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"THERE IS ALWAYS THE OTHER SIDE": DISPLACEMENT AND RESISTANCE IN JEAN RHYS'S *GOOD MORNING, MIDNIGHT* AND *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

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Esta Dissertação foi julgada adequada para obtenção do Título de Mestre, e aprovada em sua forma final pelo Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários.

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To all the strong women who have fought for women's rights to have better lives.
To all the strong women in my family, who have set inspiring examples of intelligence, persistence and bravery.

Sisterhood rocks!

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". . . You imagine the carefully-pruned, shaped thing that is presented to you is truth. That is just what it isn't. The truth is improbable, the truth is fantastic; it's in what you think is a distorting mirror that you see the truth". (*Good Morning, Midnight* 74)

"The rumours I've heard— very far from the truth. But I don't contradict, I know better than to say a word. After all, the house is big and safe, a shelter from the world outside which, say what you like, can be a black and cruel world to a woman. Maybe that's why I stayed on…Yes, maybe that's why we all stay— Mrs. Eff and Leah and me. All of us except that girl who lives in her own darkness. I'll say one thing for her, she hasn't lost her spirit. She's still fierce. I don't turn my back on her when her eyes have that look. I know it." *(Wide Sargasso Sea 160)*

ABSTRACT
"THERE IS ALWAYS THE OTHER SIDE": Displacement and resistance in Jean Rhys' *Good Morning Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

MARIA EDUARDA RODRIGUES DA FONSECA
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2016

This study presents a comparative analysis of Sasha Jensen and Antoinette Cosway, the protagonists of Jean Rhys' novels *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), respectively. Focusing on the two protagonists, the general objective of this research is to understand in what ways the main characters are presented as displaced in the narratives, discussing it mainly from the perspective of hybrid identities and gender. The specific objective of this research is to understand if and how their displacement can be considered a site for resisting imperialistic and oppressive male systems. Concerning the issue of displacement, the characters seem to portray conflicting views towards fixity and belonging, often questioning the relation between identity, place and language. Instances of the novels suggest that their gender affects the specific ways in which the characters experience displacement, bringing into light the discussion of intersectionality when relating gender, social class and displacement. In relation to resistance, it seems that both would rather remain in this in-between place than being assimilated by totalizing discourses that erase the complex formation of their identity.

KEYWORDS: gender representation, displacement, hybridity, in-betweenness, resistance, Jean Rhys

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RESUMO

“THERE IS ALWAYS THE OTHER SIDE”: Displacement and resistance in Jean Rhys’ *Good Morning Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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2016

O estudo em questão apresenta uma análise comparativa das personagens Sasha Jensen e Antoinette Cosway, protagonistas dos romances *Bom dia, Meia-Noite* (1939) e *Vasto Mar de Sargaços* (1966), respectivamente. Dando enfoque às protagonistas, o objetivo geral desta pesquisa é entender de quais maneiras elas são retratadas como deslocadas nas narrativas, considerando especificamente suas identidades híbridas e questões de gênero. O objetivo específico da análise reside em verificar se o deslocamento vivenciado pelas protagonistas pode ser considerado um local de resistência a forças opressoras masculinas e colonialistas. Considerando o deslocamento que as protagonistas vivenciam, ambas apresentam uma visão conflituosa com relação ao pertencimento, questionando-se com frequência sobre a relação entre identidade, lugar e linguagem. Momentos nas narrativas sugerem que o gênero das protagonistas influencia sua experiência de deslocamento, trazendo à tona a discussão sobre a intersecção entre gênero, classe social e deslocamento. Com relação a resistência, os romances parecem sugerir que as protagonistas preferem viver neste entre-lugar do que serem assimiladas por discursos que apagam a complexa formação de suas identidades.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: representação de gênero, deslocamento, entre-lugar, resistência, Jean Rhys

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INTRODUCTION:
"I OFTEN WONDER WHO I AM"[1]

When challenged about why she wrote the story of the *madwoman in the attic*[2], a character considered minor in Charlotte Bronte's acclaimed *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys replied with another inquiry, questioning the stereotypical portrayal of the female Caribbean character as exotic and mad[3] present in the mentioned novel. Instead of overlooking the recurrent view of the Caribbean as "the other", Rhys decided to present a self-definition in terms of identity and gender issues, considering she was Caribbean herself. Even though in her time literature was even more predominantly male, Rhys wrote novels with female protagonists who often questioned about their place (or displacement?) in society, tackling issues of identity and belonging in her narratives.

Concerned with understanding the portrayal of women as displaced in society and the reasons behind it, the present study addresses the issues of displacement and gender in literature. Displacement is one of the key concepts in Postcolonial studies and, as signaled by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002), "[t]he dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two". (9) More specifically on the dialectic of place and displacement, the latter deals with the feeling of dislocation in physical, social or cultural aspects. When experienced through physical dislocation, displacement may be related to the lack of identification with a place. People move (or are moved) away from their homelands but cannot identify with the new environment or its culture. Displacement in terms of social or cultural aspects, on the other hand, can be experienced even if one remains in the same space. The forces of

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[1] *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 93. Antoinette questions herself about identity and belonging right after one of her servants, Amélie, starts singing a song that refers to Antoinette as "white cockroach". This was a derogatory term the Jamaican community surrounding Antoinette's house employed, in order to make her uncomfortable about her position in society. Antoinette's family had been made rich as a result of slavery, but now that the system was abolished, the community feels entitled to discriminate Antoinette and her whole family.

[2] The madwoman in the attic is Bertha Mason (and Antoinette Cosway in *Wide Sargasso Sea*), Edward Rochester's Caribbean wife, whom he locks up in the attic for obscure reasons in *Jane Eyre*. Later on, Antoinette's character inspired the title of the book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, first published in 1979.

[3] Qtd in Nancy Harrison 128.

colonization, for instance, may impose or bring a different culture into a place and affect or disrupt the lives of those who are bound to the existing culture. More than that, as a consequence of colonization, the boundaries between colonizer and colonized become blurred, since both cultures influence one another. From this relation, a tensions arises, to the extent where the necessity to categorize and separate what comes from the colonized or the colonizer becomes a questionable and dangerous task. Rather than separating the two cultures, the consequences of such relationship may be important in order to understand how the process of colonization takes place. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) thus refers to these "contact zones":

> By using the term "contact," I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations among colonizers and colonized… not in terms of separateness on apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (7)

Another important prospect on the discussion of displacement is that it encompasses the intricate relation between identity and place. As Stuart Hall (2000) points out, identity is related to place in the sense that identity is historically constructed and its formation is influenced by people's origins, especially because there is a tendency to associate identity to roots. Considering these factors, the relation between displacement and identity is important because it attempts at "the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 8).

While discussing displacement in literary texts, the fact that this analysis will focus on female characters brings into debate gender issues as well, such as how gender has molded their experience of displacement. Because displacement and gender have become important issues in Western literature, in light of their recurrence in contemporary times, they deserve to be examined in different representations and contexts**.**

Figure 1

Moving from the general to the specific context of this research, this study focuses on the portrayal of displaced women in Jean Rhys' fiction. Jean Rhys (figure 1) [4]was prolific in the 1930's, having written most of her novels during that decade. Some thirty years later she wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for which she became famous. Being inserted in a period influenced by great events like the World Wars, the Great Depression and when Western societies all over the globe were facing strong economic change, due to the development of industries and cities, her novels resonated some of themes present in the society of the time. Along with the wars, imperialist practices together with religious and racial intolerance caused a great number of people to move from their homelands. As a result of people's dislocations and movements caused by the wars, boundaries between countries and people became less distinct and authors felt it was important to debate the questions of identity and belonging. Whereas societies had been previously arranged with a fixed structural order, now there was social turmoil and several questions related to the self, such as "everyday questions about clothing, appearance and leisure to high-impact decisions about relationships, beliefs and occupations" (David Gauntlett 2012).

Having lived in a historical period rich with events and having herself experienced a dislocation from the Caribbean to England, Jean Rhys was provided with enough material to express the feeling of displacement in her fiction. Such is the case of the novels *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)[5], in which, through both leading characters, Rhys approaches the complexity of identities and the experience of displacement with the emergence of modern society. In both novels, Rhys tackles the issue of a changing society and presents her protagonists facing an identity crisis as a result of these changes. Although Sasha and Antoinette experience this identity crisis in different historical contexts, because Sasha lives in the

[4] Jean Rhys. Date unkown. Retrieved from: http://ep00.epimg.net/diario/imagenes/2009/12/05/babelia/1259975536_740215_0000000000_noticia_normal.jpg

[5] From here on, I may refer to the novels through the abbreviations GMM (*Good Morning, Midnight*) and WSS (*Wide Sargasso Sea*).

1930's and Antoinette in the 1800's, in both novels the characters ask questions about themselves, and refuse to limit to one single culture by identifying themselves with in-between cultural aspects. Sasha lives in a Europe devastated as a result of the first and second wars, and along the way she meets other people who experience the same feeling as she does – of not belonging. Through Sasha, Rhys paints the picture of Europe's situation and the people who were moving all around the continent as a result of the wars. Antoinette lives in the Caribbean during the 1840's, a moment rich with change for the Jamaican society, because slavery was abolished. As a result, Antoinette's father's status moved from prestigious to decadent, as he was a slave owner. But this revolution did not affect Antoinette's life only in the financial prospect; it deeply altered her privileged position in the Caribbean society. Antoinette and her family were hated by the community of blacks surrounding their house, especially because although they had "personal freedom" as a result of the end of slavery, blacks also experienced "a decline in their standard of living, their life expectancy, and their educational progress" (Emmer 2007). In other words, the end of slavery did not grant blacks the opportunity to have better lives, as society was not open to give them opportunities or jobs.

In relation to cultural in-betweenness and literature, Fred Wah (2000) states that it is the role of the ethnic writer to understand "where she is, where to go, how to move, not just through language but in the world" (56) in order to figure out how she places herself in the world. This desire to position oneself is evident in Rhys' fiction, because her characters are wanderers questioning if and where they belong. Furthermore, Rhys addresses the issue of displacement as a gendered experience, because the fact that her characters are female alters the "universal" perspective (which always privileged the male), so the author develops in what specific ways her characters are displaced as a result of their gender. This aspect will be further developed in Chapter 1.

Bearing in mind the general and specific contexts of this research, the problem to be addressed here is the understanding of displacement as a site of resistance in the novels *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As a way of resisting the forces of colonization and white male oppression, many writings present the idea of resistance, usually by questioning the presupposed superiority associated to the male colonizer figure. Some of these writings discuss the situation of the so-called minorities, the oppressed and excluded from society, such as natives, immigrants, blacks, people from a lower

social class, women and so forth. At the core of these writings is the attempt to listen to those who are silenced or prevented from acting by the imposition of others, whether in personal or political senses (or both, as is usually the case). In this study, it is my intent to investigate how the construction of Rhys' characters as displaced can be considered a confrontation to the forces of colonization and patriarchal values. Rhys' two leading characters – Sasha Jensen from *Good, Morning Midnight* and Antoinette Cosway, from *Wide Sargasso Sea* – present conflicting notions regarding their positions in specific places or cultures. This conflicted notion of identity not only confronts the concept of identity as an essence and/or fixed meaning, but, in a way, can also be seen as a space to dismantle the structures of traditional and oppressive male systems.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

> *"The contradictions, paradoxes, and assumptions active at the hyphen, all indicate a position and a process that are central to any poetics of opposition (feminist, sexual, racial) and that is the poetics of the "trans-," methods of translation, transference, transition, transposition [. . .]" (Fred Wah 90)*

In this review of literature, I discuss the issue of displacement as proposed by Angelika Bammer (1994) and Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins and Helen Tiffin (2002; 2007). Alice Kaplan's (1994) comments on the complex relation between language and displacement will enrich the analysis of the novel Good Morning, Midnight (1939), since the protagonist, Sasha, experiments the use of different languages to communicate. Because the displacement experienced by the characters is highly related to their in-between identities, in the second part I present an overview of Stuart Hall's definition of post-modern identities (1992) and Angelika Bammer's (1994) discussion of the role of "otherness" for post-modern identities.

Since the issues of displacement and gender are related, some concepts from the area of Gender Studies will be discussed. More specifically, I intend to present how the issue of male dominance directly influences the displacement both characters face. As a way of mapping the protagonists' experience of displacement because of

gender, race and social class, Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of Intersectionality (1989) will be employed. Also on the discussion of displacement related to the characters' identities, Homi Bhabha's (1994) theory of the "in-between" space will be brought into discussion. Some of Fred Wah's (2000) considerations on the "hyphen" will expand the discussion of in-betweenness, along with Glória Anzaldúa's (1987) groundbreaking notion of the *mestiza*.

Since my study aims to understand how displacement can be regarded as a site of resistance, this part of the analysis will be developed in light of the three following views on resistance. Firstly, I draw on the concept of resistance in feminist literature as proposed by Teresa de Lauretis (1984). From a more specific context, I will present Edward Said's (1977) theory about the Orient and relate it to how literature can be used to maintain or resist reductionist views, in this case, also bringing Said's comments on the construction of the British Empire and its relations to the Caribbean (1993). Finally, bell hooks' "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" (2004) will close the discussion on resistance.

Displacement, as proposed by Angelika Bammer, (1994) is a complex concept that can be looked at from different perspectives. According to Bammer, one way of looking at displacement is to understand it as "the separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation (as refugees, immigrants, migrants, exiles, or expatriates) or the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture" (xi). Displacement, then, may be experienced by people who willingly leave their motherlands, as in the case of immigrants and migrants, or in the case of people who are forced to move, such as refugees, exiles and expatriates. But displacement is not only related to moving to a different place. As Bammer points out, the forces brought on by colonization can also cause individuals to face displacement, such as the erasure of a previously established culture, causing what many refer to as "cultural denigration" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989).

In addition to pointing out the relation between environment and displacement, the intricate relation between place, displacement and language will be pertinent to my analysis. Many times a displaced individual moves to a country and has to learn a language that is not their own, a process that can be complex and painful. Alice Kaplan (1994) argues "that language equals home, that language is home, as surely as a roof over one's head is a home" (63). However, to learn a new language is also source for empowerment – when, for instance, one learns the imperial language in order to deconstruct the ideology of the

oppressor. However complex the relation between language and place might be, Sasha Jensen, from GMM, employs the use of code-switching, a discursive strategy indicating her ability to be in-between cultures in her speech. According to Mary Louise Pratt (1993). code-switching becomes an important strategy in the "context of fiercely monolingual dominant cultures like that of the United States", because while employing it, the person articulates in both languages, "recombining" them as they choose (Pratt 863). Although the context of the novel is not the United States of America, Sasha's strategy is a clever one because she makes use of code-switching as a means to blend in when in Paris, also proving she can express herself in the chosen language.

In the context of the present study, the characters' in-between identities are highly related to their experiences of displacement. According to Stuart Hall (1992), identities are "formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (277). Despite the fact that Jean Rhys' novels are set before the issues brought on by postmodernity were discussed, the way she presents her characters as in-betweenners can be related to how postmodernism theorizes the concept of identity. Here it is important to mention that another study has drawn the relation between Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* and postmodernity, which is Carmen Woolgar's (1997) thesis. Although she deals with Zygmunt Bauman's theory specifically, in her study, Woolgar also defends that the protagonists of GMM and WSS have complex identities which put at stake the presupposed homogeneous categories which construe one's identity. However, Woolgar does not tackle the issue of gender as a component of fragmentation and displacement as I am interested in investigating in my research.

On the relation between identity and postmodernism, theorist Stuart Hall goes on to state that "identity [is] a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222). As both novels present this complex notion of identity, it is also significant to understand that "[o]ur sense of identity is ineluctably, it seems, marked by the peculiarly postmodern geography of identity: both here and there and neither here nor there at one and the same time" (Bammer, 1994, xxxi). Rhys seems to view identity in the same manner: because her protagonists refuse having their identities pinned down by totalizing discourses, in a way they acknowledge their identity as intricate, such as when Antoinette does not quite belong in the Caribbean but can't consider herself English

either. These characters seem to understand how complex identity can be and confront those who expect them to fit one mold of identity. Furthermore, Rhys deals with the trajectory of women who are marginalized in society precisely because they have a fragmented identity. They are seen and regarded as "others" and "[i]t is in this sense and for this reason that marginality and otherness increasingly figure as the predominant affirmative signifiers of (postmodern) identity". Bammer also states that "'to be' in the postmodern sense is somehow to be an Other: displaced" (Bammer xxxi). This construction of the Other is developed throughout Rhys' novels, as her characters are outsiders in society.

Because Rhys' novels present the issue of displacement as a gendered experience, some theories brought on by gender studies can contribute to my analysis. As presented by Elaine Showalter (1989), the term gender has to do with the "social, cultural, and psychological meaning imposed upon biological sexual identity" (2). That is, one of the main concerns of gender studies is to discuss the representations of both women and men in society. In addition, the term "gender" refers to the social construction of what it means to be male and female. Considering, then, that the concept of gender delimits to each biological sex certain aspects and roles, it is important to understand that this compartmentalization has political implications, including the distribution of power and the behavior associated with each gender (2). Still debating on the issue of assigning certain aspects according to gender, Judith Halberstan (2007) states that gender can be regarded as "a marker of social difference" (118). Taking that into consideration, the socially constructed category of gender "names a primary mode of oppression that sorts human bodies into binary categories in order to assign labor, responsibilities, moral attributes, and emotional styles" (118).

As regards possible implications of gender, more specifically about how power works within gender relations, Showalter (1989) also mentions that historical analysis has proven that gender relations have great importance when talking about "sexual asymmetry, inequality, and male dominance" (4). Precisely because of how gender relations are structured to subdue the female, it is important to understand how these relations have been built in order to justify and sustain the male monopoly throughout centuries. The understanding of this system can lead to the deconstruction of "the belief that men are superior to women" (Lois Tyson 86). Still concerning the issue of male dominance, feminists have demonstrated great interest in discussing how useful it is

"to understand and resist the various ways in which patriarchy dictates our lives" (93). It is important to understand how the patriarchal system operates within society so as to be able to question and deconstruct it.

According to Adrienne Rich (1976), patriarchy is characterized by "the power of the father: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men — by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor" (57). As a consequence of privileging the masculine in relation to the feminine, the patriarchal system limits the possibilities for women in society. Several issues presented in the novels to be analyzed in this research can be considered as criticism of the traditional roles assigned to women in a male-centered world, a world that "compartmentalizes" and restricts women to the roles of nurturing mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. In relation to their sexuality, within this system, women are oftentimes considered sexual objects; thus, it is expected of them to show passivity in relationships, and, many times, powerlessness in face of male supremacy. As Rich argues, still regarding the oppression that takes places within patriarchal systems, the rituals nurtured by patriarchy are deterministic on the role of women, usually looking at the female as "subsumed under the male" (57).

One of my interests in this research is to understand how the female protagonists of Jean Rhys' fiction experience displacement because they are women. In other words, I aim at investigating the relation between gender and displacement. But in order to fully discuss the characters and their experience as oppressed, there are other axes of their identity that must be addressed: their ethnicity and their social class. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), in order to understand how oppression takes place, it is necessary to see that it happens simultaneously and differently, according to one's race, gender, social class, sexuality, just to mention a few identity axes. When addressing the oppression experienced by black women, Crenshaw explains why they experience it differently than white women: "because of their intersectional identity as both women and people of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, the interests and experiences of women of color are frequently marginalized within both" (1). Because these women live in a world that is white and male supremacist, black women are doubly devalued: as a result of their race and their gender. This idea of intersections could be related to Jean Rhys' protagonists, because they are marginalized from society not only

for being women, but also because of their low social class and ethnic origins. As Maggie Humm (1991) points out,

> Rhys constructs in her fiction [. . .] a feminist anti-colonialism becoming aware of its own history. Rhys interrelates history and gender, and images anti-colonialism as her peculiar version of boundary crossing. Rhys's texts all have heroines struggling with ethnic and gender identity without stable geographic or national place. (63)

Another important fact about the protagonists' identities is that both are marked by the experience of in-betweenness when it comes to their origins. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, the protagonist comes from England, but for most of the narrative, her nationality remains an avoided topic. Also, she dislikes so much the place she comes from that she spends most of her lifetime trying to find a place to call home. In the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette Cosway suffers a lot of prejudice for being Creole, that is, the daughter of a Martinican and an Englishman. In light of this fact, to understand this "in-between" space which both characters inhabit becomes paramount for my analysis. Their in-betweenness is what sets them moving in a society that constantly tells them to define themselves according to one single and homogenous story. But my view on these characters' in-betweenness is similar to the one presented by Homi Bhabha (1994), in which he claims that "these 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (2).

Siding with this idea, in the essay "Half-Bred Poetics" (2000), the Canadian writer Fred Wah talks about cultural identities that are hybrid and brings into discussion the concepts of "living a hyphenated culture". He mentions that people with this in-between identity have attempted writing in order to "create a more satisfying space within which to investigate their particular realities" (51). Furthermore, Wah goes on to state that the hybrid writer must make use of the hyphen as a tool (73) to dismantle traditional or generalized narratives: traditional narratives because they usually do not include "the other" and generalized narratives because they tend to fall into the trap of the homogenization of experience, making the particular experience of

immigrants a generic one. As a tool to resist these discourses, according to Wah,

> [t]hough the hyphen is in the middle, it is not the centre. It is a property marker, a boundary post, a borderland, a bastard, a railroad, a last spike, a stain, a cypher, a rope, a knot, a chain (link), a foreign word, a warning sign, a head tax, a bridge, a no-man's land, a nomadic, floating magic carpet, now you see it now you don't. (72-73)

For the author, the hyphen represents the "in betweenness" of cultures and it must be used to "actualize this hybridity" (73). Writers should make it visible in their writings so as to have "instruments" that cause "disturbance, dislocation, and displacement" (73). In her own way, Jean Rhys deals with disturbance, dislocation and displacement by portraying her protagonists as living "hyphenated" cultures. By doing so, Rhys breaks away from the homogenizing discourse of the immigrant because she is not generalizing their experience, but placing them in specific contexts.

Gloria Anzaldúa also theorizes about hybrid identities in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), in which she proposes the term *mestiza* to refer to someone who lives in between cultures, as "a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" (78). Ergo, la *mestiza* has to face the conflict of choosing one side to listen to, leading to "a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war". One way to deal with this "dilemma" is to move towards a new consciousness that allows you to be "on both shores at once", embracing all that you are. Anzaldúa's argument in favor of this new consciousness is that it "break[s] down the subject-object duality" (80) which structures the social order and leads to injustice, prejudice, war, violence and rape (80). Considering that Jean Rhys places her characters in this dual place, it is possible to infer that her novels discuss the possibility and importance of in-betweenness, not only by denouncing the exclusion of the so-called "others" in society, but also when creating a new terrain in order to talk about these women who are "othered" not merely because of their gender, ethnicity and social class, but because of their particular situation as immigrants or wanderers.

Proceeding to the last part of this review of literature, the role of resistance in literature will be briefly presented. Throughout centuries,

literature has been used as a means to portray the struggles of the "so-called" minorities. According to Teresa de Lauretis (1984), "strategies of writing and of reading are forms of cultural resistance" (7). Rhys' novels can be considered a tool for resisting or at least questioning the ways in which patriarchy oppresses women in political, social, economic, and psychological ways. Therefore, the issue of resistance becomes prominent when discussing her novels. Still according to Teresa de Lauretis (1984), resistance, as portrayed in literature, can be the beginning of the dismantling of a male centered society, as it can function as a way to change and undermine dominant discourses (7). As de Lauretis problematizes the issue of hegemonic discourses, she states that "the only way to position oneself outside that discourse is to position oneself within it – to refuse the question as formulated, or to answer deviously (though in its own words), even to quote (but against the grain)" (7).

Moving from the general discussion of literature as a tool for resisting dominant and oppressive cultures, I shall bring into discussion the role of literature in the context of the Caribbean. The Caribbean region is marked by its multicultural historical background, and as such, it addresses its history of having been the colony of several European countries like England, Portugal, the Netherlands, France and Spain. Post-colonial societies do not deal only with the fact of once having been colonized; they still face the consequences and the influences of the colonizer's culture. This might partially explain the reasons why dealing with the intricate (re)definitions of identity, stability and the experience of diaspora and dislocation are very common in Caribbean literature. Now, to talk about one single Caribbean literature could be homogenizing and dangerous, so I would like to highlight that the focus of my research are the Caribbean regions that have been colonized by the British Empire. As Stuart Hall (1994) has pointed out, to talk about the Caribbean can be a very difficult task

> [p]artly because of the dislocations of conquest, of colonization and slavery, partly because of the colonial relationship itself and the distortions of living in a world culturally dependent and dominated from some center outside the place where the majority of people lived. (4)

Having stated that, it is possible to draw a relation between Caribbean literature and resistance. These countries have been

influenced by the colonizer's culture throughout centuries, and the relation between the colonizer and the colonized is a very intricate one, because the colonized have had their cultures changed by the imposing forces of the Empires, but many cultural aspects of the colonies mimic or appropriate cultural aspects that come from the colonizer. In other words, the boundaries between the colony's and the empire's cultures become interrelated. While the process of colonization is an extremely violent one, according to Stuart Hall (1995), the dislocations that are a result of it have "[. . .] also been important for counter-identities, providing sources on which the important movements of decolonization, of independence, of nationalist consciousness in the region have been founded" (4).

Literature exposing the colonial system undertakes the tasks of discussing it while debunking it: its violence against slaves, natives and the exploitation of the land and its natural resources. Another important aspect for this literature to resist is the reductionist and biased representation of the Caribbean that has been elaborated by the master's narratives, such as labeling the Caribbean as "the exotic". This is the point that Edward Said makes in *Orientalism* (1977), though he is not directly addressing the representation of the Caribbean, but the representation that England has fabricated of the Eastern World.

Throughout his introduction on the concept of Orientalism, Said addresses the issue of Alterity, a philosophical term that carries the meaning of "otherness". To understand the process of "Othering" is to understand the very possibility of colonialism, because it is through the process of Othering that the "I" becomes central and more powerful than the "Other". Orientalism is a strategy the Occident has employed in order to gain and maintain power through the fabrication of discourses regarding what it means to be Oriental. These discourses have been reproduced and reiterated in many texts by European scientists, authors, researchers and anthropologists, texts which were speaking for or about the Orient, but never allowing it to speak and never taking into the account the Orient's view on itself.

Another issue Said highlights is that the discourse about the Orient talks more about the colonizer, Europe, than about the "object" which it addresses, the Orient. The concept of Orientalism is imbricated with relations of power, colonization and imperialism which were acted upon Oriental societies by the colonizers. But this was not so only in Oriental societies, because the concept can be related to the experiences in the Caribbean and the colonizers.

Representations in literature have been a great source to maintain the empires as superior to the colonies. One clear example is how texts were responsible for endorsing the British Empire throughout the 19th century. According to Edward Said (1993), the discourse about the Empire as a "good home, of a nation and its language, of proper order, good behavior, moral values" (81) was accomplished through repetition, expanding itself at the cost of nations that were not British. As Said argued about the Occident that constructed an inferior Orient in order to value itself, the British Empire also constructed its values in opposition to other nations, using this duality to construct itself as the "center", and the colony as "marginal". In order to make his point, Said talks about *Mansfield Park* (1814), by Jane Austen, a classic novel that "expresses an unattainable quality of life" (84) but doesn't care to mention that what guarantees the main characters' rich and proper lifestyle is the exploitation of the land (Antigua) and the slaves who work there. Although Jane Austen does not make clear references to the Caribbean, it is central to the narrative.

bell hooks (2004) also theorizes about resistance, but she is interested in drawing a connection between resistance and the margins. She conceptualizes the margins as being a place of resistance, because it can be a source of "creativity and power" (159). The margins are an alternative space that is not dependent on dichotomies, such as the one between "colonized/colonizer". In the margins that hooks talks about, the individual chooses to live in that space, it is not an imposition made by others. She regards this margins as a "new location from which to see the world" (159).

As developed previously, for centuries, literature was used in favor of the Empire, disseminating the discourse of the Empire's superiority and development. It was successful at doing so because literary texts did not present the process of colonization and what made it possible for Empires to build themselves. That is why resistance is not only important, but fundamental in counter literature. Literature can be a source of describing the horrors of colonialism and used as a tool to question this system. More than that, literature can be a source for presenting the margins as an alternative space, as a space which embraces creativity to live under such difficult situations and still thrive, such as the one mentioned by bell hooks (2004). Furthermore, through the exposure of horrors related to the process of colonization, authors create narratives that resist erasure and oppression.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Taking the aforementioned aspects into consideration, the overall objective of the proposed research is to analyze the issue of displacement in Caribbean literature, as illustrated in the work of Jean Rhys. More specifically, the proposed research attempts to understand (1) how the feeling of being displaced manifests itself in the characters' thoughts, words, and actions, and (2) if displacement can be considered a space for resisting colonization and patriarchal values, especially in the context of hybrid identity. Therefore, the construction of the leading characters in both novels is primordial to the understanding of how Rhys approaches the complexity of hybrid or displaced identities. Although both characters are set in completely different historical periods, they share an anxiety related to their identity and are displaced as a result of their in-betweenness. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha feels uncomfortable with her English background, but does try to find an alternative place she could call her own as she wanders across several "geographies". Antoinette Cosway, from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, has a Creole identity: her mother is a Martinican and her father is an Englishman. Rejected by both natives and colonizers due to her origins, Antoinette feels doubly displaced, a feeling which is later on accentuated by her physical removal from the Caribbean to England by her husband in the end of the novel. Based on the aforementioned objectives, the following research questions have arisen:

(1) Considering the specific context of each novel, in what ways do the main characters of *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* experience displacement as poor, racialized women? In other words, in what ways do the different axes of their identity influence their experience of displacement?

(2) How similar are the experiences of the two characters in terms of (or as a result of) their feelings of displacement? And in what aspects do they differ?

(3) Both characters present in-between identities, which might be the cause of their feeling of being displaced. Can this displacement experienced by the characters be considered a space for resisting patriarchal and colonizing values? If so, in what ways?

Considering the research questions proposed for this study, in order to verify the ways the novels construct the protagonists as displaced, different moments in the narratives that address the conflicts the characters face in terms of identity and place will be analyzed. The

discussion of the theoretical framework composed by concepts of displacement, in-betweenness, post-modern identities, gender and resistance will be intertwined with the analysis and discussion of excerpts of the novels. Furthermore, literary aspects such as setting, style, theme and plot will be part of the analysis so as to make connections between the issues presented in the novels with the theory selected for discussion.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

The significance of the proposed research relates mainly to three broad aspects. Firstly, the study should contribute to research that explores the portrayal of displacement in literary texts. Narrowing the scope, it serves the purpose of better understanding how this concept is explored in Jean Rhys' literature.

Secondly, the research should add to the studies previously held at PPGI – UFSC. So far, only one thesis has dealt with the issue of displacement in literature. Its title is "Citizens of Nowhere? Assymmetrical Displacements in Nadine Gordimer's*The Pick Up*"and it was written by Renata Mayumi Ogawa in 2010. No research has investigated the depiction of displacement in Jean Rhys' fiction. Only one study has discussed Jean Rhys' novels, but it was conducted from a different perspective. It is entitled "'Say Nothing and it may not be True': Focalization and Voice in *Wide Sargasso Sea*", and it was written by Vera Helena Wielewicki in 1992. The proposed research hopes to instigate more studies on Caribbean literature, and more precisely, on Jean Rhys' fiction.

Lastly, the proposed investigation is significant for personal reasons. I have already developed a research on Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* in my final monograph, and I intend to broaden my knowledge on this particular novel. More specifically, I seek to understand how the previous novel relates to another text written by Rhys, namely, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As an admirer and avid reader of Jean Rhys' novels, I am interested in exploring what kind of questionings the writer is able to raise through her fictional works.

CONTENT OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

Having presented the main theoretical perspectives as well as the corpus for this research, I shall now move to the analysis of the characters that were selected for the study. In chapter 1, entitled "I am empty of everything", I will develop the analysis of both leading characters from the two novels and their experience in relation to their

specific ethnicity – Sasha as an Englishwoman who feels uneasy with her background and Antoinette, a Caribbean woman strongly influenced by English culture. After understanding each character in their specific settings and contexts, I intend to make a comparative analysis of whether their displacement can be regarded as similar or not. After the discussion of the characters' displacement, in Chapter 2, entitled "We lost our way to England", I aim at understanding if the displacement portrayed in the two novels can be considered a site for resisting patriarchy, oppressive and colonizing forces. Throughout chapters 1 and 2, besides developing an analysis of the novels, I draw connections between my analysis and some literary criticism that has been made on Rhys' literature. Finally, as a way of presenting some final remarks on this research, a recap of the main points presented in the previous chapters shall be included. Next, I will bring into discussion the general and specific conclusions of my analysis, followed by the implications of the study for future research.

CHAPTER I
"I DON'T BELONG ANYWHERE[6]":
Displacement and hybrid identity

"I have no pride — no pride, no name, no face, no country. I don't belong anywhere" (Rhys 2000)

Sasha Jensen, the protagonist of the novel *Good Morning, Midnight* states that she doesn't belong anywhere because she has no pride, no name, no face and no country. According to her beliefs, these issues are correlated, and indeed, they are at the root of her longings and questionings. Her saying offers a start for the discussion of Jean Rhys' protagonists and the place where they usually stand: women who do not belong, be it because they were taken away from their homes or because they have decided to move from their place of origin. But before developing the discussion of whether their movements were forced upon them or a choice they have made, it is paramount to understand these characters' contexts and social conditions. Most of them are "poor, badly educated, female, and often colonial subjects exiled to the metropolis. Their positions on the extreme edge of multiple axes of exclusion certainly render them powerless in real-world situations" (Maren Linett1).

As immigrant women, Rhys' characters must face not only the challenge of living in a patriarchal society, but also the challenges of feeling displaced within their own cultures and countries. These women usually present conflicting views in terms of location and consider the ideas of belonging and fixity haunting. The fact that some of them oscillate between different languages when expressing themselves also mirrors their in-between positioning in relation to their English background. Upon reading Jean Rhys' novels, one learns the reality of "silenced 'foreign' and female voices, inhabiting marginalized and usually urban social spaces" (Mary Lou Emery xi). Taking that into account, the aim of this chapter is to present an analysis of two of Jean Rhys' protagonists: Sasha Jensen, from *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) and Antoinette Cosway, from *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). In order to analyze the characters in terms of their displacement, the chapter will offer an analysis of each protagonist in their settings and contexts,

[6] *Good Morning, Midnight,* 44. Sasha's statement about herself.

debating issues from specific moments in the novels which offer insights on their experiences as displaced women.

"JUST LIKE ME – ALWAYS WANTING TO BE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE[7]": SASHA JENSEN'S DISPLACEMENT

Before entering into the realm of Sasha Jensen's personal experiences as an immigrant woman, it is necessary to understand the kind of world she was living in: a Europe marked by two Great World Wars. Part of Sasha's devastation is connected to the places surrounding her, so she feels lonely partially as a result of the post-war destruction she sees. The experience of war has left in her a sense of helplessness and alienation, as if she did not belong anywhere. There are indeed several factors which set Sasha Jensen moving, and the feeling of displacement in the novel is dealt with from several perspectives, such as Sasha's notions about place, nationality, language, and the way she relates to other people and to herself.

Sasha Jensen's displacement in terms of place can be detected in her conflicting views towards defining one specific setting as her "home". Presenting a narrative that is mostly set in Paris, the story reveals Sasha's desire and yet inability to feel at home wherever she is at the moment. Although she was born in England, there are many indications that she is uneasy with being defined as English and identifying with her native culture. Sasha does not completely identify with her English background, but does not find an alternative place she could call her own. Paris is the closest she ever gets to feeling that she belongs, but she is aware that she is not French either. In her study relating *Good Morning, Midnight* with spatiality, Emily Duffy (2015) makes an interesting connection between Sasha's knowledge about the streets of Paris and her identity, so much so that Sasha's "identity is linked with the Parisian streets she walks" (16). Sasha has had so many experiences in this city that "[s]he cannot walk through [...] with detachment or critical distance, because each corner and café is drenched in memory and association" (16). Rather than fixating in one specific place of Paris, what Sasha does it to connect herself with a few hotels, streets and cafés.

The first indication that she does not feel comfortable with her English background appears very early on in the novel, when she does

[7] *Good Morning, Midnight,* 13.

not like the idea of mentioning her nationality. Because she did not put her passport number on the form when checking into a hotel in Paris, the owner asks for her passport. Sasha gets nervous with this idea and starts questioning herself: "What's wrong with the fiche? I've filled it up all right, haven't I? Name So-and-so, nationality So-and-so… *Nationality – that's what has puzzled him*. I ought to have put nationality by marriage" (Rhys 14, my emphasis). The fact that she has to show a document to prove who she is indicates the categories through which people want to identify her. At the same time, it is important to note that when mentioning this particular moment, Sasha still refuses to reveal the answers to each category. She refers to her name and nationality as "So-and-so", keeping them a mystery (at least to the reader). When mentioning that she should have put nationality by marriage, she was referring to her former husband, Enno, because he was French. Although the reason that leads the patron to ask for her passport is clarified – Sasha had forgotten to put the number on the form –, still she jumps to the conclusion that it is because of her nationality. Another moment in this scene also indicates that Sasha does not feel comfortable with being English. Still referring to the clerk, she says that he gives her hat a disapproving look, because "it shouts '*Anglaise*' [. . .]" (15), so the way she is dressed also makes her feel out of place as she says "my dress extinguishes me" (15).

The fact that Sasha decides to refer to herself as *Anglaise* instead of English is an interesting linguistic choice and is one of the first evidences that she likes to express herself in more than one language. According to Erica Jonhson, "in [Sasha's] experience, nation cannot consist of a monolithic composite of language and place" (44). It is interesting to mention that French words pop up in the narrative whenever Sasha finds herself in a difficult or confusing situation, especially when the issue of nationality is mentioned. For instance, when she goes to a shop to buy a hat, Sasha imagines the saleswoman referring to her as "A strange client, *l'étrangère*…" (Rhys 70). Not only does Sasha feel self-conscious about being foreign, she also makes the connection between being a foreigner ("*étrangère*") with the word "strange", indicating her discomfort with her nationality. In this moment Sasha uses a French word to make reference to her nationality again, maybe as an attempt to be more blended with the French culture by making use of the language.

Another passage which refers to the issue of her nationality being an obscure aspect is when she meets two Russians while wandering in the streets of Paris. They start a conversation and end up

trying to discover each other's nationalities: "We stop under a lamp-post to guess nationalities. [. . .] They tactfully don't guess mine" (46). As the conversation with the two Russian develops, one of them tells Sasha that she looks sad, to which she replies: "*Tristesse*, what a nice word! *Tristesse*, *lointaine*, *langsam*, forlorn, forlorn…" (47). Again, from this passage, it is possible to notice that Sasha likes to express herself in more than one single language, here using not only French, but also a word in German.

But the fact that she employs more than one language in conversation is not the only important aspect of this scene. The nature of the guessing game they were playing is rather interesting, because it could be a consequence of the historical context of the story – a period greatly influenced by the wars. According to Bammer (1994) "it is estimated that during the years of Hitler's rule over 30 million people were uprooted and forcibly moved" (xi). This concern regarding one's nationality was emphasized during those times, as there were people from all over the world transiting in Europe. The people Sasha meets throughout the novel also indicate that her displacement was shared by others: she has "friends" from Arabia, bumps into a Canadian-French gigolo, meets some Russians and gets married to a Enno, a French soldier on duty in England when they first met.

Still concerning Sasha's nationality, there seems to be a mystery regarding her past in London. At one point, the reader learns that she got married to Enno just so she could run away from England: "Because I wanted to escape from London I fastened myself on him" (130). The reasons are never revealed, but this fact leads to the interpretation that she had the urge to leave her homeland. In fact, her past in London is so obscure that she changed her name, as if wanting to erase or forget everything related to her life before: "It was then that I started calling myself Sasha. I thought it might change my luck if I changed my name" (12). Another aspect that is very emblematic of how she perceives London is the very words she chooses to refer to it: "Well, London… It has a fine sound, but what was London to me? It was a little room, smelling stuffy [. . .]" (113). The description seems to make reference to feeling suffocated, as if Sasha felt oppressed by the environment when in London.

The inconformity of living in London is what sets Sasha moving. Her life is all about moving from one motel room to another, wandering in the streets of many European cities. In Part III of the novel, there is a detailed account of all the places she visited right after

getting married to Enno: “The room at the Steens” (113), “The room in the hotel in Amsterdam” [. . .] (116), “The room in Brussels-very hot” (118). Aside from moving to different cities, Sasha also shifts constantly from one hotel room to another: “This damned room – it’s saturated with the past… It’s all the rooms I’ve ever slept in, all the streets I’ve ever walked in. [. . .] Rooms, streets, streets, rooms…” (109). There is no reference to her living in a house or apartment or having settled in one specific place. This displacement could be related to her social status and seen not only as a consequence of a symbolic yearning for settling in. Since she does not have the money to buy a house, she feels like an outsider looking in, as the following remarks indicate:

> [. . .] walking in the night with the dark houses over you, like monsters. If you have money and friends, houses are just houses with steps and a front-door – friendly houses where the door opens and somebody meets you, smiling. If you are quite secure and your roots well struck in, they know. They stand back respectfully, waiting for the poor devil without any friends and without any money. Then they step forward, the waiting houses, to frown and crush. No hospitable doors, no lit windows, just frowning darkness. Frowning and leering and sneering, the houses, one after the other. (32)

The feeling of homelessness in this passage works on two levels. On the one hand, there is the relation to class, to being economically deprived and unable to own a place she could call her own. On the other hand, the novel blurs the boundaries between the public and the private spheres, and Sasha’s lack of “home” can also be understood as a way of questioning the idea that women belong to the domestic environment. What this indicates is that Sasha is displaced not only as an immigrant, but as a woman as well – she does not inhabit the one place women were usually associated to. The hotel rooms represent public spaces, and Sasha’s ability to move as she wants from one space to the other does indicate a sort of refusal, however unconscious it may be, to establish herself in just one place, to be confined to a house. But this is dubiously featured in the story, because although she has the freedom to go anywhere, she is marginal to society. Her marginalization becomes clear in the passage above, where she sees houses as “frowning monsters”. This aspect of the novel seems to suggest, again, the

restricted options women have in relation to what they want to be or do with their lives.

Sasha is also displaced because she has difficulty connecting to anyone. One of the most lasting relationships Sasha had would be her marriage to Enno. Although they spent some time together, their relationship was not very healthy. The first time they break up and he leaves her, he says: "'you don't know how to make love [. . .] you're too passive, you're lazy, you bore me. I've had enough of this. Good-bye'" (Rhys 128). Some days after this statement, without any explanation or apology, Enno comes back and starts making all kinds of demands on Sasha, such as "'[. . .] Peel me an orange'" (129). Instead of arguing with him, she obeys and peels the orange, but in her head, she says to herself: "Now is the time to say '*Peel it* yourself', now is the time to say '*Go to hell'*, now is the time to say 'I *won't be treated like* this'" (129).

Here the reader witnesses Sasha's failure in expressing her thoughts verbally, because although she acknowledges how absurd it is for him to disappear and then come back like that, acting as if he owns her, she simply does as she is asked. Not for a moment does she express her thoughts or simply refuse to do as he says. Enno's speech explaining why he is leaving Sasha exemplifies the virtues usually associated with femininity and is also very reductionist of women. According to it, they should be interesting and attractive sexually speaking, not lazy, probably regarding the household chores, and entertaining for their men. Ironically enough, he also questions her "passivity". This vision can be very conflicting, as women are supposed to act passively, but not *very* passively. In other words, it seems that men want to control not only how women feel, but also *how intensely* they should feel about things.

Because Sasha feels like she needs Enno to support her financially and emotionally, she feels she has no other choice but to welcome him back and put up with his mistreatment. Sasha's behavior can be considered a reflection of a patriarchal society that silences women and their pains, and also teaches them to be obedient. The fact that she would rather be with Enno than alone – at least in the beginning of the narrative – could also be explained because of her need to feel protected, for she has probably internalized the idea that women are not self-sufficient.

Another kind of involvement that Sasha has with men, which seems to be the most degrading one, is represented through her relationship with René, the French-Canadian gigolo she meets at a bar. Because Sasha frequents certain kinds of places and is often alone, she

is vulnerable to that kind of encounter and is considered a target for men. At first, because of his interest in her money, René treats Sasha very well. But as soon as he perceives that she is not willing to "go along with the game" and is resistant to "hiring" him for his services, he begins acting hostile towards her. When they are up in her hotel room, he starts using violence and forcing her to have sexual intercourse with him: "and there we are – struggling on the small bed. [. . .] at the end he is lying on me, holding down my two spread arms. I can't move. My dress is torn open at the neck. But I have my knees firmly clamped together" (181).

Sasha does not explicitly reveal if René manages to rape her, especially because she is drunk and it is difficult to make sense of what is indeed happening, but this particular dialogue between them indicates that he wants to rape her: "'*Je te farei mal*', he says. 'It's your fault'" (182). René gets even more brutal when telling her: "'In Morocco it's much easier. You get four comrades to help you, and then it's very easy. They each take their turn. It's nice like that'" (182). After the struggle stops, he storms out of the room, takes some of her money and never comes back. René's attitude indicates that he sees her only as a sexual object and as a vulnerable woman he can take advantage of.

This scene reveals two aspects present in relationships between men and women in *Good Morning, Midnight*, which presents men treating women solely as sexual objects and oppressing them through violent behavior. As the conversation between René and Sasha develops, she shows sings that she would like to get romantically involved with him, thus takes him to her hotel room. But once René realizes that she does not want to exchange "more" than a few kisses, he starts getting impatient and acting rude towards her. It is when she refuses his sexual advances openly that he gets even angrier and tries to force a sexual intercourse. He even says it's her fault that he is going to hurt her, as if she had started it. The clear reference to rape that René makes is connected with his wish to be in command – the fact that she is trying to resist him makes him angry. It is clear that he wants to use sex as a way of oppressing Sasha, of imposing what he wants and as a way of reinforcing his masculinity. This episode can be related to two aspects of sexuality and women: (1) once women show sexual interest, they have to follow through with it until the end, a preconception that denies women the right to change their minds and have control over their own bodies; (2) the woman's purpose is to please the man, and not otherwise.

Another circumstance in which Sasha's involvements with men leave her more disconnected takes place in the beginning of the narrative, more specifically in the episode Sasha describes the way she is treated by her boss, Mr. Blank. As she does not manage to fulfill one of his demands, he refers to her as: "the biggest fool I've ever met in my life. She seems to be half-witted. She's hopeless" (27).The irony in this particular case is that Mr. Blank's instructions were the ones that caused Sasha to fail. As Sasha was introduced to him by another co-worker, the latter tells their boss she is fluent in German. In order to test her ability in the language, Mr. Blank asks her to fetch something with a strong accent and mispronounces the words. Sasha, too intimidated to ask because of his powerful position, pretends to understand what he said and goes after it. As she tries desperately to find it, she says: "I walk up stairs, past doors, along passages – all different, all exactly alike. There is something very urgent that I must do. But I don't meet a soul and all the doors are shut" (26). After mistreating Sasha, Mr. Blank fires her over a misunderstanding and not for a moment does he consider giving her a second chance or showing any sign of compassion. Although the mistake was primarily his, she is the one who pays for it. Because of her position as an employee, Mr. Blank feels like he has the right not only to test her, but also to ridicule and mistreat her. After his harsh words, Sasha says: "I cry for a long time – for myself, (…) for all the sadness of this damned world, for all the fools and the defeated" (28).

The following internal monologue of Sasha's gives an idea of how she perceives the treatment she gets from Mr. Blank and demonstrates her ability to criticize the way in which society is structured. At the same time, it also proves her inability to express her convictions and demand her rights, since she only reflects upon these ideas, but does not voice her opinion to anyone or takes any action:

> Well, let's argue this out, Mr. Blank. You, who represent Society, have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month. That's my market value, for I am an inefficient member of Society, slow in the uptake, uncertain, slightly damaged in the fray, there's no denying it. So you have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month, to lodge me in a small, dark room, to clothe me shabbily, to harass me with worry and monotony and unsatisfied longings till you get me to the point when I blush at a look, cry at a word. We can't all

> be happy, we can't all be rich, we can't all be lucky - and it would be so much less fun if we were. Isn't that so, Mr. Blank? There must be the dark background to show up the bright colours. Some must cry so that the others may be able to laugh the more heartily. Sacrifices are necessary… Let's say that you have this mystical right to cut my legs off. But the right to ridicule me afterwards because I am a cripple - no, that I think you haven't got. And that's the right you hold most dearly, isn't it? You must be able to despise the people you exploit. (29)

Sasha's perceptions about how society works for people like her, "the defeated", becomes clear in this passage. The closed doors she refers to may as well be the doors of a capitalist system, where she is marginalized and oppressed not only physically (lack of money and, therefore, of food and a decent place to live), but also psychologically (the fear of losing her job – which ironically is what costs her job in the end – the pressure to be the best at work and to compete with co-workers). Mr. Blank, who represents "Society" (and is ironically a "blank"), would emblematically embody the oppressor. He takes advantage of his privileged position in the system and precisely because of some sort of "mystical right" feels like he has the power to determine Sasha's worth.

In this case, "power asymmetry" plays a very important role, because Mr. Blank is Sasha's boss as well. Their relationship grounds itself on the fact that men hold powerful positions in society when it comes to their professional careers, relegating women to jobs where they are subordinates. This also has something to do with the fact that the job market was very unstable due to the economic situation (the great depression). There is another suggestion for this early in the same chapter, when Sasha mentions the variety of jobs she fails at keeping (as a saleswoman and as a guide, for instance). These factors place her in a doubly devalued position, related not only to her gender, but social class as well, because she becomes financially dependent on men. This is one of the main features of patriarchal societies, which systematically grants men more privileged positions as a result of their sex.

But Sasha's relationships with men are not the only ones who leave her empty. Instead of bonding with other women, whose experience is also affected by a patriarchal society, Sasha's interactions with them are presented mostly as negative. Relationships between

women seem to be very influenced by patriarchy, as they usually focus on how women were born to compete with one another. By analyzing the interaction between Sasha and other women in the story, it is possible to understand her views towards femininity as well. Dealing with the idea of how women relate in Rhys' fiction, Caitlin Moloney developed an interesting study which points out that "every woman seems to be alienated from others of her own sex" (1). I would affirm that, although there are moments in the novel in which Sasha presents some sort of sympathy towards women (the old lady buying a hat, as I explain further in the analysis), in most cases Moloney's argument is valid. Women judge each other in terms of looks by applying a male-gaze[8] and are judgmental of each other in terms of sexuality (3).

Still according to Moloney (6), one of the instances where it is possible to perceive how women are alienated from one another is when Sasha narrates what happens to her neighbor's kitten. It is important to mention this episode because, through Sasha's description of the cat, it is possible to match many of her personality traits with the ones she uses to refer to it: "The kitten had an inferiority complex and persecution mania and nostalgic de *la boue* and all the rest" (Rhys 54). As the story goes, back when she was living in London, Sasha's neighbors had a kitten which was "thin, scraggy and hunted, with those eyes that knew her fate [. . .] All the male cats in the neighborhood were on to her like one o'clock" (55), indicating that the kitten was sexually attractive. One day the kitten got a sore on her neck, probably because the male cats were onto her all the time, so her owner decided that the cat should be put away, because she found the sore on its neck "disgusting" (55). Feeling sorry for the creature, Sasha took it in and started taking care of it. After a while, Sasha got tired of the cat's strange behavior (it would refuse to eat and be petted) and shunned it away. That same day the cat was run over by a "merciful taxi" (55). Because the cat was female, this little tale can be an example of how women relate to femininity in Sasha's experience.

In a society influenced by patriarchy and tending to objectify women, women relate in terms of competition and mistrust. When both Sasha and her neighbor refuse to give the cat any assistance, it is

[8] Term coined by film critic Laura Mulvey, in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", published in 1975. According to the critic, anyone who visualizes women solely as sexual objects is applying the male-gaze.

suggested that women resist when it comes to helping one another. As Moloney argues, it is possible to make the analogy between the cat's behavior with that of a woman who is sexually active/attractive and "whose sexual activity makes other women uneasy" (7). This is hinted at when the owner of the kitten does not seem to show any concern for its well-being and simply remarks how disgusting the sore on its neck is. The word "disgusting" could be related a women who is promiscuous, since due to religious beliefs, for many centuries sex was considered something dirty. Sasha's decision to close her door on the kitten also demonstrates her resistance to help the animal, as "she seems to shun the cat in the same manner that a sexually promiscuous woman may be shunned by other, more reserved women" (7).

In Sasha's world, even so little as exchanging glances with other women can present itself as dangerous. She often feels other women are going to publically humiliate her, as she affirms when agonizing over the fact that one woman behind the bar is looking at her: "is she going to giggle or to say something about me in a voice loud enough for me to hear? That's the way she's feeling. No, she says nothing… But she says it all" (Rhys 50). Not a word between these two women has been exchanged and yet Sasha feels negatively towards her. Another clear example of that is when she goes to a restaurant and notices that a woman is talking about her. She cannot understand the exact words the woman is saying, but she reconstructs the woman's statement as something like this: "*Qu'est-ce qu'elle fout ici, la vieille*? What the devil (translating it politely) is she doing here, that old woman? What is she doing here, the stranger, the alien, the old one?" (54). Not only does Sasha reconstruct the dialogue negatively, she also concludes that the girl would think that way "partly because she did not like the look of [her]" (53). In order to strengthen her argument about this "rivalry" between women, Moloney (5) brings feminist theorist Luce Irigaray's views on the issue. In the book *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985), Irigaray states that patriarchal society reduces women to "commodities", and

> commodities can only enter into relationships under the watchful eyes of their "guardians." It is out of the question for them to go to "market" on their own, enjoy their own worth among themselves, speak to each other, desire each other, free from the control of seller-buyer-consumer subjects. And the interests of businessmen require

> that commodities relate to each other as rivals. (98)

The remark Sasha makes about the girl who does not like her because of the way she looks is emblematic of another aspect very present in women's relationships in the narrative: they notice each other in terms of their looks. Sasha's own obsession with her appearance and aging seems a consequence of society's pressure for women to be constantly beautiful and forever young so that they can still be considered sexually attractive. In a sense, to be sexually attractive is considered positive, but is also what sets women against each other, because women often feel threatened by other women. This negativity towards the process of aging can be seen even in mother-daughter relationships, as Sasha witnesses a daughter publicly reprimand her own mother just because she wants to buy a hat. In the mother's perspective, she wants to buy a hat to feel beautiful, but in the daughter's view, the mother is old and therefore should no longer concern herself with those issues: "'well, you made a perfect fool of yourself, as usual. You've had everybody in the shop sniggering'" (Rhys 23). Sasha pities the woman, and at the same time can relate to her situation, because she herself feels that aging is a decadent process. She compares getting old with being "sad as a circus-lioness, sad as an eagle without wings, sad as a violin with only one string and that one broken" (45). It seems, then, that women see each other and themselves through a male perspective, and Sasha is very much aware of this view that objectifies women.

Although Sasha's behavior seems to be one of acceptance of the world surrounding her, because she hardly voices her opinion or takes any action to change her reality, it is noticeable that she is critically aware of many aspects of her situation as a woman who belongs to the so-called minorities. This is related to the way women see themselves in the novel and may be one of the reasons why Sasha feels the need to wear a mask, as she mentions many times during the story: "Besides, it is not my face, this tortured and tormented mask. I can take it off whenever I like and hang it up on a nail". (43) She acknowledges the world surrounding her, but has to live in it all the same, feeling powerless. This could justify the need other women feel to "mask themselves" as well, as Sasha observes: "They have a drink, these women, and then they have another and then they start crying silently. And then they go into the lavabo and then they come out – powdered, but with hollow eyes – and, head down, slink into the street". (107)

Wearing make-up could be seen as a way of taking care of one's appearances, but could also be used as a mask, to hide or protect from the world. The use of masks could also represent Sasha's desire to be assimilated: "*Faites comme les autres* – that's been my motto all my life". (106) There are moments in the novel that Sasha's wish to be accepted by others or at least not noticed becomes evident: "Don't let him notice me, don't let him look at me. Isn't there something you can do so that nobody looks at you and sees you? Of course, you must make your mind vacant, neutral, then your face also becomes vacant, neutral – you are invisible" (19). From this statement, it is possible to see that Sasha does not want to be noticed. At the same time, she understands that it is not possible to be just like the others, that her attempt is a failure. Sasha remains ambiguous again as a woman who wants to belong, but who acknowledges her limitations when trying to do so, as she makes clear when she states:

> I could have spared myself the trouble. But this is my attitude to life. Please, please, *monsieur et madame*, mister, missis and miss, I am trying so hard to be like you. I know I don't succeed, but look how hard I try. Three hours to choose a hat; every morning an hour and a half trying to make myself look like everybody else. Every word I say has chains round its ankles; every thought I think is weighted with heavy weights. Since I was born, hasn't every word I've said, every thought I've thought, everything I've done, been tied up, weighted, and chained? And, mind you, I know that with all this I don't succeed. Or I succeed in flashes only too damned well… But think how hard I try and how seldom I dare. (106)

All these experiences in relation to her English background, her attempt to blend in by using other languages, and her relationships with other people and herself demonstrate in what ways Sasha Jensen experiences displacement in the narrative. Maybe because as a woman who is foreign, poor and lonely, Sasha wishes she could be invisible. Since Sasha knows that it is impossible, she tries as hard as she can, through her appearance, to conceal her true self. This inner struggle is a complex process, and it is visible to the reader that Sasha is not living these experiences unconsciously – she is trying to adjust consciously.

She understands her position in the world by criticizing the ways in which society presses her to fit in.

"IT LOOKED LIKE SNOW ON THE ROUGH GRASS[9]": ANTOINETTE COSWAY'S DISPLACEMENT

Before discussing Antoinette Cosway's personal experiences as a Caribbean woman who is forcefully taken to England, the social context she was living in must anticipate the discussion of the novel. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is set in Jamaica, starting in the 1830's, a historical moment very rich with social revolutions in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, in the year of 1833, the Slavery Abolition Act took place and this altered very deeply the life of Antoinette's family, who had been made rich as slave owners. Because of this social moment, instead of privileged, her family was now seen as decadent. They were regarded by the community as "white cockroaches" because they were white people who had neither money nor prestige. This early experience as an outcast of the community is only the beginning of Antoinette's conflict with her origins and identity. In part I of the novel it is possible to perceive that Rhys is tackling the issue of colonialism directly, since she talks about the former slaves and the status that the former slave owners occupy in the community.

Connecting more precisely the issue of literature and post-colonialism, fiction portraying post-colonial issues has been concerned not only with the effects of the process of colonization in the past, but with the impact and influence that this process still has on the former colonies nowadays. Furthermore, one of the main objectives of post-colonial literature is, as mentioned by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002), "to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. That is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2). One of the places in which Post-colonial literature and criticism is the strongest is the Caribbean. The Caribbean is a region with a complex background, mixing the cultures from the Awaraks, natives who were eradicated due to colonization, and from Europe, since many aspects of European culture were incorporated and assimilated by the Caribbean. These countries have been influenced by the colonizer's culture throughout centuries, because the colonized

[9] *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p.79.

have had their cultures partially erased by the imposing forces of the Empires. More than that, many cultural aspects of the colonies mimic or appropriate cultural aspects that come from the colonizer. In light of that, the relation between the colonizer and the colonized is a very intricate one and the boundaries between the colonizers and colonized are indistinct.

Taking into account the debates surrounding Post-colonial Caribbean literature, it is possible to state that the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is emblematic of these issues. As Antoinette Cosway stands for the side of the colonized in the novel, she is the voice of the "other" in the (hi)story, a side which has been ignored, suppressed, silenced and many times forgotten. Because Antoinette was born and raised in a place with complex social and cultural formations, her experience is a different one, detached from the stable or fixed meanings, crystallized by the power of hegemonic societies. Among the elements that contribute to her experience of displacement are her creole identity, her marriage to Edward Rochester, and the final moment in the novel, when she is forced to move to England.

Antoinette Cosway's creole identity is one of the first aspects that indicate her in-betwenness and complexity. Although she was born in Jamaica and her mother was from Martinique, her father was an Englishman. This hybrid background plays an important role in shaping Antoinette's different perspectives in terms of identity, as she seems torn between places and haunted by the ideas of belonging and fixity. At one point she asks her husband Edward Rochester: "'Is it true,' she said, 'that England is like a dream?" (Rhys 48). Although Antoinette Cosway has heard many times about England, although she was raised in a family with English customs, she has seen England only in pictures and textbooks. It was a distant reality to her.

Another way in which Rhys presents Antoinette as an outsider is related to her marriage, through which Rhys opposes the relationship between colonizer and the colonized in the characters of Antoinette and Rochester. His reactions demonstrate that he feels threatened by his wife's in-between identity. At one point in the story, after observing her for a while, Rochester states that her eyes are "too large" and that they are "long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (39). In this passage, Rochester is trying to categorize his wife, but since he fails at that, he refers to her eyes as alien. As a matter of fact, the word "alien" comes up a few other times in his narrative, always related to the things Rochester cannot tame, categorize or understand. Precisely because her

background is not merely English or Caribbean, Antoinette learned to be suspicious of single stories. Although her father was English and she was brought up in an environment culturally and economically influenced by the British Empire, she can relate to that culture only faintly. This is one of the very first things that set them apart, because Rochester feels uneasy when talking to his wife about England. He cannot understand the fact that she does not see it as superior and more developed than the Caribbean.

But Antoinette's point of view is not the only one presented in the novel, since Rhys also portrays the side of the colonizer and oppressor in the character of Edward Rochester. The oppressive way in which he deals with his wife is emblematic of the violent relationship between the colonies and the colonizer. Edward Rochester is the personification of English culture. Although he comes from a rich family, his father has left all his state to his eldest son, leaving Rochester with nothing. This is why Rochester must marry into his fortune and forcefully gets married to Antoinette Cosway. Although they both share an unfavorable position within their families, Rochester does not seem to show understanding towards Antoinette. On the contrary, upon getting married to her, Rochester feels the need to exert his power as the male and the husband. Maybe because he was never truly powerful in his past, Rochester saw his marriage to Antoinette as his first chance to feel superior. But this is not what happens when Rochester first arrives in the Caribbean. Rochester's first encounter with the Caribbean is overwhelming to him, because he is able to realize its variations, different meanings and possibilities. On the one hand, he can see how lovely it is, he can appreciate its beauty; on the other, he is oftentimes suspicious about the land and imagining about the secret it hides. The environment is extremely oppressive to him, maybe because he wants to be part of this loveliness but is unable to. The following passage portrays Rochester love/hate relation with the Caribbean landscape and his wife, as he cannot grasp what he sees as their magic. As he states,

> I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life

> would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it. (103)

Aside from being surrounded by an environment he cannot feel comfortable with, Rochester also feels threatened by this hybrid experience in Antoinette's identity. When Rochester realizes Antoinette's views towards England, at first he tries to change her mind. He reveals that his wife "often questioned me about England [. . .] but I was certain that nothing I said made much difference. Her mind was already made up [. . .] and her ideas were fixed. About England and about Europe" (56). But what happens here is that Rochester's ideas are the ones that are fixed. He cannot accept the fact that Antoinette may relate both to England and Jamaica, and many times he tries to convince her of England's superiority in terms of economy and knowledge. When she states that she loves Jamaica, Rochester tells her that she does not know 'the world', and by world he means England. He sees his world as universal, while her world is "wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret" (52). Her world is the "other" world, the world he does not have access to, the world he cannot understand. All the time Rochester feels vulnerable and threatened: "I feel very much a stranger here…I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side" (8).

The dynamics of hierarchy critiqued by Rhys through her main characters can be related to what Edward Said has termed as "Orientalism" (1977), even though she is portraying the relationship between England and the Caribbean. Similarly to what happens in Orientalism, Europe has also fabricated a unified and stable version of what Caribbean culture is. European culture has constituted itself while "othering" the Caribbean as the exotic and the inferior. After marrying Antoinette, Rochester feels his "power" is being even more threatened because he cannot make his wife see the world the way he does. He also feels threatened by his wife's "double consciousness"[10], because he has never experienced the world with the possibility of two points of view. But what affects Rochester the most is that, before arriving in the Caribbean, he felt superior because he was on the side of the colonizer.

[10] W.E.B. Du Bois's concept. He referred to double-consciousness as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder". (2007: 8)

However, that feeling of superiority falls apart when he arrives in the Caribbean and when he sees Antoinette: “Sombre people in a sombre place” (40). There, when he encounters that setting, he realizes that his power is nothing but an illusion. He realizes that England’s superiority is merely an idea, and that his power as a man is based solely upon the construction of his wife as “inferior”. Even Christophine, the black Martinican servant, who apparently does not hold any power, is dangerous in his view. Indeed, she can see through him:

> Everybody know that you marry her for her money and you take it all. And then you want to break her up, because you jealous of her. She is more better than you, she have better blood in her and she don’t care for money – it’s nothing for her (91-92).

Antoinette becomes even more displaced within her marriage when Rochester fails at understanding his wife’s experience of in-betweenes, but more specifically when he understands that his “powerful” position is all the time threatened by the supposed “other”. Upon understanding this position, one of the ways in which he tries to dominate her is by taking away her name and calling her Bertha. Antoinette picks up on his strategy and tells him: “Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name.” (88). When he realizes he cannot make Antoinette change her mind about English culture, he takes advantage of his position as the husband and male of the house and decides Antoinette’s fate. Similar to the natives who were annihilated by the colonizers when they refused being converted, Rochester annihilates his wife’s identity when she refuses his power.

Just as the discourses produced about the Orient influence the lives of people in the Orient, the discourses that produce England as superior and stronger grant Rochester the power to erase Antoinette’s culture. They also lead him to obliterate her as a human being, since the discourses fabricated about Caribbean people by European culture are monolithic and cannot accommodate variations. She is no longer a person; she is an object, a thing Rochester can easily do away with. This is one of the moments in the novel where Antoinette feels most displaced: she has been stripped of all the things that constitute her identity, like her name and her place of origin.

As generally recognized by critics, Jean Rhys' novels usually depict female experience through characters that are displaced, because they live in a world which tends to favor white, middle class men; her women attempt "plural identities" (Emery xii). Her women are usually not in favorable positions, due to their lack of power, money, gender, status and so on. Taking up the second research question of this study, interested in comparing Sasha and Antoinette's displacement, it is possible to state that they share a similar experience. When it comes to their nationalities, both Antoinette and Sasha refuse being categorized. Antoinette Cosway because she can relate to England and Jamaica. Her struggle is related to the fact that she does not feel she is only Jamaican, mainly because of two reasons: 1) her father's background; 2) having been raised in a culture highly influenced by English. However, while growing up she had never visited England, so to her, this place remained a dream. "'Is it true,' she said, 'that England is like a dream?'" (Rhys 48). Sasha Jensen experiences conflicts regarding her origins because, although she is formally English, she likes to maintain her nationality a mystery. Instead of fixating in one specific setting, she tries to connect with a few bars and hotels on the streets of Paris.

Their relationships with other people also make them displaced: because of their hybrid background, people have trouble connecting with them. Antoinette Cosway's relation with the community she was raised in is very problematic, since the community considers her and her family "white cockroaches". This is one of first moments in her life in which Antoinette is distanced from other people. When she grows older, Antoinette gets married to Rochester and faces a similar experience. He cannot understand her hybrid background, as mentioned previously in my analysis, and this is one the reasons why they are set apart.

Although both characters similarly have problems connecting with others, the reasons behind this reality differ. Sasha cannot connect to some people because there is an asymmetry in power, related to class and gender issues, and to others because they are wanderers like Sasha, looking for a place to call their own. Because other characters cannot understand Antoinette or Sasha's background, they tend to keep a distance from both women. In that sense, I see their displacements as acts of resistance to a society which wants to standardize, categorize and diminish them. Their hybrid experience is threatening to a world which is easily divided by dichotomies. Both Antoinette Cosway and Sasha Jensen are larger than these categorizations. The idea that their displacement and hybrid experience can be considered a place for resistance is the issue I shall present in the next part of my analysis.

CHAPTER II:
"WE LOST OUR WAY TO ENGLAND[11]":
Displacement and hybridity as a site of resistance

> *Whether I accept it or not, the natures of I, you, s/he, we, they, wo/man constantly overlap. They all display a necessary ambivalence… Despite our desperate eternal to contain and mend, categories always leak. (Min-Ha 1989)*

Literature is usually believed to describe the way society has established itself, but one of the most powerful aspects of literature is that it also presents the possibility of questioning some of the models that people live by. It has been the quest of many writers to offer a critique of the *status quo* through their texts, and many take this opportunity to raise an awareness of the injustices brought on by that very *status quo*. Through its characters and stories, literature can present alternative representations related to people's lives in several aspects, such as gender, sex(uality), race, nationality and the way social relations are lived. Concerning the impact that representation in fiction has on real life, Patricia Stubbs remarks in *Women and Fiction* (1979) that "our images create the world for us; they shape our consciousness" (4).

Thinking more specifically about women's lives in a male-dominated world, the way women were depicted in fiction became important for the very definition of womanhood. At first, there were few women writers and the representations of female characters were limited. As regards the stereotypical female representations in literature, Virginia Woolf (1989) questions "the peculiar nature of woman in fiction; the astonishing extremes of her beauty and horror; her alternations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity – for so a lover would see her as his love rose or sank, was prosperous or unhappy" (83). Not only were women reduced in terms of their personalities, but, as Susan Gorsky (1972) states, women did not have a wide variety of experiences they could live. Their function was "to look forward to marriage as their proper goal, and to expect in marriage to

[11] *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 162. Part Three of the novel. Antoinette is already in England but can't believe it. For her, England remains a dream.

see their parent's authority exchanged for that of their husbands". As a result of that, female characters were mostly restricted to the "inner world" of feelings and represented through their "domestic and sexual roles" (29). This recurrent portrayal not only projected women's reality, but also perpetuated the kind of role they should fulfill in society and what possibilities they had in the real world (31).

Nevertheless, there was a shift in women's lives, not only in literature, but in real life too. With the rise of feminism and all the social commotion it brought, women not only started to realize that they were under-represented in literature, but started questioning how they were portrayed: usually as wives, mothers, sisters, and, in most cases, related to the men around them. Their relations to other women were thus limited and reduced to their "rivalry" for men. According to Virginia Woolf (1989[1929]), for centuries, in fiction, women were "not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex" (82). Gradually, the critical awareness brought by the ideas of feminism led many women to express themselves through their writings. Women's portrayals attempted a different perspective on femininity: they no longer accepted the limited possibilities presented to them in fiction and in the real world. Such writings discussed the yearnings of women who could no longer take the patriarchal mode of life. More specifically, these writers wanted to adopt instances of resistance in their literary pieces by presenting new scripts and other possibilities for women in terms of lifestyles. In this sense, I believe that Jean Rhys is one of the female writers who attempt to portray women with a differentiated view – women who resist a world ruled by white men. Much of the research conducted on Jean Rhys' novels focuses on how the author brings into discussion the theme of oppression through her main characters.

When considering the novels Rhys published during the 30's -- *Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) – , the pattern amongst her characters is evident because all her women present conflicting notions in relation to their identity and place of belonging. Julia Martin (*Leaving Mr. Mackenzie)* is a woman in her thirties who has been dependent on men financially, another criticism presented in Rhys' fiction. Another similarity Julia shares with Sasha Jensen (*Good Morning, Midnight*) is the fact that both are torn between England and Paris. Anna Morgan (*Voyage in the Dark*) is taken away from her home in the Caribbean after the death of her father, sharing a similar experience with Antoinette. Rhys' last novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), does not differ from this debate, since it also deals with the theme of displacement. In

fact, it brings even more debatable themes, since it is a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë's eighteenth-century Bildungsroman, known worldwide as a masterpiece of English literature. When questioned about her idea to give life to the "madwoman in the attic" present as a minor though important character in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys is said to have replied:

> When I read *Jane Eyre* as a child, I thought, why should she think Creole women are lunatics and all that? What a shame to make Rochester's first wife, Bertha, the awful madwoman, and I immediately thought I'd write the story as it might really have been. She seemed such a poor ghost. I thought I'd try to write her a life. (qtd in Nancy Harrison 128)

Upon reading Rhys' comment about the creation of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, I understood that, although there is no doubt that her novels can be considered a critique to a society which constantly marginalizes its women, it is also possible to find room for resistance in her narratives. When writing about Antoinette, Rhys decided to tell us the "other" side of the story. By bringing Antoinette to life, Rhys created the opportunity to question reductionist and stereotyped views on the Caribbean as the exotic and undeveloped culture. According to Homi K. Bhabha (1994), stereotypes are "major discursive strategies" of the colonial discourse because they rely on the fixity of meanings (66). This same fixity of meaning is what allows the colonial discourse to fulfill its quest, which is to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (70). Another aspect that adds to this discussion is that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a prequel to a classic piece of literature. Rhys chose to develop a character that had already been created and read by many people, and this makes her narrative even more powerful as a revisionist piece. In that sense, Rhys' prequel can be regarded as a tool that the writer uses to empower the ones who are on the "Other" side of the oppressive binaries which constitute society.

This desire to challenge and innovate can also be seen in Rhys' writing style and choice of themes. She makes frequent use of stream of consciousness and nonlinear narrative. Her protagonists' fragmented

narratives are a reflection of their mental state in light of the struggles they face in a patriarchal society, not to mention that this fragmentation can be understood as a reference to their own identities, which are multiple and complex. As pointed out by Cristina-Georgiana Voicu (2014), when discussing Rhys' literary devices and characterization,

> [b]y depicting such characters, Rhys criticizes modernity's tendency to order reality by constructing binary oppositions, which reduce people to homogenous categories. She shows how this view is mistaken and destructive and highlights the heterogeneity of human existence and exposes the provisionality of truth and the instability of meaning. (86)

In a way, Rhys breaks a certain kind of literary pattern in order to reinforce the idea that Sasha Jensen and Antoinette Cosway escape the borders, inside and outside the text.

Considering the aforementioned aspects, I would like to propose another perspective for discussing Jean Rhys' characters. I believe that, although her characters have suffered from great oppression, they have also found in this oppression a certain kind of strength, or, at least, some way to fight and resist patriarchal values and categorization. When referring to categorization, I mean the limited view the environment and the social order imposes on Rhys' protagonists in terms of the multiple axis of their identity: their gender, their nationality and their social class. Specific examples will be provided later on in this chapter.

The objective of this chapter is, therefore, to identify the ways in which I believe that Sasha Jensen (GMM) and Antoinette Cosway (WSS) have found in their displacement and hybrid identity a place to call their own. It is my view that their displacement can be considered a site for resistance and creativity; their [dis]placement is the very place they perceive as an alternative version of a world which is constantly trying to tell them they are useless and powerless when it comes to making decisions about their own fate. In order to develop this analysis, I will present my views on both characters simultaneously, considering aspects such as their relation with other people, sexuality, how they deal with the roles more evidently delegated to women during their time – such as taking care of the house, the husband and the children – and finally, how they perceive identity and belonging.

SASHA JENSEN'S AND ANTOINETTE COSWAY'S RELATIONSHIPS

The way both protagonists deal with their families shares a similarity in the sense that both Sasha and Antoinette do not have a good relationship with their relatives. In GMM, the reader does not learn much about Sasha Jensen's family, except for a few moments in which she makes reference to them. One moment in the novel which makes obvious the broken relationship they have is when Sasha goes back to England to ask for help after trying her life in Paris. When she meets a male relative, he asks her "Why didn't you drown yourself in the Seine?" (42). What Sasha gets from this interaction is her inheritance, which was left by a female relative who also remains a mystery to the reader, as her name or relation to Sasha is never revealed. This trifling amount of money allows Sasha to buy basic things to fulfill her needs, and no names are mentioned as the reader does not know exactly how she was related to those two family members.

Much like Sasha, Antoinette does not have a good relationship with her family, more specifically her mother. In the first part of the novel she explains how much Annette, her mother, mistreated or simply ignored her existence: "She pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her" (18). Ever since she was a child, Antoinette had to take care of herself, since her mother devoted all her attention to Antoinette's younger and frail brother, Pierre, "who staggered when he walked and couldn't speak distinctly" (17).

Annette's uncaring demeanor toward her daughter may not be completely related to Pierre's condition only, but also to Antoinette's connection with the place they lived in and its people. As an outsider, from Martinique, Annette disliked the Jamaican community surrounding her house and felt ashamed that they considered her and her family "white cockroaches". As Antoinette remarks about her mother, "[t]hen there was the day when she saw I was growing up a white nigger and she was ashamed of me, it was after that day that everything changed" (120). It is possible to understand Annette's conflict because while Antoinette's father was alive and the Jamaican act had not passed, they had prestige as slave-owners. After this event, everything changed: Antoinette's father passed away, and all that was left to Annette and the children was the house and some of the staff who worked in it. However, they did not have a lot of money and, on top of that, had to

deal with the community's hatred toward them, since the family reminded the blacks of slavery times. When Annette realized that her daughter was mixing up with that culture, she felt embarrassed, and her conflict is evident because "[w]hile Annette is still tied to the generation of slavery, Antoinette must achieve a new identity for the white Creole, one that is harmonious with post emancipation Jamaica" (Melody Carrière 2007 89).

One important relationship developed by Antoinette, partially as a result of being displaced in her own family, is her bond with the house servant Christophine. She is the embodiment of the cultural in-betweeness present in the Caribbean, as becomes clear in Antoinette's account of her:

> She was much blacker – blue-black with a thin face and straight features. She wore a black dress, heavy gold earrings and a yellow handkerchief – carefully tied with the two high points in front. No other negro woman wore black, or tied her handkerchief Martinique fashion. (18-19)

Christophine brings into the narrative many aspects that are part of the diverse Caribbean formation due to her origins – Martinique –, her religious beliefs – connected to obeah –, and her songs in patois, which caught Antoinette's attention because she wanted to understand the meaning of the words. In my view, their connection brings about instances of in-betweeness as resistance in two different levels.

Firstly, Antoinette considers Christophine her closest friend, even if they come from different origins and social class. This also accentuates Antoinette's in-between position within her family, because she spends more time with Christophine than with her own mother: "I spent most of my time in the kitchen" (18). Besides that, having a close relationship with Christophine makes Antoinette have more contact with other cultural aspects, such as different languages, religious beliefs and dressing styles. Secondly, their bond is a resistance to patriarchy, which oftentimes has women competing with each other. Antoinette can count on Christophine from her childhood to her adulthood. It is Christophine who confronts Rochester when he makes Antoinette's life miserable, as will be later on developed in this discussion. Antoinette and Christophine's relationship defies the boundaries of social class, race, and can be regarded as a resistance to the conventions of a society that would consider their closeness inappropriate. Antoinette is explicitly

confronted by Rochester about this issue when she kisses and hugs Christophine, affirming that he wouldn't "hug and kiss *them*" (my emphasis 83). By referring to Christophine as "them", he is delineating the distance between himself and the servants, even denoting a certain tone of disdain towards them.

From this experience within their own families, the two protagonists have learned how to be independent and how to explore the world on their own. Their relationship with their families indicates that both have experienced displacement since early on in their lives, because they were not given specific roles to fulfill, especially as daughters. This literary representation of the characters as not devoted to their family breaks away from the recurrent social and literary patterns of the woman as family oriented, in which young women were expected to fulfill the roles of prodigious daughters who made their family proud. This was common in western literature until the beginning of the 20th century.

Aside from being displaced within their families, Sasha and Antoinette share another similarity as grown women: neither of them complies with the roles usually assigned to adult women during their time, which were those of being dutiful wives and devoted mothers. In relation to marriage, the two women marry for one reason: the financial and emotional support that supposedly only men could provide at that time (or so Sasha and Antoinette thought). Sasha needs the money because she has no studies or career to support herself, and Antoinette, because the only money she would ever have access to is her dowry.

Although both women lean on men to get financial support, in the end they are the ones who make or already have the money. In Sasha's case, she mentions that neither she nor Enno, her then husband, had any means to support themselves: "He seemed very prosperous when I met him in London, but now no money – nix. What happened? He doesn't tell me" (114). After living in poverty for a while, she is the one who gets out of the house and makes the money to support herself and Enno. At first, she works as a prostitute, as indicated in this passage. After her meeting with Mr. Lawson, Sasha comes home with a hundred francs and says: "'It's my dress. I feel so awful. I feel so dirty. I want to have a bath. I want another dress. I want clean under-clothes. I feel so awful. I feel so dirty'" (120). This statement suggests that she feels guilty about the situation, even though they were desperate and needed to earn some money. Later on, she starts giving private English lessons

in order to improve their financial situation: “I give English lessons. Ten francs an hour” (131).

Although this presents an apparent subversion of the roles usually associated with men and women, especially as they were back in the beginning of the 20th century, Enno is the one who controls the money. The narrative also indicates that this practice was common not only between them, since there is another couple who seems to present the same behavior. As Sasha and Enno watch the couple’s argument because the husband is irresponsibly spending the wife’s money, Enno gets worked up about the woman’s behavior and even says “’That to call itself a woman!’”. By referring to her as “that”, he is turning her into a “thing”, because her behavior is not that of a woman. According to him, women should not rebel or reveal themselves, much less question their husbands, even if the money is the wife’s. Sasha replies to his remark “’But it was her money’”, but he ends the dialogue by saying “’Oh well,’ ‘he makes very good use of it, doesn’t he? He makes much better use of it than she would’” (123). This is very emblematic of their relationship, as he is the one in charge for the money.

A little different is the case of Antoinette, because she already had the money inherited from her family, but all of it goes to Rochester once they marry. She is aware of this reality and mentions it to Christophine at one point: “I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him […] that is English law" (100). Her husband, Rochester, actually depended on her dowry to have something of his own and to look good in the eyes of his father. This becomes evident when Rochester thinks about his marriage to Antoinette:

> I have not bought her, she has bought me, or so she thinks. Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition [. . .] I have a modest competence now. I will never be a disgrace to you or to my dear brother, the son you love (63)

These two men’s dependence on the women becomes clear, because Enno needs Sasha to support him, and he clearly does not fulfill the role of the provider, usually expected of men. Edward shares a similar position to Enno’s, because in his own family he is the youngest son and therefore does not share the same prestige as his older brother. In the way that Edward addresses his father it is clear that he is victimizing himself when saying that he is never going to be his father’s

disgrace or when he refers to his brother as the loved one, not him. Rochester marries Antoinette purely because he needs her money. Deep down, he is just a social climber. This situation serves to highlight that his powerful position is actually somewhat questionable, which happens when Christophine tells Rochester that she knows him for what he is and what his true intentions with Antoinette are:

> She is Creole girl, and she have the sun in her. Tell the truth now. She don't come to your house in this place England they tell me about, she don't come to your beautiful house to beg you to marry with her. No, it's you come all the long way to her house-it's you beg her to marry. And she love you and she give you all she have. Now you say you don't love her and you break her up. What you do with her money, eh? (143)

As Christophine exposes that it was Rochester who ran after Antoinette, his position of power is questioned by his servant, a person considered inferior in terms of race and social class. Her statement exposes Rochester's vulnerability as the younger son who is easily ignored by his father and who must marry an heiress in order to have money of his own.

When it comes to fulfilling the roles of mothers, neither Sasha nor Antoinette has this experience. Although Sasha Jensen gets pregnant, she loses her baby when it is just a few days old. For Antoinette, being a mother is not mentioned in any moment of the novel. The fact that both women are not mothers may be considered a challenge to the social belief that women are not fully women unless they become mothers. None of them mentions the fact that not being a mother makes them unhappy or incomplete. By not presenting this conflict in the novel, Jean Rhys is opening new possibilities in the lives of women that, for centuries in literature, had been portrayed as "the angel in the house".

"The angel in the house" is a term referred to aspects usually assigned to women: they had to be pure, calm and sweet like angels. They had to obey, give their best advice to other people and be lovely. Women should also stay confined within the walls of a house and thus devote themselves to taking care of the house and those who live in it. I believe that, by [dis]placing both characters outside those walls, Rhys

has killed the “angel of the house”, something Virginia Woolf pointed out women authors should do in her speech entitled “Professions for Women”. As she put it, “[k]illing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer”, because only after killing this angel women could be free to try and do what they wanted. Not only that, but as Gilbert and Gubar (1979) pointed out, “women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been ‘killed’ into art” (60). By killing the angel of the house, Rhys is not merely killing those limited spaces which women could inhabit, but she is also questioning a literary aesthetics which had been established as high literature and that was oppressive towards women.

This leads to another aspect of their private lives: Sasha and Antoinette’s sexuality. In Sasha’s case, throughout the novel she has sexual encounters with many different partners, denoting liberty when it comes to choosing her sexual partners. This portrayal may be linked to the “New woman”, a feminist ideal that emerged in the late nineteenth century and represented many changes in the lives of women, including their sexual life. As stated by Andrzej Diniejko (2001), “The New Woman fiction emerged out of Victorian feminist rebellion and boosted debates on such issues as women’s education, women’s suffrage, sex and women’s autonomy”. So, according to the principles brought on by this critique, the new woman should not be an object, but take charge of her own sex life and desire. This concept implied women should have the liberty to choose their sexual partners as well.

In GMM, the last scene presents what could be interpreted as a different type of sexual interaction between Sasha and men. After refusing René’s advances, a man Sasha had been going out with, she decides to seek comfort in the arms of her next-door neighbor, whom she dislikes: “I don’t like this damned man…” (14). From Sasha’s description of the scene, although she does not have any feelings for him, she is making all the sexual moves, contrasting the situation she had experienced with René a moment before, where he was forcing himself on her. Most of the relationships presented in GMM privilege men over women, and Sasha is often entangled with oppressive or aggressive men. In this last scene, however, it seems that Sasha embraces this stranger and is in charge of her own body, as her last words are: “Then I put my arms around him and pull him down on to the bed, saying: ‘Yes – yes – yes . . .” (190). A more detailed account of this particular scene will be developed at the end of this analysis.

When it comes to Antoinette, there is explicit reference of her being sexually active with Daniel and later on with her husband,

Rochester. Moreover, sex seems to be the only moment they communicate well, as Rochester mentions how pleasurable sex feels for them: “Very soon she was as eager for what's called loving as I was – more lost and drowned afterwards" (84). Rochester also adds that he watched Antoinette “die” many times during sex, referring to her orgasms: “I watched her die many times. In my way, not in hers. In sunlight, in shadow, by moonlight, by candle-light. In the long afternoons when the house was empty. Only the sun was there to keep us company. We shut him out” (84).

Antoinette’s explicit sexual desire breaks another pattern in the literature of the time, which usually suppressed any interest women might have in sex. In Antoinette’s case, she really enjoys the experience of making love to her husband and she is not afraid of expressing it. However, the reference to Antoinette’s being sexually happy soon ceases to happen once Rochester loses interest in her, because their connection isn’t real – he can only see her as an object and as his property. As Rochester admits to himself “[a]s for the happiness I gave her, that was worse than nothing. I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did” (85). This might explain why Rochester easily gets rid of Antoinette later on, since he clearly can’t connect with her because she thinks and feels differently, and this demonstrates his closed mind to different points of view.

Furthermore, his distance from Antoinette is not only related to his powerful position towards his wife: it is also related to his fear of the wildness of the nature surrounding him – a wildness that he believes is part of Antoinette and her sexuality. According to Deanna Madden (1995), "Antoinette is so closely identified with her tropical islands that they seem to be extension of each other. The landscape becomes engendered through this close identification, and Antoinette becomes a manifestation of place" (166). Through Rochester’s reaction to the nature and landscape surrounding him, Rhys opposes nature/rationality, a dichotomy which asserts that rationality is positive whereas nature is uncontrollable. Rochester feels threatened by this landscape that overwhelms him, maybe because the unknown scares him: "It was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I’d find myself thinking, ‘What I see is nothing – I want what it *hides* – that is not nothing’" (79).

As opposed to British women of the time, who lived under the strict Victorian concepts of femininity, Antoinette escaped those delimitations when it came to expressing her sexuality. She enjoyed and sought for sex, something that played against her in the end, because Rochester associated her behavior with something negative. As Edna Aizenberg (1999) points out, "sexuality and miscegenation play an essential role in this incendiary mix, since Rochester comes to perceive Antoinette's honeymoon pleasure-in-sex as the crazy nymphomania of a 'dark alien'" (464). During the Victorian Age, women led restricted sex lives not only because they should have sex only if they were married, but also because they should not explicitly enjoy and seek for sex. Antoinette defies these ideas during a time when women's sexuality was related to their moral and civility. As pointed out by Robert Kendrick (1994),

> [b]y attempting to imagine Antoinette into the role of a proper English wife, he is forced to recognize her ultimate inability to conform to the discourses which constitute the normal within the frame of English upper class subjectively. (241)

Discussing both characters' portrayals as women, in relation to GMM, the fact that Sasha does not fulfill the roles of the perfect wife and a mother is what makes her free to experience what she wants. On the one hand, it is possible to understand Sasha's lack of a home as a longing to find one, but on the other, she is free to walk as she pleases, as she does not have the physical constraints of a house or family to hold her down. In Antoinette's case the situation is completely different, because the fact that she is married traps her in a situation she can't get out of, especially because of her financial dependency. In this case, Rhys is not exactly portraying Antoinette in an innovative or liberating situation, but rather denouncing how oppressive relationships were for women. Because of the social norms of late 19th century, Rochester had the power to rule his wife's life. However, what frustrates him is that he can't control the way she thinks or her behavior. He can't control her relationship with Christophine and her views on sexuality. Although he locks her up in the attic, still, she resists.

SASHA JENSEN'S AND ANTOINETTE COSWAY'S NATIONALITY

Another aspect both characters refuse categorization is in terms of their nationalities. In *Good Morning, Midnight,* Sasha refuses having her identity pinned down in terms of one place. She refuses to settle because her nationality is not connected to where she comes from, but to many of the places she has been to. She clearly refuses being identified as English and she has a connection to the innumerous hotel rooms she has stayed in. Although Sasha's relationships to England and France remain complex, Rhys does not seem to offer a kind of alternative place where Sasha would feel at home (Erica Johnson 39). Rather, Sasha's attempt to connect is related to many different places within the cities and streets she aimlessly wanders in:

> My life, which seems so simple and monotonous, is really a complicated affair of cafés where they like me and cafés where they don't, streets that are friendly, streets that aren't, rooms where I might be happy, rooms where I shall never be [. . .] (Rhys 46).

Sasha's decision to go back to France, where she had lived for many years in the past, may be related to the fact that Paris is the only place she ever felt closer to "home". As a young woman, Sasha idolized Paris in the sense that it provided hope for a new and better life: "We shall be quite alright as soon as we get to Paris" (119). However, when she gets back to Paris, Sasha realizes her lack of purpose and feels detached from everything and everyone. It is clear, then, that she experiences a profound sense of dislocation in relation to Paris as well, because her views towards it are also ambivalent: "Paris is looking very nice tonight… You are looking very nice tonight, my beautiful, my darling, and oh what a bitch you can be! But you didn't kill me after all, did you? And they couldn't kill me either" (16). In this part of the novel, Sasha is referring to her attempt at suicide, by drowning in the Seine:

> Saved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I had ever been in it. Except, of course, that there always remains something…Never mind, here I am, sane and dry, with my place to hide in. What more do I want? I'm a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely – dry, cold and sane. Now I have forgotten about dark

> streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning. (45)

Even though there seems to be a constant pressure from society and from herself to define who Sasha is in terms of nationality and social class, she resists that social pressure. In the following statement, Sasha presents an insightful comment on society's demands:

> That's what they look like when they are saying: [. . .] Who are you, anyway? Who's your father and have you got any money, and if not, why not? Are you one of us? Will you think what you're told to think and say what you ought to say? Are you red, white or blue – jelly, suet pudding or ersatz caviare. (92)

By questioning her English background, trying to connect herself with French culture but acknowledging she is not French either, and by expressing herself through different languages, Sasha refuses to limit herself to a single way of communicating and to one specific way to settle. Sasha's refusal for everything and everyone to be classified as either this or that highlights her struggle in relation to categorization: "Back to the hotel without a name in the street without a name. You press the button and a door opens. This is the Hotel Without-a-Name in the Street Without-a-Name, and the clients have no names, no faces" (145). From the many evidences in the text, it is possible to state that Sasha acknowledges her complexity in terms of identity and in-betweenness. As Salmon Rusdhie (1991) points out,

> [t]he effect of mass migrations has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves--because they are so defined by others—by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To

> see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. (124)[12]

Having herself lived in different countries and experienced varied cultures, Sasha goes against this society who is all the time asking her to define herself as one single and reductionist story. On the one hand, sometimes it seems that she wants this identification and definition to occur – when trying to blend in or looking least English possible. On the other hand, she does not limit herself to just one aspect of her complex background – she refuses to limit herself to one single category in terms of nationality. In the end, the refusal to give any resolution to the character's place of belonging and way of expressing herself seems to present the idea that living in-between is a possibility for Sasha. Having experienced "fusions" and "several ways of being", Sasha understands how problematic or even limiting it can be to classify herself as either *this* or *that*.

Antoinette Cosway relates differently to her Caribbean English background. Since the beginning of her life, her hybrid background affects the way the community treats her and her family. By her community, she and her family are treated as white cockroaches, white people who do not have money. Because of this fact, people from the community mistreat and consider them inferior. When talking about the way the community sees Antoinette's mother, Deanna Madden (1995) points out that

> [t]hey despise the poverty she has fallen into; they resent her attractiveness and think her vain ("The Jamaican ladies never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self' Christophine said" [465]); they disapprove of her sexuality ("She was my father's second wife, far too young for him, they thought" [465]); and they consider her an outsider because of her French heritage (as Daniel says, "French and English like cat and dog

[12] This excerpt was extracted from Salmon Rushdie's essay "The Location of Brazil" (1985; 1991), in which he comments about the movie *Brazil* (1985), by Terry Gilliam. Although he is referring to a filmic production, Rushdie is discussing issues related to migration, contributing to my reading of Rhys' portrayal of migration through the character of Sasha Jensen.

> in these islands since long time" [515]). (Madden 162 qtd in Bales)

The community's views towards Antoinette's mother certainly affected her as well, because she grew up isolated, having no friends to play with. Another fact that emphasizes Antoinette's belonging nowhere is that she and her family were disregarded by both black and white people in the community where they lived. Because of the changes in many social and economic aspects during the colonial period, her family, once renowned and rich, was now poor and living under difficult conditions. Her father and ancestors had once been slave owners, and this factor influenced the Caribbean people to hold her and her family in contempt: "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches" (13). According to the rich white people, Antoinette and her family were "white niggers" because of their economic conditions: "Real white people, they got gold money. [. . .] Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger" (14). From this perspective, Antoinette and her family are considered "nobodies", because they are neither black nor white, and it is this very lack of definition that influences other people to keep a distance from them. Very early on in the novel there is already an indication of how isolated they are: "When I asked [mother] 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" (9).

One of the moments in the novel in which the community's disregard of Antoinette and her family becomes evident is when she befriends a black girl named Tia. When they first meet, they start playing and, as Antoinette states later on, both "had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river" (27). But although Antoinette felt close to the girl, the girl did not feel the same way about her. In fact, Tia mimics the community's anger towards Antoinette and her mother when she throws a rock at Antoinette's face, causing her to bleed. Antoinette and her family are truly outsiders, because even the people they consider their friends "betray" them in a sense. Although they share the same geography as the other people, that place is not theirs. In the case of the two young girls, the fact that they had share the same food, bed and river doesn't make them bond, and this is a consequence of Antoinette's status as the daughter of a former slave owner.

This episode happens moments after the community had set Antoinette's house on fire, and it is when the community's need to

destroy Antoinette and her family becomes clear. Maybe because of their decadent status and maybe because Annette thinks Antoinette is becoming what the community referred to as a "white nigger", Antoinette's mother finds motivation to get married again, this time to Mr. Mason. After one year of marriage, she insists on moving from Coulibri State, because she fears the community's contempt for her will lead to tragedy. But Mr. Mason's reaction is always one of mockery, because he does not believe the blacks will do anything against his family, relying on the stereotype that blacks were too passive or lazy to take action. As Mason points out: "'They're too damn lazy to be dangerous'" (19).

His decision to stay changes the course of their lives forever, because when the community sets the house on fire, Antoinette's brother, Pierre, dies. And his death leads her mother, Annette, to mental illness. These factors make Antoinette more displaced, because although she's lived in a remote place, Coulibri State is all she had ever known. After her brother's death she also becomes even more physically distanced from her mother, since Annette disconnects with reality for good.

In her marriage, Antoinette's hybrid experience clearly scares Rochester, as he has a monolithic version when it comes to nationality: he is English and period. He can't accept the fact that Antoinette is both English and Caribbean, and their argument about England makes his position towards this issue very clear:

> 'Is it true', she said, 'that England is like a dream? Because one my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up.'
> 'Well', I answered annoyed, 'that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.'
> 'But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?'
> 'And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?'
> 'More easily', she said, 'much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.'
> 'No, this is unreal and like a dream', I thought. (73)

For Rochester, only facts and concrete can account for reality, whereas nature is more like a dream. For Antoinette, the opposite is true, for nature is the only truth she has ever known during her life on the islands. And even when she is taken away to England, she still can't believe England is real:

> [t]hen I open the door and walk into their world. It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard. I have seen it somewhere before, this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it. [. . .] They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. (162)

Through this argument between Antoinette and Edward, it seems that Rhys is problematizing the binary nature/civilization, where the former is considered uncivilized and dangerous, and the latter developed and realistic. This is when Rochester can't accept Antoinette's views about England. He feels threatened and questioned by her opinion, later on by affirming that she doesn't understand about the world. As Kristyn Bales (2003) points out, "[o]nce Rochester recognizes that Antoinette has substantial imperfections that threaten the English ideological empire, he attempts to deconstruct her into his imagined normal" (3).

In relation to nationality, thus, it seems that both characters remain in-between spaces, in a space which can account for their complex origins. Sasha escapes categorizations and Antoinette puts those categorizations at stake. She shows how fragile they can be. In the *borderlands* where both live, Sasha and Antoinette find the source of creativity and power that hooks (2004) makes reference to when talking about the margins as a place of resistance. Furthermore, their position within their families, communities and marriages enable "the reconceptualization of the very concept of identity" (Emery 17).

SASHA JENSEN'S AND ANTOINETTE COSWAY'S FINAL ACTS OF RESISTANCE

One interesting fact about both novels is that they have ambivalent endings, which I consider the protagonists' ultimate acts of resistance, really demonstrating their refusal to fit in. In the last scene of *Good Morning Midnight*, Sasha gets sexually involved with a man she

despises. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette sets Thornfield Hall (her English home) on fire.

In *Good Morning, Midnight*, after refusing René's advances, Sasha decides to seek comfort in the arms of the next door neighbor, whom she dislikes: "I don't like this damned man…" (14). Her decision to be with him can be seen as one of empowerment, because to be with him is entirely her choice: "I look straight into his eyes and despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time… Then I put my arms round him and pull him down on to the bed, saying: 'Yes – yes – yes…'" (190). From Sasha's description, it is noticeable that she is making all the moves, contrasting the situation she experienced with René, where he was forcing himself on her. It seems that Sasha has internalized the ways in which she has been objectified many times in her life and decides to treat men the same way. Most of the relationships presented in the novel privilege men over women, and she is often entangled with oppressive or aggressive men. Differently from that, in this particular situation Sasha is the subject instead of a sexual object.

However, although this encounter may present some sort of female empowerment, the way out that Rhys' offers to her protagonist should be problematized. Some will argue that Sasha's decision to be with someone she despises is her ultimate act of self-destruction. The fact that it takes place after her problematic encounter with René may suggest something. After almost being raped, Sasha is confused and seems to think that he is returning to her room. However painful and traumatic, René's advances seem to have awakened a part of her: "My mouth hurts, my breast hurts, because it hurts, when you have been dead, to come alive (182)". This suffering may have brought Sasha to life, maybe because she was used with indifference or maybe because she was too numb and too drunk to tell. Whatever the reasons, pain seems to remind her that she is still alive, that she still can *feel* something. A part of Sasha wishes René would come back, so much so that she undresses herself thinking he is coming back. However, when she opens the door to let him in, she recognizes it is her next door neighbor instead.

Some of Rhys' critics suggest that many of her writings reveal a certain "agency of negation". As developed in the research of Molly Hite (1989), this agency of negation can be understood as "when one has no other choice, when self-destruction is the only possible form of agency offered, the act of re-claiming oneself through self-destruction

characterizes the agency of negation" (27). What this ending may suggest is conflicting, as it seems to say that the only way out for women them is through self-destruction. In my view, the ending suits the character's construction well in the sense that Sasha does not offer any kind of concrete answer towards her position and views about the world or society, and her involvement with the next-door neighbor is also ambivalent in that sense. The controversial interaction goes well with the character's in-betweenness in terms of acknowledging how society's mechanisms and structures marginalize women.

Antoinette's refusal to being assimilated manifests itself in a different way. Unfortunately, she finds herself physically trapped inside a marriage, a house and a life that she does not wish to lead. At some point, Edward takes Antoinette to England and locks her away in the attic, refusing to deal with or relate to her: "I too can wait – for the day when she is only a memory to be avoided, locked away, and like all memories a legend. Or a lie…" (156). Undeniably, when Rochester takes Antoinette to England, he tries to erase her Caribbean identity by changing her name to Bertha and locking her up, and Antoinette perceives his strategy and starts buying into it: "Names matter, like 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" (page). Since he cannot understand her or Caribbean culture, he ends up hating both: "You hate me and I hate you. We'll see who hates best. But first, first I will destroy your hatred. Now. My hate is *colder, stronger*, and you'll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing" (154 my emphasis). In this passage, Rochester is asserting himself by stating that his hatred is more powerful than hers, maybe because he is the man. He also states that his hate is colder, suggesting that he is indifferent towards Antoinette's situation. When people feel hatred, they are showing their weakness, but when they feel indifferent, they are showing their supremacy.

Indeed, he tries to leave her with nothing when he makes her leave the Caribbean. He takes away what is most valuable to her because she destabilizes his world of universal truths and certainties. More importantly, he feels the need to destroy her because he realizes her power. As a way of protesting, Antoinette decides to write her stepbrother a letter in order to ask for help: "Dear Richard please take me away from this place where I am dying because it so cold and dark" (164). Although Richard goes to visit and barely recognizes her – because she looks miserable - he doesn't do anything to help, affirming he "cannot interfere legally between [Antoinette] and [her] husband"

(165). Her stepbrother's attitude makes him another oppressive male figure in the narrative, and in a desperate response, Antoinette tries to attack him with a knife. It is clear that she no longer wants male figures to rule her life. It is also clear that, although she is locked away from the world, Antoinette finds in her suffering a source of strength to attempt a change in her situation.

As a result of Rochester's aggressive attempts to impose his own truth by marginalizing Antoinette, she feels the need to express this injustice in some way. Her first attitude is to write the letter, but unfortunately it does not change her situation. Finally, as she sees no other way out, Antoinette sets the master's house on fire. It becomes evident that Antoinette and Rochester's relationship represents the mechanisms which structure the system of colonialism, because even though he subjugates her, she does not give up easily. Her decision shows exactly where the process of marginalization brought on by colonialism turns on the colonizer. The colonies find in their oppression a need to escape and a need to protest, so they try as hard as they can to destroy the empire.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that Antoinette decides to end her suffering through fire – which can be related to the sun, a reference to the Caribbean tropical weather. As a recurrent symbol in literature, fire can represent anger, passion and impulse. In addition, fire can stand for a sort of rebirth as well, and it is related to the myth of the phoenix, which needs to die by fire in order to start anew. The anger in Antoinette's action may be related to her desire to destroy the English mansion and everything it represented for her – oppression and the erasure of her Caribbean identity. As signaled by M. Adams (2013), through the burning of the master's house, "Rhys gives Antoinette the opportunity to rid herself of her mental torment and helplessness and obtain release from her physical and psychological prison" (9). When she jumps off of the roof towards the flames, it seems that Antoinette is reconnecting herself with her home, as she thinks about Coulibri State: "when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri" (Rhys 179). As Paula Anderson (1982) adds, Antoinette's "is no act of despair – but a final aggressive act of assertion, reaffirmation, and self-liberation" (60).

After bringing instances of the novels that present the characters' experience of displacement as a site of resistance, I shall now move to the final remarks of this research. The ending of my analysis will is entangled with the ending of the novels because I believe

they are crucial for discerning Rhys' irresolute portrayals of Sasha Jensen and Antoinette Cosway.

FINAL REMARKS: "WRITING BEYOND THE ENDING[13]"

"For those […] who inhabit the space of in-between, no closure, such as that provided by definitions and conclusive endings, can exist"
(Adjarian M.M.)

As previously discussed in Chapter II of analysis, both *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* have ambivalent endings as Jean Rhys does not offer an easy way out for her protagonists. In the former novel, Sasha ends up having sex with a man she despises, which leads to diverse interpretations. On the one hand, her decision to "welcome" her next-door neighbour may be related to her desire to embrace "death". According to Mary Lou Emery (1990), some critics regard the last scene of the novel "as a death of self-respect or of the possibility for any unified self at all". On the other hand, there is room to view this decision as some kind of rebirth. Still according to Emery, other critics see in the ending "suggestions of rebirth through transcendence of the self in union with another human being" (145). In my view, the ending of the novel does not fall in the trap of being one or the other; it remains open to two possible readings: a sort of death and/or a way to rebirth. Yes, Sasha is getting involved with a man she doesn't have feelings for, but in a way, there is agency in her decision. She is in control of the actions, as she puts her arms around him and then leads him to bed. Here, Sasha is the subject of the situation. She is not suffering the actions, but rather, taking action.

The same can be said about *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s ending, in which Antoinette Cosway decides to end her suffering by setting the master's house on fire. Superficially, the ending of the novel can be read as the ending of Antoinette Cosway's life. But there is more to it than that – especially because of the way she decides to end her life. As Grace Poole (her caretaker) adds in the ending of the novel, Antoinette "hasn't lost her spirit" (160). Although Rochester has locked her up in darkness, "[s]he's still fierce". This ambiguity goes along with Rhys'

[13] Title making reference to the book *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* by Rachel DuPlessis (1985).

portrayal of an in-betweener in terms of ethnicity and gender. Moreover, Antoinette's choice to bring down Thornfield Hall must not be overlooked, because it expresses her desire to destroy her prison. Through fire, an element that makes allusion to the heat of the Caribbean tropical weather, Antoinette leaves "her master" a clear message: that she is no longer going to accept the way of life he has subjected her to.

But before Sasha's and Antoinette's "final acts" of resistance, there were several moments in the novel indicating their resistance to oppressive ideals regarding gender roles and national identities. Sasha and Antoinette's displacement, in the sense that they do not fit the roles cut out for them, can be seen as resistance because they would rather be part of the margins than being assimilated by totalizing discourses. Their lives are bigger than binary oppositions that tend to reduce the complexity of one's experience and identity.

Neither Antoinette nor Sasha conforms to standards when it comes to gender aspects: they support their husbands financially and they break the pattern of the "angel in the house". After breaking up with her first husband, Sasha does not remarry, although she has casual relationships. She does not consider any of the men good enough to keep a relationship with. Instead of getting attached to someone just because it is socially expected of her, Sasha refuses relationships that do not make her happy. This *flaneuse*[14] position might render her a displaced woman, since she does not fix her "roots" anywhere specific. I consider this as her statement that it is possible to live in the margins. Living as an "outsider" doesn't have to be something negative.

As for Antoinette, she does not fit the mold of the perfect wife either, mainly because Rochester doesn't accept her hybrid background and she refuses to keep it hidden just to please him. Rochester has a condescending attitude towards his wife because he distrusts her knowledge – "she was undecided, uncertain about facts" (80) – and the manner through which she expresses her sexuality. As pointed out by Sherry Lewkowicz (2004), "Rochester is disturbed and intimidated by the sexuality of Dominica's landscape, it seems too free, too lush", and Rochester feels the need to tame Antoinette's wildness, for he relates the

[14] Emily Duffy (2015) has drawn the connection between Sasha Jensen and the term "flâneuse", which was inspired by Walter Benjamin's concept of flanêur: "a flâneur is an urban spectator, someone who experiences a city through leisurely strolling" (6). In the case of Sasha, she is a spectator of the life in Paris.

Caribbean landscape surrounding him to Antoinette's sexuality. When he decides he can change her name to Bertha, it becomes evident that Rochester considers his wife an "object" under his possession.

In terms of nationality, they refuse being associated with one single culture. Sasha, in her own way, demonstrates discomfort towards this reality that is constantly asking her to define herself. On the one hand, it looks like she wants this identification to happen (when wearing make-up or when she tries to look more French than English). On the other hand, she does not limit herself to just one aspect of her complex background (she speaks a mixture of languages and avoids defining her place of origin). In the end, the refusal to give any resolution to the character's place of belonging and way of expressing herself seems to present again the idea that living in-between is a possibility. Having experienced "fusions" and "several ways of being", Sasha understands how problematic or even limiting it can be to classify herself.

As for Antoinette, her complex Caribbean background for itself demonstrates that one's identity is not reductive or simple as others might suggest. As early as her childhood and Antoinette already understands that she is an outsider, for by the community of blacks she is seen as a "white cockroach" (white person with no money), and by the English community living in the Caribbean she is not considered as equal. The view that Antoinette and her mother have about the Caribbean is also different from the one of Mr. Mason, for instance, which could represent how English people regard the community living in the colony. This is clear when Antoinette's mother tries to warn Mr. Mason that they should move from Coulibri because the natives were threatening their lives. Mr. Mason laughed at her comment and went on to say that the blacks were too lazy to be dangerous (29). As discussed by Melody Carrière (2007), "Mr. Mason's tone is paternalistic and is representative of England as the imperialistic authority that views other islands, races, and peoples as insignificant" (35). However, Antoinette and Annette know what it's like to live surrounded by a community which despises their existence, so "their viewpoint demonstrates that they do not fully connect to England", embodied through Mr. Mason.

Antoinette's hybridity also influences her view towards England, which, according to Carrière (36), is evident when Antoinette visualizes in England:

> [c]ool green leaves in the short cool summer. Summer. There are fields of corn like sugar-cane

> fields, but gold colour and not so tall. After summer the trees are bare, then winter and snow. White feathers falling? Torn pieces of paper falling? They say frost makes flower patterns on the window panes. (Rhys 101)

Her depiction is completely entangled with her own reality in the Caribbean, as she relates the English corn fields to the sugar-cane fields, typical of the Caribbean region (36). Another important mention is the summer, a season for which the Caribbean region is known. Antoinette also makes reference to flowers, possibly relating to the rich nature that she grew up around. It is clear that Antoinette cannot disconnect herself from her background, even more so when she arrives in England and thinks it couldn't possibly be England, as she says "[t]his cardboard house where I walk at night is not England" (163).

Making reference to the endings of the novel and the title of this chapter, I shall move to my final comments on the novels. In a way, Rhys writes beyond the ending in both novels – by offering her characters other possibilities than the constant portrayal of women as wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. Maybe even more outside the text than inside, Rhys seems to state that displacement is a place of resistance. Inside the text, the protagonists have conflicts regarding their situation, although they refuse passiveness and easy solutions. Outside the text, however, Rhys places her women in varied situations and her protagonists are not necessarily living through others, because they are moved by other interests far more personal than taking care of the house and the family.

Although Rhys' characters should not be read without ambivalence, both Sasha and Antoinette can be regarded as a break in the pattern of "feminine" archetypes recurrent in literature. For centuries in fiction, the place outside the home was not appropriate for respected ladies, but Rhys displaces her characters by creating women who could not care less about being ladies, especially because being a lady meant they would have to accept things as they were. Sasha and Antoinette go against the grain: they drink, they openly enjoy sex, and they are not willing to settle just because society expects them to. These are women who are concerned about who they are and who "dare" ask where they come from and what their function in the world is. It is possible to affirm that they face what can be referred to as an identity crisis. As stated by Stuart Hall (1992), this crisis may be explained by

> This so-called 'crisis of identity' is seen as part of a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world. (274)

Through Sasha's and Antoinette's questionings, Rhys raises a lot of awareness about the ways society marginalizes women who are "different". Women who realize social injustice and voice against it – Sasha when thinking about how diminished she is by her boss merely because she is a poor woman and Antoinette when being critical of the empire's superiority. Women who recognize they worry too much about their looks and know this is a suffocating reality – Sasha when concerned about being old and ugly and Antoinette when thinking how much her mother was judged because she was considered vain "The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self" (15). Even though the protagonists experience these conflicts, they are not willing to surrender.

No wonder both Sasha and Antoinette are portrayed as "displaced": they live in the margins because they do not want to fit in molds that are entrapping or oppressive. On the contrary, they defy these molds and they show that "[m]arginality is the space [site] of resistance" (152) by embracing their in-betweeness. Furthermore, they seem to be inviting people to broaden their binary views on the place of women in society and inviting them to "enter that space" of resistance: "Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators" (hooks 152). Rhys' novels go further than the ending because they are writing new possible trajectories for women's lives and inviting others to "enter that space" of liberation, power and creativity and however powerful that oppressive force might be, equally or even more powerful will be the resistance to change that reality.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The scope of this research could be broadened in the sense that it focuses on the protagonists only and a study of the other characters would enrich the understanding of *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Furthermore, the novels are substantial enough to provide material for discussion from different theoretical perspectives. Finally, most of Rhys' novels are pervaded with themes such as fragmented

identity, cultural in-betweenness and displacement, so taking a deeper look into the stories of her other protagonists would contribute to the discussion of Jean Rhys' body of fictional works. Hopefully the present study has contributed to the analysis of literary works from feminist perspectives and more specifically to the works of Jean Rhys.

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