

Wide Sargasso Sea: Antoinette's Living Spaces as a Case Study

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This study explores the identity formation and mobility of the role of Antoinette in the novel "Wide Sargasso Sea" from the perspective of the cultural and human geography. In general, it is a space and place study. The thesis suggests that, Antoinette has some conditions and circumstances that she developed in an autonomic manner with different experiences in order to navigate and recognize the dangerous and safe spaces around her. Wide Sargasso Sea, by Jean Rhys, elaborates a self-sacrifice experience that the protagonist went through in her search for identity, which she lost due to the circumstances around her. In this research, a psychological analysis of Antoinette's personality will be taken, moreover; an attempt is made to find out the reasons for her schizophrenic behavior. The research focuses on Antoinette's shattered identity and the specters she faced in her life, which ultimately played a huge role in her madness. Also, the visible opposite aspects of black/white, rationality/unconsciousness, male/female, and sanity/madness are conceived by her conscious mind, and it causes the frantic thoughts of insanity, womanhood, and blackness. Also, it sheds light on Antoinette's journey in life to figure out where she belongs and her struggle in this search. Antoinette's personality and identity crisis as a Creole girl will be discussed in depth. There are different areas that are explored in this paper; such as the interpretation of how the surrounding spaces affect Antoinette and the reasons behind the absence of a loving mother in Wide Sargasso Sea. Furthermore, Rochester's character is also examined to find out how the masculine space differs from feminine space, and to what extent Mr. Rochester's cruelty harms Antoinette. Another important thing that is discussed in the paper is the effect of family relationships on a person's identity, and how it becomes a reason of mental disorder.

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Wide Sargasso Sea: Antoinette's Living Spaces as a Case Study

By

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A Non-thesis Paper Submitted to the Department of English
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Advisor

Dr. Farhadiba Hashmatullah Khan

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in English Literature.

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that where the material is obtained from published or unpublished works, this has been fully acknowledged in the references.

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Wide Sargasso Sea: Antoinette's Living Spaces as a Case Study

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Has been approved for the Department of English Language and its Literature

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The final copy of this paper has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet the acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Abstract

This study explores the identity formation and mobility of the role of Antoinette in the novel "*Wide Sargasso Sea*" from the perspective of the cultural and human geography. In general, it is a space and place study. The thesis suggests that, Antoinette has some conditions and circumstances that she developed in an autonomic manner with different experiences in order to navigate and recognize the dangerous and safe spaces around her. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, by Jean Rhys, elaborates a self-sacrifice experience that the protagonist went through in her search for identity, which she lost due to the circumstances around her. In this research, a psychological analysis of Antoinette's personality will be taken, moreover; an attempt is made to find out the reasons for her schizophrenic behavior. The research focuses on Antoinette's shattered identity and the specters she faced in her life, which ultimately played a huge role in her madness. Also, the visible opposite aspects of black/white, rationality/unconsciousness, male/female, and sanity/madness are conceived by her conscious mind, and it causes the frantic thoughts of insanity, womanhood, and blackness. Also, it sheds light on Antoinette's journey in life to figure out where she belongs and her struggle in this search. Antoinette's personality and identity crisis as a Creole girl will be discussed in depth. There are different areas that are explored in this paper; such as the interpretation of how the surrounding spaces affect Antoinette and the reasons behind the absence of a loving mother in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Furthermore, Rochester's character is also examined to find out how the masculine space differs from feminine space, and to what extent Mr. Rochester's cruelty harms Antoinette. Another important thing that is discussed in the paper is the effect of family relationships on a person's identity, and how it becomes a reason of mental disorder.

Key words: *Spaces, Schizophrenic behavior, Madness, Identity, Black, White.*

Introduction

Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) is a novel by Jean Rhys. It is written in postcolonial era and is a prequel to a famous novel "*Jane Eyre*" (1847) by Charlotte Brontë. The novel is focused on the reinvention of Rochester's wife Bertha Mason's identity. The motivation to write the novel was to clear some misrepresentations in the novel as Rhys thought Bronte showed a wrong image of both Creole women and of West Indies. In fact, Rhys wanted to write the story of the Creole girls lost to England, the young Creole women who were married off to Europeans, torn from the people and the land they loved, and reduced to mere property. In 1966, Rhys wrote to a friend, Diana Athill, regarding this portrayal of the world Bronte, in her novel, presents: "Of course Charlotte Bronte makes her own world, of course, she convinces you, and that makes the poor Creole lunatic all the more dreadful. I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read [*Jane Eyre*] rather annoyed. "That's only one side-the English side" sort of thing" (296).

The novel attempts to create a history of Antoinette, showing the causes for her crazy behavior that is presented in *Jane Eyre*. The novel claims subjectivity and voice for the character in order to address the assumptions that were made in the previously written text. Rhys showed the tragic condition of Bertha to understand the reasons behind Antoinette's anguish.

The novel is about a number of significant areas of discussion like feminism, race, gender and post-colonialism. The central focus is the female character, with a shattered psychology which is a consequence of having lost her identity and life because of the circumstances around her. According to Olaussen, the main theme of the novel is "The fate of a woman, belonging to a group, which no longer has a place" (66). The sufferings of Antoinette in the novel are great and are the reason why she lost her identity in the two worlds; she is a Creole, a person of European descent born in the Caribbean.

In the whole novel, Antoinette's relationships with other people are marked by exclusion, alienation, and brutality. As a result, she undergoes an inconsistent search for peace in the surrounding circumstances. As a young girl, she tried her best to find peace under the care of her mother, but the rejection, especially from the person closest to her, made her a silent and lonely person. Moreover, she saw her home burned to the ground by a group of previously

disenfranchised slaves and witnessed her mother going crazy as a consequence. Antoinette, failed to find a safe haven to protect her from the discrimination she faced in her life. She was excluded and treated as an outsider, which made her choose the wrong man to spend the rest of her life with. She married an English man, a complete stranger, who married her only for financial advantage. From initial conditions like facing troubles at her honeymoon to later being locked by her husband in the attic affected her mental and emotional health, which leaves suicide as her only escape.

Surrounded by such devastated spaces in her life Antoinette fights to be safe, however; all her attempts fail and eventually, she falls apart. In this research, I have divided her surrounding spaces into two spaces: outside space and inside space. The outside space includes her sufferings with the outside world; the emancipation act and its effect on her and her family, the rage of the blacks which leads them to burn Antoinette's house, her friendship with Tia and her rejection of Antoinette, and finally, the English law that gave the husband the right to take all the properties of his wife. The inside space, on the other hand, contains the inside world (home): a child who grew up without a loving mother, the injustice of a mother preferring one child over another, and finally, a relative who tells a previous history of mental illness to her husband. These were the spaces that affected her mental and physical health and eventually led to her madness.

Moreover, the novel is an excellent reflection of a hybrid person, "Antoinette" who is of European descent but born in the Caribbean. In her community, she is considered neither black nor white, she is a stranger, who has no right to live in the black society and is not even recognized as a white European. In fact, she is in-between two worlds and two cultures which culminated in the struggle of all her life. Homi Bhabha discusses this in-between situation, "We find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha 1). This kind of living, in-between multiple identities, leads to a form of hybridity, an ambivalent state of mind where there is no longer a particular place or home, but mixed feelings over the fact that nothing is stable anymore. This hybridity in the novel makes it the most problematic novel by Jean Rhys. It unfolds intense passions and fears; it also reveals the psychological complications of the author. In fact, it shows the inner, disturbing conflicts of the author which is extended in all of her heroines i.e. Julia Martin, Anna Morgan, and Sasha Jansen. Antoinette, as the protagonist of this novel, has some similarities with Rhys; they both face racial discrimination based on their mixed race.

Antoinette is discriminated against because her mother is of Martinique ethnicity, and her father was a white slave-owning Englishman. Rhys, on the other hand, was born to a Welsh father and a Creole mother, a white native of the West Indies. The author's experiences with discrimination are discussed in her short story "*The Day They Burned the Books*," in which she states, "My relations with the few 'real' English boys and girls I had met were awkward. I had discovered that if I called myself English they would snub me haughtily: 'You're not English; you're a horrid colonial'" (39). It is exactly this discrimination that resulted in Antoinette's mental conflict and personality split, which she faces and attempts to solve. Thus, the parallels between the author and the protagonist are quite detailed in the novel which include: a troubled childhood, spatial sensitivity, and a struggle to search for their identity in the society. The haunting memories of these past experiences disturb the mental health of the protagonist.

The novel is mainly divided into three main sections that are narrated by Antoinette (twice) and Rochester. These parts, with two different narrators, give the protagonists the chance to express their own views and ideas in the novel. Consequently, the facts are presented from both perspectives.

Nevertheless, much space in the novel is given to the negative characters which show Rochester also had complications in his personality. Rochester's behavior and attitudes all along with other complications made him an interesting character. This can be seen through his unsent letters to his father. Likewise, his description of his wife at the very beginning of their marriage reflects his complex character:

She never blinks at all, it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she maybe, but they are not English or European either. And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette? After we left Spanish Town, I suppose. Or did I notice it before and refuse to admit what I saw? Not that I had much time to notice anything. I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever. (Rhys 61).

Rochester's description of his wife makes us, as readers, not only suspect his love for her, but also notice his uncertainty, from the beginning of their marriage, about her origin "Creole of pure English descent she maybe, but..." (Rhys 61). In addition to this, the author is successful in portraying the view that both of the genders were equally suppressed. On one hand, we have Antoinette, who tired of enduring racial discrimination, ends up marrying a

total stranger just to escape from what she faced early in her life. On the other hand, we have Rochester, who was forced into this marriage by his father in order to own a fortune as dowry.

In the novel, there are conflicts shown between men and women, whites and blacks, and colonized and colonists. The reasons behind them are traced to the conflict of the two main opposite forces: emotion and reason. Sentimentality and rationality have always been trying to knock each other down but without result. These forces are shown in the context of different images and themes in the novel, so the problems of gender suppression also show other abstract problems. Reason and emotion are on the battle lines that clash with the brain of Antoinette, so the importance of outer stress indicates the impact on the mental condition of the protagonist. Antoinette carries two contrasting worlds and aspects in her personality; more precisely, it can be said that her mind and thoughts are stuck between the two opposite worlds, and she belongs to neither of them completely.

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 I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (Rhys 93)

Her response to what Amelie sang in front of Rochester was severe. Consequently, Antoinette is stuck in her memories, and she keeps recalling all the bad things that happened to her. Even when she is trying her best to find a suitable place in either of the cultures, she is rejected by both these worlds, and realizes that she actually belongs nowhere. This is because her personality imbibed a mixture of ideas; about the blacks and their life and her imaginary ideas about the whites. However, these ideas are not recognized by any of the nations she was willing to fit in.

In fact, the title of the novel suggests the situation of the protagonist, i.e. drowning in the sea of identity and not being able to reach either of the shores on the two sides of the sea (Shapiro 686). The Sargasso Sea, present between the Europe and the Caribbean, is too wide for the protagonist to cross, so she remains stuck in the middle, just as a ship gets stuck in the shallow water. In the novel, much attention is given to the eternal issues of gender, race, and colonial politics. In this research, focus is given to the psychological relevance of these matters, including the reasons behind the protagonist's torments. However, to bring out the miseries and sufferings of Antoinette, a contrast is made with the character of Rochester, who

also had factors that complicated many things for him and became the reasons for his paranoid behavior.

Rhys voices up for the Creole woman in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and actually creolizes *Jane Eyre* and tells Jane's story from a different racial context. Rhys provides a comprehensive background to Antoinette's portrayal as the protagonist of the novel having a history and a voice. The story of *Wide Sargasso Sea* interprets the character of Bertha from *Jane Eyre* with a different lens.

The narration of the protagonist's childhood experiences, as well as the experience of her unhappy marriage with Rochester, give an explanation of her final act of rebellion in the novel *Jane Eyre*. *Wide Sargasso Sea* didn't simply negate *Jane Eyre*, but it also overly directed the reader's mind to the present text in every scene and event. The discriminations, rejection, and struggle with identity that Antoinette faces in her life resulted in the production of the isolated and raving mad woman called Bertha in *Jane Eyre*.

Identity Crisis of the Creole Woman

In the first part of the novel, Antoinette thinks of the idea of having a socially acceptable personality and identity as she put her brother into bed. She is plagued with the desire to create her own personality and identity in the face of racial and cultural rejection. As a Creole lady residing in the English community of Jamaica, she learns English quickly, but the Caribbean community considers her a foreigner. She faces disgrace from both societies and is rejected by both cultures. According to Settineri, there is social ostracism, negative verbal labeling, and many restrictions by law for Creole women (49). Furthermore, the society is dominated by male colonizers who don't recognize the identity of Creole women. This creates a complete class of people that is superior but is also a threat to cultural norms of gender and race as posed by individuals like Antoinette who don't have any defined identity.

Overall, Rhys's portrayal of the protagonist is the classic way of showing how a woman descends into madness to escape a male dominated society. Therefore, the novel is normally defined as a reconceptualization of every notion of identity. There is a conversation between Antoinette and Rochester where she said, "So between you, I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (Rhys 93). She hereby in the conversation shows the uncertainty of the cultural identity and the feeling of being a stranger or foreigner. According to Loomba, this is the feeling that is generally felt by West Indians (195). Hence, the novel gives the reader an understanding of the complex and mostly conflicting characters that are imposed on the Creoles and especially the Creole women by the communities where they belong and the resulting split personality. In the novel, there is a great male imperialist struggling to remove all the areas of identity in Antoinette, but the author created a new idea of self-realization in the protagonist as she accepts her complex personality.

According to Sylive Maurel's article, "Across the 'Wide Sargasso Sea': Jean Rhys's Revision of Charlotte Brontë's Eurocentric Gothic", Antoinette is classified as a Creole. Her classification as a mixed person of European white and Caribbean black race shows a major aspect of her personality as she gets a complex social idea and impact with regards to her identity. Antoinette lives with her family in a black community in Jamaica, but they have faced racial discrimination and are disgraced by the black people who are in the majority

after Britain's Act of Emancipation gave freedom to the colonial slaves. The Cosways previously depended on the labor of slaves, and it was a source of wealth that vanished after the slaves were freed. Their reputation vanished, and the social status also was affected negatively, which created the main problem of the racial discrimination and revenge. Antoinette faced a number of incidents of violence and black slander against the family, where they were called "white niggers and white cockroaches" by the black mobs that burned the estate at Coulibri. The protagonist has been rejected by the culture in which she was raised, and she started suspecting her right to claim the island that was the only home she ever had and was the only identity she had. She also conveyed these feelings of desperation and doubts to Rochester: "I loved [the island] because I had nothing else to love, but it is as indifferent as this God you call on so often" (Rhys 78).

This is the way in which the Creole experience rejection by the black community where they belong, and are treated as foreigners by the white European part of the community, which they are also part of. Moreover, the European people have the wealth and political power over the Caribbean society. The white colonizers are not able to comprehend the culture and way of life of Creoles, and a discriminated stereotype was created for the people with mixed racial identity. They are treated inferiorly than other people of pure race on both sides. An instance of this extreme culture limitation between the Creole and whites is present in their attitude toward the native black people on the island. For example, Rochester's response of anger at the time of Antoinette's display of physical affection for the black people like Christophine shows the persuasive European brain of seeing these races as just objects and not like human beings. Rochester narrates this part: "Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?" I'd say, "Why not?". "I wouldn't hug and kiss them." I'd say, I couldn't." At this, she'd laugh for a long time and never tell me why she laughed" (Rhys 83).

Antoinette was raised like a number of black people, and she regards Christophine as a member of her family. It is very obvious for her to kiss and hug her with no regards to her race. At the end, she was imprisoned in the dark at Thornfield hall, and during this time, she received the effects of her island, and Christophine's preaching with feminist ideas provided her the much needed strength. It is evident in Christophine's words to her: "Have spunks and do battle for yourself" (Rhys 105). According to Sakina Elouardi, Christophine was a model and idol of female independence and freedom for Antoinette as she was self-sufficient and devoted to her independent self, which gave her a deep sense of self-reliance (32). Social

discrimination like this also makes Antoinette feel rejected by the white people and hence stopped her from feeling like a part of that race. When she is rejected as a Creole, from the white and black colonizers, she faces a complex realization of her personality that impacts her own sense of building her personality. An extreme social influence can be seen in Antoinette's first words from her narrative "They Say," which shows the society and her lack of self can grow with no independence in society's idea of Creole people.

The protagonist is highly desperate and upset. To get socially accepted, she went from trying to fit in the society in the role of a Caribbean native and then as an English white girl. She also adapts the characters of the people she has a relationship with, like her black friend, Tia, where she adopted different black characteristics during the friendship. She is called a "white nigger," which makes her mother realize how she is constantly trying to associate with the whites. This leads to her mother's engagement to a white man known as Mr. Mason. When Mr. Mason becomes her stepfather, Antoinette tries to reclaim her black identity and calls him the white puppy, which is a term that black slaves of Jamaican society use to refer to their masters. This attempt shows Antoinette's desire to be recognized as black. It also shows the idea of bondage under the white patriarchal system as symbolized by the character of Mr. Mason. This is not the only incident where Antoinette tries to reclaim other identity. Like her mother, Antoinette tries to claim a white identity but fails as she never gains the acceptance of the white society.

When she gets married to a white Englishman, Mr. Rochester, she starts feeling love towards him. She acquires more and more English characteristics like her dependence on men and her reluctance to leave Mr. Rochester as she says: "But I cannot go. He is my husband after all" (Rhys 99). Kaitlin Gangl illustrates Antoinette's dependence on Rochester: "Antoinette is financially, physically, and emotionally dependent on Rochester and she is somewhat insecure with this dependence because since he provides it, he also has the power to take it away" (Gangl 60). Antoinette also reveals her deep love and desire for Rochester to Christophine, and she wanted him to accept her. This desire made her ask her black nurse to make her wish come true even with the help of an Obeah magic potion.

Antoinette wanted to use the magic to complete her identity with England and whiteness. In fact, she wanted to earn the identity this way by making her husband desire her. However, the magic failed at creating the desired effects, so Antoinette was left with no other option

than recognizing her non-blackness and non-whiteness. She figured out that she has to accept her personality that doesn't belong to either world she knows.

According to Tennholt, the community affects the development of the protagonist's identity and personality, and that is in Rochester's cruel treatment of Antoinette. All he wanted was control over her. When Rochester reached Jamaica, he found the island to be a beautiful but alien place, and thus does he describe Antoinette. However, this creates a feeling of uneasiness in him. He gets the idea of powerlessness in an alien land that hurts his dominant white man's feelings (16). So, he feels threatened by the wild nature of the place and also by Antoinette's nature and thus wants to control them. He gets a reminder that white men are not the ultimate masters of the world, and that is why he wants to embody them in a form that he can easily handle. He wants to make Antoinette resemble an English woman and hides her Creole personality by giving her a new name, Bertha. In this way, Rochester gives himself the right to remove her identity, and this is the first spark that leads to her schizophrenic behavior.

Rochester wants to have control over her and calls her a ghost, a doll, a witch, hysteric, and temptress, etc. He does this to overcome his own insecurities, as he feels threatened by the unfamiliar culture of the Caribbean. Antoinette resists British society's attempt to remove her identity as a Creole woman and finally finds a safe sense of self at the end of the story. She frees herself from the limiting labels and the rejection of society that she has had to deal with all her life. The author used a number of images in the story to show the protagonist's internal efforts and changes, which help her to realize her own self with no regard to gender and cultural stereotypes. For instance, the looking glass motif is the most important motif of all in the novel. This motif can be seen at different points in the novel and shows different situations of the protagonist and her family. As a matter of fact, Antoinette inherited from her mother the habit of looking in the mirror. She noticed her mother look to the looking glass every now and then. She narrates this in the first part: "But my mother still planned and hoped perhaps she had to hope every time she passed a looking glass" (Rhys 16). Antoinette, also, misses this looking glass in her dormitory. "We have no looking-glass in the dormitory, once I saw the new young nun from Ireland looking at herself in a cask of water" (Rhys 50). Finally, in the cold attic, she longs to see how she looks "There is no looking glass here and I don't know what I am like now." (Rhys 162).

Women were successfully subjugated by the European patriarchal society by controlling the way in which they were viewed. This also helped to maintain the status quo. Similar idea is used in showing the image of Annette by Rhys. She was also a Creole, and despite the continuous attempts to abide by the standards of white society, she became enslaved to the system of white supremacy and patriarchy. In the start, as stated by Phelps regarding Antoinette and the position of her family, “This label of her family being crazy, that is justified by her mother's actions, eventually destroys the only happiness Antoinette obtains in her life, her marriage” (7). However, Antoinette describes her mother as a person who hopes and plans to have a better life, and this is emphasized when Annette sees a looking glass as it shows the norm of the society in which she must depend on men for her identity and personality recognition. Annette keeps on seeking a mirror that can decide her secure future, and she tries to reintegrate into the society with the help of marriage to an English man, Mr. Mason. Annette had a split personality, and with the reflection of the mirror, she could realize what her real persona was like.

Annette behaved quite relentlessly with her daughter, and when Antoinette grew older and faced the same system, she realized the catastrophe that her mother underwent. She encounters the same restrictions and cruel system of patriarchy; in particular, her experience of an arranged marriage and the loss of her inheritance traumatizes her. Nonetheless, unlike her mother, she is brave and deals with the issue with the intent to solve the enigma of her personality. She doesn't just give in to what society wants to impose on her. This becomes a threat to her husband, who views her as totally alien and aggravates her hostility by imposing a completely opposite persona on her. He wants her to reside in a world which was never hers, a society that always pushes her away.

In a scene that again involves a mirror, Antoinette's feelings about her own image and rejection by society are displayed. This scene shows Antoinette wandering along the corridor of the hall in Thornfield, and she comes across a mirror in which she finds her reflection as an alien to her. She narrates it to be a ghost that looks nothing like her. “The ghost, the woman with the streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her.” (Rhys 169). She was rumored to have haunted the mansion. Nevertheless, the reflection showed how her identity was tarnished by the patriarchal oppression. This is the point where she is negating her apparent personality and is ready to accept what she really is. Antoinette claims that she is familiar with the woman in the mirror who has been labeled by the society, and

this situation is very similar to how her mother was labeled by the society. This is because the mirror in the novel is symbolic of how a man defines a woman's identity. The protagonist realizes that she has been labeled and branded by the dominant men in her life around her, Richard Mason first and then Rochester. Rochester labeled Antoinette as a lunatic just like Mason had labeled her mother. Her mother accepted this label and tried her best all her life to be the person she never was. Antoinette, on the other hand, tried to resist and didn't believe in the label that she was given. She rejected it and called Christophine for help. She then realized her own character with the failed attempts to get what never belonged to her. Her own personality and identity are shaped by those incidents, and she realizes for the first time that this is not the life she wanted to live. She has to live with a false identity when she is actually unique in her own way, whether society accepted her or not. She destroys the control that colonization, patriarchal society, and men around her had over her life and becomes a real, free person.

Christophine tried to convince Rochester about the charm of Antoinette's personality, and she comments, "She is a Creole girl, and she has the sun in her" (Rhys 143). This association of her character with the sun shows a deep link with the Caribbean atmosphere and associates her charming personality with the unique colors of the island and its environment. In the same way, the audience can see her strong recognition with the Caribbean culture with the help of some symbols like the red dress and fire that had the fragrance of the native flora. Antoinette found herself to have an association with this amazingly colored fabric. She feels more alive while surrounded by these colors. On the other hand, in the cold attic, she feels restless and almost dies because of the dark around her. In her letter to her stepbrother, Richard, she writes: "Dear Richard please take me away from this place where I am dying because it is so cold and dark." (Rhys 164).

Furthermore, apart from her identity, another important thing for Antoinette is the heat and beauty of fire which makes her recall something that she thinks she has to do and appeals to her to act in a certain way that shows her real personality. These acts were performed in a dream and when she woke up had a fire in them, which shows her own jumbled and complex yet newly discovered personality. This fire was meant to burn the cardboard house that, for her, is equal to Thornfield Hall. This is like some psychological trick that the society uses to make the Creole lady realize that she has no real identity, and the cardboard house that is

burnt mirrors her resistance to the demand that she actually denies being the person everyone thinks she is.

The author has developed the character of Antoinette in a way that persuades the audience to be involved more deeply in her role and identity. Her unique personality gives her the label of neither white nor black, and also, she cannot be recognized as colonized or colonizer. In fact, the Creole woman is a blend of socially acquired characters that deny themselves and have the feminist behavior that she felt in the character of Christophine. Spivak elaborates Christophine's bravery in confronting Rochester: "Most important, it is Christophine alone whom Rhys allows to offer a hard analysis of Rochester's action, to challenge him in a face-to-face encounter" (253). Most of the critics define the success of Antoinette at the end of the story as her gaining the identity and personality that was snatched away by the cultural imperialism. However, the writer didn't show a character that gets self-realization from the cruel society, but she discovers herself in the socially restrictive culture that is being imposed on her.

In the third part of the novel, Antoinette associates her personality with her name as when Rochester stopped calling her Antoinette. She felt like Antoinette, and her whole personality was drifting away from a window, and all her charm vanished just like her name. Not only did Antoinette's personality vanish but also the things that were associated with her, like her looking glass. This shows that names also matter, as they are part of a person's personality, and they give her/him an identity, and with the help of this name, a person gets recognition in society. So, the cruelest thing on the part of Rochester was to steal away the name of Antoinette. The colonial power of Mr. Rochester is also exhibited by him when he removes his wife's identity. As a colonizer, he attempts to impose a British personality and identity on her. This is a patriarchal obsession of Mr. Rochester that makes him take these extreme steps when he tries to convert her to a Victorian Englishwoman, which she hates as she could never become one. She saw her mother trying to be an English and turn lunatic after failing at those attempts. This makes her hate the English disposition that her husband wants her to adopt.

Even when Antoinette accepts her fate as inevitable and dies emotionally wrecked, she never becomes Bertha or that perfect fake person her husband wants her to be. She keeps her stance that Bertha is not her name, and she cannot be someone other than Antoinette. Giving her another name means stealing her identity and integrity away. Rochester believes his masculine power empowers him to control his wife and even change her name. He thinks he

can make her any person he wants and could actually create a woman that he could possess, control, and dominate.

In fact, Antoinette is much like the “subaltern” in Spivak's famous essay, “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” She has a desire to protest against the society that has captivated her but at the same time has devalued her own identity, and also against the husband who has driven her to madness. Antoinette is silenced by these factors and seems to have given up in submission. Her whole struggle is now inside her own head, and she keeps on struggling against the impositions on her, making her another person rather than her real self. She doesn't want to be the English girl that her husband wants her to be; hence, she becomes just like her mother.

Near the end of the second part when Antoinette is to leave for Britain with her husband, Mr. Rochester realizes that she has given up her vitality and she is totally submissive. This, in actuality, is the direct result of her getting continuous disappointments in her husband's treatment. Antoinette has become like a zombie, a person without a soul. According to some critics, the lunatic women in *Wide Sargasso Sea* keep their madness hidden. The alienation and destruction of her real identity have made her mad, and her husband accepts her madness without ever trying to find out what the problem is. He even tries more to destroy her emotionally by removing every part of her personality, and this is because he attempts to control her mind and body (Nurminen 50). He has his own reasons for behaving like an oppressive Englishman. He has faced fear and oppression all his life because of his father. Later, Antoinette's strange behavior makes Rochester feel like an alien who is afraid of this hostile behavior. He tries to turn her into a more familiar person, one that he can deal with. Antoinette is turned into an aphasic object when Rochester destroys the last spark of life in her. He steals everything she owns, even the place where she feels happy, and she is left with nothing of her identity. She says, “But I love 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 spoilt it. It's just somewhere else where I have been unhappy” (Rhys 95).

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