Feminine Beauty in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Satu Parvela
University of Tampere
School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies
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PARVELA, SATU: Feminine Beauty in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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Tutkielmassani olen selvittänyt naisellisen kauneuden ja vallan yhteyttä jokapäiväisen elämän ja kirjallisuuden näkökulmasta. Esitän, että yhteiskunnassamme kauneus liitetään naiseuteen. Samalla naisten odotetaan pyrkivän kohti mahdollisimman kaunista ulkomuotoa. Tämän lisäksi kauneuteen on yhdistetty erilaisia palkintoja, kun taas ruma nainen joutuu yhteiskunnan tuomitsemaksi. Täten naisen ulkonäöllä on suuri merkitys hänen elämäänsä. Tutkielmassani olenkin kiinnostunut siitä, mikä tätä kauneuden valtaa ohjaa. Onko se ympäröivä yhteiskunta vai tarjoaako kauneus omistajalleen vallan paeta yhteiskunnan asettamilta rajoituksilta?

Kirjallisuudesta löytyy useita kauniita ja rumia naishahmoja. Ongelmallista monissa näissä naishahmoissa on tietyt stereotyyppiset piirteet, jotka usein yhdistyvät joko kauneuteen tai rumuuteen. Kirjallisuudessa kauniit naiset ovat usein passiviisia, heidän luonteenpiirteensä ovat toissijaisia heidän ulkonäköönsä nähden ja he ovat usein riippuvaisia miehistä, kun taas rumat naiset ovat kirjallisuudessa usein aktiivisia ja he pyrkivät edistämään omia tavoitteitaan. Olenkin kiinnostunut siitä, kuinka Charlotte Brontën ja Jean Rhysin romaaneissa naishahmot esitetään suhteessa kauneuteen ja valtaan.

Brontë kirjoitti romaaninsa päähenkilöksi ruman naisen, mikä haastaa olettamuksen, että vain kaunis päähenkilö voisi kiinnostaa lukijoita. Brontën päähenkilö Jane on ruma nainen, joka viettää koko elämänsä kauniiden naisten ympäröimänä. Jane tuntee myös yhteiskunnan odotukset naisellista kauneutta kohtaan ja sen, kuinka hän ei pysty vastaamaan niihin. Romaanissaan Brontë kommentoi ja kritisoi olettamusta siitä, että kauneus on naisen tärkein ominaisuus vertailemalla Janea näihin kauniisiin naisiin, joita tämä tapaa elämänsä varrella.

Rhys ei ollut tyytyväinen Brontën kuvaukseen kreolinaisesta Antoinette Masonista. Täten hän päättää kirjoittaa Antoinetten tarinan uudestaan. Toisin kuin Jane, Antoinette on kaunis. Hän kärsii jälki-kolonialistisella Jamaikalla omasta ihonväristään ja perheestään, joka on historian saatossa omistanut orjia. Antoinette on ulkopuolinen omassa yhteiskunnassaan ja myöskin perheessään. Hän joutuu oman kauneutensa uhriksi. Hänet pakotetaan kohti perinteistä vaaleaihoisen naisen roolia vaimona ja äitinä. Antoinetten sopimattomuus tähän ahtaaseen rooliin ajaa hänet kohti mielenvikaisuutta.

Avainsanat: kauneus, valta, Brontë, Rhys

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1. Introduction

While it may sometimes seem that the preoccupation with human beauty and self-adornment is a fairly recent phenomenon, there is evidence that these matters have always interested humans in some way. For instance, a group of archaeologists excavating a cave at the southern tip of Africa found orange-and-black mollusk shells that had been pierced and worn on a cord. These beads have been dated to 75 000 years ago and they are the oldest pieces of jewellery ever found. (Patzer, 2008, 11.) Thus, humankind has always been preoccupied with human beauty though what is considered beautiful has changed with the times.

Beauty itself does not consist of anything, but it is society and culture that invest it with different sentiments (Callaghan, 1994, ix). Culture then makes beauty something to aspire to. During the course of history, the notion of beauty has been strongly connected with women. Rita Freedman (1988, 10) sums up the issue:

> At every age, appearance is emphasized and valued more highly in females than in males. Women are more critically judged for attractiveness and more severely rejected when they lack it. A woman's beauty is constantly anticipated, encouraged, sought, and rewarded in a wide range of situations.

Women are placed in a position where they have to choose whether to attempt to enhance their beauty or to stay out of the beauty game and be ugly (Frueh, 2000, 21). For women then, the conformance or non-conformance to these notions can greatly impact their lives. Beauty is thus not only connected with women but also with the notion of power. In my thesis, I am interested in how this power is connected to feminine beauty and who/what wields that power? Does the culture use this power in order to control women or do the (beautiful) women gain power from beauty that enables them to escape from at least some of society's restrictions? I will look at these issues from sociology's point of view and use its idea's about beauty and its connection to power to answer these questions. Sociology studies the society around us and offers views on it. Novels are always products of the culture they were written in. In its own way, literature thus also studies society and

the major issues circling in it. Some of these issues do not go away with time but merely take different forms. It is because of this, that I chose sociology as my point of view. While I believe that issues connected to feminine beauty are timeless, I have taken into consideration the publication date of the novels and have attempted to leave out most of the modern aspects of feminine beauty.

Literature is full of representations of beautiful heroines and ugly antagonists. The problematic part of this is that certain character traits seem to be attached to beauty and ugliness respectively. In numerous novels, the beautiful heroine is presented as the hero's love interest and she is characterized by passivity, whereas a woman who is active in achieving her goals is more likely to be ugly (Wright, 2006, x–xi). It is this conflict that I am interested in and how some novels, including *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, subvert this issue. In addition to this, I am interested in how literature reinforces/weakens the idea of ideal beauty. I will look into how the issue of feminine beauty has been handled in literature previously and what kind of images of women (with regard to beauty) it has put forth. In my thesis, I am interested in the aspects and consequences of feminine beauty for the female characters of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I will approach this by comparing these novels and the way they handle these issues.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë was first published in 1847, and since its publication it has interested both readers and critics alike. Unlike the heroines in various novels preceding *Jane Eyre*, Brontë creates a protagonist that is passionate and strong in character but plain in looks. Jane's plainness is noteworthy because it differs from the tradition of beautiful heroines found in Western myths and fairy tales (Heiniger, 2006, 25). Brontë herself was unhappy with the assumption that a novel's main character must be beautiful in order to be accepted by the readers. It is claimed that she once told her sisters that "they were wrong – even morally wrong – in making their heroines beautiful as a matter of course" (Martineau, quoted in Cadwallader 2009, 235). In the novel, the traditional beauties of Western culture surround the 'plain Jane'. This context allows Brontë to

comment and criticize the notion of feminine beauty, which is an important and problematic issue in *Jane Eyre*.

Jean Rhys published *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966 and it won the Royal Society of Literature Award and the W.H. Smith Award. It was written as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys was unhappy with Brontë's portrayal of Rochester's first wife, Bertha Mason, as a mindless and animal-like madwoman. Thus, she decided to write Bertha a life. *Wide Sargasso Sea* reimagines Bertha Mason as Antoinette Cosway and narrates Antoinette's journey from Jamaica to the attic in *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette lives as an outsider in a hostile environment until she is married off to Rochester for her fortune. Her downfall comes from her beauty and her inability to match the English ideal of the "angel in the house". *Wide Sargasso Sea* approaches the notion of feminine beauty from a slightly different angle from *Jane Eyre*. It shows how destructive the ideal can be for someone who is unable to conform to it and how nothing, not even her looks, can save Antoinette in the end.

2. Beauty and Power

I will begin this section by defining a few of the terms used in my thesis. After this, I will discuss the images of (beautiful and ugly) women in literature. Then I will move on to a discussion about gender, how it is defined and the part it plays in our attitudes towards beauty. Finally, I will look at the different ways in which beauty and power are connected in everyday life.

2.1. Defining Terms

I will begin my examination into feminine beauty with an attempt to define the terms beauty, power and identity. On the surface all of these concepts may seem simple and straightforward. Yet, they cannot be easily explained. In the following paragraphs, I will offer one way of defining them.

What makes beauty difficult to define is that it can be used in conjunction with multiple different areas of meaning. The word beautiful could be used for, not only, buildings and works of art but also for abstract concepts and works of nature. The interesting part is that while we may be unable to define what is beautiful, we recognise it instantly when we see it. Beauty also makes us feel. Scruton (2009, ix) points out that beauty can "never be viewed with indifference." The feeling it inspires in us is the most essential part in attempting to describe the concept of beauty. Scruton (2009, 26), for instance, claims that something is beautiful "when we gain pleasure from contemplating it as an individual object, for its own sake, and in its presented form."

Comparative judgements are also an integral part of the concept of beauty. There are then different degrees of beauty. There are, for instance, landscapes or people whose beauty leaves us in awe but there are also more everyday beauties that nonetheless affect us in some way. (Scruton, 2009, 16–17.)

'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is a popular saying. It is used especially when talking about human beauty. But is this saying true? On the one hand, our feelings toward a person can make them seem more beautiful in our eyes. In addition to this, Scruton (2009, 48–49) believes that human beauty derives from embodiment. He explains that "a body is an assemblage of body parts; an embodied person is a free being revealed in flesh" (2009, 47). In his opinion, it is the soul that shines through the human features that makes someone beautiful. It is this that attracts us to another person. Here, Scruton follows Plato's ideas about soul in that they are somehow connected to "the eternal sphere from which we rational beings are ultimately descended" (2009, 47). In Scruton's opinion, we are astonished by the individuality and embodiment of another person in the same way as with the beauty of a work of art (2009, 50). On the other hand, the scientific studies conducted about the experience of human beauty offer different types of results. In order for a discussion about the effects of beauty to be meaningful, there needs to exist an agreement about what is found beautiful. In different studies where the participants were asked to rate the attractiveness of a person

on a scale, the researchers found that this type of agreement does exist. While complete agreement about the looks of others is uncommon so is complete disagreement. (Hamermesh, 2011, 26.) This shows that some type of agreement on beauty does exist. In addition to this, there seems to exist in people's minds an image of ideal beauty against which the other faces that we see are compared (Etcoff, 1999, 10). It is again through the comparison that judgements about beauty are reached. One final interesting notion is that in studies where the looks of others were judged on a scale, more people were judged as being average or above average in looks than below average or homely (Hamermesh, 2011, 23).

I will attempt to define the term power with the help of Michel Foucault who dealt with it in his writings. The subject of power could be considered very extensively. I will look into this issue here only briefly and due to this, the definition is condensed to some main points.

To begin with, there can be no power or power relations without freedom. This means that power can only be exerted over free subjects. These subjects must then have the ability to choose the way they react to the person using this power. Slavery is thus not a power relationship if the slave has no way to resist or attempt to escape from their captor. (Foucault, 1982, 342.) Therefore, "'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up" (Foucault, 1982, 340). Thus at the heart of a power relationship there exists a conflict with freedom. In every power relationship there is a possibility for insubordination and thus an opportunity for escape. When a power relationship attempts to suppress this insubordination by intensifying the power exerted, the power relationship reaches its limits. In these situations, the relationship either ends with the reduction of the other into impotence or the power relationship turns the parties into adversaries. (Foucault, 1982, 347.) The exertion of power also does not require consent nor does it necessarily mean the use of violence.

While both violence and consent are often part of a power relationship, it is not part of the basic nature of power. (Foucault, 1982, 340–341.)

Power is exercised in power relationships between individuals or groups of people. A power relationship can be differentiated from a relationship of violence from the fact that a relationship of power does not act immediately on the subjects. Instead, a relationship of power "acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions" (Foucault, 1982, 340). In addition to this, power relationships do not exist somehow separately from the structures of society. In fact, to live in a society means that there is always a possibility for one's actions to act upon another's. Thus, a society without power relationships is merely an abstraction. This makes it extremely important to examine the power relationships that exist in a society and to find their historical origins in order to transform or abolish them. (Foucault, 1982, 343.) To sum up power is to say:

> It incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constraints or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action (Foucault, 1982, 341).

What makes identity difficult to define is that it takes on different connotations depending on the context in which it is used (du Gay, Evans and Redman, 2000, 1). Although, there is still much debate about some aspects of identity, there does exist interdisciplinary agreement on the fictional nature of a stable and unchanging identity. In fact, identity can only be formed through difference. Stuart Hall (1996a, 17) explains that it is "only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed" (original emphasis). Identities are thus constructed through a continual process of exclusion or a leaving out of. Humans need the feeling that their sense of self is continuous and stays unchanging throughout their lives (Fadjukoff, 2009, 180). Yet, this feeling of a stable and unified identity is a fantasy that we create in

order to feel whole. In fact, a subject takes on different identities at different times and depending on the different ways we are represented in the cultural systems that surround us. Despite our feelings of unity, these conflicting identities do not group together around some unified centre that is 'I' (Hall, 1999, 23).

Another aspect of identity is national identity. These national identities are still thought of as unified even though they are also created through difference. Connected to these national and cultural identities are the identities of those who have permanently moved to a different country. These people carry with them the traditions of their native lands but they do not have any illusions about being able to live in the past. They must integrate themselves into this new culture without completely losing themselves and their identities (Hall, 1999, 71). These identities are called hybrid identities. These people will never be truly 'whole' due to the fact that they are a part of more than one 'home' (Hall, 1999, 71). These people "must learn to inhabit at least two identities, speak two cultural languages and translate and negotiate between them" (Hall, 1999, 72).

2.2. Images of (Beautiful and Ugly) Women in Literature

Ideologies are transferred through culture. These ideologies contain, among other things, views and attitudes about feminine beauty. These ideas are then communicated to women and children who unconsciously internalize them. One of the channels through which these attitudes are spread is literature. Literature offers many images of women through the various female characters that appear in novels and other works of art. This becomes problematic if the images of women portrayed in literature, uphold oppressive notions about women and, in this case, about feminine beauty. One of the most prevalent of these notions is the connection between beauty and goodness. This can be seen, for instance, in fairy-tales that most children will hear during their childhood. This is problematic because it is through fairy-tales that children learn about cultural values and stereotypes. Thus, it is often the ideas of the dominant powers that are explicitly or implicitly

encoded in children's literature (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003, 714). I also believe that fairy-tales often distil some ideas about culture into a clearer form. In this way, they offer examples on how these issues are viewed in the culture.

Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz conducted a study into what type of and how many mentions are there to feminine beauty in the most popular Brothers Grimm's fairy-tales. These include stories such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. They found that there were five times as many references to women's attractiveness than to men's handsomeness (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003, 717). Most importantly, there is "a clear link between beauty and goodness, most often in reference to younger women, and between ugliness and evil" (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003, 718). Other attributes connected with beauty are being white, virtuous and rich (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003, 722). Finally, the beauties of the fairy-tales end up being rewarded while the ugly characters are punished. These fairy-tales thus uphold the gender roles and teach young girls that beauty is an important part of being a woman. Girls are also being taught to compare themselves and their bodies to the ideal represented in these stories.

If we look at *Cinderella* more closely, some of these issues discussed in the previous paragraph can clearly be seen. In *Cinderella*, the girl needs a fairy godmother to give her a beauty transformation in order for her to attend the ball that the prince is throwing. In the story, we find out that Cinderella is a good and a virtuous woman but this is ignored while she is dressed in rags and covered with soot. It is only after she appears at the ball in her finery that she catches the eye of the prince through her phenomenal beauty. How does Cinderella receive this gift of beauty? Does she actively attempt to better her life? Does she protest against the treatment her stepmother and –sisters give her? After the prince is trying to find the owner of the glass slipper does she step up and claim the shoe as her own? In the story, Cinderella receives these gifts by being passive and accepting the way she is treated. Thus, again, passivity and virtuosity is rewarded by beauty. (Freedman, 1988, 69.)

Women are also often portrayed in a problematic way in the masculine literature tradition. First of all, the female characters are often divided into two categories, angels and monsters. This "good" woman is the feminine ideal imagined by men. The best example of this is the angel character in Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House". This character is passive and exists in someone else's story. She is virtuous, gracious, self-sacrificing, and she offers sympathy and consolation to the others around her. (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979, 20.) While the woman was supposed to do all of this without drawing attention to herself, the angel woman was often also beautiful. This again draws a connection between beauty and goodness. In addition to this, in the nineteenth century, "the aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility and delicate beauty … obliged "genteel" women to "kill" themselves … into art objects: slim, pale, passive beings whose "charms" eerily recalled the snowy porcelain immobility of the dead" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979, 25). These angels lead self-denying lives until they pass away.

The monster character is the negative counterpart of the angel woman. These women are often physically deformed and hideous to look at. Instead of self-sacrifice, these monster women are interested in acting for their own behalf and towards their own goals. It is this self-interest that makes these women ugly. Some of these female monsters may even use makeup or other ways of disguising their deformed natures behind a false mask. These are the most dangerous women of all because of their cunning and their power to deceive men. (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979, 30.)

The ugly or plain woman need not necessarily be evil. The stories may also be making a point about how a female character is allowed either a mind or a body but not both. Examples of these pretty-plain pairings include Mary and Martha in the New Testament, Helena and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and Glinda and the Wicked Witch of the West in *Oz* (Wolf, 1992, 59–60). Another important notion to consider is the relationship between women in many fairy-tales, especially between mothers and daughters. It is important to note that these stories show from

whom girls learn about the importance of beauty, their mothers. It is the mothers who prepare the daughters for the marriage market where beauty offers the edge over other women.

Another issue is the dividing of the beautiful women in to body parts by the male narrators in literature. There is a long tradition of composite heroines in Western literature. One example of this is Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. In these texts, the male narrator views the female character from her head downwards, describing the beauty of her different body parts, for instance, admiring her luxuriant hair, her brilliant brow, and her graceful neck. This gaze turns the woman into a beautiful object to be appreciated and judged. Cadwallader (1995, 35) also points out that this suspends the action of the woman and, in a way, she has to wait for the description to end in order to resume what she was doing. At the same time, the male narrator is in control and measures her with his eyes the way a judge in a beauty contest might. The woman is then "dismembered" and disempowered. (Cadwallader, 1995, 38.) Of course, not all of these kinds of 'lists' in literature have the same kind of effect for the object of the gaze. Cadwallader (1995, 41) offers *The Song of Songs* from the Bible as a kind of positive example, where the list of body parts does not diminish the woman but instead energizes her.

As I have already pointed out, in the literary tradition, the ugly woman is often evil and not interested in passivity or a life of self-sacrifice. The ugly female character also often has a low self-esteem. The ugly woman is not only compared unfavourably against the more beautiful women but she also often receives ridicule and scorn from both the other women and men. It is because of this that the ugly woman is isolated from the rest of society. In the literary tradition, the ugly female character is viewed as a failure, no matter what she has accomplished in her life. She has failed because she is unable to fulfil the most basic requirement of femininity, beauty. (Wright, 2006, 32.) The more contemporary novels have begun to change this presupposition. Nowadays, the novels show that like men, the women should also be judged by their actions rather than by their appearance. In addition to this, Wright (2006, 120) claims that these novels show that there are no

real winners in the everyday beauty competition. This may be true in the novels but the fact is that, in real life, there are a multitude of rewards given to the beautiful woman. These rewards extend to almost all aspects of the woman's life. I will explore this issue more in the next section.

Another problem with the characterization of women as mere beauties in many novels is that this label is often paired with passivity. Wolf (1992, 59) points out that "a beautiful heroine is a contradiction in terms, since heroism is about individuality, interesting, and ever changing, while "beauty" is generic, boring, and inert." Beauty can also be seen as limiting a woman's need to act. She is complimented and rewarded for the mere fact that she is beautiful and thus she can contend herself with maintaining her beautiful image. She does not need to find another source of power, unlike unattractive or ugly women. The ugly women may not have as many options available to them when it comes to finding suitors; but she is freer to choose between different options in other parts of her life. (Wright, 2006, 121.) Despite all of this, I do wonder in how many novels is the main protagonist an ugly and unattractive woman? An even more of a rarity is a female protagonist who is overweight. It seems to me that while nowadays there exists a wider variety of types of female protagonists literature, the rule still seems to be that she is beautiful, slim, young and attractive.

2.3. Gender

I will begin this section with a brief look into the concept of gender and how it is constructed. Here, I will present merely one view on the issue of gender. This is important to keep in mind because there is no one correct way to approach this subject. When talking about gender, the most significant aspect is the clear division between the terms of sex and gender. Sex is a biological category. It means that people are divided into categories on the basis of "socially agreed upon biological criteria" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, 131). These classification criteria include sexual organs or chromosomal typing at birth. The concept of gender, on the other hand, was, for a long time, seen as almost a synonym for sex. Nowadays, the concept of gender is seen as more complex

than that. In their influential article, West and Zimmerman (1987, 127) determine gender as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category." For West & Zimmerman gender is something that people "do".

While many post-structural theorists have rejected the idea of an essential masculine or feminine nature, this belief still seems to exist in some ways. This idea is connected to the notion of gender display. This means that people expect others to be displaying their gender in their actions, appearance, and clothing choices (West & Zimmerman, 1987, 133). The problematic part of this is that it is not the individual who can choose what actions or clothing choices are classified as masculine or feminine. This classification is usually culturally determined. Thus, if someone wants to be seen as "appropriately" feminine, they must not actively engage in activities that are considered masculine. In addition to this, people are aware that they are continually judged "according to what is deemed appropriate feminine or masculine behaviour" (Deutsch, 2007, 106–107). This awareness leads to self-regulation among members of society. They begin to monitor not only themselves but also others on whether they follow the prescribed ideas that exist in society about the correct ways to display one's gender.

I feel that this brief overview on gender is important in order to fully understand the connection between feminine beauty and power. This connection begins in childhood when children are socialized into their respective gender roles. The children become concerned with being seen as socially competent. They understand that it is important to first learn the gender categorization practises and then the ways of displaying their gender identities. (Cahill, quoted in West & Zimmerman, 1987, 141.) Children thus learn that girls wear dresses and that they are valued as ornamental objects whereas boys reject this kind of behaviour as something 'girly'. Therefore, one aspect of the connection between feminine beauty and power comes from the fact that women learn that beauty is a very important part of the display of feminine gender identity. Valuing feminine beauty may also be an important factor in maintaining a feminine gender identity when a woman

engages in masculine activity. Thus, for instance, if a woman works in a profession that is seen as masculine, she may value her appearance in order to appear appropriately feminine. In a way, women and men may feel chained by these expectations that are being put on gender identity and the 'correct' way to display it. The pressure from culture and the awareness of being monitored and judged by others can strongly affect a woman's attitude towards feminine beauty.

2.4. Aspects of Feminine Beauty

The issue of feminine beauty is a difficult one for the feminists. This is caused by the fact that this subject can be viewed from many angles. There also does not seem to be an easy answer to the question of how women should feel about it. First of all, the matter of feminine beauty may seem too trivial or superficial an issue in comparison to more 'serious' matters, such as equal pay. Second of all, none of the feminists that I have studied for this thesis have wanted to be labelled as anti-beauty. All of these feminists recognize that there is nothing wrong with beauty in itself and women should still be able to enjoy dressing up or styling their hair, for example. This is probably the most important part to take note of. Women should not feel guilty for finding pleasure in beauty. Finally, while feminine beauty brings pleasure, there are also problematic aspects connected to it. These issues arise from the fact that a woman cannot choose not to participate in the beauty game. In addition to this, "if a woman is successful [in this game] – she never really wins – then all that she achieves is passive power, and it will die along with her youth" (Frueh, 2000, 21). Furthermore, while what is considered beautiful changes with the times, the borders of feminine beauty are narrow and oftentimes the beauty ideal is impossible to reach, for most, if not all women. Yet, women are judged on how close they can come to embodying the ideal. (Chapkins, 1986, 14.) When all of this is combined, it is easy to see that feminine beauty is not as straightforward a matter as it may at first seem. Perhaps the ideal situation is reached when every woman can choose whether to indulge in feminine beauty or not without this resulting in guilt, judgement or punishment.

Naomi Wolf believes that the feminine beauty myth is the patriarchal society's way of controlling women after feminism has released them from their homes. She claims that the beauty myth is devised as a way to keep women distracted with their appearance and striving to reach for an impossible ideal, in order to keep them from more direct sources of power. Furthermore, beauty and the need for women to possess it have been made to seem natural and something that almost seems like a biological imperative. Wolf points out that this would not be the first time that ideals of femininity have been used against women. For instance, "the suffragists of the nineteenth century were faced with the glamorized invalid, and women were driven out of the work force in the 1950s by the glamorized full-time housewife" (Wolf, 1992, 3). The beautiful woman is merely a new feminine ideal for women to aspire to. In addition to this, the beauty myth positions women into a vertical hierarchy with regards to beauty. It places women in a position where they must compete with each other in order to reach the top of the pyramid. This competition results in division among women because everyone can be seen as an enemy or an obstacle to jump over in the race for the top. (Wolf, 1992, 14.) Furthermore, when the value of a woman is based on their appearance, they are dependent on outside approval. Women are then left vulnerable and their self-esteem can be affected by the loss of this approval. Wolf explains:

> Because "beauty" lives so deep in the psyche, where sexuality mingles with self-esteem, and since it has been usefully defined as something that is continually bestowed from the outside and can always be taken away, to tell a woman she is ugly can make her feel ugly, act ugly, and, as far as her experience is concerned, be ugly, in the place where feeling beautiful keeps her whole (Wolf, 1992, 36).

Another piece of evidence that Wolf presents as proof that the beauty standards are a part of oppression against women is the caricature of the Ugly Feminist. This view of the ugly feminist can keep at least some women from siding with the feminist agenda with regards to feminine beauty because they fear that they will be connected to this image. (Wolf, 1992, 18–19.)

Nancy Friday sees the issue of feminine beauty from a completely different viewpoint. In her opinion, the problems connected to beauty are not caused by the patriarchal society or the culture.

She sees women themselves as the true problem. Friday (1996, 50–51) believes that women do not strive towards feminine beauty because of men but because of other women. I agree with Friday in that women do not dress only for the men, but also for other women. Women do criticise and scrutinise each other. They judge other women on how close they have been able to come to achieving the beauty ideal. This is also a source of jealousy for women and it causes them to compete with each other. This behaviour could be explained by the expectations of beauty that are placed on women. If a woman's worth is determined by her looks, the competition between women takes the form of a beauty contest. Another interesting aspect is that while women envy other beautiful women, they also admire them. They copy their styles and they look up to them. Yet, in the end, another woman is often seen as the enemy that has to be defeated in the race to the top of the pyramid.

Another aspect of the requirement of feminine beauty can be found in biology. In the animal world, there exists a pressure to pass the best genes onto the next generation. This is often achieved through the animals representing their reproductive fitness in their colourful displays, their health and their strength (Hamermesh, 2011, 131). Some scientists have claimed that these requirements of biology are also behind the image of the ideal woman as being young and beautiful. At least in previous times, our looks gave some indication of our health. In addition to this, if the goal is to ensure the passing on of the genes to the next generation, this could explain why youth is rewarded in women. Young women are in the best physical condition to bear children. On the one hand, this could explain why such an emphasis is placed on feminine beauty and youth. On the other hand, this does not remove the fact that women who do not or cannot conform to the expectations of feminine beauty are punished for it. As Hamermesh (2011, 177) notes, "our behaviour is a relic of a set of responses that now lack a biological basis."

2.5. The Rewards of Beauty

Feminine beauty does confer power to the woman to wield. The question that arises is what kind of power is connected to beauty. Rita Freedman (1988, 72–73) divides power into two distinct categories, into agonic and hedonic power. She describes agonic power as something that contains an aggressive undertone. It "involves threat or direct use of force" (Freedman, 1988, 72–73). Hedonic power, on the other hand, involves display. She explains that "by becoming more conspicuous, flashing bright colours, dancing, howling, or somehow exhibiting oneself, an animal or person can command attention and take over a situation" (Freedman, 1988, 72–73). It is this hedonic mode of power that is thus connected to feminine beauty. In addition to this, the hedonic mode of power is usually linked with women whereas the agonic mode is attached to men. This becomes problematic if women's access to the agonic mode of power is limited. A woman using agonic power may seem masculine and consequently unattractive. This connection can be seen in fairy-tales. In them, it is usually the ugly witch that uses agonic power. Another issue that makes it more difficult for women to use agonic power is the women's lower perceived status in comparison with men. Thus, a woman using the more masculine, agonic source of power may lead to "status incongruity" for the woman (Freedman, 1988, 73). In addition to this, agonic power sources – physical strength, education, money and, expertise – are not as readily available for women as for men (Freedman, 1988, 74). Women are thus often forced to turn to the more indirect, hedonic source of power. This then may become the primary source of strength for a woman. In addition to this, hedonic power does not usually bolster self-esteem in the same way as agonic power does. Thus, it may leave a person feeling insecure even after they have achieved personal success. (Freedman, 1988, 74.) Freedman (1988, 75) sums up this issue by claiming, that, "women learn repeatedly that direct, self-initiated action is viewed with suspicion; that it may lead to social rejection, economic reprisal, or even a label of neurosis."

Women are aware that beauty matters. While there are problematic aspects connected to hedonic power, it may be the only form of power available to some women. For a woman, it is also easier to gain hedonic power rather than attempting to force yourself through the society's restrictions towards agonic power. In addition to this, the truth is that beauty bestows a woman slightly more respect and attention from men than unattractiveness (Chapkins, 1986, 95). This fact is not going to change as long as women's beauty is awarded more than their intelligence and abilities.

From early on, women learn to connect appearance with their feelings of self-worth (Freedman, 1986, 25). As I have already mentioned, there exists in society the model of ideal feminine beauty and the image of it is etched into the minds of the women. This image places demands on women to attempt to fit the changing image of ideal beauty. This is, of course, often impossible and it leads to a negative body image. Because, in society, the demand for beauty is placed on women, body image influences a woman's self-concept. Thus, women's "self-concepts are correlated with their own perceptions of their attractiveness, whereas men's self-concepts relate more closely to perceptions of their effectiveness and physical fitness" (Freedman, 1986, 28). Men are then likely to judge their self-worth on what they can do and accomplish whereas a woman's self-worth is often connected to their perceptions about their attractiveness.

One possible reason why women react strongly to negative comments about their looks is that they have confused their self-esteem with their body-esteem. Women believe that by losing some weight or by being in better shape, they will boost their worth in their own eyes and in the eyes of the others. Oftentimes it is easier to try to lose weight than to tackle the real issue behind it, the feelings of not being good enough (Bulik, 2012, 12.) How well someone has been able to separate their self-esteem from their body-esteem also affects how strongly they react to negative comments directed towards their appearance. Others can bear this negative criticism easier than others. This

type of criticism will strongly affect the feelings of self-worth and self-esteem of someone who is easily wounded by the comments of others (Bulik, 2012, 41.)

It makes sense that the features of infants evoke warm and affectionate feelings in adults. These features include “soft skin and hair, huge eyes, big pupils, chubby cheeks, and small noses” (Etcoff, 1999, 34). What is interesting about this is the fact that many of these same features are found attractive in women. While people seem to find average faces more attractive, there are distinctive features in some people’s faces that set them apart from the rest. Studies show that an attractive female face has “large eyes, high cheekbones, plump lips, small lower faces and a gracile jaw” (Etcoff, 1999, 153). These features also enhance the youthful look of a face. Some scientists have studied what kind of features people find attractive and whether an already attractive face can be made more attractive by exaggerating some of these features. They discovered that men found a picture of a female face even more attractive after these features connected to femininity and youthfulness were exaggerated. It is because of this that some scientists have speculated that these infantile features in women’s faces are what men are responding to. This would mean that an attractive female face arouses in men the same kind of tender and protective feelings that an infant might. This would mean that men respond to features connected with helpless and dependent creatures. (Etcoff, 1999, 150, 154.)

This preference towards youth in women is connected to the issue of what happens to feminine beauty when women grow older. Can an older woman ever be considered beautiful? How can an older woman conform to the beauty ideal that is reserved only for the young? It is true that when a woman reaches a certain age “they find themselves pushed over the hill into no-man’s-land, considered old simply because they no longer look very young” (Freedman, 1988, 200). Does this same happen for men? While older men are also judged to be less handsome than younger men, the effect is not as strong for men as it is for women. For instance, an image of the charming older man can be found in culture but the same does not exist for the older woman. The concept of aging may

be the most difficult for the beautiful woman who has spent her whole life using her beauty to get attention. Any power that beauty has bestowed on her is gone along with her youth.

Oftentimes, beauty is treated as something superficial. People also tend to underestimate the significance of beauty in everyday life. Actually, many studies have been conducted about beauty and they refute these notions. These studies show that beautiful people are rewarded for their appearance throughout their lives. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to point out some of the ways in which beautiful people are treated better or differently than others. As I have already mentioned, in stories, feminine beauty is associated with goodness. What is interesting is that this connection is not limited to stories. These same ideas also guide our actions and expectations in real life. In our everyday interactions we do treat beautiful people differently and we also expect more from them than from others. In other words, the belief that we can tell something about a person's character from the way they look has not disappeared even though we may now know better. Psychologists have found that beautiful people are treated better than others. Studies also show that people are more willing to help beautiful individuals. This is true even when they might not like the attractive person. Interestingly, this does not work both ways since others are less likely to ask for assistance from beautiful people. (Etcoff, 1999, 45.) Etcoff explains:

> Our efforts to please good-looking people with no expectation of immediate reward or reciprocal gesture are one way we reinforce beauty as a form of status, not unlike being born into the nobility or inheriting wealth. (Etcoff, 1999, 45)

Our attempts to please the beautiful do not limit to our willingness to assist them. We also afford them more personal space, and we are more likely to be persuaded to their point of view. We share information and gossip with them, and we are more likely to concede to them in an argument. A good-looking person truly is afforded many rewards in their lives. It does not come as a surprise then that these privileges have a positive effect on the beautiful person's self-esteem and confidence. In fact, they are more assertive, confident, and at ease in social situations. Beauty is thus a status symbol that affects the way we treat the person in possession of it. (Etcoff, 1999, 49.)

Another popular saying is to “never judge a book by its cover”. Studies show that while people may believe this, they do not act in that way. We are, for example, more willing to give the good-looking the benefit of the doubt, whereas we are not as willing to give it to the less attractive. In a study, a group of subjects were told to judge the behaviour of an attractive and an unattractive child who had committed the same transgression. In this study, the subjects were harsher towards the unattractive child. In fact, the attractive child’s “severe transgression was less likely to be seen as a display of chronic antisocial behaviour than an equally severe offense by an unattractive child” (Patzer, 2008, 52). These attitudes do not change for the attractive adults either. Beautiful adults are less likely to be suspected of crimes and they are also less likely to be penalized. This attitude can probably be connected to the link between beauty and goodness. We still expect beautiful people to act better. (Etcoff, 1999, 47, 49.)

In the previous paragraphs, I have presented some examples of the types of rewards offered to the beautiful. The question then arises whether or not beautiful people are happier than the rest of us. A survey reveals that a larger percentage of beautiful people are satisfied with their lives than the ones with more average looks. The homely or the bad-looking ones are the most dissatisfied with their lives. (Hamermesh, 2011, 174.) It does seem then that beauty does bring happiness. Yet, the question remains whether the power that beauty brings can release women from the society’s restrictions? To me, the answer is no due to the limited ways in which hedonic power can be used.

2.6. Beauty in Dating and Romance

Beauty obviously plays an important part in the world of dating and romance. This has been true in the history as well. In the nineteenth-century, the options for women were extremely limited. For most women, the only way to secure their future was to marry. Single women were often considered as anomalies and the society looked down upon them. (Perkin, 1989, 226.) It was also important for women to marry in order to gain social advancement and financial security. Beauty,

self-adornment and social graces helped women win admiration and notice from potential husbands. Beauty was also important in the competition for the best matches.

One could say that beauty is a form of currency and a woman who looks like a million dollars might have a better chance of finding a rich husband. There is thus a prestige factor attached to the attractiveness of the person you are dating. This is especially important for men. Men "believe that they make a better impression on others by appearing in public with an especially attractive date than without one" (Patzer, 2008, 40). This actually seems to work. People looking at photos of a man with a beautiful woman who is described as his girlfriend, assume the man to be more intelligent and likable than when they are told the woman in the picture is a mere stranger. What is interesting is that no such effect exists for the woman. A woman is not thought to be any smarter or likable when she appears with a handsome man. (Etcoff, 1999, 66.) In addition to this, the wives clothed in expensive attire are thought to show off their husband's wealth. The clothes thus seem to say more about the woman's husband than about her. (Chapkins, 1986, 79.) This was especially true in the nineteenth-century when it was important for the rising middle-classes to present their growing wealth. While the Victorians may have discouraged feminine display and would have preferred the women not to make a spectacle of themselves, it was also important for the rising middle-classes to show signs of their wealth in the women's dress, for instance. (Newman, 2004, 5, 14.) These middle-class women, especially in Britain, started to emulate the styles of the aristocracy in the hopes of raising the status of their class in the society.

Even if the marriage market does not exist anymore, feminine beauty still seems to be the most important commodity. Daniel Hamermesh (2011, 9) sees beauty as something tradable in the world of dating and romance. He explains this thought through the fact that throughout the history of the world, the "men who can raise more sheep, produce more crops, or earn more dollars in the stock market have used these characteristics to obtain more desirable (and, in some societies and epochs, more) wives" (Hamermesh, 2011, 18). In the case of feminine beauty, the beauty of women

is seen as something that men desire and thus the beautiful woman can trade her beauty for a more desirable match. This often leads to beautiful people ending up with other beautiful people or with someone who can bring something else to the relationship, such as intelligence.

If beauty offers rewards to the ones that possess it, are there penalties for the ones who could be called homely or even ugly. The truth is that the homely are disadvantaged due to their looks. They, of course, do not enjoy any of the advantages given to the beautiful. If in the world of dating, beauty is seen as something that can be traded for a bigger 'reward', the homely have less to trade with. They will have to attempt to trade their other abilities such as intelligence, for instance. As Hamesmesh (2011, 180) notes "most bad-looking people have other characteristics that can give them a romantic advantage that, with careful nurturing, can help remove the initial disadvantages that their physiognomies inflict on them." In addition to this, the bad-looking are also penalized for their looks in other areas of their lives, as well. They do not have the same opportunities in their work life as the beautiful, for example. The homely have to take these drawbacks into consideration in their lives. Yes, the bad-looking do suffer from disadvantages but they can move around them by acknowledging them and planning their lives in such a way as to minimize the impact of the penalties given to the ugly.

For women, beauty is not always connected to mere physical appearance. The attitude towards beauty and the amount of anxiety it can cause is also connected to aspects of mental well-being and to how a woman feels about her life in general. A Dove-sponsored study found that women also find feeling beautiful:

> As the result of qualities and circumstance: being loved, being engaged in activities that one wants to do, having a close relationship, being happy, being kind, having confidence, exuding dignity and humour. Women who are like this look beautiful. They are beautiful. (Orbach, quoted in Patzer, 2008, 145)

This would perhaps be the ideal attitude towards feminine beauty. In these circumstances could feminine beauty be merely a pleasure for women and not also a source of concern.

2.7. Aspects of Self-Adornment

The body has also become important in the display of femininity. The body displays many of the culture's rules and notions. Often, the body of the woman is seen as connected to her identity. This leads to the fact that the "imperfect body has become a sign of an imperfect character" (Gimlin, 2001, 5). What is interesting about the beauty ideals revered in society is that they often require women to painfully alter their bodies in order to fit into the ideal's narrow confines. Nowadays, this is achieved through plastic surgery. Some of these operations today include Botox injections, breast implants and liposuctions. While these are some examples of women's attempts to mould their bodies, in the next section, I will talk about two techniques that existed before surgical operations were the norm: foot binding and the corset.

In the nineteenth century, the corset was one of the most integral pieces of women's clothing. The corset, in addition with the other pieces of cumbersome clothing, reflected the restricted life of the woman in the nineteenth century. The women's clothes were not only frivolous, but they also restricted women's movement and accentuated the delicateness of their bodies. The corset was one of the devices used in order to heighten the difference between the bodies of men and women and, thus, it was used to support the ideas about women that were prevalent at that time period. In addition to this, beauty was such an important factor on the marriage market that it forced women into wearing these uncomfortable fashions. These fashions also emphasised the "erotic or seduction principle in women's dress, with a constant change of emphasis on different parts of the anatomy to stimulate interest and attention" (Nunn, 2000, 8).

The corset was made from steel or whalebone and it restricted women's breathing and made it difficult for them to bend at the waist. The corset was also connected with correct behaviour:

> The woman's erect, formal posture was identified with moral rectitude and social propriety (the term 'straitlaced' owes its origin to the corset), and loosening the stays or leaving the home without them was interpreted as a sign of loose, licentious behaviour. (Brownmiller, 1984, 36)

The consequence of wearing a tightly laced corset was that the muscles in the upper body grew so weak that eventually the women became dependent on the corset in order to stay upright. (Roberts, 1977, 560.) The corset was put on the young girl already in childhood. The corset was changed into a larger one as the girl grew and it moulded the girl's body according to the society's requirements (Utrio, 2001, 66). It also taught the girl that there was something fundamentally wrong with their bodies and that these defects needed to be corrected (Brownmiller, 1984, 37). In addition to the corset, the women of the nineteenth century also wore voluminous skirts that made it hard for them to move. The light fabric of the crinoline was highly flammable and some women burned to death because of it. Finally, the sleeves of these skirts were set low on the shoulder and so tight that it was difficult to make any big gestures in them. (Roberts, 1977, 557.)

The impossible to reach beauty ideal causes some women to become obsessed with reaching the image of the thin and beautiful woman. This may lead to them succumbing to eating disorders, such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa. Social factors are usually behind these eating disorders. Some of these social factors include "the pressure to be thin, the glorification of childlike qualities as part of femininity, a rejection of the maternal look, and an emphasis on glamour and independence" (Freedman, 1988, 155–156). Another factor may be the feeling that their bodies are one of the only things women have control over. The women of today are modifying their bodies through self-control that women of before used a corset for. The flipside of the desire for thinness is the rejection of fat. Overweight is something unfeminine and undesirable. It also cancels out any other beauty that a woman may possess.

Foot binding was popular in China and it involved binding the foot to make it more aesthetically pleasing. The men found the dainty feet of the women beautiful and sexually arousing, while it made it extremely difficult for the woman to walk. Like with the corset, it involved exaggerating a small natural difference between the bodies of men and women. It also bolstered the man's masculinity due to the fact that he seemed stronger and steadier next to the handicapped, and

thus dependent, woman. (Brownmiller, 1984, 34.) Simone De Beauvoir (1949, 167) sums this whole discussion up by claiming that whether "weighed down with fat, or on the contrary so thin as to forbid all effort, paralyzed by inconvenient clothing and by the rules of propriety – then woman's body seems to man to be his property, his thing."

It clearly has an effect on a woman's life whether she is beautiful or not. On the one hand, if she has beauty, she is rewarded for it. She is happier with her life, her transgressions will be excused and she will be able to find a more desirable match in the world of dating and romance. On the other hand, if a woman does not have beauty, she will be penalized for it. She will have to work harder to achieve everything that comes easier for the beautiful. She will have to plan her life around her lack of beauty. In addition to this, she will not only be made aware of her failings but she will be expected to try to enhance her beauty through make up, new wardrobe or even cosmetic surgery. Furthermore, while beauty bestows hedonic power on to the beautiful woman, this power will not boost a woman's self-esteem and it can still leave a woman dependent on men.

3. *Jane Eyre* and Feminine Beauty

In the next section, I will analyse *Jane Eyre* from the point of view of feminine beauty. The sections are divided according to the houses that Jane occupies throughout her life.

3.1. Gateshead

Jane Eyre is an orphan and she spends her childhood with her cousins at Gateshead. She does not have any other known family, she is poor, and she is made to feel inferior to her cousins. Her aunt Reed not only makes it abundantly clear that she does not care for Jane as much as her own children, but Jane is also very aware of her position in the family. At the very beginning of the book, the poor weather outside prevents the children and their nurse from taking a walk outside. This makes Jane glad. She is relieved not to have to come "home in the raw twilight, with nipped

fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed (Brontë, 2000, 7). These lines make it clear that Jane is inferior not only because she is allowed to stay with the Reeds' out of charity but also because she is not equal to her cousins in strength and appearance. Jane is thus not the beautiful heroine found in many novels. She is not a Cinderella who could be made to look conventionally beautiful with the help of a fairy godmother and a new wardrobe. Jane could be described thus:

> Very plain and her low social position (despite a genteel birth) and lack of any fortune with which to attract a husband make her very unlikely to marry, unlikely even to have a clandestine relationship with a man in the 19th century (Teachman, 2001,1)

This is something that Jane is aware of and it does affect the way she feels about herself.

Jane is also often surrounded with beautiful women. From very early on in her life, she is forced to compare herself with these other women and realize that she is left wanting. Furthermore, she realizes that the society treats these women better not only because of their social position but also because of their appearance. During the course of the novel, Jane learns to value herself better. She realizes that she need not be as beautiful as these other women in order to be worthy. It is these comparisons that make Jane eventually realize her own self-worth and find her own strength of character. At Gateshead, Jane is not there yet. She is still greatly affected by the physical inferiority that she feels towards her beautiful cousins. What is important to take note of is that while Jane feels physically inferior to her cousins, she never considers her cousins somehow morally or intellectually superior to her. In fact, it could be said that Jane is proud of her personality and wit. In this area, Jane is confident of her own superiority.

Her cousin, John Reed, the only boy, is not considered to be handsome. In fact, John could almost be called ugly with his large body, poor skin and sickly complexion. In addition to this, he is a bully and does not seem to have respect for anyone. John Reed also uses plenty of agonic power. He often seems a threatening presence in to his own family. Despite of this, he is Mrs Reed's

favourite and he gets away with everything due to this. Georgiana Reed is the beauty of the family. She is admired for her beautiful hair and she and her sister are always clothed in the nicest of attire. While Eliza Reed does not match her sister in looks, she is still considered more charming and beautiful than Jane. While at Gateshead, Jane attempts to follow the rules and wants to please Mrs Reed. Yet, she is constantly rejected while her cousins are rewarded even when they break the rules. Jane feels anger towards this unjust treatment:

> Eliza, who was head–strong and selfish, was respected. Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, a captious and insolent carriage, was universally indulged. Her beauty, her pink cheeks and golden curls, seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault. John, no one thwarted, much less punished; though he twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little pea–chicks, set the dogs at the sheep, stripped the hot–house vines of their fruit, and broke the buds off the choicest plants in the conservatory: he called his mother "old girl" too, sometimes; reviled her for her dark skin, similar to his own; bluntly disregarded her wishes; not unfrequently [sic] tore and spoiled her silk attire; and he was still "her own darling". I dared commit no fault: I strove to fulfil every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and from noon to night. (Brontë, 2000, 15)

The belief in the connection between beauty and goodness is most clearly seen with Georgiana Reed. Georgiana's beauty is something that dazzles other people and helps her get ahead in life. People are more willing to forgive her because she is beautiful to look at. In my opinion, Georgiana is the one who is most dependent of hedonic power. She is very aware of her attractive features and uses them to purchase admiration and forgiveness from others. In addition to this, the servants at the Reed house believe Georgiana to be worthier of their admiration and attention than Jane. While some part of this attitude comes from the class differences, the appearance of these two girls affects the way they are treated. This could be connected to the study where people were more lenient towards the transgressions of attractive children. If Jane were more beautiful she would probably be treated better. One of the servants actually confirms this when she remarks, "if she [Jane] were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that" (Brontë, 2000, 28). Another servant agrees with this sentiment and

adds that “at any rate a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition” (Brontë, 2000, 28). At least in the servants’ opinion, the looks of the children matter more than the way the act. It can be seen that, here, Georgiana’s beauty weighs more than Jane’s personality.

While Georgiana’s appearance makes people more lenient towards her, John does not need to do anything in order to be forgiven. He is a bully and he has no respect for anyone. In addition to this, he is not handsome. Yet, out of everyone, he is still treated the best. This is due to the fact that he is a man and he is thus considered to be superior to the women. For a woman to reach the same position she needs to be beautiful. This is not for a man. An ugly or plain woman is therefore lowest on the totem pole. She is burdened by the lack of status for women and in addition to this, she cannot trade her beauty for admiration. Therefore it is easy to see why Jane’s lack of money, status, and beauty causes her to be treated poorly at the Reed house.

Because of her plain looks, hedonic power is not a possibility for Jane. In fact, that source of power is completely inaccessible to her. In addition to this, in the Victorian era, women did not have much power to begin with. Is Jane then left completely powerless? I believe that in the very beginning of the novel, the fire inside of her induces Jane to use agonic power. Before the incident in the Red Room, Jane has a fiery argument with her Aunt Reed, where she accuses her aunt of mistreating her. In this argument Jane could be said to be using agonic power. Aunt Reed is taken aback by Jane’s attitude and punishes her by locking her in the Red Room. In fact, it seems to me, that, in *Jane Eyre*, women are often punished for their use of agonic power. The clearest example of this is Bertha Mason. I will elaborate on this issue later on.

The most influential event that happened at Gateshead was Jane’s experience in the Red Room. There she was frightened by the thought of her uncle’s ghost appearing in front of her. Before this happens, Jane sees herself reflected in the mirror. In the poor lighting coming from the window, the image in the mirror does not seem like her. She sees a pale and white figure with glittering eyes. The image resembled “one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie’s

evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers" (Brontë, 2000, 14). At that moment, Jane sees herself as a supernatural creature. She does not even seem to recognize her reflection in the mirror. What makes this interesting is that later on in the novel, Rochester also calls her an elf and fairy-like (Brontë, 2000, 258). These quotations seem to place Jane somehow out of this world. This imagery would also suggest that Jane possess some type of power that is unique to her. Thus, perhaps she does not need the power that beauty could afford her because her power and strength comes from somewhere that is more than skin deep.

Is this "supernatural" power something distinct from agonic and hedonic power? Is it a third type of power? If a third type of power does exist, what is its source and is it something that everyone could possess or does it only exist in fiction? Or is this third type of power merely a combination of the best sides of agonic and hedonic power? The successful combining of agonic and hedonic power could be the answer to the problem of women being dependent on merely hedonic power. In this situation, women would be able to appear as feminine as they wish without losing their authority and assertiveness or seeming masculine. Could this type of power then be something that only women could possess? Yet, even in this scenario, the requirement of feminine beauty would still exist which would exclude plain or ugly looking women.

At the beginning of the novel, Jane is poor and dependent. In addition to this, she does not have any friends or family. While her situation obviously causes her pain, I believe that she perhaps would not have found her happiness if her life was different. If she had money and status, she would have been expected to become an ornamental object. She would have been expected to wear beautiful clothes and attend social events in order to find a suitable match for herself. This life would have been difficult for Jane due to her plain appearance. Now, while in the novel she did not have many opportunities in life, she did have more freedom to choose her path and she was able to

grow into the kind of woman she wanted to be. This creates a contrast with Antoinette's situation in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I will talk about this more in section 4.

Jane meets the Reed sisters again later on when she goes to visit her aunt who is on her deathbed. The way Georgiana was raised has a clear effect in the way she behaves. While her mother is dying, Georgiana:

> Never once adverted either to her mother's illness, or her brother's death, or the present gloomy state of the family prospects. Her mind seemed wholly taken up with reminiscences of past gaiety, and aspirations after dissipations to come. (Brontë, 2000, 234)

Georgiana is more concerned about trivial matters than the serious state that her family is currently in. She also does not know how to be by herself. She must always have company and something to occupy her time with. The way she was always admired and excused as a child has caused her to grow into a woman who is extremely shallow and self-centred. Even her own sister has grown disgusted with her. Eliza sums up Georgiana when she tells her:

> Instead of living for, in, and with yourself, as a reasonable being ought, you seek only to fasten your feebleness on some other person's strength: if no one can be found willing to burden her or himself with such a fat, weak, puffy, useless thing, you cry out that you are ill-treated, neglected, miserable. Then, too, existence for you must be a scene of continual change and excitement, or else the world is a dungeon: you must be courted, you must be flattered – you must have music, dancing, and society – or else you languish, you die away. Have you no sense to devise a system which will make you independent of all efforts, and at all wills, but your own? (Brontë, 2000, 235–236)

Georgiana has never felt the need to attempt to become a more well-rounded person because that has never been expected of her. The emphasis placed on her appearance to the exclusion of everything else has robbed Georgiana the possibility to learn to develop her personality and her abilities. Georgiana is also a good example of the hollowness of hedonic power. She seems to have nothing to show for this use of power. This is one of the paradoxes of hedonic power. It is often the women "who seek or gain power through their attractiveness … who are most dependant on men's

resources" (Baker-Sperry, Grauerholz, 2003, 712). Georgiana's life is empty without the admiration of men and social events.

3.2. Lowood

After the event in the Red Room, Mrs Reed decides to send Jane to school. She settles on Lowood that is run by the extremely strict and religious Mr Brocklehurst. He does not tolerate feminine beauty in his pupils. He declares that "humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood; I, therefore, direct that especial care shall be bestowed on its cultivation amongst them" (Brontë, 2000, 34). Because Lowood is a school that is run on charity, it does not have any rich children as students. Thus, Mr Brocklehurst believes that the pupils of Lowood do not have any need for feminine beauty. They have no status and no money. Therefore, these girls need to learn how to work hard and not be distracted with issues of such low and frivolous nature as feminine beauty and self-adornment. This means that the girls at Lowood are forced to conform to Mr Brocklehurst's ideas of what he believes constitutes low-class femininity (Federico, 1991, 30.) Jane is surprised when she first sees the girls at Lowood. She sees them in the dining hall:

> Ranged on benches down the sides of the room, the eighty girls sat motionless and erect: a quaint assemblage they appeared, all with plain locks combed from their faces, not a curl visible; in brown dresses, made high and surrounded by a narrow tucker about the throat, with little pockets of holland (shaped something like a Highlander's purse) tied in front of their frocks and destined to serve the purpose of a work–bag: all too wearing woollen stockings and country–made shoes fastened with brass buckles. Above twenty of those clad in this costume were full–grown girls; or rather young women: it suited them ill, and gave an air of oddity even to the prettiest. (Brontë, 2000, 46–47)

The girls at Lowood are dressed in ugly clothes with their hair arranged as plainly as possible. In addition to this, the girls are not allowed any ways of self-adornment. In fact, in another scene, Mr Brocklehurst demands that all of the top-knots of the girls must be cut off because his mission is to "mortify in these girls the lusts of flesh [and] to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety" (Brontë, 2000, 64). Thus, if feminine beauty affords power to the woman,

Mr Brocklehurst wants to rip any chance at power away from these girls and force them to submit to his authority. Furthermore, Mr Brocklehurst's comment also makes it seem that he feels some type of disgust towards the female body and sexuality that he hides behind his Christian morality. Mr Brocklehurst's attitude towards women can also be seen in the way he treats Miss Temple who is in charge of the day-to-day activities in Lowood.

Miss Temple is a type of mother-figure for Jane and she is the reason why Jane stays at Lowood even after her graduation. Miss Temple is kind and she attempts to better the poor living conditions of the girls in small ways. Yet, while she holds some type of a position of power at Lowood, she is still essentially powerless. She too must follow Mr Brocklehurst's directions. In a way, she is no different in Mr Brocklehurst's eyes than the pupils at Lowood. While it is clear that she does not approve of the way Mr Brocklehurst runs the school, she is forced to bear his dictions in marble-like stillness, with "her mouth closed as if it would have required a sculptor's chisel to open it" (Brontë, 2000, 63). While Miss Temple may not have power over Mr Brocklehurst, she does have some power connected to feminine beauty. Miss Temple is described as "tall" and "fair" and clothed in a dress "relieved by a sort of Spanish trimming of black velvet" with "a gold watch at her girdle" (Brontë, 2000, 47). Miss Temple is then a physical opposite of Jane who is small in stature. In addition to this, her attire would have made clear her social standing for the contemporary readers of *Jane Eyre* (Federico, 1991, 31). In fact, Miss Temple can be seen to fit the Victorian ideal of the angel in the house better than Jane and because of this, the readers of that time, would have probably thought Miss Temple a more 'appropriate' heroine than Jane, at least when considering the typical heroine of those times. The fact that Brontë defied those expectations is one of the reasons that *Jane Eyre* has achieved its status in the literary canon.

One example of women's social standing being reflected in their appearance are Mr Brocklehurst's wife and daughters. They walk in while Brocklehurst is preaching about the evils of vanity to the Lowood pupils. The two daughters:

> (fine girls of sixteen and seventeen) had grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled; the elder lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl, trimmed with ermine, and she wore a false front of French curls (Brontë, 2000, 64).

Thus, while Mr Brocklehurst is against feminine beauty when it comes to his students, he finds nothing wrong with the women in his family dressing splendidly and having long, curled hair. On the one hand, it seems hypocritical of Mr Brocklehurst to sermonise shame-faced humility to the pupils while he does not apply his teachings to his own family. Therefore, his Christian teachings seem to be undermined by the adherence to considerations of social class (Cadwallader, 2009, 242). On the other hand, the social classes had different expectations placed on them and there is a clear difference in social standing between the girls at Lowood and the Brocklehurst family. The high-class Brocklehurst women are expected to display the wealth of the family and their social standing in their appearance and dress. In comparison to this, the lower-class Lowood girls perhaps do not have the 'right' to indulge in feminine beauty and fashionable dress when they do not have money and status to back it up.

In the novel, there is also a link connecting feminine beauty and nature. While Jane is at school, spring finally arrives and "Lowood shook loose its tresses; it became all green, all flowery" (Brontë, 2000, 76). Here, spring is described as a woman wildly shaking her hair loose from restriction. This passage seems ironic when it is compared to Mr Brocklehurst's disgust towards unnecessary female vanity. Especially when this scene is compared with the one where Brocklehurst demands that the girls at Lowood must cut off all their topknots. While at Lowood, the girls are under the agonic power of Mr Brocklehurst. Feminine beauty is denied from them, as well as the hedonic power that it affords. Yet, Mr Brocklehurst's power does not extend outside the walls of the school. Brennan (2010, 46) explains that "the fecundity and unruliness of femininity so feared by Brocklehurst in his young charges and represented by their tresses is here allowed its way."

At Lowood, Jane's best friend is Helen Burns. In the novel, Helen is never described as a beauty. In fact, Helen does not pay much attention to the outside appearances of either herself or others due to the fact that she is preoccupied with spiritual issues. She even tells Jane that she keeps waiting for the moment when she is reunited with her Lord. Helen's thoughts are often wondering elsewhere and because of this, she gets in trouble with the teachers at Lowood. While Helen may not be conventionally beautiful, she has a strong inner spirit and she is animated when she is able to talk about her beliefs. During one instance, Helen is allowed to converse with Miss Temple about anything and everything. Jane watches their exchange and is amazed to watch Helen's spirit and "powers" rise:

> Woke, they kindled: first, they glowed in the bright tint of her cheek, which till this hour I had never seen but pale and bloodless; then they shone in the liquid lustre of her eyes, which had suddenly acquired a beauty more singular than that of Miss Temple's – a beauty neither of fine colour nor long eyelash, nor pencilled brow, but of meaning, of movement, of radiance. (Brontë, 2000, 73)

This is perhaps the best example of the kind of human beauty that Roger Scruton talked about. Here, it is Helen's inner spirit or her soul that shines through her eyes and makes her look beautiful. In addition to this, Helen seems beautiful in Jane's eyes because Jane cares for Helen. Someone who did not know her might not have noticed any difference in Helen's features. As was mentioned before, our feelings play an important part in our experience of beauty.

While life at Lowood is sometimes difficult for Jane, the school does teach her to place more emphasis on her abilities than her appearance. In fact, Jane does well in her studies at Lowood. She enjoys learning and is offered praise when she excels in her work. Thus, at Lowood Jane is able to develop her character in ways that would not have been possible at Gateshead. At Gateshead, where there seemed to be a connection drawn between appearance and personality, Jane is treated negatively, whereas in Lowood, Jane is able to use her mind and it earns her appreciation from the teachers and other students. Furthermore, while Jane is at Lowood, she never mentions the inferiority that she feels in the presence of beautiful women. At school, Jane learns to appreciate

what she possesses instead of worrying about what she lacks (Cadwallader, 2009, 243). These lessons that she learns at Lowood are important later on when she meets beautiful Miss Ingram at Thornfield Hall and is again forced to compare herself against a stunning beauty.

Right before she is about to leave Lowood, Jane meets her old nurse, Bessie, again. This meeting reveals something about Bessie's ideas about the worth of feminine beauty and personal accomplishments. During their meeting, Jane notes that Bessie is disappointed about the fact that Jane has not grown any more beautiful with age but is still as plain and unattractive as she was when she was young. Her thoughts are confirmed when Bessie sees a now grown up Jane and remarks that "it is as much as ever I expected of you: you were no beauty as a child" (Brontë, 2000, 91). While Jane agrees with Bessie about her appearance, this fact still hurts her. Jane muses that "at eighteen most people wish to please, and the conviction that they have not an exterior likely to second that desire brings anything but gratification" (Brontë, 2000, 91). Bessie seems to notice this and asks, "by way of solace," about Jane's talents (Brontë, 2000, 91). Jane then tells Bessie about her ability to paint, to play the piano, and about the other things she has learned at Lowood. Bessie finds this impressive and it causes her to exclaim, "you are quite a lady, Miss Jane!" (Brontë, 2000, 92). In Bessie's eyes, Jane has been able to make up for any deficiencies in her appearance by her diverse abilities. Bessie even comments that the painting that Jane has drawn reminds her more of the work of a professional than something that the upper-class ladies would make to amuse themselves or their husbands (Cadwallader, 2009, 242). This exchange also emphasizes how women are judged first and foremost through her appearance. The abilities that a woman possesses are only secondary to her looks. This can be contrasted against how men are treated. With men, their abilities have the most weight. Yet, while feminine beauty still seems to be the most important measure of a woman's worth, at Lowood, Jane gains self-confidence and belief in herself and her abilities.

3.3. Thornfield Hall

After Lowood, Jane ends up at Thornfield Hall as a governess for Mr Rochester's ward. While at Lowood, Jane had no need to concern herself with feminine beauty due to the emphasis placed on her abilities, but at Thornfield, Jane is again forced to confront these issues. The challenges come in the forms of Adèle and Blanche Ingram.

As someone who has no money and status, Jane cannot afford any type of self-display. Because of this, she wears simple, Quaker-like dresses and does not draw attention to herself in company. In order for Jane to retain her respectability, she is required to be plain. The prohibition against female self-adornment is something that Jane has internalized. Her pupil, Adèle, is a complete contrast to Jane. Adèle is everything Jane is not in terms of femininity.

Adèle is an example of the negative image of a narcissistic and frivolous woman sometimes found in culture. She is eight years old but in many ways attempts to act like a grown woman. In a way, Adèle is doll-like with her beautiful dresses and her long, profuse curls. She likes to be the centre of attention and to entertain people with her singing and dancing. She also loves being an ornamental object. This can be seen when she prepares for the guests Mr Rochester has invited to Thornfield Hall. At first, Adèle is ecstatic, but then she changes:

> The importance of the process quickly steadied her; and by the time she had her curls arranged in well-smoothed, drooping clusters, her pink satin frock put on, her long sash tied, and her lace mittens adjusted, she looked as grave as any judge. No need to warn her not to disarrange her attire: when she was dressed, she sat demurely down in her little chair, taking care previously to lift up the satin skirt for fear she should crease it, and assured me she would not stir thence till I was ready. (Brontë, 2000, 170)

Mr Rochester believes that Adèle has learned this behaviour from her mother who was a French opera-girl. Adèle is thus an example of how daughters learn the importance of feminine beauty from their mothers. In addition to this, there seems to be an undertone of disapproval to the conversations the characters have about Adèle and her personality. One example of this is Rochester's comment about Adèle. He had given Adèle a present and resumed conversing with Jane

when he notes that “she pulled out of her box, about ten minutes ago, a little pink silk frock; rapture lit her face as she unfolded it: coquetry runs in her blood, blends with her brains, and seasons the marrow of her bones” (Brontë, 2000, 139). His comment makes it seem as if there is something inherently wrong about Adèle. In addition to this, when it comes to the description of Adèle, the novel displays an attitude inherent to the time it was written. The characters seem to believe that the other reason why Adèle does not act like a proper woman should is because she is French. She does not understand the superior English way of behaving. The characters treat Adèle as if she is not expected to know better due to her ‘inferior’ background. In the end, Adèle is sent to school where “a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects” (Brontë, 2000, 450). Adèle’s description is thus one example of ‘the other’ having negative aspects connected to them. Another example of this is Bertha Mason. With both Adèle and Bertha, this attitude of English superiority is important to keep in mind when considering these two characters.

Bertha Mason, Rochester’s first wife, is “a big woman” and has “a quantity of dark … hair” (Brontë, 2000, 293). In addition to this, she is physically Jane’s opposite. While Jane is small and plain, Bertha is a tall, dark, and large woman. When Rochester first met Bertha, the men admired her because of her beauty. In the beginning then Bertha could be said to have been using hedonic power to lure Rochester to her. It was Bertha’s beauty that dazzled Rochester into marrying her. Yet, by the time Jane sees Bertha she has lost her beauty and the hedonic power that comes with it. The only form of power Bertha is left with is that of agonic power. In fact, I believe that, in this novel, Bertha is the best example of a woman using agonic power. She is filled with rage and she is not afraid to express that hatred in the form of direct acts filled with threat. Interestingly, Bertha also seems to resemble the ugly witch character found in fairy-tales who wields agonic power.

Despite Bertha being Jane’s opposite physically, she does represent Jane’s passionate side that wants to be free of oppression. Bertha on the other hand, is kept locked down in the attic of Thornfield Hall. When Jane first sees Bertha she describes her as animal-like and just as mindless

as one. Yet, Bertha also seems to sometimes act in ways that Jane wishes she could. Before the failed wedding, during the night, Bertha visits Jane's room. She "took [Jane's] veil from its place; she held it up, gazed it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror" (Brontë, 2000, 283). After that she "removed [Jane's] veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them" (Brontë, 2000, 284). This scene could be contrasted with Jane's discomfort with Rochester's insistence to dress her in expensive clothes that she did not feel herself in. Bertha was able to destroy the expensive veil while Jane could not. Bertha then represents Jane's urge to defy Rochester's expectations (Jafari, 2010, 47). Bertha also seems to represent Jane's desire for agonic power and direct action. While the urge to escape the restrictions placed on women is understandable, Jane cannot afford to act like Bertha. Thus, during the course of the novel, Jane must also learn how to control herself and the fire inside of her in order to not meet the same fate as Bertha. The reason for this is that women need to follow the roles society prescribes for them if they do not want to get in trouble (Yildirim, 2012, 49). The cost of rebellion for Bertha is the label of insanity. The question arises whether it was the use of agonic power that gives Bertha the label of insanity or whether her insanity causes her to use agonic power? I will be looking more into this issue later on.

As I have already mentioned, the description of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* is problematic. Like with Adèle, Bertha's personality is connected with her West Indian heritage. In Rochester's opinion, Bertha was "intemperate and unchaste" (Brontë, 2000, 306) and it is because of this that he slowly begins to hate her. The truth is probably that Rochester grew disgusted with her because she did not act like an English-woman. It is this characterization of Bertha as a crazy and animal-like Creole woman that compelled Jean Rhys to write *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Jane calls herself "a cool observer of her own sex" (Brontë, 2000, 368). This attitude does come across in the novel. It seems like during the course of her life, Jane is presented with different versions of femininity, either negative or positive. All of these women also have a different way of

approaching the notion of feminine beauty and self-adornment. It seems that Jane has to meet all of these women in order for her to better understand herself and to find the kind of femininity that best suits her. It also allows her to make peace with her lack of feminine beauty. During the course of the novel, Jane also finds the strength she needs in order to assert herself when it comes to the pressure to conform to society's ideas about feminine beauty. This can be seen in the scenes between Jane and Rochester before their failed attempt to get married.

One interesting aspect of the novel is the emphasis placed on the body shapes of these women. Miss Temple, Blanche Ingram, Georgiana Reed and Rosamond Oliver are all described as tall and statuesque while Jane is the complete opposite of these women. This tall and fair body type seems to be the desired one in the society of *Jane Eyre*. Yet, interestingly, all of these women (except Miss Temple) also share some of the same unappealing personality traits that are often connected to their view of themselves as beauties. Jane, in comparison, radically differs from these women in both her personality and body type. It could thus be said that in *Jane Eyre* "an unconventional body is an index to an unconventional spirit" (Federico, 1991, 30).

Though she had learned to value her abilities in Lowood, Jane has still not completely overcome her anxiety about her lack of beauty. Quite soon after Jane has arrived at Thornfield, she ponders herself in front of the mirror:

> I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer: I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and small cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately, and finely developed in figure; I felt it a misfortune that I was so little, so pale, and had features so irregular and so marked. And why had I these aspirations and these regrets? It would be difficult to say: I could not then distinctly say it to myself; yet I had a reason, and a logical, natural reason too. (Brontë, 2000, 98)

In this passage, Jane seems to long for the characteristics of feminine beauty that the society prefers. What is interesting about this is that Jane cannot even explain to herself why it is important for her to have a 'small cherry mouth', for instance. This is an example of how the prevalent ideologies in a society are internalized in a way that it is difficult to point out where a certain idea

or desire seems to originate from. Yet, it is at this point in the novel that Jane begins to slowly accept herself and starts to reject the need for feminine beauty that the society seems to require of women.

Another woman that Jane is forced to compare herself against is the beautiful Blanche Ingram who is also Jane's rival for Mr Rochester's affections. Jane first hears about Blanche from Mrs Fairfax who describes Blanche as tall and beautiful with long, glossy curls and fashionable clothes. Mrs Fairfax also considered Blanche as the "belle of the evening" (Brontë, 2000, 159). In addition to her looks, Blanche is much higher in the social hierarchy than Jane. It is clear that her family holds power and money. Blanche's beauty and status thus make her an advantageous match in the marriage market.

Blanche Ingram is very aware of her attractiveness and she is willing to play the part of the beauty. She also knows that she is a desirable match. This is reflected in her personality. Blanche could actually be linked to Wright's ideas that I talked about earlier. Blanche is connected to those female characters whose beauty limits their need to act. Blanche is already rewarded for her beauty and thus she has no need to attempt to develop her personality, unlike Jane, for instance. In fact, if Blanche were to lose her beauty and position in society, her unappealing personality would make it extremely difficult for her to find a husband. In the current situation, Blanche's outward show cancels out her inner deficiencies. An example of this is that Blanche is wearing a snow white, voluminous gown the first time Jane sees her. Blanche is thus dressed as the pure angel, but is actually selfish and extremely self-centred inside. (Talairach-Vielmas, 2009, 127.)

Blanche also has clearly internalized the gender roles of the society that she lives in. In Blanche's opinion, men should be strong and masculine whereas women should only be concerned with making themselves into pleasing and decorative objects. Blanche is even dismayed with the men of her time who, in her opinion, have become too ladylike:

> Creatures so absorbed in care about their pretty faces and their white hands, and their small feet; as if a man had anything to do with beauty! As if loveliness were not the special prerogative of woman – her legitimate appanage and heritage! I grant an ugly woman is a blot on the fair face of creation; but as to the gentlemen, let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour: let their motto be: – Hunt, shoot, and fight: the rest is not worth a fillip. Such should be my device, were I a man." (Brontë, 2000, 179)

These comments could also be described as Blanche using agonic power. Was it acceptable for a woman to express such strong opinions during the Victorian era? I believe that Blanche is able to express these opinions due to her place in society. She has enough status and money to be safe from outside scrutiny. For instance, Jane would not be able to voice these types of opinions without repercussions. In addition to this, Blanche also has beauty that she can trade for leniency and Blanche does not otherwise step outside the lines of acceptable feminine conduct.

Another interesting aspect of Blanche is that she seems to embody the male-created feminine ideal (Heininger, 2006, 24). While Blanche might at first seem to possess many advantages, in reality she could also be characterised as a victim of the requirement for feminine beauty. Beauty obviously gives Blanche some power that she uses in the marriage market in order to catch a rich husband, but it does also limit Blanche. Beauty is the only thing that Blanche has to trade on (Cadwallader, 2009, 240). What is Blanche then left with when her beauty is lost with age?

While at this point in the novel Jane has begun to accept herself, she is still very aware of the power of feminine beauty in the marriage market. It is because of this that she finds it difficult to believe that Mr Rochester would be interested in her. Jane believes that while Rochester himself is not very handsome, he would still be romantically interested in beautiful women. This becomes clear when Jane ponders why Mr Rochester does not fire Grace Poole even though she is supposedly guilty of trying to burn Rochester in his bed. At first, Jane contemplates that maybe Rochester is in love with Grace until "Mrs Poole's square, flat figure, and uncomely, dry, even coarse face, recurred so distinctly to my mind's eye, that I thought, "No; impossible! my supposition cannot be correct" (Brontë, 2000, 156–157). In fact, Jane is correct in that she is not the

type of woman that Rochester usually finds attractive. Bertha Mason was thought to be beautiful. In addition to this, Jane's rival, Blanche Ingram is tall, dark and beautiful. Finally, the lovers that Rochester had while he travelled were also "considered singularly handsome" (Brontë, 2000, 311). None of these attractive but 'hollow' women made him happy. Yet, Rochester is not able to completely let go of this attitude and expectation of feminine beauty with Jane.

After his proposal to Jane, Rochester's preconceived ideas about feminine beauty and self-adornment come out. This makes Jane uncomfortable but Rochester does not seem to listen to Jane's wishes. He does not even seem to see her anymore. He calls Jane his "little sunny-faced girl with the dimpled cheek and rosy lips; the satin-smooth hazel hair, and the radiant hazel eyes." Jane corrects his mistake by explaining that "(I had green eyes, reader; but you must excuse the mistake: for him they were new-dyed, I suppose.)" (Brontë, 2000, 258). It almost seems as if Rochester lost sight of the woman that he fell in love with in the first place due to his need to transform Jane into a conventional beauty.

At this point, Rochester wants to clothe Jane in exquisite dresses and wreathe her in jewellery. He declares that:

> I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead, – which it will become: for nature, at least, has stamped her patent of nobility on this brow, Jane; and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings. (Brontë, 2000, 258)

What is interesting about this passage is that here Rochester uses the vocabulary of slavery to describe how he will dress Jane after her rise in social status. The necklace becomes a chain that chokes, while the bracelets represent handcuffs that weigh down the one who wears them. Brennan (2010, 66) believes that this vocabulary represents the Victorian marriage that chained the woman to her husband and forced her to rely on him economically, physically and psychologically.

Jane tries to resist Rochester's attempts to turn her into something she is not. She feels that she will always be small and plain and for her to act like she is a beauty would be a deception and a fraud. In

the end, Rochester refuses to listen to Jane's protests. At her wedding day, Jane looks into the mirror and sees "a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger" (Brontë, 2000, 286). This passage could be connected with the previous scene of Jane looking into the mirror at the Red Room and not recognizing her own image. Here, Jane has lost herself and her identity underneath the fashionable wedding apparel that Rochester has requested that she wear (Cadwallader, 2009, 244). Throughout all of this, Rochester remains ignorant of Jane's feelings and he does not understand why Jane resists his efforts to turn her into a beauty.

Rochester seems interested with investing Jane with hedonic power. This makes Jane uncomfortable. From early on in her life, Jane is aware that hedonic power is denied from her. She is not a beauty and she cannot purchase it by dressing in expensive gowns and jewellery. In fact Jane would rather run away from Rochester in order to hold onto her sense of identity. To conform to Rochester's wishes would turn Jane into something that she is not. Like Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jane also must escape Rochester.

3.4. Marsh End and Ferndean Manor

The one final beauty that Jane encounters is Rosamond Oliver. She is probably the most beautiful of all the women in *Jane Eyre*:

> No charm was wanting, no defect was perceptible: the young girl had regular and delicate lineaments; eyes shaped and coloured as we see them in lovely pictures, large, and dark, and full; the long and shadowy eyelash which encircles a fine eye with so soft a fascination; the pencilled brow which gives such clearness; the white, smooth forehead, which adds such repose to the livelier beauties of tint and ray; the cheek, oval, fresh and smooth; the lips fresh too, ruddy, healthy, sweetly formed; the even and gleaming teeth without flaw; the small, dimpled chin; the ornament of rich, plenteous tresses, – all advantages, in short, which, combined, realize the ideal of beauty, were fully hers. (Brontë, 2000, 363)

In comparison to Georgiana Reed and Blanche Ingram, Rosamond does not possess any overtly negative personality traits. Rosamond has money like Blanche but she still helps the poor children of the village to get an education. In addition to this, Rosamond is in love with reverend St John

Rivers who lives much more simply than Rosamond. She could thus be characterised as the perfect fictional heroine, beautiful, humble and truly good. Yet, in some ways Rosamond resembles a doll. While Rosamond has the advantages of perfect beauty, social status and the power these bestow, she still seems powerless. She is physically and psychologically weak. She has no will or strength to assert herself and her wishes. Her only recourse against disappointment is to "pout like a disappointed child" (Brontë, 2000, 367). Thus, Rosamond is more like the stereotype of the child-like woman who is admired for her beauty but who does not act like a mature, intelligent woman (Brennan, 2010, 79–80). Even St John realizes this about Rosamond. While St John may be in love with her, he recognizes that the defects in her character prevent her from being what St John requires from his partner. Thus, unlike in other stories, here the beautiful heroine does not end up with the man she loves but instead ends up marrying someone more suitable. Cadwallader (2009, 240) sums up the three beauties, Georgiana Reed, Blanche Ingram and Rosamond Oliver, by claiming that these characters "are treated as objects by those around them and their upbringing has left them without the inner resources necessary for autonomy". In addition to this, Rosamond, Blanche and Georgiana are beautiful and the hedonic power that it bestows on them, but do they achieve anything through their looks? Are they able to escape from society's restrictions? In my opinion the answer is no. To begin with, all three of them strive towards fulfilling the traditional female role. All of them are also dependent on men and their resources. The one advantage that they do have is that they are able to trade their beauty for a more advantageous match. Yet, after the marriage, what else can they achieve through hedonic power. Even the beautiful women are bound by the expectations placed on women in a marriage. Yet, in a society where agonic power is denied from women, hedonic power gives women some way to affect the course of their lives while, at the same time, it fixes them in the traditional female role.

If for Jane, Rochester is connected with love and the need for feminine beauty, St John is linked with reason and the rejection of beauty as something trivial and superficial. With St John,

Jane is again able to forget the requirement for beauty because St John admires her abilities and work ethic. In this way, St John seems like the perfect match for Jane. He even claims that Jane is "formed for labour, not for love" (Brontë, 2000, 402). Yet, St John is too overbearing and his cool demeanour quenches Jane's inner flame and she begins to feel trapped under his demands. It is here that Jane completes her journey of self-discovery when she finally learns to accept all sides of herself. She also realizes that she is not only formed for labour but also for love. This causes her to search out Rochester again. She has now reached the place in her life where a relationship between her and Rochester can work.

During her stay in Marsh End, Jane also learns that she has inherited a fortune from her rich uncle. Interestingly, in their research Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003, 719) found that in fairy-tales feminine beauty is often also linked with "whiteness and economic privilege." While this concerns only fairy-tales, I find it intriguing that at the end of the novel, Jane does resemble the traditional heroine of other novels in some ways. It could be said that Jane's fortune was a way of making Jane seem more equal with Rochester. I agree with those critics who find this plot point to be unnecessary exactly because it makes Jane similar to those more traditional heroines. Yet, if money and education are sources of agonic power, does this change Jane's position in some way? I believe that it does afford her more respect but in the end, the women's position in the Victorian society and their dependence on men makes it almost impossible for women to attempt to better their position in life.

In the end, Jane hears about Rochester's misfortune and returns to him. Rochester has injured himself in a fire that destroyed Thornfield Hall. He is blind and he has lost one of his eyes in the fire. The other is too inflamed to work properly. In addition to this, one of his hands had to be amputated. Many of the critics have commented that Rochester had to be symbolically castrated in this way in order for Jane and Rochester to be equals. What I find interesting is that at the end, Rochester is literally blind while before the failed marriage attempt Rochester could not 'see' the

real Jane from his need to try to transform her into something that she is not. In fact, Rochester does not gain his sight until he and Jane have been married for a while. If Rochester cannot see Jane, her appearance and dress do not matter. It seems then that at the end of the novel, Rochester has finally been able to let go of the ideas about feminine beauty and hedonic power that society has made him internalize. This can be seen in his insistence that "the third day from this must be our wedding-day, Jane. Never mind fancy clothes and jewels, now: all that is not worth a fillip." (Brontë, 2000, 446). His quote is a perfect contrast to the scene earlier where he maintained that Jane needed to be clothed in expensive dresses and jewellery. Now that Rochester has gone through hardships, he understands what is truly important. It also means that Jane is free to act and dress in a way that she finds comfortable. This evens out the balance of power between them and allows them to make their marriage work. Interestingly, Jane and Rochester end up staying at Ferndean Manor. The house is isolated and secluded in a forest. Here, Jane and Rochester can live their lives separated from the surrounding society. It also allows them to live the way they want to without the condemnation from other people who may not approve or understand Jane and Rochester's equal partnership. It also saves them from seeing the society's reactions to the fact that Rochester married someone who is not traditionally beautiful. While Rochester himself could not be called handsome, he would still be expected to trade his money and status for a beautiful wife.

4. ***Wide Sargasso Sea*** **and Feminine Beauty**

It is difficult to attempt to put *Wide Sargasso Sea* into context, mostly because there is more than one to choose from. Helen Carr explains that:

> If *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be read in the context of the period in which the novel is set, or in that of the on-going world liberation movements taking place as the novel was written, it must also, and perhaps most significantly be seen in the context of the world in which Rhys grew up. (2012, 100–101)

Rhys was born in 1890 in Dominica before she moved to England to get an education. Throughout her whole life Rhys felt misunderstood. In her childhood, she felt marginalized by her distant father, her unavailable mother and by her white skin-colour in a multiracial population (Simpson, 2005, 2). Although Rhys spent most of her life in England and Paris, she always felt a strong, if complicated connection to the West Indies. Even though she loved the island and the beauty of it, she felt that the island rejected her. She also felt that as a white Creole, she did not have as strong a claim on the island as the black majority. (Carr, 2012, 17, 20.) Yet, she also felt that she did not fit in in England either and felt that she was as much of an alien in there as in the West Indies. Furthermore, she felt disgust towards England's imperialist ambitions. Thus, Rhys suffered from a feeling of rootlessness. In this, she repeats the experience of other expatriates. Hall sums this experience up when he comments that:

> Having been prepared by the colonial education, I knew England from the inside. But I'm not and never will be English. I knew both places intimately, but I'm not wholly of either place. And that's exactly the diasporic experience, far enough to experience the sense of exile and loss, close enough to understand the enigma of an always–postponed 'arrival' (1996b, 490).

While it is dangerous to attempt to connect a fictional work too closely to its author's own life, it cannot be denied that Rhys infused her novels with her own experiences of the world. Thus, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is connected to the West Indies of Rhys's youth.

I have divided the analysis section into three parts. The first section takes place when Antoinette is young, the second tells the story of Antoinette's marriage and the third is about Antoinette's life at Thornfield Hall.

4.1. Part One

The novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is set in the time after the Abolition of Slavery Act in Jamaica. While the abolition of slavery should be a time of triumph and joy, for Antoinette it only means despair. Her family's background as slave owners means that they are cast aside by this new world order.

For Antoinette, “the liberation the New English bring both rips away safety and imposes new, repressive social controls” (Gilchrist, 2012, 462).

Like Jane’s, Antoinette’s social position is a difficult one. This is reflected in the two first lines of the novel: “They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks” (Rhys, 2000, 15). Antoinette and her family exist between the white and the black community, yet they are not part of either of these communities. Antoinette could be considered as a slightly different type of hybrid that Hall talked about. Instead of having moved to a different country and thus, a different culture, Antoinette is a hybrid due to her parentage. She is a part of both the colonizing and the colonized people. Yet, she is rejected from both due to her hybrid nature. Antoinette’s Creole heritage means that she is excluded from the white, English community while her family’s slave owner background has led to hatred from the black community. This leads to Antoinette feeling anchorless. Tia, Antoinette’s black friend, explains:

> Plenty white people in Jamaica. Real white people, they got gold money. They didn’t look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger. (Rhys, 2000, 21)

Tia’s comment reveals how “skin colour is not sufficient to carry admittance to whiteness; in the colonial situation, whiteness only belongs to those with economic power” (Carr, 2012, 94). Helen Tiffin sums it up when she describes the white Creole “as a double outsider, condemned to self-consciousness, homelessness, a sense of inescapable difference and even deformity in the two societies by whose judgements she always condemns herself” (2000).

Before the Emancipation Act that freed the slaves, Antoinette’s family had both money and status. In this new world, all of it is gone. They live in a leaky and dilapidated house while the garden surrounding it has grown wild. Antoinette’s father has died and she only has her mother and a baby brother. In addition to this, they are isolated from the rest of the society who acts hostilely towards them. This new order of things is difficult for Antoinette’s mother, Annette. She is beautiful, young and she still remembers what life was like before. While the family’s situation

seems hopeless, Annette cannot allow herself to give up hope. She still plans to get back to their old lives because “how could she not try for all the things that had gone so suddenly, so without warning” (Rhys, 2000, 16). In the end, the only thing that Annette has to bargain with is her physical beauty. Even the Jamaican ladies do not approve of her because Annette is “pretty like pretty self” (Rhys, 2000, 15). In addition to this, she was still young and could try to find a new husband. In fact, it is Annette’s beauty that kept her from having to publicly admit the loss of the money and status that she once possessed (Nun Halloran, 2006, 92). This again shows how beauty could be considered as a type of income.

Annette thus has hedonic power due to her looks. It also quite clear that in the novel Annette is quite dependent on the power that beauty bestows on her. She is very aware of the traditional role that she must play in society. She knows what is expected of her as a woman in a patriarchal society. I believe that it also Annette’s reliance on hedonic power that causes her to cling to hedonic power. This is due to the fact that in these two novels the women who most use hedonic power are also the ones that seem to fulfil the traditional female role. Annette also strongly contrasts with Christophine in their use of power. Part of Annette’s need to act in accordance with the expectations placed on women is her preoccupation with Antoinette’s younger brother, Pierre. Annette probably hopes that Pierre will grow up to become the man of the house. Unfortunately, Pierre is developmentally challenged and cannot fulfil this role. After Annette hears this from the doctor, she begins to change. Slowly, she “grew thin and silent, and at last she refused to leave the house at all” (Rhys, 2000, 16). In addition to this, Annette knows that the only way for her to find financial stability is to find a husband. She must trade her beauty for money. Annette does not know what to do outside of this traditional female role. In fact, the family would not have survived if Christophine, a black servant, had not stayed and helped take care of the family. Annette needs to be provided for by a man and in return she will be the beautiful mistress of the estate and bear her husband a male heir (Olaussen, 1992, 103).

Antoinette's relationship with her mother is a difficult one. Antoinette yearns for her mother's attention and affection but her mother is more concerned with her brother than with Antoinette. Annette, in fact, ignores her daughter in favour of her baby brother. Antoinette cannot help but continue to try to connect with her mother:

> A frown came between her black eyebrows, deep – it might have been cut with a knife. I hated this frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. She wanted to sit with Pierre or walk where she pleased without being pestered, she wanted peace and quiet. I was old enough to look after myself. "Oh, let me alone," she would say, "let me alone," and after I knew that she talked aloud to herself I was a little afraid of her. (Rhys, 2000, 17)

The only connection between Antoinette and her mother is beauty. Not only is Antoinette considered to be as beautiful as her mother but Antoinette also connects her mother's hair with safety and affection. She tells how "once I had made excuses to be near her when she brushed her hair, a soft black cloak to cover me, hide me, keep me safe" (Rhys, 2000, 19). Thus, Antoinette's best memories of her mother are linked to her beauty. In addition to this, if Annette uses hedonic power, it is also the power that Antoinette relies on later on in order to keep Rochester under her spell. Annette also seems to push hedonic power onto Antoinette. In this way Annette resembles the fairy-tale mothers who teach their daughters the importance of hedonic power. This may also play a part in how during the course of the novel Antoinette seems to turn into Annette. As a child, Antoinette keeps watching her mother, yet she is never allowed to get close to her. She is always kept at a distance. Antoinette is denied the right to a sense of unity with her mother (Scharfman, 1981, 100.) Yet, her mother is all that Antoinette has in the world. Due to her mother's rejection of her, she is left without an anchor to which she could secure her identity. It is because of this that Antoinette is doomed to spend her life searching for this anchor and a stable identity.

Christophine, the black servant, acts as a kind of surrogate mother for Antoinette. She is the warm and loving mother that Annette is unable to be. While Annette is the head of the house, it is

Christophine that makes sure that the family is provided for. She keeps them fed, clothed and clean. In addition to this, Christophine is an example of a different kind of femininity for Antoinette. It is due to the fact that she is a black servant that she has more freedom to act as she pleases. There are no expectations to marry placed on her and she does not need a husband to provide for her. She is able to get by on her own. Furthermore, the local people are afraid of her because of her supposed ability to do obeah, a type of magic. This could also be seen as Christophine using agonic power. Actually, Christophine is never described as being especially beautiful, thus, hedonic power may not even be in her grasp. Yet, if hedonic power leads to the traditional female role that is something that Christophine seems to reject. Maybe the reason why other people fear her is because she does not act like a woman is expected to. Christophine seems to castoff both these expectations and the use of hedonic power. Unlike Annette, Christophine does not understand why any woman would trade their possessions for a husband. This can be seen in her quote to Antoinette where she claims:

> All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank my God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man. (Rhys, 2000, 91)

The tragic aspect of this is that while Christophine uses agonic power, and though she has more independence and ability to choose for herself, she is still not powerful enough to go up against the patriarchal society. In the end, she is unable to help Antoinette with her husband. The only thing that she can do is walk out and leave Antoinette to her fate. I will elaborate on this aspect later on.

Antoinette's only friend growing up was Tia, a black girl. While they are able to hold on to their friendship for a time, eventually the issues of race come between them. One day, Tia calls her friend a "white nigger" and claims that Antoinette lies when she says that she can do a somersault under water. This makes Antoinette incensed and she is determined to prove Tia wrong. While Antoinette is in the water, Tia steals Antoinette's clean and beautiful dress and leaves Antoinette with her own. Antoinette feels humiliated when she is forced to walk home in Tia's old, dirty dress. When she has finally reached home she realizes that her mother has English guests over and:

> They were very beautiful I thought and they wore such beautiful clothes that I looked away down at the flagstones and when they laughed – the gentleman laughed the loudest – I ran into the house, into my bedroom. (Rhys, 2000, 21–22)

Antoinette is mortified that the guests have seen her wearing the old dress of a black girl. The one time when they actually have guests over, Antoinette "stands out as aberrant because she has had to attire herself in the clothing of the other" (Burrows, 2004, 48). Furthermore, Tia did not only steal Antoinette's dress but she also robbed a part of Antoinette's hedonic power since self-adornment enhances this power. Thus, in a way, Tia leaves Antoinette powerless when she is clothed in her dress. In addition to this, the English guests seem to be reduced to beautiful people in beautiful clothes. Here, they have no discernible faces and personalities. They are merely defined by their attire and their superior attitude. Interestingly, it is the gentleman who laughs the loudest when he sees Antoinette clothed in a dirty dress. For him, the sight of Antoinette dressed like a black girl is a source of amusement. Finally, her mother is dismayed to realize that Antoinette came home wearing someone else's dress:

> "But why are you wearing Tia's dress? Tia? Which one of them is Tia?"
> Christophine, who had been in the pantry listening, came at once and was told to find a clean dress for me.
> "Throw away that thing. Burn it."
> Then they quarrelled.
> Christophine said I had no clean dress. "She got two dresses, wash and wear. You want clean dress to drop from heaven? Some people crazy in truth."
> "She must have another dress," said my mother. "Somewhere." But Christophine told her loudly that it shameful. She run wild, she grow up worthless. And nobody care." (Rhys, 2000, 22)

Annette notices that her daughter is sliding away from white femininity. For Annette, it is the final straw to see Antoinette coming home wearing the dirty dress of the other instead of her own clean, ironed and starched dress. It is at this point that Annette realizes that she needs to better their social position in order for Antoinette to be able to fulfil her role as a respectable, white woman. In addition to this, since Annette is concerned with fulfilling the traditional female role and making sure that her daughter does the same, it is not difficult to understand why she is afraid of Antoinette

losing her hedonic power. For Annette, hedonic power seems to be the only acceptable form of power. Furthermore, hedonic power could be seen as an integral to white femininity whereas agonic power is, at least in this novel, more connected to black femininity. If Pierre's diagnosis caused Annette to give up, it is her fear for Antoinette's future that pushes her back into action:

> I don't know how she got the money to buy the white muslin and the pink. Yards of muslin. She may have sold her last ring, for there was one left. I saw it in her jewel box – that, and a locket with a shamrock inside. They were mending and sewing first thing in the morning and still sewing when I went to bed. In a week she had a new dress and so had I. (Rhys, 2000, 23)

After the event with Tia's old dress, Annette uses her new muslin dress and her looks to find herself a new husband, Mr Mason. At the wedding, the locals gossip behind Annette and Mr Mason's backs. They cannot understand why a man like Mason would marry such a disreputable woman as Annette. If the marriage is seen as a business arrangement, the locals feel that Mason made a bad bargain (Olaussen, 1992, 103). For Annette, this marriage is confirmation that Antoinette is now able to fulfil her role as a respectable, white woman. In the end, the marriage does turn out to be a bad bargain but not for Mr Mason but for Annette. This marriage also seals Antoinette's tragic fate. Thus, Annette's use of hedonic power did not help her in the end. Instead, it doomed her into madness. It is thus interesting that the marriage that was supposed to turn everything for the better, actually lead to tragedy for both the mother and the daughter.

In the dining-room of Antoinette's home, Coulibri, there is a picture hanging on the wall:

> So I looked away from her at my favourite picture, 'The Miller's Daughter', a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping off her shoulders. Then I looked across the white tablecloth and the vase of yellow roses at Mr Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English. And at my mother, so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either. Not my mother. Never had been. Never could be. (Rhys, 2000, 30)

This small passage reveals the main issue between both Mr Mason and Annette and also between Antoinette and her future husband. *The Miller's Daughter* is an example of something that neither Annette nor Antoinette can achieve. No matter what they do or how they act, they cannot resemble

the English ideal that *The Miller's Daughter* represents. Their beauty is not that of the English women and because of this they will always stand out as "so without a doubt not English". In addition to this, neither Mr Mason nor Antoinette's husband can truly accept this fact about their wives. Due to this, there seems to exist a kind of disconnect between them that eventually leads to the end of the marriage.

In the "bargain" between Mr Mason and Annette, Annette traded her possessions and beauty for financial and physical security from Mr Mason. Mr Mason is thus expected to keep up his end of the bargain. Yet, the marriage only further emphasizes the already existing rift between Antoinette's family and the surrounding black community. Mr Mason does not understand how deep the hatred towards the old slave owners runs in the black community. In the end, the blacks end up burning down their estate. Pierre ends up dying in the fire and the rest barely escape with their lives. Outside of the burning house, Antoinette sees someone:

> Then not so far off, I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-class. (Rhys, 2000, 38)

This is an example of how, throughout the first part of the novel, Antoinette wishes to become a part of the black community. The incident with Tia's dress showed how Antoinette was not part of the beautiful and wealthy English. In addition to this, Antoinette had already noted how Mr Mason, "so without a doubt English" was contrasted with her mother, "so without a doubt not English". The interesting part is that while they do not fit in with the English, both Antoinette and Annette are bound by the same expectations placed on white femininity to marry and to become dependent on a man. Furthermore, as a white woman, Antoinette is expected to cultivate the types of personality traits suitable for white femininity. These include fragility, beauty and passivity. While her mother

has fully internalized these ideas, Antoinette is frightened by the restrictions of white femininity. Antoinette's yearning to be a part of the black people can be seen as hope to escape from these restrictions placed on white women. Antoinette has seen that, like Christophine, the other black women seem to be excluded from the expectations of white femininity (Olaussen, 1993). Antoinette also desires this freedom that is granted to the black women. Yet, it is at this point when Antoinette realizes that escape is not possible. She will forever be separated from the black community and she must accept the burden placed on her as a white woman. This is also the point where she begins to fear the kind of future that awaits her.

Antoinette begins having terrifying dreams when she realizes that escape from white femininity is not possible. She has her first dream after the event with Tia's dress. These dreams get worse after she notices that Mr Mason is preparing her to enter into the marriage market. She has a second dream:

> It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. "Here?" He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. "Not here, not yet," he says, and I follow him, weeping. Now I do not try to hold up my dress. We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them. There are steps leading upwards. It is too dark to see the wall or the steps leading upwards. It is too dark to see the wall or the steps, but I know they are there and I think, "It will be when I go up these steps. At the top." I stumble over my dress and cannot get up. (Rhys, 2000, 50)

What is interesting about this dream is the dress that Antoinette is wearing. It is long, white and beautiful. The slippers and the long dress make walking difficult. This dress seems to represent the virginal and pure ideal of womanhood. The slippers and dress may also be symbols of hedonic power. They make walking difficult because Antoinette must be cautious not to get it soiled, not to become sexually active before she has found a husband. After a while, Antoinette no longer cares if

the dress drags across the ground while she walks. She is also scared and sad because the man she is within the dream does not seem to care about her or her safety. In the dreams, Antoinette seems to fear sexual violence. What makes this more frightening for her is that she is not able to get away. All of this must happen. Yet, Antoinette seems to participate in her own subjugation. She willingly walks toward the dark forest. In addition to this, she is the one following the man, not the other way around (Gilchrist, 2012, 474.)

For Annette, the burning of Coulibri and the death of Pierre are too much. She goes mad. Mr Mason puts her in the care of a black couple and seems to forget about her existence. He does not go to see her afterwards. The only one still worried about Annette at this point is Antoinette. Yet, even after this tragedy, Annette is still unable to bear her daughter's presence and pushes her away. After Annette's death, Rochester, Antoinette's husband, asks Antoinette about her mother and the reasons for her madness. Antoinette explains that after her first husband died Annette became sad and unhappy:

> "And very poor," she said. "Don't forget that. For five years. Isn't it quick to say. And isn't it long to live. And lonely. She was so lonely that she grew away from other people. That happens. It happened to me too but it was easier for me because I hardly remembered anything else. For her it was strange and frightening. And then she was so lovely. I used to think that every time she looked in the glass she must have hoped and pretended. I pretended too. Different things of course. You can pretend for a long time, but one day it all falls away and you are alone. We were alone in the most beautiful place in the world, it is not possible that there can be anywhere else so beautiful as Coulibri." (Rhys, 2000, 107–108)

I believe that Coulibri was a safe place for both Annette and Antoinette before Annette's marriage to Mr Mason. While neither Antoinette nor Annette was ever truly happy there due to their loneliness, Coulibri did shield them from the hostile society. Coulibri was a beautiful island in a harsh sea. For Annette, it is difficult to accept that the feminine traits that she had cultivated were of no use in this new world where she is no longer rewarded for them. By the time she married Mr Mason it was already too late. She had spent too much time alone and isolated from the rest of the community to again fit in it. The only escape from the situation she is in is to go mad. In the end,

the very traits that she valued turned against her. Antoinette remembers seeing her mother after Mr Mason had arranged for her to stay with the black couple:

> "I remember the dress she was wearing – an evening dress cut very low, and she was barefoot. … Then she seemed to grow tired and sat down in the rocking-chair. I saw the man lift her up out of the chair and kiss her. I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all soft and limp in his arms and he laughed. The woman laughed too, but she was angry." (Rhys, 2000, 110–111)

Annette has become a plaything. She is at the mercy of the man taking care of her. The roles have changed. The old slave owner has become a victim of the ones she had enslaved. On the other hand, throughout her life, Annette was trapped in the patriarchal society. She had to trade her beauty and youth for security. In a way, she had to make herself into a valuable possession in order to attract a husband. Even though she has gone mad, she is still beautiful and is, even now, dressed in an evening dress. Now, at her most vulnerable, she is used for her beauty but she no longer gets anything in return. It could be said that Annette's beauty no longer bestows any power on her. She is now powerless in the hands of her caretakers. Although, it is difficult to tell how much Annette understands about what is happening to her, Antoinette's comment, "there are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about" (Rhys, 2000, 106), fits Annette's situation perfectly. The Annette that Antoinette knew died with Pierre.

After the burning of Coulibri, Antoinette stayed for a while with her aunt Cora. When Cora could no longer take care of her, Antoinette moved to an all-girl convent nearby. Antoinette is pleased to stay at the convent. It could be said that it is the only place where Antoinette feels happiness and security. In a way, the convent is a secure island among the surrounding patriarchal society. It is interesting that the convent is depicted as a safe place for a woman when the religious institution itself is thought as patriarchal. Yet, the convent is not completely absent of patriarchal influences. Despite its safety for Antoinette, the convent is not able to save her from being passed between men and having her future decided for her by the men in her life. In addition to this, the convent cannot keep the patriarchal society away completely but some of the same issues are

present there than in the outside world. The only difference is that, at the convent, the women are able to deal with these issues in an enclosed and protected environment.

The convent is not without a hierarchy. While this hierarchy does exist, it is based on something else than race and class (Olaussen, 1992, 106). This is, of course, positive but while I agree with Olaussen, I do believe that the hierarchy inside the convent is not without its problems. The main issue is the de Plana sisters. They hold the top spot in the hierarchy between the girls. Both the other girls and the teachers like them. The teachers praise them, "sometimes it was Miss Hélène's hair and sometimes Miss Germaine's impeccable deportment, and sometimes it was the care Miss Louise took of her beautiful teeth" (Rhys, 2000, 46). Like with Annette, they are praised for the things that are a part of the traditional ideal of a woman. They are admired for their beauty and their poise. They are not praised for their achievements and accomplishments, only for their looks and manners. This is an example of how ingrained the patriarchal ideology has become in the minds of the women. It seems that the girls at the convent are being taught the importance of hedonic power and through that the traditional female role. Even in this enclosed community, the surrounding society's ideas about women are still present. The only difference is that "if we were never envious, they never seemed vain" (Rhys, 2000, 46). In the convent, the other women do not seem to represent 'an enemy' to each other. They are not rivals in a competition for a man or for some other prize.

Antoinette is like the others in that she also admires the de Plana sisters. She wants to learn how to look and act like them. In one instance, Antoinette wanted to know how Hélène de Plana is able to style her hair so effortlessly without a mirror:

> "Please, Hélène, tell me how you do your hair, because when I grow up I want mine to look like yours."
> "It's very easy. You comb it upwards, like this and then push it a little forward, like that, and then you pin it here and here. Never too many pins."
> "Yes, but Hélène, mine does not look like yours, whatever I do."
> Her eyelashes flickered, she turned away, too polite to say the obvious thing. (Rhys, 2000, 45–46)

Antoinette is unable to achieve the beauty and grace of the de Plana sisters. While Antoinette is also beautiful, her beauty is of a different kind. Furthermore, Antoinette can never resemble the brown skinned Hélène. While both of them are of Creole descent, Antoinette is separated from the de Plana sisters because of the colour of her skin. Her hair will never look like Hélène's no matter what Antoinette does.

The convent does allow Antoinette to release her creativity:

> We are cross-stitching silk roses on a pale background. We can colour the roses as we choose and mine are green, blue and purple. Underneath I will write my name in fire red, Antoinette Mason, née Cosway, Mount Calvary Convent, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1839. (Rhys, 2000, 44)

Antoinette seems to feel joy in being able to channel her energy into her project. This scene also shows Antoinette's love of colours. The flowers in her work bloom in different colours and her name will be written in fire red. This is one other aspect that separates her from the modest English women. Antoinette is too vibrant to blend in and stay in the background. She always seems to stand out. This scene also parallels the very end of the book where Antoinette writes her name in fire red when she burns down Thornfield Hall.

The teachings that the students receive are centred on women. The students are told "stories from the lives of the Saints, St Rose, St Barbara, St Agnes" (Rhys, 2000, 44). Even the convent's own Saint is a woman, St Innocenzia. Yet, "the saints we hear about were all very beautiful and wealthy" and "all were loved by rich and handsome young men" (Rhys, 2000, 45). Of course, it is good that the students are being taught about female saints. In addition to this, these saints all have their own wealth. However, these saints are also beautiful and all of them are connected to a man. Again, while some of the aspects connected to the convent seem to subvert the social order, the patriarchal society is still always present. In a way, the convent does provide shelter from the outside world but it cannot shut it out completely.

In the end, the walls of the convent are not strong enough to keep out the patriarchal society. First of all, Antoinette mentions that a Bishop visits the convent every year. He is dismayed about the fact that in his opinion the nuns are too lax. Second of all, Mr Mason begins to visit Antoinette at the convent. He gives Antoinette "presents when we parted, sweets, a locket, a bracelet, once a very pretty dress which, of course, [she] could not wear" (Rhys, 2000, 48). Antoinette is not pleased with these presents. She "answered coldly, "I can't wear all these things you buy for me" (Rhys, 2000, 49). It is clear that Mr Mason is preparing Antoinette for her inevitable marriage. Mr Mason reduces Antoinette into an object that can be passed between men without her consent. Antoinette is not given any choice in her future. Mr Mason tells Antoinette that she "can't be hidden away all [her] life." Antoinette cannot help but silently think "why not?" (Rhys, 2000, 49). The thought of leaving the convent and being forced to marry someone makes Antoinette feel ill. This feeling keeps intensifying. When Mr Mason is leaving, she notes that "it may have been the way he smiled, but again a feeling of dismay, sadness, loss, almost choked me" (Rhys, 2000, 49). After this, Antoinette no longer feels safe and secure at the convent. She knows what awaits her in the future and she knows that there is no way to avoid it. Interestingly, it is not Antoinette's own choice to use hedonic power in order to find a husband. Hedonic power was thrust on her. After this situation Antoinette begins to rely on hedonic power to keep her marriage together. This is also where part one of the novel ends. The second and longest part is narrated by Rochester, even though he remains nameless in the book. It could be said that at the point in her life where her future is decided for her, Antoinette also loses the ability to narrate her own story.

4.2. Part Two

When the second part of the novel begins, Antoinette and Mr Rochester are already married and on the way to the house where they will spend their honeymoon. It is also the first time Rochester describes his new wife:

> She held up the skirt of her riding habit and ran across the street. 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. And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette? After we left Spanish Town I suppose. Or did I notice it before and refuse to admit what I saw? (Rhys, 2000, 56)

From this paragraph it is easy to see that Rochester views Antoinette as somehow alien and other than him. To him, she is not English but someone who is deeply connected to the West Indies. This seems to create a type of disconnect between Rochester and Antoinette. He does not allow himself to let go of his English identity and the ideas that are connected to it. He does not allow himself to feel at home in the West Indies. Interestingly, while Antoinette has always felt isolated from the community, Rochester sees Antoinette as being inseparable from the island.

While they are riding to the honeymoon house, Rochester is able to admire the view around him. The beautiful scenery does not awe Rochester but instead it disturbs him:

> Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger. Her pleading expression annoys me. I have not bought her, she has bought me, or so she thinks. (Rhys, 2000, 59)

The land does not feel familiar to him. This makes him reject it and push it away. In my opinion, Rochester's views about the beautiful nature that surrounds him can also be connected to his feelings towards Antoinette. To him, Antoinette is as beautiful and strange as the surrounding land. As I have already said, I feel that Rochester connects Antoinette to the West Indies. His feelings about the island shift in the same way as his attitude towards Antoinette. Yet, what I find interesting is that while the strange nature of the island and Antoinette frighten him and cause him to feel hatred towards them both, there are moments in the novel where Rochester seems to wish to understand that what is strange to him:

> As for her, I'd forgotten her for the moment. So I shall never understand why, suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain that everything I had imagined to be truth was false. False.

> Only the magic and the dream are true – all the rest's a lie. Let it go. Here is the secret. Here. (*But it is lost, that secret, and those who know it cannot tell it.*) (Rhys, 2000, 138, emphasis in the original).

These moments make the ending of the novel feel especially tragic. Rochester could have accepted and loved both the island and Antoinette. In order for Antoinette and Rochester's marriage to work, Rochester would have to embrace hybridity. He would not only have to accept Antoinette's hybrid nature but also to become one himself. He would have to emerge himself into the culture of the West Indies and to learn to take that as part of his identity. At times, he seems to entertain the possibility of letting go of his logical and rational view of the world and embracing the inhabitants of this strange island. Rochester feels frightened by these feelings. It makes him feel as if the island and Antoinette are putting a spell on him. He feels as if he is losing himself in this place. He cannot allow for his sense of identity to become unstable. Because of this, he must turn away from the island and from Antoinette, who is a part of this place in his eyes. In the end, he retreats back to his English identity and hardens himself to everything connected to the West Indies, including Antoinette.

Antoinette attempts to please Rochester in every way. She knows that Rochester would rather have married a Victorian English woman and, at times, Antoinette tries to act more like what she believes Rochester wants. One morning, Rochester hears Antoinette talking to a servant:

> I woke to the sound of voices in the next room, laughter and water being poured out. I listened, still drowsy. Antoinette said, "Don't put any more scent on my hair. He doesn't like it." The other: "The man don't like scent? I never hear that before." (Rhys, 2000, 66)

Scented hair is connected to the West Indies. Antoinette does not want Rochester to link her to the island. She wishes that he would see her as somehow more white, more English. Leaving her hair unscented is merely one of the ways she uses in order to fade her Creole background. Antoinette also uses hedonic power in order to hold on to Rochester. It seems to work in the very beginning of the marriage but the effects of hedonic power fade quickly. Soon, Rochester even seems to resent

Antoinette's beauty and the hedonic power connected to it. He begins to feel as if Antoinette's power is putting him under some type of spell. In the end, he must rip this power away from Antoinette and drain her of her beauty. This attitude of Rochester's explains some of what happens at the end of the novel.

In one crucial aspect Antoinette greatly differs from the Victorian English ladies; she enjoys having sex. Even Rochester notes that "very soon she was as eager for what's called loving as I was" (Rhys, 2000, 77). This attitude, of course, differs from the Victorian English beliefs that a proper woman was not interested in sex. Rochester, on the other hand, feels a sexual pull towards Antoinette. One day even "the sight of a dress which she'd left lying on her bedroom floor made [him] breathless and savage with desire" (Rhys, 2000, 78). While it is clear that Rochester is sexually attracted to Antoinette, he also seems to resent this fact. He feels that Antoinette is intentionally attempting to seduce him. Actually Rochester seems to seek examples of Antoinette's unrestrained sexuality (Burns, 2010, 23.) This sexual attraction that Rochester feels towards Antoinette begins to turn to disgust during the course of the novel. In Rochester's eyes Antoinette begins to resemble a whore:

> She'll loosen her black hair, and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She'll not care who she's loving.) She'll moan and cry and give herself as no sane woman would – or could. *Or could*. (Rhys, 2000, 135–136, emphasis in the original)

Antoinette's sexual nature, her beauty, and her Creole background make Rochester connect Antoinette with the stereotype of sexual wantonness attached to blacks. The stereotype of the black whore is the belief that a black woman is sensual and is continually attempting to lure the white man into having sex with her (Olaussen, 1992, 145). Even the things that Rochester used to appreciate about Antoinette turn into sources of hatred. During dinner, Rochester watched as "she was wearing the white dress I had admired, but it had slipped untidily over one shoulder and seemed too large for her" (Rhys, 2000, 105). To Rochester, this is merely another example of Antoinette's essential nature finally coming out. Yet, this scene could be read in another way.

Antoinette's favourite picture hanging on the wall of Coulibri, *The Miller's Daughter*, depicted a beautiful English woman. The woman in the picture also had a dress slipping off her shoulders. Antoinette could thus be seen as attempting to recreate the picture and to make herself appear English (Burns, 2010, 23.) Rochester does not understand Antoinette's attempt to conform to the English cultural values. Rochester cannot grasp Antoinette's intentions because of the fact that like Annette, Antoinette "is so without a doubt not English" (Rhys, 2000, 30). To Rochester, Antoinette is merely an example of the colonial stereotypes prevalent in the English society at that time.

Antoinette also differs from Jane Eyre who was happy to dress modestly and to not stand out in social occasions. In addition to this, Jane found no pleasure in dresses and other forms of self-adornment. Antoinette, on the other hand, finds pleasure in beauty and she relishes in the hedonic power that it brings her. Unfortunately, this also plays a part in her downfall. Unlike Jane who rejected hedonic power and was uncomfortable with Rochester's attempts to clothe her in expensive dresses and jewels, Antoinette enjoys adorning herself:

> She seemed pleased when I complimented her on her dress and told me she had it made in St Pierre, Martinique. "They call this fashion *à la Joséphine*."
> "You talk of St Pierre as though it were Paris," I said.
> "But it is the Paris of the West Indies." (Rhys, 2000, 67)

Antoinette is not only pleased that Rochester complimented her but she is also aware of fashion trends and has her dresses made in the Paris of the West Indies. In addition to this, Rochester makes note that "all day she'd be like any other girl, smile at herself in her looking-glass (*do you like this scent?*), [and] try to teach me her songs, for they haunted me" (Rhys, 2000, 76, emphasis in the original). Thus, Antoinette also enjoys admiring herself in the mirror and wearing different scents. In this way, Antoinette resembles the beautiful women in *Jane Eyre,* Blanche Ingram and Georgiana Reed. She is like the women that Brontë subtly criticized in her novel. The difference is that unlike Blanche and Georgiana, Antoinette does not use her beauty as a way to find a handsome and rich husband. In fact, it seems that Antoinette would have preferred not have been forced to

marry at all. Yet, these traits that Antoinette possesses do not seem to be criticized in the *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The only character in the novel that seems to find Antoinette's interests vain is Rochester. He appreciates Antoinette's beauty but treats it as a trivial matter. Actually, it seems that, in this novel, it is acceptable for women to find pleasure in beauty and self-adornment. Yet, the women using hedonic power still end up having tragic fates. I do not think that this is due to their beauty but that it merely showcases how powerless all the women in this novel are. They may possess some type of power, either hedonic (Annette and Antoinette) or agonic (Christophine) but this power is not enough for them to go up against the patriarchal society.

Christophine and Rochester do not get along. Rochester looks down on Christophine because she is a black servant. Thus, she cannot be his equal. Yet, there is another reason for Rochester's hatred of Christophine, she seems to intimidate him in some way. He notes that "if she were taller, […] one of these strapping women dressed up to the nines, I might be afraid of her" (Rhys, 2000, 62). His attitude towards Christophine could also be caused by the fact that she is not bound by the expectations of white femininity. Another factor could be that Christophine uses agonic power and this makes Rochester feel intimidated by her. In addition to this, Christophine is quite independent and she does not need a husband in order to survive. She also seems to understand Rochester's motivations and this makes him unnerved. In a parallel to the very beginning of the novel, Christophine tells Antoinette "your husband certainly love money, […] that is no lie." She continues "money have pretty face for everybody, but for that man money pretty like pretty self, he can't see nothing else." (Rhys, 2000, 94). For Rochester, money is thus more appealing and beautiful than Antoinette could ever be.

In the end, Christophine tries to help Antoinette get free from her marriage. The final exchange between Christophine and Rochester reveals how powerless Christophine is to go against patriarchal society. She is unable to convince Rochester to let Antoinette stay at the West Indies. There is a comment in that conversation that seals Antoinette's tragic fate:

> Perhaps because I was so quiet and composed she added maliciously, "She marry with someone else. She forget about you and live happy."
> A pang of rage and jealousy shot through me then. Oh no, she won't forget. I laughed. (Rhys, 2000, 131)

Rochester wants nothing to do with Antoinette but he is also unwilling to allow her to be happy with someone else. Christophine herself is saved from the restraints of white femininity but she is not strong enough to save someone else from that fate. The only thing Christophine can do is walk away and leave Antoinette to suffer in the hands of her husband. As I have already noted, even the use of agonic power does not give women the ability to overcome their lower social status.

Magic or obeah is also an important part of the novel. Christophine reportedly knows how to perform magic. Thus, it is to Christophine that Antoinette goes to in order to salvage her crumbling marriage to Rochester. Christophine gives Antoinette a type of "love potion" that would make Rochester want to get close to Antoinette again. Her plan backfires:

> The light changed her. I had never seen her look so gay or so beautiful. She poured wine into two glasses and handed me one but I swear it was before I drank that I longed to bury my face in her hair as I used to do. I said, "We are letting ghosts trouble us. Why shouldn't we be happy?" She said, "Christophine knows about ghosts too, but that is not what she calls them." She need not have done what she did to me. I will always swear that, she need not have done it. When she handed me that glass she was smiling. I remember saying in a voice that was not my own that it was too light. I remember putting out the candles on the table near the bed and that is all I remember. All I will remember of the night. (Rhys, 2000, 113)

The gap between Rochester and Antoinette has thus grown too large and the potion was Antoinette's last effort to save her marriage. This incident could also be seen as Antoinette's effort to become the white English lady that Rochester wants instead of the alien Jamaican woman that he seems to hate. Her plan is unsuccessful because even magic is not strong enough to turn Antoinette into someone else (Mackie, 2006, 211). In addition to this, Antoinette's use of the potion may also be seen as Antoinette's attempt to use agonic power on Rochester. Not only that, but she procured this power from Christophine who Rochester does not care for. These two issues put together may explain why afterwards Rochester is disgusted with her. This event also meant the death of

Rochester and Antoinette's marriage. Her use of magic drives him to have sex with a black servant and leads Antoinette into the path to "madness".

Rochester is also guilty of obeah, of his type of magic. Rochester's 'magic' is the power that the patriarchal society has bestowed to him. Rochester's 'magic' could also be called agonic power and this power of Rochester is stronger than any power that Antoinette has. In a way, the entire marriage between Rochester and Antoinette could be seen as a power struggle. Antoinette uses hedonic power on Rochester in order to "put him under her spell". While it works for a while, in the end, Rochester cannot bear being under Antoinette's sway. Thus, Rochester must make sure that Antoinette is left powerless. Due to their marriage, Rochester now owns all of Antoinette's money and her future is basically in Rochester's hands. In addition to this, Rochester begins to steal Antoinette's identity from her. He starts calling Antoinette, Bertha. Antoinette dislikes his new name for her:

> When I turned from the window she was drinking again.
> "Bertha," I said.
> "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too." (Rhys, 2000, 121)

In a way, this is a show of the power that Rochester holds over Antoinette. He even has the authority to re-name her and she can have no say in the matter. Rochester's actions slowly begin to have an effect on Antoinette. Towards the end of the novel, Antoinette starts to lose herself. It comes to a point where Antoinette is gone and only Bertha remains. In fact, in part three, Antoinette's name is never spoken out loud. Antoinette has thus become nameless (Kimmey, 2005, 122.) Antoinette herself sees the effects Rochester's re-naming of her has had. She realizes that "names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass" (Rhys, 2000, 147).

Rochester's re-naming of Antoinette is not the only thing that he did to her. He also seems to take away the one aspect of Antoinette that she has always appreciated about herself, her beauty. After the incident with the black servant, Rochester is surprised to see Antoinette for the first time:

> The door of Antoinette's room opened. When I saw her I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare. However when she spoke her voice was low, almost inaudible. (Rhys, 2000, 120)

In a way, Rochester has managed to turn Antoinette into the monstrous woman found in the attic of Thornfield Hall. Rochester's kind of obeah seems to turn Antoinette in to a zombie. Her beautiful features become 'disfigured' after Rochester seems to suck the life and beauty out of her. She is essentially left feeling empty and bitter. This event could also be seen as Rochester uses agonic power in order to suck the hedonic power away from Antoinette. In this way, Rochester steals away the last bit of power that Antoinette possess and leaves her completely under his authority. This seems to have been Rochester's plan all along as is revealed in his conversation with Christophine:

> "But you don't love. All you want is to break her up. And it help you break her up."
> (*Break her up*)
> "She tell me in the middle of all this you start calling her names. Marionette. Some word so."
> "Yes, I remember, I did."
> (*Marionette, Antoinette, Marionetta, Antoinetta*)
> "That word mean doll, eh? Because she don't speak. You want to force her to cry and to speak."
> (*Force her to cry and to speak*)" (Rhys, 2000, 127, emphasis in the original).

In Rochester's eyes, Antoinette is turned into a doll. Antoinette is his possession in the same way as a doll would be and he can do what he pleases with his possessions.

In the end, Rochester must remove the threat to his identity by leaving the West Indies and taking Antoinette/Bertha with him. In order for him to be correct, he must cast Antoinette in the role of the mad woman who is as vain and free with her affections as the black whores. He uses his own obeah on Antoinette and reduces her into something invisible:

> But first, first I will destroy your hatred. Now. My hate is colder, stronger, and you'll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing.
> I did it too. I saw the hate go out of her eyes. I forced it out. And with the hate her beauty. She was only a ghost. A ghost in the grey daylight. Nothing left but hopelessness. *Say die and I will die. Say die and watch me die*. (Rhys, 2000, 140, emphasis in the original).

Yet, even when he is leaving, there seems to exist the possibility that everything could have turned out differently. He could have been happy in the West Indies and he could have loved Antoinette but this would have required Rochester to be the one who is 'mad'. Now, that role falls onto Antoinette and Rochester is able to hold on to his sanity.

4.3. Part Three

Part three is the shortest section in the novel and it only comprises of ten pages. In part three of the novel, Antoinette is again the narrator of her story. At this point, she is locked in the attic of Thornfield Hall with Grace Poole as her guardian. She is only allowed to have the basic amenities that keep her alive. She is no longer allowed to have even a mirror:

> There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us – hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I? (Rhys, 2000, 147)

At this point Antoinette seems to have lost everything. She is locked in a cold room in a foreign country, separated from the rest of her family and she has lost not only her fortune but also her name. The only role left to her is the role of the madwoman in the attic. Antoinette also seems disconnected from herself. She feels that she is inseparable from the West Indies and cannot become a part of this English world of dull colours. In the end, Antoinette's only connection to the West Indies is her red dress:

> The scent that came from the dress was very faint at first, then it grew stronger. The smell of vetivert and frangipanni, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees when they are flowering. The smell of the sun and the smell of the rain. (Rhys, 2000, 151)

The red dress is as connected to the West Indies as Antoinette. Touching the dress helps Antoinette reconnect with her identity. The dress is a "comment on an English character which fears and so represses any outbreak of spontaneous warmth, joy or colour" (Tiffin, 1978). While the red dress represents the warmth and light of the West Indies to Antoinette, for Rochester the dress merely reinforces his view of Antoinette:

> "Does it make me look intemperate and unchaste?" I said. That man told me so. He had found out that Sandi had been to the house and that I went to see him. I never knew who told. "Infamous daughter of an infamous mother," he said to me (Rhys, 2000, 152)

Rochester is unable to see Antoinette as anything other than the Bertha who would have sex with anyone. This makes Antoinette doubt her own view of the dress that she loves. Grace Poole recommends Antoinette to forget about the red dress and instead to wear the grey wrapper. This wrapper is symbolic of the 'death-in-life' that Antoinette has been assigned to while the red dress is a signifier of a type of escape from this life (Simpson, 2005, 131). Yet, Antoinette cannot forget the red dress and "[she] looked at the dress on the floor and it was as if the fire had spread across the room" (Rhys, 2000, 153). The red dress reminds Antoinette of the burning of the Coulibri and the hatred of the freed slaves that set it on fire. These old memories are linked together with her current situation and it makes Antoinette determined to escape. Thus, the red dress is connected to Antoinette's fury and passion and it shows Antoinette a way out of her imprisonment, fire (Gilchrist, 2012, 485).

Richard Mason comes to visit Antoinette in England. Yet, he does not even seem to recognize Antoinette anymore. He looks at her as if she were a stranger. This makes Antoinette furious. She believes that if she were wearing her red dress he would have recognized her. In this way, the dress is almost a physical representation of Antoinette's lost identity. Another example of Antoinette's disconnect with herself happens when she sees herself in the mirror. She had heard tales about a

ghost of a woman that haunted the house. This makes Antoinette frightened because she does not want to see this ghost. Finally, she comes across a mirror and "it was then that [she]" saw her – the ghost". It was a "woman with streaming hair" and "she was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her" (Rhys, 2000, 154). The ghost is "at once herself and her dead mother, both willed into a zombie existence by their British captors" (Simpson, 20005, 132). This section also creates a parallel with the scene in *Jane Eyre* where Jane does not recognize her own appearance. In both instances, the person staring back from the mirror is something supernatural, something not human and also someone with supernatural powers.

The idea that Antoinette got from seeing her red dress lying on the floor leads her to have one final dream:

> Then I turned round and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and the bamboos and tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of the moss on the garden wall. I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter. I heard the parrot call as he did when he saw a stranger, *Qui est là? Qui est là?* and the man who hated me was calling too, Bertha! Bertha! The wind caught my hair and it streamed out like wings. It might bear me up, I thought, if I jumped to those hard stones. But when I looked over the edge I saw a pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? And I heard the man's voice, Bertha! Bertha! All this I saw and heard in a fraction of a second. And the sky so red. Someone screamed and I thought, *Why did I scream?* I called "Tia!" and jumped and woke. (Rhys, 2000, 155)

This dream is again a premonition of what will happen in the very near future. It represents Antoinette's burning of Thornfield Hall and consequent suicide. This incident is also another example of Antoinette using agonic power. The question that I am interested in is whether the only acceptable time for a woman to use agonic power is when she is mad or whether the cost of using agonic power is the label of insanity. I believe that the latter is true in these novels. The label of insanity gives woman the opportunity to use agonic power. Thus, a woman has to pay a heavy price for this 'freedom'. Some critics, such as Maria Olaussen, sees this scene as Antoinette's triumph

over Rochester and his actions that led her to her imprisonment in the attic. These critics see Antoinette joyfully burning down her prison and flying to freedom. I partly agree with these comments. I do agree that in her suicide and in burning down Thornfield Hall she is able to find her escape and she is able to enact her revenge on Rochester. She burns down the great house in the same way that the freed slaves burned down Coulibri. It was the slaves' way of enacting revenge on their old masters. It is also the method that Antoinette chooses in order to find her freedom. In this way, Antoinette turns into the symbol of the rebellious slave. In addition to this, Antoinette could also be seen as fulfilling her role as the mad woman in the attic. Yet, I cannot call this incident as purely a triumph from Antoinette's point of view. I believe that there is also an element of tragedy in Antoinette situation. In the end, the only way for Antoinette to escape is to commit suicide. Her powerlessness and her status as Rochester's possession in the eyes of the law, leave her with no choice but death. While her destructive violence hurts her captors, she must also lose her life at the same time.

Unlike Jane, Antoinette is not strong enough to resist the powers of patriarchy. Not only is Antoinette constantly attempting to find her identity but she is also not the type to try to escape from her situation. In addition to this, Antoinette's beauty is connected to her oppression. Unlike Jane, she is beautiful enough to become an object to be traded between men. Antoinette also plays a part in her own victimization. She meekly accepts her situation and she does not try to save herself. In addition to this, Antoinette is content to use merely hedonic power and, at least in these novels, hedonic power seems to lead to the fulfilling the traditional gender roles and the maintaining the status quo. Jane, on the other hand, never had the chance to use hedonic power and thus she had to find other ways to affect her life and destiny. Perhaps Rochester was right when he read: "*Rose elle a vécu*," I said and laughed. "Is that poem true? Have all beautiful things sad destinies?" (Rhys, 2000, 72).

5. Conclusion

In my thesis I have been studying the connection between beauty and power from the angle of both literature and everyday life. I have found that, in everyday life, beauty is expected of women and those who do not or cannot comply with these expectations are punished. Beautiful women are also treated differently. They are rewarded for their beauty throughout their lives and, according to studies, they are happier with their lives than the rest of us. In addition to this, the ugly are disadvantaged due to their looks. Thus, they must plan their lives around these disadvantages and they must also work harder to achieve some of the same rewards that are merely given to the beautiful people. Beauty is also a valuable commodity in the world of dating and romance. In these instances, beauty is seen as something that can be traded for a more desirable match. Thus, the beautiful have a wider variety of options to choose from.

In literature, the importance of beauty is already emphasized in the popular fairy-tales. It is through these stories that children learn the traditional gender roles. In these fairy-tales, beauty is often connected with goodness whereas the evil witch is regularly ugly. Furthermore, the beautiful women in fairy-tales are frequently characterised as passive, dependent on men and also reliant on hedonic power. In addition to this, they may not feel any need to develop their personalities because they are used to being rewarded for their looks. The ugly witch character is often the one using agonic power and this may be the reason why she cannot be beautiful. In addition to this, the ugly characters also may have more freedom to step outside the prescribed gender roles due to their 'defective' femaleness.

Jane Eyre portrays the plain woman as the protagonist. This was especially revolutionary at the time this novel was written. In addition to this, beautiful women surround plain Jane throughout her life and she is forced to compare herself against them. It is through these comparisons that she learns her own value and worth. In the novel, all of these beautiful women are portrayed as having flaws in their personalities due to the fact that they have relied too much on their looks and have felt

no need to develop their personalities. Georgiana Reed is clearly spoiled and insolent, Blanche Ingram is cold and proud whereas Rosamund Oliver is doll-like and as weak as one. All of them are reliant on hedonic power and while this brings them an advantage in the marriage market, they are still not able to free themselves from the restrictions society places on women. In fact, hedonic power seems to uphold the traditional gender roles and maintain the status quo. In comparison with these women, hedonic power is denied from Jane and because of this she must get through life relying merely on her personality and abilities. In this, Jane does defy the traditional feminine role. Yet, at the very end of the novel, Jane has received a large sum of money and is married with children. Thus, the ending of Jane's story resembles that of the traditional heroines found in novels.

Wide Sargasso Sea gives us the story of Antoinette Mason. She spends her childhood in the West Indies isolated from the rest of the community with her mother and baby brother. Her mother, Annette, clings to the traditional female role. Annette feels that she needs to find herself a husband through her beauty who will then provide for her and the rest of the family while she bears him a male heir. Antoinette fears the life ahead of her as a white woman and attempts to escape the restrictions of white femininity into black femininity. In the end, Antoinette realizes that there is no escape for her and she must accept her fate that is remarkably similar to her mothers. Both Annette and Antoinette use hedonic power in order to keep their husbands satisfied. A comparison with this is Christophine who not only uses agonic power but is also free from many of the expectations placed on women. Yet, all of the women in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are united in their powerlessness. They all find out that the power that they possess is not enough to go up against the patriarchal society. In the end, the only way for Antoinette to escape the power of men is to set the great house on fire and to commit suicide.

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