

A Cultural Materialist Reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys

Jean Rhys'in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Adlı Çalışmasının Kültürel Materyalizm Açısından İncelenmesi

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Abstract

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys, published in 1966, gives a voice to the silenced woman Antoinette, who was a victim of both patriarchal and colonial society. The novel, written to serve as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, aims to destroy the Eurocentric perceptions constructed by the British writer Charlotte Brontë in her novel titled *Jane Eyre* against Antoinette, known as Bertha Mason. Brontë, in her novel written more than a century earlier, had given little place to Antoinette and depicted her only as a mad woman. Antoinette, in search of a female identity, struggles to find her identity after the emancipation of Jamaica. Aiming at freeing a woman of mixed race, who is stuck within two ethnicities and cultures, Rhys becomes an intermediary in giving a voice to the madwoman who was imprisoned in the attic by her British husband Mr Rochester in England. In her attempt to get rid of the oppressions she has experienced by the two cultures and to reach the freedom she desires, Antoinette finally commits suicide by jumping off. In this study, cultural materialism has been used in order to reflect the social, economic, and political conditions along the power relations of the period.

Keywords: Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Foucault, cultural materialism, ideology

Öz

Jean Rhys'in 1966'da yayınlanan *Wide Sargasso Sea* adlı romanı hem ataerkil hem de sömürge toplumunun kurbanı olan susturulmuş kadın Antoinette'in sesi olmaktadır. Böylece Bertha Mason olarak bilinen Antoinette'i sadece deli bir kadın olarak tasvir ederek ona çok az yer veren *Jane Eyre* adlı romanın öncesini anlatması amacıyla yazılan bu roman, İngiliz yazar Charlotte Brontë 'nin yüzyıldan fazla bir zaman önce yazmış olduğu *Jane Eyre* adlı romanındaki Avrupa merkezli algıları yerle bir eder. Kadın kimliği arayışındaki Antoinette, Jamaika'nın kurtuluşundan sonra kimliğini bulmak için mücadele eder. İki etnik köken ve kültür arasında sıkışıp kalmış melez bir kadını özgürlüğüne kavuşturmayı amaçlayan Rhys, İngiltere'de İngiliz kocası Bay Rochester tarafından tavan arasına kapatılan deli kadının sesinin duyulmasına böylece aracı olur. Antoinette, iki kültürün ortaya çıkardığı baskılardan kurtulmak ve arzuladığı özgürlüğe ulaşmak için atlayarak intihar eder. Bu çalışmada dönemin sosyal, ekonomik ve politik koşulları ile güç ilişkilerini yansıtmak amacıyla teori olarak kültürel materyalizm kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, kültürel materyalizm, Foucault, ideoloji

Introduction

Cultural materialism, coined by the British critic Raymond Williams, appeared in the 1980s, and focuses on the text in a politicized framework, examining and becoming a voice of the marginalized. Like its American counterpart New Historicism, it was influenced by Marxism and Michel Foucault's theories on power. Cultural materialism, which is related to the production of culture and focuses on social and political characteristics of a text, has largely been affected by Marxism. Marxist critics claim that not only historical texts but also literary texts are shaped by the ruling class. Marx and Engels (1998) use the expression "phantoms formed in the brains of men" (p. 42) to refer to individuals who are dominated by the bourgeois through ideology that applies to morality, religion, and metaphysics. They state that civil society only develops with the bourgeoisie (p. 98).

Foucault's theories, on the other hand, bring a new perspective to history and literary analysis. He contributed to the reinterpretation of power, discipline and control mechanisms, punishment, and sexuality, and their characteristics in different periods in history. His "[w]here there is power, there is resistance" (1978, p. 95), expression means that the existence of power creates resistance and power alone cannot exist without the other. Cultural materialism makes use of Foucault's theories of power because it is power relations that define gender relations and social roles to be attributed to individuals. Foucault defines power as the multiplicity of force relations that constitute their own organisation (p. 92). In this regard, he brings a new definition to "power" in literary analysis, which is different from its traditional meaning. Power, with its complex functions, does not necessarily follow a hierarchical order.

Cultural materialism believes in the power of literature in shaping history. Therefore, texts are regarded not as ineffective literary tools that narrate only stories but also as effective elements in having the potential of shaping history. Brannigan (1998) specifies the object of study in cultural materialism as "literature in history" rather than the text and its context, and requires seeing literature as a constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making of history (p. 3-4). Cultural materialism suggests that "cultural artifacts, institutions, and practices are in some sense determined by 'material' processes" (Payne & Barbera, 2010, p. 162).

It is ideologies that function as control mechanisms in societies. The French philosopher Louis Althusser (1984), in his "Essays on Ideology", emphasizes the role of ideology by stating that the school and other state institutions teach 'know-how', but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice' (p. 7). Althusser further claims that ideology is embedded in an apparatus that functions in society. He divides these apparatuses into two groups as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatuses. According to him, family, law, politics, communications, and culture are among the ISAs while the Army and the Police are Repressive State Apparatuses since they are empowered with using force over individuals

(pp. 17-19, 40). Ideology, which can simply be described as a system of ideas or faith, creates its own reality. That's why Sinfield (1992) maintains that groups with material power will dominate the institutions that deal with ideas (p. 35). Since these groups create their own control mechanisms and realities, individuals start believing in these ideologies and tend to reject other opposing ideas or mechanisms. Within this framework, individuals with opposing ideas and attitudes will only be accepted as divergent.

Cultural materialism is interested in finding out elements that reflect the politics and ideology of a text both in a specific time and also in later centuries since culture is a phenomenon that changes as well with the time. Reception of literary texts and tastes differ from period to period. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (1994), two British theorists and critics renowned for their contribution to cultural materialism especially with their work *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, give the example of Shakespeare in explaining cultural materialism within ideology and power relations. They express that while culture reflects the economic and political system, it cannot be independent of that system and Shakespeare's plays were affected by the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England (p. viii).

What makes cultural materialism different from other methods is its political commitment and it "achieves its political ends by interpreting literary texts from the standpoint of oppositional or dissident subcultures" (Brannigan, 1998, p. 99). Therefore, through dissident reading in search of oppositional voice, it aims at bringing the voice of the marginalized to the foreground. Cultural materialists search for the possibility of subversion, which contributes to the destruction of the power of the dominant ideology. Cultural materialism, compared to its American counterpart new historicism, is hopeful in that "for new historicism subversion is always contained by state power" (Brannigan, 1998, p. 10). There is hope of salvation or free will in cultural materialism while free will is maintained or suppressed by controlling mechanisms in new historicism.

This study examines Antoinette's life, her marriage, and finally her transportation to the UK by Mr. Rochester, who is not named in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as her husband. Cultural materialism, the critical theory used here, reveals that Antoinette challenges the dominant colonial ideology that can be described as "beliefs which serve to perpetuate a particular social formation or power structure" (Dollimore, 2004, p. 9). Cultural materialist work "examines power...the clash between dominant cultural forms and dissident ideas" (Marlow, 2017, p. 1). Jean Rhys' text *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as a text, provides a dissident discourse as another text to the colonial discourse created in Victorian era. Cultural practices are regarded as ideological apparatuses. Williams (1977) mentions "the dominant culture" and "substantially alternative or oppositional" elements to it (p. 123). Cultural materialism is concerned with the social, political, and economic context of the text as these elements are effective in shaping and determining the identity and social roles of individuals in a society. A dominant culture in a society imposes its cultural assets

on all individuals and creates its own truth. However, characters like Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* subvert the established structure that limits their rights as women.

1. Analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Writers are influenced by their personal experiences and reflect this in their literary works. Jean Rhys is no exception in this regard. She was born “Ella Gwendoline Rees Williams on 24 August 1890 in Roseau, Dominica, to a Creole mother and a Welsh doctor. She spent her childhood there and left when she was seventeen to attend the Perse School in Cambridge” (Maurel, 1998, p. 1). She travelled to Europe and became acquainted with the works of various writers and novelists.

She had her first love affair with a well-to-do English gentleman called Lancelot Hugh Smith, and the break-up with him caused her to go through some kind of trauma (Maurel, 1998, p.1), which can be observed with Antoinette’s marriage to Mr. Rochester. “In the colonial Caribbean, she belonged to the elite, but in England she was working-class as a chorus girl and an outsider as a Creole” (Savory, 2009, p. 13). Rhys addresses all of these problems that she personally went through in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She established her reputation with *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

Wide Sargasso Sea is a novel that describes the challenges Antoinette faces as a Creole in the nineteenth century in the West Indies. Rhys, because of her origin, wanted to rewrite *Jane Eyre* many years after reading the description of a Creole woman imprisoned in the attic room of Thornfield Hall. It was her decision to provide the character Antoinette with an identity through which Antoinette could speak for herself and about herself to the readers, which created one of the renowned postcolonial novels. Thus, rather than being depicted as a woman whose character and life was not known in detail, Antoinette is a woman who struggles to shape and maintain her identity in a patriarchal and colonial milieu that represses the voice of a woman thirsty for liberty and identity. It is her non-submissiveness that makes her commit suicide for the freedom of her tortured soul.

Wide Sargasso Sea was written as a retelling of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Considering the setting, it can be said that the events in *Wide Sargasso Sea* take place starting from the 1830s in a sugar plantation called Coulibri near Spanish Town in Jamaica. Rhys aimed to give an identity that would make Antoinette, the woman who was depicted as mad in the attic in *Jane Eyre*, an individual who had her own world, though a sufferer of British colonization. Rhys’ attempt of doing that is visible through the narration of Antoinette, who starts telling about herself in the first part of the book (WSS¹, p. 5). Antoinette, who is renamed as Bertha Mason after her marriage, is the white Creole of slave owners. Mr Rochester, for whom actually we do not have a name in the novel, is the character who marries Antoinette through arranged marriage that was organised by

¹ Hereafter, the book is referred to as WSS.

Antoinette's step-brother Richard Mason. With the Emancipation Act of 1833, the abolition of slavery results in economic downfall of Bertha's father who later dies of alcoholism. When Mr. Rochester decides to take Antoinette to England and locks her in the attic, her life gets worse as she is confined to Rochester Hall. At the end of the novel, she wakes up from her dream, unlocks the door, and walks through a passage with a candle in her hand, which suggests that she is going to set the house to fire, as was clearly mentioned in *Jane Eyre*.

Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in 1966, what Jean Rhys took as basis was the novel *Jane Eyre* that was published in 1847 and Rhys was clearly inspired by the story of Antoinette and conditions of Victorian period along with colonisation in that novel. Jean Rhys, in an interview with Elizabeth Vreeland, expressed that she had read *Jane Eyre* when she was a child and "She seemed such a poor ghost. I thought I'd try to write her a life" (qtd. in Harrison, 1988, p. 128). Rochester takes his Martinique origin wife to Britain in order to suppress her identity and heritage. This situation reminds us of the condition and image of the idealized Victorian period women who were labelled as *the Angel in the House* mentioned for the first time in a poem by the English poet Coventry Patmore (Hogan & Bradstock, 1998, p. 1). Moreover, since the Victorian period women were under the hegemony of a man-controlled society, some female writers chose male pseudonyms, and Charlotte Brontë assumed Currer Bell for her writings. This was acceptable on behalf of the publishers since women were deemed less capable than men in many areas.

Michie (1993), in her book titled *Cultural Exclusion, Gender Difference, and the Victorian Woman Writer* deals with the challenges that five leading female novelists faced from the patriarchal ideology in Victorian era. Michie mentions the cultural exclusion of femininity experienced by Mary Shelley, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot. Charlotte and Emily Brontë, for example, could not use their knowledge of literature to achieve professional status in Victorian society. Gaskell and Eliot found that they were excluded from active participation in the literary marketplace and intellectual circles dominated by men (p. 2, 4).

Victorian period women were seen as second-class citizens compared to men regarding gender issue. Charlotte Brontë, as a female novelist, wrote *Jane Eyre* under the effect of patriarchal ideology. However, what is striking is that although she privileged the rights of British women in her novel, she was under the influence of colonial discourse and othered a Creole woman, Berta Mason, in her novel. Gayatri Spivak (1985), a literary theorist and feminist critic, evaluates Antoinette's condition in England and her setting fire to the house as "an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer" (p. 251).

Brontë puts Antoinette in the attic room in her novel as an insane woman and gets her female character Jane to marry Rochester on equal conditions. This brings victory for the self-determined Jane as a woman over the patriarchal society of her time but

suppressing a Creole coming from Jamaica subverts Brontë's scales of justice in gender equality and reveals her colonialist ideology. Charlotte Brontë, like many people of her time, was a subject of colonial discourse. King (2005) states that Bertha's 'madness' is shown to be largely Rochester's own construction and that it is the product of a patriarchal and imperialist ideology which identifies his wife's sexuality (p. 2).

Wide Sargasso Sea provides us with an important source of the colonization period of the British Empire. Although the slaves gained their freedom in territories that were under the British rule with the Emancipation Act of 1833, many were still bound to their white patrons for survival. Colonization did not end immediately. It definitely left its traces especially through culture on the colonized peoples. The duration of colonization determines the length of its afterward-lasting effects as it can be seen in the examples of India and many other countries. Colonization requires the use of the language, patriarchal system, and cultural assets on the colonized in order to easily reach its objectives. It is the colonizers' political and economic ambitions that silence indigenous people and exploit their sources regarding materials or human power. The colonized cannot change the Eurocentric influence imposed upon them. One way to accelerate colonization is marry the locals. When a colonial woman married, she was expected to leave all her material assets to her husband, which was not different from the exploitation of natural and human resources by the colonizers at all. "As in English law, the personality of the creole wife, like her personality, was merged into her husband's (Mair, 2006, p. 151). Being exploited takes plays through marriage for Antoinette.

The process of marriage and the difficulties that follow it is complicated for Antoinette. When Richard Mason offers 30.000 pounds to Rochester, he accepts the marriage to Antoinette (WSS, p. 42). The main motive in that on behalf of Richard Mason is that Rochester is of a good race with his British citizenship, which would mean more power for both of them. On behalf of Mr Rochester, however, this would mean nourishing his material aims. On the other hand, for Antoinette, marriage means taking shelter in a male-dominated world. Mill (1984) considers marriage an enslavement of women: "There remain no legal slaves, except the mistress of every house" (p. 323). However, this situation will get worse for Antoinette, who is not only a woman, but also a Creole.

The economic condition of women is an important aspect of the novel that should be analysed. Although Mr. Rochester was offered a great deal of money to marry Antoinette, he was the one who exerted his power on her as a woman. Antoinette could not make use of the material source that she inherited, which made her void of economic liberty. Marx and Engels (1988) state the importance of money as functioning as "the almighty being" (p. 136). In a way, Antoinette was sold to a British man. Being a man of so-called noble blood, Mr. Rochester takes advantage of being a part of the patriarchal ideology that equips him with power. Foucault (1978) mentions power as operating over sex and according to "endlessly reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship: from state to family, from prince to father..." (p. 84). While talking to Christophine about the house

that Antoinette inherited from her mother, Mr. Rochester states that it belongs to him now (WSS, p. 103). English law gave what the woman possessed to the man she married. Considering the setting of the two novels of the England of 1840s, Twycross-Martin expresses that any property a wife had before marriage became her husband's (Hogan & Bradstock, 1998, p. 9). Since economic liberty means independence, depriving Antoinette of her property only means more control over women and the sustainability of patriarchal hegemony.

Going back to *Jane Eyre*, Antoinette is locked in the attic room and is not aware of even the love affair and process of marriage between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester, which is implied in the last part of *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Antoinette as the narrator. According to Foucault (1978), women are (along with adolescents, children, and patients) among those who are deprived of power and are forced to remain ignorant (p. 99). As a woman and Creole, Antoinette is marginalised. She is forced to obey the rules determined by patriarchal ideology and Rochester is the representative of that society as a male. Antoinette is forced to be locked in the attic, let alone walk freely as an ordinary woman in public. Her condition can be depicted as even worse than the Victorian era woman since she is a Creole, different from pure British subjects. It is an ideological system that defines the hierarchy. Dollimore and Sinfield (2005) define ideology as being composed of beliefs, practices, and institutions that work to legitimate the social order, and the dominant not only speak for subordinate classes but also repress them (p. 213-214).

Mr. Rochester confesses that he did not love her and that she was a stranger to him, a stranger who did not think or feel as he did (WSS, p. 58). It is his colonial approach towards Antoinette that makes her condition worse in addition to what she had suffered in the past. In Part Two, Rochester clearly conveys his thought about her. "She'll loosen her black hair and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She'll not care who she's loving). She'll moan and cry and give herself as no sane woman would – or could". (WSS, p. 106). What Rochester expects from Antoinette is the attitude of the Victorian women. Moreover, he does not have a sense of belonging to the West Indies, since what he sees around himself is nature that is far from his own land. The space between his country and this new land colonized by Europe makes him feel foreign to almost everything that exists there. At the end of Part Two, Mr. Rochester states that he hated the people there and the place, the mountains and the hills, and above all, he hated her since she belonged to the magic and the loveliness (WSS, p. 111).

Colonial oppression is displayed by othering the Creoles and, in the example of Antoinette, turning her to a completely mad woman. She is even degraded to the level of being totally insane without emotions, senses, or reason. Foucault (1973), as an influential historian, in his book titled *Madness and Civilization*, mentions that societies from the Middle Ages to modern times treated the issues of insanity, madness, and confinement differently since such labelling was a social construct that differed from period to period (pp. 65-84). Rochester, as a colonizer, easily labels Antoinette as mad. It seems Mr.

Rochester represents a stereotypical man who believes in the superiority of men over women, as he locks Antoinette in the attic instead of leaving her or taking her back to the West Indies. This, to a great degree, stems from the prevalent ideology in the Victorian era, which commonly saw women as a commodity, and letting Antoinette would mean losing power on behalf of Rochester.

Antoinette is kept in the attic under the custody of Grace Poole, a servant who was paid more than the others by Mr. Rochester due to her duty. At the end of the novel, Antoinette commits suicide by jumping off due to her recurring dreams revolving around her past life. Her recurring dreams can best be explained by Foucault's analysis and comments on madness. Foucault (1973), talking about madness in the classical age, claims that it was related to dreams with its hallucination of the unreal, it occurred during daytime contrary to the nighttime, and that it is an error since it is not capable of understanding the truth (p. 106).

However, by making Antoinette a narrator telling her own story, Rhys manages to open a door to Antoinette's inner world and "readers following the first-person narrative of Part One of *Wide Sargasso Sea* move within the Creole's mind and come to understand the elements that drive her to her apparent madness" (Simpsons, 2005, p. 111). Moreover, Rhys makes her protagonist aware of being discriminated against by colonization. At the beginning of Part One, Antoinette, as the narrator, states that as Creoles, they were excluded by the white people coming from Europe with the words "...but we were not in their ranks" (WSS, p. 5).

Mr. Rochester keeps Antoinette under control by getting her locked in the attic and Grace Pool, as a servant, takes care of Antoinette. Foucault (1973), in the preface of *Madness and Civilization*, states that modern man no longer communicates with the madman. Instead, the physician is delegated to madness, and order, physical and moral constraint are used on the madman to comply them with the social norms (p. x). Antoinette has been reduced to a madwoman, and the more she behaves out of the norms, the worse it will be for her, since she is surrounded by a colonial and patriarchal ideology that makes her suffer more by cutting her communication with the outside world. As a representative of British Empire, Mr. Rochester feels superior to the local people and makes his power felt among them. In Part Two, Christophine excuses Mr. Rochester with the following words: "It is in your mind to pretend she is mad...The doctors say what you tell them to say" (WSS, p. 103).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is othered not only by her husband Rochester as a white colonizer but also by their black servants who hate her and her family just because they are Creoles. They even call them "white cockroaches" (WSS, p. 9). Furthermore, her childhood friend Tia, who is a black girl, throws a stone at Antoinette (WSS, p. 24), who runs toward her and her mother to take a shelter in the aftermath of a fire that starts at Coulibri. On the other hand, Rochester's description of Antoinette and her family as

“Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either” (WSS, p. 40) shows us that Antoinette is othered and marginalized by both races.

Antoinette passes through a cultural identity crisis with the feeling of being unhomed since she is in a completely different land from her own. Tyson (2006) mentions that *double consciousness* often produced an unstable sense of self, which was heightened by the forced migration colonialism frequently cause (p. 421). Furthermore, the cultural differences between the two create a huge gap. Antoinette’s sexuality or behaviours can, to some extent, be called cultural or specific to her country. Rochester, as a Victorian man, finds this as pushing the limits since, as a colonizer, he does not intend to approach the locals or Creoles on equal terms. Thus, labelling her mad is an easy strategy in an ideology that makes women weaker and hopeless socially, politically, and psychologically. Even calling her Bertha (WSS, p. 71) aims to change her name, and thus her identity. This reveals that he wants to possess her culturally and psychologically as well, which in turn brings ruin to Antoinette. Her being called Bertha creates a strong identity crisis and protest in herself as she says: “Names matter, like when he wouldn’t call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass” (WSS, p. 117).

Wide Sargasso Sea challenges patriarchal society and becomes a voice for those who are suppressed. Antoinette’s attempt to get her identity and individualism recognized undermines the hegemony of the patriarchy. Foucault (1982) mentions the resistance against power existing in a society through “opposition to the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the ways people live” (p. 780). This resistance causes Antoinette to exist as an individual.

Although Antoinette suffered a lack of love from her mother and felt isolated when she was young, her condition is exacerbated when Rochester becomes a part of her life, which pushes her to have fits of violence. However, she does not yield her soul to Rochester even while under his control through a servant woman. Her resistance to life imposed by the male order subverts patriarchal and colonial ideology. Thus, she can be considered a woman who does not accept patriarchal authority by her seemingly passive subject positioning. Cultural materialists, in their analysis of a text, attempt to find ways in which “defiance, subversion, dissidence, resistance, all forms of political opposition, are articulated, represented and performed” (Brannigan, 1998, p. 108).

Rhys’ rewriting of *Jane Eyre* turns into a successful attempt in order to reconstruct the arbitrary identity formation of Western epistemology. Thus, she creates an alternative truth to that created by the discourse of powerful Western countries. Foucault (1980, 1995) mentions that it is usually the ideology of the dominant class that determines what is 'right' or 'not right' to do or to be. He states that it is power that shapes social norms and gender hierarchy, and we perceive the world from a specific perspective: “In fact,

power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (pp. 3, 194).

Conclusion

Rhys, with the changing conditions of women’s rights in the twentieth century, aims to change the status of Creole women because of their gender, class, identity, and race. By rewriting the story of the mad woman in the attic in *Jane Eyre*, she gives an identity to the oppressed Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Thus, Antoinette becomes a symbol of all women who were ignored and exploited just because of being a Creole and woman as well. Antoinette’s implied walk in the passage to set the house on fire and her jump to death is just to let herself free from the cruel world she was forced to live in. Committing suicide seems to be the only solution to emancipate herself from the order constructed by the patriarchy and colonizing culture, and this is the only way to make a decision for her destiny.

As a theory, cultural materialism deals with subordinate and marginalised groups and “it registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class” (Dollimore & Sinfield, 1994, p. viii). Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be considered an important contribution to the literature in the sense that it became a voice of women who were suppressed, exploited, and marginalised due to their gender and identity. In addition, as a canonical counter-discourse, it subverts the Eurocentric literature. In this regard, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, carries its marginalized character to a triumph compared to Antoinette’s counterpart in *Jane Eyre*.

With the application of cultural materialism to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the study reveals that Rhys wrote her novel in a dissident manner and she criticises the colonial discourse that was reflected in *Jane Eyre*. The dissident voice created in the novel shows the power struggle and resistance against the colonial discourse.

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