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Madness, Death, and Civilization:
Non-European Women under Patriarchy and Imperialism

Mengying Li

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

In light of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, through which Jean Rhys intends to provide the madwoman Bertha in *Jane Eyre* with a voice and a life, this thesis attempts to reread *Jane Eyre* from a postcolonial perspective, arguing that both texts can be read as critiques of the cruelty and inhumanity of European civilization. After the English beat the Spanish at sea, and complete the First Industrial Revolution, it establishes the country as the greatest imperialistic power in the world. The need of labor, raw material, and new market leads them to develop colonies in remote areas like the Caribbean. By claiming a civilized and therefore higher status, the English carry out cruel enforcement of the English law in the colonies, and justify their exploitation and oppression by concocting sex and race theory, which situate themselves on the privileged side of the binary pairs such as human/nature, male/female, and reason/emotion. Suffering from the dualism of colonial expansion, non-European women are often inferiorized and dehumanized from a Eurocentric perspective. In Victorian literature, it is not rare to see that those women often end their stories either with madness, or death. This thesis gives a detailed analysis of how and why Antoinette/Bertha is represented as one of the civilization's discontent, a character who is driven to madness and death by Rochester, her English husband. Ultimately, she burns with the Thornfield Hall to criticize the patriarchal and imperial ideology of English civilization.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In her book, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak contends that it is impossible to read nineteenth-century British literature without considering its historical background, during which time England is the incomparable imperialistic power in the world. She says:

> In order to resist, we must remind ourselves that it should not be possible, in principle, to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. (*A Critique*, 113)

Nearly all British literature produced during that time reflects the unique background of colonial expansion and the writer's pride as the male colonizer. It helps reinforce the patriarchal and imperial domination in the colonies, as well as in the England, by elevating the Bourgeois English male as the master, and marginalizing different sexes, classes, peoples, and cultures as "the other". Especially for non-European women in the colonies, they are demonized as less humane, and driven to madness and death. Represented by Bertha in *Jane Eyre* and Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, non-European women characters are portrayed as the sacrifice of English civilization, who choose to die with this cruel civilization to claim their resentment.

Jane Eyre has long been praised as the story of an independent young woman, Jane, who breaks the restriction of the class hierarchy, strives for freedom and true love, and ultimately reunites with her beloved, Mr. Rochester. However, in order to exalt Jane as the heroine, Brontë creates Bertha, "the madwoman in the attic" and Rochester's Creole wife. She is depicted out of humanity and brought back from Jamaica by Rochester to be locked up

in the attic. As his wife, Bertha haunts Jane every time the latter shows affection toward Rochester, and the revealing of her existence successfully destroys the marriage between the two. Given no voice but a threatening laughter, she is described as an animal or even a ghost, incapable of human language: “her eccentric murmurs stranger than her laugh. There were days when she was quite silent; but there were others when I could not account for the sounds she made” (Brontë 130). In addition, lack of reason and logic is another primary instinct represented by this creole woman character: “what it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (Brontë 338). As Brontë explains in a letter to W. S. Williams, that she deliberately represents Bertha as a primitive, bestial, irrational subhuman:

> There is a phase of insanity, which may be called moral insanity, in which all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind, and a fiend-nature replaces it. The sole aim and desire of being thus possessed is to exasperate, to molest, to destroy, and preternatural ingenuity and energy are often exercised to that dreadful end. (Shorter 383-84)

I believe it is not a coincidence that Brontë’s intention in creating Bertha accords with dualism, the logic behind colonization, which categorizes the colonizer and the colonized on the contrasting sides of the binary oppositions such as human/nature, male/female, and reason/ emotion. Bertha’s sex, race, language, and mentality are interrelated constraints, which reinforce her to continued oppression.

In order to give Bertha a voice and “write her a life”, Jean Rhys creates Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which serves as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*. Though Antoinette and Bertha die in the same way: burnt to death in Thornfield Hall, the reader is given “the other side” of the story from Antoinette’s perspective. She grows up with a fear of abandonment, because her mother, Annette, seems to only care about her little brother, Pierre. Also, she experiences

the betrayal of her best friend, Tia, and her husband, Rochester. Even worse, she suffers from the hatred of both her husband, who regards her as an inferior creature, and the newly emancipated slaves, who burn her house and torture her mother to death. Rhys' detailed descriptions of Antoinette's personal history – growing up in the shadow of a miserable childhood, being cheated of all her money by marriage, and then being locked up in the attic – brings understanding and sympathy to Bertha. A postcolonial reading of Bertha might depart from Brontë's intent in creating this character in the first place, but it is interesting to see how both of these texts explicitly or implicitly reflects the cruelty of European civilization, which develops at the expense of non-European women; and how they can be read as a critique of patriarchy, racism, and imperialism. As suggested in the beginning by Spivak, regardless of the authors' intent, reading these two novels as cultural representations, we can find some shared truth about colonialism and imperialism.

This thesis argues that *Jane Eyre* is written from a Eurocentric perspective, which calls attention to the sufferings and maturation of Jane, and ignores or even distorts the colonized people, especially colonized women, who are the double victims of racism and sexism. Rhys, by narrating Antoinette Cosway Mason's story, attempts to do justice to creole women by reasoning their madness as an evidence of driven oppression. In her work, female madness and death are depicted as the product of the English husband's prejudice and exploitation, instead of a biologically determined trait within the non-European female themselves. Therefore, I argue that Antoinette/Bertha is represented as the sacrificial victim of the prosperity of British Empire, which is governed by the ideological rules of patriarchy and imperialism, and her story reveals the cruelty of European civilization toward women and non-Europeans.

To this end, I develop this thesis into five chapters. The first chapter gives a brief introduction of the thesis statement, with the hope to give the reader a clear picture of what

they can expect from this thesis, and offers a concise summary of a postcolonial interpretation of these two classic novels and characters.

The second chapter provides a literary review of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I focus mainly on the critical review of Bertha and Antoinette, and how they serve as the victims of patriarchal and imperial exploitation. First, I introduce different interpretations of Bertha's madness. Be it an expression of female anger, or a signal of help-seeking, I argue that female madness is in fact a product driven by patriarchy and imperialism, and it reveals the cruelty of English civilization. English males assume power over "the other" by inventing racist and sexist theory, according to which Bertha, a Creole woman, is exoticized and demonized. Secondly, I analyze the literary reception of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which she elaborates a context that illuminates why Bertha becomes "mad". Some critics argue it departs from the original novel in important ways, but others claim that a postcolonial reading of *Jane Eyre* is crucial to "recover a female history and analyze a neglected female literary tradition" (Hassan 112). Combining their analyses together, I argue that Rhys exposes the hypocritical camouflage of English civilization, which is in fact governed by patriarchy and imperialism, thereby underscoring its exploitive, oppressive, and inhumane nature.

Val Plumwood's theory of dualism and feminism gives the third chapter insight into the logic of colonialism and imperialism. She suggests that dualism "results from a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated other" (41), and this denied dependency results in a certain kind of logical structure, where both the dominator and subordinator shape each other's identity. However, by denying this dependency, the European male is able to define "the other" as someone they themselves are not. That is to say, "the other" is not defined by whom they really are, but as alien and dependent in relation to the dominator. That said, a system of dualism formed according to the dominator's needs, and confines "the other" to the

inferior side. The system of dualism includes binary oppositions such as human/nature, male/female, and reason/emotion, where nature, female, and emotion are made correlated on the inferior side. These groundless categorizations lock women into a position of continued oppression, which further defines them out of humanity. Combining her arguments with the two texts, I find these five characteristics of dualism identified by Plumwood – backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism, and homogenization – are extremely apparent with respect to Bertha and Antoinette. After analyzing the five aspects with the support of the texts, I argue that these two women are the typical representations of "the other", who suffer from a dual system of oppressional relationships.

The fourth chapter attempts to bring an interdisciplinary analysis from the linguistic perspective. By identifying the characters' habitual linguistic behavior, huge differences are found between the language used by the male and the female, as well as the colonizer and the colonized. According to Robin Lakoff, woman's language shows uncertainty, concerns triviality, and therefore, is weak comparing with the assertiveness of the male's language. Antoinette adopts such kind of language, which entraps her to a powerless position. Besides, the colonizers tend to use simple language structure when talking to the colonized people, in order to implant the inferiority of the latter's race and class. It is reflected in Christophine's repetitive and childish Caribbean creole, which lessens her discursive power. She is further deprived of power when it comes to the written language, such as the English law. What's worse, the power generated from the discourse expands to other aspects of life. Language becomes one of the parameters in the dualism, British English/creoles, which completes and reinforces the binary oppositions that center the Englishman on the privileged side.

In the last chapter, first of all, I introduce Freud's theory on the relationship between human and civilization. I argue that the nature of English civilization is to develop one country or one group of countries at the expense of the others. Madness and death are the

outbursts of the resentment that the indigenous people have toward the colonizers. Then I argue that Rochester is also a victim of English civilization, whose madness reveals the inhumanity of English civilization is not only restricted to non-Europeans, but all human beings in order to eliminate their nature and conform to rules based on wealth and power. In order to regain his control over Antoinette and in the Caribbean, Rochester represses his emotion and natural instincts to reaffirm his authority and identity as an English male. However, seeing through the inhumane and exploitative nature of English civilization, Antoinette/Bertha burns with the Thronfield Hall to criticize the ideological control of patriarchy and imperialism, and reaffirms her creole identity.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Though the novel, *Jane Eyre*, has been published for almost 170 years, a staggering amount of insightful research on its characters, themes, and many other issues is still developing and evolving. In particular, there has been a great deal of critical commentary and debate on "the madwoman in the attic", Bertha. Over the years, scholars and critics have analyzed her from many perspectives, ranging from feminist, postcolonial, psychoanalytic, and more recently, disability studies, which generate multiple interpretations of her madness, and discussions about its effects on this non-European character.

Within this research, a broad critical consensus supports the argument that madness is an outraged response to male domination. Perhaps the most famous study would be *The Madwomen in the Attic*, considered by many to be a classic feminist analysis by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. In the book, they argue that, during the nineteenth and twentieth century, female characters are often used by the women writers' to question the male-dominated authorship as early as Greek and Roman period. These women writers project their anxiety of being deprived of the freedom, power, and authority to express themselves and represent the experiences of women to the women characters in their works under the patriarchal literary tradition (45-92). The most convincing evidence they find to support is that Bertha acts as Jane's truest and darkest double, and the former does everything the latter wants to but chooses to repress it: "Bertha has functioned as Jane's Dark double throughout the governess's stay at Thornfield. Specifically, every one of Bertha's appearances … has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part" (360). I agree with their argument that Jane's symbolic pairing with Bertha is what the book focuses on. Because portrayed as the "dark double" of Jane, Bertha is the other side of self that Jane has to overcome, which is crucial to her mature understanding of gender and class equality.

However, Spivak argues that being emphasized as the dark double of Jane, Bertha is silenced in the story. She claims that by comparing Jane with Bertha, Gilbert and Gubar "reproduce the axioms of imperialism", which the "isolationist admiration for the literature of the female subject in Europe and America establishes the high feminist norm". It means that they ignore the racial difference between Jane and Bertha under the Eurocentric perspective. Bertha and Jane are never a comparable pair in the eyes of Rochester. Therefore, when feminism is integrated with racism, it "establishes the high feminist norm". (*Three*, 243). I agree with Spivak's analysis, and still cannot be convinced by Gilbert and Gubar's argument that Bertha is the avatar of Jane. After all, how can Jane be represented by a creole? How can her sufferings from poverty and a lower class be comparable with Bertha's misery in betrayal, hatred, imprisonment, and dehumanization? Following Spivak, Suvendrini Perera, Susan Meyer, and Jenny Sharpe argue that Bertha, a "colonial other", represents not only female anger, but most importantly, the anger of the colonized subject. The difference of their identity, an English and a creole, has a strong impact on their attitude toward Thornfield Hall. Bertha is brought back to England and locked in the attic, whereas Jane advertises herself to be the governess and go to the Thornfield Hall excitedly. It provides her with a social ladder where she moves upward, but Bertha falls down. Both as female characters, British colonialism and imperialism plays a more important role in the oppression of Bertha.

Many other scholars suggest that Bertha's madness develops from female anger to a desire of self-liberation. Helene Moglen claims that Bertha represents sexual desire, and her act of tearing the wedding veil and leaning over Jane's bed is a fantasy of sexual violation, and a darker version of Jane's resistance to male authority (124-26). However, I think Bertha's action is more than just a sexual desire. She reveals her ravaged countenance, and lets Jane see for herself her future in it: marrying Rochester would solidify her subordinate position. When tearing Jane's wedding veil, Bertha must have thought of her own marriage

with Rochester, but by destroying it, she shows her resolution to liberate herself from the exploitative relationship.

Valerie Beattie helps explain why Bertha's reasonable protest is always seen as threatening. She argues that there is a "disruptive force of madness" (498) as a haunting sense of something working under the surface: "her character embodies the fusion if a continuous literal and figurative challenge to social norms, a challenge that other characters enact in a perfunctory way. And because of her figurative ascendancy over other characters, her threatening presence is not expelled from the novel with her immolation" (498). She clarifies that Bertha's contrast with other characters makes Bertha's madness more menacing and threatening. Besides that, as readers, we are always reminded that there is something wrong in Thornfield Hall. Whether it's the old furniture, the dark attic, Mr. Rochester's secrets and lies, laughers and murmurs, Bertha is always haunted behind the scene.

For those critics who hold positive attitude toward female madness and death, they share a common opinion that, the female writers express their preoccupation with the inhumanity of colonial oppression on non-European women. Madness and death offer these characters an extreme way to vent their feelings. Whether it represents female anger, or self-liberation, they are actively voicing their discontents about colonial civilization. The madwomen are no longer the receivers of the oppression, they grant themselves a way to show their resentment toward colonialism, and reveal the cruelty of patriarchy and imperialism toward non-European women. The postcolonial writers, like Rhys, are using madness and death in their works to critique the inhumanity of such civilization that drives non-European women to insanity and commit suicide.

Feeling that the critics have interpreted Bertha too much, Lerner argues that Bertha is just a minor figure, occupying a small number of pages, and suggests that it is dangerous to "unpack the significance of Bertha in a way that forgets how little we are actually told about

her" (300). Based on our little knowledge, it's possible that we may overlook or over-interpret Bertha's suffering. However, Valerie Beattie sees Bertha as a well-developed character as any, who has matured through phrases in this Bildungsroman novel, even "as significant as Jane's" (494). I agree with her that the scanty references to Bertha's behavior from Jane or Rochester's perspective does convey more than might meet the eye, at the very least, their Eurocentric prejudice against her economically reveals a racial hierarchy between the English and "the other".

Besides interpreting madness as symptom of revolutionary psychological energies like female anger and self-liberation, which generates destructive power, there are some other critics claiming that madness only offers women an illusion of power, which has no pragmatic function. Phyllis Chesler, the author of *Women and Madness*, argues that madness doesn't have the "romanticized glamor of political protest and of social and cultural contestation" (2). Admittedly, "madness", if defined as "a loss of reason", is not logical, effective and powerful enough for women to equip themselves and strive for equality. Followed by Shoshana Felman, who deems madness as a signal for help, which results from women's impotence under male deprivation of the means of production and reproduction and thus are left to a helpless condition:

> Quite the opposite of rebellion, madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation. Far from being a form of contestation, mental illness is a request for help, a manifestation both of cultural impotence and of political castration. This socially defined help-needing and help-seeking behavior is itself part of female conditioning, ideologically inherent in the behavioral pattern and in the dependent and helpless role assigned to the woman as such. (2)

Taking into consideration of the possibility that madness serves as a productive rebellion, Marta Caminero-Santangelo argues that Bertha Mason's "madness": the severe object-oriented destruction, would be definitely in vain, and result in harsher oppression. She states in her book, *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or, Why Insanity Is Not Subversive*, that Bertha's madness only "offers the illusion of power" (3). Similarly, in *The Madwoman and her languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory*, Nina Baym points out that the author's intent in representing Bertha as mad is to define her "out of humanity" (48), and then justify her madness as an instinct within female sex and colored race. By naturalizing Bertha into the inferior group, her sex and race make it "seems a guarantee of continued oppression" (49). In other words, madness is a literary device that the author uses purposefully to define the inferiority of the women of color.

Whether madness grants women power or not, we cannot deny that it is a powerful literary device to shape characters and reveal the social reasons behind their madness. Madness grants Bertha a way to vent her anger. The more threatening she appears, the more one might be inclined to sympathetically imagine her history. However, Brontë doesn't intend to represent Bertha as a sympathetic figure, and allow the reader with full imagination of her history and humanity. Seeing this gap, Jean Rhys writes *Jane Eyre* a prequel.

Much more insight will be gained if we consider Bertha's experience before she comes to England, which is Antoinette Cosway Mason's story in Jean's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. However, critics argue that misunderstandings may take place when we interpret Bertha according to the evidences from other works. Rhys, who tries to "write Bertha a life", fills the gaps that are left by *Jane Eyre* and misleads the readers' responses to Bertha. Elizabeth Donaldson finds that Rhys' book contributes to "contemporary readers' newfound sympathy" (99). She argues that Rhys' construct of Antoinette's madness, which results from "a difficult childhood, a dangerous social climate, and her husband's ultimate betrayal" (100), departs

from *Jane Eyre*'s in important ways: an instinct which defines her out of humanity. Also, the institutional control from the establishment of asylums and the legitimization of the connection between women and madness are also identified as important factors that may inform contemporary readers' sympathy toward Bertha: "The reception of Rhys's re-evaluation of Bertha Antoinette Mason is in part a product of this particular historical moment in England and the United States" (100). Sue Thomas argues that because Bertha is represented as a white Creole in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it lessens her "racial ambiguity" (1) in *Jane Eyre*, which decreases her dramatic change from an "imagined white" (of pure English descent) to "black in the form in which she becomes visible in *Jane Eyre*" (dark purple face with long hanging hair) (1).

There are also many other positive assessments of Rhys's work, suggesting it provides the reader with "the other side" of the story. Ruth Robbins argues that Jane's success is based on the sacrifice of all other women characters in the novel, "as though there is only the space for one bourgeois liberal-individual woman's triumph in this society" (41). She further comments on Rhys's work that it tells the same story from the colonized perspective, reminding us that it's dangerous and inaccurate to judge the indigenous people from a Eurocentric master position:

> The novel (*Wide Sargasso Sea*) offers not only a critique of *Jane Eyre*, but also a critique of the whole perspective of realist narrative which cannot admit that there is always another way of seeing things, that there are many subject positions that might have equally significant views but which nonetheless realism excises from its 'authorized' version of the truth. (45)

What she means is that we are given the story from Jane and Rochester's side, the English colonizer, who interpret the world centering the white and marginalizing "the other". As the most powerful imperialist power, the British Empire expand their exploitation to the colonies

and appropriates their cruel domination by naturalizing the indigenous people as an inferior race. Claiming the superiority of English people and English civilization, the colonizer silence the native people of color and present the world an "authorized" version of truth, namely the story told from the colonizer, the superior, and the master point of view. *Wide Sargasso Sea* focuses on the perspective of the colonized, which interprets Antoinette's madness, not as inherited from her mother; rather it can be understood as a result of history of trauma, driven by the English hegemony on the colonies.

Faizal Forrester claims that the death of Antoinette is a tragedy, which should not be interpreted as self-liberation, "because all that is left of her is blood, tears and fire" (37). Similarly, Charles Sarvan claims that death provides Antoinette with an escape, through which she is able to break the entrapment and go into the "peace of death" (65). These negative readings of her death suggest that *Wide Sargasso Sea* serves as a postcolonial response to challenge the colonial literary canons, which sacrifice non-European women figures for other main characters' needs. Before she dies, Antoinette violently rejects English civilization, which is especially obvious when it comes to English legal system: broken promises on post-emancipation Coulibri, sudden hatred from the slaves after Abolition of Slavery, and every single rule which guarantees the Englishman's political or economic interests. However, her violence upends her desire to be treated as a sane person and deprives her right to rebel because of her imprisonment. That is when her violence becomes the ultimate solution, and her defiance of English values, customs, and laws leads to self-destruction. In the end, as her shielding the candle in the dark passage, she realizes that not only her own sufferings, but of all inhumane treatments toward the colonized people is a result of colonial expansion and English patriarchal hegemony. Determined to express her resentment, she lights a fire and burns down the Thornfield Hall, which is an emblem of her sufferings from a patriarchal English husband and the English colonial oppression.

This negativity of self-destruction is analyzed by Lori Lawson from a feminist point of view. She suggests that Antoinette's choice of death is "the absolute rejection of the existing symbolic order" (26), namely because she neither remains imprisoned and insane in the imaginary order, nor subjects herself to English law in the symbolic order. Lois Tyson offers a simplified interpretation of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. She suggests that the symbolic order refers to "a symbolic system of meaning-making" (28), where the meanings, and the rules are already made for different groups (race, gender, class) of people to obey. Antoinette's extremely marginalized position in society reflects her female status as always "deficient". Their defined identity as a dependent and inferior in relation to men reveals an "existential negativity", as if they are "deficient" by nature. Jean Rhys represents Antoinette's response to her dire situation as an implicit critique of patriarchy.

The death drive is also mentioned in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*. He explains that besides the desire to live, there is always a desire to die accompanies with each individual. It results from the hostility toward outside world, namely civilization, since as early as infantile period, when the child is taken away from the mother's breasts. Because they have to repress the natural instinct and desire, which in Freud's words "pleasure principle", and follow the "reality principle". Once their discontents toward the civilization accumulate to an unbearable degree, the resentment develops to a destructive force towards the objects produced in that civilization, or themselves. I'll give detailed explanations in Chapter five as it is clear in Antoinette's destruction of the Thornfield Hall and herself to show her discontent toward the English imperial and patriarchal domination. For a woman accused of madness, burning Thornfield is such a difficult task. For one thing, she is entrapped in the prison, watched by Grace Poole, so her movement is restricted; for another, there are limited resources (key and candle) for her to use and keep them safe with her as tools to break prison and burn the house. When she manages to acquire the tools and has a

revenge plan in mind, it must grant her a narcissistic enjoyment of her power over patriarchal and colonial oppression. As Freud explains: "the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man…that it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization" (81).

Similar to Freud's theory, several critics claim that Antoinette's matured self-recognition and desire to destroy English colonialism makes her become "the greatest impediment to civilization". Robbins describes Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as both oppressor and oppressed. Judith Raiskin similarly states that the status of Antoinette can be seen as simultaneously colonized and colonizer. On one hand, she is the daughter of a slave owner and of pure English descent; but on the other, after the abolishment of slavery, she becomes the target of the emancipated slaves, and growing up in the Caribbean, she is "the other" with regard to the Englishman Rochester. Given her complex identity, Jeffery Robinson observes a transformation in Antoinette's self-recognition. He sees a "beautiful symmetry" (53) between the burning of Coulibri and Thornfield Hall, where Antoinette grows as "the oppressor, displaced by the oppressed" (53), to "the oppressed, displacing the oppressor" (53). The reversed identity reveals her matured recognition of Rochester, from desperately wanting his love back to cursing him and burning his house. Also her matured response toward the inhumanity of English control changes from the negative avoidance to active protests.

The reception of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not always at odds with the reception of *Jane Eyre*. In fact, these two novels share plenty parallel critiques of patriarchy. Their differences are rooted in colonialism, which is reflected in the male/female relationship and imperial nation vs. native colony power dynamics. By telling "the other side" of the story, Rhys skillfully chooses Rochester to tell a large part of the story, which also makes him "a victim of England's implacable desire" (Savory 81) to accumulate wealth and power, which restricts

his primary instincts: to be kind, soft, emotional, and humane. In this way, Rochester gains the reader's sympathy and offers him/her more reason to question the inhumane logic of imperialism.

Different voices in telling the story also contribute to "the ambiguity and complexity of the white creole in a manner impossible in *Jane Eyre*" (Josephs 81). Aside from the master discourse, we are given the details from both Antoinette and Rochester's side of the story in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which artfully illuminates how and why patriarchy and imperialism places undue limits on the freedom of women and man alike. Through their own narrative, signs of becoming "mad" can be detected. Antoinette's experiences shape her knowledge of reality. But knowing doesn't necessarily equate to anything like full understanding. The irreconcilable conflict between colonized Jamaica and imperial England leads to her madness and death. Rochester also shows signs of madness in his narrative, but he manages to restrain his emotions, controlling them by projecting his fear and anger onto Antoinette. Thus he is able to demonstrate the competence and self-mastery of an "Englishman" and continues to assume power over her.

The portrayal of mad characters is the key to understanding both of the novels' response to colonialism. I wish to argue that the representation of madness and death are the tools that literature uses to critique the logics of imperialism and patriarchy, which justifies the master's needs at the expense of non-European women. Saliently demonstrated in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette and Bertha are the sacrificial discontents of a cruel and mercenary European civilization. With the knowledge of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and thus reading *Jane Eyre* from a postcolonial perspective, it is difficult to see Bertha as a mere "madwoman in the attic" according to an English definition – to see her subhuman status as the sole explanation of her madness and death – and concede the master side of the story as the only truth.

Chapter 3. Dualism: the Logic Behind Colonization

Any form of a long-term control is arguably based on a naturalized hierarchical relationship. By naturalizing, I mean the superior side invents certain logic to make the unequal hierarchy normal and unthinkable for the oppressed people. As identified by Val Plumwood, the crucial role of dualism helps establish and stabilize the logic behind colonialism and imperialism, which centers the European as the master while rationalizing their political dominance by defining those who are "different" as "the inferior other".

In order to define anything or anyone different from the self as "the inferior other", it's important to understand that the difference not only distinguishes one from another, but also marks the other as inferior. The categories of difference, such as gender and race, are invented as natural and scientific categorizations, which "naturalizes" the power of one over the other through a variety of ideological discourses. In other words, these differences, constructed without a definite basis in reality from a master perspective, generates power and institutionalizes European domination. Additionally, these marked differences don't exist alone, but are interrelated with each other in complex and subtle ways. For instance, the conceptual categories of female, emotion, and nature are on the inferior side as opposed to male, reason, and human. The three aspects establish a conceptual consistency which assumes that all women are emotional, close to nature, and follow biological instincts. This ideological system of binary oppositions work to enforce and reinforce oppression. It is obvious during British colonial expansion, that the people of color, especially women of other races are ill-treated because of their constructed inferiority.

Besides the power it generates from one over the other, another crucial characteristic of dualism is that it naturalizes these differences, which means the subordinated internalizes the colonial ideology, without even knowing that they are being exploited. As Plumwood puts it, "once the process of domination forms culture and constructs identity, the inferiorized

group must internalize this inferiorization in its identity and collude in this low valuation, honoring the values of the center, which form this dominant social values" (47). That is to say, the process of European ideology normalizing and legalizing the white male as the dominator, makes it unthinkable for the colonized other to reject and internalize imperial construct, which defines them as the subordinate. Once it becomes a culture and ideology, these naturalized concepts and identities tend to foreclose the idea of equality and mutuality.

I identify three most common and fundamental contrasting pairs in colonial domination, namely human/nature, reason/emotion, and male/female, which will be used to ground my analysis in this section. And other contrasting pairs like mind/body and civilized/primitive, which derives from the most basic three, are also employed in my analysis. Borrowing Plumwood's five characteristics of dualism, namely backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism, and homogenization (47-55), I attempt to analyze how the three binary pairs play out in Rochester and Antoinette's relationship. I also intend to demonstrate how these characteristics of dualism are reflected in English colonial and imperial "reason", which contributes to Rochester's manipulation and control of Antoinette, which arguably results in her madness and subsequent death.

Backgrounding refers to an interpersonal dynamic in which women's contributions t osociety are often ignored or denied by the dominator. Thus, their existence only provides a background picture, which disappears in the environment and becomes a part of nature. The female are conceptually associated with "nature", a concept that is historically freighted with negative connotation. This backgrounding process establishes woman's position in society as a provider and nurturer, which justifies the male dominator to take their contribution for granted. Also, the reduced value of domestic housework and child-bearing reinforces their inessential contribution, and drags them backward from the scene.

Many scholars ask the question that why in order to write Bertha a life, Rhys chooses an English male to tell a large part of the story. As far as I'm concerned, it's probably a way of indicating Antoinette's inferior position within master discourse. From the beginning of Part Two, Rhys uses plenty of first-person singular pronouns to imply Rochester's self-centeredness. When the two finally reach their destination for the honeymoon, Rochester says to himself: "There we were … myself, my wife Antoinette … and a … servant who was called Amélie" (Rhys 38). This reflects, as will become clearer as the story goes, that every relationship Rochester has, is defined from a master perspective, namely how the other is related to me myself, an Englishman. These possessive pronouns indicate that women, servants, and slaves are habitually thought of as "property" (Antoinette is my wife and Amélie is my servant). It never occurs to him to try to understand the other from their perspective, and he can't help evaluating them from a European value system. From the perspective of the master, women and non-Europeans are the inferior and uncivilized, who provide their labor to serve the master's needs. As Aristotle states in *The Poetic*s, that woman provides a means to serve man's ends, which contributes to her intrumentalization, the fourth characteristic of dualism that Plumwood puts forward.

The background position of non-European women is especially apparent when Rochester gains a sense of security surrounded by the noise made by busy working women. "I … got up very early and saw the women with trays covered with white cloth on their heads going to the kitchen. The woman with small hot loaves for sale, the woman with cakes, the woman with sweets … and I felt peaceful" (Rhys 41). This happens shortly after he recovers from his fever, which might be an indication that the fever is caused by something unclean, or unusual to an Englishman he eats in Jamaica. The cleanness of women wearing white cloth on heads and the order of daily life help him to reestablish the faith that everything here is governed by rules and laws. A master perspective of overlooking them working brings back a

sense of security to him, which is based on a hierarchical relationship between male and female, as well as between the English and "the other". It is arguably the "orderliness" of the scene that reminds him of English society and culture and, as a consequence, makes him feel safe and secure.

Radical exclusion, or hyperseparation is a way to establish the hierarchy by pushing the differences between the dominator and subordinator to an extreme, where "it demands not merely distinctness but radical exclusion, not merely separation but hyperseparation" (Plumwood 49). That is to say, the aim of radical exclusion is to ensure the polarization process between the centered one and the other, to minimize the characteristics that they share in common, and to clarify that the status of being a dominator and a subordinate can never be blurred. In this way, genuine sympathy and contact between the two groups are blocked. A strictly hierarchical power dynamic governs human relations. In addition, radical exclusion helps naturalize different traits and features as the other's "nature", which further justifies and reinforces colonial domination.

It's interesting to see how the English colonizer uses personal hygiene as one important aspect to criticize the "uncivilized" and "backward" habits of the colonized. As I have mentioned earlier, Rochester's fever and the white-cloth women wear on heads may indicate his obsessive preoccupation with cleanliness. Later in the novel, Rochester further questions the dressing habits of Christophine, a black servant of both Annette's and Antoinette's, saying that "she might hold her dress up. It must get very dirty, yards of it trailing on the floor" (Rhys 50). After Antoinette's explanation, he still holds on to his value system, claiming that "'whatever the reason it is not a clean habit'" (Rhys 50). Personal hygiene is a crucial aspect for the English to distinguish themselves from the uncivilized colonized other. First, as I have repeated, cleanliness excludes the subordinated from the position of a civilized human. Secondly, uncleanliness is naturalized in the subordinates, and

it becomes an indication of their "lazy" nature. However, Rochester's dismissal of Christophine results from not only her uncleanliness, but also her questioning on his authority. Seeing the couple consummate their marriage, Christophine warns Rochester when serving them coffee, "'Taste my bull's blood, master.' … 'not horse piss like the English madams drink. I know them. Drink drink their yellow horse piss, talk talk their lying talk'" (Rhys 50). By saying these disrespectful words, the black servant, Christophine, challenges Rochester's master position in the household, and reveals her contempt toward Englishmen. She "knows them well", for she witnesses how Antoinette's mother has been tortured by Mr. Mason to madness and death. Therefore, she warns Rochester that she knows his tricks and will keep an eye on him. However, by criticizing Christophine's unclean habit, Rochester intends to reduce her to an uncivilized savage and regain his authority.

In Coetzee's *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, he identifies different categories that the West imposes on the colonized to distinguish between themselves and the other, and uncleanliness and laziness are among them. He suggests that under the ideological system of white writing, writers employ a master discourse, where the differences between two cultures are distorted to support colonial dominance. It's ridiculous to define someone who enjoys nature, as one who idles their time away. Because influenced by capitalism, the colonizer believe that the only standard to evaluate one's contribution to the society is his productivity, namely wealth and power. This leads to the third point I want to make, that Christopine's habit can be defined as "unclean" under English civilized ideology, but in the Caribbean, it shows that she has a genuine personality and is close to nature. Therefore, in her mind, the ground is the root and thus pure, which is not unclean at all. Unlike Englishmen, they wear clean and nice suit, but "talk, talk their lying talk" (Rhys 50). However, when Rochester first arrives at the Caribbean area, he comments on the wild environment that "everything is too much". These women wear colorful flower dresses, and

let the plants grow without pruning, which is a sign of laziness of English ideological perception. He distinguishes their primitive lifestyle from the elegant and orderly English society, and believes that they are incapable to live a civilized life, which decides their inferiority.

These distinctions, represented by uncleanliness, establish and maintain the hierarchy between the colonizer and the colonized. As showed later in the novella, an unbridgeable separation is reflected in the relationship between Christopine and Antoinette in the eyes of Rochester, even if the former two have lived together for a long time. He asks Antoinette why she could hug and kiss Christopine, a black servant. If it was him, he "wouldn't" and "couldn't" hug and kiss her (Rhys 54). In Rochester's mind, people are categorized by race and sex, and there is no way for an excluded other to be equally treated as one among themselves. Because from the ideological English perspective, women like Christophine are defined as the inferior by nature. It's ridiculous to show affection toward "subhuman" from an English rational logic. On the contrary, Antoinette relates to people based on emotion, namely whether they share intimate feelings and common experiences. These two opposite ways of defining their relationship with other people reflect another essential contrasting pair of dualism, reason/emotion. Reasoning, reflected by behaving in strict accordance to laws, rules, and logic, which are made to legalize and guarantee colonial and imperial domination, separates people based on race and sex, and exploits the other on the basis of a supposed inferiority.

"Incorporation", is another crucial way to deny the other's identity and guarantee the dominant position of the colonial master. In order to do that, the master defines the outside world from a self-centered perspective, where the other is perceived in relation to the master, not as an independent individual. In addition, their dependency on the master further confines them into an inferior, a lack, and a negativity. Women are always taken for granted to be on

the inferior side of the binary pairs. Even great philosophers, thinkers, writers, and policy-makers, such as Aristotle and Jonathan Swift, show contempt for women's supposed inability to use reason and logic. Simone de Beauvior explains,

> Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being … she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other. (8)

de Beauvior reveals the reason behind colonialism and imperialism, which is to define "the other" on the inferior side of the dualism, and thus naturalizes and legitimates the domination of the European colonizer. In the specific example of women, it is because they are defined in relation to men, that their defined "lack" is not a nature within themselves, but a reflection of the male's desires and needs.

This relational definition of "the other" can be found throughout the novella, represented by the white male Rochester, who adopts a Eurocentric worldview, which defines the other characters from the master's point of view. So, for example, whenever he meets a non-European, the very first thing that comes to his mind is whether he or she is able to speak standard English. For instance, when Baptiste is first introduced to Rochester, the latter immediately judges his language ability. Rochester thinks to himself, "he [speaks] good English" (Rhys 43). What seems to be implied in this sentence is that Baptist is able to acquire the "English" English, the symbol of being a civilized human, but also a subject of English ideology. The dominator doesn't care about the subjects' mastery of their native languages, except English, which is regarded as the one and only elevated, refined, superior, and human tool of communication. Therefore, under the master discourse, the other's deficiency in speaking "English" English is categorized as a "lack" in their nature. In *Jane*

Eyre, Rochester comments on Bertha: “I found her nature wholly alien to mine, her tastes obnoxious to me, her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger” (Brontë 353). By evaluating Bertha’s behavior as “mad” and “inhumane” in relation to European ideology, Rochester attempts to rationalize his right to marry a new wife. His excuse reflects his prejudice, which is deeply rooted in colonial ideology. First of all, there should not be a hierarchical rank of different languages. They exist equally as a form of communication. However, under colonialist discourse, English becomes the master discourse and therefore gains power and legitimacy. Based on this dominant language, many other abstract ideologies are built upon, such as laws, which reinforces the dominant position of the Englishman. Even worse, the subordinate internalizes such hierarchical ideologies, which enables colonial oppression, and makes equality and mutuality impossible and unthinkable. For instance, in order to make Rochester believe Daniel Cosway’s letter, Amélie describes Daniel as “a very superior man”, who is “always reading the Bible”, and “[lives] like white people” (Rhys 72). As a black servant, Amélie’s understanding of being like white people is superficial. She further explains that Daniel has “one room only for sitting in” (Rhy 72) to convince Rochester that Daniel is a learned person who can be trusted. Her statements imply her desire to get closer to English culture. Though she has a superficial understanding of Englishness, she clearly understands its tight relation with power.

Christophine also attempts to convert Antoinette into English thinking. When Antoinette asks for her help to win back Rochester’s love, Christopine suggests:

> ‘Speak to your husband calm and cool, tell him about you mother and all what happened at Coulibri and why she get sick and what they do to her. Don’t bawl at the man and don’t make crazy faces. Don’t cry either. Crying no good with him. Speak nice and make him understand.’ (Rhys 69)

Rhys' portrayal of Christophine leaves the reader with an impression that she is always tough, independent, has her own principles, and never gives up. However, when it comes to the reconciliation between Antoinette and Rochester, she has to persuade Antoinette to be practical, which means to temporarily yield to the English rules so that Rochester is able to understand. What she really persuades her is to follow the logic behind colonization, namely the dualism of the reason/emotion construct, which demonstrates the inferior status of emotion when comparing with reason.

The fourth characteristic of dualism, instrumentalism, is the most common one that the dominator uses to objectify "the other". Like what Aristotle claims over two thousand years ago, the subordinate is a means to the dominator's ends. It reveals that "the other" has to sacrifice their own interests to the centered master, who declare a superior status and use "the other" as tools to satisfy their own needs. Therefore, being constructed instrumentally, the subordinate has no intrinsic value, but is evaluated by their usefulness to the master. Women are often the victims of such instrumentalization. They are defined as the provider and nurturer, who are confined in the domestic sphere to serve male's needs. As Lois Tyson argues, a patriarchal woman is someone who internalizes traditional gender roles, which cast women as emotional, weak, and submissive, and promotes men's privilege (85).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rochester's original motive to marry Antoinette is to acquire the money she has inherited from her stepfather, Mr. Mason. Because he is the younger son of his family, and according to the laws of primogeniture, the entire possession of his father would go to his brother. Therefore, he needs to secure his position and power as an Englishman by acquiring himself wealth and power. Marrying Antoinette would be the most convenient way. Once he gets the money, he thinks to himself about the letter that he is going to write his father:

> Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must been seen to). 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 manoeuvres of a younger son. I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet… (Rhys 41)

This letter is not the one that he ultimately sends to his father. However, it spontaneously reveals his indignation about English laws on distribution of wealth. The law deprives the genuine affection between the father and the son, and coldly replaces it with capitalism. Like Antoinette, Rochester is also a victim of English civilization, who is required to gain wealth and power if he wants to keep the master status of being an Englishman. At some level, Rochester is also evaluated by his father on his usefulness to him. From his cold tone, it arguably implies that Rochester is upset because, first, he has to perform what his father requires his to do, which makes his a victim of patriarchy; and secondly, he has to seek himself power and wealth by going to the colonies, and marrying a Creole woman, which makes a victim of colonialism.

Another feature of instrumentalization is, as Plumwood puts, that "the dualising master self does not empathetically recognize others as moral kin, and does not recognize them as a center of desires or needs on their own account" (53). That said, Rochester intentionally neglects or rejects to notice Antoinette's needs. Because she constantly reminds him of their shared memory of a traumatic childhood, parental abandonment and sibling rivalry. His neglect and denial of Antoinette's needs climaxes when he insists on calling her Bertha:

> 'Certainly I will, my dear Bertha.'

‘Not Bertha tonight,’ she said.

‘Of course, on this if all nights, you must be Bertha.’

‘As you wish,’ she said. (Rhys 82)

In the first sense, making Rochester insist on calling Antoinette Bertha, Rhys follows the literary tradition of *Jane Eyre*, and connects these two works. However, the name Bertha gains new significance in this novel. First of all, it is another name that Rochester is particularly fond of, which shows his carelessness toward Antoinette’s intrinsic needs, where emotion, true love, genuine human affection weigh much more importance. More importantly, the name Bertha represents the admitted madwoman who is imprisoned in England. By enforcing the English name on Antoinette, which is a name of French origin, Rochester shows his desire to bring her back to England and assumes control over her. Rhys implies in this name that Antoinette is on her way to becoming Bertha, the madwoman who will be deprived of freedom and sanity, locked in the attic and being dehumanized as a ghost from the English colonial perspective. From calling Antoinette Bertha, Rochester successfully changes her identity from a free and cheerful Creole enjoying life in the Caribbean area, to a confined madwoman in the England. He successfully instrumentalizes her as a tool, who sacrifices her freedom and happiness as a human being with feelings for his needs of wealth and power.

The last feature of dualism is called homogenization, or stereotyping. It consolidates the power of the dominator by overgeneralizing the other. The master has little interest in the differences and diversity of the so-called inferior groups, who are just the background, the resource, and the instrument that they use for colonization. As a result of the neglect and denial of their individuality, the colonized people suffer from naturalized oppression, endangered languages, lost identity, and the extinction of Aboriginal culture. Additionally, homogenization contributes to other characteristics of dualism, such as hyperseparation,

incorporation, and intrumentalization. By ways of assuming similar traits within people of the same race and sex, but opposite traits between male and female, and European and non-European, it enhances the distinction between the master and the other, and naturalizes their power of domination.

Gender roles are most often the category that men use to assume power over women. However, it should be noted that gender is in essence a social invention that imposes restrictions on female autonomy. When they don't behave according to traditional gender roles – that is to say, they don't accept and internalize the hierarchical relationship between males and themselves – they would usually be categorized as "mad" or "insane". Patriarchy works under this simple mechanism. No matter if females yield to patriarchy or not, there is a socially constructed and institutionalized weakness attributed to women, which guarantees men's domination over them. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rochester first accuses Antoinette of madness by claiming that she doesn't embody English culture, who relates herself with the emancipated slaves. Then he further confirms it by claiming that she has inherited the insane gene from her mother. Because the letter sent by Daniel convinces him that madness is a biological trait that runs in the family and causes her mother's death. Taking these two points as evidences, he not only regains control of Antoinette, but also by denying all the differences that exist between Antoinette and her mother, he reveals his prejudice against all Creole women, that they are invariably emotional, insane, and uncivilized, and therefore assumes power over all women. This is also evidenced by the long argument he has with Christophine, in which she exposes his self-centered scheme of taking Antoinette's money and then breaking up with her, Rochester accuses her of insanity: "She's as mad as the other, I thought, and turned to the window" (Rhys 97). By categorizing Antoinette, Annette, and Christophine as insane, he adopts the method of homogenization to characterize the

collectivity of non-European women as emotional and inferior, thus naturalizing and consolidating patriarchal hegemony.

Besides asserting "women are all alike", male domination is also solidified by polarizing differences between these two gender groups. When Antoinette is on her way to madness, Rochester tries his best to stay tranquil, though it can be inferred from the text that he is driven to madness too. The reason he keeps calm on a surface level is to hold authority. As Marilyn Frye argues, the male needs to appear different from the female and exaggerates their differences in order to naturalize domination. She explains, "the appearance of the naturalness of the dominance of men and the subordination of women is supported by anything which supports the appearance that men are very like other men and very unlike women, and that women are very like other women and very unlike men" (34). Therefore, by claiming that "All women go crazy easily", but he (like other men) is able to stay calm, Rochester successfully enlarges the distances between two genders, and solidifies his domination and patriarchal privilege.

From the analysis above, it is obvious that a large web of dualism works behind colonialism and imperialism, which continues to center the white male as the master and marginalize non-European women as the inferior other. This established system of hierarchical structure naturalizes and legitimates the power of the privileged side, namely human over nature, reason over emotion, male over female, and the colonizer over the colonized, by ways of backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism, and homogenization. It cruelly persecutes other equal human beings, especially non-European women, for the prosperity and civilization of English Empire.

Chapter 4. Language, Gender, and Power

People not only speak languages, languages "speak" people. One's existing linguistic behavior is an accumulation of his or her past socio-cultural experiences, as well as a representation of the power dynamics among the conversing parties. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, non-European women characters lose their discursive power in terms of using a feminine, therefore weak, way of talking, and Caribbean creoles, which are unrecognized by the English colonizer. Only standard British English is adopted in law and education to build the colonizers' authority. This chapter provides a close textual analysis of colonial oppression in the site of language, exposing how linguistically female gender and creoles are constructed as indicators of inferiority, which justifies the power of the Englishmen over the colonized women, and the English civilization over the indigenous culture.

In her book, *Language and Woman's Place*, Lakoff argues that women are taught to use a polite, unaggressive, and weak way of talking since they were little girls. This speech style lessens women's discursive power and inferiorizes them as incompetent counterparts in dialogue with men. As defined by Foucault, discourses are more than just the ways of thinking and talking. They also includes "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them" (Weedon 108). Therefore, the discursive power is enlarged to any area of power constructions, which categorize women and non-Europeans as incapable human beings by nature. What's worse, the ideology within which they are raised, makes it unthinkable that the discourse of women and non-Europeans is a result of power dualism, because it is disguised by the English patriarchal and imperial ideology that it is the natural and virtuous way for them to perceive the world and themselves. Lakoff comments on the effects of "woman's language" and its linguistic representation:

> It submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of

> expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object - sexual or otherwise - but never a serious person with individual views. Of course, other forms of behavior in this society have the same purpose; but the phenomena seem especially clear linguistically. (7)

Lakoff suggests that some linguistic markers clearly indicates women's inferior status within patriarchal societies. For instance, women tend to use words like "might", "I guess", "kind of" more frequently than men in one sentence to make it sound less direct and more friendly. However, the male takes these words as a sign of uncertainty, revealing their lack of full confidence in the truth of what they are saying. Similar linguistic behavior also includes using tag questions, which are regarded as the repetitions of the previous statements to elicit agreement from the other.

Besides uncertainty, triviality is mentioned by Robin as another indicator of the inferiority women's language. They tend to lack confidence in the importance of what they say, which may indicate that they are often subtly "encouraged" to defer to male authority in patriarchal societies. This is reflected in their terminology. For instance, the color which men call green can be honeydew, lime, spring, clover, fern, or moss for women, according to the degree of greenness each of them contains. However, this ability to distinguish similar colors contributes to the accusation that women are more concerned with trivial matters like superficial beauty. The weakness of woman's discursive power also results from the meaningless particles they add to their speech, which are the unnecessary and redundant words such as "actually", "you know", and "I mean". They reduce the assertiveness of the tone. In addition, the address form is another factor that greatly alters the power dynamic of the conversing parties. For instance, women are often called as "girl", "cutie", or even

"creature" in the colonial literature: these childish and disrespectful forms of address reinforce their discursive weakness.

In addition to the power relations played between gendered languages, the competition between standard British English and creoles is also a part of the power struggle. Due to the unique origin of creole languages, their linguistic features of borrowing vocabulary and lack of inflectional morphology are identified as evidence to show its incompetence as a language and therefore inferiority to British English. When the English colonizers establish their language as the official one, and use it in law and education, British English has secured a long-term authority and domination. Azfar Hussain names it "print-capitalism", where the written words establish a higher level of authority and sophistication (44-46). The hierarchy between standard British English and native creoles not only derogates the indigenous languages and culture, but more importantly, it changes the power relations and production relations between the colonizer and the colonized, which tends to deprive the colonized people of the power of discourse. In the following discussion, I'd like to give a brief introduction of creoles, and several close textual analyses on how non-European women are deprived of power under the hegemony of standard British English.

A creole derives from a pidgin, a simplified mixture of other languages spoken by non-native speakers. When it becomes the first language of the native children, it establishes itself as a creole. The emergence of creoles caters to the trading and communicational needs during European colonial expansion, because it involves frequent interactions with the indigenous people but none of them can speak the other's language. Therefore, a creole, a mixture of different languages, emerges. However, due to its hybrid nature and simplified structure, creoles are not recognized as competent languages, but variants or dialects of other self-generating languages. In literature, a creole person is usually a character of European descent, but born and raised in the colony, whose so-called primitive culture shares nothing in

common with European civilization. The term is also extended to include indigenous natives and others of non-European origin, like people living in the Caribbean area in this novella. It also generally refers to all other mixtures of languages, as long as they have risen in similar circumstances.

Although creoles function well as other languages, they didn't gain recognition from European colonizers. In fact, in order to reinforce colonial domination, the Europeans made efforts to demonstrate that Caribbean creoles are "broken" English or French, which lack the linguistic quality to be recognized as official languages. For example, most creoles have little or no inflectional morphology, which is a system of the word construction by adding prefix or suffix, for they are not allowed adequate time and practical use to evolve. Along with other features like polysemy (a single word with several different meanings), and multi-functionality of words, it leaves an impression that creoles are still in preliminary development, where a logical, scientific, and systematic language structure is needed. Especially when French and English are recognized as the official languages in the colonies, and are used in written form – for example, in the letters and legal documents – people who speak creoles are stigmatized and delegitimized, in other words, lose their power of discourse.

Combining the inferiority of the female gender and Caribbean creoles in colonial society and culture, *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents Antoinette, Christophine, and Rochester in a triangular power relation, where linguistic behavior alters their discursive power in dialogue with another. This is especially evident in two intense conversations between Antoinette and Christophine, and Christophine and Rochester. The first happens between two female characters, the ex-slave-owner, Creole English Antoinette, and Christophine, he black servant from Martinique. The latter is shaped as a proto-feminist figure, adored by the former but distrusted by Rochester. It can be inferred from their conversation (Antoinette asks for her

help to win Rochester back with obeah) why Christophine's creole surpasses Antoinette's English. The second dialogue takes place when Rochester finds out the obeah, and questions Christophine if she knows her conduct is against law. During their conversation, it is easy to notice that Christophine's creole gradually loses its advantage to standard British English, especially when it comes to English law.

The most salient reason that Christophine sounds far more strongly than Antoinette is because she weakens the image of English males by addressing them as boys. In the first intense dialogue, she reveals to Antoinette that the English marriage law is what Rochester uses to deprive her of wealth and power, and therefore assumes control: "Law! The Mason boy fix it, that boy worse than Satan and he burn in Hell" (Rhys 66). Mr. Mason is Christophine's English master, who married to Antoinette's mother and drove her to madness and death. By calling him "boy" and cursing him to hell, Christophine infantilizes the English colonizers and reveals her resentment toward the imperial power. Likewise, Antoinette is called by Christophine with endearing names such as "*Doudou, che cocotte*" (43), "*Ti moun*" (90), and "*Do do l'enfant do*" (90), which reflects her maternal affection toward Antoinette. Though she doesn't mean to infantilize Antoinette, the readers are left with an impression that in Christophine's mind, the adult Antoinette is still a little girl. From the other side of the triangle, Antoinette is referred to as "Bertha", another woman's name, and "marionette" (92), meaning doll, by Rochester. By calling Antoinette "Bertha", a typical English name, Rochester reveals his ambition to colonize Antoinette's consciousness with English values and ideals. Following the literary tradition of the "Bertha" in *Jane Eyre*, he attempts to lock her in England, and manipulate her like a doll. Be it Christophine for Antoinette's sake or Rochester for his own sake, childish address forms in the dialogues weaken Antoinette's discursive power.

Besides address forms, adding meaningless particles, words of hesitation, and tag

questions frequently to her speech, Antoinette lessens the authority of her tone. These three linguistic behaviors are saliently reflected in her dialogue with Christophine: "*I think* he hates me", "*You think* I must leave him?", "I *might* be able to borrow money for that", "You certainly know now. *Well, don't you*?" (Rhys 65-67 My emphasis). These words appear frequently in just a couple of pages, though I have to admit that it fits her character's setting in the dilemma; nonetheless, it has greatly weakened her image as an independent and determined woman. It also should be noted that these words are commonly found in spoken languages, but when they appear in a written work, it reinforces the inner hesitation of the women characters. In addition, nearly in the whole section of their dialogue, Antoinette starts with a question and continues with another: "What shall I do?", "Go, Go where?", and "When must I go, where must I go?" (Rhys 65-66). It further reduces the assertiveness of her discourse, and reflects the harsh condition that the European colonizers have inflicted on creole women.

Both as females, Antoinette suffers from a much more severe influence from the gendered discourse comparing with Christophine, which consolidates her inferiority facing Rochester's misogyny. Throughout the novella, we are not given any word that shows Rochester's compliment toward Antoinette. Instead, he keeps judging her from a patriarchal perspective and estranging her from him, namely a civilized human being:

> I watched her *critically*. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark *alien* eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. (Rhys 39 My emphasis)

It reveals from the word "critically" that Rochester judges Antoinette with Eurocentric prejudices. It is arguably that her eyes must blink and may not be disconcerting. But under

the English patriarchal ideology, Rochester distorts certain features of a creole woman in order to alienate female gender and creole identity. These attempts have a common goal, which is to construct and reinforce colonial power dualism, namely the power of male over female, and the power of the English over other races. In this particular scene, Rochester's misogyny is revealed in his thoughts about Antoinette and creole female, which reinforces the sexist assumptions about the supposed inferiority of women.

Lakoff concludes on the horrible consequences of such discourse injustice on women's life:

> The ultimate effect of these discrepancies is that women are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistic behavior along with other aspects of their behavior; and the irony here is that women are made to feel that they deserve such treatment, because of inadequacies in their own intelligence and or education. But in fact it is precisely because women have learned their lessons so well that they later suffer such discrimination. (7)

In other words, language becomes one of the parameters in the dualism, the working mechanism of colonization, like gender (male/female), race (white/people of color), and mentality (reason/emotion), which structure power relations in colonial societies. Non-European women are forced to become the sacrificial victims of colonial civilization.

Apart from the gendered linguistic behavior, it seems that language hierarchy, represented by British English and other creoles in this novella, plays a more crucial role in determining power relations. This is the reason why masculinized Christophine, who abstains from an uncertain, trivial and weak way of talking, gradually loses her discursive power facing Rochester's British English, especially when he mentions the written English law.

Russell identifies two characteristics of Caribbean creoles reflected in Christophine's

speech, childishness and repetitiveness, which I argue are the major reasons that make her language informal, and therefore result in her ultimate failure when confronting with Rochester. It should be noted that these negative features of creoles are not defined from a linguistic perspective, rather from a Eurocentric perspective to secure the authority of British English. Speaking of childishness, besides the address forms I mentioned earlier, Christophine uses a variety of "baby talk" to communicate, especially with Antoinette. In Suzanne Romaine's *Pidgin and Creole Languages*, she claims that "baby talk" is one of the linguistic features of the origin of pidgins, through which the colonizers "use a simplified language to communicate with lower classes" (Romaine 74). The childish feature of creoles reflects that the colonizer intend to use a simplified form of language to communicate with the indigenous people to indicate that they are of a lower status, and to reinforce their lower status by avoiding the possibility for them to acquire the sophisticated British English. However, Christophine's language ability is not limited in such childlike way. For example, she has creative and rhymed expressions, which sometimes even make her words poetic and striking: "'Drink drink their yellow horse piss, talk talk their lying talk'" (50), and "'women must have spunks'" (69). She also uses some simple rhetoric like simile in her expression: "she creep and crawl like centipede" (61), which demonstrates the unlimited creativity of creoles. This accords with linguists' arguments that creoles are fully functional as other languages, it is their social status that fails them to be officialized.

A more apparent linguistic behavior of Christophine's creole is the use of repetition. Sometimes they help emphasize her tone, but more often than not, they reduce the formality of her discourse. *Wide Sargasso Sea* opens with her comment on Antoinette's mother, "because she pretty like pretty self" (9). The repetition of "pretty" and its creative usage here reflect Christophine's mastery of Caribbean creole, but this sentence also implies her lack of "grammatical correctness". Her repetitive speech style develops throughout the novella:

"They got magistrate. They got fine. They got jail house and chain gang. They got tread machine…" (15); "Money have pretty face for everybody, but for that man money pretty like pretty self" (68); "don't you provoke me more than I provoke already" (90). The repetitive and simplified sentence pattern further contribute to the childishness of her speech. However, this simple discourse fits Christophine's identity as a black servant, and shows her mastery in making a simple language artful and cleverly subversive.

Although she is the master of creoles, when the topic comes to law, the written language based on its preciseness and complexity, Christophine's creole seems impotent from an English colonizer's perspective. She loses the power when debating with Rochester. When Rochester reveals that the poisonous love potion she gives Antoinette to put in his drink is against law, and threatens her with the magistrate's promise to send policemen to put her in jail "if she lives near [him] and gets up to any of her nonsense" (96), Christophine gets enraged and begins murmuring to herself, neither in creole, nor patois, but something Rochester can't understand to remind him that he is an outsider in the Caribbean. In the end, she succumbs to the law, and admits her inability to subvert the language hierarchy:

> When I looked at her there was a mask on her face and her eyes were undaunted. She was a fighter, I had to admit. Against my will I repeated, 'Do you wish to say good-bye to Antoinette?'
>
> 'I give her something to sleep – nothing to hurt her. I don't wake her up to no misery. I leave that for you.'
>
> 'You can write to her,' I said stiffly.
>
> 'Read and write I don't know. Other things I know.'
>
> She walked away without looking back. (97)

Suddenly leaving Antoinette without notice, Christophine shows her fear of the police, but more of her disappointment toward the cruelty of English civilization, which ignores the

voices of marginalized people. Although she doesn't know how to "read and write", she does know that Rochester, the Englishman, comes to Caribbean for wealth and power, which derives from the oppression of non-Europeans and women. Although she doesn't know about the English law, she does know that it is established only to protect the English's privileges, which is again to exploit the rights of non-Europeans and women. In essence, the English law a means of control in the site of language, where the colonized are not given the access to acquire.

Though Antoinette speaks better British English than Christophine, she still can't escape her fate to be exploited by an English husband and the English law. The most important reason that Rochester would chase her after a long way to the Caribbean is that, according to *Married Woman's Property Act*, all possession of the wife goes to the husband after the two get married. In the footnotes, Raiskin comments, "the wife's position under the common law of England is worse than that of slaves in the laws of many countries" (66).

Antoinette used to believe that Rochester marries her for true love; however, his pride and ethnocentrism betray the real intention. When Christophine suggests that Antoinete should leave Rochetser, Antoinette explains,

> 'He will not come after me. And you must understand I am not rich now, I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him.'
>
> 'What you tell me there?' she said sharply.
>
> 'That is English law.'
>
> 'Law! …' (Rhys 66)

After he acquires the money, and all her other belongings, Rochester doesn't need to ingratiate himself with Antoinette anymore. Not only because he hopes to prove his worthiness to his father as the second son, but also he reaffirms his master identity as an English male who has the wealth and power over the female and people of color. This sense

of security generates certain confidence which makes him believe that Antoinette dare not leave him. However, this confidence also deadens his capacity to feel love and compassion. He achieves "success" in his father's eyes, becoming a "rational" and "cold" Englishman, which in another way, lessens his affection toward Antoinette. Therefore, without the agency and resources to leave her husband, Antoinette internalizes her identity as a property of Rochester. The English law enforces female dependence on males, which guarantees patriarchal domination.

Another intense scene that reveals Antoinette's resentment toward English law takes place near the end of the story. When Grace Poole, the woman who looks after Antoinette in the attic, questions if she remembers that she has attacked Richard, her brother, with a knife, she said, "I was in the room but I didn't hear all he said except 'I cannot interfere legally between yourself and your husband.' It was when he said 'legally' that you flew at him and when he twisted the knife out of your hand you bit him" (Rhys 109). As Poole points out, that it is when Antoinette hears the word "legally" that she reacts furiously towards Richard. It reveals her accumulated anger towards the English law, which starts destroying her life from her mother's marriage with Mr. Mason, her mother and her brothers' death, and the destruction of their house in Coulibri, to her loss of everything and imprisonment in England. Camouflaged as the law, a civilized superstructure, the written form of English language powerfully justifies and guarantees English hegemony, whose prosperity depends on the exploitation of non-European women.

Through analyzing the linguistic behavior of main characters and the social status of British English and creoles, this discussion facilitates a better understanding of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in terms of the power of discourse, especially in legal and ideological aspects. Their languages, implied meanings, and ways of talking serve as accurate reflections of colonial influence, which reinforces the English domination of the colonies.

Chapter 5. Madness, Death, and Civilization

Female madness is one of the major themes in Victorian literature. When people talk about the madwoman image in British literature, Bertha, the haunted ghost with a purple face and dark hanging hair, locked in the third floor of Thornfield, is usually the first character that most people are reminded of. Demonized as a ghost, she is driven to madness and death for the sake of the reunion of Jane and Rochester. It is an example of the cruelty and inhumanity of imperial civilization, whereby one country or people develops at the expense of the others. In light of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, I contend that Antoinette/Bertha is represented as one of the "discontents" of European civilization, who is accused of madness and driven to death by the irreconcilable conflict between the colonizer and the colonized, in order to critique the "madness" of the logic behind colonial civilization.

Freud explains that human beings' hatred toward civilization starts from as early as the period of infancy. Once separated from the carefree life on the mother's breast, the infant has to repress the id from following the "pleasure principle", and obey the "reality principle", which dominants the external world by ideological beliefs, sentiments, and laws, which are already made for different groups (race, gender, class) of people to obey. The struggle between the superego and the id, namely the ability to bear the rules of a certain civilization and the desire to follow one's primary instinct and humanity, creates tension among people from different cultures, who hold different beliefs and values. That is the starting point of our hostility toward civilization. Then he identifies three aspects of human suffering which add to this hostility, namely the unchangeable laws of nature, the unstoppable decay of the human body, and the inequality of human relationships. In answering the question as to why so many people develop a hostile feeling toward civilization, he says, "I believe that the basis of it was a deep and long-standing dissatisfaction with the then existing state of civilization and that on that basis a condemnation of it was built up, occasioned by certain specific historical events"

(38). This assertion should be understood within the historical context when Freud wrote this book. Undoubtedly, World War I has a great impact on his central concern about the tension between the individual and civilization. Still recovering from the brutal war, Freud develops his thoughts on how Bourgeois class, and Judeo-Christion religion help form a shared set of beliefs, like patriarchy and colonialism, which demand too much repression on both the Europeans and the people they defined as "the other". As a result, it inhibits the "natural instincts" of human beings such as love and compassion, and governs the world and manages interpersonal relationships based on power and wealth.

Unsatisfied with the existing cruel civilization, there are two tendencies of which people might use to deal with the suffering wrought by Eurocentric ideologies. The first is intoxication. Drinking, smoking, and using drugs may be the ways that one uses to escape from the reality principle and follow the "pleasure principle". Intoxication also includes indulgence in the past memories, daydreaming, and hallucination, which are identified as the pre-symptoms of madness. The second way out is aggression. In other words, alongside the desire to live and preserve the living substance, there is a death instinct which leads the individual to aggressive destruction, whether toward the objects that produced by such inhumane civilization, or themselves. In fact, Antoinette and Bertha adopt these methods to express their resentment toward English colonialism. For example, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette constantly dreams about her past in Coulibri with Christophine, Annette, and Coco (36, 112), which awakens her from the exploitative nature of colonial civilization and encourages her to protest against it; in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha attempts to burn Rochester, breaks the wedding veil, and lights fire on Thornfield Hall. They share a similar suffering from and hatred toward English patriarchy and imperialism; and by extremely ending their lives with madness and death, they reveal the inhumanity of such civilization, which develops at the expense of non-European women.

Drawing from his theory, I attempt to analyze how madness and death are portrayed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and how they reflect Antoinette's resentment toward European civilization, which demonstrates Freud's point of view that the inclination to aggression serves as the greatest impediment to civilization. In addition, Rochester is also portrayed as a victim of patriarchy and imperialism in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. However, he hides his anger and madness, and projects them on Antoinette, for the English society requires a man to hold his authority by inhibiting emotion and weakness. His decision to adopt the identity of the master and repress his humanity as the way to resolve the tension between English and creole cultures reveals that the colonial civilization isn't solely built upon the oppression on the colonized, but all human beings alike.

Wide Sargasso Sea explores the theme of madness through the character of Antoinette. It mainly comes from three aspects: the foreshadowing of a similar fate like her mother; a projection from Rochester to refuse to recognize his own madness; and the literary tradition of Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. In the following paragraphs, I wish to argue that, all these driven forces of her madness are direct or indirect results of English colonial expansion, which not only oppresses non-European women, but also pressures English males to obtain wealth and power, while repressing their natural instincts.

There is no more need to say that Antoinette's mother, Annette, becomes "mad" and dies because of her conceited English husband, Mr. Mason. His contempt for black slaves intensifies the potential resentment between Antoinette and the recently emancipated slaves. The outburst of their resentment is a fire, which burns down their home at Coulibri, Coco, Annette's parrot, and Pierre, Antoinette's little brother to death. The fire is a direct result of Mr. Mason's arrogance and pride toward the black servants and Creole people. In one dinner, when Mr. Mason talks about his plan to import servants from East Indies instead of using local laborers, he is cautioned by Aunt Cora to be careful of his words, but he

arrogantly declares: "'They don't want to work. Look at the place – it's enough to break your heart … They are children – they wouldn't hurt a fly'" (Rhys 21). This is overheard by the black servant Myra, who also takes care of Pierre. After she realizes Mr. Mason's arrogance and prejudice against black people, she tells Antoinette that "Everyone went to hell" with a mournful smile (Rhys 21). It can be inferred from her smile that the seed of a revenge plan secretly sprouts. This is evidenced in the novella that she intentionally leaves Pierre in the fire.

Besides Pierre, Annette's favorite child, her parrot Coco is also killed in the fire. It can't be more vivid that Coco symbolizes not only Annette and Antoinette, but also all Creole women, living in the margin of English and colonial culture, who are hated by both sides: "…Coco on the glacis railings with his feathers alight. He made an effort to fly down but his clipped wings failed him and he fell screeching. He was all on fire" (Rhys 25). Coco, an animal, is compared with Creole women under the inhumane oppression of the English colonizer represented by Annette and Antoinette. They share a similar fate which their deaths are result of accumulated oppression. Women are treated as animals with least respect, leaving the Englishman free will to control and hurt them as he likes. For example, in order to domesticate it, Coco's wings are clipped by Mr. Mason, which fails it to fly out of the fire. And its feathers are burnt by the fire set by the slaves, which causes its death. Likewise, being a Creole, Antoinette suffers from this double-side attack, being tortured from "cultural inbetweenity" (Josephs 74): on one side is the European civilized culture, represented by her husband, the white-male Rochester's manipulation; and on the other side is the hatred from the former slaves, represented by her friend, the black-female Tia's betrayal. She fails to relate and find self-identity on both sides.

Moreover, Coco's image reappears in Antoinette's dream before burning Thornfield. It implies a similar fate of the parrot and our heroine, that both of them will be burnt with

different houses. However, there is a difference between Thornfield and Coulibri. As Robinson concludes: “A beautiful symmetry is created … the fire at the beginning of the book shows Antoinette as one of the oppressors, displaced by the oppressed. The fire at the end shows her as one of the oppressed displacing the oppressor” (53). Realizing that she is treated even worse than the freed slaves, imprisoned in the Thornfield Hall, Antoinette adopts the way in which the ex-slaves show their anger and cause great damage to her family. She lights a fire in Thornfield, and attacks the cruelty of English colonization by her death. Jennifer Gilchrist argues that the fire is a symbol of powerful nature, which grants her the destructive power to combat “civilization”. She explains that living within the protective wall of Coulibri, Antoinette only sees smoke inside the house, and “tall flames shooting to the sky” outside, where her Aunt Cora hides her with her arms to avoid the horrible view. Therefore, she has a vague impression of the collective anger from the black community, which the fire represents. Giving an aesthetic description of the fire, “the yellow-red sky was like sunset” (Rhys 27), supports Gilchrist’s argument that Antoinette’s view of the fire is more of an “awesome power of natural destruction” (470). Recognizing the power of nature, Antoinette is then able to destroy Thornfield Hall with the help of fire, which demonstrates Freud’s point that the inclination to aggression serves as the “greatest impediment of civilization” (81). For the people under oppression, their desire to destruction is “an original and self-subsisting instinctual disposition” (81), which grows as the cruel oppression becomes harsher and the inhumanity of colonial civilization becomes clear.

After the death of Coco and Pierre, Annette is sent by Mr. Mason to be “taken care of” by the former slaves: “He bought her a house and hired a coloured man and woman to look after her. For a while he was sad but he often left Jamaica … He almost forgot her” (Rhys 80). Mr. Mason doesn’t learn his lesson from the fire and still believes that black people are too lazy and naïve to rebel. When Antoinette visits her mother, she sees “a colored

man, a colored woman, and a white woman sitting with her head bent so low that I couldn't see her face" (Rhys 28). From the lowly bent head, it can be inferred that Annette is ill-treated by the ex-slaves, who ultimately torture her to death. This is evidenced by an even more insulting scene when Antoinette reveals to Rochester that her mother dies of torturing instead of madness. She said, "I saw the man lift her up out of chair and kiss her. I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all too soft and limp in his arms and he laughed. The women laughed too, but she was angry" (Rhys 81). In the end, Antoinette views her mother's death rather indifferently: "She died last year, no one told me how, and I didn't ask … Christophine cried bitterly but I could not" (Rhys 36). This indifference is greatly a result of numbness to the accumulated deaths that she has encountered in her life, rather than a lack of affection for her mother. Also the indifference is a product of her helplessness in facing the common reason of these deaths, which is the irreconcilable conflict between English and Creole society. Thus what she really questions in why "Such terrible things happen. Why? Why?" (Rhys 36), is why people of color are treated as slaves in the first place, why English people racially distinguish Creoles from themselves, and why colonial civilization is so inhumane and cruel.

It is also interesting when Antoinette explains to Rochester why she lies about the time of her mother's death: "'She did die when I was a child. There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about'" (Rhys 77). Metaphorically, to Antoinette, Annette dies long before the physical one that everybody knows about. Partly because of her favoring of Pierre over Antoinette, leaving the latter with a fear of abandonment. More importantly, it is also because of her mother's suffering from Mr. Mason and the slaves, that her life can't be called as a living at all. She loses Pierre, her favorite son, and everything that she loves so much in Coulibri, which the arrogant Mr. Mason should be responsible for her lose and despair of life. Similarly for Antoinette, the relationship between her mother and Mr.

Mason mirrors hers with Rochester. Both as English males, they share cultural superiority facing non-European women. Caught between English and creole cultures, Antoinette suffers from what her mother has gone through. Therefore, it is more apt to interpret the heredity of madness within the family as a heredity of similar sufferings. Being "a living dead" like her mother, Antoinette's zombie image begins to haunt Rochester: "you have eyes like zombie too" (Rhys 29), "he look like he see zombie" (Rhys 60), "Is there a ghost, a zombie there?" (Rhys 63). Savory interprets Rochester's reaction as a resistance to Antoinette, "who made him love her beyond his sense of safety" (90). Thus in order to acquire security as a white male, he accuses her of madness to justify his oppression, to bring her back to England and lock her up. Furthermore, Nagihan argues that the zombie image becomes a spirit of a place, which "becomes a category belongs to the Caribbean … and a metaphor for transitional identity" (176). Suffered from the cultural inbetweenity, especially in the Caribbean area during English colonial expansion, Antoinette represents the numerous non-European women who were driven to become the living dead, like zombies.

Besides the female characters, Rhys also makes an effort to portray the Englishman, Rochester, as a victim of patriarchy and imperialism. His discontent is repressed, and implicitly projected on Antoinette. Tyson explains that people tend to use projection as a defense to "ascribe our fear, problem, or guilty desire to someone else and then condemning him or her for it, in order to deny that we have it ourselves" (15). Therefore, her accused madness, anger, and fear reflect Rochester's own helplessness and resentment toward English hegemony. As evidenced by the imagined letter to his father, Rochester reveals his discontent toward patriarchy and capitalism, which I'll explain in detail later. Rhys successfully brings the readers' sympathy and understanding to this English colonizer, Rochester, who is forced to the alien Caribbean to secure wealth and power. In this way, Rhys criticizes the inhumanity of English civilization, which not only oppresses non-European women, but also

all human beings on a cruel “survival-of-the-fittest” basis.

The reason for categorizing Rochester as a victim is because the English law doesn’t include him on the privileged side of being an English male. As a second son in the family, he is not protected by law to inherit even a portion of his father’s estate. The prosperity of British Empire doesn’t build upon solely on the sacrifice of non-European women, but also within the English society. Living in a capitalist society, Rochester feels little love from his father, because the latter leaves nothing for him but the first son in order to run his business as a whole. And that is the most important reason of why he comes to the Caribbean and gets married to a creole woman. In addition to that, being an Englishman, he has to force himself to behave according to the so-called civilized code and inhibits his nature. As he reveals in the novel, “how old was I when I learned to hide what I felt? A very small boy. Six, five, even earlier. It was necessary, I was told, and the view I have always accepted” (Rhys 61). The lack of sincere affection from the family is another reason why he can’t get involved in Antoinette’s world. He is taught to be detached, cold, and business-like, which is the civilized code and will bring him power. When he arrives at Massacre, a place where people do not strictly adhere to an English code of conduct, his first impression of the town is that “everything is too much” (Rhys 41). The alien place and people make him feel wild and forget about the rules, which leads to his betrayal of Antoinette with the black servant Amélie. However, raised up in England, the “civilized” rules of gender and racial hierarchy still impact him. He has to repress his primary instincts so as to regain the authority in the alien land. However, holding up to his rules and criticizing the backward Caribbean, he feels to be left alone. For example, Antoinette mocks him when he points out that Christophine’s dragging dress is not a clean habit, and is surprised that he couldn’t hug Christophine as a friend. Rochester is also tortured from the ambivalence with respect to both English and creole cultures, where he struggles back and forth, leading to his madness. As an English

male, this situation awakens his pride and desire to secure the superior power. In order to repress his emotion and madness to regain authority, ultimately the English values overcome the creole ones. He plans to bring Antoinette to England and assume permanent control.

His madness first reveals itself when he gets lost in the woods and interested in the zombiism. It is caused by a little girl who screams and runs away from him, as if he is the dead spirit of the white priest who tortures black slaves to death. Interested in this "obeah", Rochester looks into the zombie chapter of *The Glittering Coronet of Isles*, and it explains: "a zombie is a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead. A zombie can also be the spirit of a place, usually malignant but sometimes to be propitiated with sacrifices or offerings of flowers and fruit" (Rhys 64), which is identical to his situation. Shocked by the definition of a zombie, he experiments on Antoinette by calling her Bertha, because as Raiskin notes, "part of the ritual of creating a zombie is to baptize the victim with a new name … names are so important that a change of name is powerful enough to transform a person's life" (Rhys 88). By calling her with an English name that he is particularly fond of, Rochester attempts to transform her cultural identity, beliefs, and values from a creole woman to an individual subjected to English patriarchy and imperialism. His deeds reveal his ambition to not only assume control over Antoinette, but also inhumanely eliminate her natural instincts so as to be accorded with English ideological values. After that, he can secure his authority, and draw Antoinette to his side in the alien and wild place.

Then the interference of Christophine's love potion, which is begged by Antoinette to win Rochester's love back, further accelerates his madness. When confronting with Christophine, Rochester's voice echoes in his mind and shows the clues of his real thinking. After Christophine reveals his intention in marrying Antoinette to get her money and then breaking her up with the help of Daniel's letter and fooling around with Amélie, she tells Rochester that she suggests Antoinette leave him and "marry with someone else. She forgot

about you and live happy" (Rhys 95). Hearing this, Rochester becomes enraged and jealous: his pride as her husband and the English colonizer require him to take Antoinette back as his own property. Therefore, he uses the English law to reduce Christophine's authority. The magistrate writes to him about Christophine's previous history, and promises that: "if she lives near you and gets up to any of her nonsense let him know at once. He'll send a couple of policemen up to your place and she won't get off lightly this time" (Rhys 96). Being a victim of the English law, but also getting help from it at the same time, Rochester is tortured from this paradox to maintaining his power. Ultimately, he forces Antoinette to go to England by taking advantage of the English law, and excitedly says to himself: "If she too says it, or weeps, I'll take her in my arms, my lunatic. She's mad but *mine*, *mine*. What will I care for gods or devils or for Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. For *me*" (Rhys 99 My emphasis). This reveals the self-centeredness of his master perspective, which demonstrates Rochester's regained dominion over Antoinette. His secured position of authority in England seems to cure of his madness, but pushes Antoinette further into a physical and mental oppression.

Where there is oppression, there is opposition. Physical and mental confinement lead to Antoinette's violent protest, climaxing at burning down the Thornfield Hall. This plan reveals her sanity and that the alleged madness is nothing but a "socially unaccepted behavior", which the white males use to secure their control. At last, Antoinette comes to end her own life. But this seemingly suicidal behavior is an actual protest against patriarchal and colonialist ideology in my eyes. After she gets married to Rochester for the love she believes, it seems that she recovers from the shadow of the former deaths of Coco, Pierre, and her mother: "'Why do you make me want to live? … Suppose you took this happiness away when I wasn't looking… If I could die. Now, when I am happy. Say die and I will die'" (Rhys 54-55). For the first time in her life, she enjoys the happiness that there is an English

man who asks her for marriage and even follows her to the Caribbean. She interprets his action as true love, but in fact Rochester intends to transfer her money under his name and get his father's approval. The excessively passionate love that Antoinette feels for Rochester later becomes the pretext to suggest that she is a "typical" female, who is governed by primitive instincts, which easily lead her to uncontrolled emotions, namely madness. Rochester reveals his gender and racial prejudice agaisnt Antoinette: "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" (Rhys 55). When Antoinette realizes that she loses everything and is imprisoned in the attic in Thornfield Hall by her "true love", she finally takes action: "I was outside and holding my candle. Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (Rhys 112). It is suggested that she is going to burn down Thornfield, the epitome of the English exploitation of the colonies. What really burns here is her resentment toward a patriarchal and imperial society. Just like their house in Coulibri that gets burnt by the liberated slaves, she is going to destroy Thornfield. After all, being a seemingly powerless and insignificant cog in a large and oppressive system, what else can she, a Creole woman, do to show her rage toward hypocrisy, inhumanity, and injustice? Self-destruction or death seems the only way out.

Antoinette's destructive power manifests itself by burning Thornfield Hall, through which affirms her humane instincts that have long been stigmatized and destroyed by English civilization. She sees through the lies of the colonizers, awakens from the oppression, and ultimately takes defiant action to assert the value of her identity and culture. Different from Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, who is defined out of humanity, Antoinette is given the colonial oppression as the reason of her madness, and initiates suicide as a protest against English patriarchal and colonialist civilization.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In order to write Bertha a life, Rhys creates a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, which gives Bertha a voice through Antoinette. *Wide Sargasso Sea* departs from *Jane Eyre* in many important ways: most importantly, it provides a sympathetic, nuanced understanding as to how and why patriarchy and colonial ideology can drive non-European women to madness, destroying their lives and the ones they love in the process.

Revealing the ideological and psychological dynamics behind colonialism, this thesis exposes the exploitative nature of European civilization, which prospers at the expense of people of other race and sex. By means of backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism, and homogenization, the colonizer justifies and naturalizes its master position, which establishes the hierarchy between human/nature, male/female, and reason/emotion construct. Followed by a close textual analysis from a linguistic perspective, a severe oppression is found in the site of language, where the ideology of patriarchy and imperialism are reinforced. The colonized women are deprived of the power of discourse, and further restricted by the written English law. As the victim of such a cruel civilization, non-European women are driven to madness and death to be expelled from interfering with the male's sphere, whereas in another way, madness and death grants them power to destroy colonial ideology and serve as what Freud calls, the greatest impediment to civilization.

Both of the two fictions can be read as radical critiques of a civilization that is committed to advancing the interests of patriarchy and imperialism at the expense of women and non-Europeans. Antoinette/Bertha represents one of the "discontents" of civilization, who uses madness and death, which are accused as an instinct in non-European women, to reveal the cruelty and madness within the European ideology itself, and claim that this

ridiculous system of meaning-making, the hierarchy of human relationship, and inhumane "civilization", need to be burned down.

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