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THE ABSENT VOICE: JANE EYRE¹ AND WIDE SARGASSO SEA²

Sezgi ÖZTOP HANER*

Abstract

The heroines of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) experience oppression and degradation due to the patriarchal and colonial subjugation in England and Jamaica during that time. Jane's struggle against patriarchal oppression corresponds with Antoinette's resistance to colonial subjugation in the sense that both attempt to achieve self-recognition and liberty of speech together with cultural and economic liberty. While Brontë's main concern in *Jane Eyre* is to articulate her displeasure against gender and class inequality in England, Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* focuses on the racial inequality in Jamaica. As a consequence, Brontë and Rhys present two different ideologies and thereby two different social reality that indicate each authors' apprehension and world view.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Colonialism, Cultural Identity Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea.

1. Introduction

Two novels, *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by Jean Rhys, demonstrate the experience of women in patriarchal and colonial societies during the mid-nineteenth century. The British heroine, Jane Eyre, and the Jamaican heroine, Antoinette Cosway Mason, struggle to assert their voices in a male-dominated society. Jane's resistance to patriarchal domination is similar to Antoinette's resistance to colonial oppression in the sense that both struggle to identify themselves and define their existence. In this sense, their resistance to the dominant power converges since it shares basic ambitions, particularly to achieve self-recognition together with cultural and economic liberation.

2. Patriarchal Oppression in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë emphasizes Jane's individuality while suppressing Bertha's voice and thereby reducing her to a voiceless character whose life and existence are determined and controlled by others, particularly Rochester. It is in this silence in *Jane Eyre* that the imperialist ideology manifests itself. In fact, Brontë sacrifices the racially different Bertha to make way for Jane's complete development and freedom. Making way for Jane's progress at the expense of Bertha then indicates Brontë's attitude towards the racially different Bertha.

In Brontë's novel, Bertha emerges as "a black-visaged character" whose blackness is more a reflection of her rebellious actions rather than of her physical complexion (Meyer, 1996a: 48). At the same time, Bertha's presence in *Jane Eyre*, despite her reduction to a voiceless character, is as powerful as Jane's since it reinforces the issue of racial and cultural prejudice rooted in the practice of colonialism and imperialism. In the course of the novel, Bertha's silence turns into her rebellious actions. When she escapes from her ten years' imprisonment to burn and stab her oppressors, Bertha becomes "a symbol of revenge" on the part of the colonized races and "a sort of revolt" that threatens the British colonies in Jamaica (Meyer, 1996a: 51-52).

In addition to her reduction to inarticulateness, it is remarkable that Bertha is the only character in Brontë's novel who is not given a full characterization as a human being. Brontë's usage of animal imagery to overstate Bertha's racial and cultural difference is evident in Jane's description of her as having "a savage face" and "blood shot eyes" (*JE*, 1996: 281). Similarly, the dehumanization of Bertha by reducing her to a beast is seen in another comment by Jane: "the clothed hyena rose up, and stood on its hind feet" (*JE*, 1996: 290). By describing a human being in this way, Brontë consciously or unconsciously reflects an imperialist attitude towards the racial "other".

Throughout the novel, Bertha's racial "otherness" is associated not only with savagery and bestiality but also with sexuality and irrationality as reflected in Rochester's utterance: "What a pigmy intellect she had, and what giant propensities... Bertha Mason, the true daughter of an infamous mother, dragged me

¹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1996). All the future references to this work will be to the abbreviated title *JE* and the page number.

² Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1982). All the future references to this work will be to the abbreviated title *WSS* and the page number.

* Instructor, Dumlupınar University, School of Foreign Languages, Department of Basic Foreign Languages.

through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (JE, 1996: 302). Here, it is worth noting that Bertha's sexuality is associated not with her gender but with her racial difference, which can also be inferred from Rochester's elicitation of his racial superiority as a criterion upon which Bertha's family chooses him as a proper bridegroom: "[Bertha's] family wished to secure me because I was of a good race" (JE, 1996: 301). Here, Rochester places himself in the position of respectable English man. His racial discourse can be seen again when he contrasts her with Jane: "Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder, this face with that mask, this form with that bulk" (JE, 1996: 290).

Madness is another defining feature of Bertha's racial otherness. First, Rochester explains Jane that his wife's "excesses had prematurely developed the germs of insanity" (JE, 1996: 302). Here, Rochester and Jane uses Bertha's madness and her excess in action as a criteria to define themselves as temperate and rational people. Bertha's madness is also shown by the fact that she is confined like mad people: "since the medical men had pronounced her mad, she had, of course been shut up" (JE, 1996: 303). Moreover, Bertha's unpredictable behaviour is attributed to her madness as asserted by Grace Pool's words: "One never knows what she has, sir: she is so cunning: it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft" (JE, 1996: 290).

Bertha's misrepresentation is further emphasized through her imprisonment, which leads to her rebellion against her oppressors. The atmosphere of the third floor of Thornfield, where Bertha is locked up, is "heavy" with "the repressed history of [colonial] crimes" committed by a "violent race" (Arac and Ritvo, 1995: 167). These are crimes which have been removed from sight and enclosed with Bertha in a room without a window. This setting provides enough reason for Bertha to take revenge on a "violent race". In such a case, Brontë seems to justify Bertha's imprisonment since her freedom threatens the course of the novel and thereby the British colonial power.

Significantly, Rochester describes Thornfield as "the tent of Achan" (JE, 1996: 296) and particularly its third floor, which according to Susan Meyer "incarnates the history of the English ruling class as represented by the Rochesters" (Meyer, 1996a: 71). Even Mrs. Fairfax acknowledges Jane that "the Rochesters have been rather a violent than a quiet race in their time" (JE, 1996: 113).

The more Rochester tries to deny Bertha - to lock her in the past - the more she comes to represent his own past. The third floor of Thornfield is rendered as "the aspect of a home of the past: a shrine of memory" (JE, 1996: 113). "What crime was this," Jane wonders, "that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion?" (JE, 1996: 211).

By referring to Thornfield as "this accursed place - this tent of Achan" (JE, 1996: 296), Rochester reveals his implications in colonial conquest. The Biblical story of, as Tracy puts it, "Achan's expropriation of an other people's wealth," which he buries under his tent, parallels Rochester's "expropriation of Bertha and her inheritance" (Tracy, 2004: 19-59). At the same time, Achan's punishment by burning foreshadows what is to come for Rochester in the end.

Despite the striking differences between Jane and Bertha, both are regarded as "outsiders" and "others." At the same time, Jane and Bertha share the rebellious spirit which is associated throughout Brontë's novel with imageries of slavery and rebellious slaves (Meyer, 1996a: 55). However, the reason for their rebellion differs. Bertha, being doubly oppressed, revolts against patriarchal and colonial domination, whereas Jane rebels against patriarchal oppression. While Bertha's imprisonment is perceived in terms of her belonging to an inferior race, Jane's confinement in the red room is explained by her inferior social position. "[L]ike any other rebel slave ..." (JE, 1996: 24), the ten-year-old Jane "... resisted all the way" (JE, 1996: 24). Then, Jane is imprisoned for her unacceptable and assertive behaviour in the red room where "the mood of the revolted slave" (JE, 1996: 27) "keeps alive her sense of injustice" (Sharp, 2006: 80). While Bertha's passive resistance turns into covert rebellion -since she burns her husband and stabs her brother-, Jane's passive resistance turns into overt rebellion when she confronts Mrs Reed: "Shaking from head to foot, thrilled with ungovernable excitement, I continued- 'I am glad you are no relation of mine: I will never call you aunt again as long as I live'" (JE, 1996: 47). In the same confrontation scene, Jane's wildness is seen again: "Deceit is not my fault! I cried out in a savage, high voice" (JE, 1996: 48). In fact, Jane's passionate behaviour is an act of self-defense in her attempt to restore her own identity.

3. Colonial Oppression in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

To rectify Brontë's omission of Bertha's voice, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* reverses the order of "narrative perspective" in *Jane Eyre* (Glen, 2009: 162). By reconstructing Brontë's text, Rhys allows her Jamaican heroine Antoinette to narrate her story from her own perspective. Exactly as Brontë gives Jane the power to revolt against patriarchal domination by granting her complete control over her own language and voice, Rhys gives Antoinette the power to revolt against colonial domination by granting her a voice and enabling her to represent herself. The ability to narrate one's own story then becomes a strategy of "survival" for both Jane and Antoinette (Thorpe, 1990: 181). At the same time, this is an act of self-assertion

in a male-dominated society. In the first part of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette recalls her childhood at Coulibri and her life at the convent before her marriage to Rochester. The second part is a joint narration between Antoinette and her husband Rochester in which he starts to impose his point of view. The last part indicates Antoinette's disintegrating narration as Rochester confines her in the attic of Thornfield Hall.

Antoinette is silenced twice in her life before being silenced for ever, first by her mother and then by her husband. Annette, Antoinette's mother, constantly orders the child to leave her alone: "She pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her" (WSS, 1982: 20). On the other hand, Rochester refuses to believe what Antoinette says. When he receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's illegitimate brother, revealing the secret of Antoinette's mad mother, Rochester reads the letter and takes it into consideration, but he is reluctant to listen to Antoinette's version. This incident indicates the beginning of Antoinette's exclusion and betrayal by her husband, as she tells Rochester: "He [Daniel] tells lies about us and he is sure that you will believe him and not listen to the other side" (WSS, 1982: 128). From that moment, "the other side," which refers to Antoinette's own voice, is being denied for ever. When the couple leave Jamaica for England, Rochester takes complete possession of his wife and her story. The story of their marriage, as it appears in Brontë's novel, becomes Rochester's story. Instead of being an equal partner, Antoinette becomes a silent character in his narration.

Since the ability to speak for oneself is by itself power, both Antoinette and Jane are deprived of this privilege as they are constantly silenced by the dominant power. The main difference between the two female characters is that Antoinette declines from partially silent status to become an inarticulate person. However, Jane proceeds in the opposite direction as she gradually gains power. Before acquiring control over her own voice, Jane suffers a lot as an orphan child and a female. She is judged harshly by people around her, and is often denied the right to speak, as when she is scolded by Mrs. Reed for asking questions: "Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners; besides, there's something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent" (JE, 1996: 20). Condemning Jane to silence is meant to secure the dominant and oppressive power of patriarchy.

Early in her childhood, Jane begins to exert a kind of control over her language and speech to assert herself, which is exemplified by her soliloquy before her confrontation with Mrs Reed: "Speak I must: I had been trodden on severely, and must turn: but how?" (JE, 1996: 47). Jane's concern with reflecting the appropriate form of language to convey the truth of her experience is also indicated when she addresses Mrs Reed: "And that punishment you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me, knocked me down for nothing. I will tell anybody who asks me questions this exact tale" (JE, 1996: 47). This angry statement is also significant in the sense that it refers to Jane's attempt later at Lowood to tell her story to Miss Temple in a modified way: "Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me" (JE, 1996: 80).

Moreover, Jane's self-awareness in relation to her language can be associated with her use of art as a means of self-control. For instance, in her painting of Blanche Ingram's portrait, Jane reveals her will to discipline her mind by constructing a sense of reality. In other words, Jane's self-expression through art is controlled by her awareness of social hierarchical divisions between her and Miss Ingram.

In contrast to Brontë's text, which is constructed by a central "narrating subject," the narrative of Rhys's novel breaks down the constraints of the imperialist discourse. Rhys also eliminates the assumptions advanced through Jane's voice regarding the image of the Western self as superior to a colonial Other who is regarded as primitive and not quite human. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette's narrative reflects her desire to assert her cultural identity by challenging Rochester's imperialist assumptions.

In fact, the discourse of Antoinette and Rochester is in a violent conflict. While Rochester maintains a white male imperialist stance, Antoinette attempts to preserve the integrity of her own self. As a consequence, both stand in a binary cultural opposition. There is a wide difference in their perceptions because they represent two opposing consciousness. Through extended passages of dialogue, Antoinette challenges Rochester's superiority by emphasizing her point of view, as this example of their argumentative exchanges shows:

"Is it true," she said, "that England is like a dream?..."

"Well," I answered annoyed, "that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream."

"But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?"

"And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?"

"More easily," she said, much more easily. "Yes a big city must be like a dream."

"No, this is unreal and like a dream," I thought. (WSS, 1982: 80-1)

Antoinette's tendency to resist the imperialist discourse, as voiced through Rochester's consciousness, can also be seen in the argument that emerged from Christophine's speech when she is serving them coffee. Antoinette attempts to defend Christophine by correcting Rochester's distorted views of blacks along with his racist language. She rectifies his judgments of Christophine, especially his attribution of laziness and vulgar language to her, and thereby to the natives in general, as the argument indicates:

"Her coffee is delicious but her language is horrible..."

"Don't you like Christophine?"

"She is a very worthy person no doubt. I can't say I like her language."

"It doesn't mean anything," said Antoinette.

"And she looks so lazy. She dawdles about."

"Again you are mistaken..." (WSS, 1982: 85-6)

Rochester's disapproval of Christophine's verbal style is not insignificant. This recurring pattern dramatizes his concern with the question of the adequacy of language and its correspondence with imperialist standards of expression. This attitude is shown again in his refusal to take the native boy who wishes to accompany him to England, even though he can speak English, by replying in a witty manner that "He hasn't learned any English that I can understand" (WSS, 1982: 171).

The conflict between Antoinette and Rochester's discourses brings to the surface power relations between the two, which are gender driven and culturally based. The gap between their perspectives signifies a lack of communication and understanding that gives rise to mutual mistrust, a desire to control the other, and consequently violence. This aspect of the relationship is not explored in Brontë's story, simply because Antoinette is denied existence. In Rhys's novel, Rochester is represented as a British imperialist subject who is exhilarated by the exotic Caribbean landscape, where he experiences a strange sense of freedom, as he says: "It seemed right in that lonely place. Here I can do as I like (WSS, 1982: 92). It is the landscape that causes him to experience estrangement. The significance of his experience lies in its being free from the constraints of Brontë's imperialist text, which sets cultural boundaries between Europe and its Other. By yielding to the exotic pull of the landscape and the creole woman, Rochester blurs these boundaries.

Antoinette's subversion of the imperialist discourse is also evidenced by the high value she attaches to her own identity. Her concern with independent selfhood is manifested throughout the novel. It is emphasized by the recurring image of the mirror, which is associated with her confirmation of self. When Rochester contrarily calls her Bertha, and provokes her by saying, "I think of you as Bertha" (WSS, 1982: 135), Antoinette strongly protests this false name because it signifies the destruction of her real identity: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name" (WSS, 1982: 147). When Rochester takes her to England in the end, Antoinette's sense of loss and uprootedness is emphasized by her remark on the room to which she is confined: "There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now" (WSS, 1982: 180).

Even when confined to the attic of Thornfield Hall, Antoinette struggles to restore her own identity. She is aware of the importance of her true name for her sense of her identity, insisting that "Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass" (WSS, 1982: 180). In this desperate situation, Antoinette decides to perform an act which, though it brings about her destruction, is an achievement for her since it signifies self-assertion. This act is to burn Thornfield Hall in order to avenge herself on Rochester, who has repeatedly betrayed her. Antoinette's last act is an attempt to reject the constraints of the imperialist discourse that seeks to dominate in Brontë's text at the exclusion of the Other.

If we look at Bertha in Brontë's novel, we notice that she is described as a white creole, a fact which marks the ambiguity of her race. In her definition to the word "creole," Susan Meyer, who cites a nineteenth century history of the United States, affirms:

The word creole was used in the nineteenth century to refer to both blacks and whites born in the West Indies, a usage which caused some confusion, for there are creole whites, creole negroes, creole horses... etc. Creole whites, are, of all persons, the most anxious to be deemed of pure white blood (Meyer, 1996b: 48).

The ambiguity of Bertha's race is obvious in Brontë's novel, where, on one hand, she represents the colonized natives who are oppressed and enslaved, on the other hand, we perceive her as an heiress to a West Indian fortune, as a woman whose father is a West Indian planter and merchant, and whose step-brother, Richard Mason, is socially accepted as a white man. We find this ambiguity also emphasized in Rhys's novel, in which Antoinette and her creole mother are ostracized by whites and despised by their black servants. They are suspended between the two races and isolated from both; the blacks who call them "white cockroaches" and the whites who refer to them as "white niggers." Antoinette's undefined race is a major dilemma in her life as she declares: "So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (WSS, 1982: 102).

Since her childhood, Antoinette's feelings of rejection and marginality in relation to her family and to the people around her are intensified by her experience as a creole. As a child, Antoinette notices that nobody comes to visit them, and that the Jamaican ladies do not approve of her mother, who is originally from Martinique. In fact, Annette, Antoinette's mother, is doubly rejected. She is isolated from the black women who consider her an outsider, and excluded from the white community because of her being a French West Indian woman in a British West Indian colony. We can feel a deep yearning for human contact and security which Antoinette and her mother lack, as Antoinette bitterly acknowledges: "My father, visitors, horses, feeling safe in bed-all belonged to the past" (WSS, 1982: 17), before the decline of the family estate.

The exclusion of Annette and her daughter Antoinette by the former slaves and the new colonizers in the island is related to the socio-economic and political changes following the emancipation of slaves. Despite the emancipation of slaves, it is noticeable that human relationships in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are established in terms of racial and class differences. For instance, Antoinette's nurse, Christophine, is a wedding gift to Annette who chooses to remain with the Cosways and later on with the Masons even after emancipation. In this context, Annette says: "Christophine stayed with me because she wanted to stay. She had her own very good reasons you may be sure. I dare say we would have died if she'd turned against us and that would have been a better fate" (WSS, 1982: 21). Christophine's good reasons point out a relationship of "intense dependency," for she moves from being a slave to become Antoinette's nurse, which in a sense indicates the "continuity between slavery and post-slavery conditions" (Gregg, 1995: 86). With regard to other freed slaves, Annette adds sharply, "They stayed, because they wanted somewhere to sleep and something to eat" (WSS, 1982: 22), which points out that the emancipation of slaves did not put an end to the master/slave relationship of the past because it did not improve the situation of blacks in the West Indies, and neither did it present them better opportunities. Instead, slaves became "indentured" servants for the same master, a relation which intensified class and racial inferiority after emancipation (Strachan, 2002: 71).

Rhys places Christophine into *Wide Sargasso Sea* to demonstrate her role as "Obeah" woman and her challenge to British civilization. Obeah is one of several Caribbean religions joining Western or Central African religious practices with its focus on multiple gods, rituals, and incantations (Olmos, 1997: 2). Antoinette remembers being afraid to enter Christophine's room stating "No one had ever spoken to me about obeah - but I knew what I would find if I dared to look ... a dead man's dried hand, White chicken feathers, a cock with its throat cut dying slowly" (WSS, 1982: 18). Moreover, Christophine's uses Obeah's strengths as a threat in order to curtail Amélie's sexual interest in Rochester as she says: "Perhaps you don't get up again with the belllyache I give you" (WSS, 1982: 61). At the same time, through her knowledge of Obeah and an Obeah love potion, Christophine exerts her power or influence on Antoinette and Rochester.

Christophine also challenges British civilization and Rochester. During a conversation with Christophine, Antoinette points out how her life would be different if she lived in England saying she "will be a different person when I [Antoinette] live in England and different things will happen to me ... England, rosy pink in the geography book map" (WSS, 1982: 66). In this context, Christophine questions Antoinette's idealization of England:

'England' said Christophine, who was watching me. 'You think there is such a place?'

'How can you ask that? You know there is.'

'I never see the damn place, how I know?'

'You do not believe that there is a country called England?'

She blinked and answered quickly, 'I don't say I don't believe, I say I don't know. I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different' (WSS, 1982: 67).

Likewise, Christophine questions whether Antoinette's idealized England protects Antoinette as a White Creole since her inheritance will be under the control of Rochester. Then, Christophine challenges Rochester's authority over her regarding his threat to put her out of the house or call the police. In the face of his threats, invoking her spiritual power, Obeah, she states courageously: "You think the men here will touch me? They not damn fool like you to put their hand on me? ... No police here, ... No chain gang, no tread machine, no dark jail either. This is free country and I am free woman" (WSS, 1982: 96). In resistance to Rochester and British civilization, she appears to be self-reliant.

Regarding her relationship with Tia, a black Creole servant, Antoinette is aware of racial rejection and hostility of the blacks, a fact that makes her friendship with Tia vulnerable and ambivalent. In this sense, Antoinette says, "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches... One day a little girl [Tia] followed me singing, 'Go away White cockrach, go away, go away'" (WSS, 1982:

23). Accordingly, her relationship with one of the members of the black Creole group indicates the social divisions of black and white and their racial difference due to the lack of mutual standards in a relationship.

In relation to the racial difference between Antoinette and Tia, Antoinette attempts to emphasize her racial superiority: "After we had eaten she [Tia] slept at once. I could not sleep, but I wasn't quite awake as I lay... looking at the pool" (WSS, 1982: 23). Here, she tries to distinguish herself from Tia, applying to a general racial stereotype concerning the "lazy black" (Gregg, 1995: 88). However, Tia challenges Antoinette's racial superiority by referring to her as a "white nigger" (WSS, 1982: 24). Here, Tia equates Antoinette and her family referred to as old colonizer with "white niggers" due to their economically declining situation in comparison to the new colonizers. After this incident, Antoinette notices that Tia has worn Antoinette's "clean" clothes and left her own "dirty" dress in exchange. Once more as a black creole Tia challenges Antoinette's racial superiority through this dress exchange.

Yet, through her relationship with Tia, Antoinette wishes to identify herself with the black Creole group members in the English colony of Jamaica. However, this wishful thinking is never fulfilled. As soon as the blacks burn down Antoinette's family estate, Tia takes revenge on the oppressor by striking her friend with a jagged stone. This incident indicates another interracial encounter between the "black nigger" and the "white nigger." Again, Antoinette returns to her loneliness and isolation when the few people in her life abandon her all at once. Antoinette is left with Aunt Cora and Christophine.

Meanwhile, after the death of Antoinette's father, Mr Cosway, Annette's second marriage to the new English colonialist, Mr Mason, saves her momentarily from social and economic ruin by restoring her to the status of the planter class, but leads to her destruction later on. Mr. Mason represents a typical English imperialist who still seeks to dominate the economic life of the colonies even after slavery has formally ended. The result of his selfish imperial desires lead to the blacks' violent revolt against them, which culminates in the burning of Coulibri. This incident marks the end of their relationship.

The new colonizers usually come with preconceived notions about the West Indian people, and their ethnic differences, notions which are essentially stemmed from racial stereotypes rather than a direct interaction with the people. In this respect, the new colonizers consider the West Indies as an uncivilized and wild place, an area for making money, a place where the blacks are inhuman and the creoles are strange and not of pure European blood. With the arrival of the new colonizers, the creoles as being "double" outsiders are not only mistrusted by the whites but hated by the formerly colonized blacks as well.

The conflict between the old and new colonizers is also emphasized through Antoinette's relationship with her white, English husband, Rochester. They constantly reject each other's point of view, believing that it might deprive them of their own voice and identity, as Rochester notes: "Nothing that I told her influenced her at all" (WSS, 1982: 94). Both Antoinette and Rochester are displaced from their own countries, both feel denied, and both struggle to achieve self-recognition. As the younger son, Rochester is denied his share in his father's estate and is forced instead to become a member of "plantocracy" and colonial wealth by marriage (Stoddard, 2012: 80). The arranged marriage with Antoinette makes him feel that he is being sold to a wealthy creole, as he bitterly addresses his father: "The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition... I have a modest competence now. I will never be a disgrace to you or to my dear brother the son you love... I have sold my soul or you have sold it" (WSS, 1982: 70). Likewise, Antoinette's displacement makes her dependent on a dowry supplied by her stepfather, Mr Mason, as well as on the arranged marriage with a stranger. After all, marriage turns out to be a process of exchange or a materialistic affair in which love and mutual understanding have no place.

Aunt Cora is the only one to foresee the disadvantages of such a match. She quarrels with Antoinette's stepbrother, Richard Mason, who arranges everything with Rochester, and Antoinette overhears her angry words: "'It's disgraceful,' she said. 'It's shameful. You are handing over everything the child owns to a perfect stranger. Your father would never have allowed it. She should be protected, legally'" (WSS, 1982: 114). To her stepbrother, Antoinette seems expendable property that can be exchanged for a respectable lineage, something the creoles do not possess. Reducing Antoinette to a commodity reflects Rochester's attitude towards both blacks and women, as is revealed later on in his relationship with Jane.

As a colonizer, Rochester has to overcome his feelings of alienation in the new place. His dominant voice becomes a process of self-identification that enables him to maintain his superiority over the uncivilized island. He shows an intense concern for his place in the island and he constantly refers to the natives in relation to their gender, race, appearance and the "debased French patois they use" (WSS, 1982: 67). He even reconsiders the racial background of Antoinette, as he describes her: "Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (WSS, 1982: 67). His indifference to the place and thereby to the natives and Antoinette is revealed as he thinks to himself: "It was all very brightly coloured, very strange, but it meant nothing to me. Nor did she, the girl I was to marry" (WSS, 1982: 76).

Part of Rochester's estrangement from Antoinette derives from their being different. Not only is Antoinette a stranger to him, but he is also alien to her and to the entire island as well: "I feel very much a stranger here. I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side" (WSS, 1982: 129). The feeling of being rejected by his wife as well as by the community intensifies his feelings of superiority before his creole wife and the racially different natives.

Rochester takes advantage of his new status as husband because, according to English law, the wife relinquishes her property and all her possessions to her husband. Antoinette is a powerless woman under such a rigid law, for she becomes part of Rochester's property. There is one instance throughout their relationship in which Antoinette acknowledges Rochester's power over her. On their honeymoon, Antoinette declares: "You look like a king, an emperor." Rochester continues, "She knelt near me and wiped my face with her handkerchief" (WSS, 1982: 73-74). The imagery of an emperor is associated with patriarchal and colonial oppression against women and slaves. In this context, the passage signifies the distinction between the superiority of the oppressor, Rochester, and the inferiority of the oppressed, Antoinette. This imagery resonates later on throughout Rochester's courtship with Jane. There Rochester is the absolute master and sultan while Jane is his dependent creature.

While Jane constantly describes Rochester in terms of an "emir" and a "sultan," Antoinette refers to him as an "emperor" only once throughout their short-lived marriage. The rest of the time, Antoinette attempts to challenge Rochester's superiority by tending to correct his definitions of "reality." Rochester's identity, which is inevitably tied to imperial history, is threatened by Antoinette's daring arguments and insisting voice. He recognizes that the only way to assert his superiority and to ensure his dominance is to break up Antoinette's voice and existence: "I too can wait - for the day when she is only a memory to be avoided, locked away, and like all memories a legend. Or a lie..." (WSS, 1982: 172). To achieve his goal, Rochester has to return to England with Antoinette. In England, he transforms her into what he desires, an inarticulate madwoman, and confines her out of sight. At this point, the two novels meet in the third floor attic of Thornfield hall where Antoinette, whose name has been changed to Bertha, is imprisoned. In her confinement, Antoinette recognizes Rochester's inhumanity, which is similar to her family's past actions towards slaves. She becomes both a symbol of a repressed history of violence, and a victim of abuse. She is also a constant reminder of Rochester's stained history in the colonies as a ruler and the undeserved wealth he brings with him back to England. Antoinette lives as a marginalized outsider, and dies excluded and unknown.

With regard to the British side in *Jane Eyre*, the social, economic and political power that Rochester gains in the colonies influence his attitude back home. As he settles in England, he seems to justify his mastery and sadistic behavior over those inferior to him and

particularly Jane: "I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt, perhaps exacting... I have battled through a varied experience with many men of many nations, and roamed over have the globe, while you [Jane] have lived quietly with one set of people in one house" (JE, 1996: 139-140).

Rochester is identified as an "Oriental despot" (Michie, 1993: 64), for he is described as a "Paynim," an "emir," a "sultan" and the "Grand Turk" (JE, 1996: 182, 186, 112, 267). This identification becomes remarkable during his courtship with Jane. In Brontë's novel, the imagery of "Oriental despot" is put in opposition to the imagery of slavery and rebellious slaves. Slaves are associated with the oppressed female characters; that is Jane and Bertha, and thereby both have an unstable social status. This common changeableness in role indicates a similarity between race relations in the West Indies and class and gender relations in England, in which both are mainly considered in terms of master/slave relationship.

The first reference to class difference in Brontë's novel is between Jane's mother and father. Jane's mother, a middle-class woman, marries scandalously below her against the wish of her family. Jane's father is a penniless clergyman. Both parents catch the typhus fever while visiting "among the poor of a large manufacturing town" (JE, 1996: 37) and die. Jane pays the price of her parents' mismatch in the sense that as an orphan child, Jane experiences the unpleasantness of an unstable social status. Likewise, Antoinette is neither considered as part of the family, nor is she a servant, yet fluctuates between two extremes.

In fact, Jane's sense of rejection and exclusion from the social and domestic world is related to her experience of social, economic, and personal dependence. More precisely, she moves from a dependent orphanhood at Gateshead, to a charity school at Lowood, to become a governess at Thornfield, which indicates the climax of her socially inferior position. In each of these places, Jane is situated within the boundaries and she is humiliated and abused by a dominating master.

In a more detailed manner, at Gateshead Jane notices that she is not wanted and not loved as she says: "I was a discord in Gateshead hall; I was like nobody there" (JE, 1996: 28). She is also continually abused by her cousin John Reed. For instance, he violently attacks her for reading books that do not belong to her. At this point, she compares him to a Roman or to a slave driver: "You are like a murderer, you are

like a slave driver, you are like the Roman emperors" (*JE*, 1996: 23). In this context, she turns out to be a rebellious "slave" who protests against the patriarchal authority represented by Mrs Reed and her son. During her stay at Gateshead, she is also completely excluded from all family activities. Her isolation is manifested by her withdrawal into a window seat. Therefore, in a cultural context, Jane becomes the member of the "out-group".

Subsequently, at Lowood school Jane is once more humiliated and abused by another dominating master Mr. Brocklehurst who describes her as " a little heathen who says its prayer to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut" (*JE*, 1996: 76). The "evangelical" Mr Brocklehurst uses Christian doctrine to deny the girls of any luxury. His mission "is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh" (*JE*, 1996: 74). Under such an oppressive rule, Jane is humiliated by Mr Brocklehurst who refers to her as "a little castaway... an interloper and an alien" and he adds: "You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse" (*JE*, 1996: 75). In such a case, Jane thinks of herself as a slave or a victim, especially when Helen Burns, her dear friend at Lowood, passes her and smiles: "It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or a victim, and imparted strength in the transit" (*JE*, 1996: 76). Here, Helen seems to be a "martyr" figure and thereby she is submissive, patient and selfless. In fact, her spirituality or her devotion herself to God teaches her to be submissive. Accordingly, she turns her eyes towards heaven by denying the earthly delights. Then, Helen seeks comfort in heaven to compensate for her sufferings on earth. In this respect, her early death releases her from her sufferings.

Different from Helen Burn, Jane seeks comfort on earth not in heaven. She rejects the code of the patriarchal society. Thus, she questions the authority. After spending eight years at Lowood, Jane longs for her liberty: "I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer... Then I cried, half desperate, Grant me at least a new servitude" (*JE*, 1996: 93). Jane's desire is granted, but she moves from the confinement of Lowood to the confinement of domestic sphere when she becomes a governess in Thornfield Hall.

In Brontë's novel, the power differential between Jane and Rochester is emphasized in terms of gender, class and wealth. Rochester characterizes his own power through Oriental images as Rochester says: "I see the mountain will never be brought to Mahomet, so all you can do is to aid Mahomet to go to the mountain" (*JE*, 1996: 122). Following this incident, it comes as no surprise when Rochester chooses to dress "in shawls, with a turban on his head" (*JE*, 1996: 186) for a game of charade. In such a case, Jane sees him as "the very model of an Eastern emir" (*JE*, 1996: 186). Furthermore, The shopping trip to Millcote is a degrading experience to Jane.

Rochester seeks to provide Jane with gifts abundantly, a gesture that again emphasizes their difference in status, that is the money he has and which she lacks. In Jane's eyes, Rochester confirms his ownership over her body. She is also aware that his treatment and her submission to his requests emphasize her inferiority. Moreover, Rochester compares her worth to the purchase price of "the grand Turk's whole seraglio" (*JE*, 1996: 267). It is at this point in their relationship that Jane starts struggling to retain possession of her own self.

In addition, with the arrival of Blanche Ingram to Thornfield, Jane is once again reminded of the difference in power that separates her from both her master and Blanche Ingram, a woman of Rochester's own social rank. This time it is a difference of class when Blanche Ingram and her friends speak of the "anathematized race" (*JE*, 1996: 180) of governesses in a belittling manner.

Similar to Jane's relationship with Rochester, she enters into a relationship with St. John, a despotic, patriarchal man of God. Jane describes him as "a cold hard man ... difficult to persuade" (*JE*, 1996: 400, 404). Yet, she tries to restrain his despotic nature. She swears by herself to "adhere to [her] resolution" (*JE*, 1996: 418). While she attacks St John for being as "inexorable as death" (*JE*, 1996: 397), he criticizes her "perseverance" (*JE*, 1996: 407). In this sense, St John reinforces Jane's restlessness calling her "ambitious" and "impassioned," adding, "in your nature is an alloy as detrimental to repose as that in mine" (*JE*, 1996: 395-96).

While Rochester economically colonizes in the West Indies, St. John transfers his religious mission towards India. Brontë describes his mission in India in an imperialist manner: "Firm, faithful, and devoted; full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labors for his race: he clears their painful way to improvement" (*JE*, 1996: 394). His mission is to sacrifice himself for the sake of civilizing and Christianizing the natives, which reflects "the white man's burden". However, Jane is fully aware of the stern, ambitious and relentless nature of St John whose religious mission is matched only by his coldness far from the spirit of compassion and tender feelings. However, at first the thought of working with Indian women appeals to Jane, and she accepts to join with St. John as her helper. However, denying her freedom to love, he asks her to abandon her already established love for Rochester. In such a case, she recognizes his despotism and then finds the strength to resist him: "If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now" (*JE*, 1996: 402).

Additionally, the final part of the novel does not glorify his missionary and imperialist work, rather it states that “the toil draws near its close,” referring to St John’s approaching death (*JE*, 1996: 410). In the case of Jane, after rejecting the unromantic marriage, Jane returns to Rochester to find him disfigured, blinded and needy. He needs to be purified by the help of a woman. Becoming nursemaid and wife to the blind Rochester, she declares, “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine” (*JE*, 1996: 413).

Apparently, both novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, present a society in which almost all human relationships exist as power struggles, a fact that fosters unequal relationships. While colonial relationships in both novels are mainly based on racial differences, patriarchal relationships are greatly influenced by gender and class differences, and both relations are indicated by dominance and submission.

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