THE MAN WITH NO NAME

– THE STRUGGLING NARRATOR IN JEAN RHYS'S WIDE SARGASSO SEA

University of Tampere
School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies
English Philology
Pro Gradu Thesis
October 2006
Sari Heinonen

Tampereen yliopisto
Englantilainen filologia
Kieli- ja käännöstieteiden laitos

HEINONEN, SARI: The Man with No Name
- The Struggling Narrator in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Pro gradu- tutkielma, 88 sivua (+ suomenkielinen tiivistelmä, 1 sivu)

Työni aiheena on Jean Rhysin Romaani *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) ja erityisesti sen nimetön mieskertoja. Charlotte Brontën romaanin *Jane Eyre* on sanottu synnyttäneen valkoisen brittiläisen/eurooppalaisen naisen subjektina, mutta tämä tapahtui toisen naisen kustannuksella; ullakolla olevan hullun vaimon. Sitä vastoin *Wide Sargasso Sea* kirjoittaa uudelleen hullun vaimon tarinan, synnyttäen näin valkoisen kreolin subjektina. Kenen kustannuksella? Kirjalla on vähintään kaksi kertojaa: Antoinette Cosway (uudelleen nimetty Bertha Rochester) ja hänen englantilainen aviomiehensä. Muutkin kertojaäänet saavat kuitenkin tilansa tässä tekstissä, joka moniäänisyydessään hangoittelee yksinkertaistavaa, yksiselitteistä tulkintaa vastaan. Sellaisia se kuitenkin tuntui saavan käyttämissäni lähteissä, joista useimmat edustavat feminististä kirjallisuudentutkimusta, ja näistä ristiriitaisuuksista rakennan omaa tulkintaani. Pohdin nimettömän kertojan roolia tässä romaanissa. Miksi hänen tekstinsä siellä on, ja kuka hän on? Kun kahden romaanin välinen linkki on selkiö, miksei hänellä ole nimeä? Yritän kuunnella niitä puolia, jotka ovat lähdekirjallisuudessani vaiettuja tai sivuutettuja koska ne ovat olleet ”sopimattomia”. Tavoitteeni on lukea nimettömän miehen teksti omana kertomuksenaan, ei vain Antoinetten tarinan osasena. Työni on spekulatiivinen luenta, jossa pyrin tekstienväliseen vuoropuheluun Rhysin ja Brontën romaanien ja lähdekirjallisuuteni kanssa, pohtien ja testaten erilaisia ajatuksia ja näkökulmia. Tavoitteena on Rhysin tekstin tapaan ommella monien äänien kirjava tilkkutäkki.

Rhys pystyi nimeämään uudestaan ullakolta lunastamansa kreolin symboloimaan sitä, että tämä hahmo on jotain aivan muuta kuin Brontën romaanissa. Rochesterin suhteen hän teki saman kun ei nimennyt häntä ollenkaan. Nimettömyys on erittäin tärkeä seikka. Nimetön mies on tuleva herra Rochester, jonka Rhys kirjoittaa harjoittelemassa totuuttaan, taistelemassa kerronnan hallinnasta. Kun hänen oma versionsa tapahtumista ja hänen taitonsa kertoa se ovat valmiita, hän voi ylittää tekstien välisen kuilun ja siirtyä Brontën romaaniin. Nimettömän kertojan voi lukea myös Charlotte Brontëna, jonka Rhys näin kutsuu tutustumaan siihen maailman, jonka kuvaus Brontën tekstissä Rhysiä häiritsi.

Päätelmäni on, että Rhys menee erilaisten uudelleenkirjoitusten toiselle puolen. Hänen tekstinsä osoittaa kuinka henkilöhahmon subjektius voidaan luoda ilman, että se tehdään jonkin toisen hahmon kustannuksella. *Wide Sargasso Sea* kirjoittaa uusiksi koko sivuhenkilön käsitteen. Kun on aina toinen puoli, ei ole enää ”meitä” ja ”heitä”. Rhysin teksti haastaa huomaaman hierarkiset ajatusrakennelmat siellä missä hierarkioita ollaan purkavinaan. Kaikki alistaminen, perustui se sitten rotuun, sukupuoleen tai kolonialismiin, käyttää samaa mekanismia, keskiön ja marginaalin hierarkiaa. Rhysin anti tähän yhtälöön on se, että nämä erilaiset alistusmekanismit eivät ole vain samankaltaisia, vaan samoja. Niiden motiivit ja vaikutukset ovat samoja, ne kaikki ovat yhtä merkityksellisiä ja tärkeitä. Tämän asian tunnistaminen on mielestäni ensiarvoisen tärkeää Rhysin työn analysoimiselle. Vaikka olisikin valittu jokin tietty näkökulma, tekstiä ei pitäisi yrittää kesyttää, vaan säilyttää luenta mahdollisimman avoimena eri näkökulmille.

Avainsanat: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Jane Eyre*, intertekstuaalisuus, spekulatiivinen luenta, Rochester-hahmo, kamppaileva kertoja

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Why *Wide Sargasso Sea*?

"Such terrible things happen… Why? Why?" (*WSS*, 51)

"There is always the other side, always." (*WSS*, 106)

The connections between Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) have been well established in previous scholarship (e.g. Howells 1991, Angier, 1992) and the issue has been giving voice to the madwoman in the attic. The subject of my thesis is Jean Rhys's novel and especially the role of the nameless English husband of Antoinette Cosway. I will start by explaining why I have chosen this point of view in a text that is really the story of the mad first wife of Mr Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's novel. I will take the roundabout way by looking at the connection between these two novels and the reasons Rhys herself gave for writing hers. The "clues" come from the author's letters (published in *Jean Rhys Letters*, hereafter *JRL*) and interviews.

There seem to be three main points in the reasons Rhys had for writing *Wide Sargasso Sea*. One is that as a white West Indian Rhys felt that Brontë's description of that part of the world and the people living there was not accurate. The second one is the reaction to the role that the mad wife plays or actually does not play. Rhys reacts to the "off- stage" status of this character, and tries to "write her a life". The third point is the one from which I will try to expand the reading of this novel. Rhys was puzzled by the cruelty that Mr Rochester displays towards his

wife in *Jane Eyre* (hereafter *JE*). Rhys describes her feelings of *Jane Eyre* in a letter she wrote in 1964:

> The Brontë sisters had of course a touch of genius (or much more) especially Emily. So reading *Jane Eyre* one's swept along regardless. But *I*, reading it later, and often, was vexed at her portrait of the "paper tiger" lunatic, the all wrong creole scenes, and above all by the real cruelty of Mr Rochester. After all he was a very wealthy man and there were many kinder ways of disposing of (or hiding) an unwanted wife- I heard the true story of one- and the man behaved very differently. (Another clue).
> (To Francis Wyndham, April 14th 1964, *JRL* pp. 261-266)

This maintains that the character of Rochester is in a way "rewritten" in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (hereafter *WSS*), as well. Another thing that puts forward the idea of studying him is the fact that his narration takes up most of the pages in the book. So my questions are: why is his text there and what does it do? His later actions need to be explained: why is he so cruel, why does he not dispose of his unwanted wife in a kinder way. Consequently, his narrative tells a story of its own, his version of it. Rhys seemed to feel that in her effort to write the story of Bertha another narrator was needed because the narration of the mad wife would not convey everything: the husband's narration is there to give credibility to the primary character and to make her story convincing. Even so he is allowed to tell his own story. Something that Bertha did not get to do; she was a necessary element in the story, her character was indispensable to the plot, but she was cut out, pushed off-stage, shut up.

> I've read and re-read *Jane Eyre* of course, and I am sure that the character must be "built up". I wrote you about that. The Creole in Charlotte Brontë's novel is a lay figure- repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls, laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry- *off stage.* For me (and for you I hope) she must be right *on stage*. She must be at least plausible with a past, the *reason* why Mr Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the *reason* why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad, even the *reason* why she tries to set everything on fire, and eventually succeeds. (Personally, I think *that* one is simple. She is cold- and fire is the only warmth she knows in England.)
>
> I do not see how Charlotte Brontë's madwoman could possibly convey all this. It *might* be done but it would not be convincing. At least I doubt it. Another "I" must talk, two others perhaps. Then the Creole's "I" will come to life. I tried this way and that, even

> putting her into modern dress. No good. At last I decided on a possible way showing the start and the Creole speaking. Lastly: Her end- I want it in a way triumphant!
>
> The Creole is of course the important one, the others explain her...
>
> Ps *I will not disappoint you*. Come with me and you will see. Take a look at *Jane Eyre*. That unfortunate death of a Creole! I'm fighting mad to write *her* story.
>
> But it's a good book- and so one must be wary and careful. Sober and plausible. At first. (To Selma Vaz Dias, April 9th, 1958, *JRL* pp. 156-157, no emphasis added)

Here is the first explanation to the husband's narration. Another "I" must talk to make the "I" of Antoinette convincing. The other "I" is the husband, but not only him: all kinds of characters get their voices through. Rhys does not use much reported speech like "she said that", or "he thought that"; instead all these voices just come to the text, in a way just float in and are given their space without a mediator who would interpret or explain what they say. For example the letter of Daniel Cosway that is there in all its length and the voices of Christophine and others. The narrative space is given to the male narrator but nobody really has the narrative control that Mr Rochester had in *Jane Eyre* where his interpretation of the past events is accepted as the truth. Even though "[t]he Creole is of course the important one, the others explain her..." (*JRL, 157*) Rhys does not harness her other characters into lay figures. The others do explain Antoinette and even if it is their most vital function the fact that they too have a story of their own is not denied. For example Christophine in whose character Gayatri Spivak sees Rhys "mark[ing] the limits" of her own narration (Spivak, 806); the story cannot hold Christophine but it does not pretend that this is all there is to her, instead she just leaves, goes away.

In this paper I mark the limits of my own reading. There are some claims that often disturbed me in many of the critics I studied for this thesis. What was common was the feeling that the reading was "closed" and preset, and conflicting evidence was shut out since it would have questioned the reading. In brief, my attempt is to engage in a dialogue with the texts. The text of the novels *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* and the texts of the different critics, testing out divergent ideas and aiming at an open reading that would listen to all sides, would not silence

certain aspects. In doing so I hope to follow the example of *WSS* that acknowledged that there always is another side and that all the characters are entitled to their own voice.

My reading is speculative, much like that of John T. Irwin's in his *Doubling and Incest/ Repetition and Revenge –a Speculative Reading of Faulkner* (1975). We both look at a character that appears in two different novels, but whereas Irwin has Faulkner's two novels in conjunction I have novels by Jean Rhys and Charlotte Brontë. Irwin's work, apart from the introduction, consists of one long essay without any mechanical breaks. Irwin describes his work as an effort to weave a seamless garment that would imitate the structure it was trying to reveal, which only exists as a whole (Irwin 6). My speculative reading has similarly very few mechanical breaks but instead of a seamless garment I am trying to sew a patchwork of different voices, different sides and points of views and conflicting alternative ways of interpreting and reading the text. Since that is what *WSS* is doing; it is letting all the colours in.

Jean Rhys's writing as well as her protagonists always seem to be in-between two or more places or positions, never quite belonging to either of them. Mary Lou Emery discusses the dangers of categories such as "woman writer", "West Indian author" or a "European modernist", for understanding Rhys's writing "that remains outside the main current [of each of these categories] by virtue of its participation in the other two" (Emery, 8). If categories and generalizations are what distorts the reading of Rhys's work then a look at the post-modern angle is in order. In her introduction to *Feminism/post-modernism* Linda Nicholson outlines how any category can be either dangerous or liberatory; for example "gender"; liberating when its centrality in understanding the human thought and behaviour is recognized, but dangerous because when given "substantive, cross-cultural content, there arises the possibility that it becomes totalizing and discriminating against the experiences and realities of some" (Nicholson, 15).

Is *WSS* or my reading of it post-modern? The novel replaces the certainty of *JE*'s view of the world with the experience of the silenced mad wife, but does not claim it to be the only experience. *WSS* has, furthermore, given room to several points of view within its own discourse without validating any of them at the expense of the others. It would seem to succeed in applying gender as one category, including the similarities but also the differences among the representatives and noting how other categories such as those of class and race overlap with the category of gender in moulding each individual's experience. This is my initial argument of how *WSS* shows an infinite number of other sides and the impossibility of pinning down the experiences of its characters within one category, when these categories would stand apart and oppose one another.

Indeed, this reading can be seen as "post-modern", even the problems and hesitations it creates seem to resemble those present in the discussion of the value of postmodernism for the feminist criticism and feminist politics. Certainly it was the redefinitions of modernism by postmodernism and feminism that brought Rhys the long delayed critical recognition as a modernist writer (Howells, 25). Although the feminist critics with a biographical point of view seem to undermine her as a writer when stressing her alleged intuitiveness, I think the novels and the letters, instead, show a very self-conscious author with a clear view of her intentions. In *WSS* a number of modernist techniques can be detected; the absence of a god-like author, the shifting point of view, the disruptive chronology and the uncertainty of time and place.

Rhys rewrote the story of Bertha and her husband because she wanted to write her a life. But she also wanted to explain why Mr Rochester treated his wife so horribly and felt justified in doing so. Consequently Rhys had to write him a life, too. Yes, he had a life in *JE* but that character would not do it; she had to rewrite him too. That I think is the reason why he has no name in this novel. He is not Mr Rochester, not yet. This is one important point in which my

reading of him differs from the critics I have used in my thesis. Mr Rochester has to have his side of things, too, his story, and he has to be a round character. Making "flat" characters "round" and central is an example of Rhys's innovativeness in style (Hite, 25). Rhys did not do to him what Brontë did to Bertha Mason, make her a papertiger lunatic, a minor character with no story, no voice of her own. In accordance to this I try to respect the fact that the narrator of part two, Antoinette's English husband, is not named in *WSS* by not naming him in this text either. When I quote someone who has named him I will nevertheless also use that name, but when referring to him in general, when not explicitly pondering upon his identity, he will be the male narrator, Antoinette's husband, the "Rochester" character, the man, and so on.

It is said that when creating the subjectivity of her white European female Brontë had to be very careful in her description of Bertha, the other woman at whose expense Jane acquired her subjectivity (Spivak, 804). Similarly Rhys had to be very careful with her description of the English husband. But she did not stop there. There are other characters in this novel, who despite being necessities to the stories of Antoinette and her husband also have their own voice and their point of view.

The term "point of view" is widely used in this thesis. As Chatman reminds us it is a problematic term since it has so many senses in ordinary use and can be confused with narrative voice in narrative texts. "Point of view does not mean expression; it only means the perspective in terms of which the expression is made. *The perspective and the expression need not be lodged in the same person"* (Chatman, 153*).* But in *WSS* it seems they do need to be lodged in the same person. The character that has a point of view also has the narrative voice with which to communicate to the audience; Antoinette has her text and her husband his, Daniel has his letters and Christophine has her forceful speech. In my opinion this distinction between narrative voice

and point of view even further intensifies my main argument that *WSS* goes beyond the rewritings and explores the possibility of telling a story without silencing minor characters.

This also intensifies the intertextual aspect of my analysis. It was "this particular mad Creole" that Rhys wanted to write about, the mad Creole depicted by Charlotte Brontë. It was Brontë's alleged negative feeling towards the West Indies and Creole women that "vexed" Rhys. I am sure that the feminist analyses of Rhys's texts that show the patriarchal oppression have their merits but I want to take a step back from these readings towards these particular texts. It was not the nature of patriarchy that vexed Rhys, it was the fact that Brontë had such beliefs about Creole women that one of them was suitable for the papertiger lunatic that she inevitably needed for her story. This brings me to the aspect of my argument about the anonymity of the narrator in part two. Rhys takes Brontë herself along with her character Rochester into her text, to the tour of her native West Indies to meet with Antoinette. The faith of Antoinette is inevitable, because it has already been written in the earlier novel; there is no getting around that. Rhys exposes both Brontë and her character to the other side, takes them to the tour that forces them to realize that there always is another side, and shows them how hollow the truth of *JE* is. Hence she makes the cruelty visible. The cruelty of the author Brontë, who created the cardboard prison for the dotted line drawing that a round character has to be drained into in order to be contained in the attic.

> *I drew a house… I drew a standing woman – a child's scribble. A dot for a head, a larger one for the body, a triangle for a skirt, slanting lines for arms and feet. (WSS, 134-5)*

1.2. Why His Text?

In her letters Rhys described Brontë's character Bertha as a "lay figure…*off stage*" (*JRL,* 156). She wants to put her on stage, to write her a life and a past. She had been vexed by Mr

Rochester's cruelty and wanted to write a "reason why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad" (*JRL*, 156). In her effort to make the narration convincing Rhys reflects upon different approaches. "Another 'I' must talk, two others perhaps. Then the Creole's 'I' will come to life" (*JRL*, 157). She is primarily writing her story, she is "the important one, the others explain her…" (*JRL*, 157). Hite notes how "by recentering the story on the character who is in many ways the most necessary accessory to the action – most necessary and most necessarily accessory – Rhys demonstrates how both social and narrative conventions mandate that certain categories of women must be devalued if other categories of women are to assume importance" (Hite, 32-3). But there is more to this equation than the question of gender. Colonialism is another important aspect in theoretical approaches to Rhys's work, represented here by Gayatri Spivak.

> In this fictive England, ((Bertha/Antoinette)) must play out her role, act out the transformation of her "self" into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself, so that Jane Eyre can become the feminist individualist heroine of British fiction. I must read this as an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a selfimmolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer. At least Rhys sees to it that the woman from the colonies is not sacrificed as an insane animal for her sister's consolidation (Spivak, 804).

In *The Empire Writes Back – Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* Rhys is listed as one of the writers who have drawn an analogy between the relationship of men and women and those of the imperial power and the colonies; "colonizer and colonized" (Ashcroft, Gareth and Tiffin, 31). Wilson Harris reads *WSS* stressing the cross-cultural elements and points out the correspondence between *WSS* and an ancient Arawak creation myth. Arawaks flee their enemies to a tree that is set on fire and rises up into the sky where they burn and their sparks become the seeds of the garden of the Pleiades (Harris, 50-51). He stresses "doubles in untamable cosmos to bridge a divide" (Harris, 51). This idea opens up several interpretative possibilities,

since the book is full of doubles and divisions to be bridged; those between Antoinette and her husband, Antoinette and Tia, the husband and Daniel just to mention a few examples of the innumerable points of view. For every story there is at least two sides: "…[Daniel Boyd] tells lies about us and he is sure that you will believe him and not listen to the other side.' 'Is there another side?' I said. 'There is always the other side, always" (*WSS, 106).*

Kathleen K. Ferracane examines Rhys as a colonial writer. Rhys is writing "against long-standing historical tradition which associates the Mother with England, an image which England sought to foster, casting itself in the benevolent role of the parent caring for its dependent colonies" (Ferracane, 4). In the two novels with a West Indian setting, *WSS* and *Voyage in the Dark,* Rhys associates the Mother with the warmth and passion of the black West Indies in contrast to the cold, powerful English world. But the image is not just that of warmth; in *WSS* the threatening image of the Mother is linked to the forests of Coulibri and Granbois and to Christophine although she is the nurturing mother as well. Ferracane notes that both Anna in *Voyage in the Dark* and Antoinette in *WSS* seek a nurturing mother, but find and accept the Mother as she must ultimately be accepted, absolutely, as death. Also Teresa O'Connor studies the West Indian elements in these two novels and, furthermore, links the colonial vision of alienation with the theme of gender stating that Rhys "unites the experience of the child, the woman, and the colonial in one voice" (O'Connor, 10). O'Connor herself hears the person, the author, and the character in one voice, being one of the feminist critics whose point of view emphasizes author's biography.

No matter which theoretical framework we choose one important factor remains: centering a previously flat and marginal character does not lead into a new group of "lay figures". As Rhys puts the focus on the character pushed off the stage in *JE*, she does not do the same to her own characters "necessary to the plot". The man's narration does not merely bring life to that of

Antoinette's: it tells the story of its own. When Rhys describes how a live character is being transferred into a "papertiger lunatic" she also shows how the man becomes to adopt the belief in the justification of his actions.

The novel's textual space is divided into three parts, differing on the narrator and the plot content. The narrators are Antoinette and her English husband. Although the husband's contribution, part two, takes up more pages than Antoinette's parts one and three together, it took a long while before my reading started to lead into considerations of his narrative. The novel was her story, and the voice of the man in the middle was on the background, as the oppressor and victimizer that made Antoinette's story so heartbreaking. However, little by little the multiplicity of the other voices and points of view began to show itself as a theme. *WSS* provides another side to the story told in *JE*, but also within this novel different characters provide conflicting and competing versions of the same story. A clue provided by Rhys was that she was appalled by the real cruelty of Mr Rochester, so it can be assumed that this has been dealt with somehow in the novel.

My argument is that the man's text is yet another "other side" and that it is important in its own right, not just as a factor in Antoinette's plight. Usually it is Antoinette that everybody is interested in and the reading of her character largely dictates the critics' view of her husband. If Antoinette is seen as the victim of patriarchal oppression then he is the patriarchal oppressor, if Antoinette is the colonial oppressed then he is the imperialist conqueror. The novel is often described as giving the mad wife's point of view but do the critics recognize that it also gives the English husband's point of view? If they do not, then how do they explain that a great amount of literary space is taken up by the male narrator? And what is their explanation of the fact that he is not named?

Horner and Zlosnik name the theme of the other side as the reason for the narrative of the anonymous husband: “In a novel in which there is no authoritative narrator and which consists of two often conflicting narratives, Rochester is also allowed to tell his side of the story” (Horner and Zlosnik, 145). Their reading of the book explains his anonymity as undermining the victory he gains on the level of the plot since “he may, or may not, be Rochester”. Evidence in support of this view can be found in Rhys’s letters. Although in the most frequently quoted bits she acclaims that it is “this particular mad Creole” she wants to write about there is at least one occasion where she bluntly says “there were several Antoinette’s and Mr Rochester’s…Mine is *not* Miss Brontë’s, though much suggested by “Jane Eyre”…Mr R’s name ought to be changed. Raworth?” (*JRL*, 263). But if there is a victory in this novel it is won by the character in this novel. To say it is undermined by his anonymity refers to a connection to *JE* that the same anonymity would question. And apart from the lacking name all the evidence that the text in the actual novel provides clearly links the two books together.

Mona Fayad questions why Rhys who is “dedicated to portraying a female point of view, would choose to write more than half the novel from a male perspective?” (Fayad, 437). She quotes Rhys’s description of Bertha as “a poor ghost” and answers that *WSS* is a rewriting of *JE* and an analysis of how the process of exorcising ghosts from haunting and intervening with the narrative has been accomplished (Fayad, 437). Fayad argues that the male text denies Antoinette the limited freedom of self-representation that she was allowed before and subjects her to the invention of others as had happened to her mother and, like her, she grows increasingly silent (Fayad, 442). I can agree with this part quite easily but the way in which Fayad sees the anonymous male text presents some problems. She says that in the second section “we are invited directly into patriarchy and away from Antoinette’s struggle to ‘write’ herself” (Fayad, 443). In actual fact Antoinette’s struggle goes on and she is able to intervene in the man’s text

and occupy many pages right in the middle of it. “The male narrator is unnamed in the text, significantly so both because he is his own “subject” and thus free from objectification by naming and also because by not being named he becomes omnipotent, the god-like creator of Bertha’s narrative text” (Fayad, 443).

I think, however, that there is more evidence in favour of his missing name being a handicap. He was not his own subject and his narration is far from omnipotent. “His version of the tale (by his definition, the only version of the tale) is a familiar one, following as it does the history of patriarchy” (Fayad, 443). By the time he becomes Mr Rochester in *JE* his tale is the only version of the tale but while still the unnamed man in *WSS* his tale tries to find itself and besides his effort to control his narrative it still very much tells a multiplicity of tales. “The ‘sanity’ that he advocates is the sanity of the ‘norm’, or phallocentric order, and any infringement on that ‘sanity’ provokes an immediate attempt to destroy the source of that infringement” (Fayad, 443). She goes on to say that the male character feels himself outside the protection of this order, and this is an important point for me. He is outside the protection of this order and only reaches the aforementioned “sanity” at the end of his narration, and not after having tried and been tempted by the other way, not without a struggle.

One of the critics I have used, Sue Roe (1987), does not comment at all to why his text is there or why he is without a name. She does not question his motives as a narrator nor his trustworthiness. Instead Sue Roe reads his text accepting the narrator’s views on the landscape, for instance, as being menacing and threatening. She does not think about why he says the things he does, or seem to notice the internal conflicts. On another occasion he describes the landscape as the loveliest he had ever seen.

Coral Ann Howells says Mr Rochester’s voice was one of those “eclipsed by the Victorian novel”. According to her, his narration in *WSS* corrects the “all wrong Creole scenes” by offering

"the most anguished celebration of the wild beautiful Caribbean landscape" (Howells, 105). The fact that he is not named is just mentioned but not analysed (Howells, 108). Howells manages to incorporate into her theory the similarities of experiences between Antoinette and her husband. The three-part structure "has interesting implications in a novel which scrutinises the traditional binary oppositions of colonialism and gender" (Howells, 114). She resists the temptation of reading the "mirror structure with the first and third parts looking inwards at each other and privileging Antoinette's story" since his narration "is not only an interruption of Antoinette's, but is itself a partial mirroring of it" (Howells, 114).

> This suggests a loss of boundaries between her experience and his, and the consequent need for narrative redefinitions which would reflect the changing positions within cross-cultural encounters. It is only when this impulse towards convergence is denied by Rochester that the narrative returns to the traditional plot of a politics of imperialist domination. (Howells, 114-115).

Carol Angier sees the importance of his narration as twofold. First: it relieves Antoinette and the whole book from displaying self-pity and thus rejecting the danger of loosing the readers' sympathy for the heroine (Angier, 551). It seems generally very important for Angier that the reader should sympathize with the Rhys heroine; it is essential in her discussion of all Rhys's novels. For her the fault of the earlier novels that *WSS* cured was the plea for pity that alienates the reader from the heroine. And instead of sympathy the heroine gets contempt. The second point for Angier is that his text shows how "rejectors as well as rejected have a point of view" (Angier, 551). My general argument is that the book is very much about showing how there are innumerable viewpoints, so at the first glance her analysis should fit into mine quite well but although sharing several observations the conclusions based on them differ radically. Angier's overall conclusion is that though acknowledging through the structure of her text that Rochester has his own point of view Rhys fails in giving it to us. Angier interprets the similarities between Antoinette and her husband as a "flaw": a man like him would not have felt like that. Sue Roe

shares her view, for her the similarities are something Rhys "did *not* specifically plan" (Roe, 259). But here is an essential difference from my reading; he was not that kind of man, he was not the man he felt he should have been. Reading his character this way would break down the dichotomy essential for Angier's analysis.

Very often the text of the unnamed narrator is seen to show how impossible a woman's text is; how self-representation escapes the female narrator and the male text can invade her space. Nancy Harrison has produced a reading similar to this but also quite contrary: the male text is in the centre but the woman's language is working its way through the gaps and silences (Harrison, 128-9). Harrison sees *WSS* completing "the woman's sentence that, more than fifty years ago, Virginia Woolf despaired of finding" (Harrison, 130; Woolf, 79-80). "The completed sentence is a metaphor emphasizing the relation of the dominant text of our culture. Rhys's text offers another, more serviceable metaphor that emphasizes the relationship between women" (Harrison, 130). So for Harrison, despite the psychological preciseness of the character, the husband is not a person but a text. He is a metaphor that turns around the way in which the man's discourse has been using "woman-as-metaphor [that] has served as the place to fix a man's desire in the aesthetic and institutionalised structures of our culture" (Harrison, 129). She does not comment on the anonymity of the character but it could be seen as a factor in favour of this analysis. What disturbs me about Harrison's approach is the mythologizing and idealization of the woman's text and the community of women. This is, according to Julia Kristeva, the danger facing second phase feminism in its quest after the specifically women's way of writing. Harrison notes how the turning around does not silence the man's text in its new place like the woman's text has been silenced but instead he gets to tell his own story. I think Harrison does silence the man's text though after complimenting Rhys for not having done so. She sees it "…only [as] the initially flexible, finally resistant warp against and through which the women weave the text of the

dream" (Harrison, 130). Also much like the other critics she overlooks the barriers between women and fails to listen to the man's text. Thus she loses the more complex way in which Rhys's characters display and represent the different contexts in opposition to one another from which they try to speak.

Iris Marion Young points out that the ideal of community denies the difference between subjects since it presumes subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves: "The desire for community relies on the same desire for social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism on the one hand and political sectarianism on the other" (Young, 302). Sue Spaul sees his text as "reality" of the dominant group as opposed to Antoinette's "reality" of a muted group (Spaul, 103). She claims that the reader is directed to sympathize with Antoinette and not with him, although their experiences are much the same. She too interprets barriers between women as less blameworthy than the ones that separate Antoinette and her husband. My point is that these barriers are important and the same. "The move to create totality, as the logic of hierarchical opposition shows, creates not one, but two: inside and outside" (Young, 304).

For Spaul allowing Rochester to "speak for himself", with his own confused comprehension that enables the muted group to be heard through it, is irony, critique of his reality: "It is Rochester's insecurity, his inability to make sense of his new life, which completes our disbelief in his perception" (Spaul, 103). I think that on the contrary it makes it more "true", not that we are after truths. Instead, his insecurity makes known the more general argument that there are only conflicting truths, and he is valuable in that respect. His crisis is that he becomes to realize this; his position makes him realize it. If this is a matter of "sympathizing", then we should indeed sympathize with him, as a very different character than the other white males in the novel. They are the true members of the dominant group. They are certain of the validity of their

comprehension of the world. To my mind that is the reason not to believe them, rather than according to the analogy of Spaul's sentence we should have no disbelief.

How then could the general feeling of distrust toward the male narrator be explained? Seymour Chatman defines an "unreliable narrator" as one whose "values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author's" (Chatman, 149). This means that there is such a conflict between a narrator's presentation and the rest of the narrative that "we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the 'true version'" (Chatman, 149). Sincerity or competence – he either will not or cannot tell the truth. An idea especially perplexing when considering this narrator, the will-be Mr Rochester of *JE*.

Mary Lou Emery sees his text and him as the representative of Victorian values:

> The development of Rochester's point of view and his growing suspicion concerning Antoinette make clear the Victorian ideology that conflates moral idiocy, madness and female sexual expression. The dichotomous oppositions of madness/reason, sexuality/control, black/white, and – perhaps generating them all – nature/culture, through which Rochester thinks and attempts to maintain his own place in the system, are, nevertheless, continually threatened (Emery, 48).

I agree with the first part with the restriction that I do not see the male character as the unproblematic conveyer of the values of his society. He shares those, of course, and they are plainly visible in his suspicions as Emery points out. But he is an outcast of the system, just like his wife, and cannot take those values for granted. He has to reassure himself continually. He is unsure of his own position and hence his ears are open for conflicting evidence.

Here it might be useful to compare him with Mr Mason, who was the self-confident patriarch, Briton and colonialist. He never questioned the validity of the values or the order of the world, although he was constantly exposed to conflicting evidence. He cast it off as occasional disturbances, as accidents, something gone wrong, but never as hints that there is the other side. His perceptions were not challenged; the desperate pleas of his wife were just meaningless parrot

babble in his ears. Mr Mason's solution was to flee, to be able to contain his own evaluations. The male narrator's solution was to engage himself in the battle with the compromising evidence: he saw the other side, but wanted to beat it. Emery has compared his struggle to a military manoeuvre which became a challenge he felt he must answer. In a way he ended up building his own world on the ruins of the system that had deserted him. The challenge was not solely from this alien culture but also from his own; he fought his father and what he represents just as much as Antoinette and what she represents for him.

The story is seen as the story of the marriage from the mad wife's point of view, and even with the text of the man "the reader is directed to sympathize with Antoinette, not with Rochester" as Spaul puts it (Spaul, 103). In my argument though the reader might be directed not by the text but by the selected framework. In Spaul's count there are two viewpoints, "two different versions of 'reality'– those of the muted and dominant groups" (Spaul, 103). My disagreement goes not only to the number but also to the nature of these realities: the novel is about muted and dominant groups and idioms, but not in such a simple way. The husband is no more the member of the dominant group as he is the imperialist; this is another important point of the book to which such easy dichotomies do not apply. The reason he narrates his own story is not to my mind "irony" from Rhys's part, irony in which the dominant speaker is allowed to tell his story, implying that he never needs allowing.

The reader is presented with different "realities". The critics I have discussed above name two: the dominant male idiom and the muted female one. I think the number is infinite. That seems to be one of the main points of the book; in its own words "there is always another side". Gayatri Spivak has noticed this, and not only does she point out that the number of viewpoints is uncountable, according to her, Rhys in her text also admits that one person, one author, who has her own point of view cannot account for them all. Rhys "marks the limits of her own discourse"

most clearly in the case of Christophine, whose expulsion from the text she does not see just as Rochester using his empirial powers but as Rhys admitting that Christophine can not be contained in this text (Spivak, 806).

His text is there to tell his side of things, too. Not to neglect how he became what he did in the earlier novel. Rhys showed how Antoinette was driven to madness but also why he took part in the process. Rhys's biggest disappointment of *JE* had never to do with what Bertha was like. It did not matter how repellent her Caribbean "sister" was portrayed. What mattered was that she was kept out of the centre of the story: that she was a "flat" character whose only role was to explain the stories of the important characters. So she could not very well do the same in her own book; write the life for Bertha but make the husband the raving lunatic in the attic whose only function is to be a necessity to the story of her important character. Hence he had to be written a "round" character with his own side of the story. It is ironic that many critics overlook this in their readings of the book and try to force him into a papertiger patriarch.

The need to rewrite Mr Rochester is independent from that of rewriting Bertha. Because no matter which way the question of madness is resolved in her case, the question still remains why he disposed of his unwanted wife with that "real cruelty". So here already is a next step from the Rochester character being just an enabler in her story. Through the male character Rhys describes what another novel has done to the character of the first wife in order to contain it in its text. As such this is not primarily a male / female issue. That is one explanation for why he has no name, although a psychologically precise portrait of the husband he is also there to represent another text – *Jane Eyre*. For her rewritten Mr Rochester she needed to write "reasons" for treating his wife so badly, and she does, allowing him his side and point of view. But then Rhys shows how the other text has silenced Bertha, drawn her up on a piece of cardboard. This shows what *JE* did to Bertha. Then what follows is that there is always another side, none of the characters in Rhys's

book get the same treatment. Having no name the man could also signify that even though it is not his story he is allowed to be a "round" character. Critics have mentioned how it is the text in part two that corrects "all [the] wrong Creole scenes", and does so in his voice. But it was not Mr Rochester who made the character Bertha into a "lay figure" depriving her of her voice, it was this other text written by another woman. One more clue can be picked up from Rhys's interview: "… why should she think Creole women are lunatics and all that? … Charlotte Brontë must have had strong feelings about the West Indies because she brings the West Indies into a lot of her books…" (Vreeland, 234-5). Rhys suspected that these "strong feelings" were mainly negative ones and it disturbed her. I claim it is very possible to read the narrator of part two as Charlotte Brontë who Rhys decides to bring to the islands and show her first hand.

2. THE ENIGMA OF "ROCHESTER"

2.1. "Rochester"; Different or Same

The paths of Antoinette and her husband are dictated in advance by *Jane Eyre*, and also the husband is given a history and a point of view and reasons for his actions. As Rhys pointed out in her letters, these stories were not just fiction. Girls were married off, taken to England and never again heard of. She felt Mr Rochester's actions were cruel; there would have been more civilized ways of disposing of an unwanted wife. In order to write Bertha a plausible and convincing life and past, Rhys has to do the same to Rochester. To sketch him in turn as a monster is not the solution. Coral Ann Howells reads the male character as an image of "the male will to dominate" but notes that the portrait was not entirely hostile; his experiences in the West Indies make a difference to him. However, this still means that his "story begins and ends by asserting its

masculine imperialist differences from Antoinette's colonial text" (Howells, 116). Mr Rochester is even more hostile in the end because he has realized his own "lack" and "the limits of imperialism as the standard of absolute value" (Howells, 108). What he lacks is the "secret" he desires. According to Coral Ann Howells the "secret" is the "territory of romance that lies beyond his grasp" (Howells, 108), whereas, for Nancy Harrison it is the inability to enter the mother text (Harrison, 229). My view is slightly different. The young man who came to the West Indies was highly critical of the order of things. It was possible for him to see the flaws of the system because his own position was shaky from the very beginning. He may have experienced a new kind of lack in these strange surroundings but he had had a lack even before; a lack that he was painfully aware of. Although he was "guilty" he too had his reasons. Furthermore they were all "guilty", even Antoinette and in a very similar way.

Sue Roe notes that in the midst of her drafting and redrafting of the novel, the character of the husband caused Rhys special trouble. In a letter from 1963 she writes: "Dreadful man but I tried to be fair and all that and give some reason for his acting like he did" (*JRL,* 233). For Roe the reason is that he "marries Antoinette for her dowry and gradually destroys her by believing the local stories about the madness in her family (Roe, 257). Refreshing in this criticism is that the evil of the husband is not emphasized but the shift seems to be to the other extreme. He has no agency at all: "He is frightened by these stories, and his fear makes him cold" (Roe, 257-258). Sue Roe uses the letters to trace the development of the character, perhaps excessively. Much like in the case of the male narrator's text discussed in the previous chapter, she seems to accept everything as such, overlooking the conflicting information. Roe notes that the male character "is so subject to this conjunction of meanings which he cannot grasp, that he, along with Antoinette, is destroyed by the conjunction of geographical and psychological landscapes [and a]t the end he has lost as much as Antoinette has lost", but does not credit the author: "Rhys did not specifically

plan" this "power" of the character (Roe, 258). The similarities of their experiences do not fit into the selected framework; it was supposed to be about the woman's loss, so the writer could not have suggested that the man has lost too, it has to be an accident!

Sue Roe shares the husband's interpretation of the landscape; it is "beautiful and dangerous", it is "natural to search for shelter from the powerful landscape and the dumb watchfulness of its people" (Roe, 254). Roe sees that for him the landscape and Antoinette are indistinguishable, sharing the secret. But she conflates him with the landscape, too, or at least sees his desire as "powerful and obsessive and destructive" like the beautiful and dangerous landscape. Another quality that the desire and the landscape share is their ability to destroy him as well. And he is determined not to be conquered by neither (Roe, 254). The secret is the one contained in all her novels, according to Roe:

> The fundamental secret of this network of relationships [between love and fear, desire and dread, passion and destruction, history and the unconscious] is that you cannot penetrate it and remain entirely in control; you cannot love, or even desire, without being changed by forces you do not, at the time, entirely understand (Roe, 255).

Roe thinks that Antoinette knows the secret because it "seems to be contained in the powerful, dream-like landscape she has grown up in". The knowledge is unconscious though, surfacing in the dreams (Roe, 255). Antoinette's husband does not know the secret, cannot know, according to Roe, because he is "used to power, used to being in control" (Roe, 255). He might know about power and want to have control, but I do not think he is used to neither. Roe comments on his determination not to be conquered with a quotation from *WSS* where he says he wants what it hides: the secret. This, according to Roe, is an example of his knowledge of power; that it is "manipulative, disingenuous" (Roe, 254). But in my mind he was conquered, he "has left caution" in one point of the novel, and given in to just being, wanting to sleep and spending time in the pool. Obeah night, the night when Antoinette resorts to local black magic, obeah, and gives

her husband a love potion, makes him furious because then he is conquered violently; he can no longer resort to his illusion that he can resist being conquered.

Disturbing in Sue Roe's interpretations or concept of the place and the landscape is that she seems to conflate the black population with the place. This is rather like saying they represent nature and the whites represent civilization. Antoinette is somewhere in between and even she seems to want to get out of there, especially to get out of the cruel landscape that the blacks are part of. In Roe's reading of the second dream the "identification with the insidious power of place" is presented with the man's face that is black with hatred and the trailing dress that reminds of the fashion of black women. The ignorance of the place by the whites is represented by Mr Mason's "ignorance of the black people and their capacity to contain rage and resentment" (Roe, 256). When Sue Roe comments that Antoinette giving her husband the love potion is destructive on both of them, she shares Carole Angier's view that the mental destruction of Antoinette, the little deaths, have already begun in her childhood. But does she mention the resentment of the white community, the laughing English gentleman or things like that? No, for Roe the causes for this initial destruction are the deeds by the black people. The place itself as it were: "the [black] local people [who] burned her house, and her black friend, Tia, [who] betrayed and injured her" (Roe, 258).

Roe analyses Rochester's feelings for his wife: "he is maddened by her, impassioned by her, rather than in love with her" (Roe, 257). He says that and there is one letter where Rhys says that, but even then I find the text reveals that he did love her and he indeed says that at the end. But it is one of those things that his narration tries to struggle away, efface from the way of a polished version of the events. Roe talks about the way in which the husband is unable to tell Antoinette anything about England because her mind is already made up, her ideas based on fiction. This describes his "inability to penetrate her mind", which in turn obsesses him and

increases his passion towards her. This Roe enlightens with the scene where Antoinette's dress on the floor roused his passion (Roe, 257). The idea is that because there is an empty dress, there is no unpenetrable mind. But this seems a bit paradoxical. If he desires to penetrate her mind, why is he exited in the face of the impossibility of this? Is it the mystery he desires? Roe suggests that the power of his passion brings him closer to the landscape. The stronger his obsession the stronger the power of the place. It is drowning him as she already is in the light and shadow, "its destructive powers" (Roe, 257). This again is somewhat disturbing: Roe sees the landscape as malicious and evil. Rhys was writing against this; replacing the malicious qualities attached to her native landscape in *JE* with a more fair description. The male narrator is afraid of the landscape and feels it is menacing and threatening him, but should that view be accepted just like that?

> It is this awe-inspiring respect for the Caribbean landscape which informs the powerful paradoxical forces that sustain *Wide Sargasso Sea* and which makes the book feel like a tremendous homage to the West Indies, while Rhys is at the same time writing about the destructive forces which drive its people (Roe, 257).

Such a view makes it possible to call rumours that poison the husband's mind "local stories"; the word in this context already spells out maliciousness and destruction.

Judith Kegan Gardiner does not find much in the favour of the male narrator, he is "a greedy, shallow young man, angry, self-deceptive, and self-pitying" (Gardiner, 130). She does comment that the text seems to sympathise with him as it "enter[s his] consciousness" and "allows him to express his estrangement on the island", but it does punish him for hating a woman because she desires him and expulses him when he decides Antoinette is his property, not companion (Gardiner, 130-1). It is quite perplexing that she regards the respective losses of father and brother as something blameworthy for the man since Antoinette loses whereas he profits and "happily step[s] into their financial places and home" (Gardiner, 131). Equally grim is Gilbert

and Gubar's view according to which "Rhys characterizes the hero of *Jane Eyre* as viciously oppressive" (Gilbert and Gubar, 113).

Sue Spaul sees the male narrator's blanks as an inversion of the traditional link between women and lack and as such exposing the logic of patriarchal discourse (Spaul, 105). In her reading Rochester is seen as a "pure" representative of the male logic. The other side in her reading is that he is the only male character that comes close to seeing the other side, experiencing what women or Antoinette experience. The point raised here is his claim after his authority and power when the point could be how he feels he lacks authority and power. This simplifies his character. The real exposure on the hollow logic of patriarchal discourse is that it has betrayed him; he does not symbolize the lack in patriarchy, he experiences it. Just as Amélie finds it in her heart to be sorry for them both the text sympathizes with them both. The text inverts the blamed and the innocent ones of *JE* but not categorically. He is more than a neat package of patriarchal evil and she more complex than defiant, innocent female strength.

I think Spaul makes the same "mistake" as many others in evaluating the male narrator's role. "He is conscious of a terrible sense of lack – 'I want what hides' – but in order to acknowledge Antoinette's reality as valid he must deny his own status and authority: the power of subscribing to, and controlling, the dominant world-view" (Spaul, 105-6). The order of things is wrong: he has already been denied his status and authority by the law of the patriarchal world. The dominant world-view itself has cast him on the edge quite the same way as Antoinette is on the edge between the two worlds neither of which will have her. The husband as the younger son has no other status than his Englishness. Without money that status is as hollow as that of the Cosway family in their impoverished estate. Their whiteness without the other attributes is a mockery of a status. The Englishman does not confront the problem of having to deny his power. His problem is either to accept that he has none or try feverishly to acquire some. In this way his

situation is parallel to that of Annette Cosway. The sight of her daughter in Tia's clothes wakes her to the realization of their lack of status after the death of her husband, and she decides not to accept it. Her means of trying to acquire the status the dominant world-view would expect of them are the same as his: they have to marry money. Antoinette on the other hand has money after the death of her stepfather, but her status lacks the Englishness.

Her motives for the marriage have been largely overlooked by seeing it as arranged against her will in the readings that emphasize the male-female dimension of the text and make her the victim of patriarchy. These interpretations also usually stress her link with other women in the text. Here a feature of Rhys's texts' "dangerousness" is exposed. It is much safer to see her female protagonists as victims because to see their mistakes could lead to a renewal of the view where women and other oppressed groups are seen as fully responsible for their position. But to play safe is not honest nor does it do justice to Rhys's texts that are more complex in their treatment of human relationships.

Most certainly the marriage between Antoinette Cosway and the Englishman was arranged. Mr Mason has started the arrangements in his own words to give Antoinette a chance for happiness. Mr Mason is really the pure patriarch of the novel. One who is certain of his status and power and of the validity of his own view of the world so much so that he cannot even see the possibility of any other way. He is also representative of the "mission" quality of imperialism. He thinks it is his task to arrange things for the good of everybody. In his honest belief in his own views Mr Mason is the most dangerous character no matter how harmless he appears in his foolishness. Not even the mob action against them can change his mind; he expects the blacks to repent in the morning like children who have done naughty tricks. Antoinette's husband has been offered as the symbol of the patriarchal logic but really it is Mr Mason who better fits that description. This again presents problems for feminist criticism. Mr Mason is good-natured and

open and despite his mistakes it is almost impossible to hate him; though he represents the imperialistic and patriarchal values he is very sympathetic. No matter how easy it might be to hate the husband and state him the source of all evil it must be admitted that his evil-mindedness does not equate with imperialism or patriarchy. Through him the logic and value are exposed that is true but in fact these work through the silent ways of Mr Mason and his kind.

Horner and Zlosnik put together the effects of Rochester's visit in the West Indies and his initial position. Though he is the "product of an imperialist and misogynist culture" he was the "second son in a culture which favours first sons" and he is "manipulated into marriage with Antoinette by a father from whom he is emotionally estranged" (Horner and Zlosnik, 145)

Mary Lou Emery has many interesting comments, but she, however, sees the husband as a rather one-dimensional character, like many of the critics she argues against. As no one is particularly interested in the male character, it is very easy to simplify him to fit any model of interpretation that the critic evolves. But Emery has dealt with him from the point of view that the conflict between Antoinette and Rochester, the conflict between a victim and a victor is what "structures the pattern of the narrative in the intense opposition of voices and points of view" (Emery, 48). There is at least some hint that the character is seen developing and having his reasons and feelings to direct that development, but Emery does not see this as a theme. Emery's description of how Rochester feels in his initial situation uses metaphors of military conquest in expressing his antagonism toward the island and his wife (Emery, 48). Though I did not see the sentence which begins his narration: "[s]o it was all over, the advance and retreat..." either as explicitly military or expressing the feelings toward the place and person. I thought it rather stated his own situation: here I am and have accomplished what I was sent here for. But the idea opens interesting possibilities to our understanding of the "Rochester" character.

Later when he ponders on his shaky position and his relationship to the place and his wife he talks of Antoinette's eyes or Baptiste or the mountains "challenging" him. He is determined to meet that challenge and not be conquered. Seen together this shapes the picture of the male narrator as a man who sees his existence as that of the battle. He is on a mission of war and by analogy the result must either be that of conquesting or being conquested if not out rightly to kill or be killed. In fact, he was almost killed as soon as he arrived. The place made its first manoeuvre in the form of fever that though failing to finish him off left him fragile and vulnerable. He does in fact explain his confusion with the aftermaths of the fever ("I'm not myself yet"); this would mean battle fatigue, but he intends to gather his strength and resist the invasion and in the end strike back. All this does not have to mean that he is somehow essentially aggressive. When we consider that sentence that opens his narrative, we must again remember that these are the words of a struggling narrator. Noteworthy is that instead of its chronological placing these might be the words with which he starts his narration from the future, in other words relating to the whole story. "So it was all over"; their marriage is over and the situation as he speaks is already the confinement in the attic. Or then "over" is his confused battle to control his narrative.

The narrative of *WSS* turns around *JE*'s account of the marriage by revealing Antoinette the one trapped by it, but that is not how her husband perceives it. He feels he has been bought with her money. When this is combined with Daniel's contribution he becomes convinced it is in fact he who has been trapped to a situation that no money can console. As Daniel put it: all the money is sweet but it cannot compensate for a mad wife in one's bed. Mary Lou Emery notes the dissymmetry in the role of the English husband:

> If Antoinette becomes the victim in their conflict, he should become the victimizing victor. However, Rochester feels himself the victim; his aggression and tyranny result from the

> treatment he has received from his own family as the youngest and penniless son and from his fear of the unknown and the foreign (Emery, 48).

In this point of view too, the man is more or less a background figure, a symbol of the oppression. A good point in this criticism is that Emery does ponder upon the lack of control that he has of his own text, though not in these words. In the ending of the novel, he is mentioned as the one whom Antoinette refuses and turns away from as he is not essential to her quest. Also the bond between Jane and Antoinette is not so much their respective relationships to him as their shared experiences. Emery says that European oppression of otherness and cultures is analogous of its oppression of women, so her analysis does bring these different aspects together, but some amount of glorification is to be detected. Jane and Antoinette and Tia find one another and the place from which to stand up to the oppression. The problem for me still remains whether this really solves the complex question of oppressors and oppressed. This again chimes with the notions of the post-modern challenge to feminist theory. When gender is treated as the most important category the readings of *WSS* fail to recognize that Antoinette and her husband's individual experiences dictate their relationship more than their supposed social positions. There can be no categorization of either of them. There are barriers between women, and the English husband is not one of the patriarchs. Saying that the male narrator is not believable creates Angier's "such a man" and a reading that silences a character and confines him into the attic of a preset category.

Essential on the man with no name is that he was other from the very start. His own position was threatened; he was in between of two worlds, hanging on the edge of respectability just as Antoinette and her mother were. He did revenge on Antoinette, but the real address would have been the father text. Not because he had rather been part of the mother text but because the already promised place was taken away from him. The thing he therefore got scared of was the

realization of how hollow those systems are and how random the positions supposedly natural. I do not think he wanted to break down the system or resolve his differences with Antoinette, no more than Daniel Cosway or Antoinette for that matter. She turned “patriarchal” as soon as she could not cope on her own, when her view was challenged, in her confrontation with Tia. What they all wanted was their own secure place in the lie.

2.2. The Struggling Narrator

The structure of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is complex. The narrator is not the same throughout, neither is the content of the narration. The first part is narrated by Antoinette, and it deals with her childhood up to the moment when the husband is about to enter the scene. Most critical interest seems to be directed to the relationship and marriage of Antoinette and “Rochester”. Antoinette’s narration, however, does not directly touch on that matter very much. The story of their marriage is told in part two, and by the anonymous husband, from his point of view. The complexity of the issue of narrative authority reaches its peak in this part. Part two takes up 87 pages altogether, against the 37 and 11 of parts one and three. The man’s text has so many pages and yet he does not seem the main narrator. His text is not coherent, maintaining “control” of its narrative place. Antoinette’s text comes first and last and even intervenes in the man’s text. Many pages are taken up by Daniel Cosway’s letters that appear in full. Furthermore, the narration is interrupted and taken over by other voices in italics and in brackets. Some of these could be argued to be just memories from earlier conversations echoing in the narrator’s mind. But some are undeniably true interruptions and an invasion of his narration because they are from situations where he has not been present. Even in his reported discussions with Christophine and sometimes also with Antoinette, he is more or less a listener, so the narration is partly taken over by the other

characters that are speaking to him. This feature of the narration of the novel has presented a puzzle to me from the very beginning. It seems there are neither narrators nor narratees; the reader seems to have a direct link to the thoughts of the characters.

In his *Transparent Minds* Dorrit Cohn has separated the following basic types of techniques for rendering consciousness in the third and first person narration respectively: psycho-narration and self-narration, quoted monologue and self-quoted monologue, narrated monologue and self-narrated monologue (Cohn, 14). The definitions of the basic techniques are the same but there the parallelism stops. When using the first person narration the narrative climate changes; the relationship between the narrator and his protagonist is very different when that protagonist is the narrator's own past self. Cohn points out that this affects the narration of inner events much more than that of the outer events; past thoughts are presented as remembered by the self, as well as expressed by the self (Cohn, 15). This description seems to apply to the male narrator who, in his struggle to gain narrative authority, not only remembers but also tries to reshape and give new meanings and explanations to his past experiences and actions. For him the use of the first person form is essential because it makes visible to the reader all moulding and practising that he has to do to his narration but also because in this way he is able to tell his own story. For Antoinette the choice of the first person firm seems self-evident since she was to be given the voice she was deprived of in the earlier text. But other characters as well have their own voices in *WSS*. This analogy intensifies the theme of not making other characters marginal that I discussed in chapter two.

Another notable difference between the third and first person forms is the dissymmetry in monologues. In the third person context these are always quoted but in the first person form monologues can either be quoted or presented outside the narrative context, in which case they belong to an independent first-person form: interior monologue. This term can refer to two

different phenomena that share some psychological implications and stylistic features but differ in their narrative presentations. First, a narrative technique for presenting a character's consciousness by direct quotation of his thoughts in a surrounding narrative context. These thoughts are always explicitly or implicitly mediated or quoted by a narrating voice that refers to the monologist by third-person pronoun (Cohn, 16). In *WSS* the surrounding narrative context as well as a narrating voice is absent. The second use of the term interior monologue designates a narrative genre constituted in its entirety by the silent self-communion of a fictional mind that is unmediated and apparently self-generated (Cohn, 16). This can be used to describe *WSS* as a conflation of several fictional minds and their interior monologues following and overlapping each other and even interacting and influencing one another.

Another difference between the narrations of Antoinette and her husband is that her text is very tense; it contains huge amounts of information carefully and skilfully expressed with scarce words. The first chapter manages to convey only in four lines the essence of the narrator's social situation, with the following page and a half creating a whole history of the place and its peoples and their relations. His text is more confused, but it involves more description. All this intensifies the idea that he is in foreign terrain, unsure of himself. Different narrators and different intruders to those narrations give all their own point of view, their respective views on reality. The reader undoubtedly also forms opinions selecting, unconsciously most likely, the facts and realities s/he can relate to. The only one in this entanglement of viewpoints who does not seem to "take sides" is the author.

Antoinette's parts are first person narration. They are not wholly chronological. It is as if she were reminiscing and mentioning things as they come to mind, which ties together separate events. At the same time, the narration creates mirror images, so what she brought together is highly important as a technique of making things clear. Information through repeated, overheard

discussions blur with Antoinette's own notions and experience. Are the "notions" in her own text in fact, evaluative, commenting, or just reporting? In other words, does she give meanings to things or do these meanings come from other sources: the quotations from others and the way things are brought together to form mirror images?

Through the succession of events the reasons and results are hinted at. For example the description of how Annette clings to her past as a slave-owner's wife in their luxurious life. It is described subtly; first the sentences "I...she couldn't". "Still" instead of saying bluntly she always used to do this before and then repeating Godfrey's comment that give an analysis of the situation; let bygones be bygones, don't cling to them. Is the way Antoinette does not comment or evaluate intended to add her credibility as a narrator, to give an impression that she is true and honest, without any self-serving intentions of mastering the text and making evaluations? If so, it is an important difference between the texts of Antoinette and her husband; he tries to create meanings and evaluate and prescribe. This is why his text is sometimes paradoxical, he insists on something while his own text proves the opposite. For example, when he claims that Antoinette was always unsure of facts; his preceding narration has shown how she is the knowledgeable one in this place that is so strange to him. Another example is his claim that she never meant anything to him and that he never loved her.

When considering the male narrator and his reliability we can look at the signs of the unreliable narrator that Rimmon-Kenan lists and defines: limited knowledge, personal involvement and problematic value-sceme (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, 101-2). At least the first two are unquestionably visible in the male narrator. He has limited knowledge on the grounds of his young age and his unfamiliarity with every aspect of his new surroundings: the weather, nature, people and culture constantly surprise him. His personal involvement shows very clearly: he is

bitter towards his father and resentful of his own financial situation, he is mistrusting and defensive.

This is the crux of his text and the clearest difference from Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre*: he tries to give his own version of reality but other characters force their voices in leaving the narrator no other choice than to listen to them. This happened with Daniel, and Christophine, who even succeeds in making him agree with her version. This is what he talks about when he claims his readiness to answer any challenge. If Antoinette, Baptiste or anybody challenge him, that is, if they try to force in their versions of the reality, he will be ready to name those intrusions dreams. When he has more or less managed to fasten his foothold as the narrator, the last regret is the feeling that everything he thought to be true is dream and everything he named as the dream is true. But he takes the way of narration whereas Antoinette finds another way, she cannot have her own text but she burns down the other text that is holding her as a prisoner deprived of her own voice. She had her moments of attempting to be the narrator (in the meaning of defining other characters), with Tia whom she tried to force into a lying cheating nigger, and with Christophine who she scolds for not even believing in a place called England. Tia can easily defend herself and strike back. Christophine makes it clear that she will not be a minor character, if she has no text then she needs no text: “[how to] read and write I don’t know. Other things I know” (*WSS,* 133).

The special features of the husband’s narrative include gaps and silences. The two extremes of how these have been seen are represented here by Howells and Spivak. For Howells this is part of creating “local colour”, and of writing the other side to the Creole scenes: “Caribbean history is full of disrupted stories and it is through her narrative recording of its gaps and silences as much as through its vanished voices that Rhys replaces the threatening other world on the periphery of Brontë’s vision with a community that is ‘possible, convincing’ ” (Howells, 109). For Spivak instead of being part of the story these are part of the structure; the text has the gaps

and silences to “mark the limits of its own discourse” (Spivak, 806). I think the lack of control that the narrator of part two has over his text also depicts his struggle. Struggling for control over the text is analogous to his struggle to gain or maintain his position, depending on whether he was seen to have any to begin with.

Gaining control over language would mean gaining the power to define and name, becoming the speaker of the dominant idiom. That is what Mr Rochester in *JE* was and *WSS* shows how he attained his voice. The man with no name is rehearsing for the flawless performance of *JE*. He is reshaping his experiences through language creating the later unhesitating narration. One example of this is the story about the conditions of their marriage. In *JE* Mr Rochester claims she flattered him and lured him into marriage. The man with no name in *WSS* starts to say so too but is contradicted by his own uncontrollable narration. He tells how she tried to resist the marriage and describes her appearance as pale and ghostly prior to the wedding. It is only later that she seems happy and vibrant and apparently much more appealing to him, so she was hardly the scheming temptress he later tries to claim. As a matter of fact, I do not share Fayad’s view that his narrative is aimed at an audience. Mona Fayad says he has to rationalize to the reader “his rejection of the apparently innocent young woman who, he has married” (Fayad, 444-445). This, I think, is what Mr Rochester does in *JE*. The narrator in *WSS* has to rationalize it to himself.

For Mary Lou Emery the narrative elements and the language of the novel are where Christophine’s obeah (black magic, voodoo) succeeds. Not having worked as a remedy to individual problems it works in its social and political form. Although this is not what Antoinette asked for it is something she is able to use all through the novel (Emery, 44-45). The first of these obeah scenes begins on page 89 when the husband has “turned to the chapter ‘Obeah’” in his book and read a description of a zombi. Here the husband’s narration is interrupted by

Antoinette's for many pages (89-98) when she visits Christophine to ask for the love potion. Her plea to Christophine interrupts the male narration again, in italics and in parenthesis on p. 127, among the echoing words of Christophine when she argues with Antoinette's husband.

> (I lay awake all night long after they were asleep, and as soon as it was light I got up and dressed and saddled Preston. And I came to you. Oh Christophine. O Pheena, Pheena, help me.) (*WSS*, 127)

Mary Lou Emery's analysis turns away from the Eurocentric concepts of character and identity. In her reading, Antoinette's quest is not so much about resolving her relationship to her husband than it is about finding a place where she belongs. The racial and social laws of the island make it a place where she cannot stay even if she belongs there and this makes her a zombie (Emery, 44-5), the living dead. In other readings it is most often loosing the power struggle against her husband that makes Antoinette a zombie, something he himself feared of becoming. He seeks to control Antoinette completely, making her the final product of this "master- narrative" and thus assuring the possibility of his continued existence (Fayad, 446-8). In the course of the text they are both associated with zombies and consequently the danger of becoming one is very real for either one of them. Wandering into the forest the husband finds an almost hidden path leading up to an opening with bunches of flowers suggesting obeah rituals. A little girl he meets mistakes him for a zombie: "to my astonishment she screamed loudly, threw up her arms and ran" (*WSS,* 87). He asks Baptiste about the place, goes home and reads a description of a zombie in a book he finds in his room: "[a] zombi is a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead" (*WSS*, 88). Another occasion when he is closely associated with zombies is on p.83 where Amélie announces to Antoinette "[y]our husban' he outside the door and he look like he see zombi". According to Antoinette "There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about" (*WSS*, 106). Antoinette witnessed the sight

of her own mother as the living dead in the house where she was held before the death people know about.

Perhaps in my reading becoming a zombie symbolizes loosing one's voice. The husband sees that Antoinette's voice challenges his version and threatens to make him a zombie, so he has to try and make her one instead. But to save his version of the narration he has to sacrifice his own experience as well as his wife. In the end when he is left with "nothing" inside, is he not a zombie, too? Horner and Zlosnik's interpretation is analogous to this although their point of view is that of the sexual relationship and the man's fears of the sensuality that threaten a sexual polarity essential to his sense of self. He states he will be "longing for what [he] had lost before [he] found it" (*WSS,* 141) and, nevertheless, abandoning it by returning to England. "The figure of the zombi thus suggests not only his deepest fears, but also the death of such desires" (Horner and Zlosnik, 174). So the "master-narrative" by the very definition of how it is compiled carries with it "nothing", it is untrue and empty inside.

Antoinette refuses all the alternative courses of action that Christophine urges her to take. She says she has no money now, and where would she go, she cannot "pack up and go". From the intertextual point of view Antoinette is very right; "this must happen". But what has this meant for the interpretations of the character in this novel? "Readers may sympathize with her plight, but they hardly admire her response" (Emery, n.18). But Emery finds a way round her self-destructiveness, irrationality and desire to please a man. At the moment when her character seems to fail and she becomes most slavish to a man the narrative "enters the realm of magic, and shows us and Antoinette the place where she, impossibly, belongs" (Emery, 46).

Lucy Wilson points out how this passive portrait of a "Rhys woman" does not apply to her black heroines Christophine in *WSS* and Selina Davis in *Let Them Call It* Jazz. They are just as much social outcasts as Antoinette or the other white West Indian heroine, Anna Morgan in

Voyage in the Dark. But instead of falling victims to their own powerlessness to alter their conditions they are resilient and draw upon their inner resources (Wilson, 440). You can jail them but you cannot break them. Antoinette is not a slave nor is she imprisoned and Christophine for one has very little patience towards her behaviour; she criticizes Antoinette for not having "spunks". Mary Lou Emery does not join the many critics who share this view. Instead she points out the similarities between Antoinette's reactions to her conditions and the resistance of Jamaican slaves: satire, laziness, plans for running away and suicide (Emery, 46). The more aggressive method available for Antoinette is obeah. Emery suggests that the sickening effect of the love potion on the husband might not have been merely an accident. Christophine herself warns that the potion is too strong for béké (a white person) and Spivak credits the failure for the unsuitability of black magic as the remedy for the whites' personal problems (Spivak, 806). Emery states that the "obeah men and women often provided poisons for individually employed violent resistance" (Emery, 46). As such she sees it foreshadowing the burning down of "the master's house", which becomes another act of violent resistance.

If Antoinette's behaviour is to be interpreted as methods of resistance that she has learnt from the slaves through her own enslavement there is one that she cannot use, that of the collective action. She has no mob to burn the house with. The reason is her isolation that has gone so far that "she does not even know with whom she might find solidarity" (Emery, 47). For her isolation we can hardly blame her husband, as the first part of the book has been a description of the different ways in which she is isolated. The final confinement to isolation is forced on by him, but in the problems of identity and belonging that she has to solve he seems in the end to play only a minor part.

The ending of the book is fascinating and the interpretations of it almost equally so. The critics who have concentrated on the relationship between "Rochester" and Antoinette and dealt

with their story as the romance plot and “the failure of love” see also the ending as a resolution of that relationship. This model leaves two possibilities. The fire and the suicide are either Antoinette’s final defeat or the opposite: the victory of breaking free from the chains of her husband. Mona Fayad thinks the victory lies in the fact that the narration escapes him in the third section and returns to Antoinette who is determined to find a mode of representation for herself. In the fire Antoinette writes herself as the fire separates her from the patriarchal representation of herself, the ghost, that she now recognizes and confronts (Fayad, 448-450). Or it could be said that the fire separates her from the representation of herself that Brontë wrote. The last pages of her narration place her very definitely in the attic at Thornfield. Grace Poole is named and the story begins to overlap with that of *JE*. But the burning of the house and the moment of her death are left to the other novel. Or are they? In the original ending of *Voyage in the Dark* that the publisher demanded her to change, Rhys wrote Anna Morgan recording her own faith up to the moment of her death (*Gender of Modernism*, 375-6). In *WSS* she did it; Antoinette narrates her story up to the moment when she crosses the dark passage into Brontë’s novel and becomes the ghost. And that is the “real death” for her; the death recorded in the other novel is “the one people know about”.

As in the other two parts the thematical importance of the narratological choices is great in the man’s text. The structure and the content work together. The novel has no authoritative narrator, no one to sum up the meanings and truths. This as such is probably a theme, a comment on the literary tradition, and on the preceding text of Brontë. A feature that could also be seen as modernist. In my intertextual viewpoint Rhys’s work is a reaction to and even against that of Brontë’s; its truthfulness, concrete and taken-for-granted views are questioned. Not just their content but the idea of such truths as well. *WSS* shows that such a view depends on omissions, in this case the omission of the white West-Indian Creole’s voice and point of view. In her own text

Rhys acknowledges that there are an infinite number of other sides, and that the multiplicity cannot be confined within the covers of one novel. She thus leaves out point of views too, but not by silencing them but by acknowledging the limitations of her own text. Instead of forcing everything to fit in, she lets them go and be full outside her text. Christophine, for example, is essential to the story Rhys tells, but she is not limited to the needs of that story. Christophine's exit from the text shows that she is more and that her point of view finally exists somewhere outside the text of *WSS*. This is an example of an alternative treating of characters to the one Rhys criticized in *JE*. The madwoman, a necessity to the story, was diminished into a "papertiger lunatic" and Rhys shows another way of writing. According to this line of reasoning, from the intertextual point of view, Rhys shows in her book how the characters end up as those presented in *JE*. She demonstrates how a self-confident patriarch and a soulless madwoman become what they are. Rhys represents one version of what must have, or could have happened to make *JE* possible.

Again this could be called the modernist side of Rhys, dealing with literary innovation and theoretical problems of writing. As such it forms an analogy to the two most interesting thematic considerations: the patriarchal and the colonial interpretations. Putting these together forms an interesting kaleidoscope; there is no one main point that is being reflected and metaphorically presented in the others. All of these really represent the same pattern of creating and maintaining binary oppositions that are hierarchically organized to create dominant and muted idioms.

In her more descriptive than theoretical reading of the novel Howells manages to catch an important aspect that has often been neglected or explained away since it has not suited the selected framework. The man with no name is facing the reality of cross-cultural encounters that make his position and state of mind similar to that of Antoinette's but also to the heroines in Rhys's earlier fiction. His bewilderment, paranoia and blankness of mind "had previously seemed

an exclusively female condition" (Howells, 116). The man himself describes his condition: "There are blanks in my mind that cannot be filled up" (*WSS,* 76). It is not sex alone, or race or nationality that defines the experiences of an individual. You can find dominant idioms where you would not expect them and the expected dominant speakers can find themselves muted.

3. STAGE ONE: BEWILDERED

"It had been arranged…. I agreed. As I had agreed to everything else" (WSS, 56).

3.1. The Husband as the Lost Little Boy and a Failing Patriarch

The puppet quality of the husband is evident as he enters this new world following someone else's master plan; a plan in which he has no say, he just has to act it out. As the younger son he is not entitled to name or fortune and has to go along with a fixed marriage in order to secure his wealth and position. This effectively crumbles the picture of him as the dominant male, the patriarch. Instead there is a lost little boy among people and places alien and threatening for him. From the very beginning of his narration he starts listing things he perceives as malicious. When Amélie wishes him happy honeymoon he reports, "[s]he was laughing at me I could see. A lovely little creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like much else in this place" (*WSS, 55).* When the introductions at the honeymoon house are over, "Rochester" is sent to his room almost as a little boy. The little boy metaphor contains ideas of powerlessness and insecurity.

On their way to the honeymoon house his feelings of alienation are evident. He does not know anything of this new place which he has entered. On their riding trip he is dependant on others to lead him the way and to tell him what to do and when. He looses the invisible battle of authority both to his newlywed wife and to her black servants who are all in their home field. At

this point, however, he rather just monitors and lists his defeats without even trying to fight, “not yet” (*WSS*, 57), “I have had fever. I am not myself yet” (*WSS*, 57). He may be male, white and European and thus supposedly superior but he has to experience that none of those qualities give him superiority in his new surroundings. Or it could be said not even there; he lacks his name that was deprived of him earlier or outside this novel. From a textual point of view this tells a great deal. He is a main character but he has no name and the other characters do not yield to being just ornaments in his story even when he himself is telling it. Instead of standing in the background they run him over and giggle at him (*WSS*, 60-61).

All along their trip Antoinette tells him about the place, educates him as it were. He cannot even put on his coat when he is getting cold without having her tell him to (*WSS*, 59). All this must be somewhat humiliating for him. This conflates in his mind with the humiliations afforded to him by his father, indicated by the letters he starts to plan to write for his father. At the same time these letters show how he has been deprived of language. He is unable to express himself, to get through to the world. This is also quite literally true: “... I wondered how they got their letters posted. I folded mine and put it into a drawer of the desk” (*WSS*, 64). This experience is shared with Antoinette and other Rhys heroines from other novels, and the technique resembles their “I thought”, “I wanted to say” parts.

He tries to overcome his childlike dependency by talking of England. He is reminding Antoinette that he knows things about his own place. The prevailing superiority that she has gained over him is only due to the place. If it were the other way round he would be the knowledgeable one. His fears and anxieties are partly due to the strange environment and culture that he does not understand and perceives as threatening. When Antoinette declares they are now at Granbois he looks immediately at the mountains “...purple against a very blue sky.” Along their riding trip the mountains and the hills have acquired threatening features for him. He

reflects on the young man saying the place is wild and agrees though the warm wind is blowing. He adds "[n]ot only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you" (*WSS*, 58). Then he goes on reflecting his confused impressions and weariness in the face of all that is new and strange for him: "Everything is too much.", too much too intense colours, "the mountains too high, the hills too near". During his stay he does acquire knowledge, which is visible in his comments of the natural phenomena: "The cloudless sky [...]. At noon I knew it would be gold, then brassy in the heat" (*WSS*, 71). The familiarity does not reduce his fears or annoyance, though. He manages to get some things right but still he has to listen to such remarks as "[y]ou don't understand at all" (*WSS*, 71) or "[a]gain you are mistaken" (*WSS*, 72).

When they arrive at the honeymoon house, he describes the house and its position in a way that might very well apply to him and his feelings of his position. There is an imitation of an English summerhouse much like he is a poor imitation of an English gentleman. The description contains two elements he did not mention in his "entering scene", the forest and the sea. The first for him is an element of danger and enclosure, the latter is one of hope, probably because over the sea is England. ".. [T]he house seemed to shrink from the forest behind it and crane eagerly out to the distant sea" (*WSS, 60)* The house as his mirror image is mentioned again as he and Antoinette prepare to leave it towards the end of his narration (Discussed in chapter 7, stage three: resolved).

The black servants win him in the field of performance. The porters and Amélie, with her bare feet, will reach their destination before the helpless European on a horseback. Antoinette's view of the blacks resembles this as well. Although a native of the islands she does not seem to have the same survival skills as they. She admires Tia for "fires always lit for her, sharp stones did not hurt her bare feet, I never saw her cry" (*WSS*, 20). Things do not brighten up for the husband when they arrive at their house. The welcoming ceremony by their servants or their

overall behaviour is quite contrary to his expectations. The first encounter is with Bertrand who runs him down "without a word of apology" (*WSS*, 60). This is a literal description of how unstable his position is. The boy rolls his eyes and Antoinette says, "That was Bertrand who nearly knocked you down". A man's voice instructing the Negroes to "look sharp" is his next perception followed by a visual image as he counts them: "there were four of them"; he feels that he has been outnumbered. The first glimpse of Christophine comes as, "a woman, a girl and the dignified man who were together, with Antoinette's arms around her". Antoinette names them and lastly remarks: "and here is Christophine who was my da, my nurse long ago". This does not catch his attention as Baptiste begins to speak his words of welcome in "good English". The proper picture of shyly grinning servants is disrupted though when Hilda begins to giggle (*WSS*, 61). This interruption makes the English husband look at her more carefully.

The first time he really pays attention to Christophine is now that she comments on Hilda's behaviour. After the tall, dignified man's good English her strange words "Doudou, ché cocotte", catch his attention and he "look[s] at her sharply", discarding her as insignificant, but now summing her up with his view. Perhaps surprisingly she looks back "steadily, not with approval," as he ventures to interpret it. This welcoming scene is exemplary of his seeking for comfort in English. The country he has left behind is his to understand and so is its language. He complains about Christophine's language, he listens to Baptiste, he looks for explanations in written word. Daniel's letter is very laboriously written but it emphasizes all the time his efforts of using good language. Daniel is trying to speak the Englishman's language, which could be one of the reasons he accepts Daniel's truths. Antoinette can speak but she evades, does not say, or is not sure of the facts. Or so he claims.

When they enter the house he is quickly pointed to his own room; sent away as a little boy who has lingered with the adults long enough. He more or less confesses to being afraid of

Christophine and Antoinette "laughed. 'That door leads into your dressing-room'. I shut it gently after me" (*WSS*, 62). For a short while he feels at ease in that room but that does not last very long. After the encounter with Baptiste the room changes for him: "the feeling of security had left me" (*WSS*, 63). What is it that causes this? Earlier he was quite content with Baptiste, the "tall, dignified man" (*WSS*, 60) as he was behaving according to his expectations, "spoke good English" (*WSS*, 61) and showed him the proper respect the master of the house should be entitled to. Now on the other hand, he sneaks up on him, entering the room without asking if it is appropriate, without knocking to let him know that he is no longer alone. He invades the place he has just had a chance to call his own, his "refuge" (*WSS*, 63). The Englishman's room is allegorical of his text. There are books in his room and for a while his literary space is secure without the challenge of the other characters. But Baptiste enters as easily as the texts and voices of other narrators interrupt and take over the literary space of the male narrator of part two.

Indeed, the encounters with the servants give him two good reasons to feel the unease again. There is the lack of respect, as he would interpret it. Or else it is an indication of how strange this culture is for him: how nothing works the way he expects. He is also troubled by the lack of privacy. He is unable to decide when and where other people can see him and observe him. He is unable to decide what he wants to share and what to keep to himself. He is unable to have authority over his own text. He was probably reminded of the inquisitive, malicious eyes whose attack had horrified him on his wedding day and cultivated the seeds of doubt and suspicion in his mind: "…I thought I saw the same expression on all their faces. Curiosity? Pity? Ridicule? But why should they pity me. I who have done so well for myself?" (*WSS*, 65).

Other reasons for the unease have to do with his shaky position as the patriarch, or – depending on how it is interpreted – with his rebellion against the patriarchs. This would mean a rebellion against his father's text, the narration that has condemned him into the margins as a

nameless and penniless secondary character. Baptiste mentions Mr Mason whose room this used to be, and also tells how he never used to like that place. This Englishman hardly felt the need to agree with another to such a degree so as to change his mind about the room. Instead the mention of Mr Mason reminds him of his own deficiency as a colonialist and patriarch. Mr Mason had property and position; instead, he was forced to marry Mr Mason's stepdaughter in order to gain some status. For him Mr Mason represents one of those who bought him. The other possibility is quite the opposite of this. He might reject the model of Mr Mason as he rejected the model of an emperor, casting off his crown: he "crowned [him]self with one of the wreaths [….] 'You look like a king, an emperor' […] 'god forbid', [he] said and took the wreath off […] [He] stepped on it" (*WSS*, 62).

A great deal of my analysis of the husband as the lacking patriarch and narrator, trying to make up for it, relies on the comparison between the husband and Mr Mason. Perhaps then the point of comparison for his rebellion is old Mr Cosway, the slave owner. Antoinette compares her husband to Mr Cosway and his likes after the night with Amélie. Yes; he starts out as the rebel but ends up wanting to be the emperor in the emperor's place, and funnily enough that is just what he is going to be, in *JE*.

3.2. The Husband as the Illegitimate Son

Well he is not, but as to his position he might just as well be. He is the younger son who has no right to his father's heritance for the cause of keeping the property intact. His situation has a pragmatic side and a more symbolic one. It dictates his social position and it also marks his expulsion from the white male sovereignty. He becomes to experience the lack, which according to some critics allows him to glimpse into the feminine sensitivity; shows him another reality.

Sue Spaul for instance says that as he is “displaced from his own, male-dominated, ‘orderly’ society, Rochester comes face to face with the ‘wild zone’ of female experience” (Spaul, 105). This implies that what shook him from the certainty of his own orderly worldview were the place itself and the alien culture that he encounters. But there had been others before him. Also Mr Mason, for example, had entered a world strange to him, but he suffered from no such confusions.

The essence of the husband’s alienation is the betrayal of his father, of the orderly world. He has been taught all this world’s lessons and he has learnt to accept them, as he notes in the case of hiding one’s feelings: “It was necessary, I was told, and that view I have always accepted” (*WSS*, 85). Nevertheless, at the crucial moment he has been robbed of the position that would give him the solid ground for a firm, continuing belief in these lessons. I do agree with the basic idea that his current position reveals him the arbitrary nature of the orderly world, of the reality he has learnt to accept, and that to some degree it is a conflict between male and female experience, but I suggest the realization does not end there. Rhys does “use [] symbolic inversion to demonstrate the fallacy of a patriarchal mono-dimensional reality” as Spaul says (Spaul, 105) but in fact Rhys goes further than that; she shows that there are many mono-dimensional realities and shows the fallacies of having them.

His mirror image as the wrong son is Daniel Boyd/Cosway. His letter is one of the ruptures in the English husband’s narration. The letter is signed “your obt servant”. Daniel wants to make himself obtainable to this man, whom he urges to come and visit him soon. He indeed manages to be an obtrusive element in the story. He is also bitter to his father (or the man he claims to be his father), because he has been disinherited and denounced. Unlike the Englishman who retained from the “furtive shabby manoeuvres of a younger son” (*WSS*, 59), Daniel has been pestering Mr Cosway for money. He has openly spoken his mind to his father and been thrown out of his

house. This serves in the text as the motivation for his actions. “Vengeance is mine” (*WSS*, 100), says the biblical picture in his wall, but he wants to take matters into his own hands. He could not revenge old Mr Cosway but he can do his best to ruin his daughter’s life. The more concrete motive is blackmail. He threatens to make public the scandal that the husband is facing unless he gives him some money. At first he tried to sugarcoat his motives into “Christian duty” toward a gentleman so cruelly deceived.

Daniel assumes yet another name by telling his reluctant listener that he is Esau who got nothing but curses from “that damn devil” of his father. “The old man’s favourite” (*WSS*, 102) was his half brother Alexander Cosway who Daniel resents because he has succeeded in what he himself has failed: accumulating wealth and acquiring a respected “white” position in the society. In his unwritten letter to his father the English younger son talks of “my dear brother the son you love” (*WSS*, 59). He probably recognizes the similarities between himself and Daniel, and they do share some attitudes toward the slave owners, but he does not want to identify with this man with the “yellow sweating face”. He can very clearly sum him up for the bitter revengeful troublemaker who is out to get some money out of him. And the mentions of money have the sobering effect on the husband all through the novel. Financial matters are clear in his mind. It is not the fear of scandal, or sympathy, that make him stay and listen. And let Daniel’s words take their effect on him. He has had his own insecurities and doubts and he uses Daniel “as validation of all his fears and a legitimation of his own culture’s methods of social control" as Mary Lou Emery put it (Emery, 50). Both of them could be said to use one another, Daniel is trying to use him as the weapon of his revenge and to get some money. At first he does not seem very successful. All he gets is to throw him out of his house “…get out. Now it’s me to say it” (*WSS*, 104). But as Emery points out his voice becomes one of those that begin to inhabit the husband’s mind with the effect of emptying him of his own concept of sanity (Emery, 50). His curses

nurture the husband's racial prejudices and his jealousy: "[g]ive my love to your wife – my sister, [….] You are not the first to kiss her pretty face" (*WSS*, 104).

The character of Daniel is yet another image of displacement, of inhabiting the place in-between with all the uncertainty of identity that follows thereof. He is as such a mirror image even to Antoinette and not just her husband. Daniel Cosway is a coloured man in-between blacks and whites. He represents the distrust between the coloureds and the whites and the lack of solidarity between the blacks and coloureds, which Emery said prevailed effectually preventing possibilities of social reform (Emery, 50). Philip Curtin describes the situation of the free coloured people after the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of the slaves. They "had no other home and they often played key roles [in creating local pressure against slavery], representing the interests of the slaves, though they sometimes tried to guard their own position of superiority over the freedmen" (Curtin, 177). When the husband questions Amélie about Daniel, she denies him being her friend. Whether or not he really is a Cosway she says, "that's what he calls himself" and adds "thoughtfully that Daniel was a very superior man, always reading the Bible and that he lived like white people" (*WSS*, 99). Antoinette "quickly" denies Daniel's right to the Cosway name and declares that he hates the white people and especially her (WSS, 106).

Daniel himself expresses reproach against the "detestable" slave owners who "buy and sell [people] like cattle" (*WSS*, 80,101). This does not prevent him from feeling superior to the blacks. He tells of his futile efforts to get some money from the man he claims to be his father in order "[n]ot to go barefoot like a nigger. Which I am not" (*WSS*, 101). He is bitter to his half-brother Alexander Cosway, because he has succeeded in becoming almost white, is very well respected and financially successful. Frantz Fanon has written about the black man's "desire to be suddenly white" and his "wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*", especially in the Caribbean

colonial context. Being loved by a white woman makes him a white man (Fanon, 63). Alexander's son Sandi is a weapon Daniel uses to inflame the husband's jealousy. Sandi's role in the story is left somewhat vague, but Amélie too reports that Sandi and Antoinette were intending to marry (*WSS*, 100).

Daniel's accusations in his letter include the suggestion that Richard Mason has tricked the Englishman into marrying. If asked about the family history, Mr Mason would tell "a lot of nancy stories which is what we call lies here" (*WSS*, 82). This "allusion to 'nancy stories' discloses Cosway's own cultural displacement and the conflicts of interest he is attempting to manipulate" (Emery, 49). "Anansi" is the central character of folk tales in Akan and Jamaican tradition: it is a spider folk hero or often an anti-hero (Alleyne, p.xi, glossary). The nancy or anancy tales are a part of African culture introduced to Jamaica by slaves. These popular tales characterize a little man who despite his inferior status was able to outwit his opponents. He possessed magical powers that enabled him to turn into a spider when in danger. His ability to fly expresses the desire to have wings and be able to fly home. In West Africa these stories were a way to impersonate and ridicule those ordinarily in power and occupying superior positions. In the Caribbean context this function survived as a way of satirizing and ridiculing the white ruling class. What for the whites is superstition is for the blacks a way to express oppressed truths and desires (Emery, 49-50). Emery notes that Daniel betrays his origins; he takes on the deceptive qualities of the Anancy man while calling the stories lies as a token of his identification with the white (Emery, 50). The reader has very conflicting evidence of Daniel's racial identity. Antoinette says he hates white people, Amélie says he lives like white people, Daniel himself insists on having a white father.

The British younger son's quest in the West Indies is a quest after something his father and his culture had deprived him of: his authorship and his manhood. A manhood that is defined by

the power and authority, that is, by property. The side of the father has very often been neglected or the conflict gets suppressed. In Nancy Harrison's reading the letters are seen as relating to the male world and language in the midst of a constant conflict between male and female ones. Luce Irigaray says Rochester is "identifying with the law-giving father" when challenging his wife for power (Irigaray, 140). In the end the son more or less wants to become his father, but now he rebels against him. A futile and vain rebellion that only takes place in his mind in the bitter letters he plans to write his father. The letters also make visible the process of rehearsing to mould his narration. For each of the three letters he plans to write there are two versions. The first is always a wild outburst of bitter sentiments, the second one a more controlled and subtle version. Only the last letter actually gets sent to his father, and it is at this point he starts to be ready for the transition into Mr Rochester, his version of the truth ready and his talent of telling it complete.

He is the boy who grew up as the second son, pushed aside from the way of the privileges and position of the firstborn, inheriting no money, no place and in effect no name. Here is a very striking resemblance to the heroine Sasha Jensen in Rhys's *Good Morning Midnight* (1939) where she says "I have no pride – no pride, no name, no face, no country. I don't belong anywhere" (*GMM, 38).* Indeed, he has no pride either, he cannot afford it and has to be humble facing the realities and schemes drawn up by other people. When he finally decides to follow his father and accept his world, he takes up this issue of the name when he questions Antoinette about having made promises for him, in his name (*WSS,* 141). Perhaps just an idiom, but in Rhys's text it can be counted to be chosen for a purpose. He has learnt to habit the position and is therefore cautious of the invasion into his place, his autonomous existence, and his name.

In the beginning he had not yet built up his patriarchal throne and had to hide away in little rooms in the far end of the house. When his privacy was invaded, his throne challenged, he had no means of defending it, and he lost it. Now he is determined not to loose it, not to let anything

challenge it. Again the unwritten letters are the narrator's attempts to gain authority over his text, but at this point he does not have the means or the knowledge to do so. Even if he scribbles something on paper he does not know how to send the letters. Towards the end he learns the tricks and can use language effectively to serve his own needs. He sends a letter to Mr Frasier gaining ammunition with which to deport a disturbing character, Christophine, from his text (*WSS*, 132). He writes a lot of letters concerning practical matters and with these he secures his future literary space. He defines what he wants and where he will go, he creates a literary space in which to push and lock in the other disturbing character, his wife. All this done he is in *JE* on a secure ground. No one can interrupt or challenge his narration.

4. STAGE TWO: BATTLE

4.1. Obeah Night

In the evening of the obeah night Antoinette is trying to follow Christophine's advice and tell her husband about her mother and what happened to them. In the course of her story he seems almost friendly and considerate but at the same time careful and withdrawn. Antoinette's interpretation at the end of her story is that she has not been able to make him understand just as Mr Mason never understood her mother. "Nothing has changed", she utters with a laugh. Her husband proves her point: "Don't laugh like that, Bertha" (*WSS*, 111). Vaguely she questions him about the usage of that name but in vain. The talking is over and she uses the magic and gives her husband the love potion she got from Christophine. As Christophine predicted it only made him hate her. He swore that she need not have done it and watches her "hating". His revenge is to sleep with Amélie, which sends Antoinette away to Christophine again, as he knew it would. The

household is breaking apart; everyone is leaving because of what is going on. He writes to Mr Fraser about Christophine and acquires weapons against her that give him a chance to say "so much for you" Christophine. The servants act peculiarly in a way that leads to think that when they look at him they see a zombi. Hilda acts like the little girl in the forest who ran screaming from the husband she thought was a zombi (*WSS*, 119) and Baptiste stares at him with an "expression of utter bewilderment"(*WSS, 120)*. Now at last Antoinette confronts him for the use of the wrong name: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name, I know, that's obeah too" (*WSS*, 121). In her frantic, drunken state she of course manages to duplicate the scene between her mother and Mr Mason.

According to Mary Lou Emery the husband has turned against Antoinette and slept with Amélie as a result of which Antoinette turns to Christophine to ask for the love potion (Emery, 48). The order of things is wrong. The night with Amélie followed the Obeah night and was his revenge for it. This is an interesting mistake in regards to who the readers might sympathize with or see as the guilty ones. Anyway the obeah fails. It fails because it is not for "béké" (the word for a white person in the patois language spoken by Christophine). It fails because it involves another betrayal: Antoinette forces Christophine into helping her with her "ugly money" (*WSS*, 118). A cock crows as a sign of betrayal in many occasions in the novel and now it crows for Antoinette. Emery sees Antoinette's lack of place in the society as the basic reason for the failure of obeah. "Neither *béké* nor black, her reliance on obeah for individual, personal matters cannot succeed, for as an individual she hardly exists. Indeed, she soon becomes a victim of the "magic" Rochester practices when he renames her Bertha" (Emery, 44). Antoinette has become a zombi. Emery points out that obeah had other functions besides the manipulation of personal affairs. These functions were primarily social ones including maintaining group cohesion and order among the slaves and working on behalf of slave rebellions (Emery, 44).

Horner and Zlosnik see the obeah night as a shock for the husband since “he discovers the nature of female sexuality and finds to his horror that, like the forest, it is beyond his control” (Horner and Zlosnik, 169). Certainly he fights to gain control, that is described in the “die” piece, though the game initiated by her, they do it his way. To say he discovers the nature of female sexuality does seem a bit farfetched, that is precisely what he does not discover; he can hardly understand the nature of his own sexuality. Horner and Zlosnik point to his possible lack of sexual experience that faithful to the style is suggested by “oblique hints”: his defensiveness and anxiousness at the idea of the “bull’s blood” (Horner and Zlosnik, 169). He must have also thought of the porter who was called young bull and compared himself with him.

In his struggle over his narration the obeah night serves as an important piece of evidence for his final story about his wife. He has gotten news of her madness from the outside but his own experience is the final proof and he tells himself that “no sane woman” (*WSS*, 136) would or could do that. This reflects Victorian ideas about female sexuality, which according to Emery was one of his functions as a narrator. Horner and Zlosnik note that because of his cultural background he cannot understand Antoinette’s “frank eroticism” and female sexuality gets conflated with madness (Horner and Zlosnik, 164). In *JE* Mr Rochester states his wife’s sexuality as the cause of her madness, or at least as a factor that “ripened” the inevitable hereditary madness sooner rather than later. Inevitable madness that inevitably had to be blameworthy, but as Hite points out Rhys “made the theme central by allying madness with rebellion and making it the effect, not the cause of her female protagonist’s outcast status” (Hite, 28).

He is horrified by his own desires as well, the nature of which he understands just as little as those of Antoinette’s. Not to mention the lack of control of his own sexuality that the obeah night reveals for him; the dark tropical forest is not just outside in Antoinette but in him as well. I think it was trying to regain this illusion of control, along with wanting to hurt Antoinette, which

led to the affair with the servant girl. Horner and Zlosnik see it differently: ”His attitude to black women is distastefully racist and reveals an intense inner conflict in which his own sexual desires can be acknowledged only by projecting them upon a race supposedly less ‘civilised’”(Horner and Zlosnik, 169-70). The race is important of course, and he has this racial suspicion regarding Antoinette that makes him uneasy. But Horner and Zlosnik leave out an important factor in their description of his affair with Amélie. They see it as a revenge of Antoinette and Sandi’s affair that has been suggested by Amélie and Daniel. However, the context of the seduction has more significance than being “shortly after the wedding” (Horner and Zlosnik, 170). It takes place right after the obeah night. Yes, it is revenge but to what?

In the course of the obeah night the last of the control was taken away from the male narrator, the English husband. The love potion removed all his inhibition and caution. The love potion merged their narratives completely, taking away from him even the little control he has had so far. Unlike usual cases of obeah he can remember everything in the morning which is as good as proven by his emphatic denial of remembering anything. By sleeping with Amélie he tries to regain the control, so it is in fact quite the contrary to letting one’s unfettered desires loose with someone less civilized. His desires had been loose, now he gains control again by the social hierarchy between himself and the servant girl. He is the master and the transaction is more or less bought sex. He gets to be the purchaser, too, something his marital arrangements deprived him of. He regains the authorship of his own narration and secures his control.

Whether Antoinette had had a sexual relationship with Sandi before their marriage or after the obeah night, or both, remains something of a mystery. Horner and Zlosnik interpret Antoinette’s comment “We had often kissed before but not like that” (*WSS*, 152) as a proof that it was before (Horner and Zlosnik, 170), but that is very questionable. I think it took place after the obeah night, after they had come back to Spanish Town before departing to England. I ground

this on the fact that Sandi said she is unhappy, and she was not particularly unhappy before the marriage – she was uneasy and confused – she was unhappy later. The other thing is the mention of the ship whistling in this context “once gaily, once calling, once to say good-bye” (*WSS*, 152), suggesting the near proximity of their departure. It can also be that Antoinette fled to Sandi when she left the house, so it took place prior to their departure of Granbois, as the husband’s final speech takes place before they leave.

Be that as it may the attitude of the husband is that his wife “thirsts for anyone”, like no sane woman could. Here he comes to accept the views presented by Daniel: madness and promiscuity were both inherited, and in her case madness equals promiscuity and vice versa. Horner and Zlosnik see his brutality (the marks that Christophine comments on) and the confinement in the house as his need to control and contain her sexuality. He is supported by the values of his society. They quote Elaine Showalter: in the nineteenth century discussion female insanity was seen as nymphomania, autonomous sexual pleasure being a symptom or perhaps the essence of it. ”Seen in this light Antoinette’s frank sexuality politically subverts the code by which Rochester lives, just as Edna Pontellier’s eroticism [in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*] threatens the values which Robert Lebrun embraces uncritically”(Horner and Zlosnik, 171).

The sexual oppression is linked with colonialism and imperialism. Rochester tries to “civilize” her like the Europeans “civilized” Jamaica. But her desires, “unconstrained by English convention” cannot “be confined to marriage and monogamy” and Rochester plans to contain her more literally in an English house that he draws on paper. “Thus, [], the control of woman in private house is implicitly linked to authoritarianism in the political sphere, as it is in Woolf’s *Three Guineas*.”(Horner and Zlosnik, 172) And in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman? By the way there was something in *WSS* that reminded me of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, namely the event in the attic when Antoinette thinks she sees her mother; “Looking at the

tapestry one day I recognized my mother dressed in an evening gown but with bare feet" (*WSS, 147).*

From my point of view the "frank eroticism" is indeed the willingness and ability to challenge the husband's narration. When he politely gives room to her narration in the discussion in the evening of the obeah night, he is able to stand on guard and not be swept off his feet by her narration. But she is not content with that. She uses the magic to force his narrative control out. This is what infuriates him the most; this is what he cannot forgive. In their final scene before leaving Granbois, he is once more tempted by her, aches after reconciliation, and wants her to give in to his narration.

> So I shall never understand why, suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain 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. […] I had found it in a hidden place and I'd keep it […] As I'd hold her. I looked at her.[…] She was silence itself. Sing Antoinetta. I can hear you now. […]What was I to say to her?
>
> Do not be sad or think Adieu.[…] No, I would say – I knew what I would say. 'I have made a terrible mistake. Forgive me.'*(WSS, 138-9)*

But she meets his expectations with hate; with a reminder of her own narration. This "swings" him back to hate, back to the battle over narrative control. The cardboard prison is where her narration is to be contained.

> I drew a house surrounded by trees. A large house. I divided the third floor into rooms and in one room I drew a standing woman – a child's scribble, a dot for a head, a larger one for the body, a triangle for a skirt, slanting lines for arms and feet. But it was an English house. (*WSS*, 134-5)

4.2. Battle with Christophine

When the new husband first sees the servants at Granbois the introduction of Christophine is saved till the last. His words and actions here form an interesting conflict. When he says "I looked at her sharply but she seemed insignificant" (*WSS*, 61), he really undermines his own

evaluation by reporting how they stared at each other and how she seemed not to approve of him. The staring competition ends with Christophine's victory and joy over it, at least according to his evaluation: "I looked away first and she smiled to herself..." (*WSS*, 61). She may have seemed insignificant at the first glance but he surely changes his idea of that in a flash. It is interesting that he does not judge the other blacks he meets with such considerations who is significant and who is not. And significant in what respect? Christophine is significant to the whole book as Horner and Zlosnik acknowledge when they describe her as the character with the deepest insights in the novel (Horner and Zlosnik, 166).

According to Mary Lou Emery the husband's fears stem partly from his ignorance of the culture that threatens him. As an example she mentions his failure to recognize Christophine's powers, to cast her as insignificant (Emery, 49). He obviously had fears and uncertainties when he arrived, stemming from his compromised position in his own country. Now, surrounded by an alien culture he does not know and does not understand his insecurity turns his lack of knowledge into suspicion. This causes him to project the fears produced by his own situation onto this new culture he frequently misinterprets. His codes of cultural evaluation are not valid and he is dependant on his reflections and feelings or other people's advice. It must be a hard experience for someone who has learnt to value reason and the facts above all other ways of knowledge, which is reflected in his annoyance with Antoinette's uncertainty of facts. This is a strange argument since what the reader has witnessed is a long line of facts provided by her to straighten out his misconceptions. In fact the uncertainties are only mentioned when he complains about them. His story is conflicting also in this case of Christophine. He says she seemed insignificant but what follows clearly shows he soon got over with that misconception. Emery notes that he does not just recognize her powers but that the two of them engage in a struggle. This struggle, both over Antoinette and moral authority, is seen as a major conflict in the novel (Emery, 49).

Christophine's weapons in this battle are her understanding of English "reason" along with her West Indian "magic". Horner and Zlosnik remind of the role of the obeah men in the culture and see Christophine's presence as "suggestive of political subversion, however, ineffectual" (Horner and Zlosnik, 166).

There might not be a successful rebellion on the level of the plot and it seems that Christophine looses. Emery has another point of view: although the effort to persuade Rochester to let Antoinette go fails she manages to "possess" Rochester. What Emery describes as his "irrational obsession [to] possess []" Antoinette turns against him and leaves him "possessed". (Just like the love potion did not give the required solution in the plot but yet the obeah entered the very structures of the narration, denying Rochester autonomous authority of his text that becomes invaded and interrupted by other voices.) However, Christophine's timing in using her weapons seems to fail. Emery sees her advice to Antoinette to speak calmly to her husband as an indicator of a "naïve hope that recourse to the reason the white legal system claims as its basis will help Antoinette whose property and livelihood it has taken from her"(Emery, 49).

It does seem a surprise to Christophine that Antoinette now has no money because all that was hers now legally belongs to her husband; she makes agitated remarks on women's foolishness giving their money to worthless men. Here is another "insight" that Christophine has: "cynical view of arranged marriages between Creoles and Europeans" (Horner & Zlosnik, 166). I do not understand why Horner and Zlosnik restrict her cynicism to this group of marriages when her own words expand the field enormously, serving herself as an example: "All women, all colours, nothing but fools…no husband…I keep my money" (*WSS,* 91). Anyway, they explain her view on the culture she comes from that has "little regard for the convention of marriage" (Horner and Zlosnik, 166).

In his *The History of Jamaica* that was published in 1774 Edward Long wrote that "[the blacks] laugh at the idea of marriage, which ties two persons together indissolubly" (Brathwaite, 215). In the first chapter Antoinette was telling her stepfather that the blacks never married, which seemed to shock him utterly. Whether it was the fact itself or the young girl spitting it out so naturally worth some consideration. In this light Christophine's utterance might indeed be interpreted differently. By a husband she might mean something outside the white institution, by not having a husband she might not just mean keeping from marrying but not letting a man live in her house. Then again women of her race do have "husbands" whose marks of violence she treats. On the face of all this I find it hard to believe that Christophine was being "naïve" or would not have known that the husband gets all the money.

The significance of her surprise is that this is not how it was supposed to be. The husband was planning on making a provision for her, somewhere on the way he changed his mind. There were also some rings that Aunt Cora gave her for her security, but she must have given those up as well. Aunt Cora confronted Mr Mason's son about his arrangements for the marriage. The young man acclaimed his total trust for this English gentleman; he would trust his life in his hands. Aunt Cora's sarcastic reply is that it is not his life they are talking about. Judith Kegan Gardiner mentions Aunt Cora along with Christophine as being the independent women and speakers of truth who, nevertheless, fail to save Antoinette in the patriarchal and racist society (Gardiner, 130).

The real wisdom of Christophine, in my opinion, is her understanding of the language, of words. She knows that they are used to create, not describe, reality. Rimmon-Kenan studies the conflict between representation and creation in his *A Glance Beyond Doubt* and the following might well have been written about *WSS* and its different narrators: "the act of telling, which is unable to reach reality, becomes a struggle over the power to shape it by shaping the narrative"

(Rimmon-Kenan, 1996, 26). Words are indeed too part of obeah, like the use of a wrong name makes the person into someone else. Christophine's analysis of the lack of understanding between Antoinette and her husband is this: "Plenty people fasten bad words on you and your mother" (*WSS*, 94). She sees the husband as a confused man who "hear[s] so many stories he don't know what to believe" (*WSS*, 94). That is why Antoinette has to provide her own words to fight off those of others. Somehow she should make her words the most reassuring to her husband. The way to do that is to speak his language.

We have seen how suspicious he is of languages that are not his of utterances he finds alien and strange. So I must slightly disagree with Emery here, because Christophine does not exactly advice Antoinette to "approach her husband with reasonable questions about his neglect of her" (Emery, 49). Instead she urges her to "tell him about [her] mother and all that happened at Coulibri and why she get sick and what they do to her" (*WSS*, 96). She wants her to replace the rumours he is using as a basis of his beliefs with the other side of the story, with her version. In order to make it able to compete with the other versions of truth and thus make it true to him she has to provide its credibility. She has to tell the story in the way that is as close to his own language as possible: "Speak...calm and cool...Don't bawl...don't make crazy faces...Don't cry...Speak nice and make him understand" (*WSS*, 96). Another important point in diminishing her husband's suspicions is that she has to appear as "sane" as possible. Christophine shares the insight that Antoinette's life is going to be a repetition of her mother's in her accusation to the husband that he is going to pretend she is mad (Horner and Zlosnik, 167; *WSS*, 132). "Making crazy faces" would provide him with evidence in support of his pretence.

The point of the novel when the husband has to decide whom to believe comes when Antoinette confronts him after he has received Daniel Cosway's letter. Emery notes (implicitly) that the letter wins, and Rochester does not pay much attention to Antoinette's efforts to explain

her side of the story calmly and reasonably. Perhaps it was the understanding of English reason behind the advice, but the letter wins. It was not about being reasonable after all. It was about language and his own prejudices; he hears what he chooses to, what will fit into his final narration. Except with Christophine, who nearly bewitches him making him listen, forcing him to hear her message. With the law he wins. He is able to drive Christophine away. But her words remain with him and her curse follows him to the other novel, to *Jane Eyre*, where he loses his hand and his eyes. Obeah enters the structures and undermines the surface level victory of the reason.

> 'And do you think that I wanted all this? I would give my life to undo it. I would give my eyes never to have seen this abominable place.'
>
> She laughed. 'And that's the first damn word of truth you speak. You choose what you give, eh? Then you choose. You meddle in something and perhaps you don't know what it is.' She began to mutter to herself. Not in patois. I knew the sound of patois now. (*WSS, 132)*

There are Daniel's and Antoinette's words invading his inner voice during his "dialogue" with Christophine (their confrontation stretching over pages 124-133). Mary Lou Emery too notes how he is losing his own "concept of sanity" and the way in which "at first his inner voice challenges her words, then it begins to agree and finally simply to echo them" (Emery, 50). Christophine then overpowers him with her words and her use of language, uses her "magic". It is perhaps noteworthy that they can not engage in a discussion among equals, so to say. First Christophine is dominating, then him through the usage of his magic, the letter of the law, then Christophine again with her final curses. On some level they do get across and understand each other. Nevertheless, there can be no reconciliation since this is a battle over authority. Daniel's voice invades the male narrator's and so does Christophine's. And, according to Emery, so does the whole culture: "His thoughts have begun to follow a rhythmic pattern resembling the call-and-response songs of black laborers" (Emery, 51).

Even Antoinette manages to win her husband with her words in the scene in which her "disembodied voice interrupts the dialogue" (Emery, 51). The husband, however, has recognized the powers he is up against, when he heard Christophine's murmur in patois, the language he does not understand, he says it is "dangerous" and thinks he must protect himself. His narration faces challenges and is in danger of being invaded. His weapons to protect himself with are the written words of the law, the letter of the law. He hides behind the magistrate's letter and the Bible when he tries combating Antoinette and Christophine and their narrations. He should be one of the men of "reason" but he does not need to justify himself "reasonably", all he has to do is to refer to the texts. This opposition between the spoken and written word is, I think, very meaningful in many ways. The first words he receives from Daniel are written (Daniel's letter pp. 79-82) and he easily believes those. In the second occasion they speak (the visit to Daniel's house pp. 100-104). That in turn resembles the dialogue between him and Christophine. In that case, too, he becomes almost "bewitched" though trying to resist. He does not trust Daniel or like him, and rejects his identification with him. What is absent though is the echoing inner voice. He flees from the little man, disgusted and enraged.

Mary Lou Emery calls the encounter between Rochester and Christophine as her "intervening [in] the section given to Rochester's first person narration" (Emery, 52). It is a violent invasion during which she "revises what he has told us, forcing him to internalise her interpretation" (Emery, 52). The extent to which she is successful in this is shown, I think, in his hesitation to call Antoinette his wife when he inquires what Christophine has done with her: "You haven't yet told me exactly what you did with my – with Antoinette" (*WSS*, 127). Christophine's interpretation imposed on him prevents him from calling her his wife and makes him call her by her first name, independent of her relation to him. This also proves of the success of Antoinette's own words: his question is preceded by Antoinette's words to Christophine that

invade the literary space from his inner voices. Forced to listen to her words he is also forced to recognize, as Emery points out, that the visit Antoinette pays Christophine to plea for her help is motivated by his actions, or in Emery's words, by "a desperation to which he has driven her"(Emery, 52). Her "disembodied" voice begins: "(I lay awake all night long after they were asleep...And I came to you...help me)" (*WSS, 127)*. The reference to the obeah night is clear. "They" are her husband and Amélie, who he pays for sex as a way to escape after the aphrodisiac has broken down his inhibition depriving him of the sense of control. As I have argued above (chapter 4.1. obeah night) the night spent with Amélie is just as much about regaining the (illusion of) control as revenging Antoinette for having stolen it away from him. Or more precisely, having shown him it is an illusion.

According to Emery, the sleep Christophine has offered as a remedy for Antoinette poses a threat to the husband since "it places Antoinette somewhere else where she can speak on her own behalf even when she is absent from the scene" (Emery, 52). Furthermore, this ability has given more weight to her words so that they can now succeed in possessing his mind, too. Emery suggests that the battle that we came to know from Antoinette's imagination goes on, but now in his mind. It has been suggested that in his wandering and getting lost in the wood the husband actually visited Antoinette's dream; entered the landscape of her imagination.

A peculiar, but revealing, dissymmetry, in Emery's interpretation appears when Daniel's voice again invades the male narrator's mind when Christophine questions him whether he will love her like he did before. The words "give my sister your wife a kiss from me", are now seen as called upon by the narrator in order to "bolster his internal armoury of weapons" (Emery, 52). Why are they now called by him, when in other cases all interruptions were invasions? Is there any other justification to this interpretation besides the fact that it fits the description of the husband as intentionally malicious and cruel? It is different from the other cases in that along

with Daniel's sentence there are the narrator's own thoughts within the bracket, so perhaps it is him thinking about Daniel's words. But what does this tell of his "reasons" for falling out of love with Antoinette, which he has been according to his own words "love her as I did – oh yes I did" (*WSS*, 130). He cannot promise that because she is Daniel's half sister? Then it would seem that his racial prejudices are indeed playing a great part. This is supported by his earlier comments of her descent: pure white, but not European, and his comparisons of Amélie and Antoinette. These cause him much discomfort, when his attitude toward Amélie after their affair indicates his racist feelings. In the morning her blackness and thick lips were repulsive for him. In this way he also again reveals the arbitrariness of his own values. He reproached the slave system, but his reasons were clearly not ideals of equality between races.

The abolition of slavery, or rather the reasons for it, seem rather puzzling even as a historical fact. The democratic revolutions in Europe clearly had something to do with the abolition, but the quasi slavery that followed indicates no deep-going change in the way people were valued. "After slavery ended, other forms of coercion continued such as debt peonage, contract labor with penal sanctions, vagrancy laws, or regressive taxation aimed at forcing peasants to become wage laborers in order to meet the demands of the tax collector" (Curtin, 173). Mr Mason's attitudes are revealing here as well. He thought it natural that the blacks might have some antagonism against Annette as a wife of a slave owner, but his attitude towards the blacks is racist. He sees them as harmless, and rather stupid, children. He is intending to import culi workers and the conditions of those workers did not differ significantly from those of the slaves. Seeing that the new age of emancipation and equality has only replaced the old brutal system by more subtle forms of constraints is one of the insights Christophine has (Horner and Zlosnik, 166). "No more slavery! She had to laugh! 'These new ones have Letter of the Law. Same thing. They got magistrate. They got fine. They got jail house and chain gang. They got

tread machines to mash up people's feet. New ones worse than old ones – more cunning, that's all.'" (*WSS*, 22-3).

5. STAGE THREE; RESOLVED

5.1. Determined and "Sane"

In stage three the husband finds the means of self-expression and finds the context in which he can use language to create and shape meanings. He is now determined and knows what to do. "I'd seen to everything, arranged everything" (*WSS*, 137) has replaced the "It had been arranged" (*WSS*, 56) of the lost little boy in stage one. He now knows who to write to and how to send his letters. Mona Fayad notes that he now thinks himself the author completely, with no danger of the narrative escaping but is mistaken as the third section returns to Antoinette's narration (Fayad, 448). Perhaps the narration escapes him or the other way round. These are the moments when he is about to become Mr Rochester and enter the text of *Jane Eyre*. Coral Ann Howells remarks he starts "a kind of intertextual obeah […] by summoning up the name of Brontë's mad wife" (Howells, 118) for the first time in his rage after the obeah night. I agree with this: there is obeah being used in the precise purpose of crossing the line into the other novel. Which I think he does but she might not. But there is a mistake: this was not the first time he called her Bertha. Whether or not it has any implications to the reading I do not know. When did he start that? After Daniel's letter? It is somewhat vague, but I do think that whenever the moment was it was the moment that the battle began in his head, the moment he started drafting his manuscript for *JE*. Howells thinks that the overlap between the two novels is complete when he has summoned up

the mad wife Bertha and had his final "confrontation with otherness in the person of Christophine that forces him to see himself "not as an English gentleman but as violator and thief" (Howells, 119). I think his final confrontation though is with himself. The final battle takes place in his own head and deals with the opposite truths of the two texts *WSS* and *JE* and the necessity for him to finally belong to the latter.

Also Mary Lou Emery sees the battle going on in the male narrator's mind. "The battle continues as later Rochester reviews the dialogue, inventing new and vicious responses to Christophine's phrases as they chorus in his mind"(Emery, 52). This is an indication of both his muteness and helplessness in this strange culture. He has been outwitted by Christophine's more rapid mind; no doubt to his great dissatisfaction he can only come up with biting answers afterwards. Confronted by Christophine he seems paralysed and incapable of shooting back; a fundamental experience of muteness, of being muted. In the end he manages to win territory, but only by hiding behind someone else's words. He can only drive Christophine away, not answer to her challenge of words and interpretations. The only sentence of his own interpretation that he is able to utter "loudly and wildly" (*WSS, 132)* gives Christophine the means of final victory. He can drive her away but her curse will follow him to the other text where he will lose his arm and eyes.

The battle in his mind involves swaying between sanity and madness. As Mary Lou Emery puts it: "[His] jealousy and rage at the deception he believes his wife has deployed push him over the line and into the irrationality he has projected onto his wife and tried so hard to disown" (Emery, 52). The borders between madness and reason are dissolved and so are the characters. What follows is a "cacophony of intersubjectivity" (Emery, 52). The whole text and not just a character has lost its mind, it has no single author in control of it. In terms of Barthes' distinction between "work" and "Text" here is yet another perspective into the intertextual aspect of my

reading. “No vital ‘respect’ is due to the Text: it can be *broken*” (Barthes, 1988b, 161). If Rhys has “broken” *Jane Eyre* to write her own text, she certainly acknowledges that her text, too, can be “read without the guarantee of its father [or mother], the restitution of the inter-text paradoxically abolishing any legacy” (Barthes, 1988b, 161).

In the face of the interruption and the multivoicedness of the second section can we then claim that we have in fact the man’s point of view at all? Maybe the man’s point of view is exactly his lack of point of view, his inability to find and listen and make heard his own voice. His status is in the mercy of others that provide for him the point of views and interpretations. For example the view that it is not appropriate to show one’s feelings. He has learnt to accept these given views and is only now faced with a situation when the views are conflicted and he would need his own to establish what to believe.

The final letter to his father comes when the things have gone wrong and the short time of happiness is over. The male narrator has driven Christophine away and written a great number of other letters making preparations for their journey. As always there is first a mental letter revealing his true emotion and then a more discreet version that he actually writes:

> All wish to sleep had left me. I walked up and down the room and felt the blood tingle in my finger-tips. It ran up my arms and reached my heart, which began to beat very fast. I spoke aloud as I walked. I spoke the letter I meant to write.
>
> ‘I know now that you planned this because you wanted to be rid of me. You had no love at all for me. Nor had my brother. Your plan succeeded because I was young, conceited, foolish, trusting. Above all because I was young. You were able to do this to me...’
>
> But I am not young now, I thought, stopped pacing and drank. Indeed this rum is mild as mother’s milk or father’s blessing.
>
> I could imagine his expression if I sent that letter and he read it.
>
> I wrote
>
> Dear father,
>
> We are leaving this island for Jamaica very shortly. Unforeseen circumstances, at least unforeseen by me, have forced me to make this decision. I am certain that you know or can guess what has happened, and I am certain you will believe that the less you talk to anyone about my affairs, especially my marriage, the better. This is in your interest as well as mine. You will hear from me again. Soon I hope. (*WSS*, 133)

This letter is followed by a letter to lawyers giving them instructions. In his report of the writing of these letters he shows consciousness of the method he has used with his father; think one thing, write another. He has learnt to say things with euphemisms: “so long as they keep their mouths shut, I thought – provided that they are discreet, I wrote” (*WSS,* 134). A familiar sign of the betrayal is heard here, even though he does not recognize it but gets really annoyed by it. Or recognizes but wants to silence. “A cock crowed persistently outside. I took the first book I could lay hands on and threw it at him, but he stalked a few yards away and started again” (*WSS*, 134). Noteworthy is that the method of trying to silence the unwanted message is again the resorting to a written text, in this occasion a book, literally as a weapon. Antoinette explicitly identifies cocks crowing as a sign of betrayal during her narration in the middle of the man’s text, when she has convinced Christophine to give her the love potion: “...I thought, ‘that is for betrayal, but who is the traitor?’ She did not want to do this. I forced her with my ugly money. And what does anyone know about traitors, or why Judas did what he did?” (*WSS, 97)* The male narrator tells how they begin their journey to the honeymoon house when “A cock crowed loudly and I remembered the night before […] I lay awake listening to cocks crowing all night” (*WSS, 58)*

5.2. Leaving from the Honeymoon House

As they are preparing to leave for England the husband thinks of a little song; “Blot out the moon / Pull down the stars. / Love in the dark, for we’re for the dark / So soon, so soon” (*WSS,* 139). Horner and Zlosnik think this is ominous about her future (Horner and Zlosnik, 161). I think it is important to look at the context too. This is at the point of their departure when the husband is having his last fit of insecurity; wondering what is true and what is dream. In the previous page

he has reflected on the contempt of the servants and proclaimed to himself that he does not care of what they think of him. Then as he proclaims he will never understand why he is "bewilderingly" (*WSS*, 138) certain of what he had imagined to be true is false and the magic and the dream are true and he should let go of everything else because it is lie. "Here is the secret. Here" (*WSS*, 138). Again a voice in italics and in brackets comes in insisting that the secret is lost to which he reacts by saying that he had found the secret. He identifies holding the secret to holding her and regrets all that has gone wrong. He is hoping things would be the way they were.

Next he talks of the pirates and their treasures that are found but kept quiet about and sold forward. The song quoted here is preceded by his confession that he scarcely listened to Antoinette's stories for he was waiting for the night and the passionate moments. What does the song tell about? Where does it come from; is it a real song or lines written by Rhys? In any case it fits the theme of passion and sexuality as little deaths, and echoes the earlier accounts of their lovemaking and the danger of it "in a place like that". In the silence of the dark where passion and death come together, are not alike but the same. The song is followed by another reference to the pirates of her stories; "Like swaggering pirates [The pirates and what they did between voyages. For every voyage might be their last.], let's make the most and best and worst of what we have. Give not one-third but everything. All – all – all. Keep nothing back...No, I would say – I knew what I would say. 'I have made a terrible mistake. Forgive me" (*WSS*, 139). And he says it but her hatred meets his eyes and gives new violent rise to his own hate, "the sickening swing back to hate" (*WSS*, 139).

The themes of money and betrayal come back echoed by Daniel's voice from their discussion, again in italics and in brackets. Now he refuses the false heavens and identifies the state of affairs of the hell: you hate me and I hate you. Next passage is interesting. He says he forced the madness out of her and made her a ghost. Antoinette's earlier words "Say die and I

will die. Say die and watch me die." come in. What happens next is puzzling; "She lifted her eyes. Blank lovely eyes. Mad eyes. A mad girl. I don't know what I would have said or done. In the balance – everything" (*WSS*, 140). Is this another swing back to the dream and magic? Or is it a picture of accomplishing "the male will to dominate" (Howells, 116)? Is it pity or regret? At any rate he gets very annoyed when this strange atmosphere is broken by the sobs of the little black boy; "I could have strangled him with pleasure" (*WSS*, 140). Was it annoyance because his triumphant moment was interrupted or annoyance because the re-entering of the dream on the edge of which he was staggering was interrupted? As a result of the interruption and the discussion followed by it he is firmly established in the "sanity". When Antoinette comes forward to explain the boy's behaviour, the husband can view the results of his triumph: she is the indifferent doll with the doll's face and a doll's voice.

It is perhaps ironic that now emptied of all emotion and passion she speaks in his language: calmly and quietly. Perhaps this throws his resolution slightly off balance for a while when he expresses his horror of having to return to England under such scandalous circumstances: "God! A half-savage boy as well as…as well as…" (*WSS*, 140). As well as what: a mad wife, a wife with dubious racial identity or a reminder of his shame as the bought husband? For her the emptiness means the label of madness, for him the recovered sanity: "all the mad conflicting emotion had gone and left me wearied and empty. Sane" (*WSS*, 141). He is now only a few lines away from becoming the Mr Rochester of *JE* and the question of names becomes important: "[His] Fury grew, 'What right have you to make promises in my name? Or to speak for me at all?'" (*WSS*, 141.) Now he is "sane" but he too has lost a lot; he hates everything: "She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it" (*WSS*, 141).

In chapter 3 (stage one: bewildered) I discussed their arrival at the honeymoon house and noted how he lists everything he fears. In the end of course he overcomes his fear by hating, and says he hates the mountains as everything else there (*WSS*, 141). On their welcoming scene he described the house in a way that led to thinking it was his mirror image. Now the house has the same function again. Also this time it is forcefully animated, he even has a dialogue with it. The house surprises him, or rather the feelings it arises in him;

> .. the sadness I felt looking at the shabby white house – I wasn't prepared for that. More than ever it strained away from the black snake-like forest. Louder and more desperately it called: Save me from destruction, ruin and desolation. Save me from the long slow death by ants. But what are you doing here you folly? So near the forest. Don't you know that this is a dangerous place? And that the dark forest always wins? Always. If you don't, you soon will, and I can do nothing to help you. (*WSS*, 137)

Is this also recognition of his own defeat, after all he is fleeing from this place and from the islands all together? If he saw his stay as a military manoeuvre, it is most certainly ended with a retreat. Certainly he has a prisoner of war to take home but he failed to invade the place. Conflating it with Antoinette, he thinks he can now capture the place, too. Again I think he identifies with the house, the house as a picture of him in case he stayed. It is symptomatic that he identifies himself with something man-made while identifying Antoinette with nature. Partly it reflects the division between sexes seen as the division between nature and civilisation. This also echoes their different ideas of reality, the ideas that are conflicted, and their cultural background. Antoinette questions "how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal" and her husband's counterargument is "how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal" (*WSS*, 67). For him reality is man-made like the houses and streets, for her reality is nature. As nature is indifferent to people, also reality has nothing to do with people, or people cannot dictate reality.

This discussion is one of the many occasions in which the male narrator finds out how it feels to be muted, how it feels to have inadequate means for self-expression. This is a feature

common to many protagonists from Rhys's earlier novels: they do not say, but report "I wanted to say" or "I thought". In this example Antoinette gets the last word but he the last thought. When Antoinette claims that the things he mentioned could be a dream much more easily he *thinks*; "No, this is unreal and like a dream". For example Nancy Harrison dwells on this subject from the female characters' point of view considering their muted idiom. In the narrative they remain mute and unable to express themselves, but by writing this Rhys ensured that they are heard in her text. The same technique is at work here: "Rochester" does not say things but by reporting this they become said. Are the effects the same I wonder? It is curious that critics do not seem to notice this much or at least to pay much attention to it. The man is supposed to be the privileged native speaker of the dominant idiom who oppresses and silences women. My own earlier readings of the novel concentrated on the different ways in which the women of the book are silenced overlooking entirely that the male character was not only a silencer but silenced himself. Perhaps the reason is that initially "the reader is directed to sympathize with Antoinette", since her story is so sad and heart-breaking that it takes a while before one can find it in one's heart to feel sorry for them both as Amélie did.

5.3. Becoming Rochester

The young man who did not want to be the emperor in the beginning and did not want to be a tyrant, becomes one, and ends up fighting bitterly for a foothold as one. Despite the obvious uneasiness about sexuality and its decisiveness in the end, he was quite happy with it at first, in their "happy times". Her sexuality as such would not have caused all the scruples. But it is true that the possibility of her autonomous pleasure turns him against her. He was ready to accept all she might be if he could be certain she was for him alone. Christophine's efforts of trying to talk

the husband into leaving go wrong in two points. The hint that he holds on just for the money makes him cautious and suspicious. The possibility that Antoinette would have a happy life with someone who did love her makes him furious. The jealousy of Antoinette is the beast that finally sets his mind at revenge though he claims he does not even love or want her himself. That is what he tries to tell us: that he does not love and never did. Instead it seems more likely that he did, but now wants to deny it. Just as he tries to deny a lot of his other experiences and feelings in his quest after control and autonomy. Consequently he is really jealous, bitter for the loss of love he again has to experience. The first loss being the lack of his father's love to him. He wanted Antoinette's love and her and now that he cannot get it "revenge is his" and she shall have no other. That is because he has now learnt to inhabit the patriarchal stance and instead of Antoinette can be jealous of his wife; something he thinks should be his property, his and only his.

His jealousy prevents him from being compassionate or believing that Antoinette loves him, or could love him. He is really yet another Othello. The shadiest character with dubious motifs whispering malicious gossip in his ear instantly gets him to trust those whispers rather than his wife. Unlike Desdemona Antoinette had an affair and this works to make the message clearer. The tragedy was not that the murdered wife was innocent of the crime but that the husband made it his right to judge and punish the crimes of his wife. As Othello, the man with no name has some difficulty believing all these bad things of the woman who at first seemed to him a beautiful, exotic flower. But as their honour is at stake the both of them do their best to turn that flower poisonous so that they can freely tramp on it and smash it.

When the doubt enters the husband's mind Antoinette's sexuality among other things nourishes it. His observation that his wife begins to enjoy their lovemaking as much as he does is for him a cause for suspicion. A sexually active woman is not secure possession; if she enjoys sex with one she could enjoy it with someone else as well. There might be a question of envy as well.

It could be that the way she is so deeply involved in the lovemaking and so “drowned” afterwards represents for him another feature of the “secret” he feels himself unable to enter or understand. Then there is the question of private and public. As long as he feels their life is sheltered from the eyes of the outsiders he feels more at ease but the outside exposure makes him doubt every aspect of their happiness. Also her sensuality becomes untrue; part of the charade used to deceit him, part of the witchcraft with which he has been imprisoned, part of her “lie”. When the outside “truth” hits him he does not want to continue their lovemaking, he refuses her and her body thinking he could thus refuse the spell. That was the lie Daniel told of her mother; that she used her sexuality to bewitch men to make fools out of them.

The husband is already uneasy about his position in the eyes of the world because of the financial arrangements of his marriage. His status and position as a man have been questioned. But he was able to put this worry aside for the moment of their brief happiness. His ideas of what personal relationships between people of different races should be, for example, are present in his anxious questions about Antoinette’s conduct with their black servants. But he does not enforce his ideas, he goes with the flow. Even if disapproving of Antoinette’s behaviour he can only question it mildly saying that “I could never kiss and hug them”. After all Antoinette is the one who knows about this place. His “not yet” comments have often been interpreted as an ominous sign of his all along malicious intentions, but it does not have to be that. Perhaps he has an unconscious vision of what will happen if their values are to collide. Perhaps he, as Antoinette, knows that the outside influence will destroy everything and he does not want that to happen. Also it might be that he is just being cautious for the plain reason that he has learnt and been shown over and over again how he is an alien here. He is the one who does not know his way around.

His “drowsy and content” existence in the honeymoon house is interrupted when Daniel’s first letter arrives. At first he does not open it but puts it in his pocket. It is significant that he finds it when reaching for his watch. It is at this point that watches and time become important in the imagery of the novel. It is as if the clock is ticking; the time afforded to this narration is running out. The inevitable transition into the other text is eminent. The letter appears in the narrative uninterrupted by his comments. He was not able to be cautious or protect himself against written word, and he instantly believes everything the letter tells him and treats the letter itself as a valuable piece of evidence. “I folded the letter carefully and put it into my pocket. I felt no surprise. It was as if I’d expected it, been waiting for it” (*WSS*, 82). Now he tramples into the mud some flowers he explicitly identifies with her. He says it brought him to his senses but yet tells how he was “sweating and trembling”. He blames his agitated state on the weather: “far too hot today” (*WSS, 82).* In this confused state trying to save face and appear to remain in control of his own conduct he witnesses a fight between Antoinette and Amélie (*WSS, 83),* and Antoinette cutting the sheet on the bed into strips (*WSS* 84). This scene, that for the husband must have provided evidence on behalf of the allegations in Daniel’s letter, is a significant mirror image from the night of the fire at Coulibri. Aunt Cora tore her petticoat into strips to nurse Antoinette’s brother Pierre whom his nanny had left alone in the smoke-filled room (*WSS*, 31). In the middle of this Christophine enters and informs she is going to leave (*WSS*, 84).

Antoinette is feeling lost and alone, but so is her husband. Despite his reservations he seeks comfort in her. He knocks at her door without getting an answer. He opens the door finding her with her back turned towards him. They are both wrapped in the silence of their own tragedy; “It was five minutes to three” (*WSS*, 86). He wanders out into the forest and loses his way. He must be saved by the black servant, the porter who like him is not from this part of the world, and further identifies with him by speaking his language. But the porter has acquired knowledge

about this place and demonstrates the husband's lack of it, educating him of the peculiarities of the place. In the end he, too, has learnt a great deal about his surroundings but the "secret" is still there to haunt him and remind him of what he has found only to loose it. Here his idea might be just as well that if I cannot belong to this place neither can you. If this place will not accept me it will not have you either.

When he speaks of the secret he talks of those who will not or cannot tell and, if he cannot be one of those who know, he will join those who prevent them from telling. The secret that will not open itself to him will be buried to oblivion along with her. Here he is as jealous of the secret as of Antoinette. Cutting her off from a possible other lover he also cuts her off from someone who might get to the bottom of it all, who might learn the secret. Furthermore, he wants to hide his shame where no one knows of it, where no one can go on laughing at him. He thinks the mere existence of Antoinette sends out messages of his degradation and he wants those messages and their responses to stop. He no longer wishes to hear the whispers that pain his ears and make him loose his dignity and his belief in his own power. But he himself has to acknowledge how impossible this is. People will always talk, no matter how far he goes and how much he pays them to be "discreet" – to keep their mouths shut. Here too he has learnt the same lesson as Antoinette; the outside is always catching up with you, there is no escape from it. The outside, first in the form of Daniel would not leave him alone and it never will. Having entered the text of *JE* he keeps on hearing the rumours.

In the beginning he did not want to be the emperor, he did not intend to own his wife. He acknowledges that the marital agreement is unfavourable to her and plans to change it: "no provision made for her (that must be seen to)" (*WSS*, 59). If the outside world is the destroyer of Antoinette's happiness it is the same for her husband. He tries to resist the intrusion of the malicious outsider Daniel Cosway, but being suspicious of his own circumstances is forced to

yield: “I’d expected it” (*WSS*, 82). This could mean he believes what the letter tells him; that this kind of bad news is what he had been anticipating. Or he could have expected maliciousness, and is not surprised at having received such a letter. In terms of intertextuality this could be very revealing; being the character from *JE* he knows his happiness on the island cannot go on. He is reluctant to meet Daniel and hear more of his “expected” bad news that will force his text onwards, away from the happiness he has found towards the battle and the becoming of Mr Rochester. When Antoinette tries to tell him her side of the story he tries to stop her from talking because he too knows that the words are no use. His path is predestined and nothing that can be said will make a difference. He cannot stay in this text and he has to force her along with him into the other text.

In my reading the similarities between the experiences of Antoinette and her husband are far from being a “flaw”. Instead it is in the very essence of the interpretation of the key sentence “such terrible things happen, why? Why?” (*WSS*, 51). Also Antoinette has had to listen to whispers and malicious remarks all her life. She, too, has lived on the edge of social acceptability, financially insecure. Her experiences of other people are so negative that she finds the sharp grass cutting her painfully in the legs far better than other people. Neither Antoinette nor her husband gets rid of the whispers. In her imprisonment Antoinette still hears them though the voices are different. Her husband cannot keep people from talking. Rumours go around. Rather than enemies they should have been allies, just as Antoinette and Tia should have been. But they were kept from alliance and ended up victimizing and oppressing each other. The terrible things happen because people are separated by artificial categories organized hierarchically. These hierarchies are supported by the logic of power that always justifies itself. The first rule of this logic is that people can be divided into better and lesser. That rule makes every oppressed an oppressor and guarantees that the terrible things and the whys never stop.

6. CONCLUSION

JE is said to have created the subjectivity of white British/European female but it did that at the cost of another female; the mad first wife in the attic. In contrast, *WSS* is the book rewriting the story of the mad wife, thus enabling the subjectivity of the white Creole. In this speculative reading my argument has been that Rhys actually goes beyond this rewriting and demonstrates in her text how such subjectivity can be produced at the cost of no other character in the book. Rhys's text opens up an infinite number of other sides. There are sides and points of views of the characters that we see as marginal to the story of Antoinette. Yet the story of Antoinette does not silence these characters. Her story does not finally and unquestionably define them and hold them within the boundaries of this narrative. The characters all get their say in the exquisite narrative choices that Rhys made for her novel. This is mainly accomplished through the text of the anonymous English husband, who in turn is a rewritten Mr Rochester from *Jane Eyre*. *WSS* is a rewriting of the whole concept of marginal characters.

Charlotte Brontë had to be very careful when writing Bertha; she had to make her blameworthy of her own faith. Hence the madness that is described as inherent, as the reason to how she is treated. When rewriting Bertha Rhys takes away the inherent madness and instead shows both the mother and the daughter becoming mad as a result of the way they were treated. Antoinette Mason is not mad and her English husband knows it but still they need to end up as Bertha and Mr Rochester of *JE*. This created the need to rewrite Mr Rochester, and Rhys had to be very careful in her aim because now the reasons or justifications for his actions given in the earlier novel no longer are valid. She needs to write him new reasons and write for both of them the passageway to England, the route to *JE*.

In reclaiming the Creole from the attic Rhys was able to use renaming as a symbol of how she is something entirely different from the portrait given in *JE*. Rhys could not do the same with Mr Rochester but she does do the same by not having named him at all. The fact that there is no name is very important. It shows that her male character, too, is something different from the portrait of *JE*. Most critics use the name Rochester for the character in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. For the most part the interpretations seem to be that although he is given a voice and a point of view he is Mr Rochester from the beginning to the end, from this text to the other. But that interpretation rather just turns the question of guilt upside down and makes Mr Rochester of *Jane Eyre* into a liar. But Rhys does not question the fictional world of *JE* as such. Bertha is Bertha in *JE* although Rhys shows how she became that. The same naturally applies to Mr Rochester. Rhys creates a possible antecedents for him and shows how he becomes Mr Rochester. In this thesis I have tried not to use the same black magic on the male narrator as Antoinette accuses him of: "You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too" (*WSS* 121). Many critics might be accused of this and it might restrict the reading of his text. Therefore I have used the name Rochester only when it has been used by the quoted critics or else refers specifically to the character in *JE*.

Writing a life or a voice to Bertha does not create intertextual problems, because those are the very things she did not have in *JE*. But Mr Rochester did. A well documented life and a firm and solid voice. Not only did she have to rewrite him as a psychologically plausible character Rhys also had to tackle with the question of how he attains that steady unhesitating voice. She has to write him practicing his truth, battling for the narrative control that he has in that other text. There was one additional thing that gives weight to the anonymity of the narrator of part two; besides a rewritten Rochester it is the author of *JE* who is brought to visit the West Indies. We can pick one more clue from the letters where Rhys expressed things that bothered her about

JE; she wonders whether Brontë had a ”thing” about West Indies, why she would think it such a horrible place and all the women crazy. I think it is very possible to read the narrator of part two as Charlotte Brontë who Rhys decides to bring to the island and show her first hand. Critics have mentioned how it is the text in part two that corrects the “all wrong Creole scenes” that bothered Rhys, and does so in his mouth. But it was not Rochester who made Bertha into “a lay figure” and deprived her of her voice, it was this other text written by another woman. All this nicely brings together the theme of other sides: “There is always the other side, always” (*WSS*, 106).

If the polarity is taken away, if the unity of “us” and the unity of the “enemy” is taken away, what is there to go on? Despite the dangers it would seem necessary to try and use the post-modern speculations as a way of handling the problem within feminism: how it has become itself a totalitarian thought excluding the experience of some. As I have argued in my reading of *WSS*, a step forward is needed. A step away from the system of hierarchies or else each repressed “group” is always also an oppressor. Lucy Wilson has noticed a significant similarity between the concerns of Rhys and Michel Foucault: “power and powerlessness, discourse and silence, prisoners, patients, and the machinery that keeps society functioning” (Wilson, 447). In *WSS* it is Christophine who has an insight of how power only changes hands but not its nature: “No more slavery! She had to laugh! ‘These new ones have Letter of the Law. Same thing.[…] New ones worse than old ones – more cunning, that’s all” (*WSS*, 23). This is the same “endlessly repeated play of dominations” that Foucault describes as “humanity install[ing] each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceed[ing] from domination to domination” (Foucault, 85).

The male narrator’s text involves a battle. On the level of the plot he battles for power and authority over Christophine and Antoinette and his own confused impressions. He struggles to replace his uncertainty and insecurity with certainty and security. On the level of the text the battle means trying to gain narrative authority, coming to a conclusion of one fixed truth, one

steady voice. In that way, as well as psychologically, it is a battle that produces the male character Rochester in Brontë's text. A character that is self-confident and has command over the facts and can unhesitatingly offer one solid account of the way things are. It is the battle that enables the words of Brontë's character to utter truths and unquestionably name and define the other characters, especially his mad wife, because it is really his account that the whole text relies on. This does not mean that his account was not carefully grounded, it certainly is, a point that Spivak pays great attention to. And from these groundings arise the issues that Rhys writes around, or demonstrates how these "facts" were produced. Similarly Rhys's text reveals the path of Antoinette from a live character into the "papertiger lunatic" of her predecessor's text.

In fact, the reasons for the "real cruelty of Mr Rochester" that Rhys seeks are not only mental but textual as well. The cruelty is not just the cruelty of the plot, the man shutting up his wife in the attic depriving her of humanity. It is also the cruelty of the discourse, of the literary tradition that confines characters into the margins of the narration, omitting their voices and autonomy, making them into tools of the stories of the characters in the centre. By writing about her controversial heroines, Rhys cast a disturbing spot of light on the margins of society and literature and discourse. She revealed the hidden, rejected characters that become so disturbing for the simple reason that the balance, the established, accepted discourse can function as long as it can use these silent, ghostly figures for its own purposes. Patriarchal, racial or colonial oppression are all analogous to this system of convention that differentiates between the centre and the margin and trivializes the margin. As Rhys's novel depicts all these sides of the issue it has been a rich source for various critical approaches all of which can be very well grounded.

What I think Rhys adds to the equation is that these systems are not just analogous but the same. Mr Mason refused to listen to his wife; his position and the hierarchy between the two of them made it possible for him to dismiss her speech as meaningless babble. Exactly the same

mechanism was at work when Antoinette refused to listen to Christophine. Whether the label is patriarchal or racial oppression the motives and the effects are the same, both systems equally important and meaningful. The acknowledgement of this fact is essential for a sensitive reading of Rhys's work, an analysis that would be as open as possible to the different perspectives of her narrative, even if concentrating on a particular point of view. The biggest mistake in my opinion would be to try and tame the text, to force it and explain away all the contradictions and complexities (in the extreme Carole Angier, who judged properties not fitting into her theory as flaws!). In other words the aim should not be to seek for the "truth", as my idea is that this is one of the goals of Rhys's writing; to show that it is not all that simple, that the "truths" are lies and that there always is another side.

This comes close to what Barthes writes about in his *The Death of the Author*: there is no single "message" to be found in the text, rather a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings…blend and clash" (Barthes, 1988a, 146). Looking for the message, giving the text an Author "is to impose a limit on that text … to close the writing", whereas "refusing to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text" is a revolutionary refusal of "God and his hypostases – reason, science, law" (Barthes, 1988a, 147).

In *Jane Eyre* the logic of the language and words prevail, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* they are challenged and other ways of telling are shown; "read and write I don't know. Other things I know", says Christophine (*WSS*, 133*)*. Words play their own magic but there are other kinds of magic too.

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