

Jane eyre in wide sargasso sea english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



The quotation " I'm all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (Carter, 71) is preceded in Notes from the Front Line by " most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts" (Carter, 71) By reading the quotation in its original context, its meaning can be fully understood; that intellectual development occurs when we challenge and question old material with the insights and ideas of the new. It is this alone that forces readers to rethink their positions on topics taken to be understood in a specific way and enables insight and new perspectives to form. It is in light of this that throughout my essay I will argue that the rewriting of novels is entirely beneficial owing to the fact that it allows for varied perspectives and forces the reader to reconsider preconceived notions. Jean Rhys does exactly this in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by giving Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason not only a narrative but indeed a creative space in which her story can be told and better understood. Rhys's novel raises pertinent questions from all areas of life, for example what truly is madness? Is it a product of upbringing, a genetic predisposition or a result of one's situation? It is questions like these which force the reader to question relationships depicted in the novel such as that between Antoinette and her husband, the mother/daughter relationship and those between races. There are a multitude of possible comparisons that could be made between *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. However, in light of Carter's quotation I will focus on three areas which I believe best demonstrate how Rhys has transformed a revolutionary literary work into a widely discussed and analytic novel. Her work forces the reader to re-evaluate the accepted viewpoint, for example the preconceived notion

of Bertha Mason as animalistic and inherently insane. The three areas this essay will focus on are how dreams, madness and womanhood are depicted in the novels. From this point on I will refer to Bertha when talking of Brontë's character and Antoinette whilst talking of Rhys's. Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* is undeniably a literary phenomenon in its own right, it would be foolish to forget that it too portrays only one side of the story. Dreams are a predominant feature in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. They provide insight into the character's repressed and suppressed emotions and reveal their interior consciousness. Whilst the stifling of Antoinette's emotions are purely due to her lack of understanding as to how best to express them, Jane's are the result of wishing to fulfil the Victorian ideals of womanhood. However, like Jane's dreams, Antoinette's dreams are also clairvoyant. Dreams act as precursors to future events in both character's lives; Rochester moves away in Jane's dreams indicating the trepidation she feels with regard to their romantic relationship, whilst Antoinette is continuously followed by "someone who hated [her]" (Rhys, 26). These dreams and the foreshadowing that they bring to both novels are equally beneficial for reader and character as their meanings can be deciphered and understood. It is an interesting paradox that whilst both novels use imagery in similar ways, the outcome of this imagery is remarkably different; the texts reveal distinctly different approaches to dreaming and reality. In Brontë's novel, despite their importance, a very clear boundary between the dream world and England is maintained. Jane's dreams are always neat and ordered. In contrast, dreams in Rhys's novel are chaotic and muddled which creates an overarching tone of surrealism as there appears to be no

definitive boundary between dreams and the world of the narrators.

Antoinette experiences a sequence of three dreams which appear to roughly emulate the three dreams which Jane experiences as the apprehension about her marriage grows. The first dream Antoinette has symbolically takes place in her childhood after an incident with Tia, where she cheats Antoinette out of her money, calls her a "white nigger" (Rhys, 24) and steals her dress. This incident spurs the young Antoinette to question her place in society as she's told that she's merely a "white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger." (Rhys, 24) Antoinette dreams of "walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated [her] was with [her], out of sight. [She] could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though [she] struggled and screamed [she] could not move." (Rhys, 26) This symbolises Antoinette's apparent confusion and distress at Tia's ruthless dismissal of her. The use of the past tense is indicative of the distance between her reality and dream consciousness, whilst the ambiguity of the images indicate Antoinette's inability to acknowledge her fears and reflects her undeveloped self-awareness. This dream occurs on a number of occasions each time becoming progressively more vivid and elaborate as she progresses through womanhood. It also vaguely coincides with Jane's primary dream of Mr Rochester which is striking given that they are the inverse of one another. Antoinette fears an approaching form of 'someone who hated' [her] (Rhys, 26), whilst Jane is fearful of the retreating figure of Mr Rochester.

Antoinette's second dream occurs when she is seventeen, just after she receives a visit from her step-father and directly before Rochester takes over the narrative. In the preceding passage, women are demonstrated to be

possessions of men as Mr Mason lavishes Antoinette with jewellery such as " a locket [and] a bracelet" (Rhys, 58) and clothes in an attempt to create for her a new femininity and identity. Mr Mason speaks of Antoinette's happiness as an essential factor, which reveals that the match has been carefully calculated and resulted in Rochester being the best suitor. This is ironic as Rochester will be the root of her destruction. Antoinette finds herself " choked" by feelings of " dismay, sadness [and] loss" (Rhys, 59) reminding her of the time she " found the dead horse" (Rhys, 59) and that if she says nothing in response then " it may not be true" (Rhys, 59). It is after this incident that again Antoinette experiences the dream indicating the imminent loss of her happiness, sexual purity and freedom. The dream depicts Antoinette entering " an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall" (Rhys, 60) correlating to earlier allusions to the Garden of Eden, that the garden at Coulibri " was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible - the tree of life grew there." (Rhys, 19) Rhys's illustration is of a paradise " gone wild" (Rhys, 19) where orchids are " snaky looking" (Rhys, 19) create an inversion of the Biblical idyllic haven. This allusion to the Fall of Man symbolises Antoinette's continued demise from this point onwards. It is in this " enclosed garden" (Rhys, 60), as Gayatri Spivak asserts, that " Antoinette encounters not Love but a strange threatening voice... inviting her into a prison which masquerades as... love" (Spivak, 242), wholly summarising Antoinette's fate. The second instalment of the dream is recorded in the present tense which contrasts the use of the past tense during the first dream. This signifies that the gap between reality and dream consciousness is rapidly closing. The greater clarity of the second dream

suggests Antoinette's increased maturity, perception and self-awareness. The dream is also indicative of Antoinette's adolescent sexuality. Paula Le Gallez asserts that the man's lecherous guidance and Antoinette's efforts to avoid the "white beautiful" (Rhys, 59) dress becoming soiled are indicative of her concerns regarding the maintenance of her innocence and sexual purity (Le Gallez, 84). This version of the dream acts as a prelude to the numerous problems Antoinette experiences after meeting Rochester, who symbolically remains unnamed throughout the novel. For example, the "white and beautiful" (Rhys, 59) dress symbolises her wedding dress, the man "black with hatred" (Rhys, 60) represents Rochester, and finally Antoinette's reluctance to follow the man in her dream indicates her unwillingness to marry Rochester. It is worth noting here that in *Jane Eyre*, Mr Rochester claims that he was tricked into marrying Bertha, whilst in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Antoinette wishes to call off the wedding yet Rochester insists and persuades her otherwise. Furthermore, the change in location within her dream from the forest to the enclosed garden symbolises the impending move from Granbois to England. Therefore the "different trees" (Rhys, 60) represent those unknown to Antoinette from England. The specific description that the garden was surrounded by a "stone wall" (Rhys, 60) mirrors the stone wall at Thornfield from which Jane falls in her second dream about Rochester. The entrapment within the garden, with only "steps leading upwards" (Rhys, 60) represents and anticipates Antoinette's imprisonment in Rochester's attic. It is here that Antoinette demonstrates her increased perception and self-awareness, as she knows that she will leave behind her identity "when [she goes] up these steps." and that "at the top" (Rhys, 60) she will take on the

identity of Bertha, which Rochester has constructed for her. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë creates a conscious dualistic world that guarantees that there is a clear distinction between dreaming and reality. By contrast, Rhys depicts a seamless amalgamation of dreams and reality. Whilst Jane's Victorian upbringing enables her to minimise daydreams and isolate night dreams, Antoinette's neglected childhood in the disorganised post-emancipation Caribbean indicates that she experiences waking life as a continuous dream. The entirety of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is written in this dreamlike style, with Rochester describing Granbois to be "quite unreal and like a dream" (Rhys, 80). Eventually, even Rochester's formal, structured narrative becomes fluid, primitive and dreamlike with elements reminiscent of Antoinette's dream (Rhys, 104). Antoinette experiences the third and final dream at the very end of the novel, giving a full elucidation as to how, precisely, she arrived at the state we find Bertha at the end of Brontë's novel. The vague parallels between the ending of *Jane Eyre* and the one presented by Rhys force the reader to reconsider their assumptions of madwoman Bertha maliciously setting fire to Thornfield. At this point in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is seen to be symbolically burning down and ultimately destroying the bonds of patriarchy which have imprisoned her for the entirety of her life. At this final stage, Antoinette has wholly transformed into the delusional woman, Bertha Mason, with a treacherously loose grip on reality and only occasional moments of clarity stimulated by flashes of pure rage. Whilst imprisoned in the attic of Thornfield Hall, Antoinette's frail ability to differentiate between memory and dreaming is completely lost, therefore removing any remaining distinction between waking and sleeping. After informing Antoinette of her attack on

Richard Mason, Grace Poole suggests that she is "too far gone to be helped." (Rhys, 187) Whilst lying in bed considering this fact, Antoinette notices her "red dress" (Rhys, 187) on the floor observing that "it was beautiful and it reminded [her] of something [she] must do." (Rhys, 187) This contextualisation of the final dream demonstrates its purpose, that it will enlighten Antoinette of what she perceives must be done. Despite both previous dreams including forewarnings of her ultimate fate, it is only at the point of this final dream, where the gap between her reality and dream consciousness has been completely eradicated, that Antoinette is able to fully understand their meaning. Even with the removal of this barrier, Antoinette's confusion is still apparent represented by her walking "as though [she] were flying" (Rhys 187) and her apprehension that "someone" (Rhys, 187) was following her. With no distinction between waking and dreaming, Antoinette's state of consciousness is difficult to discern. What is more, having set fire to the curtains and table cloth watching the "flames shoot up" (Rhys, 189) Antoinette calls for help from Christophine, in response "there was a wall of fire" (Rhys, 189) which protected her. Antoinette then moves up onto the battlements, giving her an elevated, almost transcendent position over the devastation of which she is creator. As she looks back into the flames, Antoinette visualises scenes from her life, for example "the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork...the tree of life [from Coulibri] ...the soft green velvet of the moss on the garden wall" and she hears "the parrot call" (Rhys, 189). These images expose Antoinette's true unexpressed emotions. The nostalgic images of Coulibri are indicative of the innocence and safety of childhood she now longs for. Such images also express the

anguish she feels at the corruption, destruction and subsequent reconstruction of her identity as symbolised with reference to Coco the parrot. The parrot whose wings had been clipped by Mr Mason could not escape death, just as Rochester has done to Antoinette; he has created and imposed the identity of Bertha upon Antoinette leaving her with no form of escape. Antoinette's inability to recognise "the ghost" (Rhys, 188) although knowing her, or to distinguish her voice to be the source of the scream, further demonstrates her total loss of identity. The images of an animalistic madwoman "with streaming hair" (Rhys, 188) portray 'Bertha', an identity which has been imposed upon Antoinette by Rochester. In addition, the image of Antoinette's "doll's house" (Rhys, 189) is symbolic of her entrapment as a child in her stepfather's house and her continued imprisonment in Rochester's attic. It is evident that Antoinette is merely a doll playing out the role of "Marionetta" (Rhys, 154) created for her by Rochester. Antoinette lacks any independence both physically and mentally, being reduced to nothing but a doll for Rochester's use. In light of this, however, Antoinette perceives her only escape to be through death where she can be truly free. It is significant that this does not materialise in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, suggesting a preservation of Antoinette's innocence causing her to remain a victim of her circumstance. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha malevolently burns Thornfield to the ground before jumping to her death. Brontë interpolates readers to empathise very little with Bertha at this point in the novel, foregrounding this form of violent revenge instead. Although it has been suggested that "Bertha's function in *Jane Eyre* is to render indeterminate the boundary between human and animal" (Spivak, 241), a

significant connection between Bertha and Jane can be recognised. Firmly established through reflective imagery in both characters' dreams is their ardent desire for freedom. As Jane explores Thornfield, she leans " against the picturesque battlements" (Gilbert and Gubar, 348) and looks " out over the world like Bluebeard's bride sister" (Gilbert and Gubar, 348) longing " for freedom" (Gilbert and Gubar, 348) contemplating " all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that [she] desired and had not in [her] actual existence." (Brontë, 95) This association, illuminating re-writing of narratives as advantageous, will be explored in greater detail further on in this essay. However it is important to notice the characteristic parallels between Jane and Bertha; they both stand on the battlements and envisage their lives and wish for freedom. In Jane Eyre, Brontë uses dreams as a device, foreshadowing future events and providing insight into the characters' consciousness. Whilst maintaining these predominant functions, Rhys's novel is supererogatory as the entirety of the narrative is created in a dream-like manner without any temporal references. The clarity of the distinction between dream and waking for Jane is as strong as her disposition whilst in Wide Sargasso Sea the distinction is as feeble as Antoinette's. Through her use of dreams, Rhys forces the reader into an uncomfortable position of reconsideration, as it is through dreams that Antoinette's true vulnerability and true nature are conveyed thus giving an alternative understanding to the wild beast portrayed in Jane Eyre. The depiction of Antoinette's madness is a central tenet of how Rhys conveys Antoinette's story. In Wide Sargasso Sea, Rhys firmly establishes Antoinette's identity separately from any other character's observations or perceptions. Whilst in Jane Eyre, Bertha is portrayed as the archetypal '

madwoman'; savage and assumed to possess no voice or sense of self. Contrastingly, in spite of her evident vulnerability, Antoinette is a complex and multi-dimensional character. Rhys' narrative provides insight into Antoinette's consciousness through the use of disjointed memories, thoughts and, as previously discussed, dreams. This narrative structure is immediately at odds with the lengthy dialogues and monologues found within the pages of Jane Eyre. Rhys criticises the construction of madness in Jane Eyre, interrogating Brontë's depictions of this notion as an innate and inherently immoral characteristic. Identity itself is illustrated to be a stable and rational construct based upon observable behaviour and waking consciousness. Despite this criticism, Rhys must still account for Antoinette's ultimate state of madness and therefore must give an alternative justification. If her madness is not a result of her genetic make-up or an innate character flaw, then perhaps her madness can be attributed to an overwhelming independence of character which results in the severing of all social connections. Bertha " is Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self that Jane has been trying to repress" (Gilbert and Gubar, 360) She is the alter-ego to Jane's " grave and quiet" (Brontë, 22) form. " Unjustly imprisoned ... in one of the traps of a patriarchal society" (Gilbert and Gubar, 363) Jane realises that " she must escape through deliberation rather than through madness" (Gilbert and Gubar, 363). Brontë's Bertha possesses no form of intellect or perception, in fact, she lacks any redeeming characteristics even prior to her state of madness. With no " modesty", " benevolence" or " refinement" in mind or manners, and lacking the essential qualities for success, Bertha is an enigma

to Victorian society and is therefore marginalised. The reader is led to believe that Bertha's madness originates from disinterest in socially acceptable behaviour as a result of the genetic predisposition for madness inherited from her mother. The price Bertha pays for placing herself as the antithesis of a character such as Jane, in addition to challenging and disobeying societal norms, is to be silenced completely; her narrative is muted. Through her inability to voice her story, Bertha's narrative is told only from the perspective of other characters. It is apparent that Rhys believes everyone, even madwomen, have a story worthy of telling, even if they are unable to express it themselves. Rhys, therefore, provides the reader with an alternative view of madness in the narrative of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It is demonstrated to be a condition instigated by failed social negotiation, a state developed and enticed into being rather than an innate condition laced with inevitability. This ideology is demonstrated by Christophine's explanation to Rochester why Antoinette's mother was mad;" 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's mad...But no kind word, no friends and her husban' he go off, he leave her." (Rhys, 157)Antoinette is exposed to a similar tragedy, as she experiences rejection by her mother, the malicious burning of the family home at Coulibri and abandonment by her friends, for example Tia. For the entirety of her life, Antoinette receives only negative, abusive and distorted reactions from others and is therefore unable to understand herself sufficiently through the narrative prescribed to her by others. Examples of this abuse can be identified when Tia informs Antoinette of the town's opinion of her and her family; " she hear all we poor

like beggar...Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger." (Rhys, 24). Amélie's insulting song of " the white cockroach she marry / The white cockroach she buy young man" (Rhys, 101) and finally Daniel Cosway asks Rochester " is your wife herself going the same way as her mother?" (Rhys, 98) All of these narratives take precedence over Antoinette's own, making her increasingly introverted and leading to eventual madness. Rochester appears to be the only character possessing the potential to differ from others in Antoinette's life; however he too becomes merely another source of negativity which makes Antoinette retreat further into herself. Nevertheless, this could merely be the result of the social disparity between the two characters based on class and race, as Rochester proclaims that " she was a stranger to [him], a stranger who did not think or feel as [he] did." (Rhys, 93) Despite this optimistic observation, Rochester makes no attempts to rectify this, instead announcing " I won't tell [her] that I scarcely listened to [her] stories." (Rhys, 169) This signifies the drastic contrast in characteristics between the Mr Rochester portrayed in Jane Eyre and the character exposed as Antoinette's husband. Whilst Brontë's Mr Rochester is agreeable, observant and in harmony with Jane's every thought and movement, Rhys's character inflicts his own prescribed identity upon Antoinette revealed by her proclamation that " Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name." (Rhys, 147) This mirrors the image of a doll which is imprisoned and helpless within her constructed doll's house. In Wide Sargasso Sea, it is impossible to rely upon the Victorian practise of social interaction to gauge the identity of a character as the result will prove to be

a widely inaccurate and erroneous conclusion of others. The dream-like narrative used results in far less dialogue but also less successful communication than can be found in Jane Eyre, as even the most simple of interactions become fraught with misunderstanding. Instead, the bulk of a character's identity can be found not in the rational or visible management of their waking consciousness but rather from within the fragments of the subconscious revealed to the reader through disjointed dreams and memories. Characters often appear to be too deeply submerged within themselves to possess the ability to coherently interpret and understand any identity other than their own. In turn, this leads to the useless resolve of never being able to know one another, as Antoinette recognises too late; "No, I had no right, I am sorry I don't understand you. I know nothing about you and I cannot speak for you" (Rhys, 171) As the distinction between dreams and reality becomes more obscured, subjective truths flow into the real. Whilst standing on the battlements of Thornfield Hall looking at the sky, Antoinette visualises the remnants of her past. She is, however, unable to distinguish that they are memories, just as she was unable to identify herself as the source of the scream. This clearly reveals her total loss of identity and self-knowledge. The message appears to be apparent, that an abundance of strength of character, independence of mind or perceived freedom from societal constraints result in madness and eventual death. Antoinette in effect dies in her own unfathomable self, driven to madness through circumstance, not an inherent characteristic. Antoinette's condition of madness is portrayed to be inevitable as a result of operating within the margins of society. Rhys suggests it to be impossible to exist in a flawed

society, such as the one Antoinette experiences, and successfully seek their identity through social negotiation. However, she does not privilege independence or freedom alone as effective tools for self-discovery either. Although Rhys ' saves' Bertha from a fate of muteness in Jane Eyre, once she is given a voice and the ability to tell her story, Antoinette must still be surrendered to the fate of the fire, as it is her only escape. Although Rhys's narrative predominantly provides an alternative perspective of Bertha, through the examination of parallels between Antoinette and Jane, the nature of Angela Carter's sentiment can be determined. Throughout Wide Sargasso Sea, Antoinette strives for knowledge of her self-identity, mirroring Jane's ambition to establish gender equality. Both novels provide the reader with tremendously resilient female protagonists, outcasts of society who rebel against patriarchal social values and pursue their feminine independence. During the course of their journey through womanhood, both characters face psychological and physical challenges when searching for their feminine individuality. It is through this quest that they gain insight and ultimately defy the powerful male order. Both Jane and Antoinette are victims of childhood abuse, experience loss of family and friends, and eventually a renewal of their social relationships occurs through the liberation from the constraints of society. For Jane this is through her ultimate equality with Rochester, whilst for Antoinette it is through death. The marginality from which both characters operate is immediately established as Jane is orphaned at a very young age and Antoinette's family is ostracised from society as " the people...hated them." (Rhys, 23) This allows the reader to understand that the violence and psychological torture

they endure originates from hatred and mockery. In line with Carter's ideology, further comparisons can be drawn as initially both characters are restrained by living under a higher authoritative figure. Living with her aunt, Jane is ignored and "never ... called" (Brontë, 29) to her presence for "nearly three months." (Brontë, 29) Antoinette's own mother "pushes her away...as if [she] were useless" (Rhys, 33) Both are subjected to verbal and physical attacks from those surrounding them, as Jane's cousin, John Reed calls her a "rat" and "struck [her] suddenly and strongly" (Brontë, 7) Similarly, Tia calls Antoinette "a white cockroach" (Rhys, 23) and betrays her trust by stealing her money and clothes (Rhys, 24). These exemplified physical and emotional difficulties establish the protagonists' foundations of character and give insight as to why, throughout their fictitious lives, they act in the manner they do. The knowledge of this better explains Jane's constant drive for equality and Antoinette's maddened state, receiving only negative responses from others as formerly mentioned. In accordance with Carter's statement, fundamental links established between Antoinette and Jane give renewed perspectives and therefore a deeper understanding of Brontë's central character. In their adolescent years, both characters experience a loss of a family member or friend through abandonment or death. Although these experiences further shatter the fragile psychological state of the characters, they allow the reader insight into their consciousness through the portrayal of their true emotions and beliefs. Whilst at Lowood, Jane receives news of her Aunt's death claiming Mrs Reed "must hate [her] still" (Brontë, 214) even from the grave. This symbolic release from a suppressive authoritative figure is an essential step towards Jane becoming

an independent woman. Antoinette learns of her mother's death whilst at the convent and "prayed" (Rhys, 61) although "the words fell to the ground meaning nothing" (Rhys, 61). This depicts an important transition from the mental confinement of her mother's madness to both objective and subjective freedom and therefore is a fundamental development in Antoinette's quest for self-identity. Moreover, examples of continual abandonment and death demonstrate the basis for both characters' negative stances about life. Jane loses her religious friend Helen Burns with her "face against [her] shoulder...and arms round her neck." (Brontë, 75) Antoinette is betrayed by Tia as she throws a "jagged stone" (Rhys, 45) at her face. This is exemplified further as Jane considers it to be "vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity" (Brontë, 95) and Antoinette informs her husband that "there is no justice" (Rhys, 146) in the world. Despite this, however, both characters develop a strong moral sense of what is right and wrong. Even though Jane and Antoinette share similar social values, their views of religion are completely contrasting; for Jane, "God is a friend to her" (Brontë, 17) whereas Antoinette believes that "there is no God." (Rhys, 157) Through the definition and expression of their own individual philosophies, it is demonstrated that both protagonists' are able to escape archetypal understandings of women existing in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, the experiences of both characters through womanhood is epitomised in their final establishment of their new identities within society. Despite having dysfunctional upbringings, the protagonists become part of new families. Jane is reunited with St. John Rivers described as an "incommunicative" (Brontë, 312) man, whilst Antoinette marries Rochester who "hated her"

(Rhys, 161). Consequently both find salvation by liberating themselves from the status of outcasts through the establishment of a family. Gaining financial, intellectual and social equality to Rochester, Jane's objective is accomplished through her inheritance. Antoinette is branded as being madwoman who "lives in her own darkness" (Rhys, 146) imprisoned in the attic at Thornfield Hall. Brontë allows Bertha to find her freedom and self-exemption through the finality of death. However, it is the "symbolic death of Bertha" (Gilbert and Gubar, 362) in *Wide Sargasso Sea* that "frees [Jane] from the furies that torment her and makes possible a marriage of equality" (Gilbert and Gubar, 362). Through the exploration of differing viewpoints, readers are re-informed and views, values and perspectives are redefined. When a literary work presents something which does not conform to the normative ideology, we as readers are jolted from our antiquated and somewhat narrow viewpoints. Without diversity in literary works and art as a whole, societal ideas and values would never be questioned, therefore making diversity necessary for change. In accordance with Carter's quotation *Wide Sargasso Sea* does exactly this. Both Antoinette and Jane represent outcasts striving to break free from the traditional views of women within a patriarchal society, a task in which they are both successful. I conclude that Rhys's rewriting of *Jane Eyre* demands a certain degree of self-reflexivity on the part of the reader. *The Wide Sargasso Sea* provides readers with challenging and thought-provoking alternative to Brontë's seminal text. However, the use of a dream-like narrative creates a literary space in which the story of Bertha Mason cannot only be told but fully understood. Through the series of dreams Antoinette experiences, the reader follows her on a

tempestuous journey through womanhood forced into madness by those around her. This questioning of the construction of madness gives the reader a circumstantial insight as to why Bertha is portrayed the way she is. In Jane Eyre we are led to believe that the burning of Thornfield and jumping to her death are Bertha's way of gaining hateful revenge on her captor. In contrast, *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents us with a trapped young girl with no self-awareness or conceptual identity, so much so that she believes the only means of escaping her mental and physical imprisonment is through death. Carter provides an ideology that "new wine in old bottles...makes the bottles explode" (Carter, 71) in line with which Rhys creates a crucial narrative illustrating the momentous amelioration of rewriting.