

Secretive Truth of the “Other Side”¹ in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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Abstract

Jean Rhys’s last novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is generally identified with feminist and post-colonial issues. This study attempts to read this novel as a reflection of Jean Rhys’s perception of the physical nature as spiritually animated. Revealed, especially, in her autobiography, Rhys believes in a world soul that is reflected in all existence as the manifestation of a greater force. Human love especially, in all its forms, replaces her belief in God. Rhys reflects the same belief in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as the main conflict that leads both Antoinette and Edward Rochester into tragedy, when Rochester fails to adjust to this mystical reality because of his Victorian breeding. Awed by the physical reflections of Antoinette’s love for him because of his puritanical upbringing, Rochester fails to understand the spiritual extension of it, which he perceives as sensual only. Disconformity between Rochester’s material English reality and Antoinette’s West Indian spirituality distracts both characters from a happy union.

Key Words: Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, physical and spiritual love.

Özet

Jean Rhys’in son romanı, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, genellikle feminist ve sömürgecilik-sonrası teorileri açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Jean Rhys’in, bu romanda, doğanın görünen yüzünün ötesinde canlı bir ruhsal varlığa sahip olduğu inancını yansıttığını vurgulamaktır. Özellikle otobiyografisinde belirttiği gibi, Rhys dünyadaki tüm varlıkların daha büyük bir gücün yansıması olan bir ruh’a sahip olduklarına inanır. İnsan sevgisinin her türüne inancı, onun tanrıya olan inancının yerini alır. Bu inanış *Wide Sargasso Sea*’de de, Rochester’ın Victorian terbiyesinden dolayı bu mistik gerçeği kavrayamaması nedeni ile, Antoinette ve

¹ (See, David L. Higdon. *Shadows of Past in Contemporary British Fiction*. Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1985.)

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Edward Rochester’ın sonlarını hazırlayan temel çelişkiyi oluşturur. Rochester, püritan yetiştirme tarzından dolayı, Antoinette’in kendisine olan sevgisinin fiziksel tezahüründen ürkütüğü için, bunu şehvi bir sevgi olarak değerlendirip ruhsal boyutunu göremez. Rochester’ın maddeci İngiliz gerçeği ile Antoinette’in Batı Hint Adalarındaki maneviyatçı hayatı arasındaki uyumsuzluk her ikisinde mutsuz olmalarına neden olur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, şehvi ve manevi sevgi

The wide range of critical attempts at defining *Wide Sargasso Sea*, since its first publication in 1966, have frequently considered it as a feminist manifesto against the patriarchal (and imperial) power that constitutes the background of Jane Eyre’s struggle in Brontë’s novel.² The narratorial voices of Edward Rochester and Bertha Mason, the other two characters both of whom are reflected through Jane’s point of view in *Jane Eyre*, reveal themselves in *Wide Sargasso Sea* to be victims, like Jane herself, of an English system that charges both men and women with problematic identities. By “. . . fashioning, credibly, the unwritten history of creatures whom a previous author had invented” (Hearne, 2006:188), Rhys reflects “the other side, the other truth” (Higdon, 1985:106). Rhys, by voicing of the unvoiced characters in *Jane Eyre*, problematizes the concept of “truth” itself, not only by Bertha Mason’s final subjection to the patriarchal and colonial truth, but also by Mr Rochester’s double subjection to Victorian truth, first by constructing his identity in terms of his superiority as a “man” and a representative of the British empire, then subjecting him to the West Indian truth as a disinherited second son seeking for material compensation through Antoinette’s (Bertha Mason) money. Thus, “the other side” or “the other truth” that Higdon refers to is not “the other” of *Jane Eyre* only, but is represented in the many layers of truth juxtaposed in the novel, as England and West Indies, brought together in Rochester’s and Antoinette’s marriage constitute the background of the two characters’ personal tragedies. Rochester represents the other truth of the English man, the coloniser, the patriarch, the male, whereas Antoinette represents the West Indies, the colonised, the matriarch and the female. The ultimate truth beyond all these is the collision between the materiality which marks Rochester’s culture and the spirituality which defines that of Antoinette’s. It is possible, beyond Rhys’s surface of feminist commitment in this novel, to identify further theme of a mystical appeal that is allied with West Indies. Edward Rochester fails, in his material armor of the colonising-English-male, to intuit its spirit and he subjects Antoinette to English materiality, even while still in the West Indies, to get over the paradox of his destroyed

² Tom Sheehan discusses female suppression in parallel to colonization. While doing this he refers to feminist critic Gayatri Spivak especially (See “Jean Rhys’s Caribbean Space-Time.” *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*.)

Kenneth Ramchand reads the novel as dealing with the theme of “rejected womanhood” (See *Critical Perspectives*. Pierre M. Frickley (Ed.) USA: Three Continents, 2006, 195-205).

self image, as the patriarch subjected to Antoinette's money and island. This study is an attempt to read *Wide Sargasso Sea* as the culmination of Jean Rhys's own experience of all these "others", represented by both Antoinette and Rochester, during her childhood on the West Indian island of Dominica, and her adulthood in England. The opening of Rhys's unfinished autobiography contrasts her experience of the idyllic atmosphere of the West Indies as opposed to the depressive melancholy of her adult life in England. This paper focuses on reflections of Rhys's perception of self-identification with nature and the pantheistic animism, through Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Jean Rhys was reclusive during her life time: her posthumously published autobiography, *Smile Please*, is important in providing her readers and critics with details of not only her emotional involvement in her childhood home and her miserable struggle for survival in England, but also her intellectual occupation with material and spiritual reality. Her compiled letters from 1931 to 1966 are also important in reflecting the long and painful process of her writing of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She could write at intervals only sporadically as she had to earn her living to survive in England. In one letter she wrote: "Oh God if I could finish it before I peg out or really turn into some fungus or other! . . . It really haunts me that I can't finish it though." (*Letters* 50). It was her last novel and the only one to be set in the West Indies. The mystical atmosphere of Antoinette's island in *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents Jean Rhys's idyllic childhood world overshadowed by her troublesome adult life with its worries of financial survival.

Antoinette's and Rochester's estrangement in *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents the two conflicting realities that Rhys herself experienced in the natural, warm and simple atmosphere of the West Indies and the cold and concrete materiality of England. Claiming that *Wide Sargasso Sea* ". . . underscores the crucially different formation of the Englishman and the West Indian woman," Gregg asserts the irreconcilability of the two worlds (2006:158). Viewed from the West Indies, England is no more real than a "rosy pink" spot in "the geography book map" or "a cold dark dream" for Antoinette (69). From Rochester's perspective, however, ". . . that is how . . . [her] beautiful island seems . . . quite unreal and like a dream" (47). Their contradictory identity formations are reflected in their conflicting perspectives,

"But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?"

"And how can millions of people , their houses and their streets be unreal"(47)?

Rhys's own experience of England parallels that of Antoinette, whose first reflections of England at the beginning of her final narration in the attic at Thornfield Hall are of the cold: "In the room I wake early and lie shivering for it is very cold." (115). The later part of Rhys's autobiography is entitled as "It began to grow cold" (*Smile Please* 95). Foreshadowing the financial and emotional difficulties that Rhys would face in England to the end of her life, her first impressions of England, when she nears it with her aunt

as a seventeen year old girl, are: ". . . it began to grow cold. . . . There were rugs for me too, but still I shivered. It was a very grey day when we reached Southampton and when I looked out of the porthole my heart sank." (*Smile Please* 97).

Jean Rhys tells of her spiritual conformity with her childhood landscape and how she brought its details into her last novel. Her mother was born on an estate in Dominica, called Geneva, and she reveals that "I tried to write about Geneva and the Geneva garden in *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (*Smile Please* 33). Geneva inspired the depiction of the Coulibri Estate. Antoinette and Rochester's honeymoon resort, Granbois, on a small island from which most of Rochester's narrative takes place, is modeled, however, on "Morgan's Rest", a small estate among the hills that Rhys went to with her family during summertime. The island is beautiful, for Rhys, not only as a landscape but has a mystical appeal also.

There I would go for long walks alone. It's strange growing up in a very beautiful place and seeing that it is beautiful. *It was alive*, I was sure of it. Behind the bright colours the softness, the hills like clouds and the clouds like fantastic hills. . . . I wanted to identify myself with it, to lose myself in it. . . . The earth was like a magnet which pulled me and sometimes I came near it, this identification or annihilation that I longed for. Once regardless of the ants, I lay down and kissed the earth and thought, 'Mine, mine.'" (*Smile Please* 82)

Antoinette owns Granbois, their honeymoon house, and feels a great respect for and an empathy with its edenic natural landscape. She admits that "I love it more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person. More than a person" (49, 53). As opposed to Antoinette's spiritual unification with nature, which recalls Rhys's own, Rochester's English breeding alienates him not only from the Indies and its inhabitants, but even from his wife. Instead of participating in the life there, he prefers to remain as an outsider because of his self-imposed sense of insecurity in his marriage. He witnesses Antoinette's emphatic identification with the landscape throughout his narration, but fails to understand its meaning. Here, for Rochester, unlike the pale English landscape, "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." (39).

The gradual sense of insecurity that overwhelms Rochester, Hearne believes, originates from his self-alienation from his wife and everything about her. "This Rochester cannot understand. He cannot understand it about Antoinette whom he marries in contempt, for her money; nor can he understand Christophine and the black on the honeymoon island" (Hearne, 2006:190) Antoinette tries to make Rochester feel at home and see her as an ally and wife rather than an enemy. She says "This is my place and everything is on our side"(42). Yet, Rochester fails to get over his sense of loss as the "bought out" husband, who feels subjected to Antoinette and her reality.

Rochester's unconscious judgement of the place through the western lenses of materiality and superiority blur his perception, and he others everything and everybody around him. So, he closes himself to and rejects the spiritual manifestations of nature which make their presence felt, but failed by Rochester as a whole. He believes that "It was a beautiful place – [with a] . . . secret loveliness. And it kept its secret I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing –I want what it hides –that is not nothing.'" (52) The critic, Kathy Mezei explains that "the secret" that Rochester fails to understand is Antoinette's narratorial voice. She suggests that "Quite simply the secret of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is Antoinette's valiant, heroic attempt to tell her story." (Mezei 196). Jan Curtis, on the other hand, defines "the secret" from a feminist perspective by suggesting that Jean Rhys reflects passive "female consciousness" in a world where man have all the power (1990: 2). This paper, however, attempts to define "the secret" that Rochester fails , in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, to discover as the regenerative potential of love that becomes manifest in pure nature.

In an extract from a notebook added to the end of her autobiography, Jean Rhys puts herself on a self-trial on religion and spirituality: "Dou you believe in God?/I don't know./ In human love?/Yes" (*Smile Please* 161). Despite her convent education in Dominica, the influence of which on her unconscious mind she admits, she defines herself as "an atheist or perhaps an agnostic" (*Smile Please* 148). It is possible to strain Rhys's rejection of traditional religion in both extracts. She believes, instead, in a greater force, a God, outside the human self: ". . . human beings can be taken over, possessed by something outside, something greater . . . Then, my dear, you must believe in God, or the gods . . ." (*Smile Please* 161) Rhys's God perceived thus, is identifiable as an "*anima mundi*", a world soul, defined by Lothane as ". . . the generative spiritual womb of all souls" (Lothane, 2008: 8). *Wide Sargasso Sea* reveals the existence of a similar "world soul" that transcends beyond the boundaries of time and space. This reality is difficult to explain in words as it is possible to intuit only for it is invisible and internal: "I cannot say it. I have not the words . . . It is in myself. . . All. Good, evil, love, hate, life, death, beauty, ugliness." (*Smile Please* 161). This explains how Rochester fails to grasp and take the many revelations of it as "the secret", in the novel.

Edward Rochester's external journey from England to Granbois parallels his internal disintegration as he gradually feels stripped off all his power, and subjected to an alien reality that clashes with his patriarchal identity. His first impressions of this "cool and remote" place are of "discomfort", "melancholy" "sadness", "insecurity", "illness", "intoxication" and "fear". He owns Antoinette's money through marriage, but feels intimidated, at the same time, as the "bought out" husband in a place the mechanics of which are different from the ones he knew. He feels defeated with a "sense of desperate alienation". (Luengo, 2006:170) Despite his regain of material power through Antoinette's money, Rochester loses his authority, then, in failing to master his wife as

well as the place and its inhabitants as a real patriarch. In a letter intended for his father, Rochester admits feeling a sense of spiritual loss, which he relates with his involvement with Antoinette and West Indies. He blames himself as well as his father and brother for coming to the West Indies, by saying that "I have sold my soul or you have sold it" (39). Yet, it is paradoxical that the spiritual loss that he realizes in the West Indies is a consequence of patriarchal and imperial English values at home.

Rochester's internal confusion parallels his inconsistent responses to the landscape. At the outset, he admires the beauty of the place as that, "Standing on the veranda I breathed the sweetness of the air. Cloves I could smell and cinnamon, roses and orange blossom. And an intoxicating freshness as if all this had never been breathed before" (41). Soon after praising the beauty of the landscape, he expresses his confusion in his contradictory feelings about the same landscape:

We watched the sky and the distant sea on fire –all colours were in that fire and the huge clouds fringed and shot with flame. But I soon tired of the display. I was waiting for the scent of the flowers by the river –they opened when darkness came and it came quickly. Not night or darkness as I knew it but night with blazing stars, an alien moon –night full of strange noises. Still night, not day (53).

It is, "Not only wild but menacing" too (39). The darkness that threatens him in the image of the night and the landscape, Bender also suggests, is consequent to ". . . the male domination of English society and wealth", which indicates to his sense of insecurity in the West Indies, which he feminizes as Antoinette's territory (1997: 45). He holds the same attitude to the black, who "[t]hin or fat . . . all looked alike," and that "I saw the same expression on all their faces. Curiosity? Pity? Ridicule?" (44-45). He disapproves and distrusts these people, whose "–sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles" visit, eat and drink in the house, and also Antoinette's reliance on them, especially, her hugging and kissing Christophine (55). He says that "She trusted them and I did not . . . if she asked no question how could I? . . . I could hardly say no. Not yet." (53-54). Feeling overwhelmed and undermined thus, his breeding love is overshadowed by hatred, especially, for the matriarch of this feminine realm, Antoinette.

As in his confused reaction to nature, Rochester's attitude to Antoinette is also inconsistent. He loves her at the beginning, and reveals his attraction to her: "She was sitting on the sofa and I wondered why I had never realized how beautiful she was. Her hair was combed away from her face and fell smoothly far below her waist. I could see the red and gold lights in it." (46). Rochester becomes even more confused about Antoinette after he realizes her overt sexuality, a characteristic which contradicts Victorian standards of femininity. "Very soon [Antoinette] was as eager for what's called loving as I was –more lost and drowned afterwards" (55). The socially meek and submissive

Victorian women, as Rochester knew them, were supposed to suppress their sexuality which was otherwise, regarded as “animalism” and possibly leading to insanity.³ Even though he enjoys Antoinette’s overt sexuality at the beginning, later he rejects Antoinette totally, most probably either because of his Victorian unconscious – that allies excess of sexual energy in women with madness, or by his fear of masculine failure. Elgin W. Mellown explains Rochester’s rejection of Antoinette’s sexuality as a response to his upbringing, when she suggests that “Her passion for him corresponds –so much so that his basically Puritanical nature is revolted, and he is ready to turn away from her in disgust . . .”(113). Rochester’s unconscious reaction to Antoinette’s sexuality reflects itself in his unconscious identification of her with “Magdalene”. He reveals his decisive commitment to punish her by separating from her homeland, by saying that “Even if she had wept like Magdalene it would have made no difference”(112).

Rhys’s concept of love, which she considers to be one of the many spiritual “manifestations” in nature and “something greater” outside the self, parallels her transformed conception of “God” (*Smile Please* 161). Defined thus, however, love is not deified as it is in the Puritanical understanding of it as an abstraction only. Lothane discusses the concept in its two different manifestations: love (non-sexual) and love (sexual) (2008: 19). For him, sexuality, which is constantly associated with the physical body, is also spiritual. Depending on its “dyadic-interpersonal” – rather than monadic –nature, Lothane suggests that “. . . sexual activity between two persons leading to orgasm . . . [is] a profound physical, interpersonal and soular-spiritual communion and communication” (19). So, he associates sexual love not with “animalism”, but with the means of transcending beyond the physical existence through this interpersonal physical activity. Having Antoinette love Rochester both “body and soul”, Rhys also allies physical love with spirituality (Mellown, 2006:113). Rhys uses “death” as a metaphor for physical love in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, by having Rochester take it as a reference to sexual love. “I watched her die many times. In my way [physical], not in hers [spiritual]” (55). Antoinette’s plea, however, that, “If I could die. Now, when I am happy. Would you do that? You wouldn’t have to kill me. Say die and I will die,” refers to sexual love as a means of spiritual transcendence (55). In *Smile Please*, Rhys identifies death as the defiance of both time and space: “You are seeking a new world. I know of one that is always new because it is eternal. . . . At the cost of a long death before the fact, I shall conquer this world that is ever new, ever young”⁴ (*Smile Please* 160). Considering Rhys’s admitted atheism and her sublimation of the soul of the nature, the eternal here does not refer to Christian afterlife, but to a union with the spirit of the world. Physical love,

³ (See, Peter T. Cominos Cominos. “Innocent Femina Sensualis in Unconscious conflict. In M. Vicinus (Ed.). *Suffer and Be Still*. (pp. 155-172). Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1972)

⁴ Jean Rhys remembers this comment as an extract from the days of her convent education in Dominica, but she is not sure whether it is an extract from St. Teresa’s Meditations.

thus, mediates between the physical and the spiritual. Antoinette desires to transcend beyond physical time and space to achieve eternal happiness through her bodily love for Rochester. Even Rochester suspects that this might be "the secret", "Always this talk of death. (Is she trying to tell me that is the secret of this place? That there is no other way? She knows. She knows,)" but he fails to intuit it (55). Daniel Cosway's letter, which warns Rochester for Antoinette's parental inconvenience, her inherited madness and her betrayal to Rochester with an incestuous love, appears at a very climactic time when Rochester is disoriented, totally, by the "enigma of Antoinette and her island" (Luengo, 2006:171). By then, Rochester is disintegrating and is about to lose total control over reality, as his ". . . initial self-deluding confidence is rapidly undermined and he feels for the first time in his life, a dreadful sense of alienation (Luengo, 2006:175).

Rochester fails his last chance to grasp "the secret", when he gets lost in the forest after reading Daniel Cosway's letter. At this moment of identity crisis he believes he has been wronged by everybody who had a hand in the arrangement of his marriage to Antoinette. He walks unawares to the forest, perceived as another source of menace by him. "A green light. I had reached the forest and you cannot mistake the forest. It is hostile" (64). Rather than relying on his internal emotions, he expects the "truth", ironically, to be revealed to him from the outside. As an "urban-nurtured" person, in Griffiths's terms, he fails ". . . to experience an ecstatic responsiveness to nature. The clamor of Western society, urbanisation and industrialization may block out the resonances of the natural world." (Griffiths, 2002: 266). Rochester's intuitional failure is reflected in his narrative. "How can one discover the truth . . . No one would tell me the truth. Not my father nor Richard Mason, certainly not the girl I had married. I stood still, so sure I was being watched that I looked over my shoulder. Nothing but the trees and the green light under the trees." (64) Confused by his paranoid speculations, he sees some ruins, which seem to have a sacred atmosphere, in the middle of the forest, "At the back of the ruins a wild orange tree covered with fruit, the leaves a dark green. A beautiful place. And calm –so calm that it seemed foolish to think or plan" (64). There are tied bunches of flowers under the tree, presumably offered to nature by natives who identify and emphasise with its spirit. "I don't know how long it was before I began to feel chilly" (64). His perception of time is blurred, but he fails once again to ". . . transcend the strict boundaries of man-made time and man-imposed meaning" (Abrams qtd. in Griffiths, 2002:268). His Victorian upbringing, and distorted self-image hinder him from recognising this mystical experience as an initiation to his union with nature in which the boundaries of time and space are blurred. Edward fails eternally to envision the "secret" which is a mystical ". . . absorption of the self into the higher one" (Griffiths, 2002:260).

Gregg refers to Daniel Cosway as Edward Rochester's "alter ego". He appears at a time when Rochester is confused about reality (2006, p.159). To regenerate his self-confidence, he denies not only the hidden spirituality of Granbois, but even its physical

existence: “ If these mountains challenge me , or Baptiste’s face, or Antoinette’s eyes, they are mistaken, melodramatic, unreal . . .” (63). Even though he is disgusted with Daniel Cosway when they meet –because it is obvious for many reasons that he is a lying blackmailer, Edward prefers to believe him. “Daniel’s vindictiveness . . . make[s] . . . [his] testimony not very trustworthy,” yet, Edward prefers taking his self evident lies for truth, as a guard against his insecure position in his marriage. (Luengo, 2006:71) Thus, he creates his own truth, “He ‘reads’ Daniel Cosway’s letter-version, but is reluctant to listen to Antoinette’s version.” (Mezei, 1987:199) Before he begins to destroy Antoinette, Rochester has to destroy the emotional boy who was killed within him years ago. Patriarchal discourse requires the denial of emotion, which is seen as a feminine quality. “ How old was I when I learned to hide what I felt. A very small boy. Six, five even earlier. It was necessary I was told, and that view I have always accepted” (63). A servant boy, unnamed like Rochester as the “unnamed husband” of Antoinette, comes to the foreground while Rochester is about to leave the island with Antoinette. The unnamed boy, Antoinette explains, loves Rochester and wants to be taken away by him. The boy appears at the time, when Rochester is defeated by hatred and desire for revenge on Antoinette. He feels sad and helpless at Antoinette’s dignity, from whom he expects a sign of reconciliation: “But at this moment the nameless boy leaned his head against the clove tree and sobbed. Loud heartbreaking sobs. I could have strangled him with pleasure. But I managed to control myself . . .” (112) Edward’s narratorial voice in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, ends with the image of the boy: “That stupid boy followed us . . . He used the back of his hand to wipe away his tears. Who would have thought that any boy would cry like that. For nothing. Nothing . . .” (113) Leaving the boy behind, Rochester leaves any possibility of his own spiritual regeneration through love in the mystical atmosphere of the West Indies. His final words, “For nothing. Nothing”, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, begins not only the process of Antoinette’s physical and spiritual disintegration, but annihilates any possible recovery for Rochester’s own spiritual blindness, on his way back to Victorian materiality. He fails to intuit and respond to the unifying force of Antoinette’s love which is backed up by the land scape. He confesses that “It was a beautiful place – . . . with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret . . . What I see is nothing – . . .”(52)

In conclusion, Jean Rhys’s posthumously published autobiography reflects her experiences of England and West Indies, and her intellectual perception of spiritual matters. Though *Wide Sargasso Sea* is read, mostly, in terms of feminist and postcolonial criticism, Rhys’s attribution of a spiritual extension to nature associates it with mystical themes. I suggest that “the secret” that Rochester fails to discover throughout his stay in the West Indies is Antoinette’s self-conformity with the spirit of the place and its inhabitants. Deformed by Victorian standards of social identity formation, Rochester fails to conform to his new position as the husband of a socially and sexually un-English-like

wife, whom he has married for her money. He is emotionally unable to see Antoinette's love and spirituality. His loss of sense of social and emotional security in West Indies as a "bought out" husband distracts his perception. He feels threatened by everything that belongs to Antoinette. The menace that he allies with the island, in fact, is a reflection of his own sense of degradation within Antoinette's feminine territory, the dynamics of which do not conform to his sense of patriarchal superiority. He is threatened by the landscape, the black native, and even more by Antoinette herself, whose overt admittance of sexuality invokes Rochester's puritanical breeding, and leads him to reject her, even if it requires self-denial (as reflected in his denial of the boy who loves Antoinette within himself). Finally, Edward Rochester's total failure with West Indies is consequent to the corrupt Victorian materiality that obstructs his perception of the unspoiled purity, nature and spiritual mystery of West Indies.

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