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Portraits d'Une Femme: A Comparative Study of Jean Rhys's Antoinette and Charlotte Brontë's Bertha

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Abstract

Reading Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* after Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, one does not sympathize with Jane anymore, nor does she really see Brontë's Bertha as an imbruted partner for Mr. Rochester. This paper will take a *comparative* look at the way Antoinette Cosway is presented and treated in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and at the way Bertha is presented in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The study of some dominant themes in Rhys's novel, themes such as racial discrimination, imperial oppression, place attachment, displacement and its influence on Antoinette, will work as technical elements of the comparison. In particular, the motif of Antoinette/ Bertha's madness in an imperialistic and patriarchal society will be analyzed in details. The scholars who are interested in post-colonialism will find this paper useful in that it discusses the role of the colonizer and the colonized with regard to the female characters of the putative novels.

Key words: Charlotte Brontë; *Jane Eyre*; Jean Rhys; *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Imperialism; Post-Colonialism; Madness

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INTRODUCTION

Jean Rhys is the pen name of Ella Gwendoline (spelled Gwendolen on her tombstone) Rees Williams, also known as Vivien or Emma Grey, Ella Lenglet or Ella Hamer (on the stage or after her marriage) (Savory, 2009, p.1). She was born in Dominica, a British colony, in 1890, but she left her hometown as a teenager and lived in England most of her life. She had lots of ups and downs in her life and some of her novels are to some extent a reflection of her own life. In her *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for instance, we see the tough life of a Creole, Antoinette Cosway; Jean Rhys herself was a Creole. As Savory (2004) declares "Her mother was white Creole of Scottish ancestry, a Lockhart, and her father was Welsh and had come to Dominica in 1881, shortly before his marriage, to practise medicine" (p.4).

When Jean read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* she was "haunted by the figure of the first Mrs. Rochester – the mad wife" (Rhys, 1992, p.11) who was introduced as a Creole. Thus, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is in fact a prequel to Brontë's novel. On the surface, it seems to deal with the troubles of a man and a woman with different cultures, thoughts, and personalities who are just married; however, when one reads the novel, she perceives the deep layers of it.

Gayatri C. Spivak (1985), Professor of English at Emory University and the translator of Jacque Derrida's *De la grammatologie*, in her paper "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" has a close look at Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. She compares *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* and discusses the role of literature in imperialism and cultural representation. She declares that Antoinette is drifted between the white and black culture and is indeed rejected by both.

Similarly, Wendy Kneeper in *Postcolonial Literature,* scrutinizes some postcolonial works regarding race, culture, gender, and so on, including *Heart of Darkness*,

and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The book also sheds light on Edward Said's theory about Orientalism. It refers to some parts of Spivak's great articles, "Can the Sublatern Speak?" and "Three Women's Texts", as well.

Elaine Savory in her two amazing books, *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* (2009), and *Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature: Jean Rhys* (2004), gathers brilliant accounts of Rhys's life and career, both as a short story writer and novelists, as well as a chorus girl. In her *Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature: Jean Rhys*, she also discusses Rhys's works, including *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Nazila Herischian (2012) studies these two novels with regard to hypertextuality. She declares that *Jane Eyre* is in fact the hypertext of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and refers to the concept that "there is no originality in literature" (p.72). She regards the former as a Bildungsroman while she believes the latter is an Anti-bildungsroman. Herischian discusses about the dreams significance in both novels, as well. At the end, she sheds more light on Mr. Rochester's character by comparing this character both in Brontë and Rhys's novels.

In another great article, Zahra Sadat Ismailinejad in "Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea: An Ecocritical Reading" studies the novel through different points of view. She focuses on the relationship and harmony between people and nature, Antoinette being a native and in harmony with nature while her husband has come from an industrial country. She declares that when Antoinette is detached from nature she is destroyed as Nature is the only one who calms her.

In order to clarify the significance of place in Rhys's novel, there is also a reference to Lynne C. Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright, the editors of *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods, and Applications* in this paper. The book consists of several articles regarding Place Attachment, Forced Displacement, and Place Detachment, studying different causes and effects of them on people all over the world.

Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is divided into three parts: the first part is narrated by Antoinette and shows her life from childhood to adolescence; the second part is mostly narrated by Antoinette's English husband – which is the longest part of the book – except for some short parts narrated by Antoinette. Finally, the third part is narrated by Antoinette while she is locked up in the attic in England. The narrative also includes some letters and a part where Grace Poole, Antoinette's guardian, is overheard by her, talking to another servant. The third part of the book is the part where the two stories, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* intertwine with each other.

1. METHODOLOGY

In the recent years, the authority of Truth as absolute and unchangeable has been completely shaken; philosophy and literature have a lot of contribution to the study of the reasons behind the fickleness and fragility of Truth. Modern and postmodern novelists have approached single events from different perspectives and in different time and place. This diversity is actually the main objective of the studies performed in the field of Comparative Literature, a discipline that pursues and pinpoints the diversity of outlooks, approaches, and understandings of what we call humanities in a global scale. Charlotte Bronte of the 19th-century England and Jean Rhys of the 20th-century central America are two among many who best exemplify the diversity of outlook and/or difference in perspective, hence, a comparative study of their masterpieces, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Bronte's Bertha is regarded as a mad woman who threatens a gentleman's happiness whereas Rhys's Antoinette is the same Bertha whose sanity and identity has been completely harassed by the imperial and patriarchal view of a man who stands for the dominant discourses of his own male-oriented community. Thus, a comparative study can best demonstrate why the difference in the outlook happens. It eventually pinpoints the truth about the *relative* nature of what we take as factual.

2. CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S PORTRAYAL OF BERTHA MASON

In Brontë's novel, Bertha is a passive, marginal character without any background story. The reader never knows why she is there in the attic, why Mr. Rochester married her, whether she was mad before her marriage; if affirmative, how she got mad? Was she mad from the very beginning, when she was in her family before marriage (which is what Mr. Rochester claims)?

In *Jane Eyre*, she is merely depicted through mysterious laughs and screams. Then, she is described as "the savage face" and "the Vampire" (Brontë, 1999, p.250) by Jane when she tells Mr. Rochester that she has seen something or someone in her room at night, "It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back... I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face – it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes... – the Vampyre" (p.250). Jane wants to know who she is but it is in vain. At last, on her wedding day, when it is revealed that Mr. Rochester has already married a woman, Jane as well as the reader sees Bertha for the first time. She refers to her as *it* and claims that it was not distinguishable whether it was a "beast or human being,"

> In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: It grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: But it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (Brontë, 1999, p.258)

Regarding Bertha's past, the reader is merely told that her mother "the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard" (p.257). Brontë depicts a savage portrayal of a Creole, a foreigner, and an outsider in her novel, and puts her in a sharp contrast to Jane, "look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder – this face with that mask – this form with that bulk" (p.259). Thus, in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is portrayed in a way that the reader cannot sympathize with her: she is dangerous, and "a bad, mad, embruted partner" for Mr. Rochester who "was cheated into espousing [her]" (p.258). The reader may even wish to get rid of her as she is an obstacle in the way of the union of the major characters. However, when Jean Rhys faces this poor creature in *Jane Eyre,* she is so "moved" that she feels she has to "try to write her a life" (Spivak, 1985, p.249). However, there are intricacies that cannot be habituated to the new context. As Delia Caparoso Konzett (2002) explains,

> Rhys's novel opens with a paradoxical denial of whiteness to its white protagonist Antoinette/Bertha and her family, former slave owners who have lost their social standing and become "marooned" with the emancipation: "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks." Due to its impoverished economic status, the undoubtedly white family to which the novel refers no longer enjoys this privilege. (p.135)

3. JEAN RHYS'S PORTRAYAL OF ANTOINETTE/BERTHA MASON

As Antoinette declares "there is always the other side" (Rhys, 1992, p.116) of a story. Therefore, Charlotte Brontë's flat character, Bertha, becomes the protagonist of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Rhys's Antoinette, later called Bertha by her English husband, is more active and an object of sympathy. The readers see her sufferings, isolation, dehumanization, forced displacement and loss of identity under the imperialistic and patriarchal circumstances of her society throughout the novel.

Quite contrary to Brontë's novel, Antoinette has got a personality in Rhys's novel and the reader can find reasons for her actions and *re*actions. The reader finds out that she is not born mad, but if one should call her mad at all, she must admit that she is in fact made mad due to many tough events in her life including being isolated by both the white and the people of color mainly as a Creole.

4. "NAMES MATTER": IMPERIALISM AND LOSS OF IDENTITY

Throughout the novel Antoinette's husband tries to rename her and finally calls her Bertha despite the fact that she does not want to be called by another name, "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know that's obeah, too" (Rhys, 1992, p.133). By her attempting to preserve her true name, Antoinette shows that she endeavors to keep her identity, but as we see at the end of the novel, she is called *Bertha* again while she is jumping "and the man who hated me was calling too, Bertha! Bertha!" (p.170). As Antoinette declares, "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*" (*italics added*) (p.162). This mirror image is repeated throughout the narrative reinforcing the significance of identity, "there is no looking glass here and I don't know what I am like now" (p.162). As Nazila Herischian (2012) explains, Antoinette is bewildered about her identity. She is both black and white at the same time, "she has a white appearance with black blood; however, her white appearance is rejected by the black and her black blood by the white" (p.75).

Unlike Antoinette who is called with different names by her English husband, "Marionette, Antoinette, Marionetta, Antoinetta" (Rhys, 1992, p.140), as well as *Bertha*, her husband, the English man, remains unnamed throughout the novel: Throughout the earlier parts, he is the husband, and at the end he is mentioned as "the man who hated me" or just "the man" (p.170). Thus, Rhys interestingly generalizes the matter; the English man represents England as the colonizer, and Antoinette, *dubbed* Bertha, stands for the colonized.

5. THE COLONIZER

Antoinette's husband is very proud of his Englishness. He has a colonizing view towards whatever or whoever is around him. For instance, he thinks about Granbois (a place near Massacre, Dominica), "It was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing secret loveliness...what I see is nothing – I want what it hides – that is not nothing" (Rhys, 1992, p.79). He despises the people there, "Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (p.61), and he is suspicious about everything around him. He repeatedly thinks that he has been watched or observed, "so sure I was being watched that I looked over my shoulder. Nothing but trees and green light" (p.94). When he has got everything that he needs, money and dominance, things turn out to be "a nightmare, the faint consoling hope that [he] might wake up" (p.108). He tries to change Antoinette's opinion of England in vain and regards her ideas "a wrong path taken" (p.85). When Antoinette hits her servant Amelie in the face for being insulted by her, because she calls her "a white cockroach" (p.93), the English man takes her anger and reaction for insanity. However, when he himself is angry he cannot stand a cock's crowing and throws "the first book [he] could lay hands on" (p.147) at it.

This English male figure is associated with lies, hypocrisy, jealousy and selfishness. He confesses that he has not married out of love and that the marriage means nothing to him. He has had a role which he "was expected to play" (Rhys, 1992, p.69) as a colonizer, and indeed he does play it well. He himself declares that "I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did" (p.85). Hence, he has been thirsty for her wealth and lustful for her beauty, when he achieves them, there remains nothing, not even pity. He even says that in her absence he does not feel lonely or sad as "sun, sleep, and the cool water of the river were enough" (p.129). However, he is so selfish that though he does not love her he feels jealous when Christophine asks him to leave Antoinette by herself. She says that they will leave the place and Antoinette will forget him and marry again, but "a pang of rage and jealousy shot through me then. Oh no, she won't forget. I laughed" (p.144), "for I don't want her and she'll see no other" (p.150). Antoinette, like her mother, is caught in the patriarchal tyranny. Her husband talks of her as his own property, "she's mad but *mine, mine*" (p.150). He also refers to his hypocrisy, that since his boyhood he has learned to veil what he feels, "A very small boy. Six, five, even earlier. It was necessary, I was told, and that view I have always accepted" (p.93). He sometimes refers to Antoinette as "my wife" but after he cheats on her– when she was sleeping in another room next door where he knew she would hear them –and breaks her heart severely, he does not even call her "wife". He tells Christophine "you haven't yet told me exactly what you did with my – with Antoinette" (p.140).

6. THE COLONIZED: POWERLESS FEMALE FIGURE

Antoinette, being a Creole, is not welcomed either by the white or the colored people. She is an outsider for both the English and Caribbean communities. As Spivak (1985) asserts, "Antoinette, as a white Creole child growing up at the time of emancipation in Jamaica, is caught between the English imperialism and the black native" (p.250). Because her father had been a slave trader, she and her family were hated and isolated by the people in Jamaica. Simultaneously, they were not considered as white English people by the English, "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks" (Rhys, 1992, p.15). When she is a child Tia, the daughter of a colored servant and the only friend of Antoinette's childhood, yet for a quite short time, tells her that "old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger" (p.22). Therefore, as a young girl, she is ignored not only by the people, but also by her own mother, who preferred Antoinette's sick brother, Pierre to her, "[A]s if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. She wanted to sit with Pierre or walk where she pleased without being pestered, she wanted peace and quiet" (p.18).

Urged by her isolation, Antoinette spends most of her time alone in the kitchen where Christophine is around, because she feels safe near her. Nonetheless, by her descriptions of what is going on in the first part of the book, we can even justify her mother's madness. Annette suffers not only from racism of her society but also from the powerlessness as a female figure, "All women, all colours, nothing but fools" (Rhys, 1992, p.99), Christophine says. Being afraid of the hatred and anger of the native people, Annette begs her husband, Mr. Mason, for many times in vain to leave the place. Eventually the colored people set fire to their home. Her favorite son, Pierre, who was supposed to be kept safe in a room by a black servant is in fact left alone and dies.

The dependency and powerlessness of the women remind us of the slavery and even colonialism itself. Antoinette, the Creole, though once rich, now has nothing for her own after marrying the English man, "I have no money for my own at all, everything I had belongs to him.... That is English Law" (Rhys, 1992, p.100). Quite surprisingly, in a such a so-called developed country as England, women were deprived of the right to their own property after their marriage! And this English man who is so proud of his Englishness and claims that he has come from a civilized country acts uncivilized by marrying a woman for her money and not for love; Besides, he gives her the promise which he never fulfills, "promising her peace, [and] safety" (p.72). Throughout the novel, he refers to his marriage as a "bargain" (p.64) as if it were just a contract, a deal, "Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition" (p.63), a bargain through which he gains a lot whereas she loses all she has. He lies at the very beginning. He does not love her, but when she refuses to marry him, he claims if she does not marry him, he will "go with a sad heart" (p.72). But in fact he feels humiliated by being rejected by "this Creole girl" (p.71). He tries to convince her. He is even sometimes brutal although he tries to hide it, for instance when he cheats on his wife with Amelie in a room next door and then confesses at least to himself and the reader as well, that he talked and laughed with the girl loudly on purpose to make his wife know about it, "Yes, that didn't just happen. I meant it" (p.140). What makes his act even worse is that neither while he is cheating on her, nor after that, he feels regret. "I had not one moment of remorse" (p.127). Even Amelie, who initially just feels sorry for the husband, feels sorry for Antoinette thereafter, "'Well, Amelie, are you still sorry for me?' 'Yes', she said, 'I'm sorry for you. But I find it in my heart to be sorry for her too'" (p.128). Quite

interestingly, he believes that it is he himself who has been "deceived" and "betrayed" (p.154) by Antoinette. Thus, Antoinette, like her mother and many other women in the world, suffers a double tragedy: being a victim of racial discrimination and being a woman. Hence, in Christophine's words, under these circumstances, "women must have spunks to live in this wicked world" (p.92).

7. PLACE ATTACHMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

Place attachment is defined as "bonding of people to places" (Manzo, 2014, p.1). These powerful emotional connections have a significant role in the social and psychological life of the people. People may undergo place detachment and experience displacement due to different causes including war, imposed or optional migration, natural disasters, or in the case of the heroines of the two novels, *Jane Eyre*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, familial estrangements along with the other racial or social issues. Both Jane Eyre and Antoinette suffer from the isolation imposed on them by the society and their families since childhood. Antoinette, for instance, has no friends, except for Tia, who after a short time betrays her. Thus, not only in her married life but also as a child she has been a victim of betrayal. Therefore, being annoyed by people, she turns to nature and seeks tranquility and company there, "And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think 'it's better than people'…. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people" (Rhys, 1992, p.25). She feels safe there, "I am safe from strangers" (p.24). But she has indeed brought the stranger with his colonizing power there. She puts a wreath of frangipani on his head and calls him "a king, and emperor" (p.67). She trusts him innocently, but what she gains in return is just hatred and humiliation. She becomes the slave of this tyrant. Antoinette adores the place even compares it to "that garden in the Bible" (p.17) and once she confesses that it is the place where she "belong[s]… and wish[s] to stay" (p.99). The English man knows well that "Antoinette is much attached to it" (p.68); nevertheless, when he accomplishes his mission (clever exploitation and dominance), he not only ruins the place, but also the inhabitant. When he has cheated on her with Amelie, Antoinette is shattered down severely, "It is not the girl, not the girl. But I loved this place and you have made it to a place I hate" (p.133). He has ruined her last refuge.

Antoinette's island seems as "a nightmare" (Rhys, 1992, p.108) to her husband, whereas London seems to her as "a cold dark dream [which she wishes] to wake up" (p.73). She believes that nature cannot be a dream; it cannot be unreal whereas a so-called big city such as London can. Therefore, this *Wide Sargasso Sea* gap between the heroines and their milieu can represent and reinforce the wide cultural gap between them and the people around them. For example, Christophine warns Antoinette about London by saying that "I heard it cold to freeze your bones and the thief your money, clever like devil" (p.101); however, it is what her husband has already done to her. She knows in advance that if she goes to England she "will be a different person… and different things will happen to" her (p.100); nonetheless, she cannot resist. Through an intelligently foreshadowing picture, Rhys points to what the English husband is going to do to Antoinette at the end. While drinking, he draws a large house which is "surrounded by trees" (p.148). In a room on the third floor, he draws a woman. He insists that "it was an English house" (Ibid.). As a matter of fact, this drawing foreshadows what happens to Antoinette in her husband's house in England: confinement in the attic of Thornfield Hall. Rhys once more emphasizes this image of confinement when the English husband says that he waits "for a day when she is only a memory to be avoided, *locked away* (*emphasis added*), like all memories a legend. Or a lie" (p.156). This displacement has a significant role in Antoinette's sadness and mental exhaustion. Zahra S. Ismailinejad mentions that Antoinette in the attic at Thornfield Hall "is detached from the society forcefully. She hates human civilization and wants to escape this society to return to nature as it is her spiritual heaven. She gains comfort in relation to nature, so she decides to unite herself with this faithful friend to end patriarchy" (p.49).

8. MADNESS

Unlike Brontë's portrayal of Bertha in her *Jane Eyre*, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, especially in the last chapter, which is interwoven with Bronte's novel, we see Antoinette quite sane when she says,

> I thought when I saw him and spoke to him I would be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. "I'll give you all I have freely," I would say, "and I will not trouble you again if you will let me go." But he never came. (Rhys, 1992, p.161)

Though too late, but she sees and finds out the realty. She knows he did not marry her out of love but for her property. She who has always sought freedom, happiness and peace in her life, vainly, finds herself ready to give everything she has to be freed. But the cruel husband has left her there since she has been brought to England. Therefore, if she seems mad to others it is not because her mother or brother were mad, or that it was in her family; like her mother, as Christophine argues, "They drive her to it. When she loses her son, she loses herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad; they act like she is mad" (p.142). Antoinette, too, has been driven mad by many factors, especially imperialistic oppression and racial discrimination. There are some references to supernatural elements in the book such as the night she

sleeps "in the moon light when the moon is full (p.75) or the practice of Obeah. However, the main reasons for her so-called madness, or in better words, severe depression can be listed as below:

a)The imposed isolation due to racial and cultural discrimination.
b)The imposed isolation due to poverty, loneliness and her mother's behavior under the tough circumstances of this loneliness and financial problems.
c)The lies, hypocrisy and betrayals which she encounters throughout her life.
d)The imperialistic patriarchal tyranny in which she is caught.
e)Forced displacements that she undergoes several times in her life.

Wendy Knepper (2011) believes that

> Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) rewrites *Jane Eyre* (1847), providing a back-story for the Creole history of the 'madwoman' named Bertha who grows up in post-abolition Jamaica before she migrates to England and is locked in the attic of her husband's mansion. (p.196)

Rhys's "feelings toward her Caribbean background," to use Greenblatt's (2005) words, "and childhood were mixed" and so was that of Antoinette (p.2356). Eventualy, we can regard her mentally exhausted, but not mad.

When Antoinette is in Thornfield Hall, she regards England as a "cardboard world" (Rhys, 1992, p.162). She says, "I open the door and walk into their world. It is as I always knew, made of cardboard…this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it" (p.162). Then at the end, after her dream in which she sets fire to the house, she declares that she knows at last why she is there in that "cardboard world", and what her mission is, "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (p.171). Thus, we can conclude that she has been brought into this novel by Jean Rhys, from Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, in order to set fire to the castle of the tyrant. Therefore, we can interpret this act of setting fire to the house as an act of revenge and resistance against colonizing power, not an act out of insanity. This "cardboard world" can interestingly refer to the book itself, as well, as Spivak (1985) states,

> This cardboard house' –a book between cardboard covers –…. In this fictive England, she must play out her role, act out the transformation of her "self" into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction. I must read this as an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer. At least Rhys sees to it that the woman from the colonies is not sacrificed as an insane animal for her sister's consolidation. (p.251)

While Antoinette is in the innocent state in the first part of the book (which consists of the memories of her childhood), and in the experience state in the second part (through which her life and honeymoon as a married woman is depicted), she reaches the state of organized innocence, at the end of the novel by setting fire to the imperialistic confines metaphorically incarnated in the form of a big house; she sets fire to free herself from the devastating patriarchy. The final dream she sees in the last part of the book is epiphany and changes her view making her aware of her duty.

CONCLUSION

The authors of this paper have had an attempt to study Jean Rhys's novel in the light of imperialistic and patriarchal oppression upon Antoinette. They argue that unlike what is depicted in Charlotte Brontë's novel, Antoinette has not been mad due to inherited diseases, but she has made mentally and physically exhausted by different factors, including loneliness, forced isolation, and displacement under multicultural, imperialistic, and patriarchal circumstances she encounters since her childhood.

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