

## The Exotic Snare of the Caribbean in Terms of Nature

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### Abstract

The present study carries the purpose to explore the Exotic Snare of the Caribbean in terms of nature with reference to Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is Jean Rhys's most problematic novel, revealing the author's own psychological complexity and the inner conflict that tore her mind apart and that is variously reflected in all her heroines. Consequently, African traditions never became a normal and for that reason, Jamaica lacks its own black culture and has not succeeded in creating Afro-Creole traditions, which still affect the identity of the Jamaican people.

**Key words:** Exotic snare; Caribbean in terms of nature; Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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Gayatri Spivak in her essay, *The Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism*, appreciates Rhys for her ambitions to tell the story of Bertha from a perspective of the Creole, however, she also attacks the author for marginalizing the native peoples of West Indies. That is why, in most literatures of the West, such qualities like cruelty, savageness, inferiority, laziness, corruption belong to the non-Western societies but goodness, reason, hard work, all the ideal labels are manifested to belong to the West. Another main oriental attitude of the West

towards nonwestern societies has been to perceive the rest as the "exotic, mystical and seductive" other companion combined with a desire of identifying those other peoples as homogenous masses instead of recognizing their individual choices and variations.

Upon the insistence of Antoinette, he says, "I like the drink, but I hate the language" (Rhys, 1969, p.45). This very succinct statement of Mr. Rochester is enough to unearth his attitude towards the people of the West Indies; he surely likes the land, its richness, the plantations, the natural beauty, and the exoticism of the nature, which cannot be attained in his homeland, England. That is, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is Rhys's own exploration of what it means to be of Caribbean descent, and how the European master culture views you, culturally and socially, as a result. Whilst critiquing patriarchal and colonial discourse, Rhys has effectively downplayed and eroticized the black Caribbean people in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Amelie becomes a part of the Jamaican landscape, as beautiful as foreign to Rochester as some exotic bird.

The origin of the stereotype of immodest Creole or Caribbean women came from the hierarchy based on skin color, which is a product of slavery and colonization. Kamala Kempadoo summarizes this mythology associated with the sexuality of Caribbean women:

The combination of Western Europe and Africa produced notions of the "light-skinned" woman who could almost pass for white yet retained a tinge of colour, as well as a hint of the wantonness and uninhibited sexuality of exotic cultures. (Rhys, 1966, p.165)

Finally, in reference to the idea that Creole women were more interested in sex than British women which violates the ideal of sexual moderation, Rochester comments on the fact that he is drowned in passion for Antoinette, but that he doesn't love her. It is as if he believes that romantic love shouldn't involve passion. "I was thirsty for her, but that is not love." (Ibid., p.55) Because of its hybridity, its medley of cultural references

and moods, the extreme passions and fears it unfolds, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is Jean Rhys's most problematic novel, revealing the author's own psychological complexity and the inner conflict that tore her mind apart and that is variously reflected in all her heroines. The simplistic drawing, without detail, shows the dehumanization of Antoinette, and destruction that Rochester causes to her identity. Throughout the text, we are made aware of the fact that Rochester intends to destroy Antoinette's identity, particularly when stating, "We'll see who hates best. But first I will destroy your hatred." (Ibid., p.59)

According to Carr, Rhys was constantly aware of how the politics of imperialism affected people's identities since she herself, a West Indian Creole living in Europe, experienced this ambivalence of being mixed and marginalized. However, she does not only portray people who live in a racial in-between world but also those who drift between being rich and poor, sick and well (Rich, 1979, pp.33-49). The black slaves in Jamaica failed in maintaining their own culture since they were eager to be seen by their masters and therefore imitated the European traditions and became mimic men (Millett, 1970, p.204). Consequently, African traditions never became a normal and for that reason, Jamaica lacks its own black culture and has not succeeded in creating Afro-Creole traditions, which still affect the identity of the Jamaican people.

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