Power and Position: Exploring the Post-Colonial Women and Men in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

By

Tasneem Tabassum

17203016

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree of

B. A in English Literature

The Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

June 2022

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing my degree at Brac University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Tasneem .

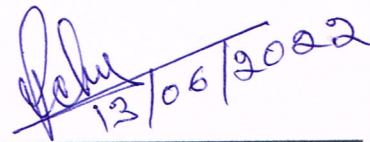**Tasneem Tabassum**

ID: 17203016

Approval

The thesis titled "Power and Position: Exploring the Post-colonial Women and Men in the Novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*" submitted by Tasneem Tabassum ID: 17203016 of Spring, 2022 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts on 13- 6-2022.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:

(Member)

Rukhsana Rahim Chowdhury

Designation, Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

Departmental Head:

(Chair)

Professor Firdous Azim

Professor and Chairperson, Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

Acknowledgement

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor and mentor, Miss Rukhsana Rahim Chowdhury for being patient with me and for providing me with guidance with utmost care and dedication. It would not have been possible for me to complete my thesis without her support. I would also like to thank my husband, family and friends who actively supported me and gave me the push and space I needed. Above all, I am grateful to Almighty Allah (S.W.T) for giving me the opportunity and blessings to be able to come this far.

Abstract

Women have always been the object of oppression from the very beginning. Due to men and women having different natural biological structures, it is believed that they are assigned with different roles in society. As colonization took place, it only added to women's misery. Not only were women colonized by the imperial power but also by the male-dominated society. Thus, they became victims of double colonization. In the name of civilization, the West were abusing and destroying the East. It was as if the people of the East were not human beings at all and rather an inferior breed of humanity. Women were now triply colonized, with the burden of not only colonization and gender discrimination, but also due to their race. It was power which dictated the position of women in the society. My thesis will explore the two contrapuntal Post-Colonial novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea.* The different nature and personalities of Jane and Antoinette, being in the same society as well as Rochester's character showing two different types of male in the patriarchal society, is evident in these novels. My thesis aims to investigate and explore if the characters Jane and Antoinette represent the notion of typical subjugated females in a patriarchal society or if they show a rebellion against societal norms and be able to change their position in the society. It will also help to reveal, if the character of Rochester represents a typical patriarchal dominating male of the society or not.

Keywords: Post-Colonial, Feminism, Victorian era, Women and men in the society, power and position.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Women have always been the object of oppression from the very beginning. Due to men and women having different natural biological structures, it is believed that they are assigned with different roles in society. According to the founder of sex polarity theory, Aristotle, women is by nature inferior to men. The term patriarchy is used by feminists to describe men and women's relationship when it comes to power, along with finding out the main reason to women's subordination. In addition, patriarchy is not only a mere term; it is also a concept through which we can understand women's realities and their place in the society. As colonization took place, it only added to women's misery. Women have also been marginalized due to the oppression linked to colonial encounters. Not only were women colonized by the imperial power but also by the male-dominated society. Thus, they became victims of double colonization, a concept which investigates women's position in the patriarchal society under colonial power.

The West successfully colonized the East and imposed their culture, tradition and norms on them. They justified their right to colonize "by asserting that they had a legal and religious obligation to take over the land and culture of indigenous peoples. Conquering nations cast their role as civilizing "barbaric" or "savage" nations, and argued that they were acting in the best interests of those whose lands and peoples they exploited" (Blakemore). The colonized society had to practice the colonizers' norms, religion and traditions by having their own ones banned in order to become 'civilized'. White skin color was thought to be the color of the superior whereas

black skin color was regarded as the inferior one. The black people were snatched from their hometown and family, and forced into slavery. In the name of civilization, the West were abusing and destroying the East. It was as if the people of the East were not human beings at all and rather an inferior breed of humanity. Women were now triply colonized, with the burden of not only colonization and gender discrimination, but also due to their race. It was power which dictated the position of women in the society. And clearly, men had the upper hand over women during those times which led the women's position to be inferior to men. An important part of colonization history was also the inclusion of resistance against the conquerors. During 1945, the colonized people of "South-East Asia were the first to demand the departure of the Europeans and to claim independence" ("The Beginnings of Decolonization and The Emergence of The Non-Aligned States - Historical Events in The European Integration Process (1945–2014) - CVCE Website"). Gradually, the other colonized countries in Asia as well as Africa, started to protest and rebel against the colonizers and thus, successful waves of decolonization were seen.

Even though most of the colonized countries were now independent from the colonizers, there was still the notion of imperialism and hegemony which failed to leave their lands. The notion of patriarchy was deeply embedded all over the world which made it difficult for women to fight against patriarchy and for equal rights. It is said that patriarchy was a process which kept on developing over more than 2500 years and today's evident male supremacy has been established due to it. Women were deprived of legal as well as social rights. According to a popular 20th century Feminist Theorist, Simon de Beauvoir, "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Thurman). She asserts that there is nothing initially which divides the sex but we all become the gender we are socialized into. In Mary Wollstonecraft's book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she pointed out how education for women, in the 18th century, taught them

how to be subordinate to men and always is dependent on them. She also wrote about how literature is another sphere where women were not able to express themselves or openly claim their writings as theirs. Many female writers had to use pseudo names which were not doing much favor to help women rise above subordination (Wollstonecraft). One of the most famous female writers of the Victorian period, who adopted male pseudonyms, was Charlotte Bronte.

Charlotte Bronte, just like her sisters and female contemporaries, published her work under male pseudonyms in the beginning. According to her own statement, "we did not like to declare ourselves women, because – without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine' – we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice" (Armitage). During the Victorian era, a woman's life revolved around her family's domestic sphere. Middle class women were brought up to be pure, obedient and submissive women who are supposed to look forward to getting married and become their husband's servant and sexually satisfying toys. Only a few jobs were available for educated women other than being a governess. Higher education for a woman was considered to be a waste of time as they were thought to be inferior to men. However, Bronte and her sisters got quality education at home which led them to writing stories. Along with her sisters as well as her brilliant brother, she created an imaginary world named "Angria", which they together used as a setting for their "fictional stories" (Abaker). As she kept writing, she wanted to become a paid writer and looked for advice from an English poet laureate, Robert Southey. His reply discouraged Bronte into stopping writing for a time period as he emphasized on how literature should not be a woman's business and should only be for leisure purposes. However, during this short period of not writing, Bronte became more influenced and determined to change the society's views. With little to no support from the patriarchal society, Bronte kept on challenging

until the fictional world was dominated by the women writers and writing became a woman's business.

One of Bronte's best-known works which reflected her life is *Jane Eyre*. It is a first-person novel where the female protagonist, Jane Eyre's life, portrays bits and pieces of Bronte's stages of life. Bronte lost two elder sisters due to the harsh services of Clergy Daughters' School at Lancashire. This was reflected in her novel protagonist, Jane Eyre's life at Lowood School where she lost her dear friend Helen Burns due to the unhealthy and insufficient services and conditions. Just like Jane, Bronte also worked as a governess for years. Most importantly, just as Bronte challenged the social norms and patriarchy to change her position in the society, Jane's character similarly represented a growth of character development with her passionate and rebellious nature. Through this novel, Bronte depicted a true picture of the patriarchal treatment of Victorian women. Jane reflects the growth of an English woman from a state of being penniless to becoming rich with hard work and not condemning towards the male dominated society. Even though Jane was a rebellious child, she grew up to become a strong individual woman who learned to balance herself between being a submissive woman and a total social rebellion. She portrayed the characteristics of being a strong, bold, adamant and hard-working woman who was independent. This is why it can also be said to be a novel of the bildungsroman genre. It was obvious to the reader and other critics that Bronte challenged and refuted the cliché Victorian traditional views on women and portrayed her own perspective of women's rights and views. Her views on women were considered to be feminist which is the effort to change the male dominated society and gender stereotypes and to provide women with equal rights as men. Even though *Jane Eyre* was known to be a brilliant novel, another female writer, Jean Rhys

could not contemplate with the way Bronte represented Bertha Mason, who was another female character of her novel, who was not given a voice.

Jean Rhys was a modern writer of the 20th century and the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a Creole mother. Creole is someone who is "the mixed product of Caribbean black and European white races" (Coartney). Rhys lived in Dominica until the age of 16 and moved to London afterwards. Back in her time, the Caribbean was badly affected by British colonialism and the lives of the Creoles were the most effected. The practice of slavery was in thorough practice until 1833 when it was abolished, which worsened the lives of the Creoles even more. Creoles suffered "rejection by the black community of which they are a part" and they were also "treated as 'the other' by their white European counterparts whose political power and wealth allow them to maintain significant influence over Caribbean society" (Coartney). Being the daughter of a Creole woman, Rhys suffered and went through the same discrimination and rejection from the black as well as white society, like her mother. This blended oppression of triple colonization, made the life of Rhys and her family very difficult to go through. So, when Rhys read *Jane Eyre*, she could resemble the life struggles of Bertha Mason who was the wife of the male protagonist, being a Creole woman from the West Indies. In order to present the alien wife's case, she has written a 'counter-text' named *Wide Sargasso Sea*, an extension of Bronte's novel filling in the 'missing' testimony, the issues over which Bronte glosses. Bronte and Rhys belonged from different centuries and backgrounds with different struggles toward their successful writing career. However, their names are interlocked to each other for the readers of their books. *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are great examples of Edward Said's concept of contrapuntal reading.

Jane Eyre is a story of two people, Jane and Rochester, who despite their social class differences, mentality and lifestyle, fulfills their destiny of a happy ending. The main adversity of their togetherness is Rochester's mad wife, Bertha Mason who is a lunatic Creole woman, locked up in his country house's attic in England. Though at the end, this problem is solved when Bertha burns the house down and jumps towards her own death, severely maiming Rochester in the process. Jane and Rochester's moral and social imbalances are equal as he gets punished for his prior deeds and as Jane inherits wealth and rise in status which changes the power dynamics of them both thus altering their position in the society. All the events of this novel are read through Jane's perspective. Her struggles and the ideologies of her society depict the reality of women's situation in the Victorian age. The class hierarchies, colonization, patriarchy and women's struggle towards empowerment are what Bronte tried to portray through her novel. In a society where women were always oppressed into becoming submissive, Jane's character did not give into Rochester's assertions or opinions and rather she listened to her own independent will. Jane is portrayed as a social rebel who does not conform to the typical patriarchal societal norms against women. In addition, she was not the typical dependent, ignorant, subserviently polite, sensitive and weak Victorian woman; rather she depicts the characteristics of being independent, bold, adamant and strong woman. On the other hand, the character of Bertha Mason is not given a voice at all by Bronte. She is unreasonably portrayed as a villain and it looked as if the reason behind it was because of her being a Creole. According to Said's concept of the West portraying the self and the East being the other, Bronte reflected the character of Jane as the self and Bertha as the other (Moosavinia et al.). Relating to Bertha's situation, Rhys could not stop herself from writing Wide Sargasso Sea to portray the other side of the story.

Rhys was one of the first post-colonial writers who wrote a masterpiece in the world of Literature, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It is a post-colonial feminist novel through which, Rhys brings out the lives of Creole women in the West Indies where they are "triply marginalized for their class, gender and race" (Abu- Samra). Rhys skillfully parodies a different and new perspective of sympathy towards the mad woman in the attic in this novel. In addition, she rewrites the character of Bertha Mason as Antoinette Cosway. Her character suffers a tragic end as she was not only looked down upon and oppressed by her own people but also by her patriarchal husband as she was a Creole and was neither accepted by the white Europeans nor by the black Jamaicans. Antoinette suffers immensely due to her failed attempt to have a life of her own, away from all these deeply rooted ideologies regarding women. Her character portrays to be a dependent, weak and a sensitive woman of her society, which is the opposite of Jane Eyre's personality. There are multiple themes in this novel which includes racial inequality, assimilation and double colonization. Not only did Rhys put out the perspective of Bertha Mason, she also included the perspective of Antoinette's husband who was an unnamed English man, whom we can safely assume to be Rochester as it is a contrapuntal response to *Jane Eyre*. In both the novels, the male protagonist seems to act as the dominating typical patriarchal man, who tries to oppress and possess his women through his power and position in the society, be it Jane or Antoinette. He always depicted the "tendency of renaming others according to whim". In *Jane Eyre*, he renamed "Jane as Janet " and in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, he renamed "Antoinette as Bertha" (Ionoaia). However, in *Jane Eyre,* Rochester's dominating nature of trying to assert his decisions and wishes upon Jane were unsuccessful as she did everything on her own will. On the other hand, he objectifies Antoinette into becoming the madwoman in the attic.

The fact that "there is always the other side, always" can be clearly seen in these two contrapuntal novels (Rhys, 101). The two novels are like two sides of the same coin. No reader will be able to have the same impression of *Jane Eyre* once they read *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The different nature and personalities of Jane and Antoinette, being in the same society as well as the male protagonist's character portraying his oppressive nature, is evident in these novels. In my thesis, I will be reflecting on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism which put forward the binaries of the colonizer and the colonized in these two novels. It will contemplate on how power and position can dictate the lives of men and women in the society in the two novels by exploring the binaries between the characters of Jane, Antoinette and Rochester. Additionally, I will look at the novels through the post-colonial lens which will explain how racism, displacement and assimilation together can lead towards the formation of a character like Antoinette in the society. I will also enlighten the colonial theories of marronage and creolization in order to understand the reason which led Antoinette into being in such a situation in her life. Lastly, I will be exploring the novels through the feminist theories of marriage and sexuality, patriarchy, subjugation, women's position in society and their lack of freedom and autonomy. It will further help to explain the struggles and triple colonization faced by the characters of Jane and Antoinette and how the two individuals dealt with it. Moreover, it will explain how and why the character of Rochester portrays the notion of being a dominating and imposing male along with how a change in power can alter the dynamics of his position in the society. Hence, I will be referring to well-known theorists and writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Edward Said, Simon de Beauvoir and Virginia Wolf, Kate Millett along with other journals and articles. Therefore, my thesis aims to investigate and explore if the characters Jane and Antoinette represent the notion of typical subjugated females in a patriarchal society or if they show a rebellion against

societal norms and be able to change their position in the society. It will also help to reveal, if the

character of the male protagonist represents a typical patriarchal dominating male of the society

or not.

Chapter 2

Post-Colonialism

The process of colonization began in earnest around the 15th century when Europeans discovered sea routes to Eastern countries and settled there after conquering some parts of these countries. The process of establishing their settlements and making these regions their colonies continued for several hundred years. This European subjugation and domination of the countries they conquered is known as colonization. This situation immediately created the colonizer-colonized binary in the world. These Western Colonizers exploited resources, created racial hierarchies based on skin color, with the white color being considered as the superior one, imposed repressive rules and deprived the colonized of freedom in their own homelands. The colonizers imposed their language and culture on the colonized people while totally disregarding theirs in order to dominate them and exploit their wealth in the name of civilization and enlightenment. According to the West, the East could not take care of itself and needed their help as they were irrational, lustful, mysterious and exotic.

When the West found raw materials and resources in North America, they "turned to enslave Africans as a cheaper, more plentiful labor source than indentured servants, who were mostly poor Europeans" (Slavery in America). During the 17th and 18th century, Africans were taken away from their family and forced into slavery in American colonies in order to be exploited into laboring in crop productions such as tobacco, cotton, etc. It was in the 17th century when the European settlers in North America turned towards an inexpensive source of labor through African slaves rather than having poor Europeans as their laborers. The slave owners prohibited the slaves from reading, learning and writing while their movements and behavior were kept under control. The ones who rebelled against the rules were severely

punished and the ones who were obedient were rewarded with favors. "A strict hierarchy among the enslaved (from privileged house workers and skilled artisans down to lowly field hands) helped keep them divided and less likely to organize against their masters." In addition, when the enslaved men and women married one another and raised their family, even though marriages had no legal grounds, the slave owners did not flinch in order to separate their family members via removal or sale. But revolts and rebellions started taking place which scared the supporters of slavery who strengthened their slavery codes to make sure that the slaves are deprived of education, movement and assembly rights but claiming that "Black people were inherently inferior barbarians requiring an institution such as slavery to discipline them" (Slavery in America).

Many slaves tried to escape and stayed hidden in remote areas or communities outside the plantations. They were known as Maroons and this process of staying hidden and isolated from society in order to avoid enslavement is known as marronage. There were several places where there were successful establishments of marriage communities such as Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Suriname, Kumako, Caribbean Islands, etc. As the Africans were forced to be in different places than Africa, they also got intimate with the white colonizers and colonized people which ended in having mixed races with a mixture of different cultures and backgrounds. Many female slaves were frequently exploited by the white men while many mutually agreed to sexual relations with their masters, so they ended up having mixed raced children. This new creation of mixed cultures in the new world is known as creolization. In addition, the mixed raced person, particularly of having a mixed blood of white and black descent is known as a creole. This brought together a variety of cultures and origins of people together in the plantation islands which is why the Caribbean region speedily became the hotspot for creolization of these

blended populations. In the 19th century, after all the rebellions and acts which took place in order to protest against slavery, an emancipation proclamation by Abraham Lincoln was issued to abolish slavery. Slavery was totally banished after the Civil War due to the 13th Amendment in 1865. However, the black people were still looked down upon by the white colonizers that further embedded the seed towards racism. Creoles were looked down upon by the black for being a part of their oppression and also by the white for being a part of the 'uncivilized' race.

The colonizers still continued to colonize the East and in order to prove that the West were trying to make the East civilized, they invested in trade, infrastructure and expanded technological and medical knowledge. However, these developments came with bullying, assaulting and imposed assimilation. This rationalization of colonization is known as orientalism, which is explained by Edward Said in his book, *Orientalism.* According to Said, the Orient is shown to be the primitive and uncivilized 'other', in an attempt to create it as the contrast to the advanced and the civilized West or Occident (Hamadi). He believes that this kind of discourse and binaries have been created in order to justify their colonization of the East and the horrors that came with it. Hence, the concept of two opposing elements, the self and other, was created.

This domination of European countries over North & South America as well as Southeast Asia from the 16th to early 19th century was known as the era of Old Imperialism with limited influence. Colonialism started to decline with the Napoleonic Wars, the struggle for nationalism and democracy, and the cost of industrialization which exhausted the energies of European nations. Many leaders also thought that the costs to their respective empires outweighed the benefits, especially the cost of supervising the colonies. In colonized Asia and Africa, the local governments were forcefully taken over by military forces of the Europeans, in order to attain raw materials required to fulfill Europe's growing industry by exploiting local economies. So,

during the Old Imperialism era, colonialism was widespread with powers like France, Spain, Great Britain, etc., started expanding its establishments with the help of war and conquers. Later, these countries changed their strategies into building a series of trading stations in Eastern countries rather than conquering these territories. Additionally, there was mutual cooperation between these countries and Europe in order to help flourish the trading centers. This new way of colonialism is known as New Imperialism. The Europeans started to expand the industrial revolution to gain more economic interests and benefits and in order to do so, they moved forward in their mission with the slogan of 'The White Man's Burden' which acted as their shield to justify their reasons behind their domination, to be their moral obligation to civilize the uncivilized. '*The White Man's Burden*' was a poem written by a British novelist named Rudyard Kipling in 1899 which encouraged the colonizers to carry the "burden" of civilizing "Half-devil and half-child" of the East which became a slogan for the imperialists to justify their act of imperialism (Kipling). Imperialism was further fueled by Social Darwinism which suggested that some people were fit for survival compared to others. "The Europeans believed that they, as the white race, were dominant and that it was only natural for them to conquer the 'inferior' people as nature's way of improving mankind. Thus, the conquest of inferior people was just and the destruction of the weaker races was nature's natural law" (The Age of Imperialism (1870-1914)). One of the myths which was created due to Imperialist ideologies by the Europeans is that Africa is a 'Dark continent' because of the people living there being of the inferior race, to further their economic and political agenda of exploiting Africa (Thompsell).

In order to make more strong influence over the East, the West imposed their language, power and beliefs among other things. This "social, political, cultural, military, geopolitical and even linguistic predominance" of European countries over other countries, is what is known as

having hegemonic power. The West was able to reach the state of hegemony as there was now a great unequal power relation between them and the colonized state. They possessed enough power to manipulate the colonized people into thinking that their idea of power and value was the view or system of the world (InesSoukni). Thus, the West hegemonies the colonized countries into believing that the language, culture and beliefs of the colonizers were superior. However, with repression comes resistance. The colonized resisted and fought back as they became tired of racism, exploitation, political illegitimacy, taxation, assimilation, arbitrary violence and displacement. The resistance increased and spread during the 19th and 20th century and gradually decolonization was seen to be achieved during the time period of 1945- 1975. But, even though decolonization was taking place, colonization did not come to an end as the West still dominated over the East with the help of imperialism, hegemony and orientalism. The aftermath of colonialism and its consequences is what post-colonialism depicts.

Edward Said's book, *Orientalism,* is what laid the ground for the theory of post colonialism in 1978. His theory included that the concept of "Orient" and the "Occident" are "man-made". Additionally, he said that "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said, 13). The Occident has hegemonized the Orient into believing that the West is superior to the East, along with their culture, traditions and language. According to Antonio Gramsci, the term 'hegemony' is used "to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become commonsensical and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas" (Rosamond).

His theory of post colonialism was built on the Orient's or the East's false image created by the Occident or the Western poets, novelists, explorers, economists, philosophers and

administrators. West's self-authorized supremacy over the East has resulted in the Western scholars to have a false conception of them being more capable of understanding the East/ Orient more than the Orient themselves. Therefore, the West are 'Orientalizing' the Orients and exposing them to unfavorable standards of the West. Furthermore, Said, in this book, referred to Sigmund Freud's theory of how people try to project their own impulses or feelings on someone else as a defense mechanism when they try to avoid their suppressed uncomfortable feelings. So, whatever the West did not want to acknowledge about itself, they projected it onto the East. In conclusion, the binaries of the self and the other is what we find even after colonization was abolished which resulted in East being oppressed by the West in one way or another.

Chapter 3

Feminism

For centuries, the one aspect when it comes to women has always been a constant, which is oppression and discrimination. Patriarchy, the idea of men having the upper-hand in the society when it comes to political, economic and social power more than the women, is what we have witnessed due to men being physically stronger. It began from the time of 'man the hunter' which kept the notion of women taking care of the fire and cooking. According to traditionalists, this power difference has always existed and due to the natural biological differences, the gender roles are assumedly assigned to be different from one and another. According to Aristotle's theory of sex polarity, men are 'active' while women are 'passive'. "In his view, the biological inferiority of women makes her inferior also in her capacities, her ability to reason and, therefore, her ability to make decisions. Because man is superior and woman inferior, he is born to rule and she to be ruled" (Sultana, 4). It was not only Aristotle who believed so, as the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud claimed that women are inferior than men due to their sexual reproductive functions (Yadav). This did not stop there as there were several more claims and beliefs which supported the misconceptions and ideas of patriarchy.

Alongside patriarchy, another factor which was added to women's oppression was colonization. During colonization, the West imposed their culture, tradition and norms on the colonized states. They structured the power dynamics of public spheres to be controlled by the men whereas the women were restricted to taking care of private spheres such as their home and family. This "exclusion has perpetuated stereotypes surrounding perceived female subordination" (Clerk). According to Edward Said's Orientalist views, the men of the East were portrayed as being feminine, exotic, backwards, irrational, mysterious and incapable of self-

governance. On the other hand, the norms and the gender roles of the West were very misogynistic and strictly defined. In the West, it was very common for women to be uneducated and were expected to only reproduce and take care of their household. In addition, "women were forced into arranged marriages, in which potential husbands received payments from the woman's fathers in order to marry them. The attitudes towards women implied that they were a male's property and that a woman's worth was defined by her ability to follow strict expectations for her gender" (Clerk). So, during the colonial period, these misogynistic attitudes of the West were transferred into the East which elevated their preexisting patriarchy even more. This transition took place as the Eastern men's feminine characteristics led them to be excluded from democratic rights practices because they were thought to be incompetent of handling democratic states of the country. To reclaim their masculinity, a society of strict gender rules and norms in the East was seen. As a result, female oppression was observed and seen to take place even more prominently with a total separation of public and private spheres.

During the 16th and 17th century, women were strictly expected to be docile, innocent, pious and virtuous and anyone who raised their voice against the patriarchal system of gender roles, would be at the risk of being banished from the society and some would even become the targets of witch-hunts. The men would be responsible for taking care of household finances and the decision maker, whereas, women were responsible for cooking, household chores, raising children and for making sure that their husband's needs were met. Additionally, the children were also taught to obey the patriarch to make sure that the upcoming generations would have the concept of patriarchy rooted deep into their minds. Women did not have the rights to own property except for widows. In terms of education, women had limited access to it and were expected to know how to cook, knit, take care of domestic affairs and were restricted to

enhancing ideological training which only left them with career options of becoming a governess, cook, tailor, midwife, gilder, etc. It was education back then, which taught women to be subordinate, useless, inferior and dependent on men, which eventually created 'a romantic twist of mind', leading to their own subjugation at the hands of men. As time passed by, some women would express their thoughts and opinions through religious or personal writings and that too with the use of pseudonyms as they were discouraged to engage themselves in creativity and artistic talents like writing novels and poems.

To keep the women from thinking too much about intelligence and the public spheres, they were taught to give top priority on being attractive, luring, beautiful, chaste and graceful. If literature is observed, which was another sphere, used by men as a weapon to keep the women tamed and manipulate history, novels and books portrayed women as weak, subservient, vain object, epitome of elegance and etiquettes, soft hearted, chaste and mostly ridiculed and pitied women. In addition, it was clear that there was always an emphasis on unwed women being 'virgin' and pure. This concept came from 'Virgin Mother Mary' who was a married virgin and mother of Jesus. According to a French feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, this cult of virgin Mary, represented the supreme victory of masculinity as it diminishes women's sexuality and makes the female body and female sexuality seem unwholesome and impure (Lee). It became a norm that a woman has to be a virgin on the wedding night and cannot be shared with others. Men wanted to emerge as the sole possessor of women. The wife in a marriage became the symbol of a companion, sexual partner and the progenitor for their husbands. Marriage was a way to tame women's sexuality, while on the other hand, a polygamous man was common and not looked down upon but a woman committing adultery was condemned. Women's roles were divided between being a mother and a wife. On the contrary to being chaste and pure, men also portrayed

women to being a seductress like 'Eve' who seduced Adam and caused him to sin. It served as a

warning to the society's men that one should control and not make their wives more than a

companion as it would result in her becoming a seductress. In the Western society, the

dichotomy of a good mother like 'virgin mother Mary' was a bad woman like 'Eve'.

However, there was a major shift in the power position of women in the 18th century

when the new class of bourgeoisie (capitalist social class) arose due to the French revolution.

The ideology of the bourgeoisie was for women to focus on their children's upbringing.

According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, "a woman's purpose lies in satisfying the wishes of men,

and a woman's education should instill these components into her very way of thinking." He

believed that "aristocratic women who pursue their own pleasures rather than care for their

children at home disregarded their 'natural' station in life" and that the men could control their

wives as well as maintain a happy married life by doing so (Koubek, 3). These ideologies spread

across the West as well as the East. To change their minds and perspective of women, a female

writer and philosopher, Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote a book, *A Vindication of The Rights of*

Woman, in which, she "advocates better rights and opportunities for women" (Owusu-Gyamfi

191). She explained how the "false system of education" brainwashed women into believing that

they are inferior to men and should let the men objectify them over their sense of grace and

beauty (Wollstonecraft 9). While Rousseau asserted that women's education should revolve

around becoming a caregiver and submissive wife, Wollstonecraft reflected on how education

should not be discriminated between men and women in order to help women train their minds in

being an active member of the society, to be able to incorporate their learning to their children

and be more independent financially, rather than being treated as alluring objects by men. Even

though Wollstonecraft's work was revolutionary and unique, it was highly criticized by many

male critics. This was the starting of feminist views among the society which in definition means to have the perspective towards having equal rights and opportunities amongst men and women in social, economic and political beliefs.

In the 19th century, Victorian period, employment opportunities for women only included the lower ranks such as secretary or receptionists. In addition, there was a devaluation of women's work in the household because their productivity did not have an economic outcome which portrayed their work to be invisible. Not only the economic sector, religious factors also played a vital part in women subordination. In most of the religions, men had the right to avail property and more privilege whereas women were given the role of being the inferior one. Another factor which kept the women oppressed in the society was race. Even if the man belongs to a lower-class status and the woman to a higher-class status, there is still the factor of male virility which scares the women of being violated. The class position of a woman is always dependent and related to their relationship with men. According to a feminist, Virginia Woolf, in this male-dominated society, women were considered to be nothing and that they had to cope up with various type of situations, especially those which related to a man's position. However, women started to realize their worth and the prejudice that they were struggling with and there were frequent social and educational reform movements for women's rights that took place. In addition, they started to pursue profession outside of their domestic spheres even though there were still only a few career paths to choose from such as a teacher, governess, wealthy women's companion, artists, etc. But this ideology could not hold in the society for long due to industrialization which affected the middle-class society's socio-economic status. It forced men to go to the outside spheres for labor and for women to stay home, care for their children and bring meals to the table. Even though women were also producing labor at home, it was not

acknowledged by the society and was not being able to participate in the state affairs. This was the time when the first wave of feminism was observed where women protested against inequality in the late 19th century and early 20th century. They demanded equal rights to vote (suffrage), a reformation of education and for equal participation opportunity in the political affairs of the state. Moreover, women of color also raised their voice against not only sexism, but also racism. The first wave ended with the grant of voting rights to British women in 1918.

After the first wave, women soon became more conscious of the rights they deserve to fight for and so, they started aggressive feminist movements in order to gain equal wages and rights regardless of their sex. A feminist writer, Kate Millet, points out all the above factors of female subordination in her book, *Sexual Politics.* Millet's views and perspectives of how patriarchy is kept intact in the society, acted as a vital push towards the second wave of feminism in the mid-20th century. Women learned to interact with other movements and bring about a change. It was a time when women of all color believed in sisterhood in bringing down women subjugation. They were not only able to hit a milestone in denouncing sexual harassment and domestic violence, they were also able to have reformed education system for women and achieve the autonomy to have their separate financial rights without their husband's approval. Later, in the 1990s, the third wave of feminism paved the way to realizing that there are not just women but that the women are determined by race, religion, class and ethnicity. This wave of movements was being put forward to demand autonomy and equal rights for not just white women but women of all intersectionality. By then, a lot of changes could be observed in the society with women becoming more confident, gaining higher career designations, female sexuality was gradually getting more accepted by the society, access to education was increasing for women and women's rights awareness was spreading everywhere. Then the fourth wave of

feminism started in the 21st century which focused on sexual harassment, abortion rights, rape culture and many other components. As it was the era of technological advances with various platforms to highlight the issues of women rights, many movements and digital protests took place to bring awareness and a change in the society to bring forward women's safety and autonomy rights to reproductive control.

The definition of feminism is not just a narrowed down context, "feminism is part of a larger consciousness of oppression along with racism, ageism, classism, abelism, and sexual orientation" (Rampton). Thus, women were not just colonized; they were also the victim of patriarchy, racism and classism, making them vulnerable to being triply colonized. It started from the men as they wanted to prove themselves as a subject so they wanted to find their 'other'. According to a French philosopher, Simon de Beauvoir, "the self needs otherness in order to define itself as a subject; the category of the otherness, therefore, is necessary in the constitution of the self as a self" (Mussett). Therefore, woman "is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the other" (BEAUVOIR and PARSHLEY 16). This self and the other is a fundamental human thought which portrays a contrast between the two genders and creates a power imbalance. "The 'situation between the sexes' is one of 'dominance and subordination' which has created a 'most ingenious form of interior colonization" (Jeffreys 77). Thus, dominance by men in the society, in other words, patriarchy, is what kept the women subordinated and oppressed. Based on the above theories and concepts of Post-colonialism and Feminism, I will be exploring the character of the male protagonist, Jane and Antoinette in the novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* in terms of power and their position in the society.

Chapter 4

The Power Dynamics of Genders

4.1 The Character of Jane and Rochester in *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Bronte was a 19th century, Victorian English novelist who published her first masterpiece *Jane Eyre,* in 1847. Through this novel, Bronte portrayed the issues which Victorian period women had to face and became an example of how women can knock down the patriarchal challenges of the society and how there can be a shift of power and position brought about. The word 'equality' was near impossible for women in that era of strict patriarchal views and norms. However, Bronte beautifully showed how women can acquire 'equality' within such society, through the character of the female protagonist, Jane Eyre.

Bronte was an intelligent and independent woman of her era who broke all the stereotypes of the society through Jane's journey towards becoming a respectful woman who did not follow the cliché norms and traditions of the society as Jean Jacques Rousseau advised women to be like. Even though Bronte initially published her novels with a male pseudo name, Currer Bell, it allowed her to have the freedom to create her characters the way she wanted. Concealed by anonymity, she created heroines with genuine ideas and erudite views, who, above all, respected themselves, and weren't afraid to declare it. For Charlotte Bronte, it was the ideal emotional outlet." (Lowes). The character, Jane Eyre, is not the typical woman who would think of herself inferior to men or give-in to oppression.

From the beginning of the novel, Jane as an orphan tries to stay dedicated towards her self-worth and dignity no matter how much the men in her life tried to dominate and marginalize her. She was living with her cruel aunt Mrs. Reed and her children who could not tolerate Jane,

especially John. According to John, Jane is a "dependent" with "no money" and does not deserve "to live with gentlemen's children" like them (Bronte 11). Jane was left vulnerable to John's tyranny, not only for her class status but also for being a female. It was expected from the women to endure, respect men and have docile behavior towards them. However, when John threw a book towards Jane which led towards her bleeding, Jane shouted back at John by saying "wicked and cruel boy! You are like a murderer- you are like a slave- driver-you are like the Roman emperors!" (Bronte 12). She does not back off to being dominated by her cousin and expresses her feelings of how she thought John to be a 'tyrant'. Additionally, she throws a punch towards John with so much 'passion' which was visible to other members of Gateshead Hall. Bronte represents Jane's character to be a rebellious one who does not conform to oppression and refuses to be subservient. According to Simon de Beauvoir's theory of the self and the other, John tried to label Jane as the other and keep her oppressed. Her act of revenge was looked down upon by Bessie and Miss Abbot as they thought that it was a "shocking conduct to strike a young gentleman" being a woman (Bronte 14). This concept of women being brainwashed into believing that they should act like the submissive one towards the male figure of the family by Mary Wollstonecraft in her book, *A Vindication of The Rights of Women,* is portrayed through the shock and disapproval by Bessie and Miss Abbot due to Jane's act of violence. Additionally, it also shows how it was okay for the men to be abusive and violent towards the women but not the other way around.

When Jane grows into a beautiful young woman and becomes a teacher at Lowood School, she tries to seek better job opportunities. But as employment options were limited to women, she was only able to find a job as a governess in Rochester's place, Thornfield. Jane was not intimidated by Rochester even though he belonged to the upper-class family and was 'proud,

sardonic and harsh character to inferiority of every description'. Rochester, being a part of the patriarchal society, tried to show his dominating nature with Jane but ended up not being successful in doing so towards Jane. This is reflected in the lines by Rochester to Jane: "Go into the library- I mean, if you please- (Excuse my tone of command; I am used to say, 'do this', and it is done; I cannot alter my customary habits for one new inmate)" (Bronte 189). He was trying to not intimidate Jane due to her strong characteristics which were not like other Victorian era women. Jane's success in getting Rochester to soften up, portrays a change in Jane's childhood tormented character and her irresistibly strong and powerful adulthood character. When Rochester demanded her to speak to him, "instead of speaking, she smiled; and not a very complacent or submissive smile either" (Bronte 203). She refused to act submissive towards Rochester which was an unexpected behavior from a woman of those times. Thornfield was a place which Jane 'loved' because according to her, she was not 'buried with inferior minds' as no one succeeded in suppressing her even when they tried to do so. No matter how hard Rochester tried to force his opinions on Jane, she claimed herself to be "no bird" and that "no net ensnares' ' her as she believes to be "a free human being with an independent will" (Bronte 386). Her adamant and strong headed nature was what attracted Rochester towards her because he was bothered about the fact that Jane was not falling for his dominating nature. However, Jane eventually fell in love with Rochester when she was able to find another side to an English man like him, who tried to give Jane the opportunity to not feel inferior to him. Soon, Rochester was becoming desperate to marry Jane and make his wife so that he can mold her into the woman he wants her to be. Jane's character built up into a rebellious woman was evident through her lines, "I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me" (Bronte 409). Her hatred of the idea of being the wife

of a rich man and being dolled up by him seemed horrifying to her. In the patriarchal system of class, it was the dream of middle-class women like Jane to marry someone from the upper class and be cherished with materialistic attractions. Moreover, marriages back then were mostly arranged and finding love was rare. However, Jane was not one of those women and rather believed in her freedom of being her own person and not being claimed as someone else's property due to greed of gaining higher class status.

Jane was willing to marry Rochester as she thought that it would provide her with the upper-hand of being loved rather than dominated by Rochester. The typical gender role of the man conquering the woman was reversed when it came to Rochester and Jane as to Rochester, he was "influenced- conquered and the influence is sweeter" than he can express; "and the conquest" he went through "has a witchery beyond any triumph" he can "win" (Bronte 397). According to Jane, Rochester listened to her and looked at her "gently and seriously" which was not common to see in the men of the society (Bronte 387). But when she was revealed of the truths of Rochester planning to make her his mistress due to already having a wife, Bertha Mason, Jane refused to 'accept his pledge of fidelity and give him hers'. When Jane found out about Bertha and went to see her, she dehumanized her by saying that she reminded her "of the foul German specter-the Vampyr" (Bronte 432). In addition, she also referred to her as 'lunatic', 'hyena' and 'wild' (Bronte 447). Rather than giving into her love and passion, she had the self-realization of putting her worth as her top priority and refused to 'obey' him like the conventional Victorian women. Therefore, she escaped from Thornfield and found herself becoming homeless in the streets. She did not go back to Rochester even if she had to beg for survival. After finding herself a new place in St. John's house, she again became a victim of male domination in the hands of St. John. He offered her to join him on his voyage towards India

as his wife; "the sole help mate he can influence efficiently in life and retain absolutely till

death" (Bronte 619). His influential words made Jane 'shudder' out of terror by thinking how her

life would be miserable as his wife so she refused to bent down to his will of influence. In

addition, she refused to be 'imprisoned' by St. John and restrained herself from her real self. As

the character of Jane keeps developing into a sensible and independent woman, she gains wealth

all of a sudden and jumps up in the status of class hierarchy. After she was now equal in status

with Rochester, she decided to pay a visit to him and finds him in his manor-house as a helpless,

blind and cripple due to an unfortunate fire caused by Bertha who died in it. Rochester was

happy to see her and at the same time very sad as he believed that Jane was looked after by her

friends now that she is rich. Being the strong character of a woman, Jane replied to him by

declaring that she is an 'independent' woman with money and is her 'own mistress' now, who

does not heed to any external influence or assertions and rather pursues her own will. She finally

wanted to marry Rochester as he was now a widow, in need of her assistance for survival and

inferior to her. The power and position of Rochester and Jane was reserved just because of gain

and loss of wealth and class along with willingness towards having an unconventional mentality.

"Jane Eyre is unique in the Victorian period. As a feminist woman, she represents the insurgent

women eager for esteem." (Gao 929)

Other than the men and classism, another factor which tried to keep her grounded and

oppressed was religion. Jane's days in Lowood School with her friend Helen, was full of

religious teachings and shaped her into becoming a modest and meek woman. However, Jane

believed that she "should love those who show" her "affection, or submit to punishment when"

she "feels it is deserved" (Bronte 84). Through this line, she represented how one should not bow

down to societal oppression and expectations of a female to be soft spoken, forgiving, chaste and

pious. She refuses to give into these societal expectations while on the other hand, her friend Helen, portrays the type of woman the society expects one to be. According to Helen, "Heathens and savage tribes hold such doctrines, but Christians and civilized nations disown it" (Bronte 85). She uses religious norms and beliefs to denounce Jane's rebellious thoughts. Another religious concept which we find Jane to disregard was being a domesticated and innocent wife material. Jane reflected: "It is narrow minded in their more privileged fellow- creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtful to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex" (Bronte 167). Jane portrayed the personality of a feminist thinker who despises the patriarchal system. Being the 'angel of the house' was not something with which Jane was relatable to. When Rochester referred to her as the "very angel", she dismissed his words of flattery and refused to be called an angel as according to her, she will never be one until the day she dies. In addition, Jane clearly let Rochester know that he should not "expect nor exact anything celestial "of her, for Rochester will never be able to get it (Bronte 396). She did not hesitate to confess that she is not a pious or religious person which is expected from a graceful woman of the society and openly refuses to be the conventional future wife.

Jane's character, beliefs and behavior depict her as being a societal rebellion and a strong feminist character. Her development throughout the novel makes it a bildungsroman novel. Not only did she refuse to be the type of woman, the society wants her to be as well as forces her to become, but she represents how a woman can stay true to her self-worth and acquire equality. "In creating a sympathetic, autonomous female narrator, Bronte paves the way for feminist thought,

allowing for readers to consider the possibility of female emancipation both in a literary sense but also in life away from the pages of the novel" (Scott).

4.2 The Character of Antoinette, Bertha and her assumed husband, Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Jean Rhys, a 20th century writer, read *Jane Eyre* and could not stop herself from showing the other side of the story behind Bertha Mason's madness, being a creole woman. In *Jane Eyre,* Bronte gave one woman a strong voice in the society which became a popular feminist character in the Victorian era, while on the other hand, she silenced another female character of her novel and regarded her as the 'mad woman of the attic' because she represented the East and lives of the creoles back then. Rhys, being able to relate to Bertha Mason's character as her own mother was a creole too, felt the obligation to show the readers of *Jane Eyre* a different perspective of the West, the lives of creoles in the East. Therefore, she ended up writing a contrapuntal novel named *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in 1966.

Wide Sargasso Sea was a post-colonial, feminist novel which parodied a new vision of sympathy towards Bertha Mason. In this novel, Rhys mentions Bertha's name to be originally Antoinette Cosway, who was a creole woman and the daughter of previous slave owners in the Coulibri Estate. Her family's wealth almost went into ruins due to the Emancipation Act in 1833 which led him towards death because of drinking too much in depression. The Emancipation did not change the fact that colonialism kept the lives of the East oppressed and so there was more hatred released between the blacks and the white. Even though she had a mother named Annette, she was devoid of motherly love and care due to Annette's depression leading her towards isolation. Antoinette had only one friend named Tia, while growing up, who a black girl brought

by Christophine as her playmate. Her family was hated by the people of Coulibri and called 'white cockroaches' because from the outside, they looked like white Europeans but from the inside, they would always be a cockroach or black (The Construction of Gender and Race in Jamaica). Antoinette was discriminated against for being a creole by society. She was the victim of post-colonial grudge against both sides of the colonized and the colonizer. After a few years of being despised by her surroundings, her family's lost glory was back to being the way it was when her mother married an Englishman, Mr. Mason. But the brewing anger of the freed black slaves ended up setting fire to their Coulibri house and had to flee. During that incident, when she ran towards Tia for consolation, she ended up getting hit by a rock thrown by Tia. This made it evident to how Antoinette was the victim of marginalization and unnecessary bullying by her own descendants for her racial mixture. She was left without having any more friends or anyone who truly accepted her for who she was.

Annette gave into madness soon after the death of her ill son after the fire, which led Mr. Mason to send Antoinette to a convent school with other creole girls where she would be tamed and molded into becoming a cultivated ladylike woman which is acceptable by the society. During her time in the convent, Antoinette was bullied by a girl near the "long empty street stretched away to the convent." All her "books fell to the ground." However, in contrast to Jane's punch against John's bullying, Antoinette did not protest and rather her cousin Sandi Cosway who was at the "other side of the street had stopped and looked" towards them and ran to her and gave the one book which Antoinette forgot to pick up from the ground. Antoinette's docile reaction to bullying resembled the characteristics of a graceful and oppressed lady of that era (Rhys 31-32). She is not as rebellious as Jane and rather a male figure came to help her out. When she was 17 years old, Mr. Mason visited her to inform her of her upcoming marriage

arrangement with one of his English friend's sons all the way from England, the land of the colonizers. It is to be noted that they were about to arrive in the winter due to the weather being convenient for them. Coulibri at most times had warm, clear and bright weather while England was mostly gloomy and cold. This portrayed the binaries of the East and the West which were the total opposite of each other. It resembled the future married life of Antoinette and the male protagonist to be that of the self and the other. Even though Rhys did not name Antoinette's husband but as this is a prequel to *Jane Eyre,* we can safely assume him to be Rochester. Antoinette's character was successfully shaped into society's expectations of how a lady is supposed to be, when she dreams of getting married. She was "following the man who is with" her and "holding up the skirt" of her dress. In addition, she followed him even though she was afraid to do so, but she "made no effort" to save herself (Rhys 40). Here, we again see the difference between the character of Jane and Antoinette being the definitions of the two types of women, the society wanted and loathed.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Rhys portrays a lot of Antoinette's deeply repressed emotions and desires through her dreams. According to Sigmund Freud, a person's dreams are a mixture of their motivations, thoughts and wish fulfillments (Cherry). Antoinette's deep emotions of hating England was represented by another dream of hers where she was "no longer in forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and trees are different trees", which "she doesn't know" (Rhys 40). After she had her dream, she expressed to her convent's nun, Maria Augustine that she dreamt about being in 'Hell'. To Antoinette, England was as good as hell. On the contrary, Antoinette still did not protest against this marriage even though she was about to commit to a person who was from an English descend with a perspective of Western norms and beliefs. In comparison, Jane's reluctance to marry someone she did not prefer was very strong,

while Antoinette just obeys Mr. Mason, the patriarch of her family. Rochester, on the other hand, did not wish to marry Antoinette who was from the East, but did not have any choice as his father forced him to do so in order to gain money from Mr. Mason for this marriage to become financially independent. The concept of marriage for status and dowry is what is reflected in this novel by Rhys.

After the wedding in a Spanish town, they both go on a honeymoon on one of Windward Island towns named Massacre which was owned by her mother Annette. While on their honeymoon, Rochester referred to a servant named Amelie as a "lovely little creature" (Rhys 43). Having the concept of the people of the East being 'savage' and 'uncivilized', Rochester dehumanizes Amelie as she was half-caste. Not only her, he also referred to another woman named Caroline to be a "gaudy old creature" (Rhys 44). Moreover, when Rochester saw a child on a paved road while passing by, to him 'it was as if he'd put his service mask on the savage reproachful face" (Rhys 80). Being an Englishman, Rochester believed the language English to be of the most civilized and when he was in Westward Islands and around people who spoke in Patois, he felt "discomfort and melancholy" (Rhys 45). His criticism did not stop there as he made comments on how this place was "not only wild but menacing". It was' 'an extreme green" and "everything is too much" for him. When, "the sky was dark blue through the dark green mango leaves", Rochester commented that "this is my place and this is where he belongs and this is where I wish to stay" (Rhys 83). He preferred the dark and gloomy side of the Caribbean which resonated with England's all-time weather. He disliked the colors and bright life in the Caribbean which is not what Rochester is used to in England. Due to the islands being unknown to him, he follows Antoinette when she asks him to "unwillingly". On the island, Antoinette was the dominant character as she knew what to do and where to go while Rochester had to follow

her lead rather than being the dominant one. In contrast to Rochester's demeaning and controlling nature in *Jane Eyre*, his lack of being able to control things in the East has bothered him and made him not like the island. To Rochester, Antoinette's "beautiful island seems quite unreal and like a dream" (Rhys 57). On the other hand, Antoinette was "never sad in the morning" because of all the colorful "flowers" in the garden but she was never happy "in the sunset" (Rhys 104). She hated darkness or gloominess which connotes the fact that England would be a nightmare for her.

Rochester could not find the Caribbean to his likings and Antoinette being a part of this culture, its people and traditions, he always found something or the other wrong with her. Even though Antoinette's family was part Creole, they still belonged from a high-class family status, which made a lot of the others feel jealous. A man named Daniel Cosway, claimed to be Antoinette's step brother and her father's illegitimate son to Rochester and wrote him a letter to blackmail him into thinking that Antoinette will eventually turn out like Annette and that she was having an affair with her cousin Sandy. According to Daniel, she would soon give in "the madness that is in her, and in all these white Creoles" (Rhys 72). In that era, "people thought of madness as a 'female disease'" (Sabri 6). Therefore, Daniel tried to emphasize that fact on Antoinette because her mother already did succumb into madness due being treated as a colonial subject and subordinated by the society. All Daniel wanted was money from the Cosway family which he claimed to be a part of. However, his racist remarks did have an effect on their marriage as Rochester soon tried to relate Antoinette's behaviour to madness. There is a significant change seen in their married life as they start to argue a lot and do not sleep together anymore. This upset Antoinette a lot and she ended up asking help from Christophine about what she can do to make him love her again as she believes that "he does not love" her anymore. As a

reply to her desperation, Christophine advises her to "pack up and go" (Rhys 83). However, Antoinette during the Victorian era, women's property and money belonged to their husbands' and they did not have independent access to it anymore. Thus, Antoinette reflected: "I am not rich now and so I have no money on my own at all as everything now belongs to him. That is the English law." (Rhys 83). The colonial traditions have marginalized Antoinette into being dependent on this marriage and Rochester. She was not like Jane who still did not stay at Thornfield and marry the love of her life, even though she had no money for survival.

As the novel goes on, Rochester's dominant colonizing characteristics start surfacing when he forces the English name 'Bertha' on Antoinette and starts calling her by it. He tries to snatch away her identity to make her oppressed, label her as his colonial object and portray his dominance over her. Antoinette was facing colonialism, subordination, racism and was on the verge of an unhealthy marriage which led her to drink rum. When Rochester tried to stop her from doing so and called her 'Bertha', Antoinette retaliated, 'cursed and bit his arms'. According to Rochester's description of Antoinette's aggressive nature, "she looked like this red-eyed wild-haired stranger who was my wife shouting obscenities at me" (Rhys 119-120). According to the definitions of patriarchal and colonial society, "Healthy women were women who were submissive in their relationships with men. They were less adventurous, easily influenced, and less aggressive." (Sabri 9). "Those who did not adhere to these roles were labeled and considered mad" (Sabri 10). Therefore, Antoinette's aggressiveness and retaliation were labeled as madness and dehumanizing by Rochester. In addition, Rochester declared to himself and the readers: "She'll have no lover, for I don't want her and she'll see no other" "You hate me and I hate you. We'll see who hates best. But first, I will destroy your hatred. Now my hate is colder, stronger and you'll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing." (Rhys 135, 139). This line

depicts Rochester's possessiveness, domination, controlling nature and the patriarchal characteristics of being the superior one even while hating. This hatred was because "she belonged to the magic and the loveliness", referring to Antoinette being a Creole girl from the West Indies. To make Antoinette's nightmare come true. Rochester decided to move to England along with Antoinette.

After they arrive in the land of the West, England, in Thornfield, Rochester decides to keep Antoinette locked up in the attic with Grace Poole as her guard and caretaker. While the housekeeper of Thornfield, Mrs. Fairfax recruits Grace, she tells her that she "knew him as a young man" and "he was gentle, generous, brave" but "his stay in the West Indies has changed him out of all knowledge" with now having "grey hair and misery in his eyes" (Rhys 143). Fairfax assumes that it was the people and culture of the East which changed him into becoming this cruel version of himself for having his wife locked up. Helpless Antoinette admits that "they have taken everything away" and is now suffering from an identity crisis (Rhys 145). She loses herself in England and is marooned as Rochester literally takes away her identity, reality and the place where she belonged. She even wrote to her brother Richard to take her away from that place where she is "dying because it is so cold and dark" (Rhys 148). She loses sense of time and day in the attic along with herself. Even though she found ways to sneak out of the attic while Grace fell asleep drunk, she did not run away or attempt to protest herself to Rochester. She relied on another male figure of her life, Richard, to come to her rescue rather than taking the situation in her own hands. Unlike Jane who asserted herself in-front of Rochester and the patriarchal society, and took necessary steps needed to not lose her self-worth and independence. However, at the end of the novel, Rhys portrays how Antoinette jumps to her death by setting

fire to Thornfield and crippling Rochester in the process. She chose death as a way to gain

independence rather than acting on assertion and self-will like Jane.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

During the Victorian period, women were considered as subordinates of men and exploited sexually as well as emotionally. Their main responsibilities were assumed to be taking care of their husbands and children and cooking meals for them. It was acceptable for men to do as they pleased while the women had restrictions and had to act in a certain tamed manner and be submissive towards the men of their lives just so that they be accepted by the patriarchal society. Women not only had to face the challenges of patriarchal society alongside colonization, they also had to encounter racism and classism. They were triply colonized. However, during the 19th and 20th century, women were realizing their need to protest against it. In order to get more acknowledgement, participation rights and independence, women stood up for themselves and started seeking equality and the same rights as men.

The novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are examples of two different characteristics of the same society and how power can determine one's position in the society. While Bronte showed how a woman like Jane can be the opposite of what the society expects women to be and still succeed in gaining ultimate happiness and independence, through her novel *Jane Eyre,* Rhys showed how the society can maroon, destroy and make a woman go mad under the triple colonization of gender, class and race. They both portray two sides of the same coin in the society which reflects each other's realities. Jane represents the rebellious woman of that time and Antoinette represents the type of woman the society expects one to be. On the other hand, we observe how the male protagonist's character reflects upon the typical patriarchal male of the society in these two novels. In *Jane Eyre,* Rochester's independence and dominating

nature could not gain him the love of Jane and rather his crippling and dependency on her helped him gain Jane's commitment to marry him. On the contrary, in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Antoinette's husband whom we assumed to be Rochester, struggles to be the patriarch, ruins his marriage in doing so and succeeds in turning Antoinette into Bertha.

Works Cited

Abaker, Dr. Bahreldin Haroon Guma. "THE IMAGE OF VICTORIAN WOMEN AS

DEPICTED IN JANE EYRE BY CHARLOTTE BRONTE". *European Journal of English*

Language And Literature Studies, vol 7, no. 6, 2019, pp. 49-58. *Eajournals.Org*, doi:2055-0146.

Abu- Samra, Reem Mohammad. "Identity Crisis: A Comparative Study Between Antoinette In

Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea and Nazneen In Monica Ali's Brick Lane". *Meu.Edu.Jo*, 2016,

https://meu.edu.jo/libraryTheses/5870d4c2c146a_1.pdf.

Ahmed, Shene Mohammad. "Double Colonization: A Postcolonial Feminist Study Of Sia

Figiel'S Where We Once Belonged". *Scholaria: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, vol 9, no.

1, 2019, pp. 1-10. *Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana*, doi:10.24246/j.js.2019.v9.i1.p1-10.

Accessed 14 Oct 2021.

Allen, Sr Prudence. *PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND THE CONCEPT OF WOMAN IN EARLY*

JEWISHPHILOSOPHY*.Florilegium,1987,p.92,ttp://file:///C:/Users/Farhan%20Ashiq/Downloa

ds/administrator,+flor9art05.pdf. Accessed 14 Oct 2021.

Armitage, Helen. "12 Women Writers Who Wrote Under Male Pseudonyms". *Theculturetrip*,

2018, https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/12-female-writers-who-wrote-under-

male-pseudonyms/.

BEAUVOIR, SIMONE DE, and H. M. PARSHLEY. "INTRODUCTION." THE SECOND

SEX, vol. 2, LOWE AND BRYDONE, LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN, 1949, pp. 13–

28, https://newuniversityinexileconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Simone-de-

Beauvoir-The-Second-Sex-Jonathan-Cape-1956.pdf. Accessed 22 Mar. 2022.

Blakemore, Erin. "Colonialism Facts And Information". *Culture*,2019,

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/colonialism. Accessed 16 Oct 2021.

Bronte, Charlotte. Jane Eyre. https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2014-04-09-

jane%20eyre.pdf.

Cherry, Kendra. "Why Do We Dream." Verywell Mind, https://www.verywellmind.com/why-

do-we-dream-top-dream-theories-2795931

Clerk, M. (n.d.). Women in Crisis: The Colonial Roots of Epidemic Violence and Oppression.

Library2. Retrieved February 12, 2022,

from https://library2.smu.ca/bitstream/handle/01/28201/Women%20in%20Crisis%20-

%20%20Colonial%20Roots%20of%20Epidemic%20Violence%20and%20Oppression.pdf?sequ

ence=1

Coartney, Stephanie. "Identity Crisis For The Creole W". *Mckendree.Edu*,

https://www.mckendree.edu/academics/scholars/issue10/coartney.htm.

Gao, Haiyan. "Reflection on Feminism in Jane Eyre." Home - Theory and Practice in Language

Studies, ACADEMY PUBLISHER, 2013, https://www.academypublication.com/tpls/.

Hamadi, Lutfi. "EDWARD SAID: THE POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND THE

LITERATURE OF DECOLONIZATION". *European Scientific Journal*, vol 2, 2014, pp. 1-

8. *Core.Ac.Uk*, doi:ISSN- 1857- 7431. Accessed 30 Oct 2021.

InèsSoukni, Leïla. "Hegemonic Power FromColonisation To Colonial Liberation: A Historical-

Analytical Narrative Of French Colonial Dominance Over Tunisia From 1881-1956 And How It

Resulted In The Bizerte Crisis Of 1961". *Diva-Portal.Org*, 2020, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1472846/FULLTEXT02. Accessed 14 Nov 2021.

Ionoaia, Eliana. "THE CREOLIZATION OF THE SELF: FROM JANE EYRE TO WIDE SARGASSO SEA." *University of Bucharest Review: A Jouranl of Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. X, no. 2, 2008, pp. 1-15, http://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/<wbr></wbr>0/elianaionoaia.pdf

Jeffreys, Sheila. "Kate Millett's Sexual Politics: 40 Years On." Women's Studies International Forum, http://sheila-jeffreys.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kate-Millett.pdf.

Khrisat, Abdulhafeth Ali. "Patriarchal Dominance in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, and The Waves: A Study of the Female Characters." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 7, Apr. 2012, pp. 141–146., https://doi.org/ISSN 2039ᵀ2117.

Kipling, Rudyard. "The White Man's Burden." 1899. *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/kipling.asp. Assessed 10 March 2022.

Koubek, Tracy. The Emergence of Feminism Who Won the Debate in Women Education? Rousseau or Wollstonecraft? during the ... - Rollins College. 2012, https://scholarship.rollins.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=mls.

Lee, Dorothy Ann. "How the Cult of Virgin Mary Turned a Symbol of Female Authority into a Tool of Patriarchy." The Conversation, https://theconversation.com/how-the-cult-of-virgin-mary-turned-a-symbol-of-female-authority-into-a-tool-of-patriarchy-127806.

 Lowes, Melissa. "Charlotte Brontë: A Modern Woman." The Victorian Web, https://victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/lowes1.html.

Moosavinia, S. R. et al. "Edward Said'S Orientalism And The Study Of The Self And The Other In Orwell'S Burmese Days". Vol 2, no. 1103-113, 2011. *Cscanada.Net*, doi:ISSN 1923-1563.

Mussett, Shannon. "Simone De Beauvoir (1908-1986)." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://iep.utm.edu/simone-de-beauvoir/#SH5c.

Owusu-Gyamfi, Clifford. "Who Won the Debate in Women Education? Rousseau or Wollstonecraft?" *Journal of Education and Practice*, vol. 7, no. 6, 2016, pp. 191-193, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1092496.pdf

Rampton, Martha. "Four Waves of Feminism." Pacific University, 13 July 2020, https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism#:~:text=The%20first%20wave%20of%20feminism,with%20a%20focus%20on%20suffrage.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Penguin, 1968.

Rosamond, Ben. "hegemony". Encyclopedia Britannica, 6 May. 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/hegemony. Accessed 31 October 2021.

Sabri, Helena Ryan. "Conflicts in a Marriage Antoinette and Mr. Rochester Wide Sargasso Sea -." Diva-Portal.org, Feb. 2011, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:397432/fulltext01.pdf.

Said, E., 1978. *ORIENTALISM*. [online] Sites.evergreen.edu. Available at: <https://sites.evergreen.edu/politicalshakespeares/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2014/12/Said_full.pdf> [Accessed 8 March 2022].

Scott, Millicent Jarvis. "Jane Eyre: A Novel of Resistance and Rebellion? by Millicent Jarvis-Scott." BSJ, 30 Apr. 2021, https://butlerscholarlyjournal.com/2021/05/01/jane-eyre-a-novel-of-resistance-and-rebellion-by-millicent-jarvis-scott/.

Slavery In America. *HISTORY*, 2009, https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery. Accessed 13 Nov 2021.

Sultana, Abeda. "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis." Banglajol, The Arts Faculty

Journal, https://www.banglajol.info/index.php/AFJ/article/download/12929/9293.

The Age Of Imperialism (1870-1914). *Tamaqua.K12.Pa.Us*, https://www.tamaqua.k12.pa.us/cms/lib07/PA01000119/Centricity/Domain/119/TheAgeofImperialism.pdf. Accessed 14 Nov 2021.

"The Beginnings OfDecolonisation And The Emergence Of The Non-Aligned States - Historical Events In The European Integration Process (1945–2014) - CVCE Website". *Cvce.Eu*, 2016, https://www.cvce.eu/en/recherche/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/0397bac4-10f2-4b69-8d1a-366ca4a08c34. Accessed 16 Oct 2021.

"The Construction of Gender and Race in Jamaica." A Blogs@Baruch Site, WordPreess, https://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/yonistefanomatt/?page_id=16.

Thompsell, Angela. "Why Was Africa Called the Dark Continent?" ThoughtCo, Aug. 26, 2021, thoughtco.com/why-africa-called-the-dark-continent-43310.

Thurman, Judith. "Introduction To Simone De Beauvoir'S 'The Second Sex' (Published

2010)". *Nytimes.Com*, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/30/books/excerpt-introduction-

second-sex.html.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication Of The Rights Of Woman*. 2010,

https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/wollstonecraft1792.pdf. Accessed 17 Oct 2021

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*.

PDFBooksWorld, https://uniteyouthdublin.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/a-vindication-of-the-

rights-of-woman-by-mary-wollstonecraft.pdf

Yadav, Riya. "Freud and Penis Envy – a Failure of Courage?" The

Psychologist, https://thepsychologist.s3.eu-west-

2.amazonaws.com/articles/pdfs/0618yadav.pdf?X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-

SHA256&X-Amz-

Credential=AKIA3JJOMCSRX35UA6UU%2F20220322%2Feu-west-

2%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20220322T111313Z&X-Amz-

SignedHeaders=Host&X-Amz-Expires=10&X-Amz-

Signature=6b92ac1a58f2a3bf63ab05523b732ecfba32af2724d10aee69c608f64e129578.