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**Oppression and Resistance in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea
(1966)**

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents for their constant, unconditional love and encouragement.

To my sisters Dihia and Sabrina and my brothers Nacer and Yanis.

To my aunt Zina.

To my dear friend Chilali Houria whose support and advice means a lot for me.

In Memory of my Grandmother.

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Abstract

This dissertation has attempted to study the issue of colonial oppression and native resistance in Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). We have intended to examine the literary work within the historical context of British colonialism in the Caribbean country of Jamaica, and the issue of slavery. Our research has relied on Frantz Fanon's theory of colonial oppression, violence, and black counter-violence addressed in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). We have also borrowed Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' developed in his *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (1970), and the way this concept is depicted in the narrative. We have investigated the way the settler oppresses and exploits the native relying on violence, and the way this violence is taken by the native and transformed to a means of resistance as the direct, logical response to the oppression he is subject to. We have come to the following findings: first, the violent acts performed by the colonizer, both in their direct and symbolic way, serve as a way to dominate and keep under control the colonized subject. The second finding is that the oppressed subject absorbs the colonial violence they are subject to, consequently transforming that violence into their means of resistance. The study has come to the conclusion that the violence performed by the natives is depicted as their means to resist the colonial violence and oppression they are the victims of.

Keywords: oppression, domination, symbolic violence, white violence, cultural assimilation, catharsis, black resistance, counter-violence.

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I. Introduction

This research work studies the themes of oppression and resistance through violence in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). It sheds light on violence as both a means of oppression and liberation relying on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'Symbolic Violence' and Frantz Fanon's concepts of 'Colonial Violence' and colonized 'Counter-Violence'. Furthermore, it deals with the effects of that violence on the psyche of the colonized and analyzes the mental disorders resulting from it. Additionally, our research focuses on the uses of violence as a cathartic experience and a way of self-assertion for the colonized subject.

Colonialism can be defined as a process of taking control of people's life and culture. This process implies the domination and the subjugation of native people and lands by European settlers. The European colonial rule of the 19th century was based on an unequal power relationship and exploitation of many indigenous lands and cultures throughout Africa, Asia, and South America. Accordingly, the white man, thus, has justified his oppression and subjugation through ideas that implied the supposed racial and cultural inferiority of the colonized people. Indeed, the colonizer under the guise of civilizing the natives and spreading light and knowledge, exploited them and stole the natural resources of their lands. Because the European settlers associated 'whiteness' and Christianity with light and civilization, they considered all that is non-white and different from them as savage and backward.

Moreover, the white man considered it his burden to bring Christianity and white cultural standards to the colonial subject whom he considered as savage, uncivilized and inferior; Hence the notion of 'The White Man's Burden' perpetuated by colonial settlers as a justification for their control and oppression. In this context, Patrick Colm Hogan argues: "[...] the dominant society justifies its control through the denigration of the dominated culture and throughout the ideological insistence that the dominated people are an inferior race."¹ The colonial institution

justified its exploitation and oppression through the claim of the inferiority of the colonized subject.

Indeed, the white man erased and destroyed the natives' culture and languages and imposed the superiority of his culture. Furthermore, the white settler perpetuated the ideology that the dominated subjects belong to an inferior race and culture because their beliefs and the color of their skin are different from those of the European settler and do not comply with his standards of superiority and civilization. The colonial institution maintained its oppression and domination through the use of violence. The white man imposed his standards and civilization by resorting to violence. As such, colonialism is a violent process from the moment it occurs, to the way it is exercised and maintained.

Violence is the defining aspect of this process of domination. The native subject is subjugated and oppressed through violent means such as torture, land confiscation, and destruction of his culture and identity. Indeed, the violence performed by the colonial authorities affected both the body and psyche of the colonized. This violence is used as a means to control and exploit the natives; it becomes a daily occurrence in the natives' life whether it is direct punishment using force and torture, or treating him as less than human based on his race and skin color, thus, stripping him of his indigenous culture and identity.

By falsely identifying and, thus, treating him as inferior and savage, the white man managed to exploit and dominate the indigenous peoples. This exploitation affects the colonized subjects' mental and physical state. Psychologically, the natives develop feelings of inferiority towards their own culture and identity. Furthermore, they perceive their language and the color of their skin as something they have to rid themselves off. Consequently, they try to become whiter and civilized through the rejection of their black identity, language and customs.

As a matter of fact, The natives' attempt to assimilate whiteness and become white subjects ; however, they will never be accepted as white. Once they are face to face with the colonizer, the colonized realize that they will never be considered white and will never be treated as such. Consequently, the natives find themselves alienated from their original culture and not accepted by the white society as part of them. Neither black nor white, the colonized subjects experience feelings of alienation and loss.

Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is set in the colony of Jamaica under the British rule. Rhys, in her novel, explores the relationship between the natives of the Caribbean region and the English colonial masters. She tackles the issues of slavery, identity and belonging. Moreover, she deals with the effects of colonial exploitation and racism on the colonized. Rhys' characters reflect the subjugation and oppression they are subject to, and the way they try to resist it and assert themselves as the rightful owners of their land and identity.

A. Review of the Literature

Like most works of literature, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) has received a great deal of criticism which is carried out from different perspectives. Among the scholarly discourse on the novel, we may first cite Michael Thrope's essay "*The Other Side*": *Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre* wherein Thrope conducts a postcolonial comparison Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Bronte' *Jane Eyre* (1847). Thrope asserts that the novel (1966) represents a 'correction' of Bronte's character of Jane Eyre; Bertha Mason's stereotypical depiction as "a lunatic Creole heiress in Rochester's attic"² in Bronte's novel is given another depiction in Rhys' novel. Thrope, indeed, claims that the character of Bertha Mason "is given a passionate voice to make the 'other side' felt"³.

In the same essay, Thrope compares the portrayals of the characters of Bertha and Rochester in the two novels and points out the fact that Bronte's depiction is stereotypical since

there are prejudiced images about the Creoles in it. In this context, Thorpe asserts that: “An unexpected consequence of re-reading Jane Eyre in search of links with *Wide Sargasso Sea* is finding Bronte’s novel a more “dated” work, marred by stereotyping and crude imaginings at points where a vaulting imagination such as Emily possessed was needed.”⁴ Moreover, Thorpe claims that in depicting Bertha Mason’s deteriorating mental state, Rhys, like her counterpart modern writers, is appealing the readers to understand and be compassionate about mental illnesses. He asserts in this context that: “In getting behind Bertha’s insanity, eschewing the catch-all dismissive generalization – “sin itself is a species of insanity” – Rhys joins those modern writers ... who have sought to win their readers’ understanding and compassion for those whose mental state is often ... just the wrong side of a thin dividing line from “normality”.”⁵

Additionally, Thorpe in his essay explores the relationship between Bertha and her husband which, according to him, is characterized by “a mutual incomprehension that rests, in fact, on a closer identity of personal experience than Edward or Antoinette ever imagine.”⁶ They are unable to understand each other because of a common misunderstanding that is their identity. Antoinette and Mr. Mason’s relationship is made more complex by their complicated backgrounds. Antoinette is of Creole descent, the daughter of a former slave-owner with mixed heritage, while Mr. Mason is a white man of aristocratic English descent which affected their interactions as husband and wife.

Akintunde Olasupo’s essay entitled “*Alienation and Madness: A Literary Psychopathological Approach*”, analyses the novel from a psychoanalytical approach. Olasupo suggests that Rhys’ narrative which is divided into three parts – the narration alternating between Antoinette and her husband – is “suggestive”⁷. He contends that: “Rhys’s avant-garde narrative perspective [...] presupposes the complex, undulating nature of the human psyche and its inability in establishing the ‘centre’ amidst interlocking emotional and psychic experiences

that trouble it.”⁸ Rhys titling her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is indicative of the fact that the human is complex; the Sargasso Sea – a body of water located mid-way between the Atlantic Ocean and the West Indies – is known for its complex currents, thus, making difficult for the sailors to navigate.

Olasupo adds, Rhys tries to convey this complexity through race, gender and segregation. In this context, he argues that: “However, in the midst of these, Rhys’ attempts to locate the ‘centre’ of the spherical nature of the human psyche in the character of her heroine, Antoinette.”⁹ Additionally, Olasupo analyses the psychological cause behind “the different levels of madness that pervades the narrative”¹⁰. He suggests that insanity is a dominant factor in Antoinette’s family; from her father, to her mother Annette, to her brother Pierre, and finally to herself. Accordingly, Olasupo wonders about the “subtle psychic cause”¹¹ responsible for Antoinette’s madness. He views that Antoinette hearing her husband’s voice while incarcerating the house and her claiming to know the reason behind her forced stay in England as examples of her madness.

Another point Olasupo discusses is the fact that by depicting Antoinette’s character as a total opposite of a stereotypical Creole woman, Rhys seeks to humanize the racially pejorative depiction of a West Indian woman. In this context, he asserts that: “[...], through the character of Antoinette, Rhys seeks to correct the stereotypical portrayal of the female folk, not only in Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, but in most phallogentric literary works.”¹² By narrating Antoinette’s journey and descent into madness and illustrating the reason behind it, Rhys seeks to remedy the portrayal of Creole women as morally corrupt and lunatic – a common stereotype about women who do not conform to English society’s standards – in male-centered literature of the Victorian era.

Moreover, Sherry Lewkowicz in her essay entitled “*The Experience of Womanhood in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea*” analyzes the novel’s protagonist Bertha Mason in

comparison to her counterpart Jane Eyre in Charlotte Brontë's novel titled like its protagonist. Lewkowicz's analysis is based on the fact that both Rhys and Brontë approach the issue of what being a woman is in their novels. Lewkowicz claims that Rhys' rewriting of the character of Antoinette is an effort to "elaborate on and complicate, the history presented by Charlotte Brontë's classic novel, *Jane Eyre*."¹³ Moreover, Lewkowicz argues that both novels are feminist works despite tackling feminist concerns in different ways. The difference lies in terms of both the protagonist's beliefs in what a woman's place in society is. She argues in this context that "Whereas Jane has concrete beliefs in what women deserve, as well as obtainable goals for how she imagines herself in society as a woman, Antoinette does not even know where to begin to desire to change or to assert herself."¹⁴ Additionally, Lewkowicz illustrates the difference in religious beliefs and spirituality of Antoinette and Jane as examples of their different takes on being a woman. Whereas Jane "finds comfort in religion"¹⁵, Antoinette on the other hand fails to do so. Lewkowicz illustrates that Jane expresses her doubt and uncertainty in the existence and power of God, but as she matures, her faith solidifies and she comes to have a clear belief in God. Like Jane, Antoinette has difficulty finding comfort in religion, but unlike her, Antoinette carries the distance from and distrust of a higher being she feels for the rest of her life.¹⁶

The above illustration showcases the difference in importance of religion in both Antoinette and Jane's lives; for Jane, religion is something she feels comfort in and she turns to it whenever she faces hardships in her life. Jane finds solace and advice in seeking God. Unlike Jane, Antoinette is distrustful of religion and religious authority. For her, no matter how much faith and belief she puts, she is aware of the fact that it will not change the hardships she faces nor will it lessen them.

The reasons which encouraged us to undertake this study come first from our interest in the topic of resistance to colonial oppression in postcolonial works. Second, although the novel

has been subject to many studies from different perspectives, the notion of violence present in the narrative has never been explored in light of our theory. Thus, it seems fit to carry out this study regarding the presence of oppression and resistance in the work from our perspective.

B. Issue and Working Hypotheses

From the above review, we notice that the novel has been the subject of many studies, and has been analyzed from different perspective. Much of the novel's criticism is based on a feminist postcolonial approach due to its treatment of themes such as race, gender and women's oppression; However, to our best knowledge, no study has dealt with the novel in light of the two suggested theories of this dissertation. This study, therefore, suggests a new perspective within the field of studies that is postcolonial literary studies with reference to Bourdieu's concept of 'Symbolic Violence' and Fanon's concept of 'Counter-Violence'.

Through the analysis, we intend to examine the issue of colonial violence in the novel and its effects on the colonized subject's psyche. Indeed, the settler resorts to violence both implicitly and explicitly to dominate and maintain oppression, while the native suffers from the impact of this violence. As a result, the colonial subject relies on violence as a means to liberate himself. As such, our assumptions are put as follow: how does the colonizer use both implicit and explicit means of violence to assert domination? What are the means the settler resorts to oppress the natives? How does colonial violence reflect on the colonized' psyche? And is the native's violence the same as the dehumanizing violence of the settler? Or does it achieve another purpose? The aim of our study is to investigate these issues.

C. Methodological Outline

This study is divided into four sections: the introduction is the first section in which we introduce the purpose of our study, as well as the review of Literature. The second section is Methods and Materials wherein we explain the concepts of 'symbolic violence' relying on

Pierre Bourdieu's *Reproduction* (1970) and colonial oppression and 'counter-violence' according to Frantz Fanon's two works: *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). We also provide the biography of Jean Rhys, as well as a historical background of the novel. The result section will focus on the findings that will be reached in the discussion. The discussion section will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter will tackle the analysis of the concept of 'symbolic violence' and its effects: inferiority complex' and 'alienation'. In the second chapter, we will showcase how the native's 'counter-violence' is used as a means of resistance and liberation to colonial violence and domination. Finally, the conclusion will serve as a summary of the major points reached in our study.

Endnotes

1-Patrick Colm Hogan. *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crisis of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2000, **quoted in** April Conely Kilinski, “*Embodying History: Women, Representation, and Resistance in Twentieth-Century Southern African and Caribbean Literature.*” PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2006, 2. http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradd/4264

2-Michael Thorpe, “*The Other Side*”: *Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre*, ariel.ucalgary.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/viewFile/1136/1110, p99.

3-Ibid, p.99

4-Ibid, p.101

5-Ibid, p.102

6-Ibid, p.106

7-Akintunde Olasupo, “*Alienation and Madness: A Literary-Psychopathological Approach,*” Open Science Repository Language and Linguistics (February 16, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.7392/Research.70081927>.

8-Ibid.

9-Ibid.

10-Ibid.

11-Ibid.

12-Ibid.

13-Sherry Lewkowicz, “*The Experience of Womanhood*” in ‘*Jane Eyre*’ and ‘*Wide Sargasso Sea*’, the Victorian web. n.d., accessed June 23, 2023, <https://victorianweb.org/neovictorian/rhys/lewkowicz14.html>.

14-Ibid

15-Ibid

16-Ibid

I. Methods and Materials

A. Methods

This dissertation studies colonial forms of domination and exploitation through explicit and implicit violence, and counter-violence as a means of resistance to that oppression. As such, to sustain our analysis, we will rely on Frantz Fanon 's theory of colonial violence and exploitation formulated in his *Black Skin, White Masks (1952)* and *The Wretched of the Earth (1961)*. Additionally, we will borrow Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' developed in his book entitled *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture (1970)*.

1. Bourdieu's Concept of 'Symbolic Violence'

Pierre Bourdieu in his work *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture (1970)* tackles the issue of violence that is invisible and non-physical; it is a symbolic violence. He argues that this type of violence manifested between social groups is used as the basis to maintaining social order through its use as a means of subjugation. Moreover, he asserts that this violence is invisible and operates on the basis of soft manner of domination; the dominated is unaware of the subjugation.

Additionally, Bourdieu defines this form of violence as follows:

A gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through symbolic channels of communication and cognition. [...] the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognized by both the dominant and the dominated – a language (or a pronunciation), a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking and acting) – and [...] the symbolically most powerful of which is that perfectly arbitrary and non-predictive bodily property, skin colour.¹

Symbolic violence, then, is an invisible form of violence exercised through symbolic means such as language, modes of thinking, and skin color.

This type of violence, used as a means of domination, serves to maintain social order since it aims at the destruction of the individual's Habitus. Its main objective is to sustain an imbalanced power relationship that benefits the dominant agent and imposes their authority. Habitus, a key concept in Bourdieu's theories, can be defined as a set of beliefs, tastes, thoughts, speaking modes an individual acquires during his life. Edgerton and Roberts define it as: "A learned set of preferences or dispositions by which a person orients to the social world. It is a system of durable, transposable, cognitive 'schemata or structures of perception, conception and action'"²

Bourdieu's theory centers on the fact that 'Symbolic Violence' affects the individual's beliefs and thought process. He managed to find a link between how control and domination are exerted without the dominant agent being present, and without the means of domination being explicit; this process of domination is achieved through symbolic means. Symbolic violence, then, means gaining illegitimate power through exercising domination by hidden and implicit means such as: media, discourses, and social institutions which serve to transmit social identification.

Accordingly, Bourdieu asserts that "symbolic violence which manifests itself in the form of a right to impose legitimately, reinforces the arbitrary power which establishes it and which it conceals."³ i.e., symbolic violence legitimizes the arbitrary authority's – the dominant agent – system of thought. The dominant agent imposes an ideology that creates deep feelings of inferiority in the dominated subject. Thus, leading the oppressed to embrace power relationships that are based on social hierarchies as legitimate and natural.

Summing up, the theory of symbolic violence operates on a manner of domination that is implicit. Symbolic violence – which is stored at the level of Habitus – is exercised via symbolic means; the dominant agent uses implicit tactics to legitimize and impose their systems of thoughts with. The victim of such violence accepts this domination as legitimate and takes

part in it. This manner of domination, although not direct and physical, affects the dominated' sense of self and agency as human beings.

2. Fanon's Concepts of Colonial Oppression, Violence and Counter-Violence

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) is a Martinican psychiatrist, writer, philosopher and political activist. He is considered as one of the most prominent thinkers and theorist of anti-colonial struggle and postcolonial studies. His theories tackle political and socio-cultural issues such as race, colonialism and decolonization. *Black Skin, White Masks (1952)* and *The Wretched of the Earth (1961)* are two major works that develop Fanon's approach to colonial oppression and decolonization.

Black Skin, White Masks (1952), was Fanon's first book. In it, he developed his analysis of the psychological and sociological consequences of colonialism. He affirms that colonialism damages the psyche of the colonized through oppression and violence. The presence of the white man in the colonized' life has a negative impact on the personality of the black subject as the latter loses his values and questions his confidence as well as his self-esteem. Homi Bhabha has asserted in his Forward to *Black Skin, White Masks (1967)* that "When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person."⁴ Indeed, the white settler imposes his culture and values as superior than those of the black subject; therefore, labeling all what is non-white as inferior and savage.

Furthermore, the black man is judged and deemed less than human based on the color of skin and the way he speaks and acts. As such, the colonized subject develops feelings of inferiority towards his blackness, his cultural values and his civilization. Whiteness represents light, goodness and beauty. One is civilized, educated and superior when he is white. Fanon asserts on this point:" Indeed no, the good and merciful God cannot be black: He is a white man

with bright pink cheeks. From black to white is the course of mutation. One is white as one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent.”⁵

In order to escape from that inferiority complex, the black subject assimilates the white settler’s cultural standards and values. He absorbs the white man’s modes of talking, his religion, and language. In other words, the black man sheds his black skin and puts on a white mask. The colonized attempts to reach whiteness and to be embraced in light and civilization because he considers his blackness a burden he has to rid himself of.

Colonialism promoted the white colonizer’s history, language, culture and beliefs to be universal, superior, and civilized compared to those of the colonized. This process led to the alienation of the black man from his native culture. The black subject rejects his language, the color of his skin, and his civilization in favor of embracing white ideals and cultural standards. The black man, therefore, is separated from his roots and all what constitutes his identity.

Onwuanibe in his book entitled *The Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon* (1983), asserts that Fanon “speaks about the alienation of the Negro in terms of cultural imposition, and of the exploitation of the native by the colonists, just as Marx sees the alienation of the proletariat as their exploitation by the bourgeoisie.”⁶ The alienation of the black man is the result of colonial exploitation, the deprivation of the black subject from his human rights – the dehumanization of the colonized – and his treatment as an object. Moreover, it is linked to the imposition of the white settler’s culture on him and separating him of his own native culture. These factors have denied the colonized his identity as a separate human being and isolated him from his community.

Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is an account of the exploiting aspect of colonialism and the impact it has on the colonized mental and physical’s well-being. It analyzes

the inferiority complex, and the alienation of the colonized as a result of colonial oppression and exploitation. As such, it remains a major work in postcolonial field of studies.

Fanon's second work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), is a book that centers on the role of violence in the anti-colonial struggle. In the chapter entitled 'Concerning Violence', Fanon discusses the importance of violence as a means of liberation from oppression and attributes a great deal of importance to violence performed by the colonized. Hence, he denies the existence of another means to rid the colonized of the shackles of exploitation except through a violent endeavor. He argues that the colonizers resort to violence in order to subdue the colonial subject mentally and physically. Accordingly, colonial oppression and the dehumanization of the native is carried through violent means. In this context, Fanon (1963) asserts:

In the colonial countries, [...], the policeman and the soldier [...] maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of the government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.⁷

In the colony, the settler maintains his oppression and domination through the use of violent means. The colonial subject's life is marred in violent events. Colonial violence is a daily occurrence for the oppressed native as he is met with the settler's gun and knife face to face.

Consequently, Fanon contends that the settler's dehumanizing violence should be met with the native's liberating counter-violence. He advocates the natives' use of violence to achieve liberation from the chains of colonial rule. In this context, he argues that the violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly destructed the native's social forms and broken up his customs of dress and external, that same violence will be claimed by the native in order to liberate himself.⁸

Indeed, the native, after being the recipient of the settler's violent exploitation, will claim that violence for his own. Through the counter-violence the colonized carries, he will destroy the Manichaeian order of colonialism imposed on him. Furthermore, the native will fully rid himself of the settler, as the latter will be expelled from his land and his life.

Fanon adds that "The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the native balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity."⁹ Indeed, the counter-violence of the native is only natural in this situation because colonialism is rooted in violence. When the native carries out his violent resistance, which is considered a reciprocal act, he answers the colonizer's violence with his own. Furthermore, throughout the colonial period, the colonized subject is dealt with through use of violence, he begins his day to the sound of gunshots and ends it to the sound of torture and screams of his people. Therefore, it is inevitable that violence is his only resort to approach the colonizer and demand his freedom.

Fanon views that the native's counter-violence achieves important results; first, it is a psychological necessity in that it liberates the minds of the colonized from the repressive effects of the colonial power. Violence carried out by the native enables him to remove the feelings of inferiority and self-loathing which he internalized as a result of colonial racism and oppression. Fanon argues on this point that: "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect"¹⁰ Through violence, the native's self-esteem and identity is restored the moment the native claims his status as the equal of the white man in the colony¹¹. The colonized comes to the conclusion that he and the settler are equal in that the settler's life is not worth more than his

Another important achievement of counter-violence is that it serves as a cleansing force because it evokes in the native a feeling of catharsis.; the colonized is put in the same stance as

the colonizer, thus, achieving the latter's mental freedom. The colonized' sense of self is destroyed by colonialism. Accordingly, violence is cathartic insofar as it allows the native to restore that sense of self and reclaim his humanity. Fanon, in this context, asserts: "The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence."¹²

To sum up, the violent overtones in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) can be divided into two categories: the violence the colonizer perpetuates through annihilation of the psyche and body of the colonized subject, and the violence the colonized answers with as a means to regain his freedom, self-respect and dignity.

B. Materials

In this part, we present the materials we will use to analyze our work. It displays, first, Jean Rhys's biography. Additionally, a summary and historical background of the novel and the place of its setting is required. We provide a background setting of British colonialism, slavery and The Emancipation Act of 1833 in Jamaica.

1. Biography of Jean Rhys

Jean Rhys, born Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams on August 24, 1890 in Roseau, Dominica, Windward Islands, West Indies, was a West Indian novelist. Being the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a white Creole mother makes Rhys of Creole descent. She authored many works namely: *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), *Good Morning Midnight* (1939), and her most successful novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Rhys published *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) wherein the character of Antoinette Cosway's background is described. Alienation and displacement are recurring themes in her works.

2. Background and Summary of the Novel

Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), published in England, takes place in Jamaica during British colonial era in the Caribbean. The novel is divided into three parts; the first and second parts are set in the British West Indies whereas the third part is set in England. The main character Antoinette narrates the first and second parts in which she gives an account of the hardships she has faced as a child; she describes the rejection and the racial conflicts she was subject to as a Creole woman in a society plagued by the colonial exploitation of the natives.

The second part of the novel is told by Antoinette's husband; he remains nameless throughout the narrative, however, since the novel is written as a prequel to Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), the husband's name is Mr. Rochester. The latter marries Antoinette, and throughout the narrative he tries to impose his beliefs, culture and standards as an English man on his Creole wife. The story ends with Antoinette committing arson and ending her life. The novel deals with problems of identity, inequality and colonial oppression as a result of British colonialism in the Caribbean region. The story takes place in different parts of the Caribbean region; mainly Jamaica and Windward Islands, and is set shortly after the Emancipation Act of 1833.

Jamaica became a British colony since it was seized from the Spanish in 1655. The colony served mainly as a source for sugarcane as it was transported and used in England. The English colonial rule was based on an unequal power relationship and oppression of the natives. The British colonial system imposed its social, cultural and economic standards on the natives as a way to maintain power and control. In the same context, Michele Lemonius asserts in her article "*Deviously Ingenious*": *British Colonialism in Jamaica*:

The British empire extended its reach to Jamaica in 1655. Its interest was accumulation of wealth through sugar-cane production, slavery

and colonialism. The British colonial model included complete sovereignty of land, people and commodities creating divisive systems using divide rule policies, land, ethnocentrism, religious suppression, education and language, native inferiority, depoliticization, loss of livelihood and sustenance, and trauma and inward violence.¹³

Indeed, the British exploited the natives through slavery, land theft and imposition of their language and religion on the indigenous populations. Violence was used to maintain their rule of terror. Through asserting the superiority of the white standards and culture, the British settlers dominated and used the native Jamaicans for their profits. Lemonius adds in this context:

Jamaica like other British colonies became subject to [...] British colonial system and slavery with clearly defined goals of economic gain achieved through “all” forms of violence imaginable to man. The British empire began its colonial rule in Jamaica with the immediate control and division of land, the enslavement of Indigenous African people for plantation labour [...], trauma and violence.¹⁴

It seems, then, that the British exploited the land and the people through all means available to them. Moreover, they maintained power and domination by resorting to violence.

Moreover, the English settlers brought slaves from Africa, in addition to the natives, in order to work in the plantations. The oppression and exploitation of the slaves was rampant in the plantations as they were forced to work in harsh conditions and treated less than humans. In 1833, the British freed all their slaves under the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833; this act granted freedom to all the enslaved natives in Jamaica.

However, despite the emancipation of the black subjects, the latter were still treated harshly and exploited under another form of slavery. The freed-subjects were forced to work for their colonial masters once again under apprenticeship. Despite being less exploiting than slavery, the apprenticeship system forced the former slaves to be employed by the same masters who enslaved them, thus prompting the black subjects' anger and frustration toward the injustice and unfairness of the situation.

As a result, many rebellions and resistance movements took place through the years namely: The First Maroon War in the late 17th century – a series of skirmishes between the colonial militia and the Windward Maroons, Tacky's Revolt in the 1750s, and The Second Maroon War in 1795. These movements were led by the natives against the exploitation and violence they were being subject to. Finally, and after many rebellions and resistance from the natives, the country got its independence from the British Empire in 1962.

Endnotes

- 1-Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*. Nice, R. (Trans.), (Stanford University Press, 2001), p.1
- 2-Jason D. Edgerton, Lance W. Roberts, “*Cultural Capital or Habitus? Bourdieu and Beyond in the Explanation of Enduring Educational Inequality*”, *Theory and Research in Education* 12, no. 2 (April 20, 2014): 195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878514530231>
- 3- Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. Nice, R. (Trans.), (SAGE, 1990), p.13
- 4-Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Markmann, C. L (Trans.), (Grove Press, New York 1967), p.IX
- 5- Ibid, p.51
- 6-Richard C. Onwuanibe, *A Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon*. (St. Louis, Missouri. Warren H. Green, Inc. 1983), **quoted in** Bobby Seals, “*Frantz Fanon, Alienation and the Psychology of the Oppressed*”, n.d.: 3. Accessed in June 21, 2023. https://www.academia.edu/1315095/Frantz_Fanon_Alienation_and_the_Psychology_of_the_Oppressed
- 7-Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.), (Grove Press, New York, USA, 1963), p.38
- 8- Ibid, p.40
- 9- Ibid, p.88
- 10-Ibid, p.94
- 11-Ibid, p.44
- 12-Ibid, p86
- 13-Michele Lemonius, “*‘Deviously Ingenious’: British Colonialism in Jamaica.*”, *Peace Research*, Vol.49, no. 2, (2017), 83, accessed in June 22, 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44779908>.
- 14-Ibid, p84

II. Results

In this piece of research, we have made a study of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) relying on Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' and Fanon's concepts of violence and 'counter-violence', as such we have come to some findings. The first finding concerns the exploitation and oppression the colonized were subject to at the hand of the white settler. To maintain this oppression and subjugation, the settler has relied on violence. Violence – as a defining characteristic of colonial oppression – is used by the white man as a means of control and subjugation. The native is tortured, punished and treated inhumanely by the colonizer. Furthermore, his culture and identity are oppressed and negated by the white man who imposes his culture and standards as the accepted norms.

In addition, the violence of the colonizer is both direct and implicit as the colonial institution has relied on both forms of violence to dominate and oppress. Killings, torture, and imprisonment are types of direct violence the settler carried out on the colonized subject. Moreover, threatening with the police and white law to discipline the natives are also violent methods the white man has resorted to. As we have explored it with evidence in the first chapter of our discussion, the natives are threatened by white man's laws to be disciplined. Moreover, they were exploited through the system of slavery, and later on after emancipation, under the system of apprenticeship.

Another type of violence is implicit violence; a type of violence that is invisible and which is no less impactful than direct violence. An example of this implicit violence is when the natives' culture and civilization are treated as inferior and the imposition of white culture and language as superior and as the standard. Indeed, the colonial institution perpetuated the notion that whiteness and European ideals equal light and progress, while everything they considered as 'Other', is viewed as inferior, savage, and backward. This has urged the colonized

to reject his culture, customs, and more importantly the color of his skin. As such, the native thinks that by assimilating whiteness, he will attain light and knowledge. He is taught by the colonial institution that all what constitutes his identity is wrong, uncivilized, and inferior, therefore, not worth celebrating.

Additionally, colonial violence affects the body and the psyche of the natives. On the psychological level, the impact of violence results in what Fanon terms as psychological neuroses. Fanon refers to the inferiority complex and alienation. The feelings of inferiority occur when the native's culture and civilization is treated as savage, inferior, and labeled as backward. Consequently, the colonial subject rejects his identity and tries to assimilate that whiteness. The black subject is, thus, alienated from his society and all what constitutes his identity. As such, he is neither white nor black, neither a European nor a native. The colonized is therefore lost.

Last and most importantly, the violence of the colonizer generates another kind of violence; Fanon addresses it as counter-violence. The colonized subject – used to the violence of colonialism – retaliates with a violence of his own; a counter-violence. This violence performed by the natives is first and foremost a means of resistance. Thus it serves as a means of liberation. Moreover, counter-violence serves as a means of assertion. The colonial subject rids himself of subjugation and oppression, and asserts himself over the colonial power through the act of violence as it solidifies the native's ownership of the land and its resources.

In the novel, when the natives set fire to the house of Mr. Mason and chase away its white inhabitants, not only they manage assert themselves as the rightful owners of the land but also they fight back against the oppression they been subject to since the white man invaded their lands and homes. By reclaiming the land, the natives are no longer passive subjects who obey the settler's orders – mere beasts with no conscious thoughts – instead, they are free human beings possessing a will of their own.

III. Discussion

The discussion of the present dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter examines the theme of colonial violence, oppression and domination in light of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'Symbolic Violence' and the way it is represented through the colonizer's arbitrary cultural assimilation. In addition to that, we will discuss the psychological effects of that forced cultural assimilation on the colonized subject's psyche relying on Fanonian theory; mainly the concepts of 'inferiority complex' 'identity loss' and 'psychological alienation'. The second chapter is devoted to discussing the theme of resistance against colonial exploitation and violence using Fanon's concept of 'counter-violence'. We will examine the way the colonized subjects' 'counter-violence' serves as a cathartic experience for them. Additionally, we will discuss the way 'counter-violence' represents a way of self-assertion by the natives.

Chapter I: Oppression through Violence and its Effects in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

A. Cultural Assimilation as Symbolic Violence in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

This chapter centers on oppression and the use of implicit form of violence to dominate through cultural assimilation in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Our purpose is to examine how cultural assimilation perpetuated by the colonial power is a form of symbolic violence used as a means of domination and control. We also aim to analyze the way the colonizer's 'Symbolic Violence' affects the colonized subject's psyche and the trauma of oppression manifesting in psychological psychoses mainly: inferiority complex, identity loss and cultural alienation.

In fact, colonialism did not necessarily rely on direct armed force to invade a region or expand territories. Despite military invasion and physical violence being one of its common traits, the colonizer, in addition to direct force, employed more implicit methods to achieve

control and maintain dominance over the colonies; as such instead of guns, symbolic means were used. Cultural assimilation is one of the key ideological aspects of the colonial institution. The latter is based on a hierarchy in which European civilization and culture are presented as superior and further advanced than other civilizations and cultures. Moreover, cultural assimilation went hand in hand with Europe's colonial expansion.

The events of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) take place in Jamaica, a former British colony, wherein the effects of colonialism can be seen through the interaction of the characters coming from different backgrounds. From the former slave owners wanting compensation from the government after the passing of the Emancipation Act in 1833, to the natives struggling with the question of identity and belonging, and finally, the relationship between the protagonist, Antoinette and her white husband, symbolizing the British Empire exploiting its colonies through both direct and implicit means such as cultural assimilation.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic violence denotes more than a form of violence operating symbolically. It is "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity"¹. It is not a violence in the simplest sense - the use of physical force or explicit use of authority – rather, it 'is lodged in an individual's durable principles of judgment and practice - the habitus.'² In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), the violence perpetuated is indirect and implicit. The natives are subject to it without their knowledge nor their consent. Such violence in the novel is manifested through implicit means such as forced cultural assimilation as the latter represents a form of symbolic violence.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, the cultural domination's effect starts when an individual presents their arbitrary culture as superior and legitimate and imposes it on another individual; thus, using it as a way to legitimate domination. Cultural domination is exercised by creating an impression of superiority and segregation over those affected. Bourdieu asserts: "The dominant legitimacy is nothing other than the arbitrary imposition of the dominant cultural

arbitrary.’³ The dominant culture is presented as legitimate and superior, as such, the dominant individual or social group legitimizes their domination through the process of cultural assimilation.

Additionally, in this case, the dominated is unaware of the process because it is invisible; unlike direct force applied directly to keep under control the dominated, the process of cultural assimilation works in a much subtle and implicit way. Bourdieu asserts on this point that: “any symbolic domination presupposes on the part of those of who are subjected to it a form of complicity which is neither a passive submission to an external constraint nor a free adherence to values.”⁴ For Bourdieu, then, symbolic domination demands a form of complicity from the dominated subject in order to be achieved.

Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is a novel that reflects the experience of the colonized subject in colonial societies in the mid-nineteenth century and the destructive effects of colonialism. Moreover, it demonstrates these implicit means of domination which are represented through the cultural assimilation the natives experienced at the hands of the British Empire. The Caribbean populations suffered through years of British imperialism which erased their cultures and languages and imposed white English standards on them. This implicit domination is justified through the idea of civilizing the natives and spreading knowledge. An example of this is the relationship between Antoinette Mason and Mr. Rochester which symbolizes the dynamic colonizer/ colonized. Indeed, their interaction is a representation of British imperialism’s exploitation of its Caribbean colonies. Furthermore, Antoinette Mason represents the natives whom colonialism affected by the erasure of their culture and identity resulting in psychological complexes. The white man came into the colonies and brought trouble with him.

In order to justify his presence in the colonies, the white man presents himself as the bringer of light and knowledge to the uncivilized black subjects. He presents his cultural

standards and religious practices as being superior and far more advanced than those of the colonial subject. He spreads his customs and traditions at the expense of the black man's native customs and cultural practices. He builds churches to spread the word of his white god and schools to teach the grandeur of his culture and language, while at the same time he undermines everything which is different and non-white and labels it as inferior and savage.

The settler has instilled in the black man a desire to associate himself with the prospect of whiteness which represents goodness and light for him, while on the other hand, blackness is equalized to evil and sin. Those feelings of the supremacy of white culture were installed in the colonial subject's mind from a very young age, and are perpetuated by colonial institutions such as schools, churches and convents. In the novel, Antoinette Mason is sent by her aunt into a convent which is a leftover from British rule. She is taught about Christianity; lectured about 'cleanliness, good manners and kindness to God's poor' ⁵ all attributes of the white man. Furthermore, while staying there, Antoinette is introduced to Louise, as a pretty white girl; thus, Antoinette's wish to look like her

'That must be seen to,' she said. 'I will write to your aunt. Now Mother St Justine will be waiting for you. I have sent for girl who has been with us for nearly a year. Her name is Louise de Plana. If you feel strange, she will explain' [...] Louise and I walked along a paved path to the classroom [...] She was very pretty and when she smiled at me I could scarcely believe I had ever been miserable ⁶.

Antoinette, from a very young age, is taught to associate whiteness with beauty. She wants to have all the attributes the white woman has: brown curls and blue eyes and an impeccable deportment. She talks about how all the nuns were impressed with Miss H el ene's beauty and comportments:

Like everyone else, she has fallen under the spell of the de Plana sisters. I admired them. They sit so poised and imperturbable while she points out the excellence of Miss H el ene's coiffure, achieved without a looking glass. 'Please, H el ene, tell me how you do your hair, because when I grow up I want mine to look like yours.' [...] sometimes it was

Miss Hélène's hair and sometimes Miss Germaine's impeccable deportment, sometimes it was the care Miss Louise took of her beautiful teeth ⁷.

The above quote shows how Antoinette has even asked her how she does her hair in order to look like her. But being a black girl, she could not have all of that. Instead of accepting herself and her blackness, she wishes to have all what those white women have; beauty, cleanliness and good manners.

Imposing whiteness as the standard and painting blackness as evil and sin is a product of the colonial institution. Fanon asserts that “ when European civilization came into contact with the black world, with those savage peoples, everyone agreed: Those Negroes were the principle of evil.”⁸ The European man has, unconsciously, decided that as the harbinger of light, it is his duty to repudiate the evil which is the black man.

The white man has already decided that the black subject was evil and made him aware of it at every possible chance. In the novel, Mr. Mason - Antoinette's step-father - treats the natives like a typical white man would; enforcing the stereotype of black people as being lazy. When he was warned that they would become violent, Mr. Mason answers in a most typical English manner:

‘They are curious. It's natural enough. You have lived alone for too long, Annette. You imagine enmity which doesn't exist. Always one extreme or the other. Didn't fly at me like a little wild cat hen 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.’⁹.

For Mr. Mason, the natives are what he perceives them to be: not dangerous because they are too lazy. He uses his white man's stereotypes to describe them, and when Annette tries to

convince him otherwise, he dismisses her on the account that he knows for sure that what he knows about them is what is considered to be the truth about them.

According to the colonizer's viewpoint, the black man is uncultured and savage, as a result, the black man needed governance, a religion and a culture to promote him from the darkness that he lives in. As such, the native's traditional cultures and identities are erased and reconstructed and replaced by the occupying power's own culture and traditions. In addition, the colonized subject has to absorb that whiteness and embrace that white knowledge in order to be elevated above his inferior status, and becomes proud for having been approved by the white man as one of theirs. Fanon asserts on this topic:

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. In the French colonial army, and particularly in the Senegalese regiments, the black officers serve first of all as interpreters. They used to convey the master's orders to their fellows, and they too enjoy a certain position of honor.¹⁰

The degree to which the black subject can be considered human is related to degree to which he assimilates the white man's cultural standards. Fanon illustrates this with the example of the Senegalese whom become translators for the French army during the war. They betrayed their fellow black subjects and renounced their origins in order to integrate themselves and be accepted by the white French soldiers.

The white man considers it his duty to 'elevate' the black man from his 'jungle status' through imposing on him his own set of cultural standards. He made it his mission to civilize and educate the colonial subject, and in order to do that he exploited and oppressed the native peoples in the name of civilization. That exploitation and dominance was asserted through use of violence through its many forms: whether it is direct force or an indirect form using implicit means such cultural assimilation.

In the novel, Antoinette Mason and Edward Rochester's relationship is an illustration of soft domination via cultural assimilation. Antoinette being of Creole descent and him being a white man of English descent reflects power imbalance. Coming from different cultures and backgrounds, one culture being the dominant one due to colonialism, their marriage can be seen as a representation of a dialectic colonizer/colonized relationship. Their marriage, indeed, is built on different mindsets. While Antoinette seeks love and acceptance from him, for Rochester, marrying her means getting access to her wealth. It is also an opportunity for him as a white English man to educate and civilize her because according to his English standards, she is considered an uncultured, Creole woman. His treatment of her and their relationship is similar to the way the British Empire exploited and oppressed its colonial territories under the cover of the 'civilizing mission'. In order to assert his dominance over her, Rochester resorts to implicit and hidden means, mainly cultural assimilation. Under the guise of marriage and love, Rochester has proceeded to manipulate and exploit his wife. He came into Antoinette's life to change and mold her into his vision of a perfect woman: a white woman.

Mr. Rochester's aim is to transform his wife into a version of a civilized woman. From the moment he comes to Windward Islands, he starts to view it and the natives from a white man's perspective. He describes the place and the people as follows:

The girl Amélie said this morning, 'I hope you will be very happy, sir, in your sweet honeymoon house.' She was laughing at me I could see. A lovely little creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like much else in this place ... I looked at the sad leaning cocoanut palms, the fishing boats drawn up on the shingly beach, the uneven row of white-washed huts, and asked the name of the village. 'Massacre'. ... so this is Massacre. Not the end of the world, only the last stage of our interminable journey from Jamaica, the start of our sweet honeymoon.¹¹

He adds about Antoinette:

'you'll get soaked, Antoinette,' I said. 'No, the rain is stopping.' She held up the skirt of her riding habit and ran across the street. 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.¹²

At this level, Rhys illustrates Edward Rochester's description of Amélie, the black servant, and Antoinette when he has first seen them. As soon as he comes into contact with women from another culture, he views them through the lens of a white man. He sees Antoinette as someone who embodies wildness and the alienness, something different from him. Moreover, after he marries her, he never thinks of her as only his wife but always comparing her to white English women, his standard of an ideal woman: "Looking up smiling, she might have been any pretty English girl."¹³ Her non-whiteness was always something that unnerved and bothered him, something he had to fix and mold in order to fit English standards; be it her language, her manners or her cultural customs.

After a while, Mr. Rochester starts to openly state his discomfort and distaste towards everything that she represents as a Creole woman: her culture, and her people. First, he starts to complain about the way the black servants and Antoinette's maids speak, dress and behave. He complains to Antoinette that "Her coffee is delicious but her language is horrible and she might hold her dress up. It must get very dirty, yards of it trailing on the floor' [...] 'Whatever the reason it is not a clean habit.'" ¹⁴ Mr. Rochester complains about her behavior and the way she dresses as being non-conforming to his white upbringing.

Despite Antoinette's attempts to convince him that Christophine is not the way he sees her to be, he is still insistent to view her the way he wants to. His mind is already made about her, and his judgment is based on the stereotypes the colonizer has constructed about black people. The only acceptable standard is his: she should dress, behave and talk the way he talks and dresses and behaves.

Furthermore, Rochester is not too pleased with the interactions she has with her maids and her servants, the trust she has in them: “‘He’s a very good overseer,’ she’d say, and I’d agree, keeping my opinion of Baptiste, Christophine and all the others to myself. ‘Baptiste says ... Christophine wants ...’ She trusted them and I did not. But I could hardly say so. Not yet.”¹⁵ Mr. Rochester does not appreciate the fact that Antoinette is friends with the natives and trusts them, a thought he does not express freely but keeps hidden from Antoinette.

Additionally, he mocks her for her use of Obeah magic; a traditional custom and belief of hers. Edward Rochester wants her to think what he thinks about them – wants her to have the same beliefs and prejudices towards those people he sees as inferior and different from his white English standards. In short, he wants her to give up associating with those people because they do not conform to what he sees as the norm. Mr. Rochester is asserting his cultural beliefs on her, in return forcing her to distance herself from her own culture and everything that constitutes it. He racializes his disenchantment with her when he is lead to believe that she is having an affair; his belief in her sexual promiscuity and degeneration comes from the colonialist discourse that black women are unlike English women who are pure and chaste.

However, after those complaints about her behavior and her conducting herself in a manner that was different from an English woman, he abandons all pretense of acting as her husband and starts to call her in another name other than her own:

When he passes my door he says, “Goodnight Bertha.” He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother’s name. “I hope you sleep well, Bertha.” – it cannot be worse, I said. ‘That one night he came I might sleep afterwards. I sleep so badly now. And I dream.’¹⁶

By renaming her ‘Bertha’, which is an English name, he distances her from her Creole identity: something he wishes not to accept because it is other than English culture. Even when it disturbed her, he kept calling her that, despite her protests:

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.' 'It doesn't matter,' she said.¹⁷

However, Antoinette never suspects anything and she complies with everything he tells her. Because for her, he represents her husband, but also a white man whose beliefs and standards she has to accept because it is the correct thing to do as a black person. Embracing that white culture and language meant having access to him, consequently, having access to superiority and civilization because that is what Edward Rochester represents: light, civilization and goodness. How could Antoinette refuse him anything when it meant refusing all that he represents? How could she run from those cultural beliefs and white standards? when it was instilled in her from a very young age that all what was white equaled goodness and progress, while at the same time, all what was black represented evil, sin and darkness. Deep down, she wants all that whiteness in order for her to elevate from her inferior status into a superior one. Fanon asserts on this point that 'when the black man makes contact with the white world, a sensitizing action takes place as the black subject stops behaving as an actional person'¹⁸ the black man loses his self-esteem when he is in contact with the white man. Simply being near Rochester is enough for Antoinette to feel worthy. As a result she is ready to accept and embrace everything that he presents.

By forcing Antoinette to assimilate his culture and white standards, Edward Rochester is, thus, exercising his domination over her, albeit a soft manner of domination. Not direct and explicit, but rather implicit and woven into Europe's colonial claim of the superiority and civilization of the white man. For Antoinette, whiteness represents, goodness and virtue; as such Edward Rochester represents Western standards, language and culture. As a result, everything about him must be embraced and assimilated because it meant getting access to civilization.

For Rochester, exploiting and controlling Antoinette meant having control over her wealth. It also meant exerting his power over her and conquering her and molding her into person who fits his white English standards: a white woman. Because for him, she represents something different than what he sees ideal, something he considers savage and uncultured needing white knowledge and light. In her, he sees the wealth she has, the land she inhabits: “a beautiful place_ wild, untouched, above all untouched, . . . and it kept its secret”¹⁹, and he ‘wants what it hides’²⁰. M.M Adjarian suggests that Rochester’s desire to control and exploit Antoinette derives from his exclusion from the secrets of the island. He asserts:

Hence part of the reason behind Rochester’s intense wish to possess Antoinette even after he has gained her wealth. By controlling her, he controls what Antoinette comes to represent for him_ the island, its inhabitants and the threat they pose to him and his self-perception as an all-powerful, all-knowing European. As his “white man’s burden,” Antoinette becomes the objectified other he uses to deal with his anxieties about Caribbean culture while establishing social and economic respectability in his own.²¹

Rochester could not simply stand the idea of being the outsider, the Other. That role was an unfamiliar one for him as a white European male, therefore, he needed to reverse the roles and put himself back into control by trying to assert his domination on her. His apparent fear of the unfamiliar and exotic landscape around him prompts him to try and regain control by promptly oppressing Antoinette and trying to control her. Despite the fact that he did not love her, he never wants anyone else to have her except him. “I’ll take her into my arms, my lunatic. She’s mad but mine, mine”²². His greed for wealth pushes him to see her as an object that he must acquire, consequently, by doing so, he gets access to the land.

Just like the white man sought to control over the colonies, seeing everything as his for the taking and exploiting the natives, Rochester exploited Antoinette and asserted his domination over her. By trying to mold her into a white person, he slowly eroded and took away her identity, erased everything in her that defined her as a black woman. From trying to isolate her from her people, to trying to mold her into his standards of a white woman; by changing the

way she perceives her own culture, to the way she speaks and conducts herself, and finally by taking away the last remnant of her identity: her own name.

Like Europe which justified the oppression and exploitation of the native peoples and their lands, the erasure of their native culture and civilizations by the claim of bringing light and knowledge to them, Rochester justifies his control and cultural assimilation of Antoinette by presenting it as the only means for her to be accepted and loved by him. Antoinette is unaware of the fact that little by little she was being molded into someone different, a perfect version of a woman whom her husband sees as ideal: a white English woman. In the end, when Mr. Rochester discovers that despite his attempts to change and fit his wife into an English lady, he could not accept her as one. As a result, he labels her as mad and locks her away in his English mansion.

Colonial cultural assimilation is one of the instruments of the colonial institution, and is used by the colonizer to subjugate and dominate the black subjects through the claim of the inferiority of their cultures and civilizations. By labeling the native peoples as savages and wild, the white man imposes his cultural standards under the guise of civilization and enlightenment. As a result, the black man is assimilated into another culture and forced to think of his own as inferior and invalid, thus, trying at all costs to evade from his own blackness into the light of the white man. This process of cultural assimilation traumatizes the colonized and affects their psyche. As such, a slew of mental psychoses are experienced by the black subject, mainly: an inferiority complex, loss of cultural identity and psychological alienation.

B. Effects of Cultural Assimilation in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

When the white man came to the colonies, he came under the pretense of civilizing the ‘inferior races’, and spreading knowledge and light. The native – made to believe that his culture, his language, all that which represented his being was bad, savage, and not worth celebrating –

starts to view himself as such and tries to escape from all that which reminds him of his blackness. After having convinced the colonized subject of the inadequacy and the inferiority of his culture, the white man starts to establish the superiority of his language and his culture. Being viewed as superior, the white man's word is made holy; anything representing whiteness or is even related to the white man is seen as something to follow, to cherish and be part of. The native, then, starts the process of assimilating that culture and whiteness. In return loses his native culture, his sense of self and starts a process of internalizing feelings of inferiority towards his own black identity.

Frantz Fanon describes the effects of colonial violence and racism on the oppressed' psyche in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). He argues that colonialism structured societies in the colonies in a way that robbed native populations of their history, culture and even their sense of self. The colonial powers instituted systems that judged colonized subjects by the standards of a white European ideal. Such establishments ranged from political, to educational to religious and include schools and churches. Indeed, the black man's culture and identity and his religious practices are deemed inferior and erased through educational texts and Christian practices aimed at repressing everything representing blackness.

Moreover, not only are the colonized subjects always judged by this white ideal, but they were made to judge themselves by it too. To be white and European was to be civilized, intelligent and cultured. To be black was not even to be the opposite of these qualities. It was to be nothing at all, and black people were made to feel this in themselves. Fanon asserts: "My body was given to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look a nigger." ²³

Additionally, the white man considers himself superior, beautiful, kind and civilized. Fanon adds: "The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. He finds himself

predestined master of this world. He enslaves it. An acquisitive relation is established between the world and him.”²⁴ The white colonizers conceive themselves as a chosen people, destined to rule and be masters over the other races; whether black or yellow, they were associated with sin and evil. As a result, the black man will strive to rid himself of his blackness at every cost, leading to his assimilation of whiteness and donning a white mask over his black skin. Consequently, Fanon argues that the presence of the white man in the black man's community has a negative effect on the colonized subject's personality. The latter loses his values, his confidence, his self-motivation.

Fanon viewed all this as unjust and destructive on the black man's psychological being. In *Black Skin White Masks (1952)*, Fanon addresses the impact of colonial dehumanization and violence on the black subject's psyche. First, he addresses the inferiority complex experienced by the black man. He asserts that the society controlled by the white man managed to maintain and perpetuate the patterns of subjugation through an all-encompassing propagation of negative racial stereotypes. The black man was reduced to the color of his skin; he was dirty, savage and uncultured.

The white man affirmed the supremacy of his culture and language at the expense of the black man's own culture and traditions. Unable to fit into the social and cultural norms established by the colonizer, and having lost his native cultural origin, the black subject interiorizes feelings of inadequacy and inferiority and strives to overcome them by imitating the white colonizer in every aspect. In other words, the native feels that wearing a white mask is the only way of dealing with psychological inadequacy. The natives' sole focus, then, becomes proving to the white man “the richness of their thought and the equal value of their intellect”²⁵.

In the novel, when Mr. Rochester asks the black servant Hilda about Antoinette's half-brother Daniel, Hilda depicts him as someone superior. Rhys illustrates: “She added

thoughtfully that Daniel was a very superior man, always reading the Bible and that he lived like white people... he had a house like white people, with one room only for sitting in [...] he had two pictures on the wall of his father and his mother”²⁶.

Hilda describes Daniel, a colored subject like her, as someone superior just because he reads the Bible, living like white people did, with a house having a sitting room and pictures of his parents hanging on the wall. The standards of superiority here become those of the white man; to be superior you have to act like a white man does. By doing so, you become someone privileged. Daniel raises from his status as an inferior man to a superior one because he complies with the white man’s culture and traditions. This shows that the black subject associates superiority with whiteness. Moreover, it also shows that the black man considers his blackness as inferior; those feelings of inferiority are internalized, harbored deep down inside his psyche. The colonial institution instilled in the colonized a desire to be white, a desire to reject his blackness.

Fanon contends that the black subject’s inferiority complex was a product of colonial racism. He asserts:

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.”²⁷

The colonizer’s treatment of the black culture as inferior to the white culture leads the black man to feel inferior and, in turn, view his own culture as inferior. The feeling of inferiority, he adds, is compensated by the black man trying to become white through imitating the white culture.

In the novel, after Antoinette’s hair is burned in the fire, it had to be cut afterward. After her aunt Cora tells her about the cut, she consoles her that it will grow back again. However, Antoinette remarks that it will grow back darker.

‘I saw my plait, tied with red ribbon, when I got up,’ I said. ‘your hair had to be cut. You’ve been really 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. ‘Why not darker?’²⁸

She is more concerned about her hair growing darker rather than being concerned about it not growing at all. In a way, she hopes that it will grow lighter, fairer and not darker. She does not want to have dark hair because it represents her being a Creole. But rather, she wants to have fairer hair, brown curls just like white girls.

Her first reaction is whether her hair will grow back darker. She does not want her hair to grow back darker, she never wanted her dark hair in the first place, and now it will grow even more darker. For her, having black hair means she can never look like her “favorite picture, ‘The Miller’s Daughter’, a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes”²⁹. Here once again, it shows that Antoinette associates beauty and loveliness of looks with a white English girl, with blue eyes and brown curls. Beauty to Antoinette is not a girl with dark hair, darkness does not represent beauty but the opposite of that.

Indeed, the black subject soon realizes that trying as he might to assimilate white culture, he will never be accepted by the white man, he will never become white and rise to the status of superiority. Fanon illustrates this in his book: “subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro. That he will learn once he goes to Europe”³⁰. Once in contact with the white world, the black man will realize that he still remains his black self, despite the fact that he negates his blackness and dons a white mask over his black skin. Feelings of inferiority arise from this; no matter how hard the black man tries to become white, he never succeeds. Trapped in his blackness, he interiorizes feelings of inadequacy, which in turn lead to feelings of inferiority towards his own civilization and cultural standards.

Another point Fanon tackles concerning the impact of colonialism on the colonized subject is the loss of identity. The colonized' sense of self and identity is fragmented as a result of colonialism; he is living in a state of in-between, neither white nor black, not belonging to either of the cultures and estranged from his own self and culture. The colonized subject no longer recognizes to which world he belongs to, which culture he is part of; his own black origins were deemed inferior by the white man, the white world he is conditioned to want to be part of is being denied to him. As a result, the colonized subject is left hanging in-between, trapped with no escape. Fanon writes:

What? While I was forgetting, forgiving, and wanting only to love, my message was flung back in my face like a slap. The white world, the only honorable one, barred from all participation. A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man – or at least like a nigger. I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged.³¹

The racial ideology of the colonizers gave him an identity and function which reduced him to the color of his skin and the racial stereotypes the white man attributed to him. Further, he describes how he felt imprisoned by not being able to define his own identity and therefore was split by his own selfhood and the identity the Europeans constructed for him.

In the novel, Antoinette talks about the white people in terms of them, and how “they were not in their ranks”³². Furthermore, she adds: “the Jamaican ladies never approved of my mother”³³. Antoinette does not consider herself as part of the white people, but also she and her mother are not approved by the Jamaican ladies because they were “pretty like pretty self”³⁴. For the white people, Antoinette is too dark to be considered as one of them, and for the natives, she was too white and pretty to be accepted as one of them. She neither belongs to the white world, nor to the black one. Another instance is Antoinette witnessing how the white people jeered at her mother for marrying Mr. Mason; him being an English man while she was of Creole descent.

Antoinette recounts: “I had heard what all these smooth smiling people said about her when she was not listening ... ‘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?’ ”³⁵. The whites never welcomed or accepted her mother into their world despite her marrying an English husband. It seems that then, since a very young age, Antoinette was subject to events that made her question where her belongings are, what identity can she attribute to herself. Was she a black woman? Or could she associate herself with the whites now that she enters their world through her mother’s marriage?

Additionally, her marriage to Mr. Rochester serves only to confuse her more about her identity. After her marriage to him, he slowly strips her of everything that represents her as a black woman. He criticizes her servants and the company she keeps, he denies her the right to keep her birth name and finally alienates her from her native land by taking her away to England and locking her with no visits from her friends and family. Antoinette is stuck halfway between two identities, not knowing what to choose as a fixed representation of her identity.

Fanon argues that colonialism has corrupted people’s understanding of themselves. Black people have an image of themselves that’s distorted—a negative image constructed by white colonizers—, as a result, they experience the weight of being “hated, despised, detested”³⁶ by white society. As a consequence, they try to become more white by assimilating whiteness, despite the futility of the task.

An illustration of this in the novel would be when Daniel, Antoinette’s half-brother, meets Mr. Rochester for the first time, he makes sure to present himself as white as possible and denies having anything to do with blackness. He starts introducing himself as Daniel, a name he changed from Esau to Daniel. Then Daniel recounts to Rochester the way his father – Antoinette’s deceased father – refuses to acknowledge him as his son and treats him like a slave

– which is due to the fact that Daniel’s mother was a slave -. The following passage is Daniel’s narration of his story:

[...] 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. I never put my eyes on a man haughty and proud like that – he walk like he own the earth. “I don’t give a damn,” he says. [...] I remember it like yesterday the morning he put a curse on me.[...] I walk all the way to Coulibri – five six hours it take. He don’t refuse to see me; he receive me very cool and calm and first he tell me is I’m always pestering him for money. 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. He look at me like I was dirt and I get angry too. “I have my rights after all,” I tell him and you know what he do? He laugh in my face. Very old he look in the bright sunshine that morning. “It’s you yourself call me Daniel,” I tell him. “I’m no slave like my mother was.”³⁷

Daniel’s narration of the way he was treated by his late father furthermore consolidates the fact that he feels ashamed of his black skin. Daniel is angered by the fact that his father will not accept him as his son. But the real reasoning behind his actions is that, deep down, he hates the fact that his father treats him so because of his skin. Daniel wants his white father to treat him as his equal; he wants to be labeled as a white man and treated as such, because he is no slave, and therefore, no nigger like his mother was. Daniel insists on the fact that he is not a nigger; a black man like his black mother. He proves his whiteness to Rochester by presenting himself as an exemplary white man: he read the bible and goes to church, his name is Daniel, he does not walk barefoot, and drinks to calm his nerves. These habits which are considered as the white man’s standard of superiority.

Despite all of that, Mr. Rochester is still wary of him. He still does not believe his intentions nor motivations and still has to inquire about the truth of what he told him. This is due to the fact that despite Daniel donning a white mask over his black skin, Rochester will never see him as his equal. He will never treat him like a white man because he can never look past his black skin.

Colonialism and the colonial institution with its racist behavior and racial stereotypes worked to demean the black subject's sense of self and belonging by labeling him as savage and uncultured, but also by tempting him with the idea of whiteness and the need to renounce his blackness. The result is the colonial subject trying to shed his culture and traditions and free himself from the shackles of blackness in favor of light and civilization that await him in the white world. However, soon he discovers that he is being denied entry into that world of light, the white man's world, on account of being black; because no matter how much whiteness he assimilates he will never be white enough. This causes a feeling of loss and confusion in the black subject; having renounced his native identity, culture and his fellow black brothers and sisters, and being rejected by the white culture, the black man is left stranded with no sense of belonging anywhere. With no cultural identity to define himself with and only a slew of negative stereotypes and bad adjectives that the white colonizer attributed to him, the colonized black subject is lost.

Alienation of the black man from his native roots is another issue Fanon addresses in *Black Skin White Masks (1952)* as being a product of the colonial institution. He argues that colonization strips colonized people of their culture, identity, and often times even a sense of their own existence, leaving them in a state of profound alienation. He emphasizes that black people are forced to exist in relation to whiteness, as a result, many of them spend their lives trying to prove themselves less black resulting in further confusion in their sense of self. The more they try to become white, the more alienated from their origins they become.

All that is due to colonial racism which discourages black people from identifying with their black origins; colonialism leaves the colonized subject bereft of a sense of belonging either to his own culture or that of the colonizing country. Fanon argues, then, that this results in the complete alienation of the colonized subject.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), the alienation of Antoinette is represented as the alienation from herself and her cultural belonging at the hands of her white husband. First, he alienates her from her culture; by viewing the servants and the natives in a racist stereotypical standard, Mr. Rochester forces her to do the same to them. He despises her association with them and tries to keep her from mixing on with them. He objects the good relationship she has with Christophine on account of her practicing Obeah magic. “she trusted them and I did not”³⁸. Just because he does not trust them, he imposes the same thing on her. “‘why do you hug and kiss Christophine?’ I’d say ... ‘I wouldn’t hug and kiss them,’ I’d say, ‘I couldn’t.’ ”³⁹. He hates the fact that she is close to them, and little by little he distances her from them.

Furthermore, he alienates her from her native land when, at the end of the novel, he takes her to England. Alone in a foreign country and with no one from home, Antoinette is completely alone and little by little she loses her sanity. Inside that chamber where she is locked, she muses about how “Names matter. Like when he wouldn’t call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out the window with her scents, pretty clothes and her looking-glass”⁴⁰. She adds that the girl she saw reflected in the mirror “was herself yet not quite herself”⁴¹. “now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I”⁴² Alone, trapped, lost and confused, Antoinette can no longer recognize her own self. Far away from her origins, her native culture and her friends and family, she slowly lost everything that defined her as a black person. As a result, she begins slowly to descend into madness.

Colonialism impacted the life of the colonized subject in a negative way resulting in a slew of mental traumas that manifest in feelings of inferiority, identity loss and alienation. The white man disfigured and redefined the cultural practices and traditions of the colonized societies to an extent that the black man no longer finds value and worth in them but rather seeks to associate himself with the culture of the colonial power. The black subject develops and internalizes feelings of inferiority towards his own blackness because it is deemed

inadequate and inferior by the white man. Furthermore, he loses his sense of self and identity when he rejects his blackness and tries and fails to become white by assimilating white culture and standards. Finally, the black subject is alienated from his self and origins when he no longer can be part of either cultures: neither the black culture he was born into nor the white world he wishes to be part of, resulting in his cultural estrangement and loss of self.

Endnotes

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Chapter II: Counter-Violence as a Form of Resistance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

The following chapter of our discussion is devoted to the analysis of the concept of counter-violence as a means of resisting colonial oppression and domination. Our analysis is centered on the role counter-violence plays in mentally and physically liberating the oppressed. Counter-violence is mentally liberating for the colonized as it is a cathartic experience for him. Furthermore, counter-violence is epresents a form of self-assertion for the colonial subject as it allows him to physically assert himself as the rightful owner of his land and country.

A. Violence as a Cathartic Experience in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

In his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Frantz Fanon deals with the issues of colonial violence, exploitation, decolonization, and the necessity for the natives to opt for counter-violence as a means of resistance and liberation from the shackles of colonial rule. As such, upon tackling the issue of ‘decolonization’ in his work, he asserts that the mere achievement of independence from the colonizer is insufficient to remove the colonialist’s distorting image about the native and to return the subjected peoples to their rightful sense of identity. Rather, Fanon contends, in order for the process of decolonization to be fully achieved, the native has to rid of the colonizer from both his lands and his mind. This is because, according to him, the colonizer’s exploitation gets beyond the body of the colonized, it also extends to his mind and psyche.

The chapter entitled “Concerning Violence” in Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) tackles the concept of violence in the colonial context as not only a means of oppression and exploitation, but also as a means of resistance to that colonial exploitation. Fanon argues that violence is the defining aspect of colonialism and the encounter of colonizer/colonized itself is marred in violence. Colonialism is a violent struggle between the settler and the native whereby the colonizer maintains his rule through violence. He asserts,

Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons.¹

The passage above illustrates the violence that is born from the encounter of colonizer/colonized. Fanon notes that colonialism is violent in its natural state: violence is the defining characteristic of colonialism whereby the natives are being exploited, enslaved, oppressed and dehumanized by the settler. As such, the native is faced with violence from the moment he makes contact with the white man. Moreover, Fanon argues that the white man “is the bringer of violence into the home and the mind of the native”². Colonial violence stems from the racial views the white man has about the black subject. For the white settler, the native represents the opposite of European ideals and civilization. The black man symbolizes backwardness, a lack of empathy and rationality. Therefore, the colonized subject must not be treated with dignity and humanity as a person deserves. Rather, he is to be tamed and civilized. In order to carry that, the settler resorts to violence.

The colonizer’s use of torture, force and violent means to oppress the colonized is a common occurrence in most of the colonies. The British Empire imported the natural riches of the lands it colonized and made use of violence when the natives resisted. An example of this occurred in the British colony of Jamaica. Jamaica was a British colony from 1655 up until it was granted independence in 1962. The colony was primarily used for sugarcane production. Like in many of its colonies, the British Empire exploited the natural resources of the land, fragmented the native’s society and culture and traumatized them with religion and violence in all its shapes and forms. In this context, Michele Lemonius also asserts:

Considered part of the Americas, Jamaica was conquered by the British Empire in 1655 because of its potential economic benefits. Using a

similar colonial system that exploited and devastated Ireland, the British Empire ruled Jamaica with “privilege and terror” to extract profits and maintain control. It left behind a divided system of unequal gender, race, sex, and class; it is so deeply entrenched that it ensures that violence in Jamaica is an everyday norm.³

For the colonial settler, the colony is a source of raw materials and economic profits. Moreover, the natives are to be treated not like humans but like sources of profit. European civilization is built from the riches transported from its colonies as Fanon puts it: “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples.”⁴ Violence was the tool that facilitated said exploitation and violence is the language the colonizer is familiar with.

Moreover, the colonizer’s oppression in the colonies is not masked, and violence is perpetrated not only on the bodies of the colonized, but also on their minds. As such, colonialism annihilates the colonized subject’s body and mind through the use of violence. Psychological violence is practised by forcing negative stereotypes constructed by the white man on the native peoples. The colonized subject is forced to accept those descriptions labeling him as a lazy, irrational creature that needs to be protected, and inhuman by nature. Fanon asserts on this point:

The colonial world is a Manichaeian world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of the colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values.⁵

Indeed, the native is not only exploited and oppressed through the use of physical force, but he is also subjected to psychological violence. The colonizer did not only resort to oppression with the help of the army and the police, but explicit means were also used. Colonialism demeans

the natives' society and reduces it to a place lacking morals and values. It also declares the colonial subject as an unethical person, representing the negation of European values of civilization.

Furthermore, because the colonial world is a Manichaeian world in its nature, it is divided into binaries of colonizer/colonized, light/dark, white/black, and dominator/dominated. The colonial settler declares his sphere as the only representative of humanity in the colonies. If one does not belong to that sphere, then one cannot claim to represent a civilized human species.

Fanon views that violence perpetuated by the white man in the colonial world as both physical and psychological. Neil Roberts in his "Fanon, Sartre, and Freedom" explains that violence "contains dimensions of physical and psychological domination by one species of mankind over another"⁶. Psychological violence is executed through the use of hostile acts such as gestures and words causing emotional damage to the victim's psyche, sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.

In Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), emotional abuse is carried out by the characters representing the white man against the natives. In the beginning of the novel, Antoinette's mother Annette is mocked by the white ladies for marrying an English man while she is a Creole woman. Antoinette overhears the conversation between the ladies,

I had heard what all these smooth smiling people said about her when she was not listening and they did not guess I was. Hiding from them in the garden when they visited Coulibri, I listened. [...] 'Emancipation troubles kill old Cosway? Nonsense – the estate was going downhill for years before that. He drank himself to death. Many's the time when – well! And all those women! She never did anything to stop him - she encouraged him. ...] As for those two children – the boy an idiot kept out of sight and mind and the girl going the same way in my opinion – a *lowering* expression'.⁷

The passage illustrates the insults and the foul accusations Antoinette hears about her mother from the white ladies. They bash and speak ill of her mother just because they consider themselves morally superior to her due to being white while she – as a Creole woman – lacks the morals the English consider as superior such as being a good Christian woman, pure and educated. They accuse her of encouraging her husband to cheat on her, and drinking until death. They perceive Antoinette's mother from a white man's lens. Thus, for them, she is just another black woman with neither morals nor a sense of dignity. As such, her marriage with an English man – the definition of nobility and honor – is something unacceptable.

Furthermore, they describe Antoinette and her brother as mad children, once more consolidating the claim that the white man views the black subject as mentally inferior. Even though the words are not directed at her, Antoinette is affected by them nonetheless. Being considered mentally ill and lacking morals due to blackness is something harmful to the psyche of the person. Antoinette, thus, deduces that they are different from those white people on the account of their skin being black.

Additionally, the natives never approve of her mother because for them she is too white to be considered one of their own. After Annette marries Mr. Mason, she insists that she does not feel safe in their home, around the natives. Annette begs Mr. Mason to move the family to somewhere else. Antoinette comments on this point,

[...] Mr. Mason would laugh if he knew how frightened I had been. He would laugh even louder than he did when my mother told him that she wished to leave Coulibri. This began when they had been married for over a year. They always said the same things and I seldom listened to the argument now. I knew we were hated – but to go away⁸

Antoinette is aware of the fact that she and her mother were neither approved by the white society they wished to belong to, nor were they accepted and loved by the black community

they were born. The white ladies mock and demean them because they are too black to be white, while the natives resent them for being too white to be considered one of their own.

Another instance wherein hostile behavior is perpetuated by the white man in the novel is when Mr. Mason treats, accuses, and describes the natives in a demeaning manner typical of the white man. He thinks of them as “too damn lazy to be dangerous”⁹. The black man cannot be hostile nor threatening because he is too lazy by nature, it is only the white man who can these traits.

Furthermore, Mr. Mason’s plan to import laborers from the West Indies to work for him when the natives refuse to work reveals that for him, the natives represent only the working hands he needs. For Mr. Mason, the natives are just a pair of hands he has use of, not people with dignity, people that need to be respected, treated the same as white persons. Thus, Aunt Cora – Antoinette’s aunt – warns him not to speak of his plans in front of their maid Myra: “When Myra had gone out Aunt Cora said, ‘I shouldn’t discuss that if I were you. Myra is listening.’ [...] ‘Do you mean to say –’ ‘I said nothing, except that it would be wiser not to tell that woman your plans – necessary and merciful no doubt. I don’t trust her’¹⁰ Aunt Cora does not trust Myra because she is a native servant. If she were a white woman, she would be trustful thus receiving the same treatment just like any white maid.

However, because she is black, she is not to be trusted, since the black subject, unlike the white man, is immoral and does not deserve to be the subject of trust. Mr. Mason’s answer to his sister shows that unlike his sister, he thinks of her not as an untrustworthy person but as a child. He answers his sister, “Live here most of your life and know nothing about the people. It’s astonishing. They are children – they wouldn’t hurt a fly.”¹¹ Here, Mr. Mason assumes that she is a child who could not hurt a fly, therefore, he is safe to talk in front of her anything he wishes. For the white man, the black man is childlike and immature, since he lacks the cognitive ability

his white counterpart possesses. The black subject lacks the mental capacity and agency to hurt and protect himself because he is child-like, unwary, naïve and unassuming. It is worth mentioning that the whole discussion between Mr. Mason and his sister is conducted in front of Antoinette. The latter has witnessed the way Myra – whom she considers a friend – is described as untrustworthy and childlike all in the same sentence just because she is of black origins.

Mr. Mason keeps his condescending behavior towards the natives. Even when he sees that they are, like any normal people would be, could cause harm if treated unfairly, he keeps belittling them. When they came to burn the house, he assures his family not to panic, because the natives are unable to hurt them,

‘There is no reason to be alarmed,’ my stepfather was saying as I came in. ‘A handful of drunken negroes.’ He opened the door leading to the glacis and walked out. ‘what is all this,’ he shouted. ‘what do you want?’ A horrible noise swelled up, like animals howling, but worse. We heard stones falling on to the glacis. He was pale when he came in again, but he tried to smile as he shut and bolted the door. ‘More of them than I thought, and in a nasty mood too. They will repent in the morning. I foresee gifts of tamarinds in syrup and ginger sweets tomorrow.’¹²

The excerpt illustrates Mr. Mason’s reaction to the event. Despite the severity of the situation, Mr. Mason keeps undermining the natives. He treats them like a person would treat a child; he scolds them like immature children throwing a temper tantrum, and not as adult men and women. For him, they are emotionally unable to feel anger or hold a grudge. When the morning comes, they will come to him and ask for his forgiveness and shower him with gifts. Ascribing to the black man the notion of naivety, child-like behavior and immaturity is a stereotype perpetuated by the colonial settler.

The colonial settler exploited the natives both physically and psychologically. Violence permeates the white man’s behavior in the colony. Fanon contends that ascribing the notion of

inferiority on the natives, and judging the black subject in a manner laden with white stereotypes, is a form of psychological abuse the colonizer carried on the native hand in hand with the physical violence that is represented by the police and army of the settler. On this point, Maggie FitzGerald in her article entitled “Violence and Care: Fanon and the Ethics of Care on Harm, Trauma, and Repair” asserts: “Fanon argues that the psychological outcome of the reproduction of the hierarchy between ‘black people’ and ‘white people’ is an interiorized superiority complex by the colonizers and a corresponding internalized inferiority complex by the colonized.”¹³

Indeed, the white settler ascribes inferiority on the native when he demeans his values and his culture. He asserts his superiority on account of the inferiority of the black native. As such, the native internalizes those feelings of inferiority resulting in psychological complexes. Violence in the colony is an everyday occurrence, so much that it is instilled in the colonized subject’s mind. Fanon asserts that the colonial subject is dehumanized by colonial violence to such an extent that it strips him of his humanity and ‘turns him into an animal’¹⁴

The settler oppressed and dehumanized the colonial subject through the use of violence. Colonial violence became the defining aspect of the struggle for domination between Europe and its colonies. Therefore, Fanon asserts, the only solution left for the colonized to break free from the exploitation of the settler is to resort to the same violence he has been subjected to at the hand of the white man. Indeed, it becomes then natural for the colonized to deploy violence in the colonial context considering that the white man will not respond to anything else. Fanon argues that colonialism is an act of complete violence which can only be confronted with revolutionary violence, the violence of emancipation. He adds: “Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.”¹⁵ The colonial subject must break free

from the colonizer through the only means he is subjugated with: violence. The native becomes aware that the only means for his freedom is to resort to the use of violence as Fanon puts it: the native knew that “violence alone will free them.”¹⁶

In the novel, the white man’s presence and exploitation is represented through the white characters and their treatment of the native. The protagonist Antoinette is the subject of exploitation at the hand of her white husband. He exerted implicit violence in order to control and dominate her. Although the violence is not direct but hidden in the form of cultural assimilation, the impact it has on Antoinette’s psyche is apparent in the way she suffers from psychological complexes. She internalizes feelings of inferiority toward her own native heritage and her black skin. Furthermore, she loses her sense of self and starts to question her identity and belonging,

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. So between you I often wonder who am I and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all.¹⁷

Antoinette is the daughter of a white man and a Creole woman. A mixture of two worlds, but not belonging to either. She is a ‘white cockroach’ to the natives and a ‘white nigger’ to the English women. She is neither accepted by the Creoles and the natives of the island where she was born, nor welcomed into the English society which her step-father is part of. As a Creole, Antoinette is stuck between two worlds, never fully being part of one of them. Too white for the natives and too black for Western standards, Antoinette is left in-between with no identity to define herself with and no country to call a home of her own. She represents an existential burden to both worlds; always different, never fitting the standards of any society.

Additionally, an array of characters from the novel can be illustrated as examples of colonized subjects suffering from repercussions of colonialism. Daniel – Antoinette’s half-brother – serves as an embodiment of the native’s interiorizing feelings of inferiority toward his own culture and identity as a black man. He assimilates the culture and religion of the white man. He reads the Bible and speaks correct English to sound like a true Englishman.

Antoinette and Annette are not accepted by the natives of their societies as part of them. She and her mother are shunned from the community because they are too white for the natives. Moreover, when she tries to associate herself with the whites, she finds herself rejected on account of her skin being too black. Although her mother has married a white man – Antoinette’s deceased father -, Antoinette finds neither admittance nor belonging to the white world. Antoinette describes the way their estate fell into ruin and their financial situation deteriorated upon her father’s death. All this because the white people they considered their friends and part of the family shunned them and denied her mother the help she needed after she became a widow. Antoinette describes their garden before and after her father’s death,

Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. Underneath the tree ferns, tall as forest tree ferns, the light was green. Orchids flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. One was snaky looking, another like an octopus with long thin brown tentacles bare of leaves hanging from a twisted root. Twice a year the octopus orchid flowered – then not an inch of tentacle showed. It was a bell-shaped mass of white, mauve, deep purples, wonderful to see. The scent was very sweet and strong. I never went near it. All Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone to bush.¹⁸

Moreover, Antoinette’s mother had to sell her jewelry in order to afford to buy clothes for Antoinette. “I don’t know how she got money to buy the white muslin and the pink. She may have sold her last ring, for there was one left. I saw it in her jewel box – that, and a locket with a shamrock inside.”¹⁹

After her husband's death, Annette struggled financially and yet she received no help from their friends. While her husband was alive, they considered her as a family member, but after his death, she is treated like an outsider because she is black. No one came to visit them or offer help afterward. As such Antoinette is wondering why there are no people visiting them. She asks her mother about it. "When I asked her why so few people came to see us, she told me that the road from Spanish Town to Coulibri Estate where we lived was very bad and that road repairing was now a thing of the past. (My father, visitors, horses, feeling safe in bed – all belonged to the past.)" ²⁰ This passage illustrates the fact that after Mr. Mason's death, Antoinette and her mother are abandoned by their white friends.

When the visitors they receive suddenly, years later, Antoinette is surprised: "I planned to get round the back of the house to the kitchen, but passing the stables I stopped to stare at three strange horses and my mother saw and called. She was on the glacis with two young ladies and a gentleman. Visitors! I dragged up the steps unwillingly – I had longed for visitors once, but that was years ago."²¹ The visit surprises her because they have not received visitors for many years; the people they called their family have abandoned them when the father died and only the Creole women were left.

Colonial violence is scattered throughout the novel despite being set in a post-emancipation Jamaica. Although the colonizer departed from the land of the native, the settler's impact is still permeating the life and mind of the colonial subject. The violence perpetrated by the natives and Antoinette in the novel can be justified as a means of resistance as Fanon puts it: "colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat."²²

Fanon puts great emphasis on the importance of the native's violence as a tool to resist exploitation. He insists that violence has a beneficial effect on the native's psyche. For him, the violence used by the native serves as the creation of a new human; the native is reminded of his

humanity that was denied by colonialism during his violent struggle to overthrow the settler.

Jean-Paul Sartre has also asserted this in his Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963):

The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When his rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates himself. Far removed from his war, we consider it as a triumph of barbarism; but of its own volition it achieves, slowly but surely, the emancipation of the rebel, for bit by bit it destroys in him and around him the colonial gloom.²³

The passage above illustrates the importance of violence perpetuated by the colonial subject as a tool to recover the lost humanity the settler took away from him. Colonialism stripped the native from his humanity and reduced him to the status of an animal and a savage lacking morals and agency. Moreover, it denied him the right to be treated as a human being by exploiting him and oppressing him through the different institutions of colonialism. The native is trapped in his own skin, forever subjected to racism and violence on a daily basis.

Therefore, Fanon views that it is only through violence that man creates himself, violence restores the humanity of the colonized man which has been eroded by colonial violence. He argues: “Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the “thing” which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.”²⁴

Fanon insists that the only true liberation is the liberation of the black man’s self from his desire to become white. The colonial settler instilled in the black man the thought that attaining whiteness is the only way to be considered equal to the white man. Thus, the black man renounces his blackness in order to enter the white world. However, the black, despite destroying himself in the process, never manages to attain whiteness. The white man will never welcome him into his white world. As such, through anti-colonial violence, the native rids himself of this desire to achieve whiteness, in the process recovering his self which he has lost.

In the novel, Antoinette valiantly tries to find a place for herself in the English society, first through her stepfather and later through her marriage with Mr. Rochester. While eating, she thinks about the fact that it's English food they are eating, and the mere thought about that makes her happy. She is rejoiced by the fact that she's becoming whiter through consuming foods that are considered part of Western culture. She asserts: "[...] As it was late I ate with them instead of by myself as usual. Myra, one of the new servants, was standing by the sideboard, waiting to change the plates. 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."²⁵ Antoinette is thrilled at the prospect of becoming an English girl through assimilating English culture. She has noticed the fact that she is waited on by a servant, her plates will be changed after each dish, and she is eating staple English foods like pies and puddings. Moreover, to her, this signifies a bit of belonging calling herself English just because she assimilates the culture.

The need to become white is ingrained in the black subject's mind through the white settler's claim of white culture superiority. European civilization is superior, the European white man is superior, as such, superiority is linked to whiteness. One is superior when he is white; in contrast, one is inferior when he is black. Fanon asserts,

For several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for "denegrification"; with all the earnestness in the world, laboratories have sterilized their test tubes, checked their scales, and embarked on researches that might make it possible for the miserable Negro to whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction.²⁶

The European man perpetuated the notion that blackness is an undesirable trait that has to be eradicated and cured like a disease. For the white colonizer, the black subject needs salvation from the malediction that is his black skin. By offering him a cure to his blackness in the form of white ideals and standards, the white man graces him and frees him from said malediction.

The black man, in this case, has no other choice but to accept and embrace those white ideals and standards and be grateful for them. The black man is lured into the white world, the superior culture, and the prospect of civilization. However, once he starts to claim that whiteness and wear that white mask, he is rejected, mocked and forever locked outside that white world.

Antoinette and Annette start to claim whiteness and embrace the English culture of Mr. Mason. But as it is evident from the conversation she has heard from the white ladies that no matter what she does, she will never be accepted: she may disguise her blackness with a set of white attitudes and cultural assimilation, however she may never become white. Additionally, upon Antoinette's marriage to Mr. Rochester, he tries to mold her to resemble a white lady. Rochester complains that she puts too much trust in the natives, then he mocks the way she practises her cultural customs and the way she behaves herself. By these actions, he manages to instill in her feelings of inadequacy and inferiority toward her own culture and traditions. However, because she seeks love and acceptance, she complies to his whims and decisions. He molds her into someone she is not, alienating her from her Creole heritage, by changing her name, denying her the right to celebrate her identity and finally taking her away from her family into a foreign country. Mr. Rochester has perpetuated all this under the pretense of love, when in reality his motive was to access her wealth. He took advantage of her while she is unaware. This an implicit type of violence that has affected her psychologically. Antoinette is taken to England and locked away in Mr. Rochester's manor. Little by little she loses herself.

There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what 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 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?²⁷

Antoinette is stripped away from everything that constitutes her identity and culture: her family, her language, her name and her home. She is left without anything, no longer recognizing where she is and who she is. As such, the only resort left for her is to fight back and assert herself through violence. Consequently, she reacts to the exploitation and oppression through the only means she knows; she sets fire to the manor which she is locked in:

I saw the sunlight coming through the window, the tree outside and the shadows of the leaves on the floor, but I saw the wax candles too and I hated them. So I knocked them all down. Most of them went out but one caught the thin curtains that were behind the red ones. I laughed when I saw the lovely colour spreading so fast, but I did not stay to watch it. I went into the hall again with the tall candle in my hand. It was then that I saw her – the ghost. The woman with the streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her. I dropped the candle I was carrying and it caught the end of a tablecloth and I saw flames shoot up.²⁸

The passage above illustrates the dream Antoinette has while locked in her room in the English manor. Upon waking up from it, she comes to the conclusion that in order to free herself, violent struggle a necessity. Antoinette asserts that now she knows the reason why she was brought and there and what to do about it r she took the candle to light her along the dark passage.²⁹ Antoinette, at last, realizes that all her pleading and placating behavior will not grant her freedom. She comes to the realization that, despite her behaving and acting in the manner Mr. Rochester wants her to, she will not regain her sense of belonging, her identity and her life.

As such, with all the violence she is submitted to, it is natural that she will claim that very same violence and use it as the only way for her to free herself from the feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, and recover herself. Fanon asserts that the oppressed' violence is a logical reaction towards white oppression. As the white settler's policy is violent, the colonial subject legitimizes his way of resorting to violence. In fact, it becomes the only means for the colonized to emancipate themselves. Fanon argues,

Thus the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. [...] For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn about him.³⁰

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Antoinette comes to the decision that whether she changes her black self to become whiter, or she assimilates her husband's English culture, she will not be white. Moreover, she realizes that her husband's love is a way of exploiting her and asserting his dominance over her. His assertion of his standards and civilized manners on her serves as an excuse to gain access to her wealth. His civilization and Englishness are no more advanced than her Creole heritage, her Obeah customs and traditions. His words and promises are nothing but shackles that enslave both her soul and spirit. Therefore, she no longer wishes to please him, to trust his words or believe his lies. She chooses to answer his violence and exploitation by a violence of her own. By burning his English manor, Antoinette burns symbolizes the English man: his house. By setting the manor on fire, Antoinette rids herself of the oppression and violence she has been subject to. Moreover, she frees herself from the restrictions of white cultural standards imposed on her in the same way the black man rids himself of the burden of achieving the whiteness that colonialism forced on him.

Through fire, Antoinette regains her sense of self, she becomes aware of her person and the value of the things she has already possessed. In her dream, she reminisces about her past,

When I was out in the battlements it was cool and I could hardly hear them. I sat there quietly. I don't know how long I sat. then I turned around and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and the bamboos and the tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of

the moss on the garden wall. I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter.³¹

Antoinette recalls her childhood back in her home in Jamaica. She is transported back into a time when she was happy and was her-self. Antoinette is human again once she frees herself from the shackles of inferiority, oppression and exploitation. After being locked in a cold and foreign country for so long, she finally manages to find her happiness in her Aunt's patchwork, the orchids and the jasmine and the tree of life that were part of her home in Jamaica.

Fanon describes the act of violence as a cleansing force leading to a cathartic feeling the colonized experiences. He asserts that: "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."³² By burning the house down, Antoinette manages to cleanse herself from the oppression Mr. Rochester subjugated her to. In the process of freeing herself, she recovers her self-respect and becomes accepting of her identity as a black woman. The emotions Antoinette experiences after she has committed the act of arson are cathartic and psychologically liberating.

B. Violence as Self-Assertion in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

After the Emancipation Act was passed in Jamaica in 1833, the slaves were emancipated and were legally free. However, the former-slave owners were dissatisfied with this decision and demanded retribution from their governments. Moreover, the former masters found a way to keep the natives in their hold through apprenticeship. Indeed, in the former colonies, the natives were kept as apprentices; they still worked in the former plantations – despite being free – with their former masters being their employers. Despite their freedom being granted to them, the former-slaves were still shackled to their colonial masters. Jim Ingraham in his article entitled "Labor in Jamaica After Emancipation" asserts,

The Emancipation Proclamation was read on August 1, 1834. There was plenty of singing, dancing, and drumming to be seen and heard on the magical day. Many people celebrated and the children added shouts “that seemed to render the air”. The Act of Emancipation “mandated in the first instance large numbers of individuals were no longer slaves but neither were they free citizens.” Now there was a new hurdle, apprenticeship. It was a turn from slave labor into a more acceptable, though still mandatory form of labor, which would last four years.³³

The natives and former slaves moved from traditional slavery into another form of exploitation. Through apprenticeship, the workers were mandated to still work for their former masters. Although apprenticeship was not the same as slavery, the former slaves had to work at least four years to gain their full freedom. This led to the creation of tensions between the now-freed subjects and the colonial masters who kept exploiting them.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), the natives were freed from slavery only to be forced into another form of exploitation. As Christophine puts it: “No more slavery! [...] ‘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. Now new ones are worse than old ones – more cunning, that’s all.’”³⁴ Myra, Amélie, and Emile alongside the other servants are freed slaves that work as apprentices in Mr. Mason’s household. After many tensions, the natives set fire to the house with the family inside. After the natives were on a strike and refused to work as servants, Mr. Mason brought workers from other countries to work in the jobs the natives refused to do. This has angered the natives more, thus, they perpetuated the act of burning the house as a warning for the tenants to leave their village. Their act of violence can be interpreted as a way for the natives to gain control and reclaim their land. Antoinette recounts the events from her perspective: “I woke up and it was still night and my mother was there. [...] She was dressed, but she had not put up her hair and one of her plaits was loose. ‘Quickly’, she said again, then she went into Pierre’s room, next door. [...] I lay

there, half-asleep, looking at the lighted candle on the chest of drawers, till I heard a noise as though a chair had fallen over in the little room, then I got up and dressed”.³⁵

Anotinette narrates the events that occurred on the night the natives stormed their mansion, threatened her family, and eventually chased them by setting fire to the house. She describes anger showing in the way that they are ‘howling like animals’³⁶ and the loud noise that I emitting from their yelling. The natives gathered outside the house and set it on fire with the inhabitants inside. Afterward, Antoinette and her family have managed to escape from the house with their belonging. Once outside, they see the natives gathered there waiting for them to leave. Antoinette once again describes the scene they find outside:

Still they were quiet and there were so many of them I hardly see any grass or trees. There must have been many of the bay people but I recognized no one. They all looked the same, it was the same face repeated over and over, eyes gleaming, mouth half-open to shout. We were past the mounting stone when they saw Mannie driving the carriage round the corner. ... Some of them were laughing and waving sticks, some of the ones at the back were carrying flambeaux and it was light as day. ... ‘Get in’, said Mr. Mason. ‘Take no notice of him, get in.’ The man with the machete said no. We would go to the police and tell a lot of damn lies. A woman said to let us go. All this an accident and they had plenty witness. ‘Myra she witness for us.’ ‘Shut your mouth,’ the man said. ‘You mash centipede, mash it, leave one little piece and it grow again ... What you think police believe, eh? You, or the white nigger?’³⁷

The natives grant Mr. Mason and the inhabitants of the estate a chance to leave the house and everything behind and run away. Indeed, through this violent act, the natives have established their control and asserted their decision. The violence the natives enacted can be considered as a form of self-assertion. Through it, they are proving themselves as the legitimate owners of the land. Moreover, it is only through this violent act they succeed in freeing themselves from the oppression of colonialism and slavery. As Fanon asserts: “The colonized man finds his freedom

in and through violence.”³⁸ Indeed, freedom and liberation, can only be achieved through violent struggle alone.

Colonialism introduced violence into the colonized’ world. The settler maintained his oppression and exploitation through the use of violence. The only solution for the native to free himself and resist colonial domination is through the very same act of violence. Moreover, according to Fanon, violence is a way for the colonial subjects to assert themselves and regain control. The colonized comes to the conclusion that violence is the only language the colonizer speaks, as such, the native’s voice can only be heard through violent struggle.

Fanon attributes an important meaning to the act of violence in the colonial context. For him, the act perpetuated by the natives serves as a means of resistance against the settler. Furthermore, violence can serve as a cleansing force that purifies both the soul and psyche of the colonized. Through the act of violence, there are feelings of catharsis that the colonized experiences. The anger and the rage over the injustices perpetuated by the settler find an outlet through the natives’ violent struggle.

Endnotes

- 1-Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.36
- 2-Ibid., p.38
- 3-Michele Lemonius, “*Deviously Ingenious: British Colonialism in Jamaica.*” *Peace Research*, Vol. 44, no. 2, 2017, 80, accessed in June 22, 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44779908>.
- 4- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.102
- 5-Ibid., p.41
- 6-Neil Roberts, “*Fanon, Sartre, Violence, and Freedom.*” *Sartre Studies International* 10, no. 2 (2004): 142. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23512882>.
- 7-Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.25
- 8-Ibid., p.28
- 9-Ibid., p.29
- 10-Ibid., p.31
- 11-Ibid., p.32
- 12-Ibid., p.35
- 13-Maggie FitzGerald, “*Violence and Care: Fanon and the Ethics of Care on Harm, Trauma, and Repair.*” *Philosophies* 7, no.03 (2022): 3. <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies7030064>.
- 14- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.42
- 15-Ibid., p.61
- 16-Ibid., p.73
- 17- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.93
- 18-Ibid., p.17
- 19-Ibid., p.24
- 20-Ibid., p.15
- 21-Ibid., p.22

- 22- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.61
- 23-Ibid., p.21
- 24-Ibid., p.36
- 25- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.31
- 26-Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Markmann, C.L. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1967), p.111
- 27- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.162
- 28-Ibid., p.167
- 29-Ibid., p.171
- 30- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.45
- 31- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.170
- 32- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.94
- 33-Jim Ingraham, “*Labor in Jamaica After Emancipation,*” *Emancipation: The Caribbean Experience*. n.d., accessed in June 22, 2023. <https://scholar.library.miami.edu/emancipation/jamaica5.htm>
- 34- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p.24
- 35-Ibid., p.34
- 36-Ibid., p.35
- 37-Ibid., p.38
- 38- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (Trans.) (Grove Press, 1963), p.86

IV. Conclusion

This piece of research has allowed us to explore the issues of colonial oppression, violence and the native's resistance in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). We have relied on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'Symbolic Violence' and Frantz Fanon's theories on violence and counter-violence. We have analyzed the issue of violence and its effects on the psyche of the colonized. Furthermore, we have studied the way the native retaliates the oppression and exploitation with a violence of his own; the counter-violence that serves as a means of freedom and liberation. The violence of the colonizer is used as a means to maintain domination and exploitation. Indeed, by brutalizing the native, degrading his culture and labeling him as savage and inferior, the white settler traumatizes and damages the psyche of the colonized. As such, the native answers back that violence with his own violence as it is the only logical outcome and means for his liberation.

In the first chapter of our discussion, we have explored the concept of violence – both direct and implicit – by depicting the violent acts carried out by the white settler. This violence dehumanizes the natives, affects their psyches, and creates complexes that they interiorize in regard to their culture and blackness. In the second chapter, we have developed the notion that the natives' violence serves as a means of resistance and liberation from the shackles of colonialism. Moreover, we have defended our assumption that the colonized' counter-violence acts as catharsis, mental liberation, and self-assertion for the colonial subject. Indeed, as the colonial institution is rooted in violence, the native becomes accustomed to it because he is subject to it on a daily basis. As such, it is only fair and logical that the native absorbs that violence and transforms it into his outlet for resistance and liberation.

Throughout our study, we have concluded that, the colonial settler brought violence into the home and the mind of the native. Through repressive laws and cultural imposition, The

West subjugated the indigenous peoples and exploited them. The native's counter-violence is not an act that denotes his savagery or backwardness, but rather, it is a legitimate and logical reaction to the oppression and domination he suffered from the white man.

After the analysis of the novel, we come to the conclusion that despite the narrative being originally a rewriting back of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), the author tackles the power imbalance that exist between the natives and the white settler. Additionally, Rhys gives a voice to the protagonist by depicting her background story. Moreover, she broaches the negative impact of colonialism on life and identity of the colonized. Additionally, by giving a voice to her protagonist, Rhys showcases that the madness and violent acts committed by Antoinette can all be justified as being the outcome of the exploitation and oppression she was subjected to.

We hope that this research work is helpful for a better understanding of the presence of violence and its justification in the novel. Moreover, we believe that further studies and research that explore other issues of postcolonial literature can be carried out on the novel.

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