Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) is a postmodern revisionary perspective of Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847). In this, Rhys has attempted a deconstructionist purview of the voicelessness and savage madness of Antoinette. The novel tracks the autobiographical angst of a girl, which closely mirrors the author's own life. The parallels between the author and the heroine are drawn from narratives of troubled childhood and struggle for identity. Rhys illustrates Postmodern Intertextuality in her usage of more than one narrator in the novel, Antoinette, Mr., and Grace Poole. She also interlaces her novel with Charlotte Bronte’s story of Jane Eyre, deconstructing Bronte’s “madwoman of the attic”. By making reference to another text, Jean Rhys toys with the post-modern element of intertextuality in her efforts to display thematic relevancy throughout time, have a feminist revisionary of the highly acclaimed Pro-feminist novel Jane Eyre.

Post-Colonial issues regarding Colonial Power, Suppression, Subordination, Identity Crisis, Madness, Subaltern concerns are present in the novel. Rhys divides Wide Sargasso Sea into three parts. The first and second part take place in colonized British West Indies and the third part is set in England. The first part is recounted by Antoinette, who portrays her childhood as being filled with cultural conflicts and viscitude of Post-Colonial Power struggles in Jamaica. She also at times wonders why her mother showers all her attention towards her son and not her. The second part is narrated by Antoinette and Mr. It is in this part of the novel that Mr. and Antoinette’s marriage takes place, and it is where both characters reveal their anxieties, compulsions along with their confused feelings for each other. The third part is once again told mostly by Antoinette in England, where she is shunted away in Mr.’s attic, which is the much maligned ‘Mad woman in the Attic’ in Jane Eyre.

Antoinette’s family relationship was far more problematic which resulted in her psychological problems and alienation because of her loneliness. Her biological father, Cosway, indulged in sensual pleasures, was a slaveholder. After the death of his wife, Cosway married Annette, a gorgeous girl, who was much younger than him. Their marriage in social hegemony hailing from the French Colony. She bore him two children, Antoinette and Pierre. After the marriage, Cosway still indulged in his bad lifestyle and made merry all day. Consequently, he died as a victim of the slave revolt. His son, Pierre, was born with cretinism which made him stagger and incoherent. Later on, he died from a fire in his farmland when slave riot spread. After her son’s death, Annette suffered from a breakdown and went crazy.

A debauched father, an ill disposed brother and an unstable mother were Antoinette’s dearkith and kin. The disastrous fate of the family had great influences on little Antoinette’s life. Since then, the whole family was cursed, even her neighbours and servants, agonized her emotionally. Her mother remarried Mason soon, a marriage of convenience as they were totally broke and marriage could provide them a respectable life. She also had an elder stepbrother called Richard Mason who played a key role in Antoinette’s matrimony.

The Creole status of the family added to the identity crisis. Antoinette didn’t get enough attention during her formative years. Her mother committed much of her time to the sick son, looked after him and sent for a doctor, almost neglected the girl child. “But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her I was a little afraid of her” (J. Rhys, 1966) (Pg 7) As her mother gave her a marginal place, she was more close to Cristophine, the maid. Antoinette's mother was reluctant to spend time with Antoinette, so Antoinette was always on her own, with no friends to exchange a few words and open her heart out so she became a recluse. Her stepfather Mason was more conciliatory treated her very well. He went to the cloister from time to time, paying visits to Antoinette and bringing her gifts. When he was
on his death bed, he even left half of his bequest to Antoinette and another half to his son from his first wife Richard Mason.

The tragedies as his brother's death and mother's mental illness kept her traumatized. As per the Freudian Psychoanalysis, childhood has immeasurable influence on a person's life and is source of happiness and painfulness in the future and her lack of family was a realistic source of her misfortune. Adversity coupled with calamity send her to lead a marginalized life and nearly trivialized her.

**Marriage of Convenience**: It was again a marriage of convenience for Mr., where he married Antoinette only for dowry, Mr. is a typical Post-Colonial opportunist can be seen as a money digger he treats her as a colonial object and muddles her identity. The marriage between Antoinette and Mr. rests on racial and gender inequalities. Antoinette status as a Creole is another aspect of Post-Colonial Syndrome. For Mr., his exotic exposure is overpowering; their relationship was marital confrontation between the binary opposition, nature Vs culture.

"Everything is too much. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, and the mountain too high, the hills too narrow. And the woman is a stranger" (Pg 42)

He was a gentleman belonged to the industrial town and Antoinette his total opposite found solace in the wild nature. Mr. is petrified by nature because it represents and signifies Antoinette and his failure to control her.

'Antoinette re-enacts her mother's experience: She marries an Englishman and is driven mad by the tension between her assumptions about her and demands on her and her precarious sense of where she belongs'. (Pg xiii)

The marriage of Antoinette and Mr. is a challenging one. As they both come from different cultural background, Mr. dominates the marriage and marginalizes Antoinette treats her as a voiceless shadow, because of his dominance and the meek subjugation of Antoinette initially the marriage becomes a troubled one. He dons the mantle of a colonizer and his wife is the colonized. Mr. is Byronic Hero or should we look at him sympathetically. As the second son, he inherits nothing from his father’s estate, and was compelled to marry Antoinette for his own financial survival. Elite hypocrisy dissuaded him from, he should be served upon, Antoinette's property is his ladder to Eliteness.

In Wide Sargasso Sea, Mr. labels Antoinette as the colonial ‘other’. He sees her as one who is unrefined, biased, and uneducated.

Wide Sargasso Sea as a feminist critique is a Patriarchal narrative, Patriarchy is an arrangement which controls and overshadows women where they are unable to make their own choices about economy, sexuality, mothering, or childbearing. It emasculates women's identity, abilities and her potentials it is a system of oppression over the other gender. The woman are left voiceless and has to give in to all the fancies of her male partner and, women are constantly given roles to serve the man. The female is first and foremost a daughter, a mate and a nurse of the children who should only offer her existence to serve the men (father, husband and son) in her life. During the industrial revolution, women, remained poor and they did not have as any rights as men. They did not have the right to own or keep assets or property. All their property and assets became the husband’s after marriage. The exploitation of many women from the Orient by the wealth hunting perspective husbands from the imperialists occident. Victorian woman had to rely on their husbands and were not encouraged to work outside the home and were considered angels when at home.

Looking at this marriage from a feminist point of view, one can see that there is an usurpation of wealth due to patriarchal norms and economic dominance empowers Mr. He married her for the thirty thousand pounds, once the marriage consummated according to the law, the money and property would be of the husband and the wife had no right over it. This economic dominance leaves Antoinette helpless and her husband in charge of her life and resources limiting her options in life. Helplessness and isolation lead to depression and Schizophrenia. Madness and how it has been defined in a patriarchal society has also been present in the marriage of Antoinette and Mr. When Antoinette and Mr. discuss Daniel Cosway’s accusations Antoinette becomes very annoyed. Mr. interprets wrath and fury as a madness that is inherited from Annette, her mother. But the fury comes from her resistance to her pathetic condition which he reduced her and she wants to revolt against it but left with no option. Mr. also labels Antoinette nutty. Here again, Daniel Cosway’s accusations of Antoinette’s promiscuity, her desire for sex and her sexual conduct allows Mr. to
think of her as a deranged woman as the women were not to have a voice and desire leave aside sexual desire, only a women with low morals can exhibit her sexual desire, which in contemporary times is very natural.

**Creole Crisis**: Antoinette was born in a slave-owning family in Jamaica in the nineteenth century. At that time, the West Indies obliterating movement waspeaking, the uprising of the natives of the native black slaves rise to fight for their rights. Her father, a slaveholder, died suddenly. Antoinette and her family’s lives were in a precarious situation. As a white Creole in West Island of Jamaica, the intermediate between Blacks and pure whites, the heroine Antoinette was doomed to suffer perplexity of a mixed identity and hybridity. On one hand, they were marginalized by the white rulers, they also faced retaliation and hatred from the blacks. They became real “sandwich class” under pressure from both the oppressor and the oppressed “I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping dogs lie. One day a little girl followed me singing, ‘Go away white cockroach, go away, go away’. I walked fast, but she walked fast … ‘Nobody wants you. Go away’” (J. Rhys, 1966) (pg9). The blacks called her “white nigger” or “white cockroach”, and told her “nobody wants her”. As a young girl Antoinette had so much of raucous around her but did not get solace anywhere, which affected her psyche and in turn dwarfed her entire persona. It’s like a frustration that deeply rooted in Antoinette’s heart. As the social conflicts were intensified, the white rulers chose to leave, but the native mestizo whites from Martinique had no way to go, most of them still lived there, she had a sense of belonging to nowhere, as the island which he thought her home, treated her as an outsider an intruder and the alien England she knew nothing about because he transplanted her. She suffered the adversity and destitution of life at the young age.

She had no friends, no one to confide in. Had she not been born in the slaveholder family, it is a matter of introspection how her fate would have been, destiny got her at the wrong place at the wrong time. The people around her were hostile. Wherever she was condemned to relocate if Antoinette was not born in this drastically changed society, “Old time white people nothing but white nigger now and black nigger better than white nigger” (Pg 10) The slavery is the root of disparity in the West Indies in the nineteenth century. ‘Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of Pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either’ (Pg 40)

Deconstructing the image of Jane Eyre: The Victorian women were conditioned to be “The Angel of the House,” a phrase taken from the title of a Victorian poem by Coventry Patmore. In the poem, Patmore describes the perfect Victorian wife as a woman who is passive, submissive and always faithful. The poem also states that the purpose and contentment of women is to please men. Women under such popular patriarchial narratives were treated as mere objects and child bearers. Women were primarily accountable for the delight of men and it was assumed that this liability that the female folk were supposed to do at any cost. This general attitude toward women affected many aspects of Victorian life and is relevant to the analysis of Bronte’s novel, Jane Eyre, particularly this novel is hailed as one of the earliest portrayals in feminists empowerment.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* has created heated questions among these literary critics, resisting easy categorization within the context of twentieth-century fiction. As a postcolonial work, the novel indict England’s exploitative colonial empire, aligning its sympathies with the plight of the black Caribbeans. However, Rhys’s narrator—a white Creole—remains a step removed from racial oppression, and in opposition to the dictates of patriarchy. It is for this reason, the character is a touchstone for feminist theorists.

Alienation and rejection of Antoinette is a sad narrative, both within the Jamaican community where she grew up and later on when she marries an Englishman. She was not accepted with the locals, had a rebellious attitude towards Tia (in the first half) and later with Amelie.

Bertha of Jane Eyre is caught in the double blind of imperialist bias and patriarchy. Jane although a victim of patriarchy cannot identify with the gendered marginalized Bertha, whereas in the case of Antoinette, in spite of her colonized status, she attempts to get rid of the shackles and bondage from her subaltern position of silence and marginality. The Subaltern (Antoinette) speaks, and when *Mr.* addresses her as Bertha she gets upset and reacts’. Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name’ (pg94) She asserts her identity and wants her respectable position in society which is denied to her by her dominating husband. Renaming is emotionally demoralizing and denying ones identity born with and remoulding as per the male’s whims.
Mr. often echoes that Antoinette is nothing like him, and he has the superiority complex of the imperialist white man and he openly declares that he sees nothing that he loves about her. In one incident when the two argue about Mr. spending the night with Amelie, Antoinette questions her husband’s love. “Don’t you love me at all?” she asks and Mr. replies firmly, “No, I do not” (Rhys, 95). Such harsh words do not allow Antoinette to feel loved or have a sense of felicity in her marriage. Such declarations however affect her self-worth and lowers her deep into gloom and rebellion delusions. She feels terrible. As she never got into any healthy relations with anyone, by the end of the novel, we can see Antoinette’s state of mind. She understands that her marriage has not been a healthy union and only a marriage of convenience. She really had high expectations from the marriage but instead of providing the solace she only got disappointment, a feeling of vacuum and marginalized.

Surprisingly it is noted that in this novel Antoinette’s husband has not been given a name by the novelist, and is referred to as Mr. butin Jane Eyre he had a name Mr. Rochester, this reveals a feminique perspective of Jean Rhys where she sides the marginalized heroine and makes the Patriarchal husband nameless.

Anarcha Feminism; Rhy’s quarrel with branding Jane Eyre is the earliest experiment in Woman Empowerment. Quarrel with Woman in the Attic and Heroic portrayal of Rochester and ultimate freedom of Antoinette from all miseries is highlighted in the novel. It is apt to quote that woman are the enemies of woman as quoted by Shirin Ebadi Women are the victims of this Patriarchal culture, but they are also its carriers. Let us keep in mind that every oppressive man was raised in the confines of his mother’s home. As Antoinette was having a troubled marriage, instead of providing solace to Antoinette, Amelie slept with Mr. creating more trouble in their already troubled marriage.

Mr. always wanted to have be in charge of Antoinette and control her and always keep her tied down and wanted that as an obedient wife without questioning abide by him and have no say in any matter and only be objectified. She was just treated ad a pretty body with no voice and no feeling of her own.

“The doll had a doll’s voice, a breathless but curiously indifferent voice” (pg 110)

From the free wild nature she is set into the shackles of the aristocratic culture, the adjustment issues which the body faces and is transferred to the mind and she undergoes psychological problems.

Diaspora: When after marriage Mr. takes her to England she feels uprooted as she felt at home in her wilderness at West Indies and did not like the industrial town of England and speaks of England as a land of gloom and coldness to which Mr. becomes annoyed and irritated. Her heart lies in the virgin islands where she was born and brought up. He replies by saying that her island is gloomy and dark. Mr. becomes irritated by her replies and questions how she can be ignorant of England. Mr. comes to the conclusion that Antoinette is unsophisticated and crude. The English have the colonizer mentality and perceived themselves as controlling, cultured and morally virtuous.

In one scene when the couple discusses his beloved homeland England, Mr. notices that Antoinette is not able to describe England or give any true facts of England. Mr. reflects: “She was undecided, uncertain about facts – any fact... hardly able to believe she was the pale silent creature I had married” (Pg54). The marriage of convenience was not fruitful for either party, the only outcome of the marriage was that Mr’s status in society was saved by the amount of dowry.

Conclusion

That Wide Sargasso Sea is a rewriting of Jane Eyre—a text long upheld as a victory of feminist liberalism—confuses the feminist debate. Mr. muddles Antoinette’s identity. She shows some spark of retaliation but she is subdued and has to be contented in the confines of the four walls of her claustrophobic home in England. Rhys’s text also invites psychoanalytic readings, through its experimentation with narrative and exploration of the unconscious. In its formal techniques and thematic sources, Rhys’s novel incorporates modern and postmodern devices of fragmentation, while drawing, at times, on Romantic notions of sublimity, passion, and the supernatural. Jane Eyre the prequel to Wide Sargasso Sea, draws out the revolt within Feminism initially she was meek and later on in the novel she rebels.

Mr. verbally tries to diminish Antoinette’s identity by calling her different names. Mr. also describes her as a just a Creole who belongs to the island and is a part of it. The marriage of Antoinette and Mr. illustrates claims of postcolonial feminist criticism.
Society, family and individual factors, all these totally determine Antoinette's tragic fate. Antoinette as a child grew up in chaos. She is a tragic figure. She gets no love from her family at her young age. Being the daughter of a slaveholder, she is cursed and hated by the blacks. She had no friends to communicate with. She is lonely. When she has grown up, marriage is the only way to change her life condition, so she has great expectation of her husband. Unfortunately, she marries a man who does not love her. Her husband is an English man and passes off as a gentleman, but does not care for Antoinette's feeling, he is a total worldly man. They are very different in all aspects. They have racial inequality and gender inequality. Thus their marriage was doomed to be a tragedy. After Antoinette finds that Mr. has an affair with her servant, she then locks up in an attic all day and her mentality is broken down completely. Thus, abandoned by her husband is the direct cause that makes Antoinette fall into despair and set fire to end her life. In the final attempt to break free all the bondages and forever become free, which shows that the mad woman in the attic of Jane Eyre now in the form of Antoinette is liberalized.

Works Cited