

Chapter 1

Jean Rhys and Charlotte Bronte: Authors under the Influence

The Argument

This study critically projects Jean Rhys' novel *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) as a parody text as the novel retells the story of *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte. Rhys has interestingly dealt with the story of Bronte's novel from the perspective of intertextuality, which is one of the postmodern strategies. It is a revision in which the mad woman silenced in *Jane Eyre* speaks and tells her own side of the story. In Bronte's novel, a man named Rochester keeps his first wife Bertha locked in an attic. Bertha is insane and comes from the West Indies, but her past is not explained. In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys accounts for Bertha's childhood and marriage.

Rhys' novel is the life story of Antoinette Masson, chronicling her solitary girlhood on her family estate in Jamaica, her coming of age in a convent school, and her early marriage to Edward Rochester, which ends disastrously in her madness and destruction. Antoinette is the mad wife in Bronte's novel. As white Creole child in her family's Coulibry Estate, with her father dead and her mother distraught with poverty, Antoinette belongs neither to the society of the recently freed slaves, who do not despise all white people, nor to that of the local whites, who reject her mother, Annette, for being widowed and poor. Cut off from all society and security, Antoinette finds a kind of painful solace in the wild bush and rain forest, which both attract and terrify her with their lushness and mysterious, menacing forms. She grows up as a wild child, until her mother marries one Mr. Mason, wealthy and recently arrived from England.

The Wide Sargasso Sea is the last but much celebrated novel of Rhys, published in 1966. This text marks the re-entry of her into the limelight of literary fame. For her it was an attempt at bridging "two cultures and two genders" (*Letters*

156). The title denotes the gap, the wide expanse of ideological conflict that separates the world of woman from that of man, the sea of convention that cannot be crossed easily. It also denotes the expanse of unresolved conflict of the colonial and the postcolonial conditions. Rhys begins where Bronte has left and Rhys voices the discourse of Bertha Mason by giving her alter ego Antoinette Cosway, the control of the narrative. She lets Antoinette to tell the story from her point of view, both as a woman and as a colonized being, subjected to dual hegemony of patriarchy and colonialism. Rochester represents the colonial, patriarchal authority impervious to the discourse of the doubly marginal, being of the colonized and the gendered.

Rhys offers a much more nuanced and sympathetic portrait of a Creole mad woman caught in an oppressive colonial and patriarchal society in which she belongs neither to the white European nor the black Jamaican. In her novel, Rhys imagines the past of Bronte's deranged maniac, whom she depicts with sympathetic understanding. She is no longer a foreigner, but a real woman with her own hopes, fears, and desires. By fleshing out Bronte's one dimensional mad woman and tracing her development from a young solitary girl in Jamaica to a love-depraved lunatic locked in the cold attic of her English husband, Rhys enables readers to sympathize with the mental and emotional decline of a human being. She humanizes Bertha's tragic condition, inviting the readers to explore Antoinette's terror and anguish.

The opening of Rhys' novel is set a short while after the 1834 emancipation of the slaves in British owned Jamaica. Antoinette conveys the story of her life from childhood to her arranged marriage to an unnamed Englishman that refers to Mr. Rochester from *Jane Eyre*. As the novel and their relationship progress, Antoinette, whom her husband renames Bertha, descends into madness. It tells the story of Antoinette Cosway, a white girl who grows up in the Caribbean and who has a disastrous arranged marriage, and goes mad, imprisoned in an English country house.

This novel is the previously untold story of Bertha Mason, the first Mrs. Rochester in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, although she is given a different name. *The Wide Sargasso Sea* sets out to answer the question of why Bertha Mason/Antoinette Cosway might have gone mad in the first place. The novel uses *Jane Eyre* as an imaginative starting-point. But the point of view is changed from the first person narrative of Jane to that of Bertha Mason. It is therefore a rewriting of the classic text from the point view of the most marginalized character in Bronte's novel, Bertha Mason who is not only mad, the imprisoned and rejected wife, but also coming from Jamaica, one of Britain's colonies.

The Context: Authors

Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890, the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a white Creole mother. Her first book, a collection of stories entitled *The Left Bank*, was published in 1927. This was followed by *Quartet* (1928), *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and *Good Morning Midnight* (1939). With the outbreak of the Second World War and the failure of her *Good Morning Midnight*, the books went out of print, and she disappeared from the literary scene. It was generally thought that she was dead. But many years later she was rediscovered, living reclusively in Cornwall. In 1966 she made a sensational reappearance with *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, which won the Royal Society of Literature Award and the W.H. Smith Award for that year. She was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1966 and CBE in 1978. *Smile Please*, her unfinished autobiography, was published after her death in 1979.

Bronte was born in Thornton, Bradford, in 1816, as the third child of six children of her parents (Maria and Partric Bronte). She was an English novelist and poet, the eldest of the three Bronte sisters who survived into adulthood and whose novels have become classics of English literature. Her father sent the three sisters to

the Clergy Daughters' School. Due to the poor condition of the school, their health worsened permanently and two of the three sisters died because of tuberculosis. Only Charlotte Bronte survived. Later in 1839 she took up the first of many positions as governess to families in Yorkshire, a career she pursued until 1841.

During her higher study in Roe Hed in Mirfield, Bronte started to write. But in view of the success of her novels, particularly *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, she was persuaded by her publisher to make occasional visit to London, where she revealed her true identity and began to move in more exalted social circle. By January 1854, she had accepted Arthur Bell Nicholas's marriage proposal. They gained approval of her father and married in June. Soon after her marriage she died, with her unborn child, on 31 March 1855, aged 38.

Bronte must have had strong feelings about the West Indies because she brings the West Indies into a lot of her books, like *Villette*. The West Indies were rich, and very much more talked about than they are now (Aktari 73). So she takes the character of Mr. Rochester's first wife, Bertha, who has a secondary role and a minor character in the novel, and makes her major character in *The Wide Sargasso Sea*. She creates a back story for this major character named Antoinette who is sometimes called Bertha by other characters in the novel. Antoinette and her husband are the same characters in *Jane Eyre*, who are known as Bertha and Rochester. In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is called Bertha, several times without any pre-information about this name. Rhys also changes the setting from England to Jamaica. She did her job well by using *Jane Eyre* as an intertext of her novel which becomes a major source of signification for her *The Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Review of Literature

For a long time, Rhys' novel considered limited by the fact that she was a woman and seemed to write only about her own life. But later on her *The Wide*

Sargasso Sea was able to attract the attention of many critics since its publication.

This novel is widely discussed by various critics from different point of view.

Reviewing the novel, V.S. Naipaul comments on its nightmare quality,

An order has collapsed and some people are 'marooned' ... a world that appeared simple is now, seen to be diseased, and no longer habitable.

Across the sea where is England, no longer home: an attic,

imprisonment, flames. *Wide Sargasso Sea* remains in the mind as a

brilliant idea; and it completes Jean Rhys' world. It falls in the West

Indian scene and makes more explicit the background to that journey,

which turns out not to have been from innocence to darkness, but from

one void to another. There is no innocence in Jean Rhys' world; there

has always been loss. (56-58)

Naipaul finds the sense of disorder and says that an order has collapsed and

Antoinette's imprisonment by her husband diseased her life. The novel's setting

reminds the previous setting of *Jane Eyre* where Bertha Mason had set fire in the house of Thornfield Hall.

Indicating contemporary patriarchal convention, Howells remarks, "Rhys shows her heroine trying to construct an identity in radically unstable situations where traditions and social conventions prescribe certain rituals but are emptied of meaning"

(qtd. in Herischian 75). So, Rhys, by giving voice to the women characters who

occupy subhuman levels of existence in the hegemonic narratives in *Jane Eyre*, has

tried to challenge the contemporary cultural conception. Jane overcomes the

difficulties and achieves her goal while Antoinette cannot surmount the problems.

Although both of them always longed for freedom and independence, Antoinette

never achieves her freedom, she lives in isolation with fragile sense and cultural

identity. The difficulties of life defeat her. Jane gets some kind of maturity from her

childhood to adulthood but Antoinette does not get any maturity as she grows up. Her condition of life is made worse by an arranged marriage to a man who is incompatible with her in character and cultural background. At last, Rochester incarcerates her in an attic in Thornfield and she gains freedom, which she wishes by committing suicide. On the contrary Jane is reunited with Rochester and enjoys a happy married life.

Rhys has given her own identity and voice to identically lost character, Bertha, in Bronte's text as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their critical work *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Author and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* speak about an inside story in the apparently conforming narratives of women authors. These texts present a woman's story on close analysis but a very different one from what is apparently stated. They mention the presence, in the nineteenth century women authors' works, of an untold story.

Authors like Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, the Bronte Sisters and George Eliot display a recurrent character pattern in their works where one could perceive vaguely developed, complex, subhuman women characters, powerful enough to destroy the conventional edifices and magnificent structures like Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre* and threaten the authoritative representations of male characters whom patriarchy has been relentlessly nourishing and cherishing. These extraordinary women characters with shady levels of existence are represented as mad women hovering on the attics of magnificent mansions far from the world of ordinary men and women beyond the rational realm of masculine logic. Gilbert and Gubar state,

As we explore nineteenth century literature, we will find that this mad woman emerges over and over again from the mirrors women authors hold up to both their own natures and to their own visions of natures. Even the most apparently conservative and decorous women authors

obsessively create independent characters who seek to destroy all patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors' submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable. (77-78)

Here, Gilbert and Gubar mean that, the misrepresentation of woman in literature brings in the need for rereading of the great canonical works. They express also the male versions of truth and reality though the deviant representation of women in literary texts is not restricted to male authored ones.

Rhys in her *The Wide Sargasso Sea* presents a "paradoxical mix of dependence on a pretext and aesthetic originality and independence" (Rubik 64). At the same time it fills the gaps within *Jane Eyre* by employing intertextual strategies that point us to a particular process of reading. Edward Said states, "In reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and what its author excluded. Each cultural work is a vision of a moment, and we must juxtapose that vision with the various revisions it later provoke" (67). The most important piece of contextual information about *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is that, the novel was inspired by Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. It is "a brilliant deconstruction of Bronte's legacy" (Maurle 141). It acts as a prequel to the events described in Bronte's tale. It is the story of the first Mrs. Rochester (Bertha/ Antoinette) Mason.

Rhys has said in a letter that when she read about Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* she thought: "that's only one side the English side" (297). She expanded this in an interview: "The mad first wife in *Jane Eyre* has always interested me. I was convinced Charlotte Bronte must have had something against the West Indies and I was angry about it. Otherwise why did she take a West Indian for the horrible lunatic, for that really dreadful creature?" (5). In this way, it became clear that Rhys parodies Bronte's novel's dominated perspective of female and colonial writing.

Spivak contends that Rhys' work, rather than giving a voice to the other, actually reinforces the notion of the supremacy of western tradition and criticizes Rhys' view of Western supremacy. She claims, "We can read this as having been brought into the England of Bronte's novel: this cardboard house – a book between cardboard covers where I walk at night is not England" (148). This study discusses *The Wide Sargasso Sea's* intertextual relationship to *Jane Eyre* as a revision/rewriting and examines the postcolonial/racial foundation.

In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys has not only answered and exposed the complexities of this new, strange Creole identity, but in the process has challenged the Empire and uncovered the difficult plight of women. In particular, it has challenged this new hybrid woman who is neither clearly British nor a native to the islands. The novel exemplifies the issues of women in the colonial/ postcolonial society that includes issues of identity and lack of independence in a male dominated society, and the formation of the hybrid or new identity. In this regard, Shalini Puri comments on the concept of hybridity in the lines below.

These questions about identity all turn to the rhetoric of hybridity to provide affirmative answers and link the diverse elements of the Caribbean. Discourses of hybridity in the Caribbean perform several functions. They elaborate a syncretic new world identity, distinct from that of its "Mother Cultures"; in doing so, they provide a basis for national and regional legitimacy. (201)

Borrowing Puri's above lines about hybridity, it can be said that Rhys has written her novel to raise voice not only for marginalized female characters but also to the postcolonial identity by connecting Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Rhys' novel is a kind of prequel to Bronte's novel, because Rhys' novel describes the childhood of Bertha Mason and the early days of her marriage, which

are not described in Bronte's novel. But it does more than this. Rhys' novel explores and modernizes also rendering timeless yearning, and all those other vital elements she rediscovered in Bronte's novel.

Outline of the Study

This study has four chapters. The first chapter includes the argument, review of literature and outline of the study that create the background of the study. All in all, this chapter reveals the significance of the current study.

The second chapter is an elaboration that traces the concept of parody and intertextuality as postmodern tools. It introduces intertextuality from its origin in the Kristevan parlance in 1966 to its wide and fast changing significance and trajectory in its deployment in various theoretical enquiries. It also excavates the parody in literature. The use of parodical intertextuality as a rewarding concept in the postcolonial and feminist enquiries is touched upon as the intertexts allow the celebration of the discourse of the marginalized and the submerged voices in the dominant discourses.

The third chapter is titled "Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* as a Parodistic Intertext to Bronte's *Jane Eyre*" that deals with the unique characteristics of Rhys' and Bronte's texts that constitute their textuality. This chapter justifies the argument of the study. The locale, characterization, the dreams and fantasies, symbols and images that provide the unique textual effect of Rhys' novel is analyzed. The text is viewed as a modernist text in its projection of the aberrant heroine as a challenge to the central figure Jane in Bronte's novel.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion of the study which summarizes the major arguments of the study. It also compares and contrasts the two authors in their textual positions

Chapter Two

Parody, Intertextuality and the Postmodern Critics

Postmodernism: The Concept

Postmodernism in literature is a movement to oppose center seeking tendency of modernism. Mainly, after the conceptual pioneering of post-structuralism and deconstruction, literature broke away from modernism. Postmodern literature also serves as a reaction to the supposed stylistic and ideological limitations of modernist literature and the radical changes the world underwent after the end of the Second World War. While modernist literary authors often depicted the world as fragmented, troubled and on the edge of disaster, which is best displayed in the stories and novels of such modernist authors as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Albert Camus, Virginia Woolf and Thomas Mann, postmodern authors tend to depict the world as having already undergone countless disasters and being beyond redemption or understanding.

Borrowing Simon, postmodern literature is a form of literature which is marked, both stylistically and ideologically, by a reliance on such literary conventions as fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humor and authorial self-reference (15). Postmodern authors thus, tend to reject outright meanings in their novels, stories and poems, instead, highlight and celebrate the possibility of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning, within a single literary work.

Many critics and scholars define postmodern literature against the popular literary style that came after modernism. In many ways, postmodern literary styles and ideas serve to dispute, reverse, mock and reject the principles of modernist literature.

However, there are logical confrontations about a postmodern literature that has changed its edge with modern literature. A scholar like Leotard argues that postmodernism is totally different from modernism. There is a vast gap between modern and postmodern culture. But supporting Frankfurt Marxists, Sanjeev Uprety, in his book *Siddanta ka Kura* illustrates that postmodern is not out of modern culture neither there is such gap that separate modern and postmodern culture. He adds that Historical continuation has tied both (75). Modernism and postmodernism are also chained due to stylistic experimentation on literature and culture. But some significant distinctions can be noticed on literary assumption in the postmodern literary era. In postmodern era literature has adopted some characteristics such as maximalism, magical realism, pastiche, paranoia, intertextuality, parody, etc. Although postmodernism bears various characteristics, this researcher has focused on parody and intertextuality to analyze the Rhys' novel.

Intertextuality: Reshaping the Text

Intertextuality is the shaping of a text's meaning by other text(s). It also refers to the author's borrowing and transformation of prior text(s) or to reader's reference of one text in reading another. This term has been borrowed and used frequently since it was coined by poststructural theorist Julia Kristeva in 1966. Talking about intertextuality, Kristeva quotes "any text is mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (125). The theory of intertextuality has been further extended by Roland Barthes and Jonathan Culler who include the readers as constituent component of intertextuality. Barthes and Reffaterre view that intertextuality as "it replaces the challenged author text relationship with other discourses" (126). In a simple parlance, intertextuality is the relationship that exists between different texts. It is a literary concept where the literary texts are intermingled with each other.

Reference of a text which is mirrored and reflected in another text is called intertextuality. So an author is influenced by a text and creates a new original work of literature by using another existing text. It puts two texts in an interdependent situation in order to produce a meaning. These two texts stand in relation to one another. Intertextuality becomes one of the central ideas of cultural postmodern and contemporary literature. Abrams notes about intertextuality in this way,

The term intertextuality, popularized especially by Julia Kristeva, is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is in fact made up of other texts by means of its open or covert citations and *allusions*, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are “always-already” in place and constitute the discourses into which we born. In Kristeva's formulation, accordingly, any text is in fact an “intertext” - the site of an intersection of numberless other texts and existing only through its relation to other texts. (364)

Referring Abram, intertextuality connects and make up the previous work from different ways. In other words, it is a repetition and transformation of features and contents of earlier text.

The emergence of intertextuality as a theoretical tool occurred in a transitional period between structuralism and poststructuralism in the nineteen sixties, which was the heyday of theoreticians and critics, where every emerging theory in the field of the sciences was repositioned to hold literature and its signifying practices. Bakhtin's concepts have revolutionized Kristeva's ideas on intertextuality and this specific term

is coined by Kristeva in a work which introduced Bakhtin to the world of theory in Paris.

Though the term first appeared in an essay titled “Word, Dialogue and Novel” published in 1966, it was again complemented by another essay titled “The Bounded Text” and both appeared in Kristeva’s early work *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. She argues, “A text is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text in which several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another” (Kristeva 36). She posits that writing is an act that presupposes a split between subject and object, a kind of doubling. She further states “The notion of intertextuality replaces that of inter subjectivity and poetic language is read as at least double” (66).

French theorist Laurent Jenny states, “What is characteristic of intertextuality is that it introduces a new way of reading which destroys the linearity of the text” (44-45). Hence, intertextuality is to challenge the canon of logocentrism and the monologic discourse.

For Kristeva intertextuality refers to the author's borrowing and transformation of a prior texts or lines. The denotative meaning of intertextuality involves two implications. First, the author is a reader of texts before s/he is a creator of texts and therefore, the work of art inevitably infected with references, quotations and influences of every kind. Second, a text is available only through some process of reading. What is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilization of the packaged textual material by all the texts which the reader brings to it, even his experience of some practice or theory unknown to the author. Both axes of intertextuality- texts entering via authors and texts entering via readers are emotionally and politically charged. Kristeva illustrates the following words:

The notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of subject when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from author to readers but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, "codes imparted to the author and reader by other texts. Intertextuality refers to text in terms of two axes: a Horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and vertical axis, which connects the text. (69)

She argues that uniting the two axes are shared codes: every text or an every reading depends on prior coders. She declares that every text is relational from the other discourses which impose a universe in it.

One of the key figures of intertextuality in the development of this concept is Roland Barthes, whose phenomenal concept of the "Death of the Author" employs intertextuality at the origin of the text which he considers as the site of a plurality of voices as he claims,

A text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the message of the author - God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.

His (the author's) only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.

(146-7)

The above quoted lines reveal the plural, multiple and alternate interrelatedness of literary texts even to the extent of the death of the demigod, the author. The author is just a compiler of the already existing possibilities and relations in a literary system and the meaning of a work does not arise from the way the author gives it, but from the way the text is situated in the linguistic, literary and cultural system.

Intertexts hold not only their parent texts in challenge and critique but also hold their authors as active intertextual presences open to criticism. They simply destabilize the assumptions of the earlier texts, texts. This is the critical means of intertextual enquiry. In such cases, the intertexts have a more subtle and intrinsic relation with the parent texts. They may keep their place in the web of textual relationships either by offering an alternate view of a voiceless character in a dominant text or by trying to tell a canonical tale from a different perspective. It may also directly challenge the plot by unearthing a hidden aspect. Moreover, it could also be in the form of a strategic critique on the craft of the master authors. As intertextuality allows the perspective of the other, all theoretical movements have made use of this strategy to throw light on the hidden and the marginalized figures by bringing about voices and presences of the characters, relegated to the peripheries and closets prescribed by the canons. In such instances, along with the characters that are given new voices and new lives, the ideologies themselves are subjected to revision and reassessment.

Intertextuality deals with the interdependence among texts by which independent texts are apprehended as intertexts. Along with their position and purpose as intertexts, they are independent units of signification where each text functions as a signifier. Every text exists as a site of meaning, where it raises some pertinent questions even though the answers may be incomplete and indeterminate. Riffaterre suggests that the text is “always one of a kind, unique” (*Text Production 2*). He points out that the uniqueness of a text is an essential element of textuality.

According to Barthes, a text is essentially concerned with its position within the work, “as a methodological field” (“From Work to Text,” 74) and deals with the limits and demarcations of the discursive field. In spite of the divergent theoretical

positions in which the text is held, its significance remains considerable as the text is the location for the play of multiple meanings of the elements that constitute textuality.

Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is held in valid interrelationship with canonical master narratives offering the view concerns that run through the texts. They are apprehended here as texts and not just as intertexts. As the text is an encoded entity, it can be analyzed from various levels. It is the literary text that comes first and foremost by which the generic features of the texts in question may be considered. Their interrelationship with the master narratives and the way various theoretical assumptions are deployed in the textual site becomes point of enquiry while dealing with the texts. On another level, the socio-cultural text that gets represented in the literary text is analyzed. Along with the multiple levels in which the text operates, the texture of the works also comes into active play.

Parody: A Critical Confrontation with the Previous Work

Parody is another related term to Intertextuality. In contemporary use, it is artistic works created to mock, comment on, or poke fun at an original work, author and style of some other target by means of humorous, satiric or ironic imitation. But as parody often exaggerated in the way, they imitate the original in order to produce a humorous effect. While parody is generally intended to amuse, they are not always comedic in nature and sometimes take on fairly serious subject matters.

As Linda Hutcheon defines the term, "Parody is imitation, not always at the expense of parodied text, it as a form ironic rupture with the past" (31). Thus, parody is a kind of revisiting or rereading of the former text that recreates a new text by distorting the original style of writing. It is an act of remixing which distorts the original style. It is, in Hutcheon's preferred term, describes an author who actively encodes a text as an imitation with critical difference. She views,

Parody-often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation of Intertextuality- is usually considered central to postmodernism, both by its detractors and its defenders. It signals show present representation comes from past one and what is politics behind such representation (89).

It means that the very possibility of a linguistic norm, in terms of which one could ridicule private languages or idiosyncratic styles.

In parodic process of textual transformation, a text of genre convention is imitated and transformed by means of ironic inversion. Therefore, irony is also at the heart of parody. Hutcheon refers to parodical rewriting as "repetition with critical difference" (92). In defining the term parody, Hutcheon takes it as a value problematizing, denaturalizing form of acknowledging the history of representation. It is often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, of intertextuality. But they stand with their special features and are defined as the styles practiced in postmodern text. In editorial review section of her book *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, Reprint Edition, quote as follow:

Looking at works as diverse as Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Brian de Palma's *Dressed to Kill*, Woody Allen's *Zelig*, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Magritte's *This Is Not a Pipe*, Hutcheon discusses the remarkable range of intent in modern parody while distinguishing it from pastiche, burlesque, travesty, and satire. She shows how parody, through ironic playing with multiple conventions, combines creative expression with critical commentary. Its productive-creative approach to tradition

results in a modern recoding that establishes difference at the heart of similarity.

So according to above lines, parody as a major form of modern self-reflexivity, one that marks the intersection of invention and critique and offers an important mode for coming to terms with the texts and discourses of the past.

Postmodern parody throws sharp arrows towards the weaknesses of the historians or society. It searches the hidden truth and finds out why it was hidden. It is a kind of mocking towards something which illustrates the cause and effect of the particular event. Elaborating on this concept, Hutcheon claims,

Parody is not a historical or de-historicizing it does not past art from its original historical context and resembles it into some sort of present spectacle. Instead through a double process of installing and ironizing parody signals how, present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference. (89)

In this way, Hutcheon views that the postmodern art ironically rethinks the history. All forms of postmodern art and thoughts are known as postmodernist contradictions. Postmodern novels are both intensely reflexive and yet lay claim to historical event and personages, its self-awareness of the history. So, parody is also the imitation for satirical purpose.

In the succeeding chapter, the present study has analyzed Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* as a parodic- intertextul revision of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys has developed her novel in the parodic- intertextual form of writing to Bronte's *Jane Eyre* to give voice to the most marginalized woman. For that, Rhys takes the elements such as theme, image, characterization, symbol and setting from the Bronte's novel. She re-evaluates their significance. Her parodical rewriting of *Jane Eyre* as *The Wide*

Sargasso Sea represents Bronte's one-sided narrative by telling the unspoken, untold text by the now-present, open-mouthed Antoinette and it transforms in Edward Said's words "giving voice to what was silent or marginally present" (66). Hence, this study has explored how Rhys' novel parodizes and shares the intertextual relationship with Bronte's *Jane Eyre* by employing intertextual strategies that point to a particular process of reading to challenge the colonial canon and reveal possibilities of alternative interpretation.

Chapter 3

Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* as a Parodistic Intertext to Bronte's *Jane Eyre*

Intertextuality and the Text

Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is a perfect example of intertextuality and is often cited as an example of postcolonial novel. Bronte's novel reflects history from a colonial perspective whereas Rhys' novel reframes that history from a postcolonial perspective. While the colonial text endeavors to suppress those belonging to a different class and race by excluding and marginalizing them, the postcolonial text emerges from the voices of those who were originally deprived and silenced. In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys gives voice to the Creole woman and provides the perspective of the other by telling Jane's story in a different racial context by translating the Victorian woman's feminist struggle to a West Indian context.

Rhys' novel is a parodic intertext of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Her novel shares a fascinating intertextual influence of the character, source, and so on with Bronte's text *Jane Eyre*. Both of these novels stand in opposition for the purpose and depiction of theme, style and motifs for the writing. The present study is based on the same shared issues and interconnectedness with both of them. Here, this study is to prove the intertextual grounds of Rhys' novel in Bronte's novel in different levels like in the state of theme, characterization, influence, symbols and the like.

Rhys composes her novel as a creative response to Bronte's novel by using one of the postmodern devices, intertextuality. Rhys is not satisfied with the presentation and the tragic ending of Bertha Mason in Bronte's novel. She decides to write a story of Bertha's life. In an interview with Vreeland, Rhys states,

When I read *Jane Eyre* as a child, I thought, why should she think Creole women are lunatics and all that? What a shame to make Rochester's first wife, Bertha, the awful mad woman, and I

immediately thought I'd write the story as it might really have been ghost. I thought I'd try to write her a life. (112)

In the above lines, it becomes clear that Rhys was dissatisfied with injustice to the character of Bronte's novel. Especially she was dissatisfied with the character of Bertha given to her and replied to *Jane Eyre* through *The Wide Sargasso Sea*.

As Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, the researcher depicts how themes in Rhys' novel bring to the surface subtle mirroring ideas in Bronte's novel.

Intertextuality occurs at two levels in these texts. First, between the two novels, which shows that Rhys' narrative line reveals striking instances of parallels between Antoinette and Jane. Furthermore, the ways in which Jane reflects Antoinette's life – such as their childhood, visionary dreams, feminine struggle and marriages to Rochester who represents a typical patriarchal and colonial oppressive master. His relationship with both women is based on a clear-cut and absolute hierarchical distinction between the rulers and ruled. Through this unequal relationship, the researcher attempts to prove that Antoinette's resistance to ideologies sustaining colonial domination is more complex and difficult than Jane's resistance to ideologies governing male and class domination. The second level of intertextuality, however, occurs between the main characters of each novel.

According to Kristeva intertextuality refers to the author's borrowing and transformation of a prior texts or lines. In the similar way Rhys' novel transforms some narrative techniques that is told through the voice of Antoinette, Mr. Rochester and briefly Grace Poole. Unlike in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys gives voice to the most marginalized character: Bertha Mason/Antoinette Cosway when the first part of the story is told through her perspective:

Then one day, very early, I saw her horse lying down under the frangipani tree. I went up to him but he was no sick, he was dead and

his eyes were black with flies. I ran away and did not speak of it for I thought if I told no one it might not be true. But later that day, Gofray found him, he had been poisoned. 'Now we are marooned,' my mother said, 'now what will become of us?' (4)

Like this Antoinette herself has narrated most of her own story in Rhys' novel unlike in Bronte's novel. The novel has three parts: the first describes Antoinette's childhood, the second the failure of her marriage, and the last part much shorter part reveals what might happen to Antoinette. Rhys has given multiple voices in her novel by challenging the one sided point of view of *Jane Eyre*.

The development of Rhys' narrative, in which it centers upon Antoinette bears striking resemblance to the younger Jane. Both heroines grow up fatherless and emotionally threatened by those who take charge of them. They live much within themselves and into their imaginations, made fearful by emotional and physical insecurity. Jane is an orphan, Antoinette virtually one, losing her father in childhood and seeing her mother marry again, infatuated, only to become insane after the burning of their estate by the emancipated Negroes. Another implicit link between Jane and Antoinette is in the oppressed Jane's search for escape in the "charm" of exotic far places. But her imagination more often torments than consoles her, inflamed by her daily struggles for survival.

By incorporating the term 'intertextuality', Rhys shapes the text by the influence of other authors. She was influenced by the prior text of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Re-reading Chapters I to X of Bronte's novel, one cannot help but notice how much in them corresponds to Antoinette's essential experiences as a solitary, unloved hold in part one of Rhys' novel. Both heroines seek imaginative escape, know terrors beyond the common, endure the encroachment of menace that threatens the very soul, and reach out for a seemingly impossible happiness. Antoinette expresses her desire: "I

said loudly and wildly,' and do you think that I wanted all this? I would give my life to undo it. I would give my eyes never to have seen this abdominal place" (104).

These lines mean that Antoinette is always wanting to escape from her haunting life.

One might also look at postcolonial theory, discussing intertextuality, and dealing with works like *Jane Eyre* and *The Wide Sargasso Sea*. Post-colonial studies are "in-depth examinations of the various relationships between dominant and subjugated cultures, races and ethnic groups" (Puri 156). What it means to say is that postcolonial writing investigates microscopic issues of consideration of the other margins like race, religion and economic status resulting in counterdiscursive narratives.

Rhys' novel was published in 1966, around the same times intertextuality as a term was first introduced. In her interviews, Rhys has expressed how, when reading *Jane Eyre*, she felt as if the portrayal of Bertha pointed at some kind of distaste for the West Indies in Bronte herself. Born in the West Indies, Rhys decided to 'write back', taking the known story of *Jane Eyre* and singling out Bertha, one of the minor characters, in order to question the original text and what it says about people from the West Indies.

Bronte's novel reflects history from a colonial perspective whereas Rhys' novel reframes that history from a postcolonial perspective. While the colonial text endeavors to suppress those belonging to a different class and race by excluding and marginalizing them, the postcolonial text emerges from the voices of those who were originally deprived and silenced. In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys gives voice to the Creole woman and provides the perspective of the other by telling Jane's story in a different racial context by translating the Victorian woman's feminist struggle to a West Indian context. Thus, this study discusses Rhys' novel intertextual relationship

to Bronte's novel as a revision/rewriting and examines the postcolonial/racial foundation, which prompts the rewriting of Bronte's novel.

Therefore, Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is a post-colonial novel. In Bronte's novel, Bertha is the mad woman in the attic without a voice of her own, whose insanity is explained partly because of her heritage. In Rhys' novel, on the other hand, Rhys has given her voice, showing the world through Antoinette/Bertha's eyes. Rhys wanted to show how Bertha is not simply a mad woman from a far off land, but indeed a human being with feelings and ideas as well as a back-story.

As postmodern literature highlights intertext – interconnectedness, interdependence and relationality, it is noticed that interconnectedness can be expressed through some characters like Grace Poole, Mr. Rochester (though he is not named first) etc., including common setting. Rhys has also shown interconnectedness and relationality of her novel with Bronte's novel. She has noted in a letter that when she read about Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, she felt that "That's only one side-English side" (Letters, 297) and thought to write a response. Rhys had read *Jane Eyre* when she was a young girl. The picture of the unfortunate woman condemned to lunacy and isolation had moved her into an awareness of her own precarious existence as a Creole woman. She wanted to write her life.

Rhys felt that literary texts with political motives are capable of depicting the native culture in a stereotypical manner. She notes,

Now I am almost as wary of books as I am of people. They are capable of pushing you into the limbo of the forgotten. They can tell lies –and vulgar, trivial lies- and when they are so many all saying the same thing they can shut you down, and make you doubt not only your memory, but your senses. (*Temps Perdi* 145)

Rhys considers the work of Bronte one such lie and she takes it upon her to revise and recreate. In this case, Ellen Friedman claims, “ Rhys enters and re-imagines Bronte’s text- glossing and subverting, reversing and transforming it- writing it to her own time and her own frame of reference” (117). Therefore, her novel was an attempt to challenge the conventions and the discursive systems of the previous era.

Having called the novel "The First Mrs. Rochester" at one point, one can assume that Rhys never wanted to hide the fact that she based her book on *Jane Eyre*. However, finally naming it *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, a title with no ties to Bronte's text, invites readers who have not read *The Wide Sargasso Sea* without risking making them feel as if they should be familiar with story of Jane, first. Another way that Rhys distances her novel from *Jane Eyre* is by never mentioning Mr. Rochester's name. Thus, if the reader has not read Bronte’s novel or been told of its ties to Rhys’ novel, there is no reason for the reader to think of Rhys' text as anything other than an independent book. It is not until the reader is introduced to one of the texts, after having already read the other one that one notices the relation between them and the possibility to investigate how they influence each other arises.

According to the concept of intertextuality, it is almost impossible to read a text without being influenced by other texts that have been read previously. Kristeva states that the term 'intertextuality' deals with the idea of how one text is shaped by a number of other texts and how two readers might perceive the same article, poem or novel in very different ways depending on their reading history. Rhys’ character is shaped by Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. In this sense, two versions of Mr. Rochester shape the intertextual element in the two novels. Written over 100 years later than *Jane Eyre*, Rhys’ novel functions as a prequel text to the story of Bronte’s building on Rochester's story of his first wife. Thus, the character of Mr. Rochester plays a prominent part in both the novels. He plays generally the same role in both books, the

partner of the protagonist. However, roles are very different apart from the title of the partner.

In *Jane Eyre*, Mr. Rochester is the dark and mysterious, yet alluring, owner of Thornfield Hall and the object of the protagonist's love. Although he is described as a dark, brooding and fairly immoral character, he is still presented as the hero of the story and the reader is supposed to hope for him and Jane to end up together. In Rhys' novel, he is again paired up with the protagonist, this time Antoinette Cosway, but Mr. Rochester of this novel is cold and hard, using his wife for sex and money and telling himself and her that she is going mad. He plays the role of the hero in Brontë's novel, but this time he plays the role of the villain. So these two versions of Mr. Rochester in Brontë's and Rhys' novel create the intertextual relation between these novels.

Intertextuality is the condition of the repetition or citation of earlier text's styles, techniques, subject matters, themes and so on. John Barth, a postmodern author and literary critic, calls this condition of art as 'exhaustion' which is reflected in Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (52). The main character Antoinette is borrowed from *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason. In both novels, the central characters are female. Rhys' novel is the untold story of *Jane Eyre*'s mad woman in the attic. Though it is a novel that can stand alone, the intertextual influence of Brontë's influence is undeniable. Intertextuality definitely questions the meaning of the text, independent from other texts and context. Barthes believes that later text is nothing more than just 'exhaustion' form of earlier texts. The traces of close resemblance between the two texts prove the intertextual nature.

Rhys' novel's intertextuality is further proved when Rhys follows a similar plot line to *Jane Eyre* – Antoinette's story begins in childhood, readers follow her into the convent school and later into a marriage that is quite blissful. As part three opens,

Grace Poole's voice locates the readers within Bronte's text and Antoinette's story merges with Bertha Mason's in Thornfield's attic:

In this room I wake early and lie shivering for it is very cold. At last Grace Poole, the woman who looks after me, lights a fire with paper sticks and lumps of coal. She kneels to blow it with bellows. The paper shrivels, the sticks crackle and spit, the coal smolders and glowers. In the end flames shoot up and they are beautiful. I get out of bed and go close to watch them and to wonder why I have been brought here. For what reason? There must be a reason. (115)

Yet while the two novels follow a similar sequence, Rhys' handling of time sense and point of view in the novel complicates and confuses these events.

Although *The Wide Sargasso Sea* reveals Antoinette's progress from childhood through adulthood, the fragmented sense of time keeps the plot from seeming as linear as Bronte's novel. From the first line of Rhys' novel, it is inferred that Antoinette is black – "they say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks" (3), but it is soon learned that she is not. It is also difficult to tell when she is writing, for a time Antoinette seems to be writing in the present, almost as a sort of diary, but at other times her narrative seems to be a reflection. Rhys' fragmented narration and sense of time confuses the reader, which keeps the reader from identifying with Antoinette or the text, something that seems to happen so naturally in *Jane Eyre*.

Rhys has also shared common setting with Bronte's novel to connect two texts. For instance, Thornfieldhall. Third part of Rhys' novel open in Thornfeild hall, England. Antoinette was already confined in Thornfield hall when she gets consciousness. She says,

I get out of bed and go close to watch them and to wonder why I have been brought here. ... There is one window high up – you cannot see out of it. My bed had doors but they have been taken away. They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. (115-117)

It is the same Thornfield hall where Brontë's protagonist Jane becomes employee. Jane places advertisement for a governess position in the local newspaper. She receives only one reply, from a Mrs. Fairfax of Thornfield, near Millcote, who seeks a governess. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane narrates:

This was all the account I got from Mrs. Fairfax, of her employer and mine. There are people who seem to have no notion of sketching a character, or observing and describing. Mr. Rochester was Mr. Rochester in her eyes; a gentleman, a landed proprietor-nothing more. ... All these relics gave to the third story of Thornfield Hall the aspect of a home of the past- a shrine of memory. ... So still a region, a laugh, struck my ear. It was a curious laugh- distinct, formal, and mirthless. ... (90-91)

Above lines makes clear that Jane was employee in Thornfieldhall where Antoinette was locked up and the sound denotes the laugh of Bertha/Antoinette, which clarifies the connection between Brontë's and Rhys' novels through common setting.

Rhys has very interestingly related the setting of Jamaica. In Brontë's novel, Jane and Rochester stand at the altar, taking their vows in course of engagement with each other, when suddenly a strange man announces there's an impediment to the marriage. He says that Rochester was already married to a woman named Bertha Mason. At the same time Rhys has employed her protagonist from Jamaica and these two Bertha are same to whom Rochester had married. In Rhys' novel Antoinette explains,

He hates me now. I hear him every night walking up and down the veranda. Up and down. When he passes my door, he says “Goodnight, Bertha.” He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother’s name. “I hope you will sleep well, Bertha” – it cannot be worse,’ I said.(70)

From these lines it becomes clear that this is the same Bertha Masson who was married with Rochester and was locked in Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*.

Parodying *Jane Eyre*

While parodying *Jane Eyre*, Rhys makes Antoinette change many things in her narratives and sets out to answer the question why Bertha Mason/Antoinette Cosway might have gone mad in the first place. However, *The Wide Sargasso Sea* uses *Jane Eyre* as an imaginative starting point. The point of view is changed from the first person narrative of Jane to that of Bertha Mason/Antoinette Cosway. *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is therefore a parodic rewriting of the classical text from the point of view of the most marginalized character in Bronte's novel: Bertha Mason is not only mad and female, imprisoned, rejected wife but also comes from Jamaica, one of Britain’s colonies.

Rhys’ novel is set in the Jamaica of the mid-1830s, retelling Bronte's novel. It parodies the earlier text by means of remixing and revisiting. While revisiting the earlier text she distorts the original style of Bronte and changes many things in Rhys narratives. For instance, in Bronte's novel, Bertha Mason is a mad woman who is completely voiceless and unheard, whereas Antoinette is open mouthed and the most story of novel is told through her voice. Bronte’s Bertha is given a different name, Antoinette Cosway in Rhys’ novel. In this sense, Rhys parodies and rewrites the earlier classical text *Jane Eyre* and presents the novel from the point of view of the most marginalized character, Antoinette Cosway/Bertha Mason.

Rhys begins her novel by making Antoinette describe her childhood that Antoinette is a white Creole girl who is rejected by both white and black people. As Ramchand states, "*The Wide Sargasso Sea* is in part about the contrast of two worlds, a contrast which becomes as well 'a lament for the divided self'" (146). Like Bronte, Rhys shows that Antoinette's life is miserable who is also ignored by her mother and that she has a surrogate mother named Christophine, and like Jane in Bronte's novel she could not benefit from her maternal love. Both Antoinette and Jane have the same childhood. Both grow up in the same environment by suffering from the isolated and lonely life. Both are powerless in their life and without any protection. Both live in a world which is hostile to unsupported women, but they end up differently.

Rhys has created her novel as a multiple narrative to parodize characters, but most of it is narrated by Antoinette. Bronte starts her novel with Jane's life, from her childhood till her maturity. In other words she writes Jane's story. But Rhys takes the minor character of Bronte's novel, named Bertha as the heroine of her novel and gives her another name Antoinette. She starts to write about her life in the way that Bronte did earlier in *Jane Eyre*, by starting from Antoinette's childhood until her growth to a woman.

In Bronte's novel, Jane starts the story by talking about her miserable childhood that how she was raised by her tyrant aunt Mrs. Reed but she copes with the life and tried to find good friends while she was at school although her school master was tyrant, too. She is ignored by her mother and has a surrogate mother whose name is Bessie. Herischian states that *Jane Eyre* can be considered as a Bildungsroman that from childhood Jane grows into selfhood and reaches her ideal identity by overcoming the problems and difficulties, this ideal identity gives her the feeling of security, strength, and autonomy (74). According to Abrams, "The subject of this novel is the development of the protagonist's mind and character in the passage

from the childhood through varied experiences and often through a spiritual crisis into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world" (229). Rhys uses Bronte's method of starting point in her novel by choosing one of the minor characters in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha, who goes through her life in detail. Just as Bronte did in her novel earlier, Rhys shows a girls' ability to perceive the atrocious world.

As Hutcheon points out postmodern parodical rewriting as "repetition with critical difference" (6). This study aims to investigate these critical differences to show that Rhys is what one may call in Roland Barthe's terms, a reader-turned-author. Moreover, her parodical rewriting of *Jane Eyre* as *The Wide Sargasso Sea* presents Bronte's one-sided narrative by telling the unspoken, untold text by the now-present, open-mouthed Antoinette, and the process it transforms in Said's words "giving voice to what was silent or marginally present" (66). In her letter, Rhys wrote about her concern that *The Wide Sargasso Sea* would be viewed as "just another adaptation of *Jane Eyre*" (15). Today critics view the novel not as an "adaptation" but rather a critical revision of the nineteenth century classic. By reconstructing Bronte's colonial text from a postcolonial perspective, Rhys unveils issues related to colonialism that Bronte overlooks and ignores. She gives voice to the colonized people through Antoinette, who is totally silenced, dehumanized in the earlier colonial text.

Graham Allen argues that works of literature, after all are "built from systems, codes, discourse, themes and tradition established by previous works of literary or nonliterary art" (48). As such, Rhys' novel shares the common theme and discourse with Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys has revitalized the theme of madness drawing upon *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette as Bertha Mason after facing failure of her marriage and after listening all the negative things about her mother descends into madness. She begins to be troubled by nightmares, and describes how she feels:

And then suddenly I was awake. I saw two enormous rats, as big as cats, on the sill staring at me. But I was not frightened. That was the strange thing. I stared at them and they did not move. I could see myself in the looking- glass the other side of the room, I woke up again suddenly like the first time and the rats were not there but I felt very frightened. I got out of bed quickly and ran on to the veranda. (48)

These lines make clear that Antonitte is mentally trying to be strengthening herself for strong presence. Rhys' novel has challenged and destroyed the Bronte's cultural conventions by strengthening most marginalized character of *Jane Eyre*.

While analyzing the parody in *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is necessary to discuss about the feminist and postcolonial rewriting of *Jane Eyre* as an aesthetic experiment in modernist techniques and a powerful example of feminist rewriting. Rhys' novel gives voice to a marginalized character and transforms her original tragic demise into a kind of triumphant heroism. It is a rewriting of *Jane Eyre*, a text long upheld as a triumph of feminist liberalism and complicates the feminist debate.

Rhys wrote the novel to respond to colonial and racial injustice in Bronte's novel. She was dissatisfied with Bronte's novel, especially with the character Bertha Masson. Veronica Marie Gregg introduces the novel as,

Wide Sargasso Sea as a re-reading and rewriting of *Jane Eyre* seeks to articulate the subjective and locational identity of the West Indian Creole of the post slavery period. It also imaginatively reinvents a category evacuated of social and political meaning in the 1950s and 1960s, the period of writing when colonial structures are being dismantled.... *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a work in which the West Indies of the 1840s impinges upon and elucidates the England and West Indies of the 1950s and 1960s seems to be underwritten by the Creole's desire

to reclaim hegemony over the literary representation of the West Indies and "black people." The racialist usurpation of the voices, Acts, and identities of "black people," so central to Rhys' writing as a whole.

(256)

Rhys subverts the premises of *Jane Eyre* in her revision and sets right the misrepresentation of the racially and gendered marginal in Rhys' novel. Racial dimension of Rhys' novel adds the extra edge of vehement subversion to the subtle satire on patriarchy represented in Bronte's novel.

Parodying *Jane Eyre*, Rhys' novel shares intertextual relationship with Bronte's novel. Rhys attempts to explore the issues related to the identity of the characters. Her novel bears about the sensibility of being a West Indian. This novel also demonstrates the pain of being Creole, dislocation in their own home, madness, identity situation of the former slaves and the subaltern African voices.

Hutcheon defines parodic intertextuality as an "imitation, not always at the expense of parodied text, it as a form ironic rupture with the past" (31), the technique of parody is used in art, culture as well as in literature. According to Hutcheon parody describes an author who actively encodes a text as an imitation with "critical difference". Parodying *Jane Eyre*, Rhys with her 'critical difference' makes changes many things in narrative. For instance, in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason a mad woman, is alien, imprisoned and completely voiceless whereas in Rhys novel Bertha as Antoinette lives initially a free life portrayed as an active woman. In the former text, Bertha has not got her active role, her voice is unheard whereas in the latter text Rhys makes Antoinette/Bertha Mason the narrator. So the novel is conveyed through a completely voiceless woman.

Parody of Liberating Self

Rhys wrote her novel in different century from Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys was a West Indian novelist that writes *The Wide Sargasso Sea* under the influence of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Herischian mentions that, Rhys' novel was interwoven with some likeness and differences as Rhys uses *Jane Eyre* a basic source of her novel. So Rhys novel can be considered as a response to Bronte's novel, *Jane Eyre* (72). According to Bonamy, "In responding to her reading of Bronte's text, Rhys sought not only to correct an omission, but also to correct what she considered a misreading of 'Creole women', part of whose identity was shaped by the British exploitative context" (qtd. in Herischian 73). So, the physical and emotional subordination in which the Creoles are held form the subtext of the novel.

The Wide Sargasso Sea celebrates the reclamation of the marginalized voices. It challenges the dominant power structures and brings out the alternate voices of mute margins of negation and excluded character. The text shares an intense intertextuality with its prequel by bringing out the concealed and hidden story of women who occupy either the attics or the cellars of the edifices of patriarchy. The novel is an attempt to validate the existence and discourse of Antoinette Cosway, who was relegated to being Bertha Mason in the dark and mysterious attic of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Rhys' novel is told through the voices of Antoinette, Mr. Rochester (though he is never named) and briefly Grace Poole (the servant in *Jane Eyre* who acts as Antoinette's jailer). It is about the failure of a marriage and the disastrous consequences for the woman, but it is also about the equally about disastrous relationship between England and her colonies. In the first part, it is seen how neglected she is and how her friend finally steals her dress and hits a stone on her. The

only person she trusts is Christophine, yet Antoinette is also afraid of her because she practices obeah.

The second part is set after wedding, and the story is taken over by a man without a name who the reader later knows is Mr. Rochester. In this part, Antoinette has become like a slave; she has lost her happiness, her husband's love, her money, her freedom and even her name. This loss reflects her role as a woman in the society of her day, but also the colonial system. Mr. Rochester believes that all the stories he is told about her mixed blood and loose morals. He is frightened by the place because it is not England, and behaves just like the old slave owners. Although he does not want Antoinette to be his wife, he does not want her to go free either. He decides to keep her prisoner, and take her money.

In part three, the action moves to England, and into the world of *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette/Bertha even talks about being inside cardboard covers. Rhys' novel ends with Antoinette/Bertha about to set the house on fire. She simply says: "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (123). It is assumed that Antoinette will kill herself, although one cannot be sure whether that will happen.

Rhys employs an entirely different narration when she tells the story of Bertha. It evokes some racial issues when the protagonist, Antoinette, is presented as a Creole girl who is part of the elite of Martinique, a woman of the tropics who loves colors and nature. Yet on her island, she is caught in the middle of great change since the slaves have been liberated. The slaves refer to her as a "white cockroach," and the British people of the Empire refer to the Creole as "white niggers". Added to the reality of the colonies is the fact that she is a woman in a patriarchal, society. Rochester proposed to Antoinette because he was penniless and he automatically obtains possession of her fortune when they marry. This young Creole woman is

constantly at the mercy of the men around her. She is a traditional silenced daughter and wife, a hybrid, unwanted by the British and rejected by her own people.

With her heart and spirit broken, Bertha begins to exhibit signs of an emotionally weak, confused and unbalanced woman. Instead of being loving husband, Mr. Rochester is cruel and even challenges her identity by calling her "Bertha," her mad mother's name. He uproots her along with her fortune to England where he keeps her hidden in the attic until finally, she sets the house on fire and jumps from the rooftop, therefore, liberating herself.

Chapter: 4

Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea*: From Text to Intertext

This study is an attempt to conceptualize intertextuality and parody the two important postmodern elements in Rhys' novel *The Wide Sargasso Sea*. It examines Rhys' textual techniques justifying an intertextual relation between *The Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*. Rhys makes use of Bronte's novel as an inter-text in her novel. She takes Bertha, one of the characters in *Jane Eyre* and writes a previous story for her. This study covers the idea of intertextuality through the examination of various aspects. One of the aspects is the subject matter of the two novels, which are concerned with their theme, characterization, influence, symbols, etc.

The Wide Sargasso Sea is the countertext of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys' novel presents the narrative of Antoinette Cosway, turned Bertha Mason, the mad and imprisoned wife of Edward Rochester as against the discourse of Jane which celebrates the character and personality of Jane and Rochester in Bronte's text. While parodying the earlier text, Rhys gives voice to the Creole woman and provides the perspective of the other by telling Jane's story in a different racial context by translating the Victorian woman's feminist struggle to a West Indian context. Bertha is brought into the first story of the narration as Antoinette from the third story which she occupies in *Jane Eyre* as Bertha. These levels are indicative of their narrative significance and dominance as well.

In *Jane Eyre*, Bronte makes a strong case for woman's discourse by presenting the eponymous heroine's struggle in a male dominated society and her passionate challenge of patriarchal authority. Rhys' novel apprehends the gender and racial issues inherent in the textual world of *Jane Eyre* and exposes the imperialist bias and the cultural divide concealed within its texture. It is the location of the story in a sad,

pitiful plight of the Creole woman, Antoinette that accounts for the postcolonial content of the story.

Rhys in *The Wide Sargasso Sea* affords an entirely different narration to Brontë's *Jane Eyre* when she tells the story of Bertha. Bertha's real name is Antoinette. She is presented as a Creole girl who is part of the elite of Martinique, who loves colors and nature. Yet on her island, she is caught in the middle of great change since the slaves have been liberated. The slaves refer to her a "white cockroach," and the British ladies and men of the Empire refer to the Creoles as "white niggers". Added to the reality of the colonies is the fact that she is a woman in a patriarchal society. Mr. Rochester proposes to Antoinette because he is penniless and automatically possesses of her fortune if they marry. This young Creole woman is trapped between two worlds, constantly at the mercy of the men around her. She is the traditional silenced daughter and wife, unwanted by the British and rejected by her own people.

As an intertext to Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Rhys' novel is the previously untold story of Bertha, the first Mrs. Rochester in Brontë's novel although she is given a different name. While parodizing *Jane Eyre*, Rhys sets out to answer the question of why Bertha /Antoinette might have gone mad in the first place. *The Wide Sargasso Sea* uses *Jane Eyre* as an imaginative starting-point. But the point of view is changed from the first person narrative of Jane to that of Bertha /Antoinette. Rhys' novel is therefore a rewriting of the classical text from the point of view of the most marginalized character in Brontë's novel.

As a parody text, Rhys' characters are carbon copies of an earlier cast in *Jane Eyre*: Antoinette is Bertha, Brontë's mad woman in the attic; her unnamed husband is Mr. Mason, the Englishman who marries Antoinette's mother, is named after Bertha's brother. In both the texts, the woman who is paid to look after the mad Bertha is

named Grace Poole. The narrative events are similar. For example, the materialistic motives for the arranged marriages are identical. Both Rochesters, whose elder brothers inherited the family estate, are thrust into an alien culture for financial reasons and both brides are married to an Englishman to restore the family to the identity and stability of the dominant social order. Both Antoinette and Bertha have a mother who goes mad, and an idiot brother. The facts of the husbands' lives after their marriages are identical. In both the novels, marriages are set in Spanish Town, Jamaica and part III of *The Wide Sargasso Sea* is set in *Jane Eyre's* Thornfield Hall. Rhys even takes up Bronte's imagery of fire and ice as well as her use of color symbolism. All these textual references prove the parodic intertextuality in Rhys' novel, which is a copy of the earlier Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

In her novel, Rhys parodies Bronte's colonialism by making her novel post-colonial novel and counters the colonial discourse presented in *Jane Eyre*. In Bronte's novel, Bertha is the mad woman in the attic without a voice of her own, whose insanity is explained partly because of her heritage. In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, Rhys has given her a voice and lets the readers see the world through Antoinette/ Bertha's eyes. Rhys wanted to show how Bertha is not simply a mad woman from a far off land, but indeed a human being with feelings and ideas as well as a previous story.

The textual implications and explications of *The Wide Sargasso Sea* are multifold. It is significant not just as a rewriting of the *Jane Eyre* story but as a unique text of parodical spirit, giving a platform for the exposition of submerged discourses. Rhys rewrites not only the premises inherent and inculcated through the text of Bronte, but also the narrative strategies of *Jane Eyre* with its blend of realistic details. The celebration of an aberrant heroine, who questions the edifices of patriarchy and colonialism, becomes the theme for a modernist rewriting against realist narrative of

Jane Eyre. It is not only through the character of Antoinette that the postcolonial and feminist voices are conveyed. Christophine, the black servant, also offers the resistance from another level where she places herself beyond the limiting discourses of colonialism and patriarchy which she critiques in no uncertain terms. Taken all above discussions, together make *The Wide Sargasso Sea* an expression of the parodic intertext of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

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