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Slavery, Racism and Women's Voice of Freedom in *Sula* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*: A Study of Trauma

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

This research paper seeks to analyze the trauma of racial discrimination and marginalization and oppression of Afro-American as depicted in Morrison's *Sula* and oppressive, colonialist society of Jamaica through the voices of women in Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Moreover *Sula* is the story of good and evil depicted through the friendship of two women who grew up together. Toni Morrison in the novel represents the traumatic events in the life of its black female protagonist, Sula. Her trauma is compounded by the deaths of her blood relations, loss of friendship and heartbreak in love. Morrison shows Sula as haunted by sorrow and pain. She describes experimental Sula as a New World black woman who speaks the voice of freedom, for not only black women but all the blacks of the society and nation. Likewise, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the story of the female protagonist, Antoinette who loses the protection of family; her father dies, her mother remarries, their house is burned by angry ex-slaves, the mother goes mad and rejects her daughter. Liberation is grounded in the novel in Antoinette's' nostalgia for the culture of slavery. The novel depicts the trauma of nostalgic mental picture of life under slavery and racial discrimination. That's why, to depict relationships damaged by racial and gender position and stories of painful lives regarding relationship within patriarchal oppression and racial and class domination, the researcher analyzes both novels through cultural dimension of trauma.

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Chapter One

Sula and Wide Sargasso Sea as the Texts about African Experience

This research focuses primarily on Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* in order to examine trauma of marginalization and oppression. It explores the relationships damaged by racial and gender position and trauma of painful lives within patriarchal oppression and class and racial domination. Moreover it explores the traumatic experiences of a black female protagonist, Sula regarding relationship and friendship in Afro-American society and the traumatic events of a white Creole woman, Antoinette Cosway from her youth in Caribbean society to her marriage to an Englishman.

This study uses a close discursive analytical style which draws on the concepts of the studies of Trauma especially its cultural dimension to explore trauma of race and gender focusing on pains and sufferings of characters living in racial and gender oppressive society. The research concentrates on the issues of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra, Ron Eyerman, Jeffrey C. Alexander and so on regarding trauma and its cultural aspect.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze Morrison's *Sula* and Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* from the perspective of cultural dimension of Trauma within the background of slavery and racial and gender oppression respectively in Afro-American and Caribbean context. It further shows the traumatic lives of not only black but also black females from long existed racial discrimination and inequalities.

This study makes a significant contribution, mainly in three areas of concern. First, this study brings all females characters in *Sula and Wide Sargasso Sea* and their traumatic experiences within the purview of critical analysis. However the focus is given to Sula, Nel, and Antoinette, and the upheavals in the experiences in their lives

within the background of racial and gender biased society. Second, this research makes a significant theoretical connection between critique of Trauma and its cultural dimension and critique of racial discrimination in African-American and Caribbean society. And lastly, the study shows the intricate relationship between the "narrative framing" of Morrison's *Sula* and Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and framing of Cultural Trauma especially in female characters. The research definitely contributes towards the changing society in terms of Cultural Trauma studies. Moreover it helps the readers enriching the knowledge about the novels, *Sula* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* and trauma and its cultural aspect.

Sula, written by Toni Morrison, a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize winning American novelist, editor and professor and published in 1973 explores the theme of good and evil through the friendship of two women who grew up together. Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970 which tells the story of a young African-American girl who believes her incredibly difficult life would be better if only she has blue eyes. Then, Morrison continued to explore the African-American experience in its many forms and time periods in her work. *Sula* is the example of such writing. Likewise in 1977, she published *Song of Solomon* which follows the journey of Milkman Dead as he searches the south for his roots. A rising literary star, Morrison was appointed to the National Council on the Arts in 1980. The following year, she published *Tar Baby* which drew some inspiration from folktales. Again, her next work, *Beloved* (1987) explores love and the supernatural. The main character, a former slave, is haunted by her decision to kill her children rather than see them become slaves. Likewise, after receiving the 1993 Nobel Prize she published other many literary works like *Jazz* (1993), *Paradise* (1998), *The Big Box*, *The Book of Mean People* (2002), *The Ant or the Grasshopper* (2003), and *Love* (2003). She

continued to explore new art forms through opera, drama and so on. *Margaret Garner* is famous opera which explores the tragedy of slavery through the true life story of one woman's experiences. No doubt Toni Morrison is renowned figure of exploring African-American experience.

Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* published in 1966 is the story of Antoinette Cosway, a white Creole heiress, from the time of her youth in the Caribbean to her unhappy marriage to a certain English gentleman. But he is never named by the author-who soon renames her, declares her mad and then requires her to relocate to England. As with many postcolonial works, the novel deals largely with the themes of racial inequality and the harshness of displacement and assimilation. The novel is split into three parts. Part one takes place in Coulibri, Jamaica and it's narrated by Antoinette. Describing childhood experiences, she reviews several facets of her life, including her mother's mental instability and her mentally disabled brother's tragic death. Part two alternates between the points of view of her husband and Antoinette during their 'honeymoon' excursion to Granbois, Dominica. Here, her increased sense of paranoia and the bitter disappointment of her failing marriage unbalance Antoinette's already precarious mental and emotional state. Likewise part three is the shortest part of the novel which is again from the perspective of Antoinette, now known as Bertha. She is now largely confined in 'the attic' of Thornfield Hall, the Rochester mansion she calls the "Great House". The story traces her relationship with Grace, the servant who is tasked with guarding her as well as her evermore disintegrating non-life with the Englishman as he hides her from the world.

Jean Rhys, born at Roseau, Dominica came to England at her age of sixteen during the 1920s and started her career through the book *The Left Bank* (1927). In 1928 she published a novel in England as *Postures* and in the USA as *Quartet* which

is the American title that Miss Rhys prefers. In 1930 she published *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* which starts in Paris, about the year 1928. She wrote *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) before returning to England. Again in 1939, she published *Good Morning, Midnight* in which we see Sasha Jansen revisiting Paris in 1937, over forty, mistrustful of the men she tries to attract, expecting insults but unarmed against them, as she says, to drink herself to death to death. Moreover she wrote many stories like *Till September Petronella*, *The Day They Burned the Books*, *Tigers are Better Looking* and so on. However, Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* depicts the social and psychological fracturing that accompanied the mid-nineteenth century dismantling of the British Empire on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. She focuses on the tortured relationship between a white Creole mother and daughter which provides poignant analysis of the ambivalent complexities of white-on-white racism, her mobilization of a trauma narrative to explain the construction of Bertha's madness that conceals the far greater traumatic historical conditions of enslaved African-Caribbean. She depicts the wounds of black history and their enslavement created by long existed white suppression and domination.

In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, Sula herself is a total rebel against all society, all conventions and nearly all moralities. A 'demon' in the eyes of the black community, Sula is a kind of Lilith, taking sexual satisfaction where she wills. Not evil but doom-eager, Sula quests desperately for freedom, but she necessarily is self victimized. Her name itself is ironic since her mode of individualism can achieve no peace whatsoever. Her mother Hannah, the freest of all erotic beings dies in an accidental fire that can be interpreted as a punishment only if we are morally diseased. She like Hannah, is a natural seductress. Her challenge to the community is both ancient and original; doom-eagerness cannot be confined. This is a black woman's epic, a study of

'female friendship', an antiwar novel, or an exploration of the feminine psyche.

Moreover the text is the study of traumatized black woman living in white suppressed postcolonial world.

Morrison's *Sula* powerfully delineates the devastating potency of white American society to create, structure, name, then destroy, a black community merely on a whim. Her carefully crafted opening sentence expresses both the violence and loss that permeates the novel.

In that place, where they tore the nightshade and black-berry patches from their roots to make room for the Medallion city Golf course, there was once a neighbor-hood. It stood in the hills above the valley town of Medallion and spread all the way to the river. It is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom. (3)

The extract introduces the capricious destruction of the rural community and suggests a sense of the black community's alienation and exclusion from any participation in the history that had and continues to have so much impact on the lives of African-Americans. The same place is regarded as suburbs for whites and when black people live, it is called the Bottom. She further expresses, "in having something torn out by its roots-it will not, cannot grow again" (3). Morrison explains the story of the community's beginnings, for she illustrates quite clearly that the inhumanity and capitalist impulsion of slavery were not halted by emancipation.

A good white farmer promised freedom and a piece of [fertile] bottom land to his slave if he would perform some very difficult chores. When the slave completed his work, he asked the farmer to keep his end of the bargain. Freedom was easy-the farmer had no objection to that. But he didn't want to give up his land. (5)

This shows that there is very little spiritual or material comfort to be found cushioning the lives of the black characters in the novel, who are often reduced to an existence of mere survival. The cruel reversal of fortunes the narrator describes as a 'nigger joke', a survival technique that inverts and masks the profound existential pain hidden beneath the laughter, '[t]he kind [of joke] colored folks tell on them-selves when... they're looking for a little comfort somehow' (4-5). Indeed the repression of pain masked by laughter acting as solace is a recurrent trope in the novel, as is an intertwining of laughter and death.

As Barbara Christian suggests, "Morrison weaves a fable about the relationship between conformity and experiment, survival and creativity, death has an overwhelming presence in this novel beginning with the death of the black community itself" (153). As Maureen Reedy argues, 'each of the ten major chapters includes a death, sometimes metaphoric but more usually actual' (29). The literal deaths are often almost incomprehensible in their violence, and always involve a family member or someone known to those involved. The spiritual deaths are long and drawn out and equally as painful. While the novel's surface construction appears to be contained within the conventions of a chronological timeframe, the text is divided exactly in half, with the two almost identically sized parts separated by a 10-year interval. It begins with an untitled prologue, and then the chapters are titled by the dates 1919, 1920, 1921, 1923-the 10-year temporal rapture registered as pure absence-then 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941, and finally 1965, which serves as an epilogue.

However the deep structure of the novel does not progress along the assumed teleological ethos of traditional historical time but moves in the rhythms of the psychic time-frame of trauma. The novelist's methodology involves placing each death at a moment in history suggested by the chapter title: at first it is merely

described by the omniscient narrator-often in horrific detail, but also, paradoxically, in evocative and hauntingly lyrical language. Then an explanation from the character that has been most involved in each death appears later in the text, usually in another chapter altogether. These knots of traumatic grief Morrison unties and reconfigures at a later moment in the text, with the denouement breaking through the sequence of repeating death with an epiphanic moment of belated experience. While expressing the complexity of the ever-changing, ever-damaging relationship between black and white Americans, Morrison describes:

They did not believe Nature was ever asked-only inconvenient. Plague and drought were as 'natural' as springtime. If milk could curdle, God knows robins could fall. The purpose of evil was to survive it and they determined (without ever knowing that they had made up their minds to do it) to survive floods, white people, tuberculosis, famine and ignorance. (90)

These lines describe that the problem with the enforced victim status of the community in the face of omnipotent white manipulation is that it results in a resigned obstinacy. This means that the inhabitants no longer have the strength to determine the difference between the ills inflicted by nature and the social ills inflicted by the white system. Tolerating evil is a passive means of survival, as the community cannot fight back against the enormity of the oppression that surrounds them.

Geneva Smitherman explains that "the label 'bottom' or 'bottoms' describes an area of any city or town where African-Americans live, and which over time has come to refer to a run-down or slum area in the black community" (90). This shows that bottom describes the place where black people live which is itself a word of domination. Racial suffering is pin-pointed in *Sula* as beginning with the traumatic

historical experience of slavery, an experience that crippled African-American bodies and minds. Each main character in the novel has a double that inverts and contradicts the other: the white town of Medallion is juxtaposed to the black community of the Bottom; the stunted deweys, the 'trinity with a plural name' (38).

As the second chapter begins, Morrison suddenly and abruptly transposes the traumatic violence of the white male public sphere onto the interior lives and material worlds of the black female private sphere, focusing her revision on matriarchal Wright and Peace families. She tries to translate the historical into the personal, the public into the private and actual male violence and grand historical traumas into repeated patterns of oppression, self-mutilation, and violence between women. This is the history of the patterning of hierarchical and prescriptive binaries. Morrison says: 'the historical becomes people with names' (105). This shows that the novel is based on the impact of racism and sexism in the society.

However, her radical shift in perspective from public to private, from outer to inner has been ironically signaled by Shadrack himself. He does not recognize himself under the de-individualizing, white-institutional army label of 'Private', a label often repeated to him by the exasperated white nurses who have no interest in understanding his trauma. "He wanted desperately to see his own face and connect it with the word private'-the word the nurse (and the others who helped bind him) had called him. 'Private' he thought was something secret and he wondered why they looked at him and called him a secret" (10). The secret or unknown quality that is Shadrack, as he discovers in the epiphanic moment in the cell, is a self that is tied to race and bound to community. This is the binding grace, the small thread of strength gained against all the odds that Morrison transfers from the masculine dominated

prologue and first chapter to the remainder of the novel that centers on the black women of the Bottom community.

Helen Wright has succumbed to the internalization of whiteness. In desperate attempt to distance herself from her own maternal heritage-she is the 'daughter of a Creole whore (17)-Helene Sabat becomes Helene Wright and thrives on her new life of repression and empty pretentiousness that merely masks the psychic distortion that has arisen because she has distanced herself from any sense of racial pride. Helene's self-protection manifests as an obsession with social order that mimics white values and customs. Shadrack is bound to his blackness, while Helene is trying to disavow hers-she devotes herself to creating a façade of ritualistic order. This is reflected in her neat and oppressive home, but more alarmingly in the way she moulds her only daughter's imagination, character, and even her body. Nel is blissfully unaware of all until the train journey south to visit her dying grandmother. Nel is only ten when Helen receives the letter summoning her back down south to say goodbye to her dying grandmother-'the woman who had rescued her' from her mother and their life in the brothel (19)-but it is an experience that will scar and haunt Nel for the rest of her life.

While moving to the 'right' section of the train as Helene opens the door marked 'COLORED ONLY' (20), they are confronted by a repulsive, sweaty white conductor, who publicly humiliates Helene. The ensuing scene is watched helplessly by a group of black soldiers, who mask their own humiliation at not being able to intervene 'with closed faces [and] locked eyes' (21). Later in the novel, Morrison connects the painful scene of symbolic death with the grief surrounding the very real death of a little boy when the narrator describes the depth of feeling of the collectively of black women in the congregation at Chicken Little's Funeral. They did not clear all what he said; they heard only one word, or phrase, or inflection that was for them the

connection between the event and themselves (65). Indeed, Morrison draws attention to the inescapability of each woman's matrilineal heritage and heightens the connection between bodily rejection, sexual betrayal and loss of self-identity by repeating the same imagery when many years later Jude, Nel's husband betrays her by having sex with Sula. Nel finds them 'on all fours (uh huh, go on, say it) like dogs' (105) and when Jude looks at her in silent guilt, all Nel can see is that 'your eyes looked like the soldiers' that time on the train when my mother turned to custard' (106).

Sula looked always as terrified. In contrast to Sula's hysterical crying, 'Nel has remained calm' throughout (170), enacting an emotional numbing that her mother has unconsciously passed on to her daughter as a means of self-protection against life's malevolence. However, Sula is unable to speak of the traumatic event ever again. In the first scene, Sula overhears her mother's painful words, not intended for her ears. In the second, Chicken Little drowns in echoing silence, followed by Shadrack uttering his singular haunting word. However, Sula is unable to accept and mourn her mother's death and see that as a child it was not her fault that she had not tried to save her.

At the time of her death the narrator states that '[s]everal times she tried to cry out, but the fatigue barely let her open her lips, let alone take the deep breath necessary to scream' (148). It is not until the final pages of the book that we learn through Nel's reminiscence that Sula's mouth in death had looked like 'a giant yawn that she never got to finish' (172). This represents the gagged silence of her life. In the last years of her life Sula never had the opportunity to speak her love aloud. Sula's inability to give words to her love had begun in her childhood as a defense against the loss and trauma she had suffered. That's why Morrison threads together the

multiplicity of psychic and material impediment that circumscribes the lives of African-American women during the time-frame of the novel.

Victoria Burrows in his book *Whiteness and Trauma* remarks:

Indeed, *Sula* is overwhelmingly a story of loss, of 'gone things' historically and collectively imposed on African-Americans, and individually on the lives of those who suffer the trauma of racism. In fact, the whole narrative structuring is based on the notion of belated assimilation and retelling as the way to salvage a lost past of 'gone things' and, in conjunction with the notion of belatedness, this echoing metaphor is only explicitly named on the last page. (122-3)

These lines describe that the novel is based on the lives of the sufferer. It exhibits the past suffering and pain through the pain of Sula. Philip Page in his essay "Shocked into Separateness: Unresolved Oppositions in *Sula*" remarks:

The plot opposes the highly individualized black characters and the nameless, featureless white characters who hover on the fringes. It opposes the sane residents of the Bottom and the insane Shadrack, whose well-ordered cabin represents a further dichotomy with his disorderly behavior. It sets children in opposition to adults, most notably in mothers' lack of love or liking for their children. It contrasts meaningful employment, such as construction work, and demeaning labor in hotels and white homes. (185)

The extract shows that the plot of the novel is based on the discrimination upon black families and even women of those families. Not only adult females, children are also felt dominated in the society. Its plot chronicles the lives of two opposed characters who grew up in two opposed houses managed under two opposed theories of child-

rearing. The character pairings of Nel and Sula are doubled in the pairings of their contrasting mothers (Helene and Hannah) and grandmothers (Rochelle and Eva). As opposed to the differences in these female pairs, the men in Nel and Sula's lives are similar but also paired: each woman lacks a brother or male friend, each has an absent father, and each has her most significant heterosexual relationship with a self-doubling man who departs abruptly (Jude and Ajax). Pairs of characters in *Sula* frequently attempt unions—most noticeably between parent and child, in heterosexual couples, and between peers but such unions are often short lived and always problematic.

Likewise, Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents the post-Emancipation Jamaican setting which, as one of despair subverts a conventional, progressive conception of history. This shows that the end of slavery marked a triumph of good will over vicious greed and a spiritual and ethical advance for mankind. In the novel, the locus of despondency is Antoinette, for whom the Abolition of Slavery Act means the deaths of her immediate family members. As the Imperial Abolition of Slavery changes the political status of the West Indies from British protectorates to colonies, Antoinette suffers a childhood without protection and an adulthood of cultural and gender oppression. From Antoinette's perspective, the liberation the New English bring both rips away safety and imposes new, repressive social controls. In the beginning part, the novel expresses:

They say when trouble comes, close ranks and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother 'because she pretty like pretty self' Christophine said... Another day I heard her talking Mr. Luttrell, our neighbor and her only friend. 'Of course they have their own

misfortunes. Still waiting for this compensation the English promised when the Emancipation Act was passed. Some will wait for a long time. (15)

The beginning lines show that the novel is a representation of the colonial encounter. It is based on the social and political scenario after the arrival of the Abolition of Slavery Act. This was a period of great political and social instability in which the local meaning of white was in great flux as power relations shifted in England's colonial domains as a result of the passing of the British Emancipation Act of 1833 and its ratification in 1834. With the abolition of slavery, West Indian plantations fell into a temporary state of ruin. It was a point in imperial history when colonial whites discovered to their dismay that there were different levels within the power structure of whiteness, and their place within this system was largely dependent on their position within the capitalist/imperialist enterprise.

Wide Sargasso Sea is a story of the 'struggle to come into being' of Antoinette Cosway, the thwarting of that process, and her stubborn insistence on 'speaking herself' no matter what the cost may be. Antoinette seeks alternative ways of self-representation. Because the infant's first and foremost means of identification is through the mother, Antoinette tries to wipe away the traces of patriarchy from her mother's face: "A frown came between her black eyebrows; deep-it might have been cut with a knife. I hated this frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it" (8). The mother cannot reflect Antoinette. She has established her alliances clearly. It is Pierre's face that the mother mirrors and not Antoinette's, despite the male's handicap. Antoinette is made to feel somehow inadequate, lacking. Moreover, the mother seeks constantly the approval of a real mirror that is to decide her future and

hopes of reintegration into society through marriage. The mirror aptly summarizes Antoinette's problem of representation.

Having set up the barrier of racial hatred between herself and her friend, Antoinette loses Tia permanently by labeling her as other. With that she also loses her close contact with nature because she never returns to the pool. To reinforce this, Rhys times this entrance into patriarchy with the entrance of Mason. Immediately upon returning home Antoinette finds the visitors and "things were never the same" (27). For Antoinette, cultivating the 'female' virtues of modesty and chastity, even the act of washing become a perverted contrast to her past practice. When she had once bathed nakedly and openly in the pool in Coulibri, Antoinette must now wash in "the big stone bath where we splashed about wearing gray cotton chemises which reached to our ankles. The smell of soap as you cautiously soaped yourself under the chemise, a trick to be learned dressing with modesty, another trick" (57).

With the second section we are invited directly into patriarchy and away from Antoinette's struggle to 'write' herself. The male narrator is unnamed in the text. He is his own 'subject' and thus free from objectification by naming. It is also because by not being named he becomes omnipotent, the god-like creator of Bertha's narrative text. From the beginning Rochester feels himself outside the protection of the order. The inexplicable feeling of menace he feels towards the island increases minute by minute. The falling rain causes "a feeling of discomfort and melancholy" (67), and "the sea crept stealthily forwards and backwards" (66). Rochester's basic hostility is increased by the fact that he recognizes in the place a matriarchal tendency.

The critic, Irigaray, is threatening to the very mode of representation that seeks to exclude it, for it is "a nothing that might cause the ultimate destruction, the splintering, the break in their systems of 'presence', of 're-presentation' and

'representation' (50). It is interesting to see how Rochester's representation is echoed by a male critic who remarks: "there is something hollow in Antoinette's character which is covered over by the exotic and mysterious qualities Rhys gives to her" (Staley 115). Rochester himself betrays one source of his anxiety of nothingness by associating Antoinette with death in the early stages of their relationship. But, She is also associated with another fear, the twin of death, which Irigaray calls "the ban of returning, regressing to the womb" (140).

Right from their first encounter, Christophine emerges as stronger than he, a towering figure whom Rochester perceives as a "phallic mother" who "castrates" him, first through her gaze and then through her words: "We started at each other for quite a minute. I looked away first and she smiled to herself" (73). Her second encounter is presented by Rochester as even more clearly threatening to him. Later he reveals the true source of his anxiety; he interprets the incident as mockery of his manhood: "The same contempt as that devil's when she said, 'Taste my bull's blood.' Meaning that will make you a man" (167). He is therefore satisfied to discover that he has some legal power over her which he can exercise to put her into jail. By threatening her, he is able to break the 'pact' that she has with Antoinette and, therefore, to weaken the power of both women. She is outside and beyond language, and she has no place within it. She can only be represented by another, and that other is Rochester, who, from within the order, becomes master of her desires. And he, having removed all physical traces of her by keeping her out of sight, can deny her existence as her mother's existence was denied to Antoinette. She becomes a ghost, dead/undead, the Zombie that Rochester had been afraid would be his fate. And by that, she assures the possibility of his continued existence. Thus appears his final creation, the "Marionette Antoinette." Having effectively killed her; "I drew the sheet over her gently as if I

covered a dead girl" (139), he brings her back again to life but now in another form: "Antoinette stretched on the bed quite still. Like a doll. Even when she threatened me with the bottle she had a marionette quality" (149-51). She escapes to freedom, away from the frame, outside the reach of the gold that directs the lives of those around her, into an open space that can no longer restrain her by giving her a name. In her bid for freedom she seeks to be other than she is, leaving behind her the name given to her as a token of her slavery.

Wide Sargasso Sea depicts the period after emancipation when the Jamaican slave society became a Crown colony with "the legal castes of slavery being replaced by the more complicated divisions of a class-race color system of stratification" (Hall 281); the old slaves came to form the landless rural proletariat while the white Creoles occupied the other cultural pole of the elite. According to Edward Braithwaite the time when "Creolization", i.e., the process of "interculturalization", was stopped. The white Creoles' lack of co-operation with and degrading of the black labor-force defeated the possibility of an alliance between the two as well as the completion of the creative process of Creolization" (24). However, the novel's portrayal of the white Creoles dramatizes a mutual and creative 'interculturalization' between white and black Creoles. It further hints at ways in which this interaction could have been propitiously sustained, and foregrounds the reasons why it was stopped. The racial and social divisions foregrounded in the novel ironically do to Rhys' Antoinette to show her as constituted within and by the processes of colonization and imperialism. The novel exposes the dominant imperial and patriarchal ideologies and denaturalizes the mechanisms by which they construct their black others.

Elaine Savory in *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* remarks:

The story begins just after Emancipation, first in Jamaica (Coulibri Estate, the family seat of the Cosways). The female protagonist again loses the protection of family (her father dies, her mother remarries, their house is burned by angry ex-slaves, the mother goes mad and rejects her daughter). Once more an Englishman appears to offer love, but, as we understand from "Rochester's" story, intense sexual passion both pleases and disquiets him. His angst about it lets the trouble maker Daniel Poison his mind Antoinette has lost one brother (Pierre) and Daniel's claim to be her half-brother is only used to enable him to harm her. Antoinette does have a surrogate mother in Christophine, but, since she was a slave and is servant, she cannot protect very much, through she tries. (81-82)

The extract shows that the story of the novel, set after emancipation is about different struggle of the female protagonist in the family and society. There are scenes of angers presented by ex-slaves. The Englishman, Rochester expresses his extreme desire of sexual passion. His angst lets the trouble make Daniel Poison his mind. Antoinette struggles hard from being safe but she doesn't because she is a slave and a servant. Rhys uses chains of references that connect significantly. At Coulibri, during the fire, a menacing man likens Antoinette's family to centipedes. Then Christophine says Amelie "creep and crawl like centipede" (102). Centipedes in the Caribbean can grow large and have a poisonous sting, sharply painful for unallergic adults and potentially lethal for small babies. They are reputed to refuse to die unless they are cut up into pieces or entirely squashed.

Likewise, the geography of the novel is broader. Rhys sets the beginning of the story in Jamaica but describes Coulibri as if it were her maternal family's estate of

Geneva in Dominica. Jamaica is a thousand miles or so from Dominica (and the fictional Granbois), and "Rochester" speaks of the "interminable journey from Jamaica" (66). They are said to be in "one of the Windward Islands, at a small estate which had belonged to Antoinette's mother" (66). The national and racial identities of major characters also represent regional history and geography. Antoinette's mother and her beloved nurse, Christophine are both from Martinique. Tia, Antoinette's childhood companion, is the daughter of Christophine's childhood friend. Antoinette's step father is English: his son, Richard, is schooled in Barbados, but afterwards in England. Though Mason has other West Indian properties, he is the new sort of planter, coming as slavery is ended, and trying to industrialize the plantation. He is not interested in knowing or adapting to local culture; his family eats English food. That's why Rhys tells the detailed story Caribbean history through the novel.

Victoria Burrows in *Whiteness and Trauma* claims:

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* it is the binding metaphor of the text that implies the historical dispossession and abandonment of white creoles: it is also a metaphor for the painful repression of the trauma that results from the actions of the racial other. The important difference is that Rhys reverses the power differentials, thus creating a vicarious victimization not only of white creoles by their imperial superiors, but also by the Island blacks. (34)

These lines express that the novel describes the painful repression of the trauma that results from the actions of the racial other. It is about victimization of people by imperial superiors, white creoles even by the Island blacks. Victoria Burrows in the same text further remarks:

Yet, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the most obvious of all her novels in which she could have focused on the black down-trodden, Rhys instead aligns her story with white traumatization. Moreover, slave resistance had strongly impacted on her own family, as their house on the family estate had been burned in 1844 by ex-slaves who feared a return to slavery. This scene 'returns' in the novel as the trauma that spiraled Antoinette's mother into madness. White individualized family trauma thereby replaces the collective subaltern history, and the any ways in which slaves fought back against the white ruling class. (33)

Rhys' elision of maroon history is especially significant because she grew up in the West Indies. Her grandfather and great-grandfather owned large numbers of slaves. So, she was aware of both the history of slavery and its accompanying cruelties and the wealth and prestige that Creole plantocracy status. "The maroon societies were communities that stood out as an heroic challenge to white authority, and as the living proof of the existence of a slave consciousness that refused to be limited by the whites' conception or manipulation of it" (Price 2). Again few slave societies had a more impressive record of revolt than Jamaica. This was the 'dark' side of the history with which Rhys grew up while protected by her white Creole status and its own version of events. However, the novel exhibits the pangs created by slavery. Family losses heavily impact the protagonist and become a factor in her lack of protection against what happens to her later on.

Thus, the novels, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Sula* illustrate mother-daughter relationships that are imbricated in either the historical specificity of the New World and its politics of slavery, or its traumatizing legacies. Both texts incorporate the powerful dynamics of figurative language and the logic of metaphor that on one hand

politicizes gender, yet on the other veers between distancing from the social injustices of racial meaning like in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and to a rewriting of black history through what Toni Morrison calls the 'gift for metaphor' like in *Sula*. The two novels delineate a mother-daughter relationship or relationships damaged by both racial and gender positioning at a particular moment in history. Rhys focuses on the tortured relationship between a white Creole mother and daughter. She exhibits the far greater traumatic historical condition of enslaved African Caribbean. Morrison's *Sula*, almost entirely excludes any white presence, and delineates the results of mother-daughter relationships irreversibly damaged by the racism and poverty crucial to the implementation of slavery in the United States. That's why to explore the traumas exhibited in the novel; the researcher has focused on reading the novel, through Cultural Trauma.

This thesis is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter provides the bird's eye view of the research with introduction regarding African experience. The second chapter gives the bird's eye view of theoretical modality of Trauma and its cultural dimension. Likewise, the third chapter analyzes the novels, *Sula* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* keeping attention the theoretical modality of second chapter focusing on the issues of trauma of slavery and race depicted by female characters. The last chapter concludes the research together with trauma of race and gender and narrative framework of the texts.

Chapter Two

Trauma and Its Impact

2.1 Trauma

Trauma is a word derived from ancient Greek, the meaning of which is 'wound'. Although the precise definition of the modern concept of trauma varies according to context and discipline, there is a general consensus that if trauma is a wound, it is a very peculiar kind of wound. There is no specific set of physical manifestation identifying trauma. And it almost invariably produces repeated uncontrollable and incalculable effects that endure long after its ostensible 'precipitating cause'. Therefore trauma presents a unique set of challenges to understanding. Moreover, traumatic events often happen due to social forces as well as in the social world. Trauma has an inherently political, cultural, historical, and ethical dimension. Over the last fifteen years or so, the emergence of ground breaking new work on trauma in literature and critical theory has made a profound impact both within and beyond the field of literature.

Scholars generally agree that the explosion of trauma work now being done in literary studies is largely due to the path breaking work by Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, two prominent members of the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory. Since the early 1990s, both Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman have been working creatively on the borders of trauma, literature and psychoanalysis. Cathy Caruth edited and wrote a critical introduction to an interdisciplinary collection of essays titled *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* in 1995. In 1996, she published a study of trauma, *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Since the publication of these books Caruth has been recognized as a leading pioneer of trauma theory and her works has been valuable for reference of studies related to trauma.

Likewise, Shashana Felman's engagement with trauma began with her imported work in 1992 in collaboration with psychoanalyst Dori Laub; *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. In 2002, with the publication of *The Juridical Unconscious: Trails and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, Felman joins her long-standing exploration of the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis to her more recent reflections on testimony and trauma. Now, there are other many scholars who have contributed for trauma studies from different dimension.

Cathy Caruth in her important work on trauma, *Unclaimed Experience* points out that the original meaning of trauma is "an injury inflicted on a body" (3). In Freud's texts, trauma refers to "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). She then provides the general definition of trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares and other repetitive phenomena" (91). Kai Erikson expands the definition of trauma to make it a result from both "*a constellation of life experiences*" and "a discrete happening", from "*a persisting condition*" and "an acute event" (185). He stresses that trauma can transform "one sharp stab" into "an enduring state of mind" (185). He even distinguishes "individual trauma" from "collective trauma". The former means the blow to individual psyche while the latter the damage to the bonds between people (187) Laura Brown broadens the scope of trauma even further by taking into account the private, secret experiences of various minority groups such as girls and women of color, men of color, homosexuals, poor and physically challenged people. She brings up the concept of "insidious trauma" by Maria Root, which refers to "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or

threatening to bodily wellbeing at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (107).

Similarly, Stef Graps and Gert Buelens cite Frantz Fanon's account of black people's encountering racism, which leads to the "feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and self-hatred", as a classic example of insidious trauma (3). They indicate that trauma studies has one-sided focus since it focuses almost exclusively on the traumatic experience of "white Westerners" and applies critical approaches "emanating from a Euro-American context" (2). Jill Matus concurs that little work has been done on the "experience of racism as traumatic" (27). Again Michelle Balaev, in "Trends in Literacy Trauma Theory" defines trauma as "a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society" (1). Balaev believes that analyzing the role of place- "the lock, nature and culture converge to construct meaning and inform both individual and collective identity"-acknowledges the sociopolitical and cultural forces that cause trauma, so it gives new understanding to trauma's meaning for both the individual and community (8).

By showing that the onset of traumatic pathology (post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD) cannot be fully determined by, or located in, a given traumatic event, Caruth proposes that trauma compels us to imagine that traumatic events do not simply occur in time. Rather, they fracture the very experience of time for the person to whom they 'happen' (4). She writes, "The impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (9). In the opening chapter of *Unclaimed Experience*, "The Wound and the Vice", Caruth analyzes why and how Freud makes use of a literary text-a story from Tasso-in order to explain the

concept of traumatic repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. She concludes her own interpretation of Tasso's story with the following haunting remarks about what this literary text reveals to Freud about the nature of trauma:

What the parable of the wound and the voice thus tells us, and what is at the heart of Freud's writings on trauma, both in what it says and in the stories it unwittingly tells, is that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and language. (4)

Likewise, Felman and Laub while describing *Testimony* and its impact point:

Although the traumatic past remains radically unfinished and unknown, it continues to act on, in, and through present events in ways that elude or surpass conscious understanding. But the most urgent and essential claim of *Testimony* is to show that even though we do not "recover" from our traumatic past, nor can we "cure" it, "overcome" it, or even fully understand it, we can and we must listen to it and survive it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors. (2)

The extract shows that the aim of *Testimony* is to provide new ways of thinking about how trauma language and survival are bound together in the act of bearing witness through speech. *Testimony* must go beyond the personal experience of the individual who bears witness because others must tell and hear the very truth that the witness is

bound to tell: "By virtue of the fact that the testimony is addressed to others, the witness, from within the solitude of his own stance, is a vehicle of an occurrence, a reality, a stance or a dimension beyond himself" (3).

Felman's radical and rigorous conception of testimony has profound implications for the way we think about the nature, impact, and transmission of historical truth. By understanding testimony, we can say that it is as a medium through which truth can be transmitted. So, Felman's work enables us to be attuned to the truths transmitted by trauma even as those very truths may not be entirely 'knowable' as objects of direct observation or historical documentation in the traditional sense.

Freud's earliest idea, in *Studies in Hysteria*, concerned the dynamics of trauma, repression, and symptom formation. Freud held that an overpowering event, unacceptable to consciousness, can be forgotten and yet return in the form of somatic symptoms or compulsive, repetitive behaviors. Freud returned to the theory of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a work which originated in his treatment of World War I combat veterans who suffered from repeated nightmares and other symptoms of their wartime experiences. Again in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud attempted to a theory of trauma that would account for the historical development of entire cultures. Especially valuable in this work is his elaboration of the concept of 'latency' of how memory of a traumatic event can be lost over time but then regained in a symptomatic form when triggered by some similar event. Regarding the issues describing Freud's idea James Berger quotes, "In this way each national catastrophe invokes and transforms memories of other catastrophes, so that history becomes a complex entanglement of crimes inflicted and suffered, with each catastrophe understood-that is, misunderstood-in the context of repressed memories of previous ones" (570).

However, trauma is recurrent evidence of a failed mastery of the event. Trauma operates with something of a bad conscience. It is a violence done to subjective consciousness. It even distorts a person's perception of reality, causing the past to be lived as indistinguishable from the present. Trauma repeats the event as it cannot bring to recollection and even leads the pain and impacts to future. Trauma can be the means of an engagement with history by those who have suffered its direct effects and seem least able to address the history in those who stand outside the trauma. Trauma is not simply another word for disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event. This dispersal occurs across time, so that an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later. This representational and temporal hermeneutics of the symptom has powerful implications for contemporary theory. In its emphasis on the retrospective reconstruction of the traumatic event, a traumatic analysis is both constructivist and empirical. That's why a concept of trauma can be of great value in the study of history and historical narrative and even narrative in general.

Thus, trauma is bodily injury or shock. It is an emotional shock, often having a lasting psychic effect. There are two types of it; physical wounds and emotional wounds. Emotional trauma is not confined to the single shock that comes with an assault. Some people even suffer trauma from continuing attacks on their emotional stability. Trauma theory, as recent burning approach of study has multiple dimensions like cultural, political, psychological and so on. Those dimensions deserve their own specialties but there are even some common features which every dimension share each other. Here, the study focuses on trauma from cultural dimension especially on two novels, Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

2.2 Cultural Trauma

There is a difference between trauma as it affects individuals and as a cultural process. The trauma especially caused by cultural norms, values, customs or cultural system is called cultural trauma. A cultural trauma is even caused when colonial cultural values suppress or dominate the original culture of a place and create cultural ambivalence. As cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory. Cultural trauma includes collective trauma rather than individual. It is observed in whole culture and society with impacts in people of the society and culture.

Cultural trauma even relates to memory when cultural hegemony exists for a period of time in a place. Memory and heritage form a continuum or 'heritage/memory nexus' whereby claims to the past receive different degrees of reverence or legitimacy. Cultural trauma is a process of mediation involving alternative strategies and alternative voices. It is a process that aims to reconstitute or reconfigure a collective identity through collective representation, as a way of repairing the tear in the social fabric. A traumatic tear evokes the need to 'narrate new foundations' which includes reinterpreting the past as a means toward reconciling present or future needs.

While describing cultural trauma in "*Cultural Trauma; Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*", Ron Eyerman expresses:

As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be

felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all.

While it may be necessary to establish some event as the significant 'cause', its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process which requires time, as well as mediation and representation.

(2)

The extract clarifies that cultural trauma exhibits a dramatic loss of identity and meaning. It is a tear in the social fabric. It affects a group of people in the community or whole society.

Arthur Neal (1998) defined a "national trauma" according to its "enduring effects", and as relating to events "which cannot be easily diminished, which will be played over again and again in individual consciousness" becoming "ingrained in collective memory." In this account, a national trauma must be understood, explained, and made coherent through public reflection and discourse. Here, mass-mediated representations play a decisive role. This is also the case in what we have called cultural trauma. (*Cultural Trauma 2*)

These lines show that cultural trauma in some cases become national trauma when mass mediated representations play a decisive role. When such mass becomes affected, this can't be easily dismissed. Cultural identity and effects on it is even national issue. At this time trauma takes a process which requires mediation and representation. Neil Smelser (in Alexander et al. 2001) offers a more formal definition of cultural trauma that is worth repeating: "a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative effect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as

threatening a society's existence on violating one or more of its fundamental cultural prepositions" (88).

Alexander in *The Meanings of Social Life; A Cultural Sociology Expresses*: "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks on their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (85). Social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume the moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solitary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the suffering of others. The trauma experience occurs when the traumatizing event interacts with human nature. Human beings need security, order, love, and connection. If something happens that sharply undermines these needs, it hardly seems surprising that people will be traumatized as a result.

No doubt, the most influential scholar in shaping this approach has been Cathy Caruth in her own collection of essays, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, and in her edited collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995, 1996). Caruth focuses on the complex permutations that unconscious emotions impose on traumatic reactions. In keeping with the psychoanalytic tradition, however, Caruth roots her analysis in the power and objectivity of the originating traumatic event. She says, "Freud's intuition of, and his passionate fascination with, traumatic experiences" related traumatic reactions to "the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (*Unclaimed Experience* 2). She further says, "The event cannot be left behind because 'the breach in the mind's experience', 'is experienced too soon.' This abruptness prevents the mind from fully cognizing the event. It is experienced 'too unexpectedly... to be fully known and is therefore not

available to consciousness" (2). Buried in the unconscious, the event is experienced irrationally, "in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (2).

While describing the traumatic symptoms, she returns to the theme of objectivity, suggesting that they "tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available (3-4). The aim of cultural trauma, is thus to restore collective psychological health by lifting societal repression and restoring memory. To achieve this, social scientists stress the importance of finding through public acts of commemoration, cultural representation and public political struggle-some collective means for undoing repression and allowing the pent-up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed. The traumatized feelings of the victims, and the actions that should be taken in response, are both treated as the unmediated, common-sense reactions to the repression itself. Alexander claims, "Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of the acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors 'decide' to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go" (93).

However, these lines show the processes that the nature of the collective actions and the cultural and institutional processes that mediate them. However for traumas to emerge at the level for the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crisis. Representation of trauma depends on construction a compelling framework of cultural classification. The representational process creates a new master narrative of social suffering. Such cultural classification is critical to the process by which a collectivity becomes traumatized.

Alexander's studies (2003, Alexander et al. 2004) on cultural trauma are highly suggestive of a different approach to memory. Alexander is concerned with the

role of trauma in the modern world and the ways in which cultural trauma is produced through claims in the public sphere. Alexander's modeling of such process explicitly suggests that while memory is contingent upon individual actions and acts of remembrance, historically grounded generalizations and some general principles. This perspective takes into account that, while each act of commemoration reproduces a commemorative narrative – e.g. a story about a particular past that accounts for the ritualized remembrance – the selection and organization of the vast array of facts into narratives requires more from the actors. "Segments of the past are organized into *master commemorative narratives* that structure collective memory-to be set against *alternative commemorative narratives* that provide for a counter-narrative" (Zerubavel 1995:6-11).

Alexander analyzes the emergence and institutionalization of such master commemorative narratives that explain traumatic events in national or group history. Alexander (2003, 2004) suggests an elaborate mechanism that is responsible for shaping the creation of the narratives: "In the case of cultural traumas, claim-making operates through carrier groups that proceed to address an audience within the context of a specific historical cultural trauma, and institutional environment" (Alexander 2004: 12-13). The cultural trauma for Alexander is therefore a new master narrative that is produced by developing persuasive accounts of the nature of pain, the nature of the victim, the relation between trauma victim and wider audience, and finally, the attribution of responsibility (13). That's why Alexander stresses the significance of such cultural structures, which provide the means for developing different frameworks of remembrance.

Ron Eyerman in his *'Cultural Trauma, Slavery and the formation of African American Identity'* joins his notion of cultural trauma that African American identity emerged in the Post-Civil War period, after slavery had been abolished. He expresses:

The trauma of forced servitude and of nearly complete subordination to the will and whims of another was thus not necessarily something directly experienced by many of the subjects of this study, but came to be central to their attempts to forge a collective identity out of its remembrance. In this sense, slavery was traumatic in retrospect, and formed a "primal scene" which could, potentially, unite all "African Americans" in the United States, whether or not they had themselves been slaves or had any knowledge of or feeling for Africa. Slavery formed the root of an emergent collective identity through an equally emergent collective memory, one that signified and distinguished a race, a people, or a community depending on the level of abstraction and point of view being put forward. (1-2)

The extract tries to show that slavery formed the root of an emergent collective identity on equally emergent collective memory. Slavery was traumatic and prime cause of distorting cultural identity. It was traumatic for those who experienced it directly. He further claims, "if slavery was traumatic for this generation of intellectuals, it was so in retrospect, mediated through recollection and reflection, and, for some, tinged with some strategic, practical and political interest" (2).

Likewise, Eyerman describes:

National or cultural trauma is usually mediated, through newspapers, radio, or television, for example, which involves a spatial as well as temporal distance, between the event and its experience. Mass-

mediated experience always involves selective construction and representation since what is seen is the result of the actions and decisions of professionals as to what is significant and how it should be presented. (3)

National or cultural trauma always engages a "meaning struggle", a grappling with an event that involves identifying the "nature of the pain, the nature of the victim and the attribution of responsibility (Alexander et al. 2001). Alexander calls this the 'trauma process' when the collective experience of massive disruption, and social crises, becomes a crisis of meaning and identity. However interpretation and representation of the past and the constitution of collective memory are central to cultural trauma.

Resolving cultural trauma can involve the articulation of collective identity and collective memory, as individual stories meld through forms and processes of collective representation. The reconstructed common and collective past may have its origins in direct experience, its recollection is mediated through narratives that are modified with the passage of time, filtered through cultural artifacts and other materializations which represent the past in the present slavery and racism in the United States, Africa and in other countries are the central point for the study of cultural trauma. Cultural trauma articulates a membership group as it identifies an event or an experience, a primal scene that solidifies individual/collective identity. It focuses on the suppression of people in the name of race, slave or any other cultural aspect. On the one hand colonial hegemony with its stereotypes and on the other the pains and suffering brought by slavery and racism on both individual and community are the issues of cultural trauma in this study.

Toni Morrison's '*Sula*' exhibits slavery and ongoing racial inequalities and oppression. It shows that racism and slavery themselves are trauma. Sula, the

protagonist, rebels against all society, all conventions and nearly all moralities. She quests desperately for freedom but she gets herself victimized. She disregards social conventions following only her own heart and conscience. As Sula, other characters in the novels are shown suffering from the situation caused by the gap between their conscience and socio-political situation. Likewise, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* depicts social and psychological fracturing of mid-nineteenth century in Caribbean Island of Jamaica due to British imperialism. She shows a mother-daughter relationship or relationships damaged by racial and gender positioning. She exhibits the politics of slavery or its traumatizing legacies. The national and racial identities of major characters even represent regional history and geography. The naming proves to be an exercise of appropriation and domination. She shows that as the Imperial Abolition of Slavery changes the political status of the West Indies from British protectorates to colonies, Antoinette suffers a childhood without protection and an adulthood of cultural and gender oppression. So, to analyze such issues in two texts, *Sula* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* which are based on the African experience, the researcher has applied cultural trauma as the central writing tool.

Chapter Three

Slavery, Racism and Women's Voice of Freedom in *Sula* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Toni Morrison in *Sula* depicts the traumatic events of the black female protagonist, Sula who faces the problem of being a black female, having a dead father and a distant mother, causing Chicken Little's death, witnessing her mother's death, losing Nel's friendships and being abandoned by Ajax. Morrison shows Sula as haunted by sorrow and pain. She describes experimental Sula as a New World black woman who speak the voice of freedom, for not only black women but all the blacks of the society and nation. Likewise in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the story begins just after emancipation, first in Jamaica creates the female protagonist, Antoinette who loses the protection of family; her father dies, her mother remarries, their house is burned by angry ex-slaves, the mother goes mad and rejects her daughter. Liberation is grounded in the novel in Antoinette's' nostalgia for the culture of slavery. The novel depicts the nostalgic mental picture of life under slavery and racial discrimination. However, these both novels depict relationships damaged by racial and gender position. Moreover, both novels are based on stories of painful lives regarding relationship within patriarchal oppression and racial and class domination.

Toni Morrison's *Sula*, is basically, novel of racial trauma and problem of freedom. Gender, race and trauma, created by them are basic points of departure in the novel. It is about oppressive and dominated lives of African Americans due to long existed inequalities in the name of race, gender and so on. *Sula* starts with the death of the Bottom whose origin is a 'nigger joke' which is a constant reminder of the force and continuing effects of racism; it is the powerful white people who define and determine the fate of the Bottom (4). The word, Bottom symbolically represents black, slaves or niggers who surpass painful lives of domination. Again in the last

section '1965', the sadness of the loss of the Bottom is highlighted through the contrast between 'a real place' and 'separate houses with separate televisions and separate telephones.' (166). So, the place describes in the novel also plays crucial role serving as a character with values and moral views affecting the characters in their ways of achieving their identities and dealing with trauma. The hierarchy of places like Suburbs and Bottom itself exhibits the racial suppression. This plays a crucial role in *Sula* as a character with values and moral views affecting the characters in their ways of achieving their identities and dealing with trauma.

In the first titled section '1919', we encounter Shadrack, a traumatized World War I shell-shocked victim, and learn about his founding of National Suicide Day as a way to make "a disorderly world orderly", which becomes "a landmark in time and point of reference in the neighborhood (Matus 56). Matus emphasizes the significance of the "historical circumstances"; in addition, she links Shadrack with the soldiers on the train Nel and her mother take to New Orleans and Sula's drug-addicted uncle Plum to highlight "the duplicity of American race relations" (57). Moreover, in a way, Shadrack's war trauma is also made present to the community and becomes a part of the communal memory, which manifests the close connection between the individual and the community.

There are many traumatic events that Sula has to deal with. She has the pain of being black. Her father has been already dead and she has a distant mother. Likewise causing Chicken Little's death, witnessing her mother's death, losing Nel's friendship and being abandoned by Ajax are other painful events. However, she is haunted by sorrow and pain. Regarded by the Bottom community as a pariah, an evil, and a witch, Sula has also been interpreted in many ways such as "a rule-breaker", a "lawless women" (Step 216 qtd. in Bryant 739) a new "female being" (Spillers 28);

"a misanthrope and shamed social outcast" (Bouson 52). Being a black girl growing up at a chaotic low class Peace household at the Bottom means that opportunities are quite limited for Sula and ensures that she would have a "constellation of life experiences." Even at a very young age, both Sula and Nel know that since they are "neither white nor male", "all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them" (52). They have "set about creating something else to be" (52).

Christian in her reading of *'Sula'* mentions the "effect of insularity on the women of the Bottom" because the neighborhood is high up in the hills and so isolated from the rest of the world (Community and Nature 50). She even remarks that due to the insularity and vulnerability of the black community, the crucial defining characteristic of "the class of woman is that she makes others: by making babies and supporting men (Concept of Class 76). The adult Nel, who has both borne children and made Jude (83), reminds Sula that being "a women and a colored women", she "can't act like a man" and "can't be walking around all independent-like" (142). Even Eva, who has traveled outside the neighborhood, accepts the role of women and accuses the anti-conventional Sula, who only wants to "make myself" and on one else, of being "selfish" (92). However, for Sula, life and the fate of being a colored woman are similar in the cities. She concludes that "All those cities held the same people, working the same mouths, sweating the same sweat", which bores her (120). Sula tells Nel that every colored woman in their country is "dying" "like a stump" while she is going down like "red woods" (143). In such picture of the colored women, Sula presents the potential trauma victims.

Sula is being fatherless and has a distant mother which results a 'solitary'. Her 'loneliness was so profound it intoxicated" her though ironically all sorts of people drop in her house. Overhearing her mother's words "I love Sula. I just don't like her"

which give her a "sing in her eye" and send her "flying up the stairs" with "dark thoughts", when she was 12 years old is a crippling turning point for Sula with severe consequences (57). First it marks her as a "mother-damaged figure" and shatters her sense of self (Bouson 64) because her mother's remarks teach Sula there is "no other that you could count on" (118-9). Second, the overwhelming event leads to Sula's accidental drowning of Chicken Little, another haunting trauma, which shows her there is "no self to count on" (119). As a result, Sula has "no center, no speck around which to grow" (119).

Likewise, Matus reads Chicken Little's death as a symbol of "Sula's own childhood hurt and loss" and as the novel's "central symbol of loss or lack" (4). It can also signify the end of Sula's innocence and childhood, which is short-lived just like the butterflies. Moreover, it tells that when Nel tries to deal with the overwhelmingly traumatic double betrayal of Sula and her husband Jude, she remembers the mourning and screaming women at Chicken Little's funeral. Again Sula's budding sexuality is presented clearly in the chapter with her delight from Ajax's compliment and the highly sexually implicated game Sula and Nel play. Furthermore, the whole event regarding Chicken Little's death is also significant in terms of Sula and Nel's friendship. It is their mutual, unspeakable, and unforgettable memory, which supposedly binds them. Yet at the funeral they neither touch each other nor keep eye contact; instead, there is "a space, separateness, between them". It seems to foreshadow the breach of the friendship between Sula and Nel, which, considering their awakening sexuality, prepares and makes room for Nel's marriage to Jude.

Sula is traumatized by her mother's unexpected and violent death by fire and suffers from the symptoms of "the delayed reaction and haunting dreams" (Matus 67). Before she dies, as if to convince the absent Eva of her innocence, who believes that

Sula watches Hannah burn because she is "interested" (78), Sula explains, "I didn't mean anything. I never meant anything. I stood there watching her burn and was thrilled. I wanted her to keep or jerking like that, to keep on dancing" (147). For such small girl of thirteen her mother's burning is an extraordinary event out of the monotonous daily life (55). Bousoon proposes that Sula's secret pleasure suggests "her desire for revenge against her shaming mother" and her "emotional disconnection from the suffering of others" (65). Likewise, Elizabeth Abel states that unlike parental and sexual bonds friendship is "a privileged relationship" with the potential to blend "perfect freedom with complete involvement" (428). Nel is disgusted by Sula's unintentional self-mutilation in the effort to protect her, believing the fear-stricken Sula cuts herself to "protect herself" (101). For the emotion dominant Sula, Jude "just filled up the space" (144). She also thinks since they are such good friends - "two throats and one eye" and with "no price" (147)-Nel should "get over it" (145). Matus notes that Sula's seduction of Jude suggests the "detachment" and a profound lack of, or disregard for, feeling" (62). Her experiencing misery from bedding down with Jude begets more and appalling misery in Nel.

Similarly, when she is being abandoned by Ajax contributes to Sula's sickness. The thoughts in her mind then- "There aren't any more new songs and I have sung all the ones there are"-seem to suggest that she can cease exploring, imagining, experimenting, inventing, or even living now that she has tried everything (137). Again her absence it last moment is echoed in the end shows that it is Sula rather than Jude that she has been missing all the years. So, the loss of a human connection is intensified by Sula's failure to remember Shadrack as the person who has said "always" to comfort her after her accidental killing of Chicken Little and by Shadrack and Nel's mutual failure to recognize each other (149). In their final encounter, they

move in "opposite directions, each thinking separate thoughts about the past" (174). The word separate is reminiscent of the loss of the community. Therefore the loss of human connection and relation represents the social transition. This is representing issue of disrupted community through racial and gender discrimination. The suffering of the characters is the suffering of the whole community surpassed with long existed racial hierarchy, slavery and gender biases. Sula's voice of freedom is the voice of every black women and even whole black community.

Morrison draws attention to the inescapability of each woman's matrilineal heritage and heightens the connection between bodily rejection, sexual betrayal and loss of self-identify by repeating the same imagery when many years later Jude (Nel's husband) betrays, her by having sex with Sula. Nel finds them 'on all fours (uh, huh, go on, say it) like dogs' (105) and when Jude looks at her in silent guilt, all Nel can see is that time on the train when my mother turned to custard' (106). Morrison's use of simile to liken Helene's servility to a starving street dog and the idea of a black couple having sex in an animalistic manner keeps significance to represent the condition of every black woman. Animal imagery is used by both white male characters in the novel who are discussed with more than just a passing reference: the conductor and, later, a white bargemen refer to black people as animals (63). Yet while the young black man is bound and knotted inside, something he cannot undo, Helene's body is seemingly exposed by the white male gaze. Nel believes that if she raises her eyes above the fall of the skirt of the 'elegant dress', she too will see the nakedness that this gaze imposes. the famine detail of 'hooks and eyes'-the tiny and most often invisible fastenings that hold together the opening or slit at the top of a dress (the placket)-is juxtaposed with the child's overwhelming fear that all the world will see her mother's body. The feminine self is exposed in ritual humiliation.

Nel's wedding marks the final pages of the first half of the novel. Her wedding veil is too heavy for her to feel the core of Jude's kiss pressed on her head (85). It is not only that the veil represents a mantle of social convention and identity erasure that will negatively overlay the rest of her life. But in marriage, she has relinquished the one person who saves her imagination from being permanently driven underground. During the wedding, Sula leaves the Bottom, and it will be 10 years before she and Nel each other again. When she returns, she will be accompanied by a plague of robins, and will be dressed in the 'manner that was as close to a movie star as anyone would ever see. A black crepe dress splashed with pink and yellow zinnias, foxtails, a black felt hat with a veil of net lowered over one eye' (90). However, at that time she sinks in imagination.

The repeated reference to veiling is particularly intriguing in a novel that places a great deal of credence on the visual economy. There is even a command to look, 'Voir ! Voir ! (27) and textual emphasis is placed on the different ethics between the active verbs *see*, *watch* and *look*. Through this, we can judge that Morrison raises by the comparison between these verbs. From this we can find the double message that has always been not just a matter of survival for Africans-Americans in the white world, but a means of resistance and subversion of the dominant culture and its constitutive ideologies. Importantly, the veil metaphor has both an ideological and literary history in the African American tradition.

In her essay entitled "The Site of Memory", Morrison discusses her own literary heritage and its relationship with the 'print origins of black literature (as distinguished from the oral origins) [which] were slave narratives (103). Written to enlist the support of white audiences to help in the fight to abolish slavery, these narratives necessarily avoided explicit renditions of the most violent and demeaning

details of this experience. "Over and over", Morrison relates, 'the writers pull the narrative up short with a phrase such as, "But let us drop a veil over these proceedings too terrible to relate" (109-10). Given the shift in time, Morrison sees her participation in this literary heritage this way: For me-a writer in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not much more than a hundred years after emancipation, a writer who is black and a woman-the exercise is very different. My job becomes how to rip that veil drawn over –"proceedings too terrible to relate" (110).

Morrison also writes *Sula* in the same background and setting. In *Sula* Morrison takes up behind the veil of the distortions of white ideology and shows the black world; a world of survival against all the odds, but one with profoundly painful individual and collective consequences Ripping the veil also means exposing vulnerabilities. Analyzing the novel, Victoria Burrows in "*Whiteness and Trauma*" in this context describes, "The aim of Morrison is not to suggest that the women of the Bottom are weak and their behavior ineffective, but to emphasize their enormous courage and perseverance in the face of their powerlessness amid the exigencies of the dominant white world" (137). Helene's lighter skin speaks of her whitened heritage, but instead of banding together with the rest of the community against white oppression, Helen protects her vulnerabilities by becoming the ultimate assimilationist and by leaving her blackness behind. Again, Eva Peace follows a completely different path as she tries to overcome her particular vulnerabilities. As undisputed head of the three woman household at 7 Carpenter's Road, built with insurance money she earned from self-mutilation, Eva becomes its powerful 'creator and sovereign' (30). When her deserting husband unexpectedly returns, and stands before her, she feels, a 'picture of prosperity and goodwill. His shoes were a shiny orange, and he had on citified straw hat, a light-blue suit, and a cat's-head stickpin in his tie' (35), instead of anger, disgust,

or a rush of love, Eva feels no emotion at all. All feeling has been excised in the will to survive.

For Eva, the impact of BoyBoy's return does not provide comfort through a belated relinquishing, and perhaps acceptance, of the past. Instead, 'hit like a sledge hammer' she is slammed into a bodily centered traumatic memory, and this gone thing transforms into bitterness and the driving force of hate. While Eva thrives on hate, her daughter Hannah, whose 'laughing' husband dies when Sula is three, subsumes her grief under a mask of indifference, and spends her days in domestic tasks in her mother's house interspersed with 'some touching every day' (44). Her causal and frequent encounters with men 'taught Sula that sex was pleasant and frequent but otherwise unremarkable (44).

Sula's self-protective displacement and her seeming 'lack' of vulnerability has a history. With Nel as her friend, Sula negotiates her childhood quite happily until one fateful day when she is 12, two events happen that shake the very foundations of her growing self. When Sula stands at the window, fingering the curtain edge, aware of the sting in her eye' (57), Nel calls her, disrupting her 'dark thoughts' (57). They meet downstairs, and run towards the river. A small boy named Chicken Little approaches. Sula is playful and kind to the little boy, and helps him climb to the top of a nearby tree. But suddenly he slips from her hand and falls into the nearby river. However, this event also becomes traumatic for Sula and blames of killing him comes upon her. One after another she gets pain. For her, two events of the catastrophic day revolve around the presence or absence of words.

In the first scene, Sula overhears her mother's painful words and next Chicken Little's drowning. One year after the Chicken Little's death, she witnesses of her burning to death which adds more pain in her. When Sula becomes ill and lies dying

at 7 Carpenter's Road alienated and alone. She receives a single visit from Nel, from when she has been estranged ever since her brief fling with Jude, and the visit does little to change this. Yet, after she leaves, Sula thinks longingly of Nel and the loss of times past. Another traumatized event for her is her mother's death. Jill Matus says: "If anything, Sula's artistic sensibility-the interestedness, curiosity, aesthetic wonder-leaves her more vulnerable to pain than others who see more restrictedly and conventionally" (67). However Sula has existential problem led through repeating trauma. She is unable to accept and mourn her mother's death and see that as a child it was not her fault that she had not tried to save her.

The poignancy of Sula's "Wait' !! I tell Nel" (149) is compounded by the fact that in the last years of her life Sula never had the opportunity to speak her love aloud. Sula's inability to give words to her love had begun in her childhood as a defense against the loss and trauma she had suffered. Her closeness to Nel was that could have reconnected her to her lost subjectivity and, by extension, to her black community. Yet Sula's gift for metaphor, at least during her life, did have a positive impact on the Bottom. The actual structure of the text is also an example of belatedness. The prologue covers a historical-and therefore collective-traumatic event in the far past that is represented as the immediate present in the manner of a flashback. The chapters that cover the 1920s (Nel and Sula's childhood), the late 1930s and early 1940s (the period of their adult estrangement), and then finally the 1965 epilogue (the end of the community), bring together both the principal characters, and by extension the wider community, in an act of remembrance and belated understanding.

As Nel walks along, her memory roams to the day that Sula was buried. After the white folks had left the cemetery, a group of black people from up in the Bottom enter with 'hooded hearts and filed eyes to sing "Shall We Gather at the River" over

the curved earth that cut them off from the most magnificent hatred they had ever known' (173). This is a sorrow song that, in the words of Trudier Harris, 'is one that has traditionally brought comfort to black people and the expectation that life after this world would be much better than that lived here' (68). Ironically, their singing is more a ritual-bound affirmation of their religion and the spiritual comfort it provides than any heartfelt sadness at Sula's death. And as if in one last mocking gesture, the narrator suggests that perhaps Sula answers them from beyond the grave, 'for it began to rain, and the woman ran in tiny leaps through the grass for fear their straightened hair would beat them home' (173). This is an ironic reference to the fact that although it is now 1965, the era of Black Power and the slogan of 'Black is Beautiful', members of the Bottom are still worried about the effect of rain on their 'nappy' hair, suggesting that internalized whiteness is still paramount in the community (Smitherman 65).

However the novel, *Sula* is compound acts of racialised silencing. Through a complex meditation on silence and the difficulty of gaining a voice in a world structured by racial hierarchies, Morrison exhibits the scenario of society grown in racial and slave tradition. Through interracial dialogue she expresses continuing racial prejudice in language. Marie Nigro in "In Search of Self: Frustration and Denial in Toni Morrison's *Sula*" remarks:

Morrison in *Sula* celebrated the lives of ordinary people who daily must work and provide. *Sula* celebrates many lives: it is the story of the friendship of two African American women; it is the story of growing up Black and female; but most of all, it is the story of a community of mythical Medallion, Ohio, can be seen as those that might be fall residents of any Black community in any town during the years of this narrative, 1919 to 1965. (15)

These lines show that Morrison created this novel to celebrate the working class and to explore the consequences of work among African Americans. Though there are events of death and love, but it is the story of a community. In the tightly knit community of the Bottom, survival is serious business and each person must determine a means of existing in a world that is alien-white and male. Nigro further describes, "Although Morrison's novel is "imbedded in the context of the Black experience in America", the author of *Sula* succeeds in bringing to the reader of any race the joys, the suffering, and the pain of Eva, Hannah, Sula, Jude, and Shadrack" (16). The business of survival is an everyday concern for Eva and Hannah, but because they are Black women in the 1920s, the only paid work available in Medallion is as domestics for ungrateful White families or as prostitutes. So, mother and daughter devise their own means of coping. On the other side when Sula and Nel grow into womanhood cling to each other and each provide what the other lacks in herself.

Sula becomes more impulsive and emotional whereas Nel more practical. Sula refuses to accept the conventional boundaries of her race and gender and rejects the mores of the outside world as well as those of her own community. Then she stands alone. Though Nel also gets different pain in life, she carefully orders domestic life. Sula can't maintain ordered life. One after another, she gets painful situation. Nel's life is changed forever. Sula, however, is not contrite as she stands alone, outside the boundaries of the community. Nel always loves Jude as true wife but he ruins Nel's life. However, she still orders her life. Not only that the true friend Sula later also becomes a woman who adds pain in the life of Nel.

Sula realizes that the world-or more singularly, Nel-cannot yet accept such a philosophy. On the deathbed, she tells Nel that after something, some violent event

turns the world upside down, "then there'll be a little love left over for me. And I know just what it will feel like" (146). After that, she fades into drugged hazy memories of her own and Nel's shared childhood, remembering "the days when we were two throats and one eye and we had no price" (147). Further the depth of her bond with Nel becomes apparent when, significantly, Sula thinks of Nel as she passes from this life and enters the next: "Well, I'll be damned... it didn't even hurt. Wait'll I tell Nel" (149). However, through her friendship with Nel, Sula finally achieves the sort of immortality. In her deathbed, she only realizes the true friendship with Nel and which will also make her immortal after death.

Nel and Sula's estrangement offers Morrison an opportunity to examine women's lives in and out of marriage. As girls Nel and Sula had cunningly authored the dimensions of their own existence without the permission or approval of their families or the community. It is because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be.

Jan Furman in "Black Girlhood and Black Womanhood: *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*" remarks:

Sula is, without a doubt, a manifesto of freedom, and that fact in large part accounts for its popularity with readers and critics who champion its triumphant chronicle of a black woman's heroisms. That does not mean, however, that the novel approximates the ideal or that Sula's character is not flawed. Morrison describes her as an artist without a medium. (233)

The extract shows that *Sula* is a manifesto of freedom which accounts the heroism of a black woman. It is Sula's rebellious spirit that fuels the intermittent moments of

originality that Nel manages to have. Sula resists any authority or controls, and Morrison offers her as one of the lawless individuals whose life she is so fond of examining. Sula's sorrow is intense, but short-lived, unlike Nel's enduring suffering for Jude. In the end, when Nel accuses her of never being able to keep a man, Sula counters that she would never waste life trying to keep a man. As perfect complements, one incomplete without the other, Sula and Nel together face life, death, and marriage, and eventually they also must face separation. Throughout, Morrison affirms the necessity of their collaboration.

Thus, Sula gains a self, but, unable to gain harmony with community and cosmos, she cannot achieve lasting fulfillment. A pioneer, she forges a new path, but like so many American heroes, she cannot be absorbed by the community. Sula's fate resembles that of many African Americans. African Americans are split off from mainstream American culture, and she is split off from the community and the larger society. She has the mobility of all Americans but she has only a marginal place. Neither slave nor free, she is caught in the racial enclosure of negation. She insists on absolute independence, refusing to negotiate the two extremes, refusing to bend to be absorbed within the confining limits of community, and finally accepting a fixed position in opposition to convention. Sula's thwarted affair with Ajax emphasizes the varying concepts of female love in the Bottom. After loving Ajax, she finds Hannah's approach of sexual pleasure equally unsatisfactory. Looking at Ajax's license and seeing the name Albert Jacks, *Sula* discovers that she never knew the identity of her lover. Therefore the novel is objective myth of the black American woman through black woman's point of view. No doubt it is about female's search of identity and self in white dominated society. Through the voice of protagonist, Sula, Morrison expresses the voice of liberation from racial and gender violence.

Likewise, the next novel of this study, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, through the voice of female protagonist Antoinette, exhibits complex representation of Caribbean racial relations. In the novel she shows the struggle of a heroine against oppressive patriarchal forces. Further *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents Rhys's West Indian protagonist as facing the sexist constraints and ideologies. Antoinette is victim of the workings of a homogeneous system of sexual domination. The novel can be re-examined as the enactment of a colonial as well as a sexual encounter. Rhys domesticates the novel in terms of class as well as of sex and race, and confines it to the othered space against Britishers. The racial and social divisions foregrounded in the novel ironically do to Rhys's Antoinette shows her as constituted within and by the processes of colonization and imperialism. However, the binaries of the novel accounts the interrelation of axes of power i.e. gender, race, class which constitute and contextualize cultural identities.

The set of oppressions structuring Antoinette and Rochester's relationship entails examining them in light of the black and mulatto people's subordination and resistance. Indeed the novel is not only about the repression of a white Creole woman or of the white Creole in general but also about the black enfranchised slaves and their 'double colonization.' Patricia Hill-Collins remarks:

By the mid-80s, however, the recognition that race, ethnicity, class, and nationality functioned as interlocking system of oppression and formed a "matrix of domination", disrupted the monolithic category of woman." A new paradigm examining the articulation of gender along the axes of race, class, and nationality emerged and effectively displaced previous interpretations of the Antoinette/Rochester dyad in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (10)

The extract shows that after mid-80s critics recognize and explore the interrelations of sex and nationalities in Rhys's writing. Through Antoinette, Rhys in the novel does not only show colonial and sexual encounter but also opposition to masculine nationality. That's why my aim in this research is also to link the depiction of race, slavery and suppression against woman to cultural aspect of trauma. Likewise Gregg claims, "Rhys is believed to identify with the white Creole perspective in the novel, she is perceived as unaware of the operations of imperial history when it comes to her black and colored Others, and guilty of "the appropriation and recruitment of 'race' as an accessory of power and trope of otherness" (43). She expresses that the novel is based on the discrimination of people in the name of race and condition of feeling as otherness.

Rhys was born in Dominica and moved to Europe when she was seventeen. All her novels except for *Wide Sargasso Sea* are set in Europe, but her heroines are usually West Indian exiles who find themselves adrift in a major European city; London or Paris. In her novels she shows her "inbetweenness" to explain her failure to view from and identify with the black Creole perspective. Though her main character Antoinette and Rochester respectively represent Caribbean and European identity, her focus is on raising the voice of black criticizing racial hierarchies. This novel is set on Caribbean context which explores the lives of black in such West Indies nationality. Patricia Moran in *Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Trauma* remarks, "Rhy's novels depict self-destructive and self-punishing female protagonists who seem caught up in repetitious and compulsive patterns of behavior that point back to traumatic experiences in their various past experiences that remain fragmentary and only partially articulated, and hence unprocessed" (117). However, her characters live

in a truncated present: radically cut off from their childhoods, their lands of birth, and their families of origin, painful and half-glimpsed memories of the past haunt them.

Slave resistance had strongly impacted on her own family, as their house on the family estate had been burned in 1844 by ex-slaves who feared a return to slavery. This scene returns in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* as the trauma that spiraled Antoinette's mother into madness. Thereby white individualized family trauma replaces the collective subaltern history in which slaves fought back against the white ruling class. So, resistance was an integral part of Caribbean slave society. It is a text narrativised by associative connection: one memory immediately leads into another through parataxis not contiguity. It is almost plunged into the tragedy which is presented with the vivid immediacy of traumatic vignettes We proceed from the stated outsidership of white Creoles in Jamaica, to Antoinette's Father's death to Mr. Luttrell's despairing suicide and finally into the first incident of the white-washed version of marooning all within the first page. As the imperial Abolition of slavery changes the political status of the West Indies from Britishers, Antoinette suffers a childhood without protection and an adulthood of cultural and gender oppression.

One calm evening Mr. Lutterell shot his dog, swam out to sea and was gone for always. No agent came from England to look after his property-Nelson's Rest it was called-and strangers from Spanish Town rode up to gossip and discuss the tragedy...Mr. Luttrell's house was left empty, shutters banging in the wind. Soon the black people said it was haunted, they wouldn't go near it. And no one came near us. I got used to a solitary life, but my mother still planned and hoped-perhaps she had to hope every time she passed a looking glass. (15-6)

These beginning lines of the novel represent the lives of the novelist's hometown. Now Christophine's neighbor Mr. Luttrell looks tired of waiting the coming time because the Emancipation Act has been recently passed. Britishers even, have property in different towns. Many people of that place who are living in Europe have property in that hometown. The black people feel as being haunted. The symptoms of long rooted suppression and domination and slave-like behavior is affecting the lives of people even after Emancipation Act. The novelist expresses, "Still waiting for this compensation the English promised when the Emancipation Act was passed. Some will wait for a long time." (15)

Likewise, while describing Christophine, she expresses:

She was much blacker-blue-black with a thin face and straight features. She wore a black dress, heavy gold earring and a yellow handkerchief carefully tied with the two high points in front. No other Negro woman wore black, or tied her handkerchief Martinique fashion. She had quite voice and a quiet laugh (when she did laugh), and though she could speak good English if she wanted to, and French as well as patios, she took care to talk as they talked... She had only one friend-a woman called Maillotte, and Maillotte was not a Jamaican." (18-19)

These lines describe Christophine who looks as if being black Negro woman but she was born in Europe and later brought in Jamaica. Her dress-up and gesture is like of a black woman. But she can speak different language. The narrator is not clear about how old she was when she was brought to Jamaica. Through the reference of her, the novelist on the one hand represents imperial strategy of Britishers and on the other represents the way of looking a black woman. Though her origin is Europe but represent the black woman of Jamaica.

Rhys uses the trope of a freedom longing for slavery to invoke a universalized preference for protection over autonomy. In describing her own and her family's post-emancipation predicament as a state of being 'marooned' (16), Maroon is the Creole word for an escaped slave who lived in the mountainous center of Jamaica. In keeping with the novel's privileging of subjective associations over empiricism, dreams prophesy Antoinette's fate as victim. The first invocation of her recurring dream-"I dreamed that I was walking in the forest. No alone... I struggled and screamed I could not move (16). This occurs right before Mr. Mason enters her and her mother's lives. After she wakes, she tries to calm herself by recalling "the tree of life in the garden" (16), which may be seen, again as Eden before the Fall of Emancipation. The person 'out of sight' who hates her is a premonition of Mr. Mason, whom she has not yet met, and of Rochester, who is still in England.

Masochism drives the vision. In the second incarnation of the dream-which comes after Mason visits her in the convent tells her she will be leaving, and insinuates the existence of Rochester. Then Antoinette participates in her own subjugation. Instead of already being in the forest, she walks towards it, and instead of being followed by the man, she follows him, encumbered with an oversized, white dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled (35-6). Antoinette associates white dresses with her mother, who sewed them to save herself and her daughter from destitution and through her mother with the impossible, shifting expectations of metropolitan Englishman.

Recovering from a tropical fever and experiencing culture shock, Rochester describes his perspective as one of 'confused impressions' having "blanks in [his] mind that cannot be filled up" (45). As in Antoinette's dream, but with reserved gender roles, he feels that he is following his wife into a wood he cannot understand.

Overwhelmed by the dramatic physical features and sensuality of the West Indies, Rochester imagines his new found powerlessness as enslavement by a woman he associates with the land. The West Indies sets masculinity standards for Rochester to which he is unaccustomed. Antoinette struggles and fails to meet metropolitan British requirements of proper womanhood. But Rochester likewise receives messages that he is not masculine enough for his new environment. Christophine offers him coffee with the imperative to "Tasty my bull's blood, master" (50), which he recognizes as "meaning that will make you a man" (100). When Antoinette leads him to the honeymoon bed with two wreaths of tropical flowers laid on it, Rochester balks at the expectation that he will take charge.

Rochester finds himself in the grip of struggle between the rational restraint he has learned in England and the sensual lure of both Antoinette and the West Indies, imagined as virgin territory: "It was a beautiful place-wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness" (51-2). Antoinette's sexual desire for submission is at once a psychological corrective to her childhood neglect and reenactment of historical slavery. This shows that the couples have sadomasochistic relationship, as "things she says, whispers, in darkness. Not by day" (54). Elizabeth Freeman writes of sadomasochism, "It reorganizes the senses and, when it uses icons and equipment from traumatic pasts, reorganizes the relationships among emotion, sensation, and historical understanding. Its clash of temporalities ignites historical possibilities other than the ones frozen into the 'fate' of official histories" (63). By reenacting a sexualized version of slavery, Antoinette and Rochester create their own personalized historical narrative which produces, as Freeman characterizes the process of history-inspired sadomasochism; as he says "a kind of somatized historical knowledge, one that does not demand or produce correct

information about or an original experience of past events, or even engender legibly cognitive understanding of one's place in a historically specific structure, but enacts the oscillation between forms of time and illuminates their historical consequences" (62). Antoinette requires Rochester to be the sadist to her masochist in order for him to help her transform a reenactment of historical slavery into physical pleasure.

Rochester and Antoinette reach their pinnacle of unrestrained sexuality through Christophine's Obeah love potion; African-Caribbean extra-rational knowledge then, is the conduit to this 'dark past' within them. When their sadomasochistic sexual experiments transgress what Rochester can tolerate, he depicts them as a gap in the narrative. "I remember putting out the candles on the table near the bed and that is all I remember. All I will remember of that night" (82). For Rochester, sexuality as unrestrained as that which he refuses to remember of his and Antoinette's lost night is a form of madness that suggests a physical corruption. Having fully experienced the extent of Antoinette's sexual masochism, Rochester struggles to comprehend it. However, Rochester's physically ill reaction to the love potion signals his psychic rejection of both sadomasochism and the Caribbean culture he misunderstands. Rochester construes the effects of the love potion as a poisonous means to seal his soul and make a zombie of him. "I woke in the dark after dreaming that I was buried alive", he narrates, "and when I was awake the feeling of suffocation persisted" (82). Originating in African, the zombie became in the Caribbean "the symbol of the slave, the alienated man robbed of his will, reduced slavery, forced to work for a master" (Laroche 55). Rochester believes Antoinette acts as a sorceress trying to sexually enslave him and, in giving him the potion; Antoinette is trying to exert sexual power over him.

Antoinette associates the Emancipation of slaves with her mother's object sexual enslavement. Having gone mad as a result of the freed slaves 'killing Pierre, Annette lives out her days in a sort of planter Hell, repeatedly sexually abused by a "fat black man" (80). Supplying details to Rochester, Antoinette relates, "I saw the man lift her up out of the chair and kiss her. I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all soft and limp in his arms and he laughed" (81). The scene is a reenactment of slavery with reversed social roles: the caretaker laughs like Old Cosway laughed, he has interracial sexual intercourse with a woman powerless to object, and his wife begrudgingly tolerates it. The reversal is a racist nightmare. For Antoinette, the horror lies in Annette's insanity, which prevents true consent while providing the appearance of it. The man laughs because he knows he mistakes her for Luttrel, her long-lost (white) friend and because he can exploit her madness. His skin color seems symbolic: the black man, "and others" (157), Christophine tells Rochester, can rape Antoinette's mother because Emancipation has both created the loss that drove her mad in the first place and dismantled the social structure that had provided special protections to white women.

Although Rochester will eventually replicate a version of Annette's enslavement by confining Antoinette in the English attic, he does experience a moment of reckoning: "suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain that everything I had imagined to be truth was false. Only the magic and the dream are true-all the rest's a lie. Let it go. Here is the secret. Here" (100-1). However he accepts the West Indies, despite its English imported problems, as authentic, against Western Civilization's intricate construction of lies. Rhys deliberately extends the politics of naming both to imperialism and to phallocentrism. She accomplishes this by her choice of timing: the novel is set just 1 year after the Emancipation Act of 1833, allowing issues of

colonialism to come to the fore; but the novel is also synchronized with a period of British history in which there was no Married Women's Property Act that would secure the legal identity of married women (Letters 271). Just as the unnamed husband refuses to recognize the nameless child, so too does Richard Mason not legally recognize Antoinette when he visits her in Thornfield Hall:

Grace Poole said, '...I was in the room but I didn't hear all he said except 'I cannot interfere legally between you and your husband.' It was when he said 'legally that you flew at him and when he twisted the knife out of your hand you bit him. Do you mean to say that you don't remember any of this?' I remember now that he did not recognize me. (109)

Spivak writes, "In Rhys's retelling, it is the dissimulation that Bertha discerns in the word 'legally'-not an innate bestiality-that prompts her violent reaction" (50).

Antoinette, once married, is not legally recognized. She explains to Christophine, "...I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him...That is English law" (66). Jean Rhys was concerned with narrating the condition of women prior to the Married Woman's Property Act of 1870. Her description of the married (white Creole) woman's plight is manifested throughout the novel. For example, Aunt Cora's gift of two rings to Antoinette evidences a concern for women's lack of the legal right to property after marriage, which pauperized many women-particularly within the colonial context (69). Issues of legal identity are also at the heart, of the unnamed husband's anger with Antoinette for speaking "in his name" when she tells the nameless boy that they will take him with them to England (103). By English law, Antoinette's legal identity is given over to the unnamed husband, and speaking in her name is his right; she can neither speak in his name, nor in her own.

Likewise, Daniel drinks rum before and during his meeting with Rochester. Antoinette's husband drinks rum as he confronts Antoinette with what he has heard from Daniel. He empties the decanter and fetches another bottle and, whereas Antoinette had refused wine, "now she poured herself a drink", though she scarcely touches it" (130). She remembers seeing her mother in confinement, being fed rum before one of her custodians kisses her on the lips. Antoinette feeds the love potion she has begged from Christophine to 'Rochester' in wine. After he sleeps with Amelie, Antoinette's servant, Antoinette sends the butler for rum for herself. Rochester finds a chest full of bottles of "the rum that kills you in a hundred years, the brandy, the red and white wine smuggled, I suppose, from St. Pierre ..." (144). Antoinette and Rochester have a fierce quarrel after being found by strong drink. Christophine confronts when Antoinette smashes another bottle and threatens him with a piece of broken glass. Christophine admits she has been trying to heal Antoinette with her own medicine, as well as with simple kind care, but when this seems to be failing, she gives her rum. The role of alcohol is similar in the lives of Rhy's young protagonist. It plays a role in first sexual experience, and becomes the drug of choice when heartbreak comes, only to be part of the reason for further rejection.

However, race is a key element in the story. But it is complexly portrayed and tangled with gender, class and national identities in Antoinette, and these designate her as different in complicated ways from those around her. Rhys visited Dominica with her second husband in 1936. Her account of the visit in "The Imperial Road" shows she found hostility to herself as a local white Creole, and was reminded strongly of the way race and racism informed her childhood. In the novel, the Englishman's gaze assigns racial characteristics according to how he feels. "Rochester" describes Antoinette as both "not English (67) and as looking like "any

pretty English girl" (71). Under the influence of rum, as things between them go awry, he thinks she looks like the servant Amelie (127). At first sight, he thought Amelie "a lovely little creature", but "malignant perhaps" and "half caste" (65). After he sleeps with Amelie, he thinks her skin is darker and her lips "thicker" than he had thought (140).

Again, Daniel, who significantly says his real name is Esau claims to be Antoinette's half-brother, by a slave woman her father impregnated and then set free. Daniel claims his half-brother Alexander will not speak against white people, because he has done so well from them. "Rochester" notices Daniel, the loser, has a "thin yellow face" (122). Amelie says some say yes, some say no, as to whether his father is the same as Antoinette's, but that he lives like a white person with one room just for sitting, in that he was once a preacher in Barbados , and that he has pictures of his parents in his house, and they are "colored" (120). She says Alexander has made much money in Jamaica and married a fair-skinned woman: his son is Sandi, who looks like a white man. She says, she heard Antoinette and Sandi "get married", but never believed it.

Likewise, Antoinette understands race complexly. Though white children benefit in her racially hierarchical culture, they do not feel in control if outside their fortress houses and other institutions that protect them. When Antoinette goes to school from Aunt, Cora's house, she is intimidated by two children, one, a boy, who is an albino, and the other, a girl, who is "very black". They frighten her until she remembers to hate them. Also racial barriers are constantly breached. Her "cousin" Sandi protects her, though she has been warned off claiming him as kin because he is "colored" (50). The nuns at her convent school are both white and "colored", as are the girls. She wants to find love, even across forbidden boundaries. She hugs and

kisses Christophine, whereas "Rochester" says he could not" (91): "She trusted them and I did not" (89). Though she uses "they" like any colonial white to connote the specific cultural practices of black people- "They don't care about getting a dress dirty" (85) she wants to be thought an insider (this remark is made in explanation to the stranger "Rochester").

Antoinette knows exactly how Christophine wraps her head-tie, "handkerchief". She tells "Rochester" how her mother worried she was growing up a "white nigger" and shaming her (132). But she is also called a "white cockroach", as a child (23) and a "white nigger" by Tia, who declares, "black nigger better than white nigger." (24). Amelie calls Antoinette "white cockroach", and Antoinette explains: "That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am..." (102). When 'Rochester' takes Antoinette back to Jamaica, before he takes her to, England, Sandi manages to find her, both when 'Rochester' is out and when she goes out driving (185). They kiss before parting for the last time, "the life and death kiss and you only know a long time afterwards what it is, the life and death kiss: (186). But, though intense, this love is almost entirely offstage.

However, the major cultural influence on Antoinette as she grows up after the fire is the powerful Catholicism of her convent school, and there are many references to hell and devils in the novel. Antoinette is never more of a spoiled white girl than in hurling a curse at Christophine as a "damned black devil from Hell" (134). 'Rochester' on some level knows he might be "bound for hell", which he prefers to "false heavens" (170). Myra, the servant who betrays Pierre when Coulibri is set on fire, thinks everyone goes to hell, unless saved by her particular religious sect (35).

Antoinette calls the man who kisses her mother "black devil" (147). That's why in *Wide Sargasso Sea* family losses in each heavily impact the protagonist and become a factor in her lack of protection against what happens to her later on. Rhys calls up plantation history in the novel through white male relatives of her protagonist who is casual about interracial sex; i.e. Cosway. Black servant has a close emotional tie to the central character (Christophine). There is a strong sisterly connection between the white female protagonist and a black slave or poor girl (Tia).

Victoria Burrows in "*Whiteness and Trauma*" describes: "In Rhys' text, the tropes of subversive rebellion which have a history of their own become anglicized, whitened and reformulated and African-Caribbean resistance politics are effectively disarticulated, even erased. Black suffering and the trauma of slavery is rewritten as white suffering and that is where the textual empathy lies" (37).

In the first instance, Antoinette's actions vocabulary and traumatic memories are all bound up with a yearning for lost safety and this longing is, for the most part, always connected to her mother whose continual acts of rejection create a profound sense of vulnerability and aching to be loved in the child, a heritage that she carries into adulthood. Burrows further claims:

However at the same time, this trauma narrative is immensely complicated because Antoinette has another mother-figure who is both the only signifier of black difference in the novel and simultaneously the preserver of white safety, a textual positioning that results in occlusion of the traumatic lived experiences of slavery, and thus a de-signifying of the politics of significant blackness. (38)

Jennifer Gilchirst in "*Women, Slavery, and the Problem of Freedom in *Wide Sargasso Sea**" analyzes:

Antoinette's version of history-that Africans are responsible for their own enslavement and that English planters laid claim to the West Indies before any slaves arrived-has no correspondence to historical facts. Her rationalizing is particularly problematic when set against the weight of historical evidence pointing to the Jamaican plantation system as one of the most brutal in the world. These interlopers, as Antoinette presents them, were forcibly brought across the Atlantic as a result of both the planter's dependence on slaves and of their extreme mistreatment: as slaves died mature deaths, they needed to be replaced. Indeed, so feeble is Antoinette's attempt to absolve her family of any responsibility for the derision she now faces from the freed slaves as emblematic of how "the colonialist mode of representation in *Wide Sargasso Sea* ends up revealing its own contractedness. (473)

However, *Wide Sargasso Sea* evokes black resistance while suppressing knowledge of its causes, especially the details of black slave history which can even taken as complicit with colonial exploitation. As Antoinette juxtaposes an origin claim for planters against her own isolation and despair, she appears as a scapegoat who relies on her own obscurantist renderings of history, for which Rhys provides no counter. Emancipation too brings knowledge of good and evil, but is an imported definition of good and evil that supports a liberation narrative of righteous Englishmen freeing helpless slaves from wicked planters. The novel topples this formulation. Instead, the English are wicked of being mistaken, stupid, and weak; the ex-slaves are helpless or dead; and the ex-saves are divided among those who adopt the righteous pose of the slave mentality and those who resist New English cultural manipulations. The burning of Coulibri tears down the facade of peace supported by subtle smiles and frowns. In

its destruction of the boundaries of the estate, the fire reveals an intensity of feelings between freedmen and planters and exposes hostility towards the Masons that the house walls had hidden. Antoinette's perspective shapes her experience of the fire. Inside the estate at Coulibri, Antoinette sees only smoke and hears perpetuating planter racism, which denied the humanity of African West Indians in order to justify slavery.

Finally, the novel tries to represent the rekindling of Antoinette's energies-and of our energies as women, having left behind the pale ghosts of patriarchal order and refused the incarceration of the male house. Antoinette is not a passive, apathetic girl as she has been made out to be. Nor is she some poor demented creature from whom we can detach ourselves. For, after all, her madness is only a tale told by a 'sane' male whose motivations are at best dubious. She is a representative of our constant, long struggle against suppression in a society either in the name of gender or race that still persists in perceiving woman as object and not as subject and continues to tell its tale of woman without her sound and fury, signifying nothing. Not only that, depicting Antoinette as savage, Rhys contrasts socially-constructed ego formation against libidinal drives and European Enlightenment rationality against West Indian slavery. It ascribes its heroine's dislocation and despair to historical, legal, psychological, and metaphysical emancipation.

Thus, Morrison in *Sula* tries to show that racism, and slavery themselves are trauma. It exhibits not only racial trauma but also slavery from which African Americans have been suffered. Moreover it describes the trauma created by racial and gender inequalities through the female protagonist. In the novel individual trauma becomes communal because majority of people are suffered of oppression by minority. Likewise, through female protagonist in post-emancipation Jamaican

setting, Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* through female protagonist exhibits the racial and social divisions in the West Indies society. Rhys' Antoinette shows her as constituted within and by the processes of colonization and imperialism. The novel exposes the dominant imperial and patriarchal ideologies and denaturalizes the mechanisms by which they construct their black others. So, Rhys shows Antoinette's nostalgia for the culture of slavery. Antoinette maintains a nostalgic mental picture of life under slavery that no other character corroborates.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: Trauma of Race and Gender in Morrison and Rhys

Toni Morrison, as a Black female writer, offers not only insight and context from an African American point of view, but also gives a detailed perspective of life, love and community in the eyes of a Black woman. "Morrison... emphasizes the interconnection of community stability and individual survival. The two values coexist in a state of tension; neither deserves to be emphasized one above the other" (Harding 103) However, the novel deals with and explores the racial traumas and slave mentality created by such racial system.

Sula, the female protagonist of the novel encounters institutionalized racism on the outside, particularly during the time she was away from home and trying to make a life traveling around and associating with primarily white communities. She also exhibits signs of internalized racism, where prejudices against herself and of her own people are seen from time to throughout the novel. Her outlook on the community in the Bottom, which she left behind at one point, is a mixture of sympathy, commitment and pity. The people in the Bottom were systematically placed there because of discrimination. As a matter of fact, the Bottom came out of "joke" played by a white farmer on his black slave, where the slave was given Bottom land and told that it was "rich and fertile... it's the bottom of heaven-best land there is" (5). Being tricked out of receiving desirable and fertile land, the Black slaves were forced to live their lives under hostile conditions. In addition, they were barred from entering white establishments down in the valley of Medallion, as well as denied decent jobs and wages. What can be seen as equally destructive in regards to Everyday Racism is "white people's denial that racism exists or has occurred in a particular instance" (Tyson 370). Due to the social construction of race, the city of

Medallion was able to exploit the people who lived in the Bottom and, thereby held all of the economic and political power in the area.

There is even the concept that "minority writers and thinkers are generally in a better position than white writers and thinkers to write and speak about race and racism because they experience racism directly" (Tyson 377). That's why "Morrison places herself as a creative artist on the divide between two communities, tracing the origins, the evolution, and the consequences of the racial fracture in American society" (Harding 171). Morrison's choice to deeply probe into issues such as intra-racial racism, internationalized racism, and the intersections of racism, classism, and sexism is, in its own way, proof of the African American struggle to persevere through life's negative experience. A certain level of internationalized racism and hatred is evident in *Sula*, as her conflicted sense of identity and community create polar opposites within her internal make-up. When Sula returns to the Bottom, she confides to Nel that "half [Medallion] need [killing]" (96), confessing her dislike for the surrounding town and community. It seems that this conflict may be the main reason for Sula to have abandoned the Bottom in search of comfort and identity elsewhere.

Through the protagonist, Sula, Morrison exposes sensitive race matters in the novel. She presents jarring depictions of the trauma of slavery and the horrors of racist oppression and black-on-black violence. The symbolic geography in Morrison's fiction emerges from the precise physical details that give her black neighborhoods so much startling character and presence. A more complex figuration of land and identity emerges in *Sula*. *Sula* tells the story of two women who renegotiate the pressures of place and person through their long friendship, which is not, without moments of rupture and discard. The growing bond between Nel Wright and Sula Mae Peace as

well as their complementary personalities are first revealed to us by the contrasting features of the land. The double figuration of the land as a framing device also foreshadows the novel's curiously double closure.

One ending, affected by Shadrack's haunting, successful celebration of death, culminates his search for a 'place for fear' as a way of 'controlling it' and brings his social marginality to a shocking conclusion. A second ending, however forces the reader to revise such reading of the novel. Nel's visit to the elderly Eva, now in a nursing home, picks up the unfinished business between Nel and Sula (here represented by Eva) with shattering results. Nel is forced to acknowledge the guilt she shares with Sula for the accidental drowning of Chicken Little who had slipped from Sula's swinging hands and had entered the 'closed place of the water. However *Sula* becomes as much a novel about the shifting patterns of accountability in Sula and Nel's friendship as it concerns a community's acceptance of moral relativism. That's why *Sula* is based on the underlying traumatic condition of fragmentation and displacement which are even barriers to the formation of African-American identities. Sula's resistance to any fixed interpretation parallels her own role in resisting the narrow formulations of self, woman, or black.

Likewise, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the major characters Anette and Antoinette become victims of traumatic experience as they encounter various kinds of maltreatment and biasness because of the patriarchal norms and values. They are victimized by white British Colonizers, and lived painfully and ambiguously. The contemporary society was gender biased, racist and colonialist mindset of slavery system that made the females victimized of traumatic experience. Women face the problems like racism, sexual abuse, psychological and emotional torture, social restriction, deprivation of social and political rights and face the hierarchy of

colonizer and colonized. A woman is raped but rapist escapes without punishment. So, traumatized protagonists bring into awareness of specificity of trauma is connected to larger social factors and cultural values. Antoinette is boycotted from social interaction and even with her relatives. She is neglected and discriminated because of her Creole identity and is treated like animal. Through Antoinette, the novelist expresses traumatic feeling and suffering and social norms and values in contemporary society. Antoinette and Annette lost their native land and dislocated. They explore their identity as sympathetic portrait of a Creole madness caused in an oppressive colonial, gender, racial and patriarchal society in which they belong neither to the white nor the black.

Wide Sargasso Sea is a focused study of the sense of displacement experienced by the self as a result of existing in a world of denial, negation and oppression. Such self, who has been rejected and never been granted any recognition because of her race and the color of complexion, survives and gains her independent individuality by defying the brutal acts of one race against another in a world of dichotomy and hierarchy which derives acknowledging the other as a human being. Antoinette suffers the patriarchal despotism of the Victorian assumed conventions of gender and the complexities of male/female relationship. During the nineteenth century, the English strongly believed in the English superiority over the people of other races. That's why Rochester's brutal acts in appropriating Antoinette wealth, accusing her of being mad and imprisoning her in the attic room stem from social forces and political agenda to maintain the prestige of the English personality as a master and the British Empire as the invincible empire.

Gregg makes a claim in her book *Jean Rhys' Historical Imagination*, “she identifies a dialectical tension between the text's recruitment/obliteration of blacks and

Rhys' acute critical awareness of the workings of colonialist discourse... both the deployment and the unmasking of the colonialist discourse help to forge Jean Rhys' truth" (38-9). However, Rhys' insight into the workings of ideologies as limited to dismantling Rochester's i.e. the English colonialists discursive constructions of his female Other (Antoinette). Rhys perceived herself as 'exiled' and fragmented even before leaving the West Indies because of the antagonism of the black and mulatto population with whom she nonetheless sought to identify. Rhys in the novel witnessed the emergence of a nationalist tradition, the development of the (lower class) black Creoles' positive identification with blackness and their resulting challenge to the white dominant cultural system.

Antoinette undergoes traumatic events in which she is abandoned or betrayed because of her racial difference. In the novel women's mental illnesses are shaped by the traumatic experiences which provides a framework for understanding how the protagonist copes with illness and subsequently gains agency. *Wide Sargasso Sea* intimates that Antoinette's descent into madness results from her conflicting position vis-à-vis the Europeans and Dominicans; she is both a 'white cockroach' and white nigger. Denounced and denied by both countries, she is marooned-with her existence jettisoned to the border. As she says to the unnamed husband: "... I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all" (61). Antoinette's act of arson is an active refusal to continue submitting to the powers that be: in her case, her husband's white, male, English, domestic domination of her, manifested in sexual neglect.

However, through her conflict with Amelie, Antoinette posts the most difficult claim the text offers regarding historical West Indian slavery. After Amelie taunts Antoinette, they tussle, Rochester breaks it up, Christophine quits and threatens

Amelie with Obeah, and Antoinette tries to explain to Rochester the socio-historical context of the domestic drama. In the novel the state of post-Emancipation on Jamaica is very much depicted as a historical reality. Mr. Mason, the New English master of the old Cosway plantation, represents the ineffectuality, at best, of the metropolitan English who came to Jamaica to impose order and to make money after Emancipation. Although both the black rioters and their white targets interpret Coco's death as supernatural, Rhys suggests that the violence is stopped by a symbol of how the English have disastrously interfered with nature. Mason clipped Coco's wings to control and domesticate a Jamaican bird. Likewise, the English have imposed the law on post-Emancipation West Indian society to restrain planters and civilize freed slaves.

Thus, *Sula* is Morrison's most complex work in reference to traditional African culture. Because the African presence and cultural rootedness is woven into Black-American culture. The characters themselves connect to life in traditional African culture. The incidents in the novel are presented based on the life of the black community of the Bottom, which itself was established on a racist act. It is about trauma of racial discrimination and marginalization and oppression of Afro-American Women. Similarly, *Wide Sargasso Sea* set in the colorful and exotic Jamaica of the 1830s revolves around the early life of Creole heiress, Antoinette Cosway, the woman destined to become Rochester's mad wife, Bertha. The novel depicts oppressive, colonialist society of Jamaica through the voices of women. The novel dramatizes the impossibility of mutual and creative exchanges between the fragments of a disintegrating world. It demonstrates the trauma of race and gender during post Emancipation West Indian Colony.

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