"Allowing Her To Tell Her Story": Wide Sargasso Sea And The Voice Of Bertha Mason.



Nadjet Bouzid *
Department of Foreign languages, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria
nadjet.bouzid@univ-biskra.dz

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Abstract:

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys writes back to one of the colonial classics, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. As a postcolonial endeavour, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, tells the story differently, and uses dialogism to revise the story including the voiceless characters as main actors in the plot. In this respect, this paper examines how Rhys unfolds the story using three different narrators unlike the first person narrator of *Jane Eyre* through highlighting the concept of dialogism as developed by Bakhtin. As such, dialogue, in this postcolonial text, highlights the author's attempt to defy the imperial practice of denying the colonized subjects a voice in the story. Bertha Mason, the Creole character who is locked up in the attic, does not have any dialogue in Bronte's novel. Instead, she is represented as a beastly unhuman being who lacks a language, growls like animals, and is thus unable of any human-like dialogue practice. Recent literature on Rhys's work have solely focused on the feminist postcolonial representation of a Creole marginalized woman who is denied a voice to tell her story. Gayatri C. Spivac's *Can the Subaltern Speak*? is among the most famous texts in the field. However, the use of dialogue in Rhys' novel has not received the due attention it deserves. As such, the present paper seeks to spotlight on the use of dialogue in the postcolonial novel of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a means to fight imperialism as represented in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

key words: Dialogism; Postcolonialism; *Wide Sargasso Sea*; *Jane Eyre*; the subaltern

* Corresponding Author

Introduction:

When it comes to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, one can hardly notice the colonialist ethos within this work. The novel, embracing the bildungsroman of the protagonist, tells the story of Jane Eyre who grows up as an orphan and suffers cruelty from different people until she manages to become a governess for Mr Rochester's foster daughter Adel. It also describes the romantic relationship that develops between Jane and Mr Rochester and the dreadful secret of him being married to a Creole madwoman locked up in the attic. Although the story in Jane Eyre ends with Mr Rochester losing everything, including his eyesight, in the fire set by his mad wife, Jane meets her happy ending as she gets to marry Mr Rochester. So far so good, the reader, including myself back then, will only think of Bronte's novel as a romantic story that seeks to empower women of the time.

In fact, as a reader, I hardly thought about anyone else but Jane and her lover. For me, as I presume for most readers of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason is not more than the mad haunting ghost who keeps the couple from finding their peaceful happiness. I even considered her as an obstacle, a hindering stuck character who happened to be there to further complicate things and create tension. Yet, the fault in this mind-set is not entirely ours. Bertha Mason has no share in the ongoing dialogue in Bronte's novel, which made her no different from an object or a piece of furniture in the story. She is not even a sane human being and that leads us as readers to dehumanize her and wish she did not even exist in the story. As readers, we were directed to believe what the dominant single voice of the novel told us without much questioning. The authority of using a homophony led us to read the novel focusing on the trials of Jane and forgetting about all other characters, especially Bertha. It was only after Jean Rhys wrote her *Wide Sargasso Sea* that we could realize how things could be interpreted differently.

As a Creole, Jean Rhys could not forget the depiction of Bertha Mason in Bronte's novel when she read *Jane Eyre* for the first time. Not only that Bertha is denied a voice to tell her story and what led her to be locked up in that attic in the first place, but also that the language that is used by Bronte to describe this Creole woman is full of prejudice and stereotypes. This drive made Rhys more eager to write back to the centre; writing back to Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. While reading *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is hard to bypass the character of Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. It is even impossible not to empathise with her and abhor Mr Rochester's behaviour

for all what happened. Reading Wide Sargasso Sea as a postcolonial novel deeply changes the understanding of *JE*. Rhys gives Bertha a story, a voice, and as a result, she gives her a life. Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is no longer the ghostly madwoman in the attic from Jane Eyre; she is Antoinette Cosway Mason; a rich Creole heiress from Spanish Town, Jamaica. Giving Bertha, the marginalized character, a dialogue and a voice helped in giving her a full being. The latter is what the present paper seeks to highlight; how dialogue in postcolonial texts, particularly in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, empowers the marginalized characters and challenges the centre of oppression.

Jean Rhys' Antoinette Vs. Charlotte Bronte's Bertha

As a prequel to Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents the story of Antoinette Cosway Mason, and how she ends up being in that attic in England. The novel, as a postcolonial text, seeks to challenge the imperial realities and prejudices that were directed towards the Creoles of the Caribbean by the English aristocracy. In *Jane Eyre*, Bronte tells the reader that Mr Rochester was haunted by a dark past. The latter turns out to be him being bound to a Creole madwoman for life. As such, the reader empathises with Mr Rochester, the victim of circumstances, who was seduced by the exotic Bertha Mason (or rather seduced by her money) and who was destined to misery and misfortune.

The language that is used by Bronte in describing Bertha is rather sharp, the thing that drove Rhys to feel intimidated as a Creole woman herself. In a letter to her friend Selma Vaz Dias in 1958, Rhys revealed that:

> I've read and re-read 'Jane Eyre" of course, and I am sure that the character must be "built up". I wrote you about that. The Creole in Charlotte Bronte's novel is a lay figure - repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls, laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry - off stage. For me (and for you I hope) she must be right on stage. She must be at least plausible with a past, the reason why Mr Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the reason why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad, even the reason why she tries to set everything on fire, and eventually succeeds. (Wyndham & Melly, 156)

The above passage highlights the issue of misrepresentation of the Creole character in Bronte's novel that provoked Rhys and motivated her to

write her reactionary novel *WSS*. As it is mentioned in *Jane Eyre*, Mr Rochester reveals the prejudiced view of most Europeans against the Creole people in particular and the West Indian people in general. The following passage is an illustration of the latter, in which Mr Rochester tells Jane that:

> Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations? Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard!—as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in both points. (Bronte, 445)

This passage not only announces the madness of Bertha Mason but also attributes it to three generations of Creoles. Taking it as an offence, Rhys even questions the claims of such madness and rather links Bertha's disturbed psychological state to all what happened in her life. In the same letter to Selma in 1958, Rhys doubts Bertha's madness stating the reason for setting the whole place in fire to the fact that "She is cold- and fire is the only warmth she knows in England" (Wyndham & Melly, 157).

In *Jane Eyre*, Mr Rochester is thought of as a swindled man who was plotted against by the entire Mason family. He was "cheated into espousing" that "bad, mad, and embruted partner" (Bronte, 445). Yet, if one looks closer, Mr Rochester wilfully moved to Jamaica and married Bertha Mason as he seemingly was going after her money (her thirty thousand pounds). It seems that "the white man's burden" is brought into surface here. England had a duty to civilize and manage the wealth of the savages of the New World who were not mature enough to manage their own affairs. In other words, Mr Rochester, the English gentleman, has a duty to travel all the way to the Caribbean, exactly to Jamaica, to marry Bertha Mason, the immature human being who owns lots of money but who lacks the faculty to manage it. It is also important to note that her money is what he mostly needs to secure his economic state as a second son who inherits nothing of his father's wealth.

Throughout the entire story of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason does not have one single word to say. She is not given any dialogue to anticipate. According to Robinson (2011), "to exist is to engage in dialogue" and since Bertha is denied this very thing, it is as if she does not exist. The reader is not even sure if she is human or not. Indeed, during their first encounter, Jane reveals how she saw "a figure" that "ran backwards and forwards" (Bronte, 446), and that she could not tell whether it was "beast

or human being" in the way that it "grovelled, seemingly, on all fours" and how it "snatched and growled like some strange wild animal" (Bronte, 446). Even the use of the pronoun "It" here is problematic. As if Bertha is not a woman anymore to be referred to as a 'She'. Not only that the language used is totally dehumanizing Bertha but also is the conversation that followed between Mr Rochester, Jane, Mr Mason and the others in which Mr Rochester is comparing Jane the English to Bertha the Creole. It goes as the following:

> That is MY WIFE,' said he. 'Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know—such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And THIS is what I wished to have' (laying his hand on my shoulder): 'this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon, I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder—this face with that mask—this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged! (Bronte, 448)

Mr Rochester claims that Jane was the real pretty woman that he ought to be with, while his wife is just an unpleasant mask, something unreal that he wishes did not exist. Every word that was attributed to Bertha made her resemble animals more than human beings. This is particularly what angered Rhys and made her resolve to alter this view regarding Creoles.

The imperial impulse of the novel is in its full bloom when Mr Rochester claims that he heard the winds of Europe calling him home when he was in Jamaica. He claimed hearing a voice saying that in Europe "there it is not known what a sullied name (he) bares, nor what a filthy burden is bound to (him)" (Bronte, 470). The filthy burden is his Creole wife Bertha Mason. Mr Rochester then goes on to call his wife "a maniac," "a monster," "a wild beast," and "a goblin" (Bronte, 471). He also calls her "the fury," "the curse" and "the Creole" (Bronte 472-473). Even giving that his wife was actually mad, still it is not appropriate to associate such traits to any human being regardless of their mental state.

The Voice of Bertha Mason (Antoinette)

At the end of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys compares Antoinette to the parrot that burnt in the first fire in her childhood. Just like the parrot, Antoinette (Bertha) lacks a voice of her own and rather echoes what

others have to say about who she is and what she must do in her life. Just like the parrot that is burnt and set free from his cage, Antoinette is burnt and set free from her prison in the attic. To empower her, Rhys gives Antoinette a voice to tell her story, to share what happened to her leading to her lockdown in the attic of Thornfield Hall in England. Rhys gives Bertha her fair share in the dialogue that she was denied in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. As stated by Bakhtin "To be means to communicate dialogically" (252). Bertha comes to being when she is given dialogue, when she is actively communicating in the story with the rest of the characters.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys presents the story with the use of three different voices; Antoinette, Mr Rochester, and Grace Poole. Rhys is not satisfied with the homophony of the first person narrator of *Jane Eyre* that left Bertha voiceless. As such, she resolved to have multiple voices in which "another 'I' must talk, two others perhaps" (Wyndham & Melly, 157) to give the story the required depth and provide a wholesome picture. However, Antoinette gets most of the narration as she narrates both part one and most of part three, "as the Creole is the important one, the others explain her" (Wyndham & Melly, 157).

Antoinette narrates the first part and it is mostly about her childhood with her mother, the first fire incident that made her lose her brother and made her mother goes mad, and the convent days that were followed by Mr Mason having news for Antoinette. These events work as a tapestry of Antoinette's life and background story that showcases who she was as a young girl. They also help in illustrating that Antoinette used to have a family and a life before she was brought to England as it is revealed in *Jane Eyre*. Rhys seeks to enliven Antoinette's existence in the West Indies as she challenges the stereotype of the Creoles as unhuman savages according to Bronte's description.

Mr Rochester narrates the second part and he reveals how he married Antoinette for her money. This part also includes the suspicions that led him to abandon his wife and cheat on her with their maid Amelie. The second part ends with Antoinette and Mr Rochester heading to Jamaica. This part displays the decline of Antoinette's marriage and the arising troubles of betrayal and mistrust. It could also be regarded as the stage that revealed Mr Rochester's real skin and his motives to marry Antoinette in the first place.

Grace Poole takes on the opening of part three, however, not a very long narration. She informs the reader that after the death of both his father and brother, Mr Rochester inherited everything. It is also revealed

how she received Mr Rochester and his wife who needed special care. The place is Thornfield Hall in England, precisely the attic of the third floor of the mansion. Antoinette takes on after Grace's brief narration and she reveals how she ended up losing way to England, locked up in that windowless room, instead of being in Jamaica as planned. This part also highlights how she came to lose her identity and how she tried to escape her prison. The reader is faced with an open end in the form of a dream about setting the entire place on fire, and as Antoinette wakes up she finds herself holding a candle and heading down the dark passage.

One of the unique techniques used by Rhys in her novel is the use of dreams not solely, as a foreshadowing to what is coming but also as a way to question what is real and what is not. Antoinette, approximately, sees the same dream three times at vital points of the course of her life. In her dreams, the same man who hates her is leading her in a dark forest. The first time she sees the dream, she tells her mother that it was "a bad dream" (Rhys, 24). What comes after her bad dream is the marriage of her mother from Mr Mason.

The second time Antoinette sees her dream was when she was at the convent and Mr Mason visits her to reveal his news. In the second dream, she is wearing a white dress and the man who was leading her takes her out of the forest to an "enclosed garden" with trees that she did not know. When Antoinette wakes up, she tells the nun Mary Augustine that she dreamt she "was in Hell" (Rhys, 55). This is a foreshadowing of her marrying Mr Rochester and moving to the attic in England; her new Hell.

The third time Antoinette sees her dream is at the ending scene and this dream is more detailed and different from the two previous ones. In her last dream, she saw herself escaping while Grace Poole was asleep, taking the keys and a candle and heading down. She then enters a room, apparently Mr Rochester's room as it is mentioned in *Jane Eyre* and she "lits all the candles" (Rhys, 169). Her dream takes her to Aunt Cora's room, the place of her comfort and sweet memories. Antoinette comes back again to Thornfield Hall and she sees Jane Eyre; "it was then that I saw her- the ghost" and she drops the candle and the flames start spreading (Rhys, 169). Her dream ends with her jumping off the roof of the house and feeling free. When she wakes up, she states "at last (she) knows why (she) was brought here and what (she) has to do" (Rhys, 171). This dream, though imaginary, seems to tell Antoinette what she needs to do now; burning the whole house and jumping off the roof.

Throughout the novel, Antoinette gradually loses her identity. Rhys highlights this process moving from part to part and stressing the role of Mr Rochester in such loss. From the very beginning, Antoinette lacks a clear identity to start with. Being a white Creole with a seemingly distant mother, Antoinette does not develop a sense of who she is and where she belongs. Spivak, in her famous essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", states that "Antoinette, as a white Creole child growing up at the time of emancipation in Jamaica, is caught between the English imperialist and the black native" (250). She is neither accepted by the whites who saw her as too dark, nor by the blacks who saw her as too white. Moreover, after marrying Mr Rochester, her identity degrades drastically.

Mr Rochester starts questioning her sanity that affects her own mental state. He then changes her name and he gives her a new label, Bertha, which she dislikes. At one incident as he called her Bertha, Antoinette protested, "My name is not Bertha, why do you call me Bertha?" (Rhys, 122). By insisting that her name is Bertha, Antoinette started to see that Antoinette is some other woman and not herself, " Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty cloths and her looking-glass" (Rhys, 162). Rhys, here, spots light on what makes a person loses their sanity and their identity. Solely, through denying her the name she was given at birth, Antoinette lost a grand portion of herself to the extent that "the girl she saw" in the looking-glass "was (herself) yet not quite (herself)" (Rhys, 162).

The Use of Dialogue: Empowering the Marginalized Bertha Through Words

Rhys, in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* uses dialogue to fight imperialism and to empower the marginalized Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre*. Bertha is both a narrator and a character in the story. This technique is used to give Bertha both Power and credibility in telling her story just the way it gave Jane the power and credibility in *Jane Eyre*. As a marginalized, almost-non-existent character in Bronte's novel, Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is turned into the protagonist and the heroine who goes through a tragedy that leads her to lose her mind and be imprisoned in an attic.

The Russian philosopher M.M Bakhtin is often credited for introducing the theory of dialogism, though as stated by Michael Holquist, Bakhtin never used the term dialogism to refer to his theory, directly. Dialogism is, thus, "used to refer to the interconnected set of

concerns that dominate Bakhtin's thinking," in a way that combines "the different ways he meditated on dialogue" (Holquist, 14). As Holquist puts it "dialogism, then, is part of a major tendency in European thought to reconceptualise epistemology the better to accord with the new versions of mind" in that it encompasses "an attempt to frame a theory of knowledge for an age" dominated by relativity (16).

For Graham Pechey, "novelistic dialogism may by the same token be understood as a metaphor for the subject in civil society constituted by multiple intersecting identities and personalities" (110). Since it is inevitable for individuals to communicate in their everyday life, dialogue is undoubtedly an essential component of social life that assures the smooth exchange of ideas between people. When individuals cease to engage in dialogue, or if they are being denied access to dialogic situations because of power and authority, they cease to exist. In the case of Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, the fact that she is not given a share in the dialogue made her invisible. The reader does not think of her as flesh and bones but rather as an object or ghost. In dialogism, "life is expression. Expression means to make meaning, and meaning comes about only through the medium of signs" (Holquist, 47). The signs in the realm of literature exist in the language of production.

Bakhtin was particularly interested in the study of the novel as a genre that has received little attention in literary studies. In this regard, he centres most of his philosophy on aspects that exist in the novel. According to Bakhtin, novelists, such as Dostoevsky, who use a multiplicity of voices in their texts are the original ones who succeed in presenting the truth. Such writers adhere to "the new artistic task" that revolves around "constructing a polyphonic world and destroying the established forms of the fundamentally *monologic* (homophonic) European novel" (Bakhtin, 90). This aspect of polyphony adds to the diversification of voices in the novel and presents the characters' different consciousness that opposes the authority of homophony.

Unlike Bronte's homophonic voice in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys's *WSS* presents the story polyphonically. As it is mentioned above, the story is told by three different narrators. The portion of the story, or the fragment of events that is revealed by each narrator builds up the parts that make the story complete. In this sense, "dialogism is a form of architectonics, the general science of ordering parts into a whole" that is about "relations" which are "never static, but always in the process of being made or unmade" (Holquist, 28). The events narrated by Antoinette are

connected to the part narrated by her husband as they are both related to the brief part of Grace Pool. The total sum of this polyphony is what renders the story whole and authentic. The concept of polyphony " can therefore be characterized as person-related" that "implies not only a plurality of voices, but also a genuine encounter among the various subjective points of view" (Steinby, 40).

The use of fictional dialogue by Rhys in this particular novel is regarded as a means to strengthen Antoinette's stand as a white Creole wife of a white Englishman. By having the possibility to converse with him freely, Antoinette breaks all prejudices regarding white superiority and intelligence. According to Bronwen, "the very conventions developed by novelists for representing fictional dialogue could be said to carry ideological meaning," and that direct "character's utterances (are) accepted as a mark of authenticity but also of value" (38). As such, Rhys' ideology here is about condemning imperialism and empowering the periphery.

In fact, the novel could have been entitled Antoinette Cosway Mason like Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. However, it seems that Rhys is addressing the Caribbean population as a whole, those who lived in the arena of the wide Sargasso Sea. Naming is highly important here. By giving Bertha a sophisticated name, Antoinette, and by showing how Mr Rochester denied her the original name, Rhys is well aware of how one's name affects one's realization of the self. This is not new with the imperial practices of attributing names to the colonized subjects in order to make them forget who they were before the coming of the white men. Rhys takes it further to an extreme when she denies Mr Rochester a name in her novel. Only through the technique of intertextuality, that it is revealed that he is the Mr Rochester from Bronte's classic. One who did not read *Jane Eyre* before Wide Sargasso Sea would only know him as the husband of Antoinette, an English man who lacked a fortune.

Antoinette's narrative discourse and dialogue changes alongside the course of events. As Robinson (2011) puts it "people are also transformed through dialogue" in which "dialogue can produce a decisive reply which produces actual changes". To illustrate, in the first part, Antoinette is confident in her speech and even the conversations she elaborates assure her sense of strength even when she was deprived of her mother's affection. When she married Mr Rochester, her narrative discourse reached its peak when she was the happiest. However, right after the abrupt coldness from her husband, Antoinette started to lose, not

only her self-realization, but also she started to lose her own voice. The climax for her deteriorated state was when she found out about the cheating of her husband with the maid who hated her and mocked her the most. After that incident, Antoinette lost the desire to engage in conversation and instead she was forced to resolve into drinking and sleeping as a means for comfort and solace.

It is because of this decline in her mental state that Antoinette is thought to be mad. Her husband takes her to England. Yet, instead of having her psychologically treated, he confines her into a remote room in his mansion, which he purchased with her own money. That last straw broke Antoinette's back. As everyone deserted her and announced her mad, Antoinette started to act as a madwoman and human conversation was no longer an option for her. It is through this rationalization of events that the reader understands how Antoinette was rendered weak and helpless. To the very end, Rhys keeps questioning and even rationalizing Antoinette's madness. As readers, we may even think of it as a resistance to those who locked her up and denied her the freedom she once had.

The picture that Rhys draws of Antoinette and the stages of her supposed madness is quite similar to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1889). In the short story, Gilman reveals the account of an unnamed woman who is struggling with a psychological issue. As it is described in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the woman; wife of a doctor who is called John, is diagnosed "with one but temporary depression- a slight hysterical tendency" (Gilman 1889, 3). Nonetheless, instead of treating her depression, the woman was assigned to what is known as the "rest cure" in which she is not supposed to engage in any intense physical activity; not even caring for her baby or writing letters. In *WSS*, Antoinette goes through a similar treatment when she starts feeling tired and moody, everyone advised her to sleep and avoid anything that might bring her frustration. Men, namely the husbands and brother of the protagonists in both stories of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* representing the patriarchal imperial force, are viewed as "wise men who attempt to manage 'mad' women medically" (Hume, 2).

For both women, their social and physical existence is reduced to the extent that they started to appear as mere objects in their houses. Both women are being taken care of physically in terms of food and medicine but psychologically and emotionally they are deprived, especially that it is this mental aspect that they crave the most. Not surprisingly, in the

case of the woman in Gilman's story, her mental condition keeps deteriorating because of forced confinement and lack of communication until she loses completely her mind and she becomes mad as she "kept on creeping" (Gilman 1889, 19) like an animal on all fours, at the end of the story.

In Antoinette's case, drinking was her prescribed solution for her distressed state that helped her sleep. However, gradually, and with the loss of the ability to engage in proper dialogue with her husband in particular, Antoinette enters a state of psychological instability in which her husband declares her mad and resolves to locking her up in the attic. This confinement and deportation to England further worsens Antoinette's condition until she becomes mad and unhuman. Through adding such details to the plot, Rhys invites the reader to think about possible scenarios that would have taken place had Antoinette received the proper care and treatment instead of being locked up and shut away.

Another interesting note regarding *Wide Sargasso Sea* is that it could be considered, as a whole, as a dialogue between Jean Rhys and Charlotte Bronte. Though the two writers lived in completely different times, through their writings they were conversing with the shared subject of the madwoman in the attic. Bertha Mason or Antoinette Cosway gave them something in common to present to the world. However, while Bronte chose to present the Creole with utterly racist description using an authoritative homophonic voice, Rhys chose to defend and empower the helpless Bertha Mason and present the story with multiple voices, giving the choice to readers to decide for themselves. According to Susan Meyer, Bronte was "following the common racist convention" that she has "associated with blacks since her childhood" (Meyer, 254). In this regard, she considers the Creole as a black who is not human enough to stand next to the white Jane Eyre.

As Bronte silenced the Creole in her story, Rhys wrote back giving her a full life, as if she was directly talking back, to *Jane Eyre*. Even Antoinette encounters Jane Eyre in *WSS*, but the matter is reversed. It is not Bertha who appears as a ghostly figure that is unable to converse properly, but it is Jane Eyre who is viewed as a ghost that does not speak in front of Antoinette. This particular scene in which there is no dialogue between Jane and Antoinette is highly emblematic in denoting how imperialism is being challenged by its subjects. Normally, Jane is the one speaking while Bertha is unable to converse as a human. However, the balance is altered in Rhys' novel as Antoinette is the one with the ability

to converse and engage in dialogue and Jane is the unhuman entity that does not talk.

Conclusion

Resisting the imperial prestige of the classic *Jane Eyre* that misrepresents her ethnicity, Jean Rhys resolved to rewrite the story of the creole madwoman in the attic that does not have any dialogue in Bronte's novel. Rhys gives Bertha Mason a name, a voice, and a story, which in return gives her an authentic existence. She is no longer the ghost in the hallways, or the beast that growls and grovels in the attic. She is a respectable heiress from Spanish Town, Jamaica, who had a home, a fortune, and a family before her downfall and displacement. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the protagonist is the marginalized character in another work. Even the use of dialogue to empower such character is aided with having Antoinette as both a narrator and a character in the story. This led to a magnificent altering and revision of *Jane Eyre*. Whoever reads *Wide Sargasso Sea* after reading *Jane Eyre*, will surely reconsider the character of the madwoman in the attic and the nobleness of Mr Rochester. As such, *Wide Sargasso Sea* becomes the reworking that challenges the original in fascinating ways.

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