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Forging the Self through Otherness: the Double Motif in
Wide Sargasso Sea and *Jane Eyre*

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ABSTRACT

The concept of identity has represented the cornerstone of both psychoanalytic and literary studies in the last few centuries. Individuality, thus, seems to be forged by the encounter and the relationship with the Other, which embodies both an internal and external counterpart. This dissertation aims to analyse the character of Bertha Mason in two literary masterpieces, namely Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). By focusing on Bertha Mason as the embodiment of the so-called Other, the dissertation will analyse her crucial function in the shaping of Jane's identity. It will firstly investigate the structuralist and poststructuralist theories which attempt to define the notion of the Self based on the bond between two opposites, namely the I and the non-I or Other, and it will move on to the psychoanalytic domain by considering the Freudian and Lacanian conceptualisations of the identity of the subject. By exploring the motif of the double as the darkest and innermost Other in Gothic literature, the dissertation will then analyse the notion of Other in racial terms, examining the role of Antoinette as Jane's colonial double as well as the idea of enslavement and confinement. The focus will finally shift to the role of women in Victorian society and, in particular, to the confrontation between the figure of the angel in the house, the embodiment of patriarchal Victorian principles, and the madwoman as the feminine dangerous and aggressive female counterpart threatening the patriarchal structure, yet still necessary in forging the true self.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the last few centuries, investigations dealing with the meaning of identity have deeply concerned scholars across a wide spectrum of research fields, thus enlivening socio-political, psychoanalytical and even literary debates. The many definitions of identity have contributed to a further exemplification of such a concept which advocates the importance of recognition in order to assert self-individuality. Therefore, the role of the Other acquires profound significance to the process of shaping the self since it leads the subject to confront it, thus becoming self-aware of its own unexplored facets. Accordingly, in his *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre observes that:

> The Other has not only revealed to me what I was; he has established me in a new type of being which can support new qualifications. This being was not in me potentially before the appearance of the Other, for it could not have found any place in the For-itself.[1]

The principal aim of this dissertation is to investigate the concept of Otherness as a necessary means to forge identity by focusing on the character of Bertha/Antoinette Mason in two literary masterpieces, namely Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Therefore, interpreted as the archetype of the alleged Other, the analysis of Bertha will prove her to be fundamental in the development of Jane Eyre's self.

The first chapter will outline the idea of Otherness in structuralist terms, by examining the notion of structure implemented by Claude Lévi-Strauss based on the equilibrium between binary pairs: such couples, composed of opposing units,

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[1] J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), translated by Barnes, Hazel E., p. 222 Washington Square Press, 1993, http://www.ahandfulofleaves.org/documents/BeingAndNothingness_Sartre.pdf. [Last accessed: 12.04.21]

are balanced by a centre which is tasked with the fundamental function of stabilizing the whole structure. However, Derrida's poststructuralist theories subverted the structuralist stance by questioning the equality between the elements of the binary pairs, claiming the possibility for the equilibrium of the structure to be unsettled and for its elements to be set in motion. The chapter will therefore explore the concept of identity as a whole system composed of two main units, namely the Self and the Other, which unquestionably rely upon one another for their own existence, but whose symmetry and stability might fail to be guaranteed. Such a relationship between the I and the non-I counterpart was further investigated by Sigmund Freud who, in his psychoanalytic approach to the study of the human psyche, whose main components are the Id, the Ego and the Super Ego, strongly emphasises the role of the Id as the unconscious part of the human subject encompassing repressed desires and impulses. Accordingly, such subjugated drives, stored in the unexplored depths of the human psyche, might unpredictably come to the surface and, despite belonging to the subject, be perceived as unfamiliar feelings, thereby producing what Freud defines as *unheimlich.* Such a confrontation between the homely and the unhomely urges the subject to encounter and acknowledge an inner part of its self which has long been unknown, thus challenging the idea of its own individuality. Moreover, by introducing the concept of the "mirror stage", Jacques Lacan attempted to explain the process through which the individual is able to achieve a comprehensive idea of its own identity as a subject in the earliest stages of its life, by relying upon the image and perception of the Other. Hence, Identity, both from an anthropological and psychoanalytic stance, might be conceived as a system composed of two contrasting elements, namely the Self and the Other, which, despite being often perceived in terms of inequality, are reciprocally fundamental in their function of characterising the subject.

The chapter will then consider how such anthropological and psychoanalytic theories have influenced the literary field, especially when concerning Gothic literature. By briefly introducing the historical background which fostered the development of such a genre, the focus will move onto the origin of the motif of the *doppelgänger* which, conceived as a persecutor embodying the subject's innermost fears and impulses, challenges the individual self-awareness to subsequently lead it to further expansion and development. Therefore, such a disturbing and alien element, the non-I intimidating the mere realization of the I, proves to be crucial for the creation of one's individuality.

The second chapter discusses the character of Antoinette Mason interpreted in terms of racial Other. By introducing the historical background which led Jean Rhys to create her masterpiece *Wide Sargasso Sea* and which shaped her female protagonist, the chapter offers a depiction of Antoinette as an in-between figure, struggling to feel part of two contrasting and opposing worlds which constantly exclude her due to her Creole origins and, therefore, what she represents. Such an alienation, experienced on both a social and personal level, progressively disempowers her and leads her to lose her subjectivity. Most importantly, her British husband transforms her into an object by depriving her of those elements upon which her identity is based, namely her community, her voice and even her name. Such a disqualified character will be later compared with Jane Eyre and analysed as her own double portrayed in racial terms, paralleling their personal experiences and backgrounds in an enslaving environment which deeply hindered the position of women in Victorian society.

The last chapter will examine the concept of Otherness in gender terms, particularly exploring the notion of female hereditary madness in Victorian society. It will firstly explore the historical and social background wherein the idea of female insanity was fostered, in order to further analyse the social and

family circumstances which might have led Antoinette to madness. Significantly, the character of Antoinette/Bertha will be compared to Jane in terms of passion and self-restraint: indeed, despite a first possible parallelism between the two female characters, they both develop contrasting strategies to deal with their irrepressible impulses and passions which lead Jane to learn self-discipline and compliance, while leaving Bertha prey to her intense emotions. Therefore, such a divergent attitude might cause Antoinette/Bertha to be seen as Jane's double in that she becomes the expression of her darkest and innermost fears and impulses, thus allowing Jane to enlarge her self and be more self-aware.

My conclusion will draw on the observations analyzed in the foregoing chapters, in order to evaluate Bertha's role in Jane's evolution and the shaping of her own identity. Therefore, both characters proved to share an intermingled fate and might be conceived as two opposing units of the same whole which, despite being so different, are necessary to each other.

My research has mainly been based on the study of the two novels analyzed to complete this dissertation, namely *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I have also consulted several scientific articles available on the Internet as well as newspaper articles and governmental documents such as the Slavery Abolition Act.

1. The Concept of *Otherness*: a Tentative Definition

> The self which willed to serve was identical with the self which was unwilling. […] So I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself [2].
>
> Saint Augustine - *Confessions*

1.1 A Deconstructive Theory on Otherness and Identity

It was in October 1966, in his talk at John Hopkins University, that Jacques Derrida provided a thorough critique of the assumptions lying at the basis of the structuralist way of thinking[3]. By delivering a formal speech on his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", he vigorously deflated some of the notions which had been representing the foundations of the structuralist approach and marked the outset of the formulation of Poststructuralism[4]. Such American neologism was subsequently employed to refer to those French intellectuals exerting some influence in the 1960s and 1970s whose works and writings aimed at superseding some structuralist notions[5]. In *Literary Theory. A Guide for the Perplexed*, Mary Klages identifies the fundamental aim of the structuralist doctrine, namely the search for the basic units which make

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[2] Augustine, of Hippo, Saint (354-430), *Confessions*, translated by Chadwick Henry, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 153.

[3] B. McCabe, "Structuralism's Samson" *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, Fall 2012, https://hub.jhu.edu/magazine/2012/fall/structuralisms-samson/ [last accessed: 12.04.21]

[4] M. A. Peters, "DERRIDA, NIETZSCHE, AND THE RETURN TO THE SUBJECT." *Counterpoints*, vol. 323, 2009, p 60. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42980423 [last accessed: 10.04.2021]

[5] H. Rapaport, *The Literary Theory Toolkit. A Compendium of Concepts and Methods*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, p. 45.

up every existing matter[6]. Taking inspiration from the Aristotelian teachings and from the nineteenth-century chemistry and physics studies, structuralism accordingly bases its quest on the existing relations among the parts which compose a whole system: therefore, this approach endeavours to reduce complex structures to their basic components in order to investigate how human systems work on a broader level[7]. Despite focusing their analysis on the different components, universality is accordingly their fundamental claim, in the attempt to demonstrate that it is the whole which comes before each single part.

The aforementioned structuralist method would thereafter be employed by Claude Levi-Strauss, one of the most influential anthropologists of the nineteenth century, in order to explore the basic structure that all human beings share by the simple virtue of being humans[8]. He theorises how human thinking works in terms of binary pairs, which constitute the foundation of all human mental structures and represent the only way in which relations between basic units and the whole can be performed. Therefore, the process through which human beings conceive the world cannot be structured but in terms of these opposing pairs: "Even more importantly, in each binary pair one term is favored over the other: cooked is better than raw, good is better than evil, light is better than dark, etc"[9]. Hence, humans interpret the world through oppositions and define themselves in terms of their opposites and counterparts. Furthermore, as Mary Klages specifies, these binary opposites form patterns of both identity and difference and ultimately reveal how a term is consistently valued over the other. As a consequence, according to structuralist thinkers, every system is characterised by

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[6] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, London, Continuum, 2007, p. 32.
[7] H. Rapaport, *The Literary Theory Toolkit. A compendium of concepts and Methods,* pp. 38-39.
[8] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 42.
[9] *Ibid*, p. 43.

the relations among their single parts, which are combined in more complex structures following established and precise rules of aggregation.

In his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"[10], Derrida applies these ideas on binary pairs to Western philosophy and culture by pointing out how the world is mostly conceived in terms of inseparable opposites such as true/false, day/night, original/derivative[11]. He further argues that the term which is positively valued is normally placed on the left side. While the positive element might be easily identified in some pair opposites, other oppositions which have been spreading throughout the last decades are reasonably arduous to scrutinize. For instance, pairs such as male/female, west/ east, white/ black have been progressively shaping cultural backgrounds, leading to an overvaluation and consequent positive connotation of the left elements over the right ones[12].

In his theory of Deconstruction, Derrida tries to discover what exactly happens when the two units composing binary pairs are separated. Moreover, by examining the structuralist theories, Derrida also focuses on the notion of the "centre", a fixed origin upon which each structure should rely in order to balance and organise itself[13]. However, he made a further point by claiming that the foremost function of the abovementioned centre is to prevent the structure from moving freely, thus avoiding what he called "free play", in order to keep it rigid and stable:

> "Nevertheless, the center also closes off the freeplay it opens up and makes possible. *Qua* center, it is the point at which the substitution

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[10] J. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", http://www2.csudh.edu/ccauthen/576f13/DrrdaSSP.pdf [last accessed: 12.04.21]

[11] R. Selden, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 8: From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 169.

[12] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 54.

[13] J. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p.1.

of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible. At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements (which may of course be structures enclosed within a structure) is forbidden. […]. Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality. […] The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center"[14].

Therefore, the centre represents the ultimate cause of the whole structure: it operates both within and outside the system without being part of the whole. What Derrida and the deconstructive approach aim at, thus, is the witnessing of the consequence of removing such a centre from the whole system, which should be consequently highly destabilised by such alteration. As a result, all the elements will be set in motions, thereby threatening the stability and integrity of the structure itself[15]. As a consequence, it might be unavoidable to consider the fundamental implications arising when binary opposites such as white/black are deprived of their own centre, that is the element which is able to guarantee their stability in the whole system. Hence, deconstructive theories demonstrate that black and white do not have a stable meaning, but rather that their meaning is constantly evolving and transforming over time.

Accordingly, deconstruction can be defined as a set of strategies which offer a different reading of the functioning of the world from a non-dominant and decentralised perspective, claiming the impossibility of fixed and stabilised meanings. This conclusion results in the assumption that nothing is truly permanent and durable, including the very notion of identity, which appears to be constantly changing. Both poststructuralism and deconstruction consequently

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[14] J. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p.1.
[15] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 56.

maintain that identity cannot be innate nor natural, since it proves to be a social construction which is based on a stable structure. However, even the most stable structure might be put in motion by substituting or removing its own centre. Identity, thus, becomes the product of a system which can be destabilised and whose established framework and limits can be blurred[16]. Accordingly, the notion of the "self" appears to be unquestionably related to its own opposite, namely its "other" side: individuals build their own identity by relying upon the necessary presence of their other self, which creates and legitimizes their own identity: without alterity, identity cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, according to the theory of deconstruction, questions on the real meaning of individual identity and the self are raised when the centre of such structure is removed, threatening the equilibrium of the entire system and the set of the established meanings associated with each element of the pair.

The Jewish thinker and Derrida's mentor Emmanuel Levinas underlines the deep connection existing between the self and the Other:

> For Levinas, the effect of the Other upon me is not just abstract or conceptual, but visceral. I feel the Other's presence, predicament, trauma, joy and so on, which unsettles my existence, because it requires me to open up to an alterity: a difference or otherness that isn't symmetrical and therefore not knowable [17].

This opposition self-Other demonstrates that the identity of the subject unavoidably depends on the relationship with its opposite: it is the I bent on a non-I which defines the self, thus. As Sartre points out in his *Being and Nothingness*:

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[16] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 56.

[17] H. Rapaport, *The Literary Theory Toolkit. A compendium of concepts and Methods*, p. 279.

"I can never meet with anything but the consciousness which is mine. But the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other. By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other"[18].

Therefore, the self and the Other turn out to be the poles of the same structure which cannot be thought separately, since their own existence is defined in terms of their opposite: the self is intertwined with the Other, the Other cannot be conceived without its correlative part, namely the self. As Levinas specifies: "The Other is not merely different from me in being this or that person but who is quite different from the I that I am for myself"[19].

Despite being essential for the definition of the self, the Other should be distinguished from it. Their relationship is to be based on a balanced equality between the two poles, two different counterbalanced elements which are defined by a mutual interaction and which are not mere opposing forces but also reciprocal cornerstones of their own existence[20]. The self, thus, is capable of conceiving and understanding itself only when confronted with its own Other, since the latter becomes a measure to accept the essence without negating it.

However, this relationship of the self with its Other counterpart, appears to be the product of a discourse which inevitably leads one pole to dominate upon the other: accordingly, the creation of identity itself is determined by a hierarchical structure existing between self and Other[21]. The Other is consequently moulded

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[18] J. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 222.

[19] T. Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 15.

[20] *Ibid*, p. 16.

[21] J. F. Staszak, "Other/Otherness", in R. Kitchin and N. Thrift (eds), *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*, Oxford, Elsevier, 2008, Vol. 8, pp. 43-45 https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/geo/files/3214/4464/7634/OtherOtherness.pdf [last accessed: 12.04.21]

by a relationship based on a condition of asymmetry, which imposes discriminatory values by devaluating everything which is different from the self. Derrida uses the term *differance* in order to refer to what can be simultaneously identical and different[22]: opposing elements, thus, shouldn't be thought just as different, but rather as contrasting forces proceeding from a presupposed whole[23].

To conclude, it can be assumed that the notion of identity is inseparably based on the idea of alterity. Most poststructuralist thinkers such as Derrida and Levinas maintained that Western culture has been imposing a dominant paradigm of the idea of the self, identified as *Logos, Reason* or *Ego* over the Other, which is in turn depicted as a persecutor, a dark force against which the self should defend itself[24].

1.2 The *Uncanny*: a Psychoanalytic Interpretation of the Other

Psychoanalysis has been deeply concerned with the necessity of understanding the innermost impulses and desires responsible for altering and influencing the self. The most committed scholar to the exploration of such primitive instincts was the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud, praised as the founding father of psychoanalysis since he was bestowed the creation of a new approach in order to investigate the human personality.

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[22] H. Rapaport, *The Literary Theory Toolkit. A compendium of concepts and Methods*, p. 211.
[23] A. T. Nuyen, "Derrida's Deconstruction: Wholeness and Différance." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (1989): 26-38, p. 35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25669901 [last accessed: 12.04.21]
[24] T. Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*, pp. 10-13.

In his inquiries, Freud identified in the so-called "sublimation" the process through which every civilised human being acts on its own impulses. He points out two principles which govern the individual, namely the "pleasure principle" and the "reality principle". The former urges the individuals to fulfil their innermost pleasures; the latter, instead, instructs on how to subordinate pleasures to duty[25]. Nevertheless, as a member of a civilised society, the individual is not allowed to satisfy all its appetites, which are to be necessarily curbed and readdressed in order to be socially acceptable and useful; such an act of renouncing all the unaccomplished desires entails, thus, the psychological process known as sublimation, which helps the individual turning the energy springing from pleasure and desire into something more productive for the whole society: according to Freud, this process consequently lies at the basis of civilisation itself[26].

However, this positively invested energy is not the sole product of sublimation, since all those unfulfilled desires and passions risk remaining latent in the individual and need to be stored into what Freud calls the "unconscious". Representing a sort of profusion of sexual drives and prohibited needs, the unconscious is not directly accessible to the conscious mind, since it might be only attainable through dreams, parapraxes or slips of tongue and even jokes, all elements that disclose the existence of a hidden part of the self[27].

This idea of repression is central to Freud's revolutionary definition of the human psyche. Firstly, Freud makes a distinction between what he calls the Id, the Ego and the Super Ego. The Id is defined as the most primitive part of our mind: it contains sexual and aggressive drives and, thus, it is the source of our psychic energy. The personality of the child, which is not immediately affected

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[25] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 63.
[26] *Ibid*, p. 64.
[27] *Ibid*, p. 65.

by reality, is all Id, being this part the only one present from birth and being entirely subconscious. The Ego develops from the Id and it ensures that the impulses of the Id can be expressed in a manner acceptable in the real world. It is the component of our personality that is responsible for dealing with reality. The ultimate development of these three agencies is the Super Ego, which embodies the ethical component of personality. It provides the moral conscience, the prohibitions, the restrictions and the ideals of a person, and represents one's idealized self-image. The Ego is a mediator and tries to negotiate between the unconscious primitive demands of the Id and the ethical constraints represented by the Super Ego[28]. The tension between conscious and unconscious, sane and traumatic experiences and between what is acknowledged and repressed lies at the heart of several works by Freud, and it particularly concerns his essay *Das Unheimliche.*

It is the unconscious, thus, which moulds the self with its innermost desires and passions. Such explanation leads to doubt and question the idea of a conscious and intact self, which seems to be threatened by some concealed and occult forces. However, by analysing the unconscious, Freud aims at strengthening the conscious part of the human psyche, namely the Ego over the Id. The Ego represents the rational part of the human personality which strives to achieve a total control over the most hidden and unconscious part[29]. Freud, indeed, had a humanist goal in mind, since he wanted to rekindle the light of reason over darkness.

Despite being conceived as a branch of philosophy centred on the human being, psychoanalysis was interpreted in poststructuralist terms by Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist[30]. The main difference between

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[28] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed,* p. 73.
[29] *Ibid*, p. 66.
[30] *Ibid*, p. 73.

Freud and Lacan is that the latter believes the Ego to be just an illusion, and that it cannot therefore govern the non-conscious part of the self. Hence, in order to clarify how the real self is created, he attempts to analyse the evolution of the child towards adulthood. First and foremost, he identifies three different concepts which mark the development of the child, namely the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, the last one being the equivalent to the achievement of adulthood.

In the first stages of its live, the baby is merely driven by needs and finds itself in a state of nature not yet characterised by the use of language: therefore, the baby seeks to satisfy his needs without being able to express it linguistically. Moreover, it is not able to form an idea of itself: it perceives itself as being inseparable from its mother, and it is not able to distinguish its own identity from the one of anything or anyone else surrounding it. In this stage, which corresponds to the Real, the I of the baby is understood as a primordial entity, which has not been engaged in the relationship with the so called Other and, consequently, which has not been objectified yet by the implications of such a relationship[31]. Selfhood and Otherness, thus, are concepts which develop as the baby grows up, by experiencing the world around it. At this point, the baby is entirely motivated by its needs. However, this first stage of the Real is defined by Lacan as impossible to preserve, since it is destined to cease exactly once language enters the domain of the child[32]. Moreover, as Freud maintained, needs and desires alone cannot produce civilisation. For this reason, the baby has to be elevated onto the cultural domain by separating itself from its creator, its own mother. Despite being subsequently perceived by the infant as a loss producing an antecedent anxiety, this separation marks the beginning of the formation of its

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[31] J. Lacan, *Écrits* (1966), ed. Fink, Bruce in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.
[32] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 77.

own individuality[33]. The lack of this sense of unity, which simultaneously entails safety, is paramount for the child to forge its own self. The passage from the order of the Real, in which the baby is not yet able to achieve an idea of the self, to the order of the Imaginary leads the baby to transform its needs into demands, which are different from the former since they are marked by a recognition of the concept of language and of an existing society regulated by laws. In this phase, the baby only issues one unsatiable demand: he urges to be reunited to his mother, searching for completeness[34]. As he realises that its own body is parted from its mother's, he starts to understand that it is separated from everything surrounding it. According to Lacan, thus, this is how the baby starts creating the idea of an existing Other, without having shaped an idea of the self yet. It is aware of other people around it; it perceives them as complete subjects which are different from itself, but it still cannot produce an idea of itself as a whole. In order to gain experience of its own completeness, the baby needs to look at itself in a mirror, a moment which corresponds to what Lacan defined the "mirror stage"[35]. In this phase, the baby proceeds from the idea of fragmentation to totality, through the reflection it sees in the mirror. By taking the reflected image as a summation of its entire being, the child starts creating its own Ego. Through its own mirrored image, the baby is therefore able to undergo a transformation which leads him to identify itself as a subject rather than an object[36]. It is in this stage of the Imaginary that the relation self-image is created, but this happens merely by looking at a reflection which does not correspond to our real self:

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[33] J. Gallop,"Lacan's '"Mirror Stage': Where to Begin." *SubStance* 11/12 (1982): 118-28, p. 123, www.jstor.org/stable/3684185 [last accessed: 12.04.21]

[34] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 80.

[35] J. Lacan, *Écrits,* ed. Fink, Bruce in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, p. 76.

[36] *Ibid*, p. 78.

"For Lacan, the identification of 'self' is always in terms of 'other.' This is not the same as the binary opposition where 'self' is defined as 'what is not other' and 'other' is defined as 'what is not self.' Rather, 'self' is 'other,' in Lacan's view; the idea of the self, that inner being we designate by 'I,' is based on an image, an other. The concept of self relies on one's misidentification with the image of an other"[37].

By seeing its own image in the mirror, the baby encounters its own double[38] and is able to create an idea of the Other, which becomes a structural possibility through which the infant forms the idea of the self. Hence, this idea of Otherness is fundamental in order to form the I and to enter the Symbolic order, which represents the structure of language itself. In this final stage, the infant can finally become an adult by accepting the regulations imposed by society in reference to both language and the restraints of its own desires: the Symbolic order, thus, denotes the possible acknowledgment and consequent acceptance of the Other on the part of the subject. Therefore, basing our analysis of Lacan on Derrida's findings, it would be possible to assume that the Other represents the centre of the structure, which is able to bring balance and organisation to the whole system. However, by fulfilling the role of the centre, this Other cannot be part of the structure itself, consequently creating a situation of lack which Lacan defines as desire, a desire which aims at being Other than the self, an Other which is simultaneously different and indispensable for the self.

The mirror stage represents a pivotal moment in the creation of identity, since its own formation is based on the image cast on the glass, which appears to be a totalizing one and which opposes the fragmented perception the baby has had

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[37] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 81.
[38] M. Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny." *October*, vol. 58, 1991, pp. 5–23. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/778795 [last accessed: 12.04.21]

theretofore[39]. The baby confronts itself with its own reflection, which creates the Ego-identity: the other part, the double of the baby, is necessary for the creation of the I. Nonetheless, what the baby sees is just a projection: it provokes both anticipation of the totality of the self and self-delusion, since it is merely an illusionary image which produces what Lacan labelled *méconnaissance*, namely misrecognition[40]. Despite appearing as a moment of glory, since it entails the recognition of a totalizing self, the mirror stage also represents the opportunity for the baby to govern its own self without having indeed the possibility of doing it: it is merely an anticipation of its power as an individual subject, and such anticipation is based on a development from a perception of fragmentation to totality, thus rendering the I apt to join the world of social relationships which imply a connection with others[41]. According to Lacan, this recognition of the unattainable totality symbolises a drama for the baby: the mirror stage undoubtedly represents an immense loss, namely the loss of a sense of being unique in its image and essence, and it is only this loss which eventually leads the baby to become a real subject in the transition from the order of the Imaginary to the order of the Real[42].

The dialectic conscious-unconscious had been formerly investigated and developed by Freud, who argued that the drives and inner desires repressed in the subconscious are eventually disclosed and start haunting the subject in the form of ghostly figures. However, such phantoms are mere products of the self[43]. As Julia Kristeva maintains, the individual expels what it perceives as unfamiliar in itself in order to project its inner and hidden anxieties onto an "external" stranger, which inevitably leads to a negation of the acknowledgment of being

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[39] J. Gallop,"Lacan's "Mirror Stage": Where to Begin", p. 120.

[40] *Ibid*, p. 121.

[41] J. Lacan, *Écrits*, ed. Fink, Bruce in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, p. 79.

[42] M. Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny", p. 13.

[43] K. Richard, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, p. 71.

strangers to ourselves[44]. This relationship of coexistence between the subject and its own internal and external enemies was better exemplified by Freud in the idea of the Uncanny, (*das Unheimliche*), which is largely discussed in his essay *The Uncanny*. According to him, this term is employed to refer to what was initially kept secret and hidden, and which has eventually come to the surface and become visible, conveying the meaning of what is perceived as both familiar and unknown[45]. Moreover, since it is related to something which is hidden from the conscious mind, the uncanny originates fear and frightening feelings, as it is based on the need to deal with what is repressed, and consequently unresolved[46]: "The uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long be familiar"[47].

Freud's analysis stems from the German word *Unheimlich*, which, from a semantic perspective, corresponds to the English words "uncanny" and "eerie". If analysed from an etymological viewpoint, instead, it might refer to something which is the negation of the world *heimlich,* which represents what is homely, cosy and familiar[48]. *Unheimlich*, thus, corresponds to what is neither homely nor familiar, and which is consequently generating fear and uneasiness[49]. This concept encloses the chore of psychanalysis itself[50].

Therefore, the uncanny embodies this opposition *Heimlich-Unheimlich*, which leads to the point in which these two terms are almost impossible to separate[51]. They refer to those hidden, dangerous and repressed matters which belong to the self and, consequently, despite being perceived as untrustworthy and secret, are

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[44] K. Richard, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, p. 73.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 73.
[46] F. Botting, *Gothic (The New Critical Idiom)* (1996), London, Routledge, 2013, p. 14.
[47] S. Freud, *The Uncanny* (1919), ed. D. McLintock, and H. Haughton, London, Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 124.
[48] M. Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny", p. 5.
[49] S. Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 125.
[50] M. Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny", p. 6.
[51] *Ibid*, p. 6.

also dealt with a sense of familiarity since they have always belonged to the individual[52]. In spite of referring to two opposing concepts, these terms cannot be disentangled for reason of representing the ambivalent link which characterises two self- reliant opposites[53]. It is a phenomenon of strangeness, a clinging between what is known and what is unknown, homely and unhomely. Moreover, Andrew Smith observed that Freud further explained this controversial relationship by claiming that the home is characterised by tensions and anxieties aroused by the alleged Oedipus Complex: consequently, what is supposed to be perceived as intimate and secure turns out to be a source of anxiety and uneasiness[54]. The idea of strangeness, thus, might be associated to what has been long repressed and which might unexpectedly come to the surface: this might prove that what is perceived as completely different and strange from ourself can actually be more similar than it is expected[55]. Consequently, a stranger would differ from something other than ourselves in terms of nations, race, gender…, but it would inevitably be identified as an inhabitant of our divided conscience[56]. Analysing the issue from a Lacanian viewpoint, it would be therefore possible to operate a distinction between the real and the psychic domains[57].

In order to go beyond the fright generated by the encounter with the uncanny, a decentring of the structure in Derridean terms should be achieved, which would imply a decentring of the Ego, welcoming the other part of the individual and accepting it as something alter than the subject, but still belonging and necessary to it. The prefix "un", thus, refers to strangeness resulting from

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[52] S. Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 134.

[53] F. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 13.

[54] A. Smith, *Gothic Literature*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 13.

[55] K. Richard, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, p. 47.

[56] *Ibid*, p. 46.

[57] M. Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny, p. 8.

repression, and not to something which does not partake the formation of the self[58].

1.3 Otherness and Gothic Literature: the Motif of the *Doppelgänger*

On 24th December 1764 the publishing of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole laid the basis for an eighteenth-century excursus and discussion on the meaning of the term "Gothic" both as a literary and historical phenomenon[59]. Indeed, not only is such a romance considered the progenitor of Gothic fiction, but it also represents a landmark in the discussion on the link between the Middle Ages and modernity[60].

In order to better understand the appearance of this new cultural phenomenon, an analysis of the word "Gothic" has to be carried out. Such a term, indeed, has undergone great changes over the centuries, having been employed in both literary and cultural-historical backgrounds. The original idea behind its usage in the eighteenth century was referred to the barbarian tribe known as the Goths, who inhabited Northern Europe, more specifically Germany and even England, and who took a crucial role in the decline of the Roman Empire[61]. However, as David Punter remarks, those who used the word Gothic in the seventeenth as well as in the eighteenth century were quite unlikely to possess a thorough knowledge of the roots of such a word and, as a consequence, its meaning was

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[58] S. Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 151.

[59] H. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 2014, Introduction, p. ix.

[60] A.J. Downie, *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 472.

[61] D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day, Vol. 1: The Gothic Tradition* (1980), London and New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 4.

subsequently broaden out so as to connote what was barbaric and uncivilised[62]. Therefore, in the eighteenth century, the employment of the word Gothic had a derogative meaning, the Goths being equated to the Middle Ages and to their dark and barbarous history and environment.

Therefore, the Gothic firstly started to be compared to and used in opposition to Classicism, the former being identified with a disapproving meaning which influenced the architectural and literary field as well as the political and historical spheres: order gave way to chaos, logic was superseded by irrationality, civilisation was opposed to wildness and barbarity. Fred Botting maintained that the superiority of classical architecture couldn't be compared with the Medieval one. Indeed, the disturbing ugliness of Gothic style and constructions was tantamount to the demolition of the Roman Empire. However, the primary negative aspects which characterised the Gothic in its initial phase progressively yielded to a more positive stance associated with this new concept and, by the 1780s, the wildness and passion associated to the Gothic conflated into more positive and romantic ideals, which proved the cultural importance gained by the phenomenon itself, and led it to be one of the most dominating literary genres by the end of the century[63]: architecture, customs and values belonging to a distant medieval past started to hold great fascination on those who aspired to revive an epoch of romance and adventures, an era of barbarism which entailed strong emotions at the same time[64], a change in perspective which marked a shift from a more geographical and historical attitude towards a more cultural and literary one.

Horace Walpole was a great admirer of Gothic architecture, which was a cause of wonder and was linked to an arousal of passions. Such a taste was exemplified

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[62] D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 5.
[63] *Ibid*, p. 7.
[64] F. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 7.

in his building project, namely Strawberry Hill: with its jumbled styles, Gothic elements, medieval towers and lack of harmonious proportions, this architectural pastiche represented a new cultural climate embodied by a greater taste for Gothic elements[65]. Strawberry Hill represented the perfect setting for his Gothic work *The Castel of Otranto*, which marked the beginning of the Gothic novel with its medieval settings and landscapes[66]. This romance, set in the Italian principality of Otranto at the time of the Crusades, paved the way for the development of the Gothic genre in terms of conventions, characters and settings[67]. It was published in two editions, both preceded by a Preface. In the first one, there was no mention of the name of the author, since it pretended to be an Italian original piece of writing written by a monk of the church of Saint Nicholas in Otranto, Onuphrio Muralto, printed in 1529 and translated into English by William Marshall. On the other hand, the preface to the second edition, published in 1764, differs from the first one as it does not feign the story to be written by a medieval man[68]. Moreover, while the first preface suggests reading the novel as a medieval romance, the second one presents the story as an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern one[69]. Accordingly, in the eighteenth century, stories started to be written in realist ways, conforming to what Ian Watt called "Formal Realism", referring to real life events easily comprehensible for the majority of people. This modern way of writing was opposed to the romance, a more fancible kind of story deriving from less realistic experiences which, on the other hand, express fascination and wonder for passions and more sensationalistic events or ordeals. The novel, thus,

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[65] A.J. Downie, *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 472.
[66] *Ibid*, p. 474.
[67] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2017, p. 11.
[68] H. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, Introduction, p. xxxi.
[69] A. Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 19.

can be read as a conflation of medieval and modern and led the reader to question the interpretation of medievalism and its relationship with the modern world[70]. Hence, *The Castle of Otranto* marked the beginning of two important genres such as the historical romance and the Gothic tale, whose features were introduced by Walpole's novel itself[71] since its themes and setting were to become representative of the Gothic genres such as: the presence of a tyrannical villain persecuting a young lady, dark and gloomy settings, events which cannot be given logical explanations and passions overpowering reason.

Therefore, *The Castle of Otranto* laid the basis for the spreading of Gothic fiction which progressively became characterised by castles, ancient and medieval settings including dark dungeons and hidden panels, the haunting presence of mysterious elements, suspense and terror conveyed by the presence of ghosts and supernatural creatures, a taste for haunted ruins and disturbing atmosphere symbolising a return to the past[72]. Nevertheless, this primordial usage of the term Gothic associated to terror and dark settings and characters would gradually shift into a more modern type of this genre which appeared to be more interested and focused on the labyrinth of the mind, obsessed and afflicted by psychological traumas. This new evolution of the genre was defined as "Neo-Gothic", which showed a more psychological insight reflecting the psychological disorders stemming from a progressively decaying social and cultural background[73].

Fred Botting describes Gothic fiction as a writing of excess, by embodying many threats and oppositions to those humanist values of rationality and realism which had marked the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries[74]. It is a writing concerned with disintegration and corruption, imagination and transgressive

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[70] A. Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 19.
[71] A.J. Downie, *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 474.
[72] D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 7.
[73] *Ibid*, p. 2.
[74] F. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 1.

behaviour which is reflected in a style characterised by violent exclamations, hyperboles and disturbing contrasts, in creating desolate and dark settings and striving to avoid what refers to common language[75]. These dramatic and violent features offered the reader the possibility to free their own anxieties and innermost desires, which gave immense popularity to the genre[76].

The Gothic, thus, was related to the idea of what is wild and consequently difficult to be taken under control resulting in a spread of emotions which aroused terror and awe but also uneasiness, and which were constantly challenging the power of reason, order, equilibrium and integrity. Progressively, during the second half of the eighteenth century, and especially after the French Revolution, the ideas of excess and transgression started to mould some of the themes related to Gothic fiction such as feminisation, gender roles and plays of oppositions and antithesis which were prevailing in a dilapidated society: Gothic fiction, indeed, relied upon instable boundaries between opposing poles, such as light and dark, good and evil, reason and imagination, civilisation and barbarity[77]. In this world of constant ambiguity, the human subject faced a disintegration of its own identity, lacking those supporting and fixed values which had always sustained its own individuality and personality. However, the encounter with terror and fright allowed the individual to go beyond itself and to elevate over the limits of its own self in order to redefine it against and in terms of Otherness[78].

Everything was dominated by ambivalence: equivocation inevitably aroused a sense of uncertainty and terror which ceased being linked to the notion of sublime and yielded to the anguish and anxiety provoked by the uncanny[79], by

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[75] D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 9.

[76] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds*, p. 13.

[77] F. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 6.

[78] *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

[79] *Ibid*, p. 7.

portraying a world defied by otherness and estrangement caused by extreme pains and suffering[80]. The uncanny, thus, turned out to be the dominant figure in a culture which was progressively influenced by horror, death, excessive imagination, evil, perilous events, fragmentation, mental disintegration, which all represented threats to both cultural values and the wholeness of the self. The integrity of the individual was at stake in this new era of transgression and fractures, resulting in the emergence of one of the chief motifs in Gothic fiction: the double. Being considered as one of the main sources of uncanny feelings, the double symbolised the alienation of the human subject[81]. Moreover, this figure also emerged from a progressive incorporation of pain, suffering and debauchery characterising the century, and such internalisation could be explained both in psychological and social terms. As previously illustrated, Freud laid the basis for a psychological interpretation of the appearance of the double as a literary motif, representing the frailty of human beings. The psychoanalyst, in fact, ascribed the emergence of uncanny feelings to those infantile impulses which need to be controlled and repressed: when entering adulthood, the human subject forms a conscience whose primary role is to regulate those drives and desires which are freely expressed in childhood. However, such censorship operation of the primary impulses results in the emerging of a psychological double whose role eventually becomes that of destroying the morally integral self. Therefore, this other part appears to be unquestionably linked to the image of death[82]. As Andrew Smith points out, this Freudian double is perceived as "[…] a harbinger of death, as a liberator from censorship, and as a mode of repression […]"[83].

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[80] A.J. Downie, *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, p. 476.
[81] K. Richard, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, p. 76.
[82] A. Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 94.
[83] *Ibid*, p. 95.

Conceived in these terms, the double intensifies the estrangement and the agony of the self[84]: human subjects were unsure of both their own identity and unable to distinguish the blurred boundaries between reality and imagination. They were constantly torn between their impulses and their reasonable conduct, producing divided and alienated selves[85]. When analysed on a broader level than the individual one, this double presence is also represented as a threat to society and civilisation: indeed, the double epitomizes repressed urges and desires, embodying degeneration, debauchery, transgressive sexual drives and the darkest and most frightening sides of the inner conscience which could cause society to crumble down[86].

Duality, thus, was at the basis of society at the end of the eighteenth century, and the double was a tool to express the discomfort existing between wholeness and disintegration. From an individual viewpoint, it better exemplified the tension between the I and the non-I. As Freud had already observed, from childhood the subject creates its own personality comparing itself with the other existing beyond and around itself, placing the non-I on an internal and personal level. However, not only can the double identity exist within the self, but also outside its physical and mental limits and boundaries, representing a culture which was deeply concerned about contradictions and ambiguities opposing a preceding era dominated by reason. The double, thus, gives voice to both internal and external tensions and divisions and, as a literary device, can be portrayed as having both similar and opposing features to the self.

Jean-Paul Richter conceived a new term to be used in the literary field to refer to the motif of the double, namely *doppelgänger*: by the use of this new-coined German word, Richter literally intended to refer to the "double of a living

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[84] F. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 8.
[85] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[86] A. Smith, *Gothic Literature*, p. 94.

person" and, in his many works, he offers alternative forms of this motif, ranging from the representation of the double as a real person to a psychological fragmentation of the main character[87]. This double is symbolically set in opposition to one of the characters of the story and it illustrates the co-existence of separate parts in one whole which oppose each other but are unquestionably dependent on one another. According to Kristeva, the *doppelgänger* derives from our most hidden fears, the utmost being the fear of death, and it is eventually perceived as a haunting persecutor, questioning the existence of the self as a whole: in fact, by relying upon fright, it shows the weakness and fallibility of the human subject[88]. Through the experience of disturbing events and ordeals, the self subsequently undergoes fragmentation and disruptions, leading to the spread of dualities. This is what Kristeva calls "abjection"[89]. Moreover, as John Herdman maintains, the *doppelgänger* obliges the subject to confront the projection of its own fears and repressed desires which are transferred onto an alterity which is perceived as being both linked and alienated from the self:

> "The Doppelganger is a second self, or alter ego, which appears as a distinct and separate being apprehensible by the physical senses (or at least, by some of them), but exists in a dependent relation to the original. By 'dependent' we do not mean 'subordinate', for often the double comes to dominate, control, and usurp the functions of the subject; but rather that, qua double, it has its raison d'etre in its relation to the original"[90].

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[87] O. Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1925), translated and ed. Tucker, Harry Jr., Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2012, pp. 14-15.

[88] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), New York, Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 35.

[89] N. A. Diederich, "Telling Differences: Complicating, Challenging, and Expanding Amit Marcus's Discussion of Clones and Doubles". *Connotations* Vol. 23.1 (2013/2014), p. 98, https://www.connotations.de/article/amit-marcus-telling-the-difference-clones-doubles-and-whats-in-between/. [Last accessed: 12.04.21]

[90] J. Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (Edinburgh Studies in Culture and Society)* (1990), London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990, p. 14.

Thus, in Gothic literature, the subject ends up being confronted with its own double which is capable of influencing the main character's destiny by hampering the course of the events and, by embodying its most hidden drives, it can also doom its counterpart to failure[91].

According to Otto Rank, the origins of the double can be traced back to ancient history and primitive communities, especially referring to the folkloric motif of the shadow, which represents a separate entity of the human soul. In literature, the double has been represented as an immaterial subject embodied by the image cast in a mirror, a shadow or a spirit, therefore revealing the double in terms of likeness and as an admonition of death, or as a living rival in love and life[92]. Amitav Marcus identifies seven aspects which characterise the relationship between the double and its own original in Gothic literature, and analyses two pivotal narratives in the genre, namely *Jane Eyre* and *Frankenstein*. The first feature he notices is the ongoing rivalry between the double and its own original, the former being conceived as opposed to the latter and chasing it in a continuous competition which might lead to inevitably disastrous outcomes for one of the pair. This rivalry might be embroiled on both practical and ideal levels: Marcus's second observation, indeed, claims that the double is often fascinated by and tries to retain possession of those objects which are valuable to the original since, as Marcus highlights in his third assumption, the original arises both awe and hostility in its counterpart. This is due to the result of sharing similar experiences which both make them close and set them in opposition, as also Romana Rutelli observes[93]. Moreover, in aiming at possessing its original's life and at replacing it, the double is often able to invert and alter the relationship which relegates it

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[91] M. Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny", p. 11.

[92] O. Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, p. 13-15.

[93] R. Rutelli, *Il Desiderio del Diverso: Saggio sul Doppio*, Napoli, Liquori, 1984, pp. 62-63.

to a subaltern creature and tries to gain the upper hand on its opposite: this persecution embodies a vindictive desire towards the original and justifies the terrible actions undertaken by the double itself[94]. This fourth point illustrates how the double creates considerable ambiguity when compared and analysed in relation to its original. As a consequence, this attitude is deeply related to the fifth and sixth features identified by Marcus, respectively the fact that the double is not a creation of its own original and that, coming from the same source, they are therefore inseparable halves of the same whole and can thereupon be considered in terms of parity and equality[95]. However, this growing rivalry and hostility is inevitably doomed to end with an atrocious death or suicide, usually the double's[96]. It can therefore be assumed that the double embodies at first the guilt for the transgressive drives and fears of the original and it has to be consequently hidden, opposed and destroyed. However, the final resolution of this double-original clash can be solved in the final recognition of a situation of balance and equality between these two opposing poles[97].

The motif of the double, thus, which has been thoroughly depicted through Marcus's observations, is a literary theme whose major aim not only is that of arising terror and uneasiness in the reader, but also of uncovering and denouncing problems afflicting the society of that time: a sense of fragmentation, loss of identity, changes in cultural values which all represent a threat to the stability of social structures.

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[94] R. Rutelli, *Il Desiderio del Diverso,* pp. 62-63.

[95] *Ibid,* p. 84.

[96] N. A. Diederich, "Telling Differences: Complicating, Challenging, and Expanding Amit Marcus's Discussion of Clones and Doubles", p. 105.

[97] R. Rutelli, *Il Desiderio del Diverso,* p. 85.

1.4 Scapegoating the Other: a Pathway towards the Forging of the Self

The notion of identity has been investigated over the centuries for the challenging attempt to its definition. Therefore, the self has always been threatened by both internal and external elements which are inseparable from its own existence. It has been alleged how the idea of alterity, namely something other than the self, is unquestionably indispensable for the definition of identity: the Other becomes a projection of all the unconscious, frightening and unwanted fears, urges and aspects which the subject strive to repress[98], which has consequently led this other part to be perceived in terms of hostility. On a more individual level, the Other embodies a non-I which is crucial to the construction of the identity, but which is to be destroyed in order to assert and impose identity itself; it is perceived as a stranger which should be discriminated against. From a more collective stance, it represents a menace to the values imposed by society and, as a result, it has to be extirpated. On this more extensive level, the notion of Other might be applied and analysed from different perspectives, such as the religious, the racial, the gender or even the national one, therefore contributing to a definition of identity which encompasses many different approaches and conceptions[99]. It eventually becomes a scapegoat upon which all the negative and most deplorable facets are projected in order to purge what has to be conceived as an ideal self, without flaws and weaknesses. An equation between the subject and the Other is therefore not desirable, since the self refuses to accept itself in terms of Otherness and is reluctant to admit the Other as a necessary requirement for its own existence. Two attitudes have been observed towards the stranger within or outside the self: acceptance and hospitality as opposed to loathing and

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[98] K. Richard, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, p. 64.
[99] *Ibid,* p. 67.

refusal. In particular, the latter arises from the fear of what is unknown and does not comply to the common rules and norms, namely the fear for what is different from ourselves.

In Gothic fiction, the role of the Other has been exemplified by the motif of the *doppelgänger*, conceived as both an internal and external Other, having either the same or different features in comparison to its counterpart. The double, in literature, usually represents the evil part, perceived as a threat and which needs to be destroyed in order to free the self from its dark innermost fears and impulses. However, it is not through opposition and resistance that the individual can eventually reconcile itself with its inner self, but through acceptance: only by acknowledging its own alterity, shall the subject be capable of wholly discovering its humanity, thereby overcoming the difference between good and evil[100]. This process of acceptance develops through three different phases: starting with the first horrific encounter with the Other, which generates discomfort and terror, the individual progressively comes to discover this Other part in order to achieve a complete recognition of itself as being a coexistence of oppositions which are fundamental in order to define its own identity[101].

Julia Kristeva observes that modern cultures are not always able to accept the Other, since its features, which are so diverse, are welcomed with jealousy. For her, the meeting with the stranger is a crucial moment in the formation of identity, since it obliges the individual to confront itself with what it is not but, at the same times, it should lead to a mutual recognition of diversity existing both inside and outside ourselves[102].

Therefore, the double, the Other, the *alter ego*, despite being perceived as an opposition to the self, is indispensable to it for the confrontation with an inner

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[100] R. Rutelli, *Il Desiderio del Diverso*, p. 85.
[101] *Ibid,* p. 85.
[102] J. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (1988), Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 1.

part which has to be repress, but which is still crucial to the formation of its own identity, and without which it could not attain a whole knowledge of itself. Hence, it would be vital to learn to conceive the self both in terms of sameness and otherness, without opposing and flattening our personal identity in this confrontation, but by acknowledging it as richness belonging and defining ourselves.

2. Antoinette: the Colonised Dark Double

> It is the 'inter'- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the
> in-between space- that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.
> It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist
> histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may
> elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.
>
> Homi Bhabha- *The Location of Cultures*[103].

2.1 The Racial Other and the British Empire

Human beings have always been driven by the tendency to cross imaginative and concrete boundaries in order to be pushed over their own limits and make sensational and glorious discoveries. On their exploration journeys across the globe, they would encounter new cultures, unfamiliar traditions and peculiar ways of life which were inevitably compared with their owns. Significantly, by confronting the unknown, men would and still tend to categorize their knowledge of the world in what is beneficial and what is adverse, this tendency being applied to all stages and life sectors. Consequently, as European powers undertook voyages of discoveries and began their expansion overseas in the sixteenth and in the seventeenth centuries, the world started to be divided into territories according to a set of features which would be labelled as either righteous or despicable[104]. Therefore, such a demarcation continued to settle into a more and more rigid differentiation in the well-known opposition between West and East[105].

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[103] H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Cultures* (1994), London and New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 38.
[104] E. Said, *Orientalism* (1978), London, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 39.
[105] *Ibid*, p. 39.

According to Edward Said, during the eighteenth century the aforementioned confrontation led to the establishment of two main features, which outlined the world balance of power:

> One was a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; […] The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination[106].

Therefore, Said maintains that the Orient represented the other side to Europe, at once deeply fascinated by it and distrustful of its exotic and unfamiliar features. Nevertheless, despite exerting an enduring fascination on European subjects, not only were the Orient and its conquered territories overseas perceived as distant and different, but also as inferior.

Starting from the eighteenth century, Western powers underwent an extraordinary expansion in their colonial territories leading to the so-called rise of the West: Said, in *Culture and Imperialism* argues that "in 1800 Western powers claimed 55 percent but actually held approximately 35 percent of the earth's surface, and that by 1878 the proportion was 67 percent*"[107].*

Significantly, by the end of the nineteenth century, there were very few world regions which were not under the control of an imperial power, implying that imperialism was rather an extensive phenomenon whose main perpetrators were Great Britain and France[108]. Having its root in the Latin word *imperio*, whose meaning is associated to the notion of domination, imperialism firstly relied

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[106] E. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 39-40.
[107] E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), New York, Vintage Books, p. 8.
[108] *Ibid*, p. 7.

upon the idea of possessing a distant land, which might be appealing for the country's economy and profit. Such an idea used to be later applied by settling and gaining control of those lands taken by force from their native people, who consequently suffered agony and distress brought by the new masters[109]. These conquered territories overseas were defined *colonies*, indicating those areas where colonists would settle both intrusively and illegally[110]. Therefore, by forming strong commercial relationships with their colonies in order to expand and support their economic and political apparatus, colonial powers became inevitably acquainted with a foreign culture which ultimately influenced their way of conceiving and understanding the world, since the main feature characterising an empire is its hybrid and culturally varied society[111]. As a consequence, European people eventually started to mould their own identity as opposed to the one of their far distant fellow citizens, thus leading to the establishment of an opposition Us-Them which consequently developed into a more pronounced antagonism, namely European- Others[112].

As stated in the previous chapter, according to the structuralist approach, human beings interpret reality and the world in terms of binary pairs[113]. Therefore, the couple European-Others definitely represents two opposites which are interdependent: indeed, the idea of Europe might be created only upon its opposite; its counterpart, namely the Other or even the Orient, although vital in engendering the idea and the knowledge of the alien and unfamiliar, does contribute to the very concept of Europe[114]. These two elements significantly

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[109] E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 7.

[110] V. Mishra and B. Hodge, "What Was Postcolonialism?", *New Literary History*, Summer, 2005, Vol. 36, No. 3, Critical and Historical Essays (Summer, 2005), pp. 375-402, p. 379, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20057902. [Last accessed: 27.04.21]

[111] E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxv.

[112] *Ibid*, p. xxv.

[113] M. Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for The Perplexed*, p. 42.

[114] E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 41.

strengthen the balance of the pair by further emphasising their own differences. However, these two components do not possess the same value, since the term on the left is positively valued over the one on the right. Imperialism, thus, contributed to the spreading of a set of values associated to the colonised territories which led to reinforce the difference between familiar codes and unfamiliar or threatening ones[115], leading to the creation of a political view according to which Western culture and identity were destined to dominate and impose their own values[116]. As a consequence, society in the colonies was structured through the imposition of a dominant ruling class composed of colonists and a lower class represented by native dwellers, who were considered inferior human beings doomed to be silenced and repressed[117]. The dichotomy between colonizer and colonised was created since colonised subjects, embodying the threatening and unknown Other, were progressively misunderstood and mistreated[118]. Moreover, in the Age of Reason which aimed at bringing the light of reason into society, the native-Others were portrayed in terms of bestiality and brutality, deserving to be civilised in accordance to the ideal of the white man's burden. Therefore, colonisers settling on unknown and distant lands were tasked with bringing civilisation, Christian religion and education alike, among those very people who were considered inferior merely due to their unfathomable features[119]. The racial Other, thus, started to be used as a means to forge European identity by showing what Europe was not.

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[115] R. Bloem, "The Spectre of the Other in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea, and Nadine Gordimer's A Sport of Nature", p. *74.*
http://sh.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:212507/FULLTEXT01.pdf. [Last accessed: 27.04.21]
[116] E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 43.
[117] *Ibid* p. 45.
[118] A. Pandele, "Coloniser and Colonists. (Re) defining the Other in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea". *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies*, issue No. 7/2015, p. 436.
https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=457004. [Last accessed: 27.04.21]
[119] T. Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 29.

In the nineteenth century, identity represented one of the major concerns of British society, deeply related to the relationship of the British political and economic centre with its colonial territories, since it claimed to have mainly a regulative and educative mission overseas[120]. Such a relation between the centre and its periphery fostered a major theme in the literary field.

More specifically, Gothic fiction was focused on the notions of transgression, distress and the uncanny, dealing with unfamiliar subjects which would be better embodied by the colonial Other shrouded by its aura of mystery[121]. As the Gothic genre unfolded throughout the century and acquired many peculiar features, the figure of the racial Other began to be combined with a set of traits and motifs: first and foremost, as opposed to the civilised European and British citizen, it was defined as brutal and barbarous, a source of terror through which Gothic fiction fostered its own nature. By representing a devilish figure, it depicted the ideal outcast upon whom ghostly and monstrous characters could be drawn. Indeed, as many colonial subjects were defined as cannibals devouring their fellow creatures, they also typified the perfect metaphor for the representation of vampires, namely bloodthirsty creatures driven by their ravenous aggressiveness mainly associated with the image of the rebellious native[122]. However, the colonised Other has not been fully described, especially in British narratives: its presence is therefore perceived as if it were a ghostly figure undeserving to neither speak nor take a significant part in the course of the events, since it is doomed to be silenced and repressed in order to be fully civilised according to the white man's burden, namely the fundamental aim of

[120] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea*". College of Education for Women – Baghdad University vol. 22 (3) 2011, pp. 589-605, p. 589, https://jcoeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq/index.php/journal/article/view/753/688. [Last accessed: 10.05.21]
[121] T. Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*, p. 22.
[122] *Ibid*, p. 55.

the European and British colonisers[123]. In a subaltern position when compared to its European counterpart, the native was deprived of its own voice, and its own subjectivity was consequently moulded by and on its "superior" invaders[124].

Nevertheless, over the course of the twentieth century, a branch of literature attempted to give voice to the marginalised and unheard Other in order to disrupt a conceptualisation of the world which justified racial discrimination and violence to claim the protection of cultural identity. Such literature was labelled as Postcolonial Literature, since it sought to shift the existing balance between the centre of the empire and its periphery in order to disrupt the binary opposites European/Other, centre/colony which defined the European plea for supremacy[125]. The Dominican writer Jean Rhys, born in Roseau in 1890 to a Welsh father and a Creole mother, was deeply concerned with the role of the British centre in shaping the identity of its native cultural background. Living on the brink of literary and social marginalisation in both the Caribbean and England, she lived an in-between existence from which she took inspiration for her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)[126]. Furthermore, when she read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, she was particularly struck by Bertha Mason's mistreatment based on her Jamaican origins. Consequently, her attempt to disrupt the colonial rendition of Bertha from a Eurocentric perspective resulted into a novel which wished to

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[123] T. Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*, p. 37.
[124] C. M. Mardorossian, "Shutting up the Subaltern: Silences, Stereotypes, and Double-Entendre in Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea", *Callaloo*, Autumn, 1999, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 1071-1090, p. 1071, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3299872. [Last accessed: 28.04.21]
[125] S. Cappello, "Postcolonial Discourse in "Wide Sargasso Sea": Creole Discourse vs. European Discourse, Periphery vs. Center, and Marginalized People vs. White Supremacy", *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, Summer 2009, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Summer 2009), pp. 47-54, p. 47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40986298. [Last accessed: 28.04.21]
[126] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea*", p. 591.

voice back the racial Other by describing her story from the perspective of the alienated colonised subject[127].

2.2 The Role of Antoinette in-between Cultures

Born in the West Indies in 1894, Jean Rhys was a proliferous author who proved to be particularly devoted to the notions of both gender and identity in the majority of her novels and short stories[128]. Born of a Welsh father and a Creole white mother, her life was deeply affected by her mixed family background. Hence, she moved to England when she was almost sixteen years old in order to attend school in Cambridge. After entering into an unhappy marriage with a Dutch poet, she spent her years moving all around Europe, assimilating new cultures and being influenced by the people she met in her rootless life[129]. Belonging to two distant and yet intertwined cultures, she has consequently been seen by critics as a referee between two contrasting worlds, namely the Caribbean and the European ones[130]. For this reason, Rhys had been feeling, undeniably, an outsider divided between cultures all her life:

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[127] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", *College Literature 26.2* (Spring 1999), pp. 79-95, p. 80, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25112454. [Last accessed: 11.05.20]

[128] E. W. Mellown, "Character and Themes in the Novels of Jean Rhys", *Contemporary Literature*, Autumn, 1972, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Autumn, 1972), pp. 458-475, p. 459, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1207442. [Last accessed: 30.04.21]

[129] J. Rhys, (1966) *Wide Sargasso Sea.* London, Penguin Books, 1997, pp. 125-126.

[130] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 85.

I would never be part of anything. I would never really belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing… I am a stranger and I always will be[131].

She was consequently perceived as an invader by the black population living in Dominica because of her Creole ancestry. Similarly, in England and Europe she was considered a stranger to the Western culture as a result of her West Indian background[132]. Therefore, the feeling of being constantly exiled and in-between cultures clearly impinged upon her literary production, especially in her post-colonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written in 1966. The main character, Antoinette Cosway, living in Jamaica in the 1830s, gives voice to the silenced Creole woman incarcerated and subjugated on the third floor at Thornfield Hall in Charlotte Brönte's novel *Jane Eyre*, written more than one century before[133]. She explained:

I've never believed in Charlotte's lunatic, that's why I wrote this book. […] The Creole in Charlotte Bronte's novel is a lay figure.... repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does[134].

This feeling of double yet incomplete identity which characterises both Jean Rhys and her heroine Antoinette is best exemplified in the title of her novel: the Wide Sargasso Sea is indeed located in the portion of the North Atlantic Ocean between the West Indies and the Azores. Despite being a predominantly still sea, the

[131] J. Rhys, (1979) *Smile Please. An Unfinished Autobiography*, London, Penguin Classics, 2016, p. 109.

[132] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea" p. 86.

[133] M. M. Adjarian, "Between and beyond Boundaries in "Wide Sargasso Sea"", *College Literature*, Feb., 1995, Vol. 22, No. 1, Third World Women's Inscriptions (Feb., 1995), pp. 202-209, p. 202, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25112175. [Last accessed: 30.04.21]

[134] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 80.

currents flowing at its centre can generate dangerous swirls, which might pose as a threat to the ships crossing it. Moreover, the sea was named after the samphire-like weed known as *Sargassum*, native to Portugal and which resembles the yellow one found in the Sargasso Sea[135]. Therefore, this sea becomes a symbol of two distant and opposing cultures which inevitably affect each other, and also symbolises the dangerous outcomes which a mingle of worlds and values might lead to, namely a feeling of entrapment into a troubling and incessant swirling of identities which cannot be completely assimilated[136]. This is clearly linked to the political situation in the British Empire in the nineteenth century: in 1833 the Slavery Abolition Act banished slavery in all the British colonies, although not including the territories owned by the East Indian Company, and provided slave owners with a compensation which the loss of slaves would cause to their properties[137]. Particularly in the West Indies and in Jamaica, the Emancipation Act laid the basis for an increasingly complicated relationship between the black slaves and the Creole people, leading to a further polarization of the two opposing social and cultural groups[138].

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word Creole has two main meanings: "**1**.A person of mixed European and African race, especially one who lives in the West Indies. **2**. A person whose ancestors were among the first Europeans who settled in the West Indies or S. Americas […]"[139]. Having its etymological root in the Spanish word *criar*, namely "to breed", the word Creole

[135] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, General Notes, p. 131.
[136] S. Yurdakul, "The Other Side of the Coin: the Otherness of Bertha / Antoinette Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*". B.A.S. vol. XXV, 2019, pp. 63-69, p. 65. https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=803341. [Last accessed: 30.04.21]
[137] HM Treasury, (2018, February 9), Slavery Abolition Act 1833, GOV.UK, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slavery-abolition-act-1833. [Last accessed: 11.05.21]
[138] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", p 88.
[139] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 362.

refers to those men and women of European or even African descent who were born and naturalised in the West Indies or, more broadly speaking, in the Caribbean[140]. Not only was this word employed to define individuals, but also animals, vegetation and even to indicate a language spoken in the West Indies[141]. Indeed, the Creole language developed as a natural outcome of the Pidging in the community of slaves deprived of their native language. Thus, when slaves were taken from Africa to the Caribbean or to Southern America, they were not allowed to use their mother tongue and, as they were unable to understand the language of their masters, they would inevitably develop a mixed language known as Pidging. Once the Pidging became the mother tongue of the slave community, it came to be defined as Creole[142]. Therefore, despite referring to people who were born in the West Indian territories, both the noun as well as the adjective Creole convey a double identity which entails a sense of belonging that cannot be completely achieved. It embodies two opposing and contrasting worlds which were forced to mingle, although unable to peacefully coexist. Creole people could not integrate among native populations since they were perceived as colonial masters subjugating the native through dominance and enslavement. Simultaneously, the Europeans would not consider the Creole as part of their colonialist world anymore considering that they had acquired those features commonly associated with black slaves, such as the darker complexion or some wilder and inappropriate behaviours[143]. Creoles, thus, used to live in an actual limbo, in a liminal and unbearable existence particularly embodied by

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[140] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 134.
[141] S. L. Meyer, "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of "Jane Eyre"", *Victorian Studies*, Winter, 1990, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), pp. 247-268, p. 253, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3828358. [Last accessed: 01.05.21]
[142] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, General Notes, pp. 134-135.
[143] S. L. Meyer, "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of "Jane Eyre"", pp. 252-253.

women who were deeply ostracised by Europeans for being coloured Creole women, and suffered due to their European origins and ancestry[144].

In nineteenth-century literature, the Creole female subject, in terms of both race and gender, was portrayed as one destined to be silence and repressed, and as one deploying a passive attitude towards the events. However, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys opposed this trend by giving Antoinette her voice back, and by operating a decentralisation of the binary structures European/Other and Europe/West Indies where the Caribbean and Jamaica no longer represent the periphery of the colonial Empire but become the central perspective through which the events are narrated, thus overturning the imperial viewpoint[145]. Therefore, Antoinette comes into being as a representative of an attempt by the author to disclose colonial coercion towards the black slaves and to further claim justice for those Creoles who were relentlessly silenced and mistreated according to the British colonialist mindset[146]. This situation of ambiguity is detectable from the opening lines of *Wide Sargasso Sea:*

> They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. Bu we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies has never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self'[147].

Therefore, from the very beginning the reader is confronted with Antoinette's depiction of her own reality in which white people are equated to trouble brought to the Jamaican natives. However, despite being white, she does not feel part of the group of white planters feared by black people and, by using the word

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[144] R. Bloem, "The Spectre of the Other in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea, and Nadine Gordimer's A Sport of Nature*", p. 75.
[145] *Ibid,* p. 76.
[146] M. M. Adjarian, "Between and beyond Boundaries in "Wide Sargasso Sea"", p. 203.
[147] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 5.

"ranks", which clearly allude to a military meaning[148], she further emphasises her sense of exclusion in her personal battle towards the achievement of her own identity. Moreover, the alienation Antoinette does experience in Jamaica is exemplified by her estate, named Coulibri, which symbolises both the English colonial rule and slavery, as it was handled by black slaves too[149]: "Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. […]. All Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone to the bush"[150]. Therefore, from Antoinette's perspective, this home of hers which had once been an otherworldly place, has all gone untamed and uncontrolled, the same happening to those childhood events which had forced her to live a divided life between two contrasting worlds. The estate indeed, which is named after the little bird which has extraordinary flying capacities, inevitably falls into carelessness, thus symbolising the Cosways' lost status and fortune. However, Antoinette desperately strives for being part of the Jamaican land, and this connection is offered by Rhys through the parallelism between Antoinette and the surrounding Caribbean landscape, characterised by bright and intense colours and by the hot and constantly shining sunlight: "She is Creole girl, and she have the sun in her"[151]. Although she has European origins, her sense of belonging lies in that environment which has raised her and whose features she constantly loves and praises:

> 'So this place is as lonely as it feels?' I asked her.
> 'Yes. It is lonely. Are you happy here?
> 'Who wouldn't be?'

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[148] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 592.

[149] A. Pandele, "Coloniser and Colonists. (Re) defining the Other in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 438.

[150] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p.6.

[151] *Ibid*, p. 102.

I love it more than anywhere else in the world. As if it were a person.
More than a person[152].

Such a personification of the landscape shows the role played by Jamaica in forging Antoinette's identity, holding a prominent place in her life despite being depicted as a lonely spot, further emphasising the alienation and loneliness she used to feel. Fascination and solitude, sense of belonging and alienation: this opposing pairs have characterised Antoinette since her childhood. The verdant, lush vegetation of the Jamaican landscape is in stark contrast with the image of her crumbling house symbolising the deteriorating prestige and fortune enjoyed by white Creole families prior to the Emancipation Act in 1833, which caused the female protagonist to grow up in solitude surrounded by the hatred of native black people who rejected her for what she represents[153]. Marginalised by both her fellow community and by those English men moving to Jamaica and the West Indies to seek fortune in the wake of the abolition of slavery, Antoinette lives in-between two cultures and becomes the emblem of a conflict which inevitably confines her to the role of a rejected outsider: she is not able to completely adapt to either world[154] and she seems to be driven by a naïve misinterpretation of reality when establishing relations with black native people at Coulibri and its surroundings. On the one hand, she desperately craves approval but, on the other hand, she shows an ambiguous attitude towards those very people she longs to be reunited with: "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches"[155]. This ambiguity is exemplified by the use of the noun *negro* to refer in a derogative tone to the people who had been living with

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[152] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 54.
[153] A. Pandele, "Coloniser and Colonists. (Re) defining the Other in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 438.
[154] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 591.
[155] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 9.

her and by the employment of the expression "white cockroaches" used by black people to disdainfully address to the destitute white Creoles and which denotes a merely bitter awareness of her exclusion[156].

Such a dual attitude might be first and foremost understood in Antoinette's relationship with her mother Annette, who constantly rejects her in spite of Antoinette's insecure attempts to be noticed and loved by her[157]. In the effort to escape the limbo to which her white origin confined her, Annette marries Mr. Mason, a white Englishman unable to thoroughly understand the Jamaican political and social situation, consequently destining her family to be destroyed by the black hatred towards the oppression and subjugation represented by both English and Creole social standings. Significantly, Antoinette does not eventually learn from her mother's mistakes, since she marries an Englishman, whose name is never openly mentioned, and who will lead her to renounce to her own country[158].

Another character who proves to be enormously influential in Antoinette's growth is Tia, a black girl through whom Antoinette desperately attempts to achieve social acceptance in a system which dooms her to perpetual exclusion. In one of the episodes involving the two young girls, after losing a bet to Tia and in order to defy her provocative attitude, Antoinette again uses a disdainful expression to address the former, namely "cheating nigger"[159]. However, once she discovers that Tia has stolen her clean dress, Antoinette decides to go back home by wearing Tia's one. Such a moment is highly significant since not only does it symbolise Antoinette's aspiration to be accepted by her Jamaican friend,

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[156] P. G. Anderson, "Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea: The Other Side/"Both Sides Now"", *Caribbean Quarterly*, MARCH-JUNE, 1982, Vol. 28, No. 1/2, Critical Approaches to West Indian Literature (MARCH-JUNE, 1982), pp. 57-65, p. 60, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40653444. [Last accessed: 05.05.21]

[157] M. M. Adjarian, "Between and beyond Boundaries in "Wide Sargasso Sea"", p. 204.

[158] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 6.

[159] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 10.

but also her desire to be like her, to be her[160]. It is extremely moving how the simple act of re-dressing herself in Tia's clothes emphasises both her lack of identity and her need to cover herself with a new one which might fit her better[161]. Moreover, her lack of sense of belonging and her impossibility to feel included is further conveyed in the following scene: at home, she feels completely unsuitable for the English visitors who are paying her mother a visit, particularly referring to their garments, far more beautiful and cleaner than hers[162].

Nevertheless, it is when forced to leave her homestead, Coulibri, after being set on fire by the black people, that Antoinette faces the fragmentation and the impossibility to utterly achieve her true self; shaken by the hatred towards her family, she sees a possibility of alleviating her sense of displacement and loss of everything that represented her in her encounter with Tia: her home, her people, her life. While standing before her dark-skinned friend, Tia becomes like a mirror through which Antoinette hopes to unify and reconstruct herself by finding her counterpart, her other side, merely through violence, though[163]. Nevertheless, naively enough, she does not seem to understand how impossible a reconciliation between the two opposites, self and Other, colonizer and colonized, is unattainable[164]:

> Then, not so far off, I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her

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[160] M. M. Adjarian, "Between and beyond Boundaries in "Wide Sargasso Sea"", p. 205.
[161] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 592.
[162] *Ibid*, p. 592.
[163] R. Kamel, "Before I Was Set Free": The Creole Wife in "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea", *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Winter, 1995, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter, 1995), pp. 1-22, p. 5, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30225421. [Last accessed: 10.05.21].
[164] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 593.

hand but I didn't see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking glass[165].

Although Antoinette is unwilling to leave her place, by throwing that stone at her Tia is able to show her, like a mirror glass, a part of her identity she was reluctant to truly accept[166]. Tia's gesture represents a whole community rebelling against the oppressor, displaying the impossibility for two contrasting worlds to reconcile despite Antoinette's attempt to act as a mediator.

If, on the one hand, the association of Antoinette to the West Indian landscape epitomises her need to identify with the Jamaican culture, on the other hand it reveals her detachment from the English and European world. Her non-Englishness is accentuated in her relationship with her husband, the English man who was forced by his father to marry her for financial reasons[167] and who felt profoundly deceived by his wife's family who had kept secret Antoinette's hereditary madness, in order to secure her with an honourable and profitable marriage[168]. Despite Antoinette's European origins, her spouse seems to be constantly focusing on some features of her which are associated with black people:

I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark

[165] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 24.

[166] R. Kamel, "Before I Was Set Free": The Creole Wife in "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 5.

[167] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 597.

[168] Sandra M. Gilbert, "'Jane Eyre' and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking", *NOVEL*: A Forum on Fiction, Summer, 1998, Vol. 31, No. 3, Thirtieth Anniversary Issue: III (Summer, 1998), pp. 351-372, p. 365, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1346105. [Last accessed: 30.05.21]

alien eyes. Creole of English descent she may be, but they are not

English or European either[169].

Specifically, he seems to incarnate and to unveil those Victorian prejudices addressed to both his wife and her country[170]: "Everything is too much. […] Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger"[171]. Despite being captivating and beguiling due to their brightness, these colours are perceived as almost violently blazing to Antoinette's English companion, to the point that he feels them both disgusting and intoxicating. His attitude contrasts with Antoinette's praise for the dazzling colours which represent a predominant feature of her Jamaican self: "We are cross-stitching silk roses on a pale background. We can colour the roses as we choose and mine are green, blue and purple. Underneath I will write my name in fire red"[172].

Therefore, Antoinette and her husband might be considered as similar in that they are not able to completely adapt to the Jamaican land, though Antoinette is constantly torn between different cultures, whereas her husband's inability to fully appreciate the island is driven by his English and European mindset, which denotes an intrinsic sense of superiority[173]. Such an attitude is significantly related to a colonialist stance according to which both the natural world and the black and native people on the island are seen as an inferior and alienated race:

It was a beautiful place- wild, untouched, above all untouched, with
an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find

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[169] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 40.

[170] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 83.

[171] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 42.

[172] *Ibid*, p. 29.

[173] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 83.

myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing- I want what it hides- that is nothing[174].

Antoinette's married Englishman tends to define the landscape of both Massacre and Granbois estate as alien, a term which conveys the meaning of what is unfamiliar and therefore threatening. Significantly, Granbois becomes the place where the two lovers are supposed to share their life and passion, but it eventually turns into a symbol of isolation and alienation which impede the Englishman from utterly integrating with the scenery. However, this impossibility of totally comprehending and appreciating the place he has just discovered deeply affects his relationship with the local people, as he is mainly driven by prejudice and an attitude of superiority. Indeed, he acts as a colonial master who misunderstands and misjudges the native islanders, especially Christophine, Antoinette's Martinican black nurse[175]. Antoinette seems to rely upon this liminal figure, who is both a servant and a mysterious healer practicing *obeah*, namely sorcery. She is always on Antoinette's side, she replaces the lack of her mother affections, and her husband is evidently suspicious of her[176]:

> 'Her coffee is delicious but her language is horrible and she might hold her dress up […]. Whatever the reason is, it is not a clean habit.'
> 'It is. You don't understand at all. They don't care about getting a dress dirty because it shows it isn't the only dress they have. Don't you like Christophine?'
> 'She is a very worthy person no doubt. I can't say I like her language.'
> 'It doesn't mean anything,' said Antoinette.

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[174] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p.54.
[175] G. C. Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn, 1985, Vol. 12, No. 1, "Race," Writing, and Difference (Autumn, 1985), pp. 243-261, p. 252, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343469. [Last accessed: 05.05.21]
[176] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p.135.

'And she looks lazy. She dawdles about.'

'Again you are mistaken'[177].

Therefore, by conforming to a typical colonialist stance, he is reluctant to accept both Christophine's attitude, which he defines as "lazy", and her incomprehensible Patois language as they represent an alien culture which colludes with his Englishness and Victorian values. Nevertheless, Christophine has a more significant function in the novel, since she further emphasises the impossibility for Antoinette to fully integrate in the local culture due to racial discrepancies, which would cause Antoinette to seek refuge and comfort in the dream-like England[178].

Moreover, as a ruling master, not only does Antoinette's husband attempt to dominate and tame the Jamaican natural world, but he also aims at making his wife compliant, through deprivation: indeed, Antoinette undergoes a transformation by which she is firstly deprived of her own name, as her husband renames her "Bertha" and uses the appellative "Marionette" in order to divest her of her own identity and subdue her. Furthermore, by marrying Antoinette, he deprives her of her properties which, according to the British law, were to be passed to the husband, consequently leading the wife to be legally inexistent from an economic stance[179]. Lastly, by taking her to England, he bereaves her of the sun, of the bright light shining and enlightening both her native island and her inner self[180]. Ultimately, her husband causes Antoinette to lose her own freedom by confining her at Thornfield Hall and by concluding her transition

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[177] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 52-53.

[178] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea ", p. 6.

[179] S. Yurdakul, "The Other Side of the Coin: the Otherness of Bertha / Antoinette Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*", p. 64.

[180] A. Pandele, Coloniser and Colonists. (Re) defining the Other in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 438.

from an other side to the other, without allowing her to achieve a fulfilled identity:

> She'll not laugh in the sun again. She'll not dress up and smile at herself in that damnable looking-glass. So pleased, so satisfied. Vain, silly creature. Made for loving? Yes, but she'll have no lover, for I don't want her and she'll see no other. […] She said she loved this place. This is the last she'll see of it[181].

She finds herself hauled into a world made of cardboard[182] in which she definitely loses everything she had lived for, first and foremost her fragmented and wounded self[183].

As she undergoes a transformation from a subject showing a potential and heartly voiced self to a restrained voiceless Other, Antoinette strives for her husband to understand that "there is always the other side, always"[184] and that the two sides are intermingled and essential in order to forge a through self. Significantly, Antoinette lives in-between, waving from two sides in which she attempts to identify herself. She feels as if she is part of neither world, and this lack of boundaries contributes to intensify the ambiguity of her entire life. She perfectly understands how the other side is not merely a complementary part to the whole, but a fundamental one, as human beings are doomed to fail in their creation and development of a true identity without any confrontation with their own counterpart.

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[181] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p.107.

[182] *Ibid*, p. 117.

[183] J. C. Oates, *Romance and Anti-Romance. From Brontë's Jane Eyre to Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea*, in *Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre- A Casebook*, ed. Michie, Elsie B., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 208.

[184] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 82.

2.3 Antoinette: the Revelation of Jane Eyre's Colonial Double

First published in 1847, *Jane Eyre* was acclaimed by the Victorian public as a remarkably revolutionary work since it proved to be "the archetypal scenario for all those mildly thrilling romantic encounters between a scowling Byronic hero (who owns a gloomy mansion) and a trembling heroine (who can't quite figure out the mansion's floor plan)"[185], but also an unorthodox novel which aimed at challenging the Victorian patriarchal values[186]. However, Lori Pollock illustrated how Charlotte Bronte's work had been claimed by some critics to be compliant to the imperialist Victorian views by creating and introducing both colonial backgrounds and figures[187]. Among these characters is Bertha Mason, Rochester's Creole first wife who has been imprisoned since her arrival in England, who embodies the features of the racial Other due to both her physical and behavioural features as well as the role her confinement plays in the events affecting the figure of Jane[188]. Despite the wide resonance the eighteenth-century public allotted to *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys was deeply moved by the conduct engaged in towards Bertha. As a consequence, she decided to give and retain her silenced dignity, denouncing the outrageous treatment Rochester's first wife received because of her Creole blood[189]. Thus, her revisiting of *Jane Eyre* might be

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[185] S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*, 1984, p. 337, https://archive.org/details/TheMadwomanInTheAttic/page/n7/mode/2up. [Last accessed: 08.05.21]

[186] E. B. Michie, *Introduction* in *Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre- A Casebook*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006., p. 3.

[187] L. Pollock, (An)Other Politics of Reading "Jane Eyre", *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Fall, 1996, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall, 1996), pp. 249-273, p. 255, http://www.jstor.com/stable/30225973. [Last accessed: 08.10.21]

[188] *Ibid*, p. 255.

[189] C. M. Mardorossian, "Double (De)Colonisation and the Feminist Criticism of Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 80.

understood as "a potential site of ideological dislocation"[190] through which the author removes Bertha from the enclosed limits of her dark confinement so as to reclaim the dazzling and shimmering light and colours of her endemic Caribbean country[191].

Notwithstanding Bertha Mason's brief appearances in Brontë's novel, her role is essential to the implications of the plot and in further forging Jane's individuality and personality. Therefore, Bertha is engaged in the delicate task of representing Jane's dark double and, as Gilbert and Gubar maintained, her avatar from a psychological point of view, while she is and does what Jane does not dare to be and do in her life[192]. As already stated in the previous chapter, John Herdman asserted that human beings are constantly forced to confront, either willingly or not, their multiple Others, thereby testing their own limits in the uncanny encounter with a part of themselves they refuse to acknowledge[193]. Moreover, the Other should not be always conceived in terms of differences, considering that it might share some common traits with its original. Accordingly, although Jane and Bertha are two female characters set in a Manichean opposition in the novel, it would be feasible to assume a few similarities equating them.

The first parallelism which might be drawn to compare Jane and Antoinette refers to their family background. In fact, alienation and desolation broadly define Jane's childhood: an orphan since at an early age, ever since her uncle's deathbed she has been forced to live with Aunt Reeds and her careless and detestable children at Gateshead. One of the Reeds' utmost enjoyment consists in

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[190] L. Pollock, (An)Other Politics of Reading "Jane Eyre", p. 253.
[191] S. Maurel, "The Other Stage: from *Jane Eyre* to *Wide Sargasso Sea*". *Brontë Studies*, 34:2, 155-161, p. 155 https://doi.org/10.1179/147489309X431566 . [Last accessed: 08.05.21]
[192] S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979, p. 359.
[193] J. Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, p. 1.

excluding the young Jane from all family reunions as well as in mistreating her at the earliest opportunity:

> The said Eliza, John and Georgiana were now clustered round their mamma in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on a sofa by the fireside, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group […] – 'She really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy little children'[194].

Similarly, although Antoinette still has someone in her life whom she can call "mother", she shares Jane's solitude and estrangement: indeed, such maternal character continuously rejects her in a coldly fashion, thus leaving Antoinette alone to manage her everyday hardships solely relying upon her black nurse Christophine, as well as to handle the hatred of her county fellows all by herself.

Therefore, both Jane and Antoinette experience a childhood doomed to exclusion from both a family and societal level, lacking the maternal support which would help them sooth their sense of alienation. Indeed, as Jane bitterly asserts:

> I was a discord at Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs Reed or her children or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them. They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathise with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperaments, in capacity, in propensity; a

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[194] C. Brontë, (1847) *Jane Eyre*, London, Penguin Modern Classics, 2006, p. 9.

useless thing, incapable of serving their interests or adding to their pleasures […][195].

However, the abovementioned situation of isolation is not the mere feature equating the two female characters, since they both share Caribbean origins and, therefore, a colonial family background. In the letter initially concealed from her by Mrs. Reed, Jane discovers she is the niece of the "Madera agent for the Caribbean business of the wealthy Richard Mason, Bertha's brother"[196], by whom she would acquire a considerable wealth. Such a letter unquestionably bonds Jane to a Jamaican environment which is able to grant her a new identity and simultaneously relates her to Bertha's culture and upbringing[197].

The West Indian origin and scenery subsequently delineate a second tie between Jane and Bertha, namely the presence of slave-like bondage both at individual and collective level. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, references to slavery are illustrated and exemplified in several episodes related to Antoinette as well as to the abolition of slavery in the territories of the British Empire, ranging from the scenes involving her relationship with Tia to the hatred towards the Creoles which leads black people to set fire to Coulibri Estate. Such hints are not immediately understandable on a collective level when reading *Jane Eyre* except for very few allusions to the West Indian colonial background, but are easily ascribable to Jane own growth and personal circumstances.

Significantly, it is from the very first pages of the novel that the imagery related to slavery is employed by the young Jane in order to denounce the unjust mistreatment inflicted by her cousin Jhon Reed: "You are like a cruel murderer-

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[195] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 19.
[196] Trevor Hope, 'Revisiting the Imperial Archive: "Jane Eyre", "Wide Sargasso Sea", and the Decomposition of Englishness', *College Literature*, WINTER 2012, Vol. 39, No. 1 (WINTER 2012), pp. 51-73, p. 62, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23266040. [Last accessed: 09.05.21].
[197] *Ibid*, p. 62.

you are like a slave-driver- you are like the Roman emperors"[198]. Consequently, her fierce and furious response towards her cruel and sadistic cousin John is inevitably equated to the attitude of a slave furiously rebelling against its master, an enslaved victim who is labelled as a mad animal and a non-human, thus echoing the revolts which spread in the West Indies in the 1820s and 1830s and deeply impacted the imaginary of sectors of English society, who were attempting to claim their rights and fight against their submission, such as women and workers[199]. John Reed is described as a tyrant whose oppression in the domestic field is transposed on a national and colonial background, thus equating it to the imperial subjugation in the West Indies[200].

However, her cousin John is not the only masterly figure Jane encounters along her path. She deals with two other men who, despite firstly appearing as saviours, try to force Jane to comply to their own needs and desires. At Thornfield Hall, Jane finds herself enthralled by the Byronic figure of Edward Rochester, who takes her from an ambiguous position as a governess into a bigamous relationship she is not immediately aware of. According to the axioms of the Victorian patriarchal ideology enriched by Orientalist precepts, Rochester acts like a Sultan in an Eastern fashion: in one of their trips to Millcote, after their betrothal, Jane is urged by her husband-to-be to accept the high-priced gifts he has intended for her, consequently feeling like a female slave objectified by the powerful male gaze of her master[201]:

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[198] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 13.

[199] J. Sharpe, *Excerpts from Allegories of Empire*, in *Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre- A Casebook*, ed. Michie, Elsie B., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 80-81.

[200] R. Kamel, "Before I Was Set Free": The Creole Wife in "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 6.

[201] Z. Joyce, "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of "Jane Eyre"". *Signs*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 592-617, p. 593, The University of Chicago Press, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174859. [Last accessed: 09.05.21]

And somewhat relieved by this idea (which failed not to execute that day), I ventured once more to meet my master's and lover's eye, which most pertinaciously sought mine, though I averted both face and gaze. He smiled, and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched"[202].

Jane adamantly refuses to be dressed up like wife-servant by Rochester, and she further expresses her reluctancy to be treated as a humiliated slave by replying with passion to his Easter references to female submission and by posing herself as an ardent advocate of the suppressed subjects[203]: "I'll be preparing myself to go out as a missionary to preach liberty to them that are enslaved- your harem inmates amongst them"[204]. Despite the references to Oriental and imperial circumstances, the sustained employment of slavery images in *Jane Eyre* aims at denouncing the outrageous attitude Victorian patriarchal society holds towards women, relegating them to a subjugating position which hinders their own liberty and their role as potential active subjects[205]. Indeed, although she fiercely claims right for those harem inmates, Jane is unable to consider herself as their equal, but rather as an English woman whose fundamental duty is to save them[206]. However, when given the opportunity to fulfil her educational and civilizing mission, she refuses by virtue of her own liberty. When fleeing from Thornfield after the discovering of Rochester's first wife Bertha, Jane finds herself entrapped under the influence of St. John Rivers, who reveals to be an authoritarian master exerting a strong influence upon Jane and who suggests that

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[202] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 310.
[203] L. Pollock, (An)Other Politics of Reading "Jane Eyre", p. 257.
[204] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 310.
[205] L. Pollock, (An)Other Politics of Reading "Jane Eyre", p. 256.
[206] J. Sharpe, *Excerpts from Allegories of Empire*, p. 95.

she marries him to pursue her missionary vocation[207]. She refuses on behalf of her self-determination and to be reunited to Rochester, since she is willing to spend her life in a relationship between equals rather than as a rebellious slave.

By comparing Jane's attitude towards the most remarkable events taking place in her life to Antoinette's reaction and endurance of circumstances, a first substantial difference emerges as Jane strives for her self-determination and speaks up to confront and resist her masters, whereas Antoinette is passively drawn to the confinement of her room at Thornfield Hall to be deprived of her liberty and her own voice, as if she was a slave left with no weapons to oppose her oppressor[208]. However, the utmost opposition between the two characters is illustrated in chapter twenty-five, when Jane relates her unconscious encounter with her dark double through a mirror reflection:

> It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell."
>
> "Did you see her face?"
>
> "Not at first. But presently she took my veil from its place; she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror. At that moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass."
>
> "And how were they?"
>
> "Fearful and ghastly to me--oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face--it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!"
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> "Ghosts are usually pale, Jane."

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[207] J. Sharpe, *Excerpts from Allegories of Empire*, p. 96.
[208] R. Kamel, "Before I Was Set Free": The Creole Wife in "Jane Eyre" and "Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 7.

> "This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes[209].

As Lacan explained, it is through the reflection in the mirror that the individual is able to gain an idea of its own self as detached from its mother and consequently forging a notion of self-identity as opposed to Otherness[210]. Therefore, in the encounter between Jane and Bertha, the mirror becomes the vehicle through which the two doubling characters are re-united: two binary opposites of the same whole, Jane and Bertha are conceived in Manichean terms representing good qualities and civilised values on the one hand, and evil and savage nature on the other[211].

However, it is only when Rochester finally discloses his bigamous relationship that the outright confrontation between the two female characters arises:

> In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What is what, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face[212].

Neither human nor completely inhuman, Bertha is depicted as a clothed hyena having monstrous appearances, thus embodying everything that Jane is not. What is remarkable about the above-mentioned description is the animalization

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[209] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pp. 326-327.

[210] M. Vanon Alliata, The Naked Man fom the Sea: Identity and Separation in "The Secret Sharer", in *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie Occidentale*, Padova, Editoriale Programma, 2005, pp. 325-341, p. 333 http://hdl.handle.net/11707/3247. [Last accessed: 30.05.21]

[211] L. Pollock, (An)Other Politics of Reading "Jane Eyre", p. 250.

[212] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 310.

and objectification of Bertha through the choice of verbs such as "snatched" and "growled", which clearly emphasise an animal behaviour, as well as the noun "mane", which inevitably gives her a bestial connotation. Moreover, the adjectives used to describe the traits of her face, such as "fearful blackened" as referred to her lineaments, "swollen" and "dark" to depict both the colour and the shape of her lips and "black" and "bloodshot" to delineate her eyes, do undeniably provide the reader with a portrayal of the black enslaved savage. Despite being a white Creole, some of the features characterising black people- such as the dark-coloured skin and their appalling wildness- are still associated to Bertha, who eventually becomes the personification of the enslaved racial Other living in-between cultures and to whom Jane is compared[213]. Moreover, some critics have observed how not only do the confinement and physical abuses Bertha is forced to suffer symbolise the oppression of slaves in the colonial domains, but also male cruelty towards women in patriarchal society[214]: thus, Bertha epitomises that burden the white imperial man is to bear in order to bring civilisation and moral restraint[215].

Therefore, Bertha embodies all the negative qualities which cannot be ascribed to Jane, consequently becoming her alter-ego, a double who dared to satisfy Jane's innermost impulses. The encounter with the Other causes the subject to disintegrate, thus leading to a moment of interior crisis, which is what leads Jane to flee Thornfield as soon as she discovers Bertha. Moreover, as Amit Marcus observes, there are some fundamental features defining the relationship self/Other which might be applied to the tie between Bertha and Jane. Considerably, according to Marcus's first and second observations, rivalry

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[213] L. Pollock, (An)Other Politics of Reading "Jane Eyre", p. 263.
[214] *Ibid*, p. 259.
[215] V. Beattie, "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness In "Jane Eyre"", *Studies in the Novel*, winter 1996, Vol. 28, No. 4 (winter 1996), pp. 493-505, p. 496, https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533162. [Last accessed: 23.05.21]

moves the double to confront the original, as it aspires to obtain what its original has taken possession of. As far as Bertha is concerned, her antagonism aims at gaining back what Jane now enjoys, namely Rochester's love. A further shared feature which might be analysed is the inversion of the hierarchical structure which Marcus ascribed to the double-self relation: despite Jane's wish to marry Rochester, she is unable to accomplish it due to the existence of his first legal wife, who eventually revels herself as an impediment to Jane's fulfilment. Therefore, the two female characters' fate proves to be indivisible, as Rochester appears to have conceived Jane as Bertha's replacement. The last element which might be taken into account is the importance of Bertha's death in order to allow Jane to have her happy ending, thus complying to Marcus's last observation[216]. Hence, it is in Bertha's final self-immolation that her fate as Jane's double could be merely understood, since the destruction of the racial Other allows Jane to achieve her full individuality by establishing, through marriage, an equal relationship with Mr. Rochester, who ceases to be seen as a sultan. Therefore, on the one hand Jane largely relies upon Bertha to destroy her submissive position as a woman in order to complete her *bildung* and forge her identity as a resilient self. On the other hand, Bertha's suicide should be understood as a rebellious act which aims at gaining her true self back, ending an age of enslavement and confinement which reminds of those rebels in the distant colonies claiming for their freedom and who, as an act of dissent, set fire to Coulibri Estate in Jamaica.

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[216] N. A. Diederich, "Telling Differe*n*ces: Complicating, Challenging, and Expanding Amit Marcus's Discussion of Clones and Doubles", pp. 104-105.

3. The Madwoman and the Abjected Other

> [The abject] is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become alter ego, drops so that the "I" does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence[217].
>
> Julia Kristeva- *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*

3.1 The Female Other in Victorian Society

"Colney Hatch lunatic asylum fire. Scarcity of water. Inmates resist efforts to rescue. Fifty-two lives lost. A hundred bed-ridden cripples. Appalling horrors"[218]. Such headline appearing in *The Mercury Newspaper* in January 1903 reported the horrors of the great fire which damaged the notable lunatic asylum in Middlesex known as Colney Hatch. Lunatics asylums were not unusual in the British territories: they started to proliferate in the Victorian period as they became a symbol of British advancement in many fields, such as the medical and the scientific ones. However, these health centres simultaneously showed how a newly detected malady, known by the name of "madness", had started to slowly penetrate society, eventually becoming an emblem of Victorian times[219]. In fact, as the American literary critic Elaine Showalter reveals in her work *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840*, "England, pre-eminent

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[217] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 9.

[218] "Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum Fire. Scarcity of Water. Inmates Resist Efforts to Rescue. Fifty-two Lives Lost. A Hundred Bed-ridden Cripples. Appalling Horrors", *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tas.: 1860-1954), 29 Jan 1903, Trove, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12268374. [Last accessed: 22.05.21]

[219] E. Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840,* London, Virago Press, 1987, p. 24.

in art, in letters, in technology and in trade, also led the world into madness"[220], since considerable improvements in both industrial and technological sectors, as well as in the civilised organisation of society, had been detected as the prime cause of the ravaging of such mental illness which was transforming Victorian England into a showcase of insanity[221]. According to Foucault, the attitudes towards madness and insane people alike have undergone major changes throughout history, but always sharing the fact that the mad person was seen as a real blemish for society and therefore condemned to social exclusion and isolation[222]. Hence, in order to quell such a social and health phenomenon, those who were deemed insane were linked to and consequently imprisoned with both criminals and deviant figures such as heretics or libertine, and consequently detained. Such individuals were held responsible for the evils of society and, due to their otherness when compared to the other members of the group, were turned into necessary scapegoats. As modernity was moving forward, however, madness began to be analysed from different perspectives, resulting in a re-inclusion of the destitute into social structures to be healed and better supervised[223]. Moreover, insanity was increasingly being associated with the uncontrolled and unconscious impulses of the individual: indeed, the medical reformists of the British Medico-Psychological Associations in the nineteenth century published some research in the *Journal of Mental Science*, by which they identified a mentally-sane person as an individual showing full capacity in restraining its impulses[224]. As a consequence, insanity was seen as the tragic

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[220] E. Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840*, p. 24.

[221] *Ibid*, p. 25.

[222] M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, New York, Random House, 1988, p. 7.

[223] *Ibid*, 212.

[224] E. Fee, "Psychology, Sexuality, And Social Control in Victorian England", *Social Science Quarterly*, March, 1978, Vol. 58, No. 4 (MARCH, 1978), pp. 632- 646, p. 634, https://www.jstor.org/stable/42859921. [Last accessed: 21.05.21]

outcome of the inability of the will to control childish and primitive drives, causing the individual to lose its reasonable self and be torn between the dark forces of the unconscious and the rectitude of the will. Therefore, madness might be described as a variable concept, spanning from antiquity to modernity, which used to identify what came to be known, particularly after Freud, as the unconscious part of the human mind"[225], thus encouraging a crucial link between reason and instincts, which inevitably urged to deploy self-control and restraint.

This internal battle involving both self-discipline and irrationality echoed the social environment surrounding the individual, and made it possible to detect some feasible causes of mental illness. First and foremost, among psychiatrists in Victorian England, the term 'inheritance' used to be mostly associated with insanity, as it was reported that the evil stored in the parent's mental structures was inevitably inherited by the offspring, therefore causing drives and impulse to prevail over the ability of self-control[226]. When congenital and heredity mental structures were not held responsible for the insane attitudes of the individual, one of the essential components needed to guarantee a sane mind was identified in the education and training provided by the parents, which would prove essential to teach how to stifle the instinctual impulses, thus turning a savage individual into a civilised one. As a consequence, mothers were tasked with a key role since they represented a model for their children, who were in turn supposed to acknowledge the dark, unconscious part of their selves and understand how to deal with them[227]. Hence, the lack of a family background could prove detrimental for both the personal and intellectual growth, especially when combined with other social and economic adversities: particularly, poverty was reported to have a huge impact on mental health since

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[225] M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, p. viii.
[226] E. Fee, "Psychology, Sexuality, And Social Control in Victorian England", p. 635.
[227] *Ibid*, p. 636.

it was usually associated to malnutrition, disease and social isolation[228]. Elizabeth Fee draws the attention on a further remarkable feature defining Victorian society, namely its concern for sexual drives and impulses, whose framework and outlines were established and deeply affected by the ideas and ways of life of the existing social classes. Indeed, two contrasting outlooks on sexuality might be analysed in Victorian England: the first one, adopted by the bourgeoisie, urged to restrain and repress sexual drives while the second one, diffused among the new working class, was more liberal and less constrictive[229]. Members of the bourgeois social strata claimed for the need for hard work and self-repression in order to achieve their goals and were strongly opposed to both the aristocracy and the working classes, the latter being mostly driven by laxist and more sexually-driven attitudes. As a result, the bourgeoisie did strive for a moral reorganisation and reformation of society through religious and working ideals, and such view was progressively being supported by psychologists willing to analyse social deviance from a more psychological stance since they aimed at creating social institutions so as to take care of more fragile and deviant figures[230].

Therefore, by the second half of the eighteenth century, Victorian society had been thoroughly operating what has been defined as the 'domestication' of insanity, a phenomenon which, as Elaine Showalter maintains, aimed at reincluding the mad person into the social environment by giving human dignity to him or her. This process entailed the recreation of a familiar setting where self-restraint and the importance of hard work would teach the

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[228] E. Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity" *Victorian Studies*, Winter, 1980, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter, 1980), pp. 157-181, pp. 162-163, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827084. [Last accessed: 21.05.21]
[229] E. Fee, "Psychology, Sexuality, And Social Control in Victorian England", p. 632.
[230] *Ibid*, pp. 633-634.

individual how to deal with its aggressive and uncontrolled impulses[231]. Such a treatment of insane people was made possible by the stark changes in the theories on insanity, which consequently led to the adoption of less inhuman therapies in the asylums and health institutions alike: mechanical restraints were abandoned whereas opportunities to foster interpersonal relationships and social integration, such as recreational activities and even balls, were organized at the asylum among patients[232].

Psychiatric theory in Victorian society was based on three main principles, the first one being "moral madness". Such a term, first coined by James Cowles Prichard in *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* in 1835, claimed that madness was not related to any significant disfunction of the human mind, but rather caused by innate and moral dispositions which were present long before the outbreak of the illness[233]. According to the psychiatrists and psychologists of that time, moral elements afflicting the intellect might be associated with those stressful situations such as starvation and social exclusion, which resulted in hindering the ability to curb inappropriate drives and were frequently juxtaposed to physical problems[234]. Therefore, in order to allow patients to be cured and helped, a specific organisation and administration of the treatments in the lunatic asylums was necessary: in the late nineteenth century, the management of insane people experienced significant changes, in that such people were no longer harshly treated as a vessel of their condition, but rather as individuals entitled to be re-educated and treated with dignity[235]. Such advancement in the medical management, that is a system of practices

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[231] E. Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840*, p. 28.

[232] E. Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity", p. 158.

[233] P. Grudin, "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in 'Jane Eyre'", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Winter, 1977, Vol. 10, No. 2, Tenth Anniversary Issue: II (Winter, 1977), pp. 145-157, p. 147, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344783. [Last accessed: 22.05.21]

[234] E. Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840,* p. 30.

[235] *Ibid*, p. 31.

known as "moral management" devised by William Tuke and later perfected by his grandson Samuel Tuke in the mid-nineteenth century[236], did represent the second cornerstone of Victorian psychiatric theory, one which aimed at removing those mechanical restraints which inflicted violent sufferance to the patients[237]:

> Patients benefited from being treated as ordinary people. They were expected to dine at the table, make polite conversation over tea, and do regular chores. The role of the alienist (psychiatrist) was to encourage rational behaviour. The system relied on rules and constant supervision, enforced by simple rewards and punishments. Physical restraints could be used to modify behaviour if used sparingly as punishments or deterrents[238].

These principles had to be funnelled into an architecture which would allow the individual to feel secure and surrounded by a homely environment, thus engendering a process of rebuilding the psychic equilibrium of the subject, even recreating a child-like situation in which the patient was to be guided in its own mental growth[239]. Moreover, not only were lunatics divided and categorized according to their mental illness, but such classifications were also based on gender and class standards[240]. Consequently, asylums were not devised as prisons, but rather as pleasant structures which would facilitate the healing of insane patients[241].

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[236] "A Victorian Mental Asylum, Science Museum", *Science Museum*, 13th June 2018, https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/medicine/victorian-mental-asylum#the-moral-treatment-system. [Last accessed: 22.05.21]

[237] E. Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity", p. 158.

[238] "A Victorian Mental Asylum, Science Museum".

[239] E. Fee, "Psychology, Sexuality, And Social Control in Victorian England", p. 640.

[240] E. Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840*, p. 34

[241] *Ibid*, p. 34.

Moreover, it has been reported that the process of domestication of madness in Victorian England coincided with an increase in the number of female patients in the lunatic asylums. In fact, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe, relationships among women were particularly arduous and troublesome in patriarchal society since, in order to survive and gain their share in a male-centred world, female individuals were often obliged to compete one against the other[242], struggling against those very patriarchal values which attempted to subjugate them[243], all of which resulted into stressful and demanding situations. Significantly, the census carried out in 1871 reported that:

> […] Every 1,000 male lunatics, there were 1,182 female lunatics; for every 1,000 male pauper lunatics, 1,242 females. By 1872, out of 58,640 certified lunatics in England and Wales, 31,822 were women. There were more female pauper inmates in county and borough asylums, in licensed houses, in workhouses, and in single care. Men still predominated among private patients of all categories and in registered which were more expensive and selective than the asylums"[244].

The figures above are clearly related to a widespread patriarchal belief in women's predisposition to inherit mental insanity due to the frailty of their nervous system[245]. Moreover, they were considered incapable of exerting control over their bodily instincts as they frequently fell prey to their own emotions, resulting in the alteration of their mental capacity, a characteristic apparently

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[242] S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*, p. 38.

[243] John Gruesser, "Say Die and I Will Die": Betraying the Other, Controlling Female Desire, and Legally Destroying Women in "Wide Sargasso Sea and Othello", *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, Summer 2003, Vol. 3, No. 3, Jean Rhys (Summer 2003), pp. 99-109, p. 100, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40986147. [Last accessed: 22.05.21]

[244] E. Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity", p. 160.

[245] *Ibid*, p. 170.

linked to their reproductive features[246]. Indeed, female madness was largely described as an illness which reached and permeated the brain through blood: as a consequence, starting from their adolescence, males especially were suspicious of female menstruation, which was detected as one of the reasons of insanity and had to be cured or delayed as long as possible[247]. Therefore, mothers performed a crucial role in supervising their daughters' behaviour mainly during puberty, which was considered the most troublesome stage in a girl's life. It should not be underestimated that, in order to prevent young females from knowing the 'dangers' of their own sexual apparatus, they were often unaware of menstrual flow and consequently engaged in inappropriate behaviours caused by the fright at the sight of their own blood[248]. However, other events exclusively marking female lifecycle, pregnancy and menopause for example, could prove excessively arduous in extreme conditions such as poverty and hostile environments, especially in a patriarchal society based on womanly dependence and subjugation[249]. Moreover, some reports analysing the sex ratio and female patients' behaviour at the Glasgow Royal Asylum inform about the dangerous conduct of the majority of madwomen who were consistently locked in asylums for their uncontrolled sexual behaviour, obscene language and unvirtuous and rude attitude[250].

The trope of female madness deeply symbolised the difficult role women had to fulfil, which inevitably led to a disruption of their individuality. Regardless of their social class, race and culture, they were strongly united in their differences, representing the "other" side in a male-ruled world which tended to use them as scapegoats. Therefore, both on a social and literary level, madness started to be

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[246] E. Fee, "Psychology, Sexuality, And Social Control in Victorian England", pp. 638.
[247] E. Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity", p. 170.
[248] E. Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1840,* p. 57.
[249] *Ibid,* p. 55.
[250] E. Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity", p. 166.

used to confront and rebel against patriarchism in order to allow women to give voice to their selves[251]. As Foucault observes, "madness has become man's possibility of abolishing both man and the world-and even those images that challenge the world and deform man"[252].

Hence, madness might be considered as a revelation of its own flaws to society, being a social construct rather than an innate and inherited trait that dooms an individual from its birth[253].

3.2 Maddened Double: the Rebellious Dark Side of the Angel in the House

Victorian England, an emblem of progress and civilised restraint, seemed to take the lead among European countries in its concern towards uncontrolled and deviant behaviour, especially when improper conducts were engaged by females. As a result, women and madness were deemed as two unaccepted and excluded figures of Victorian society as, intertwined and sometimes hardly detachable, represented a dire and subversive threat to a world unwilling and probably still unable to forsake its patriarchal values[254].

Charlotte Brontë, deeply aware of the social background she was living in, offered her readers a depiction of madness which is primarily conveyed through the representation of her insane Creole woman in the third-floor attic Bertha

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[251] S. Alshammari, *Literary Madness in British, Postcolonial and Bedouin Women's Writing*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, https://books.google.it/books?id=EO9TDgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_book_other_ver sions_r&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false. [Last accessed: 22.05.21]

[252] M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, p. 281.

[253] *Ibid,* p. 288.

[254] V. Beattie, "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness In "Jane Eyre"", p. 494.

Mason and, in a more veiled and subtended fashion, by relating the emotions of her heroine Jane Eyre throughout her life stages. However, the reader's encounter with the madwoman and her husband's biased account of the events do not seem to favour a further analysis of the circumstances which caused Bertha to descend into madness. In order to do justice to such an emotionally underestimated and overlooked character, Jean Rhys created a dignified background which could elucidate Bertha's/ Antoinette's inevitable decline thus refusing to confirm the inherited insanity reported by Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, thereby disclosing the socially constructed pathway which led her to such a condition[255].

Hence, the heroine who is presented from the first pages of *Wide Sargasso Sea* appears as a disrupted young girl whose identity is torn between worlds, cultures and muffled emotions from the early stages of her life in the West Indies[256]. Therefore, from the very first pages of her work, Jean Rhys attempts to provide the reader with some reasons for Antoinette Mason's madness, the first being traced back to the relationship with her mother, Annette. Antoinette, alienated in a world to which she desperately craves to belong, feels rejected by her community and is equally deprived of her mother's love and affections, which are entirely devoted to her disabled brother Pierre[257]. However, she continuously cherishes her and desperately needs her love:

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[255] D. Porter, "Of Heroines and Victims: Jean Rhys and Jane Eyre", *The Massachusetts Review*, Autumn, 1976, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 540-552, p. 541, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25088673. [Last accessed: 23.05.21]

[256] N. Azam, "'Madwoman in the Post-Colonial Era' A Study of the Female Voice in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*", *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, pp. 236-242, p. 237, www.ijalel.aiac.org.au. [Last accessed: 23.05.21]

[257] R. S. Patke, "Method and Madness in "A Question of Power" and "Wide Sargasso Sea"", *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, Fall 2005, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fall 2005), pp. 185-193, p. 188, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40986181. [Last accessed: 23.05.21]

It was too hot that afternoon. I could see the beads of perspiration on her upper lip and the dark circles under her eyes. I started to fan her, but she turned her head away. She might rest if I left her alone, she said.

Once, I would have gone back quietly to watch her asleep on the blue sofa- once I made excuses to be near her when she brushed her hair, a soft black cloak to cover me, hide me, keep me safe[258].

Significantly, her self-centred, eerie mother who should facilitate her integration into the local community but who instead gives all her energies and cares to Pierre and to maintain her social status, strongly contributes to the fragmentation of Antoinette's identity who is not able to feel accepted for what she is:

I hated this frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. She wanted me to sit with Pierre and walk where she pleased without being pestered, she wanted peace and quiet. I was old enough to look after myself. 'Oh let me alone' she would say, 'let me alone,' and after I knew that she talked to herself and I was a little afraid of her. [259]

Furthermore, both Antoinette and Annette are obliged to live in a hostile environment which constantly reminds them of her social position as Creoles, and Annette becomes Antoinette's vehicle to assimilate and live with such hostility which inevitably dooms them to isolation and exclusion as: "no one came near us"[260]. Therefore, despite acting as a guide for her daughter against the aggression of the negro's rancour and enmity, she seems unable to deal with the

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[258] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 8.

[259] *Ibid*, p. 6.

[260] *Ibid*, p. 5.

changes occurring to her social position[261]. The utmost expression of hatred is exemplified in the fire destroying Coulibri estate, which causes Antoinette to leave her home and to lose her brother Pierre. Moreover, such a despicable accident will inevitably dismantle the mother-daughter relationship since Annette would never forgive Antoinette for having survived while letting Pierre die. According to Christophine, who acts as and then becomes a sort of delegate or second mother to Antoinette, such adverse conditions, which represent a further element of displacement and fracture in the forging of Antoinette's self, are motivations responsible for driving Annette to madness, consequently impacting on Antoinette's individuality:

> They drive her to it. When she lose her son she lose herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad, they act like she is mad. Question, question. But no kind words, no friends, and her husban' he go off, he leave her. They won't let me see her. I try, but no. They won't let Antoinette see her. In the end- mad I don't know- she give up, she care for nothing[262].

Nevertheless, it is in her marriage with her British husband that Antoinette unavoidably loses her identity and that her self is disrupted the most. Despite Christophine's revelation about Annette, Antoinette's husband is utterly aghast when the truth about her wife's family background is disclosed: Daniel Cosway, born of the liaison of Antoinette's father with a black woman, is a yellowish-skinned man and lives an in-between life of both alienation and exclusion. Overwhelmed by the rancour and jealousy for her half-sister Antoinette, he takes his revenge towards the family by instilling in Antoinette's husband the doubt

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[261] V. P. Roper, "Woman as Storyteller In "Wide Sargasso Sea"", *Caribbean Quarterly*, MARCH-JUNE, 1988, Vol. 34, No. 1/2, WOMEN IN WEST INDIAN LITERATURE (MARCH-JUNE, 1988), pp. 19-36, p. 21, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23210989. [Last accessed: 23.05.21]
[262] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 101.

on her maddened germ inherited by her mother[263]. Moreover, he even informs the Englishman of a love affair Antoinette was conducting before marriage, depicting her as impure and sexually compromised[264]. Therefore, to the European-centred man, madness and sexuality appear two intermingled features characterising the Creole woman, and this is doubtlessly understandable from the very start of his relationship with Antoinette, since they completely lack intellectual and emotional connections, and lovemaking seems to be the only form of communication and sentimental tie between them[265]. By becoming increasingly voiceless in her marital relationship, Antoinette resorts to sex in order to demand for love and care and, most importantly, to express who she truly is[266]. As a consequence, sexuality is interpreted by Antoinette as a means of communicating her real self and finding the love she should be entitled to in a love bond which is slowly causing her own voice to fade away. Despite being physically attracted by his wife, the Englishman is not able to truly understand her wife; he interprets her active sexual desire as a manifestation of her Creole origins and subsequently of her incipient madness:

> 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 of feel as I did. One afternoon the sight of a dress which she she'd left lying on her bedroom floor made me breathless and savage with desire. When I was exhausted I turn away from her and slept, still without a word or a caress[267].

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[263] M. M. Adjarian, "Between and beyond Boundaries in "Wide Sargasso Sea"", p. 204.

[264] D. Porter, "Of Heroines and Victims: Jean Rhys and Jane Eyre", p. 545.

[265] N. Azam, ""Madwoman in the Post-Colonial Era" A Study of the Female Voice in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*", p. 239.

[266] *Ibid*, p. 239.

[267] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 58.

Antoinette's impulsive passion impacts on her spouse's drives, preventing him from sexually restraining himself and from utterly and consciously exerting his male control over his wife. On the other hand, Antoinette becomes emotionally dependent on him, whose silent and emotionless bond makes her feel loved in her own way. Jennifer Gilchrist claims that Antoinette's dependence on her companion is transformed into a "sexualised version of slavery"[268] in which she becomes at once the master and the victim. However, her excessive and undisciplined sexuality relegates Antoinette to the other side, to a distant world which is incomprehensible to her husband who inevitably sees her as the Other in slavery terms[269]. The sole form he has to regain his patriarchal and masterly control on her is to aim at her annihilation by destroying her individuality and her chance to speak for herself. As a consequence, he decides to rename her according to his own wishes by labelling her "Bertha" or "Marionette", almost an act of revenge for her ventured attempt to impose her true self[270]. By invoking justice for the unhappy marriage in which he has been framed, he lays claims on his wife and her subsequent alienation, leading her to desperation and madness[271]. Such insanity is interpreted by the Englishman as a malady which has cast shame upon his family and which has bound him to a miserable and unwanted marriage: if Antoinette's madness is too much for him to bear, this very madness allows her to free her real self and live without restrictions, speaking her own mind and rebelling against conventions, at the cost of restricting and threatening her husband's power and independence. Therefore, confinement appears to him as the just retaliation to avenge his lost liberty.

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[268] J. Gilchrist, "Women, Slavery, and the Problem of Freedom in Wide Sargasso Sea", *Twentieth Century Literature*, fall 2012, Vol. 58, No. 3 (fall 2012), pp. 462-494, p. 476, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24246943. [Last accessed: 23.05.21]

[269] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea*"*, p. 599.

[270] *Ibid*, p. 600.

[271] John Gruesser, "Say Die and I Will Die": Betraying the Other, Controlling Female Desire, and Legally Destroying Women in "Wide Sargasso Sea and Othello", p. 106.

Detained at Thornfield Hall and monitored by the ironically named "Grace" Poole, Antoinette slowly abandons herself to a new identity which has been constructed by someone else and progressively becomes Bertha Mason, Edward Rochester's mad wife.

Therefore, the unjust treatment suffered by Bertha and revealed to the reader in the last part of *Jane Eyre* pushes Jean Rhys to challenge Charlotte Brontë's representation of female madness and to do justice to Bertha/Antoinette by fashioning a touching and emotionally persuasive background which leads the reader to sympathise with her[272]. The different attitudes adopted by the two female authors should be understood in the light of the historical contexts during which the books were written. In fact, while in the Victorian period the conception of madness had been positively evolving towards a more indulgent approach, although still based on the theory of moral restraint, in the 1960s madness had acquired mythical overtone as it was perceived as a rebellious act against patriarchal values[273]. Hence, by presenting Bertha from a different perspective, Jean Rhys is able to reinterpret Jane's dark double in more lighted terms, bringing the two female characters into an interdependent position in which they are mutually indispensable for their personal evolution. Indeed, madness itself is the common denominator between Jane and Bertha, joining and separating them as two parts of a same whole unity. Significantly, many are the features and situations which equate Bertha's fate to Jane's one.

The first parallelism which can be drawn between Jane and Bertha/Antoinette is their attempt to forge an identity. From the early stages of her life, Jane is constantly seeking to escape her alienation to find domestic inclusion and self-

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[272] N. J. Kadhim, "Double Exile: Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea*"*, p. 591.

[273] D. Bolt, J. M. Rodas, and E. J. Donaldson. *The Madwoman and the Blindman: Jayne Eyre, Discourse, Disability*, Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013, p. 12, muse.jhu.edu/book/23963. [Last accessed: 24.05.21]

determination, thus experiencing the same estrangement which used to characterise Antoinette's childhood and her West Indian background. Left an orphan at an early age, Jane is deprived of her motherly love, thus sharing Antoinette's feeling of isolation and abandonment, even though due to different motivations; such feeling is highly intensified by her reluctant stay at her aunt Reed's abode, namely Gateshead, which is associated to images of segregation from the very first lines. There, treated cruelly by her persecutory cousin John, Jane is unloved and marginalised from the family circle which, by using derogatory labels to address and define her, does transform her into an Other who is to be kept at a distance for its alien nature and even non-humanness[274]: equated to a slave undeserving to live with the other members of the Reeds family, Jane is described as a bad animal and a rat, further emphasising her subjugated condition[275]. Seeking comfort and shelter in the distant and exotic landscapes of the book Bewick's *History of British Birds*, Jane feels psychologically and emotionally isolated in her suffering from John's and his family's cruelty. The climax of such alienation is reached in the red-room, which had witnessed his uncle's last breath nine years before and whose epitome alludes to the eerie crimson drapes of its furniture[276]. Therefore, confinement is the punishment Jane has to endure for her rebellious nature which is seen as madness and which equates her to a fiery creature in Mrs Reed's eyes as she is overtaken by fits of unrestrained passion which make her resemble a "mad cat"[277]. Jane herself seems to be aware of her aggressive reaction, since she admits that "I was a trifle beside

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[274] C. Yao, Y. Wang, "Using Language to Rage against Victorian Hierarchy: Self-constructed Feminist Identity in Jane Eyre", *Metathesis*: Journal of English Language Literature and Teaching, Vol. 4, No. 1, April 2020, pp. 1-10, p. 3, https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/fcaa/c79af820588ecded9b8ea64a38573f75a60f.pdf. [Last accessed: 30.05.21]

[275] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pp. 10-11.

[276] *Ibid*, p. 17.

[277] *Ibid*, p. 15.

myself, or rather *out* of myself"[278], and she desperately resorts to her turbulent temperament to express her agony and demand for justice for the unfair tyranny imposed upon her by a patriarchal and a class-based society devoted to authority, silence and restraint[279]. Hence, by transforming her into an alien creature, deprived of its human features and emotions, Mrs. Reed feels entitled to treat her cruelly and to exclude her from her own family circle[280]. Therefore, in the vain hope of escaping the disruptive hostility of Gateshead, Jane is taken to the boarding school known as Lowood, where she confronts a further limitation to her own self. There, Mr. Brocklehurst, the headmaster, aims at the mere annihilation of his girls who, by fulfilling the Victorian dictates, have to learn to be compliant to the social roles society has assigned them, their lives being devoted to religion, humility and self- disruption[281].

However, despite her initial intolerance for the same gender and class-based limitations she was obliged to endure at Gateshead, it is at Lowood that Jane understands the vital importance of self-restraint: although being a trait which is not ascribable to her personality, the ability to exert control over her impulses is progressively internalised thanks to her relationship with Helen Burns and the exemplum provided by her teacher Mrs. Temple[282]. Therefore, both Helen and Mrs. Temple prove to be key figures in Jane's growth while such positive, auxiliary personalities definitely lack in Antoinette's life, condemning her to deal with her own hardships all by herself and with no means to which she can resort.

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[278] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 15.
[279] J. G. Peters, "Inside and Outside: "Jane Eyre" and Marginalization Through Labeling", *Studies in the Novel*, spring 1996, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 61, https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533113. [Last accessed: 24.05.21]
[280] *Ibid*, p. 60.
[281] Arnold Shapiro, "In Defense of Jane Eyre", *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Autumn, 1968, Vol. 8, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1968), pp. 681-698, pp. 684-685, https://www.jstor.org/stable/449473. [Last accessed: 25.05.21]
[282] C. Yao, Y. Wang, "Using Language to Rage against Victorian Hierarchy: Self-constructed Feminist Identity in Jane Eyre", p. 5.

Hence, Jane's fury in the red-room and her desperate resistance to an unjustified confinement might be connected to a further episode in the novel which inextricably unites the two female characters, Jane and Bertha/Antoinette. However, the first encounter between them is not at all visual, as Jane is progressively driven to Bertha by her mirthless laugh, an eerie sound she overhears while wandering along the corridor in the third story at Thornfield Hall:

> I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third storey: narrow, low, and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking, with its two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle.
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> While I paced softly on, the last sound I expected to hear in so still a region, a laugh, struck my ear. It was a curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped: the sound ceased, only for an instant; it began again, louder: for at first, though distinct, it was very low. It passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to wake an echo in every lonely chamber; though it originated but in one, and I could have pointed out the door whence the accents issued[283].

When striding along such a hallway which she compares to some indoor passage in Bluebeard's castle, Jane feels comfortable, as it gives her access to the roof of the old hall where she can escape her misery and emotional confinement by losing herself in the limitless expansion of the horizon[284]:

> […] When I went down to the gates and looked through them along the road; or when, while Adele played with her nurse, and Mrs. Fairfax made jellies in the storeroom, I climbed the three staircases,

[283] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 126.
[284] P. Grudin, "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in 'Jane Eyre'", p. 149.

raised the trap-door of the attic, and having reached the leads, looked out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line--that then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit[285].

Jane's desire to go beyond the restraints of her life might be interpreted as a plea for gender equality and feminist social rights. Her "silent revolt"[286] sparking from her rebellious attitude can be opposed to Bertha's laugher as it gives voice to Jane's silent insurrection to protest against Victorian social conventions[287]. However, the most open and outright confrontation between the two female characters occurs on Jane's wedding day, when Rochester reveals her about his bigamous intentions and about the existence of his first Creole wife, Bertha Antoinette Mason:

Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell[288].

Betha's passion and ire confer her an unhuman and feral appearance which makes the reader recall Jane's fits of passions in the red-room[289]. Both figures' revolt equates them to bad animals whose going-mad attitude is understood in terms of mere insanity[290]. Nevertheless, in both episodes, madness has to be read as an act of rebellion against the confinement imposed by masterly figures who

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[285] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 129.
[286] *Ibid*, p. 129.
[287] V. Beattie, "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness In "Jane Eyre"", p. 498.
[288] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 338.
[289] S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*, p. 361.
[290] D. Bolt, J. M. Rodas, and E. J. Donaldson, *The Madwoman and the Blindman: Jayne Eyre, Discourse, Disability*, p. 14.

both Jane and Bertha/Antoinette have to face, and consequently against patriarchal social conventions[291]. Therefore, rage and passions, which are interpreted by Rochester as a malady affecting mental stability and transfiguring the physical features, give voice to the repressed plea for gender inclusion, freedom and equality which were underrated in Victorian England. In her first open apparition in the third-story attic, Bertha is described as a clothed hyena, a beastly demon who even to Jane appears as a disturbing non-human being. Such a depiction mirrors the nineteenth-century theories, which conceived madness in moral terms for it caused impulses to prevail upon reason[292]. The epithets used to describe both Jane and Bertha in terms of appearance when overcome by their passions do show how the conception of madness was influenced by physiognomy and facial features, which delineate the monster-like traits of maddened females[293]. In her beastly countenance, Bertha functions as an uncanny literary device: she is the "revenant vampire"[294], the ghastly Gothic character with "a savage face" and "bloodshot eyes"[295]. However, it is worth noticing how non-human labels are implied by Rochester throughout the novel not only to negatively describe Bertha, but also to connote Jane and his affair with her: although positively comparing her to a fairy or an angel[296], such epithets allude to and bring her to an inhuman condition. This might be due to Rochester's desire to deprive their liaison of the social restrictions which represent an impediment to their marriage in order to elevate such a relationship to a non-human and otherworldly status where they could live together in terms of spiritual equality

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[291] D. Bolt, J. M. Rodas, and E. J. Donaldson, *The Madwoman and the Blindman: Jayne Eyre, Discourse, Disability*, pp. 14-15.

[292] P. Grudin, "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in 'Jane Eyre'", p. 147.

[293] D. Bolt, J. M. Rodas, and E. J. Donaldson. *The Madwoman and the Blindman: Jayne Eyre, Discourse, Disability*, p. 16.

[294] T. Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*, p. 60.

[295] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 327.

[296] *Ibid*, p. 300.

unspoilt by Victorian restrictive values. [297] Moreover, by using such labels, not only is Rochester attempting to shape his own bond with Jane, but even her personality, as if he wanted to mould her according to his own wishes and prospects[298], especially when acting like a puppeteer dressing his marionette in rich clothes in Millcote, without respecting her real nature.[299] Significantly, Antoinette undergoes a similar transformation since she is passively drawn to convert her identity into her husband's creation, namely Bertha. Therefore, women are consequently conceived in object terms, controlled and subjugated by the masculine objectifying gaze and, whereas Jane is able to assert her real self, Antoinette/ Bertha is mostly incapable of regain her lost voice[300].

Therefore, Jane's and Bertha/Antoinette's fates seem to be inevitably intertwined: following the revelation of Bertha's existence in the attic, Jane feels deeply shaken since everything she has believed in and has been up to that moment is inevitably lost[301]. Moreover, in her extreme passion and fits of rage, Bertha shows Jane what she would have become without imposing on herself those very restraints she learnt by Helen Burns, thus proving to be a manifestation of Jane's inner darkened and fiery nature[302], almost equating a hidden part she has been obliged to repress[303]. In fact, Bertha has a symbolic function in the novel: she represents Jane's dark double in that her rebellious madness is inevitably linked to Jane's Otherness. The adult Jane has never

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[297] J. G. Peters, "Inside and Outside: "Jane Eyre" and Marginalization Through Labeling", p. 64.
[298] A. Young, "The Monster Within: The Alien Self in "Jane Eyre" and "Frankenstein"", *Studies in the Novel*, fall 1991, Vol. 23, No. 3 (fall 1991), pp. 325-338, p. 328, https://www.jstor.org/stable/29532797. [Last accessed: 26.05.21]
[299] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 309.
[300] P. J. Bellis, "In the Window-Seat: Vision and Power in Jane Eyre", *ELH*, Autumn, 1987, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 639-652, p. 639, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2873224. [Last accessed: 26.05.21]
[301] A. Smith, *Gothic literature*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 82.
[302] P. Grudin, "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in 'Jane Eyre'", p. 147.
[303] *Ibid*, p. 153.

directly expressed her anger throughout her stay at Thornfield[304], apart from the most significant moment in the novel, that is her passionate love confession to Rochester uttered in uncontrolled rage and in fierce animalistic aggressiveness, void of the self-control loved proclaimed by the Christian precepts[305]. Therefore, not only does Bertha behave as Jane's repressed Other, but her madness also acts as a catalyst to express their rage for the confinement and repression imposed on women by society[306]. The outcome of such rebellion proves to be fundamental for the development of both female characters: driven by the desire of being herself again and to be liberated by her enslavement, Bertha sets fire to the emblem of her alienation, Thornfield, and commits suicide. However, such an extreme act must be interpreted as the last attempt for Bertha to assert her real self, to regain her voice and the Antoinette she had lost when leaving Jamaica[307]. Despite having been interpreted as the removal of the major impediment to Jane's happy ending, Bertha's death has more crucial implications: on the one hand, it destroys Rochester controlling and imprisoning masculine gaze which embodies the patriarchal power oppressing the female. On the other hand, it represents the fulfilment of both Bertha and Jane's *bildung* as it allows Jane to reclaim her lost self, rediscovering her Other side, repressed by Victorian constraints, and to openly confront and acknowledge it in order to reunite with her beloved Rochester and live a relationship based on equality in terms of class, gender and spirit.

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[304] S. Yurdakul, "The Other Side of the Coin: the Otherness of Bertha / Antoinette Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*", p. 68.

[305] Sandra M. Gilbert, "'Jane Eyre' and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking", p. 357.

[306] V. Beattie, "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness In "Jane Eyre"", p. 495.

[307] P. G. Anderson, "Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea: The Other Side/"Both Sides Now", p. 59.

3.3 Chromatic Tinges in the Representation of Otherness

Throughout the centuries, philosophers, scientists and researchers have been analysing the impact of visual experiences on the individual as a means to evaluate its emotive reactions and consequently outlining its personality. Colours have been identified as a potent tool to convey and express feelings, since they deeply appeal to the emotional sphere due to their visual energy and allure. Therefore, colours enhance the chance to convey emotions and temper since they represent a visual device to assert one's voice and identity. Significantly, both Charlotte Brontë and Jean Rhys intriguingly resort to the choice of specific colours in order to further disclose distinctive traits of Jane's and Antoinette/Bertha's personality, thus joining these characters even further.

Though holding different values on the significance of the red colour, both Charlotte Brontë and Jean Rhys associate it to Jane's and Antoinette's temper[308]. When referred to Antoinette, it is able to convey her exotic, sensual and passionate individuality: she feels deeply empowered by a colour which has a positive and potent connotation since it allows her to directly and visually express her true nature[309]. Moreover, the red colour embodies Antoinette's beloved Jamaica, where flowers blossom in bright red, embellishing the land and the soul, and where the sky and the ocean are dyed in warm reddish shades when the sun sets:

> "Every evening we watched the sun go down from the thatched shelter she called the *ajoupa*, I the summer house. We watched the

[308] B. Tarozzi, *La Forma Vincente: I Romanzi di Jean Rhys*. Verona: Arsenale Editrice, 1984, p. 135.

[309] N. Azam, ""Madwoman in the Post-Colonial Era" A Study of the Female Voice in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*", p. 238.

sky and the distant sea on fire- all the colours were in that fire and
the huge clouds fringed and shot with flame"[310].

However, despite being a qualifying catalyst for Antoinette's voice and identity, her husband does not share the same sensations summoned by this colour. To him, it provokes stimulating and exciting passions without being invested of the effective qualities perceived by his wife: for the English spouse, red stands for eroticism, for those unrestrained impulses which make him "savage with desire"[311]. As Antoinette recalls when enclosed at Thornfield, he eventually associates it with unchastity and betrayal[312]:

I took the red dress down and put it against myself. 'Does it make
me look intemperate and unchaste?' I said. That man told me so. He
had found out that Sandi had been to the house and that I went to
see him. I never knew who told. 'Infamous daughter of an infamous
mother', he said to me[313].

While for Antoinette her red dress, which significantly "has a meaning,"[314] epitomises her entire world, the elements forging both her personality and a way out of her confinement to an imagined return to Jamaica, her husband cannot fathom the profound essence of such a colour and deploys it as a means to defend Antoinette's imprisonment and disruption of her identity. Unlike Jean Rhys, Charlotte Brontë does not invest this colour with a positive and liberating connotation, but rather with apprehension and dread. The red-room, in fact,

[310] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pp. 54-55.
[311] *Ibid*, p. 58.
[312] N. Azam, ""Madwoman in the Post-Colonial Era" A Study of the Female Voice in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea"*, p. 238.
[313] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 121.
[314] *Ibid*, p. 120.

becomes the confining place where Jane is haunted and frightened by what she perceives as a ghostly presence and the place where she loses her self, falling prey to a maddening passion[315]. Therefore, the red colour conveys anxiety and images of death to Jane, since it is associated with her uncle's death in the red-room, and it completely differs from the liberating and empowering sensations which characterised Antoinette's and Rhys's connotation. It embodies both freedom and confinement, sensuality and savage sexuality, delight and angst. Furthermore, it represents fire, just like the West Indian fiery sunsets but also the destroying fire at Coulibri estate, which marks Antoinette's derangement. Fire is the element which represents both Bertha and Antoinette, since it symbolises rebellion against enslavement, both on a social and individual level: indeed, the fiery red symbolises female anger against the patriarchal Victorian constraints in *Jane Eyre* as well as the slave uprisings against the ruling masters in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Such ideological revolts, instead, are brought on a more individual level as fire comes to embody resentment against the unjust confinement suffered by both young Jane and Bertha. Indeed, it is through fire that Bertha can eventually regain her suppressed self and, by recalling that slave revolt which had destroyed her home, she rebels against her master in the attempt to finally free and be herself again[316].

A further chromatic expedient to visually exemplify personality traits and ideas is the usage of the white colour. As opposed to the red one, for Antoinette's companion it symbolises purity and compliance, which are two fundamental requirements a wife should have according to Victorian standards[317]. However, the extremely passionate Antoinette seems not to comply with his needs: "She

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[315] B. Tarozzi, *La Forma Vincente: I Romanzi di Jean Rhys*, p. 131.
[316] V. Beattie, "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness In "Jane Eyre"", p. 501.
[317] L. Erwin, '"Like in a Looking-Glass": History and Narrative in Wide Sargasso Sea', *NOVEL*: A Forum on Fiction, Winter, 1989, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 143-158, p. 156, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1345800. [Last accessed: 30.05.21]

was wearing the white dress I had admired, but it had slipped untidily over one of her shoulder and seemed too large for her"[318]. Therefore, Antoinette's white dress symbolises the very chastity and innocence so profoundly admired by her husband, which, however, do not seem to fit her personality, while being perfectly evident in Jane:

> 'That is my wife' […] 'And this is what I wished to have' (laying his hand on my shoulder): 'this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder—this face with that mask—this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the Gospel and man of the law, and remember with what judgement ye judge ye shall be judged' [319].

Moreover, in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, not only is the white colour set in opposition to unchaste and mad behaviours, but it is also presented to the reader in racial terms, since it alludes to the confrontation between the white English man and the black slave or mulatto West Indian Creole. On the other hand, such an opposition also conveys a feeling of alienation and exclusion typical of Antoinette's childhood and adult life, which compels her husband to perceive the West Indian blackness as a corruption and poisoning of his white Englishness[320].

Therefore, both Charlotte Brontë and Jean Rhys deeply rely upon colours as a catalyst to express one's identity, and such chromatic hues further highlight the opposition marking the relationship between Jane and Antoinette/Bertha. Thus, both female characters interpret and sometimes desperately cling to coloured

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[318] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 81.
[319] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 339.
[320] L. Erwin, '"Like in a Looking-Glass": History and Narrative in Wide Sargasso Sea', p. 156.

memories and sensations which, characterised by epiphanic potential, set the action in motion and lead the characters to self-fulfilment.

3.4 The Mirror Stage: the Role of Bertha Mason in Forging the Self

> If it be true that the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject, one can understand that it is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject[321].
>
> <div align="right">Julia Kristeva- Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection</div>

Throughout its existence, every human being feels the necessity to interact with the Other in order to confront itself with its peers and gather comprehensive knowledge of its own essential nature and abilities. Therefore, such a confrontation leads the subject to become perfectly aware of itself by drawing a clear distinction between its individuality and the others, who are thus needed as a key instrument in the process of self-development. However, as Julia Kristeva maintains in *Powers of Horror*, the clear separation between the I and the Other might be sometimes blurred, consequently causing a disruption of the self and its existence. Abjection, thus, represents the impossibility to discern the subject and the object, generating a loss of meaning which brings the individual to an uncanny feeling of alienation[322]. In psychoanalytic terms, abjection marks

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[321] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 5.
[322] *Ibid*, p. 5.

the precise moment in which the baby separates from its own mother and becomes aware of such a detachment, in what Lacan identifies as the "mirror stage"[323]. By looking at its own reflection through the looking glass, the subject at once projects and interprets its own image as something other than itself, thus leading to a disruption of the entire identity. Therefore, it is in the recognition of the existence of the Other that the individual becomes aware of itself:

> And, as in jouissance where the object of desire, known as object a [in Lacan's terminology], bursts with the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other, there is nothing either objective or objectual to the abject. It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become alter ego, drops so that "I" does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence[324].

Thus, the Other grants the real existence of the self as it confronts it and consequently allows the subject to reshape and expand its essence by acknowledging an unfamiliar or unexplored inner part of itself. Accordingly, the mirror proves to be a fundamental tool in the process of forging the self and, for this reason, it has been vastly resorted to in the literary field as an instrument to achieve complete self-recognition[325] by simultaneously revealing the existence of an *alter-ego*, namely the double, which might act as either a conflicting or a supportive being.

Interestingly, both Charlotte Brontë and Jean Rhys resort to the motif of the mirror in their novels so as to bring both Jane and Antoinette to a further awareness of their selfhood.

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[323] M. Vanon Alliata, "The Naked Man fom the Sea: Identity and Separation in 'The Secret Sharer'", p. 333.
[324] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 9.
[325] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, p. 53.

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë employs the mirror to efficiently join the two main female figures, namely Jane and Bertha. Jane's first encounter with her dark side in the red-room is empowered through the looking glass, where Jane apprehensively confronts her specular self:

> Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers[326].

The innermost secrets guarded by the mirror show Jane her unfamiliar image, which is perceived as a persecutory Other revealing that unconscious and dark part of herself. Moreover, a clear connection might be drawn between the "tiny phantom" in the red-room and the eerie reflection the adult Jane sees in the mirror at Thornfield Hall. Such a figure, disclosed by the dim nigh light on the mirror, reveals an intruder who is intertwined to her own fate: despite profoundly terrorising her for the horrible traits of her "lurid face"[327], Jane cannot help perceiving the dread generating from such a figure as part of herself, recalling the same feelings experienced in the red-room at Gateshead[328]: "[…] For the second time in my life- only the second time- I became insensible from terror"[329]. Significantly, Jane's glance at the mirror does not manifest her self-

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[326] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 19.

[327] *Ibid*, p. 327.

[328] P. J. Bellis, "In the Window-Seat: Vision and Power in Jane Eyre", p. 645.

[329] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 327.

image, but rather the devilish, frightening features of her alien self. The looking glass thus becomes the oxymoronic device which reveals the individual its own reflection, simultaneously perceived in terms of sameness and alterity. [330]

Furthermore, Jane's wedding veil worn by Bertha while looking at the mirror becomes a token anticipating the awful implication of Jane's choice of marrying Rochester and the subsequent disclosure of his first wife. However, it is in the tearing of Jane's wedding veil which the utmost connection between Jane and Bertha can be established: despite being interpreted as an act of revenge or extreme rage for having being replaced as Rochester's wife, Bertha does not have the intention of hurting Jane. Indeed, as Gilbert and Gubar observe, Bertha's intrusion might be interpreted as an act of warning for Jane and as an implicit manifestation of her forthcoming future[331]. Although featuring as her innermost and dark double, Bertha is not willing to destroy Jane, as she would rather perform the task of equating her and even acting for her own safety[332].

As far as *Wide Sargasso Sea* is concerned, the most meaningful and arduous recognition of Antoinette's identity as Creole is further emphasised by her relationship with Tia who, by acting as a mirror, makes Antoinette conscious of her impossibility to feel entirely accepted and integrated in a world which is persistently attempting to expel her[333]. Unavoidably, in such a touching episode, the looking glass conveys and gives a racial connotation to Antoinette's identity, which starts to be shaped when a sharp separation occurs from what she perceives as her double[334].

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[330] J. La Belle, "Mutiny against the Mirror: Jane Eyre and 'The Mill on the Floss'", *Pacific Coast Philology*, Nov., 1985, Vol. 20, No. 1/2 (Nov., 1985), pp. 53-56, p. 53, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1316516. [Last accessed: 12.06.21]

[331] S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*, p. 360.

[332] *Ibid*, p. 361.

[333] R. S. Patke, "Method and Madness in "A Question of Power" and "Wide Sargasso Sea"", p. 189.

[334] L. Erwin, '"Like in a Looking-Glass": History and Narrative in Wide Sargasso Sea', p. 144.

Moreover, the considerable importance of the looking glass as vehicle to establish identity arises at Thornfield Hall where, enclosed in her almost bare room, the absence of any mirrors takes Antoinette back to her days in Jamaica and makes her contemplate her divided and lost self:

> There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself and not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us - hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?[335]

The reflected image on the glass is perceived by Antoinette as both familiar and unfamiliar, a part of her own self she cannot immediately recognise and which is therefore seen as an otherized double. In Lacanian terms, the mirror becomes the mediator which allows Antoinette to establish a contact with her inner self during her childhood and to create her idea of Otherness. She narcissistically tries to kiss her own image in the attempt to reach and join such a double, only to be disappointed with the impossibility to join it. Deprived of a looking glass, she now declares to be unable to understand who she really is, further emphasising the pivotal role performed by the Other in forging identity.

Furthermore, in Antoinette's last dream, before committing the act which will allow her to regain her freedom, the mirror is transfigured into the pool of her childhood memories where she would play with Tia, and which becomes a metaphor for Antoinette's desire of the very inclusion she has been striving for her whole life:

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[335] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 117.

But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? And I heard the man's voice, Bertha! Bertha! All this I saw and heard in a fraction of a second. And the sky so red. Someone screamed and I thought Why did I scream? I called "Tia!" and jumped and woke[336].

Many critics have interpreted Bertha's suicide as a necessary sacrifice to be offered to grant Jane the possibility of fulfilling her *bildung* and forge her complete identity, in an act which symbolises the indispensable destruction of Jane's dark side, representing her impending, troublesome and repressed self and standing for her racially idealised female counterpart. However, it is through the acknowledgment of such a threatening and inner part that Jane is truly able to be aware of her entire self, which is inevitably composed of both light and dark impulses. Such drives enable her to be fully aware of both her potential and her place in society and to established an equal relationship, based on love rather than on the Christian restraint and self-discipline, with her beloved Rochester. Therefore, the encounter with Bertha through the looking glass reveals her true nature to Jane and allows her to consciously be in control of her own life.

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[336] J. Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, p. 124.

CONCLUSIONS

> Foreigner: a chocked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel
> clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. […] Strangely,
> the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity,
> the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding
> and affinity fonder[337].

Ever since time immemorial, cultures and societies have been foisting principles with the aim of shaping people's personalities and mindsets alike. Men and women have oftentimes been confronting with dilemmas in order to adapt their temperament to such precepts, often struggling with unexplored sides of their own individuality which, although essential for personal growth, were to be restrained. Such an expansion of one's identity constantly requires a confrontation with another side which, although engendering an inner struggle capable of leading the subject to self-disruption, most often proves crucial for its own maturation. Hence, only when accepting the unknown and unfamiliar aspects of ourselves, are we at last consecrated to blossom and prosper both as individuals and as community members[338].

The concept of Otherness as an effective tool to forge a thorough and conscious identity has been investigated throughout the centuries in a good many fields of research. From an anthropological and sociological perspective, Structuralism has attempted to provide human beings with structures to conceive and interpret their lives in terms of society, culture and mindset. Such structures have been organised into what Levi-Strauss called binary pairs, conceiving the relationships

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[337] J. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 1.
[338] *Ibid*, p. 1.

between a whole and its components as two sets of contrasting and opposing elements. Such an interpretation of the world unavoidably involves the human subject, which is equally conceived in term of binary oppositions existing in a system whose entire equilibrium is therefore ensured by the presence of a centre.

Nevertheless, Derrida questions such a uniformity in the idea of structure provided by structuralist thinkers, observing the ineptitude of the human mindset in conceiving opposing elements in terms of sheer equality. Therefore, by observing the tendency to overestimate one of the elements in a binary pair, Derrida advocates an internal deconstruction of the structure itself by removing its element of stability, namely the centre, in order to set it in motion and alter its hierarchical composition.[339] Hence, such lack of stability causes the elements in a pair to confront each other thus proving their mutual dependence for their own existence. Accordingly, the Self-Other couple should not be interpreted in hierarchical terms by overvaluing the self over the Other, since both components are vital for the human being to be aware of its own identity. Strengthened by Derrida's deconstructive approach, a comprehensive concept of Otherness has been also devised with a significant contribution of psychoanalytic theories, particularly those formulated by Sigmund Freud who introduced the division of the human psyche into three systems, namely the Super Ego, the Ego and the Id, the latter being identified with the repressed impulses and desires of the subject. Such hidden drives, when emerging from the depths of the spirit, provoke uncanny feelings which are associated with both familiar and unknown sensations, thus unavoidably causing the subject to be unable to recognise itself.

This theories on the disruption of the self on both a sociological and psychoanalytic level have considerably influenced the literary production of those times. In fact, Gothic literature has embraced the concepts of ambivalence

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[339] M. A. Peters, "Derrida, Nietzsche, and the Return to The Subject" p. 70.

and ambiguity, transgression and excess, thus contributing to the emergence of the motif of the double, conceived in psychoanalytic terms as it embodies the rejected self along with its pains and greatest fears. Moreover, such a figure, if interpreted in terms of Otherness, might also reveal a connection to scientific theories such as the Darwinian ones in the nineteenth century about society and its hierarchical structure in its human compositions.[340] This has consequently led the Other to be perceived and assumed in both geographical and societal terms, thus forging the concepts of Exoticism and Orientalism, and severely affecting the conception of gender equality in society.[341]

The Other has always represented a crucial element in the perception of the human being and its environment, being interpreted as a part which is both necessary and dangerous to the self. In many fields throughout history, segregation has proven to be the most recurring form of exclusion and otherization of what compels the individual to confront with the most unfamiliar sides of its own individuality, thus causing the Other to gain part of its identity from its own imprisonment.

Otherness and the motif of the double are the recurring themes joining Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* as exemplified in the figure of Bertha/Antoinette Mason who is rendered as an opposing character to Jane on two different levels, namely the geographical/racial one and the gender based one, both deeply relying upon a conception of society influenced by Victorian and patriarchal values.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys gives voice to the silenced woman in the attic by providing her with a background which, despite offering an explanation for her confinement at Thornfield Hall, further highlights her other origins

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[340] J. F. Staszak, "Other/Otherness" p. 4.
[341] *Ibid* p. 6.

contrasting with Rochester's Britishness and, consequently, with Jane's one. Jane and Antoinette are further linked by the motif of slavery, as Antoinette symbolises both the enslavement of the black man in the West Indies by the British Empire and the enslavement imposed on her by society for being a woman. On the other hand, Jane deploys slavery images as well to refer to her unjust treatment by her cousin John, who is described as a slaver and a cruel master. Therefore, both women are linked by their position as in-between figures doomed to exclusion from their family background and community, consequently sentencing them to confinement in a hostile environment which they both perceive in terms of slavery. A further element joining these two characters is their strength in attempting to rebel against their subjugation, thus speaking their own voice which is too often unheard.

However, conceived as binary opposites composing the whole structural self, and despite showing some common features, Jane and Bertha are primarily destined to be characterised by contrasting and opposing traits. The utmost confrontation unfolds in Jane's encounter with Bertha in the attic at Thornfield Hall, where the appalling features of her face and her uncontrolled behaviour which makes her a disturbing character typical of Gothic literature are interpreted in racial terms. Therefore, due to her West Indian background, Bertha becomes Jane's avatar conceived in racial terms. She might also be interpreted as a psychological extension of Jane, since she shows her the possible consequences of being enslaved by her own unrestrained passions. As racial Other, Bertha has been doomed to silence and she attempts to liberate her own voice by becoming Jane's nocturnal spectre and recounting her of the entrapping values of patriarchal society. Moreover, Bertha echoes Jane's terror of being a monster by embodying her innermost fears, as only a double figure could do.

Patriarchal society identifies as deviant everything which does not comply with restraint, submission and order, thus inevitably targeting women driven by their passions and desires and who are not easy to be quelled. In Victorian society, women dissenting from such values were given the label of "madwomen", emphasising and leading to further fragmentation of their individuality. Therefore, branded as a madwoman, Bertha's unrestrained and passionate attitude is clearly set in opposition to Jane's self-control. However, Jean Rhys tries to return Bertha her dignity by showing how madness is not an inherited family trait but rather a socially constructed illness which has deeply disrupted her individuality because of people such as her mother Annette and her husband. Thus, in the attempt to rebel against these patriarchal values Antoinette, now transformed into Bertha, acts as Jane's double by showing her the other side, Jane's repressed inner self and her way out of a constraining and subjugating environment.

According to Romana Rutelli, the 'original' certainly needs its own double in order to accomplish its journey of self-discovery, which undergoes three difference phases, the first one concerning the horror deriving from the encounter with the Other, which is then followed by the unavoidable acknowledgement of the Other as a part of itself and which, in the end, might lead to the acceptance of such an alien part[342]. This last phase is exemplified by Jane in her decision to go back to Rochester, as she lets her passionate side to prevail upon her Christian values of self-discipline and moral restraint: love is no longer interpreted as an overwhelming force disrupting the integrity of a person, but as an inner energy through which the subject can gain a complete awareness of its own individuality.[343]

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[342] R. Rutelli, *Il Desiderio del Diverso: Saggio sul Doppio*, p. 86.
[343] S. M. Gilbert, "'Jane Eyre' and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking", p. 367.

Therefore, the relationship between Jane and Bertha complies with all the features characterising the original-double connection, starting from their initial rivalry based on both admiration and hostility in the perpetration of the same desired object, namely Rochester's love, and leading eventually to interdependent relationships altering the hierarchical original-double structure. Moreover, both female creatures have been metaphorically forged by Rochester, who employs labels to address both Jane and Antoinette since he tries to reshape Bertha as a madwoman and Jane as an enriched but abjected angel in an Oriental fashion.

However, it is in the last stages of Antoinette/Bertha's life that their inseparability as two halves of the same whole is disclosed: in her decision to commit suicide, Bertha ends up acting for Jane by giving her the possibility to discover her real identity and showing her how to act in order to speak her voice and liberate her passions. Nevertheless, through this act of self-sacrifice, Antoinette/Bertha is ultimately able to regain her real self by freeing it from the constraint of such a society as she is finally reunited with her Jamaican and real subjectivity.

Hence, through the confrontation with her *doppelgänger*, namely Bertha, Jane achieves integrity of her self[344] since it is through Bertha's silence that she is able to gain her voice[345] in a journey that progressively guides her towards self-awareness.[346] The expansion of the self cannot be achieved but through a confrontation with what is perceived as Other which, representing the self's double, allows the subject to detach from and simultaneously lose itself in order to find it enlarged by new life experiences and by the encounter with new

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[344] V. Beattie, "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness In "Jane Eyre"", p. 500.
[345] C. M. Mardorossian, "Shutting up the Subaltern: Silences, Stereotypes, and Double-Entendre in Jean Rhys's "Wide Sargasso Sea", p. 1082.
[346] J. G. Peters, "Inside and Outside: "Jane Eyre" and Marginalization Through Labeling", p. 67.

cultures. Both the subject and the double, thus, are deeply altered by such a confrontation both in terms of personal growth and consciousness of society roles.

As a result, Jane and Bertha might be conceived as separated halves of one structural identity, as the abjected Other proves to be an empowering and undeniable feature in forging the self and accepting it as being composed of both light and dark, restraints and impulses, reason and passions.

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