

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**Truth and Strangers in Jean Rhys's Novels:
Good Morning, Midnight and *Wide Sargasso Sea***

Carmen Woolgar

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 1997

© Carmen Woolgar, 1997

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-25956-0

ABSTRACT

Truth and Strangers in Jean Rhys's Novels: *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Carmen Woolgar

This thesis stages a meeting between the postmodern cultural theory of Zygmunt Bauman and the novels *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys. These novels portray marginal women who are excluded from the very community which has created them. Rhys illustrates how the need to sustain an artificial order gives rise to a psychic fragmentation which is typical of the decentered self. By depicting such characters Rhys criticizes modernity's tendency to order reality by constructing binary oppositions which reduce people to homogeneous categories. Rhys illustrates how this view is mistaken and destructive. Rhys highlights the heterogeneity of human existence and exposes the provisionality of truth and the instability of meaning by employing multi-vocality, irony, parody and images of doubles.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I. Fragmentation in <i>Good Morning, Midnight</i>	12
Chapter II The Madwoman's Story.....	48
Conclusion.....	92
Bibliography.....	96

Introduction

Jean Rhys¹, who has been deemed “quite simply the best...English novelist” (Alvarez, 7), almost slipped into obscurity because her novels “were ahead of their age, both in spirit and in style” (Wyndham, 9). Rhys’s novels *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* challenge modernist presumptions of the stability of meaning, identity and truth by depicting the postmodern condition of decenteredness in marginalized individuals, and by exposing the provisionality of truth. Rhys’s writings portray women who are exiled both culturally and sexually as the historical result of social polarizations of gender, class, ethnicity, age, sexual preference, language and morality.

Although Rhys is a ‘woman writer’ who focuses largely on the female condition of constitutive otherness, her chief concern is not the issue of gender. Her emphasis, rather, is on those - regardless of gender - who are disempowered and disenfranchised because they do not belong to a homogeneous group held together by class, nationality or race. Furthermore, Rhys reveals how constitutive otherness or marginalization is created by the very system which excludes and condemns those who are shunned. Alienation - for Rhys - is not regarded as an inevitable condition of existence; rather, it is a social construction manufactured by the project of modernity. Ultimately, Rhys is a social critic who attacks the underlying assumptions of modernity that have allowed the dominant culture to enforce its own racist practices.

¹ Although many critics have drawn parallels between Jean Rhys’s life and her fiction, I have refrained from a biographical interpretation of her works. For more biographical information refer to Carole Angier’s detailed account of Rhys’s life in *Jean Rhys: Life and Work*.

Contrary to A. Alvarez's claim that Rhys "is absolutely nonintellectual: no axe to grind, no ideas to tout" ("The Best Living English Novelist," 7), I believe Rhys's novels question modernist concepts such as autonomy, totalization, homogeneity, universal truth, and certainty.² Rhys illustrates how modernity's need to construct an artificial social order through the maintenance of binarisms which favor one side over the other perpetuates discrimination against those who fall outside the centers of power. Furthermore, Rhys exposes the means by which the systems of oppression are transmitted. She reveals how all forms of institutionalization are constructs of a patriarchal order which perpetuate domination in the attempt to secure a hegemony which favors those in positions of power.

Although Rhys eschews direct ideological statements, she consistently places the ex-centric or marginal character at the center of her fiction to contest the discourse of the meta-narratives. Rhys also employs an ironic stance as a political and social weapon. Linda Hutcheon, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, writes that "the ex-centric or the different has been one of the postmodern forces that has worked to reconnect the ideological with the aesthetic. Race, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference – all become a part of the political, as various manifestations of centralizing and centralized authority are challenged" (206). Rhys continually exposes the irony of a situation wherein the margin is the ultimate place of subversion and transgression, yet the margin is created by and is a part of the center. Hutcheon maintains that postmodern irony denies "transcendental certitudes of any kind, including the subject. Postmodern irony also denies the form of dialectic and refuses resolution of any kind in order to retain the doubleness that is its

² Although the terms "modernism" and "postmodernism" are contentious, I am using Linda Hutcheon's postmodern theory and description of modernism as outlined in her critical text, *The Politics of Postmodernism*.

identity...But ...irony [may be used] as an ideologically deconstructive weapon” (“The Power of Postmodern Irony,” 35). Essentially, Rhys uses irony to challenge “ideology, by its power to unmask and de-‘naturalize’”(Hutcheon, “The Power...”, 45).

The critical framework which I believe best illuminates the themes of Rhys’s works is the postmodern theory of estrangement presented by Zygmunt Bauman in his critical text, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Although Bauman’s rendition of the project of modernity (the Enlightenment) is primarily concerned with Jews who are marginalized by hegemonic European culture, certain affinities can be found between the Rhysian “stranger” and Bauman’s “stranger”. Both writers examine European society’s production of ‘difference,’ its propagation of intolerance and its refusal to accept those who are deemed ‘different’.

Bauman differentiates between modernity and modernism by defining modernity as a historical period that began in Western Europe in the seventeenth century with a series of social-structural changes and intellectual transformations; modernism, however, is likened to the postmodern condition of the awareness of the impossibility of the project of modernity (*Modernity and Ambivalence*, 4). Bauman’s “modernism” has essentially the same meaning as Hutcheon’s “postmodernism” insofar as both modernism and postmodernism are opposed to the project of modernity because it creates and sustains dichotomies or binarisms such as young/old, rich/poor, woman/man, good/evil, public/private, and so on, as a means of upholding social order.³

³ In Bauman’s terms, Rhys is a modernist opposed to the project of modernity; however, according to Hutcheon, Rhys would be singled out as a postmodern writer opposed to modernity. Considering the interchangeability of the two terms, I will use the term “postmodern” to mean the same as Bauman’s “modernism”.

Opposites or polarities allow for classification, division and separation, which in turn create a comfortable order. Developing this idea, Bauman writes:

In dichotomies crucial for the practice and the vision of social order the differentiating power hides as a rule behind one of the members of the opposition. The second member is but the other of the first, the opposite degraded, suppressed, exiled side of the first and its creation. Thus, abnormality is the other of the norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, barbarity the other of civilization...both sides depend on each other, but the dependence is not symmetrical. The second side depends on the first for its contrived and enforced isolation. The first depends on the second for its assertion (*Modernity*, 14).

Bauman claims that modernity is characterized by classification and allocation in thought and in practice. Paradoxically, however, because the world is not geometrical and not everything can be slotted into categories, there exists that which is neither/nor, that which resists classification, that which gives rise to ambivalence. Bauman posits that ambivalence is the “main affliction of modernity and the most worrying of its concerns.” Using the garden as an analogy, Bauman illustrates how ambivalence disrupts social harmony and, like a weed in an ordered garden, must be eradicated by modernity. Bauman quotes H. G. Wells to illustrate how the “new order” “seeks to make a plan as one designs and lays out a garden, so that sweet and seemly things may grow, wide and beautiful vistas open, and weeds and foulness disappear” (Bauman, 34, extracted from H.G. Wells, “Socialism and the New World Order”). The drive to create artificially an ambivalence-free homogeneity is an exercise in social engineering. All constructs of artificial order, according to Bauman, are inherently asymmetrical and dichotomizing. For example, Bauman asserts that artificial order splits “the human world into a group for whom the ideal order is to be erected, and another which enters the picture and the

strategy only as a resistance to be overcome – the unfitting, the uncontrollable, the incongruous and the ambivalent” (Bauman,38).

Bauman assigns the term “strangers” to those persons whom society deems marginal, or undesirable entities which resist classification, and who thus give rise to disharmony and discord. These disrupters of the existing social order are subjugated and victimized in a variety of ways as a means of restoring the delicate balance between opposites. Bauman writes:

There is hardly an anomaly more anomalous than the stranger. He stands between friend and enemy, order and chaos, the inside and the outside. He stands for the treacherousness of friends, for the cunning disguise of the enemies, for the fallibility of order, vulnerability of the inside (*Modernity*, 61).

The stranger represents all that is incongruous; the stranger is an “undecidable” – a third element; the stranger “unmasks the brittle artificiality of division...[strangers] must be tabooed, disarmed, suppressed, exiled physically or mentally – or the world may perish”(Bauman, 59). Bauman uses Kafka as an example of the Jewish position of the stranger, insofar as Kafka’s life “is an in between life: in between spaces, in between time, in between all fixed moments and settled places”(183). Kafka, who was an assimilated Jew, that is, neither a gentile nor a practicing Jew, spoke German while living in Prague; he was not Czech, but he was not German either on account of his being Jewish. Kafka, according to Bauman, “was among the first to see through the modern dream of uniformity, the first to shake free from the modern horror of difference, the first to assault point-blank the modern religion of intolerance” (156). Many parallels can be drawn

between Kafka's state of indeterminacy and Rhys's in-between worlds where her characters' identities are unfixed.

Rhys, like Bauman, examines those who remain marginalized because they do not fit into existing social structures. All of Rhys's protagonists are "strangers," in the sense that they are alienated from their communities as a result of not fitting into the existing social constructs. They are rootless, homeless, have no or few familial relations, no friends and little money. They are excluded because they resist classification – they are different – and therefore reject the morals by which the larger community conducts itself. The outcast, for Rhys, becomes a hero, because she is bound by no formal commitments; she becomes the unmasker, the penetrator of lies and ideologies, and the exposé of hypocrisy. As Mary Lou Emery points out, all Rhys's heroines employ the "privileged vision of exile" to "expose sexual and cultural domination" and to "resist that domination" (Emery, 429).

Rhys's novels *Good Morning*, *Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* exemplify the crisis of modernity insofar as they question notions of meaning and representation. Both novels illustrate how modernity served to repress the linking of its own master-narratives and relations of power with the creation of alternative narratives woven out of the pain of subordinate groups. Rhys resurrects the figure of the madwoman in the attic from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* to illustrate how certain figures are reduced to the imagery of the colonizer and denied a subjectivity. She writes the "other side of the story" to point out the aporias in history. Rhys reveals how there is no story which can speak with authority and certainty for all of humanity. The truth is partial, particular and specific. By employing multi-vocality or a variety of points of view, Rhys illustrates how history - or a

narrative representation of the 'truth' - is plural, decentered, discontinuous and fragmented. By juxtaposing the voice of a madwoman with the voice of an English man, Rhys challenges the liberal humanist notion of a unified, rational subject as a bearer of history; instead she presents contradictory and multi-layered versions of history which are not controlled by reason.

Rhys's persistent themes of alienation, marginalization and fragmentation of self center on the exploration of the driving forces behind the creation of the victim. She reveals why "Human beings are cruel – horribly cruel" (*GMM*, 41) by illustrating how class, gender and race serve to divide people into various groups which are intended to be homogeneous "centers" that exclude those who are different. There are some individuals who resist categorization, and are therefore estranged from the larger community. It is these marginal persons to whom Rhys directs her attention. Her heroines are exclusively women who lack social and economic stability, and are consequently exploited by men in particular, and by those in positions of power in general. The protagonist's instability is compounded by the problem of her being an outsider - a creole⁴, a nomad, a rootless traveler – who does not belong to or identify with a specific cultural heritage; hence the heroine is an alienated individual who is cut off from her family, friends, and/ or community. As a stranger who stands outside the bounds of a group, with no support system, the heroine becomes isolated. As a vulnerable misfit whose role is determined by

⁴ Rhys employs the term "creole" as meaning a white descendent of early French or Spanish settlers of the West Indies. The term, however, is ambiguous insofar as it could also represent a person of mixed French or Spanish and Negro descent speaking a dialect of French or Spanish. Judith Raiskin provides an excellent discussion of the ambiguities of the term along with a history of the Caribbean in context of Rhys's novels in *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity*.

others, she is denied a subjectivity and consequently suffers a fragmentation of her self. This fragmentation occurs because, on the one hand, the individual who is deemed 'different' is at once created by and is a part of the very system which relegates her or him to the margins; however, on the other hand, although the excluded individual recognizes him/herself as 'different', he or she cannot completely separate him/herself from a system in which he/she is implicated. The stranger interiorizes a self-hatred which the larger community teaches him/her to feel, and yet the 'stranger' also desires to belong to the system which victimizes him/her. Coral Ann Howells writes that "the double bind repeatedly rehearsed in [Rhys's] fictions is that despite their awareness of the social structures within which they are trapped, her heroines do not attempt to break out; instead they assiduously try to stay within the conditions of their entrapment, where every new instance of betrayal represents another expulsion from paradise" (13). Paradoxically, the system which consigns those who are different to the sidelines exists solely on the basis of its act of expulsion.

Although those who are marginalized are aware of the relativity and provisionality of laws, and although Rhys's heroines know that concepts such as truth and justice are empty, meaningless words which serve only those who are in privileged positions, they are still dependent upon the conditions of the larger community. In the short story "Outside the Machine," Inez Best, a patient, thinks the hospital is run like a machine, and she "lay very still, so nobody should know she was afraid. Because she was outside the machine they might come along at any time with a pair of huge iron tongs and pick her up and put her on the rubbish heap, and there she would lie and rot. 'Useless, this one,' they would say, and throw her away before she could explain, 'It isn't like you think it is, not at all. It

isn't like they say it is. Wait a bit and let me explain. You must listen; it's very important'" (*TABL*, 82). The message is clear: either be complicit with the system or exist outside the "machine" and lie on the rubbish heap to rot. Rhys implies that survival hinges on one's ability to be a part of the machine – or at least to pretend to be a part of the machine.

The real world, as Rhys sees it, is composed of deceptive appearances, game playing and hypocrisy. Rhys often employs images such as masks, puppets, mirrors, parrots, and doubles, as a means of revealing how our foundations of truth are built on artifice. The key to survival, Rhys intimates, is to posture under the guise of respectability. The implications of constructing oneself artificially as a means of protecting oneself undermine the modern belief in the unified subject, for the real self is always hidden under a mask, or is a reflection of another person's projection.

Rhys reveals how all systems which totalize are merely ideological structures designed by people in power positions to answer their needs. Rhys adopts an anti-foundationalist stance by depicting the provisionality of truth. By employing multivocality in her fiction, she highlights the discrepancy between the different versions of truth or history. She reconstructs history from multiple points of view to offset the colonialist's version that has been taught as part of the curriculum. The marginalized, by being on the outside, are purveyors of the truth; however, the paradox that Rhys underlines is the truth that there is no truth, and the marginal characters are in a position to understand this; it is this knowledge that sets them apart – for they see the hypocrisy of morality.

Contrary to Linda Bamber's claim that the "Rhys heroine knows that she is largely responsible for her own unhappiness. Whenever something good comes her way – money, a man, the possibility of a good time – she instantly loses it through laziness, obsessiveness, or a kind of a petty anger arising from her sense that it isn't enough" (Bamber, 94), Rhys's fiction puts forth the idea that the oppression of its members by the community is unrelenting. Victims are not responsible for the treatment they receive at the hands of the community. Rhys's characters and themes expose a crisis in which moral values and traditions delineating "stranger" from "native" or "civilized," and those separating private from public lives are collapsing. Rhys reveals the ambivalence within the modernist experience and the artificiality of order by exposing the dichotomies of the existing social, political and economic structures. Rhys reveals the effects of falling between the various polarities of the structures wherein the oppositional dualities pull the characters into the murky middle-ground of neither/nor.

The endings of *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are ambiguous because in the midst of the protagonists' self-sacrifice, there remains an unresolved tension. Implicit in the ambiguity of the endings is the idea that marginalized individuals are manipulated and destroyed by their communities, but that these individuals are dependent upon these communities for their happiness and well-being. Thus, the individual is paradoxically dependent upon the community which destroys her. The second tension arises because these communities can only sustain their artificial order by destroying the "strangers" upon whom they also depend. Unaware of the self-deception involved in the sustaining of the artificial construction of binarisms, modernity deprives itself of 'truth' and 'knowledge' by excluding the perspective of the persons whom it

attempts to destroy. There are tensions in Rhys's fiction because there is no suggestion that the centers and the margins can strike an adequate balance between their respective needs. Rhys's protagonists end up being psychologically destroyed, whereas the communities in which they exist remain insular, hypocritical and self-deluded.

CHAPTER I

Fragmentation in *Good Morning, Midnight*

“You imagine the carefully-pruned, shaped thing that is presented to you is truth. That is just what it isn’t. The truth is improbable, the truth is fantastic; it’s in what you think is a distorting mirror that you see the truth”(*GMM*, 63).

Rhys’s “masterpiece,” *Good Morning, Midnight*, criticizes “modernist pretensions,”¹ by presenting a ‘distorting mirror’ of the ‘truth’ of the de-centered or alienated individual. In Rhys’s fiction, alienation is expressed not as a necessary condition of existence, but as a consequence of the social and historical conditions of women’s constitution as ‘Other’ in relation to men. Rhys, however, does not merely direct her attention to the creation of woman’s constitutive otherness; for her, the power structures of organized society depend on the complex interaction of economic, class, racial, national and gender privilege. Although the Rhysian heroine is presented as a woman whose identity is revealed as being a construction by men and who, in turn, is reliant upon men for self-definition, Rhys also depicts the anti-Semitism, racism and economic exploitation directed by those in power at men as well as women.

In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Rhys gives the reader a “Close up on human nature” when she characterizes life as a “dream” where “all the faces are masks and only the trees are alive and you can almost see the strings that are pulling the puppets”(*GMM*, 75).

Rhys employs images of dreams, distorted mirrors and masks to challenge the humanist

¹ Judith Kegan Gardiner, like myself, contends that *Good Morning, Midnight* is a “sustained critique of polarizations about sex, class, and moral value that oppress women and the poor” (“Good Morning” 233).

belief that wo/man is a subject more or less in control of her/his own actions; she challenges the idea that there is a *real* subject at all. Instead, she emphasizes the provisionality and positionality of identity, the social and historical construction of gender, and the discursive production of knowledge and power.

Contrary to Elizabeth Abel's assertion that "although Rhys describes her heroines' progressive degeneration, often in excruciating detail, she fails to provide an adequate explanation for this process" ("Women and Schizophrenia", 156), I believe Rhys clearly depicts the fragmentation of the self which occurs as the result of polarizations of class, race and sex. Furthermore, as Judith Kegan Gardiner has observed, Rhys "challenges traditional dualisms between reader and character...to show that they enshrine a particular privilege of exploiter over exploited. In a capitalist patriarchy, men and the propertied control language and the literary tradition so that women's words are not believed" ("Good Morning Midnight", 249). In order to illustrate her point not only does Rhys parody traditional narratives by inverting the typical theme of affirmation through sexual union, but she also collapses categories of opposition into one another.

Rhys's title, *Good Morning, Midnight*, establishes an immediate relation to the epigraph poem by Emily Dickinson where images of day and night are juxtaposed to underscore the "paradoxes about female rejection" (Judith Kegan Gardiner, 234). In the poem "Day" and "sunshine" are personified as the male who rejects the female speaker; she claims that "Day got tired of me - / How could I of him?" In effect, by writing a poem about rejection where the female welcomes "night" because she has been cast aside by "Day," Dickinson highlights how women traditionally depend on male approval as a means

of defining themselves and their happiness. Rhys explores all the implications of Dickinson's poem by presenting her own version of human acceptance and/or rejection. On the one hand, Rhys reveals how women's identities are divided by a patriarchal system which accepts a certain type of woman and rejects another. On the other hand, Rhys illustrates how women themselves are guilty of perpetuating their own oppression by molding themselves into their prescribed roles.

Although *Good Morning, Midnight* focuses largely on the marginal woman, the novel also roots itself firmly in the territory of all those who are marginal: a gigolo, a Russian immigrant, a Jewish artist, a mulatto woman. Rhys juxtaposes these characters against those who represent the center, such as employers, wealthy women, and young people. Rhys draws parallels between all those who are marginal in order to draw attention to the failure of what Bauman calls the "project of modernity". Bauman and Rhys both indicate that modernity's goal of achieving social order by creating neat categories of binary opposition is exclusionary and perpetuates alienation because homogeneous categories do not exist.

From the outset, Sasha Jansen, the heroine of *Good Morning, Midnight*, is portrayed as a social underdog: she has no job, no husband, no family, and she is aging. Sasha is a person who is split because she belongs to both sides of the binary oppositions: she is not yet old, but not quite young; she is neither entirely poor, nor is she rich. Although Sasha is both, she is neither, and is therefore relegated to the margins where she belongs to no particular community. She is shunned by the larger community because her in-between position represents a threat to the social order. Sasha is what Bauman would call a "stranger"; she is "one member of the family of *undecidables*" that "can no longer be

included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganising it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics” (Bauman, 55). Bauman writes:

Undecidables are all *neither / nor*, which is to say that they militate against the *either / or*. Their underdetermination is their potency: because they are nothing, they may be all. They put paid to the ordering power of the opposition, and so to the ordering power of the narrators of the opposition. Oppositions enable knowledge and action; undecidables paralyse them. Undecidables brutally expose the artifice, the fragility, the sham of the most vital separations. They bring the outside into the inside, and poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos (*Modernity and Ambivalence*, 56).

Although Bauman is largely concerned with the assimilated Jews who were ‘trapped in ambivalence’, his theory can also be applied to Rhys’s in-between characters. Indeed, Sasha is likened to Serge, a Jewish artist who is clearly depicted as a marginal character. Serge’s painting of the two-headed banjo player not only represents the alienating effects of modernity’s oppositions, but it also symbolizes Sasha’s position of social pariah. Because Sasha is both-yet-neither, she is represented as being double-headed; she is a reflection of what others project onto her, yet she is also a mirror which projects back onto others. She is an alienated person who alienates others, and she is a victim who victimizes others because her psyche is the mirror image of the system which created her. There is a constant tension between Sasha’s resistance to the system and her implication within the system. She recognizes how victims are created and she mocks those who uphold the social order, yet, paradoxically, she cannot entirely resist practicing on others the same dehumanizing tactics employed by others on her. As Helen Carr points

out, Sasha has “internalized the condemnation and scorn of those around her. Rhys’s psychic patterning of those excluded and humiliated is something far more complex than the pathos of oppression. Hatred breeds hatred, brutality breeds brutality” (66).

At the beginning of the novel, although Sasha ironically notes, “I haven’t got a care in the world” and there is “nothing to worry about”(15-6), she is depicted as a survivor whose life is now at an “impasse.” She claims to “have forgotten about dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning” (10), but, as she points out, “There always remains something” (10) of one’s past. Sasha relates how she “began to go to pieces. Not all at once, of course. First this happened, and then that happened...”(119). Her story begins in Paris in 1937 where she has gone for a ten-day vacation -- from London -- at her friend Sidonie’s suggestion and expense. The narrative does not progress in a chronological or linear fashion; instead, Sasha’s thoughts, memories and experiences are revealed in fragments and must be pieced together by the reader in order to determine her process of degeneration. Toward the end of the novel, René, the gigolo who has befriended Sasha, asks her, “What happened to you, what happened?...Something bad must have happened to make you like this.” Sasha replies, “One thing? It wasn’t one thing. It took years. It was a slow process”(146). It is the “slow process” and the combination of factors -- not just “one thing” -- which have made Sasha an isolated, cynical and sad individual.

Contrary to Thomas Staley’s assertion that Rhys’s aim in employing a fragmented style was merely the “perfection of rendering private consciousness through style, not the achievement of an enlarged vision of the contemporary world” (*Critical Study*, 84), I believe Rhys’s fragmented, non-linear style to be a reflection of her theme of social

marginalization. Rhys employs irony, parody, juxtaposition, the doubling of images or parallelisms, inversion and “paratactic”² style as a means of exposing the splintering effect of modernity’s need to order reality by creating binary oppositions. These aforementioned literary devices deconstruct fixed and single, authoritative meaning; they point to multiplicity and contingency of meaning; they deny closure. In *Irony’s Edge: the theory and politics of irony*, Linda Hutcheon reveals how irony is a political tool for oppositionality which may be used by those who are marginalized by a system which they find oppressive:

They [women] are said to be able to use irony as a particularly potent means of critique of or resistance to patriarchal social restrictions or even ‘essential’ male claims to ‘truth.’ Irony has been seen as both empowering and ‘emphasizing.’ And it is often the transideological nature of irony itself that is exploited in order to recode into positive terms what patriarchal discourse reads as negative. So, the silencing of women’s voices is transformed into the willed silence of the ‘ironic and traditional feminine manner’ (*Irony’s Edge*, 32).

Good Morning, Midnight’s fragmented style and use of literary tropes that destabilize meaning underscore the subjective fragmentation and the decentered condition of marginalized groups or individuals. Irony’s doubleness deconstructs the notions of singularity and fixedness of meaning. Postmodern irony, according to Linda Hutcheon is “suspensive” in that it is aware of “contingency and multiplicity, deliberately refusing the modernist dialectic” (“The Power of Postmodern Irony”, 36). Irony acknowledges the existence of two sides, and it recognizes that “discourse today cannot avoid

²Elizabeth Abel claims that the “paratactic” style – “the short declarative sentences have few words to suggest relationships among the parts” – “...emphasizes the immediate presence of separate objects”(164). Moreover, the style additionally illustrates the “confrontation between the objective and subjective worlds” (164).

acknowledging its situation in the world it represents: irony's critique...will always be at least somewhat complicitous with the dominants it contests but within which it cannot help existing"(Hutcheon, "The Power...", 36).

Rhys reveals how "centers" are artificial constructs that serve to empower some (white, young, healthy, male, wealthy, heterosexual, native, Christian) at the expense of others (black, old, sick, female, poor, homosexual, immigrant, non-Christian). Rhys illustrates how society is comprised of differences rather than centralized sameness; yet those who deviate from these socially constructed power structures are regarded as abnormal and are perceived as threats to the dominant order. The irony of the binary paradigm – a system which creates, sustains but pretends to shun privileged opposition – does not go unnoticed by Rhys. Furthermore, Rhys ironically demonstrates how even those who are excluded from the centers cannot escape exclusionary practices as they too are created by those "centers." I believe this paradox to be at the heart of Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*. I also believe Rhys's style to be of central importance insofar as it underscores the 'subject's' fragmentation.

Sasha's fragmented "self" is depicted as being a social and political construct. She is a product of her environment. It is for this reason that Rhys melts the private and public realms into one world rather than into separate domains. Sasha's identity is, in effect, determined by what she sees reflected back to her by others. Hence, the private and public construction of self are inseparable. Inasmuch as Sasha attempts to be herself, she finds that her "self" is determined by others. She is insulted, ridiculed, befriended, and exploited because she is a "public" woman.

On her first night in Paris, Sasha begins to cry and is immediately reprimanded for her public display of sadness. The “dark woman” says to her, “I understand. All the same...sometimes I’m just as unhappy as you are. But that’s not to say that I let everybody see it”(10). The keeping up of socially acceptable appearances is immediately established as important. The exposing of one’s true feelings is regarded as unacceptable. Posturing, then, is ironically depicted as being preferable to truth. It is this paradox which Rhys highlights throughout Sasha’s story.

Rhys effectively breaks down the division between public and private selves by illustrating how one is dependent upon the other. She additionally reveals how the practice of dividing the two realms produces a split or fragmentation within the self. Social decorum, then, is depicted as an artificial construct which is designed to mask any behavior which is deemed socially unacceptable. It is also shown to be a device constructed to control and suppress certain individuals. Those who are not adept at appearing to be socially acceptable are victimized and shunned. The victims which Rhys focuses on are the elderly, women, the poor, immigrants, black people, Jews, and the sexually active.

One of the central images of the novel, namely, that of the “Exhibition,” epitomizes the public/private division of identity. This image is revealed early in the novel in Sasha’s dream, wherein she is trapped in a passage of a subway station in London, and everywhere there are placards which read ‘This Way to the Exhibition’. She tries to find the way out and feels guilty for “wanting to be different from other people”(12). The dream turns into a nightmare when a man in a long white nightshirt – who claims to be her father – shouts ‘murder, murder’ as blood streams out of a wound in his forehead. The exhibition is a

metaphor for the problems created by divisions between public and private domains. What is implied is that people are like objects on display, yet they remain indifferent to their own objectification and do not seek an exit. Sasha, unlike the majority of people, wants to find her way out of the tunnel, but the signs keep pointing the way to the exhibition. Even though Sasha tries to avoid making an “exhibition” of herself, she cannot, because she is always directed back into the world of the exhibition. To resist the exhibition is to resist patriarchy – or, in effect, to “kill” patriarchy. The wounded man in the white night-shirt who claims to be Sasha’s father is a symbolic representation of patriarchy. His shouts of “Murder, murder” are directed at Sasha as a means of exposing her attempt to undermine or to kill a system which defines people and exhibits them. Her inability to resist echoing his yells is indicative of her complicity with him; she is trapped within the patriarchal world of the Exhibition.

The man in the dressing gown echoes the “ghost of the landing,” the *commis voyageur*, Sasha’s neighbor who also wears a white dressing gown. Sasha is guilty of judging the *commis voyageur* as a repugnant and undesirable man. She dehumanizes him by portraying him as a “skeleton” with a “bird-like face,” and she admits that she does not “like this damned man”(13). Sasha’s act of judgment based on appearance is akin to murder in that it reduces one to something that is not quite human. Therefore although Sasha herself is judged harshly by others, she too is guilty of participating in despising others on account of their appearance.

Sasha recognizes the importance of keeping up appearances and conforming to the status quo as a way of avoiding discrimination. She admits that she is “trying so hard to be like you” and that every morning she spends “an hour and a half trying to make myself

look like everyone else”(88). She claims her motto is : “Faites comme les autres”(88), and she tries to make herself like others by applying make-up, by wearing the right clothes, and by behaving in an acceptable manner. She claims that her life, “which seems so simple and monotonous, is really a complicated affair of cafes where they like me [her] and cafes where they don’t, streets that are friendly, streets that aren’t...dresses that will be lucky, dresses that won’t, and so on”(40). Sasha is well aware of how people are divided into categories of opposition, and how one side of the opposition is devalued and exploited. While looking at some West African-style masks which Serge, the Jewish artist, has made, Sasha thinks “I know that face very well; I’ve seen lots like it, complete with legs and body”(76). She claims that people resemble these masks when they are in the process of judging another person. For example, Sasha remarks:

That’s the way they look when they are saying: ‘Qu’est-ce qu’elle fout ici, la vieille?’ That’s the way they look when they are saying: ‘What’s this story?’ Peering at you. Who are you, anyway? Who’s your father and have you got any money, and if not, why not? Are you one of us? Will you think what you’re told to think and say what you ought to say? (76)

What is suggested through the image of the mask is that one must hide oneself behind a “mask” in order to avoid harsh judgment by others, who, in turn, are themselves donning masks. Rhys ironically illuminates the idea that in a world of exhibition, artifice becomes a necessity for survival.

Sasha’s constant efforts to fit in are highlighted as a means of Rhys’s underscoring of the deceptive nature of appearance – or the unreality of reality. By exposing the artificial construction of self, Rhys intimates that one’s identity is not a unified or fixed entity; it is, rather, something that changes according to public opinion, and, furthermore,

it can be denied as a result of social marginalization. Sasha's conscious construction of her self begins with her new name which she has changed from Sophia to Sasha, hoping it would 'change her luck'. The reader soon realizes, however, that her name change has not brought her luck, and that she is an aging woman who -- try as she may -- is a social outcast. Her position as alienated "Other" is represented by the deliberate obscuring of her nationality. While Sasha is explicit about other people's nationalities, she is vague about her own. When the patron of the Parisian hotel at which Sasha is staying informs her that she has forgotten to include her passport number on the fiche, she narrates: "I've filled it up all right, haven't I? Name So-and so, nationality So-and-so...Nationality - that's what's puzzled him. I ought to have put nationality by marriage"(13). Her nationality is never clarified. In fact, when Sasha meets the two Russian men on the way back to her hotel, they "stop under the lamp-post to guess nationalities"(39), and although their nationalities are revealed to the reader, hers is never identified. She actually claims to have "no pride, no name, no face, no country"(38). She is the "stranger, the alien, the old one"(46) who "has seen that in people's eyes all [her] life"(46). As much as she tries to appear to be like everyone else, she does not succeed in convincing people that she is the "femme convenable" or the "respectable woman" that she tries to be. Her designated role as an "alien" or "stranger" is constantly being reinforced by her interactions with others, and their subsequent maltreatment of her. Furthermore, Sasha's self-conscious construction of her "self" as a "femme convenable" ironically backfires when her old fake fur coat is misinterpreted by René, the gigolo, as a sign of wealth. She notes with self-irony:

I want to shout at him “I haven’t got any money, I tell you. I know what you’re judging by. You’re judging by my coat. You ought to judge by what I have on under my coat, by my handbag, by my expression, by anything you like. Not by this damned coat, which was a present” [...] Well, there you are - no use arguing. I can see he has it firmly fixed in his head that I’m a rich bitch and that if he goes on long enough I can be persuaded to part(64).

Rhys’s ironic inversion of the effects of fashion on gender and status identification unmask the instability of meaning. On the one hand, Sasha Jansen –a poor, aging, alienated individual –attempts “so hard to be like you” by wearing clothes which will gain her public approval ; on the other hand, even though she believes that she does not “succeed,” she actually does succeed in attracting men, but they are men who will attempt to use her for her wealth. This ironic scene clearly shows the breakdown between sign and signification, insofar as her coat is intended to be read as a sign of wealth to prevent exploitation; however, the coat has quite the opposite effect and actually becomes the cause of her subsequent exploitation. She is not only regarded by René as a potential client, but she is also mistaken for a rich English woman by two Russian immigrants who hope to persuade her to buy a painting from their artist friend, Serge.

Rhys does not simply imply that Sasha’s plight is a singularly ‘female’ problem; instead, she reveals how discrimination is also based on economics and race, regardless of gender. Rhys presents a myriad of marginalized characters as a means of drawing parallels between Sasha’s position of ‘Other’ and the other “Others.” Essentially, René, the gigolo, Serge the Jewish artist, and the *commis voyageur* –the “ghost of the landing”—are all reflections of each other. They are all composite images of the dehumanizing effects of

modernity's need to maintain order by creating polarized opposition; however, they too are guilty of perpetuating the system of oppression.

The ironic twist which Rhys adds to her theme of marginalization is that those who are relegated to the sidelines also participate in the dehumanization of 'Others'. Sasha believes that "Human beings are cruel – horribly cruel" (*GMM*, 41) as a result of society's devaluation and negation of that which is different. Those who are "different" or who do not fit into neat categories cannot help but judge others because they too have been created by a system which favors prejudice. Although these marginal characters are highly sympathetic toward the "underdog," they too are implicated in a system of discriminatory practices. For example, immediately after Sasha realizes that René mistakes her for a wealthy woman, she too bases her judgments of him on her preconceptions of the "mauvais garçon." She indicates that "He doesn't look like a gigolo - not my idea of a gigolo at all. For instance, his hair is rather untidy"(65). She believes him to be lying about his French-Canadian identity as well as his desire to be with a woman "who would put her arms around me and to whom I could tell everything"(64). Sasha is convinced that René wants her only for her money, and she wishes to "hurt him a little in return for all the times I've been hurt"(62). She does not believe him when he repeatedly claims not to want her for her money, and to want only some compassion and affection from her.

Sasha cannot shake her suspicion of him, because although she – as a marginal person – understands his position as an outsider and as a vulnerable stranger, she is implicated in the system that created the two of them. Both René and Sasha are mirrors of each other that project distorted reflections. It is these distorted reflections which give rise to fear, animosity and hatred. When René asks Sasha what she is afraid of, she

replies: "I'm very much afraid of men. And I'm more afraid of women. And I'm very much afraid of the whole bloody human race[...]Who wouldn't be afraid of a pack of damned hyenas? [...]What I really mean is that I hate them. I hate their voices, I hate their eyes, I hate the way they laugh...I hate the whole bloody business. It's cruel, it's idiotic. It's unspeakably horrible"(144-5). It is ironic that modernity's goal of achieving social order through the maintenance of binary opposition generated hatred instead. Rhys clearly reveals how hate and fear are the outcome of a politics of oppression

Rhys's universal vision of oppression is epitomized by the image "of human misery"(155), the painting of "an old Jew with a red nose" who stands in the gutter playing his banjo, "looking gentle, humble, resigned, mocking, a little mad"(91). He is double-headed, double-faced, and has four arms. The recurrent image of doubleness resists the liberal humanist notion of a unified subject. Rhys's subjects are multilayered and contradictory, and are not governed by reason alone. Essentially, by stressing the absence of a unified self, and by recognizing that multiplicity is produced by social practices which attempt to suppress difference and heterogeneity in an effort to maintain hegemonic power structures, Rhys exposes the fundamental problem of modernity. Rhys seems to dispute the idea that alienation is an existential condition by revealing the various social mechanisms which work to oppress those who are considered undesirable and different. Rhys maintains that people are not "whole" – they are splintered like broken mirrors reflecting whatever is necessary to achieve social acceptance. The image of the double-headed old Jew mirrors back to Sasha's "being hungry, being cold, being hurt, being ridiculed"(91).

Another central image which contributes to the theme of alienation and cruelty is that of the kitten which “had an inferiority complex and persecution complex”(47), and which developed an infected sore on its neck as a result of being attacked by the male cats in the neighborhood. The owner of the kitten finds it “disgusting” and recommends that “she ought to be put away, that cat”(47). The kitten “feeling what was in the wind” attempts to escape her fate by hiding in Sasha’s room, but Sasha –who initially took pity on the cat --“couldn’t stand it any longer” and chased the cat away. The cat runs out into the street only to be killed by a “merciful taxi”(47). This story is an allegory which symbolizes the condition of alienation; it illustrates how those who are weak are victimized and are rendered impotent until the only alternative is death. A parallel is drawn between Sasha’s character and the kitten, for shortly after relating the tragic story, Sasha looks at herself in the mirror and realizes that “In the glass just now my eyes were like that kitten’s eyes”(48).

Sasha reveals that, like the kitten, she had been abused and was considered “as dead” until she returned to England only to find that she was heir to a legacy. She was “saved, rescued and with [a] place to hide in”(37). She would receive two-pound-ten every Tuesday. This income would keep her alive, yet she admits that “the lid of the coffin shut down with a bang,” and she “had enough of these streets that sweat a cold, yellow slime, of hostile people, of crying [herself] to sleep every night”(37). She resolved to try to drink herself to death to avoid the viciousness of life. Her plan fails, but she soon realizes that she can remove “this tortured and tormented mask”(37) whenever she likes, and she can sing defiantly, “You don’t like me, but I don’t like you either”(38). Her discovery, then, is that she must wear a mask in order to gain public acceptance. Sasha,

however, remains “sad;” she is an aging woman without friends, family or property. She has no binding ties to anything or to anyone. Her life is pervaded with a feeling of uselessness and aimlessness. Sasha acknowledges that “If you are quite secure and your roots are well struck in, they know. They stand back respectfully, waiting for the poor devil without any friends and without any money. Then they step forward, the waiting houses, to frown and crush...And they know who to frown at”(28). The ‘waiting houses’ personify those people who are secure and who victimize the weak.

Rhys puts much emphasis on the effects of aging on women. Sasha, who is growing old, is sad, “sad as a circus-lioness, sad as an eagle without wings, sad as a violin with only one string and that one broken, sad as a woman who is growing old. Sad, sad, sad...”(39). Judith Kegan Gardiner maintains that the devastating psychological effects of aging are actually created by the system of polarized oppositions of which one side is negated and devalued. In her article entitled “**Good Morning, Midnight; Good Night Modernism,**” Gardiner writes:

But the hegemonic discourse mystifies this opposition, transforming it into present/absent and thus denying the oppression of the element that is now defined only by its privation of dominance as nonexistent, as not there. The socially-defined opposite of “desiring man” is “desirable woman.” Sasha is doubly opposite of this opposite; she is both desiring woman and undesirable (old) woman, and therefore she is doubly negated (238).

Rhys reveals how this process of negation is perpetuated. Sasha recalls the scene of a “bloodless killing”(20) where years earlier an old Englishwoman and her daughter enter the dress shop where Sasha is employed. The old woman, who is “perfectly bald on top – a white, bald skull with a fringe of grey hair”(19), has made “a perfect fool” of herself by

trying on hair accessories. Initially, the old lady “doesn’t care a damn...she is calm and completely unconcerned”; however, as they leave and the young girl hisses that she refuses to “do this again,” Sasha notices the old lady’s face “reflected in a mirror...something about her mouth and chin collapsing”(20). Later, Sasha cries “for the old woman with the bald head, for all the sadness of this damned world, for all the fools and all the defeated...”(25).

While hat-shopping during her sojourn in Paris, Sasha spies an aging woman with half-dyed, half-grey, “very dishevelled” hair who is trying on hats. Sasha describes her as having a “terrible - hungry, despairing, hopeful, quite crazy” expression on her face, and she wonders if in six years time she will be like this. Juxtaposed against the image of the desperate “hag” is the “smug, white, fat, black-haired one who is offering the hats with a calm, mocking expression”(58). Here, young and old are placed side by side as a way of illustrating how women themselves are complicit in perpetuating the marginalization of the elderly. The young lady is compared to a “devil with a damned soul,” and Sasha declares that if she “must end like one or the other, may I end like the hag”(58).

Rhys consistently illuminates the position of the victim in a sympathetic light; however, she also reveals how constant discrimination against those who are marginalized gives rise to hostility and violence. In two consecutive scenes where Sasha revisits restaurants from her past, she is made to feel like an object on display. In the first instance, Sasha returns to a café where the “clients paid for the right, not to have a drink, but to sleep”(35). She recalls how in the past, her friend had asked her if she “Would like to go in and have a look at them...as if he were exhibiting a lot of monkeys”(35). Sasha enters the café which has been transformed into a Javanese restaurant, and now it is she who is

the “monkey” on exhibition. Ironically, Sasha quotes from “one of [her] favorite books,” *The Autobiography of a Mare*: “We English are so animal-conscious. We know so instinctively what the creatures feel and why they feel it”(37). Sasha reveals how the opposite is quite true when three young people – “Not French” – enter the restaurant and insensitively refer to her as “la vieille.” Sasha thinks, “Me? Impossible. Me - la vieille?[...] This is as I thought and worse than I thought...A mad old Englishwoman, wandering around Montparnasse”(35-6). Sasha is no longer the young woman watching the “monkeys” in the window of the café; now, it is she who is watched and reduced to the status of an object –“la vieille.” In the second incident, Sasha enters Theodore’s – a place from her past – only to be humiliated by the attention drawn to her by two young English girls. Everybody in the restaurant stares at Sasha when the tall girl asks loudly, “Et qu’est-ce qu’elle fout ici, maintenant?”(43). Sasha’s hand begins to shake violently as she feels herself to be on exhibition. Unable to speak even “one word” to the girl, Sasha imagines taking a “hammer from the folds of my [her] dark cloak and crack[ing] your little skull like an egg-shell...One day the fierce wolf that walks by my side will spring on you and rip your abominable guts out”(45). Although Sasha merely imagines smashing the young woman’s skull, the image of the wolf walking by her side acts as a reminder of the latent violence which arises as a result of perpetual cruelty.

Following these incidents, Sasha quickly decides to have her hair dyed. She reveals that she “hangs onto that thought [dying her hair] as you hang onto something when you are drowning”(44). In her description of “Educated hair” – that is, the process of dying hair is a metaphor of the human condition - she describes how first the hair “must be bleached, that is to say, its own colour must be taken out of it – and then it must be dyed,

that is to say, another color must be imposed on it”(44). The dying of hair functions in the same manner as the image of the mask insofar as both cover the ‘real’ or ‘natural’ self and transform it into a more socially acceptable representation of self.

What Rhys ironically illustrates is that artifice or illusion is more acceptable than that which is real. She even seems to imply that a “real” self cannot exist in a world which prefers artifice. Rhys presents this idea by a series of images of women portrayed as reflections of male fantasies and social constructs. Rhys intimates that the “feminine” is simply an artificial construct created and perpetuated by patriarchy and its institutions. Rhys illustrates how women without money, friends or family are especially vulnerable to victimization, and how it becomes even more important for these women to maintain the illusion of the feminine in order to avoid undue victimization.

In *Jean Rhys at World’s End*, Mary Lou Emery interprets the “educated hair” scene from an anthropological perspective by regarding the stripping of the victim’s own identity as an act of ritual. Emery insists that the ritualistic “transformation act”, which includes buying hats, clothes, applying make-up, “contain[s] dual possibilities: on the one hand, they create beauty; they allow strangers to meet in orderly ways, enjoying prescribed intimacy; and they restore calm. On the other hand, Sasha must submit to the priestlike administrations of others who manipulate her body, so that she is ‘possessed by something’”(*World’s End*, 152-3). So then, the artificial construction of a feminine self maintains order – as Emery points out; however, what is lost as a consequence is the individual or “real” identity. To stand outside of the existing order is to be marginalized; however, to stay within the center is to kill off or to destroy a part of oneself. Rhys asserts that the only ways of achieving a state of calm are either by being close to death or by

allowing oneself to be pulled into the centers by creating oneself artificially – by keeping up appearances. Sasha is aware of the consequence of marginalization for not posturing. One evening prior to meeting René, Sasha debates whether she should make herself up and thinks:

Well, there I am, prancing about and smirking, and suddenly telling myself: 'No, I won't do a thing, not a thing. A little pride, a little dignity at the end, in the name of God. I won't even put on the stockings I bought this afternoon. I won't do a thing. I will not posture before these people any longer.'

And, after all, the agitation is only on the surface. Underneath I'm indifferent. Underneath there is always stagnant water, calm, indifferent - the bitter peace that is very near to death, to hate (128).

As much as Sasha would like to stop “posturing,” she is well aware of how “human beings are cruel - horribly cruel”(41), and she must keep the mask on in order to maintain the “calm” order of charades. Sasha knows what it is like to be poor and “dirty and haggard, with that expression that you get in your eyes when you are tired and everything is like a dream and you are starting to know what things are like underneath what people say they are”(102).

Sasha's memories of her earlier experiences -- as a married woman, as a mother, as a poor, young woman – highlight the instability of the self. Depending on the image projected or the mask which one wears, a woman receives treatment which is in accordance with the expectations of her role. Rhys reveals how appearances are deceptive and are often misconstrued by others. In one such scene where there is confusion between sign and signification, Sasha, who is pregnant and tutoring a Russian, lies in bed while she awaits his arrival. She notes, “He looks surprised to find me in bed, the Russian -

surprised, then cynical. Does he think it's all arranged, this being in bed? Does he think I want him to make love to me? But surely he can't think that. I believe he does, though"(115). Sasha is as "amused as God" by his misreading of her being in bed, but she decides there is "no use arguing," and continues with the English lesson. Sasha is "calm...with the huge mound of [her] my stomach safe under the bedclothes"(115). As a pregnant woman she is safe from sexual advances; however, her being in bed is still perceived as a possible invitation to intercourse.

Rhys illustrates quite effectively how meaning is not fixed and permanent, and how selfhood is unstable and dependent upon others' perceptions of who we are. The treatment which Sasha receives from both men and women hinges largely on the image which they have of her. Rhys juxtaposes images of Sasha at different times in her life as a way of underlining the unfixity of meaning. When Sasha is in desperate need of money, she approaches Mr. Lawson for a loan, and he calls her "Little Miss" and kisses her mouth. Sasha claims that at that moment she is "hating him more than I have ever hated anyone in my life, yet I feel my mouth go soft under his"(100). In this instance, Sasha is vulnerable and can therefore be exploited for sexual purposes. A woman without money is viewed as a commodity which can be purchased regardless of her marital status. Shortly after this incident, Sasha – who is pregnant – claims that "people are very kind to me. They get up and give me their seats in buses"(110). A pregnant woman, Sasha notices, is a "femme sacrée"; pregnancy suddenly elevates the woman to the position of a mother earth goddess – something to be revered, rather than to be perceived as a sexual object.

Rhys reveals how women are "instrument[s], something to be made use of" – objects of pleasure for men, or incubation centers for babies; however, the two roles are

regarded as being mutually exclusive. Unlike a pregnant woman who is viewed as a sacred object, a woman who has given birth must revert to her original position as sexual object by maintaining the appearance of youthful femininity. The matron who delivers Sasha's baby claims that she will swathe Sasha in bandages so tightly that "there will be no trace, no mark, nothing"(51). Sasha notes ironically that five weeks later, her baby is dead, but she is "without one line, without one wrinkle, without one crease"(52).

Rhys illustrates how a woman without money is denied a subjectivity – her behavior, her appearance, her intelligence are dictated and determined largely by men, or by people in positions of power. Sasha recalls a time when she and Enno, her then-husband, were poor and had just borrowed five hundred francs from a man named Alfred. Alfred blew on Sasha's wrist to cool her down, and although Sasha wished him to stop, she dared not ask because she felt obliged to him as a result of the monetary loan. A brief altercation occurs between Enno and Alfred when Alfred says, "I wouldn't let my wife work for another man. No, no. I should think it a terrible disgrace to let my wife work for any other man but me"(106). Enno takes offense at this insult and tells Sasha to "shut up" when she asks Alfred to stay. This brief scene is revealing insofar as it constructs the woman's position as an object to be utilized by men, thus denying her a subjectivity. Having no money, Sasha is like a puppet whose strings are pulled by whoever has power; in this instance, it is Alfred who blows on her wrist despite her discomfort. Then, Sasha is denied a voice when her husband instructs her to 'shut up'. Furthermore, her role as a working wife is insulted by Alfred who maintains it is improper for a woman to work for anyone except her husband. The hypocrisy of his moral superiority is revealed by Sasha's uncontrollable laughter when she remembers Alfred blowing on her wrists. Alfred certainly

would not allow *his* wife to work for anyone else, but it is perfectly acceptable for Alfred to blow on the wrists of another man's wife on account of having lent them money. Immediately after this incident, Enno leaves Sasha after declaring: "You don't know how to make love... You're too passive, you're lazy, you bore me"(107). Sasha's role as a woman is defined and determined by the men around her. She becomes an extension of their needs: she is a sexual object for one, a worker for another. She is, in effect, a social construction; she is something that exists for the purposes of others rather than something that lives for itself. Sasha's choices are limited to the alternatives created, sustained and perpetuated by men.

The process and the effects of society's tendency to polarize individuals is clearly depicted in the "Kise" scene wherein Sasha is dismissed from her job because the English manager mispronounced a French word. The entire scene centers on the interaction between Mr. Blank, the English employer of a Parisian boutique, and Sasha, who is rendered "blank" in her effort to please him. She describes the job as "dreary" –the employees are not permitted to read -- and she claims that she feels "drugged... watching those damned dolls, thinking what a success they would have made of their lives if they had been women. Satin skin, silk hair, velvet eyes, sawdust heart – all complete"(16). Ironically, the more a woman resembles a mannequin the more acceptable she becomes, because – as Sasha later points out – a female "cérébrale" is of "no use to anybody"(135). When Mr. Blank begins his inquisition of Sasha's linguistic abilities, and demands to know where she worked before, she maintains that she had been a mannequin. Mr. Blank looks her up and down, and asks, "How long ago was this?" She is not young enough to play the part of the model, and feeling pressured by his stare she admits that "everything is a

blank in my head...everything is a blank in my head”(18). Mr. Blank’s reductive objectification renders Sasha “blank.” Implied in this scene is that when a woman does not fit neatly into her designated role as “mannequin” or object, she is subjected to pressure tactics that are designed to instill fear. Mr. Blank thus deprives Sasha of a voice by reducing her to an object.

When Mr. Blank calls on Sasha again, she is so nervous and convinced that he will dismiss her that she fails to clarify his instructions when he directs her to deliver a letter to the “kise.” It is Sasha who pays for Mr. Blank’s mispronunciation of the word “caisse.” She is rendered “blank” by her fear of his power to “give her the sack.” She also considers his feelings by sparing him the embarrassment of pointing out to him that he has mispronounced the French word for cashier, and that that is the reason why she failed to deliver the letter. Ironically, he accuses her of being a “fool,” “half-witted,” and “hopeless.” He uses his power to reduce her to the “hopeless, helpless little fool” that he has labeled her. He dehumanizes her by “looking at [her] as if [she] were a dog which had presented him with a very, very old bone”(23). She admits that Mr. Blank “is one thing and I am another”(25). Sasha reveals her understanding of the process of social oppression in the following monologue:

Well, let’s argue this out, Mr. Blank. You, who represent Society, have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month. That’s my market value, for I am an inefficient member of Society, slow in the uptake, uncertain, slightly damaged in the fray, there’s no denying it. So you have the right to...harass me with worry and monotony and unsatisfied longings till you get me to the point when I blush at a look, cry at a word. We can’t all be happy, we can’t all be lucky...Let’s say that you have this mystical right to cut my legs off. But to ridicule me afterwards

because I am a cripple - no, that I think you haven't got. And that's the right you hold most dearly, isn't it? You must be able to despise the people you exploit (25-6).

Sasha knows there "must be the dark background to show up the bright colours. Some must cry so that others may laugh the more heartily. Sacrifices are necessary"(26). Oppositionality is artificially created as a way to maintain order; as Rhys clearly points out through Sasha, these constructs are upheld by those in positions of power. Bauman claims:

to draw such lines [insanity, sickness, anomaly, disorder] is to dominate; it is the domination which wears the mask of norm or health, which appears now as reason, now as sanity, now as law and order. Domination is eager to represent the other side of the relation it conjures as an agent in its own right, as an equally potent and greedy partner, a carbon copy, a mirror image and a rival; but the putative opponent is merely a product of the defining power, a sediment of its monopolistic dream, a detritus of its uncompleted labour. Power turns out its enemies by denying them what it strives to secure for itself; and the enemy exists only of and through that denial"(*Modernity*, 174).

Rhys shares Bauman's estimation of modernity's drive to maintain order by upholding practices which perpetuate the role of the victim. In other words, the existent power structures are designed to oppress some as a way of elevating others. The scene between Sasha and her employer, Mr. Blank, demonstrates perfectly how the system operates – as Sasha astutely claims, "Sacrifices are necessary."

Rhys illustrates how literary and narrative structures reinforce patriarchal and political constructs. She also reveals the difficulties involved in attempting to overthrow or thwart the inherited tradition of the binary schema which preserves the notion of

difference or otherness. What Rhys is suggesting is that certain narrative conventions perpetuate an ideology of marginality. Women, and other marginal characters are trapped in stereotypical, minor roles -for the most part – because of the literary tradition maintained by a patriarchal order. Rhys illustrates whose notions of truth gain power and authority over others, and she demonstrates how these “truths” are socially, ideologically and historically constructed. Furthermore, she reveals how discursive representations of “truth” legitimate certain kinds of knowledge which sustain the constructs of centralized power. Rhys depicts how those forces which combine to push people onto the side-lines are the same ones which determine literary traditions which also de-emphasize certain characters in favor of others.

In effect, literary or narrative structures reinforce existent patriarchal social and political constructs. Rhys, as Molly Hite points out in *The Other Side of the Story*, focuses on the “flat” and minor character as a means to illustrate how those who are marginal are typically denied a subjectivity (Hite, 47). By placing a marginal character at the center of her novel she decenters and undermines the values and assumptions of the master narratives. Rhys challenges the modernist division between art and life by illustrating the intersection between literature and social determination. Rhys sheds light on the process by which people become relegated to the margins by alluding to the patriarchal and capitalist control of the production of literature. Those values which are assumed to be universal are shown to be provisional constructs which only serve to further the goals of those in power. Literature and art produced by the “masters” of high culture - mainly white Eurocentric male artists -- are depicted as the primary sources by which values are transmitted. These sources, however, do not cover the discourse of the

“Other”; they merely serve to further the division between the centers and the margins.

Regarding the idea of the literary perpetuation of otherness, Molly Hite writes:

Rhys’s novels are eminently about exploitation and judgment and in particular about how the two are often identical...exploitation and judgment are encoded in the already written texts of the dominant culture, so that when representatives of that culture banish one of Rhys’s protagonists to its margins, they are merely restoring an order so pervasive that they cannot question its prescriptions (*The Other Side of the Story*, 54).

In an exchange between Sasha and René, Sasha claims to be a “cérébrale;” however, René admits that he thinks of her as “rather stupid,” and he proceeds to define a “cérébrale” as a “monster” who “likes nothing and nobody except herself and her own damned brain”(136). A ‘thinking’ woman, according to René, is an aberration, a “monster” who needs nobody. Although René claims to “like women” and vows that he would “never say cruel things” because he is “not cruel to women”(134), he inadvertently insults Sasha by positing that all women are alike - stupid. René’s bigotry does not focus exclusively on women; he continues his attack on Russians and Jews by referring to them as “terrible people”(136). It is ironic that René criticizes others for being “poor whites” when he himself is a “poor white” illegal alien who seeks his fortune in “the untapped gold-mine just across the channel”(131). René’s character emblemizes the irony of the marginal character who is discriminated against by those who occupy the centers of power and morality, yet – as a by-product of the system – he cannot avoid partaking in the very thing that oppresses him. He criticizes women, immigrants and Jews in the same way that others judge and criticize him for being an indecent gigolo.

Sasha thinks about “how funny a book would be, called, ‘Just a Cérébrale or You Can’t Stop Me From Dreaming’. Only, of course, to be accepted as authentic, to carry any conviction, it would have to be written by a man. What a pity, what a pity!”(135) Rhys adeptly and succinctly illustrates the dilemma of the marginal position: those in marginal positions do not have access to the literary narratives which form consciousness, therefore, the “distorted truth” or the “clichés” are perpetually transmitted by those in positions of power. Sasha maintains that those who occupy the centers are marked by and controlled by their distinct lack of originality: “They think in terms of sentimental ballad. And that’s what terrifies you about them. It isn’t their extraordinary cruelty, it isn’t even their shrewdness – it’s their extraordinary naiveté. Everything in their whole bloody world is a cliché. Everything is born out of a cliché, rests on a cliché, survives by a cliché. And they believe in the clichés – there’s no hope”(36). What Rhys is intimating is the whole foundation of knowledge is an artificial construct which perpetuates discrimination because it lacks any forward movement. The Western episteme is dead-locked in a cliché.

Rhys makes clear how language and different systems of epistemology entrap people: “Every word I say has chains round its ankles; every thought I think is weighted with heavy weights. Since I was born, hasn’t every word I’ve said, every thought I’ve thought, everything I’ve done, been tied up, weighted, chained? And, mind you, I know that with all this I don’t succeed. Or I succeed in flashes only too damned well...But think how hard I try and how seldom I dare. Think – and have a bit of pity. That is, if you ever think, you apes, which I doubt”(88). The problem, then, with modernity is that people desire everyone to be the same and have little tolerance for those who are different. Those

who are different are forced to assimilate as a way of avoiding marginalization; however, as Rhys points out, “something always remains.”

Sasha, the aging ‘stranger’, tries “so hard to be like you” by conforming to the stereotypical image of the woman. She goes to the hair salon to receive “educated hair” and notices a variety of magazines – *Fémininas*, *Illustrations*, *Eves*, *Pierrette de la Lune* - - whose purpose is to help women cope with the difficulties of life. These magazines acknowledge that “Life is not so easy. Life, mademoiselle, is difficult...Nothing is easy. But there is hope”(52-3). The hope these magazines have to offer is weight loss, living without love in marriage (“Love is one thing; marriage – alas!”) and breast lifts; all the advice provided by these magazines instructs women on how to adapt their appearance to fulfill male expectations of what constitutes a woman. Those women who do not conform to the magazine’s recommendations risk being ostracized or rejected. Rhys constantly and consistently draws attention to the scorn and malice directed towards elderly women by juxtaposing images of youth with images of aging. Rhys illustrates how elderly women become marginalized because not only do men perpetuate the stereotype as to what the ideal woman represents, but women also participate in this process because they are immersed in the system. It is always this paradox that Rhys brings us back to, especially when it concerns the power of the Book to perpetuate the margins.

One may infer from the story of Sasha’s experiences as a ghost writer that a book must either be written by a man or paid for by a wealthy woman in order to gain public acceptance; additionally, it also has to be written in a specific style and it must concern a worthy subject – a subject that excludes marginal characters. Sasha relates to René the story of her stay with the wife of an extremely wealthy man in Antibes. The wealthy

woman explains how her husband was not content with the simple words which Sasha employed to write the allegory, and she asked Sasha to use a more complicated vocabulary. The rich woman tells Sasha that she will soon collaborate with a “real writer,” a Madame Holmberg, who has “just finished her third volume of her *Life of Napoleon*”(140). Thus, “real writing” is about famous men and it is written in a complicated syntax with words of “more than one syllable”. Rhys seems to be insinuating that literature is a “distorting mirror” which widens the gaps between the centers and the margins. Rhys reveals how literature is controlled by men or people in positions of power who decide what constitutes ‘great’ literature, but these texts are created out of deeply rooted prejudices that serve to dehumanize and alienate some over others.

Réné, Sasha, Serge and the *commis voyageur* are mirror images. They are all considered outcasts by virtue of their homelessness and poverty. The process of marginalization is graphically represented by Serge’s story of his meeting in London with a drunken mulatto woman “who was at the end of everything.” This woman had been ostracized on account of her affair with a white English man with whom she lived. She claimed to have not been outside except after dark for two years, because “every time they [people] looked at her she could see how they hated her”(80). Serge describes the woman as “something that has turned to stone,” and he claims it was difficult to speak to her “because I had the feeling that I was talking to something that was no longer quite human, no longer quite alive”(80). After speaking to Serge, the woman felt better and decided to go for a stroll when “it wasn’t quite dark”; however, her renewed confidence was quickly shattered after a little girl – ‘only seven or eight’—told her she was “a dirty woman, that she smelt bad, that she hadn’t any right in the house” and continued to say, ““I hate you

and I wish you were dead.” The Martiniquan woman proceeds to drink a bottle of whiskey and Serge maintains that he knew “all the time that what she wanted was that I should make love to her [...] But alas, I couldn’t”(81).

This scene is ambiguous and can be read in several ways. First, it can be read as a type of male sexism which assumes that all women’s woes can be cured through sexual intercourse. After all, it is Serge who claims “he knew” the drunken woman wanted him to make love to her; the reader never actually hears the mulatto woman’s side of the story. Second, the scene can also be indicative of racial discrimination. Serge admits that “She wasn’t a white woman...she had been crying so much that it was impossible to tell whether she was pretty or ugly or young or old” (78). Finally, it can also represent how women fit into their prescribed roles by believing that they may achieve affirmation through sexual union. The dehumanized mulatto woman seeks to reestablish her humanity by connecting with another human being. But her desire for sex is simply a manifestation of the master-narrative’s romance prescription insofar as in traditional narratives love and intercourse go hand in hand. However, in Rhys’s counter-discourse, sex is a manifestation of oppression wherein women are objectified and subjugated by man’s desire or a desiring woman is depicted as a “dirty” woman or a “sale vache” who is to be used as an instrument by men. As Gardiner points out, “Sexuality holds the promise of bridging the opposition between men and women, but patriarchal society forbids the voicing of any but polarized desires” (“Good Morning...”, 235). Although, the scene can be read as Serge’s refusal to endorse male dominion through intercourse, it seems more like a rejection of female desire.

The scene between Serge and the mulatto woman prefigures the final scene between Sasha and René; however, Rhys inverts the relationship between Sasha and René so that now it is the woman who rejects the man on account of her prejudices. The marginal characters are all mirror images of each other, yet instead of receiving each other with compassion and empathy, they reject each other. The similarities between Sasha and René are established by Rhys when both “sell” themselves to the wife of the wealthy man in Antibes. They are both portrayed as outsiders to the community and both have been hurt in a variety of ways. René, the “poor gigolo...who looks sad,” points to a long white scar on his neck and says that he has “wounds”(146). Sasha, in a surly voice reminds him that she too has wounds, and she thinks, “Why should I pity you? Nobody has ever pitied me. They are without mercy”(146). René persists in trying to convince the reluctant Sasha to make love to him. He is convinced she is unwilling to concede to his desire as a result of her fear that he will kill her because he is a “mauvais garçon.” Sasha refuses his advances because she has judged him an unscrupulous money-seeker who will hurt her. She is guilty of judging him and rejecting his affections in the same way that Serge rejected the mulatto woman. Although Sasha is a victim herself, she refuses to give René the compassion he longs for, she wishes to “hurt him a little in return for all the many times I’ve been hurt”(62). She is suspicious of him and expects the worst, yet when he appears on the landing and she puts her arms around him, she thinks, “Now everything is in my arms on this landing – love, youth, spring, happiness, everything I thought I had lost”(148).

Sasha’s moment of happiness begins to dissolve when René puts his hand on her knee under her dress, laughs and says, “You love playing a comedy, don’t you”(150). The

process of fragmentation begins as soon as they are reminded of their mutual roles. His hand on her knee reminds Sasha of all the times she has been exploited by men as a result of her poverty, and she immediately feels “sparks of anger.” She reads his actions according to the stereotypical prescribed interpretation of a gigolo’s actions: he can only mean to hurt her. She thinks he is laughing at her, fooling her, torturing her, and she responds by being cruel. He fulfills her expectations of him by reciprocating her cruelty; he maintains that she has treated him like a “dog,” has not “looked well” at him, and she has a “voice that gives orders”(151). He decides to act out “this comedy...this game played in the snow for a worthless prize” by breaking her “calm.” He resorts to physical violence by pinning her to the bed and threatening her with rape, saying “Je te ferai mal...It’s your fault...T’as compris?”(152-3). She gives the “ritual answer,” and like the painting of the two-headed banjo player, she too becomes double-headed.

Sasha splits into two selves with two voices: one is the speaking third-person “she” and the other is the feeling first-person “I.” She becomes an actress and an audience simultaneously. Her public self is hurtful and destructive and aims to wound René by taunting him, saying, “You and your wounds – don’t you see how funny you are? You make me laugh...I shall laugh every time I think about you”(154). As the words come out of her mouth, her other self tries to silence the voice and deny it by thinking, “Don’t listen, that’s not me speaking. Don’t listen. Nothing to do with me – I swear it”(153). Her two selves continue to dialogue with each other – one self, the “I”, hurts and cries, while the other, who “isn’t me...her voice in my head” lashes out at the other self with sardonic, bitter comments such as “The last performance of What’s-her-name And Her Boys or It Was All Due To An Old Fur Coat”(154). The “self” that has internalized society’s

prejudice still thinks the gigolo was only there for the money, and she directs this self to check the drawer. When the “I”-self discovers the money still intact she claims, “I knew...I knew. That’s why I cried”(156). She “appreciates this sweet gigolo” and toasts him for his “courtesies.”

Sasha continues to drink to “stop [the ‘damned voice in my head’] from talking. This voice reminds her that “Venus is dead; Apollo is dead; even Jesus is dead,” and all that remains is “an enormous machine, made of white steel. It has innumerable flexible arms, made of steel...At the end of each arm is an eye, the eyelashes stiff with mascara”(156). This vision of a mechanized and artificial world devoid of gods reveals to Sasha where the “damned voice” has arisen. In a world where everyone is on exhibition, wearing masks and playing out a comedy for each other, there is little possibility of a unified self. The self is forever divided between the public persona which is judged and judging others, and the feeling self which recognizes the humanity in every one. Sasha realizes her mistake of assuming the gigolo had befriended her only for her money, and she tries to summon him back. She undresses and prepares herself for his arrival, but instead of the gigolo it is the “ghost of the landing.”

Critics have pointed out how the white gown is associated with death (Rosalind Miles) and with rebirth (Arnold Davidson). The white dressing gown worn by the “priest” (*commis voyageur*) recalls Sasha’s nightmare of the wounded “father” crying “murder”. Both scenes are ambiguous and can be interpreted as affirmation or as negation Has Sasha surrendered to self-hatred or achieved empathy in her embrace of the *commis* ? Arnold Davidson maintains that in order to “give this nonbeing [“paper man,” “something that doesn’t exist”] a chance at life” (363), Sasha – unlike Serge who could not make love

to the mulatto woman – must embrace the “dark Other.” Like Davidson, Veronica Marie Gregg maintains: “For the artist/Sasha, embracing the repugnant Other, through empathy and an opening up of the self, is the only means by which she can cease to be herself while trying hard to remain so. It is the only way out of a destructive binarism... To turn away from that which appears horrible or repugnant, to discriminate, is to betray the artistic responsibility”(*Historical Imagination*, 160-1). This interpretation stresses that the fragmented self can only be whole when it accepts the reviled other.

The other interpretation put forth by Coral Ann Howells and Judith Kegan Gardiner is that Sasha negates her “self” by surrendering to her prescribed role of seductress. Sasha is regarded by the *commis voyageur* as a “sale vache” – a promiscuous woman – and he looks at her with “his mean eyes flickering”. He despises her for what he thinks she represents, and she despises him for seeing her as a sexual commodity. They are both victims of modernity’s polarized oppositions, yet they cannot free themselves from modernity’s grasp. They both see each other according to the roles prescribed for them by the “world [of the] enormous machine.” He represents patriarchy, but unlike in Sasha’s dream, he cannot be murdered. Howells claims that when Sasha lies on her bed “as still as if I were dead,” she “realizes the terrible possibility of the totally decentered self, when as a subject she has ceased to exist... This is her private space emptied of sexual desire as it is of romantic fantasy, where nothingness has been carefully constructed through her explicit recall and rejection of all the traditional discourses about love” (98). Sasha cannot exist in her own private domain; she is always pulled back into the public world of the Exhibition. Therefore, Sasha annihilates her “sale cerveau,” “puts the light out” and says “yes” to the white robed “priest” of an “obscene, half-understood religion”

(*GMM*, 30). This interpretation stresses the impossibility of any unified self: when Sasha submits to patriarchal domination she kills off the resistant part of her “self”.

Some critics have suggested that Sasha’s “yeses” are a parodic version of Molly Bloom’s “Yes” at the end of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Emery and Gardiner). By welcoming ‘night’ Rhys rejects Joyce’s “affirmation of a transcendent female sensual unity” (Gardiner, 249). By parodying a male modernist writer who uses the voice of a woman as a way of affirming the value of a man’s existence, Rhys exposes how traditional dualisms are perpetuated. Rather than suggesting a way out of the “Exhibition,” Rhys offers no closure. The ambiguous ending implies that there is no escape from ambivalence; the only dissent that can be offered is the “double-voiced language of parody, a mimicry of other voices in contexts which have been emptied of significance” (Howells, 99).

Rhys illustrates through a series of inverted images that the truth is reflected in what we believe to be a distorting mirror. Employing the image of the room to represent the self, Rhys advises us to “never tell the truth about this business of rooms, because it would bust the roof off everything and undermine the whole social system.. All the rooms are the same”(33). Despite slight variations, all rooms are the same, just as -- despite the differences -- all people are the same. To admit that the binary opposites are artificial constructs intended to divide people in order to maintain the existent power structures would “undermine the whole social system.”

CHAPTER II

The Madwoman's Story

“So between you both I wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all” (WSS, 85).

Loneliness, homelessness, alienation, disenfranchisement, exclusion, exploitation, marginalization, otherness, outsidership, and the relativity of truth are all hallmarks of Rhys's fiction. Her novels explore themes that are typically modernist in their depiction of the existential condition of estrangement. However, her narratives also illustrate the way in which “strangers” are created by the very system which excludes and condemns them. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys's overarching concern with the outsider focuses largely on specifically English forms of exclusion and marginalization, especially in terms of national, racial, personal and gender identity.

Wide Sargasso Sea exemplifies the crisis of modernity as it is related to the Western colonial experience. Rhys offers *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the counter-discourse to Charlotte Brontë's Victorian novel *Jane Eyre*, as a way of destabilizing the hegemonic language which seeks to define the West Indian Creole in its own terms. Rhys reclaims a subjectivity for the character of Bertha Rochester by re-inventing her character and by filling in the aporias in the narrative. Rhys's West Indian novel reveals how the goal of English imperialism is to transmit its own culture to other people through a British curriculum and to impose English infrastructure and legal and religious institutions on the Jamaican colony. As the cultural metamorphosis begins, and as the natives' (slaves') traditions/roles dissolve or transmogrify, the culture inevitably splinters

Rhys illustrates how the drive to create a homogeneous, monolithic social structure leads only to further fragmentation and instability. Modernity attempts to maintain its artificial order by constructing binarisms which favor one side over the other. However, the two sides define and depend upon each other and cannot exist in isolation. These binary oppositions, such as black / white, English / French, civilized / uncivilized, subject / object, form a whole; one cannot exist without the other. While the black ex-slaves and the white Creole adopt the mother country's culture and mores, they are never quite assimilated; instead, they are regarded as the "Other" -- a position which gives rise to feelings of estrangement and displacement. The Creole is neither English nor native; he/she has been educated to think like a British subject; however, he/she has also been shaped by black African/French culture. A homogeneous culture, then, cannot flourish or exist in a colonial environment. The white Creole identifies with black culture and English, but is not one or the other, and consequently is misunderstood by both. Jean Rhys clearly identifies colonialism's creation of this in-between position in her unpublished *Black Exercise Book* when she writes:

I was curious about black people. They stimulated me and I felt akin to them. It added to my sadness that I couldn't help but realize that they didn't really like or trust white people. 'White cockroaches' they called us behind our backs. One could hardly blame them...I thought a lot about them. But the end of my thought was always revolt, a sick revolt and I longed to be identified once and for all with the others' side which of course was impossible. I couldn't change the color of my skin.¹

¹ The extract from Jean Rhys's unpublished *Black Exercise Book* is cited in Teresa O'Connor's critical text, *Jean Rhys: The West Indian Novels* (36).

The white Creole is a “stranger” who is paradoxically both inside and outside simultaneously. The Creole, who is located by the imperialist system in the in-between position, is ironically a member of both communities, yet a member of neither. Much emphasis has been placed on the role of the “stranger” in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The English “Rochester” character says of the white Creole woman, Antoinette/Bertha, “I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did”(WSS, 78).

Wide Sargasso Sea, Rhys’s “most socially important book” (Davidson, 16), and “most comprehensive analysis of the psychological and social dynamics of white Creole identity and cultural status”(Raiskin, 109), which was published in 1966, provoked fresh interest in her work from the general public as well as from a litany of literary critics. Many critics such as Judith Kegan Gardiner, Mary Lou Emery, Veronica Gregg, Molly Hite, Coral Ann Howells, Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak and Helen Tiffin have approached Rhys’s fiction, especially *Wide Sargasso Sea*, from a post-colonial perspective. They consider the West Indian experience and that of exile or homelessness to be central to Rhys’s fiction. Additionally, they have claimed that Rhys scrutinizes the crosscurrents of race, social status, and gender. V.S. Naipaul, a precursor to post-colonial theory, writes that Rhys’s heroines are outsiders “appearing to come from no society, having roots in no society,” coming “from a background of nothing to an organized world with which they never come to terms.”²

²Naipaul, V.S. “Without a Dog’s Chance,” *New York Review of Books*. May, 1972, 29-31 quoted from Carol Angier’s *Jean Rhys: Life and Works* (612).

Although the characters in Rhys's fiction indeed are "outsiders," who "appear" to come from "no society," they are actually an amalgamation of two or more cultures, but they belong to neither. Furthermore, contrary to Naipaul's view that the Rhys's characters "never come to terms" with the "organized world," Rhys's characters cannot fit in because they are not permitted to do so. Although the system of binary oppositions (the organized world) creates the role of the in-between "stranger," it shuns her and expels her to a marginal position.

Many colonial discourse theorists, seeking to reveal the contradictions inherent in imperialist representations of "other," claim that in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys wants to emphasize the relationship between colonizer and colonized and the complexity of racial, cultural, and national identity. Judith L. Raitskin notes that the "brilliance of Rhys's novel lies in her claiming a subjectivity for a character denied a stable position in any cultural or social space"(109). This "subjectivity" is reliant upon the structures and ideology of European colonialism and imperialism, and it subsequently becomes "unraveled in a postcolonial Caribbean. Such a subject cannot any longer exist"(Gregg, *Historical Imagination*, 197-8). Rhys, however, not only regards the marginal position from a perspective of colonial differences, but she also raises the issue of gender by revealing how the marginal position is compromised by the conditions of female dependency.

By rewriting Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* from the point of view of the madwoman in the attic of Thornfield Hall and by placing it in a West Indian context, Rhys negotiates the space between the centre and the margins, acknowledging the plurality of differences as a challenge to any supposedly monolithic culture. By using the voice of the "first Mrs. Rochester" (Rhys's original, intended title), and depicting the marginalized

white Creole's experiences, Rhys is able to contest the hegemony of English imperialism. She rejects the binary opposition of self and 'other' by depicting a woman whose status is ambivalent. Bertha Rochester/Antoinette Cosway remains outside of the neat categories; hence, she is portrayed as the "stranger" -- the character who is "different" and is not understood by others -- and resides in the middle ground of neither/nor, a position which leaves her vulnerable to those in the "centralized" positions of power.

The protagonist's descent into madness may be viewed as a direct result of the modern tendency to construct the social order as a monolithic or homogeneous structure based on binary opposition. Those who resist classification are viewed as potential disrupters of the existing social order and are subsequently victimized in a variety of ways. However, it is this victimization that leads to their madness or dangerous rebellion. Ironically, the imperial system creates the very problems which it seeks to eliminate. Rhys deconstructs these colonial binary opposites (black/white, English/ native, civilized/savage, Christian/heathen) by telling Brontë's story from the point of view of someone who lies between the polarities. Furthermore, Rhys examines how cultures influence each other and how racial and cultural roles are artificial constructs. Rhys's fiction asserts that cultures are not homogenous; they are composed of pluralities and ambivalence, and she implies that people are not so easily slotted into categories. Additionally, she implies that these provisional and artificial constructs create the margins which they then attempt to destroy. It is this paradoxical position which I wish to explore.

What inspired Rhys to compose *Wide Sargasso Sea* was her desire to tell "the other side" of the story. In a letter to Diana Athill, Rhys writes,

Now about my book...I came to England between sixteen and seventeen, a very impressionable age and *Jane Eyre* was one of the books I read then. Of course Charlotte Brontë makes her own world, of course she convinces you, and that makes the poor Creole lunatic all the more dreadful. I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read it rather annoyed. "That's only one side -- the English side" sort of thing...They [West Indians] have a side and a point of view (*JRL*, 297).

By presenting only the "English side" of the story, Brontë creates or perpetuates an already existing myth of the mad Creole woman. Brontë's version of the story denies the Creole woman a history. Bertha, in *Jane Eyre*, is depicted as a "ghost" or as an unpredictable, vicious animal-like creature who "howls" and "shrieks." The character is portrayed in an unsympathetic manner --her voice is never heard; hence the reader can feel nothing but repulsion for this repugnant object in the attic. What Rhys aims to accomplish by telling the Creole side of the story is to convey that if the West Indies are a zone of madness, it is precisely because the English have created them this way. The English define themselves against the West Indies which represent everything the English are not. But if the West Indies represent madness, as contrasted with English sanity, it is because the English have defined them this way. Rhys wishes to redeem the character of Bertha Rochester by revealing the reasons behind her descent into madness. She also wishes to illustrate that contrary to the English imperialist view that madness is in the West Indian's blood, insanity is actually produced by the English. This idea is clearly exemplified in Rhys's letter to Selma Vaz Diaz, the radio-actress, who was partially responsible for

arousing interest in Rhys's work after Rhys had slipped into obscurity for almost thirty years:

I've read and re-read *Jane Eyre* of course, and I am sure that the character must be "built up"...The Creole in Charlotte Brontë's novel is a lay figure -- repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls, laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry -- *off stage*. For me (and for you I hope) she must be right *on stage*. She must be at least plausible with a past, the *reason* why Mr. Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the *reason* why he thinks she's mad and why of course she goes mad, even the *reason* why she tries to set everything on fire, and eventually succeeds (*JRL*, 156).

Rhys provides the Creole woman with a history so as to end the "lies" or misconceptions surrounding the legend of the mad West Indian woman. Rhys had in fact considered calling the novel *False Legend* because the story and the character seemed so untrue to her. She convinced herself later that the legend was probably based on reality --albeit a different (English) version of the "truth" -- and thus decided to alter the title(*JRL*, 234). "The Sargasso Sea," Coral Ann Howells writes, "is that becalmed area of the Atlantic Ocean between the West Indies and England, first spotted by Columbus in 1493 and named after the seaweed drifting there, a place of stagnation and suspended animation" (Howells, 113). The final title, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, therefore, represents the in-between position of the heroine, Bertha Rochester. Rhys challenges the British imperialistic discursive practices which perpetuated the "lie" of the mad Creole woman, by rewriting the history from a Creole's perspective.

The new point of view deconstructs one version of history by constructing another version. I use the word "construct" primarily because Rhys does in fact regard history as

a series of artificial constructs. Rhys reveals how our understanding of the truth depends on our perspective -- that we are usually only permitted to hear one version of "history", and furthermore, that those in positions of power impose their understanding of the "truth". Rhys illustrates the constructed nature of the truth by recreating it from another cultural perspective. Rhys does not simply adopt a West Indian voice as a means of rewriting the Creole version of the "mother text" (Harrison, 194); she also wishes to examine the relationship between the imperial "motherland" and its colony. Rhys indicates that the modern enterprise of colonization had devastating consequences for the white Creoles and the emancipated black slaves, and that rather than acknowledge how and why these problems arose, the imperial power structures covered up the truth by distorting history. The ending of Part II in the novel attests to Rhys's account of history when the unnamed Rochester character narrates: "Very soon she'll join all the others who know the secret and will not tell it. Or cannot. Or try and fail because they do not know enough. They can be recognized. White faces, dazed eyes, aimless gestures, high-pitched laughter...She's one of them. 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*, 142). This one paragraph encapsulates Rhys's critique of the British imperialist episteme. She indicates that the truth or knowledge is a composite of multiple subjective experiences, and that only some of these experiences are ever heard. The truth is forever buried under the layers of partial-truths or lies, because of the voices that "will not", "cannot", or "try and fail" to tell their side of the story. Rhys reveals how the perpetuation of lies is part of the imperialist project to suppress the voice of the marginalized. Rhys writes that although "the whole county (Yorkshire) knows" of the madwoman in the attic at Thornfield Hall,

“they do not know the truth. Not about anything. How could they?”(*JRL*, 134). The final inference that can be drawn from Rhys’s novel is the paradox that the truth is that there is no definitive, fixed truth, and those who know this are not in a position to tell.

Rhys relates the tale in three parts, each part told from a different point of view. Part I relates the history of Antoinette Cosway’s isolation, poverty, and maternal neglect in her youth, her mother Annette Cosway’s remarriage to Mr. Mason, the destruction of her home, Coulibri Estate in Jamaica circa 1840, the death of her little brother, her mother’s subsequent mental breakdown, and her entry into and stay at the convent. This section is narrated in the first person by Antoinette Cosway. Part I acts a mirror to Part III insofar as parallels are drawn between Annette /Mr. Mason and Antoinette/Mr. Rochester. Rhys doubles her images so as to reinforce the idea that the white Creole woman’s insanity is not the result of her genetic predisposition, but occurs as a direct consequence of her sandwiched position between the forces of imperialism and the racial tensions created by colonialism. Both Annette’s and Antoinette’s madness is determined by the circumstances of their history. Christophine, the black Martiniquan servant says of Annette’s madness:

They drive her to it. When she lose her son she lose herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad, they act like she is mad. Question, question. but no kind word, no friends, and her husban’ he go off, he leave her. They won’t let me see her. I try, but no. They won’t let Antoinette see her. In the end -- mad I don’t know -- she give up, she care for nothing. That man who is in charge of her he take her whenever he want and his woman talk. That man and others. Then they have her. Ah there is no God (157).

Madness, then, in this novel is depicted by Rhys as a construct of modernity, imperialism and patriarchy.

Part II recounts the unnamed “Mr. Rochester” character’s version of his marriage to Antoinette Cosway, their stay at Granbois, his affair with a black servant, and Antoinette’s subsequent descent into madness. This section differs from the other two insofar as there are interruptions in the narrative structure. The point of view switches back to Antoinette’s narrative voice two times within this section of the novel. Although the point of view alternates between Rochester (I will call him this) and Antoinette/Bertha, other voices can be heard as well through the use of dialogue or letters. Christophine and Daniel / Esau Cosway’s ‘voices’ are important in that they depict different versions of the same story. Hence, the four different voices --the English voice, the black Martiniquan / French voice, the mixed racial heritage voice, and the white Creole woman’s voice-- which are heard in Part II represent the incongruent perspectives of the same story. But the various stories are not equally valid. Each voice reveals its own misconceptions of reality. The different versions of Antoinette’s history are juxtaposed to draw attention to the misrepresentations of her story. By placing the subjective voice of the madwoman beside the white, English voice of Rochester, the black Martiniquan voice of Christophine, and the mixed-race voice of Daniel, Rhys allows the reader to see the invalidity of their approaches. Rhys displaces the center of interest, and as Coral Ann Howells remarks, “No longer is the mad wife a horrid colonial secret” (108). The multifaceted approach also symbolizes the fragmentation of the colonial experience, and furthermore, how all the varieties of cultures, languages, races intertwine to affect each other --sometimes detrimentally.

Part III, the shortest section, locates Bertha Rochester, the madwoman in the attic of Thornfield Hall, in England. Grace Poole's voice can be heard at the opening of this section, an inclusion which is intended to connect the reader to Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Poole's voice also serves to illustrate the function of gossip, that is, the creation of a legend -- or a "lie". The dream sequence, where Bertha sees herself set Thornfield Hall on fire, establishes the series of events which have already been related in *Jane Eyre*.

Coral Ann Howells also regards the three-part structure as a mirroring device: It is a means to suggest the "loss of boundaries between her [Antoinette's] experiences and his [Rochester's], and the consequent need for narrative redefinitions which would reflect the changing positions within cross-cultural encounters"(114). Rochester's story is not only an interruption of Antoinette's but a partial mirroring of it. The different voices are mirroring devices which serve to illustrate how the self is a distorted reflection of the "other". The leitmotif of the mirror acts as a recurrent symbol of the precariously divided nature of the self and how those in power impose their definitions on the disempowered.³ A mirror's purpose is to reflect the self, but this self is the "other's" projected image. There is always a division between self and reflected self. However, in order to define one "self," a mirror is necessary. Antoinette herself comments on this in Part III when she is locked away at Thornfield Hall without a mirror:

There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I

³ Coral Ann Howells regards the mirrors as "agents of duplicity." She maintains the mirror's "substance betrays a shift toward the relativising concept of 'difference' when striking similarities between the two positions are revealed" (*Jean Rhys*, 116).

tried to kiss her, but the glass was between us - hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I? (*WSS*, 147).

Although the mirror does not bridge the gap between the reflection of the identity ascribed by others and the self defined, it does allow for a partial identity.

Each character portrayed in *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents a distinct aspect of colonialism. The interaction between the characters and their impact on each other symbolizes the problems produced by imperialism and modernity. Rhys negates modernity's assertion of order and belief in homogeneity by presenting the myriad of colonial personages who do not belong to strict categories of classification. Her characters blur the lines between the neat modern divisions of black/white, French/English, inside/outside, victim/victimizer, moral/immoral and so on. There is a noticeable cross-over and interplay between the variety of cultures. Rhys presents a West Indian society which is composed of plurality and differences rather than one of homogeneity and similarities. Rhys indicates, through her literary representation, that viewing the world as consisting of binary opposites is not only false, but dangerous as well. The colonial "subject" escapes these clear-cut categories, which, in turn, inevitably leads to their estrangement from the community. By "community" I mean a body of people who are living in the same environment, under the same laws, speaking the same language, practicing the same religion and sharing the same culture. Modernity believes that such communities of sameness exist; however, postmodernity reveals that nowhere can such homogeneous communities be found. They can only be made by expelling what is not the same. Those living under a colonialist or post-colonialist regime unavoidably experience

an identity crisis as they seek to define to whom or to where they belong. The community, that is the English, do not regard the Creole as one of them; similarly, the black population views the Creole as different. The rejection by both communities leaves the indeterminate “other” a “stranger”.

The alternating voices which Rhys employs further serve to shed light on the nature of history or the “truth”. Rochester narrates, “How can one discover truth I thought and that thought led me nowhere. No one would tell me the truth. Not my father nor Richard Mason, certainly not the girl I had married” (86). Later he goes on to reveal his perception of “truth”: “So I shall never understand why, suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain that everything I had imagined to be truth was false. False” (138). Daniel Cosway writes to Rochester, ‘I take up my pen after long thought and meditation but in the end the truth is better than a lie’ (79). Upon meeting with Mr. Rochester, Daniel asserts, “Then there is my half brother Alexander, coloured like me but not unlucky like me, he will want to tell you all sorts of lies...There is that woman up at your house, Christophine. She is the worst. Christophine is a bad woman and she will lie to you worse than your own wife. Your own wife she talks sweet talk and she lies”(103). Antoinette says of Daniel, “He hates all white people, but he hates me the most. He tells lies about us and he is sure that you will believe him and not listen to the other side”(106). Each character depicted understands only his or her subjective experience from his or her cultural perspective, and proceeds to interpret reality according to his or her own background. The characters do not understand each other, nor can they. They do not see the gaps between the different versions of reality, nor do they understand how their actions affect each other. By presenting several versions of the same story, Rhys illuminates the provisional and

subjective nature of “truth”. Furthermore, she reveals how identity and knowledge are cultural constructs which are not stable and impermeable; they are forever transforming themselves in their interactions with others.

Mary Lou Emery claims that “An entry into ‘otherness’ opens early in *Wide Sargasso Sea*” (*World’s End*, 38). The “Other” or the “stranger” is represented by the figures of Annette Cosway and her daughter, Antoinette Cosway. The different versions of the same name (both French) represent the parallel drawn between the mother and daughter; they are both products of the imperialist system, and their subsequent madness is also a product of their colonial status. Both characters become marginalized and are subsequently victimized to the point of madness because they exist outside the center. They have no solid family structure, no friends, no fixed cultural affiliation, and they do not belong to any one community. This idea is clearly depicted in the first three lines of the novel: “They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother” (*WSS*, 15). The reader immediately learns that Antoinette Cosway’s mother, Annette Cosway, has been excluded from the white Jamaican community because she is a “Martinique girl,” and because she is “pretty”. Not only is there an element of jealousy on account of her sexual allure which condemns her as being immoral, but she is also a French West Indian woman living in a British West Indian colony. Furthermore, she is a poverty-stricken young widow who is jeered at by the black Jamaicans, “especially after her riding clothes grew shabby (they notice clothes, they know about money)” (16). In a letter to Rochester, in Part II, Daniel writes of Annette: “She have no money and she have no friends, for French and English like cat and dog in these islands since long time. Shoot, Kill,

Everything”(80). These details illustrate the break-down of the class system and the blacks’ ensuing hostility toward the white population after the dismantling of the plantation system following the Abolition of Slavery Act. Her neighbor and “only friend” commits suicide as a result of his failure to receive compensation for the loss of his slaves following the Emancipation Act. The effects of this altered social system are graphically represented by the image of the fallen paradise of Coulibri Estate. The narrator compares the garden of Coulibri to the “garden in the Bible,” and claims that it had “gone wild”(16). The garden gone wild is a symbol of the breakdown of order. Bauman writes that modernity establishes ‘gardens’ by expelling weeds, but the weeds always return (25-28).

This postslavery period altered the social and economic structure, and along with it, Annette changes too. She “grew thin and silent, and at last she refused to leave the house at all”(16). Although Godfrey, her servant, suggests that “When the old time go, let it go. No use to grab at it,” Annette could not, for “How could she not try for all the things that had gone so suddenly, so without warning”(16). A slight distinction is made between mother and daughter when Antoinette claims that the changes “never saddened me. I did not remember the place when it was prosperous”(17). The destruction of the pre-existing order of master/slave has an immediate impact on Annette (loss of wealth, status, freedom), but Antoinette, who was born into this period of turmoil, does not yet realize what the implications are.

For five years between Cosway’s death and her second marriage, Annette struggles to support her family. She is an object of scorn for the black community who stare and laugh at her, and, having no one to communicate with, Annette begins to talk to herself. She suddenly becomes withdrawn, “thin and silent,” after learning that her son’s

condition (he staggered and couldn't speak properly) is permanent, and she subsequently neglects her daughter. Her life improves dramatically, however, when she meets Mr. Mason, "the white pappy." Coulibri Estate is restored to its original grandeur, and the family adopts typically English customs. They eat "English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings", and Antoinette is "like an English girl"(30). Mr. Mason promises to take Pierre to England where "he would be cured, made like other people"(31). Mr. Mason's arrival represents the imposition of English customs and values onto a West Indian family; he restores what was missing by constructing norms and standards which contradict those of the black culture. The family, then, is made to be "exactly like other people"; by "other people" what is implied is "English people," because that is the imperialist's mission: to convert or to transform the "other." The problem with English cultural imperialism is that it can imagine only two possibilities: on the one hand, it is universalist and assimilationist and believes everyone should conform to English norms; on the other hand, it is racist and exclusionary and believes some people are radically different and therefore less human. What English colonialism cannot acknowledge is that people can be fully human and different. The two options are contradictory – all humans should be English; those who are not English are not fully human. White Creoles, Rhys maintains, are trapped by this contradiction.

Mr. Mason is representative of English colonialism, and its values and built-in racist misconceptions. Mr. Mason, "so sure of himself, so without a doubt English"(30), regards blacks as lazy, harmless children. He says, "They're too damn lazy to be dangerous"(28), and "They are children – they wouldn't hurt a fly"(30). What Mr.

Mason does not understand is the perceived laziness of the blacks arises from the association of labor with slavery. The “laziness” is thus a form of rebellion, not a sign of the blacks’ incapacity for rebellion. But as Aunt Cora points out, “Unhappily, children do hurt flies.” Mr. Mason’s naive and stereotypical preconceptions of what constitutes blackness are representative of the modernist persistence in creating binaries: the black person is the opposite of everything the white English man stands for.

Mr. Mason’s failure to acknowledge the racial tensions which exist between the white population and the black community leads to the destruction of Coulibri Estate. Although Annette warns Mr. Mason of the imminent danger, he disregards her warning because, as he says, ‘No, I don’t understand...I don’t understand at all’(28). Antoinette wishes she could tell him that “out here is not at all like English people think it is”(29); she resolves that “None of you understand about us”(26). The emphasis on Mr. Mason’s lack of understanding and his refusal to listen to Annette’s admonition because of his naive preconceptions is included as a way of setting up the divergent views of the English man and the white West Indian woman. Mr. Mason represents the new breed of English imperialists who seek capital gain by exploiting the working classes even after slavery has ended. The West Indians “won’t work” or “don’t want to work”, and Mr. Mason announces that he wishes to import labourers, “coolies” from the East Indies. This conversation is overheard by their servant, Myra, who –it is suggested – reveals Mason’s plans to the black labourers. Although Mr. Mason is warned by Aunt Cora not to discuss his plans in front of Myra, he assumes that his understanding of the black people is superior to hers and cockily says, “Live here most of your life and know nothing about the

people. It's astonishing"(30). He regards Antoinette's fears as delusional and attributes them to her having "lived alone far too long" and claims she "imagines enmity which doesn't exist"(27-8). The unbridgeable gap between their divergent views acts as a catalyst for the ensuing mob scene and torching of the estate.

This heavily charged scene employs symbols, such as the wedding ring falling off her finger and the parrot dying, to mark the end of their marriage and Annette's fall into "madness." Immediately prior to the discovery of the fire, Annette thinks about Pierre: "She was twisting her hands together, her wedding ring fell off and rolled into a corner near the steps. My step-father and Mannie both stooped for it..."(33) as smoke billowed out from under the door. Annette becomes enraged after she carries Pierre, who "looked dead," out of the room," and yells hysterically at Mr. Mason, "I told you what would happen again and again... You would not listen, you sneered at me, you grinning hypocrite, you ought not to live either, you know so much, don't you?"(34). Her rage, like the blacks' rage, is a response to Mr. Mason's inability to see beyond his own English cultural and racial stereotypes. The dominion of white over black and man over woman engenders hatred and a violent rebellion by both the blacks and Annette against Mr. Mason. The blacks are depicted as a mob : "They all looked the same, it was the same face repeated over and over..."(35), whereas Annette stands alone without any power. The blacks are able to empower themselves by banding together; however, Annette who also tries to kill Mr. Mason can only shout, "I'll kill you if you touch me. Coward. Hypocrite. I'll kill you"(39).

Annette is like a bird with its wings clipped--trapped; she is as Antoinette points out, "so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either"(30). Annette stands between the two groups, misunderstood by both, and defined against both. Like Coco, the parrot who speaks French, her fate is determined by the control of the English man and the interaction of the races. Coco's death is the direct result of his wings having been clipped by Mr. Mason and of being unable to fly away after the house is set on fire by the black mob. The bird's condition (clipped wings) and his subsequent fiery death not only foreshadow the events to come, but symbolize Annette's imprisonment and Antoinette's own death in the fire which she sets in Thornfield Hall. The bird's clipped wings represent the control of the English and their stripping away of 'native' Creole and black power. Furthermore, the parrot scene epitomizes the loss of freedom and the resulting tragedy. The symbol of the parrot figures largely at the end of the novel when Antoinette dreams that she hears the parrot call.⁴

Annette is locked away in a house in the country, isolated from her family and --it is suggested -- perpetually raped by her male guardian. Three different versions of Annette's madness are described by her daughter, Daniel, and Christophine. Antoinette, when relating her mother's "history" to Rochester, never describes her mother as "mad"; instead, she acknowledges that her mother spoke to herself out of loneliness and fear, and she blames the post-emancipation circumstances for her mother's condition of estrangement. She says, "Many people died in those days, both white and black,

⁴ Graham Huggan, in his article "A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry" maintains that the parrot serves as a metaphor for the reconfirmation of European cultural supremacy; yet it also serves as a metaphor for the process of colonial mimicry - a process of answering back to their European precursors to display their self-imprisoning master-narratives.

especially the older people, but no one speaks of those days now. They are forgotten, except the lies. Lies are never forgotten, they go on and they grow”(108). Daniel’s version of Annette’s history is juxtaposed with Antoinette’s version as a reminder of how “lies” are created and sustained. Daniel, in a letter to Rochester, writes that madness is a part of the character of all Creoles. He writes: “Mrs. Cosway is worthless and spoilt, she can’t lift a hand for herself and soon the madness that is in her, and in all these white Creoles, come out...the madness gets worse and she has to be shut away for she try to kill her husband -- madness not being all either”(81). He also asserts that Antoinette’s father and her brother were insane, and says of her “idiot” brother that “God mercifully take him early on.” Daniel does not include any references to the pressures of emancipation on the white population, nor does he allude to the fire at Coulibri set by the blacks, nor does he acknowledge the murder of Pierre --instead calling it a ‘merciful’ act of God. His version of Annette’s madness is clearly one-sided and a racially biased recording of the past. Daniel cannot see beyond the limits of his own resentment toward the family which he regards as being responsible for his misfortune. Daniel’s revenge is a consequence of his divided feelings: on the one hand, he wants to be white; on the other hand, he hates whites because he is rejected by the man whom he insists is his father.

Christophine’s analysis of the past is that Annette was driven mad by her husband’s inattention to her fears of the blacks’ violence against them; then she “lost herself for awhile” after her son’s death, was defined as “mad,” isolated from her family, kept drunk on rum, raped and subsequently became “mad.” Despite Christophine’s awareness of Annette’s instability, as a black woman who was shunned for practicing “Obeah,” Christophine was not permitted to visit and consequently could not intervene in preventing

Annette's slide into madness. Christophine knows the "truth"; however, she cannot convey her knowledge because she herself is an outsider, not only to the black community but also to the white community. Even if she attempts to impart her version of the truth, it is disregarded.

Veronica Marie Gregg asserts that Antoinette is Annette/Tia/Amelie and she further claims that the reason Rhys employed the "double" was to "suggest a subjectivity split by the pressure of difference and exclusion based on binary oppositions"(197). Gregg additionally posits that the "Creole mode of subjectivity, dependent as it is upon the structures and ideology of European colonialism and imperialism, becomes unraveled" (197-8) when the pre-existing social structure alters. Antoinette's identity has been constructed upon the imperial design of binary opposition, which inevitably leaves her stranded between the poles, excluded and de-centred. Her fragmentation is graphically represented through the use of mirror images. Her self is a reflection of a multiplicity of "others." Gregg writes, "The cathexis between Antoinette and Tia as Self/Other, Narcissus/Echo, the separation and the intimacy all work toward the construction and de(con)struction of the white Creole woman"(100).

Not only are Antoinette and Annette's names different renditions of the same name, but the characters are different versions of the same story; that is, they both represent the story of the mad Creole woman. Rhys depicts two female Creole figures who are regarded as insane, and who eventually become insane, as a means of emphasizing how the legend of the mad West Indian is actually a construction of English imperialism, and not the result of a genetic predisposition to insanity. It is the system that creates the insanity, not the individual's natural predilection. From the outset, Antoinette, like her

mother, is ostracized by the white Jamaican community and by the black community as well. Antoinette's fate is determined by her inherited circumstances. The misfortunes that befell her mother have been passed down to Antoinette. Her history has already been written; her madness is inevitable.

Antoinette's status as an outsider and a member of a subordinate class is represented by the key scene when she encounters Tia. One day, Antoinette is followed by a black girl who sings, "Go away white cockroach, go away, go away...White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you. Go away"(20). Although Antoinette has learned to create a division between "blacks who serve" and "blacks who are hostile and represent a threat," the two girls forge a short-lived friendship. It is this demarcation that pre-constructs the terms of Antoinette's relationship with Tia. Veronica Marie Gregg suggests that:

The marks of 'race' that structure the Antoinette/Tia relationship undermine the *narrative* suggestion that it is a friendship. The *text* insists upon the racial divisions even as it appears to be 'transcending' them...The 'narrative function' enacts a sentimental fiction of friendship between the black and white girls even as the 'textual function' demystifies and undercuts it. In this way the Rhys text displays its own contradictions, offering its own internal critique" (*Historical Imagination*, 88-9).

Briefly put, the narrative function is the actual plot and story line, whereas the textual function is the inclusion of 'clues' which allow for interpretation.

This scene serves to illustrate the underlying racial tensions of the post-slavery period, and also acts as a mirror, reflecting the alienated condition of the white Creole woman and her likeness to the subjugated black population. While playing at the bathing

pool one day, Tia bets Antoinette her three pennies that Antoinette cannot turn a somersault under water. Antoinette performs the task, but arises from the water choking, and Tia takes the money, claiming that Antoinette had not “done it good”(21). Antoinette’s response to the situation is to call Tia a “cheating nigger.” Her racial insult illustrates how Antoinette cannot escape her own inherited prejudice; although she attempts to befriend a black girl, she supports the system which regards blacks as racially inferior. Tia quickly retorts that “Real white people, they got gold money. They didn’t look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger”(21). Immediately following this exchange, Antoinette discovers that Tia has stolen her clean dress and left her own in exchange. The loss of money (the three pennies), the exchange of the dresses, and the term “white nigger” represent the likeness between Tia and Antoinette. The white people’s racial superiority is determined by and dependent upon their economic elevation above and control of the black population; without the economic power to perpetuate the exploitation of the blacks, the whites become just like the subjugated black population. Antoinette’s poverty leaves her and her mother isolated from the white Jamaican community, and, in effect, renders them impotent just like the blacks. Antoinette is not a “real white person”; because she lacks economic status she is a “white nigger.” Gregg, in an excellent examination of this particular scene, writes:

A focus on dress is threaded through the narrative to inscribe an examination of the roles of Creole woman within the racialized hierarchies of the plantation society of the nineteenth-century West Indies. When Tia switches the dresses, leaving Antoinette her shabbier one, the text

reverses in a microcosmic way, the white-over-black paradigm, destabilizing categories of victim/victimizer, haves/have-nots. Tia's action consummates the discursive invention of Antoinette as "white nigger." Forced to put on Tia's dress, Antoinette, the poor white, takes on the mantle of the nigger (*Historical Imagination*, 90).

Essentially, by drawing a likeness between Tia and Antoinette, Rhys addresses the problems inherent in the colonial structure. The whites' ascendancy over the blacks was based on their wealth; however, with the collapse of the plantation system, the "old time white people" can no longer define themselves according to their economic status. The breakdown of the system created a gap between the neat binaries of white/black and rich/poor. To be white was to be rich, to be black was to be poor; however, following the Emancipation Act, to be white was no longer to be rich. The various roles no longer presented clear-cut divisions. It is precisely this aspect of the Creole's position that Rhys examines.

The exchange of the dresses acts as a catalyst for Antoinette's mother, for when she sees her daughter "growing up as a white nigger...she was ashamed...it was after that day that everything changed"(109). Annette attempts to elevate their status by marrying a wealthy English man. Their reinstatement into the elite class causes further racial conflict. Antoinette remarks that "The black people did not hate us quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we would be dead for we had no money left. What was there to hate?"(29). As Howells points out, "Her mother's rescue through marriage to the Englishman, Mr. Mason, and her alliance with the new

colonialism represents the final stages in the destruction of the old way of life.”⁵ In order to secure their socioeconomic status, Mr. Mason wishes to import labor – a coercive measure which can only provoke violence from the ex-slaves. A violent rebellion quickly ensues, wherein Coulibri Estate is burned, Pierre, Antoinette’s brother dies, her mother slips into an irreversible hysteria, and Antoinette is injured in a confrontation with Tia.

The rebellion of the blacks against the oppression of the new colonialism, and Antoinette’s identification with the blacks’ subjugation by the English, is graphically represented by the mirroring of Tia and Antoinette. Although Tia is black and Antoinette is a white Creole, the two girls are mirror images insofar as they are both victims of English imperialism:

As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass (38).

The mirroring of Tia and Antoinette in this confrontational scene depicts them as Other and same in that the circumstances that separate them also create a likeness. Who they are is determined by the existence of the other. Gregg asserts that this scene “anatomizes the intimate violence that inheres within the Creole’s cathexis to the black Other and Tia’s refusal of this role”(*Historical Imagination*, 96). Antoinette’s identity is a composite of

⁵ Coral Ann Howells notes that Mr. Mason’s new colonialism is signalled in his plans to import contract labourers from India and the East Indies to replace former slave labor (111).

English culture and black, but being a “stranger” to both she is denied entry, and therefore, Tia must reject her. Bauman states: “The native culture defines him [the stranger] and sets him apart as a miscreant – ‘neither friend nor foe’; as that ambivalent inside/outside which sets the limit of the life-world’s order. The stranger is assigned no status inside the cultural realm he wants to make his own. His entry will therefore signify a violation of the culture he enters”(Modernity, 78). Although Bauman employs the term ‘native’ in the context of European nationalism, it can be applied to black culture. However, the contradiction inherent in the black colonial position is that the blacks were also forced to become reflections of white European culture; therefore, the blacks are also not entirely homogeneous. Hence, there is a similarity between the white Creoles and the black ex-slave population in that both groups were subjugated by English imperialism, yet there still remains a racial difference. The scene between Tia and Antoinette will subsequently be replayed almost identically by Antoinette at the end of the novel in her fight against the oppressive forces of English patriarchy. She, like the black ex-slaves, will set fire to Thornfield Hall in an attempt to liberate herself.

After the burning of Coulibri, Antoinette, homeless and motherless, is placed temporarily in her Aunt Cora’s care and subsequently is sheltered in a convent. Of homelessness, Bauman writes:

In the native world-view, the essence of the stranger is homelessness. Unlike an alien or a foreigner, the stranger is not simply a newcomer, a person temporarily out of place. He is an *eternal wanderer*, homeless always and everywhere, without hope of ever ‘arriving’...The natives may view the freedom they impute to the stranger with genuine horror, with a jaundiced eye, or (most commonly)

with a mixture of both. To the stranger himself, however, freedom appears first of all as acute uncertainty. Unmitigated by at least a part-time availability of safe harbour, it tends to be experienced as a curse rather than a blessing. Freedom in the unalloyed state is lived as loneliness, and as a chronic condition is virtually unbearable. In the extreme case it verges on madness – but even in mild versions it tends to be medicalized as a mental problem (79).

Rhys, like Bauman, makes a connection between strangerhood, homelessness, freedom and madness. The song which Antoinette asks Aunt Cora to sing after six weeks of being ill is significantly '*Before I was set free*'. Her role as the "stranger" and her homelessness, then, signal freedom; however, along with this freedom comes the "loneliness" or "madness" of which Bauman writes. Antoinette's state of in-betweenness and the psychological and physical consequences of the alienating colonial experience are metaphorically represented by the image of the zombie. A zombie is "a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead" (*WSS*, 88). Judith Raiskin writes: "The Afro-Caribbean religion of Vodou provides Rhys with a rich symbolic terrain to explore both colonial exploitation and the 'terrified consciousness' of the white bourgeoisie; her use of the pervasive symbol of the zombie underscores her ambivalent position as a white Caribbean Creole" (*Snow*, 130).

Having lost her home and her mother, Antoinette, upon entry into the convent, is tormented by a negro who is an albino, and another unidentified black girl. The girl says: "Look the crazy girl, you crazy like your crazy mother. Your aunt frightened to have you in the house. She send you for the nuns to lock up. Your mother walk about with no shoes and stockings on her feet, she *sans culottes*. She try to kill her husband and she try to kill you too that day you go to see her. She have eyes like zombie and you have eyes

like zombie too” (42). Antoinette’s mother, in her madness, embodies the zombie-like state of existence; she is at once alive, yet dead. Antoinette, while in the convent, says that she must remember to pray for her mother “as though she were dead, though she is living”(46). Later, when Rochester asks Antoinette why she told him that her mother had died when she was still a child, Antoinette answers him: “Because they told me to say so and because it is true. She did die when I was a child. There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about”(106). Antoinette and Annette both represent the Creole’s painfully alienated condition of being between two groups and rejected by both.

Antoinette is an outsider regardless of where she goes. Her condition is perpetually one of unbelonging. Even in the confines of the convent, Antoinette does not fit into the religious community insofar as she does not embrace the tenets of Christianity. She questions the nature of sin, deciding that questioning sin is itself sinning. Therefore, she abandons praying altogether. Antoinette recognizes that everyone seems to feel that their own salvation requires the damnation of others. Christianity practices intolerance by promising a place in heaven only for those who adhere to its tenets. Realizing the discriminatory nature of Christianity, Antoinette reveals that she “did not pray so often after that and soon, hardly at all. [She] felt bolder, happier, more free. But not so safe”(48). Of the nuns and other girls at the convent, she indicates, “They are safe. How can they know what it can be like *outside*?”(50). Antoinette’s position is always that of being outside.

The condition of being an outsider or a stranger is a trait recognized immediately by Rochester. He describes her as having “Long, sad, dark alien eyes,” and continues, “Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they’re not English or European

either”(56). On their journey to Granbois, Rochester admits that “the woman is a stranger”(59), but she “might have been any pretty English girl”(60). He further acknowledges, “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”(78). He later describes her as a “wild-haired stranger who was my wife shouting obscenities at me”(122). Antoinette is clearly represented as the stranger. The stranger, according to Bauman, is a member of the family of *undecidables*, a ‘ubiquitous unity’ that cannot be included within binary opposition. The *stranger* or the *undecidable* is *neither/nor*; “which is to say that they militate against the *either/or*” (*Modernity*, 56). Bauman continues to say of strangers or undecidables that they “brutally expose the artifice, the fragility, the sham of the most vital of separations. They bring the outside into the inside, and poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos” (56).

Antoinette’s position as a “stranger” is represented by her ability to identify with both English culture and black Caribbean culture. Antoinette has been educated to identify with colonial and patriarchal interests, but she also recognizes Rochester’s otherness to her Caribbean side. She understands and identifies with black culture in the same way that she identifies with English culture. She is able to sing an English song, “Hail to the queen of the silent night...” (70) with Rochester just as she can sing “Ma belle ka di maman li” with Christophine (76) She says that she is “like Christophine” in that she is “lazy” and “often stays in bed all day” (72). Antoinette understands the cultural differences, unlike Rochester, and she clarifies his misunderstanding of their customs. For example, one morning when Christophine serves them coffee and breakfast, her long dress trails on the floor, a custom which Rochester attributes to uncleanness. Antoinette

corrects him by revealing how Christophine deliberately allows her dress to trail behind her because “it’s for respect... Or for feast days or going to Mass” or because “it shows it isn’t the only dress they have” (71).

The differences between Antoinette and Rochester are also represented by their appreciation for or identification with the land. Antoinette’s West Indian identification is revealed when she admits that England is “like a dream,” whereas Rochester regards her “beautiful island” to be “quite unreal and like a dream” (67). Her identification with the land separates her from Rochester. She loves the land “more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person. More than a person” (74). Antoinette feels that the island is her “place” and says, “this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay” (90). Rochester views the place as “wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness” (73). He feels, however, that there is “something unknown and hostile,” and admits to Antoinette, “I feel very much a stranger here...I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side” (107). England, for Antoinette, is “rosy pink in the geography book map...There are fields like sugar-cane fields, but gold colour and not so tall” (92). England is the place in her dreams “where I will be cold and not belonging” (92).

Rhys allows Rochester to tell his side of the story as a means of exposing his misperceptions of the West Indian people, his belief in his cultural and racial superiority, and the way in which his will to dominate ultimately leads to Antoinette’s destruction. Gregg points out, “One of the achievements of the narrative structure is that the husband’s story provides insights and gives the reader access to precisely those sites where the husband most lacks insight into himself” (*Historical Imagination*, 102). Although Rhys allows Rochester to provide his English version of the legend of the madwoman in the

attic, Rhys very deliberately omits his name. In a letter to Diana Athill, she writes, “I carefully haven’t named the man at all” (*JRL*, 297). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is the speaking subject –a position denied to her in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. However, in Rhys’s rendition of the story, Rochester, the nameless “other,” is allowed a voice in order to reveal his own prejudices. His story will be – or has already been – sympathetically related by a British author. In Rhys’s story he is intended to be regarded harshly for destroying Antoinette; however, Rhys is careful to depict Rochester as a victim of imperialism as well. As Graham Huggan points out, “Rochester’s position is of course an ambivalent one; caught between his duties as an authoritarian husband and as an obedient son, he is at once implicated within the system and victimized by it” (154). He is caught in a world which does not permit him to see beyond his own prejudices. He too feels menaced by the same system which oppresses Antoinette. Ironically, those forces which victimize Rochester are the same ones which cause him to victimize Antoinette.

Rochester is not depicted as a villain. His role as a victimizer is determined by his position as the younger, less favored son of a family in the entailment system. Having been denied financial assistance from his father, Rochester seeks to elevate his social status by fortune hunting in the West Indies. A deal is made between Richard Mason and himself which stipulates that he will receive thirty thousand pounds which have been left to Antoinette Cosway upon his marriage to her. With the stigma of her mother’s insanity adhering to her, Richard Mason is all too pleased to marry her off without a financial provision for her well-being. In an imaginary letter to his father, Rochester reveals the reason behind his marriage to Antoinette: “I have a modest competence now. I will never be a disgrace to you, or to my dear brother the son you love. No begging letters, no mean

requests. None of the furtive shabby maneuvers of a younger son. I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain?" (59) Rochester is forced into a marriage with a woman for whom he feels no love on account of his father's favoritism for the eldest son. The marriage is regarded as a business transaction where the lines between buyer and seller are blurred. Rochester admits that Antoinette has 'bought him' and that his father has 'sold his soul', therefore positioning himself as a commodity; however, it is Antoinette who ultimately is sold and who becomes the exclusive domain and property of her husband following her marriage.

Rochester is forced into exile and into a loveless marriage for the sake of economic advancement. The feeling that he has 'sold his soul' as a means to empower himself and that he has married a "stranger" engenders in him a hatred of Antoinette. From the outset, he indicates that she is "sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps like much else in this place" (55), and when he watches the beauty of her body, he does not do so with admiration but with hatred: "As I watched,, hating..."(114). At the end of the novel, Antoinette alludes to Rochester as "the man who hated me"(155).

Rochester hates Antoinette and must dominate her because she is different from him and he does not understand her. Gregg asserts that Rochester's estrangement from Antoinette derives in part "from their mutually exclusive definitions of 'reality' as well as his own inability to assert superiority by controlling her perception...The identity of the husband is constituted by the history and narrative of Europe and is dependent upon the 'breaking up' of Antoinette, the Creole woman"(*Historical Imagination*, 103). Rochester, who is the embodiment of English imperialism and its drive to assimilate others, hates Antoinette because she represents something "strange" and different from

him. Rochester contends that no matter what he tells Antoinette about England or Europe, she will not change her perceptions:

She often questioned me about England and listened attentively to my answers, but I was certain that nothing I said made much difference. Her mind was already made up. Some romantic novel, a stray remark never forgotten, a sketch, a picture, a song, a waltz, some note of music, and her ideas were fixed. About England and about Europe. I could not change them and probably nothing would. Reality might disconcert her, bewilder her, hurt her, but it would not be reality. It would be only a mistake, a misfortune, a wrong path taken, her fixed ideas would never change.

Nothing that I told her influenced her at all.

Die then. Sleep. It is all that I can give to you...(78-9)

If Rochester cannot “influence her at all” then he must “break her up”(126) by erasing her own identity and by imposing another one on her. Like all colonizers, he seeks to own for economic gain, then to destroy the native culture by erasing it and imposing English culture (in the name of assimilation) onto the colonized subject. But the colonized subject –even after the completion of the process of assimilation -- is always the “other,” and is never regarded as the “same” as the colonizer. Rochester, in true imperialistic spirit, marries Antoinette for her money. The marriage between the Rochester and Antoinette is like colonization in the sense that she relinquishes all her possessions to him. When Christophine advises Antoinette to “pick up your skirt and walk out,” she responds, “And you must understand, I am not rich now, I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him... That is English law”(91).

Rochester's feelings towards the island are analogous to his feelings for Antoinette. He regards the land as being "not only wild but menacing" (58), and he indicates, "What I see is nothing – I want what it *hides* – that is not nothing" (73). The land is different from his native England; he is intrigued and afraid of the territory because he does not understand it. His will to dominate is revealed in his wish to unlock the secret of the place. What he does not know or understand presents a potential danger to him, and therefore, he must "know what it hides" in order to establish his ascendancy. After receiving a letter from Daniel regarding Antoinette's past, Rochester goes for a walk in the woods, contemplating the elusive nature of 'truth' (86), when he realizes that he is "lost and afraid among these enemy trees, so certain of danger" (87). When Baptiste finds Rochester, Rochester asks him if there is a ghost or a zombie at the ruined house which he passed, but Baptiste dismisses this as "foolishness." In an attempt to discern the mystery of the place, Rochester turns to a book about the West Indies called *The Glittering Coronet of Isles*. The book posits that "negroes as a rule refuse to discuss the black magic in which so many believe" (89). The "truth" will not be revealed, nor will Rochester discover the truth in a book. In the same way that Antoinette constructs her understanding of England through her exposure to English texts, Rochester also attempts to make sense of the Caribbean by reading about it. Rochester, however, cannot uncover the mystery of the land, nor can he understand Antoinette. The gap between him and Antoinette cannot be closed unless he systematically destroys her.

Christophine sums up Rochester's process of "breaking up" Antoinette:

Everybody know that you marry her for her money and you take it all. And then you want to break her up, because you

jealous of her. She is more better than you, she have better blood in her and she don't care for the money – it's nothing for her...And then...you make love to her till she drunk with it..till she can't do without it. It's *she* can't see the sun any more. Only you she see. But all you want is to break her up...So I give her something for love...But you don't love. All you want is to break her up. And it help break her up...She tell me in the middle of all this you start calling her names. Marionette...That mean doll, eh? Because she don't speak. You want to force her to cry and to speak...But she won't... You bring that worthless girl to play with next door and you talk and laugh and love so that she hear everything (ellipses are mine, 125-7).

While Christophine is accusing Rochester of being a puppet master, he thinks, “It was like that...It was like that. But better to say nothing...Yes, that didn't just happen. I meant it” (126-7). Discovering that Antoinette's ideas (like the landscape) are different from his and he can't change them, he seeks to erase them. In typically imperialist fashion, he gives her the new English name of Bertha, thus re-creating her identity by destroying her old one. Antoinette understands Rochester's imperialist goal when she asserts, “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” (121). While in Thornfield Hall she thinks about the significance of names and admits, “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” (147). The link between Obeah and Antoinette's renaming illustrates how different cultures employ similar means to destroy the individual who does not belong to the community. The will to dominate and to destroy outsiders to the community is typical of all colonies; however, the method of destruction varies from culture to culture. Judith L. Raitskin points out that zombification is a rare form of punishment meted out to individuals

who have committed crimes against the larger community (*Snow*, 136). Thus in some cultures, obeah is used to bring about a kind of living death, whereas in others, institutions such as marriage, law and psychiatry are employed as a means to control the “stranger.”

Rochester renames Antoinette and proceeds to treat her like a doll that has outgrown its usefulness, and calls her a “marionette” or a puppet. Upon receiving Daniel’s letter which claims that the “madness that is in her, and in all these white Creoles, come out” (80), Rochester begins to view Antoinette differently. Immediately after discovering that Antoinette has “bad blood,” Amélie reveals how Rochester “look like he see zombie” (83) when he sees Antoinette’s reflection in the mirror. Rochester – as Christophine acknowledges –is “not a bad man, even if he love money, but he hear so many stories he don’t know what to believe. That is why he keep away” (94). Rochester’s feelings toward Antoinette are ambivalent; he does not know “how one can discover the truth” (86), and although Antoinette has tried to tell him the “truth,” it “is always too late for the truth” (96). Desperate to win back Rochester’s affections, Antoinette, looking “like a dead woman...eyes red like *soucriant*” (96), turns to Christophine for “something to make [him] love her again” (126). Christophine warns Antoinette that she “don’t meddle in that for béké...too strong for béké” (126), but Antoinette does not heed her advice, and slips the ‘love potion’ into Rochester’s wine. Instead of loving Antoinette, he believes she has tried to poison him, and is filled with hatred. Although he has claimed that he would not “hug and kiss them” (76), he has intercourse with Amélie, a woman whose “skin was darker, her lips thicker” (115) than he had thought. Hurt and angry, Antoinette turns to rum to ease the pain, and in her drunkenness, she becomes violent, smashing bottles against the wall and shouting

obscenities at Rochester. Her reaction is interpreted by Rochester as a confirmation that she indeed has 'madness in her blood.' He regards her as "crazy," a "wild-haired stranger" and a 'dangerous doll' (123). By reading her behavior as insane and by labeling her a "madwoman," Rochester, in effect, causes her madness. Christophine, who recognizes the various mechanisms employed by the colonizer to subjugate the colonized, points out to Rochester that he accomplishes this task by affirming her madness through other male agents who support the colonizer's position: "It is in your mind to pretend she is mad. I know it. The doctors say what you tell them to say. That man Richard he say what you want him to say – glad and willing too, I know" (132).

When Christophine suggests to Rochester that he relinquish his hold on Antoinette and allow her to leave to permit her some happiness and perhaps a chance to remarry, he firmly denies her this opportunity as "a pang of rage and jealousy shot" through him. Driven by his greed and by his will to dominate, Rochester claims Antoinette as his sole possession. He thinks, "Vain, silly creature. Made for loving? Yes, but she'll have no other lover, for I don't want her and she'll see no other...She's mad but *mine, mine...* My lunatic. My mad girl" (136).

On a narrative level, Rochester's response to Antoinette has largely been affected by his interactions with both Christophine and Daniel. Daniel's letter and Christophine's obeah irrevocably alter the course of Rochester and Antoinette's relationship. However, these characters are included to provide alternative perspectives to the stories told by Antoinette and Rochester. The multivocality serves to fill in the aporias of each version of the truth. By including different versions of the same story, Rhys suggests that history is subjective, and perceptions of reality are affected by cultural biases; the "secret" or the

“truth” is “lost” or “those who know the secret will not tell it. Or cannot. Or try and fail because they do not know enough” (141) Furthermore, Rhys implies that those in positions of power control the transmission of history, but this version of “history” is a distortion of the truth.

Rhys had considered including a section of the novel from Daniel’s point of view, but she changed her mind after Diana Athill suggested it might be too complicated to include so many points of view (*JRL*,256). Daniel’s voice and his rendition of Antoinette’s history are included in Rochester’s section of *Wide Sargasso Sea* to parallel Rochester’s preconceptions of the black West Indians and the white Creole woman. Gregg regards Daniel as a “shadow of the husband, a displaced phantasm, a surrogate...Both Daniel and the husband are emanations of a repressed history of violence, linked to sexuality, gender, and economics, which has been written out of imperial history”(*Historical Imagination*, 114). Daniel, like Rochester, is neglected by his father, and is cut off from receiving an inheritance. He is bitter and resentful, and directs his ire at Antoinette; it is his envy and hatred that motivate him to scorn and attempt to destroy Antoinette. On the wall of his house hangs a sign which reads “Vengeance is Mine” (100). Daniel is a mulatto who believes himself to be the son of Mr. Cosway, Antoinette’s father. He describes himself as a “little yellow rat,” and Antoinette describes him as having the “eyes of a dead fish” (41). He refers to himself as Esau Cosway, but as Amélie points out, “Some people say yes, some people say no” (99) that he is Cosway’s son. He is the embodiment of the “white nigger,” insofar as he aspires to live as a white man but is still oppressed and poor like a black man. He recalls how when he was sixteen years old he visited Cosway “pestering him for money. This because

sometimes I ask help to buy a pair of shoes and such. Not to go barefoot like a nigger. Which I am not" (101). The encounter resulted in Cosway throwing an inkstand at his head. It is the discrepancy between what he wants to be and what he is allowed to be that engenders a deep-rooted hatred. Amélie indicates that "Daniel was a very superior man, always reading the Bible and that he lived like white people...he had a house like white people, with one room only for sitting" (99). She adds that Daniel is a "bad man" who will "make trouble for you" (100). Antoinette tells Rochester that Esau has no right to the name Daniel Cosway: "His real name, if he has one, is Daniel Boyd. He hates all white people, but he hates me the most. He tells lies about us and he is sure that you will believe him and not listen to the other side" (106). The multiplicity of names and the ambiguity of his heritage signals the position of the mulatto who attempts to assimilate into English culture. He is rejected and regarded as a "white nigger"; as much as he tries to assimilate and live as a white man, he cannot. He is regarded with contempt and suspicion – both of which engender hatred within himself for Antoinette. Gregg posits that Daniel is "representative of a kind of speaker whose story (history) repeats and fissures the historical and cultural representations which the husband, as a kind of speaker, articulates as 'knowledge' and by which he is constituted. Daniel is also made of this discourse..."(*Historical Imagination*, 114).

Christophine is the voice of the Afro-Caribbean individual. She is the opposite of Rochester. She is a person who knows the "secret" but "cannot tell it," because she is illiterate, and because her voice is silenced by the threat of colonial law being used against her. In a letter to Diana Athill, Jean Rhys wrote that she thought the "obeah woman" was "too articulate" (*JRL*, 297).

It is no coincidence that Christophine's skin is "much blacker" than other people's, and "her songs were not like Jamaican songs, and she was not like other women" (18). She is portrayed as being "different" and as being rejected by the black Jamaican community. Antoinette notes that although Christophine "took care to talk as they talked...they would have nothing to do with her"(18). She is everything that Rochester is not: black, female, pagan ("obeah woman"). Being diametrically opposed to everything that signifies order, she represents a threat to English society, but she is kept at bay through the implementation of English laws designed to dismantle her power. Daniel says of Christophine: "She is the worst...She is obeah woman and they catch her. I don't believe in all that devil business but many believe. Christophine is a bad woman..."(103). Christophine's power is revealed by the fear she instills in Amélie when she threatens to "give you a bellyache like you never see bellyache" (84). Christophine is depicted as an autonomous woman who has no husband, is economically independent, and does not respect the laws of the white colonizer. She scorns the white men, *béké*, who "talk their lying talk" (71), and she sees England as a "cold thief place" (92). Antoinette is viewed by Christophine as being somewhere between the two polarities. She says to Rochester, "She is not *béké* like you, but she is *béké*, and not like us either" (128). This statement is significant because it locates Antoinette between the two. Her madness might be regarded as being the result of the confrontation between the two 'worlds' of Christophine and Rochester. Rochester blames Christophine for Antoinette's demise when he laughs at her and says, "Now, say good-bye to Antoinette, then go. You are to blame for all that has happened here, so don't come back"(131). On the other hand, Christophine blames Rochester for Antoinette's situation: "You make her so unhappy she don't know what

she is saying”(128). Christophine dehumanizes Antoinette by giving her rum and some other potion to make her sleep, whereas Rochester turns her into a “doll” by removing all human affection and treating her like a “marionette.” It is their interaction and interference that bring about Antoinette’s madness. Their confrontation represents the power struggle between white/English/male and black/African/female epistemologies. Each employs his or her own source of power; Rochester utilizes “law” whereas Christophine uses “obeah.” In their final struggle for dominance, Rochester relies on the law to threaten Christophine. He claims to have kept some of the poisoned wine which he will turn over to Mr. Frazer, the town magistrate, if Christophine refuses to comply with his wish to “send her away.” Foreshadowing events to come—events which have already taken place in Charlotte Brontë’s novel – Rochester issues his own curse by saying, “I would give my eyes never to have seen this abominable place”(132). Christophine ominously predicts that “You choose what you give, eh? Then you choose. You meddle in something and perhaps you don’t know what it is...Read and write I don’t know. Other things I know”(132-3). Judith Raiskin asserts that this curse is fulfilled in *Jane Eyre* when Rochester loses his sight during the fire at Thornfield (*Snow*, 141)

Antoinette’s madness is legitimized and validated by doctors who represent the system which supports the English imperialist drive to conquer and destroy those who are different. In effect, she becomes the label that has been assigned to her by those who ascribe her to the margins. Her madness is the creation of imperialism, and it is perpetuated by a structure designed to further the goals of imperialism. Rochester completes his colonization of Antoinette by bringing her against her will to England, where she will remain locked up like a prisoner in the attic of Thornfield Hall.

In Part III, Antoinette narrates as Bertha Rochester, the madwoman from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Her voice is fragmented and slips in and out of memories and dream imagery. She is portrayed as being confused about time, place and her own identity. She does not believe she is in England – England for her is outside where there is “grass and olive-green water and tall trees looking into the water” (150). She is in “their world” which is “made of cardboard” (148). Grace Poole indicates that the “poor creature” does not know how long she has been in the attic (151). Bertha contends that she is aware of the “nights and days” spent in the attic, but she says, “Time has no meaning. But something you can touch and hold like my red dress, that has a meaning” (151). Her red dress has “meaning” insofar as it represents her past and her identity. The only link to her past is her dress. She claims Richard Mason looked at her as though she were a “stranger” when he visited her but he would have recognized her had she been wearing her red dress. Her last attempt to convince someone that “it isn't like it seems to be” (148), that she isn't mad, fails when she attacks Richard with a knife after he admits that he cannot interfere “legally” between herself and Rochester. Her violent response to the word “legally” arises from a recognition that the law is designed to work in favor of the colonizer and not in favor of the colonized. The law has made it possible for her to end up in captivity. The only means to freedom for Bertha is through violence. Although Rochester claims that he has “destroyed her hatred” and that she is only a “ghost” with “nothing left but hopelessness” (140), she “hasn't lost her spirit. She's still fierce” (146). Before being transported to England against her will, Antoinette vows revenge upon Rochester: “I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you” (121). The red dress reminds Antoinette of a fire, and she subsequently dreams of the fire which she

will set at Thornfield Hall in order to attain her liberty and her vengeance. In her dream she sees herself, the “ghost. The woman with streaming hair,” and she drops the candle which she is holding. As the building burns, she sees ‘all her life in it’ (155). Antoinette’s dream sequence mirrors the action of the black ex-slaves who burnt down Coulibri Estate in order to liberate themselves.

Wide Sargasso Sea culminates in a series of voices calling out to Antoinette. These voices are representative of the variousness of the Creole experience. Each voice symbolizes a different aspect of imperialism: Christophine is a black “Obeah woman” who has resisted English customs and maintains her own autonomy; Rochester, a white, English man, is the binary opposite of Christophine; between these two are Tia and the parrot. The references to Coco, the French-speaking parrot that burned in the Coulibri fire, and to Tia establish a link between her situation as a powerless Creole in captivity and theirs –victims of English imperialism. In her dream, she is the mirror image of the two of them: Antoinette is like the parrot that died because his wings were clipped by an English man when her hair “streamed out like wings” and she thinks “it might bear me up”(155) if she jumps to the stones below; instead of being rejected and separated from Tia as she was during her youth, this time, the girls are united as Antoinette shouts, “Tia” and jumps to her death. The ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is ambiguous. The vision of unity between Antoinette and Tia ends in self-sacrifice and destruction. The ending of Rhys’s novel preserves Brontë’s ending in *Jane Eyre* where the ‘mad woman’ is consigned to act out her prescribed role as victim. But the question remains whether Antoinette is the destroyer or the destroyed. Regardless of whether one reads the ending as triumph or self-sacrifice, it is tragic. Rhys’s ambiguity intimates that there is no escape from the in-

between position of ambivalence. The destruction ends not with the death of Rochester, but with the refracted mirror images of Antoinette / Tia / Coco. Antoinette is the reflection of all these “others”; it is their interactions with her and with each other, and the way they define themselves and her, that has created the madwoman in the attic.

Like all reflections, they are both “self” and “other” simultaneously; each one depends on the other for its existence; however, they exist forever with a gap between them. It is the gap that separates the two which Rhys explores in her deconstruction of the West Indian colonial/post-colonial experience. It is in this gap where the truth lies. Rhys challenges the voice of English imperialism by drawing the reader’s attention to the gaps between the various texts. By writing *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys provides a counter-discourse which challenges the English assumptions of *Jane Eyre*. Within Rhys’s West Indian version of the madwoman’s story are other voices which serve to reveal the “other side” of the other sides.

Conclusion

I know that to write as well as I can is my truth and why I was born, though the Lord knows I wish I hadn't been! (*Letters*, 1959)

In Jean Rhys's unfinished autobiography *Smile Please*, in the chapter entitled "Books," she writes "Before I could read, almost a baby, I imagined that God, this strange thing or person I heard about was a book...but it made no sense to me" (27). Rhys's likening of the Book to God is significant in suggesting that books – much like God – are creators and destroyers. The Book, which comprises all forms of discourse, shapes humanity through the power of the Word. Although the Word acts as a filler with which to stuff the "self", it offers no truth or knowledge; it is denied as a forbidden fruit. In the same way that God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after they had tasted the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Rhys intimates that those who know the "truth" are expelled from paradise. Therefore, in order to maintain the artificially constructed social order – 'paradise' – knowledge is denied. The knowledge of the existence of 'difference' is suppressed by those in power as a means of upholding the structures which keep the system of oppression in place.

Running through all Rhys's fiction is the implication that books somehow distort, invent and shape reality by offering a limited perspective of the "truth". In the chapter entitled "The Facts of Life," the narrator reveals that she becomes engrossed in books as a means of sorting out the problems of "life":

So as soon as I could I lost myself in the immense world of books, and tried to blot out the real world which was so puzzling to me. Even then I had a vague, persistent feeling that I'd always be lost in it, defeated. However, books too were all about the same thing, I discovered, but in a different

way. I could accept it in books and from books (fatally) I gradually got most of my beliefs (*Smile Please*, 62-3).

In this passage, not only does Rhys highlight how books create beliefs, but she also draws attention to how they serve to oppress people.

Literature and other forms of discourse perpetuate an insidious process of discrimination and oppression by transmitting the values and beliefs of those in power. Rhys constantly illuminates how dispossession arises not only as a consequence of polarized oppositions but also through patriarchal control of discourse. Those who occupy the centers uphold their power structures by sustaining the hegemonic language which defines their terms.

At the beginning of the novel *Voyage in the Dark*, the protagonist, Anna – a white Creole – is lying on the couch reading *Nana* (an anagram for Anna). Her friend, Maudie asks her if the book is a “dirty book” and quickly adds, “I know, it’s about a tart. I think it’s disgusting. I bet you a man writing a book about a tart tells a lot of lies one way or another. Besides all books are like that - just somebody stuffing you up” (9). Books written by men about women traditionally reduce women to stereotypical roles of mother-earth-goddess or sexually immoral “tart”. In effect, books serve to reinforce the oppressive structures of modernity.

Rhys relates a story that her nurse, Meta, told her as a child: “If you read so much...your eyes will drop out and they will look back at you from the page” (*Smile Please*, 28). Meta’s warning symbolizes how books may lead to a fragmentation of the self. One’s values are formed by one’s interaction with various forms of discourse; however, if the subject of the text does not accurately reflect the reader’s role, then the

reader may experience a decentered self. The eyes that stare back from the page represent the split which occurs when a person's self-definition and society's definitions do not mesh.

Rhys challenges the prescriptions inscribed in the texts of the patriarchal literary canon by providing her own counter-discourse. The heroines of all her stories are women who are on the margins of respectable society. These marginal women are traditionally denied a subjectivity and are depicted by men as objects to revile and to scorn. Their voices are silenced; their stories are not told because they are regarded as potential disrupters of the social order. By muting the outcries of those who are victims, their oppressors are never exposed; instead, the oppressors can continue to legitimately shun those who are 'different'.

Essentially, by writing from her own experience as a colonial British 'subject' in 'exile', Rhys uncovers the "lies" which she sees as being firmly embedded in a history which has largely been written by men who have been influenced by the ideologies of their times. By presenting her own version of history --albeit fictional -- Rhys challenges the misconceptions surrounding the social pariah. Rhys's novels and short stories concern themselves with downtrodden, destitute, homeless women who are shunned and exploited by members of the community --men and women alike -- to which the protagonist does not belong. Rhys's novels imply that these 'misfits' have been poorly represented by literature, and she wishes to tell the "truth" by writing the victim's side of the story.

Although Rhys subverts literary traditions by speaking back in the voice of a marginal character, she is not a Utopian. She eschews any positive vision of what the good society might be like. It is doubtful that she believed there could be a non-

oppressive society. She certainly provides no blueprints for that type of community. Instead she concentrates her aesthetic powers on making clear the fundamental contradiction that lies at the center of her dark books: namely, society destroys its victims in a variety of ways, but there is no true freedom or human flourishing outside of society. In her reluctance to entertain thoughts about Utopias, and her concern for the pervasiveness of power and suppression of the individual, Rhys's fiction exemplifies the theme that the powerful will always prey on the weak, and that these sources of power are manifold.

Howells writes that "while [Rhys] exposes the hidden dynamics within social discourses of sexuality and power, her female protagonists never manage (never wish?) to evade those traditional structures or to unsettle the bastions of male power" (11). Although books "can make a lot of difference to your point of view [by making] you see what is real and what is just imaginary" (*Voyage in the Dark*, 80), Rhys's fictions do not offer solutions; instead, they merely deconstruct stereotypical representations of women. Perhaps Rhys's bleak perspective of the human condition can best be summed up by Sasha's words in *Good Morning, Midnight*: "You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. You fall into blackness. That's the past - or perhaps the future. And you know there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same" (144).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Rhys, Jean. *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*. 1930. Reprint. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.
- _____. *The Collected Short Stories*. Introduction by Diana Athill. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.
- _____. *Good Morning, Midnight*. 1939. Reprint. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.
- _____. *The Left Bank and Other Stories*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1927.
- _____. *The Letters of Jean Rhys*. Edited by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly; introduction by Francis Wyndham. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.
- _____. *Quartet*. 1928. Reprint. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987.
- _____. *Sleep it Off, Lady*. New York: Popular Library, 1978.
- _____. *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.
- _____. *Tales of the Wide Caribbean*. Edited with an introduction by Kenneth Ramchand. London: Heinemann, 1986.
- _____. *Tigers are Better Looking* with a selection from *The Left Bank*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
- _____. *Voyage in the Dark*. 1939. Reprint. London: André Deutsch, 1967.
- _____. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. 1966. Reprint. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

Secondary Sources

- Abel, Elizabeth. "Women and Schizophrenia: The Fiction of Jean Rhys", *Contemporary Literature* 20 (Spring 1979) 155-177.
- Alvarez, Al. "The Best Living English Novelist", *NY Times Book Review*, 17 Mar 1974, 6-7.
- Angier, Carole. *Jean Rhys: Life and Work*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

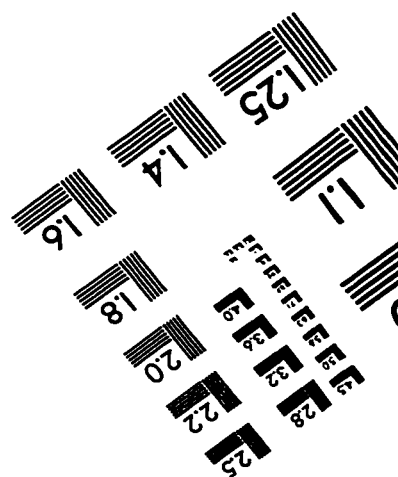
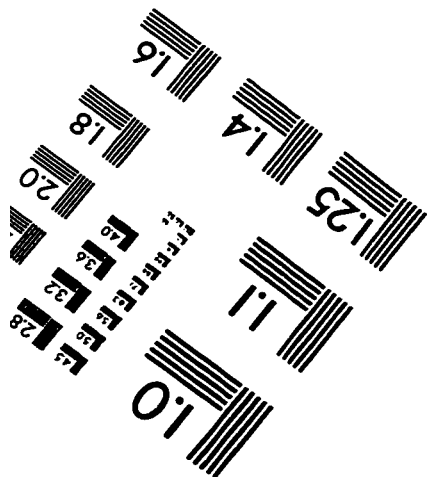
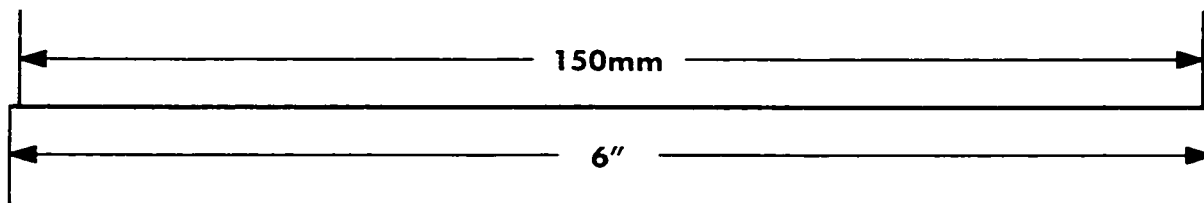
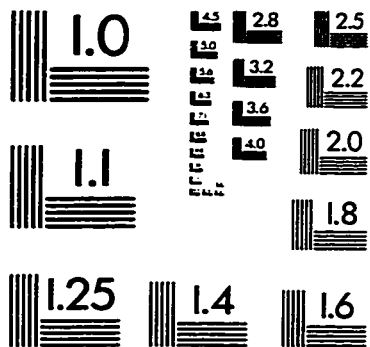
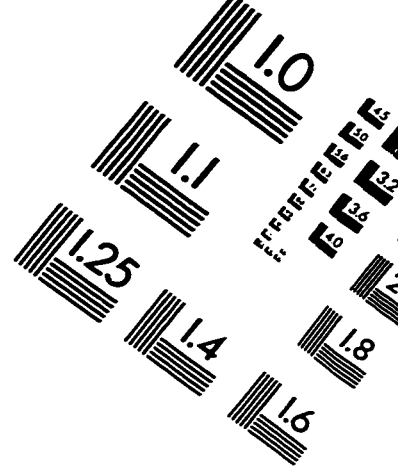
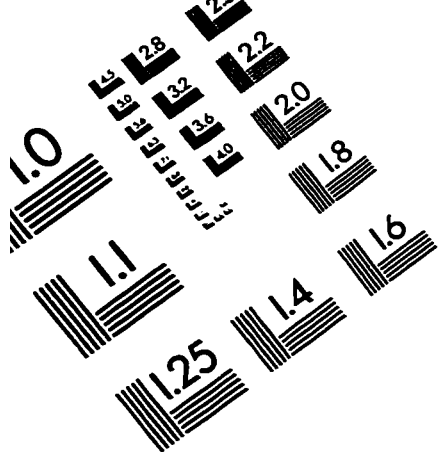
- Baldanza, Frank. "Jean Rhys on Insult and Injury." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 11, no. 2, 1978.
- Bamber, Linda. "Jean Rhys." *Partisan Review*, 49, no.1, 1982, 93-100.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- Bowen, Stella. *Drawn From Life*. London: Virago, 1984.
- Byrne, Jack. "Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*: The Boulevard of Broken Dreams." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. v5 (2), Summer 1985, 151-9.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Reprint. *Treasury of World Masterpieces: The Brontë Sisters*. London: Octopus Books, 1981.
- Carr, Helen. *Jean Rhys*. Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1996.
- Davidson, Arnold. "The Dark is Light Enough: Affirmation from Despair in Jean Rhys's *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*." *Studies in the Novel* 16, 1984.
- _____. *Jean Rhys*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1985.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. London: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- _____. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1976.
- Emery, Mary Lou. *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Sexual and Colonial Exile*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- _____. "The Paradox of Style: Metaphor and Ritual in *Good Morning, Midnight*." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 5, no.2, Summer 1985, 145-150.
- Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963.
- Fayad, Mona. "Unquiet Ghosts: The Struggle for Representation in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. v. 34, no.3, Autumn 1988, 437-452.
- Ford Madox Ford. Preface to *The Left Bank and Other Stories*, by Jean Rhys. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1927.

- Gardiner, Judith Kegan. "Good Morning, Midnight, Good Night, Modernism." *Boundary* 2 II, no 2 (1982): 233-52.
- _____. *Rhys, Stead, Lessing, and the Politics of Empathy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Gregg, Veronica Marie. *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading & Writing the Creole*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Harris, Wilson. "Jean Rhys's Tree of Life." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. v5 (2), Summer 1985, 114-7.
- Harper, Phillip Brian. *Framing the Margins: The Social Logic of Postmodern Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Harrison, Nancy R. *Jean Rhys and the Novel as Women's Text*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Hite, Molly. *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Howells, Coral Ann. *Jean Rhys*. Herfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.
- Huggan, Graham. "A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry." *Contemporary Literature*. v.35, no.1, Spring 1994.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- _____. *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- _____. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- _____. "The Power of Postmodern Irony." *Genre*Trope*Gender*. Edited by Barry Rutland. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992.
- James, Louis. *Jean Rhys*. London: Longmans, 1978.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methuen, 1981.
- Kloepfer, Deborah Kelly. *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H.D.* Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1989.

- Kraf, Elaine. "Jean Rhys: The Men in Her Novels (Hugh Heidler, "The Gigolo," and Mr. Mackenzie)." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. v.5, no.2, Summer 1985, 118-28.
- Lindroth, Colette. "Whispers Outside the Room: The Haunted Fiction of Jean Rhys." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. v.5, no.2, Summer 1985, 135-39.
- Look Lai, Wally. "The Road to Thornfield Hall." *New Beacon Review*, ed. John LaRose. London: New Beacon Books Ltd., 1968.
- Malcolm, David and Cheryl Alexander. *Jean Rhys: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996.
- Mellown, Elgin. "Character and Themes in the Novels of Jean Rhys." *Contemporary Women Novelists*. Edited by Patricia Meyer Spacks. N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977, 118-136.
- Meyers, Robert and Gill Holland. "The Theme of Identity in the Works of Jean Rhys." *Revista/Review Interamericana*. 1983, v13 (1-4), 150-85.
- Miles, Rosalind. *The Fiction of Sex: Themes and Functions of Sex Difference in the Modern Novel*. London: Vision Press, 1974.
- Milner, Andrew. *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press, 1994.
- Nixon, Nicola. "Wide Sargasso Sea and Jean Rhys's Interrogation of the "nature wholly alien" in *Jane Eyre*." *Essays in Literature*. v.21, no.2, Fall 1994, 267-283.
- O'Connor, Teresa. *Jean Rhys: The West Indian Novels*. New York: New York University Press, 1986.
- Plante, David. *Difficult Women: A Memoir of Three*. New York: Atheneum, 1983.
- Ramchand, Kenneth. *An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature*. Jamaica: Nelson Caribbean, 1976.
- Raiskin, Judith L. *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Readings, Bill and Bennett Schaber. "Introduction: The Question Mark in the Midst of Modernity." *Postmodernism Across the Ages*. Ed. Bill Readings and Bennett Schaber. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993, 1-28.

- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Race, Writing, and Difference*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 262-80.
- Stacey-Doyle, Michele. *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Self*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1986.
- Staley, Thomas F. *Jean Rhys, A Critical Study*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1979.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Tiffin, Helen. "Travelling Texts: Intertextuality and Resistance in V.S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Journal of West Indian Literature*. v.6, no.1, July 1993, 58-65.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- _____. *Postmodernism: A Reader*. London: Edward Arnold, 1992.
- Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice*. London: Methuen, 1984.
- Wyndham, Francis. Introduction to *The Letters of Jean Rhys 1931-66*. Edited by Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved