

**University of Pardubice  
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Multiple Identities in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys**

**Veronika Dibelková**

**Bachelor Thesis  
2013**

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Akademický rok: 2012/2013

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Veronika Dibelková**  
Osobní číslo: **H10512**  
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**  
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**  
Název tématu: **Identity v díle Širé Sargasové moře od Jean Rhysové**  
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Studentka se ve své bakalářské práci zaměří na analýzu identit v díle *Wide Sargasso Sea* od Jean Rhysové. Studentka nejprve uvede autorku do příslušného literárního kontextu s ohledem na celé její dílo, ale především zvolený román. Dále se zaměří na charakteristiku historického vývoje Karibiku, která je k danému dílu relevantní. Pozornost bude věnovat především otázce otroctví a pozice Afričanů v karibské oblasti před a po zrušení otroctví, kreolské identitě a postojům Britů k místnímu obyvatelstvu. Důležitá je v souvislosti s analyzovaným dílem i otázka ztráty vlastní identity. Těžištěm literární analýzy bude konfrontace těchto kulturních aspektů s románem Rhysové. Studentka vytvoří analytický akademický text založený na dostatečném množství kvalitních primárních a sekundárních zdrojů.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

ASHCROFT, Bill, GRIFFITHS a Helen TIFFIN. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: ROUTLEDGE, 2002. ISBN 978-0-415-28020-4. BRONTË, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: PENGUIN CLASSICS, 2007. ISBN 10: 0140623256. EDWARDS, Justin D. *Postcolonial Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. ISBN 10:0230506747. HALL, Stuart. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996. ISBN 10: 0803978839. PARRY, J. H., Philip M. SHERLOCK a Anthony P. MAINGOT. *A Short History of the West Indies*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1987. ISBN 10: 033340954X. RHYS, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: PENGUIN CLASSICS, 2001. ISBN 10: 0140818030. YOUNG, Robert J.C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: ROUTLEDGE, 1995. ISBN 0415053749.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

**Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.**

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

**30. dubna 2012**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

**31. března 2013**



prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSc.

děkan

L.S.



Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.

vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2012

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

Byla jsem seznámena s tím, že se na moji práci vztahují práva a povinnosti vyplývající ze zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., autorský zákon, zejména se skutečností, že Univerzita Pardubice má právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití této práce jako školního díla podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona, a s tím, že pokud dojde k užití této práce mnou nebo bude poskytnuta licence o užití jinému subjektu, je Univerzita Pardubice oprávněna ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložila, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše.

Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 26. 3. 2013

Veronika Dibelková

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Olga Roebuck, M. Litt., Ph.D., for her kindness and valuable advice. Also, many thanks go to my family for their support during my studies.

## **Annotation**

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a novel written by Jean Rhys, which depicts the West Indies during the British colonial rule soon after the abolition of slavery. The analysis is focused on the identities in the novel. It follows the shift from slavery in the West Indies and the consequent identity crisis of the individual characters.

## **Keywords**

Rhys; Jean; *Wide Sargasso Sea*; the West Indies; the Caribbean; identity; colonial; Creole

## **Anotace**

Hlavním cílem této práce je analýza románu Jean Rhysové *Šíré Sargasové moře*, který se odehrává v anglicky mluvícím Karibiku během koloniální nadvlády Britského impéria krátce po zrušení otroctví. Tato práce sleduje změnu ve společnosti, která nastala po osvobození otroků a následné krize identity postav v románu.

## **Klíčová slova**

Rhysová; Jean; *Šíré Sargasové Moře*; Karibik; identita; koloniální; Kreolka; kreolský

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. THE COLONIAL HISTORY OF THE CARIBBEAN.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. CARIBBEAN NATIONAL IDENTITY .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4. CREOLE IDENTITY.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5. BLACK CARIBBEAN IDENTITY .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6. THE ENGLISH IN THE WEST INDIES.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>7. LOSS OF IDENTITY .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>8. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>RESUMÉ .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>47</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

At its height, the British Empire ruled over a significant part of the world. This is why it is no wonder that the British colonial rule affected the history of the whole world. English settlers established colonies in distant lands and a large number of people were either forced to work for a low wage, or imported from Africa and subsequently enslaved. Upon arriving in the colonies, these people were deprived of their basic rights. They were forced into unpaid work in new cultural environments with rules and languages of the colonizers, who deprived these uprooted people of their original identity. Thus, they had to adapt in order to survive. Extramarital affairs between slave owners and their female slaves were not uncommon, and this resulted in the creation of a new race. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to define Caribbean identities with a focus on the English-speaking Caribbean in the colonial period and to track how individuals were affected by colonialism.

The search for identity became a never-ending struggle for all races in the Caribbean. As nearly all the indigenous people were replaced by white slave owners and slaves, both of whom arrived from diverse cultures, there was nothing left of the original Caribbean culture. Although the subordinate people tried to preserve their habits and traditions as a part of their cultural identity, they had to assimilate into the culture of the colonizers.

Colonial experience and its impact on people were major themes in the twentieth century literature, especially at the point of the dissolution of the British Empire. Caribbean writers and thinkers such as V.S. Naipaul, Aimé Césaire, Kamau Brathwaite and Jean Rhys wrote about the colonial experience in the Caribbean with an aim to criticise imperialism. Jean Rhys was one of the significant twentieth century postcolonial authors. She published most of her books in the interwar period between the 1920s and the 1930s. After that she remained in seclusion for a few decades before publishing *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966. All Rhys's novels tackle similar matters – all present a West Indian woman who is “exiled both culturally and sexually” (Emery, 1982, p. 418) and struggles to cope with displacement and a patriarchal society. Like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Rhys experimented with the modernist style of writing. Modernism is a literary movement which was at its height in the first half of the twentieth century. This literary movement is typical for “a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position and function in the universe and [...] experiments in form and style.” (Cuddon, 1998, pp. 515-



516) By applying the modernist techniques, the novels “present an intensely personal rather than social vision.” (Emery, 1982, p. 418) She is likened to postcolonial feminist writers such as Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall and Margaret Atwood for drawing “an analogy between the relationships of men and women and those of the imperial power and the colony.” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 30) *Wide Sargasso Sea* differs from Rhys’s interwar novels in one aspect. The novel is written in a similar literary style as her previous works and tackles the same topics, such as displacement, the search for identity and a critique of patriarchy. However, what makes *Wide Sargasso Sea* stand out is the fact that the book is a ‘rewriting’ of *Jane Eyre*, the English classic written by Charlotte Brontë in 1847. *Wide Sargasso Sea* functions as a prequel to *Jane Eyre* because it tells the life story of Rochester’s mad wife, who in Brontë’s novel is a stereotypical portrayal of a woman in the colonial West Indies from the English point of view. As Ashcroft et al. point out, such writing is known as ‘writing back’ and it is especially common in the postcolonial literature which looks back at the colonial period. Such response to a canonical novel is the result of “post-colonial reading” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 173) The term ‘post-colonial’ is defined as “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 194) The aim of the post-colonial reading is to search the text for colonial ideas which would reveal the opinions of the colonizers in the colonial period. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 173) The terms ‘imperialism’ and ‘colonialism’ and the difference between them will be further dealt with in the following chapter.

Rhys belonged to the group of postcolonial writers, such as J.M. Coetzee, V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood etc., who did not merely rewrite canonical novels by “reversing the hierarchical order”, but also by “restructuring European ‘realities’ in post-colonial terms... [and] interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based.” (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 32) Tiffin calls this type of writing “canonical counter-discourse” for the usage of the canonical text for “post-colonial purposes” by borrowing characters or ideas from the previous text. She emphasises that Rhys does not merely write back to *Jane Eyre*, but “to the whole of the discursive field within which such a text operated and continues to operate in postcolonial worlds.” (Tiffin, Ashcroft, 2006, pp. 100-101) As Ciolkowski suggests, Jean Rhys writes back to “the imperial logics and commonsense structures in which Brontë’s text is produced and consumed.” (Ciolkowski, 1997, p. 351) The novel presents the white colonial subject’s search for identity:

*Wide Sargasso Sea* seems born of a historical moment when the older nationalism of the largely absentee English settlers of the early nineteenth century, who would have looked unquestioningly to England for their cultural identity, has given way, in the century between emancipation and the time of Rhys's beginning the novel, to the "identity crisis" of the white former colonial at the end of empire. (Erwin, 1989, p. 156)

Therefore, by contrasting the point of view in *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* questions the imperial politics, patriarchy and slavery. The novel comprises multiple first-person narrators; therefore, multiple points of view. The narration switches from Antoinette to her unnamed husband, Rochester from *Jane Eyre*, and to Grace Poole who is Antoinette's jailer in England. The switch in narration is important as each narrator tells the story from their perspective. Unlike Charlotte Brontë, Rhys allows both Antoinette and Rochester to tell their side of the story.

The paper comprises two main parts. The first part of the paper focuses on the historical context of the English-Speaking Caribbean, which is the main setting of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The primary focus is on the colonial history and the changes before and after the Slavery Abolition Act 1833. The last part of the theoretical part provides a definition of the Caribbean national identity and addresses the problem of displacement.

The second part is an analysis of identities in the above mentioned novel. First of all , the analysis concentrates on the identity of the main character, a Creole woman, whose portrayal is contrasted with the imperialistically influenced Brontë's view of the West Indians in *Jane Eyre*. Secondly, the identities of black characters are presented and are followed by the analysis of the behaviour of the English towards the West Indians. Finally, the problem of losing one's identity as a result of imperialism is discussed at the end of the analytic part, where is Antoinette's loss of identity analysed.

The following chapter provides an introduction into the colonial period.

## 2. THE COLONIAL HISTORY OF THE CARIBBEAN

The issues of identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which will be dealt with later in the paper, are closely related to the settlement and colonial history of the Caribbean islands. These islands are known as the Caribbean or the West Indies. According to Ashcroft et al., the difference between these terms is that “the term ‘Caribbean’ refers to all island nations located in the area, while ‘West Indian’ refers only to those nations that were formerly British colonies.” The latter term originated from Columbus’s assumption of arriving in India. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, pp. 27-28) Though the European settlement of the islands started after the discovery in 1492, it is necessary to mention that there had already been native inhabitants, the Caribs and Arawaks, who became extinct shortly after the beginning of the European settlement. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 2) The first settlers, the Spaniards, were the first to realize the potential of the fertile grounds and started planting sugar cane in the Caribbean. This work required cheap labour and after the initial attempts to enslave the local inhabitants proved to be unfruitful, the slave import to the Caribbean was established at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (Parry et al., 1987, pp. 17-18) However, the English did not settle in the Caribbean until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 48)

Before speaking about the colonial practices of the white settlers, it is essential to define the key terms. Said defines imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” and colonialism as “a consequence of imperialism, the implanting of settlements on distant territory.” (Said, 1994, p. 9) Moreover, as Said suggests, colonialism and imperialism are not only connected with acquisition of foreign lands, but also with spreading culture and knowledge of the colonizers regarding the other race as inferior. (Said, 1994, p. 9) In the case of the British Empire, it was the spread of the English language and culture, which were considered advanced in comparison with the local languages, cultures and habits. What is more, European colonialism was the main reason for the dislocation of a large number of people, especially the African people:

Although people have always moved either voluntarily or by force, European colonialism entailed a massive dislocation of people in the form of the slave trade and later indentured labor, as well as generating other movements among European countries and their colonies. (Behdad, Schwarz, 2005, p. 396)

Ashcroft et al. define dislocation as “the occasion of displacement that occurs as a result of imperial occupation and the experiences associated with this event.” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 65) According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, displacement is “the enforced departure of people from their homes, typically because of war, persecution, or natural disaster.” (oxforddictionaries.com) Thus, the colonies in the Caribbean were not typical settler colonies, since the majority of the settlers were slaves imported from Africa and settler colonies are usually considered to be colonies which were settled by the Europeans. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 193)

The import of slaves was connected with the beginning of “sugar revolution” and resulted in changing the composition of the West Indian society. Because sugar became the main product in English and French islands after 1650, the labour present there was not sufficient; therefore, it was necessary to import slaves from Africa. (Parry et al., 1987, pp. 60,64) The slave population would increase gradually and at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century African slaves formed the majority of the population. (Parry et al., 1986, p. 67)

Slavery had already been present in Africa when the first slaves were first imported to the colonies. The slaves in Africa were either debtors or prisoners enslaved as a form of punishment. Considered to be commodities for sale, they lost all their rights upon their arrival to the colonies and their fate depended solely on the slave owner. (Parry et al., 1987, pp. 68-69) According to Ashcroft et al., the European form of slavery was harsher and crueller than the forms of slavery that had existed before. In the ancient Greek and Roman societies, slaves were not subjected to such cruelties and inhumane behaviour while in the European view of slavery, slaves became commodities in the commercial slave trade and their only purpose was to provide labour for the plantations. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, pp. 40,195) The behaviour towards slaves was generally accepted and tolerated. Parry et al. explain that “[t]he exploiters rationalized their savagery in the way the Nazis did with the Jews, [...] treating blacks as subhuman, inferior beings. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 89)

Slaves were granted freedom only in rare circumstances, for example, when slaves acquired money to buy themselves out of the slavery or slave owners freed their favourite slaves, especially their black mistresses and their children, who were, therefore, of a mixed race. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 134) In the novel, Antoinette’s dead father, a slave owner, can be used as an example confirming this theory:

“Pious”, they write up. “Beloved by all”. Not a word about the people he buy and sell like cattle. “Merciful to the weak”, they write up. Mercy! The man have a heart like stone. Sometimes when he get sick of a woman which is quickly, he free her like he free my mother, even he give her a hut and a bit of land for herself (a garden some call that), but it is no mercy, it’s for wicked pride he do it. (Rhys, 2001, p. 77)

Consequently, as slaves and their mixed-race children were gradually given freedom, “a large class of free coloured people grew up in the course of the eighteenth century.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 134) The term ‘mulatto’, which was then widely used to describe these people, is defined as “a person with one white and one black parent”. (oxforddictionaries.com) Although being free, mulatto people did not belong among the group of white settlers and their “rights as citizens were limited.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 163)

The first step towards the emancipation of slaves was An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Caribbean in 1808. This law, however, did not mean the end of slavery because illicit slave trade emerged. (Parry et al., 1987, pp. 156-157) Hence, in 1823 the Anti-Slavery Society came into existence to demand total abolition of slavery. (nationalarchives.gov.uk) The turning point came in 1833 when the Emancipation Act was finally proclaimed. However, the law did not grant immediate freedom to all slaves:

The 1833 Act did not come into force until 1 August 1834. The first step was the freeing of all children under six. However, although the many thousands of enslaved people in the British West Indies were no longer legally slaves after 1 August 1834, they were still made to work as unpaid apprentices for their former masters. These masters continued to ill-treat and exploit them. Enslaved people in the Caribbean finally gained their freedom at midnight on 31 July 1838. (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Apprenticeship served as “a period of transition during which labourers would be prepared for full freedom by a series of social reforms and by the enjoyment of fuller rights.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 165) The system of apprenticeships brought dissatisfaction among the freed slaves as it “was an attempt at a compromise between two irreconcilables: slavery and freedom.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 164) The times of changes for all inhabitants followed after the abolition. The old system of plantations ended and slaves were gradually granted freedom after the end of the apprenticeship period. Though, as Parry et al. suggest, their freedom and equality was on paper, not in reality and “[t]he trouble was that the social structure based on slavery remained intact.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 164) Also, the relation between the slave owners and the former slaves changed because “those who had been owners of labour had become the buyers, and those who had been slaves were now the sellers of labour.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 165) The changes were not merely in the society, but also in the economy of the islands because “the

abolition of imperial preferences completed the destruction of the old plantation system.” (Parry et al., 1987, p. 163) Nevertheless, racial discrimination remained a hot issue after the abolition. It was the shade of one’s skin that determined one’s place and status in the society. (Kašpar, 2002, p. 153) Moreover, this preoccupation with racial differences and discrepancies in wealth caused that people did not feel united as a nation. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 165) This was also partly the result of the compensation provided from the British government for the slave owners for their losses in production and property caused by the abolition of slavery. On the other hand, slaves, who were ill-treated and their basic human rights were violated, received nothing:

Plantation owners received compensation for the ‘loss of their slaves’ in the form of a government grant set at £20,000,000. In contrast, enslaved people received no compensation and continued to face much hardship. They remained landless, and the wages offered on the plantations after emancipation were extremely low. (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

After the emancipation of slaves, there were some attempts to bring free people from Africa to provide the cheap labour. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 174) However, the most significant immigration of workforce was from India and China. Indentured labour from East Asia supplied workforce for the plantations. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 196-197) *Oxford Dictionaries* defines indenture as “a contract by which a person agreed to work for a set period for a landowner in a British colony in exchange for passage to the colony.” (oxforddictionaries.com) Indentured labourers were needed because it was not uncommon that the ex-slaves did no longer want to work for their former masters:

My stepfather talked about a plan to import labourers – coolies he called them – from the East Indies. When Myra had gone out Aunt Cora said, ‘I shouldn’t discuss that if I were you. Myra is listening.’ ‘But the people here won’t work. They don’t want to work. Look at this place – it’s enough to break your heart. (Rhys, 2001, p. 16)

The hatred between the ex-slaves and ex-slave owners after the emancipation was something to be expected. The theme of the relationship between blacks and whites as well as the question of their identities will be further explored later in the paper.

To conclude, this chapter provided a brief insight into the history of the changes in the racial composition of the West Indies. White settlement and import of slaves changed the racial structure of the population on the islands. The native inhabitants were replaced by white

settlers and slaves from Africa, both of whom had to get accustomed to the new environment. However, the Africans did not come voluntarily, which is reflected in the interracial conflicts.

The next chapter will deal with defining the identity in the Caribbean perspective.

### 3. CARIBBEAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Before addressing the issues of the Caribbean national identity, it is necessary to define the term 'identity' as such. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, identity is explained as "the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others." (oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com) Therefore, as shared identities help to understand oneself by differentiating from others, they "are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition." (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 30) In 'Who needs 'identity'?', Stuart Hall claims that identity and the process of identification are outcomes of a common background which is shared with somebody or something:

[I]dentification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. (Hall, du Gay, 2000, p. 16)

Moreover, he considers identification to be a continual process which is "never completed" throughout one's life. (Hall, du Gay, 2000, p. 16) Therefore, identity can be seen "as 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation." (Hall, Rutherford, 1990, p. 222) Hall suggests that identities "are constantly in the process of change and transformation." This means that identity can be changed anytime throughout the life. As he further claims, identity "can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned" and includes "the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it." (Hall, du Gay, 2000, pp. 16-17) It is because identities are neither fixed nor constant, and they are affected by external factors. Among the main factors affecting individual identities are history and historical events. Hall points out that "identity is not only a story [...] it is a set of stories that change with historical circumstances, and identify shifts with the way in which we think, hear and experience them." (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 30) The link between one's identity and physical things as a part of preserving one's identity will be further explored in the subsequent analysis of the novel.

One of the factors which keep people together is the sense of belonging to a particular race. Rustin considers identification with a racial group very important:



Identification with one 'racial group' and against another, oppression of one racial group by another, and resistance to such racial oppression by groups who define themselves in racial terms for this purpose, are among the most important forms of social cleavage, domination and resistance. (Rustin, du Gay, 2000, p. 184)

Culture is also important for one's identity as "[i]t provides a kind of ground for our identities: something to which we can return, something solid, something fixed, around which we can organize our identities and our sense of belongingness." (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 25) Therefore, cultural identity is a product of "those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories that remain unwritten." (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 37) However, Hall suggests that it does not mean that one should search for identity in the past as "[i]dentity is not in the past to be found but in the future to be constructed." (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 37)

Owing to the historical factors that helped create the contemporary Caribbean society, it is not so easy to define the Caribbean national identity. It is mainly because the islands differ one from another resulting from having a different imperial government in the past:

[T]he closed circles of imperial political and trading systems induced the islanders to see each island as a world. As a result Fort de France was nearer to Paris than to Barbados, Havana nearer to Madrid than to Kingston, Kingston nearer to London than to Port-au-Prince. (Parry et al., 1987, p. 150)

Also, the people in the West Indies, despite sharing the same land, did not share the same values as they differed in race, social background and a different country of origin. Moreover, the question was whether they came to the West Indies willingly or were forced to come. Thus, white settlers from Europe, black slaves from Africa and later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the indentured labourers had little in common. This is why even nowadays, long after the abolition of slavery and the collapse of the ruling empires, according to Girvan, "[t]he process of forming a common Caribbean psychocultural identity that transcends barriers of language and ethnicity is at best slow and uneven." (Girvan, Meeks, 2001, p. 8) Hall points out that the issue of the common Caribbean identity became important in the twentieth century after the independence from the colonial powers. Dislocation, colonization, slavery and cultural dependence on the imperial centres made it problematic to define the Caribbean national identity as "the search for identity always involves a search for origins." (Hall, Meeks, 2001, pp. 25-26) Therefore, after the centuries of the colonial experience, people who came from different backgrounds find it difficult to identify themselves as a single nation:

Not a single Caribbean island looks like any other in terms of its ethnic composition, including the different genetic and physical features and characteristics of the people. And that is before you touch the question of different languages and different cultural traditions that reflect the different colonizing cultures. (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 27)

During the colonization, the shared experience of slavery brought the uprooted Africans together. However, maintaining African cultural traditions was not easy because of the process of assimilation which Hall describes as “dragging the whole society into some imitative relationship with this other culture that one could never quite reach.” (Hall, Meeks, 2001, p. 29) Moreover, as Hall suggests, the experience of displacement and uprooting “unified” these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past.” (Hall, Rutherford, 1990, p. 227) The black people stopped being the Africans and turned into the West Indians. They were forced to learn the language of the colonizers and imitate their cultural habits. Hall points out that the black Caribbean identity is based on the common experience of slavery:

We might think of black Caribbean identities as ‘framed’ by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture. Caribbean identities always have to be thought of in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes. The one gives us some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity: the peoples dragged into slavery, transportation, colonization, migration, came predominantly from Africa – and when that supply ended, it was temporarily refreshed by indentured labour from the Asian subcontinent. (Hall, Rutherford, 1990, pp. 226-227)

To the black people in the Caribbean, Africa has been present in all aspects of their everyday life and customs. (Hall, Rutherford, 1990, p. 230) Africa, the place of origin of the majority of the population, remains important for the Caribbean people in the search for their identity:

It is the presence/absence of Africa, in this form, which has made it the privileged signifier of new conceptions of Caribbean identity. Everyone in the Caribbean, of whatever ethnic background, must sooner or later come to terms with this African presence. Black, brown, mulatto, white – all must look *Présence Africaine* in the face, speak its name. (Hall, Rutherford, 1990, p. 231)

If the problem of racial inequality could be put aside, it might be said that all the people in the Caribbean, white and black, ex-slaves and their former masters shared the same experience of dislocation as they all had to leave their homeland and had to get used to a new life in the Caribbean. (Ramchand, 1988, p. 96)

To sum up, it is important to realize the relationship between the colonial history of the islands and the problem of defining a Caribbean identity. As each island was under different colonial rule, the islands were never unified. Therefore, there is no common Caribbean identity that would join the inhabitants of the islands. As the indigenous people became extinct shortly after the first settlement of the colonizers, all the contemporary inhabitants came from different parts of the world. Some of them came voluntarily, whereas the others were imported as commodities, which is reflected in the black-white relations in the novel. Therefore, a link was formed between the traumas of the past and the ways in which the identities are shaped. This chapter concludes the theoretical part and the next chapter begins with an analysis of the Creole identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

## 4. CREOLE IDENTITY

As previously mentioned, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a story about a white Creole woman living in the post-emancipation West Indies. Jean Rhys wrote her most successful novel as a response to the postcolonial reading of *Jane Eyre*. The portrayal of a Creole woman and the West Indies is stereotypical and negative in this Victorian classic. Rhys, herself a white Creole from Dominica, attempted to create a life story for Bertha in order to explain her mysterious madness in *Jane Eyre* and criticize the politics and ideas of the British Empire. Spivak regards the character of Bertha Mason as “a figure produced by the axiomatic of imperialism.” In *Jane Eyre*, the figure of Bertha Mason borders between humanity and animality. (Spivak, 1985, p. 247) Bertha represents a mad daughter of a Creole and it is implied that madness is hereditary in their family as well as their tendency toward alcoholism:

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. (Brontë, 1994, p. 290)

Brontë has been criticized for depriving Bertha of her point of view. She provided no explanation for Bertha’s motives. Roy suggests that “Brontë did not choose to dignify the West Indian madwoman with speech, reason, a history, a grammar of motives, or even a human personality.” (Roy, 1989, p. 720) What is more, Rochester’s wife is repeatedly described as having animal characteristics:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (Brontë, 1994, p. 291)

Not only is the Creole woman given the opportunity to explain her motives, but she also loses her humanity as she is referred to as ‘it’. Moreover, in the following paragraph, she is described as “the clothed hyena.” (Brontë, 1994, p. 291) Therefore, because of coming from the colonies, the Creole woman is thought to be inferior to the English. When referred to as “a bad, mad, and embruted partner” (Brontë, 1994, p. 290), the figure of Bertha proves the stereotypical view of Creole women in the Caribbean. (Nair, Schwarz, 2005, p. 240)

Hence, Rhys attempted to give the madwoman from the attic the voice to speak for herself and explain what lies behind her madness. She wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* in response to the stereotypical views of the Creoles. The analysis of the two Creole characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* follows to show the relation between their Creole identity, historical events and madness.

First of all, it is necessary to define what the term 'creole' stands for. According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, it defines "a person of mixed European and black descent, especially in the Caribbean." (oxforddictionaries.com) The term was originally used to describe a white person of European descent living in the colonies, but gradually 'creole' started to be used for referring to all inhabitants regardless their colour or origin. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, pp. 50-51) Because the term was later applied to people of mixed race, Ghosh-Schellhorn points out that the white Creoles in *Wide Sargasso Sea* might be "'not quite right' due to a possible contamination of 'pure' European blood." (Ghosh-Schellhorn, 1998, p. 179) This is suggested when Rochester suspects that everybody on the island is related:

She raised her eyebrows and the corners of her mouth turned down in a questioning mocking way. For a moment she looked very much like Amélie. Perhaps they are related, I thought. It's possible, it's even probable in this damned place. (Rhys, 2001, p. 80)

Also, when Antoinette suffers head injury, her hair has to be cut and she is afraid that it will grow darker. This might also suggest the possibility of having a black ancestor in the family:

'Your hair had to be cut. You've been very ill, my darling,' said Aunt Cora. 'But you are safe with me now. We are all safe as I told you we would be. You must stay in bed though. Why are you wandering about the room? Your hair will grow again,' she said. 'Longer and thicker.' 'But darker,' I said. (Rhys, 2001, p. 24)

Therefore, the issues of race and colour are important as much as the issues of identity.

The main protagonist, Antoinette, and her mother Annette are white Creoles living in the post-emancipation Jamaica. Coming from a family of former slave owners, they are despised by both the ex-slaves and by the white newcomers. This is obvious from the first paragraph of the novel:

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self' Christophine said. (Rhys, 2001, p. 3)

Therefore, from the beginning until the end, the themes of the novel are belonging, identification and desertion. They live in seclusion on a large decaying plantation. While Annette attaches herself to her handicapped son, her daughter seeks constant, unchanging objects, such as the estate, their garden and a picture of 'The Miller's Daughter'. She is rejected by her mother; therefore, she demands attention from their black servant, Christophine, who is placed in the position of a caring mother figure.

The two white Creoles in the novel are constantly challenged by the question of belonging – their 'homeland' is England because it is the place from where their ancestors came from and it is the place with which they like to link, but they were born in the Caribbean. (Huggan, 1994, p. 655) Therefore, they are not English, but they also do not feel purely West Indian, as they are rejected by the whole West Indian society, both the ex-slaves and the rich newcomers who despise the former plantation owners. Also, the recent experience of slavery prevents them from being accepted by either the black or white people. This is one of the main issues for their isolation.

Also, because they are a minority in the Caribbean, their situation, according to Gunner, "gives a sense [...] of the Otherness of whiteness in the Caribbean." (Gunner, 1994, pp. 141-142) Thus, their abandonment by the society is not only due to the part that their family played in the history of slavery, but also owing to their skin colour. Because the Creole women repeatedly experience rejection from all sides, Antoinette's description of her childhood can be seen as "the confusion of the Creole woman who is caught between the increasingly separate moral and economic logics of England and the West Indian colonies." (Ciolkowski, 1997, p. 341) Her inability to understand the present situation puts her into a difficult position: "So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all..." (Rhys, 2001, p. 63)

Antoinette is caught between two identities – black and white, the English and the Caribbean. As Emery suggests, "[r]aised by her black nurse Christophine yet dressed in English clothes, Antoinette lives [...] in between two cultures." (Emery, 1982, p. 425) She is surrounded with English things, especially after her mother's marriage with Mr Mason. The marriage is the turning point because it is when Antoinette starts to feel to be more English than West Indian: "We ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings. I was glad to be like an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine's cooking." (Rhys, 2001, p. 16) Nevertheless, she realizes the difference between an Englishman and a West Indian. She knows that however they try to mimic the English way of life, they will never be truly English:

So I looked away from her at my favourite picture, 'The Miller's Daughter', a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping off her shoulders. Then I looked across the white tablecloth and the vase of yellow roses at Mr Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English. And at my mother, so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either. Not my mother. Never had been. Never could be. (Rhys, 2001, p. 17)

They are too poor to fit in the white rich society, which consists mainly of newcomers who came shortly after the emancipation to invest into abandoned estates similar to Coulibri, the estate that belonged to Antoinette's family. Before Annette's marriage with Mr Mason, they live in a decaying plantation:

Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. [...] All Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone to bush. No more slavery – why should *anybody* work? This never saddened me. I did not remember the place when it was prosperous. (Rhys, 2001, pp. 4-5)

The estate is decaying because the black people no longer want to work for them. As they are left alone without money and support, they are repeatedly insulted by the black people who call them 'white cockroaches' or 'white niggers' to distinguish them from newly arrived white people. The impoverished Creole women are thought to be outcasts in the West Indian society. They are rejected by the white society as well as the black society, who are supposed to be their inferiors. As Scharfman points out, "[t]he mother is subjected to mockery, poverty, suspicion, jealousy, loneliness, fear, and humiliation, as much by the remnants of her colonial community as by the black community surrounding her." (Scharfman, 1981, p. 100)

Burrows suggests that the desertion of white people is caused by the belief of the English that they are superior to the white inhabitants of the West Indies. However, the white Creoles long to be English because they still see England as the place of their origin. (Burrows, 2004, p. 29) As Burrows points out, "[i]t is to imperial whiteness that white creole ideological loyalty lies: but they are *white but not quite*." (Burrows, 2004, p. 29) This can be observed from Rochester's behaviour towards Antoinette as well as from the attitudes of Jamaican ladies towards her mother, when she saves herself from poverty by entering into marriage with a wealthy English gentleman:

'A fantastic marriage and he will regret it. Why should a very wealthy man who could take his pick of all the girls in the West Indies, and many in England too probably?' 'Why *probably*?' the other voice said. '*Certainly*.' 'Then why should he marry a widow without a penny to her name and Coulibri a wreck of a place? ... (Rhys, 2001, p. 11)

What makes their position worse is their financial situation. Receiving no compensation and having been left alone, Annette cannot do anything else but wait for better times to come. This is why she continues to live her life the way it was before the emancipation, maintaining the identity of a widow of a plantation owner, who used to be rich and socially accepted. Antoinette's mother tries desperately to maintain her social status, her dignity and lifestyle as if it remained intact during the emancipation:

She still rode about every morning not caring that the black people stood about in groups to jeer at her, especially after her riding clothes grew shabby (they notice clothes, they know about money). (Rhys, 2001, p. 4)

Thus, when her horse is poisoned, she can no longer continue in the routine that she maintained, which would remind her of the pre-emancipation times. When she complains, her servant Godfrey advises her to go on and not to dwell on the past, to accept their destiny as well as their current social status:

Godfrey said, 'I can't watch the horse night and day. I too old now. When the old time go, let it go. No use to grab at it. The Lord make no distinction between black and white, black and white the same for Him. Rest yourself in peace for the righteous are not forsaken.' But she couldn't. She was young. How could she not try for all the things that had gone so suddenly, so without warning. (Rhys, 2001, p. 4)

The most obvious hatred is shown by the black people. After the emancipation, when everybody is supposed to be equal, it is money that determines the social status. Therefore, Annette and Antoinette no longer belong to the local elite and by receiving no compensation from the British government, they become the outcasts of the society for living in a large decaying plantation and having no money for maintaining their social status. They are being called "white cockroaches" and "white niggers" to be punished for their family's slave owning history. They are labelled as "poor men's versions of the European whites." (Huggan, 1994, p. 655) They are bound to bear it as a punishment for the acts of their slave-owning family:

'Did you hear what that girl was singing?' Antoinette said. 'I don't always understand what they say or sing.' Or anything else. 'It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers.' (Rhys, 2001, pp. 62-63)



Finding a rich English husband gives Annette the possibility to return to the pre-emancipation times when she had money and power. However, as they acquire money, the black people grow to despise the Cosway-Mason family even more because of their transformation from ‘white niggers’ and ‘white cockroaches’ back to the rich society. It is implied that they were not punished adequately for their deeds caused by their family in the past. The punishment was, of course, poverty and the loss of their social status. By becoming rich, they avoid their punishment and thus are despised by the black people even more:

The black people did not hate us quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we would be dead for we had no money left. What was there to hate? Now it had started up again and worse than before, my mother knows but she can’t make him believe it. I wish I could tell him that out here is not at all like English people think it is. I wish ... (Rhys, 2001, p. 15)

Antoinette is rejected by white people, even by her own mother who prefers Antoinette’s handicapped brother, to whom she gives all her love and attention. This is why she tries to identify with black people around her, especially her only friend Tia and Christophine, their servant. The black woman is put into the position of a mother figure to Antoinette. Therefore, “she represents another community, another color, and another class in relation to her young ward, thus dramatizing the gap between colonial populations.” (Scharfman, 1981, p. 101) It is because of having an unloving mother that Antoinette searches for love among the black people. Annette does not help her daughter to identify with herself, and yet forces her to accept the white identity:

Then there was that day when she saw I was growing up like a white nigger and she was ashamed of me, it was after that day that everything changed. Yes, it was my fault, it was my fault that she started to plan and work in a frenzy, in a fever to change our lives. (Rhys, 2001, p.84)

Erwin suggests that “[h]aving been subjected both to her mother’s attempts to *make* her “white” and to the metropolitan view that the effort is failure, Antoinette will try to be black, not an anomalous ‘white nigger’.” (Erwin, 1989, p. 144)

In Antoinette’s opinion, the only way to secure the connection with the island is through the black people. As Haliloglu suggests, this is because she does not want to lose her link with her home. (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 162) Thus, when the black people set fire the estate, she sees that the only possibility of maintaining her identity is to stay and assimilate with the black people:

Then, not so far off, I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass. (Rhys, 2001, p. 23)

Willing to ‘change the colour’ and assimilate, Antoinette does not realize the difference between herself and her friend Tia because Antoinette comes from a slave-owning family and Tia is from the family of ex-slaves. Thus, “to be the same as they, Antoinette would have to be able to differ from herself.” (Scharfman, 1981, p. 101) It is not only a matter of race; it is a problem of the history that these people share since certain issues can never be forgotten.

As already mentioned above, the question of belonging to a particular place is very important in the novel because Antoinette cannot identify with people and cannot trust them. Hence, she identifies with the estate and other physical things which surround her:

I took another road, past the old sugar works and the water wheel that had not turned for years. I went to parts of Coulibri that I had not seen, where there was no road, no path, no track. And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think ‘It’s better than people.’ Black ants or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin – once I saw a snake. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people. (Rhys, 2001, p. 11)

After the marriage with Rochester, she links herself with another place, the estate in Massacre, where the newlyweds spend their honeymoon. She explains to Rochester: “I love it more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person. More than a person.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 53) As Gunner points out, it is Antoinette’s isolation from people that “gives a sense both of the Otherness of whiteness in the Caribbean and of the child’s rich imaginative life.” (Gunner, 1994, pp. 141-142) It is for the lack of maternal love that Antoinette attaches herself to physical objects rather than human beings. Her mother, who is supposed to be her role model, is distant and unloving. Hence, the Coulibri Estate is her only solace in her unhappy childhood. When the estate is burnt down by the black people, she would rather stay and assimilate with them rather than move away and continue life with her family even though they are enemies.

To conclude this chapter, the Creole women in the novel are caught between two worlds – the Caribbean and the English. Their lives are affected by the historical events preceding the emancipation. Therefore, Antoinette as a young girl is desperate to find a place

in the society. She understands the logic of belonging to the English side as they are white, thus should be superior to the black ex-slaves. However, she feels that belonging to the black society would help her secure a permanent connection with her homeland. For this reason, she remains torn between two worlds and two identities. Now, it is time to focus on the problems of the black people in the Caribbean.

## 5. BLACK CARIBBEAN IDENTITY

As the story of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is set in Jamaica and Dominica only a few years after the abolition of slavery, coming into terms with its consequences can be seen as one of the key themes in the novel. Although slavery is already over at the point of the beginning of the novel, both the black and white people have to face the consequences of the shared history of slavery. The black people present in the novel will be analyzed with further attention to the change in their situation following the shift from slavery to freedom.

The black people in the Caribbean, as it was already mentioned in the previous chapters, were brought to the Caribbean as slaves from Africa against their will. They were forced to assimilate and leave most of their culture and habits behind. Not only were they displaced and uprooted, but they also experienced inhumane and degrading treatment from the slave owners, for they were treated as commodities. Therefore, the black people's feelings of hostility towards the former slave owners after the emancipation are more than understandable:

I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping curs lie. One day a little girl followed me singing, 'Go away white cockroach, go away, go away.' I walked fast, but she walked faster. 'White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you. Go away.' (Rhys, 2001, p. 7)

Haliloglu explains this kind of behaviour as the black people's form of revenge which is expressed "by violence and by the discursive tools of alienating and, in their own way, denigrating the whites." (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 157) Verbal abuse is one of the weapons that the black people in the novel possess. As they experienced offensive behaviour and language from the slave owners, they strike back by treating the ex-slave owners in a similar way. The white Creoles accept the degrading treatment as a form of a punishment. They are of course aware of the injustice that their family caused, even though it was not their fault. Therefore, they stay away from the black society apart from the few servants who stayed with them after the end of slavery. One of them is Christophine, the most important black character in the novel. She represents a former slave who used to be treated as a commodity, as Annette explains to Antoinette: "She [Christophine] was your father's wedding present to me – one of his presents. He thought I would be pleased with a Martinique girl." (Rhys, 2001, p. 6) After the emancipation, Christophine gains freedom; however, she decides to stay with the Cosways, as Annette comments: "Christophine stayed with me because she wanted to stay.

She had her very own reasons you may be sure.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 6) Therefore, she represents a loyal family servant, who functions as a link with the outside world for the Cosway family. Antoinette mentions that if it had not been for Christophine, they would have died: “I dare say we would have died if she’d turned against us and that would have been a better fate.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 6) Therefore, Christophine symbolizes a free woman, who is able to choose her own destiny: ““All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. [...] but no husband, I thank my God. I keep my money. I don’t give it to no worthless man.”” (Rhys, 2001, p. 68) Although not educated, she is wise and functions as Antoinette’s advisor. Unlike Antoinette, she is free of the social conventions. Moreover, she has power over herself and can make her own decisions, whereas Antoinette, a white woman, becomes the property of her husband and thus her fate depends entirely on his whims.

Although the slavery is over, as Christophine suggests, the colonizers have not changed their ways of treating the black people to better because the attitude of white people towards black people remains the same:

No more slavery! She had to laugh! ‘These new ones have Letter of the Law. Same thing. They got magistrate. They got fine. They got jail house and chain gang. They got tread machine to mash up people’s feet. New ones worse than old ones – more cunning, that’s all.’ (Rhys, 2001, p. 10)

Despite the fact that they are no longer slaves, the black people are still not treated equally. Christophine does not trust white people because, in her opinion, they always find their ways how to cheat black people. Thus, Christophine rejects both patriarchy and colonial practices.

For the black people in Jamaica, it is important to stay close together as a group as it is important for the white people. Christophine comes from Martinique and this is the reason why she is not accepted by the black society in Jamaica. She is in a similar position to the white Creoles, Annette and Antoinette. It is because she comes from an island which is under the French colonial rule. Moreover, her skin colour is darker, she dresses differently and people are afraid of her because she is not the same as they are:

She was much blacker – blue-black with a thin face and straight features. She wore a black dress, heavy gold earrings and a yellow handkerchief – carefully tied with two high points in front. No other negro woman wore black, or tied her handkerchief Martinique fashion. She had a quiet voice and a quiet laugh (when she did laugh), and though she could speak good English if she wanted to, and French as well as patois, she took care to talk as they talked. But they would have nothing to do with her and she never saw her son who worked in Spanish Town. She had only one friend – a woman called Maillotte, and Maillotte was not a Jamaican. (Rhys, 2001, p. 6)

In this paragraph, it is implied that however hard she tried to assimilate, she still would not be accepted within the black Jamaican circle. Therefore, her attempts to speak Jamaican Creole in order to fit in the society are not enough to make her one of them. This suggests that although having common African roots, the black people were divided by the colonial politics of each island. Thus, their African identity was suppressed by entering the Caribbean. Therefore, in Christophine's case, the problems in socialization with people outside her circle are not caused by the language barrier, but by their refusal. She has only one friend, who is also not a Jamaican. Hence, she herself must seek acquaintances with shared social background. The issue implied here is one of the reasons why there is no common Caribbean identity even for the black people whose ancestors had the same experience of being uprooted from their homeland.

As the novel is a story of a white Creole, the black people are given a limited space. There is the above mentioned Christophine, a Martinique woman who is not accepted by the black Jamaican society, and Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's half brother. Being a person of a mixed origin, he is neither black nor white. His mother was a slave, freed by his father, old Cosway. Daniel mimics the lifestyle of the colonizers, repressing his half-black origin because he thinks that being half white makes him superior to black people. It is mainly because the black people were made believe by the English to be 'the lowest caste'. This is apparent from his conversation with Rochester, when Daniel tells him about his relationship with his father: "This because sometimes I ask help to buy a pair of shoes and such. Not to go barefoot like a nigger. Which I am not." (Rhys, 2001, p. 77) By implying that he is not one of the black people – a 'nigger', he contradicts himself. He criticizes white people because of racism, especially old Cosway who preferred his white children over the 'mulattoes'. However, when he considers himself to be superior to the black people, he behaves as a racist as well. This is caused by his desire to be white, as he compares being white to being respectable. This phenomenon is explained by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask* as the need for assimilation with 'superior' culture in order to prove the colonizers their equality:

Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (Fanon, 2008, p. 9)

Furthermore, Fanon claims that “[f]or the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white.” (Fanon, 2008, p. 4) This statement does provide an explanation for Daniel’s behaviour. He, as a mixed-race person, does not want to be linked with the black people. In his opinion, to be white is to mimic the behaviour of white people to differentiate from the ‘lower caste’. This is in connection with the above mentioned extract from the novel, when Daniel compares going barefoot to behaving like uncivilised people.

Extramarital relationships between slave owners and their female slaves were not uncommon; therefore, Daniel’s example is one of many others. When he describes his relation to the Cosway family in a letter to Mr Rochester, he implies that there are many other illegitimate children: “I am your wife’s brother by another lady, half-way house as we say. Her father and mine was a shameless man and of all his illegitimates I am the most unfortunate and poverty stricken.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 58) He complains because his other half-siblings are better-off than he is. Hence, his revenge is turned against Antoinette who is the only legal heiress of their father. This is why he attempts to persuade Rochester about the madness in the family history. He does this in order to “right the wrongs he thinks have been committed against him as a non-white member of the colonial family.” The purpose of his revenge is to prove racial inferiority of the Creoles in comparison with the English. (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 170) Daniel succeeds in his endeavours to degrade the Cosway family in the Rochester’s eyes and turns him against Antoinette.

Although the novel does not explicitly speak about displacement and uprooting of the black people, it is indirectly suggested that Christophine, the black servant, is a victim of displacement and she is affected by the colonial politics as she is not accepted within the Jamaican circle of ex-slaves. However, after the emancipation her situation changes significantly as she becomes a free woman, not bound by social conventions, unlike the white Creoles. On the other hand, Daniel Cosway, who is Antoinette’s half-brother, shows as a mixed-race person what it is to be caught between two races. Unlike Antoinette, who wishes to be black, he wants to be white. He looks down at black people, considering them to be uncivilised and subordinate to him and to the white people. Hence, he rejects his black identity to become white – ‘civilized’. The clash of the white and black races will be further discussed in the next chapter.

## 6. THE ENGLISH IN THE WEST INDIES

As the narrators in the novel switch unexpectedly, it is only right to ask for the reason behind employing these changes of the narrative points of view. The novel begins with Antoinette's narration and her side of the story in which she provides the reader the information on her unhappy childhood. In the second part, the narrator becomes a man who remains unnamed; however, a reader of *Jane Eyre* knows that the mysterious character is Edward Rochester. The purpose of his narration is to provide a look at the West Indies from an external perspective and to describe the story through the colonial logic. Therefore, he provides a similar point of view as *Jane Eyre* in his perception of the colonies. His view of the West Indies and the West Indians is impaired by a few factors. First of all, as a younger son, he is not to inherit his father's wealth. This is why he is sent to the West Indies to get married to a wealthy Creole heiress. Throughout the novel, he is unable to deal with the fact that his father arranged his marriage and sent him to the West Indies regardless of his will. Being the younger son of his father, his pride is hurt by undergoing an arranged marriage for purely financial reasons. Spivak points out that "he is a victim of the patriarchal inheritance law of entailment rather than of a father's preference for the first born." (Spivak, 1985, p. 251) Because he is used to the English environment and culture, Rochester sees the West Indies as an exotic place and thus throughout his narration he keeps on resenting the place and its inhabitants, merely just for the difference from England. What is more, he shows disregard for other people's feelings. Especially Antoinette, his bride, being different from English women, attracts him at first, but then repulses him:

I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. (Rhys, 2001, p. 37)

This is why he finds it difficult to establish a relation with the place and his bride as he sees everything with dislike: "Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near." (Rhys, 2001, p. 39) Every aspect of the West Indian life is seen from the English perspective. Not only everything seems exotic and not quite right to him, but he is also annoyed with Antoinette and her behaviour: "And the woman is a stranger. Her pleading



expression annoys me. I have not bought her, she has bought me, or so she thinks.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 39)

The sadness over his fate of a younger son is apparent when he is trying to compose a letter to his father:

Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must be seen to). I have a modest competence now. I will never be a disgrace to you or to my dear brother the son you love. No begging letters, no mean requests. None of the furtive shabby manoeuvres of a younger son. I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet... (Rhys, 2001, p. 39)

Seeing his wife in his English eyes as exotic, he believes that she is not the kind of wife he deserves. Not only does she look different than women from Europe, but also her behaviour differs. It is mainly her attitude towards the black people that he cannot comprehend. Moreover, he expresses racial prejudice toward black people. Although he is opposed to slavery, he does not believe in treating the blacks as an equal race to the whites. For instance, he does not understand Antoinette’s treatment of Christophine, the black servant: “‘Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?’ I’d say. ‘Why not?’ ‘I wouldn’t hug and kiss them,’ I’d say, ‘I couldn’t.’ At this she’d laugh for a long time and never tell me why she laughed.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 55) Rochester does not openly express racism; however, his degrading attitude towards the black people is apparent from this conversation. As Haliloglu suggests, Christophine, as a black woman and a former slave, does not deserve equal treatment as if she were white. (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 168) He proves that although the slavery has been abolished, white people’s perception of other races have not changed. Thus, the racist opinions and prejudice remain. As he probably never came into contact with black people before his arrival to the West Indies, he is unable consider them as his equals. Antoinette, who grew up in the West Indies and was brought up among black people, finds his attitudes and opinions silly. Rochester does not feel that black people are “entitled to their opinions.” (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 168) He suggests this fact multiple times, especially in his conversation with Christophine, when he approaches her with mockery and rudeness:

‘You laugh at me? Why you laugh at me?’ ‘Of course I laugh at you – you ridiculous old woman. I don’t mean to discuss my affairs with you any longer. Or your mistress. I’ve listened to all you had to say and I don’t believe you. Now, say good-bye to Antoinette, then go. You are to blame for all that has happened here, so don’t come back.’ She drew herself up tall and straight and put her hands on her hips. ‘Who you to tell me to go? This house belong to Miss Antoinette’s mother, now it belong to her.

Who you to tell me to go?’ ‘I assure you that it belongs to me now. You’ll go, or I’ll get the men to put you out.’ ‘You think the men here touch me? They not damn fool like you to put their hand on me.’ ‘Then I will have the police up, I warn you. There must be some law and order even in this God-forsaken island.’ ‘No police here,’ she said. ‘No chain gang, no tread machine, no dark jail either. This is free country and I am free woman.’ (Rhys, 2001, pp. 103-104)

Here, Christophine implies that he has no right to approach her in such a manner because she is no longer a slave; therefore, she is no longer bound to submissively obey the white people. Rochester is of course intimidated by this kind of behaviour from an ex-slave woman. In his opinion, a white Englishman is supposed to be respected and obeyed by the ‘inferiors’.

Throughout the novel, Rochester and Antoinette get into the discussion over the difference between England and the West Indies. Each has the problem of understanding the other’s world. When speaking about England, Rochester blames Antoinette that she is stubborn for having fixed ideas about England, which would not be changed whatever Rochester said or explained: “She often questioned me about England and listened attentively to my answers, but I was certain that nothing I said made much difference. Her mind was already made up.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 56) Although he blames Antoinette for not trying to see England from his perspective, he does not realize that he makes the same mistake and thus “his own received ideas about the Caribbean are just as fixed, gleaned from books, pictures, and songs.” (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 169)

After an encounter with Daniel Cosway, when Rochester is told about the family history, he is disgusted with Antoinette and the situation escalates even more when he discovers that she has used ‘obeah’, a form of Caribbean magic, in an attempt to make him love her again. He revenges to Antoinette by having an affair with their maid. Antoinette accuses him of hypocrisy for judging slave owners and their behaviour while he himself acts like one of them:

‘Christophine is an evil old woman and you know it as well as I do,’ I said. ‘She won’t stay here very much longer.’ ‘She won’t stay here very much longer,’ she mimicked me, ‘and nor will you, nor will you. I thought you liked the black people so much,’ she said, still in that mincing voice, ‘but that’s just a lie like everything else. You like the light brown girls better, don’t you? You abused the planters and made up stories about them, but you do the same thing. You send the girl away quicker, and with no money or less money, and that’s all the difference.’ (Rhys, 2001, p.94)

The longer Rochester stays on the island, the more his dislike of the locals as well as the place grows: “I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears, their

flattery and envy, conceit and deceit. And I hated the place.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 112) His hatred of black people is the most apparent when they are leaving the West Indies for England and a black boy wishes to join them on their journey: “But at this moment the nameless boy leaned his head against the clove tree and sobbed. Loud heartbreaking sobs. I could have strangled him with pleasure.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 111) Rochester refuses to take him, not taking his feelings into consideration:

‘He asked me when we first came if we – if you – would take him with you when we left. He doesn’t want any money. Just to be with you. Because –‘ she stopped and ran her tongue over her lips, ‘he loves you very much. So I said you would. Take him. Baptiste has told him that you will not. So he is crying.’ ‘I certainly will not,’ I said angrily. (God! A half-savage boy as well as ... as well as ...) ‘He knows English,’ she said, still indifferently. ‘He has tried very hard to learn English.’ ‘He hasn’t learned any English that I can understand,’ I said. (Rhys, 2001, pp. 111-112)

He considers the boy to be a ‘half-savage’. The boy’s effort to learn English is laughed at by Rochester. Moreover, he implies that Creole English is not a proper language. In addition to this, he is unable to understand the boy’s disappointment caused by his rejection: “That stupid boy followed us, the basket balanced on his head. He used the back of his hand to wipe away his tears. Who would have thought that any boy would cry like that. For nothing. Nothing ...” (Rhys, 2001, p. 113) Again, Rochester does not want to accept the fact that black people have feelings. His behaviour changes considerably throughout the novel. It is because of his inability to understand the West Indians that the series of misunderstandings escalate into mutual dislike and hate. For example, after Rochester’s affair with the black girl, Amélie, Rochester asks her if she still feels pity for him for marrying Antoinette, who is hated by the black people: “As she was going I could not resist saying, [...] ‘Well, Amélie, are you still sorry for me?’ ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I am sorry for you. But I find it in my heart to be sorry for her too.’” (Rhys, 2001, p. 90) In her response, she surprises him by implying that he is as vile as the ex-slave owners were and thus feels pity for Antoinette.

Another example of the misunderstanding of the West Indian people is represented by Mr Mason, the second husband of Antoinette’s mother. He also regards black people as inferior beings. His low opinions of them go so far as to suggest that “[t]hey are children – they wouldn’t hurt a fly.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 16) Comparing them to children, he underestimates their intellect as well as their other abilities. He sees them through his eyes of a colonizer who regards other races as inferior, and intellectually and culturally underdeveloped. Hence, Mr Mason shares Rochester’s inability to think of the black race as equal:

‘They are curious. It’s natural enough. You have lived alone far too long, Annette. You imagine enmity which doesn’t exist. Always one extreme of the other. Didn’t you fly at me like a little wild cat when I said nigger. Not nigger, nor even Negro. Black people I must say.’ ‘You don’t like, or even recognize, the good in them,’ she said, ‘and you won’t believe in the other side.’ ‘They’re too damn lazy to be dangerous,’ said Mr Mason. ‘I know that.’ ‘They are more alive than you are, lazy or not, and they can be dangerous and cruel for reasons you wouldn’t understand.’ ‘No, I don’t understand, Mr Mason always said. ‘I don’t understand at all.’ (Rhys, 2001, p. 14)

Annette warns Mr Mason against his prejudice; however, it is impossible for him to understand the locals. As he comes to the colonies after the abolition of slavery and has lived in the West Indies only for a short period of time, it is obvious that he does not understand the mentality of the locals and his only knowledge of the black people comprises of what he has heard about them. Annette, on the other hand, tries to persuade him to regard them as his equals because their difference is only on the surface.

Because Mr Mason as an Englishman distinguishes between blacks and whites, he believes that Antoinette should not befriend black or mixed-race people, as they are inferior to them: “Once I would have said ‘my cousin Sandi’ but Mr Mason’s lectures had made me shy about my coloured relatives.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 27) Thus, he influences Antoinette, who does not express racism in any form, to differentiate people on the basis of their skin colour.

When the black people riot and decide to set fire to the estate, Mr Mason, who is not able to estimate the seriousness of the situation, still thinks that his family are safe and no one can hurt them. He believes that the justice exists on the island and still expects that he will be apologized to: “‘There is no reason to be alarmed,’ my stepfather was saying as I came in. ‘A handful of drunken negroes. [...] They will repent in the morning. I foresee gifts of tamarinds in syrup and ginger sweets tomorrow.’” (Rhys, 2001, p. 19)

Therefore, the Englishmen, both Rochester and Mr Mason are not able to comprehend the West Indian people. They are placed into the position of outsiders on the islands and their opinions are impaired by what they have learned in England about the West Indies. Moreover, Rochester’s attitude is influenced by the fact that he comes for the purpose of marrying a Creole heiress, who is a complete stranger to him. The last topic which will be dealt with is the problem of losing one’s identity.

## 7. LOSS OF IDENTITY

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the possibility of the link between madness and the loss of Antoinette's Creole identity. As the search for an identity is the central topic of the novel, the signs of the gradual loss of Antoinette's identity are visible from the beginning. Scharfman suggests that the change in the narration in the second part of the novel can be seen as a sign of the upcoming events. Rochester "deprives her [Antoinette] of her 'I'" (Scharfman, 1981, p. 102); therefore, he robs her of her point of view by presenting the reader with his own.

Spivak sees Antoinette as a victim of imperialism. She claims that "[i]n the figure of Antoinette, [...] Rhys suggests that so intimate a thing as personal and human identity might be determined by the politics of imperialism." (Spivak, 1985, p. 250) Rochester is permanently dissatisfied with her behaviour, as it differs from to what he is accustomed. Therefore, he makes constant comparisons between her and the English. At first, it is Antoinette's exotic appearance what makes her different from the English women, as it was suggested in the chapter which dealt with Creole identity. He repeatedly looks for features which would make her seem more English. For example, he suggests that when she smiles, she reminds him of English girls: "Looking up smiling, she might have been any pretty English girl and to please her I drank." (Rhys, 2001, p. 40) The situation escalates when he attempts to make her English by changing her name to Bertha:

After a long time I heard her say as if she were talking to herself, 'I have said all I want to say. I have tried to make you understand. But nothing has changed.' She laughed. 'Don't laugh like that, Bertha.' 'My name is not Bertha; why do you call me Bertha?' 'Because it is a name I'm particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha.' (Rhys, 2001, p.86)

Although Antoinette protests at first, she later gives in and accepts the situation in order to secure peace and harmony in their marriage: "'Not Bertha tonight,' she said. 'Of course, on this of all nights, you must be Bertha.' 'As you wish,' she said.'" (Rhys, 2001, p.87)

It is not coincidental that Antoinette and Annette are similar names. According to Scharfman, the linguistic similarity between these two names suggests that "a hidden, built-in bond between mother and daughter can be read into these names." (Scharfman, 1981, pp. 102-103) Therefore, when Rochester renames her to 'Bertha', he "deprives Antoinette of this secret identification at the same time that he reduces her to a mere linguistic creation of his own whim by calling her Bertha." (Scharfman, 1981, p. 103) In the novel, it is suggested that

he does that in order to separate her from her mother: “He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother’s name.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 70) The knowledge of Annette’s madness makes him feel that if the mother and daughter are linked together in any way, Antoinette is bound to turn out as her mother. Therefore, after his conversation with Daniel Cosway, Rochester blindly accepts Daniel’s explanations for madness in the family. According to Haliloglu, Antoinette, not able to understand Rochester’s motives, sees his attempts of changing her into a different person as magic – “the English ‘obeah’” as opposed to the Caribbean obeah, which appears throughout the novel as a part of the black Caribbean culture. To Antoinette, the English obeah means that “through renaming her [...] Rochester feels he has complete power over her.” (Haliloglu, 2011, p. 178) This fact is apparent from the following extract:

‘Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that’s obeah too.’ Tears streamed from her eyes. ‘If my father, my real father, was alive you wouldn’t come back here in a hurry after he’d finished with you. If he was alive. Do you know what you’ve done to me? It’s not the girl, not the girl. But I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoiled it. It’s just somewhere else where I have been unhappy, and all the other things are nothing to what has happened here. I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you.’ (Rhys, 2001, p.95)

Here, Antoinette implies that if her father lived, she would be under his protection, but as her both parents are dead, she is powerless against Rochester. As his wife, she loses her independence and therefore must accept his decisions. Rochester’s transformation of Antoinette into a different – ‘English’ woman puts him in the position of a slave owner who enslaved Africans, changed their names and transported them into a foreign land and thus deprived them of their identity as well as of their link with their homeland. (Olaussen, 1993, p. 79) Thus, being in the same position as the African slaves, she is punished for the wrongs that her forefathers caused to the black people.

First deprived of her name, Antoinette ends up losing all the links which connected her to the place, where she used to feel secure. As it was already mentioned in the previous chapters, Antoinette, who has always linked herself to things and places, cannot come in terms with the fact that Rochester purposefully ‘polluted’ their home by a sexual intercourse with their servant. Therefore, she feels vulnerable without a place to provide her with the feelings of security. It is when she starts to drink alcohol and falls into despair. Rochester, who is confused by her behaviour, compares her to a doll - marionette: “Like a doll. Even

when she threatened me with the bottle she had a marionette quality.” (Rhys, 2001, p. 96) Moreover, from the conversation between Christophine and Rochester, it can be seen how indifferent Rochester has become towards Antoinette and her feelings: “‘You bring that worthless girl to play with next door and you talk and laugh and love so that she hear everything. You meant her to hear.’ Yes, that didn’t just happen. I meant it.” (Rhys, 2001, pp. 99-100) Rochester thinks that Antoinette starts to develop madness as her mother. For this reason, he deprives her of everything, transfers her to England and leaves her locked in the attic of Thornfield Hall. It is when she is locked in Thornfield Hall that she loses the sense of self. She no longer knows who she is after being renamed and taken away from her homeland:

Names matter, like when he wouldn’t call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass. There is no looking-glass here and I don’t know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us – hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I? (Rhys, 2001, p. 116)

Moreover, as she is locked away from people and her only company is her jailer, Grace Poole, Antoinette also loses the sense of time and place:

She looked at me and said, ‘I don’t believe you know how long you’ve been here, you poor creature.’ ‘On the contrary,’ I said, ‘only I know how long I have been here. Nights and days and days and nights, hundreds of them slipping through my fingers. But that does no matter. Time has no meaning. But something you can touch and hold like my red dress, that has a meaning. Where is it?’ (Rhys, 2001, p. 119)

Her last link to her lost identity is a red dress. It is the last thing reminding her of the West Indies. Moreover, it provides her a link with her lost self. In the last part of the novel, when she is locked in the Thornfield Hall and almost does not know about herself, she attacks her step-brother Richard Mason, who comes to visit her. She injures him because he admits that he cannot help her out of her situation, as she belongs to her husband: “I didn’t hear all he said except ‘I cannot interfere legally between yourself and your husband.’ It was when he said ‘legally’ that you flew at him...” (Rhys, 2001, p. 119) Richard does not recognize her, for she has been locked for a long period of time and thus must be in a bad condition. However, Antoinette believes that if she had the red dress on, she would be the same as she used to be before they brought her to England:

I remember now that he did not recognize me. I saw him look at me and his eyes went first to one corner and then to another, not finding what they expected. He looked at me and spoke to me as though I were a stranger. What do you do when something happens to you like that? Why are you laughing at me? 'Have you hidden my red dress too? If I'd been wearing that he'd have known me.' (Rhys, 2001, p. 119)

Also, she does not believe that she is in England, for the place is not as she would imagine it to be: "They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it. [...] This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England. (Rhys, 2001, p. 117)

However, it is not only Antoinette who loses identity. The same thing can be partially said about Rochester. He, as a younger son, is sent to the West Indies to get married, losing the link to his familiar environment. He comes to a new place to which he must get accustomed. His illness at the beginning of the marriage adds to his discontent and resentment of the West Indies. Throughout the story, Rochester feels more and more hatred towards the place because he is insecure and uprooted from his familiar environment: "I feel very much a stranger here,' I said. 'I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side.'" (Rhys, 2001, p. 82) Therefore, the actions taken towards Antoinette can be seen as his attempt to preserve his own identity, which is fragmented while he stays in the West Indies, for things are no longer under his control. Rhys's decision to deprive him of his name does provide a reason for his behaviour. As Spivak suggests: "Rhys denies to Brontë's Rochester the one thing that is supposed to be secured in the Oedipal relay: the Name of the Father, or the patronymic." (Spivak, 1985, p. 252) Therefore, he must return back home in order to preserve his identity.

To sum up, Antoinette's gradual loss of identity is caused by a number of external factors. Both her position in the society and her arranged marriage add to her emotional instability. She is deprived of her Creole identity by her English husband, who in an attempt to suppress her Creole identity to make her English, destroys her personality and thus creates Brontë's madwoman in the attic.



## 8. CONCLUSION

The paper was focused on the analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a literary work written by Jean Rhys, a postcolonial author. The aim of the research was to analyse the identities in the British Caribbean society in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shortly after the Slavery Abolition Act 1833, which is the temporal setting of the novel. The findings proved to what extent the British colonial rule interfered into the lives of the Caribbean people and how this affected their cultural identification.

First of all, Jean Rhys and her novels were discussed in the literary context. Her last novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which was the primary source of the analysis, is labelled as ‘rewriting’ or ‘writing back’ to a canonical novel, *Jane Eyre*. Rhys reacted on the stereotypical portrayal of a West Indian woman and created a prequel for the Victorian novel. Not only did she explain the circumstances of Bertha’s madness, but she also criticised the attitude of the colonizers towards the colonies. Moreover, in order to specify the situation in the colonial Caribbean, a short summary of the historical context with respect to the beginnings of slavery until the emancipation of West Indian slaves was incorporated. It was found out that the Caribbean islands are unique for their composition of inhabitants. The reason is that the majority of the population comprises black people who were brought involuntarily as free workforce to take place of the Caribs and the Arawaks, who became extinct soon after the beginning of the colonization. The sole purpose of keeping the islands under the colonial rule was to provide the imperial centre with agricultural products. White people born in the Caribbean realized that they belonged to the imperial centre because of the cultural and racial connection with Britain. However, as the analysis of the Creole women proved, these Caribbean born whites were thought to be inferior to the Europeans. The reason was of course the stigmatizing history of slave owning in their family. However innocent they were of the wrongs caused by their family members and forefathers, they lived on the margins of the society. It is pointed out in the novel that they do not belong anywhere and therefore are caught between two different worlds, races and identities – the English white and the Caribbean black. Antoinette’s situation is even more problematic as she is rejected by her own mother. Therefore, she attempts to identify with the black people, especially their servant Christophine. However, such identification is impossible and she is therefore caught between two worlds. She is repeatedly traumatized and the traumas of her childhood together with her unhappy marriage lead into the development of her madness, which can be perceived as a

result of her lost identity, of which she is deprived by Rochester. Therefore, she is a victim of imperialism and patriarchy.

Christophine and Daniel Cosway are two black characters who were also at the centre of the attention in the analytical part, as they are two examples of how difficult is to define Caribbean identity even for the black people who happen to be the majority on the islands. Mainly it is because of the history of slavery and their displacement from their country of origin. Christophine, the black servant from Martinique, proved that she is seen as a stranger in the black Jamaican community for coming from a French island. Therefore, although her roots are in Africa as well, the black Jamaicans see her as a stranger for coming from a French speaking island. On the other hand, the character of Daniel, a mixed-race son of Antoinette's father, showed the difficulty of identification within a racial group for people who are neither black nor white. In the novel, he expresses both dislike of the blacks and the whites. He hates white people for not considering him their equal and he looks down at black people for their 'primitive' behaviour. Therefore, he adopts the culture of white people in order to secure a place in the white community.

Finally, as the novel reflects a postcolonial critique of the British Empire, the last parts of the paper were dedicated to the issues of the attitude of the English towards the West Indies and the West Indians. It was repeatedly suggested in the novel that the West Indians are inferior to the English. The analysis proved that the British after the emancipation looked down at the black people; therefore, the racism prevailed long after the abolition of slavery. Moreover, the British did not consider even the Creoles as their equals as they were polluted by the West Indian upbringing. There was also the possibility of the racial intermixing; therefore, the Creoles were not seen as pure blood despite their European origin because of the possibility of having black ancestors. In the last part of the analysis, it was found out that Rochester's actions towards Antoinette can be compared to those of slave owners. Therefore, his acts towards Antoinette such as renaming her and transporting her to England are equal to the slave trading. The analysis was concluded by the problem of losing one's identity as a result of imperialism and patriarchy.

## RESUMÉ

Tato práce se zabývala analýzou identit v románu Širé Sargasové moře (*Wide Sargasso Sea*) od Jean Rhysové. Rhysová patřila mezi významné autory postkoloniální literatury ve 20. století. Ve svém díle se zaměřovala na kritiku Britského impéria a patriarchální společnosti. Jelikož ona sama pocházela z Karibiku, její hrdinky se potýkaly s problematikou identifikace a začlenění do společnosti. Tato práce se zaměřila na analýzu jejího posledního románu, který vznikl jako reakce Rhysové na Viktoriánský román Jana Eyrová. Román Rhysové je tudíž postkoloniálním a feministickým přepisem kanonického textu. Tato práce se zaměřila na problematiku identit v anglicky mluvícím Karibiku v 19. století a na to, jak koloniální nadvláda zasáhla do identit jednotlivých obyvatel.

Britské impérium během své vlády zasáhlo do dějin téměř celého světa, protože v době kolonialismu ovládalo velkou část území po celém světě. Četná území se stala koloniemi a místní obyvatelstvo bylo nuceno se přizpůsobit podmínkám a kultuře kolonizátorů. Do kolonií, kde nebyl dostatek pracovních sil, byli dováženi afričtí otroci, kteří po příjezdu do kolonií přišli o všechna svá práva. Stali se majetkem otrokářů a podle toho s nimi bylo tak i jednáno. Situace se změnila po zrušení otroctví, kdy postupně všichni otroci nabyli svobody, avšak tím cesta k rovnoprávnost neskončila.

Dějiny Karibiku začínají kolonizací ostrovů evropskými národy, přičemž největší dopad na ostrovy měla kolonizace Španělů, Francouzů a Britů. Původní obyvatelstvo vymřelo brzy po kolonizaci. Jelikož půda v Karibiku byla velmi úrodná, brzy se začalo s pěstováním cukrové třtiny, pro kterou ovšem bylo potřeba zajistit levnou pracovní sílu. Tak začal obchod s otroky v Karibiku a první Afričané byli přivezeni již v 16. století. Obchod s otroky a otroctví jako takové způsobilo, že v 18. století se z černošské minority stala většinová populace. Jeden z následků otroctví byl nástup míšenců, kteří měli bílého otce, otrokáře, a černoškou matku, otrokyni. Míšenci byli, stejně jako jejich matky, osvobozeni od otroctví a proto v 18. století byla velká řada svobodných míšenců. Situace se změnila v roce 1834, kdy bylo oficiálně zrušeno otroctví. Děj románu se odehrává několik let po zrušení otroctví a proto je otroctví jedním z nejdůležitějších faktorů pro problematiku formování identity.

Tato práce poukázala na to, že je problematické definovat společnou karibskou národní identitu. Za prvé za to mohou historické okolnosti, jelikož rasové problémy přetrvávaly dlouho po zrušení otroctví a také proto, že jednotlivé ostrovy byly ovládnuty různými impérii, a proto tyto ostrovy měly blíže k vládnoucímu impériu než k sousedním

ostrovům. Rasové nerovnost je způsobena historií otroctví, tak i následky kolonialismu, kdy lidé z tzv. podřadných kultur se museli přizpůsobit kultuře a společnosti vyspělejších kolonizátorům. Afričané, kteří byli násilně dovozeni do kolonií, tak z větší části přišli o své kulturní dědictví a byli nuceni se přizpůsobit novým zvykům a naučit se novému jazyku. Jejich pouta s jejich rodnou zemí byla zpřetrhána. I když se jim podařilo udržet nějaké zvyky, které se kolonizátorům nepodařilo vymístit, tak byli pod silným vlivem kultury a ideologie, které byly šířeny imperialistickým centrem. V 19. století, kdy se odehrává děj románu, měli obyvatelé Karibiku pramálo společné. Podle kritiků se problém formace jednotné kulturní identity odráží i v současné společnosti.

První analyzovanou identitou byla kreolská identita, která je v analyzovaném románu reprezentována postavami dvou žen, které pocházejí z bývalé otrokářské rodiny. Antoinette je hlavní postavou románu, která byla motivována postavou Bertou Masonovou z románu Jana Eyrová (*Jane Eyre*) od autorky Charlotte Brontëové. V tomto románu je Berta prezentována jako duševně narušená manželka Edwarda Rochestera, která pochází z Jamajky. Portrét Berty v tomto románu vyjadřuje stereotypní představy o ženách z kolonií, a proto Rhysová napsala *Šíré Sargasové moře* jako příběh, který předchází románu od Brontëové. Rhysová se snažila vysvětlit problematiku konfliktu mezi bělochy a černochoy a taktéž vysvětlit příčiny Bertina jednání v Janě Eyrové. V Janě Eyrové je Berta prezentována jako tvor, který hraničí mezi člověkem a zvířetem. Brontëová je kritizována za to, že neposkytla žádné vysvětlení k Bertinu stavu a jednání.

Označení "Kreol" bylo původně používáno pro bělochy narozené v koloniích, ale postupem času se toto označení přeneslo na všechny obyvatele kolonií. V románu je naznačeno, že Kreolky, Annetta a Antoinetta, mohou mít černé předky v rodině. Tím se odlišují od evropských novousedlíků, kteří na ně pohlížejí s despektem. Antoinetta a její matka jsou na počátku románu chudé, jelikož během osvobození otroků přišly o většinu majetku a zbyly jim jen zchátralé domy a opuštěná plantáž. Antoinettina matka se neumí vyrovnat s přítomností a uzavírá se do sebe a pokračuje v rituálech, které jí připomínají období před zrušením otroctví. Na Jamajce je místní černošské i bělošské obyvatelstvo nesnáší. Černoši se jim vysmívají jako protiútok za otroctví, zatímco bílí novousedlíci s nimi jako potomky otrokářů nechtějí mít nic společného. Situace se změní, když se matka vdá za bohatého Angličana. Tím, že znovu nabudou bohatství, tak se stávají terčem ještě větší nenávisti ze strany černochoy. Jsou nenáviděny za to, že svatbou přijdou k penězům a majetku, a tak se vyhnou chudobě, kterou měly jako odplatu za činy jejich otrokářské rodiny. Kreolky

si uvědomují, že náleží k Anglii, a proto je pro ně zraňující, že nejsou přijímány ani mezi bělochy, kteří je vidí jako podřadné pro jejich karibský původ. Z těchto důvodů jsou Kreolky minoritou a jejich identifikace s Karibikem i Anglií je problematická. V podstatě nepatří nikam, což je patrné z rozhovoru mezi Antoinettou a Rochesterem, kdy mu říká, že neví kdo je, kam patří a proč se vůbec narodila. Antoinetta je odmítána svou vlastní matkou, která se upíná k nemocnému synovi, a tak Antoinetta tráví většinu času ve společnosti černochoů. Již od počátku románu je zřejmé, že Antoinetta bloudí mezi dvěma světy – černošským a bělošským. Kvůli matčinu odmítavému chování, se navíc upíná na materiální věci namísto lidí. Když se její matka znovu vdá za bohatého Angličana, jejich situace se výrazně změní. Antoinette si uvědomuje, že ona i její matka náleží do anglické společnosti, ale proto, že žijí v Karibiku, se jako Angličanky necítí. Uvědomují si, že v ani jedné zemi pro ně není místo.

Co se týče černošské identity v Karibiku, v této práci byla stěžejní analýza dvou postav, služebné Christophine a míšence Daniela. Jak již bylo zmíněno, černošská komunita se v Karibiku objevila po zavedení trhu s otroky, a proto tvoří jedinou skupinu obyvatel, která přišla do Karibiku nedobrovolně. Protože se děj románu odehrává krátce po zrušení otroctví, nenávisť mezi černochoy a bělochoy je zde stále aktuální. Daniel, který je Antoinettin poloviční bratr, je svazován nenávisť k bělochům, nejvíce však k rodině svého bílého otce, která ho neuznala jako právoplatného člena. Jeho situace je o to problematičtější, že se necítí být černochem a černochoy pohrdá. Napodobuje životní styl bělochů, a tím potlačuje svoji černošskou identitu, aby se co nejvíce přiblížil bělochům. Na druhé straně, Christophine, která je Antoinettinou věrnou služebnou, je příkladem černošské otrokyně, kterou daroval otrokář Cosway své mladé manželce jako svatební dar. Christophine symbolizuje věrnou služebnici, která po nabytí svobody zůstala ve službách rodiny. Protože stejně jako Annette pochází z francouzsky mluvícího Martiniku, tak není přijata do jamajské černošské komunity. Čímž je naznačeno, že Afričané, kteří byli dovezeni do různých kolonií, přišli o svou africkou identitu a byli ovlivněni koloniální politikou jednotlivých impérií.

Tato práce dále zkoumala postavení Britů k místním obyvatelům. V této části bylo analyzováno chování Rochesterera a pana Masona a především jejich postoj vůči černochoům. Rochester přijíždí do Karibiku, aby se oženil s Antoinettou, bohatou dědičkou, a tak si zajistil jmění. Jejich sňatek je předem dohodnutý, což se negativně projevuje na jeho postoji jak k Antoinettě, tak i k celému Karibiku, který mu v porovnání s Anglií připadá cizí a exotický. Rochester opakovaně porovnává Antoinettu s anglickými ženami a nechápe její přátelské

chování vůči černochoům. Ačkoli odsuzuje otroctví jako takové, jeho názory na černochoy jsou silně rasistické. Rochester má předsudky vůči Karibiku i jeho obyvatelům. Jeho představy o Karibiku, které nabyl v Anglii, jsou neměnné a tím znesnadňují jeho integraci do karibské společnosti. Když se Rochester dozví od Daniela Coswaye o tom, že Antoinettina matka byla duševně nemocná, a že tato nemoc je dědičná, jeho chování k ní se ještě zhorší. Potrestá Antoinettu tím, že svede jednu z černých služebných. Antoinetta ho obviní z pokrytectví, protože Rochester se svým chováním přibližuje k otrokářům. Posledním bodem Rochesterovy nenávisti k místnímu obyvatelstvu je odvržení černého chlapce, který si přeje doprovázet Rochesteru do Anglie. Rochester nemá pochopení pro jeho pocity a uráží i jeho snahu se naučit mluvit anglicky, protože tvrdí, že kreolská angličtina není jazyk, kterému by rozuměl.

Pan Mason nemá negativní postoj vůči černochoům jako Rochester, avšak jeho jednání také svědčí o tom, že je ovlivňován koloniální ideologií. Manžel Antoinettiny matky podceňuje černochoy a to především jejich intelekt a schopnosti, protože je porovnává s dětmi. Jeho předsudky jsou silně zafixovány a Annette ho nedokáže přimět k tomu, aby jednal s černochoy jako se sobě rovnými. Navíc nařizuje Antoinettě, aby se nezmiňovala o příbuzných, kteří jsou míšenci. Jeho jednání je tedy silně rasistické a plné předsudků.

Posledním bodem analýzy byla ztráta identity, která je v Antoinettině případě prezentována jako důsledek koloniální politiky. Zlomovým okamžikem je Rochesterovo přejmenování Antoinetty na Berthu. V románu je vysvětleno, že takto učinil po tom, co zjistil, že její matka měla stejné jméno. Cílem přejmenování bylo, aby se Antoinetta přiblížila anglickému ideálu a její spojení s Karibikem bylo přerušeno. Antoinetta Rochesterovo chování nechápe a přisuzuje to k evropské magii, která má být ekvivalentem té karibské - tzv. obeah. Situace se stupňuje a Antoinetta se zcela poddává Rochesterovi až nakonec ztrácí kontrolu nad svým osudem. Rochester odváží Antoinettu do Anglie. Její cesta do Anglie je připodobněna k cestě otroků na kolonie, protože stejně jako afričtí otroci, Antoinetta je odvezena proti své vůli, zbavena jména a přichází o svou karibskou identitu. Když je uvězněna v Rochesterově panství na Thornfieldu, tak ztrácí pojem o realitě, a proto se stává Bertou z románu Charlotty Brontëové.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

ASHCROFT, Bill, Gareth GRIFFITHS a Helen TIFFIN. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 2002, 283 s. ISBN 978-0-415-28020-4.

ASHCROFT, Bill, Gareth GRIFFITHS a Helen TIFFIN. *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007, 292 s. ISBN 0-415-42855-6.

BEHDAD, Ali. Global Disjunctures, Diasporic Differences, and the New World (Dis-)Order. In: SCHWARZ, Henry a Sangeeta RAY. *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005. ISBN 06-312-0663-9.

Black Presence: Emancipation. *The National Archives* [online]. 2012 [cit. 2013-01-03]. Dostupné z: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/rights/emancipation.htm>

BRONTË, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, 447 s. ISBN 01-406-2325-6.

BURROWS, Victoria. *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, and Toni Morrison*. Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 240 s. ISBN 978-023-0005-792.

CIOLKOWSKI, Laura E. Navigating the Wide Sargasso Sea: Colonial History, English Fiction, and British Empire. *Twentieth Century Literature*. [online] 1997, roč. 43, č. 3, s. 339-359. [cit. 2012-10-03]. Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441916>.

Creole. In: *Oxford Dictionaries* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-01-20]. Dostupné z: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Creole?q=creole>

CUDDON, J. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 4th ed. London: Penguin Books, 1998, xix, 991 s. ISBN 01-405-1363-9.

Displacement. In: *Oxford Dictionaries* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-02-21]. Dostupné z: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/displacement?q=displacement>

EMERY, Mary Lou. The Politics of Form: Jean Rhys's Social Vision in *Voyage in the Dark* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. *Twentieth Century Literature*. [online] 1982, roč. 28, č. 4, s. 418-430. [cit. 2012-10-03]. Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/441252>

ERWIN, Lee. Like in a Looking-Glass: History and Narrative in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*. [online] 1989, roč. 22, č. 2, s. 143-158. [cit. 2012-10-03] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1345800>.

FANON, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New ed. Překlad Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto, 2008, 186 s. ISBN 978-074-5328-492.

GHOSH-SCHELLHORN, Martina. The White Creole Woman's Place in Society. *Across the lines: intertextuality and transcultural communication in the new literatures in English*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998, s. 177-190. Cross/cultures, 32. ISBN 90-420-0733-8.

GIRVAN, Norman. Reinterpreting the Caribbean. In: MEEKS, Brian a Folke LINDAHL. *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001, s. 3-23. ISBN 97-664-0103-9.

GUNNER, Liz. Mothers, Daughters and Madness in Works by Four Women Writers: Bessie Head, Jean Rhys, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Ama Ata Aidoo. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*. [online] 1994, č. 14, s. 136-151. [cit. 2012-10-03] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/521769>.

HALILOGLU, Nagihan. *Narrating from the Margins: Self-representation of Female and Colonial Subjectivities in Jean Rhys's Novels*. New York: Rodopi, 2011, 212 p. ISBN 94-012-0066-1.

HALL, Stuart. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: RUTHERFORD, Jonathan. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence, 1990, s. 222-237. ISBN 08-531-5720-0.

HALL, Stuart. Who needs 'identity'?. In: DU GAY, Paul, Jessica EVANS a Peter REDMAN. *Identity: A Reader*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2000, s. 15-30. ISBN 07-619-6916-0.

HALL, Stuart. Negotiating Caribbean Identities. In: MEEKS, Brian a Folke LINDAHL. *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001, s. 24-39. ISBN 97-664-0103-9.

HUGGAN, Graham. A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry. *Contemporary Literature*. [online] 1994, roč. 35, č. 4. [cit. 2012-10-03] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1208702>.

Identity. In: *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* [online]. 2011 [cit. 2013-02-21]. Dostupné z: <http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/identity>

Indenture. In: *Oxford Dictionaries* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-02-21]. Dostupné z: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/indenture?q=indenture>

KAŠPAR, Oldřich. *Dějiny Karibské oblasti*. Praha: Lidové noviny, 2002, 261 s. Dějiny států. ISBN 80-710-6557-9.

Mulatto. In: *Oxford Dictionaries* [online]. 2013 [cit. 2013-02-21]. Dostupné z: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mulatto?q=mulatto>

NAIR, Supriya. Creolization, Orality, and National Language in the Caribbean. In: SCHWARZ, Henry a Sangeeta RAY. *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005, s. 236-251. ISBN 06-312-0663-9.



- OLAUSSEN, Maria. Jean Rhys's Construction of Blackness as Escape from White Femininity in "Wide Sargasso Sea". *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*. [online] 1993, roč. 24, č. 2, s. 65-82. [cit. 2013-01-09] Dostupné z: <http://ariel.synergiesprairies.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/viewFile/2645/2594>.
- PARRY, J. H., Philip M. SHERLOCK a Anthony P. MAINGOT. *A Short History of the West Indies*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 1987. ISBN 10: 033340954X.
- RAMCHAND, Kenneth. West Indian Literary History: Literariness, Orality and Periodization. *Callaloo*. [online] 1988, č. 34, s. 95-110. [cit. 2013-01-09] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2931112>.
- RHYS, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: Penguin Books, 2001, 168 s. ISBN 01-408-1803-0.
- ROY, Parama. Unaccommodated Woman and the Poetics of Property in *Jane Eyre*. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. [online] 1989, roč. 29, č. 4, s. 713-727. [cit. 2012-10-03] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/450608>.
- RUSTIN, Michael. Psychoanalysis, racism and anti-racism. In: DU GAY, Paul, Jessica EVANS a Peter REDMAN. *Identity: A Reader*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2000, s. 183-201. ISBN 07-619-6916-0.
- SAID, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1994, xxviii, 380 s. ISBN 06-797-5054-1.
- SCHARFMAN, Ronnie. Mirroring and Mothering in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Téliumée Miracle* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. *Yale French Studies*. [online] 1981, č. 62, s. 88-106. [cit. 2012-10-03] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2929895>.
- SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty. Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism. *Critical Inquiry*. [online] 1985, roč. 12, č. 1, s. 243-261. [cit. 2012-10-03] Dostupné z: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343469>.
- TIFFIN, Helen. Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse. In: ASHCROFT, Bill, Gareth GRIFFITHS a Helen TIFFIN. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2006, s. 99-101. ISBN 978-041-5345-651.