UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS

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FEMALE MADNESS IN *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*: ANALYSING THE STORIES OF ANNETTE AND ANTOINETTE

PORTO ALEGRE
2021

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Bacharel em Letras.

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PORTO ALEGRE
Maio de 2021

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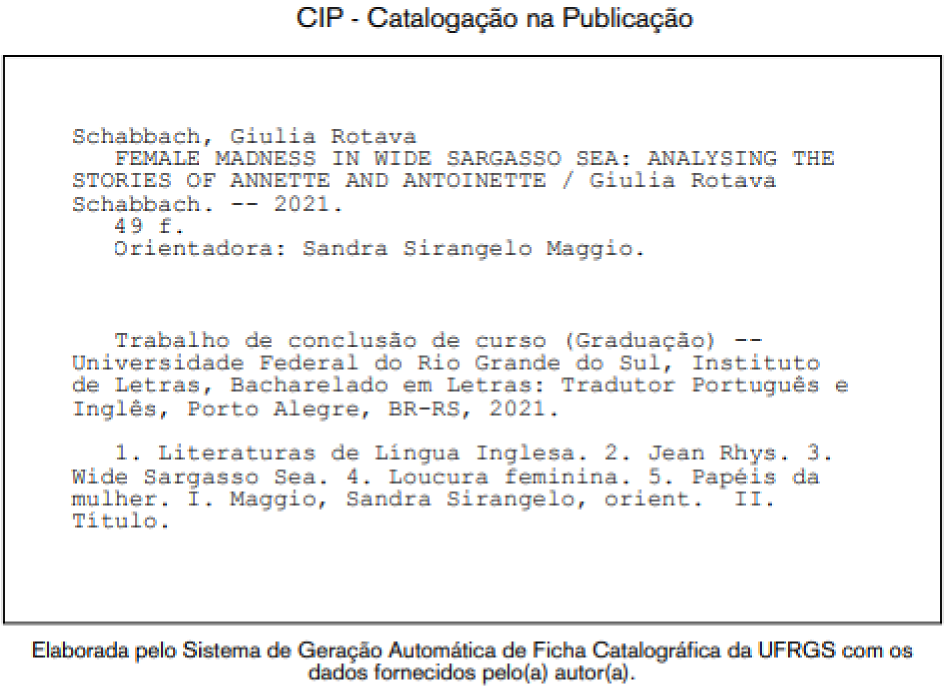

CIP - Catalogação na Publicação

Schabbach, Giulia Rotava
FEMALE MADNESS IN WIDE SARGASSO SEA: ANALYSING THE STORIES OF ANNETTE AND ANTOINETTE / Giulia Rotava Schabbach. -- 2021.
49 f.
Orientadora: Sandra Sirangelo Maggio.

Trabalho de conclusão de curso (Graduação) -- Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Instituto de Letras, Bacharelado em Letras: Tradutor Português e Inglês, Porto Alegre, BR-RS, 2021.

1. Literaturas de Língua Inglesa. 2. Jean Rhys. 3. Wide Sargasso Sea. 4. Loucura feminina. 5. Papéis da mulher. I. Maggio, Sandra Sirangelo, orient. II. Título.

Elaborada pelo Sistema de Geração Automática de Ficha Catalográfica da UFRGS com os dados fornecidos pelo(a) autor(a).

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Bacharel em Letras pela Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Porto Alegre, 21 de maio de 2021.

Resultado: Aprovada com conceito A

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AGRADECIMENTOS

Em primeiro lugar, agradeço à minha família — meus pais, Tatiana e Gilvan, e minha irmã, Carolina — por todo o apoio, encorajamento, aconselhamento e carinho que sempre me deram e por me ensinarem a ter coragem, determinação e comprometimento para correr atrás dos meus sonhos. Nada disso teria sido possível sem o apoio e o amor incondicional de vocês. Vocês sempre serão meu porto seguro e espero ser o mesmo para vocês, sempre. Devo, também, um agradecimento ao meu cachorrinho lindo, Caramelo, por ser uma infindável fonte de paz e alegria na minha vida.

Agradeço também à minha melhor amiga, Andréa, e à minha dinda do coração, Débora, por sempre me fazerem rir, por serem ouvintes maravilhosas e por me falarem quando estou errada. Vocês me ajudaram mais do que imaginam e a presença de vocês na minha vida deixa tudo mais colorido e emocionante. Devo um especial e caloroso agradecimento também à minha tia, Janice, que sempre me estimulou e me apoiou durante a vida toda e que sempre esteve presente para comemorar todas as minhas conquistas.

Um enorme agradecimento aos três orientadores que tive durante a graduação — Prof. Dr. Gabriel Othero, Profa. Dra. Rozane Rebechi e Profa. Dra. Sandra Maggio — por terem me ensinado tanto e por terem me dado a oportunidade de enriquecer minha experiência como estudante universitária. Eu não imaginava no começo do curso que poderia aprender tanto e participar de tantos eventos e pesquisas durante esses anos de estudo. A contribuição de cada um de vocês foi indispensável para que eu chegasse até aqui.

Por fim, agradeço à Profa. Me. Vanessa Gomes Alves de Oliveira por ter me introduzido à obra de Jean Rhys de uma maneira tão especial e à Profa. Me. Lis Yana de Lima Martinez por ter me ajudado tanto nos últimos semestres da graduação e por ter estado sempre disposta a responder minhas dúvidas e perguntas. Além disso, agradeço a ambas por terem aceitado o convite para comporem a banca avaliadora deste trabalho.

[...] Assent, and you are sane;
Demur, — you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain.
Emily Dickinson, “Much Madness is Divinest Sense”

RESUMO

O objetivo da presente monografia é analisar as circunstâncias que desencadeiam a loucura de duas personagens femininas, Antoinette e Annette, do romance *Wide Sargasso Sea*, publicado em 1966, da autora dominicana Jean Rhys. A história se passa durante o século XIX na Jamaica e na Dominica, que ficam nas antigas colônias inglesas conhecidas como as Índias Ocidentais. A tensão que subjaz ao enredo do romance demonstra os conflitos envolvendo os proprietários de terras ingleses, as mulheres crioulas (assim eram chamadas as pessoas de descendência europeia nascidas nas colônias) e os negros recém-libertados pela abolição da escravatura. Antoinette e Annette são escolhidas para se casarem com homens ingleses, e seus respectivos casamentos são elementos decisivos que as impulsionam à loucura. Baseio minha análise na relação entre os papéis da mulher e a questão da loucura feminina durante aquela época. Como aporte teórico para as questões referentes à loucura feminina nos contextos das colônias inglesas e da Inglaterra durante a era Vitoriana, utilizo os textos de Elisabet Raskel Sigurðardóttir (2013), Elaine Showalter (1987) e Gayatri Spivak (1985). Minha intenção é refletir acerca de algumas das circunstâncias que culminam no confinamento dessas mulheres. São analisadas quatro cenas do romance que são centrais para o deterioramento mental das personagens — duas delas são focadas em Antoinette e duas em Annette. Para cada personagem, trago uma cena que as represente no momento em que são declaradas mentalmente instáveis, e outra que se passa após estarem por isso confinadas. O trabalho está estruturado em duas seções. Na primeira, apresento uma contextualização da discussão a ser trazida, com informações sobre a obra, a autora, o cenário (lugar) e o conceito de loucura adotado. Já na segunda, exponho minhas análises das quatro cenas selecionadas. Pretendo, com esta monografia, contribuir para os estudos sobre Jean Rhys e sobre este romance.

Palavras-chave: Literaturas de língua inglesa. Jean Rhys. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Loucura feminina. Papéis da mulher.

ABSTRACT

This monograph aims to analyse the circumstances that trigger the madness of two female characters, Antoinette and Annette, in the 1966 novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written by the Dominican author Jean Rhys. The story is set in the nineteenth century, in Jamaica and Dominica, in the former English colonies known as The West Indies. The tension underlying the plot of the novel betrays conflicts involving the English landowners, their Creole wives and the recently freed black local community. Antoinette and Annette are chosen to marry English gentlemen, and their respective marriages become the decisive elements that push them into madness. My analysis is based on the relationship between female roles and female madness during that period. As theoretical support to issues concerning female madness in the contexts of England and the English Colonies during the Victorian Era, I rely on texts by Elisabet Raskel Sigurðardóttir (2013), Elaine Showalter (1987) and Gayatri Spivak (1985). My intention is to consider some of the circumstances that lead to these women's eventual confinement. Four scenes in the novel are analysed — two focused on Antoinette, and two on Annette — which are pivotal to the characters' mental deterioration. For each character, I consider one scene that represents them around the time they are considered to be mentally unstable, and one scene after they have been confined. The work is structured in two sections. In the first, I present the contextualization of the discussion to be carried out, with information about the work, the author, the place, and the concept of madness adopted. In the second, I offer my analysis of the four selected scenes. This monograph is meant as my contribution to the studies about Jean Rhys and about this novel.

Keywords: Literatures in English. Jean Rhys. *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Female madness. Female roles.

APOIO DE FINANCIAMENTO: FAPERGS

O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio parcial da Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (FAPERGS). / This study was financed in part by the *Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul* (FAPERGS).

APOIO DE FINANCIAMENTO: CNPq

O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio parcial do Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (PIBIC CNPq). / This study was financed in part by the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* (PIBIC CNPq).

APOIO DE FINANCIAMENTO: UFRGS

O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio parcial da Pró-reitoria de Pesquisa da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (PROPESQ UFRGS). /This study was financed in part by the *Pró-reitoria de Pesquisa da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (PROPESQ UFRGS).

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1 INTRODUCTION

I first read the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* when I was taking a discipline on English Literature, in 2019, for which I prepared a presentation on the subject of madness and confinement of women in the nineteenth century, focusing on how these themes are presented in this novel. Although the research I did then was rudimentary, it led me into a fascinating journey in which I explored subjects involving marriage, English law (and the ways it relates to the English Colonies), female roles, statistics involving female madness and stereotypes about madness in the English and Caribbean societies in the mid-nineteenth century. This research resonated with the feminist in me, and I found myself mesmerized by how much there is to study in this short novel by Jean Rhys. My interest culminated, finally, in the decision to turn my bachelor's monograph into an investigation about the stories of madness of Annette and Antoinette — two women, mother and daughter, whose personalities are different, but whose lives end in similar circumstances. There is a rich body of criticism on *Wide Sargasso Sea* in different theoretical areas, such as Post-Colonial Studies, Feminism and Comparative Literature, and I refer to them whenever necessary. However, because of the limitations in time and space imposed by this textual genre, the monograph, I concentrate on one single point: my personal reading of the elements that lead these two characters into madness.

That being said, among the theorists and texts that help support my analysis I highlight the contributions of Elaine Showalter, in the book *The Female Malady* (1985) — a feminist study of female madness in English society from the 1830s to the 1920s —, Gayatri Spivak, in the 1987 essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", Elisabet Raskel Sigurðardóttir in her bachelor thesis (2013) on the effects of societal oppression on women's mental health in the nineteenth century, and Jane M. Ussher, in the book *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience* (2011), in which she explores the history of madness and the historical relationship between mental illness and women. These scholars provide a panorama of the way people diagnosed with some form of madness were treated in the English society of the nineteenth century, especially in the case of women who were considered mad. They also refer to the issue of the power men had over their wives and female relatives. Based on that, I have selected and analysed four scenes in *Wide Sargasso Sea* that I consider pivotal to Antoinette and Annette's stories, more specifically, to the outcomes of their stories — their confinement as madwomen.

Before starting this discussion about female madness, I feel that it is necessary to clarify the way in which the concept of “madness” is used in this research. Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* was written and published in the twentieth century, the fictional treatment of these two women as mad goes in accordance with the nineteenth-century social and medical understanding of the issue. Annette and Antoinette are confined because they represent a problem to the maintenance of the social order in the communities in which they are inserted. Showalter and Sigurðardóttir approach the subject in this line, and I, therefore, adopt their views in my monograph. I work with the Victorian concept of madness and disregard the advances in the study of mental illness that have happened since then because the novel is set in the mid-nineteenth century. My interest lies in the circumstances that lead them to be considered mad and subsequently confined as such. This choice is explained in more detail in section 2.3.

I would also like to explain the choice about the spelling (capitalized or not) of words related to ethnicity and skin colour, such as “white”, “black” or “Creole” used in this monograph since there are different approaches to how these words should be written. I decided to use them here as they are presented in the Norton edition of *Wide Sargasso Sea* which I used in my research. This was intended as a way to keep this monograph as uniform as possible in the sense that quotations and the main text maintain the same spelling system.
And lastly, since this work is written in Brazil, it is relevant to observe that the term “Creole”, particularly “white Creole”, as used in the novel and my monograph refers to the descendants of European colonizers who were born in the colonies. This is a necessary point to mention because, in Brazil, the first meaning of the word “Creole” evokes the idea of a mulatto, which in Rhys’s novel would be called “coloured or “half-caste”. This difference in the meaning of the word would, therefore, affect readers’ interpretation of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and of this work by changing a fundamental aspect in the dynamic between the characters Annette and Antoinette and the people they interact with, whether black or white.

This work is structured in two main parts. In the first, I provide a contextualization of the novel, the author, the subject of female roles and female madness in the nineteenth century, and the studies that underlie my work. In the second part, I analyse the four chosen scenes, focusing on how the tensions between colonizer and colonized, and the gap between expectation and reality in the female characters’ marriages to English men influence the progression of their stories and their tragic endings. The analyses of the four scenes are divided by character: first, I analyse Annette’s madness and then Antoinette’s. Both women marry English gentlemen. Annette marries the rich Mr. Mason, whom she enchants with her beauty and grace, and who becomes the stepfather of her two children, Antoinette and Pierre. Through her mother's second marriage, Antoinette then becomes the heiress of a fortune of thirty thousand pounds given to her by her stepfather. It is also her stepfather who arranges her marriage to the second son of a prominent English family — a man who stands to inherit little or nothing from his own father, due to England's laws of primogeniture. Despite this difference, their respective marriages are decisive elements to their confinement and, as I intend to demonstrate, to their loss of sanity.

The aspects of Antoinette's and Annette's relationships with their English husbands and the tensions that surrounded the lives of both women that influenced, and perhaps triggered, their eventual madness are the object of the research. These are mostly cultural aspects related to the nineteenth-century paradigm, such as Victorian moralism, the stereotypes of colonial sensuality and madness attributed to white Creole women, female roles in that time's society and the fact that wives were, for all purposes, subjected to their husbands, who exerted almost unlimited power over them. They are also related to how the impoverished wife and daughter of a former-slave owner interacted with the diverse community of people around them and the complicated relationship both women had with their own cultural and ethnical identities. These aspects can be traced back to the way the Victorian and West Indian colonial societies functioned. In terms of the expectations for female behaviour, strong displays of emotion, such as angry outbursts or crying, and an expressive sensuality were often considered indicators of madness, especially in women (Cf. SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, 2013). In terms of the tensions arising from power struggles in the colonies, these women lived in a delicate place of balance, where from the perspective of black and coloured people they were part of the oppressor class, and, from the perspective of the English, they were the inferiors, the colonized.

These are the central aspects through which I have analysed the course of Antoinette and her mother towards madness, and the relationship between their madness and their marriages to English men who could not truly understand them, due to the differences in their cultural and social backgrounds. In this respect, the works of Gayatri Spivak (1985) and Laura E. Ciolkowski (1997) were very useful, since they deal with issues of colonialism and madness in the Caribbean. First, I analyse the four scenes selected from the novel. I then compare the stories of the two women, identifying the similarities between them and tracing the issues that lead to their confinement as madwomen and that formed the cycle of madness in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Finally, I consider whether their madness began before their confinement, due to the general circumstances of their lives, the complicated dynamics of their marriages and the repression of their emotions and opinions by societal norms, or whether their madness was a result of their confinement.

My hope is that this research can contribute to the studies of *Wide Sargasso Sea* by demonstrating that it is a novel that can stand on its own terms, independently from its connection with the classic of English literature which inspired it. I also believe my work can contribute by bringing the character Annette into the spotlight, alongside the protagonist, Antoinette, because in the studies I have had access to, Annette, being an almost invisible character in the novel despite her importance to Antoinette's story, has not been the focus of analyses about this piece of literature. Finally, I hope my work can also be a contribution, even if a small one, to the studies of female madness in literature, which has long been a topic of interest to many scholars.

Both Antoinette and her mother are Creole women who married English gentlemen who became landowners in their place. These alliances expose the two women to great tension in their familial and communal environments, and become pivotal to the outcomes of their stories — their madness and their subsequent confinement. The fact that they are Creole is also relevant because of the existing stereotype at the time that related creoleness to madness. Their "race" is, therefore, also an influencing factor in their final fates.

2 CONTEXTUALIZATION

2.1 ABOUT JEAN RHYS

Jean Rhys was born on the Windward Isle of Dominica in the Caribbean in 1890. Her birth name was Ella Gwendoline Rees Williams, and she changed it more than once during her life before settling on "Jean Rhys". She was a white Creole woman and a descendant of English colonizers and former slave-owners whose fortunes declined after the Emancipation Act of 1833[1], which abolished slavery in most of the British Empire, much like the protagonist of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette. Also like her character, Rhys had a distant relationship with her mother, who seemed to be perpetually busy with Rhys's siblings. This culminated in lifelong feelings of loneliness and neglect, besides a confused sense of identity, unstable interpersonal relationships with friends and romantic partners, and a complicated relationship with her daughter, Maryvonne, later in life. Furthermore, Rhys's family used to own a plantation called Genever Estate, which collapsed after the Emancipation, resulting in the financial decline of the family after the end of slavery. This estate was Rhys's inspiration for her descriptions of Coulibri, Antoinette's deteriorating family estate in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Jean Rhys's interpersonal relationships remained complicated throughout her life. Pizzichini (2010) explains that Rhys was always suspicious of other people, having been the victim of abuse during childhood. A friend of her parents, Mr. Howard, would often talk to her, take her on interesting outings to the Botanical Gardens, and give her presents. At that point in her life, Rhys was so desperate for adult attention that she did not get at home that she became easy prey for Mr. Howard. This childhood trauma tainted her views of the world, of men and women, and affected her future relationships with men, which were unhealthy in different ways, some men leaving her in complicated financial and legal situations, others intensifying her depression.

Besides this significant trauma, when she was seventeen years old, Rhys's parents sent her to England, to finish her studies. The school she was sent to was "strict, correct and conventional" and "epitomized an English society that Jean came to fear and dread" (PIZZICHINI, 2010, n.p.). The other students mocked her for her West Indian accent and this contributed to the feeling she carried through life that she did not truly belong anywhere: not in Dominica, where she was too English to fit in, nor in England, where she was too Creole to fit in. Her time in England did not bring only sorrows, though. While there, Rhys found her love for theatre and acting, and even studied for some time at the Academy of Dramatic Arts (colloquially known as “Tree’s”) in London. Unfortunately, when she was nineteen, her father decided not to pay for her to continue studying there, after receiving a letter saying that her accent would “seriously affect her chances of success in Drama” (PIZZICHINI, 2010, n.p.). This experience only confirmed her intense dislike of England and the English, which led her to prefer life in continental Europe.

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[1] Also known as the Slavery Abolition Act. Except when expressly referenced otherwise, the factual historical information presented in this section comes from the annotations to the Norton Critical Edition of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, edited by Judith L. Raiskin.

As a whole, Rhys lived a very adventurous life, but also a very unstable one. She had several convoluted relationships with her lovers and her three husbands, lost her first child (a son) to pneumonia at only three months old, moved from country to country for years, and had a long-standing affair with the famous author and editor Ford Maddox Ford — a married man who encouraged her writing and who suggested that she adopt the name “Jean Rhys”. Their relationship began while she was still married to her first husband, Willem Jean Marie Lenglet. Rhys even had to give up her daughter, Maryvonne, into the care of others right after her birth, while Rhys dealt with postpartum depression, and again after Lenglet was arrested and left her with no money.

Rhys struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts throughout her life, and had a sense of being constantly misunderstood by those around her. All these factors made for a complicated life. Rhys finally found some semblance of stability with her second husband, Leslie Tilden Smith, with whom she even travelled back to Dominica in 1935 to visit her home country for the first time since she had left it after they inherited some money from Leslie’s father. Four years later, in 1939, Leslie gifted her with a copy of a classic work of English literature which inspired her to offer another version for a Creole character depicted in that story. That was when she started working on the novel that would eventually be named *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

2.2 ABOUT *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Known as Jean Rhys’s last and most famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in 1966, almost three decades after Rhys started writing it. The novel is set in the mid-nineteenth century West Indies, and tells the story of Antoinette Cosway, a white Creole woman, daughter of Creole parents, from the time of her childhood, through her marriage and, finally, to her descent into madness. As explained by Laura E. Ciolkowski (1997), Creoles were generally and stereotypically associated with moral and sexual deviance, which were, according to Sigurðardóttir (2013), considered to be symptoms of madness during the nineteenth century. It is also interesting to note that in the novel, Antoinette's husband states that she is a Creole of "pure English descent" (WSS, p. 39), although in Part One it is said that her mother is a "Martinique girl" (WSS, p. 9), which means that Annette comes from a French colony. This discrepancy calls Antoinette's English Creole "pedigree" into question.

As a white Creole woman herself, Rhys was inspired to retell the story of the mad white Creole character from a classic of nineteenth-century English literature who was confined for years in her English husband's house before, finally, burning it down and dying. Rhys decided to tell this woman's story from a different perspective because she identified with the dislocated, and, in her opinion, misrepresented Creole character. Her intention, as stated by herself in letters, was to give this character her own voice, a chance to tell her story for herself, and show the readers the other side of the story — the Creole side.

Wide Sargasso Sea is organized in three parts, each with its first-person narrator. The first part is told by Antoinette, and focuses on her childhood and adolescence in Jamaica. It begins with her formative years at the decaying Coulibri Estate, her strained and distant relationship with her mother, Annette, and the racial tensions between the black community and Antoinette's family, who were former slave owners. The section ends with her as a seventeen-year-old who is being educated in a convent in Spanish Town, the former capital city of Jamaica. The second part, the longest in the novel, is narrated mostly by Antoinette's husband, whose name is not mentioned in the novel. That is why I refer to him simply as "the Husband". This part, unlike the first one, is set in Dominica (Jean Rhys's native country), where we follow the early months of their complicated marriage up until the point when the husband concludes that Antoinette is mad and decides to return to England and take her with him. The final section of the novel is narrated by Antoinette/Bertha, as Gayatri Spivak calls the madwoman that Antoinette has become: a person who has been locked in a room in her husband's house in England for several years and has lost touch with reality and with her own fragile and fragmented identity.

The story begins with Antoinette's narration. The reader learns about her lonely childhood at Coulibri estate, which is permeated by a constant feeling of vulnerability. The narrator states that "[m]y father, visitors, horses, feeling safe in bed—all belonged to the past"

(RHYS, 1999, p. 9), illustrating her family's precarious situation and revealing a longing for a different time, when her circumstances were less lonely and uncertain. The narrator shows us her distant relationship with her mother, who focused more on Antoinette's brother, Pierre, who had some unspecified special needs[2]. The narrator also tells us about how her mother had retreated into herself, depressed, after the financial decline of the family and the death of Mr. Cosway, which left them unprotected and "marooned". We also learn that Antoinette was left to run free around the estate, where she felt more connected to nature than to other people. Antoinette also tells the reader of the friend she had for a while — a black girl called Tia, who eventually betrayed her by stealing the little money she had and all her clothes one afternoon.

Their circumstances change after Annette marries Mr. Mason, a rich Englishman who renovates their house and establishes an English routine in their home. The narrator states: "[w]e ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings. I was glad to be like an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine's cooking" (RHYS, 1999, p. 21). Antoinette now has to act "like an English girl", but she is not English. The family's improved financial condition, the repairs made to Coulibri, and Mr. Mason's talk of bringing Indian workers to take the place of the black workers all fan the flames of resentment that had long been simmering since before the Emancipation. The black people eventually set Coulibri on fire and Pierre and Annette's pet parrot, Coco, both die in the fire.

After this, Annette is allegedly sent away to recover, but is actually confined as a madwoman, and Antoinette is sent to study in a convent in Spanish Town. Some years later, Mr. Mason and his son, Richard, arrange for Antoinette to marry an Englishman. This man is a second son from a respectable English family who is marrying Antoinette for the inheritance of thirty thousand pounds — a fortune at that time — that Mr. Mason has given her. In that time, second sons rarely inherited anything due to the law of primogeniture, which stated that the first male child or the closest male relative inherited all of a man's property after his death. In the novel, Antoinette's husband imagines writing a letter to his father in which he says:

> Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her [Antoinette] (that must be seen to). I have a modest competence now. I will never be a disgrace to you or my brother the son you love. No begging letters, no mean requests. None of the furtive shabby manoeuvres of a younger son. (RHYS, 1999, p. 41).

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[2] Throughout the novel, Pierre is referred to as a "cripple", an "idiot" and a "cretin" and Antoinette states in Part One of the novel that her mother had never been the same after a doctor had come and told her that there was nothing to be done for Pierre.

Second sons at the time had to either enter into a profession, such as the church or the army, or to marry wealthy heiresses to secure their financial safety, which is precisely the case of Antoinette's husband. In his letter, it is also implied that his marriage to Antoinette was arranged because his father wished to avoid the shame of a son who could not support himself, which could be a risk if he were to become a professional man of little or no success. The first part of the novel ends here, with Mr. Mason's visit to Antoinette at the convent to tell her of this arranged marriage.

The second part of the novel switches to Antoinette's husband's perspective and is the longest section of the book. This part of the novel starts with the newlywed couple arriving at the village of Massacre, in Dominica, which is located at the foot of a hill that they will climb to reach their honeymoon home, a small property that had belonged to Annette called Granbois. They will be staying there for an indeterminate amount of time in the company of a few servants, including Christophine, Antoinette's childhood nurse, and Amélie, a "half-caste"[3] young woman who is consistently cruel to Antoinette, calling her "white cockroach" and making other offensive comments, and who helps to seed doubts in the Husband's mind about his Creole wife.

From the outset, the Husband is already a bit reticent about his marriage. He is in doubt about Antoinette's lineage ("Creole of pure English descent she *may* be, but they [Antoinette's eyes] are not English or European either" (RHYS, 1999, p. 39, my emphasis)) and feels uncomfortable with how naturally she interacts with the black people they encounter, especially with Christophine. He is also struggling with feelings of having been "bought" by Antoinette's inheritance and of being in a strange, intense and alien place. This is clear in his descriptions of the scenery, such as when he states "I understood why the porter had called it [the island] *a wild place*. Not only wild, but *menacing* [...] Everything is *too much* [...] Too much blue, too much purple, too much green [...] the woman is *a stranger* [...] I have not bought her, *she has bought me*, or so she thinks" (RHYS, 1999, p. 41, my emphasis). We can see through his narration how suspicious he is of Antoinette and of the island where they will be spending their honeymoon. From the start, his outlook is unfavourable towards both the place and his wife.

During the course of Part Two, these negative views are intensified by the discomfort he feels with his own sexual desire for his wife, with her desire for him, with the habits and behaviours of the servants, and with Antoinette's idleness. There is also the factor of his growing revulsion for the island, due to its humidity and its bright colours, which seem savage to him. The situation is further worsened when he receives a letter from a man calling himself Daniel Cosway, who claims to be late Mr. Cosway's illegitimate son with a black woman — a former slave at Coulibri. In this letter, Daniel states that Antoinette's father was an alcoholic and that the man had had many affairs which resulted in many illegitimate children, that her mother was an infamous madwoman, that her brother was "an idiot from birth", and that it is common knowledge that Antoinette herself is "going the same way as her mother".

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[3] In the context of the novel, being "half-caste" means the person is biracial, usually being descendants of black people and white people.

After reading this letter, the Husband talks to the servants to find out more about Daniel and even goes to his house to question him about his claims in the letter. Eventually, the Husband decides to confront Antoinette about her mother, asking if she was truly mad. Although Antoinette denies that Daniel is related to her and tells him her mother's story from her point of view, by this point the Husband is already predisposed to doubt her and is also becoming progressively more uncomfortable and resentful of their marriage and the West Indies. By then, he had already started calling her "Bertha" instead of "Antoinette" and had also been distancing himself from her, convincing Antoinette that he hates her.

All the tension between the couple finally erupts after Antoinette gives him an unspecified substance in his wine and the Husband retaliates by having sexual intercourse with their servant, Amélie, which Antoinette hears. Antoinette spirals out of control, becoming enraged with her husband, cursing at him, drinking copious amounts of rum, and even reacting violently when he tries to take the bottle away from her. The situation is enough to convince the Husband that Antoinette is mad and he formulates a plan to take her to England, where her existence will be kept a secret by his family and where he will keep her locked on the topmost floor of his house.

Part Three of the novel is set some years after these events and is narrated by Antoinette/Bertha, who has already been confined for years under the supervision of her caretaker, Grace Poole. Antoinette has, at this point, been successfully renamed by her husband since she has been taken to England, which is his territory, and her identity and perception of time and reality have become fragmented, turning her into "Antoinette/Bertha". Because of her distorted perception of the world and events at this point, the narration of Part Three is very convoluted since the narrator is not able to maintain a coherent sequence of events. According to Kathy Mezei, "[t]he movement of the narration [in Part Three] is determined not by chronology but by associative memory" (1987, p. 201), and this reflects

Antoinette/Bertha's madness since, in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* the ability to structure her narrative coherently is directly related to Antoinette's mental stability. Mezei states that "[...] the threads that hold her to the reality that the world perceives as sanity [...] are the elements of conventional narrative: linear chronology, sequence, narratorial lucidity, distance" (1987, p. 197). Therefore, in Part Three, Antoinette's non-linear and abstract narration is representative of her deteriorated psyche — her madness.

This last part of the novel is very short and is composed mostly of Antoinette/Bertha's stream of thoughts and paranoia. We learn that she has been drinking from Grace Poole's bottle, which contains an unspecified alcoholic beverage, and that she steals the keys to her rooms when the caretaker is asleep so that she can roam around the house. Antoinette/Bertha refuses to believe she is in England: "Then I open the door and walk into their world. It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard [...] They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it" (RHYS, 1999, p. 107). This part ends when, after dreaming that she sets fire to the house where she had been confined and leaps into the pool at Coulibri towards Tia, Antoinette/Bertha wakes up and sets out to enact her dream.

Through the story of Antoinette, Rhys presents the reader with a complex picture of the racial and colonial tensions of the nineteenth-century British West Indian colonies and of the effect these conflicts had on the people who live there. Rhys's novel also forces the reader to reflect on the importance of point of view and narrative. As stated by Ciolkowski, "*Wide Sargasso Sea* [...] maps out the myriad disputes over what gets to count as the way things are" (1997, p. 353-354), in other words, the novel maps out the different points of view through which the story and the history of the West Indies of the nineteenth century can be told and interpreted and how these different points of view are all struggling to be seen as the official version of events. This is emblematically represented by Antoinette offering her husband her own version of her mother's story in Part Two and telling him that "there is always the other side" to a story. Jean Rhys wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a counterpoint to another novel, as a way to tell the other side of the mad Creole woman's story, and her masterpiece invites the reader to see more than one side of the history of the colonies itself.

The symbols and effects of colonial and racial tensions permeate the novel. They can be seen, for example, in the fire at Coulibri, in Antoinette's brief friendship with Tia, in the Cosways' isolation from the rest of society after becoming poor, and in the renaming of Antoinette, which is at once a form of Obeah (a black practice) and a tool slave-owners used to keep enslaved people in a place of inferiority. In Obeah, renaming someone was part of the ritual to create “zombies”, people whose minds were controlled by the creator. Similarly, slave-owners named or renamed their slaves as would any animals or objects they owned as a way to assert their power and control over these people. Gayatri Spivak states that the act of renaming someone demonstrated how imperialism can determine “so intimate a thing as personal and human identity” (1985, p. 250). In the novel, the Husband renames Antoinette, but, he himself is not named at all, which is seen by Elaine Savory as “an effective retort by Rhys to the renaming or erasure of names performed by colonialists and planters” (2009, p. 79), who were English, like the Husband.

These tensions are central to the theme of madness in the novel. As I demonstrate in section 3 of this monograph, the madness of Annette and Antoinette is partly a consequence of the strain these tensions caused in the characters’ lives. The racial tensions did not allow them to establish a firm sense of their identity, which is a recurring theme throughout the novel, especially in relation to Antoinette. This resulted in a constant feeling of being in an in-between place because they did not belong anywhere. The colonial tensions between the women and their English husbands, and their often conflicting interpretations of circumstances arising from their different points of view, strained their relationships and caused them pain and stress. Finally, the tensions between the former slaves and the wife and daughter of a slave owner (Mr. Cosway) led to the fire at Coulibri and the death of Pierre, leading Annette into madness and paving Antoinette’s way towards the same fate. The relationship between the tensions underlying *Wide Sargasso Sea* and the madness of Annette and Antoinette are further explored in section 3 of this monograph as I analyse the scenes of the novel.

2.3 FEMALE MADNESS IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

To begin presenting the topic of this section, I must first explain my choice of terminology. Three terms have frequently been used to refer to the mentally ill in the studies that underlie my work: “mad”, “lunatic” and “insane”. In this monograph, however, I have opted to use the terms “madness” and “mad” because they are the ones most frequently used by Rhys in her novel to refer to Annette and Antoinette’s mental state. In Francis Wyndham’s Introduction to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, he also mentions the “*mad* Creole heiresses in the early nineteenth century” (RHYS, 1999, p. 6-7, my emphasis) which, according to him, Rhys had in mind when writing the book. Furthermore, although Antoinette's husband does use the term "lunatic" in some instances (less often than "mad"), I have opted to use only one term in order to keep the text more uniform.

It is also worth noting that all the terms mentioned above have a general meaning, and, even during the nineteenth century, encompassed any number of more specific afflictions. Showalter (1987) and Sigurðardóttir (2013) mention "depression after the loss of a loved one", "melancholia", "erotomania", "domestic affliction", "moral mania", "moral insanity", and many others among the various types of madness for which people were treated during that time. However, as stated in the Introduction, it is not my objective to attempt any kind of diagnosis for the mental conditions of the characters I study in this work. My goal with this study is to provide a personal analysis on how the tensions underlying these characters' social context and their respective marriages culminated in the two women being, in the words of Elaine Showalter, "first defined, and then confined, as mad." Therefore, the most appropriate choice of terminology was to use the generic term "madness" to refer to their condition. That being said, I can now present a brief overview on the topic of female madness during the Victorian Era.

The first important thing to say about female madness in the nineteenth century is that, as stated and demonstrated by Elaine Showalter (1987), the historical medical accounts researchers have access to nowadays are mainly the ones written by the male psychiatrists of the time. According to the researcher, "[t]o find the female perspective on insanity, we must turn to Victorian women's diaries and novels" (p. 61) because there are no known records kept by the women who worked with the mentally ill. However, Victorian psychiatrists were more concerned with managing their patients' behaviours to make them act according to Victorian social mores — a treatment called "moral managing" — than with talking to them and trying to understand why *they* believed they were displaying the behaviours for which they had been confined.

Furthermore, there was a clear distinction between mad *men* and mad *women*, which reflected Victorian society's views on men and women. According to Showalter,

> Even when both men and women had similar symptoms of mental disorder, *psychiatry differentiated between an English malady, associated with the intellectual and economic pressures on highly civilized men, and a female malady, associated with the sexuality and essential nature of women*. Women were believed to be more vulnerable to insanity than men, to experience it in specifically feminine ways, and to be differently affected by it in the conduct of their lives. (SHOWALTER, 1987, p. 7, my emphasis)

This distinction was based on the fact that Victorian psychiatrists, although aware of the influence that other factors, such as poverty, had on women's mental health, believed that "women were more vulnerable to insanity than men because the instability of their reproductive systems interfered with their sexual, emotional and rational control" (SHOWALTER, 1987, p. 55). They also believed that the rise in the mad female population, especially in comparison with the smaller number of mad men, proved this correlation between mental instability and the uterus and menstrual cycles. In fact, Victorian psychiatrists, who were all men, believed that a woman's mind and morals were particularly "weakened" and susceptible to madness during key periods in her life, such as her first menstrual cycle at the start of puberty, after childbirth, and at the beginning of menopause. As a consequence of these medical beliefs, it was also accepted that a woman was more likely to inherit "madness" from her mother than from her father.

The Victorians clearly believed in a correlation between being a woman and being mad. Showalter, however, demonstrates that this condition was a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, where the more society tried to keep women's fragile minds safe and controlled to avoid madness, the closer they pushed these women to becoming mad. She states that

> In a society that not only perceived women as childlike, irrational, and sexually unstable but also rendered them legally powerless and economically marginal, it is not surprising that they should have formed the greater part of the residual categories of deviance from which doctors drew a lucrative practice and the asylums of much of their population. (SHOWALTER, 1987, p. 73)

From this description, we can see that there is a correlation between women being forced into complying with societal expectations and into obeying society's restrictive moral guidelines and their descent into madness as a result of stress, boredom and a lack of engaging mental activity arising from their circumstances. Women were discouraged and sometimes outright forbidden from applying their minds to learning, writing, or seeking other intellectual pursuits. Many women — including the famous nurse Florence Nightingale — mentioned this restriction of their intellectual freedom in their diaries and other personal writings as the main cause behind their depressive states and other mental afflictions. Beyond that, women were also expected to be submissive, utterly self-less, self-sacrificing, and dedicated to their husbands and children, and they had no legal right to make decisions for themselves. They were constantly in the vulnerable position of being subject to the decisions and whims, and sometimes tyranny, of the men in their lives. These circumstances together were the cause of many women's so-called madness, some for not demonstrating enough interest in their child, some for not obeying their husbands unquestioningly, some for expressing firm opinions about “male” subjects, such as politics, or for expressing religious beliefs that diverged from her family's.

Furthermore, behaviours that would now be considered normal were often understood as symptoms of madness. An adolescent girl who suddenly became rebellious and less docile and submissive than she was as a child, for example, was considered to be displaying signs of madness brought on by the beginning of her menstrual cycles. Behaviours that were considered unnatural or inappropriate were also ascribed to mental instability, such as neglecting or showing aversion to one’s husband or child; or having angry outbursts, while shouting and yelling expletives. In sum, women who expressed beliefs or acted in ways that were threatening to the Victorian ideals of femininity were considered mad.

That is not to say, however, that these were the only women to be sent for treatment. Many patients in Victorian insane asylums were women suffering from paranoia, hallucinations, suicidal tendencies and other symptoms or conditions that would nowadays also indicate the need for psychological or psychiatric help. Nonetheless, it is a fact that many of the women that were diagnosed as mad and treated for it — be it in insane asylums, in private institutions, or in their own family homes — were in truth simply “inconvenient” to their families or to society.

It is also important to note that creoleness was associated with madness. There was a widespread belief in England and Europe that originated in the eighteenth century that white people living in warmer and more humid climates, and especially those that were born in the tropics, suffered a process of “physical, intellectual, and moral degeneration” (FABELLA, 2008, p. 69). Considering that during the nineteenth century “moral insanity” — explained by Elaine Showalter (1987) as a condition where the person displays a “perversion” of morality and “natural inclinations”, according to the standards of the time, of course — was a common type of madness, the belief that Creoles were morally inferior to people from colder climates led people to view Creoles as being far more susceptible to madness than the English and the Europeans. This is particularly relevant information for this study, because, by this view, Annette and Antoinette are already far more vulnerable than any Englishwoman would be to a diagnosis of madness.

3 THE MADNESS OF ANTOINETTE AND ANNETTE

3.1 ANALYSING THE FOUR SCENES

In this section, I describe the four scenes I have chosen to work with and present my analysis of each one. Each scene is analysed in an individual subsection in which I present the scene's context, a brief summary of the scene itself and then my analysis. The manners in which these scenes are presented are slightly different, however. The scenes focusing on Annette are narrated by her daughter and are shorter and more clearly delimited because she is not a main character. The scenes that focus on Antoinette, on the other hand, have different narrators and are more difficult to isolate. Her first scene, in which she is determined to be mentally unstable, is narrated by the Husband in the second part of the novel. Her second scene is composed of excerpts from the third part of the novel, which is narrated by Antoinette/Bertha, and has a more abstract narrative structure.

Since Antoinette is the protagonist of the novel and her descent into madness is a central theme in the story, her journey into insanity is developed all throughout the novel, making the selection of scenes to analyse more complicated than the selection of Annette's scenes. For this reason, while Annette's scenes are clear excerpts of the novel which I quote in their entirety, my analyses of Antoinette's scenes are composed of my description of the scenes and of selected quotations that are relevant to illustrate specific events which are relevant to these analyses. That being said, I begin with my analysis of Annette's story and then move onto Antoinette's, since the story of Annette's madness is crucial to my analysis of her daughter's journey into mental instability.

3.1.1 Annette

3.1.1.1. First scene

The first scene I have chosen to analyse happens in the beginning of the novel. Annette had been warning her new husband, Mr. Mason, that continuing to live in Coulibri with the rising tension and rage in the black community surrounding them was becoming dangerous. He continually dismissed her fears stating that "They're too damn lazy to be dangerous" (RHYS, 1999, p. 19). This dismissal by her husband begins to strain their relationship and Annette seems to get progressively more scared and angry. The tension reaches its climax when the enraged former slaves set fire to their house and Annette's younger child, Pierre, dies. Annette is also hurt in the fire, her hands and hair being burned while trying to save her son.

Annette has an outburst of violent rage and grief in response to this, which the narrator, Antoinette, describes as follows:

> My stepfather said, 'Annette, you are hurt—your hands . . .' But she did not even look at him. 'His crib was on fire,' she said to Aunt Cora. 'The little room is on fire and Myra was not there. She has gone. She was not there.'
> 'That does not surprise me at all,' said Aunt Cora. She laid Pierre on the sofa, bent over him, then lifted up her skirt, stepped out of her white petticoat and began to tear it into strips.
> 'She left him, she ran away and left him alone to die,' said my mother, still whispering. So it was all the more dreadful when *she began to scream abuse at Mr Mason, calling him a fool, a cruel stupid fool. 'I told you,' she said, 'I told you what would happen again and again.' Her voice broke, but still she screamed, 'You would not listen, you sneered at me, you grinning hypocrite, you ought not to live either, you know so much, don't you?* Why don't you go out and ask them to let you go? Say how innocent you are. Say you have always trusted them.' (RHYS, 1999, p. 23-24, my emphasis).

After this, the situation continues to escalate as the family and their servants all escape the flaming house while Annette's pet parrot, Coco, is trapped inside. She tries to go back to rescue it, but her husband stops her, afraid that she would get hurt again. The bird then burns to death, trying to fly, but unable to do so because Mr. Mason had clipped its wings. The black people yell at the family, calling them "white cockroaches"[4] and "white niggers" and throwing stones at them, intending to stop them from getting into their carriage to leave. The conflict even reaches a point where a young black girl, Tia, who was Antoinette's friend for a brief period, aims a stone at her head, wounding her and making her bleed. The interference of Christophine, a trusted servant of the family since before Mr. Mason met Annette and a known Obeah[5] woman, and the burning parrot (which was considered a symbol of bad luck), however, discourage them and the family are eventually allowed to flee with their employees.

The main points to analyse in this scene are the exchanges between Annette and Mr. Mason. Firstly, we have the dismissal of her fears. She is a Caribbean woman and has lived in Coulibri for many years as the wife of the landowner and then as his impoverished widow. Clearly, she would have a better understanding of the tensions that exist between the residents of Coulibri and the black community that lives close to it because she has been immersed in this situation from the beginning. Her English husband, however, can only view the situation from the perspective of a recently-arrived colonizer. He chooses to dismiss his wife's fears and warnings based on a belief that she is evaluating the context emotionally, while he is being sensible. In fact, his response to her continued pleas to go elsewhere is

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[4] Jean Rhys herself was called a "white cockroach" when she lived in Dominica.

[5] Obeah is a West Indian religion of African origin, similar to Brazilian Candomblé or Haitian Vodou. Obeah is shown in the novel to have been generally associated with black magic in Caribbean societies and to have been illegal in the West Indies during the period when the novel is set.

> 'Annette, *be reasonable*. You were the widow of a slave-owner, the daughter of a slave-owner, and you had been living here alone, with two children, for nearly five years when we met. Things were at their worst then. But you were never molested, never harmed.' (RHYS, 1999, p. 19, my emphasis).

He goes further in a subsequent conversation with Antoinette's aunt, Cora[6], who is visiting the family at Coulibri, when she warns Mr. Mason not to speak of his plans to import labourers from the East Indies in front of a black servant, Myra, whom she says is not to be trusted. Mr. Mason dismisses her by saying "'Live here all your life and know nothing about the people. It's astonishing. They are children—they wouldn't hurt a fly.'" To which Cora replies, once more cautioning him, "'Unhappily children do hurt flies'". Here we can clearly see that Mr. Mason's racist perception of the black community as well as his assumption that he, the Englishman, is more knowledgeable about the social context of the West Indies than Cora, who has, as he himself stated, lived there all her life, are the driving forces behind his continual dismissal of these women's worries.

What Mr. Mason does not realise, however, is that his assumptions that they were never molested nor harmed, and that the black people are as harmless as children are incorrect. Although physical violence was not committed, as far as the novel shows, Annette and her family were often bullied. Antoinette's black friend, Tia, even steals her money and clothes one afternoon while the girl was swimming in a pool — an event that dissolves the only friendship that she had. Annette herself also tries to explain that those were different circumstances. When they were alone at Coulibri, they were impoverished and their house was quite literally falling apart. Now that she has married him, a rich man, tensions started rising more than ever, presumably due to resentment and rage that had been contained for too long, since the times before the Abolition. The family's return to good fortune and Mr. Mason's intention to import labourers to substitute the black people he believes are lazy are, together, the metaphorical "last straw" for the abused black community.

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[6] The novel does not specify if Aunt Cora is related to Antoinette on her mother's side or her father's.

This dismissal of Annette's and Cora's warnings then results in the tragic death of her child. Her reaction to this loss is to "scream abuse at Mr Mason, calling him a fool, a cruel stupid fool" (RHYS, 1999, p. 24). She goes on to accuse him of being a "grinning hypocrite" who "would not listen" to her warnings. Although, from a twenty-first century point of view, this may seem a very natural response and, as readers, we may even agree with Annette, it is important to remember that, in the nineteenth century, diagnoses of madness included "moral insanity", which was defined as "[...] a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses [...]" (SHOWALTER, 1987, p. 29). This condition was believed to be brought on by "strong emotions and psychological stresses," which, of course, must include the sudden and horrific death of one's child and the loss of one's home.

Furthermore, as stated by Sigurðardóttir (2013), "it was generally believed that the perfect Victorian woman had no anger, passion or strong emotion," and the gender roles of the nineteenth century also dictated that "[a] woman was supposed to be the dutiful wife, not to quarrel with her husband". Therefore, Annette's reaction could definitely be interpreted by an Englishman of the Victorian Era as a lapse of sanity — more specifically, as a case of moral insanity. The laws of the time also considered women as the property of their husbands and "[i]n many places a woman could be committed to an asylum or a state hospital because her husband or father demanded it, and this rarely required proof of her actual mental instability" (SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, 2013, p. 7-8).

Sigurðardóttir then goes on to state that "depression after the loss of a loved one" and "abusive language" were often the circumstances or "diagnoses" for the admission of many women into such facilities for the insane. As the scene I have described demonstrates, Annette certainly fits into both these categories. The loss of her son and her reaction to it — attacking her husband — appear to be, therefore, the main circumstances that led to her alleged madness.

Taking these facts into consideration, we can perceive Annette, who is confined and put into the care of two keepers soon after this event is over, as a grieving mother, angry at the husband whose choices and actions she blamed for the outcome of the situation. Her reaction to these events in her life was very strong and emotional and, to her husband's eyes, especially because most of her aggression and rage were directed towards him, demonstrated mental instability. The consequence was her confinement as an infamous madwoman — a fame that would later influence her daughter's fate as well.

3.1.1.2 Second scene

After the events described and analysed in the previous section, Antoinette, the narrator, is sick and delirious for almost six weeks. When she recovers consciousness and Aunt Cora tells her that Annette is in the country resting and recovering, Antoinette recalls that she had been awake before that and had heard her mother yelling "'Don't touch me. I'll kill you if you touch me. Coward. Hypocrite. I'll kill you'" (RHYS, 1999, p. 28). The words "coward" and "hypocrite" suggest that Annette was yelling at her husband, since they echo her words to him during the fire scene. Antoinette also relates that she put her hands over her ears because "her [Annette's] screams were so loud and terrible" (RHYS, 1999, p. 28).

A while after this, Antoinette, accompanied by Christophine, is taken to see her mother at the "tidy pretty little house where she lived now". When they arrive, she runs toward the house, enters without knocking and finds

> A coloured[7] man, a coloured woman, and a white woman sitting with her head bent so low that I couldn't see her face. But I recognized her hair, one plait much shorter than the other. And her dress. I put my arms round her and kissed her. She held me so tightly that I couldn't breathe and I thought, 'It's not her.' Then, 'It must be her.' She looked at the door, then at me, then at the door again. I could not say, 'He is dead,' so I shook my head. 'But I am here, I am here,' I said, and she said, 'No,' quietly. Then 'No no no' very loudly and flung me from her. I fell against the partition and hurt myself. The man and the woman were holding her arms and Christophine was there. The woman said, 'Why you bring the child to make trouble, trouble, trouble? Trouble enough without that.' (RHYS, 1999, p. 28-29).

After this, Antoinette does not mention seeing her mother again in Part One and the reader only learns more about Annette's story in a conversation Antoinette has with her husband. This conversion is narrated in Part Two of the novel by the Husband. He has received and read a letter from a man calling himself Daniel Cosway, who claims to be Antoinette's father's illegitimate child. In this letter, Daniel describes Antoinette and her family as "wicked, detestable slave-owners for generations" and states that "there is madness in that family". He describes Annette as "worthless and spoilt", saying that "soon the madness that is in her, and in all these white Creoles, [came] out" (RHYS, 1999, p. 57). The history of madness in Antoinette's family — namely the fact that Annette had been a madwoman — had not been disclosed to the Husband before their marriage and he eventually confronts his wife for confirmation. Antoinette then tells him her mother's story from her own point-of-view — "the other side" of the story, as Antoinette refers to it.

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[7] In the novel, "coloured" is used to refer to people of mixed black and white ancestry.

During this conversation, Antoinette relates much of what the readers have already learned through her narration in Part One. She explains how she grew up, her family's isolation after the death of her father and their financial decline, and the fire at Coulibri. She then goes on to speak of Annette's madness.

> 'Pierre died,' she [Antoinette] went on as if she had not heard me, 'and *my mother hated Mr Mason*. She would not let him go near her or touch her. *She said she would kill him, she tried to, I think*. So he bought her a house and hired a coloured man and woman to look after her. [...] she—she didn't want me. She pushed me away and cried when I went to see her. They told me I made her worse. People talked about her, they would not leave her alone, they would be talking about her and stop if they saw me. One day I made up my mind to go to her, by myself. Before I reached her house I heard her crying. I thought I will kill anyone who is hurting my mother. I dismounted and ran quickly on to the veranda where I could look into the room. I remember the dress she was wearing—an evening dress cut very low, and she was barefooted. There was a fat black man with *a glass of rum* in his hand. He said, "Drink it and you will forget." *She drank it without stopping.* He poured her some more and she took the glass and laughed and threw it over her shoulder. [...] *She walked up and down and said, "But this is a very pleasant surprise, Mr Luttrell. Godfrey, take Mr Luttrell's horse."* Then she seemed to grow tired and sat down in the rocking-chair. *I saw the man lift her up out of the chair and kiss her. I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all soft and limp in his arms and he laughed*. The woman laughed too, but she was angry. When I saw that I ran away. (RHYS, 1999, p. 80-81, my emphasis).

Although these two narrations are separated in the novel, I consider them as a single scene for the purposes of this analysis because they complement each other in representing a single story of confinement. The first visit that Antoinette speaks of, when "she pushed [Antoinette] away and cried when [she] went to see her," is the same visit that the protagonist, as a narrator, tells the reader about in Part One. The second visit that Antoinette mentions does not appear in Part One of the novel, but is a continuation of Annette's story of madness and confinement. Together, these two narrative moments form a full picture of Annette after being confined, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of her story.

The points mentioned in the previous section relating to Annette's resentment towards Mr. Mason and her use of aggressive language with him continue to be a point of interest in this second scene. In fact, as we can see in the quotation above, the existing rift between the couple has intensified into hatred and, possibly, resulted in an attempted murder, although Antoinette is not sure if her mother actually did try to kill Mr. Mason. There are also four new aspects to Annette's condition which are presented in Antoinette's narrations: violence, drinking, hallucinations, and sexual abuse.

Annette’s increased violence and volatility is the first point that seems to demonstrate her deteriorated mental state and it is represented by three main instances in the excerpts quoted above. The first is when she attacks her husband, Mr. Mason, and tries to kill him. Even though this is not something we can be certain happened, the fact that her daughter believes it was possible can be considered as evidence of its plausibility, which is corroborated by the second instance of violence when Annette pushes Antoinette forcefully away after remembering that Pierre, the child to whom Annette was most attached, is dead. This push made Antoinette fall and hurt herself. The third instance is more evident of volatility and mood swings than actual violence. It is when Annette throws a glass at the wall, shattering it. Although, as I said, this event is not a violent act towards another person, it does demonstrate a lack of self-restraint from a woman who was previously very contained and charming, and, therefore, also represents a change in her mental state.

The consumption of alcohol is another point related to Annette’s madness. Antoinette says that when one of Annette’s caretakers handed her a glass of rum, “she [Annette] drank it without stopping.” This excess is demonstrative of a habitual consumption of spirits, which indicates a desire to escape reality. Alcohol is also commonly associated with the deterioration of a person’s mind and the development of violent behaviour. Elaine Savory argues that Antoinette’s drinking “clearly enables her dreams, her violence and her memories and her intentions” (2009, p. 86) in Part Three of the novel, and the same can be said for Antoinette’s mother, Annette, whose drinking seems to simultaneously trigger hallucinations of better times, make her more compliant to sexual abuse by the man who was supposed to be her caretaker, and induce sudden outbursts of violent anger (such as when she throws the glass of rum away). An interesting point to consider is that her caretakers encourage this drinking habit and probably even started it, considering the reader never hears of Annette having a penchant for spirits before her confinement. This could also be a way to keep Annette more docile since, as described by Antoinette, Annette appears to retreat into her mind after drinking and does not fight her caretakers, even though she does throw the glass at a wall.

Besides this meekness, another factor seemingly related to her alcohol consumption is her hallucinations. Annette talks to Mr. Luttrell — a person from her past, from before she ever met Mr. Mason, even before the Emancipation Act. This is symbolic of a longing for the past, when her house was not burned, her son was not dead and their family was not destitute. The hallucinations are also apparently Annette’s way of retreating into a place inside her mind that is better than her reality. We can see clearly that at this point of the story her mind fades in and out of reality. She was in a calm, almost lethargic, mental state when Antoinette first arrived to visit her, but her mind snapped back to reality when she recalled the death of her son and she reacted by pushing her daughter away. She then drank the rum and retreated back into her mental safe space, where she hallucinates about hosting neighbours as she used to do in the past and does not fight her caretaker when he grabs her and kisses her.

The last new aspect in Annette's behaviour is the sexual abuse she suffers at the hands of the people hired to care for her. As shown by Showalter (1987), this was not uncommon for confined madwomen of the nineteenth century, who suffered all kinds of abuse in the hands of their caretaker or overseers, sometimes even being subjected to "treatments" that to someone from the twenty-first century sound more like torture, such as keeping patients chained or submerging them in ice-cold water until they lost consciousness to calm their spirits. Annette is in a vulnerable place. She struggles with her son's death, refusing to accept that reality, and is constantly kept drunk by her caretakers. Her emotional fragility and the haze of drunkenness leave her an easy victim to the abuse of the caretakers. The man grabs her and forces a kiss on her and she merely goes "all soft and limp" in his arms. She is not able to resist, not only because she is drunk and he is stronger than her, but also because her emotional state is so fragile and her hold on reality so tenuous that she does not have the mental strength to try to react.

While Annette was confined at first for her reaction to the traumatic losses that resulted from the fire at Coulibri, it is clear in Antoinette's descriptions of her mother's condition and circumstances that she remained confined for the rest of her life because she lost her hold on reality. Annette may have been confined because her husband could not understand her grief and her reaction to it, but she stayed confined because she was never able to overcome it. Furthermore, she began retreating away from reality, just as she had done before meeting Mr. Mason, when she was absent from Antoinette's life. Her hallucinations can also be seen as her way of coping with all the painful losses she suffered during her life, even before the fire. She had lost her first home when she moved from Martinique to Jamaica to marry Mr. Cosway, she lost the freedom of youth when she had her children, she lost her comfortable life when her husband died and the estate deteriorated, she lost her son, her pet parrot, Coulibri and, finally, her sanity.

3.1.2 Antoinette

3.1.2.1 First scene

This first scene I have chosen for my analysis of Antoinette's story takes place in Part Two of the novel, being, therefore, narrated by Antoinette's nameless husband. Antoinette, noticing that her husband is becoming more distant, has gone to Christophine for help, asking the Obeah woman to give her something that will make her husband love her again.[8] Christophine grants her request, warning her that Obeah is too strong for *beké*[9]. Antoinette drugs her husband by putting Christophine's mixture in his wine and they spend the night together. When he wakes up on the following morning, the Husband guesses what happened and is sick. Later that same day, in retaliation, he has sex with Amélie, their "coloured" servant, in the room next to Antoinette's and Antoinette hears everything. Distraught, she takes a horse and leaves Granbois, their honeymoon home, to return only much later with Christophine. The events that occur when she returns convince her husband that she is mad and seal her fate.

As soon as Antoinette arrives in Granbois, she goes into her bedroom and calls Baptiste, the butler, to bring her rum. Christophine has come with her to Granbois, but goes to the kitchens. After drinking some rum, the Husband decides to check on Antoinette:

> […] I [the Husband] tried the door into Antoinette's room. It yielded very slightly. She must have pushed some piece of furniture against it, that round table probably. I pushed again and it opened enough for me to see her. She was lying on the bed on her back. Her eyes were closed and she breathed evenly. She had pulled the sheet up to her chin. On a chair beside the bed there was the empty decanter, a glass with some rum left in it and a small brass handbell. (RHYS, 1999, 87).

Antoinette then calls for Baptiste to bring more rum to her, but the Husband stops him. She becomes angry at the delay and yells for Christophine. When she opens the door to her bedroom, the Husband describes her as such: "When I saw her I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare" (RHYS, 1999, p. 87). Antoinette grabs a full bottle of rum and the Husband tells her not to drink anymore. Here begins a messy argument, during which Antoinette confronts her husband with his hypocrisy in many situations, including for judging former slave-owners for having affairs with black and coloured women when he had done the same. During this argument, the Husband calls her "Bertha" and she protests this renaming, saying: "'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too'" (RHYS, 1999, p. 88). She then criticises him for destroying Granbois for her with bad memories and, after saying she hates him, she asks if he does not love her at all. He replies that he does not at the moment and when she laughs at the answer, the Husband describes it as "a crazy laugh". Here the reader begins to see that he thinks she had gone mad.

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[8] This part is narrated by Antoinette, who, through the force of her despair, regains temporary control of the narrative (MEZEI, 1987).

[9] A word used to refer to white people, according to the Norton Critical Edition of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The situation escalates when Antoinette lifts the bottle of rum to drink some and after ordering her not to drink any more, he grabs her arm:

> I [the Husband] managed to hold her [Antoinette's] wrist with one hand and the rum with the other, but when *I felt her teeth in my arm* I dropped the bottle. The smell filled the room. But I was angry now and she saw it. *She smashed the bottle against the wall and stood with the broken glass in her hand and murder in her eyes* […] Then *she cursed me comprehensively,* my eyes, my mouth, every member of my body, and it was like a dream in the large unfurnished room and *this red-eyed wild-haired stranger who was my wife shouting obscenities at me*. (RHYS, 1999, p. 89, my emphasis).

Christophine then comes into the room, Antoinette starts crying and the Husband, with his bleeding arm, leaves the room. This fight convinces the Husband that Antoinette is mad and, after a confrontation with Christophine, he writes a letter to his father in which he says that the less his father speaks of his affairs, namely his marriage, the better for their whole family. At this point, he already starts imagining where he would keep his wife. He draws "[a] large house. [He] divided the third floor into rooms and in one room [he] drew a standing woman […] it was an English house" (RHYS, 1999, p. 98).

After this, the Husband thinks about his situation and Antoinette. One of the most persistent concerns he has is with her sexuality. Antoinette displayed an enjoyment of the sexual act which made him uncomfortable from the beginning of their marriage. Since Victorians associated women's sexuality with what they called "moral insanity", a kind of madness that arose from moral depravity/degeneration or "perversions" of the "normal" behaviours for women — meaning, of course, women who did not fit into the expected ideals of the perfect Victorian woman, who were supposed to be "selfless, loving creatures whose only purpose in life is to please and protect" (OLIVEIRA, 2019, p. 18) — Antoinette's sexuality became one more point that encouraged the Husband's belief in her madness. Furthermore, according to Showalter, "[...] uncontrolled sexuality seemed the major, almost defining symptom of insanity in women" (1987, p. 74) during the Victorian Era. Therefore, the Husband's belief in Antoinette's indiscriminate sexuality, which is evident when he thinks "She thirsts for *anyone*—not for me, [...] She'll moan and cry and give herself to anyone as no sane woman would—or could. Or *could*." (RHYS, 1999, p. 99), is one of the main factors in Antoinette's definition as a madwoman.

Furthermore, during the fight between Antoinette and the Husband, some elements stand out which have been mentioned previously in the analyses of Annette's scenes. Antoinette drinks a large amount of rum, has violent reactions, uses obscene language and says she hates her husband. The alcohol she consumes during the fight increases her volatility and feeds her anger toward her husband, making her language fouler and her reactions more primal and violent. The resulting violence and obscene language would be indicators of madness to a Victorian because they were so outside the bounds of the expectations for female behaviour that they could not be considered normal (USSHER, 2011). Lastly, her proclaimed hatred for her husband would also be shocking to a man of the nineteenth century because of the expectation that women should be dutiful and submissive to their husbands, never complaining about their behaviour, but always being supportive in all circumstances (SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, 2013).

The Husband's belief in her madness also seems to be partly founded on jealousy arising from her supposedly indiscriminate sexuality and a possessiveness that seems at once related to being her husband and to being a colonizer who finds himself losing control over the colonized Creole and attempts to regain it any way he can. He thinks "She's mad but *mine, mine*. What will I care for gods or devils or for Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. *For me*. Antoinetta—I can be gentle too. Hide your face. Hide yourself but in my arms. You'll soon see how gentle. My lunatic. My mad girl" (RHYS, 1999, p. 99, author's emphasis). It is clear that his possessiveness over her is not emotional in the sense that it does not arise from a feeling of love or affection for his wife. He himself has told her plainly before that he does not love her. Still, however, he feels she is *his* and will do what it takes to keep her under his control. At first, he did so by manipulating her emotions and now he intends to do so by confining her as a madwoman and keeping her alone, lonely, and apart from society. As stated by Oliveira, Antoinette was meant to be her English colonizer Husband's "colonized, the exotic, wild woman that needs to be tamed and civilized" (2019, p. 104). When he cannot tame her, he is convinced that she is mad and confines her.

Additionally, besides the many reasons the Husband had for not being satisfied in Antoinette as a wife since she did not come close to fitting into the parameters of the ideal Victorian woman, we can also consider the fact that the only reason he married her at all was because his father arranged the marriage for Antoinette's inheritance. Since Antoinette no longer had any legal right to any of her money or property and was completely under his financial and legal control, she was no longer necessary to him. Antoinette became an embarrassment, a wild, Creole wife whom he could not tame. Ussher states that "[t]he diagnosis of madness [...] functioned very effectively to rid society — or husbands — of women who were 'difficult', or who were no longer wanted" (2011, p. 70). From this point of view, having his wife declared mad and confining her was also a solution to the Husband's problem. He would have his money, but not need to be bothered with the wife he had not wanted and whom he had begun to resent and feel repulsed by.

3.1.2.2 Second scene

Antoinette's second scene is comprised of selected excerpts of Part Three of the novel. This part is subdivided in many short narrations of different events and I selected the moments that best represent Antoinette's circumstances for my analysis. In this part of the novel, Antoinette has already been confined for an undetermined amount of time in her husband's house in England. The narrator of this part of the novel is Antoinette/Bertha: the distorted, fragmented woman that Antoinette has become through her confinement, her disconnection from the outer world and reality, and the violence of being renamed by her husband, thereby having her identity taken away from her. During this part of the novel, the narrative structure is non-linear and the reader learns of different events that occurred since Antoinette was confined in that room.

Part Three begins with a section in italics where the readers learn what has happened since the events at the end of Part Two. Antoinette and her Husband went back to England, where he found out that both his father and brother had died and he had inherited all the family property. The Husband then arranged for Antoinette's care by having the housekeeper hire a caretaker for her, a woman called Grace Poole. All but a few servants — Grace Poole, the housekeeper, a cook, and two maids — were sent away to hide Antoinette's existence from the neighbourhood and to avoid any gossip from spreading.

After this, Antoinette/Bertha's first person narration begins and it becomes clear to the reader that she has become disconnected from reality. She obsessively repeats that she must remember something, that there is something she must do, but cannot remember what it is. She tells the reader that she steals Grace Poole's colourless drink — which Elaine Savory (2009) says is probably gin — and the keys to her room so that she can roam around the house while the caretaker is asleep. She describes the place as a "cardboard house" and refuses to believe that they are in England. She is convinced they got lost on the way: "[…] I [Antoinette] slept. When I woke it was a different sea. Colder. It was that night, I think, that we changed course and lost our way to England. This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England" (RHYS, 1999, p. 107).

In the next narrative section, Grace Poole is telling Antoinette/Bertha that a gentleman claiming to be her brother visited her, but that she had attacked him:

> Grace Poole said, 'So *you don't remember that you attacked this gentleman with a knife*? […] I didn't hear all he said except "I cannot interfere legally between yourself and your husband." *It was when he said "legally" that you flew at him* and when he twisted the knife out of your hand *you bit him*. (RHYS, 1999, p. 109, my emphasis).

Although Antoinette/Bertha remembers that she wrote a letter to Richard Mason in secret, presumably to ask him to take her away from her Husband's house, she does not remember his visit. After Grace Poole tells her what happened, however, she recalls that Richard Mason had visited her and had not recognized at first. Both, her faulty memory and the violence in her behaviour towards her step-brother, indicate that, much like her mother before her, Antoinette/Bertha is not completely in control of herself. Although her violent rage appears to have rational foundations, her reaction, especially the bite on his arm, is irrational in that it undermines her purpose in asking him to visit her, which is implied by his response: Richard cannot legally interfere between Antoinette/Bertha and her husband, meaning that he cannot help her leave the house or free her from confinement. While Antoinette/Bertha's awareness of her situation and the legal control her husband has over her seem to imply that she is still in possession of her sanity, the forgetfulness she displays and her lack of awareness of the passage of time, seem to imply the opposite. We can assume, therefore, that she has not completely lost touch with reality, but she retreats into her mind as a form of self-preservation.

A while after this visit, Antoinette/Bertha is playing with her red dress. "If I had been wearing my red dress, Richard would have known me" (RHYS, 1999, p. 110), she tells Grace

Poole. Throughout Part Three, Antoinette/Bertha is obsessed with this dress and constantly paranoid, always believing that Grace Poole is trying to steal her red dress or that an unspecified “they” had changed it. As Martinez & Rebello (2018) demonstrate in their paper, Antoinette spent her life in the shadow of the tensions between colonizer and colonized and in the shadow of her own lack of a sense of belonging. Having been raised by Christophine, a black servant, her behaviour as a child was more similar to a black child’s than that of a white one, but she was not black. Spivak says “Antoinette, as a white Creole child growing up at the time of emancipation in Jamaica, is caught between the English imperialist and the black native” (1985, p. 250). Throughout her life, Antoinette was too black (in actions) to be accepted by white people and too white (in skin tone and family history) to be accepted by black people. In this sense, she is always in a place in-between two peoples and two countries — Jamaica, where she was born and grew up, and England, the country whose laws and social structure Creoles were subject to even across the ocean (MARTINEZ & LOPES, 2018, p. 54) —, belonging to neither enough that she could develop a firm sense of her own culture and identity.

Antoinette’s fragile and incomplete sense of identity is further weakened by her husband when he changes her name and begins calling her “Bertha”. Antoinette tells him: “‘Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that’s obeah too’” (RHYS, 1999, p. 88). Later, when she has already been confined in the house in England, Antoinette/Bertha reflects about her own loss of identity: “Names matter, like when he wouldn’t call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass” (RHYS, 1999, p. 106-107). Although Antoinette/Bertha is not unaware of the effect this renaming has on her, she is still powerless to stop it from happening, especially after he takes her to a different country and her existence is kept a secret, isolating her completely. He will not tell anyone of her existence, much less her true name, and she has no one who would listen to her if she tried to tell them herself. Her red dress is symbolically the last remaining trace of Antoinette and without it, she would fully become Bertha. The lovely, sensual red dress that smells of Caribbean flowers is the only thing she has left of her fragile sense of identity. This is why she is so worried they had done “the last and the worst thing”, which would be changing her dress, thereby making it into something else. If “they” had erased the last trace of her identity, it would be the worst thing because she would no longer have the last tether to herself that allows her to remember her true name and who she was before the Husband took her to England. Antoinette/Bertha’s renaming would then be complete.

After Antoinette/Bertha tells Grace Poole that Richard would have recognized her if she had been wearing her dress, she sets it down and when she looks at it on the floor, she thinks it looks “as if the fire had spread across the room” (RHYS, 1999, p.110-111). That night, Antoinette/Bertha dreams that she steals the keys to her room from Grace Poole and, taking a candle with her, she roams the rooms and hallways of the house, setting fire to everything in her wake. Finally, at the end of the dream, she is on the roof of the house and leaps down into the Coulibri’s swimming pool, where Tia is calling out to her. Antoinette/Bertha wakes up, and after taking Grace Poole’s keys, she realizes that she has finally remembered what she must do and sets out with the candle in her hands to bring her dream to life. The book ends here, but it is implied that Antoinette/Bertha will jump from the house’s rooftop after setting the building on fire.

Antoinette/Bertha’s decisions to set fire to the house and to commit suicide are the ways she found to reclaim her freedom. First, she burns down the place where she was imprisoned for “nights and days and days and nights, hundreds of them”, as Antoinette/Bertha tells Grace Poole (RHYS, 1999, p. 109). Then, she jumps from the rooftop, so that she cannot be confined to any other place. She is legally bound to the Husband for life and death is the only way she can be free of his will to keep her locked up and hidden. Burning the house is also a symbolic parallel to the fire at Coulibri, since both fires are set by oppressed people and both houses belong to these people’s oppressors.

3.2 CONTRASTING THE CHARACTERS

The stories of Annette and Antoinette share many similarities. In a way, Antoinette’s story is a repetition of her mother’s, while also being a continuation of the cycle of madness in the novel which begins and ends with fire. The stories of the two women mirror each other symbolically in many ways. Alcohol, fire, and confinement are three elements that are present in both of their stories and form the cycle of madness in the novel. Alcohol consumption is central to both women as a refuge from their pain. As for fire and confinement, when Antoinette decides to set fire to the English house she has been confined in, she closes the cycle of madness of these two generations of women. The cycle started with the fire at Coulibri which initiated their history of madness by triggering Annette’s mad behaviour and leading to her confinement and it ended when the fire Antoinette set to her husband’s house freed her from her confinement.

The consumption of alcohol for both, mother and daughter, works as an amplifier of their behaviour and as an escape from their bleak reality of confinement. The main difference is that while Antoinette drinks excessively to drown her sorrows even before being confined, Annette only begins drinking when her caretakers start giving her rum to keep her compliant. Antoinette drinks from the bottle that Grace Poole, her guardian/caretaker, keeps. Elaine Savory argues that the consumption of alcohol “enables her dreams, her violence and her memories and her intentions” (2009, p. 86). Like her mother before her, Antoinette turns to alcohol during her confinement and the effects of drinking seem to make them “madder”. Annette retreats into her own mind and hallucinations, not resisting the sexual abuse of the man who was hired as her caretaker, while Antoinette becomes increasingly paranoid and suicidal, eventually deciding to set fire to the house she’s in after having her final dream.

Fire is a significant element in both of the characters’ stories. The first fire was started by former-slaves (the oppressed), who burned down the house of the colonizers who had enslaved them (the oppressors), in Jamaica. The second fire has a similar symbolism in that the oppressed Creole woman (Antoinette) sets fire to the estate of her oppressor (her English husband) in England. Gilchrist describes the second fire as “Antoinette as a freed slave burning down the master’s house.” (2012, p. 467). In this context, we can see that the two fires mirror each other and represent the beginning and the end of the cycle of madness in the novel. While the first leads to Annette’s madness, the second ends the cycle with Antoinette’s suicide.

Furthermore, Annette and Antoinette each found their own ways to return to better times in their lives. In her hallucinations, apparently related to her alcohol consumption, Annette returns to a time when she was happier — before the Emancipation Act and the family’s financial decline — while Antoinette, in her dream, sees herself diving into Coulibri’s pool where Tia awaits her after Antoinette has set fire to the house, which is also a symbolic attempt at returning to happier times — to the time when she was free at Coulibri, before Mr. Mason entered their lives and their house burned down. In this sense, mother and daughter mirror each other in their stories even in the depths of their despair and madness.

Specifically speaking of the endings of their stories, we can posit that both characters have two deaths, which are pointed out by Antoinette and explained by Kathy Mezei (1987): Antoinette tells her husband that “there are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about" (RHYS, 1999, p. 77), which Mezei clarifies these two deaths as being "[...] the real death, the death of the mind, and [the person] becomes blank, doll-like, inhuman, in waiting for the second death, the death of the body" (1987, p. 205). In this sense, mother and daughter share the same fate because before their bodies are dead, they are confined and forgotten — Annette, who is considered dead by her own child long before dying; and Antoinette, whose existence is hidden from everyone by her husband, who takes her into a foreign country, where she knows no one after writing a letter asking his father to hide her existence and his shameful marriage to a madwoman.

4 CONCLUSION

As stated in the Introduction, one of the premises of this research is that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a novel that can stand on its own right, and be analysed and studied by itself, dispensing any reference to the classic that inspired it. That is the reason why I did not resort to the novel that propelled Rhys to write her masterpiece, except for vague allusions in section 2, where I provided background information about the origins of the novel. In this manner, I hope to have demonstrated that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a truly independent complex work that does not need to be contrasted or studied alongside its inspiration, as it contains in itself extensive material for research. Furthermore, I hope that this approach may inspire other researchers to follow a similar procedure in the future.

My main objective was to identify the circumstances that led to Annette's and Antoinette's confinement and, based on the analysis of these circumstances, to settle whether they were confined because they were mad, or whether the confinement made them mad. In the case of Annette, it seems clear that the circumstances surrounding the fire at Coulibri led to reactions that were misunderstood by Mr. Mason, who did not know how to deal with a grieving, angry wife who suddenly blamed and hated him for the death of her son. Because of this gap between husband and wife, Mr. Mason believed Annette was mentally deranged and attempted to provide her with the care he thought she needed. After leaving Annette in the hands of the caretakers he hired, however, he did not visit her often and eventually went to live on another island, leaving Annette – even if perhaps unknowingly – being abused for years in the hands of the people he hired, a circumstance that contributed to her losing any hold on sanity. In the end, Annette surrendered to her fate, letting go of reality through her hallucinations, in part because of the pain of losing her son and in part because of the trauma of her mistreatment and abuse at the hands of her caretakers, which were too much for her mind to resist.

In Antoinette's case, the Husband seems prone, almost determined, to believe she is mad. As stated previously, after their marriage, Antoinette's money and properties became her husband's. In fact, although she is a very rich heiress, Antoinette's money never belonged to her. The fortune passed directly from her stepfather's hands into her husband's. This story is set before 1870, when the Married Women's Property Act was issued, which granted married or separated women the legal right over the money they earned, or brought into the wedding. Antoinette complains about that in a conversation with Christophine:

> […] I am not rich now, *I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him* [the Husband] […] *That is English law* […] He would never give me any money to go away and he would be furious if I asked him. There would be a scandal if I left him and he hates scandal. *Even if I got away (and how?) he would force me back.* So would Richard [Antoinette's step-brother]. *So would everybody else.*" (RHYS, 1999, p. 66-68, my emphasis).

Antoinette is, therefore, totally subjected to her husband's decisions and wishes and he no longer needed to keep her happy. Since, as Antoinette states, the Husband hates scandal, separating or getting a divorce from his wife would not be viable options for him. Deciding to have her diagnosed as mad and confining her were an easy and a better way to get rid of an inconvenient wife, especially when he also decides to take her to live in England, where their marriage can be kept a secret. Although Antoinette is very passionate, angry, and even violent before her confinement, all of her actions can be easily explained as the reaction of a disappointed and betrayed wife who had no option other than to stay with her husband. Even after being confined for years, Antoinette, unlike her mother, struggles until the end to hold on to herself and to her sanity, going so far as to reclaim her freedom though the purifying force of fire and death. Antoinette setting fire to the Husband's house is doubly symbolic: she is at the same time reclaiming her freedom for herself and protesting the patriarchy and imperialism that led her and her mother to spend years confined as madwomen.

Another relevant point to mention is Antoinette's sexuality. Growing up without the usual education young girls had at the time and in a place where social rules were not as strictly observed as they were in England, Antoinette grew up to be a woman who is far more comfortable with her vanity and her sexuality than an English woman would have been. This freedom of hers is not only shocking to the Husband, but also threatening to his social standing as a respectable English gentleman. As Antoinette senses this and also senses the subsequent distance that the Husband starts creating between them, especially when he himself has an extra-marital sexual encounter with their servant, she takes revenge by exaggerating her already shocking behaviour: she gets drunk, yells, fights and abuses her own sexuality. Therefore, when, through their inability to meet each other half-way, these traits of Antoinette become too much for him to handle and he finds himself unable to control her any longer, he feels himself justified in taking action to protect himself. In this sense, having Antoinette confined as a madwoman was his imperialistic reaction to the insubordination of the colonized Creole.

It is also interesting to note the negative effect of money in the lives of these characters. Annette became depressed after the family's financial ruin and married Mr. Mason at least in part as a way to improve their financial standing and recover her position in

Jamaica's elite society. Her attempt to improve her life and the lives of her children backfire, however, since their improved financial situation was a key element in destabilizing the tense balance that had existed between the impoverished Cosways and the black community of former-slaves, leading to the fire at Coulibri. In this sense, having money again was the downfall of their family, and, to an extent, the cause for Annette's confinement as a madwoman. In Antoinette's case, it could also be said that money is partly to blame for her fate. Had Mr. Mason not bestowed the inheritance of thirty thousand pounds on her, she would not have been married to the man who became her husband. If Antoinette had not married at all or had married someone else, her fate might have been different, since the conflict that existed between herself and her husband and her husband's prejudices against her and the West Indies were the main reasons behind her confinement.

Besides the tensions underlying Annette and Antoinette's marriages, other tensions were also relevant in their stories. These are the tensions concerning the undercurrent of power struggles between black people and white people, and between Creoles and the English that permeate the whole novel. Although my analyses did not focus on the black and coloured characters, because they were outside the proposed scope of this work, their influence is essential to the outcomes of Annette and Antoinette's stories. Firstly because the interactions between the characters I analysed and the people of colour in the story are formative of the Antoinette's sense of identity, or lack of it, are the origin of the conflict between Annette and Mr. Mason, and are the catalyst for the cycle of fire and madness that ends with Antoinette's suicide.

In terms of Antoinette's sense of identity, as I stated before, her lineage, her brief friendship with Tia, and her family's impoverished state for the better part of her childhood all contribute to her inability to form a steady cultural and racial identity. While she carries a clear prejudice against black people — demonstrated in the novel by the moment when she calls Christophine a "black devil", for instance —, Antoinette also longs for a sense of belonging somewhere, which is why she wishes to run to Tia after the house at Coulibri burns down. Her feeling of not belonging anywhere also arises from the fact that, due to their financial situation and Mr. Cosway's infamous alcoholism, extra-marital affairs, and illegitimate children, they are not welcome in Jamaica's elite society anymore. In this context, Antoinette is called a "white nigger" more than once in the novel — Tia even tells Antoinette that "[r]eal white people, they got gold money" and that being a "black nigger" is better that being a "white nigger" (RHYS, 1999, p. 14) —, which means that she is poor as a black person, even though she is white. Antoinette, therefore, does not belong to the elitist white people because of her family’s poverty, but she does not belong with the black people either, because she is not black and is, in fact, the child of a colonizer and former slave-owner. Antoinette’s fragile sense of identity is a result of this in-between space she occupies, which also contributes to a constant feeling of being unsafe, since safety comes from belonging to a group: Antoinette’s first sentence in the novel is “[t]hey say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks” (RHYS, 1999, p. 9).

Like her daughter, Antoinette, Annette is also stuck in an in-between place socially. However, while Antoinette has grown up wild and unsupervised in Coulibri — like a “white nigger”, as described in the novel —, Annette was a full member of the elite society of colonizers before the Emancipation. Their family’s financial decline and fall from social grace is far more shocking for her, especially because she is responsible for the house and for her two children. In this sense, although neither mother nor daughter belong to either group anymore, Annette had the opportunity to regain her place through her second marriage, while Antoinette was never comfortable in the role that she was expected to inhabit after her mother’s marriage to Mr. Mason. Furthermore, although Annette had the social tools necessary to take over the role of a rich colonizer’s wife, she was intensely aware of the rising tensions in the black community. This awareness was a source of near-constant stress not only to herself, but to the other inhabitants of their house, since her constant requests to leave Coulibri generated conflicts between her and her husband and the thought of leaving her home did not sit well with Antoinette. The combination of these factors and the trauma of the fire became her downfall.

Beyond the effects that racial tensions had on Antoinette as a child, there were also the racial tensions that affected her marriage. Her husband’s intense mistrust of Antoinette and of the islands themselves are clear throughout the novel and demonstrate how prejudiced he is against anything and anyone that is not English. Even when he says that Antoinette’s eyes are “not English or European either”, implicitly shows how he views even other Europeans as inferior. Furthermore, there existed at the time the suspicion of people from the metropolis that the differences between the English and Creoles extended beyond the cultural sphere, into the racial. Even though it is not mentioned explicitly, it is possible to conclude that Antoinette’s husband carries a suspicion, slight as it may be that there might have been a black ancestor somewhere in Antoinette’s bloodline. This suspicion is fed by the belief in Creole people’s promiscuity, to which skin colour was not a barrier, especially in the cases where white colonizers forced themselves on black women.

Considering all the circumstances behind the characters' madness and confinement, their stories are a symbolic demonstration of the harmful effects that all the tensions and power struggles Rhys so complexly laid out in *Wide Sargasso Sea* had on the people that lived in these societies. Their story is far more than simply the representation of how they reacted to these circumstances. It is also a denouncement of all the damage that resulted from this power struggle politically and historically, and of how women were caught in the middle of these tensions, all the while having little power to defend themselves and fight for their sanity.

Additionally, Annette's and Antoinette's stories are also representative of how madness was often used as a tool to free husbands from inconvenient or unconventional wives and society from problematic women. As stated by Ussher, "[...] madness functioned to control and arguably to punish women for both enacting an exaggerated form of femininity, or for being 'unacceptable', contravening the ideals of femininity circulating at that point in time" (2011, p. 68). I believe that Annette could be the emblematic representation of the "exaggerated femininity", since her confinement resulted from her frustrated attempt at protecting her family and from her maternal grief, which she expressed through violence. Antoinette, on the other hand, could represent the "unacceptable" woman, whose foul language, excessive vanity, intense sexuality and her non-submissive behaviour with her husband all went against the ideal for women and wives at the time.

In conclusion, Annette and Antoinette represent two sides of the same coin. They are different women, who, in an ideal world, would belong in opposite spheres of society, but who share very similar fates. They are bound by the cycle of madness of which they were both victims and which begins and ends with fire and tragedy. Both were doomed by their unfortunate marriages to English men. However, while Annette truly became mad during her confinement, succumbing to her hallucinations of better times, Antoinette retained at least a trace of sanity and awareness of her circumstances and, although through her husband's actions she had already had her first death, the death of the mind and of other's memories of her, she found a way to seize control of the only thing she had left — her second death, the death of her body.

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