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# RACIAL AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE CREOLE IDENTITY IN JEAN RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

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## ABSTRACT

## RACIAL AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE CREOLE IDENTITY IN JEAN RHYS'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

**YOUNUS, Ahmed M.**

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Jane Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* builds around the theme of identity as seen in the experience of the female protagonist Antoinette Cosway, who struggles as a female Creole to prove her identity in an environment that rejects her. In fact, she is faced with double discrimination on the basis of her race and gender. The first part of this thesis will address the writer Jean Rhys and her connection with *Wide Sargasso Sea* and her female protagonist Antoinette. The chapter will attempt to compare and contrast the characteristics and reactions of two female characters in two different novels -Antoinette from *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Jane from Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* - in the face of the hardships they have to deal with throughout their lives. The second chapter of the thesis will focus on the racial discrimination against the white Creole protagonist, Antoinette, whose multiple efforts to identify with the black community of the Caribbean ultimately prove to be futile, as she is faced with rejection every time she attempts to do so. The chapter will also discuss the rejection that Antoinette is subjected to by the white English community, and the painful experience that she goes through after her marriage to her husband[1], who can be viewed as a representative of the English community. The third chapter will deal with the racial discrimination against Antoinette as a female


[1] **Antoinette's husband is unnamed throughout *Wide Sargasso Sea.* But in order to avoid confusion, he will be named after the male character in *Jane Eyre* -Edward Rochester.**

Creole caught in a patriarchal society. As a woman hopelessly trapped in a society dominated by male values, Antoinette has been renamed, displaced, and ostracized by her controlling husband. She desperately struggles to resist him as he tries in more than one way to strip her off her real identity. Given the gender issues handled in the novel, the experiences of the female protagonist will be discussed from a feminist point of view.

# ÖZET

## JEAN RHYS'İN *GENİŞ, GENİŞ BİR DENİZ* ADLI ROMANINDAKİ KRİO KİMLİĞİNE YÖNELMİŞ IRKSAL VE CİNSEL AYRIMCILIK

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Jane Rhys'in Türkçeye *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* adıyla çevrilmiş romanı, kendini reddeden bir çevrede kimliğini kanıtlama mücadelesi veren Krio kadın başkahraman Antoinette Cosway'ın yaşadıklarından yola çıkarak kimlik teması üzerine kurgulanır. Romanın kahramanı, ırk ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı ayrımcılığı aynı anda yaşar. Bu tezin ilk bölümünde Jane Rhys'in *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* ve kitabın kadın kahramanı Antoinette ile olan bağı ele alınacaktır. Bu bölümde aynı zamanda iki ayrı romanın kadın kahramanlarının – *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz*'in baş kahramanı Antoinette'nin ve Charlotte Bronte'nin *Jane Eyre* adlı romanının baş kahramanı Jane'nin – hayatları boyunca karşılaştıkları güçlüklere verdikleri tepkilerinin ve bu iki karakterin özelliklerinin bir karşılaştırması yapılacaktır. İkinci bölüm ise Karayipler'in siyahi topluluğu ile özdeşleşme çabaları her seferinde reddedildiği için nafile çıkan kitabın Krio karakteri Antoinette'ye karşı uygulanan ırksal ayrımcılığa odaklanacaktır. Bu bölümde, Antoinette'nin beyaz İngiliz çevre tarafından maruz bırakıldığı reddiyeyi ve İngiliz çevrenin bir temsili olarak görülebilecek eşiyle[2] yaptığı evlilikten sonra yaşadığı acılı deneyimleri de ele alınacaktır. Üçüncü bölümde ataerkil bir toplumda sıkışmış kadın karakter Antoinette'ye yapılan ırksal ayrımcılık ele alınacaktır. Erkek egemen değerlerle yönetilen bir toplumda umutsuz bir şekilde kapana sıkışmış bir kadın olan Antoinette,


[2] *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz*'de Antoinette'nin kocası isimsizdir. Ancak kafa karışlığına neden olmamak için *Jane Eyre*'deki erkek karakterin ismini- Edward Rochester- alacaktır.

kontrolcü kocası tarafından yeni bir ad verilmiş, yerinden edilmiş ve toplum dışına itilmiştir. Kocası her yolu deneyerek onu gerçek kimliğinden çıkarmaya çalışırken, o kocasına karşı çaresizce direnmeye çalışmaktadır. Romanda toplumsal cinsiyet konuları ele alındığı için kadın karakterin deneyimleri feminist bir bakış açısından tartışılacaktır.

To my parents, Sabah & Mahmood…

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

Identity is a fundamental theme in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea.* As the protagonist Antoinette struggles with racial and gender discrimination in an attempt to achieve her identity in a society that neither allows her to be equal to an ordinary white Englishwoman nor to belong to the black people of Jamaica with whom she grew up.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* is regarded not only as one of the most important post-colonial/ feminist novels, but also as a "prequel" or rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, unlike the mad woman shut in the attic of Thornfield Hall, Antoinette Cosway (Bertha Mason) is allowed to narrate a major part of the story. By contrast, the only voice the mad woman has in *Jane Eyre* is her screams and maniac laughs. Rhys tells Antoinette's story as a West Indian Creole child growing up in the Caribbean, later getting married to Rochester, and eventually ending up locked in his attic.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* is the story of Antoinette Cosway, the daughter of a slave-owner family who has lost its wealth and status in society because of the recent emancipation of slaves. The first part of the novel takes place in Coulibri estate, Jamaica, and narrated by Antoinette describing her childhood and her relationship with her mother, Annette, and how she was rejected and looked down upon by her society. The second part of the novel is set in Dominica and narrated by Antoinette's unnamed husband (Rochester), who recently married her just because of the big fortune her stepfather (Mr. Mason) left for her. Antoinette and Rochester spend their honeymoon in Granbois. During their stay there, Rochester's hatred towards Antoinette and the Caribbean begins to grow as he feels increasingly alienated from this place, and starts to

avoid Antoinette and treat her cruelly. Then, we witness her downfall towards insanity and her loss of identity. The third part of the novel takes place in England, specifically in Thornfield hall. Antoinette is now locked in the attic under the care of a woman named Grace Poole, who narrates a small part of the novel. Having completely lost her identity, Antoinette has now become Bertha Mason, the mad woman in the attic. At the end of the novel, Antoinette dreams that she sets the house on fire, an incident that actually happens in *Jane Eyre.*

Jean Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890 and died in 1979. She was born to a Welsh father and a white Creole mother. Like her character, Rhys suffered an identity crisis throughout her life because she had white color and fair hair unlike her siblings; this also made her feel that she does not belong to the West Indies. As a result, she moved to England when she was sixteen, where she was not accepted by the society - rejected for being an outsider and made fun of for her strange accent. "Jean's feelings of rejection and marginality in relation to her family were only intensified by her experience of being a white colonial child on a West Indian island" (Schapiro, 1994: 88). Due to the similarities between Antoinette and Rhys herself, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is often considered to be an autobiography of Rhys herself.

Rhys's white color made it difficult for her to be considered a genuine Caribbean writer. This exclusion was due to the fact that Caribbean literature was a very recent one, and that critics were not ready yet to accept the literature of a white Creole woman as part of it (Carr, 2003, p.40). Another reason for excluding Rhys as a Creole writer from the Caribbean literature is that critics also tend to exclude women writers. In her Autobiography *Smile please*, Rhys mentions: "would never be part of anything. I would never really belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing… I am a stranger and I always will be" (Rhys, 1981: 16). More recent debates and discussions however, have a more sympathetic attitude towards including both white Creole and women's writings as part of the Caribbean literature. And since then Rhys has been considered to be a part of the Caribbean literature (Donnell, 2006: 34). Additionally, Rhys's family, like Antoinette's, had a connection

with slavery and colonization. Although Rhys wished to be associated with the Caribbean culture rather than the English one, she is often linked to the English colonizing culture, and that is because of the colour of her skin and the history of her family and their involvement with slave- owning. As Rhys says:

> "I thought a lot about them. But the end of my thought was always revolt, a sick revolt and I longed to be identified once and for all with the others' side which of course was impossible. I couldn't change the color of my skin" (O'Connor, 1986: 36).

As previously mentioned, Rhys moved to England because she felt that she was an outsider in the Caribbean because of her white colour. But in England her feelings of being an outsider did not get any better because there the non-European foreigners were not very welcomed and she was often looked down upon as inferior to the English people. This feeling of being rejected by both the Caribbean and England made Rhys long for a home where she could be accepted. Rhys reflected this feeling in her writings and in the characters of her novels. One such character is Sasha Jansen in Rhys's novel *Good Morning, Midnight* who says: "I have no pride- no pride, no name, no face, no country. I do not belong anywhere" (WSS: xv). *Wide Sargasso Sea* also reflects the feeling of no belonging that Rhys was experiencing. The novel discusses the difficulties that Antoinette Cosway faces as an individual stuck between two rejecting cultures, unable to identify with either of them.

> I came to England between sixteen and seventeen, a very impressionable age, and *Jane Eyre* was one of' the books I read then.
>
> Of course Charlotte Bronte makes her own world, of course she convinces you and that makes the poor Creole lunatic all the more dreadful. I remember being quite shocked, and when

> I re-read it rather annoyed. 'That's - only one side - the English side' sort of thing.
>
> (I think too that Charlotte had a 'thing' about the West Indies being rather sinister places – because in another of her books *Villette* she drowns the hero, Professor Somebody [Paul Emmanuel] on the voyage to Guadeloupe, another very alien place according to her).
>
> Perhaps most people had this idea then and perhaps in a way they were right. Even now white West Indians can be a bit trying - a bit very (not only white ones) but not quite so often surely. They have a side and a point of view (Rhys, 1984: 297).

Rhys was obsessed with Bertha Mason's character since the first time she read *Jane Eyre.* She felt that Brontë did not justify her and did not present the Creole character the way she should have been presented.

> "When I read *Jane Eyre* as a child, I thought, why should [Brontë] think creole women are lunatics and all that? What a shame to make Rochester's first wife, Bertha, the awful madwoman, and I immediately thought I'd write the story as it might have really been. She seemed such a poor ghost. I thought I'd try to write her a life." (Vreeland, 1979: 235)

Also, Rhys did not accept the fact that Bertha was presented in the novel as a wild lunatic who prevented Rochester and Jane from leading a happy life together. As a result, Rhys decided to write about Bertha's life before coming to England.

> "I've never believed in Charlotte's lunatic, that's why I wrote this book [*Wide Sargasso Sea*]... The Creole in Charlotte Brontë's novel is a lay figure- repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does... I've brooded over 'Jane Eyre' for years... I was vexed at her

> portrait of the paper tiger lunatic, the all wrong Creole scenes." (Frickey, 1990, p.8).

As mentioned before, Antoinette (Bertha) is presented in *Jane Eyre* as a "lunatic", non-human lay figure, who has no identity whatsoever. The image of this Creole woman is seen through the point of view of the colonial English society, which had a degrading attitude towards the colonized people. Rhys tries to advocate and provide reasonable explanations for Antoinette's apparent madness and her loss of identity.

> "The mad first wife in *Jane Eyre [sic]* has always interested me. I was convinced Charlotte Brontë must have had something against the West Indies, and I was angry about it. Otherwise, why did she take a West Indian for that horrible lunatic, for that really dreadful creature? I hadn't really formulated the idea of vindicating the mad woman in a novel but when I was re-discovered I was encouraged to do so." (Thieme, 1991: 77).

The writer also tries to emphasize the reasons for Antoinette's downfall by referring to the incidents such as her marriage to Rochester and his betrayal to her by sleeping with their servant Amélie, her miserable and isolated childhood and her relationship with her mother. What is worse, Antoinette has been rejected by two different societies as she can belong neither to the native black society of the Caribbean nor to the English society, because she is considered a "white cockroach" by one, and "white nigger" by the other.

Despite the fact that Jane in *Jane Eyre* and Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are from very different origins, they seem to face the same difficulties and suffer a similar oppression imposed by the patriarchal Victorian conventions of gender roles. But their reactions against such oppression are very different. For Jane, to be a woman living in a Victorian society dominated by males is very difficult. Although she struggles to achieve her freedom and independence as a woman and she seems to dress like a doll, she

behaves like a slave or a property owned by Rochester. And what makes it more difficult for her is her inability to resist Rochester's dominance in their master-slave relationship as she willingly submits to his control. "He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched" (Bronte, 1847: 229).

Another difference between Antoinette and Jane in dealing with the difficulties they face as women can be observed in their religious beliefs. When she was a child, Jane seemed doubtful about the existence of a higher power or God. Once Jane asked her faithful friend Helen, "Where is God? What is God?" Jane also asked her friend about the nature of the place they would go to after their death and whether it really exists or not: "Where is that region? Does it exist?" (Bronte, 1847: 69). But as Jane grew up to an adult, she acquired an unwavering faith in God. Even when she was faced with the crucial decision as to whether she should marry St. John and go with him to India or remain in England, she asked Heavens for guidance so that she could choose the right path: "I sincerely, deeply, fervently longed to do what was right; and only that. 'Show me, show me the path!' I entreated of Heaven"(Bronte, 1847: 357). Another manifestation of spirituality is evident in the scene where Jane is returning to Rochester:

> . . . continued my master, 'that when you rose upon me so unexpectedly last night I had difficulty in believing you any other than a mere voice and vision: something that would melt to silence and annihilation, as the midnight whisper and mountain echo had melted before. Now, I thank God! I know it to be otherwise. Yes, I thank God! (Bronte, 1847: 381-382).

Jane's faith in a divine power can be noted in the words that she utters at the end of the novel: "Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!" (Bronte, 1847: 385). In short, Jane, as a woman facing many difficulties in a patriarchal world, finds comfort in religion and faith (Lewkowicz, 2004: 4).

Similarly, as a child Antoinette did not believe in the existence of a creator or a higher power. And this can clearly be seen at the funeral of Antoinette's mother, Annette. Antoinette says, "Christophine cried bitterly but I could not. I prayed, but the words fell to the ground meaning nothing" (WSS: 55). Unlike Christophine, Antoinette is unable to cry and mourn for her mother's death because for her "She [Annette] did die when I was a child. There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about" (WSS:116). But unlike Jane, Antoinette's lack of faith in God or a divine power remained unchanged as she grew older, which could be clearly seen in a conversation between her and Rochester:

> -'You are always calling on God,' she said. 'Do you believe in God?'
> -'Of course, of course I believe in the power and wisdom of my creator.'
> She raised her eyebrows and the corners of her mouth turned down in a questioning mocking way. For a moment she looked very much like Amélie. Perhaps they are related, I thought. It's possible, it's even probable in this damned place.
> - 'And you,' I said. 'Do you believe in God?'
> -'It doesn't matter,' she answered calmly, 'what I believe or you believe, because we can do nothing about it, we are like these.'
> She flicked a dead moth off the table (WSS:115-116).

The moth here is a metaphor for Antoinette's firm conviction that humans and insects are the same in the sense that they have no control over their lives. For her, spirituality and religious prayers are very mysterious -an idea that is clearly illustrated in the scene when the angry mob burns her house:

> [Mr. Mason] stopped swearing and began to pray in a loud pious voice. The prayer ended, 'May Almighty God defend us.' And God who is indeed mysterious, who had made no sign when they

> burned Pierre as he slept - not a clap of thunder, not a flash of lightning -mysterious God heard Mr. Mason at once and answered him. The yells stopped (WSS: 39).

For Antoinette, God seems to have ignored Pierre's death, but at the same time, the fact that the mob suddenly stopped attacking the house after Mr. Mason's prayers appears to be a mysterious thing that cannot be explained by logical reasoning. In a conversation with Rochester, Antoinette draws out the difference between Coulibri and God:

> 'I feel very much a stranger here,' I said. 'I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side.' 'You are quite mistaken,' she said. 'It is not for you and not for me. It has nothing to do with either of us. That is why you are afraid of it, because it is something else. I found that out long ago when I was a child. I loved it because I had nothing else to love, but it is as indifferent as this God you call on so often.' (WSS: 117)

It is as much confusing for Antoinette that Rochester keeps on calling for God as the fact that he rejects her. Antoinette fails to make sense of both religion and love; in fact, both are beyond her comprehension (Lewkowicz, 2004: 6).

More can be said about the differences between Jane and Antoinette; Jane can be perceived as a bright, romantic, stubborn, and determined woman who knows what she wants and is able to fulfill her desires. For instance, she succeeds in creating her own family by marrying Rochester, and by doing so; she becomes financially safe and socially respected. Moreover, Jane is a powerful woman who is able to take revenge on Aunt Reed. But the case is different with Antoinette; she can neither take revenge, nor can she achieve redemption. She desperately seeks Christophine's help and use her magic to win Rochester's love. Ironically however, the scheme backfires, and causes

Rochester to despise her even more. On the other hand, Jane can be seen as an ambitious woman who commits herself to achieving equality between men and women:

> Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (Bronte, 1847: 93).

Additionally, unlike Antoinette, Jane is a very straightforward and forthcoming woman who addresses her readers directly, an act that might seem to Antoinette an impossible thing to do.

Lost in a patriarchal world, Antoinette appears to be a woman who does not know what she wants. Unlike Jane who is able to create many defensive mechanisms to protect herself, Antoinette is unable to protect herself, usually finding herself in situations where she feels rather vulnerable. For example, Antoinette visits her mother despite the fact that she had been rejected by her as a child and most certainly that she will still face the same rejection again. And similarly, Antoinette puts herself in a vulnerable position when she asks Rochester if he loves her although she knows it only too well that he does not love her at all: "'Don't you love me at all?' 'No, I do not,'" (WSS: 134).

Another noticeable difference between Jane and Antoinette is their sexuality. Antoinette is portrayed as a seductive woman who openly shows her sexual desire. Rochester says, "Then we were left alone. Sometimes a sidelong look or a sly knowing glance disturbed me" (WSS: 82). Antoinette is even accused by Rochester of having an

affair with sandy, her cousin: “Sneer to the last, Devil. Do you think that I don’t know? She thirsts for *anyone* — not for me . . .” (WSS: 149). Antoinette cannot differentiate between pleasure and pain, for her, sex is always associated with violence and death: “I did it too. I saw the hate go out of her eyes. I forced it out. And with the hate her beauty. She was only a ghost. A ghost in the grey daylight. Nothing left but hopelessness. *Say die and I will die. Say die and watch me die”* (WSS: 154). And in another occasion, Rochester says,

> ‘Die then! Die!’ I watched her die many times. In my way, not in hers. In sunlight, in shadow, by moonlight, by candlelight. In the long afternoons when the house was empty. Only the sun was there to keep us company. We shut him out. And why not? Very soon she was as eager for what’s called loving as I was — more lost and drowned afterwards. (WSS: 84).

Jane on the other hand, is very different from Antoinette, whom Rochester describes as “intemperate and unchaste” (Bronte, 1847: 261). Additionally, Antoinette is criticized by Rochester for openly expressing her feelings, which is an act that he considers improper. By contrast, Jane is careful to avoid any behavior that may have implications of sex. Even during their engagement Jane does not allow Rochester to touch her, pamper her or even compliment her (Whittemore, 2008: 33). Jane is self-disciplined, and for that reason, she is able to restrain herself and keep her attraction and feelings for Rochester to herself:

> Ere long, I had reason to congratulate myself on the course of wholesome discipline to which I had thus forced my feelings to submit: thanks to it, I was able to meet subsequent occurrences with a decent calm; which, had they found me unprepared, I should probably have been unequal to maintain, even externally (Bronte, 1847: 137).

The differences between Jane and Antoinette clearly show the contrast between the identities of the two ladies. Jane appears to be a woman with a typical Victorian identity; however, in reality she is an ambitious woman with a strong self-image, which enables her to achieve her life goals. Antoinette, on the other hand, lacks a strong identity; in fact, she has a fragmented identity due to the influence of the racial and gender discrimination she was subjected to throughout her life. These two types of discrimination will be elaborated on in the following chapters.

Postcolonial literary criticism is marked by a special interest in the issue of cultural identity. Naturally, as a postcolonial writer Jean Rhys deals with the subject of cultural identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As Stuart Hall explains in his book *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, the concept of cultural identity can be viewed from two perspectives. The first one is the communal perspective where individuals locate themselves in a shared culture; the second one is the personal perspective where individuals differentiate themselves from others around them (Hall, 1998: 224-226). Hall also argues that these two factors define one's identity as an individual within his/her community. Cultural identity in its turn is affected by the community in which an individual lives, but it is not directly determined by it. Hall further maintains that the history of individuals has a certain impact on their identities: "Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1998: 225). Patrick Colm Hogan's views on the concept of cultural identity throw further light on the issue. In his book *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crises of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean,* Hogan explains that the concept post-colonial cultural identity has two categories: Practical identity and reflective identity.

> Practical identity contains our knowledge and experiences on how one should conduct oneself in society – knowledge of tradition and appropriateness – whereas reflective identity contains a personal hierarchy of values or what one believes to

> be important in life and how these relate to other matters of value (Nurminen, 2012: 9).

These two categories are closely associated with Hall's communal and personal perspectives: the practical identity can be linked to the communal perspective and the reflective identity is related to the personal perspective. Hogan also points out that these categories of the cultural identity are greatly affected by the society in which an individual lives "even though one's identity is highly personal and individual, it is also a product of one's surroundings" (Nurminen, 2012: 9). Hogan further suggests that one's identity is influenced by the presence of contradicting cultures in his/her surroundings, and this creates different responses in individuals. These responses can include desire to return to one's own roots, the need to integrate with the other, prominent culture, or alternatively attempting to combine the two categories of identity (Hogan 2000: 10).

Jean Rhys's writings often revolve around the theme of identity. As a matter of fact, in certain phases of her life Rhys herself experienced an identity crisis because she was faced with rejection both in the West Indies and in England. Obviously, the writer's personal experiences were a major factor that accounts for her special interest in the theme of identity, as well as for the writer's deep preoccupation with her Creole background. In her book *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole,* Veronica Gregg suggests that Rhys's strong attachment to her land and people has a significant impact on her writings, and on the way she formulates her characters' identities:

> Far from ignoring social and historical formation or separating herself, Jean Rhys's writing demonstrates that the 'identity' of the Creole is made of the socio-historical, discursive fabric of the colonial West Indies. The articulation of the Creole subjectivity is at one and the same time a discursive self-destruction articulated within the historical specificity of racialized slavery in the Caribbean (Gregg, 1995: 38).

Identity is a fundamental theme in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea.* The protagonist of the novel, Antoinette, struggles against racial and gender discrimination in her attempt to achieve identity in a society that neither allows her to be equal to an average white Englishwoman nor lets her belong to the black people of Jamaica together with whom she grew up. A hybrid Creole woman excluded both from the native black community and the white English community, Antoinette is deprived of the opportunity to develop a sound sense of cultural identity. As Patrick Hogan argues, because she is a hybrid Creole, Antoinette desperately attempts to identify with both communities. Ironically, however, the more she tries to do so, the more difficult it becomes for her to identify with either of them, which further complicates her problematic identity "Antoinette's Creole identity is made complex through her wishes to identify with both the white and the black communities around her" (Hogan, 2000: 95).

## CHAPTER II

## RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE CREOLE IDENTITY

The fact that Antoinette is a white Creole woman, oppressed by the controlling and colonizing white society, and rejected and mocked by the black Jamaican society, plays a significant role in her attempt to achieve identity as well as her loss of identity in the end. This chapter will discuss the effects on Antoinette's identity of being a hybrid Creole faced with a racial rejection by the black society in the English colony of Jamaica after the Emancipation, and her struggle to discover her own identity while suffering a racial discrimination. This study will also focus on the relationship between Antoinette and her husband Rochester within the framework of a colonized-colonizer relationship from the post-colonial point of view.

Antoinette Cosway is faced with lots of problems and hardships during her childhood and throughout her life. Her mother Annette is a white Creole woman and her father is a former slave-owner. The Cosway family loses its fortune and status in the society after the Act of Emancipation in 1833. The black community of Jamaica feel a strong dislike towards Antoinette and her family both before and after the emancipation, because they come from an English slave-owner family and thus viewed as a family of colonizers. Antoinette is alienated by the black people of her society because of her and her family's association with slavery. Despite their white color, Antoinette and her mother are also alienated and rejected by the English colonizing community due to being a Creole hybrid, which is a matter of antipathy for the English community. Rejected by both communities, Antoinette suffers from a sense of not belonging anywhere; she does not know which group of people she belongs to, as the black people consider her a "white cockroach" and the English people look at her as a "white nigger".

> a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they 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 (WSS: 85).

The previous lines are very important in the novel because they describe the position of Hybrid Creoles like Antoinette in the society. She is caught between the white and black cultures. Also, she is hated and alienated by people from both cultures as she is not English enough for the English people and not quite Caribbean for the Caribbean. Thus, she is forced to live in a state of "in-betweenness" which leads her to think of herself as the "other". This sense of isolation from the people around her is the primary reason for Antoinette's loss of identity, and eventually, her madness (Kadhim, 2011: 592). As a white Creole, Antoinette's estrangement from the people around her is emphasized in the opening lines of the novel: "They say when trouble comes, close ranks. And so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks" (WSS: 15).

Antoinette tries to get rid of her image as the "other". She tries to find out a place in society where she will be fully accepted by other people. This search can be seen in her attempt to adopt the characteristics of the native Caribbean people through her friendship with Tia, Antoinette's childhood friend. In one of the incidents in the story, Tia steals Antoinette's clothes after the two of them have gone swimming in a nearby lake, leaving her own old, dirty and torn dress behind for Antoinette. When Antoinette puts Tia's dress on, she metaphorically becomes Tia, or as Mary Lou Emery puts it, she becomes "Tia's Double" (Emery, 1990:39). This dress is a symbol of Antoinette's subconscious desire to become Tia, or in other words, become Black. Sue Thomas argues that this concept of "cultural cross- dressing" in literature is a "strategic sign of the ability to cross barriers of difference" (Thomas, 1994: 53). By putting on another person's clothings, one allows himself/herself to be released from his/her own existence. Antoinette's desire to be like Tia and to assume her cultural identity through the "re-dressing" can be viewed as an attempt on her part to be released from her own miserable condition caused by her lack of identity.

Antoinette's desire is not fulfilled by the time she gets home; she is faced with the critical looks of the English guests in her house and her dress gets torn out. It is clear that her new identity no longer fits. "Nothing fits Antoinette: her original dress has been stolen and her new dress is ripped. Antoinette cannot find an identity to suit her and this lack of belonging applies to her inability to assimilate to the Caribbean culture" (Kadhim, 2011: 592).

Tia can be seen as a possible way for treating Antoinette's fragmented identity, particularly in the scene in which the two girls exchange dresses. But Tia's image is reversed when she participates in the angry mob that burns Antoinette's house. Tia shatters Antoinette's identity even more, rather than healing it:

> 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 (WSS: 38).

The above extract reveals Antoinette's wish to be considered as one of the black people of Coulibri. She is not willing to leave the island even though people treat her cruelly, as it is obvious in her encounter with the mob. Antoinette desperately craves to identify with people of the island. She does that by comparing herself with Tia; they eat the same food and share the same bed, and bathe in the same lake. Antoinette believes that she is "like her [Tia]" (WSS: 41) sharing the same experiences and belonging to the same group of people. Antoinette's desire to be like Tia is strongly presented in Antoinette's tendency to compare Tia's image with her own reflection in the mirror. Here, Tia represents a part of Antoinette's identity. Erika Pugh argues that the image of the "looking-glass" or mirror is important because it symbolizes Antoinette's need to find

her "other" self- her identity. Her inability to reach the other side of the mirror symbolizes her failure to capture that other self. (Kadhim, 2011: 593).

Obviously, this image of being like Tia disappears when Tia throws a rock at Antoinette, metaphorically, breaking the "looking-glass" (WSS: 162) that Antoinette is looking at. At this point, Antoinette realizes that she neither belongs to the black people nor she is like Tia. Antoinette also becomes aware of the racial boundaries between herself and Tia; Antoinette represents the colonizer because she is white while Tia represents the colonized because she is black:

> it is really through her interaction with Tia that Antoinette comes to realize how radically out of place she is among the black people of Jamaica and how futile her wish to become one of them truly is (Kadhim, 2011: 593).

Despite her strong desire to belong to the black community, Antoinette has mixed feelings of hate and envy towards black people. These feelings also contribute to Antoinette's identity crisis. Her feelings of envy and dislike towards black people can be clearly seen in her relationship with Tia, about whom Antoinette says: "fires always lit for her, sharp stone did not hurt her feet, I never saw her cry" (WSS: 20). Antoinette also points out that she is "sick-hating her (Tia)" and also calls her a "cheating nigger".(WSS: 22)

> Tia, though subjected to racial prejudice, seems to find some sort of security in her blackness that Antoinette lacks. This idealization of Tia makes her an object of desire and envy to Antoinette. (Kadhim, 2011: 593)

Her feelings towards Tia push Antoinette even further away from the black community and confirm the racial boundaries that separate her from them.

The love-hate relationship between Antoinette and black people is also represented in her relationship with Christophine, the black servant and a friend of

Antoinette's mother, Annette. Christophine plays the role of a mother for Antoinette after Antoinette's mother rejected her. She is the only source of warmth and security for Antoinette. Sandra Drake suggests that Christophine represents "a model of female independence and self-defiance for Antoinette" (Drake, 1990: 197). But this positive image of Christophine eventually changes as Antoinette comes to consider her as an "ignorant obstinate old Negro woman" (WSS. 122) and "black devil from hell" (WSS. 122) because Christophine practices the black magic of the Caribbean, which is known as Obeah. And because of that, Christophine, like Antoinette, is considered an outsider and alienated from both white and black people. Like Tia, Christophine cannot give Antoinette a sense of belonging or provide her with a strong sense of identity because of the racial and cultural differences that keep them apart.

Antoinette's ambivalent feelings towards the black community cause her to get stuck in a state of in-betweenness, not knowing where she belongs or what her real identity is. Kadhim suggests that she is "caught between fear of and affinity with the black community, Antoinette fails in achieving any sense of identity" (Kadhim 2011: 594).

Another point worth mentioning is that Antoinette tries to become associated with the black community after her mother's marriage to the white Englishman Mr. Mason. This marriage can be interpreted as Annette's endeavor to be part of the English society, which Antoinette strongly opposes. Lee Erwin argues that Antoinette's mother intends to make her daughter part of the white people; however, Annette's efforts are faced with a total rejection by Antoinette: "Having been subjected to both her mother's attempts to make her "white" and to the metropolitan view that the effort is a failure, Antoinette will try to be black, not an anomalous "white nigger" (Erwin, 1989: 109). Antoinette tries to satisfy her desire to be black by calling Mr. Mason, her stepfather, "white pappy", which, according to Judith Raiskin, is a term sarcastically used by Jamaican slaves to refer to their masters. Antoinette's refusal to accept the English identity imposed on by her mother can be regarded as an attempt on the part of Antoinette to identify with the black community. At the same time, this reaction can be

seen as a reflection of Antoinette's protest against the white patriarchal system, which is represented in the character of her stepfather, Mr. Mason.

Antoinette's attachment and love to the place she grew up in can be regarded as another attempt on her part to associate with the black community of Caribbean. Despite all the difficulties she faced in Coulibri, Antoinette does not want to leave that place as she considers it her home. In fact, she feels that this place and its people are what she really belongs to: "The sky was dark blue through the dark green mango leaves, and I thought, 'This is my place and this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay'" (WSS: 98). Antoinette even makes a comparison between the garden of her house in Coulibri and the Garden of Eden: "our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible- the tree of life grew there" (WSS: 17). She also considers her house to be a shelter or a safe place from her hostile surroundings; she feels a sense of security surrounded by the nature of the place and objects from her house: "I lay thinking, 'I am safe. There is the corner of the bedroom door and the friendly furniture. There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers.' "(WSS: 24). Trying to find out a sense of safety and security in the objects in her house, Antoinette makes her home a part of her identity and existence (El Ouardi, 2013: 34).

Antoinette is in a desperate need to find acceptance in a community that she feels she belongs to, especially after her many futile attempts to be accepted in the black community of the Caribbean. Now, Antoinette tries becoming integrated into the white English society. After her mother's marriage to Mr. Mason, Antoinette is exposed to the cultural customs of the English society; in fact, they were forced on her, as her now stepfather is "without a doubt English" (WSS: 33) due to the fact that he has never owned slaves. In her article *The Homecoming of Antoinette Cosway,* Ruth Evans Lane argues that the marriage between Mr. Mason and Annette can be viewed as an opportunity for Antoinette and her mother to be rescued from the state of poverty they are in after the act of emancipation. Also, this marriage gives them the chance not to be called "White niggers"(WSS: 38) any more. But by rescuing The Cosways, Mr. Mason

alienates Antoinette and her mother from the people and land which they consider as home, thus separating Antoinette even further from the Caribbean:

> Mr. Mason rescues Mrs. Cosway, her daughter, and her idiot son from the disgraces of poverty—from the label of "white niggers." … Yet in rescuing the Cosways, he displaces them further. As a model of English manhood, he alienates the Caribbean-born, ex-slaveholding, female Cosways from the land on which they have made their home (Lane: 2).

Antoinette's marriage to Edward Rochester is one of her apparent initiatives to identify with the white people. After this marriage, Antoinette gradually gains the qualities of English women such as depending on a man all through her life and her refusal to leave him even after his betrayal. Though she has found her husband to be sleeping with another woman, Antoinette simply downplays this incident saying, "he is my husband after all" (WSS: 99). This marriage is not planned for by neither Antoinette nor Rochester; yet, both parties hope to get some benefits from this relationship. This marriage was set up for Antoinette by her stepfather, Mr. Mason, to secure her future with an Englishman, who can bring her into the English community and secure the fortune Mr. Mason will leave her: "I want you to be happy, Antoinette, secure, I've tried to arrange, but we'll have time to talk about that later'" (WSS: 54). The marriage is beneficial also for Edward because, as the second son of his family, he cannot receive any inheritance -his family's fortune will be bequeathed only to his older brother. So, by marrying Antoinette, Edward will be securing himself a decent fortune.

The fact that the European-English society rejects the Creole hybrid Antoinette is manifested in the character of Edward Rochester. Rochester measures everyone one this island according to the English standards. For him, things are either English or not, and naturally, for him, only English things are valuable. Rochester does not regard Antoinette (and everyone on the island) as a pure Englishwoman: "Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she (Antoinette) may be, but they are not English or European either." (WSS: 61). Rochester believes that Antoinette can never be

considered equal to an English or European woman, a woman that an English or European man can choose as a wife. Rochester's evaluation about his wife Antoinette is similar to the remarks made by the two women talking about her mother's marriage to Mr. Mason:

> 'A fantastic marriage and he will regret it. Why should a very wealthy man who could take his pick of all the girls in the West Indies, and many in England too probably?' 'Why *probably*?' the other voice said. '*Certainly*.' 'Then why should he marry a widow without a penny to her name and Coulibri a wreck of a place? (WSS: 26).

Rejected by the black people of the island, Antoinette decides to go to England as an alternative home, where she can begin a new life. The reason why she chooses England is that it is the mother country of colonial settlers. Antoinette believes that her marriage with an Englishman like Edward Rochester will make her part of England, which will certainly help her achieve identity. Antoinette's idolization of England can be seen early in the novel, when we learn that her favorite picture is "'The Miller's Daughter', a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping off her shoulders." (WSS: 32). But this ideal image that Antoinette visualizes for England soon changes into a cold, dark and hostile place. In one of her letters, Jean Rhys states that Antoinette burns Thornfield Hall at the end of the novel because: "she is cold-and fire is the only warmth she knows in England" (Knap. 1988: 103).

Despite her desperate need to identify with England, Antoinette cannot suppress her fear and uncertainty towards this unfriendly place, which is suggested by the character her English husband. This dilemma contributes to the sense of not belonging that Antoinette experiences, which in turn leads Antoinette to become the mad Creole woman in *Jane Eyre*. Unlike Antoinette who feels hesitant to identify with England, Christophine has such a strong identity that she totally rejects the idea of England. Christophine even rejects the very existence of this country, as can be seen when she asks Antoinette: "Why you want to go to this cold thief place? If there is this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing sure" (WSS: 101). In her book *The Daughter's Return:*

*African-American and Caribbean Women's Fictions of History,* Caroline Rudy argues that Christophine rejects England because she has "a more culturally authentic relationship to [her] island and its history" (Rody, 2001: 141). Christophine does not need a new place to assure her identity. On the contrary, Antoinette uses England as a fantasy. Actually, she is deluded by a false concept of this country which, she hopes, will provide her with the comfort and sense of belonging she is looking for.

Although Christophine describes England as a "cold thief place," Antoinette's idealized concept of the country does not change until she reaches Thornfield Hall. As a matter of fact, Antoinette tells Rochester about how one of her friends described England: "'Is it true,' she said, 'that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up.'" (WSS: 73). Antoinette's question about England is also related to the nightmare she had during her stay in the convent:

> "Again I have left the house at Coulibri. It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. 'Here?' He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. 'Not here, not yet,' he says, and I follow him, weeping. Now I do not try to hold up my dress, it trails in the dirt, my beautiful dress. We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them." (WSS: 54-55).

This dream foreshadows Antoinette's marriage to Rochester as she appears to be wearing a wedding dress and is accompanied with an unknown man. She is following

the man into an unknown forest with trees she does not recognize (England). It is also interesting that Antoinette makes no effort to get out of this situation "I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse". This dream foreshadows what will happen later in real life: Antoinette's husband forces her to leave the island and move to England without any resistance from her part. Antoinette mentions "'I dreamed I was in Hell.'" (WSS: 55) after waking up from her nightmare, only to find out later that the place she dreams of is England, which turns out to be a hell, let alone a place of refuge for her.

As previously mentioned, Rochester represents the colonizing force of England in the novel. His "position of authority and ownership clearly raises him to the status of colonizer who wields control over the subaltern, that is, Antoinette." (Kadhim, 2011: 598). An Englishman, Rochester considers himself superior to Antoinette and, therefore, responsible for colonizing both his wife and the island she is living on. Yet, Rochester's limited control and lack of knowledge of Antoinette and her world makes him paranoid and leads him to believe that he is losing his colonial grip. As a result, Rochester feels some kind of hatred towards Antoinette. This hatred is also caused by his failure to understand the people living on the island. He is extremely uncomfortable with the culture and lifestyle of the people of the island, who are obviously not English. In fact, it is this feeling which makes him force Antoinette to leave the island and go with him to England.

Rochester, unlike Antoinette, dislikes the culture of the island and its people, and that is the main reason why he does not want to accept the unfamiliar lifestyle of Jamaicans. Rochester also feels that there is something discomforting about the island; indeed, it is hostile to him. Accusing Antoinette of being his enemy, he says, "I feel very much a stranger here. I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side" (WSS: 117). Rochester's hatred towards the island is obvious even from his first encounter with it. He describes the island as "not only wild but menacing" (WSS: 63). He also mentions that on this island "Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills

too near." (WSS: 63). Because his authority as an Englishman is restricted in this foreign land, Rochester's hatred goes so far as to include his wife as well, due to the association of her beauty to the beauty of the island:

> I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever color, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it. (WSS: 156)

Rochester's antipathy towards the beauty of the island is clearly seen not only in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* but also in *Jane Eyre*. Rochester tells Jane about his experiences during the time he spent on the island when he married Bertha. He describes the atmosphere on the island saying: "The air was like sulphur-steams—I could find no refreshment anywhere." *(*Brontë, 1847: 311). Rochester tells Jane that the European wind is what made him go home again:

> *"*The sweet wind from Europe was still whispering in the refreshed leaves, and the Atlantic was thundering in glorious liberty; my heart, dried up and scorched for a long time, swelled to the tone, and filled with living blood—my being longed for renewal—my soul thirsted for a pure draught. I saw hope revive—and felt regeneration possible. From a flowery arch at the bottom of my garden I gazed over the sea—bluer than the sky" *(*Brontë, 1847: 312).

The contrast between the atmosphere of the island and the "wind from Europe" is intentionally made in order to portray Jamaica as a dreadful, hostile and harmful place, whereas England is depicted as a beautiful, pure and safe place that one can call home.

Rochester differs from Antoinette not only in his attitude towards the island, but also in his attitude and behavior toward the black community of the island. He is disturbed by the affection that Antoinette shows towards Christophine. This attitude represents the English or European mentality, which views the blacks, who used to be slaves, as objects to be put to work rather than a group of human beings. Antoinette however, treats Christophine as a part of her family, and it is only natural for her to *"*hug and kiss Christophine" (WSS: 83) without in the least considering her race or color. And this humane attitude is due to fact that Antoinette was raised in a community with a majority of black people. Antoinette and Rochester widely differ in terms of their attitudes and conduct towards the black people of the island. Antoinette is rejected by the fellow white people because of her sympathetic attitude toward the blacks. Hence, she fails to establish her position as a white Englishwoman.

In an attempt to strengthen his authority as an Englishman, Rochester changes his wife's name from Antoinette to Bertha, the mad woman in *Jane Eyre.* And by doing so, Rochester makes it more difficult for Antoinette to achieve an identity. In her article *Between and Beyond Boundaries in 'Wide Sargasso Sea',* M. M. Adjarian suggests that by renaming Antoinette, Rochester is forcing her to succumb to the "the cultural and personal association of a white English woman that he has constructed for her" (Adjarian, 207: 1995). But in reaction to this, Antoinette resolves to struggle against such constraints by rejecting the name imposed on her: "'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too.'" (WSS: 133).

Renaming Antoinette also gives Rochester the chance to undermine an important component of Antoinette's identity, her name. Antoinette's name is very important for her. In fact, it is by her name that she can be identified in her community. And for her, Berth is a foreign name that she cannot identify with. Rochester's excuse for renaming Antoinette is that Bertha is a proper Englishwoman's name. He explains to Antoinette the reason he calls her Bertha: "'Because it is a name I'm particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha.'" (WSS: 122). The reason why Rochester prefers the name Bertha is that

it is an English name (Tennholt, 2005: 22). In her article *Navigating the 'Wide Sargasso Sea': Colonial History, English Fiction, and British Empire.* Laura E. Ciolkowski argues that Rochester, who represents the colonizer, tries to "dissociate [Antoinette] from her West Indian past [which he hates] and establish her rebirth" (Ciolkowski, 1997: 343). By imposing an English name and identity on Antoinette, Rochester tries to create a woman whom he can control and practice his colonial authority over as an Englishman.

Rochester calls Antoinette also by other names, one of which is Marionette "(*Marionette, Antoinette, Marionetta, Antoinetta*)" (WSS: 140). A 'marionette' is a puppet controlled by strings attached to the hand of a puppeteer. Renaming Antoinette to Marionette is highly suggestive of her loss of identity and her becoming a property that Rochester possesses and locks away in his attic. In his book *Crises of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa and the Caribbean,* Patrick Hogan suggests that giving the name Marionette for Antoinette is a reflection of Rochester's desire to turn her into "a puppet, a piece of wood, without reflection or autonomous action, without social connectedness, without identity" (Hogan, 2000: 93).

In another attempt to assure his authority as an Englishman, Rochester forces Antoinette to leave the island and go with him back to England. By doing so, he intends to take her away from the only place she has known and loved: "She said she loved this place. This is the last she'll see of it…Here's a cloudy day to help you. No brazen sun. No sun . . . No sun. The weather's changed." (WSS: 150). This change of the weather indicates the weather in England, which is often characterized by a cloudy sky rather than the hot sun that Rochester hates. By making Antoinette leave her home, Rochester deprives her of any chance to build an identity for herself. According Nicola Nixon, it is this "removal from her natural home, her dispossession, that makes her mad" (Kadhim, 2011: 600).

Antoinette's fascination with England immediately turns into disappointment as soon as she steps foot in Thornfield hall. She can hardly believe that this place is the England in her imagination. In fact, she thinks that she must be in another place now: "They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England.

When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it." (WSS: 162). Antoinette's fantasy of England as a beautiful place is replaced with a realistic view of her surroundings, as she soon finds that England is actually "a cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it." (WSS: 162). In his book *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study,* Thomas F. Staley says:

> "Her image of England is gradually dominated by cold and snow, all of its features set in careful contrast to the warmth of her native land. England holds no hope for her; it is cold, menacing, isolated, dead. … There is no unifying element where the two of them can meet; there is no context to join them" (Staley, 1979: 90)

Now that the image of England that she used to hold is "dead", Antoinette comes to realize that she does not belong to England at all. Rather, she belongs to the island and its native people even though she had many problems in her relations with them. Antoinette believes that England, like Rochester, is cold and does not understand her. Although she is living in England now, her mind is still preoccupied with her homeland on the island. In a conversation with Rochester, Antoinette mentions that she loves the island because she has "nothing else to love" (WSS: 118). Her statement that she does not love anything but the island demonstrates her loyalty to the island and its people, as well as her strong desire to belong to the natives on the island.

Antoinette's last dream occurs during her stay in the attic of Thornfield hall. In her dream, Antoinette sets the house on fire, which is what actually happens in *Jane Eyre*. This dream is very important because it suggests that Antoinette has completely lost her identity. She does not even recognize herself as she looks in the mirror. Antoinette mistakes her reflection in the mirror for "that ghost of a woman who they say haunts this place." (WSS: 168). She is unable to comprehend that the figure she is looking at is actually her own reflection. She has failed to recognize her own image in the mirror because she was locked up for a long time in an attic without windows or mirror.

> There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us - hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I? (WSS: 162).

The above extract highlights the importance of the looking-glass for Antoinette as it becomes a "symbol of self-identification that Antoinette is missing, a place where she looks for confirmation of her identity" (Kadhim, 2011: 601). Another point to be made is that Antoinette's turning to the looking-glass reveals her search for something to confirm that she is now herself and that she has an identity (J. M. Paul, 1992: 23) Antoinette's attempt to kiss her reflection in the mirror reveals her deep desire to become herself, a person, complete with an identity. But Rochester deprives her of the opportunity to fulfill her desire by forcing her to move to England and taking away her looking-glass. By doing so, he also eliminates any chance that she may have to build an identity for herself: "She'll not laugh in the sun again. She'll not dress up and smile at herself in that damnable looking-glass. So pleased, so satisfied." (WSS: 150).

Another indication of Antoinette's deep desire to belong to the people of the Caribbean is her dream in which she sees Tia.

> But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? And I heard the man's voice, Bertha! Bertha! All this I saw and heard in a fraction of a second. And the sky so red. Someone screamed and I thought, *Why did I scream?* I called 'Tia!' and jumped and woke. (WSS: 170-171)

Antoinette ignores the voice of the man who is calling her and chooses to join Tia instead of him. This behavior is a strong indication of Antoinette's decision to be

part of the black community of the Caribbean rather than a part of the English community because she feels strongly attached to the former. Her attachment to the Caribbean community has become stronger after she experienced the feeling of being controlled by someone else, just like a slave - a feeling that the black people of the island once experienced. By jumping into the pool, Antoinette not only manages to cross to the other side of the looking-glass and embrace the "colonial blackness" represented by Tia, but she also achieves what Erica Pugh calls "ultimate completion of herself" (Pugh, 2010: 5).

## CHAPTER III

## GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Antoinette is a hybrid Creole living in a rejecting society. Her attempts to identify with either of the communities, the black and white, have proved to be unsuccessful. So, her efforts to achieve identity have ended up with failure. Antoinette suffers racial discrimination and rejection from both the white and black people of the Caribbean community. Apart from racial prejudices against the Creole, gender discrimination against women is another factor that makes it difficult for Antoinette to achieve identity. Being a hybrid Creole woman and living in a world dominated by the colonizing patriarchal power, England, puts Antoinette in a disadvantageous position and creates obstacles against her desire to achieve her identity. So, this chapter will focus, from a feminist point of view, on Antoinette's struggle to achieve identity while suffering gender discrimination.

A central theme in *Jane Eyre* and the nineteenth century literature, madness has always drawn the attention of feminist writers. Women who refused to comply with the norms of the Victorian society were often considered to be mad. In their book *The Madwoman In The Attic,* Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss women's madness in the nineteenth century's literature (including *Jane Eyre*). They argue that women under the English patriarchal control are deliberately presented as ill monsters if they do not behave in a feminine, lady-like manner. The authors also add that in the Victorian age, madness was thought to be a "women disease" caused by a mental and physical deformation in the female organs, as well as by women's lack of femininity training. According to Gilbert and Gubar, this madness is actually is the result of this femininity training (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 54).

Maria Olaussen, another feminist writer dealing with the theme of madness in English literature, argues that Jean Rhys chose to write about the madness of Bertha Mason not to present an individual case, but to produce her own version of a "Madwoman" to overwrite the version that Charlotte Brontë has created *(*Olaussen, 1992:59). On the other hand, in her book *Women and Madness,* Phyllis Chesler also deals with madness of women in the nineteenth century, suggesting that women were regarded as mad if they did not adopt a proper female behavior. Chesler argues that the real cause of women's "madness" is that they lived in a male-dominated patriarchal society is (Chesler, 1972: 56).

In *Jane Eyre,* Rochester is depicted as a victim deprived of the liberty of marrying the woman he loves (Jane) because of the burden of a mad wife. But in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* the roles are reversed. Antoinette can be seen as the victim of her husband who drives her to madness. Rochester considers Antoinette to be a lady who can behave like an English Victorian woman. But instead, he finds himself married to a Creole Woman who behaves strangely and does not act in a manner that suits a lady. Rochester feels deceived for marrying a woman who will eventually go mad like her mother because he is convinced that madness runs through Antoinette's family. In an argument between Antoinette and Rochester that occurs after Daniel Cosway informs the latter of Antoinette's mother's mental condition, Antoinette tries to justify her mother's condition and the hardships she has been through. But Rochester refuses to listen to her, which makes her very angry and violent with Rochester:

> "Then she cursed me comprehensively, 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" (WSS: 135).

Rochester thinks that this impulsive anger that Antoinette feels toward him has been caused by the madness that she inherited from her family. Phyllis Chesler suggests that Rochester's thoughts about his wife are caused by the mentality of the patriarchal society which regards the verbal and physical violence of women as symptoms of

madness. In fact, women who show these signs are abandoned by men as "crazy", as well as "unfeminine" (Chesler, 1972: 45).

A significant part of feminist criticism focuses on women's condition in society and how they can set themselves free from the roles traditionally assigned to them by the patriarchal society. Within this context, Gilbert & Gubar suggest that it is very important for women to figure as free characters in works written by male writers. These critics say, "women themselves have the power to create themselves as characters, even perhaps the power to reach toward the woman trapped on the other side of the mirror/ text and help her to climb out" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 16). Viewed from this perspective, Antoinette can be seen as a woman longing to achieve freedom and dreaming of her liberation from the bondage and restraints that she is subjected to in a patriarchal society. Antoinette feels so deeply oppressed that she envies and admires the freedom of the black women around her.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* the image of caged birds is an important symbol of the idea that women are robbed of their freedom. Carole Angier suggests that Coco (the family's pet parrot which was burned when the mob attacked Antoinette's house at the beginning of the novel) represents the imprisoned soul of Antoinette, as well as her mother, Annette (Angier, 1990: 562). Because they are both white Creole women, Antoinette and her mother have to marry a white Englishman in order to find acceptance in English society. Antoinette marries Rochester in hope that she will be granted her freedom, but unfortunately for her, she finds herself trapped in a cage just like her parrot. Because Antoinette is quite unlike English women, the only way Rochester can control his wife is by destroying her. Maria Olaussen argues that this is similar to Mr. Mason's cutting Coco's wings in order to control him (Olaussen, 1992: 152). Gilbert & Gubar maintain that in the nineteenth century "women were in some sense imprisoned in men's houses" and they are "locked into male texts, texts from which they could escape only through ingenuity and indirection" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 83). In fact, this is what Antoinette does when she is forced by her husband to go to England. She is just like the burning Coco, which saves Antoinette and her family by flying out of the house. By

doing so, Coco has stopped the mob's attack because the natives believe that a burning bird is a sign of bad luck. Likewise, Antoinette burns down Thornfield Hall and jumps to her death, liberating herself from her husband's bondage. Ironically however, Antoinette's death liberates Jane and Rochester, who get married after her death.

Another theme that feminist writers focus on in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is sexuality, a theme that finds reflection in many of Jean Rhys's novels because they were written in a period when "a new frankness about sexuality … enters women's fiction" (Selden, 1997: 128). Maria Olaussen points out that in the Victorian era, women who showed sexual appetite were considered to be morally insane. Because Antoinette openly shows a sexual desire when she is with her husband Rochester, she is considered to be suffering from a "moral madness" (Olaussen, 1992: 60). Commenting on the same subject, Laura Ciolkowski writes, "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" (Ciolkowski, 1997: 344). And thus, from the patriarchal English point of view, Antoinette is considered, as Rochester calls her, "intemperate and unchaste" (Brontë, 1847: 261).

Antoinette's lack of sexual restraint gives Rochester another reason to deny her whiteness and confirm her "otherness". He does so by comparing Antoinette with Amélie, a black servant, whose lack of moral constraint allows her to have sexual intercourse with Rochester. "For a moment she looked very much like Amélie. Perhaps they are related, I thought. It's possible, it's even probable in this damned place" (WSS: 115). Rochester is at once fascinated and intimidated by Antoinette's beauty, charm, and sexuality. And that is due to the fact that her beauty is not the kind of the English beauty that he is used to. And her sexuality is indecent, compared with any expression of sexuality in English society (Kadhim, 2011: 599). In a conversation with Christophine, Rochester says,

> "She [Antoinette] 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.* Then lie so still, still as this cloudy day. A lunatic who always knows the time. But never does" (WSS: 149).

Rochester's constant accusations that Antoinette is a woman with a lunatic laugh and uncontrollable sexual desire lead her to be regarded as a mad woman by the English society. Carole Angier suggests that women are victimized by men through their sexuality. Angier points out that men desire "passive innocent girls, whom they can imagine, and then turn into, the sad victims of men" (Angier, 1990: 565). Actually, this is what exactly happens with Rochester and Antoinette; she innocently follows him wearing her white dress to eventually end up locked in his attic: "I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen." (WSS: 54) Hélène Cixous emphasizes this point by saying that men have the urge to control women, to make them silent and submissive. Cixous also suggests that men are aroused by their fear of women, and they associate "death and the feminine sex" which are "two unpresentable things" (Cixous, 1981: 255). In fact, Rochester's desire to possess and dominate Antoinette can be seen through his words and actions: "I'll take her in my arms, my lunatic. She's mad but *mine, mine.* What will I care for gods or devils or for Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. *For me."* (WSS: 150). As it turns out, the only way for Rochester to control Antoinette is to destroy her and making her his victim; and by doing so, he overcomes his fear of her beauty and sexuality.

Antoinette's strong sexual desires lead Rochester to associate her with blackness and madness. In her essay *Double Complexity in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea,* Silvia Panizza suggests that Antoinette's free sexuality leads Rochester to believe that she acts like a black woman on the verge of madness. Panizza points out that Rochester considers Antoinette to be a woman who descended from black origins because at that time, it was believed among Europeans that black women have "unbridled libido". This belief used to find expression in exaggerated stories of sexual relationships between white masters and their black servants. Thus, Rochester doubts his wife's ethnicity, and

as mentioned before, he compares her with their black servant Amélie, who slept with him even though he is married to Antoinette because she lacks the moral constraint that prevents her from doing so. In addition, he suspects that Antoinette is having an affair with her cousin Sandi: "Do you think that I don't know? She thirsts for *anyone* – not for me…" (WSS: 149). Panizza also argues that Antoinette's sexuality makes Rochester think that she is not only a mulatto, but also a mad woman. This idea has roots in the common belief in Victorian medical circles that women suffer from hysteria and depression because of a disorder in uterus that is triggered by any excess of emotions; and that is why Rochester links Antoinette's sexuality with emotional ailment (Panizza, 2009:5).

Another important point in the novel is the close association of sex with violence and death. In her book *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys,* Elaine Savory explains that in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* sex becomes connected with violence and death. She suggests that death is both literal and metaphorical: "Antoinette provokes "Rochester" to tell her to die (literally), but he speaks of her "dying" many times in the sense of orgasm, "my way, not hers"" (Savory, 2009: 85). At the beginning, Rochester can be seen sexually desiring Antoinette, but soon he manages to reverse the roles and deprive her from satisfying her sexual needs, thus suppressing her identity.

> "'Christophine, he does not love me, I think he hates me. He always sleeps in his dressing-room now and the servants know. If I get angry he is scornful and silent, sometimes he does not speak to me for hours and I cannot endure it any more, I cannot. What shall I do? He was not like that at first'" (WSS: 99)

Because he finds himself alienated from the culture and nature of Antoinette's homeland, Rochester uses sex as a means to dominate Antoinette. He does this by controlling, and later completely suppressing her sexual desire: "'I will be quiet, I will not cry. But Christophine, if he, my husband, could come to me one night. Once more. I would make him love me'" (WSS: 102).

Rochester's renaming of Antoinette is another way for him to show his dominance as a male over her. The renaming of Antoinette into Bertha occurs immediately after Rochester informed by Sandy that madness runs through Antoinette's family, and Antoinette herself will eventually end up mentally ill like her mother. Rochester wants his wife to have decent "English values and socially accepted female role" (Uzun, 2011: 29). And in order for that to be possible, his wife must have, unlike Antoinette, a proper English name that he is familiar with. For Rochester, Antoinette's passionate burst outs and impulsive behavior is not appropriate for an English woman, and her behavior leads Rochester to believe that she is a madwoman like her mother. Judith Gardiner suggests that "being properly female in a society usually involves both doing the sorts of things mother does and being the sort of woman she is" (Gardiner, 2010: 354). This indicates that society view women's behavior as appropriate or not according to the values of that society. Rochester finds Antoinette's behavior inappropriate because unlike hers, in his society, not expressing his feelings is considered as the proper thing to do, thus, for Rochester, Antoinette's behavior is improper for a woman, and it might be a sign of her madness:

> By attempting to imagine Antoinette into the role of a proper English wife, he is forced to recognize her ultimate inability to conform to the discourses, which constitute the normal within the frame of English upper class subjectivity. She is neither English nor a properly Anglicized Creole, and the possibility of madness and alcoholism in her family further distances her from Edward's imagined normal (Kendrick, 1994: 238).

Antoinette seems to be unable to find an identity for herself because she has been displaced, renamed and othered by people around her many times throughout her life. This otherness that Antoinette suffers from is caused by excluding her as an outsider person from her society. Antoinette feels that she always has been the "other" who "is excluded from the cultural patterns of bonding at the heart of the society" (Heilburn,

1979: 37). Carolyn Heilburn adds that this feeling of being the outsider has entered Antoinette's consciousness: "one does not awaken to the awareness of being a female outsider, unless the condition of 'outsiderness' has, through other means, entered one's consciousness" (Heilburn, 1979: 39). On the other hand, Judith Gardiner suggests that this consciousness of Antoinette is cause by the rules of the male dominated world she is living in "the concept of female identity shows us how female experience is transformed into female consciousness, often in reaction to male paradigms for female experience" (Gardiner, 2010:360). In the light of Heilburn and Gardiner suggestions, Antoinette refuses the name that Rochester imposed on her and considers as a proper English name, Bertha, but she eventually embraces the madness that is associated with her and her family's identity. (Uzun, 2011: 32)

Feminist critics maintain that female writers of the nineteenth century reflect their personalities in their writings. Critics suggest that while female writers often accept the stereotypes and standards set by male writers, they try to establish their own literary authority through their writing and characters. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that women tend to accept the inferior position set for them by men. But as an expression of their revolt against this patriarchal order, women imitate men by assuming a male identity and trying to look masculine, so that they will be taken more seriously (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 72). Gilbert and Gubar also talk about the "submerged content" in the texts of female writers. They suggest that female authors use male forms in their writings as a disguise to be able "to record their own dreams and their own stories" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 73). And by doing so, female authors "managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously confirming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 73).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys converts Antoinette from a monstrous madwoman into the sympathetic victim of Edward Rochester. Within this context, Antoinette figures as a submissive woman who seems to have surrendered to Rochester's male dominance; but at the same time, she is looking forward to a chance to free herself from his chains. Antoinette refuses to be Bertha; in fact, she prefers to be a

woman like her mother Annette, instead of being the ideal Englishwoman that Rochester wants her to be: “Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name” (WSS: 133).

On the other hand, Gilbert and Gubar draw an analogy between Jane and Bertha, the characters of Bronte’s *Jane Eyre.* The writers suggest that Bertha represents Jane’s alter Ego which “echoes Jane’s own fear of being a monster” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000:362). Gilbert and Gubar also point out that the women portrayed in the works of feminist writers are afraid of looking at the looking-glass because they fear that they might see what their real image looks like; and in Jane’s case, she is afraid that she might be a monster: “am I a monster?' I said: 'is it impossible that Mr. Rochester should have a sincere affection for me?” (Brontë, 1847: 226). Overpowered by the same fear, Antoinette tries to construct an identity for herself all through her life. She tries to identify with the black natives of her hometown and with the white English community, only to end up as a woman without an identity “There is no looking-glass here and I don’t know what I am like now” (WSS: 162). Or worse, a monster, a ghost: “ghost of a woman who they say haunts this place” (WSS: 168).

The feminist perspective on *Wide Sargasso Sea* is often linked to the postcolonial one, and racial discrimination is usually linked to gender discrimination. In fact, Antoinette suffers both racial and gender discrimination in her endeavour to achieve her identity. Not only she finds herself rejected be the black and white communities because of her Creole descent, but her situation becomes more difficult as she is now a double “other” because of her gender. (Pollanen, 2012: 10). In her book *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba gives an account of how women of the nineteenth century looked down on and compared to the other “lower races”:

> It was claimed that women’s low brain weights and deficient brain structure were analogous to those of the lower races, and their inferior intellectualities explained on this basis. Women, it was observed, shared with Negroes a narrow, child-like, and delicate skull, so different from the more robust and rounded heads characteristic of

> males of 'superior' races…. In short, lower races represented the 'female' type of the human species, and females the 'lower race' of gender (Loomba, 1998: 160-161).

Antoinette perfectly fits this prospective on women as she is in more than an occasion is treated as a child, especially by Rochester "If she was a child she was not a stupid child but an obstinate one. She often questioned me about England and listened attentively to my answers, but I was certain that nothing I said made much difference" (WSS: 85). Or as mentioned before, she is considered as threat to Rochester because of her beauty, sexuality and her raging outbursts, in addition her connection with Christophine and the Obeah magic that she practices (Pollanen, 2012: 11).

Loomba also draws attention towards the "subordination of women and colonial subjects". She points out the hardships that colored women have to face living in a colonizing patriarchal world. Considered as one of these colored women, Antoinette "suffer(s) from racial and gendered forms of oppressions simultaneously" (Loomba, 1998: 163), although she is of a white color, she is not considered as an Englishwoman or European, and thus, she belongs to the both subordinate race and gender.

The image of the looking-glass is once again is very important in this novel because according to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar the recurrent mentioning of the looking-glass in *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents the ""voice" of male consent or the standard image of women that men, the dominant social group, try to impose upon them" (Coartney, 2010: 5). By controlling the means in which women view themselves, the male dominated English and European society can maintain its control over women and continue its subjection of them. This is clear in the character of Antoinette's mother, Annette who desperately tries to act according to the standards of the white society, but she eventually becomes fully controlled by the patriarchal society (Coartney, 2010: 5). In a description of her mother, Antoinette says her mother "planned and hoped… every time she passed a looking glass" (WSS: 16). And that is because she is now under a total control of the male dominated society and she is fully dependent on a man throughout

her life: “The mother seeks constantly the approval of a real mirror that is to decide her future and hopes of reintegration into society through marriage” (Fayad 228).

As a grown woman now, Antoinette faces the same fate as her mother, she is set to marry a stranger white Englishman whom she will become dependent on for the rest of her life, and she also has to give up all her fortune that her step father left for her. The similarity between Antoinette and her mother is very noticeable in Antoinette’s description of her mother: “A frown came between her black eyebrows, deep - it might have been cut with a knife. I hated this frown” (WSS: 18) and Rochester description of Antoinette herself: “the frown between her thick eyebrows, deep as if it had been cut with a knife” (WSS: 125). But unlike her mother, Antoinette manages to recover from this frown of hers “her face grew smooth and very young again, she even seemed to smile. A trick of the light perhaps” (WSS: 125), which foreshadows her breaking free from her husband’s and his patriarchal society’s chains.

Mirrors play another important role in the novel because as Gayatri Spivak suggests, mirrors are linked with identity, and the looking-glass indicates that Antoinette has come very close to understand her true identity especially when Antoinette sees herself in the mirror in part three of the novel. (Panizza, 2012: 2009). But at the same time, Spivak suggests that the reflection of the mirror could be a true reflection of Antoinette true identity, or it might be a reflection of her hidden dreams and desires to be identified with someone else like Tia, because when Antoinette looks in the mirror she sees “[herself] yet not quit [herself]” (WSS: 162). Spivak also suggest that Antoinette’s unrecognizing herself in the mirror or as Spivak puts it “othering herself” indicates Antoinette’s refusal to the false self that Rochester forced on her and her own way to re-establish her true Creole identity (Panizza, 2012: 2009).

# CONCLUSION

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is considered to be one of the most important post-colonial and feminist novels that shed light on the issue of women struggling for freedom in a patriarchal world. The novel can also be regarded as a prequel or re-writing of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in that Antoinette Cosway (also known as Bertha Mason), who is portrayed as a minor character in *Jane Eyr*e, becomes a major character in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* The story builds around the events that occur before Antoniette's marriage to her husband and her eventual downfall after her marriage.

Since the first time she read *Jane Eyre,* Rhys took great interest in the character of the Bertha Mason and she felt that this character was not presented the way she should have been presented. In Jane Eyre, Bertha was portrayed as "the Madwoman in the Attic" who prevented Rochester and Jane from getting married. Rhys's feeling of attachment to Bertha was also due to the fact that she felt she had many characteristics in common with Bertha: both of them were from the Caribbean, both had hybrid origins, and both had to struggle to identify with the people in their environment only to be faced with rejection in the end.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* follows the story of the Creole character Antoinette Cosway and the difficulties she encounters in her struggle to achieve identity in both white and black societies, and her sense of frustration that results from being rejected by them. Being a white Creole puts Antoinette in a difficult situation as she is rejected by the communities around her. The white English community rejects her on the ground that her Englishness is not sufficient, and that it is not "pure" enough. As Rochester says, "She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (WSS: 61). For this community, Antoinette is considered a "white nigger" (WSS: 93). The black

Jamaican community on the other hand rejects her because for them she is a mere "white cockroach" (WSS: 92). Actually, these rejections account for her fragmented identity, and at the end of the novel, this situation leads her to lose her identity completely.

Desperately torn between the two communities, Antoinette, consciously or subconsciously, tries to identify with the black Caribbean community, as she likes the island and its people. Antoinette attempts to achieve this identification through her relationship with her childhood friend, Tia. Antoinette sees herself or aspires to be like Tia, to have a family that loves her, a society that accepts her as one of them: "We stared at each other …It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking glass"(WSS: 38). Ironically however, Antoinette's desire to be considered as part of the Caribbean community quickly wanes as the angry mob attacks her house and Tia throws a stone at Antoinette.

Antoinette's relationship with her old servant Christophine is another factor that contributes to her identity crisis. Christophine is considered a surrogate mother for Antoinette, who lacks the warmth of a loving mother as her mother also rejected her. But unfortunately for Antoinette, Christophine cannot provide Antoinette with the sense of belonging the latter craves, for the former is also considered an outsider and is not welcomed anywhere -especially as she practises black magic, Obeah.

As a solution to her predicament, Antoinette tries to identify with the English white community by marrying Edward Rochester. But ironically again, Rochester rejects her on the ground that she is not English enough. After she was rejected by her homeland, the Caribbean, Antoinette feels that England could be an alternative home for her. But soon she finds that this place, like the people around her, is an unwelcoming, cold, and cruel place.

Antoinette's loss of identity becomes apparent as Rochester calls her by a different name (Bertha). Thus, Antoinette becomes a mere object that Rochester can possess and control as he pleases. Moreover, Rochester forces Antoinette to move with him to England, and by doing so he deprives her of the slightest chance she has to build an identity for herself. And thus, Antoinette becomes a person without an identity, a

"madwoman" locked up in Rochester's attic. Furthermore, being a woman in a patriarchal society doubles the difficulties that Antoinette comes across in her endeavor to achieve identity. Throughout her life, Antoinette is faced with racial discrimination as well as gender discrimination. And she is deemed to be a mad woman because she does not behave like a lady, in a manner befitting a civilized Englishwoman. Antoinette's unrestrained sexuality is another reason for the accusations directed towards her that she is a mad woman. As a matter of fact, Antoinette does not feel any discomfort in openly showing her sexual desires: As Laura Ciolkowski puts it, "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" (Ciolkowski, 1997: 344).

Antoinette's uninhibited sexual impulses lead Rochester to alienate his wife even further. Rochester thinks that her whiteness is questionable as he compares Antoinette with their black servant Amélie, who knowingly sleeps with him even though he is married to Antoinette "…Perhaps they are related, I thought. It's possible, it's even probable in this damned place" (WSS: 115).

As a white Creole woman, Antoinette marries a white Englishman in order to achieve an identity by finding acceptance in her husband's society. Also, she aims to become liberated from the restraints she faces as a Creole woman, and the image of the "other" that she is often associated with. But regrettably, far from being able to fulfill her dreams, Antoinette finds herself captivated in the attic of the Englishman, without a real image, name, and most importantly, an identity. But as a final act of resistance against her husband's dominance, Antoinette sets the house on fire and jumps from its roof (as her dream foreshadows), and by doing so, she achieves what Erica Pugh calls "ultimate completion of herself" (Pugh, 2010: 5), or it might be viewed as an act to re-establish her genuine Creole identity.

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