JOMOPS
JOURNAL OF MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM STUDIES
Submitted: 31.05.2023 - Accepted: 04.07.2023
Year: July 2023 - Volume: 4 - Issue: 1
DOI: 10.47333/modernizm.2023.91
RESEARCH ARTICLE

POSTMODERNIST CROSSCURRENTS AND CONCENTRIC CIRCLES IN THE WIDENING GYRE OF *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

GENİŞ, GENİŞ BİR DENİZ ADLI ROMANIN BÜYÜYEN GİRDABINDA POSTMODERNİST ÇAPRAZ AKIMLAR VE İÇ İÇE GEÇEN HALKALAR

Gökhan ALBAYRAK[1]

Abstract

This article explores the postmodernist elements woven into the tapestry of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a rewrite of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Rhys revisits *Jane Eyre* to narrate the unwritten story of the mad woman in the attic, Mr. Rochester's first wife. Thus, Dominican-British writer gives voice to Antoinette, silenced and locked away in the attic by Mr. Rochester. Hence, she subverts the European colonial and patriarchal discourse. Widely considered as a modernist novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* harbors several postmodernist features, too. Unlike a modernist novel, which clings to the notion of a coherent self, *Wide Sargasso Sea* portrays an unstable self, which resonates with the postmodernist idea of an individual identity as fluid and contingent. Moreover, *Wide Sargasso Sea* deploys numerous postmodernist techniques such as multiplicity of narrative voices, subjectivity of narration, contingency and fluidity of individual identity, intertextuality, deconstruction of grand narratives. This study therefore examines the postmodernist crosscurrents and concentric circles in the widening gyre of this novel.

Keywords: Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Postmodernism

Öz

Bu makale, Charlotte Brontë'nin romanı *Jane Eyre*'in (1847) yeniden yazımı olan, Jean Rhys tarafından yazılmış *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* (1966) romanının zengin dokusuna gömülü post-modernist unsurlarını araştırmaktadır. Rhys, tavan arasındaki deli kadının, Rochester'ın ilk karısının, yazılmamış öyküsünü anlatmak için, *Jane Eyre* romanını yeniden ele alır. Böylece, Dominikli-Britanyalı yazar Rochester tarafından tavan arasına kilitlenen ve sessizleştirilen Antoinette'in sesi olur. Bunun sonucu olarak, Avrupa'nın kolonyal ve ataerkil söylemini altüst eder. Çoğunlukla modernist bir roman olarak düşünülen, *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* birçok post-modernist özellik barındırır. Bütünlüklü bir benlik fikrine sarılan modernist romanının aksine, *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz*, istikrarsız bir benlik resmi çizer ki bu da, post-modernizmin bireysel kimliğin akışkan ve olumsal olduğu fikriyle bağdaşır. Dahası, *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* anlatıcıların çoğulluğu, anlatının öznelliği, bireysel kimliğin olumsallığı ve akışkanlığı, metinlerarasılık ve büyük anlatıların yapı bozumuna uğratılması gibi birçok post-modernist tekniği kullanır. Bu yüzden bu çalışma bu romanın büyüyen girdabındaki post-modernist çapraz akıntıları ve iç içe geçen halkaları incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rhys, *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz*, Postmodernizm

[1] Dr. Lecturer, Ankara University, School of Foreign Languages, galbayrak85@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-2703-4326

Introduction

A postcolonial and feminist prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Dominican-British author Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is a multifaceted novel, which recounts the unwritten story of the woman whom Edward Rochester married and kept in his attic in *Jane Eyre*. This prequel to *Jane Eyre* describes the background to Mr. Rochester's marriage from the perspective of his wife Antoinette Cosway, an infamous Creole woman. Brontë's Bertha, the mad woman in the attic, becomes Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In Rhys' revision of the novel, Antoinette's story is related from the time of her childhood in Jamaica, to her arranged marriage to a privileged English man, Mr. Rochester. Changing her name to Bertha and calling her mad, Mr. Rochester confines her to the attic of Thornfield Hall and thus isolates her from the rest of the world. In this multidimensional novel, described as "Janus-faced, capable of capturing opposing readings of the world" (Konzett 130), a wide range of issues is intertwined through many a spiral turn in the widening gyre of the novel. One circle, without running its course to the end, gives way to another circle, thus achieving a complex, concentric web of fiction that is to be unraveled despite the "much green, much purple, much close" (Rhys 39) fabric of the text. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is "very innovative for its critical treatment to colonial and patriarchal order as well as for its status as a loose adaptation" (Tekin 121). In this multi-layered novel, Rhys intricately weaves the polyphonic voices of the colonizer and colonized, the oppressor and oppressed, the black and white, the West Indian and British, and the male and female. These dual forces are tragically irreconcilable and inseparable, overlapping and conflicting at once. These binary oppositions and the sense of in-between-ness dovetail with Bhabha's notions of "hybridity," "ambivalence" and "multivocality" to contest these binary opposites (40-43). The hybridization of antipodal identities results from Rhys' "deconstruction of colonial binarisms" (Raiskin 107). A postcolonial text rests upon "a politics of opposition and struggle" and questions "the key relationship between the center and periphery" (Mishra and Hodge 276). Accordingly, *Wide Sargasso Sea* foregrounds opposing views and interrogates the tension between the center and the margin by means of centralizing Antoinette and decentralizing Mr. Rochester. Rhys' writing is therefore marked by "new ways of seeing the world,

constituting identity in the previously occluded, marginalized, or in-between social spaces" (Emery, *Jean Rhys at "World's End"* xiii). This sense of bivalence and in-between-ness is also metaphorically expressed by means of the Sargasso Sea, situated in the North Atlantic that divides the opposite hemispheres and stands between the polarized worlds of dichotomies. In this fictional world of binary oppositions, "[e]verything was brightness and dark [...] That was how it was, light and dark, sun and shadow, Heaven and Hell" (Rhys 32). However, the Sargasso Sea in the North Atlantic stands for a fictional space utilized by the novelist to demonstrate the constructedness of the meanings ascribed to the sea that divides the old world and the colonized new world. Therefore, the "dense fields of weeds waiting to entrap a [European] vessel never existed except in the imaginations of the [European] sailors" (Carson 119). This shows how European colonial discourse envisioned the Sargasso Sea, a terrifyingly fascinating and fascinatingly terrifying place of clinging weeds and endless currents. In tandem with the aforementioned world of dichotomies, Showalter argues that Rhys is one of the women novelists who "saw the world as mystically and totally polarized by sex" (33-34). Rhys' hybrid identity lies at the foundation of this understanding of world cut through polarizations and crisscrossed by diverse lines that coalesce and intersect with one another. Her "complex identity and experience informed her sense of the world so strongly that she resisted writing only one side of any story," and, in tandem with this complexity, she is considered to be "both colonial and postcolonial, white but Creole," and she is known to have uttered remarks that evince these contradictions (Savory 22). Therefore, her novel offers "ambiguous and mutually incompatible interpretive possibilities" (Simpson 111). Due to these contradictions, her characters do not have a stable sense of self. While modernist novels cling to "the old idea of the individual as a coherent entity," Rhys' understanding of the unstable self resonates with the postmodernist idea of individual identity as fluid and contingent (Savory 22).

This study questions whether it is possible to recognize a novel that came out in 1966 as postmodernist. One can definitely argue that it is in tune with postmodern times. Rhys' last novel seems to predict many tenets of postmodernism. The main argument of this paper is that her novel stretches the boundaries of modernism and expresses a postmodern sense of multiplicity and plurality. *Wide Sargasso Sea* displays early instances

of the "postmodern sensibilities" (Rody 218). *Wide Sargasso Sea* demonstrates "a characteristically heightened postmodern consciousness of the time line of literary history: self-consciously belated but daringly, playfully irreverent about textuality in general" (Rody 221). Besides being seen as a modernist novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* also interweaves strategies from postmodernism. It is agreed that, besides being seen as a modernist novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* also interweaves strategies from postmodernism. There are several articles that have dealt with *Wide Sargasso Sea* from the postmodern perspective. Some of them are as follows: Herischian regards Rhys' novel as a hypertext of *Jane Eyre*; Kimmey explores the meta-textual element in *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Wilson views this novel as a meta-fairy tale; Smith investigates the textual unconscious in Rhys' text. In continuation with this scholarly work on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this paper intends to contribute by analyzing how this novel employs other postmodernist elements such as intertextuality, deconstruction of grand narratives, multiplicity of narrative voices, subjectivity of narration, and contingency and fluidity of individual identity.

Classified as "a European modernist, feminist, expatriate, or, more recently, postcolonial and West Indian writer" (Konzett 130), Rhys utilizes "familiar modernist strategies such as punctuating a narrative by ellipses and using stream of consciousness to represent the disjointed manner of actual apprehension of experience" (Savory 14). Therefore, her novels share several characteristics of literary modernism such as "a predilection for the formal properties and organic elements of art, a deep commitment to the allusive, the mythic, and a subordination of the traditional narrative concerns of the realistic novel" (Staley 35). *Wide Sargasso Sea* uses other aspects of literary modernism such as "the emphasis on psychology, sexual motivation, and human alienation" (Staley 101). She also deploys modernist techniques such as "abstraction, dehumanization, serialization, and multiple and conflicting temporalities" (Konzett 133). Despite these predominantly modernist elements in her work, Rhys embarked on a literary journey to subvert "an imperialist Anglo-European modernism from within its own parameters" (Konzett 132). Rhys' modernist style carries within it multi-positional concerns and gestures towards postmodernism. Emery argues that it would be limiting our understanding of Rhys if we studied her as a woman writer only, a West Indian novelist or

a European modernist author exclusively. Therefore, she examines Rhys' "plural and often conflicting outsider identities as West Indian writer, European modernist, and woman writer at the closing of the era of empire, and the ways in which she occupied the spaces in between such identities in "Modernist Crosscurrents" (161). In tandem with the plurality of the critical views about Rhys and in continuation with the modernist crosscurrents in her work, this paper investigates postmodernist sweeping crosscurrents and fascinating concentric circles in the endlessly widening gyre of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Intertexuality

Intertextuality is an indispensable component of postmodernism. Abrams states that intertextuality refers to "the multiple ways in which any one literary text is made up of other texts, by means of its open and covert citations and allusions, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts (317). Likewise, Kristeva describes intertextuality as "a mosaic of quotations" and she asserts that every "text is the absorption and transformation of another" (37). Transforming a Victorian novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is "a writing back to *Jane Eyre* done before [...] intertextuality became identified as a widespread postcolonial response to colonial literary canons" (Savory 80). Obsessed with this canonical novel and "haunted by the figure of the first Mrs. Rochester" (Wyndham 6), Rhys transforms *Jane Eyre* into a postmodernist text by revisiting the nineteenth-century narrative and writing a prequel to it. She writes her novel from within another novel, yet Rhys aims at writing against the nineteenth century novel by means of detaching Antoinette, the protagonist of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, from the stereotype of the Creole lunatic, which is how she is reflected in *Jane Eyre*. Employing postmodern techniques from a feminist and postcolonial perspective, Rhys imagines a prequel to *Jane Eyre* through re-writing the story from the point of view of the mad woman in the attic, and thus dislocating the center of interest entirely. She writes back against "a white literary canon" and redeems Antoinette from "the shadow of colonialism" (Geentry 2). She explores the silences and omissions in *Jane Eyre* that "gags the voice of the individual" by suppressing Antoinette's voice (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 83). Hence, Rhys decenters and marginalizes what lies in the center of the Victorian novel, and recentralizes what has been pushed to the periphery of Brontë's vision. In accordance with this reversal of point of view, Rhys deconstructs Brontë's handling of the story and concomitantly reconstructs her own treatment of the insane woman incarcerated in the attic. Thus, Rhys subverts the dominant patriarchal and colonial discourse mainly through her portrayal of the three characters in the novel, namely Antoinette, Edward and Christophine.

Rhys' resentment of Brontë's treatment of Rochester's mad West Indian wife is what urges her to rewrite *Jane Eyre*. She passionately presents "the case of the underdog" (Ford 24). She wants to see Bertha Mason as fully human. Tempted by Brontë's unjust and one-sided representation of the Creole mad woman, Rhys recounts the causes of the character's downfall and the sources of her madness rather than label her directly as lunatic and imprisoning her in an attic. Rhys challenges Brontë as "a literary ancestor" (Simpson 113). Hence, the mad wife is no longer a horrid colonial secret to be hidden and locked away. She flees "out of the attic into the fiction" of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Howells points out in her critical evaluation of the novel (108). Rhys explores the circumstances that are responsible for Antoinette's madness and vindicates her rights by showing the reader how she is inhumanly abused in her family and society, and her search for love, and thus subverts Brontë's portrayal of Antoinette as a licentious villain, a temptress, a murderess, and "the demonized cultural other" in *Jane Eyre* (Simpson 114). Her monstrous representation in the canonical nineteenth-century novel is a consequence of the colonial and patriarchal gaze that imprisons her. The postcolonial feminist theorist Spivak argues that Antoinette becomes "the fictive Other" inevitably so that Jane Eyre can become "the heroine" of English feminist fiction that is not utterly liberated from colonial and patriarchal oppression (844). Not only feminist, but also postcolonial, Rhys frees this other from the colonial and male gaze.

Wide Sargasso Sea can be viewed as a "re- interpretation" deliberately distancing itself from its source text (Hutcheon 7-8). Rhys turns upside down patriarchal discourse by providing the silenced mad woman in *Jane Eyre* with the power of articulation and an independent voice: "the speechless raging monster" metamorphoses into a speaking woman in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Howells 108). Patriarchal ideology suppresses women and thus wields power over them by depriving women of the power of articulation. The most appreciated quality to be possessed by women in a patriarchal community is docility, which reduces women to an inarticulate and inanimate body. However, Rhys subverts this patriarchal narrative through endowing Antoinette with a fictional space, where she can freely express her inner feelings, fears, desires and wishes. An indispensable component of postmodern fiction, intertextuality allows the writer to deconstruct a dominant discourse

that takes itself as a reference point for others, to problematize the representation of a marginalized character, and to undermine the objectivity of the third-person omniscient narration.

Deconstruction of Grand Narratives

Wide Sargasso Sea utilizes deconstruction, another postmodernist element, as it repudiates grand narratives of patriarchy and colonialism. Postmodern fiction delegitimates the ascendancy of the master narrative that attempts to silence the narrative voice of the oppressed. Hassan states that postmodern discourse rests on "deconstruction, decentering, dissemination, dispersal, displacement, difference, discontinuity, demystification, delegimitation, disappearance" (309). Therefore, patriarchal and colonial narratives are displaced, their perspectives discontinued, and their truths dispersed in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Postmodernism repudiates master narratives, totalizing cultural narratives that order and explain knowledge and experience. Lyotard identifies postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). Disbelief is no longer suspended in postmodern fiction. Readers no longer drift into the stream of realist fiction. Moreover, the disenchanted reader is offered an opportunity to question the suspension of disbelief. Kennedy argues that the postmodern writer is conscious of the grand narratives' "totalizing and universalizing impulses which either seek to homogenize difference, or, simply, to exclude it and, consequently works against these impulses" (82).

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane is an outsider who, as a governess, comes to Mr. Rochester's mansion at Thornfield Hall. Mr. Rochester is portrayed as "a passionate Byronically moody man," the guardian of the dependent woman, a damsel in distress (Thorpe 173). Nevertheless, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this image of Mr. Rochester is shattered as he is a fortune-hunting Englishman, a stranger in the private domain of Antoinette. Thus, Rhys disrupts the patriarchal order. This reversal of roles is foregrounded by Christophine, Antoinette's old nurse and a mother substitute for her: "She don't come to your house in this place England they tell me about, so she don't come to your beautiful house to beg you to marry with her. No, it's you come all the long way to her house" (Rhys 102-3). Women are commodified through mercenary marriages in conventionally male-dominated societies. However, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Mr. Rochester is reduced to the state of an item

sold and purchased by his wife, which is evidently observed in the song that Amelie, Antoinette's servant, sings after she has a quarrel with Antoinette: "The white cockroach she marry / The white cockroach she buy young man / The white cockroach she marry" (Rhys 61). The young man Antoinette buys is Edward, who is the disinherited second son of an English family; therefore, his marriage to Antoinette symbolizes his banishment from "paternal mansion" and he is compelled to fend for himself (Jamoussi 3). By marrying Antoinette, Edward makes an investment to secure his future.

Prior to Edward's attainment of power over Antoinette, the initial report of the ride toward Granbois for their honeymoon reflects his dependency and submission. In a society where patriarchy reigns, women are compelled to submissive and meek. Yet, Edward, as a stranger in the West Indies, seems to be under Antoinette's control. As he is aware of his submission, Edward utters that he agrees to do whatever she tells him to do as he has "agreed to everything else" (Rhys 37). Moreover, their conversations terminate with Edward's unspoken words; he does not trust people around Antoinette, but he keeps his opinion to himself (Rhys 53). Speech is associated with power while being muted is linked with weakness and vulnerability in a community where women are taught to be meek and docile as Bertha is silenced in *Jane Eyre*. Hence, Rhys silences the oppressive male character to deconstruct the patriarchal attribution of speechlessness to women.

As the concrete embodiment of male dominance, Mr. Rochester takes Antoinette away to England and renames her as Bertha, intending thereby to dismantle her of her authentic identity and to capture her in a new identity designed by himself. Yet, Rhys subverts this patriarchal practice by making Antoinette announce that Bertha is not her name: "You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name" (Rhys 95). Naming is of vital importance in terms of identity politics. One's "personal names function not only as identifiers, but as locus of identity" (Abel 333). To be renamed by the male proprietor leads to one's being oppressed by patriarchy. Therefore, Antoinette says that names matter: "like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass" (Rhys 95). Furthermore, to proceed with her subversion of patriarchy, Rhys never names Edward in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and thus she disrobes him of his identity.

Rhys deconstructs the patriarchal image of Edward through reducing him to a mediocre man from his Byronic character in *Jane Eyre*. The powerful patriarch from *Jane Eyre* is reduced to a petty man who is afraid of being devoured by the giant womb of the West Indian feminine landscape, embodied by Antoinette, the symbol of the West Indian matriarchal power. Edward's anxiety emerges from the fact that he associates the "menacing" landscape of the West Indies with his wife in his psyche that threatens to suffocate him (Rhys 39). The English patriarch feels insecure in the feminine territory of the West Indian islands. Edward's impulse to subdue and demystify the West Indies is suggestive of the orientalist discourses, which regard the orient as something to be explored and conquered by the occidental perspective (Said 5). His colonialist and patriarchal gaze feminizes the West Indies and views this land as fascinating and terrifying at once. His powers diminish and he feels besieged by the feminine terrain of Granbois: "The road climbed upward. On one side the wall of green, on the other, a steep drop to the ravine below. We pulled up and looked at the hills, the mountains [⋯] Not only wild, but menacing. Those hills would close in on you" (Rhys 39). The feminine landscape seems to strip him of his masculine powers. It emasculates him. Edward is lost within the feminine fabric of the landscape, which he describes as "too much green," "too much near" and "too much high" (39). He announces that he must protect himself against the feminine powers of the land and the dark, rapacious female sexuality of Antoinette, who seems to him to be a sexually insatiable woman. Dreading the lustfully devouring woman, Edward "relapses into his ingrained Protestant rationality and fear of heretical ecstasy" (Harris 191) to regain his power and control himself. He appears to be unsure of his masculinity, which harms his patriarchal image. Edward's fear of annihilation by the feminine land and female sexuality disrobe him of the strong patriarchal identity that is supposed to control and master women. Thus, Rhys deconstructs the patriarchal image represented by Edward by drawing him as a character who comes to be paranoiac and obsessed with what people think of him. He assumes that he "saw the same expression on all their faces. Curiosity? Pity? Ridicule? But why should they pity me?" (Rhys 45). Being anxious about losing his patriarchal image, he does not "relish going back to England in the role of a rejected suitor jilted by this Creole girl" (Rhys 45) when Antoinette initially refuses to marry him. As the powerful patriarch, he is extremely disturbed when Amelia, with whom he is engaged in

sexual encounters, keeps saying that she is sorry for him because she pities him. The female sex showing signs of pity and mercy to a patriarchal man who is supposed to induce fear and awe in women perturbs Edward very much.

Rhys also deconstructs the taciturn, impenetrable image of an Englishman through making Edward open up and articulate his fears, anxieties and mental instabilities to the reader. An Englishman is marked by his sense of propriety, which causes him to conceal his feelings and keep his thoughts to himself as Edward's remarks testify to the attitude of being reserved: "How old was I when I learnt to hide what I felt? A very small boy" (Rhys 63). By means of disclosing Edward's inner turmoil and unearthing his fears, Rhys stresses that supposedly solid men too have fears and feelings, seek love and are destroyed by its loss. Hence, Rhys reverses the conventionally masculine image of Edward as a paragon of reason, propriety, rationality and impenetrability by rendering his personality porous and receptive to unsettling emotions. *Wide Sargasso Sea* contests the taken-for-granted value of master narrative of patriarchy by creating a fragile Edward in the West Indies. These subversions of grand narratives in a postmodernist novel "purposely ignore frameworks and distinctions agreed upon by conventions" (Ibsch 256). Hence, Rhys turns upside down those conventions that gag the voice of the oppressed.

By driving Antoinette mad and then keeping her in a prison-like attic, Edward supposes that he has acquired permanent possession of her. In a self-delusional mode, Edward utters that Antoinette is lunatic, "but mine, mine" (Rhys 108). He desires to grasp the secret of the feminine landscape and to penetrate the mystery of the female nature. Edward assumes that Antoinette knows the secret since he regards her as one of mentally deranged people: "the secret I would never know. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirsty and longing for what I had lost before I found it" (Rhys 107). Edward bears witness to Antoinette's "emphatic identification with the landscape throughout his narration, but fails to understand its meaning" (Kurt 204). He is yearning to take possession of Antoinette's inner being and own her by rendering her knowable and definable since that which eludes his capacity to pin down things, understand and thus grasp them utterly bothers him, leading him to feel insufficient and harming his authoritarian image sanctioned by patriarchal ideology. Edward's association of the secret with Antoinette's lunacy is an ironic act of subversion practiced by patriarchal discourse, which the novel primarily seeks to subvert. In an egoistic mania for possession, Edward

attempts to keep her only to himself by locking her away, yet Rhys shatters the image of the powerful, possessive patriarch who regards a woman as his property by making him unable to reach the clandestine and impenetrable core of her inner being. Rhys also counterattacks Brontë's portrayal of Antoinette as lunatic through her representation of Edward as a delusional character. Thus, Rhys contests the boundaries of sanity and insanity. In other words, she challenges the criteria, which label one lunatic.

Dominant Western discourse is argued to have valued and favored reason over human beings' equally legitimate desire to be enchanted by that which reason fails to explain, their wildly irrational tendencies and self-destructive sensibilities, viewing it as the ultimate truth. However, Edward comes to realize that the magic and the dream are true, disregarding the ultimate truth of the rational mind glorified by the Western discourse that colonizes the feminized other. Edward's association of the truth with the magical and the dreamy is also an ironic subversion. Thus, Rhys compels Edward to subvert his own European heritage.

Antoinette's burning of Thornfield Hall can be regarded as the female reaction by which the patriarchal captivity is subverted. She has already set herself free spiritually since Edward has been unable to get hold of the secret in her nature. By setting fire to the lord's estate, she puts an end to her physical incarceration by male dominance. In her dream, she discovers the hallucinatory mirror of her past through which she jumps to her death, which is a repudiation of the imprisonment by the patriarch, and which is a reclaiming of her independence. In her dream, she hears "the parrot call as he did when he saw a stranger" (Rhys 123). This reference to the parrot is of importance since the parrot symbolizes the spirit in the West Indian folk tales. Thus, her spirit is set free and she dissolves into immateriality even though it is through her physical death.

Through the legal bond of marriage, Mr. Rochester gains mastery over Antoinette "whose property is stolen, freedom is denied and sanity is forfeited" as O'Connor points out (153). Antoinette's entrapment in marriage subverts the so-called sacred institution of marriage glorified by religion as the holy union of the couple cemented by love, devotion and loyalty. However, Edward is neither in love with her nor faithful to her; he is just a fortune-seeking Englishman motivated into this marriage by his greed for material interests.

Conventional religious discourse elevates the reconciliation and union of the female

and the male in a heterosexual marriage. However, Rhys turns upside down this union idealized by religion by means of situating her female character and male character on opposite ends. The female and the male are unfamiliar with one another in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Both Edward and Antoinette view each other as a stranger due to "the unbridgeable gap of understanding which separates them" (Staley 103). Rhys also endows her two main characters with a psychological background, which isolates and detaches them from each other. Rhys metaphorically presents the Sargasso Sea as a wide gap between the dual forces of the female character and the male character, thus rendering their union impossible. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the story of the struggle and its failure "involved in the reconciliation of opposites when the opposites are two young people, curious about each other, and under the spell of the tropics" (Frickey 8). To emphasize the impossibility of their reconciliation, Rhys portrays Antoinette and Edward as psychologically incompatible. Dramatizing the battle between the dual forces of the orient and the occident, not as geographical locations, but as cultural constructions, *Wide Sargasso Sea* contests the association of the east with the body, the instinctual and the irrational, and the association of the west with the mind, the intellectual and the rational. Paradoxically, the West Indies is presented as the orient and represented by Antoinette, while England is presented as the occident and represented by Edward. The western and eastern duality lends itself to the mind and body duality, which gives way to the reason and intuition duality, which is built on the masculine and feminine duality. All these dualities work themselves into an all-encompassing frame predicated on the self and other conflict. Rhys, in tandem with postcolonial writing, forges a new discourse by deconstructing hierarchical binaries such as master and slave, center and periphery, civilized and savage, and self and other (Ball 3). Symbolized by a multitude of breasts, the ancient Hellenic goddess Cybele confronts the Nordic god Frey, embodied by a huge phallus. These oppositions are hard to reconcile due to the wide Sargasso Sea that cuts through them. These tensions are fleshed out in Edward and Antoinette's personalities and their psychological incompatibility.

Multiplicity of Narrative Voices and Subjectivity of Narration

Rhys creates "the unwritten history of creatures whom a previous author had invented" (Hearne 188) and foregrounds "the other side, the other truth" (Higdon 106).

Therefore, Rhys resorts to the postmodern techniques such as multiplicity of narratives and subjectivity of narration in order to demonstrate that there are as many narratives as characters, and each one is grounded in its own subjective perspective. Hence, she uses multiple narrators in her rewrite of *Jane Eyre* and juxtaposes narrative voices. Not only does she endow Antoinette with the power of speech, but she also allows Edward to articulate his own truth. Therefore, the narrative is split between two first-person narrators. *Wide Sargasso Sea* has three chapters; it begins and closes with Antoinette, but her narrative is intercepted by Edward's narrative. Rhys refrains from creating "a whole novel in the voice of the victim figure Antoinette" (Savory 80). The reader is able to gain insight into Edward's perspective, as well. Postmodernism contests the objectivity of the third-person omniscient narration. One of the most conspicuous features of postmodernism is that it favors the multiplicity of narrators and subjectivity in narration. According to McHale, a postmodern novel deploys strategies that foreground these questions: "What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (10). *Wide Sargasso Sea* displays what happens when Antoinette's world confronts Edward's world. Rhys demonstrates what occurs when two psychologically incompatible characters violate one another's boundaries.

Antoinette as a Subjective Narrator

In order to understand the confrontation between two distinct narrators and their personal accounts, and to realize how the postmodern element of multiplicity of narrative voices contributes to this confrontation, one should get to know these characters intimately by reading their subjective narratives closely. In her first-person narration, readers manage to familiarize themselves with Antoinette. Having her own narrative voice in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is able to articulate her own truth, which is suppressed by Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. The postmodern quality of *Wide Sargasso Sea* endows the female protagonist with an opportunity to announce her personal truth through her own perspective, which also demonstrates that truths are deemed to be perspectival and subjective in a postmodern novel. Her subjective account shows her as strongly attached to her mother. Their relationship is marked by "the lack of differentiation" which is

exasperated by Antoinette's emotional dependence on her mother (Fayad 226). However, Annette, her mother, does not answer Antoinette's intense love for her mother. Antoinette says that she detests the deep frown between her mother's black eyebrows that may have been cut with a knife, and that she wants to get rid of this cut: "once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her" (Rhys 5). She also says that her mother "flung me from her" and adds that she fell and hurt herself (Rhys 25). Emotionally disowned by her mother, Antoinette has nobody to love and to be loved by; she therefore searches for her mother, her maternal care and affection.

Antoinette is very fond of her mother; even their names are nested in one another, which is suggestive of the symbiotic union between the mother and the daughter that does not recognize any difference, especially the difference introduced into this dyad by the male third party. She has become very keen on her mother as they are marginalized as Creole women. As previous slave owners, their position becomes very ambiguous, especially after the Emancipation Act that has freed slaves. They are neither black nor white; because of this ambiguous situation, they do not belong to a social group entirely, which makes them alienated from themselves and which renders them precarious. Due to this uncertainty in their social position, the daughter, who feels insecure, becomes very dependent on the mother. Also, as her father is dead and she is raised by women, the male sex is unfamiliar to her. She feels insecure in the presence of a man as she has grown up in the feminine space of her mother, their black servant, Christophine, a substitute mother for Antoinette, her childhood friend, Tia, and another female servant called Amelie. The nightmare that she has prior to her marriage to Edward shows this fear:

> It is still night and I am walking towards the forest [...] I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't want to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself [...] He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred [...] I follow him, weeping [...] it trails in the dirt. (Rhys 34)

The dream that she relates is marked by both fear and desire. This erotic dream reveals her uneasiness about sexuality. She does not want to contaminate her white dress that stands for virginity. Besides, the snake that represents the phallus is repeated many times

throughout the novel, demonstrating her unfamiliarity with and fear of being engaged in a sexual encounter with a man. Antoinette's initial refusal of marriage to Edward also evinces her flight from sexuality. When he asks her why she does not want to marry him, she says, "I am afraid of what may happen" (Rhys 45). Later on, she marries him out of her need for protection and her sense of insecurity that results from two reasons, one personal, and the other social: their aforementioned ambiguous social position, and her mother's emotional distance from her as the mother loses her mental stability day by day. Before she is married to Edward, she sleeps with a stick next to her bed to protect herself. Yet, when she is married to him, she no longer needs the stick, which is another phallic image: "Once I used to sleep with a piece of wood by my side so that I could defend myself if I were attacked" (Rhys 42). Replacing the phallic stick with Edward's phallic power, she aims to protect herself against malignant outsiders, but, at this point, she does not realize he is an outsider, too. However, she comes to realize that he cannot save her, as he does not offer her love and affection that she has been seeking. Alienated and entrapped in Thornfield Hall, Antoinette disintegrates and her being begins unravelling; she wonders who she is, where her country is, and where she belongs. She looks for her other half, yet her other half is not Edward. Isolated in England, she misses home and her bosom friend Tia that represents home for her in a way. She feels alienated and incomplete in England. She is indulged in reminiscences about her childhood back home. Her other half may be Tia; they are symbolically united through their exchange of garments: Tia "had taken my dress [...] She had left me hers and I put it on" (Rhys 9). Tia also seems to be her mirror image; she says she will live with Tia, be like her and will never leave home. Tia, a black girl, embodies home for Antoinette, a Creole child. Their friendship shows that Antoinette is not a white child that is not allowed to socialize with black children, and her sense of being depends on her intimacy with Tia. However, at some point, they fall out. She relates how Tia threw a stone at her when they fell out:

> When I was close, I saw the stone in her hand but I did not see it throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking glass. (Rhys 23)

Antoinette romantically idealizes Tia, regarding her as a more powerful person. Her unconscious desire to be with her and to be her, emphasized by the image-doubling mirror, is shattered by Tia's throwing a stone at her. This "violent rupture" pulverizes Antoinette's identification with a black girl (Staley 104). Her intimate relationship with Tia is described in terms of mirror images foregrounding their likeness and especially Antoinette's need for

a similar image to hold on to. She becomes dependent on Tia as she becomes dependent on her mother. She clings to another person whom she considers to be more powerful than herself. However, her expectation to hold on to a mirror image, either through her mother or her friend, is frustrated. These two identifications are shattered despite Antoinette's attempts to merge herself with another person in whom she seeks her own likeness.

Disillusioned and crestfallen, Antoinette recedes into herself, as she is emotionally disowned by her mother, disclaimed by her supposed other half, and, later on, disregarded by her husband. Therefore, she places her object of love and desire in herself: "Long ago when I was a child and very lonely, I tried to kiss her [her own reflection on the mirror]. But the glass was between us, hard, cold and misted over with my breath" (Rhys 116). She harbors love for herself and seeks to shelter herself by her own affection for herself, yet she seems to be discontent as the hard and cold mirror does not allow for a perfect union. To recap, thanks to her subjective narrative, readers get to know Antoinette intimately and understand her psychological background that is intended to explain her motivations for her actions and decisions. The postmodern element of multiplicity of narrative voices provides the suppressed mad woman of *Jane Eyre* with a space to express herself and her personal truth.

Edward as a Subjective Narrator

In accordance with postmodernist fiction that offers multiple narratives, Rhys also offers insight into Edward's psyche, the disinherited second son's psychological background besides that of Antoinette to evince the psychological discord between the two. Rhys subverts patriarchal discourse by providing Bertha Mason with a voice; she is a victim of patriarchal and colonial narratives. Furthermore, Rhys is cognizant that Edward is also a victim of these narratives besides assuming the role of the oppressive patriarch. She "rises above any temptation to blacken Rochester in his turn" and "draws out hidden affinities between Antoinette and Edward" (Thorpe 176). Rhys examines the confrontation between "two whole worlds from both points of view – that of Antoinette and that of her husband" (Ramchand 186).

Patriarchy oppresses women, but it also victimizes men, especially men who fail or refuse to conform to the norms of patriarchy. Rhys creates "a complex portrait of the kind of severely emotionally damaged, upper-class Englishman who destroys a trusting young Caribbean woman" (Savory 80). He destroys Antoinette, yet he is, too, "a victim of England's implacable desire to raise upper-class men to make and keep money and take

no emotional risks" (Savory 81). Thus, Rhys does not only liberate Antoinette by giving her a fictional space, where she recounts her story through her subjective account, but she also offers the reader a valuable insight into the complex personality of Edward, an insight that Mr. Rochester of *Jane Eyre* would be terrified to unearth. Therefore, *Wide Sargasso Sea* manifests an essential component of postmodernism as it shows that there is no one version of truth, but a multiplicity of truths, and that the truth is perspectival. According to Brown, in the postmodern mode, the pivotal question is "no longer what the universal real, beautiful, or true is. Instead, the focus in on how reality and truth are constructed, both aesthetically and socially, in specific historical contexts" (135). The postmodernist promotion of the plurality of voices demonstrates how truth and reality are historically constructed. The coexistence of Antoinette and Edward's narratives attests to the postmodernist quality of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The narrative process is always partial and subjective, as Rhys' postmodern novel testifies. Nicol argues that narrators "select and interpret continually, deciding the order in which to place narrative events, how to describe them and the narrative world" (27). A postmodern novel lays bare the partiality of narrative. Therefore, both Antoinette and Edward are subjective narrators grounded in their version of reality. Postmodern ambivalence is substantiated in their divergent narratives. Readers are offered a bivalent narrative and provided with an opportunity to realize that truths are subjective, partial, constructed and provisional.

Contingency and Fluidity of Individual Identity

Hans Bertens maintains that the postmodern approach rejects "the transcendent truths that modernism was supposedly after" and favors "provisional, socially constructed truths" (10). For this reason, postmodernism contests essentialist and foundationalist centers of meaning. In response to modernism, postmodernism values the multiplicity of diverse points of view. Edward's narrative voice displays the postmodernist notion of contingency, the situatedness of the self and the instability of identities. Edward's truth presented in the second part of the novel is socially constructed, culturally shaped and historically informed. His version of reality is grounded in ideological narratives. As he is exposed to the diversity and plurality of cultural voices in the West Indies, his supposedly stable identity of an Englishman is shattered.

In tandem with the postmodernist element of *Wide Sargasso Sea* that offers multiple narrators and subjective narratives, Rhys offers an insight into Edward's psychological background. Through this personal account, readers have an opportunity to understand how Rhys deconstructs Mr. Rochester's patriarchal image. His subjective

narrative allows readers to see him as an insecure man. Edward appears to have experienced a solitary childhood. He is a young man embittered by the ill-treatment he has received from his father. In his relationship with Antoinette, he seems to fear losing his masculine power and be devoured by what he understands to be dark female sexuality. He fears being castrated by a giant uterus that is embodied by the Jamaican landscape and its dark, dense tropical forests that he associates with Antoinette in his psyche. Therefore, Antoinette is overwhelmingly beautiful and mysteriously menacing for him, and he associates the female body with the dark, deep, diabolical West Indian nature that threatens to obliterate him: "We pulled up and looked at the hills, the mountains and the blue-green sea [...] Not only wild, but menacing. Those hills would close in on you" (Rhys 39). The undomesticated and uncultivated nature menaces him. He is overpowered by the wild that threatens to inundate him and to engross him with the images of the wilderness that annihilates the distance between him and the external world (Rhys 39). He feels discomfort in an alien, malignant country and he views his wife as a stranger. For him, the wild feminine nature is fear-inducing and unfamiliar; he fails to keep the too redness or the too greenness of the uncivilized nature under control. The too nearness of everything renders him powerless and vulnerable against the overpowering nature and incapacitated to keep his distance. He feels insecure as a man as he associates this wild nature with dark female sexuality; he fears being annihilated by the devouring female sexuality. Too nearness is hazardous for an English man who wants to disentangle himself from the menacing wild. Antoinette's Medusa-like snaky hair that grows longer, ticker and darker is a concrete manifestation of the menacing wild and dark female sexuality that threaten to devour him. Hence, Edward turns their relationship into a power game as he dreads losing his masculine authority that the phallus confers on him. He renames his wife Bertha, which should be seen as colonial and patriarchal practice to oppress the colonized and keep them under control. He does not even like the fragrance of the flowers that Antoinette wears; their smell is, for him, dangerously intoxicating and overwhelmingly menacing. He fears being drugged into subjection. His lust for power becomes manifest in his decision to withdraw from sex with his wife. He feels disgusted and he vomits after he has had sex with Antoinette under the spell of the love potion prepared by Christophine. Edward is infuriated when Christophine offers him Bull's Blood to drink, which implies that he is not sexually potent. Their sexual relationship is associated with death. Edward views Antoinette as a *femme fatale*, which demonstrates how sexuality is linked with death and loss of power in his psyche. Edward says, "Very soon she was as eager for what's called loving as I was – more lost and drowned afterwards" (55). Edward imagines her to be a

succubus, as he fears that she feeds her insatiable desire off his body. The fear of being drowned in a sexual encounter evinces that death and sex border on one another in his mind: “I woke in the dark after dreaming that I was buried alive, and when I was awake, the feeling of suffocation persisted” (87). Her fierce desire is menacing for him. Antoinette and Edward seem to be psychologically incompatible for one another. Both are fragile, vulnerable and insecure, and they are unable to heal one another, as both are unloved by their parent as a child.

The conventional biblical discourse urges human beings to breed and cherishes the holy union of the two sexes as a potential source of recreation and regeneration required for the continuation of humankind. Nevertheless, Rhys initially presents the sexual union of Antoinette and Edward fruitless although they have been frequently engaged in sexual encounter. They do not breed and their union does to lead to regeneration. Furthermore, Rhys presents their sexual union as destructive and detrimental to their well-being. Rhys associates sex with death. Even the marks on Antoinette’s body after the sexual intercourse triggered by Christophine’s love potion demonstrate that sex is portrayed as destructive. Rhys expresses the idea that sexual desire and death “come very close in the darkness” (57). The following quote evinces the connection of sex with death and annihilation: “‘Say die and I will die’ said Antoinette. ‘Die then! Die!’ I watched her many times. In my way, not in hers. In sunlight, in shadow, by moonlight, by candlelight” (Rhys 55).

Rhys dwells upon the discrepancy between civilization and nature. For instance, this becomes manifest in the exchange of Antoinette and Edward’s views about their own countries. She asks whether it is true that England is “like a dream” and Edward replies that it is “precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream” (Rhys 47). In response to this, Antoinette asks him how rivers and mountains can be unreal, to which Edward responds by asking how millions of people, their houses and streets can be unreal (Rhys 47). It is argued that the Eurocentric discourse has regarded nature as incomplete and it has claimed that it needs to be completed by civilization. However, peoples who live in harmony with nature such as the West Indians value nature over civilization. Rhys subverts the European attribution of superiority to the civilized over the uncivilized by means of the ruins that Edward encounters when he is lost in the woods in Granbois. These ruins are the remnants of the early colonizers’ residential buildings, yet nature defeats the civilization that the first colonizers brought ashore from their continent. Moreover, Rhys contrasts the cold, remote, fear-inducing Thornfield Hall with the Eden-like archetypal garden of Coulibri, which once more contests the assumed ascendancy of

human civilization over nature. Rhys's lyrical description of the hauntingly beautiful, paradise-like landscape of the West Indies deconstructs Brontë's "hellish West Indies of fiery nights and hurricanes" as Howells points out (109). This incompatibility between these two characters is employed to stress "the crucially different formation of the Englishman and the West Indian woman" and to highlight "the irreconcilability of the two worlds" (Gregg 158). The confrontation between two narrative voices is a manifestation of the postmodern notion that truth is subjective and perspectival, and that individual identities are not fixed and unchanging, but they are volatile, unstable, fluid and contingent since they change as a result of the changing conditions and they are dependent on the situatedness of the characters whose lives fluctuate in response to the alterations in time and space.

Christophine as an Agent of Deconstruction

Besides Antoinette and Edward, whose own subjective truths are placed in confrontation, Christophine is another important instrumental character through whom Rhys subverts the European patriarchal and colonial discourse. She is portrayed as "a model of female independence and self-reliance for Antoinette" (Drake 197). She is also defined as "the native, female, individual Self who defies the demands of the discriminatory discourses impinging on her person" (Parry 248). Rhys presents her as the antagonistic force against patriarchal and imperial order. She unsettles the European codes in a self-confident and assertive way. She even distorts the language of the colonizer by means of intentionally speaking a wrong English. Her wrong English does not show her lack of intelligence as Antoinette points out that she has an uncanny power over several dialects. Christophine refuses to be signified by the colonizer as the embodiment of evil. Rhys deconstructs the European colonizer's association of evil with the colonized black people by means of endowing Christophine with the light of knowledge and wisdom; she is described as "the clearest head of all" (Staley 111). In the absence of Annette's love and affection for her daughter, Antoinette, Christophine acts as a substitute mother for Antoinette. A black servant comforts the white Creole girl, a descendant of a slave-owning colonizer family. This intimacy between the black servant and the white girl is a manifestation of the subversion of colonialism and imperialism.

In accordance with the postmodern elements of *Wide Sargasso Sea* that Rhys employs to deconstruct the image of the oppressed and the colonized, Christophine emerges as an emancipated black servant who can object to the imperialist order and has an autonomy of her own life. She is not obliged to stay with the Cosway family, but it is her

own free choice to live with them. Annette says that Christophine "stayed with me because she wanted to stay [...] I dare say we would have died if she'd turned against us" (Rhys 6). Although she is a black servant oppressed by the European colonizer, she aids the white colonizer family to survive through harsh conditions. As an indication of her independent character, she sets out to start her own life with her son, as she likes. As an antagonist of the patriarchal order, Christophine upsets the Western norms of marriage and monogamy. She announces that she has three children: "One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband" (Rhys 68). Her practice of polygamy outside the confines of marriage subverts the idealization of monogamy and marriage. Her self-reliant, emancipated image reverses the traditional image of women living in patriarchal communities.

The European colonial discourse defines the black people, especially black women, as irrational and unreasonable. Yet, Christophine is presented as the most reasonable, perceptive, dignified character in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She does not believe in the physical presence of England since she has not seen it before: "I never see the damn place. You think, is there such a place?" (Rhys 69). She consciously denies the existence of England, which is an act of non-signification, or erasure, of the colonizer by the colonized. Rhys also draws Christophine as a perceptive and wise character. She argues that "when men don't love you, more you try, more he hate you" (68), which shows her profound insight into human nature and her acquisition of folk wisdom. Her remarks are justified when Edward comes to detest Antoinette more than before. In order to subvert the distorted representation of the colonized by the colonizer, Rhys pictures Christophine as a pragmatic character. She knows that magic does not work when Antoinette seeks to regain Edward and to make him attached to her. Christophine sees through Edward with her "uncanny wisdom" (Staley 115). Christophine tells Antoinette to "pick up your skirt and walk out" because she knows that he will come after her if she does so (Rhys 67-68). Her attempt to dissuade Antoinette from continuing to stay with Edward is a blow she deals on patriarchal order. When Antoinette cannot summon up her courage to desert Edward, she tells her that "All women, all colors, nothing, but fools" (Rhys 68). Thus, she erases the difference between white women and colored women. Female solidarity brings all women together.

The Western colonial and imperial discourse attempts to christianise the black subjects of the colonies and to disassociate them from their African roots. However, Christophine is attached to her African past and she is not deprived of her ancestral roots by the colonizer. She may personify the Christian virtues of gentleness and tenderness, yet, beneath the christianised surface is concealed "another culture, another religion, the

memory of another continent, one that is cloaked in mystery and power" as O'Connor points out (163). It is this very mystery and power that Rochester realises and strives to conquer and control like the white colonizers. Yet he fails as he confesses that he is unable to grasp the secret of Antoinette's inner being.

Christophine subverts patriarchal ideology by means of mocking Edward's insufficiency and uncertainty of his masculinity (which this paper has already discussed above). He is unsure of his masculinity and unable to master Antoinette by using his male prowess. He feels intimidated and sexually belittled by Christophine who offers him "Bull's Blood," which symbolically undermines his male power by suggesting that he needs to boost his sexual potency with an extra stimulator. Christophine's dark voice hypnotizes Edward and "forces him into an echo chamber where he is violator and thief" (Kloepfer 42). In his confrontation with Christophine, Edward is silenced by her self-confident and self-assertive stance, so his patriarchal authority diminishes since silence means weakness in a power relationship. However, he cannot silence his inner thoughts, which demonstrates that he suffers from pangs of conscience. Christophine blames Edward for having got married to Antoinette solely for the sake of commercial interests. This accusation is another striking blow on Edward, since it reminds him that he has been sold by his father, bought by his wife, and thus commodified. As Christophine humiliates Edward and thus silences him, she gains total control over the dialogue. She asserts that he makes love to Antoinette until "she drunk with it, no rum could make her drunk like that that she can't do without it" and she adds that he wants to break her up, annihilate her (98). He has gained mastery over Antoinette through the fierce play of love and pure lust. Christophine argues that Edward tries to drive his wife into madness so that he could have all her money and property. Thus, Christophine counterattacks the colonizer by making his colonial ambitions no longer a secret.

In terms of the duality of the body and mind, the former is conventionally associated with black people with their muscular and strong bodies in service of the white colonizer. On the other hand, the latter is attributed to the powerful colonizer who is asserted to have a long history of civilization, cultivation, intellectual and cultural capital that he inherits from his European ancestry. At first, Edward may be seen as the embodiment of the mind since he appears to be a speculative, reflective character and broods upon the mystery of nature in a contemplative way to find out its secret. However, Christophine reduces Edward to the state of the body through her love potion, which makes him desire to sleep with two women consecutively, although he seeks to refrain from sexuality. Thus, Rhys

turns upside down the imperial and colonial order by means of shifting the signifier to the position of the signified.

Rhys subverts the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, and reverses the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed. Initially, the colonizer is colonized by the colonized through a mob of ex-slaves who burn down the Mason Estate. Tia's stealing Antoinette's clothes and cheating her out of her gold coins reverses the position of the dispossessed who has been exploited by the colonizer. Annette's being sexually abused by the black man who is in charge of Annette is an indication that the white oppressor is now sexually molested by the colonize; Antoinette says that the black keep lifts Annette up "out of the chair and kiss her" and she sees his mouth fastening on hers (86). Through this reversal of roles, Rhys stresses the fact that "people are turned cruel by cruelty, unjust by injustice" as Carole Angier points out (153). Before having been exposed to their ruthlessness, Annette remarks that the blacks "can be cruel and dangerous for reasons you wouldn't understand" (Rhys 37). Annette's remarks echo Rhys' approach to the violent acts of the ex-slaves.

Rhys subverts the European view of the black people through Antoinette's defense of Christophine against Edward, who humiliates Christophine because he finds her filthy; he says that she may "hold her dress up" as it "must get very dirty, yards of it trailing on the floor" (Rhys 50). In reply to this, Annette defends her: "when they don't hold their dress up it's for respect" (Rhys 50). Edward also blames Christophine for slothfulness: "she looks so lazy" (Rhys 50). Antoinette argues that Christophine appears to be slow, yet "every move she makes is right so it's quick in the end" (Rhys 51). This also shows that Antoinette's intimacy with Christophine subverts the colonial discourse that dictates the detachment of the white people from the black people. Moreover, for Antoinette, black is warm and gay while white is cold and sad. Rhys twists power relations in such a way that the colonizer is colonized by the colonizer as well. For instance, Antoinette, as a member of a colonizer family, is colonized by Edward, the embodiment of colonialism. Her property is stolen by him, and her freedom is shattered by him, and her sanity is forfeited by him. Furthermore, Edward assumes the role of the colonizer-oppressor by imprisoning Antoinette in an attic. Yet, ironically, Edward, as the colonizer of Antoinette, is colonized by his father. He has been deceived, sold and thus objectified by his father. Hence, Rhys reverses the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The European colonial and imperial discourse forces the colonial subjects into a hybridization of identity; they are deprived of their African heritage, but they are never

given a British identity, either. Therefore, they are stuck in a limbo and experience identity crisis. Yet, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the white Creole family are in danger of disintegration of identity since they inhabit the positions of self and other at once. They embody what Du Bois calls "double consciousness" since their identities are hyphenated and they have internalized the otherness of the other and their perspective (2-3). They suffer from their hyphenated identity as they are neither accepted as British by the British nor as West Indian by the blacks. Thus, Annette and Antoinette experience a state of in-between-ness, which becomes manifest in the phrase "white nigger" (Rhys 8). They turn out to be the outcast colonizers who are "marooned" in the West Indies as Annette points out (Rhys 8). As a white nigger, Antoinette lives in "a condition of limbo" (Simpson 114). Besides, Antoinette comes to think, "black nigger is better than white nigger" because black people try to pull themselves up and to assemble the fragmented parts of their identity after the Emancipation Act. Hence, Rhys once more subverts the European colonial discourse through this reversal of roles. Inhabiting this limbo between identities, Antoinette embodies a multi-positionality that suggests "an interchangeability of racial positions" (Erwin 208).

Conclusion

Jean Rhys revisits *Jane Eyre* and subverts the canonical nineteenth-century novel by "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" as Rich notes (369). Thus, she achieves "a task of postcolonial demythologization" (Konzett 131). Rhys fashions "a colonial story that is absent from Bronte's text" (Cappello 49). *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a novel that instantiates several postmodern features by means of which patriarchal and colonial narratives are contested. It is a multidimensional novel, in which Rhys deconstructs the Western overlapping discourses of patriarchy and colonialism. Via a complex amalgamation of diversified voices, all personal relations collapse into one another through reversal and subversion. By means of Antoinette, Edward and Christophine, Rhys subverts the established codes of the European colonial and patriarchal discourse. In the perpetually widening gyre of deconstructions and subversions, the crosscurrents of the maternal topography of the West Indies and the paternal legacy of Britain, and the concentric circles of the mysterious territory of Christophine, and the feminine psyche of Antoinette challenge Edward and turn upside down his position. Antoinette is endowed with a narrative voice and the power of speech and she is able to express her own personal truth in her subjective narration. *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a postmodern novel demonstrates that a text is always an inter-text,

interacting with other narratives from different times and spaces, and displays that grand narratives constructed and glorified by the imperial, oppressive colonizer could be deconstructed thanks to the deconstructive power of the oppressed and the silenced. The postmodern perspective that pervades this novel subverts the alleged objectivity of third-person narration by means of employing double narrators and thereby showing that narratives are subjective, truth is perspectival, and identities are contingent and fluid. Therefore, this paper has found that *Wide Sargasso Sea* stretches the boundaries of modernism and antedates postmodernism, blazing the trail for the postmodernist novels of the 1970s and 1980s.

WORKS CITED

Abel, Sarah, George Tyson, and Gisli Palsson. (2019) "From Enslavement to Emancipation: Naming Practices in the Danish West Indies." Comparative Studies in Society and History 61.2 (2019): 332-365. Web. 10 May 2023.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Orlando: Harcourt Brake College Pub., 1999.

Angier, Carol. *Jean Rhys: Life and Work*. Boston: Little Brown Company, 1990.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. 2nd Edition. London, New York: Routledge, 2002 (1989).

Ball, J.C. *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Bertens, Hans. "The Debate on Postmodernism." *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice.* Eds. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996. 3-14.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London, New York: Routledge, 1994.

Brown, Richard Harvey. "Realism and Power in Aesthetic Representation." *Postmodern Representations: Truth, Power and Mimesis in the Human Sciences*. Ed. Richard Harvey Brown. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1995. 134-67.

Cappello, S. (2009). "Postcolonial Discourse in *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Creole Discourse vs. European Discourse, Periphery vs. Center, and Marginalized People vs. White Supremacy." Journal of Caribbean Literatures, 6.1 (2009): 47-54. Web. 10 April 2023.

Carson, Rachel L. "The Sargasso Sea." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 117-119.

Drake, Sandra. "Race and Caribbean Culture as Thematics of Liberation in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 193-206.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover P, 1994 (1903).

Emery, Mary Lou. *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

Emery, Mary Lou. "Modernist Crosscurrents." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 161-173.

Erwin, Lee. "History and Narrative in Wide Sargasso Sea." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 207-216.

Fayad, Mona. "Unquiet Ghosts: The Struggle for Representation in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Ed. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 225-240.

Ford, Madox Ford. "Preface" to Jean Rhys' *The Left Bank*" London: Jonathan Cape, 1927.

Frickey, Pierrette M. *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys*. New York: Three Continents Press, 1990.

Gregg, Veronica M. "Symbolic Imagery and Mirroring Techniques in *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Critical Perspectives*. Pierre M. Frickly. USA: Three Continents, 2006. 159-165.

Harris, Wilson. "Carnival of Psyche: Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea.*"*Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 188-193.

Hassan, Ihab. "Beyond Postmodernism? Theory, Sense, and Pragmatism." *Making Sense: The Role of the Reader in Contemporary American Fiction*. Ed. Gerhard Hoffman. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1989. 306-327.

Hearne, John. “The Wide Sargasso Sea: A West Indian Reflection.” *Critical Perspectives*. Pierre M. Frickley. USA: Three Continents, 2006. 183-193.

Herischian, Nazila. "Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a hypertext of Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*: A Postmodern perspective." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 1.6 (2012): 72-82.

Higdon, David L. *Shadows of Past in Contemporary British Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985.

Howells, Carol Ann. “The Madwoman Comes out of the Attic.” *Key Women Writers*. Harvester Wheatsted, 1991.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Ibsch, Elrud. “The Refutation of Truth Claims.” *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*. Eds. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996. 265-72.

Jamoussi, Zouheir. *Primogeniture and Entail in England: A Survey of Their History and Representation in Literature*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2011.

Kennedy, David. “‘Just the Facts, Just the’: A Rough Guide to British Postmodernism.” *New Relations: The Refashioning of British Poetry 1980-1994*. Ed. David Kennedy. Wales: Seren, 1996. 79-119.

Kimmey, Deborah A. "Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: Metatextuality and the Politics of Reading in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Women’s Studies* 34.2 (2005): 113-131.

Kleopfer, Deborah K. *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H. D.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Konzett, Delia Caparoso. *Ethnic Modernisms*. New York, N. Y. and Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Kristeva, Julia. “Word, Dialogue and Novel.” *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Kurt, Zeynep Yılmaz. “Secretive Truth of the ‘Other Side’ in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.” *Çankaya Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 12 (2009): 201-

210.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction. New York*: Methuen, 1987.

Mishra, Vijay and Bob Hodge. "What is Post(-)colonialism?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman. New York: Harvester Wheat Sheaf, 1994.

Nicol, Bran. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.

O'Connor, Teresa F. *The West Indian Novels*. New York: New York UP, 1986.

Parry, Benita. "Two Narrative Voices in *Wide Sargasso Sea.*" *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 247-250.

Raiskin, Judith L. *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Ramchand, Kenneth. "The Place of Jean Rhys and *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 181-188.

Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken." *Feminisms: A Reader*. Maggie Humm. Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. England: Clays Ltd., 1966.

Rody, Caroline. "Burning Down the House: The Revisionary Paradigm of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 127-225.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin P, 1995 (1978).

Savory, Elaine. *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own, British Women Novelists from Brontë to*

Lessing. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977.

Simpson, Anne B. *Territories of the Psyche: The Fiction of Jean Rhys*. New York, N.Y. and Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Smith, R. McClure. "'I Don't Dream about It Any More': The Textual Unconscious in Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea"." *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26.2 (1996): 113-136.

Spivak, Gayatri C. "Three Women's Texts and A Critique of Imperialism." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, MA:Blackwell P, 1988. 838-851.

Staley, Thomas F. *Jean Rhys: A Critical Study*. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Tekin, İ. B. "*Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* Reconcile at "The Third Space." *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*. 7.14 (2017): 120-129. Web. 20 May 2023.

Thorpe, Michael. "'The Other Side': *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 173-181.

Wilson, Sharon. "Bluebeard's Forbidden Room in Rhys's Post-Colonial MetaFairy Tale, "Wide Sargasso Sea"." *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* 3.3 (2003): 111-122.

Wyndham, Francis. "Introduction." *Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea: Backgrounds, Criticism*. Judith L. Raiskin. New York, London: Norton and Company, 1999. 3-7.