

## (المرأة المجنونة في روايات "جين آير" و"بحر سارجاسو الواسع" و"امرأة الضابط الفرنسي")

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### الملخص:

يستكشف هذا البحث تصوير المرأة المجنونة في ثلاث روايات: "جين آير" للكاتبة شارلوت برونتي و"بحر سارجاسو الواسع" للكاتبة جين ريس و"امرأة الضابط الفرنسي" لجون فاولز. تنطوي هذه الدراسة على دراسة للموضوع في ثلاث روايات والمدارس الأدبية الثلاث، الواقعية والحداثيّة وما بعد الحداثيّة والتي تنتمي إليها الروايات الثالث على التوالي: الواقعية في الرواية الأولى والحداثيّة في الرواية الثانية و ما بعد الحداثيّة في الرواية الثالثة. يعرض الروائيون الثلاثة خروج المرأة "المجنونة" عن الأعراف المقبولة في المجتمع ويهدف تقديم الشخصيات النسائية الثلاث: بيرثا ماسون وأنطوانيت كوزواي وسارة وودروف إلى تصوير الواقع؛ وهو ما يعكس الصورة النمطية للمرأة في القرن التاسع عشر على أنها الملاك المطيع القابع في المنزل والتي يجب أن تبقى حياتها بوصفها أنثى تحت السيطرة، لئلا يقوم الزوج المتسلط بحبسها في المنزل أو في مصحة عقلية. تبين الروايات الثلاثة كيف تتمرد النساء الثلاث على قواعد مجتمعاتهن عن طريق إطلاق العنان لمشاعرهن العاطفية ورغباتهن.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** شارلوت برونتي، جين ريس، جون فاولز، جين آير، وايد سارجاسو سي، امرأة الضابط الفرنسي، ميشيل فوكو، المرأة المجنونة، الحياة الجنسية.

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## The Mad Woman in Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea and The French Lieutenant's Woman

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### Abstract:

This paper explores the mad woman in three novels: Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea and John Fowles' The French Lieutenant's Woman. Such study entails an analysis of this issue according to the three literary schools, the realist, the modernist and the postmodernist, to which the novels understudy belong respectively: realism in the first novel, modernism in the second, and post modernism in the third. The three novelists display the 'mad' woman as deviating from accepted norms of society. The portrayals of the three female characters: Bertha Mason, Antoinette Cosway and Sarah Woodruff aim at reflecting the status of the nineteenth century woman who was supposed to be the domestic obedient angel whose sexuality must be kept at bay, lest the authoritative husband shut her up in the house or confine her to a mental asylum. The three women break the rules of their society by means of sexual expression and untamed passions.

**Keywords:** Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys, John Fowles, Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea, The French Lieutenant's Woman, Michel Foucault, Mad Woman, Sexuality.

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This paper explores the representation of the mad woman in three novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* according to the three literary schools, the realist, the modernist and the postmodernist, to which those novels belong respectively. The realist school conforms to conventions of form and style in its portrayal of life, so it is creative rather than reflective. Realist literature as such tends to portray life avoiding speculation or idealization of reality. (Eagleton, 2008, 16-7) The nineteenth century realist novel produced narratives to entertain and presented those narratives through an authorial voice which reaffirmed the moral values of that time. Novelists remained constrained to work within the conventions of realism until the end of the nineteenth century with the birth of modernism. The modernist literature with its ideological intention tends to be reflective in its way of representing reality. This means it seeks to espouse the indispensability of mediation and form. To further explore the concepts of realism and modernism, it is a prerequisite to recall Bertolt Brecht's idea of realism. For Brecht, realism is "not a mere question of form. Were we to copy the style of these realists, we would no longer be realist. ... Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change." (82) Brecht emphasizes the need to keep with development and modernity in order to get a living realistic literature. The postmodernist makes use of both the traditionally realist and the radically modernist ways of representing reality. Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodernism, at the same time, underlines and undermines the conventions it appears to challenge: "A study of representation becomes, not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting but an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self in the present and in the past." (7).

Before going through the three novels, the question that needs to be raised is: When is a woman mad, and who decides whether she is sane or insane? To answer this question, a quick review of the definition of madness by some intellectuals and philosophers seems indispensable. Madness is seen by Nietzsche as the only possibility that people have: "There is one thing that will forever be impossible: to be reasonable!" (quoted in Felman, 207). Early portrayals of madness in Shakespeare's works show the fool as wise and put philosophical words into their mouths. Foucault traces the history of insanity in the age of reason and shows that the mad were experiencing ordinary life and wandering in the streets among the sane until the time when people started to see them as a threat and so asylums were built for the first time (Foucault, 1961, 1967). He asserts the fact that it is our civilization which gives birth to the asylum as a wall between the insane and the rest of humanity. He also suggests that people are driven into madness by external pressures. Similarly, R.D Laing explains the causes that lead into madness: "madness is not but a special strategy that a person invents to live in an unliveable situation. It is a kind of temporary answer to social and political oppression." (8) Such oppressions were mainly practiced upon women and lead them to madness. In the same way, Phyllis Chesler notes that women were the prominent victims of their society:

As early as the sixteenth century women were "shut up" in madhouses (as well as in royal towers) by their husbands. By the seventeenth century, special wards were reserved for prostitutes, pregnant women, poor women and young girls in France' first mental asylum, the Salpêtrière. By the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, the portraits of madness executed by both psychiatrists and novelists were primarily of women. (32)

*Jane Eyre* presents Bertha Mason as a horrible lunatic who is deprived of any human aspect. From the beginning till the end of the novel, Bertha's actions and motives are narrated by the authorial voice of Jane, as well as by other characters like Rochester, Richard Mason and Grace Poole. Bertha is introduced into the novel by a 'low, slow ha! ha!' and then as an animal-like noise snarling and snatching. Through Bertha, Brontë depicts a bestial monstrous violent type of madness. Jane describes the mad Bertha when she sees her for the first time:

In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched

and growled like some strange wild animal: But it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.<sup>1</sup>

Bertha is a minor figure in *Jane Eyre*: she is presented only in a few pages out of more than four hundred and does not utter a single word: “Bertha Mason has in the last two decades become one of the major characters of English fiction” and “the monstrous embodiment of psychosexual conflicts which are intrinsic to the romantic predicament—paralleled and unconscious in both Jane and Rochester” (Lerner, 273). She is the threatening form of Jane's struggle and challenge to male authority. Gilbert and Gubar offer another reading of Bertha. They focus on Bertha's relation to Jane as doubles in terms of repression and release: “what Bertha now does, for instance, is what Jane wants to do.” (Gilbert and Gubar, 359) They further notes: Bertha has functioned as Jane's dark double throughout the governess' stay at Thornfield. Specifically, every one of Bertha's appearances ... has been associated with an experience (or passion) of anger on Jane's part. Jane's feelings of “hunger, rebellion, and rage” on the battlement, for instance, were accompanied by Bertha's “low, slow ha! ha!” and “eccentric murmurs” (360).

Reading Bertha as Jane's double is rejected and considered unfair, as it deprives Bertha of her subjectivity in the same way the empire deprives the colonized people of their subjectivity. Gyatri Spivak argues that Bertha is a colonial subject and “a figure produced by the axiomatics of imperialism. Through Bertha Mason, the white Jamaican Creole, Brontë renders the human/animal frontier as acceptably indeterminate, so that a good greater the letter of the Law can be broached.” (247) Regardless of whether Bertha is a double of Jane or not, her silence and madness can be interpreted as a technique used by Brontë in her realist novel in order to “[keep] certain items off the agenda ... [and shut] off certain possibilities”. (Lerner, 299)

Azim argues that ejecting the figure of Bertha is a sacrifice for the sake of the happy ending of the novel and by the way to achieve a social and personal harmony: “Sexual desire, often equated with madness and symbolized by the figure of Bertha Mason, who is forcefully and violently removed, to bring about the happiness and repose of the last scene. ... Sexual passion has thus to be denied to enable the woman to emerge as triumphant and coherent.” (101) The act of leaving out the character of Bertha to achieve Jane's triumph can illustrate the realist novel's focus on the integration and consolidation of the protagonist in a way that satisfies readers. Azim explains the injustice practiced on Bertha Mason:

Bertha Mason is introduced into the text by a ‘slow, low ha! ha!’ The sound of this laughter reverberates through feminist literary history. Various read as dangerous (Woolf), as denied passion (Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar), as protest (Kaplan), as imperial oppression (Rhys and Spivak), Bertha Mason occupies the position of the obliterated and repressed Other, necessary for the emergence of the central coherent and unified female subject and the narrative of her development and growth. (175)

Commenting on Spivak, Azim goes further in considering the novel as an imperial genre which silenced and excluded women and colored people. Azim writes: “The novel is an imperial genre, not only in theme merely, not only by the virtue of historical moment of its birth, but in its formal structure—in the construction of that narrative voice which holds the narrative structure together.” (30) *Jane Eyre*, according to Azim, holds the imperial colonial subject represented by the figure of Bertha Mason whose madness is given as an embodiment of the frightening and savage image of the colonial. The sexual excess, as Azim sees, must be looked at in the light of the Gothic. Through the madness of Bertha, Brontë adds to her realist novel elements of the Gothic which associates sexuality with madness and concentrates on the dangers of sexuality on femininity: “The image of sexual excess in *Jane Eyre* inherits at once the Gothic underside of transgressive sexuality and the danger of the colonial Other”. (Azim, 186)

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 293. Subsequent references in parentheses are to this edition.

The mad woman in Brontë's novel is presented as a dangerous figure, or even a savage who threatens the stability of the society and the privileged position of both Jane and Rochester. Following the standards and requirements of 19<sup>th</sup> century realist novel, Brontë uses the mad woman to secure a successful plotline entrenched with elements of Gothicism and sealed with the search for a happy ending. Bertha is allowed neither space nor voice- in a way that opens up multiple discourses and possibilities for readers and critics alike. This is even taken further by a writer such as Jean Rhys who responds by rewriting the story of the mad woman in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.<sup>2</sup>

Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a novel that reconstructed the earlier life of the fictional character Antoinette Cosway, who was Mr. Rochester's mad first wife in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In Rhys's novel, the mad woman is presented in a more humane manner and aspects of her femininity are underscored. Unlike Brontë's Bertha, Rhys' Antoinette is capable of thinking, feeling and talking. Through her own words, we learn about the dreadful events that Antoinette witnessed in her childhood starting from the shooting of Mr Luttrell's dog and the poisoning of her mother's horse and ending with the burning of her childhood's home which resulted in her young brother's death and her mother's madness: "The house was burning, the yellow-red sky was like sunset and I knew that I would never see Coulibri again." (W.S.S p. 44). These memories inhabit Antoinette till the end of the novel. Her childhood's sufferings and experiences have paved the way for her madness.

Following literary techniques used in modernist literature, the insane model in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, unlike the one in *Jane Eyre*, is probed even on the unconscious level. This is achieved by entering the dreams of Antoinette which reflect her fears, anticipate her fate and tell of her psychological state:

This was the second time I had my dream. Again I have left the house at Coulibri. It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty following the man. ... I follow him sick with fear but I make no effort to save my self (W.S.S p. 50)

The reader is allowed access into the psychological distress of Antoinette. Words like 'night, forest, and thin slippers' reveal the psychosexual suffering and surrender of the fragile Antoinette because of her inability to confront the powerful agencies of the unconscious. Unlike Brontë, Rhys provides explanation and roots for the situation of the mad woman. She is not simply an aggressive dangerous wife, like Bertha, who is secretly caged by her husband with not even a glimpse of her past or any insight of the reasons behind her situation.

In contrast with Rhys' Antoinette, Bertha is associated with physical strength and violent, brutal actions compared to Antoinette's delicate and feminine behaviour. Jane describes the quarrel between Bertha and Rochester as follows:

The lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggle. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest-more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was. (J.E p. 293)

Apart from this incident which is told by Jane, almost all Bertha's actions take place 'off-stage', to use Nancy R. Harrison's term. (164) Bertha's attack on Richard Mason, the fire she sets in Rochester's bed, her tearing of Jane's wedding veil and finally the fire she sets to Thornfield Hall are all reported by some characters without seeing them on the 'novel's stage'.

The actions of Antoinette are not passively reported but rather presented throughout the novel and narrated by Antoinette and her husband. Perhaps the only action that one does not see in the novel is Antoinette's attack of Richard Mason. It is recounted by Grace Poole in a more sympathetic tone than the one in which Bertha's actions are reported in *Jane Eyre*. Grace Poole tells Antoinette reminding her of what happened:

<sup>2</sup> Rhys Jean, *Wide Sargasso Sea* [1966] (Penguin Group, 1968). References in parentheses are to this edition.

So you don't remember that you attacked this gentleman with a knife? I said that you would be quiet. "I must speak to her," he said. Oh he was warned but he wouldn't listen. I was in the room but I didn't hear all he said except "I cannot interfere legally between you 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. (W.S.S p.150)

In comparison, Bertha's attack on her brother is described by Rochester who likens his mad wife to vampires. Moreover, most of Bertha's actions show that she is a dangerous threatening mad woman. Antoinette's madness, on the other hand, is described as the type of madness which turns inward, destroys the self and accidentally harms others. Antoinette's madness is: "the living embodiment of Rochester's own corruption and evil, his own more pernicious madness" (O'Connor, 168). According to O'Connor, Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents two types of madness: male and female. The male one, represented by the 'Rochester' character, has the male power to destroy female sanity. Antoinette suffers because of the constrictions placed on women in a male-dominated society, where a woman or a girl grows up being taught that she is inferior or more susceptible to mental and emotional disturbances. In other words, Antoinette's sanity is forfeited in a way that satisfies the male authority.

Another discrepancy between the depictions of madness in the two novels is that Brontë points to the idea of hereditary madness. In his attempt to defend himself, Rochester asserts that his mad wife ascends from a mad family: "Bertha Mason is mad and she came of a mad family-idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mad mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard! ... Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in both points." (J.E p. 292) Rhys, on the other hand, indicates the real causes and sources of Antoinette's and her mother's madness. *Wide Sargasso Sea* provides us with the horrible circumstances in which Antoinette and her mother turn mad. Yet, some critics still see a close relation between Antoinette's destiny and her bond to her mother. Ronnie Scharfman focuses on the inadequacies of the mother-daughter bond which results in Antoinette's split self and fatal psychological bondage: "Although the daughter desperately seeks the sense of safety which an acknowledge identification with her mother might confer, the mother bars her from this feeling of unity and dooms her to a sense of fragmentation." (100) Scharfman also sees in Antoinette's madness the only way of identification with her mother. Kleopfer elaborates on Scharfman's argument and piles evidence and critical theories to prove the role of both the presence and absence of the mother in the literary text:

Rochester's rage at the absent mother is then projected onto Antoinette. He cuts her off sexually. He betrays her with a servant girl. And as Antoinette in her despair begins to break down, Rochester writes it off to hereditary madness, recreating the mother in his wife, deciding to take her away to England and lock her up. (152)

The doomed Antoinette ends up with failure of adjustment, loss of contact with reality and a disruption within her relation to herself and the world around her. This idea of fragmentation takes us back to the modernist view of man as "reduced to a sequence of unrelated inexperiential fragments ... inexplicable to others as to himself." (Lukács, 26) Rhys's model of the mad woman focuses on the modernist concept of the fragmented self, where the person finds him/herself unable to express or understand his/her self, leading to alienation, psychological trauma or madness as is the case with Antoinette.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* leaves the mad woman, along with the novel's reader, with a variety of options at the end, contrary to the only choice given to Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. This open-endedness of *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be seen as the modernist refusal of the realist inevitable end of 'marriage or death'. Although some critics think of Antoinette's third and last dream as foreshadowing the novel's conclusion, the novel is still open-ended. Emery argues that Antoinette's dream means one thing that is to have the same destiny as that of Brontë's Bertha: "Antoinette awoke. She unlocks the door again.... It hasn't happened yet, and yet it has already happened, once in *Jane Eyre* and again in Antoinette's dream, and now it is going to happen again." (37) Albeit the different ending of the two mad women's stories, Bertha and Antoinette still share the fact that they are victims who find in madness a way of escape and safety. This view of madness as an answer to

certain circumstances brings us to the third 'mad' woman character in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, who finds other ways of adjustment in addition to 'madness'.

John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* [1969] presents, to some extent, a different type of the mad woman. Sarah Woodruff is a woman wrapped in mysterious melancholy and loneliness. Fowles writes in "Notes on an Unfinished Novel" how the image of Sarah with its mystery obsessed him: "It started four or five months ago as a visual image. A woman stands at the end of a deserted quay and stares out to sea .... It was obviously mysterious. It was vaguely romantic." (136 In the novel, Fowles insists on creating the sense of enigma around Sarah's character. Sarah is presented, in a way similar to Brontë's Bertha, as silent most of the time. After more than thirty pages, the first words Sarah utters are her refusal to explain to Mrs Poultney about the relationship with the French lieutenant: "'Mr Forsythe informs me that you retain an attachment to this foreign person.' 'I do not wish to speak of it, ma'm'"<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the narrative voice portrays Sarah as an ambiguous woman whose mind and unconscious cannot be penetrated. The narrator ends chapter twelve with the question: "Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?" Then he admits his inability to solve the mystery of Sarah at the beginning of the next chapter: "I do not know ... modern women like Sarah exist, and I have never understood them" (F.L.W p. 96-97). This failure of the narrator to have an access to Sarah's mind may be intended by Fowles in his attempt to break the god-like power and authority of the first person narrator which was common in realist novels. Fowles claims full freedom for his characters, specifically Sarah.

The *French Lieutenant's Woman* tries to present Sarah as a free woman and even 'freer than men' and this is Fowles' feminism (Conradi, 48). Ironically, Fowles' feminist view in the novel, embodied in Sarah, is introduced through the comments of the male representatives: the narrator, Charles and Doctor Grogan. Sarah first appears in the novel as a silent lonely woman. The description of her face at the start of the novel puts the truth of her 'madness' in question: "It was unforgettable face, and a tragic face. Its sorrows welled out of it as purely ... There was no artifice there, no hypocrisy, no hysteria, no mask, and above all, no sign of madness. The madness was in the empty sea, the empty horizon, the lack of reason for such sorrow" (F.L.W, p. 16). It can be argued that the mysterious nature of Fowles' heroine and her being inaccessible to male curiosity explain why she is described as 'mad' by Dr. Grogan, and at large by the patriarchy he represents.

The 'mad' woman in Fowles' novel is not violent or dangerous and that is why she is not confined or shut up like Brontë's Bertha or Rhys' Antoinette. Yet, a possibility of putting her in a mental asylum is offered by Doctor Grogan. He sees it as Sarah's chance to be cured of her obscure melancholia: "Oh now come, is she the first young woman who has been jilted .... And today they're as merry as crickets." (F.L.W. p. 151) In rejecting the doctor's suggestion, Charles refers to the miserable brutal conditions of women who live in asylums. Fowles' novel explains Sarah's 'madness' through the scientific words of Doctor Grogan who talks of Sarah as a clinical case: "I was called in to see her ... a ten-month ago. Now I could see what was wrong at once-weeping without reason, not talking, a look about the eyes. Melancholia as plain as measles." (F.L.W. p. 15) [Ellipsis is Fowles'] The doctor sees it as a kind of addiction to grief and sadness: "'It was as if the woman had become addicted to melancholia as one becomes addicted to opium .... Her sadness becomes her happiness. She wants to be a sacrificial victim,'" (F.L.W. p. 153). [Italics are Fowles'] This scientific-like reading of Sarah's 'madness' can be seen as part of the postmodernist techniques of underlying and undermining at the same time. Fowles is attacking the Darwinian scientific view of women as "[un]like men, [un]able to reason clearly." (F.L.W. p.153)

Charles offers another male interpretation of Sarah as having more than one version "the one Eve personified all mystery and love and profundity, and the other a half-scheming, half-crazed governess from

<sup>3</sup> Fowles John, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* [1969] (Vintage, 1996), p. 41 All references in parentheses are to this edition

an obscure seaside town.” (F.L.W, 410-11) Sarah’s ‘madness’ and ambiguity constitute an important part of her charm which attracts Charles. She is presented in the novel as the “uncapturable mystique of the lost woman, an image designed to satisfy the demands of male imagination” (Woodcock, 49, n. 11). According to Woodcock, Sarah is considered to be the enigma of Charles’ ‘Oedipal quest’. Being deprived of his mother as she died when giving birth to his younger sister, Charles is searching for the mother figure in Sarah.

Like Bertha and Antoinette, Sarah reflects the life of women in the nineteenth century, where women’s sexual liberation was associated with neurosis, and bad women were always seen as fiends. The three women, I have discussed, share the quality of sexual expression. Being married, Brontë’s Bertha and Antoinette were looked at as unchaste wives whose sexual excess is disparaged and makes them labelled as insane. Rochester tells Jane about his mad wife’s unchastity and shows his disgust and fear of her: “the doctors now discovered that my wife was mad-her excesses had prematurely developed the germs of insanity” (J.E p. 306). Similarly Antoinette’s husband expresses his hostility and disgust of his wife’s sexual passions “She thirsts for anyone-not for me ... she’ll loose her black hair, and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She’ll not care who she’s loving)” (W.S.S. p. 135-6) [ellipsis is Rhys’].

It is in fact true that Antoinette rejects her marriage at first, but it awakens her sexuality afterwards. In addition, being rejected by her husband, these sexual feelings intensify. The two wives, Bertha and Antoinette, can be seen as victims of the imperialistic colonial project. They have been exploited to the full by their English husbands and forsaken at the end (Joseph, 49, n. 11). As they are married for money, Bertha and Antoinette were left with nothing but confinement as the worst picture of exploitation. Bertha’s ten years of enclosure and isolation were more than enough to deprive her of her humanity and turn her into a wild, savage and violent creature. She is ‘rooted off’ to be put in a hostile strange environment. She is described by Rochester himself as “the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie”. (J.E. p. 305) In her dungeon, Bertha’s beauty turns to be the ugliest picture for a human being described as a hyena with a masked face and red-ball-eyes.

Another response to Antoinette as being a victim is to see her as a Caliban: “Antoinette lives in a psychological exile wherever she is” (Joseph, 27). Starting as a rejected child by her mother and through her unbalanced relation with her black friend Tia, who sees in her a “white nigger”, Antoinette can not find herself but in alienation and fear. She ends as a commodity that can be exchanged with her servant and this is the worst enslavement her husband imposed on her (Joseph, p. 49, n. 11). He exploited her: took her money, changed her name and removed her to England as one removes a property. Far from seeing her as a Caliban, Paula le Gallez describes Antoinette as a tragic figure who, though powerless, could escape through madness as a powerful reaction to her husband’s supreme authority (141).

The tragedy of Antoinette is shared with Brontë’s Bertha; a tragedy caused by a social and political system of oppression from which the only relief is an escape into madness. Adrienne Rich best expresses the Victorian status of women: “The 19<sup>th</sup> century loose woman might have sexual feelings, but the 19<sup>th</sup> century wife did not and must not”.<sup>4</sup> According to Rich, the possibility of having sexual passions is open only to loose fallen women and this is the reason why Sarah Woodruff chooses to be the ‘French Lieutenant’s Woman’. She challenges the patriarchal Victorian restrictions placed on women and even represents a dangerous threat to the male authority. She is shown as impenetrable, unobtainable femme fatale: “even Sarah’s mere glances and smiles are sexually attractive ‘something as strange, as shocking, as if she had thrown off her clothes” (Salami, 130). This is Sarah’s danger which coupled with her mysteriousness and enigma poses a threat to masculine Victorian values (Woodcock, 129).

Fowles attempts through the character of Sarah to attack nineteenth century society and its moral values. Sarah is constructed by Fowles as a product of male readings. Yet, her ability to resist interpretation allows her

<sup>4</sup> Rich A, *Jane Eyre: Temptations of a Motherless Woman*, quoted in Rigney, p.23

to break the nineteenth century restraints placed on women. She creates and lives in a lie in order to alienate herself and by the way escape male control. She tells Charles the cause and purpose of her situation as a social outcast: "I married shame. What kept me alive is my shame, my knowing that I am truly not like other women .... No insult, no blame can touch me." (F.L.W. p. 171) Sarah also admits that she refused to end with marriage as the natural destiny for any woman and which Charles calls 'the natural law': "I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to be in marriage." (F.L.W, 430) Fowles insists on showing Sarah as a new free woman whose liberation is associated with neurosis. The postmodernist treatment of women's sexual liberation in Fowles' novel agrees with the modernist view that "one has to choose either to run with the pack or one becomes a neurotic" (Robert Musil, quoted in Lukács, 28).

In conclusion, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* present the 'mad' woman as swimming against the current. Albeit the fact that the three women are dealt with through different perspectives, they all attempt to escape the nineteenth century restraints and oppression into the world of madness. The three portrayals of Bertha Mason, Antoinette Cosway and Sarah Woodruff aim at a truthful reflection of reality. My study of the two married women, Bertha and Antoinette, and the single Sarah attempts to reflect the status of the nineteenth century woman who was supposed to be the domestic obedient angel who knew nothing about her sexuality, lest the authoritative husband shuts her up in the house or confines her to a mental asylum. The three women break the rules of their society by means of sexual expression and untamed passions which are seen by Foucault as part of sanity and reason: "The madness of desire, insane murders, the most unreasonable passions-all are wisdom and reason, since they are part of the order of nature."

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