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***Beyond the Attic: Wide Sargasso Sea as a  
Postcolonial Reworking of the Victorian World  
in Jane Eyre***

**Dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master in Literature and Civilization.**

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## **Dedication**

*I wish to dedicate this fruit of my hard work to the persons closest to my heart: my mother and my father, who have supported me through every step of the way and guided me with their unwavering love, prayers, sacrifices, and words of advice and encouragement.*

*To my dear brothers and sisters for their endless support, encouragement, and the bond we share that strengthens me every day.*

*I also dedicate this work to their precious children.*

*To my grandmother.*

*To my brother's wife.*

*To my sister's husband.*

*To my dear friends.*

*To all my loved ones.*

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*I'm deeply indebted to the jury members who took the time to examine my dissertation and for devoting their efforts and time to my work.*

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## **Abstract**

The main subject of this study revolves around the postcolonial, feminist, and intertextual facets of Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea." This study analyzes the novel as a critical rethinking of Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre." By placing Bertha Mason's existence in the context of Caribbean colonialism, Rhys challenges the Eurocentric ideas prevalent in Victorian fiction and offers a different viewpoint on the consequences of colonialism and social status. As Antoinette Cosway is portrayed as a Creole woman, she represents a marginalized and suppressed persona produced by patriarchy and imperialism. This research examines the ways in which Rhys's writing tackles racial discrimination, gender injustice, and identity struggles, emphasizing the wider societal ramifications of postcolonial literature in changing and questioning preconceived notions. The research highlights the importance of "Wide Sargasso Sea" in shedding light on marginalized voices and challenging Victorian-era literary and social conventions.

**Key words:** Postcolonial literature, Victorian literature, reworks, intertextuality, feminism, Wide Sargasso Sea, Jane Eyre.

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# **General Introduction**



### General Introduction :

This work is a postcolonial reworking of Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea (1966)" for the Victorian world, inspired by Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre (1847)." Considering that Jean Rhys is of Caribbean origins, her novel came as a response to the narratives of Victorian authors who contributed to obliterating and erasing Caribbean identity through patriarchal and colonial systems that imposed silence and marginalization on the Creole people and practiced racism and tyranny of all kinds upon them. An example of this is Brontë's novel, which has always oppressed "Bertha Mason," the main character, because she has Caribbean origins, as it depicted her as a voiceless madwoman who must be locked in the attic, possessing no importance or identity. Rhys wrote her novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" to restore the reputation of Bertha Mason and reimagine her story by giving her another name, "Antoinette Cosway," and the right to narrate her own experiences. It also gave her the courage to stand up to her husband, Mr. Rochester, who had a colonial mentality. In this way, Rhys demonstrated her defiance of both Charlotte Brontë and the patriarchal and colonial systems.

In light of this context, this study seeks to explore a critical examination of how Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" engages with and challenges established Western colonial and Victorian literary paradigms, particularly those established by Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre." By giving voice to the Antoinette Cosway character, who is neglected and marginalized by patriarchal and colonial systems, Rhys critiques racial and gender hierarchies and reveals the fragmentation and erasure of identity under colonial rule. This research aims to deepen understanding of the novel's intersection with postcolonial discourse and feminist literary criticism, highlighting its significance for contemporary debates on race, gender, and cultural identity. Based on this motivation, the present study aims to:

- Analyze how "Wide Sargasso Sea" tackles themes of race, gender, and identity fragmentation within the context of Caribbean colonialism.
- Explore how Rhys's portrayal of Antoinette Cosway critiques and defies Western-oriented and authoritarian doctrines embedded in "Jane Eyre."
- Examine the novel's role in giving voice to undervalued characters and subverting Victorian social and literary traditions.

However, these objectives emerge in response to a deeper problem that revolves around the literary erasure and stereotypes of Caribbean women in Victorian literature by the patriarchal systems and colonialism. Which research specifically examines how "Jane Eyre" perpetuates colonial hierarchies by marginalizing the character of Bertha Mason and portraying her as a madwoman in the attic. In contrast, "Wide Sargasso Sea" seeks to reclaim her power and identity by renaming her Antoinette Cosway and giving her a voice within a postcolonial framework. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- How does *Wide Sargasso Sea* tackle various ideas of race, gender, and fragmentation in identity under the eventualities of Caribbean colonialism?
- In what ways does Rhys's work defy and critique Western-oriented and authoritarian doctrines built-in in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* through the mirroring of Antoinette Cosway's identity as a Creole woman?
- How is *Wide Sargasso Sea* helpful in granting the undervalued characters a voice and subverting the social and literary traditions of the Victorian era?

In response to the above questions, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

- It is hypothesized that "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" is a critical postcolonial and feminist text that came as a reaction to "*Jane Eyre*."
- It examines the dismantling of colonial and patriarchal narratives by giving voice and power to the previously silenced Bertha Mason.
- It examines revealing the racial and gendered oppression masked by Victorian narratives.

In order to examine these hypotheses, this study will employ a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in postcolonial theory and feminist literary criticism. Textual analysis will focus on close readings of "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" by Jean Rhys (1966) alongside "*Jane Eyre*" by Charlotte Brontë (1847) and examining characterizations, narrative structure, and thematic elements related to race, gender, identity, and colonialism. The research will also

contextualize the novel within its historical and socio-political background, particularly the legacy of Caribbean colonialism, slavery, and patriarchal systems in that period.

Guided by the methodological design, this study will contain three chapters:

- Chapter one: "Contextualizing the Narrative: Theoretical Underpinnings" will introduce key concepts of this dissertation from postcolonialism, feminism, identity theory, and intertextuality.
- Chapter two: "Study of Gender, Identity, and Race in *Wide Sargasso Sea*": That will analyze how the novel addresses these themes within the colonial Caribbean context and how it has ideas that challenge those existing in "*Jane Eyre*," even after decades, through the character of Antoinette Cosway as a Creole woman.
- Chapter three: "Interconnectedness of Feminism, Identity, and Colonialism in *Wide Sargasso Sea*" will explore how *Wide Sargasso Sea* helps grant the undervalued characters in "*Jane Eyre*" a voice and subvert the social and literary traditions of the Victorian era.

## **Chapter one : Contextualizing the Narrative : Theoretical underpinning**

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2. Contextualizing Postcolonialism and Feminism .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.1. Overview on Postcolonialism .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.1.1. Colonial discourse .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.1.2. Hybridity.....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.1.3. The Self and Other .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.1.4. Interconnectedness Between Literature and Postcolonialism.....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.2. Reviewing feminist critique .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.2.1. Gender issues and female oppression .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>2.2.2. Voicelessness of women .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
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<b>5. Personal Literary Visualization .....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
<b>5.1. Author's Background and Implication.....</b>	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
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### 1. Introduction:

The enduring significance of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* lies not only in their captivating stories but also in their exploration of colonialism, gender, and identity.

While Charlotte Brontë's novel "*Jane Eyre*" (1847) offers a colonial and gendered narrative, particularly through the figure of Bertha Mason, Jean Rhys's novel "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" (1966) seeks to reimagine Bertha's backstory by giving voice to the silenced character Bertha" and revealing the colonial and patriarchal forces that shape and control her life.

This chapter will examine how both novels engage with postcolonial and feminist themes by using intertextuality to connect the two works. It will explore the historical and literary contexts, focusing on the Caribbean's representation in "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" and the colonial and gender hierarchies in "*Jane Eyre*." Through this analysis and the touching on some theories, such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, etc., this study aims to uncover the complexities of race, gender, and colonialism, offering a deeper understanding of the relationship between both novels.

### 2. Contextualizing Postcolonialism and Feminism

The title of contextualizing postcolonialism and feminism is the critical analysis of these two interrelated theoretical frameworks related to themes of power relations between states: identity and representation. Postcolonialism is a radical philosophy that interrogates both the past history and the ongoing legacies of European colonialism (and American imperialism) in order to undo them.(Loomba, 2005)<sup>1</sup>

Postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said pioneered the basic terms and tenets that were the foundation stone of this theory (colonial discourse, hybridity, mimicry, orientalism , the self and the other, race , , gender...). Which feminism is an ideological , theoretical movement that attempts to obtain equality (social classes ,

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<sup>1</sup> Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (3rd ed.). Routledge. Retrieved from [https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781317614579\\_A24757724/preview-9781317614579\\_A24757724.pdf](https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781317614579_A24757724/preview-9781317614579_A24757724.pdf)

gender, physical and mental abilities, sex, race, and sexuality) between men and women in terms of social issues and political and economic rights. (Tyson2)<sup>2</sup>

In summary, they provide more complex reflections on the intersection between race, sex, and class in narratives of empire and its aftermath. An example of this confluence is Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a postcolonial and feminist interpretation of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. Rhys challenges the dominant view of the Victorian world through the lens of an anonymous "other," Antoinette Cosway. This chapter focuses on *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its relationship to postcolonial and feminist discussions and examines colonial discourse, hybridity, and the construction of the "self" and the "other."

### 2.1. Overview on Postcolonialism :

The term "post-colonialism" refers to a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction dealing with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies during the post-independence period. In other words, it focuses on the challenges and implications that former colonies struggled with, faced, and perhaps are still facing to the present. In literature, it is an academic discipline or a study that aims at analyzing and explaining the impacts of colonialism and imperialism.

Post-colonialism in literature comprises the study of theory and literature as it relates to the colonizer-colonized experiences in different fields. One of the leading theorists in this field is Edward Said, with Chinua Achebe being one of its leading authors. (Bhabha)<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Colonial discourse:

Colonial discourse This is a term brought into currency by Edward Said, who saw Foucault's notion of a discourse as valuable for describing that system within which that range of practices termed "colonial" comes into being.

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<sup>2</sup> Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. England: Routledge. Retrieved from [https://mahollandela.weebly.com/uploads/5/4/9/5/54951553/critical-theory-today\\_1\\_.pdf](https://mahollandela.weebly.com/uploads/5/4/9/5/54951553/critical-theory-today_1_.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge. Retrieved from <https://ia601402.us.archive.org/11/items/TheLocationOfCultureBHABHA/the%20location%20of%20culture%20BHABHA.pdf>

It is a system of statements that organizes social existence and reproduction within colonial relationships. It is a system of knowledge and beliefs that determines the world and the relationship between colonies and colonial peoples. It is deeply implicated in ideas of Europe's centrality and modernity's assumptions about history, language, literature, and technology.

Colonial discourse is based on the assumption of the superiority of the colonizer's culture, history, language, art, political structures, and social conventions. It also hinges on notions of race, which represent the colonized as "primitive" and the colonizers as "civilized." Colonial discourse often excludes statements about the exploitation of resources, political status, and the importance of empire development. Instead, it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of the colonized, the primitive nature of other races, and the barbaric depravity of colonized societies. This power of colonial discourse makes individual colonizing subjects not often conscious of their duplicity, as statements that contradict the discourse can result in punishment or make them appear eccentric and abnormal.(Ashcroft et al36-37)<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1.2. Hybridity:

The idea of hybridity is an attempt to emphasize the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and post-colonial process in expressions of syncretism, cultural synergy, and cultural exchange. According to Bhabha it is the state of a migrant person who is trying to combine the culture of the country hosting him/her with the culture of his/her original country without leaving aside any of them.<sup>5</sup>

There is also *the Wide Sargasso Sea*, which depicts the character of Antoinette as a hybrid who blending her European heritage with her Caribbean background. She is not a complete reflection of the dislocation caused by colonial hierarchies, which emphasizes her lack of belonging to either world.

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<sup>4</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts (2nd ed.), Routledge, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Bhabha, H. K. (1994). The location of culture. Routledge. Retrieved from <https://ia601402.us.archive.org/11/items/TheLocationOfCultureBHABHA/the%20location%20of%20culture%20BHABHA.pdf>

### 2.1.3. The Self and Other :

It is Edward Said who said that The Self and the Other can be translated to the Occident / Orient, us /them, the west/the east The Self is the familiar (**Europe, the West, “us”**) and the Other is strange (**the Orient, the east, “them”**) Referring to him Orientalism must create its own other; because of this other it can strengthen its own identity and superiority and because of this other it can set off against the Orient as “ a sort of surrogate and even underground self”.

Said argues that Orientalism has helped Westerners to define a European self-image. He believes that the idea of Orientalism is not far from the collective notion identifying European as “us”against those non-Europeans.

Whereas in Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason is portrayed as the cultural and ethnic “other“, a wild and unusual character that threatens the stability of Rochester's English world. while By utilizing Antoinette character's perspective, Rhys subverts this account by challenging the imperialist and patriarchal beliefs in Bront' writing.

### 2.1.4. Interconnectedness Between Literature and Postcolonialism :

While Annia Loomba goes on and defines that colonialism as the conquest and control of the other people's land and goods.Literature plays an important role in challenging colonial ideologies by exposing and challenging their portrayal of colonized subjects where Colonial narratives often legitimize imperial control and reinforce hierarchies.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Ashcroft et al (2000)<sup>7</sup>Point out that postcolonial literary theory is all about how cultures and societies are affected by colonization. Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea showcases this interconnectedness by portraying Jane Eyre as a character who is silenced and marginalized, exposing the imperialist foundational aspect of Victorian literature. Which the novel challenges also colonial discourse, highlighting Caribbean identity shattered by British imperialism. In addition to that, Antoinette's Creole identity embodies hybridity, reflecting Homi Bhabha's "Third Space" and Edward Said's Orientalism theory.

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<sup>6</sup> Loomba, A. (2005). Colonialism/postcolonialism (3rd ed.). Routledge. Retrieved from [https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781317614579\\_A24757724/preview-9781317614579\\_A24757724.pdf](https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781317614579_A24757724/preview-9781317614579_A24757724.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts (2nd ed.), Routledge, 2000



### 2.2. Reviewing feminist critique:

According to Spivak, "Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization." (Spivak 282).<sup>8</sup>

"Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels."<sup>9</sup>

For these reasons, feminism is a logical commitment and a political movement that demands justice, fights for women's rights, and aims to eradicate all types of prejudice and discrimination that women have faced throughout history. Feminist theory, however, is still multifaceted; it incorporates a variety of formulations and approaches rather than depending on a single framework or viewpoint.

Different feminists have different ideas about what bias against women is and how to deal with it. Along with differing opinions on the political and social ramifications of gender, they also have different ideas about what it means to be a woman and a man.

Despite these distinctions, feminist research provides a broad range of ideas and viewpoints on social, cultural, political, and economic issues since it is based on the importance of pursuing social justice. It covers a wide range of subjects, including ethnicity, identity, sexuality, madness, socioeconomic class, gender issues and female oppression, and women's voicelessness.

#### 2.2.1. Gender issues and female oppression :

Overall, in postcolonialism, women live with the idea of oppression by both patriarchy and the colonial power.

Most postcolonial feminists (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Spivak, 1987) seek to interrogate and unsettle the negative ways in which women are represented in colonial narratives, where

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<sup>8</sup> Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). Macmillan. Retrieved from <https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Can-the-subaltern-speak-by-Gayatri-Spivak.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. South End Press. Quote retrieved from Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/7239427-feminism-is-the-struggle-to-end-sexist-oppression-therefore-it>

Women have been represented by and large as submissive victims and sexualized objects. for example, There are "Wide Sargasso Sea" a postcolonial-feminist novel written as a response to Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre", This narrative traces the story of a Creole woman, Antoinette Cosway as one of the most oppressed women in that period, from her poor and lonely childhood to her unhappy marriage with an English patriarchal man who imprisoned her in the "attic" of Thornfield Hall in England.

### 2.2.2. Voicelessness of women :

Voicelessness is a term that describes the person who is unable to speak or give his opinion, According to Gayatri Spivak, the task of the un-silencing of the subaltern subject requires not just giving the subaltern a voice to speak, but the clearing of the space to allow her to speak. (Spivak in an interview with Leon de Kock, 30-45)<sup>10</sup>

She believes that the centering of the preview of the female voice involves an intentional act by the writer of not only the inclusion of the female subject in the narrative but also the creation of an adequate space where the conditions are conducive for the female subject to speak and present her message within the literary context where the authentic representation of the subaltern female voice is not a single task of simple assignment but one that is challenging and oftentimes difficult to achieve.

She also reiterates this view when she contends in the essay, " Can the Subaltern Speak?" that, " If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow." which means that when the female voice can be represented by the artist or the intellectual, the subaltern female can and does speak her truth when she is represented following certain patterns and considerations. as one example In Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre (1847), only Rochester's and Jane's perspectives are used to describe Bertha Mason, who has no voice in that period . While Jean Rhys's novel Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) reverts back to her own voice, portraying her as Antoinette Cosway and exploring inner life, desires, and obstacles, which This subversion critiques the patriarchal and imperialist tendencies of Victorian literature.

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<sup>10</sup> De Kock, L. (1992). Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New nation writers conference in South Africa. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 23(3), 30-45. Retrieved from <https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/Spivak%20Interview%20DeKock.pdf>

### 2.2.3. Identity:

Without identity The person is worthless; it gives the person a sense of confidence, pride, worth, and social status. some dictionaries define it as “the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known.”

In sociology and according to Jerkins, identity is used to describe the way that various social categories such as class, gender, and ethnicity influence an individual’s perception of themselves and how they are perceived by others, which means the identity concept could be measured by being different since it is the element that defines societies and individuals.(Thefreedictionary.com/Identity)<sup>11</sup>

And "Wide Sargasso Sea"as a novel tried to give a voice, dignity and identity to the heroine of the novel "Antoinette", where Rhys' The Creole women such as "Bertha" referred to as "the mad women in the attic" in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre to empathize with the character of Bertha and how Bronte portrayed her in such a terrified and a horrible image (especially because Bertha has another identity , She is from the West Indies).

In this sense Rhys re-writes her novel as a reaction to Jane Eyre And her concept of identity, but with a different perspective .

### 2.2.4. Race:

Race is a concept that used to group people according to various factors, including sexuality, religion, social identity, etc., which used to categorize people based on physical appearance. Although scientific arguments about the inherent inferiority of racial groups have been continually debunked, race is a social construct that continues to have significant effects on people’s lives.(Hall)<sup>12</sup>.It is also treated as metatheoretical categories within postcolonial feminism. Whereas recognizing how the multiple sites upon which locations of gender, race, sexuality, religion, etc., come together in influencing the lives of women, praxis and feminist analysis are integral aspects of postcolonial feminist theory.As an example, the novel Jane

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.thefreedictionary.com/identity>

<sup>12</sup> Hall, S. (1997). Race, the floating signifier. Media Education Foundation.  
<https://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Stuart-Hall-Race-the-Floating-Signifier-Transcript.pdf>

Eyre presents Bertha Mason as an exoticized, monstrous "other" and describes her in dehumanizing terms as a "clothed hyena" with "savage" tendencies.

She is depicted as a racialized foreigner from the Caribbean, reinforcing Victorian anxieties about non-European subjects. *Wide Sargasso Sea* came as a response to it and gives her a voice and a name, "Antoinette Cosway" as a Creole woman of European descent struggling with her racial identity, and by doing so, Rhys humanizes her and critiques the racial stereotypes embedded in Brontë's narrative.

### **2.3. Feminist Critique in Postcolonial Context:**

When discussing the lives of women in colonized societies, feminist and postcolonial perspectives intersect.

Often colonized women are marginalized in both patriarchal and colonial hierarchies due to the double imposition of race, gender (and often social class). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as an example, the experiences of Antoinette's character as a Creole woman are characterized by layers of oppression, with her being cut off from the Black Jamaican community in "the attic," rejected by the English colonial ruling class, and subjugated by her husband Rochester's power.

#### **2.3.1. Relevant feminist thinkers and theorists :**

There are many feminist thinkers and theorists in the postcolonial period, among them Frantz Fanon, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Davis Angela, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

We will discuss two of them:

##### **a/ Chandra Talpade Mohanty (Third World Feminist):**

Third World Feminist is a Western feminist framework that is critiqued by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who argues that colonized women suffer particular problems influenced by their cultural and historical settings. She uses examples of Western feminists' representation of veiling (as a proxy for sexual segregation and control of women) as support for her critique.

### **b/ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: (Can the Subaltern Speak?):**

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a cultural critic and feminist theorist who criticizes Western feminists' propensity to silence the voices of women from colonized nations through her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988), which is considered to be one of the most necessary texts in postcolonial feminist theory, where Her thoughts align with Rhys's depiction of Antoinette, whose story questions the marginalization of Creole women in colonial and Victorian discourses.

### **3. Intertextuality and critique in modern literature**

Intertextuality is a modern literary and cultural theory that has its origins in 20th-century linguistics. It is a term that was produced for the first time by JULIA KRISTEVA, a French linguistic theorist, in her essay devoted to Bakhtin, entitled "Word, Dialogue, Novel," published in April 1967, in which she combined Saussurean theory of signs and Bakhtinian theory of polyphony.

According to her, "Intertextuality is a permutation or combination of texts; an intertextuality is the space of a given text in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva 36)<sup>13</sup>. Which means that it refers to the literal and effective presence in a text of another text.

#### **3.1. Forms and functions of intertextuality**

There are 7 forms and functions of intertextuality among them:

**a/ Revision:** This form of intertextuality explains the close relationship between anterior and posterior texts, wherein the latter takes identity from the former, even as it departs from it.

**b/ Translation:** is the transformation of the text to a different language and recreates it anew where it's important for the translator to use "accuracy in representing the original's literary quality and effects.

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<sup>13</sup> Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art* (L. S. Roudiez, Ed.). Columbia University Press.

**c/ Quotation:** Quotation means that it literally reproduces the anterior text "whole or just a part" in other text.

**d/ Genres:** Intertextuality also includes the wide range of linkings, implicit and explicit, in generic choices. These may appear in individual signifiers as an the play-within-the-play of revenge tragedy, the singing shepherds in pastoral," which function much like conventions, or range to broader and less discrete forms.

**e/ Paralogues:** It means the texts that illuminate the intellectual, social, theological, or political meanings in other texts through the author's mind or intention.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.2. The importance of intertextuality as a critical approach:

The importance of an intertextual approach is that it focuses on the composing process to reveal intent while at the same time taking into account the role of the reader in making the meaning of a text. It is both reader- and writer-centered and encompasses the entire process by which a text is created and understood.

Intertextuality plays a crucial role in modern literary criticism. To understand a literary text, it is necessary to see how other works have influenced the author and how different texts are employed to convey certain meanings, which means it is increasingly assimilated into literary theory and into theories of cultural, artistic, and even technological production and reproduction. While it is based in poststructuralist or Bakhtinian theories or in both, it reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, reversible, and open to the reader's own presuppositions.<sup>15</sup>

As an example, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a postcolonial reworking of the Victorian world in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

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<sup>14</sup><https://loyolanotredamelib.org/Chaired/docs/SevenTypesIntertextuality-04.pdf>

<sup>15</sup><https://www.mytutor.co.uk/answers/7370/GCSE/English-Literature/What-is-intertextuality-and-why-is-it-important/>

### 3.3. Intertextuality in Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre:

The intertextuality theory coined by Julia Kristeva is very prevalent in Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" and Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre. While Wide Sargasso Sea is a hypertext of Jane Eyre, it's written as a response to Jane Eyre in a different era and narrates the backstory of the character Bertha Mason from Jane Eyre.

Where Rhys emphasizes the omission and corrects the exploitative context. She writes the story of Bertha's life because she is not satisfied with the ending of Jane Eyre, and she enhances the common elements in both novels, such as dreams, the gothic style, and irony, through the Bertha and Antoinette characters.

The character Bertha "the first wife of Mr. Rochester," in Wide Sargasso Sea is narrated with another name, "Antoinette Bertha." All this happened according to the postmodern device "intertextuality theory" that helps Rhys to uncover the meanings in the text similar to Jane Eyre, where Rhys uses the Bildungsroman genre to narrate Bertha's life story, from childhood to maturity.<sup>16</sup> She also employs intertextuality as a critique technique by rewriting Jane Eyre from a postcolonial and feminist perspective, revealing the gender and racial bias present in the original Victorian story.

### 4. Historical and Literary Contextualization :

The term of contextualization was coined first by "Shoki Coe" in 1972.

Overall, The historical context is normally referred to as the background of the text while the literary context "relates to the particular form a passage takes 'the literary genre' and to the words, sentences and paragraphs that surround the passage are studying" (Duvall and Hayes 150)<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre novels

<sup>17</sup> Duvall, J. S. & Hays, J. D. (2012). Grasping God's word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible (3rd ed.). Zondervan. [https://zondervan.typepad.com/files/grasping-gods-word\\_excerpt.pdf](https://zondervan.typepad.com/files/grasping-gods-word_excerpt.pdf)

### 4.1. Jane Eyre and Literary Conventions:

Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* is a pivotal work in the English literary tradition, a social critique that challenges the rigid structures of class, gender, and morality that characterized nineteenth-century British society. It is also a novel that highlights all the characters, not just the main ones, and in doing so, creates its own narrative style.

#### 4.1.1. Eurocentric Narrative in Victorian Literature:

According to Edward Said "The Orient was almost a European invention.

[... ] a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, and remarkable experiences."<sup>18</sup>

Which means that the term "Eurocentrism" is defined as the belief system that positions Europe as the central force in shaping world history (Africa, Asia, and the Americas), promoting universal values, and representing progress and development. It is closely linked to colonial violence and justifies the domination of non-European cultures through narratives of superiority and advancement.

On the other hand, the Victorian era (1837–1901) is a period when England dominated in culture and literature, with many works reflecting a Eurocentric perspective. During this period, the novels, as an example, "*Jane Eyre* (1847)," typically upheld British notions of cultural superiority, patriarchal values, and colonial attitudes.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Jane Eyre Overview:

Charlotte Brontë, the English novelist known for her famous works that emphasize themes of independence, morality, and self-respect, like "*Jane Eyre*" (1847), which explains the story of Jane, a simple girl, as she battles through life's struggles. The novel reveals "the implicit colonial and patriarchal biases" but also still sees male power as something that only must be softened, not completely rejected, in that period.

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<sup>18</sup> Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books. Retrieved from [https://monoskop.org/images/4/4e/Said\\_Edward\\_Orientalism\\_1979.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/4/4e/Said_Edward_Orientalism_1979.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/eurocentrism>



### **a/ Colonial Biases in "Jane Eyre":**

One of the most debated aspects of "Jane Eyre" is the portrayal of the character "Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's Creole wife, as a "madwoman" locked away in the attic. Bertha is a woman of Caribbean descent that is often interpreted as a symbol of British fears of the racial and colonial "other."

This characterization aligns with "imperialist narratives" of the time, reinforcing stereotypes of foreign people as wild, uncivilized, and dangerous.

### **b/ Patriarchal Biases in "Jane Eyre":**

While Jane Eyre is about a strong and independent woman, the story still follows the rules of a male-dominated society (patriarchy), where the men in Jane's life try to control her choices, especially Mr. Rochester, who "loves her, but he also tests her and hides secrets and expects her to stay with him even when he is already married." and St. John Rivers, who "wants Jane to marry him not for love but because he thinks it is her duty, and he pressures her to follow his strict religious expectations."

Since Jane is a strong character, she does not completely submit to both of them. Nevertheless, she only marries Rochester after he is weakened (blind and injured), which makes their relationship feel more equal.

### **4.1.3. Bertha Mason: symbol of madness and savagery:**

Firstly, Bertha Mason is one of the most complex, debated, and important characters in Jane Eyre's novel. She was a victim of love, neglect, and isolation. She is Mr. Rochester's first wife, a Creole woman from the West Indies, which was seen as an exotic and wild place by many Victorians. She is the secret that was hidden for a long time.

Secondly, the author, Brontë, introduces her as a violent, mad, mysterious woman who lost her mind and is uncontrollable because she is considered a foreign "other."

Rochester locks her in the attic of Thornfield Hall, where her confinement in the attic represents the authoritarian behaviors that Victorian society had with ill people and also

suggests that savagery is something to be hidden or controlled since they likened her to a beast, a tiger, or even a demon.

Eventually, she escapes and sets the house on fire, where she dies in the flames, but she makes the others live in suspense and fear, especially Mr. Rochester, because she gives the woman he loves, Jane, the courage to be independent when she chooses her own decision, life, and path. (Brontë)<sup>20</sup>

### **4.2. Representation of Caribbean Colonialism in Literature**

The literary representation of the Caribbean has evolved significantly, shaped by its colonial past and ongoing postcolonial struggles.

During the Victorian era, British literature often exoticized the Caribbean, portraying it as a land of wealth, mystery, and primitivism, which reinforced colonial ideologies.

In contrast, modern Caribbean literature offers authentic narratives that reclaim history, identity, and resistance. Writers such as Jean Rhys and Edwidge Danticat explore themes of displacement, race, migration, and cultural hybridity, offering a counter-narrative to colonial depictions. This section examines the impact of British colonialism, slavery, and plantation culture on Creole identities and how these themes are represented in both Victorian and modern Caribbean literature.

#### **4.2.1. British Colonialism in the Caribbean:**

The British colonization in the Caribbean began in the 17th century and lasted until the mid-20th century. The British colonized many islands in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Bahamas, among others.

British colonial rule had a significant and far-reaching impact on the local populations of the Caribbean. The British colonized the region primarily for economic reasons, seeking to exploit the islands' resources, including the labor of local populations. Which the use of slavery is one of the most significant ways British colonial rule affected the local populations.

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<sup>20</sup> Brontë, C. (1847). *Jane Eyre* [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2014-04-09-Jane%20Eyre.pdf>

### 4.2.2. The Impact of Slavery and Plantation Culture on Creole Identities

"They say when trouble comes, close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks."<sup>21</sup> This quote illustrates the marginalization faced by white Creoles, who have European descent, by the Black community due to their association with former slave owners.

On the other hand, the British transported approximately 3.1 million enslaved Africans to the Caribbean to work on plantations producing cash crops such as sugar, tobacco, and coffee between the 17th and 19th centuries. The practice of slavery was brutal, with enslaved Africans often subjected to physical abuse and cultural repression. Despite these challenges, the local populations of the Caribbean resisted British colonialism through rebellions, uprisings, and social movements, including the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, which established the world's first Black republic.

The legacy of slavery continued to impact the local population, even after its abolition in the 19th century, resulting in poverty, discrimination, and limited access to education and healthcare. The British Empire profited from the trade in enslaved Africans, which provided a major source of labor for the plantation system. The profits allowed the British Empire to invest in other industries, such as manufacturing and banking, which further fueled Britain's economic growth and global power. (The Toll of Slavery)<sup>22</sup>.

### 4.2.3. The literary representations of the Caribbean in Victorian and modern literature:

#### a/ Caribbean Literature:

Caribbean literature is a vibrant and diverse body of work shaped by the region's history of colonization, slavery, and cultural hybridity. It is rooted in both oral and written traditions and reflects themes of identity, migration, resistance, and postcolonial struggles. It's written

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<sup>21</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF].p.1. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Black History Month. (2023, March 17). The Toll of Slavery and Exploitation under British Colonial Rule in the Caribbean - Black History Month 2025. Black History Month 2025. [https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/british-colonial-rule/the-toll-of-slavery-and-exploitation-under-british-colonial-rule-in-the-caribbean/\[1\]](https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/british-colonial-rule/the-toll-of-slavery-and-exploitation-under-british-colonial-rule-in-the-caribbean/[1])

in multiple languages, including English, French, and Spanish. Where The main authors in that period, among them "Jean Rhys and Edwidge Danticat...etc.," explore the issues of displacement, race, and history, which makes Caribbean literature a powerful lens for understanding the complexities of the region's past and present.

The Caribbean literature is exceptional, influenced by the arrival of over a million and a half Africans, Indians, and South Asians between the 15th and 19th centuries, where their descendants continue to produce literature with strong African expressions that showcase the themes past. This literary connection is crucial for studying the Caribbean and the Black Diaspora and central to our understanding of the New World. (Brathwaite)<sup>23</sup>

### **b/ Victorian Literature:**

Victorian literature encompasses the body of poetry, fiction, essays, and letters produced during the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 until 1901. This era was regarded as the Golden Age of English Literature, which witnessed the novel's rise as the dominant literary genre, with great authors such as the Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Thomas Carlyle, who made significant contributions to English literature in that period.

They addressed many social issues that reflected the major transformations in English society, including scientific, economic, social, and technological advancements. As an example, the novelist Charlotte Brontë emphasized themes of independence, morality, and self-respect in her works, and Thomas Carlyle highlighted the dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution. (Victorian literature)<sup>24</sup>

### **c/ Modernism Literature:**

Modernism is a literary and cultural international movement that flourished in the first four decades of the 20th century. It emerged as a reaction to the conventions of 19th-century literature. It reflects a sense of cultural crisis, which was both exciting and disquieting. It explores themes of alienation and isolation, identity and the search for self, disillusionment

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<sup>23</sup> Brathwaite, E. K. (n.d.). Caribbean literature. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/art/Caribbean-literature>

<sup>24</sup> Victorian literature. (n.d.). Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/art/Victorian-literature>

and loss of meaning, and others through the works of James Joyce ("Ulysses") and Virginia Woolf ("Mrs. Dalloway"), etc. Modernism is known as the new movement that is challenging traditional literary forms and exploring new ways of representing reality. (Kuiper)<sup>25</sup>

### **d/ Victorian Literature vs. Modern Caribbean Literature:**

The Victorian Exotic Works (19th century), which were written by British authors, and the Authentic Caribbean Works (20th–21st century) who written by Caribbean authors, are two distinct literary and cultural movements.

Victorian exotic works, which were written during British colonialism, portrayed non-European cultures through a European lens, reinforcing imperialist ideologies, where writers like Rudyard Kipling and H. Rider Haggard presented "exotic" lands and peoples as mysterious, primitive, and in need of civilizing.

While The Authentic Caribbean Works, on the other hand, emerged from a post-colonial context and explored themes of identity, displacement, and the legacies of slavery and imperialism. These works challenge colonial narratives and offer complex and authentic portrayals of Caribbean culture and history, blending African, Indigenous, and Creole influences. The difference lies in the shift from imperialistic representation to a celebration of cultural resistance and self-determination.

As a case in point, Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre" from the Victorian Exotic Works and Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" (Response to Jane Eyre) from the Authentic Caribbean Works:

In "Jane Eyre," Bertha Mason's character, Rochester's Creole wife from Jamaica, is portrayed through a distinctly exoticized lens, emblematic of Victorian attitudes toward colonial subjects. Bertha is depicted as a wild, insane, and monstrous figure who represents the untamed and morally ambiguous "other." Her portrayal reinforces the colonial stereotype of the Caribbean as a place of dangerous passion, disorder, and racial confusion. Bertha's character serves as a symbolic representation of the colonial view of the Caribbean—wild, uncivilized, and in need of control. In this sense, Brontë's depiction reflects the 19th-century

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<sup>25</sup> Kuiper, K. (n.d.). Modernism. Encyclopedia Britannica.  
<https://www.britannica.com/art/Modernism-art>

imperialist mindset where the Caribbean was seen as a place of mystery, barbarism, and dark desires, not like the European world, "proper" and "civilized." (Brontë)<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, "Wide Sargasso Sea," which came as a response to "Jane Eyre," offers a profound reimagining of Bertha's story, providing a voice to the character who had been silenced in "Jane Eyre."

The novel retells Bertha's life by giving her another name, "Antoinette Cosway," and portrays her as a tragic victim of colonial oppression and patriarchy, which left her struggling with internal conflicts as a Creole woman caught between the European and Caribbean worlds, as well as her psychological instability resulting from her marginalization and deprivation of her identity. While Jane Eyre attempts to portray Bertha as a symbol of colonial and racial fears, Wide Sargasso Sea comes as a response and adds a human touch to the novel. (Rhys)<sup>27</sup>

Victorian literature often exoticized the Caribbean. However, modern Caribbean literature was reclaiming its narratives through offering a realistic view that explores postcolonial identity, history, and cultural struggles.

### 4.3. Hierarchy of Gender and Race:

In the nineteenth century, women lived in an age characterized by gender inequality where they experienced additional layers of subjugation due to pre-existing racial hierarchies.

Creole women faced a unique marginalization as they navigated both the complexities of colonial identity and the limitations imposed by patriarchal societies. For example, they were confined to their houses and in obedient positions.

The Victorian Age was in a period of progress and reform, industrialization, and social upheaval in which England witnessed sweeping changes across Victorian time that influenced English society in culture, politics, economy, and social norms, even for women

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<sup>26</sup> Brontë, C. (1847). Jane Eyre [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2014-04-09-Jane%20Eyre.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

who were not expected to have interest in literature or any other field and who had limited status in Victorian society .(Carter and McRae)<sup>28</sup>

While, in the Victorian era, men and women were not equal at the level of educational, economic, and political rights, where women were totally marginalized.

Literature has played an important role in transmitting women's voices through many literary works, among them Jean Rhys, who gives a voice to a Creole woman of European descent struggling with her racial identity in her novel "Wide Sargasso Sea." This narrative traces the story of a Creole woman, Antoinette Cosway, as one of the most oppressed women in that period, from her poor and lonely childhood to her unhappy marriage with an English patriarchal man who imprisoned her in the "attic" of Thornfield Hall in England. Rhys humanizes her and critiques the racial stereotypes embedded in Victorian England. (Rhys)<sup>29</sup>

According to Spivak (1987), colonial and patriarchal systems effectively double the marginalization of women like the Creole woman 'Antoinette,' rendering them voiceless and powerless. This "double colonization" creates a critical space to examine how race, gender, and class intersect, as Rhys illustrates the unique struggles that arise from these combined oppressions.<sup>30</sup>

### 5. Personal Literary Visualization

This section will explore how Jean Rhys's identity as a "Creole woman" shaped her critique of "patriarchy" and "colonialism," particularly in "Wide Sargasso Sea."

It examines how her personal experiences influenced her writing and how she reimagines the character "Bertha Mason" from "Jane Eyre" by giving Bertha a voice. As Rhys

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<sup>28</sup> Carter, R., & McRae, J. (1997). *The Routledge history of literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. Routledge. Retrieved from [https://nimyakanakaraj.gnomio.com/pluginfile.php/274/mod\\_resource/content/1/The%20Routledge%20history%20of%20literature%20in%20English%20\\_%20Britain%20and%20Ireland%20%28%20PDFDrive%20%29.pdf](https://nimyakanakaraj.gnomio.com/pluginfile.php/274/mod_resource/content/1/The%20Routledge%20history%20of%20literature%20in%20English%20_%20Britain%20and%20Ireland%20%28%20PDFDrive%20%29.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Spivak, G. C. (1987). *In other worlds: Essays in cultural politics*. Methuen. Retrieved from [https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781135070823\\_A23797638/preview-9781135070823\\_A23797638.pdf](https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781135070823_A23797638/preview-9781135070823_A23797638.pdf)

challenges traditional narratives and uses "intertextuality" to address broader issues of race, gender, and power. This process highlights the significance of reclaiming marginalized stories and rethinking silenced histories.

### 5.1. Author's Background and Implication:

Jean Rhys, born in Dominica in 1890, was raised in England during the last years of colonial glory. Her parents were between two opposing ideologies: one that embraced the racial pluralism of West Indian ideals and the other that attempted to exoticize Caribbean life. The Black servants who raised her had an additional impact on her.

Her novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" who published in 1966, has the hallmarks of European modernism but also captures the unique sensitivities of a West Indian author.

Rhys traveled to England at the age of sixteen to better embrace her father's Welsh ancestry. She lived intermittently in Paris throughout the 1920s while traveling throughout Europe as a bohemian artist, exposed to the avant-garde creations of contemporary authors and painters. She experienced the psychological and physical toll of being a single woman in a patriarchal society while battling poverty, illness, and alcoholism, which she frequently addressed in her writing. Her first four novels, "Postures or Quartet" (1928), "After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie" (1930), "Voyage in the Dark" (1934), and "Good Morning Midnight" (1939), reflect her own existence. However, her reputation as a major European modernist was never fully established. Her *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which was published 27 years after her last book, is a continuation of her earlier heroine drawings with a return to the Caribbean environment of the nineteenth century and a departure from an industrial European setting. Rhys first imagined the Caribbean upbringing of Rochester's notorious Creole wife, Bertha Mason, when she was a young girl reading Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre," where "Wide Sargasso Sea" came to attempt to humanize the racially derogatory portrayal of a West Indian madwoman and turn her initial tragic demise into a triumphant heroic. By revealing the boundaries of a literary canon that presumes a shared white heritage in its readership, Rhys aims to unearth a different reality. (SparkNotes)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> SparkNotes. (n.d.). *Wide Sargasso Sea: Historical context*. Retrieved from <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/sargasso/context/>



Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" (1966) came as a rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre" (1847), where Rhys responds to Brontë in his writing due to literary impact and the colonization of Jamaica, her home country. This effect is so felt throughout her book. Rhys seeks to safeguard Jamaica's identity and culture by offering pictures that are in opposition to the canon. In order to counter Brontë's text, she presented the challenging lives of the West Indians and rectified the falsehoods propagated about her nation and the subjugated people.(Rhys)<sup>32</sup>

### 5.2. Author's Connection to the Original Text:

"Wide Sargasso Sea" is a novel by Rhys that defies thematic norms by focusing on the story of "Antoinette/Bertha, who is described in Charlotte Bronte's novel as the "madwoman in the attic." She is Mr. Rochester's first wife, locked away in Thornfield Hall due to her mental instability, which is tied to her Creole heritage. She is a symbol of racial and colonial oppression, and her existence serves as a major obstacle in Jane's relationship with Rochester. Antoinette Cosway came as Rhys's reimagined version of Bertha Mason from "Jane Eyre," which gives her a voice and portrays her descent into madness as a result of racial tension, patriarchal oppression, and emotional trauma rather than inherent instability. The novel embraces narrative, chronological, and aesthetic schemes that represent racial and cultural heterogeneity. Her tripartite structure, including time and space jumps and changes in narrative voice, gives it a multifaceted, porous surface. Supported by feminist, postcolonial, and modernist critics, "Wide Sargasso Sea" opposes prevailing customs and champions the cause of marginalized people. As a postcolonial work, it sympathizes with the Black Caribbeans' predicament while criticizing England's oppressive colonial empire. The novel's white Creole narrator stays away from racial oppression and mostly battles against patriarchal norms, making her a touchstone for feminist theorists. Rhys used the "intertextuality and "rewriting concepts to reconstruct the main characters of Jane Eyre and to show the contrast with Brontë's ones. Where she redefines them by giving them new images.(Rhys)<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>33</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

### 5.3. Retackling Marginalized Narratives

A powerful opportunity to give voice to individuals who have been disenfranchised or silenced in traditional narratives is presented by reimagining "marginalized" or "forgotten" literary masterpieces. These works usually center on characters or perspectives that have been historically marginalized or oppressed, such as women, racial minorities, or colonized peoples. By reanalyzing and reinterpreting these works, authors and critics can give characters who were previously passive or stereotypical agency, granting them the richness and humanity that their original depictions denied them. A wider, more inclusive investigation of social, cultural, and political issues is also made possible by reimagining underrepresented narratives. It creates room for many histories and viewpoints and opposes prevailing beliefs, especially those derived from colonialism, sexism, and racial hierarchies. These changes address current issues with identity, power, and representation in addition to providing fresh perspectives on the original texts.

Authors are able to challenge conventional narratives and present alternative viewpoints to the dominant literary history through these reimaginings. Reclaiming space for underrepresented voices, illuminating their hardships, and advancing a more complex and varied view of the past are all accomplished through the process of literary revision. (Ashcroft et al 121)<sup>34</sup> This larger idea will be discussed in "Wide Sargasso Sea": critical engagement with "Jane Eyre" and its particular reinvention of Bertha Mason.

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<sup>34</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.), Routledge, 2000

### 6.Conclusion:

This chapter has established the theoretical and historical frameworks necessary for understanding the complex dynamics at play, an important role in both "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea." It began by contextualizing postcolonialism and feminism, highlighting their interconnectedness and how both frameworks serve to expose the oppressive systems of colonial and patriarchal power. Whereas postcolonial theory, with its concepts of colonial discourse, hybridity, and the self and the "other," offers critical insights into the ways colonial legacies continue to shape narratives, particularly in literature. By introducing key theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, it underscored how their work provides a foundation for analyzing the representation of marginalized figures, especially women caught between the forces of colonial domination and gender oppression. Feminist critique, particularly its intersection with colonialism, further complicates these narratives by emphasizing the dual subjugation experienced by women in colonized spaces. By examining feminist themes such as gender oppression, voicelessness, and marginalization, it set the stage for a deeper exploration of female figures such as "Bertha Mason" and "Antoinette Cosway." Both characters exemplify the struggles of women who are doubly marginalized by both race and gender within the colonial context.

This chapter presents the discussion of intertextuality as introduced by Julia Kristeva that helps to frame the connection between "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea." After understanding intertextuality as a critical method, it shows how Rhys, through her novel, reimagines Brontë's portrayal of Bertha Mason and contextualizes her through her new narrative that challenges the patriarchal and colonial systems of the original novel. In this study, the literary and historical settings of "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea" are examined, with emphasis on the ways in which race, gender, and colonialism overlap, and it also presents the personal histories of the writers, especially Jean Rhys, to provide insights into the writing of "Wide Sargasso Sea" and emphasize the significance of rescuing lost voices and reinventing neglected narratives in literary history. In addition to highlighting the intersections that occurred between post-colonialism, feminism, intertextuality, and the marginalization of women in colonial literature.

## **Chapter two : Study of Gender, Identity, and Race in Wide Sargasso Sea**

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2. (Colonial) Identity and Race in Wide Sargasso Sea .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.1. Significance of Creole identity .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.1.1. Creole identity .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.1.2. Antoinette Cosway Character .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.1.3. Hybridity, Colonial Struggles, and the Issue of Race and Division in Wide Sargasso Sea .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.2. Hierarchical Colonial and Racial Power .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.2.1. Race and its impact on power between characters .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.2.2 The Impact of Slavery and Plantation Culture on Caribbean Society .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.2.3. Christophine Character and Her Standing Against Colonial and Racial Hierarchies .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3. Feminism and Female Oppression in Wide Sargasso Sea .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.1. Females Between the Grasp of Colonialism and the Wrest of Patriarchy ...</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.1.1. Antoinette's Condition regarding colonialism and patriarchy .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.1.2. Comparison Between Annette Cosway and Antoinette Cosway .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.1.3. Symbolism in Wide Sargasso Sea .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.2. Resisting Patriarchy .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.2.1. Christophine's strong character in the face of patriarchy .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.2.2. Christophine and her influences on Antoinette .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.2.3. Christophine as a strong woman who defends women's rights .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4. Madness and Identity "Fragmentation" .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.1. Colonialism and Antoinette (The Madwoman) .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.1.1. The impact of colonialism and subjugation on Antoinette's character ....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.1.2. Comparison between Antoinette Cosway and Bertha Mason .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.1.3. Madness as a Colonial Construct .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.2. Antoinette's Fragmented Self and Rochester .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.2.1. Rochester's Eurocentric Views and the Control Over Antoinette's Identity Through Renaming Her "Bertha" .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.2.2. Rochester as a Symbol of Colonial Authority in "Wide Sargasso Sea" ....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>

4.2.3. The Western Domination of Caribbean Identity in "Wide Sargasso Sea"	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5. Wide Sargasso Sea as a Reimagination of Jane Eyre .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.1. Voicing the Voiceless .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.1.1. Reclaiming the Silenced: Jean Rhys's Reimagining of Antoinette's Voice in "Wide Sargasso Sea" .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.1.2. Reclaiming Agency for the Colonized in "Wide Sargasso Sea" .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.2. Challenging Traditional (Victorian) Literary Ethics in "Wide Sargasso Sea" ..	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.2.1. A Comparative Study of Narrative Fragmentation in "Wide Sargasso Sea" and "Jane Eyre" .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.2.2. Challenging Western Tradition: Centering the Creole Woman in Rhys's Narrative	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
5.2.3. Voices from the Attic: "Wide Sargasso Sea as a Critique of Victorian Ideals, Morality, Femininity, and Rationality" .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
6. Conclusion .....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.

## **1.Introduction :**

Wide Sargasso Sea is a postcolonial feminist text that explores the intersections of gender, identity, and race in the context of Caribbean colonialism. It reimagines the life of Bertha Mason from Jane Eyre, giving her the voice and power to narrate her story and experience, which revolve around the legacy of slavery, racial hierarchies, and patriarchal domination. This chapter will examine the novel's critique of imperial ideologies, colonial systems, and patriarchy by focusing on Antoinette Cosway's identity crisis and her struggle within a racist and gendered society, as well as imposed marginalization.

## **2. (Colonial) Identity and Race in Wide Sargasso Sea:**

This section will present how Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea" explores the complex dynamics of colonial identity and race in a post-emancipation Caribbean setting where it critiques colonial ideologies that shape racial and gender identities by highlighting tensions between English and Creole cultures.

Through Antoinette's narrative, Rhys reveals the impact of colonialism on individual and collective identities, also exposing the interplay between race, gender, and cultural belonging.

### **2.1. Significance of Creole identity:**

Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" explores themes of colonial identity and race, particularly focusing on the complexities of the postcolonial Caribbean context. Through the character of "Antoinette Cosway," Rhys was examining how colonialism shapes personal and collective identities, especially among the Creole population.

The novel focuses on the psychological, racial, and cultural tensions produced by colonialism through its accurate portrayal of the dynamics of race and power. This section will examine

the importance of Creole identity, the definition of colonial and patriarchal society, and how a character like Christophine was able to challenge them.

### 2.1.1. Creole identity:

Creole identity is a central theme in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and it plays a crucial role in shaping the character of Antoinette Cosway (the protagonist), who struggles painfully for her identity as a Creole woman and her place in the society. She is "repudiated" by Black Jamaicans because of her whiteness, and she cannot ascribe to the English society because she is of a mixed race.

### 2.1.2. Antoinette Cosway Character:

She is an important character for Rhys in her novel "Wide Sargasso Sea." The character of Rochester in the novel follows different strategies to suppress Antoinette's identity. where she gives great importance to her name since she considers that it is the very first factor in the formation of her identity. It is important to note that names not only grant one a specific identity as a language user, but they also direct who that person is.<sup>35</sup>In this context, Antoinette says: "Names matter, like when he would not call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass."<sup>36</sup>By renaming her Bertha, Rochester asserts his male power by using his wife as a mere object where Antoinette becomes "an unknown quantity ready to be reinvented to his liking on his whim. And here, "Wide Sargasso Sea" as a novel tried to give a voice and identity to the heroine of the novel, Antoinette (because Bertha has another identity; she is from the West where Rhys empathizes with the character of Bertha "Antoinette" and rewrites her novel as a reaction to Jane Eyre and her concept of identity.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tschaep M. D, "Halo of Identity: The Significance of First Names and Naming," <http://www.janushead.org/6-1/Tschaep.pdf> , 67.

<sup>36</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.212. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf).

### **2.1.3. Hybridity, Colonial Struggles, and the Issue of Race and Division in Wide Sargasso Sea**

Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" (1966), as a postcolonial work, explores the concept of hybridity, a clash of cultures that creates new and brilliant works. The novel explores the dangers of cultural binarism and the fundamentalist urge to seek "pure" cultural forms. It portrays Antoinette's identity, marginal status, and distorted mental condition due to hybridity, a period in Caribbean history following the "Emancipation Act" (1833), which led to racial conflicts and socio-economic disorder.<sup>38</sup> The novel examines colonialism through the eyes of Antoinette Cosway, a Creole lady caught between Jamaica's post-slavery racial conflicts and the British Empire. Her liminal status, rejected by both white colonists and Black Jamaicans, exemplifies the Caribbean's shattered colonial heritage. Rochester, representing British power, dehumanizes her by calling her "Bertha" and denying her heritage, demonstrating how colonialism pathologizes the subjugated. The destruction of the Coulibri Estate represents a pushback against colonial power, while Rhys' fragmented narrative challenges imperialist historiography by highlighting neglected perspectives.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* there are two races: Blacks and Whites, based on the English referentiality of the nineteenth century. This approach, enforced by English planters in the Caribbean colonies, sees Englishness as a homogeneous racial category distinct by colors such as the Black Jamaican Creole. This view suggests an identifiable, unified national character evident in terms of Englishmen and Creoles based on socially codified patterns of behavior and a person's inherent physical and racial attributes. This view was marked by England's involvement in the slave trade and plantation economies in the West Indian colonies. The English perspective is the reference in the novel, and the white characters perceive Black Jamaicans as having all the same physical, moral, and social attributes. Antoinette reports on the fire destroying the Coulibri estate, stating that the Black people were quiet and there was no violence, but she declares that she sees a "mass of hatred and betrayal" constituted by a malevolent mob of Black and mulatto people. The same feelings about the Blacks are already noticeable in the story, as the white planters believe that they know the Blacks thoroughly and that their actions are unquestionably true.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hybridity: <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2004623.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Samb, B. (2009). Race and gender in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 6(1), [168,169] Retrieved



## **2.2. Hierarchical Colonial and Racial Power:**

In "Wide Sargasso Sea," Jean Rhys explores the impact of race, power, and the legacy of slavery in post-colonial Caribbean society, where she shows how racial hierarchies shape the relationships between characters like Antoinette and her husband, Rochester, and how race influences power dynamics affecting identity and social status.

### **2.2.1. Race and its impact on power between characters:**

Rochester's character, the English husband of Antoinette in "Wide Sargasso Sea," represents the colonial power where he arrives in Jamaica with the mindset of a colonizer, viewing the island, "Caribbean," and its people as strange and inferior. His racial prejudice extends not only to the indigenous Jamaicans but also to Antoinette herself, as he views her as a racially ambiguous Creole woman and less than fully English. This racial divide impacts their relationship, with Rochester's sense of superiority over Antoinette intensifying as he tries to assert control over her. His ability to dominate and dehumanize her stems from his belief in the racial hierarchies that place him above her..<sup>40</sup>

### **2.2.2 The Impact of Slavery and Plantation Culture on Caribbean Society:**

According to Rhys, she explores slavery in her novel to reflect British colonialism and its impact on Jamaica. It is noteworthy that she mentions the Emancipation Act, which abolished slavery. Therefore, the author attempts to present the circumstances that occurred on the island, "economic oppression." To illustrate this, the Cosway family and Mr. Luttrell become poor after the abolition of slavery. In the beginning of the novel, Antoinette declares:

"How could she know that Mr. Luttrell would be the first who grew tired of waiting? One calm evening he shot his dog, swam out to sea, and was gone forever. No agent came from England to look after his property, [...] and strangers from Spanish Town rode up to gossip

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<sup>40</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

and discuss the tragedy."<sup>41</sup>From this passage it becomes clear that Britain has little concern for the state and conditions of the people in their colonies. They witnessed poverty because they lost their fortunes and did not receive compensation. In fact, Rhys goes further to give image of the slaves' conditions who remained working for their master; the leading figures are Christophine, Godfrey, and Baptiste. The main reason is that they are not skilled at any trade. Rhys goes further to narrate the conditions of the freed slaves. She claims that the blacks revolt against their owners even after the Emancipation Act. Where, in the beginning of the novel, Annette's horse dies. Godfrey justifies himself, saying:

"I can't watch the horse night and day. I'm too old now. When the old times go, let it go[...]. The Lord makes no distinction between black and white; black and white are the same for Him. Rest yourself in peace, for the righteous are not forsaken."<sup>42</sup>From the passage, one can notice that the blacks are abused by the whites. Where Godfrey is not working seriously to disobey the master. It appears that he appeals for equality between the different races. This can be considered the case of all the blacks. In fact, it is related to history since the Black rebellion lasted.

Through the novel and according to Jean Rhys plantations culture creates lasting divisions, exacerbates colonial trauma, and influences both individual and collective identities which is portrayed as a deeply entrenched system that shapes the social, economic, and racial dynamics of Caribbean society and also the legacy of slavery and colonialism continues to haunt the characters particularly "Antoinette Cosway" whose sense of identity is fragmented by the plantations history where the rigid class and racial hierarchies driven by plantation economics, contribute to the alienation and psychological struggles of the characters especially in the ways they navigate their relationships, identities, and power dynamics.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF],p.3. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>42</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF],p.2-3. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>43</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

### **2.2.3. Christophine Character and Her Standing Against Colonial and Racial Hierarchies:**

According to Gayatri Spivak, Christophine is the only independent female character endowed with a sense of logic and reason in Rhys's novel.<sup>44</sup> She is able to support herself economically, and she did not serve any man. In addition, Christophine resists both "patriarchal and imperialist laws." She criticizes the institution of marriage on the ground that it is designed to reinforce male domination. As an example, when Antoinette tells her that she cannot leave her husband, Mr. Rochester, because she is economically dependent on him, Christophine replies, "All women, all colors, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank my God, I keep my money. I don't give it to any worthless man."<sup>45</sup> When Christophine tries to convince Rochester to give Antoinette some of her money back, he tries to silence her by threatening to resort to the judicial apparatus, which is male-dominated. However, Christophine is confident that he cannot harm her. She says, "No police here. No chain gang, no treadmill, and no dark jail either. This is a free country, and I am a free woman."<sup>46</sup> By speaking her mind and refusing to follow colonial laws, Christophine is a potent example of postcolonial resistance that challenges Rochester's authority and embodies a different, decolonised worldview.

### **3. Feminism and Female Oppression in Wide Sargasso Sea:**

Wide Sargasso Sea Novel is a powerful critique of patriarchal and colonial systems that oppress women. It explores female oppression in that period by highlighting how societal norms restrict women's autonomy and identity.

Through Antoinette's character narrative, Rhys writer, portrays the destructive effects of patriarchal dominance and colonialism on women's lives and challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Despite Rhys's reluctance to identify as a feminist, the novel

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<sup>44</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Three women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Chicago Journals, 12, no.

1(1985), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343469> . (accessed February 13, 2017), 252-253

<sup>45</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF], p.84. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF], p.130. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

offers a strong feminist subtext by critiquing the marginalization and silencing of women in a male-dominated world.

### **3.1. Females Between the Grasp of Colonialism and the Wrest of Patriarchy:**

In "Wide Sargasso Sea," we can see vividly the double oppression faced by women in colonial societies. Female characters, particularly "Antoinette Cosway," are caught between the suffocating grip of colonialism and the restrictive forces of patriarchy, which the novel highlights how colonialism and patriarchal norms intersect to marginalize women by stripping them of identity and autonomy.

#### **3.1.1. Antoinette's Condition regarding colonialism and patriarchy:**

The idea of "madness" examines the character Antoinette, the protagonist motivated by her controlling patriarchal husband, Mr. Rochester. Antoinette's "madness," which stems from her upbringing in a "colonial, patriarchal society" with racial tensions, is exacerbated by her sense of rejection and alienation from the island's residents. She is also more susceptible because of her background, which makes it simpler for Mr. Rochester to make her crazy. From her husband, Mr. Rochester, to her stepfather, Mr. Mason, and his son Richard, Antoinette has always been under male authority. She is able to rely on men and follow their rules because of the toxic patriarchal society in which they live. Antoinette's "madness" is a result of her husband's subjugation in a dysfunctional patriarchal culture rather than a mental illness. As the head of the patriarchal hierarchy and a symbol of British colonialism, Mr. Rochester acts as a double oppressor. His primary goal is to keep Antoinette under his authority and in his patriarchal role. Using the social notion of "madness" to justify his behavior, he alienates and rejects her, oppressing her and driving her insane. The reason for Antoinette's "madness" is her outspoken sexuality and emotional expressiveness, and thus she found herself beyond the attic between colonial and patriarchal society.<sup>47</sup> In addition to that, Gayatri Spivak's concept of "double colonisation," in which women are silenced by both empire and male power, is exemplified by Antoinette's experience of both patriarchal and colonial oppression.

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<sup>47</sup> Tennholt, K. (2005). Patriarchal madness: Patriarchal oppression and madness in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (C-essay). Södertörn University College, English Department. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:16322/fulltext01>

### 3.1.2. Comparison between Annette Cosway and Antoinette Cosway:

The characters of Annette Cosway and her daughter Antoinette Cosway in Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea" have a lot in common, but they also differ in other things. Due to their Creole identities, both suffer from marginalization in both European and Caribbean societies. While Annette is shunned by the white Jamaican community, Antoinette is isolated by her husband in England. This shows the social pressures that women faced during that period. Annette lived a difficult life marked by instability, including two marriages that ended in tragedy, leading her to apparent madness. In contrast, her daughter, Antoinette, experienced emotional and psychological conflicts due to her movement between different environments, from Jamaica to England, in addition to the patriarchal and colonial systems that completely controlled her life. This prompted Rhys to revisit this story in order to explore the social pressures, abuse, and humiliation that prevailed on women in different ways.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.1.3. Symbolism in Wide Sargasso Sea :

Symbolism is often employed in "Wide Sargasso Sea" to further the novel's themes of gender, race, identity, and colonialism. Jean Rhys further explores these intricate topics through symbolic items, acts, and situations, shedding light on the psychological and emotional ramifications of the characters' experiences. For example, the marriage of Rochester and Antoinette.

The White Creole woman Antoinette grew up without the love of her parents in isolation, in addition to her mixed identity, which caused her to be treated as an object or a commodity, as her failed, loveless marriage was a financial transaction for her husband. The marriage also faced deep issues of racial and gender inequality. Rochester, representing British colonial power, was seen as the dominant figure, while Antoinette, a white Creole, felt lost between two worlds. This confusion about her identity is shown in her reflection, where she refers to herself as a white cockroach and English women as white niggers. Antoinette feels inferior to Rochester, who holds the noble status of an English gentleman despite his lack of wealth. Rochester sees himself as superior, even to the Caribbean people, whom he despises. He

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<sup>48</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

believes that Antoinette's madness, infidelity, and drunkenness are linked to her "blood," thinking she's part of the problem that led him to marry her.

Moreover, their marriage suffers from a lack of gender equality. Despite having some money, Antoinette is emotionally weak and completely dependent on Rochester, leading to her losing everything, including her freedom. She rarely stands up for herself, as seen when she returns to her unloving mother, hoping for affection but being rejected. Rochester, on the other hand, is cold and cruel, treating Antoinette as an object or possession, treating her as a means to an end. He married Antoinette only to gain the money she inherited, seeing her as a means to an end. Antoinette represents a woman trapped by a man's imperialistic power, where Rochester says, "Thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. ... I have sold my soul, or you have sold it, and after all, is it such a bad bargain?"<sup>49</sup>(Rhys 48), She was used only for financial gain and treated as an object with no voice in her own life. Her attempt to break free from this fate and find the security she so desperately wants is almost impossible.<sup>50</sup>

### **3.2.Resisting Patriarchy:**

In her novel, Rhys explores the theme of resistance to patriarchy through the struggles of Antoinette Cosway, who faces gender and colonial oppression. Throughout the novel, Antoinette is trapped in a patriarchal system that seeks to control, silence, and destroy her. Her marriage to Mr. Rochester is a major focus of this conflict, as she is viewed as merely property rather than an equal partner.

#### **3.2.1. Christophine's strong character in the face of patriarchy:**

Christophine's character in Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" is one of the most important characters that plays a significant role in confronting and resisting colonialism and patriarchy, as she represents the image of a strong woman who maintains her identity despite

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<sup>49</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>50</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.48. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

being merely a servant to Antoinette Cosway (her nurse). Christophine worked hard on herself to remain steadfast and not to break in the face of authority, whether the British colonial authorities or the patriarchal authorities. Although she grew up in circumstances completely different from those in which Antoinette grew up, she possesses a deep awareness of the surrounding circumstances, whether cultural or political, and she completely rejects everything that seeks to diminish her position as a woman belonging to a Caribbean environment whose culture differs from the culture of the colonizing British. Although she does not speak about colonialism directly, her actions clearly highlight her complete rejection of colonialism. She is not afraid to express her opinions even when she is against Mr. Rochester himself.

### **3.2.2. Christophine and her influences on Antoinette:**

Christophine plays a significant role in Antoinette's life and also in her relationship with Mr. Rochester. She does her utmost to protect Antoinette, having been against their marriage from the beginning. She viewed Mr. Rochester as unsuitable for Antoinette and constantly warned him against mistreating her harshly. Christophine always encouraged Antoinette to regain her strength when she saw her marriage heading toward a dead end, offering spiritual healing, a practice Christophine's family believed in. However, Antoinette remained vulnerable to Rochester's power. Despite Christophine's efforts, she was unable to save her from her fate. Instead, she resorted to challenging patriarchal authority, standing up against Rochester and criticizing his harsh behavior toward Antoinette.

### **3.2.3. Christophine as a strong woman who defends women's rights :**

Although Christophine is not the ideal woman in the eyes of English society or even Antoinette herself, she remains an example and a poster child for a woman who refuses to submit to patriarchy and promotes Caribbean identity through traditional spiritual practices and herbal remedies, which are considered rebellious and backward by European colonial culture. She also presents a model of a woman who maintains her cultural roots, strong character, and clear stance.

Christophine in "Wide Sargasso Sea" is a pivotal character representing resistance against colonialism and patriarchy, where she refuses to submit to the circumstances surrounding her by protecting her loved ones and keeping them safe, including Antoinette. However, the

ending remains tragic, reflecting the tragedy of women in oppressive and tyrannical societies.<sup>51</sup>

#### **4. Madness and Identity "Fragmentation":**

The theme of "madness and identity: fragmentation" in *Wide Sargasso Sea* significantly contributes to the development of Antoinette Cosway's character. Due to her mixed identity as a Creole woman in post-colonial Jamaica, the novel depicts her psychological breakdown and fractured sense of self. Her psychological deterioration is exacerbated by the alienation she experiences in her marriage to Rochester and her homeland.

Rhys uses madness to expose oppressed women and colonized peoples, demonstrating how colonial history and patriarchal resentment can erode a person's confidence and sense of self.

#### **4.1. Colonialism and Antoinette (The Madwoman):**

Antoinette's descent into madness reflects the colonial tensions in Jamaica. As a Creole woman, she is alienated from both the colonizers and the Black Jamaican community, leaving her with a fragmented identity. Her mental breakdown symbolizes the dehumanizing effects of colonialism, and also racial, cultural, and gender oppression contribute to her loss of self.

##### **4.1.1. The impact of colonialism and subjugation on Antoinette's character :**

Considering "Antoinette" as a Creole character of European origin, it was difficult for her to be accepted by the European white colonizers or the Jamaican Black community, who saw her as strange, which made her feel like she didn't belong anywhere. This led to her psychological breakdown. Additionally, her unstable marriage to Mr. Rochester, his neglect and abuse of her, and his marginalization and renaming her Bertha to bury her identity and control her contributed to her suffering. Where the colonialism and subjugation together forced her to strip off her identity and rendered her powerless, which led to her final madness and imprisonment in the attic by her English husband.

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<sup>51</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)



### 4.1.2. Comparison between Antoinette Cosway and Bertha Mason:

The comparison starts between two female characters, mainly "Bertha Mason" and "Antoinette Cosway." The two characters play crucial roles in the narratives. They are portrayed differently by the authors Jean Rhys and Charlotte Brontë.

Charlotte Brontë presents Mr. Rochester's wife. The latter is called Bertha Antoinetta Mason, who came from Jamaica to England. Brontë portrays her through other characters, rendering her voiceless but depicted by other characters. In fact, the "West Indian woman is denied the option of a dissenting voice." Bertha is a lunatic in Brontë's narrative who is defined through her physical appearance rather than her experiences. Bertha is depicted as an odd creature that remains without a name until a later stage in the novel.<sup>52</sup> Where Brontë uses "race" as the underlying aspect for depicting her character. Susan L. Meyer claims that "Brontë's figurative use of blackness in part arises from the history of British colonialism."<sup>53</sup> It is noteworthy that Brontë tends to define Antoinette through the colour of her skin in order to emphasize the difference between the colonizer and the colonized. In other words, the foreign race such as Bertha is criticized and dehumanized even if she is a "white Jamaican Creole".<sup>54</sup>

Bertha's existence in the novel may reveal that colonialism brings in its wake unwanted people like the by-product of any process. which the image given of her is also related to the fact that she is from a British colony. which means that the colonized upset the British. Brontë provides a depiction of Bertha that is lasting and cannot be altered.<sup>55</sup> She has used the colonial discourse to provide a stereotypical and unfavorable image of Bertha.

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<sup>52</sup> Brontë, C. (1847). Jane Eyre [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2014-04-09-Jane%20Eyre.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Susan L. Meyer, Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of "Jane Eyre", Indiana University Press, Victorian Studies, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), p250, accessed in June 10, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828358>

<sup>54</sup> Susan L. Meyer, Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of "Jane Eyre", Indiana University Press, Victorian Studies, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), p251, accessed in June 10, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828358>

<sup>55</sup> Zeinab Galal Abdel-Fattah Suliman, "Jane Eyre searching for belonging", International Journal of English and Literature, Vol. 6 (2) <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/IJEL/article-full-text-pdf/3BEEA7B49917>.

Conversely, Rhys presents her in a contrasting way by giving a new image to the protagonist. Antoinette's name changes to Antoinette Cosway Mason following her mother's marriage with Mason. When she goes to the convent school, one of the nuns tells her, "You are Antoinette Cosway, that is to say, Antoinette Mason."<sup>56</sup>Hence, Antoinette becomes bound to her English stepfather's name. Additionally, her husband changed her name to Bertha. We can clearly see that Antoinette is under the influence of her British husband. Rhys subverts Brontë's character, Bertha, by changing the name over the course of the novel to eventually become Bertha Antoinetta Mason. Gayatri Spivak confirms that Antoinette's husband changes his wife's name, violently depriving her as a result of her identity.<sup>57</sup>Hence, as a colonized person, Antoinette becomes confused with her identity because the British colonizer exerts his oppression on her and shows disregard for her.

Rhys goes further to justify and explain the reasons behind Bertha's strange appearance. According to Rhys, Antoinette is rejected and oppressed not only by society but also by her husband, who attempts one night to seduce the servant, Amélie. The husband says, "Nor was I anxious to know what was happening behind the thin partition that divided us from my wife's bedroom."<sup>58</sup> This reflects the fact that the husband does not care about his wife's feelings, very much like the little concern the colonizer has for his subjects. The purpose of the Englishman in the West Indies is to gain wealth by taking profit from laws that serve him. As the situation gets unbearable for Antoinette, she becomes drunken, which leads to her depression. This image contradicts Brontë's appearance of Bertha in the sense that her madness is not inherited but the result of distress and suffering. It seems that the husband does not feel guilt about his oppression of his wife. Rhys explains that the protagonist is her husband's victim. This draws a parallel with the colonizer/colonized relationship.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.33. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Three women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Chicago Journals*, 12, no. 1 (1985), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343469> . (accessed February 13, 2017), 250

<sup>58</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.111. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>59</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

As a consequence, by showing that Antoinette is dehumanized, Rhys reverses the fact that this character is from a mad family. She aims to humanize her character by depicting harsh circumstances that she goes through.

### **4.1.3. Madness as a Colonial Construct:**

"Madness" is problematic to define, since it can be interpreted in various ways. Madness can be viewed as both a disorder of the brain and a social phenomenon. A person's cultural differences in norms and values can be looked upon as madness, but madness can also be a consequence of oppression in society, such as patriarchal oppression. *Wide Sargasso Sea* deals centrally with the theme of madness, where Foucault demonstrates in his works that madness is a social phenomenon. Which is seen as a mental illness by Freud. Thus, Antoinette's "madness" can be interpreted as a social phenomenon; she is driven "mad" by her patriarchal husband. Her "madness" is a consequence of Mr. Rochester's oppression in a diseased patriarchal society, a society that allows and accepts cruelties towards women. Mr. Rochester's oppression of Antoinette is not only a consequence of his patriarchal upbringing; it also derives from his role as a colonizer.<sup>60</sup> In line with feminist criticisms of how women's voices are frequently written off as irrational, Rhys depicts Antoinette's insanity as a metaphor for the emotional toll of social exclusion and gender oppression rather than as insanity.

### **4.2. Antoinette's Fragmented Self and Rochester :**

In "*Wide Sargasso Sea*," Antoinette's fragmented self is a reflection of her identity crisis shaped by her cultural dislocation and personal trauma in post-colonial Jamaica. Caught between her European heritage and the local Jamaican culture, she struggles to find a stable sense of self. Rochester, her husband, plays a crucial role in this fragmentation. His emotional neglect and objectification of her further contribute to her sense of alienation and psychological breakdown. Through their marriage, Antoinette's identity is continually undermined, deepening her inner conflict and sense of disintegration.

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<sup>60</sup> Tennholt, K. (2005). Patriarchal madness: Patriarchal oppression and madness in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (C-essay). Södertörn University College, English Department. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:16322/fulltext01>

#### **4.2.1. Rochester's Eurocentric Views and the Control Over Antoinette's Identity Through Renaming Her "Bertha":**

Annette's neglect of her daughter Antoinette contributed to her experiencing psychological and emotional pressures, as she also lived an internal conflict due to her lack of belonging to either world (the Jamaican Black society and the British colonizers), which led to her feeling isolated and divided. She found herself caught between the remnants of European colonial power and the local Jamaican culture. Additionally, her husband, Mr. Rochester's, Eurocentric views made him see himself as superior British and Antoinette as savage, untameable, and a strange being to be controlled, rather than seeing her as a person with her own history and identity. This resulted in an emotional gap between them, causing Antoinette's identity to become fragmented, ultimately ending her psychological and mental well-being due to this British mentality. Antoinette is an alien to both Black Jamaicans and to her English husband. She cannot affirm her identity by simply saying "I am Jamaican" or "I am English." Therefore, she sees herself as an "Other" who does not belong to any cultural group. However, their insistence that she belongs neither to Jamaica nor to England makes her experience an existential dilemma. This is clearly shown when she explains to her husband when she hears the Black servant Amélie singing a song about a "white cockroach" the suffering she endures because she is of a mixed race: "It was a song about 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 have heard English women call us white niggers. So between you and me. I often wonder who I am, where my country is, where I belong, and why I was ever born at all."<sup>61</sup>

In "Wide Sargasso Sea," Rochester follows different strategies to suppress Antoinette's identity. While the name "Bertha" is associated with madness and savagery and reflects the colonial stereotype of the "madwoman," Rochester decided to change Antoinette's name to "Bertha" to control her and erase her identity.

Antoinette gives great importance to her name since she considers that it is the very first factor in the formation of her identity. In this context, Antoinette says, "Names matter, like when he would not call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with

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<sup>61</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.77. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

her scents, her pretty clothes, and her looking glass."<sup>62</sup> Though Antoinette rejects the fact of being called by other names, Rochester insists on calling her Bertha. She is stripped of everything that can empower her, including her name: "Bertha," I said. "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeh too."<sup>63</sup> By renaming her Bertha, Rochester asserts his male power by using his wife as a mere object. Thus, Antoinette becomes "a person who can be controlled by anyone at any time."

### 4.2.2. Rochester as a Symbol of Colonial Authority in "Wide Sargasso Sea":

In the novel, Mr. Rochester's aim is to transform his wife into a version of a civilized woman. From the moment he comes to the Windward Islands, he starts to view it and the natives from a white man's perspective.

For Rochester, exploiting and controlling Antoinette meant having control over her wealth. It also meant exerting his power over her and conquering her and molding her into a person who fits his white English standards: "a white woman." Because for him, she represents something different than what he sees as ideal, something he considers savage and uncultured, needing white knowledge and light. In her, he sees the wealth she has, "the land she inhabits": "a beautiful place—wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret."<sup>64</sup> By forcing Antoinette to assimilate his culture and white standards, Edward Rochester is thus exercising his domination over her, albeit in a soft manner of domination. Not direct and explicit but rather implicit and woven into Europe's colonial claim of the superiority and civilization of the white man.

Rochester could not simply stand the idea of being the outsider, "the other." His apparent fear of the unfamiliar and exotic landscape around him prompts him to try and regain control by promptly oppressing Antoinette and trying to control her. Despite the fact that he did not

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<sup>62</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.145. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>63</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.118. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>64</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.63. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

love her, he never wanted anyone else to have her except him. "I'll take her into 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."<sup>65</sup>. His greed for wealth pushes him to see her as an object that he must acquire. Consequently, by doing so, he gets access to her land.

### 4.2.3. The Western Domination of Caribbean Identity in Wide Sargasso Sea:

When the West, "the white man," came to the colonies, "Jamaica, he came under the pretense of civilizing the "inferior races" and spreading knowledge and light. The native, made to believe that his culture, his language all that which represented his being were bad, savage, and not worth celebrating, starts to view himself as such and tries to escape from all that which reminds him of his blackness. After having convinced the colonized subject of the inadequacy and the inferiority of his culture, the white man starts to establish the superiority of his language and his culture. Being viewed as superior, the white man's word is made holy—something to follow, to cherish, and to be part of. In return, the Caribbean people, "the Black men," lose their identity, native culture, and sense of self and start a process of internalizing feelings of inferiority towards their own Black identity.

Additionally, the white man considers himself superior, beautiful, kind, and civilized. The white colonizers conceive themselves as a chosen people destined to rule and be masters over the other races, whether black or yellow. As a result, the Black man will strive to rid himself of his Blackness at every cost, leading to his assimilation of whiteness and donning a white mask over his Black skin. Consequently, the white man has a negative effect on the colonized subject's personality, "the Black man." The latter loses his values, his confidence, and his self-motivation.

In the novel, As an example, for the white people, Antoinette is too dark to be considered as one of them, and for the natives, she was too white and pretty to be accepted as one of them. She belongs neither to the white world nor to the black one. Which Antoinette

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<sup>65</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.135. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

witnessed how the white people jeered at her mother for marrying Mr. Mason, him being an Englishman while she was of Creole descent.<sup>66</sup>

## **5. Wide Sargasso Sea as a Reimagination of Jane Eyre :**

Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea" is regarded as a postcolonial response to Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre". While "Jane Eyre" focuses on the journey of its titular character, it leaves the narrative of Bertha Mason, the madwoman in the attic, largely unexplored. Rhys's novel serves as a powerful reimagination, providing a voice to Bertha by renaming her Antoinette Cosway and exploring themes of colonialism, patriarchy, and identity.

By shifting the narrative perspective to Antoinette, Rhys critiques the colonial and patriarchal structures that underpin "Jane Eyre" offering a nuanced portrayal of the Caribbean experience and the complexities of Creole identity. This reimagination not only challenges the dominant discourses of Jane Eyre but also enriches our understanding of the intertwined histories and cultures depicted in both novels.

### **5.1. Voicing the Voiceless :**

"Wide Sargasso Sea" is a powerful example of "voicing the voiceless" as it gives narrative voice to Bertha Mason (a character marginalized in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre). By centering on Antoinette Cosway's story, Rhys critiques the colonial and patriarchal systems that silence women, particularly those of mixed heritage. This novel not only humanizes Bertha but also challenges the dominant discourses of "Jane Eyre" which offering a nuanced exploration of identity, colonialism, and the struggles of women in marginalized positions. Through Antoinette's narrative, Rhys highlights the complexities of being silenced and the importance of reclaiming one's voice in the face of oppressive societal norms.

#### **5.1.1.Reclaiming the Silenced: Jean Rhys's Reimagining of Antoinette's Voice in "Wide Sargasso Sea":**

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<sup>66</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)



After Jean Rhys felt disturbed by the portrayal of Bertha in Charlotte Brontë's novel as a voiceless, savage, and strange character, she attempted to rewrite the story from her own perspective to restore Bertha's identity, giving her a voice and another name "Antoinette Cosway," by narrating her experience and revealing the psychological disturbances and patriarchal and colonial oppression she endured, which led to her downfall and madness in the end, partly due to her mother who always ignored her and her husband Mr. Rochester who dismissed her fears and erased her identity by renaming her "Bertha."

Unlike Brontë, who presents Antoinette as a mad, irrational woman locked in the attic, and whose madness is portrayed as hereditary, Rhys gives "Antoinette" a voice to narrate and reveal her suffering. By presenting her madness as a result of the psychological trauma inflicted by her patriarchal English husband, the colonialists who always saw her as a backward Creole woman, and the Jamaican inhabitants who considered her an outsider due to her whiteness and English origins.

Thus, Rhys forces readers to reconsider the inherent biases in classical literature and the historical exclusion of marginalized characters, transforming "Antoinette" from a monstrous figure into a tragic human character whose voice deserves to be heard.<sup>67</sup> By using intertextuality to reclaim the voice of Bertha from *Jane Eyre*, Rhys creates *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a counter-narrative that gives Bertha (now Antoinette) the opportunity to speak for herself.

### 5.1.2. Reclaiming Agency for the Colonized in "Wide Sargasso Sea":

By allowing Antoinette to narrate large parts of her story, *Wide Sargasso Sea* was able to reclaim the role of the colonized and shift the margins to the center—a privilege not afforded her in *Jane Eyre*. Rhys was able to tell her own story and reclaim her identity and feelings, previously obscured by the prevailing colonial discourse. By reimagining Bertha Mason and other colonized individuals, Rhys was able to portray the destructive nature of colonialism, which created ideologies of race and gender to marginalize and destroy them. In doing so, *Wide Sargasso Sea* was able to offer a powerful critique of colonialism and patriarchy.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>68</sup><https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:934756/FULLTEXT01.pdf>



## 5.2. Challenging Traditional (Victorian) Literary Ethics in "Wide Sargasso Sea":

Jane Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea" (1966) echoed Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre" by challenging Victorian literary ethics and norms that often promoted colonial ideals, rigid gender norms, and a sense of moral superiority consistent with the principles of the British Empire. Rhys violated these prevailing ethics in her treatment of the "other" by giving voice to Antoinette Cosway, a racially oppressed and voiceless character, portraying her as a victim shaped by colonial violence and patriarchal oppression, rather than as a mad woman.

### 5.2.1. A Comparative Study of Narrative Fragmentation in "Wide Sargasso Sea" and "Jane Eyre":

Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre" was written in first-person perspective, meaning the narrator and heroine are one person, which immediately captures the reader's attention. She used the first-person pronoun to express the heroine's inner self and experiences, speaking directly to the readers, expressing her reflections and feelings as an oppressed woman. For example: "Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! May your eyes never shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears as poured from mine."(Bronte490)<sup>69</sup>In addition, Brontë adopted a linear, structured narrative and a clear chronology that allows the reader to identify with the protagonist as she tells her story in a narrative style. Therefore, she pays great attention to providing us with precise details of her life; she explains how she makes decisions and, sometimes, her feelings.

In contrast, Jean Rhys, who wrote her literary work in response to Jane Eyre, addressed the same period in the novel, set in the 1830s and 1840s. Rhys employed Black characters as main characters, such as Christophine, Baptiste, Hilda, Maillot, and Godfrey, all of whom were slaves, in order to eradicate the racism of Victorian literature. Furthermore, she created a life for a character who is not humanized in Brontë's novel, making her a victim of colonialism and patriarchy. Her narrative style shifts between time periods, points of view (Antoinette and Rochester), and psychological states. For example, In Part One, "Antoinettes, There is always the other side, always." (Rhys101)<sup>70</sup> Soon after, the narrative jumps suddenly:

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<sup>69</sup> Brontë, C. (1847). Jane Eyre [PDF],p.490. Retrieved from <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2014-04-09-Jane%20Eyre.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.101. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

"The sky. It was red, and all my life was in it." (Rhys 153)<sup>71</sup> These passages are not connected by any clear logic or time. Antoinette shifts quickly from philosophical thoughts to sensory imagery to physical withdrawal.

### 5.2.2. Challenging Western Tradition: Centering the Creole Woman in Rhys's Narrative:

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys breaks with Western literary conventions by focusing on Antoinette Cosway, challenging the Eurocentric and patriarchal ideals of nineteenth-century literature, including Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. While Bertha Mason (Antoinette's counterpart) in *Jane Eyre* is a voiceless, dehumanized character, a "madwoman in the attic," Rhys reclaims this marginalized character by giving her a voice and a multifaceted identity shaped by colonialism and gender oppression. She critiques the colonial mechanisms that exclude Antoinette from both European and Jamaican society, emphasizing her Creole identity "They say when trouble comes, close ranks: when people are in difficulty, they often find strength in solidarity." (Rhys 1)<sup>72</sup> She uses this technique to demonstrate Antoinette's marginalization from both racial groups. Which employs Antoinette's struggle to demonstrate how colonialism and patriarchy intertwine to silence and suppress marginalized voices.

In addition to that, Rhys departs from the traditional Western narrative framework by presenting multiple perspectives, including those of Antoinette and Rochester, which reflect the divided identities caused by colonial domination. Antoinette's tragic journey from her childhood in Jamaica to her forced migration to England reflects this. She also critiques Western imperialism, which dehumanizes women like her, reducing them to mere caricatures or tools of male domination. For example, when Rochester begins calling Antoinette "Bertha," she protests, 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." (Rhys 118)<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.153. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>72</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.1. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>73</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.118. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

Furthermore, Rhys departs from the traditional Western narrative framework by presenting multiple perspectives, including those of Antoinette and Rochester, which reflect the divided identities caused by colonial domination. Antoinette's tragic journey from her childhood in Jamaica to her forced migration to England reflects this. She also critiques Western imperialism, which dehumanizes women like her, reducing them to mere caricatures or tools of male domination. For example, when Rochester begins calling Antoinette "Bertha," she objects, saying, "Bertha is not my name. You're trying to turn me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's wrong, too!" (Rhys, 1966, p. 118).

"Wide Sargasso Sea," by focusing on a Creole woman and critiquing colonialism and patriarchy, not only reclaims a repressed character but also questions the foundations of Western literary traditions.

### **5.2.3. Voices from the Attic: "Wide Sargasso Sea as a Critique of Victorian Ideals, Morality, Femininity, and Rationality":**

Rhys reimagines the story of Bertha Mason (renamed Antoinette Cosway), the Creole "madwoman in the attic" from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, focusing on the oppressive institutions of colonialism and racial injustice that underpinned Victorian society. Antoinette's story reveals how Victorian ideals obscure and erase the suffering of marginalized people, especially women and colonized subjects. "I will write my name in fire red, Antoinette Mason, née Cosway, Mount Calvary Convent, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1839." (Rhys 34)<sup>74</sup> Here, Antoinette directly challenges these morals and the description of the madness imposed on her while in the attic. She re-examines the "madwoman in the attic" cliché through intertextual echoes, turning it into a potent critique of Victorian notions of femininity, sanity, and empire.

Rhys critiques Victorian femininity by portraying women as confined to fixed positions defined by patriarchal ideals. Her heroine, Antoinette, and her emotional intensity contrast with the Victorian ideal of the meek and chaste woman. Her marriage to Rochester represents the commercial exploitation of women in patriarchal societies, where women were seen as a source of financial gain rather than an equal partner. As an example, Rochester's speech to Antoinette: "But I loved this place, and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think

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<sup>74</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.34. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPANEL/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPANEL/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

that if everything else went out of my life, I would still have this, and now you have spoiled it. It's just somewhere else where I have been unhappy, and all the other things are nothing compared to what has happened here. I hate it now like I hate you, and before I die, I will show you how much I hate you."(Rhys 118)<sup>75</sup>

The novel also challenges Victorian rationalism by linking Antoinette's madness to cultural disintegration and injustice, and her Creole identity and Rochester's isolation accelerate her decline, critiquing Victorian diagnoses of rebellion as madness. From this, Antoinette describes her emotional isolation : "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"?<sup>76</sup>

In conclusion, Wide Sargasso Sea deconstructs Victorian ideals by demonstrating their role in entrenching colonialism, patriarchy, and racial hierarchies, using Antoinette's tragic narrative to amplify suppressed voices and challenge the moral and cultural systems that fuel oppression.

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<sup>75</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.118. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>76</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.145. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

### **6. Conclusion:**

This chapter provides a critical analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, revealing the complex intersections of gender and racial identity in the context of Caribbean colonialism. Through its exploration of Antoinette Cosway's experiences, it explores how colonial domination and patriarchal structures dismantle identities and produce a marginalized "other." This chapter also focuses on how postcolonial feminist literature can be used as a tool for resistance, reimagining historical narratives, and revitalizing the voices of the marginalized, giving them a voice and opportunity to narrate their experiences and express their feelings. Ultimately, this study concludes that Rice's novel is not merely a reinterpretation of a classic text or a reimagining of *Jane Eyre*, but also a rethinking of the relationship between identity and power in a postcolonial world.

## **Chapter Three: Interconnectedness of Feminism, Identity, and Colonialism in WideSargasso Sea**

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2. Colonialism and Identity .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.1. Legacy in Caribbean Society .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>2.2. Colonizer-Colonized Binary "Opposition" .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3. Inclusion of Feminism .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.1. Patriarchy in the Caribbean Sphere .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>3.2. Rejection of Patriarchy (Antoinette).....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4. Trauma, Madness, and Identity Reconstruction .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.1. Psychological Trauma and Colonialism .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>4.2. Resistance and Agency Reclamation.....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>5. Rebuilding the Feminist and Colonial Narrative.....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>5.1. Re-narrating History .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>5.2. Revisiting the "Madwoman in the Attic" .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>
<b>6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>Erreur ! Signet non défini.</b>

## **1. Introduction:**

This chapter explores the interconnected themes of feminism, identity, and colonialism in Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The novel critiques the intersection of colonial and patriarchal systems that oppress women through Antoinette's experiences. Through the feminist perspective, the chapter analyzes Rhys's challenges to conventional narratives by giving a voice to a marginalized woman and giving her the opportunity to speak about her tragic experiences with her husband and community in order to resist oppressive systems.

## **2. Colonialism and Identity**

Colonialism profoundly shaped the identities of both colonizers and the colonized, often creating fragmented, hybrid, or conflicted senses of self. "There is always the other side, always." <sup>77</sup>This quote shows how colonialism tears apart identity and makes characters constantly feel inferior and alienated. In addition to that, in postcolonial literature, identity is frequently explored through characters who struggle with displacement, cultural loss, and the pressure to conform to dominant colonial values.

These tensions through Rhys's novel reveal how colonial power not only controlled land and people but also reshaped personal and collective identities, and this is what made Antoinette say: "I often wonder who I am, and where is my country, and where do I belong, and why was I ever born at all?" <sup>78</sup> Just to express her identity crisis and her constant sense of alienation due to colonial and patriarchal rule.

### **2.1. Legacy in Caribbean Society:**

British colonialism played a significant role in destroying the identity of the Caribbean region by seizing everything that belonged to this area, including its wealth and more. Slavery, in the sense that they managed to control the indigenous people and made them completely subservient to them, mocked the Creole identity and practiced marginalization

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<sup>77</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF],p.77. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>78</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF],p.101. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

and racism against them as an example. Antoinette, the Creole woman (of European descent but born in the Caribbean), experiences a profound sense of alienation, rejected by the white colonial elite due to her family's declining status after the fall of slavery and simultaneously excluded by the Black Jamaican community because of her ancestral ties to slavery. Accordingly, in "Wide Sargasso Sea," Rhys explores slavery, identity crisis, and race to reflect British colonialism and its impact on Jamaica and Jamaican people. It is noteworthy that she mentions the Emancipation Act, which abolished slavery. That's why the author attempts to present the circumstances that occurred on the island in order to answer back to Brontë in her novel "economic oppression". To illustrate this, the Cosway family and Mr. Luttrell become poor after the abolition of slavery. In the beginning of the novel, Antoinette declares: "How could she know that Mr. Luttrell would be the first who grew tired of waiting? One calm evening he shot his dog, swam out to sea, and was gone forever. No agent came from England to look after his property [...] and strangers from Spanish Town rode up to gossip and discuss the tragedy."<sup>79</sup>

From this passage, it becomes clear that Rhys tries to go further to give an image of the slave's conditions who remained working for their master colonizer in their original country, like Christophine, Godfrey, and Baptiste. as a reason is that they are not skilled at any trade, and they have no right or freedom to express themselves. In this way, Jean Rhys critiques colonialism as a political and economic system.

### 2.2. Colonizer-Colonized Binary "Opposition":

Mr. Rochester, being a man of British colonial descent, tried to provoke and oppose Antoinette at every opportunity. He always continued to call her "the stranger," and he renamed her "Bertha" because of her torn identity (neither fully a colony nor fully a colonizer). She lived amidst the instability of the colonial binary. She said, "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."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.2. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>80</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.118. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)



She said also: "I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all."<sup>81</sup>

From these two passages, it becomes clear that Mr. Rochester's perception of Antoinette as a "stranger" and calling her "Bertha" reflects his colonial mindset, while Antoinette's insistence that she is not a "stranger" or "Bertha" highlights her struggle to belong to post-liberation Jamaica. Plus, her questioning exposes this identity crisis, the colonial binary's failure to accommodate hybrid identities, rendering her a "ghost" in both worlds.

In addition, Christophine, the Black Creole maid who stood up to Mr. Rochester to defend Antoinette, said: "You think you fool me? You want her money but you don't want her. It is in your mind to pretend she is mad. I know it. The doctors say what you tell them to say That man Richard he say what you want him to say - glad and willing too, I know She will be like her mother."<sup>82</sup>

From this passage it becomes clear that Christophine challenges Rochester's patriarchal and colonial authority directly. Her criticism of him and her rejection of his authority highlight her understanding of how colonial power operates and its negative impacts on Antoinette and the entire Jamaican population. Her accusation that Rochester manipulates medical (colonial) institutions to label Antoinette as "mad" critiques how colonizers weaponize systems of control to pathologize resistance. Her knowledge of obeah (Caribbean folk practices) reveals the "opposition" as a contested and non-static power struggle.

### 3. Inclusion of Feminism:

Jean Rhys's novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" was a response to the rewriting of Bertha Mason's story from "Jane Eyre" by highlighting women's experiences at the intersection of colonial and patriarchal oppression. The novel criticizes the control over women's lives, especially marriage, economic dependency, and societal expectations, by recounting Antoinette's

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<sup>81</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.77. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>82</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.130. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

experience with her patriarchal husband, who contributed to the destruction of her character, the erasure of her identity, and the labeling of her as a savage.

Rhys also reveals the marginalization and silence of women by colonialism, and their fragmentation and erasure of their identity by their husbands during that period, challenging the traditional patriarchal and colonial narratives of both Charlotte Brontë and Victorian literature.

### 3.1. Patriarchy in the Caribbean Sphere:

The women of the period in which Antoinette was born lived at the mercy of men, as the patriarchal system was tyrannical, including her mother, Annette, her nanny, Christophine, and other women because of their dependence on them and the spread of the idea that "a woman cannot live or depend on herself unless there is a man by her side." An example of this is Annette's marriage for the second time immediately after she became widowed. When Antoinette grew up, she found herself living the same fate, as Mr. Rochester married her only for her money, as he said, "I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her; she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did."<sup>83</sup> From here it is certain that he is just an exploitative man who was able to marry her only to satisfy his financial needs. He had a colonial mentality and imposed on her several things that she did not expect from him, where he'd, She said she loved this place. This is the last she'll see of it."<sup>84</sup> In this passage, to conclude that one of the things he imposed on her was taking her away from her homeland and severing her connection to her cultural roots in order to show his control over her life and identity. Indeed, he was able to do that and make her hate everything she loved, as she told him directly: "But I loved this place, and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life, I would still have this, and now you have spoiled it. It's just somewhere else where I have been unhappy, and all the other things are nothing compared to what has happened here. I hate it

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<sup>83</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.69. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>84</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.135. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

now like I hate you, and before I die, I will show you how much I hate you." <sup>85</sup> From these quotes it becomes clear that the narrator, Rhys, makes efforts to defend Antoinette and her likes through her method of narration.

### **3.2. Rejection of Patriarchy (Antoinette):**

Antoinette didn't accept the idea of patriarchy controlling her life and tried to resist it by rejecting male dominance and asserting her voice after being silenced and subjugated by her husband. Christophine gave her a dose of courage and said: "All women, all colors, nothing but fools. Three children I have and no husband."<sup>86</sup> Because Christophine was known for her strong personality and did not submit to any man, despite the presence of her three children. She was an example of courage and defiance. She even stood up to Mr. Rochester only to defend and protect Antoinette. She never recognized patriarchal norms and male dominance.

After this dose, Antoinette faced her husband directly with confidence and without fear and said: "If I was bound for hell, let it be hell. No more false heavens. No more damned magic. You hate me, and I hate you. We'll see who hates best. But first, I will destroy your hatred. Now my hate is colder and stronger, and you'll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing."<sup>87</sup> Through this passage, we can see Antoinette's defiance and hatred for her husband by her choosing hell instead of staying by his side, and this is a successful beginning that expresses her resistance to this accursed system. In another situation, when Antoinette was locked in the attic, and after she was fed up, she said:

"I will write my name in fire red: Antoinette Mason, née Cosway, Mount Calvary Convent, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1839."<sup>88</sup> This metaphor came as a reaction to Rochester changing her name to Bertha and depriving her of her identity and freedom. It also shows her

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<sup>85</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.118. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>86</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.84. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>87</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.139. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>88</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.34. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

insistence on imposing her own name on him. Through these quotes, Rhys showed that despite Antoinette's weakness, she could not bear it and stood up to her husband and the patriarchal system and challenged them, even if only with words.

#### **4. Trauma, Madness, and Identity Reconstruction:**

After the patriarchal system had been able to suppress and control Antoinette, British colonialism came and attempted to destroy her in every way, especially psychologically. She experienced several crises due to the ongoing social marginalization, the practice of racism against her, and the desire to erase her personal identity. This caused her what is called "shock" that eventually drove her to madness.

##### **4.1. Psychological Trauma and Colonialism:**

Antoinette's trauma began due to her family's deteriorating situation as white Creoles in Jamaica after emancipation. She lived during the legacy of slavery and colonial exploitation and suffered from racism by the Jamaican "Black people," who continued to call her "the white cockroach": "White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody wants you."<sup>89</sup> From this passage, it becomes clear that Antoinette suffered from the people of her native country due to her being a white Creole woman with mixed heritage; she is neither fully European nor fully Caribbean, which deepens her sense of alienation, as she said, "I often wonder who I am and where my country is and where I belong and why I was ever born at all."<sup>90</sup>

Antoinette's marriage to Mr. Rochester intensified her trauma, as he became the main symbol of erasing her identity (calling her Bertha) and confining her to the Thornfield attic, which led to her loss of self and madness.

"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

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<sup>89</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.7. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>90</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF], p.77. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

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"?<sup>91</sup> And this confirms the imposition of his colonial mentality on her because of her Caribbean origin in order to sever her connection to her homeland and destroy her personality and identity.

### 4.2. Resistance and Agency Reclamation:

After Charlotte Brontë destroyed the character of Antoinette in her novel "Jane Eyre," Jean Rhys responded to her by giving Antoinette the voice and the right to narrate her story and experiences and express her inner voice. This was a sign of her regaining her reaction against both the patriarchal and colonial systems, as she revolted against her husband's actions first and imposed on him not to call her by anything other than her name. Then she resorted to the help of Christophine, who was an important part of her story with Mr. Rochester because she was always trying to defend her. She asked her to adopt the Afro-Caribbean "Obeah" ritual in order to regain her authority: "Hush up, she said. If the man doesn't love you, I can't make him love you. Yes, you can; I know you can. That is what I wish, and that is why I came here. You can make people love or hate. Or ... or die, I said."<sup>92</sup>

In addition, one of her most important resistances to Mr. Rochester was her adherence to her Caribbean identity and not allowing him to erase her past, so she resorted to the last solution that could save her once and for all from that humiliation and control, which was burning down Thornfield Hall, where she remained confined because of her insanity.

"Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draft, for the flame flickered, and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand, and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.145. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>92</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.86. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>93</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.154. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

From this passage, it becomes clear that this act came as a reaction to her husband Rochester's actions towards her, believing that by destroying his prison, she would take control of her story and restore her lost identity from "Bertha" to "Antoinette," and that she is a woman who chooses her own destiny, as she chose to reclaim her stolen voice and act, even if it was a destructive act, rather than remain a "silent victim." It is true that it was a sad ending for her, but at least it left an imprint on him that even death is easier for her than living in humiliation without a voice or an identity.

## **5. Rebuilding the Feminist and Colonial Narrative**

Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea" is a feminist and postcolonial response to Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre." The novel reconstructs Bertha Mason as Antoinette Cosway, a Creole woman whose identity is shaped by colonialism and patriarchy. Rhys challenges dominant imperialist and patriarchal discourses, giving voice to a historically marginalized character. The novel critiques "double colonization," where women in colonized societies experience dual oppression. Antoinette's descent into madness is reframed as a consequence of cultural displacement, racial othering, and gendered subjugation.

Rhys uses Antoinette's story to deconstruct European narratives, exposing the violence embedded in colonial and patriarchal ideologies and reclaiming agency for the silenced "Other."

### **5.1. Re-narrating History:**

Considering that "Bertha Mason" and "Antoinette Cosway" are the main characters in the novels "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea," and since they played crucial roles in the narrative, the authors portrayed them in a completely different way, as Charlotte Brontë from the Victorian period did not give the importance to her character at all by describing her as a madwoman in the attic and a monstrous animal that was forbidden to approach, and deprived her of the right to express herself and took away her voice only because she was not English and belonged to the West Indies, so she received a response from one of the authors of literature from the post-colonial period.

Jean Rhys gave the protagonist of the story a new image that was different from Bertha Mason, challenging the literature of the Victorian period. She named her Antoinette Cosway

and gave her a voice and the right to express herself by telling her story. She portrayed her as a victim of both "Jamaican and British" societies and also as having been forced to submit to colonialism, including marginalization and racism, and the patriarchal system, which included her husband's control, Mr. Rochester, over her and his desire to oppress her and erase her identity.

"If I was bound for hell, let it be hell. No more false heavens. No more damned magic. You hate me, and I hate you. We'll see who hates best. But first, I will destroy your hatred. Now my hate is colder and stronger, and you'll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing."<sup>94</sup>

"Then one day, very early, I saw her horse lying down under the frangipani tree. I went up to him, but he was not sick; he was dead, and his eyes were black with flies. I ran away and did not speak of it, for I thought if I told no one, it might not be true. But later that day, Godfrey found him; he This passage confirms Mr. Rochester's narcissism and the toxic relationship that Antoinette lived with him, with all its drawbacks. had been poisoned. Now we are marooned, my mother said. Now what will become of us?"<sup>95</sup> Which this quote reveals Antoinette's fear and denial as she struggles for her independence.

Through these passages, it becomes clear that Rhys's efforts to support the character of Antoinette and portray her as the sole victim in the story by standing against Charlotte Brontë's narrative and by criticizing colonialism, patriarchy, and racial oppression.

### 5.2. Revisiting the "Madwoman in the Attic":

After Rhys ignored Brontë's narrative by giving a voice and a human character to Antoinette, She also transformed her from a non-existent character as a "madwoman in the attic" into a character of resistance who does not accept patriarchal control and colonial marginalization through defiance, where Antoinette said, "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

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<sup>94</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.139. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>95</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). Wide Sargasso Sea [PDF],p.2. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty that was part of its loveliness."<sup>96</sup>

In this passage, it becomes clear that Antoinette's resistance and defiance, as she showed her complete rejection of the strange "other" role imposed on her by Mr. Rochester, with his cruelty and indifference to her, and her hatred of the place she was in, despite its beauty and charm.

"I said, if I had been wearing my red dress, Richard would have known me! Your red dress, she said and laughed. But I looked at the dress on the floor, and it was as if the fire had spread across the room. It was beautiful, and it reminded me of something I must do. I will remember, I thought. I will remember quite soon now."<sup>97</sup>

Here, Rhys uses the red dress in the dialogue that took place between Antoinette and Grace, her companion and servant, during her detention in the attic of Thornfield House, as a metaphor, where Antoinette likened the red dress to something that she had been thinking about doing, which is fire, which means her continued resistance and defiance of both patriarchal and colonial systems until she regains her liberation by burning the hall in which she is located. And this confirms to us that she always viewed the red dress as a "symbol of liberation."

Through these passages it becomes clear that Rhys transforms Bertha Mason from a silenced victim into a symbol of liberation (a woman capable of breaking the shackles of the attic through her constant rebellion.)

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<sup>96</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF],p.141. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)

<sup>97</sup>Rhys, J. (1966). *Wide Sargasso Sea* [PDF],p.151. Retrieved from [https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning\\_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf](https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/wide-sargasso-sea-pdf.pdf)



## **6. Conclusion:**

As demonstrated in this chapter, *Wide Sargasso Sea* illustrates how the combined impacts of racism, colonialism, and patriarchy mould Antoinette's identity. She experiences emotional and psychological collapse as a result of being marginalised as a Creole and silenced as a woman. In the novel, she uses her voice as a means of protesting the silence she encountered in *Jane Eyre*. Rhys challenges the conventional Western literary canon by rewriting Bertha's story to give her a name, a past, and a perspective. Christophine, a strong, independent feminist figure, also plays a significant role in opposing colonial and male power. Lastly, the novel demonstrates that Antoinette's alleged "madness" is a product of oppression and cultural alienation rather than something that happens naturally.

In addition to that, the novel explores the intersections of colonialism, feminism, and identity, offering a profound feminist critique. It also reveals the story of Antoinette Cosway, a woman marginalized by colonial oppression and patriarchal control; the accumulated injustices women face in colonized societies; the racism of both societies; and the enforced silence. Rhys transforms the character of the "madwoman in the attic" into a person who can defend herself and her identity and stand up to colonialism. In doing so, the novel challenges Eurocentric and patriarchal narratives, offering a profound exploration of the intersections of feminism, identity, and colonialism. This still resonates in contemporary discussions about postcolonial literature and gender studies.

# **General Conclusion**

## **General Conclusion :**

This dissertation highlights Jean Rhys's critical interventions in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a pioneering feminist postcolonial critique that deconstructs dominant narratives of race, gender, and identity in Victorian literature, particularly Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Caribbean colonial history. Set in the aftermath of British colonialism, Rhys aims to present images that contrast with conventional texts to defend Jamaican identity and culture. As a result, Rhys seeks to present the difficult experiences of West Indians to counter Brontë's text, focusing on Antoinette Cosway, a Creole woman caught between conflicting cultural forces and rigid racial hierarchies. Her fragmented identity reflects the broader dislocation and alienation brought about by colonial rule and patriarchy. Rhys depicts Antoinette's struggles for identity and belonging as emblematic of the psychological and cultural turmoil brought about by imperialism. In doing so, the novel represents a powerful counternarrative to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, challenging dominant Western ideologies that marginalize, undermine, and suppress non-European voices, correcting misleading portrayals of her country and colonized people. By reimagining Bertha Mason's story from Antoinette's perspective, Rhys confronts and critiques the patriarchal and colonial ideologies embedded in traditional texts. By giving voice and expression to historically muzzled characters, *Wide Sargasso Sea* subverts the literary and social conventions of the Victorian era, reclaiming the subjectivity of those excluded from mainstream discourse. Rhys's use of symbolism, fragmented narrative structure, shifting perspectives, "sabotage," "dispossession," and "displacement" emphasizes the ambiguity of pastoral ideals in the colonial landscape and the complexities of postcolonial identity in dismantling stereotypes. It can be concluded that Rhys uses these concepts to reconstruct the main characters in *Jane Eyre* and compare them to the characters of Brontë. She redefines them by providing them with new images. Thus, this study contributes to ongoing academic dialogues in postcolonial literature, feminist theory, and narrative studies, paving the way for further exploration of the intersections of identity, power, and storytelling in literature influenced by histories of oppression.

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## Résumé :

Le sujet principal de cette étude porte sur les aspects du postcolonialisme, du féminisme et de l'intertextualité dans le roman "Wide Sargasso Sea" de Jean Rhys. Cette thèse analyse le roman comme une relecture critique de "Jane Eyre" de Charlotte Brontë. En recontextualisant Bertha Mason dans le cadre du colonialisme caribéen, Rhys remet en question les idées eurocentriques dominantes dans la littérature victorienne et propose une perspective alternative sur les conséquences du colonialisme et les rapports sociaux. En présentant Antoinette Cosway comme une femme créole, elle incarne le personnage marginalisé et opprimé produit par les systèmes patriarcaux et impérialistes. Cette recherche explore les manières dont les écrits de Rhys abordent le racisme, l'injustice de genre et les difficultés identitaires, en se concentrant sur les implications sociales plus larges de la littérature postcoloniale dans la remise en cause des préjugés et des normes établies. Cette étude souligne l'importance de "Wide Sargasso Sea" pour mettre en lumière les voix marginalisées et défier les conventions littéraires et sociales de l'époque victorienne.

**Mots-clés :** littérature postcoloniale, littérature victorienne, relecture, intertextualité, féminisme, Wide Sargasso Sea, Jane Eyre.

## المخلص :

يتمحور الموضوع الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة حول جوانب ما بعد الاستعمار والنسوية والتداخل التناسلي في رواية جين ريس "بحر سارجاسو الواسع". وستحلل هذه الأطروحة الرواية كإعادة نظر نقدية لرواية "جين آير" لشارلوت برونتي. بوضع بيرثا ماسون في سياق الاستعمار الكاريبي، تتحدى ريس الأفكار الأوروبية المركزية السائدة في الأدب الفيكتوري، وتقدم وجهة نظر مختلفة حول عواقب الاستعمار والوضع الاجتماعي. عندما تُصوّر أنطوانيت كوسواي كامرأة كريولية، فإنها تُمثل الشخصية المهمشة والمقموعة التي أنتجتها الأنظمة الأبوية والإمبريالية. يبحث هذا البحث في الطرق التي تتناول بها كتابات ريس التمييز العنصري والظلم الجندي وصعوبات الهوية، مُركزةً على التداعيات المجتمعية الأوسع لأدب ما بعد الاستعمار في تغيير المفاهيم المسبقة ومساءلتها. سوف تعمل هذه الدراسة على أهمية رواية "بحر سارجاسو الواسع" في تسليط الضوء على الأصوات المهمشة وتحدي الأعراف الأدبية والاجتماعية في العصر الفيكتوري.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، الأدب الفيكتوري، إعادة الصياغة، التناص، النسوية، بحر سارجاسو الواسع، جين آير.