society. When discussing the idea of women's enslavement, feminist critics use the word *patriarchy*. While patriarchy is associated with feminism and feminist ideas, McLeod (2000, 173) defines it as male authority over women and how women are made to feel oppressed and inferior. In other words, patriarchy is a framework that aims to dominate and enslave women by denying them the ability to choose their own economic, sexual, mothering, and birthing decisions.

In *Women and Madness*, Chesler (1972) reveals that women shared common attitudes and ideas about why they display such symptoms. Women deny themselves what they truly desire in their lives. According to Chesler, women are not encouraged to pursue their passions while living under the dominion of men. "I'm twenty-one years old, and I'm supposed to stay silent and grin like a puppet," said one woman. I'm not a puppet. "I am a red-blooded human being with a trembling heart" (Chesler, 1972: 7). Women have been socialized to need and obey their males. Young women are encouraged to marry strong, powerful father figures and to carry out their responsibilities. Women are expected to serve and act as daughters, mothers, and wives in general, and those who do not conform to these duties are classified and deemed insane. Chesler contends that women are mentally conditioned and that this is a sort of oppression that exists in patriarchal societies.

Women, on the other hand, remain poor and lack the same privileges as men. They have no right to hold or retain assets or property. All their property and possessions become the husband's after marriage. Victorian women are expected to rely on their husbands and are discouraged from working outside the house. Their primary function is to be related beings, principally serving the male and the home (Hall & Rendell, 2000: 30).

Jackson and Jones observe how males wielded authority in colonial regions. While women in England and abroad were supposed to be true to their husbands, men utilized their authority to be with other women. Victorian Englishmen fulfilled their sexual desires in ways that were contrary to accepted Victorian morality. Being high on the social hierarchy, British males used their power and position to please themselves by having sexual encounters with natives of colonial regions (1998: 100). Furthermore, Mr. Rochester sees

Antoinette not merely as an uncultured other but also as an immoral one. When Antoinette uses Obeah on him, he believes that a respectable Englishman like him would be unaware of Obeah. Only someone like Antoinette has such experience. Mr. Rochester recognizes that Obeah can only belong to individuals who are native to the island. Antoinette's knowledge of Obeah, as well as her capacity to get and use it, classifies her as an immoral other.

Patriarchy is a social structure in which men are the dominant figures in social organizations. Under this system, the man in the home domain can physically or psychologically control women, isolating and enslaving them. It is a framework that aims to control and enslave women by preventing them from making their own economic, sexual, mothering, or childbirth decisions. As a result, it is an oppressive system aimed at undermining women's identities, capacities, and potentials. Women are perceived differently than males by patriarchal systems, and as a result, women are valued less than men, Sabri's (2011) *Conflicts in a Marriage: Antoinette and Mr. Rochester in Wide Sargasso Sea*. Moreover, economic dominance is regarded as one of the means by which males may economically rule women, despite having authority over women and women being subversive to patriarchy. In a patriarchal culture, women are regarded as inferior and lack freedom compared to men because they are inferior and lack independence. The male dominate, while the female are enslaved (Qian, 2018: 420). Women's struggle and oppression by patriarchy include all forms of male dominance and male power over women. It is simply characterized as a system in which the male member has complete power over everything and everyone.

Webster (1998) defines racism as the belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. In terms of postcolonialism, postcolonial writers and theorists have raised concerns about race and racism. They generally associate race and racism with the colonized groups' colonial past. The race is historically situated and culturally maintained in a colonial world system. It represents the dividing line between multiple power relationships.

"Implicit allusions to non-white races identify Bertha as *Other* from Jane Eyre, and the novel may be considered to serve imperialist authority," writes Da Sousa Correa (2009). In Bertha's circumstances, these connections are evident in the novel's descriptions of her: her brother refers to her as the daughter of a Creole, and Rochester describes her as intemperate and unchaste. Bertha, despite her skin color, is disassociated from the white race since chastity is considered a traditionally white attribute. Meyer sees Bertha's mixed status as strange ambiguity of race that is intimately tied to her function as a representation of problems that threaten the novel's universe. The exchange of cultures is especially noticeable in the *Wide Sargasso Sea* from a racial viewpoint. "In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the idea of racial mixing returns with a force as the obsessive symbol of colonial difference," writes the author. Antoinette's identity is heavily influenced by her Creole background. She is recognized as *the other* from the second phase of the novel, as when the white community closes ranks, she announces that we were not in their ranks, differentiating herself from the whole race by the use of pronouns. Throughout the work, Jane is considered an outsider; although she is white, she refers to herself as one of the anathematized races (Qian, 2018), implying connections with Rhys' character that urge readers to explore the reality that parallel lines never cross.

"I couldn't change the color of my skin", Rhys confirmed. As a result, Rhys felt like a foreigner in Dominica, but her emotions were heightened when she visited England, her home country, where West Indians were regarded as inferiors since they were a reminder of

a horrible history. Thus, Rhys' world was influenced by the ambiguity of being an insider or outsider in both the city, England, and the colony, the West Indies. In most of her works, Rhys expresses her displacement as a white Creole who is not accepted in either Dominica or England. She often expresses her desire for a nation or a place to call home.

Whereas Jane is only evaluated as inferior by other white people, Antoinette is viewed as *other* by both black and white communities, as evidenced by her turbulent relationship with Tia and, finally, Rochester's refusal of her, in which she appears as a victim not accepted by either black or white races and betrayed by Rochester's sexuality. Tia sums up the cultural condition in the Caribbean (or Rhys' understanding of it) by outlining its racial hierarchy. She is quoted as saying to Antoinette, "Old-time white people were nothing but white niggers today, and black niggers are better than white niggers" (Rhys, 1966: 21).

The implication that the position of old time white people has diminished can be linked to the debate, in which Hulme challenges Brathwaite's view that the relationship between Antoinette and Tia "is certainly not consistent with the historical record (Brathwaite, 1995: 49-50). "To deny that such a childhood connection could ever have occurred is likewise to seek to evaluate the novel's truth as history rather than to appreciate its imaginary position". Further to the unsuccessful cultural exchange regarding race, the relationship between the two girls is pertinent to social class, which reflects Rhys's private life, as in the colonial Caribbean, she belonged to the wealthy, but in England, she was working-class," and as such, her reading of Jane Eyre categorizes it as a power generation of its cultural and social ideology.

She is also rejected from the fortune-seeking English community due to her mother's Creole nationality. In truth, she has no home anywhere. In the West Indies, she is reviled and rejected by both the black and white communities. Because she is white, the black community does not accept her. At the same time, she does not fit into the world of whites, who regard mixed-race people as inferior to themselves. As a white Creole, Antoinette is a double outsider: a white nigger to Europeans and a white cockroach to blacks, as she explains to her husband in the novel:

"a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they [the blacks] call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (Rhys, 1966: 93).

These two sentences are significant in the novel because they capture the contradiction of the Creole experiencing double exile (Coartney, 2010: 6). While Antoinette is at once able to navigate between the black and white civilizations, she is also hated by both of them and is therefore obliged to perceive herself as "Other". She is neither English nor Caribbean enough for the Caribbean, thus she is exiled on both her island home and her mother's nation, with nowhere to properly belong. Adjarian (1995) in *Between and Beyond Boundaries in Wide Sargasso Sea* observes that Antoinette has an *inbetweenness* life. This sensation of *inbetweenness*, of not belonging to either society, is the fundamental thing driving Antoinette insane. The problematic character of the white Creole is highlighted early in the narrative by Antoinette's explanation of her lonely, isolated existence: "They say when danger comes, close ranks, so did the white people. But we were not among them" (Rhys, 1966: 15). This beginning provides the reader with a strong sense of belonging, which is reflected in Rhys's own life and, by extension, in Antoinette's.

Antoinette's attempts to break free from her misplaced status as the *Other* and establish herself inside one ethnic group are often unsuccessful. Antoinette has been thirsty for social approval since childhood, and she seeks to fit herself into the position of a Caribbean native first. In her effort at friendship with a dark-skinned youngster named Tia, she strives to embrace black qualities. Antoinette wears Tia's dirty, ripped dress after the two girls go swimming and Tia steals Antoinette's outfit while leaving her own behind. By trading garments, Antoinette symbolically becomes Tia, or Tia's twin, in the words of Mary Lou Emery. This garment represents Antoinette's unconscious longing to be black like Tia.

Another important connection is that of Antoinette and Christophine, a black house servant, which reveals the former's ambiguous attitude about blacks. Christophine is the only person Antoinette has ever known who is warm, secure, and gorgeous. As Antoinette experiences her mother's rejection, she behaves as a type of replacement for her. Despite being a servant, Christophine is self-sufficient, resistant, and shamelessly frank. Sandra Drake argues that Christophine symbolizes a paradigm of female freedom and self-defiance for Antoinette. Eventually, Antoinette sees Christophine as a black devil from hell an ignorant, stubborn old African woman (Rhys, 1966: 93), rather than the embodiment of kindness and love she once was. Since she practices obeah, a black Caribbean magic, Christophine is always viewed as an outsider, a mysterious lady who inspires terror and wonder in both black and white people. The bonds that bind Antoinette and Christophine appear to be threatened by Antoinette's determination to escape from a world [blacks] thought to be unfriendly.

The issue of identity in the novel, which will be addressed later in this section, is strongly intertwined with the Caribbean islands' settlement and colonial history. Different cultural identities can be found in various geographical locations. As a result, the Caribbean cultural identity is not unified and fixed in a single history, as evidenced by the cultural differences found on different islands. In this sense, culture is a source of identity, accompanied by thorough intellectual and moral codes that run counter to the liberality associated with relatively liberal philosophies like multiculturalism and hybridity. Because of colonialism, all cultures are interconnected; none is single and pure but rather hybrid, heterogeneous, and highly differentiated. Jean Rhys, a twentieth-century Caribbean writer, was particularly concerned with the issues of cultural exile and a fragile sense of one's own identity. As a white Creole writer living in England, Rhys attempts to depict the ambiguity of being stuck between two cultures and unable to completely connect with either. Jean Rhys was born on the Caribbean Island of Dominica to a Welsh father and a Creole (white West Indian) mother. He was white but not English, West Indian but not black. Her sense of belonging to the West Indies was strongly intertwined with her consciousness of being a member of another culture. Thus, Rhys' reality was influenced by the ambiguity of being an insider and an outsider in both the city and the colony, the West Indies, leading to her experience of exile and otherness. During this period, natives and colonized peoples were viewed as "others," while the English were viewed as masters (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998: 45). Mr. Rochester identifies Antoinette as a colonial other, he regards her as uncultured, narrow-minded, and ignorant. When the two are discussing his beloved nation, England, in one moment, Mr. Rochester observes that Antoinette is unable to describe or provide any actual information about England. "She was undecided, uncertain about facts—any facts—and hardly able to believe she was the pale, silent creature I had married" (Rhys, 1966: 54).

Mr. Rochester controls Antoinette's riches, oppresses her by impersonating her, and calls her insane. In terms of her racial history, he sees her as a colonial other who is "part of the island" (Olaussen, 1992: 110). Mr. Rochester sees Antoinette as Creole rather than English. He perceives Antoinette as having ideals and conduct that are completely contradictory to his morals and convictions. Antoinette is also not seen as intellectual or polite. Thus, Antoinette is suffering from the harmful effects of both patriarchy and colonialism.

Tia, according to A. Smith, can be understood in the scene of trading clothes as a picture of possible healing for Antoinette's sense of fragmentation. Yet, the doubling indicates disturbance rather than completion, as Tia is part of the black mob that burns down Coulibri, Antoinette's family estate:

Then, not so far off, I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I didn't see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking glass (Rhys, 1966: 38).

Antoinette wishes to be welcomed by the islanders and is unwilling to say goodbye to her life in Coulibri, despite the fact that the inhabitants are hostile to her. The island is all she knows, and she is desperate to identify with it via Tia since she believes they have had the same oppressive experience because of their race. She wants to be a part of something, so she hangs on to the notion of becoming like Tia. This longing is most obvious when Antoinette looks directly at Tia, as if she is staring into a mirror. Tia transforms into a mirror, reflecting Antoinette's identity. According to Pugh (2010), the image of the looking glass or mirror is significant because it symbolizes Antoinette's quest to find her *other* self—her identity. Her inability to reach the other side of the mirror represents her inability to locate and grasp that other self. Of course, Antoinette's beliefs are destroyed when Tia throws the stone at her face, or rather, at what she represents: the despised slave-owning class, shattering the mirror image and forcing Antoinette to realize she does not belong and is not like Tia. The truth is that racial lines have been established: Antoinette is white, whereas Tia is black. Tia is the colonized, whereas Antoinette is the colonizer. With this in mind, it is through her interactions with Tia that Antoinette realizes how out of place she is among Jamaica's black people and how fruitless her desire to become one of them actually is.

Another important aspect of Antoinette's loss of identity is her mother's rejection of her as a youngster. Antoinette's connection with her mother is one without any communication or understanding, yet Antoinette ironically follows in her mother's footsteps by marrying an Englishman, leaving the island, and falling to madness. Antoinette does not have a warm relationship with her daughter, preferring to focus on Pierre, her mentally challenged son. Antoinette considers her mother's personality: "I hated this frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she decides once and for all that I was useless to her" (Rhys, 1966: 17). As Antoinette's mother becomes sick, she travels to see her and is once again turned away: "Why you bring the child [Antoinette] to make trouble, trouble, trouble?"

Trouble enough with that" (Rhys, 1966: 40). Antoinette believes her mother is embarrassed by her integration into the black Caribbean. The island people's hatred for the family and the family's financial collapse as a result of emancipation force Annette to see the effect of that hatred and financial sorrow in Antoinette:

Then there was that day when she saw I was growing up like a white nigger and she was ashamed of me, it was after that day that everything changed. Yes, it was my fault, it was my fault that she started to plan and work in a frenzy, in a fever to change our lives. Then people came to see us again and though I hated them and was afraid of their cool, teasing eyes, I learned to hide it (Rhys, 1966: 109).

Race, gender, rejection by society, hatred of those around her, and a lack of prenatal care are all causes that lead to Antoinette's identity loss. The black community, however, sets fire to the estate at Coulibri, bringing her identity crisis to a head. When Antoinette tries to run towards her friend Tia, hoping to feel secure and comfortable with her, Tia throws a stone at her, leaving Antoinette in an ambiguous situation about her identity and whether she belongs to Tia or Coulibri, where she can feel safe. Then she realizes she does not have anything left for her. She states:

The house was burning, the yellow-red sky was like sunset and I knew that I would never see Coulibri again. Nothing would be left, the golden ferns and the silver ferns, the orchids, the ginger lilies and the roses, the rocking-chairs and the blue sofa, the jasmine and the honeysuckle, and the picture of the Miller's Daughter (Rhys, 1966: 27).

As a result, her identity has been seized because she has lost the only place where she feels at comfortable.

Madness is a common human experience. The Madness of life and the absurdity of circumstances may cause problems for people with fragile psyches. Acrimony, as reaction to the world's insanity, may be viewed as a globe of Insanity. Olausson (1992), a feminist critic, is also interested in madness, notably Antoinette's. According to Olausson, when writing about Bertha, the monster, in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys did not wish to convey Bertha's insanity separately. Rhys sought to place her portrayal of a mad woman within the context of Charlotte Brontë's literary tradition of a mad woman. Mr. Rochester predicts an English Victorian woman when he marries Antoinette (Olausson, 1992: 60). Mr. Rochester quickly realizes that Antoinette is not acting as a lady should, having weird habit. When the two are debating Daniel Cosway's letters, Antoinette attempts to justify her mother and explain Annette's struggle, but Mr. Rochester does not want to hear or even believe her. Antoinette feels angered over Daniel Cosway's accusations and Mr. Rochester's refusal to believe her. She shouts, breaks out, and throws a bottle of wine at Mr. Rochester. "Then she cursed my eyes, my mouth, every member of my body, and it was like a dream in the large unfurnished room with the candles flickering and this red-eyed wild-haired stranger who was my wife shouting obscenities at me" (Rhys, 1966: 95). Antoinette passionately tries to persuade Mr. Rochester that Daniel Cosway's claims are false and that her mother has been oppressed and excluded for many years. Mr. Rochester, on the other hand, believes Antoinette is being unreasonable and understands her insanity and anger as madness, which she inherited from her mother. Chesler believes that in a patriarchal society, males regard both physical and

verbal attacks on women as a clear example of insanity. Men leave women who express physical and verbal anger as crazy and unfeminine (Chesler, 1972: 45).

Olaussen contends that Antoinette's need for sex, display of sexual feelings, and desire for sex all play a role in labeling Antoinette morally insane (1992: 60). When it comes to her sexuality, Antoinette, according to Mr. Rochester, does not act or behave like an English lady.

Furthermore, Daniel Cosway's claim about Antoinette's sexuality is used to justify portraying Antoinette as morally insane. Mr. Rochester is now certain that Antoinette is unfaithful to him. Again, Mr. Rochester believes he has no influence over Antoinette's actions. While he believes he can manage his emotions as he learns to repress them, he believes he cannot control Antoinette's sexual urges or sexual deviancy. Mr. Rochester, furious that Antoinette has sexual contact with Sandy and is unable to control her, ignores Antoinette and spends the night with Amelie, one of the live-in housemaids.

Some critics say that while Mr. Rochester attempts to teach Antoinette, she refuses to grow up. According to Savory, declining to be cultivated meant that one was condemned to exist in loneliness (Savory, 2009: 151). Mr. Rochester realizes that Antoinette cannot be developed and attempts to keep her away. "She is one of them. I, too, can wait for the day when she will be void, locked away" (Rhys: 112). We see in *Jane Eyre* that Mr. Rochester keeps her away by shutting her up in his English home. While this is not the only reason he isolates her from society, it is what he chooses to do in order to control and manage her insanity. According to Olinder (1984: 156), many Europeans believed that locking up insane individuals was a civilized way of managing and dealing with Caribbean people who showed indications of insanity. Madness and how it is understood in patriarchal culture are also represented in Antoinette and Mr. Rochester's marriage. Antoinette grows upset as she and Mr. Rochester discuss Daniel Cosway's claims. Mr. Rochester perceives Antoinette's hatred and anger as madness traits inherited from her mother, Annette. Mr. Rochester also describes Antoinette as morally insane. Again, Daniel Cosway's charges of Antoinette's immorality, desire for sex, and sexual conduct in the bedroom lead Mr. Rochester to believe she is insane.

It is important to emphasize that Rhys questions the concept that Antoinette and her mother are insane. What the "English" define as insane is, in Rhys' story, a reaction to being abused and rejected. Annette is hated by the islanders for being a Creole and the wife of a former slave owner. She observes the blacks burning down her estate and loses hope as her only son dies in the fire. This drives Annette insane, and Mr. Mason abandons her in the care of caregivers who torture her. Annette's insanity is explained by Christophine: "They drive her to it...They tell her she is mad, they act like she is mad" (Rhys, 1966: 129). Annette's insanity, according to Christophine, is imposed from without. She becomes enraged as a result of her loss and societal pressure. Similarly, Antoinette only becomes angry when Rochester mistreats her and locks her up in the attic after understanding how strange and non-English she is. This counters what Rochester asserts in *Jane Eyre* that Bertha Mason is insane; that she came of a mad family; fools and psychos through three generations. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester is provided with the authority, as an Englishman, to declare Bertha insane and make it so. Rhys emphasizes the anonymity of the act by paralleling Antoinette's forced insanity to Annette's imposed insanity.

Rhys connects the exotic nature of the environment to Antoinette's sexual development, in addition to her comprehension and comfort with the island. In contrast to his European civilized surroundings, Antoinette's sexuality is too much for Rochester. This is

another aspect of her personality that Rochester perceives as non-English. In a talk with Christophine, he demonstrates this:

Do you think that I don't know? She thirsts for anyone-not for me. She'll loosen her black hair, and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl-she'll not care who she's loving). She'll moan and cry and give herself as no sane woman would-or could. Or could (Rhys, 1966: 135-36).

Rochester lowers Antoinette's personality to that of a woman possessed by uncontrolled sexual desire and laughter. According to Rochester, these are symptoms of insanity. Rochester continually doubts Antoinette's commitment since she is strong and open about her sexuality. For him, Antoinette operates outside the framework of rules from the Victorian era that deem sexuality one of the chief symptoms of moral insanity in women. Ciolkowski (1997: 99) reconfirmed that Antoinette is deemed mad, unsuited for English domestic bliss not because of the psychological disorder from which she might be suffering but because of the appetites and excesses she so liberally exhibits. Antoinette appears to be a victim of the English imperial system, which characterizes colonial women as intemperate and unchaste, words Rochester used to describe Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. As a result, Antoinette's lack of control proves her *otherness* in Rochester's eyes. This reminds him of Amelie, a black servant whose lack of moral restraint permits her to have a sexual relationship with Rochester. Yet, Rhys highlights the folly of the English hierarchy by weakening Rochester's moral and cultural superiority by sleeping with a black servant.

5. Conclusion

The study examines *Wide Sargasso Sea's* formulation of race and gender in the light of a feminist postcolonial studies discussion about the portrayal of racial *otherness*. On the one hand, critics such as Parry (2004) argues that we must reclaim historically suppressed knowledge and establish the subaltern's speaking position. The novel explores the contradiction between silence and voice, criticizing the Western idea that the speaker is always in authority. In the novel, silences become a style of speaking insofar as they are studied in terms of their effects rather than just as the results of an oppressive authority. Bertha's, or earlier Antoinette's, insanity is directly tied to the double and even triple oppression she faces as a woman from patriarchy and as a Creole woman in the West Indies, the burden that sets her just in-between white English society and freshly liberated slaves. During her life, she is subjected to patriarchal repression from her apparently devoted husband, as well as harassment from white English society for not being of pure white blood and enslavement by recently freed slaves who were formerly laboring on their estates. These three things might be cited as the major causes of Antoinette's insanity, but their truthfulness is again called into question.

Rhys reminds us that blackness is not an innate identity but a rhetorical act by juxtaposing the stereotypes of black and white Creoles. Although Edward used clichés to imply similarities between his wife and the black subaltern, the African Creoles reject this neglect of the cultural, socioeconomic, and historical factors that define their identity. Rather than highlighting a shared identity with Antoinette because she is colored; Tia and later Amelie reject this essentializing step and dismiss any similarity by resorting to insults like white nigger and *white cockroach*. This reversion not only makes any easy identification difficult, allowing Antoinette to avoid her role in the history of slavery, but it also refutes the blood-based idea of racial identity founded in British racial classifications. Although white

Creoles are caught between a residual white bias and a hazy sense of guilt that leads them to develop a softer approach toward ex-Africans, black Creoles refuse to accept their distinctions from the former. Antoinette is therefore caught between two definitions of racial community while continuing to reject her family's role in the history of slavery.

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