

Post-Colonial and Feminist Reading of Identity Issue in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea and Bessie Head's Maru

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Abstract. *This paper presents a comparative analysis of Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea and Bessie Head's Maru. It explores the identity problem confronted by both heroines, Antoinette of Wide Sargasso Sea and Margaret of Maru, and their fight in a culture that is triple separated by race, class and gender to solve this problem. It discusses Antoinette and Margaret's distinctions and parallels in their desire for and fight for an independent identity, and investigates how effective they are or fail to articulate their identities. Through taking up comparative literature strategies and approaches, postcolonial theory and feminist theory, the paper examines the two novels, stressing external influences, which may help, disrupt and prevent the tough and long seek for identity and independence by the two heroines. The study explores the underlying parallels and distinctions in the handling of the issue of identity by the two protagonists and how the female character fought to reach her ambition in each work.*

Introduction

Post-colonial works refer, in all its complexities, to the studies of the notion of identity. It is necessary to explore the notion of identity further to realize how colonial ideology has invaded all human life aspects. Postcolonial and feminist studies have indicated similar attention for the emergence of modern and perhaps more empowering group identities for those previously portrayed as subordinates in patriarchal western contexts. Consequently, the final quarter of the 20th century experienced an increasing concern for the role of literature in providing a room that would permit reconstruction, revision, and “innovative involvement” (BHABHA, 1994) within historical and canonical literary texts.

Representation in this context acquires a manifold and complex meaning that breaks from the traditional humanist conviction that reality is reflected by discourse; Alternatively, representation starts to be viewed as the structure of power relations and identity, by discourse. The constant debate between true and imagined “realities,” that occurs via literary discourse and even in all everyday experiences, makes fiction a source of political and conceptual confrontation, and the concern of interpretations and revisions shifts to the core of literary texts production and critique.

Among the numerous women authors who have been influenced by this kind of revisionist drive to counter balance the white masculinity of literary tradition by offering females a voice and heritage, authors are as wide-ranging as Bessie Head and Jean Rhys. In their fictional works, *Maru* and *Big Sargasso Sea*, they criticize the standards of history and literature by presenting marginal female characters with a narrative specific to them.

Bessie Head's *Maru* is considered one of the best-selling books and many readers have taken an interest in this novel. It describes the lives of Masarwa who are oppressed by Botswana. The actions center on Margaret, a female actor who struggles from the injustice of a masculine-dominant culture

and battles for an individual identity. The pain of Margaret emerges from being trapped in two realms in which she feels displaced. Eventually, her search for her own identity overcomes her difficulties.

Wide Sargasso Sea is a work of Jean Rhys, the British woman writer, one of the earliest post-colonial women writers. The novel discusses the tragic destiny of the heroine, Antoinette, that emerges out of a deep-rooted ideology that triples to marginalize women in gender, class, and race. It, therefore, reveals the lives of the African Caribbean (Jamaican), that have been conquered by the British army in 1655. the heroine struggles tremendously from the inability to pursue her own future and to express her identity free from the domination of her own culture, the colonial powers and her oppressive spouse.

Owing to the success of Bessie Head's *Maru* and Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea*, several scholars have spoken about both of the novels from a postcolonial and feminist viewpoint. All the research that have been conducted addresses each novel alone and nobody has brought both works together in a study. The paper will aim to compare the two novels by connecting them to postcolonial and feminist viewpoints and by demonstrating one female character in each novel. It explores their conflict to express their identities beyond the boundaries of gender, class and race.

Hypothesis

In this study, identity is similar or different in the *Wide Sargasso Sea* of Jean Rhys, and *Maru* of Bessie Head. Does the racism in the novels agree with society or reject it?

Aim of the Research

The study shows different and similarities between in *Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Bessie Head's* from where colonialism, feminism, and postcolonialism in novels.

Methods

Within this analysis, the researcher would use the quantitative and descriptive approach to address the issue of identity crises within Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* of and Bessie Head's *Maru*. The female characters Margaret and Antoinette would be emphasized in particular. The study will use a variety of analytical approaches to investigate the problem of identity that both of the two characters suffers from, including post-colonialism, feminism, racial and cultural analysis. Comparative literature approaches and strategies may also be used in the discussion to contrast and compare how each female character responds to their identity crisis.

Post-colonial Theory

Post-colonialism deals with the matter of how colonization affects societies and cultures (Ashford et.al, 2000). Critics and literary theorists have been developing this specific term since the 1970s to describe the sort of impact that colonization had on societies and cultures. They developed several terms, like Creolization, Other, Hybridity, Double Colonization and Anti-Colonialism.

The word "other" describes how one sounds isolated and therefore does not relate to one's self. The word was often used to apply to the invaded people; and this is what makes the distinction between the colonized as inferior and colonizer as superior. In addition, the word "Creolization" encompasses "the mechanism of intermingling and cultural interaction that creates a Creole culture" (p 51). The concept often applies to post-colonial cultures that tend to be mixed communities as a consequence of European colonialism and is, therefore, more relevant to "modern world" cultures. They emphasize the word hybridity, which reflects the tendency for one's culture and identity to be influenced by the culture and identity of others to the degree that one thinks like he inclines to both identities simultaneously. Hybridity implies the development of a modern transcultural structure, which implies "cruising the two structure into a 'hybrid' structure through cross-pollination or grafting" (p 108). They advocate also double colonization that reveals the hardships and sufferings of females from two distinct forms of domination: male and colonial. In this situation, people are oppressed and marginalized for being women and colonized people.

Parker (2008) describes the key aspects of Post-colonialism by listing several of the major contributors of Post-colonialism, like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. He discusses

colonialism and how some of the population of the world was colonized and governed by a limited number of countries such as Britain that occupied most territories of the earth's population. He refers that post-colonialism gives a great deal of attention to the national, racial, ethnic and political aspects that have all been impacted by colonization. He mentions that the conquering nations have been defined as “metropolitan” and that there have been two types of colonies. The first is settling colonies including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, where they permanently reside in the territory, and to the degree that they no longer recognize that these lands are not theirs; they make up a greater community than they have occupied. The second category is the occupied colonies where the colonized establish a limited number of inhabitants and hence the colonizers shortly reside in the colony before other conquerors or forces arrive at the territory.

The words “self” and “other” appear to be a post-colonial output in the way that “self” is linked to the colonizer as a subject and “other” to the colonized as an object. Culturally as well as politically “the *Self* and the *Other* are represented as the colonizer and the colonized. The *Other* by definition lacks identity, propriety, purity, literality. In this sense he can be described as the *foreign*: the one, who does not belong to a group, does not speak a given language, and does not have the same customs; he is the unfamiliar, uncanny, unauthorized, inappropriate, and the improper” (Al-Saidi, 2014). Let it also be clear that *Otherness* is an ordered sequence of fragmented contrasts: The *Self* is rational, ordered, good, masculine, and the *Other* is irrational, chaotic, evil and feminine.

Feminism

Through a feminist point of view, culture has interacted with gender in a manner that affects women because of men's being brought up as superiors to women and they have the right to intimidate, discipline or control them. Generally, the Feminist notion focuses on how the essence of our society is inherently patriarchal, and therefore feminism aims to re-examine culture and literature from a feminist perspective. Calling themselves patriarchal women marginalized and socially conditioned by oppressive or conventional gender roles, Tyson (2006) discusses some of the concepts relevant to feminism that involve patriarchy, conventional gender roles, and all controversial concepts and notions linked to equal rights. She points out that the theories of feminist movement differ from one area to the other and from one thinker to another. She describes feminist based criticism by referring that feminist critique explores the manners in literature that strengthens or damages the financial, social, political, and psychological exploitation of women. In addition, several feminists label their discipline feminism in an attempt to demonstrate the multiplicity of perspectives of their supporters and to give forms of understanding that contradict the conventional tendency to conclude that there is only one good perspective.

Tyson further discusses how conventional gender roles show males reasonable, protective, powerful, and decisive; they show females emotional, submissive, fragile, caring, and fragile. Patriarchy and gender roles exempt females from equality and discourage them from making important decisions concerning their own lives. Another patriarchal presumption that demonstrates how females have been granted a role of inferiority in male-dominated cultures is the hysteric behaviors which have been viewed exclusively as a female disorder or issue, and that if a male suffered a same behavior he would be identified by the use of a less adverse name, like short-tempered. In addition, patriarchal gender norms are damaging for both males and females through the reality that man is not supposed to come to any failure while doing any work as their failure in it means a failure in their manhood.

Hooks presents a positive portrayal of the feminism in her book *Feminism is for Everyone: Passionate Politics* (2000). She pointed out that this movement was never about females rising against men, but it was all about liberty and also how women battle to obtain equality with men. The aspect that leads men to exercise dominance over women is the feeling that women are inferior to men, and the best way to preserve this dominance is by control, oppression and exploitation of women. Clearly, men do not even realize what feminist movement really is all about, so they view women in a manner that shows how badly they are scared of losing charge or losing the privilege of superiority. Hooks also explains how males with all the control and dominance are thought to be trapped by the

patriarchy. Therefore, the bonding and positive ties among women is not tolerated in the patriarchal culture.

In addition, Hooks links feminism to the significance of the family saying that dominance occurs inside the family when wives are by husbands and children by adults. She believes that this feminist campaign would work to improve and empower family life by collapsing the actions of abuse, aggression, humiliation and violence. The patriarchal life has caused women to assume that they are worthless without men and that women's interactions with each other bring nothing but harm to them. Feminism's role in this situation is to eradicate this form of thinking. Finally, Women must separate themselves from racism before starting to resist male dominance.

Identity

Ferguson (2015) discusses the identity and that it can be formed and impacted by various aspects like race, class and gender. Identity stems from our experience which can form our Identity as well. This is quite special as a signature that helps us to identify the environment around us. The race is quite important and may shape an identification, as the race of the person can affect how people view and treat him/her. In addition, racial identities may contribute to discrimination and injustice. Similarly, it may be a root for pride, inspiration and belonging. With regards to gender identity, it relates to one's interior sense of self as a woman or a man and gender relates to culturally generated behavior and personality characteristics. As for social groups it has a major role to play in shaping the identity, in which it may contribute to a certain community which belong to the same social position through which it can be viewed differently than the other group. Ferguson claimed that the environment and our culture play a significant role in defining our identities, by which they determine what is and what is not acceptable.

Talking generally, identity crises are generated by the presence of various social groups and races whereby the lower classes feel discriminated upon by the upper classes and the black community feel marginalized and exploited by the white people. This indicates that women are the source of the identity problem when referred to gender, and what causes this type of crisis is the reality that we dwell in a male-dominated society where men are the superior and predominant subject whereas females are the oppressed and marginalized object.

Identity formation seems to be a very difficult process when one considers oneself confronted by a new society, place and culture that might end up having certain identity problem complications. Naturally, there are some differences between men and women, either because of differences within their biological structure (sex) or because of social differences (gender). From infancy to adult age, each of them passes through various forms of growth cycles, so this allows the formation of one's identity distinct from female to male. Gardiner (1981) puts a stronger focus on social instead of biological causes and describes female identity from infancy to adulthood. He claims that, based on Nancy Chodorow's point of view, the shaping of female identity pretty much depends on the connection between the mother and her daughter in the context that this bond and this connection are very significant factors in the construction of girl's identity. In about the same period, young girl can consider a path of her own to establish an identity of her own that will help her gain individuality and independence. Chodorow gives an interpretation for the distinctions between the opposing genders, where boys identify themselves as distinct from their mothers in order to achieve individuality and inequality whereas girls shape their identities by being analogous with their mothers, that has to be reshaped and improved at later phases to obtain independence also, definitely, through creating social ties with others.

Discussion

Bessie head's *Maru*

The woman in *Maru* is portrayed at various stages as shown in the representation of the different female characters. Margaret Cadmore, the heroine, is presented as oppressed. She becomes the 'other' because of her Masarwa background, an outcast in the community. Rather than her wedding to Maru improving her self-image, this only helps to quiet her further. She does not marry Maru willingly, but

because of Maru's capacity to manipulate the situation. Thus, Maru monitors every step and emotion of hers. Margaret's happiness contingent on his temper. Therefore, if Maru was in a poor temper, his bad temper stopped her happiness as he used very blunt terms that reminded Margaret of the miserable life she had endured.

Notwithstanding these distractions to her joy, zero memory arose in Margaret's mind of the past pain she had suffered. While Head notes, Margaret was always overcome by joy and would wander about for a full day with an enormous wide smile on her lips. The explanation for this persistent joy seemed to be that "the days of unhappiness were few and far over balanced by the days of torrential expressions of love" (p 4).

Margaret's current positive situation is therefore compared with the continued miserable experiences she had previous to this union. Thus, Maru is the root of happiness. Her failure to recall her past misery demonstrates the complete tolerance of her current condition and her reluctance to alter her fate. Through the viewpoint of Freudian psychoanalysis, Margaret's repression of the traumatic events of her life may be viewed as a calming strategy. Ironically, Moleka, who was the focus of her admiration from the start, is now confined to the world of fantasies. Nevertheless, when she gets up, she owns no visual image of her memories but that of the space where she adored Maru. Just her spouse Maru seems to have an understanding of the entire thing, however, he pretends to be unaware of it. The dream may instead be viewed as a representation of hidden emotions or ideas.

Much like their marriage can be viewed as an effort at misconception, it is also an effort to fulfil Maru's selfishness. He decided to marry someone who would be despised by all, however, in Margaret his desire was realised. Margaret's emotions as a female are not taken into account. In reality, her justification for embracing this union was that she was left without any option. Maru had thus become a godsend to her, emerging only at the middle of the pain to rescue her from grief and a shattered heart. He indulges in this reality, in his mind, till the day he married her," she had lived like the mad dog of the village, with tin cans tied to her tail" (p 5).

Margaret's portrayal as having captured Maru and Moleka's interest, who are both royalty, however, shows her as decent sufficient as worthy of male affection. Notwithstanding his devotion to Margaret, Moleka is reluctant to profess openly his affection for her. Surprisingly, his current course of behavior, the appreciation that Margaret's effect brings upon him, the ensuing competition with Maru as he learns that Maru too was attracted to the same girl as well as his inviting of the slaves to his tables all contribute to his shift of mind.

The transformation that falls over Moleka during his first experience with Margaret can be seen as an effort by Head to criticize prejudices directed at women and people as a whole. This is reflected in the reality that Margaret was a Masarwa, was seen in the community as a low species, and here were two gentlemen of royal rank competing for her affection. Therefore, in fact, people should be truthful with their emotions to others also never fall a hostage to unfounded prejudice.

At another point, her depiction of the white female, Margaret, reflects Head's effort to remove stereotypical representations of women. She is beyond petty stereotypes. Her strong sense of management, by her practice of performing stuff concurrently, is shown to improve the outcome. Her attitude is contrasted with that of her spouse, who is portrayed as being inherently boring and ignorant. However, these characteristics are played down by the reality that he had been a priest who mercifully kept quiet for long periods of time, regardless of his calling. His presence as described by Head does not help boost his common perception. In Head's portrayal he "had a long mournful face. His mouth was always wet with saliva and he frequently blinked his eyes slowly like a cow" (p 8). Despite such a disdainful image, the white male works in the fringe, dominated by his spouse.

In the opposite, his spouse, Margaret Cadmore, is portrayed as possessing commonsense in plenty. This value renders her immortal, as though she might contribute to any generation or period, but still on the continuous side. Nevertheless, this optimistic image may not end up making her exceptional. In the opposite, it renders her 'abusive of the rest of mankind' (p 8). Her deep tense and energetic disposition allowed her to live, in Head's account, at the pace of a boat speeding over rapids. Her bad treatment of mankind, that proceeded at high levels of her speed, often took her to circumstances

where she could be in jeopardy of being attacked. Cadmore is reckless and insensitive in this sense. Although this image can prove to be a well-arranged, defective character, it can also be seen as the Head's method of identifying the oppressor. As a female, she's made accountable, coordinated and guided by herself. While white, though, she contempt the black community. It causes an ambivalence about her.

In consideration of the current conditions, this ambivalence has been further established in her behavior. Although she is white, she seems to be the one who is ready to undertake the deceased Masarwa, who had other races ostracized. Her generous spirit is evident when she chooses to adopt the child of a Masarwa woman. In her opinion, the Botswana nursing staff are crude, and rather than cleaning the mother's body for the funeral, they let the body lying on a hard floor unbothered by the reality of course that the frayed dress she was wearing had been stained since the child was born. Her aim to adopt the baby is part of the race. As she feeds the baby girl, she stays the colonizer, subjection to an environment that alienates the girl from her origins, naming her Margaret Cadmore like herself. The end product is a quiet person who is incapable of taking up his own space.

Throughout *Maru*, Head's commitment is opposing discrimination. *Maru* is an example of racial discrimination and human prejudice. It is drawn from the experiences of Margaret Cadmore. Head seems to understand that children from their parents can learn about prejudices. She states, "Children learnt it from their parents. Their parents spat on the ground as a member of a filthy, low nation passed by. Children went a little further. They spat on you. They pinched you. They danced a wild jiggle, with the tin cans rattling. Bushman! Low breed! Bastard!" (p 6).

Thus, discrimination in the context that it is passed on through generations is described as cyclical. This also allows reference to the challenge of digging it out from its roots. The experience of Margaret is one fraught with prejudice from a very young age. The type of attention she got as she began attending the mission school carried her to think that her connection to the world has gone wrong. This was obvious in a way that she was the type of a kid who has been subtly pinched underneath the table, so nobody chose to sit next to her.

Of no specific cause is Young Margaret discriminated against but of Masarwa. It induces a great amount of social torment as she is a powerless member of her race like any other oppressed people. The portrayal of the author represents her helplessness, "What was a Bushman supposed to do? She had no weapon of words or personality, only a permanent silence and a face which revealed no emotion, except that now and then an abrupt tear would splash down out of one eye. If a glob of spit dropped onto her arm during play time hour, she quietly wiped it away. If they caught her in some remote part of the school building during play time hour, they would set up the wild giggling dance: since when did a Bushy go to school? We take him to the bush where he eats mealier pap, pap" (p 13).

Head highlights the abuses of racial prejudice at this point. The difference is considered a violation, but the victim cannot change its nature. Man's unreasonable conduct is mocked. Discrimination holds the identity of the survivor. The child is in complete isolation and has little feeling to show. A sudden cry, which would fire from one eye, is the only sign of her pain. Young Cadmore is indeed a prisoner of the conditions. She is doomed to be discriminated against the same way her mother was. Her Mom was untouchable because Masarwa nurses were unwilling to wash her body at her death and they revealed disgust when they were instructed by the senior cadmore to wash her body.

Jenkins considers identity as a means to differentiate individuals and groups from other people and societies in their social interactions (1996). Getting to the base of the identity pyramid leads to the earth's scam. Head advocates respect for society as an alternative to such injustice in order to rectify this discrimination. Margaret's response to nurses reflects her stance about racial discrimination. Based upon the attention the deceased Masarwa woman gets, she develops an immediate dislike. This hatred with the nurses was triggered by the way they managed the deceased woman. They left the dead lady lying on the hard floor, being in her frayed dress, even dirtier than ever after the baby birth.

However, it is worth noting that young Margaret is meant as the slogan of the white woman is "environment everything; heredity nothing" (p 11). The main concern of Margaret Cadmore was

seeing how the environment might make a change in man according to their temperament and exposure level. As nothing more than a consequence, young Margaret's mindset and soul consisted of everything around Senior Margaret Cadmore. The writers seek to establish an international identity with this indiscriminate discourse that defies racial restrictions. The outcome was neither African nor anything else but a unique and global character that was not capable of identifying anything as limited as a tribe or nationality or race. Therefore, it resulted in the development of a flexible identity that opposed specific classifications. The difference between the colonizer and the colonized citizen has therefor stayed unresolved. dominant society is the colonizing society. This is also clarified via the point of the adoption of the baby which the white woman did for the intention of using her as experimentation. The outcome is a socially disoriented character of malleable identity

Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea

Antoinette desperately has been seeking to merge herself into the society of Caribbeans since her childhood. She is a lonely and delicate Creole girl also she grows up to see none of the love of her mother nor the companionship of her peers. As she was expected to develop her own identity free from the ideals and aspirations of others, she became Rochester's wife, who was a hindrance to independence. Rochester is a white Englishman with no name whom we identify only from Jane Eyre's Rochester, in particular from his racist, biased and repulsive portrayal of his spouse Bertha. The unnamed husband of Antoinette reflects both patriarchal as well as colonial systems. Although Rhys attempts to humanize the alienated heroine Antoinette by granting her a deep voice to convey her pain and emotions, her husband tries to thwart her efforts to rob her of her right to talk and to establish an independent social and cultural identity.

A badly timed and motivated and disturbing marriage leads Antoinette to struggle with a role uncertainty or a crisis in her identity, as her husband aggressively wants to eradicate her identity. Throughout her path in life to obtaining a long-awaited identity sense, she faces critical decisions. If she chooses to overcome the challenges posed by her spouse and tries to find a path to achieve herself, she could manage to overcome her identity crises and ultimately develop an emotional bond with everyone she loves. Antoinette does not, instead, she chooses to remain passive and submissive rather than fights or thinks about abandoning her husband.

First of all, the marriage between Antoinette's mom and Mr. Mason, the rich Englishman, brings her confidence that her identity issue will be overcome by encouraging her to feel safe by getting a protecting family. Their ambition for a better lifestyle compels them to mimic the English culture and join society. They also begin to eat their foods because they realize that this path can be the only path to let them have an identity that renders them distinct from others. This way, Antoinette and her mom are seeking to mimic the colonizer and take warmth in changing their attitudes and lifestyles. This conduct can be considered 'mimicry' in postcolonial language, to use the expression of Babha in his book *The Location of Cultural* (1994). This is clear when Antoinette starts to eat the food in the same way of English people, "We 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" (p 17). This sensation, though, will not address the identity issue of Antoinette. She always has a sense of hybridity as Antoinette sees herself as a Creole woman who is neither Jamaican nor European. She is lost between the Jamaican identity and the European identity; she does not know what to pick as a specified representation of her identity.

With the marriage, planned by her stepfather and his son, Antoinette's identity problem approaches its height point. She had previously found optimism in her home, but the optimism has diminished with this marriage. The husband, in this case, is seen as serving the colonial powers and the patriarchal society. The presence and dominance of Rochester, the husband, magnifies marginalization, oppression and discrimination on Antoinette. Rochester never embraces her nor wants her identity to be strong but instead, he wants her identity to be eradicated. His cruel and heartless abuse of her eliminates the expectation that she will have independence. Rochester did not marry her out of affection but out of interest, and he never paused, as a colonist and patriarch who left her in a ruined condition, to hold her fully in control.

The physical assault by Rochester on Antoinette renders her a lower human and intensifies her identity problem. Looking at the classical roles of women as described by Tyson (2006), Antoinette's conventional role is clear as a weak, inferior and emotional person who is incapable of taking core decisions, whereas her Rochester is portrayed as a strong, superior and rational person. Changing the name of his wife to Bertha, Rochester begins to treat her as one of his personal objects. Rochester seeks to erase her identity to prohibit her from making any crucial decision. He addresses her as Bertha, not Antoinette. So even though Antoinette had been forced to marry to establish herself, it turned out that she was doing just the reverse and was throwing away what remained of hope for an independent and sovereign self.

In the terms of Postcolonial theory, and especially with the Orientalism of Edward Said (1978), one sees Rochester's "othering" behavior when he treats his woman as "the other" because he is "subject", the colonizer who is the superior West whereas his wife reflects "object", the inferior colonized Creole. Antoinette's irreversible negation of identity or nature is further exacerbated by Rochester's oppression. Underneath the colonial exploitation of her spouse, who is essentially a representation of colonialism, Antoinette is turned into a slave symbol, losing her identity. Antoinette eventually asks Rochester not to name her Bertha, recognizing the desire for identification of herself: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name... I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate... I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoilt it... I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you" (p 94). This passionate speech suggests that Antoinette steadily, yet slowly, progresses towards nothing more than epiphany or understanding of what is happening and her lack of real independence and identity. She explicitly replies to Rochester "There is no justice" (p 94) refers to Rochester when he speaks of justice. She becomes frustrated and responds strenuously: "She smashed another bottle against the wall and stood with the broken glass in her hand and murder in her eyes" (p 95). Rochester declares that Antoinette is now his property and he wants to take her, not with her desire, to stay in England, there where he actually locks her in the house to keep her away from any glimpse of independent identity.

Antoinette, in her current home in England, believes that she resides in obscurity to the degree that she is not able to view herself in a mirror that might provide an independent sense of identification and a self-recognizable self: "I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass... there is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now" (p 117). Antoinette does not really think that her current place is England; that's not as she figured it: "They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them" (p 117). This thought takes the identity problem of Antoinette to the core, where she finds herself knowing and gazing at all dark, unclear or even ruined.

Conclusion

After studying and exploring the problem of identity in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Bessie Head's *Maru*, it is apparent that both works can be tackled from various perspectives concerning identity issue like postcolonialism and feminism. It is also clear that in the issue of identity, as seen in the two works mentioned above, conventional gender roles, patriarchy, hybridity and race play a crucial role.

Though the time and space distances between the two works are somehow wide, some differences and similarities can be found between them. Both characters have a common history, contributing to a crisis in identity triggered by external powers, undermining their sense of self and conviction as independent individuals. Such external powers emerge because they are three-fold oppressed by class, gender and race. So far as gender is involved, Antoinette and Margaret are discriminated against clearly by their husbands and societies on the basis that they are females who, in keeping with conventional gender stereotypes and the social values internalized in their communities, are deemed to be less essential and less valuable than men.

Although Antoinette endures an intense experience of inner pain and struggle, her own identity crisis stems from the constant external forces which consume her and eventually influence her sense of identity and her self-confident belief. And hence, for her class, gender and ethnicity Antoinette has been exploited triply. Her husband and society discriminate against Antoinette simply because she is a woman who, based on the classical gender positions and patriarchal standards which have been directly experienced and accepted as fact in her society, is considered as inferior and less significant than men. Antoinette, as a Creole with fused race or a hybrid, feels isolated and excluded in her society, believing she does not belong to the white Europeans nor to the black Jamaicans. The colonization influence is clearly experienced in the narrative and discourages Antoinette from engaging with her community. Antoinette who prefers death as the only way to get out of her torment by burning herself along with her house where she was trapped as a resolution in the quest of seeking for real identity and independent life. For a certain way, however, Antoinette achieves her final identity now but under her own conditions and through her decision not others’.

Margaret Cadmore, the leading protagonist who seems at first timid, is identified in the outlook as quite mature; she is not intimidated to show her Masarwa identity. She is the focus of publicity in which two royal men struggle to have her attention. The undermining mentality of the men around her unaffected her. Furthermore, her mother by foster grants her a messianic status. Margaret then is the conduit that liberates her tribe. The author of *Maru* is dedicated to finding a sustainable and morally unfailing community. The character of Maru shows this. His union with Margaret is intended to create a truly prejudicial equal community, a community in which everyone is involved on the same basis regardless of ethnicity or social class. Margaret Cadmore is a Masarwa and, due to her trampling culture, is an inferior human. The Masarwa had mostly been slaves. Maru also kept a number of Masarwa slave. They took charge of his 1,000 cattle and he left them to sleep next to the fire on the bare ground. The success of such a marriage indicates that all ethnic barriers are being lifted. The combining of royalty and an inferior race is an endeavor to eliminate all class challenges or, better, to eradicate all binary disparities. This was a leap towards equality and fair opportunities for the Masarwa as indicated by the gate that opened quietly in the darkroom, where the soul of the Masarwa had long been sealed. It was a step towards ensuring justice and dignity of society. Throughout the smallness, silence and darkness of the room where the Masarws arose, is clear that they were previously exposed to dehumanization and oppression.

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