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Intertextual Identities: The Crisis of Voice and Location in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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There is only one heroine in a story, and we typically become quite possessive of her. We champion her causes, mourn her losses, and cheer triumphantly her successes. There's only room for one heroine in a story. Other women may orbit her on the periphery, but it is not their story in which we invest. Sidekicks at best, these secondary figures merely accentuate and facilitate the heroine in her quest. They are mirrors, not of themselves, but reflections of the heroine as she appears in relation to others. For example, the harshness of one character refines the *gentille* nature of the heroine, her courage amplified by another's frailty. In so doing, the heroine consumes the narrative and its focus; moreover, this is pleasing to the reader, for it instills in one the sense of knowing intimately the thoughts, emotions and true nature of the focal female. As Charles Burkhart states: "We know (if only unconsciously) what a good story is because we have heard and read and seen so many stories [. . .] [i]t believes in itself so much that we believe in it" (Burkhart 1973, 63).

And for more than 150 years, we have believed in *Jane Eyre*. From the first pages of the novel, Jane elicits sympathy. She is poor, plain and parentless. Left in the 'care,' if one can call it that, of her Aunt, Mrs. Reed, Jane is an outsider to her own family. Her spritely nature results in her confinement to the red room, a ghostly chamber of terror she describes as a cell: "no jail was ever more secure" (Brontë 2001, 11). At this stage, the reader wants nothing more than to see Jane obtain a sense of family, of belonging, of love—what develops in Brontë's female *Bildungsroman*.

Jane's coming of age tracks her degradation at Gateshead, the friendship and loss she experiences at Lowood, and ultimately her grafting to the Rochester family at Thornfield Hall. Her journey is not without complications or disappointments, but in the end all merge to construct a heroine that has triumphed over adversity. Moreover, she has done so by her own strength and intelligence,

challenging the social mores of the time. Jane questions authority, religion and the assumed inferiority of women to their male counterparts. She states:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer. (Brontë 2001, 93)

Rachel DuPlessis, in *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*, points out that character-writing of women in the nineteenth-century was highly problematic. The author was forced to negotiate a woman's place in a tradition that elevated romance and *Bildungsroman*. A female protagonist could begin a coming of age tale, an adventure to discover herself, but unlike her male counterparts, each quest necessitated an ending in marriage and familial harmony (DuPlessis 1985, 3). According to Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics*, the era of women writers in the 1840s, known as the *Feminine*, is marked by mimicry of the male tradition, specifically in women writers' use of male pseudonyms (Moi 1988, 56). She goes on to argue that, as Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert have asserted, historically "[w]omen are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness, and instead must conform to the patriarchal standards imposed on them" (Moi 1988, 57). So it is with Jane, a heroine who can challenge institutions and negotiate her position within them, but who, ultimately, cannot escape the institution of marriage. Conveniently, she does not wish to escape her matrimonial fate. In the end, she and Mr. Rochester enjoy a fairy-tale ending, an ending that would have been expedited if not for the "mad woman in the attic."

This essay explores the ways in which characters experience crisis internally, and demonstrates the ameliorating function of intertextual readings such as the one that occurs between

Jane Eyre and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Such readings provide a forum for voices on the periphery. Specifically, Bertha Mason experiences a crisis of voice and a crisis of location as she is transformed from her French Creole identity, which is wild and unyielding to colonial mores, to her English identity, which is merely a personification of phallogocentric expectations of the female as a subordinate and tool for patriarchy. Drawing upon Sigmund Freud's concept of the dark double and the role of the unconscious in identity formation, Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, and Luce Irigaray's view of language as a colonizer of the female voice, this essay aims to examine how the colonized female, Antoinette/Bertha Mason, is constructed by the text of *Jane Eyre* and its elevation of English identity and language. Moreover, it reveals that only through intertextuality can Antoinette reclaim her French identity in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* from the crisis it experiences as Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. She is removed from her island home where she experiences her maturation toward womanhood to an island where she endures her construction toward madness.

There is only one heroine in a story, so perhaps it is forgivable if we have managed to forget her. Brontë makes no effort to hide her presence; her chilling laughter and ghastly form haunt the text and haunt Jane. Bertha is the spectre of Thornfield Hall, but her vaporous laughter transforms into tangible terror. As Jane describes it:

This was a demonic laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered, as it seemed, at the very key-hole of my chamber-door. The head of my bed was near the door, and I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside—or rather, crouched at my pillow: but I rose, looked round, and could see nothing [. . .] Something gurgled and moaned.

(Brontë 2001, 126)

Although we are to learn that this demonic presence is Bertha Mason, she is initially misread, misidentified as a mirroring figure, that of Grace Poole, her keeper. The reader, along with Jane, is unaware of Bertha as a person, but has experienced her presence nonetheless. She facilitates the terror that weakens our heroine once again to that vulnerable state in the red room, renewing the reader's fear for her and strengthening her dependence upon Mr. Rochester to confirm her safety; it is he who assures her that the phantom she fears is only Grace Poole who is "a singular person" (Brontë 2001, 128). But Grace is not singular and neither is Jane; Bertha is a double for both characters. Grace is a host for Bertha, acting as the physical representation of her ever-deteriorating French-Creole identity. While it is Bertha's laugh that Jane and the other inhabitants of Thornfield hear, it is Grace who is said to cause the disturbance (Brontë 2001, 91). This assertion is unchallenged because laughter does not betray dialect; rather, Grace can embody the only voice Bertha has left because it cannot reflect her own French-Creole inflections. Her accent is muted. Thus a "universal language" of laughter, what is often seen as a tool of unification and common ground, is a tool for further isolation and misidentification for Bertha. Upon discovery of her own physical form, Bertha is described in monstrous terms:

In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal. (Brontë 2001, 250)

As Freud asserts, the idea of the double figure is a self-preservation mechanism, yet it often turns into a frightening figure (Freud 2003, 142-143). For Jane, this figure is Bertha. She is not a classic example of the *Doppelgänger*, who shares Jane's physical features. Instead, they share a dual *unconscious*. As Freud states, the uncanny double:

is intensified by the spontaneous transmission of mental processes from one of these persons to the other [. . .] so that the one becomes the co-owner of the other's knowledge, emotions and experience. (Freud 2003, 141-142)

While the reader is appalled and compelled to feel sympathy for Jane when she is abused, neglected and locked in the red room by Mrs. Reed, one is seemingly unmoved by the abuse, torment, and isolation Bertha Mason has endured for years in the attic. It begs the question: Where is the humanity for Bertha Mason, so willingly offered to Jane? Moreover, as Jane herself asserts, women, like their male counterparts, require mental and physical freedom, freedom to exercise their faculties. How, then, can one expect Bertha, isolated and confined, not to act out the suffering and stagnation she endures in captivity? But there is only one heroine in a story. Divided loyalties cannot exist.

Freud states that the concept of the double is tied strongly to one's efforts to conquer death, "insurance against the extinction of the self" (Freud 2003, 142). As Jane has historically absorbed the focus of readers and scholars alike, she has not only become the co-owner of Bertha's knowledge, emotions and experience, but also she has found a way to defy death. In expelling Bertha from the story and positioning herself as the regressed double, Jane's immortality as the focal heroine is secured.

Indeed, in a seminal essay on *Jane Eyre*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar neglect *the* mad woman in the attic, Bertha Mason herself. Instead it is her double, Jane, who is the focus of feminist criticism. Bertha is not explored on her own terms but discussed as a tool of Jane's self-discovery through confrontation:

Bertha, in other words, is Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at

Gateshead [. . .] it is only fitting, then, that the existence of this criminal self-imprisoned in Thornfield's attic is the ultimate legal impediment to Jane's and Rochester's marriage, and that its existence is, paradoxically, an impediment raised by Jane and well as by Rochester. (Gilbert & Gubar 1984, 360)

Bertha is reduced to a "legal impediment," a problem to be solved. As with all shadows, Bertha soon dissipates when knowledge of her is brought to light; her demise is secured in the fire destroys Thornfield Hall. Of course, Mr. Rochester is not without punishment in the incident; he loses his sight. The sacrifice seems small compared to what Bertha has lost, not only during her confinement, but more permanently by her death. It would appear that as Rochester has 'lost sight' of Bertha for many years, a blindness to the newest Mrs. Rochester is only fitting.

Despite her contrary position and usefulness in Jane's construction, Gilbert and Gubar also neglect Bertha in their list of women characters who serve as negative role models:

Aside from Mrs. Fairfax, the three most important of these women are little Adele Varens, Blanche Ingram, and Grace Poole. All are important negative "role models" for Jane, and all suggest problems she must overcome before she can reach independent maturity which is the goal of her pilgrimage. (Gilbert & Gubar 1984, 349-350)

More alarming than the omission of Bertha Mason from the list of important women of the text, is Gilbert and Gubar's claim that Jane's maturity is independently achieved, that she commands the destiny of her development as a woman. This assertion explicitly contradicts their statement that these "negative role models" are vital catalysts in Jane's formation as a character. It is a classical binary oppositional exercise that positions perceived aspects of femininity against one another so that the ultimate stereotype emerges victorious. Jane, *in spite of* her rebellious nature, cannot forgo

her true goal in this pilgrimage, for a secure home life over independent maturity, sanctioned by marriage, which something the other female characters do not achieve. Thus, while Jane's rebellion has been tempered by marriage and motherhood, such resolution could only come at the expense of another woman, Bertha, whose presence marks the nucleus of Jane's crisis. She cannot be Mrs. Rochester if another already assumes that role. Yet, effectively, Brontë empowers Jane to conquer her predecessor by emphasizing Bertha's French Creole heritage and wild nature. In so doing, it is not Jane, but Bertha, who becomes the outsider. There can only be one heroine in a story. In this narrative, there can only be one Mrs. Rochester. Because the threat Bertha posed could no longer be confined to the attic, it had to be eliminated. As DuPlessis asserts:

When social, familial and internalized restraints lose their force, when a character, for sometimes the most subtle reasons, has been marginalized or herself chooses experimentally to step aside from her roles, death enforces the restrictions on female behavior. In narrative, the *death* is the second line of defense for the containment of female revolt, revulsion, or risk. (DuPlessis 1985, 16, emphasis added)

But death as a force of containment, while effective in stopping female rebellion, is not an ideal method, because the finality of death prevents the character, and the reader, from experiencing or witnessing the 'positive' results of reformation. Thus, the first line of defense against unruly females is submission through (re)education. Specifically, the fashioning a female who turns from her own sense of self to that of societal norms is reinforced when such self denial is awarded by assurances of safety and acceptance. Thus, it is not the rebellious female that is edified; rather, it is the construction of her identity, an ideology of the *feminine* that is upheld. Such is the case for Adèle Varens, the young francophone pupil Jane tutors, who, like Bertha, is "Mr. Rochester's ward" (Brontë 2001, 85). As one who was

born on the Continent, and [. . .] never left it till within six months prior to her introduction to Jane, her English is limited; instead she mixes it with French, which requires Jane's translation for most of the residents at Thornfield. (Brontë 2001, 86)

When among her keepers and aside from Jane, Sophie, her nurse and Mr. Rochester, her voice, like Bertha's, is either misrepresented, voiced in the words of others, or completely ignored. Mrs. Fairfax admits "I don't understand her," and Jane relays *in English* Adèle's elation that Jane speaks fluent French, what she calls "my language" (Brontë 2001, 86). The Francophone tones of the child are only appreciated when they recite scripted material, such as the operatic selections she performs for Jane, or the poetry she orates. Of particular interest is the piece she presents to Jane entitled "La Ligue des Rats: Fable de la Fontaine." Jane comments that the inflection in her voice and her gesturing suggested she had been well trained in its delivery. She then recites the line "Qu'avez vous donc? lui dit un de ces rats; parlez!" (Brontë 2001, 87). More often than not, Jane does not translate for the reader what her pupil discloses in her native tongue. Instead, according to editorial preference, Adèle's words will at best be translated as a footnote. The phrase above is translated in the footnote as "'What's the matter, then?' says one of the rats to her. 'Speak!'" (Brontë 2001, 87).

For the Anglophone reader, these translations appear as no more than asides, perhaps even to be overlooked completely. However, to do so is to overlook Adèle's voice. Brontë does not translate the French for the English-speaking audience; only through editorial intervention is the passage translated. Ironically, the passage is about muted speech. The cat consumes the mouse and in this muffling of voice she is asked to speak, which is of course impossible. Likewise, when Bertha and Adèle are forced to digest a foreign language, it gags them. They are called upon to speak, but are muted. Thus, the reader is pressed to dismiss of Adèle and her native tongue.

Moreover, the text glosses over the meaning of the passage itself, focusing instead on the words as performance. It is not what she is reciting but the manner in which she does so, a manner that meets certain expectations. This acts as a means of avoiding a female voice that does not align with the voice of power, particularly the male English voice. As Luce Irigaray states in her essay, “The Bodily Encounter with the Mother”, avoiding the female voice is a means by which men often avoid what they fear in their own:

As a particularly honest man friend told me not so long ago, not without some astonishment at his discovery, “It’s true, I have always thought that all women were mad.” And he added, “No doubt I wanted to avoid the question of my own madness.” (Irigaray 2008, 533)

Unfortunately, women do not have the option of avoiding the madness of the other sex. Instead, as Irigaray observes, patriarchy privileges male discourse and uses its own traces of madness—not to examine itself, but to polarize the female other’s “madness” in a way that makes her functional, often in a subservient or maternal role (Irigaray 2008, 533). Irigaray states:

Everywhere and in all things, they [men] define women’s function and social role, and the sexual identity they are, or are not, to have. They know they have access to the truth; we do not. Often we scarcely have access to fiction. (Irigaray 2008, 533)

Even in the pages of revered fiction, phallogentric language denies Bertha Mason “access” to her own story, her own descent into “madness.” As Lisa Walsh points out, the first wave of French feminism relied heavily on the theories of Simone de Beauvoir and her rejection of sex and gender roles as determined biologically. Beauvoir criticizes the seemingly inextricable symbolic connection patriarchy posits between feminine/female and masculine/male roles and

characterizations. Specifically, it categorizes, and thereby limits, the development of men and women in society and any interaction between the two (Walsh 2004, 2). Thus, the ability of language to confine and to define roles translates into a limited scope of self-identification as well. Rochester's dominance over Bertha is, at a linguistic level, two-fold. He is a man, and therefore, as discussed above, benefits from society's partiality to phallogentric language. Yet, this is a gender complication that even the most esteemed English woman would encounter. More damning in Bertha's case is the fact that the French language carries with it masculine and feminine articles, which transform language accordingly. Thus, when consumed by a male voice, Bertha's words and the semantics of self-identification dissipate as does the essence of what makes them specific to her interpretations and perceptions. Not only does Bertha experience a lack of freedom in interpreting her own degeneration as a female, but also the patriarchal, phallogentric society in which she was constructed and by which she is limited does not allow her to transform beyond male expectation. She is characterized as the "mad woman" she was "born" to be.

It took nearly 100 years for Bertha Mason to speak her own name in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Up to that point, she was merely the lunatic locked in the attic, a ghost haunting Thornfield Hall who threatened the happy ending that the nineteenth-century heroine, Jane Eyre, apparently deserved. In so doing, Rhys was not silencing Jane but giving voice to Bertha, who becomes known to herself as Antoinette. The story recalls Antoinette's troubled childhood, like Jane, wild and prone to familial heartache. From an early age, Antoinette's self-fashioning is plagued by outside influence. A French Creole, she is ostracized by her peers, specifically by a girl named Tia who would shout "Go away white cockroach, go away, go away" (Rhys 1999, 13). A stranger in both worlds, Antoinette makes her first attempt to change her identity. She has been neglected and consequently embraces the wild nature within her and exchanges her fine clothing for Tia's dirty dress. Upon arriving home, her mother demands that she change into a more suitable dress. Christophine, her surrogate mother, warns that Antoinette's wild look is not limited to her

dress: “[s]he run wild, she grow up worthless. And nobody care” (Rhys 1999, 15). Antoinette internalizes this criticism, and her shame consumes her. Efforts to stifle her wild nature resurface after she reluctantly marries an un-named Englishman visiting the island, a man we must presume to be Rochester. He admits that his marriage is a farce, a result of him playing a part in restoring his family’s fortune (Rhys, 1999: 45). Slowly, the vibrant bride withers under the control of her husband who seeks to repress her passion. It is then that he begins to call her Bertha. She responds:

Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. [. . .] Do you know what you’ve done to me? [. . .] I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. (Rhys 1999, 88)

Her name, the most basic signifier of identity, is at once in crisis. There can only be one heroine in a story, and patriarchy fashions her with care. Antoinette, Francophone in voice and in name, connected to the island that embodies her wild and exotic passion, is replaced with an Anglophone identity: Bertha Mason. Yet the colonization of her French heritage by English culture is foreshadowed in the first lines of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Antoinette reveals that her mother was a Martinique girl, despised by the Jamaican women on the island; and of course, Martinique was a French colony, and Jamaica an English one. Thus, the battle for acceptance at home both begins and ends for Antoinette/Bertha on an island plagued by colonial tensions (Rhys 1999, 9). The battle of empire is amplified, therefore, in the crisis within one divided woman. She is forced to confront her dual identity at home and abroad.

When Rochester removes Antoinette from her island home, literally transporting her to England, he casts Antoinette in a foreign role. She too, becomes unknown to herself. Antoinette is asleep for the duration of her transportation to her new home; she is therefore unable to accept that she is in England, stating: “We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don’t remember, but we

lost it” (Rhys 1999, 107). Antoinette has lost far more than her way. Indeed, she experiences a crisis of location in addition to her crisis of voice. Uprooted from her home, unaware of how or when she left it, she is transplanted to infertile soil. She does not grow there but wilts in captivity.

Furthermore, in addition to the stark, lifeless environment to which she is confined, she is denied the vitality and color of her native tongue, French. Her only companion, Grace Poole, is a simple woman, versed only in English. Denied all traces of her homeland, she is also denied the one vehicle of individuality, her language. Consequently, her questions are unanswered, her story unheard. This is not to say that she cannot speak English; she so does very well. However, like Adèle, she submits to the dominant culture and is consequently a slave to its ideology. This submission is most apparent when she agrees to marry Rochester despite her instinctual reluctance to do so (Rhys 1999, 46-47), although Antoinette asserts herself against her husband’s control in correcting him when he calls her Bertha (Rhys 1999, 88). However, once Rochester takes her to England, it is as if she concedes to her status as a wilting, transplanted flower rather than the vibrant island dweller she once was. She is literally locked away, a slave, in the attic. Although she steals the key from Grace at night, her escape from the cell is not an escape from imprisonment: “Then I open the door and walk into *their* world” (Rhys 1999, 107, emphasis added). Even though she is the “lady of the house” as Rochester’s wife, she is passive in this role, undoubtedly because she remains in the shadows, un-illuminated even to herself. Moreover, her choice not to plan an escape from Thornfield but rather to retreat to the island in her sleep suggests a submissive acceptance about her captivity. In her mind, it is not Antoinette who is in prison but Bertha. All traces of her heritage and her identity apart from her English husband have been eradicated. Antoinette’s efforts to reposition herself in this new existence are futile as any efforts to relay her confusion are dismissed. Soon after arriving in England, she states that she would forfeit all she has in exchange for freedom, but the opportunity to negotiate her release never arrives. She states:

I get out of bed and go close to watch them and to wonder why I have been brought here
[. . .] I thought that when I saw him and spoke to him I would be wise as serpents, harmless
as doves. “I give you all I have freely,” I would say, “and I will not trouble you again if you
will let me go.” But he never came. (Rhys 1999, 106)

One can trace Antoinette’s transformation from a woman, newly arrived to foreign shores,
disoriented and desperate, to a seasoned prisoner, who, with a little planning might have secured her
own escape. But apart from her homeland, that woman has disappeared; Antoinette cannot act on
her own behalf. Instead, she waits for her master to set her free, a master who has seemingly
disappeared as well. Her abandonment echoes that which Adèle feels in *Jane Eyre*:

Mr. Rochester asked me if I would like to go and live with him in England, and I said yes;
for I knew Mr. Rochester before I knew Madame Frédéric, and he was always kind to me
and gave me pretty dresses and toys. But you see he has not kept his word, for he has
brought me to England, and now he is gone back again himself, and I never see him.
(Brontë 2001, 88)

Although Rochester has used language to control the females in his charge, he is not present;
neither can challenge the false promises he has offered. His words are hollow, yet it is the ghostly
females in Thornfield hall that are haunted by them. Oddly, these two orphans of Thornfield Hall
never meet in either novel. And in *Jane Eyre*, upon Bertha’s exorcism from the attic and Jane’s
impeding departure, Adèle, who acts as a conduit to Jane, faces banishment from her own story as
well. Echoing Irigaray’s notion that men conceptualize and categorize women into roles of utility,
Jane Eyre demonstrates how men like Rochester hold power over women, adjudicating their
necessary presence or departure in the world. When Jane questions the necessity of sending Adèle

to boarding school upon Jane's departure from Thornfield Hall, Rochester makes clear that his authority to mediate the females in his charge is non-negotiable, and her doubts about his judgment unfounded:

What do I want with a child for a companion? And not my own child—a French dancer's bastard. Why do you importune me about her? I say, why do you assign Adèle to me for a companion? (Brontë 2001, 257)

Despite this confrontation, it is not Jane but Adèle and Bertha who truly challenge Rochester's own insecurities. These French phantoms stand between him and Jane and the Anglo-male agenda he seeks to uphold. Adèle is slightly less threatening than Bertha/Antoinette because, as a child, she is malleable. Indeed, the narrative focuses on how her tongue is tamed by a picturesque English woman, Jane, who is the idealized female in Rochester's eyes. Any trace of Adèle's "madness," as Irigaray would argue, is negated in the translation from her own language to that of her master. She will be conditioned in new cultural scripts. However, Bertha/Antoinette presents an unruly force against Rochester. Ironically, she is a child of Rochester's own making; he has fashioned her new identity, calling her Bertha and locking her away. Consequently, one can argue that Bertha is most threatening to Rochester because to acknowledge her is to acknowledge his own madness. She personifies his failures, his lack of self-control and civility. In giving her a voice, he voices, too, *his* monstrosity.

For Rochester, women, including Jane, are merely means to an end, and some more expendable than others. Unlike Jane and Adèle, Antoinette's invisibility aggravates her lack of utility upon her arrival to Thornfield Hall. It is as if her transportation to this foreign culture is a deportation from her own identity. Consequently, Antoinette's alter ego consumes the physical space she inhabits, reinforced by those around her who perpetuate this pseudo-narrative, and any

traces of 'Antoinette' increasingly dissipate until she exists only as a haunting presence in her own mind.

This is evidenced by the fact that in *Jane Eyre* and at the conclusion of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is Bertha who permeates the narrative. Although Rhys preserves Antoinette's own inner dialogue as herself, she is located within and identified as Bertha, a woman without a story or a voice. Reduced to the low utterances and hushed whispers of the servants below, Bertha is consumed by her monstrous host and becomes a parasite of *parole*. Slowly, the delusions of others permeate her unconscious. One afternoon, she thinks she sees her mother dressed in an evening gown before her, a secret vision she keeps to herself. She comments that Grace has been misnamed:

Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass. [. . .] I don't know what I am like now. (Rhys 1999, 106-107)

Thus, Antoinette survives only in her memories, in the reflections of herself in past mirrors. She does not exist, even to herself, in the present. Instead, Antoinette retreats to the remnants of her past identity only in sleep. Thus, for the duration of the novel, Antoinette's most vivid actions occur in her dream-like state. In a sense, the unconscious act of dreaming is Antoinette's only solace and safety. "Bertha" is the substitute identity in the conscious world that compromises her understanding of her genuine identity which she understands unconsciously. The tension between manifest and latent content in dreams, and the role of the unconscious in perception, has long been the concern of psychoanalytic theory, particularly in the work of Sigmund Freud. In many ways, it is not a battle for reality but what is revealed or repressed in the "real." As Freud puts it:

[T]he remembered dream is not the genuine material but a distorted substitute for it, which should assist us, by calling up other substitutive images, to come nearer the genuine material. (Freud 1916, 63)

But the “genuine material,” an authentic Antoinette, is compromised. Every aspect of her identity has become a simulation. Furthermore, she is unable to translate her identity; it appears as dream content into a waking reality. These disparate figures speak different languages, maintain separate homelands, and indeed, inhabit different physical forms. Bertha consumes Antoinette and transforms into another body, unknown even to its host. Tragically, Antoinette’s name is no longer her own, and the attic, a room in the manor in which she should feel safe and at home and should wander freely as Mrs. Rochester, is a ruse. But this incongruity of space and identity does not bring Antoinette to the edge of insanity. Ironically, Rochester’s efforts to prevent his wife from her familial insanity are deluded. What results is not Antoinette’s madness, for she vanished in the dark waters that brought her to England. What arises is his own construction, Bertha, who becomes the lunatic, the mad wife and the monstrous menace. By locating her in the desolation of her chamber, isolated and not on an island but in a prison of his making, Rochester’s apparent fears become manifest.

Furthermore, Rochester’s efforts to counteract this transformation cause him to construct the identities of the other prominent females in the story by isolating them for a particular purpose. He uses Grace Poole as a barrier between his wife and the outside world, explaining Bertha’s haunting laughter as Grace’s to preserve his reputation. Although entrusted with the power of subduing her unruly charge, Grace is herself ruled by Rochester’s influence. As Gilbert explains, women in a patriarchal society often become the agents of male agendas, and the “keepers of other women. But both keepers and prisoners are bound by the same chains” (Gilbert 1984, 350-351).

Jane does not escape his control either, as she, too, is renamed, literally juxtaposed to Rochester in name and in duty. Like Antoinette, she feels unsettled about Rochester's christening, merging his identity with hers. Thus, beyond cultural crisis, a crisis of gender politics proves most powerful. However, Jane is able to articulate her anxieties amid the crisis. Despite the power of phallogentric language, Jane has more control over her native English tongue than does Bertha, who is silenced both by her sex and by her French voice (or lack thereof) in Brontë's text.

For example, when Rochester refers to Jane Rochester for the first time, she becomes flustered, glowing red. This response confuses Mr. Rochester, but Jane explains: "Because you gave me a new name—Jane Rochester; and it seems so strange" (Bronte, 2001: 220). Although Jane and Bertha/Antoinette act as foils for one another, both competing for a voice in a patriarchal plot, the crisis of identity that occurs in terms of naming and self-location within the narrative harmonize in what can be seen as a dual fate: an impending colonization by the white male protagonist and a resignation of the self. As Raiskin points out, in Caribbean English, "Self" refers to more than the individual: "She is pretty like prettiness itself." Consequently, in the text, words of identification and qualification embody entire concepts rather than denote singular ideas (Rhys 1999, 9). Thus the adjective "pretty" reflects more than a pleasing facade. The identification of a single quality is the identification of her entire nature and identity. Reading in this way reveals that Rochester's consumption and Bertha and Jane's submission of their respective "selves" is a submission and consumption of their entire being.

As an act of rebellion against this hostile takeover, and on behalf of the neglected Antoinette, Rhys constructs parallels with Brontë's classic novel—not simply to rename heroines or to corrupt the narrative, but to provide an outlet for a heroine in crisis. The intertextuality that operates between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* provides a voice, not merely an acknowledgement of Antoinette Mason. Intertextuality is not simply a referent term or an instance of stories building upon other stories. *Wide Sargasso Sea* engages with *Jane Eyre* in such a way that

while both texts can be read separately, the plurality of voices, what Bakhtin terms *heteroglossia*, enriches interpretation of both Jane's English and Antoinette/Bertha's French voices. Identity and its construction are dynamic. A character is not simply a two-dimensional figure that can be reduced to simplistic identification. While "stock characters" or allegorical figures appear throughout literature, each is still a part of a larger system that provides context and therefore deeper meaning within the story. Writers of fiction must utilize a dialogic imagination to achieve a story with competing characters and competing identities. That is, he or she must create heroes and villains within the same narrative and betray neither. As Kristeva puts it:

the status of the "creator," the one who produces a text by placing himself or herself at the intersection of this plurality of texts on their very different levels [. . .] leads me to understand subjectivity as a kaleidoscope, a 'polyphony' as Bakhtin calls it. I myself speak of a "subject in progress," which makes possible my attempt to articulate as precise a logic as possible between identity or unity, the challenge to this identity and even its reduction to zero [. . .] and the reconstitution of a new, plural identity. (Güberman 1996, 190)

However, Kristeva and Bakhtin assert with confidence what is not easily achieved. Blending identities is easier said than done. The fact that it is a complex process is evidenced by the internal conflict most characters exhibit when faced with a multi-faceted identity, be it racial, cultural or gender based. While intertextuality allows for the equal presence of parallel narratives which constitute another side of the story, it cannot resolve all of the conflicts that each story presents to the other. Providing a "subject in process" with such challenges is beneficial, yet the complexity of the issues intertextuality presents should not be overlooked. Intertextuality also challenges readers in that it can present a crisis of loyalty and interpretation of characters that they once thought they knew but now see differently through Kristeva's kaleidoscope.

The intertextuality Rhys sought to achieve was largely affected by the intertextuality that she experienced as a white Creole in a Caribbean world. Rather than seeing herself and her writing as a split screen, she “engaged with her European literary heritage [. . .] and just as she used European texts to enrich her fiction, so has her fiction enriched later Caribbean texts” (Lonsdale 1999, 56). These texts include Pauline Melville’s short story, “Let Them Call it Jazz”, Lorna Goodison’s poem “A Jean Rhys Lady” and Elean Thomas’s *The Last Room* (Lonsdale 1999, 56-63). The intertextuality that exists between these texts is a type of heteroglossia as well. For Rhys, negotiating her seemingly conflicting heritages enables her to harmonize a new history for her oft-misunderstood focal female, Antoinette, and make possible other interpretations through other voices at the same time.

There is only one heroine in a story. As Bertha Mason, the mad woman in the attic, she is merely a tool of a nineteenth-century plot, and a foil whose fate is apparently irrelevant in itself. Like little Adèle Varens, who is Rochester’s charge but also his cross to bear, Antoinette is marginalized from her voice in her submersion in an English community that does not value her French heritage. She becomes a foreign fixture in her own body, alienated from herself from the outside. However, in her narrative, her identity can be reconstructed in her own terms, by her own name, Antoinette. In re-writing the marginalized mad woman in the attic, Rhys states that her initial motivation behind the construction of Bertha Mason was to show her imprisoned, as Antoinette, remembering her life outside confinement, confronting the memories that collide with brief encounters and fragmented conversation with those on the outside (Lonsdale 1999, 60). Thus, in the chasm between identity and identification, the intertextuality that exists between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* is paramount in exposing the tensions between the texts, and provides, at last, a forum for Antoinette to find her voice, to tell her story. Intertextuality, then, emerges as a literary life raft for a character in crisis.

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