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Alienation in the Novels by Jean Rhys

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Autorka: Bc. Kristina Preisová

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Vedoucí práce: prof. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.

Oponent práce: Mgr. Jan Suk, Ph.D.



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Autor: Kristina Preisová

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Práce se zaměří na téma odcizení v díle Jean Rhysové, především ve třech jejích románech *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning Midnight* a *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Cílem bude analyzovat, jak je tento koncept v románech zobrazen, a také porovnat zobrazení tohoto konceptu a zjistit, čím toto zobrazení mohlo být ovlivněno.

The thesis deals with the concept of alienation in the novels by Jean Rhys, particularly focusing on her three novels *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The aim of the thesis is to analyse the concept of alienation in these novels, to compare the analysis of the novels, and to assess what was the inspiration for such a portrayal of alienation.

Bloom, Harold - Blake, Hobby. *Alienation* (Bloom's Literary Themes), New York, 2009.

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Oponent: Mgr. Jan Suk, Ph.D.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala pod vedením vedoucího diplomové práce samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

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Anotace

PREISOVÁ, Kristina. *Odcizení v románech Jean Rhysové*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2020. 68s. Diplomová práce.

Diplomová práce se zabývá tématem odcizení ve třech románech Jean Rhysové: *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning*, *Midnight* a *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Práce analyzuje odcizení zejména ženských postav těchto románů, jež způsobuje jejich pocit izolovanosti, bezvýznamnosti a smutku z osamění. Hlavním cílem této práce je podrobně analyzovat téma odcizení v jednotlivých románech, které následně vyústí do závěrečné komparativní analýzy. Analýza je opřena o teorii Nancy Gray Díaz, která odcizení rozděluje na základní typy: odcizení od místa, od společnosti a odcizení od vlastního já. Jeden z menších cílů je zrcadlit možné ovlivnění spisovatelčina života na tyto romány.

Během analýzy práce odhalila převažující podobnost v zobrazení odcizení a to zejména v odcizení od společnosti, které je jádrem všech tří románů. Odcizení od místa bylo taktéž velmi podrobně zobrazeno, avšak jsou zde viditelné menší rozdíly v popisu tohoto typu odcizení. Poslední druh odcizení, odcizení od vlastního já, bylo zobrazeno pouze v románu *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Během reflexe autorčiny inspirace pro tyto romány bylo dosaženo závěru, že její vlastní život byl pro zobrazení odcizení velmi významný a ovlivnil jej v mnoha směrech.

Klíčová slova: odcizení, Jean Rhys, anglická literatura 20. století, *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning*, *Midnight*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Annotation

PREISOVÁ, Kristina. *Alienation in the Novels by Jean Rhys*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2020. 68s. Diplomová práce.

The diploma thesis focuses on the theme of alienation in three novels by Jean Rhys: *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning*, *Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The thesis especially analyses the alienation of female protagonists, who suffer from isolation, meaninglessness and sadness. The main aim of the thesis is to analyse the theme of alienation in each of the novels in detail and then to compare the theme in the final comparative analysis. The analysis of the thesis is made according to the structure established in theory by Nancy Gray Díaz, who divided the theme of alienation into basic types: alienation from place, from society and from self. Furthermore, one of the aims is to create a reflection of the writer's life experience that possibly inspired her writings.

The analysis of the thesis revealed prevailing similarities in the portrayal of alienation especially in alienation from society, which is a core of the three novels. The alienation of place was also depicted similarly, however, more differences between the novels appeared. Though the novels are quite similar in the portrayal of the theme, the last type of alienation, alienation from self, is included only in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The reflection of the writer's inspiration proved that she was highly influenced by her life and it has an important impact on her fiction.

Key words: alienation, Jean Rhys, English literature of the 20th century, *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning*, *Midnight*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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Introduction

Jean Rhys continued in a long tradition of depicting alienation in literature and she added her fascinating and simultaneously unhappy life experience into her novels. The autobiographic tone incorporates the most captivating aspect of her fiction and this was also the reason for choosing her works as a subject of this thesis. The choice of the topic, which was driven mostly by curiosity in me, was also supported by the fact that Rhys is not a part of literary mainstream of the twentieth century, thus she stands rather at the edge of main literary circles. Rhys was for a long period of her life misunderstood and rather ignored as a writer because she wrote about topics seen still as too dark. She was, on the other hand, praised during the postmodern era, in which her writings became highly topical. What is very capturing about the writer, is also the fact that she had never known where she as a writer belonged. Her Creole origin and her topics, focused on postcolonial problematics and also on the West Indian characters, can classify her as the West Indian writer. However, she was publishing mostly in England and became famous there and some of her novels are set in England, thus she is regarded English writer as well. What is more, she had never told where she belongs as a person before she died. Rhys was undoubtedly a person with bruised identity and reflected this fact in her art.

The thesis focuses on the analysis of the theme of alienation in three novels of Jean Rhys: *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning*, *Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The term alienation signifies one's disconnection from anything fundamental for one's prosperity, it is connected with feelings of isolation, meaningless, rootlessness and sadness. The main aim of the thesis is to analyse the theme of alienation in the three novels in detail, focusing especially on female protagonists and including a concise analysis of one male character. It also aims to create a comparative analysis of the novels in order to determine similarities and dissimilarities of them and find the strongest type of alienation or main factors influencing the overall portrayal of the theme. Furthermore, as a final point of the analysis, there is a brief reflection of Rhys's inspiration on such a portrayal of alienation. It is important to add that the first two novels were written in the thirties, during Rhys's early period of writing, the third novel was written in the sixties, in the period she was rediscovered by public and became famous. This time span of publishing is taken into account and it intends to provide a richer basis for the analysis. The analysis itself is divided according to the theory of Nancy Grey Diaz, which is described in the theoretical part of the thesis. In general, its main structure is divided into alienation from society, from a place and from self.

To briefly explain the structure of the thesis, it can be described that the first part of the thesis is dedicated to life and work of Jean Rhys and it intends to provide a basis for final reflection of Rhys's influence on depiction of alienation. The focus is also given to the theory of the concept of alienation itself and alienation as a literary theme, which explains the history of this theme and its meaning in the literature. This is followed by the second part of the thesis that concentrates on the analysis of alienation in Rhys's novels, including also a brief introduction of each novel. As written, the final part includes the comparative analysis and a brief consideration of Rhys's inspiration. The thesis notably derives from Elain Savory's *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* (2009), which is a fundamental source providing very detailed and useful information not only about Rhys's life but also about her writings.

One cannot ignore the fact that the protagonists are victims of oppressions of the world they live in. They seem to be too weak to protect themselves and their primary needs and desires cannot be fulfilled. Rhys prevailingly describes alienated women during the twentieth century and sees the modern era as highly oppressive and still "pre-feminist"¹. However, her most famous novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* returns into the nineteenth century and depicts alienation of woman who has already existed in literature since 1847, Bertha Rochester. Furthermore, some of her characters are strongly alienated because of their white exotic origin that enables them to either fit into the English society nor into the Afro-Caribbean community. Considering some basic sources, it is presumed that Rhys's novels illustrate similar portrayal of alienation and similar type of female characters, who are partly based on the writer and undergo a comparable life experience. The analysis of the thesis heads to demonstrate or disprove this assumption.

¹ SAVORY, Elain. *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 68.

1. Biography of Jean Rhys

The biography of Jean Rhys is undoubtedly very important for any analysis of her work because she is considered a highly autobiographical writer. It is presumed that some novels significantly reflect Rhys's own life experience and this chapter aims to show some milestones that could be also a useful resource for the analysis of this diploma thesis.

Ella Gwendoline Rees William, which is Rhys's given name, was born on 24th August 1890 in Roseau, Dominica. She was the daughter of a Welsh doctor and her mother was a white Creole. According to *Reference Guide to English Literature*, she grew up in the West Indies, which used to be part of the British Empire, thus her first language was English. However, Rhys uses also French in communication with her black servants and "the friction of the two languages is felt throughout her work."² Ella was later on sent to a boarding school in England, she was guarded by her English aunt, Clarice.³ Nevertheless, Kirkpatrick points out that her only desire was to become an actress and she transferred to the Academy of Dramatic arts⁴, she left the school in the same year. Savory believes that the main reason was probably her unsuitable West Indian accent⁵, however, some sources render a different reason – her father's death.

After leaving the school she became unsuccessful chorus girl, this period marks the beginning of her downfall. The chorus life meant the first taste of English wildlife full of male attention and drinking. Elain Savory claims that she suffered from the death of her father during this period and no longer after this shock she "got her heart broken by a rich gentleman"⁶ and underwent great emotional collapse.⁷ The collapse might have been also caused by the fact she was pregnant and she decided for abortion: "Rhys's admission in her autobiography that she had an abortion [...] is located just after her lover leaves for New York (the end of the affair). It is followed by a suicidal period, and the release into writing."⁸ Her notebooks writing from this period and those in which she continued for a couple of years "would become key sources for her fiction."⁹ After the end of her first relationship, she remained to be financially supported by her former lover for many years. Money played

² KIRKPATRICK, D. L., editor. *Reference Guide to English Literature*. Second Edition ed., vol. 2, St. James Press, 1991. p. 1138

³ SAVORY 2009. p. 4

⁴ KIRKPATRICK 1991, p. 1138

⁵ SAVORY 2009, p. 4

⁶ SAVORY 2009, p. IX

⁷ SAVORY 2009, p. IX

⁸ SAVORY 2009, p. 5

⁹ SAVORY 2009, p. 5

a great role in these relationships, men were used to giving money to their penniless mistress, moreover “money and sex are often intertwined [also] in her fiction”¹⁰.

Following her first disastrous affair, it could be seen that men were only a disappointment for her. Savory describes that in 1919 she married Willem J. M. Langlet, but the marriage was dreadful, he was married to another woman while marrying Rhys and in 1922 he left her in Paris alone for few years, afterwards, he was arrested in 1924. However, this period seems to be the most crucial part of her life. She met some influential friends in Paris, with whom she spent this period. Moreover, she was introduced to Ford Madox Ford by them.¹¹

“Ford was a literary impresario and indefatigable if ununeven writer [...] known for helping and promising writers, including D. H. Lawrence, Graham Greene and Wyndham Lewis. He [...] made temporary consecutive sexual connection with attractive and gifted young female writers to boost his creative energies.”¹²

During 1924-1925 Rhys became Ford’s mistress and by this relationship she gained a union of mutual benefit and through Ford she indirectly entered the world of modernist writers. Ford changed her name and Jean Rhys, the writer, was born. Ford’s guidance “would result in her first significant publication, a book of short stories called *The Left Bank* [...]”¹³ After the love affair with Ford, which ended quite soon, she published her first novel *Quartet* (originally *Postures*, 1928), which was highly inspired by this relationship. Moreover, Rhys began to earn money by writing, she also translated between English and French, which “must have sharpened her sense of each word she used, as did her lifelong love of poetry.”¹⁴ McDowell argues that without the help of Madox Ford Rhys would not become the writer at all, it can be also seen how she was dependent on influential male figures most of her life unlike well-off women writers such as Virginia Woolf, who has direct access to publishing houses.¹⁵ All things considered, the dependence on male figures is typical for her life, furthermore, even her literary writings include this lifestyle pattern.

¹⁰ SAVORY 2009, p. 5

¹¹ SAVORY 2009, p. 7

¹² SAVORY 2009, p. 7

¹³ KINEKE, Sheila. “‘Like a Hook Fits an Eye’: Jean Rhys, Ford Madox Ford, and the Imperial Operations of Modernist Mentoring.” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1997, pp. 281–301. p. 286.

¹⁴ SAVORY 2009, p. 7

¹⁵ MCDOWELL, Lesley. Jean Rhys: Prostitution, Alcoholism and the Mad Woman in the Attic. *Independent* [online]. 3 May 2009. [Accessed 10 November 2019]. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/jean-rhys-prostitution-alcoholism-and-the-mad-woman-in-the-attic-1676252.html>.

Rhys divorced with her first husband Langed in 1928. Ford probably promoted her new relationship with Leslie Tilden Smith, “[...] a rather unsuccessful literary agent, who was very supportive of her work.”¹⁶ He became her second husband in 1934. According to Carole Angier, “Smith was both domestically and professionally an important part of the literary productivity Rhys achieved between 1928 and 1939.”¹⁷ Importantly, this period was the most productive part of her literary career – she published three novels: *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939). She also found some women friends, also writers, Peggy Kirkaldy and Evelyn Scott, that enrich her life experience in many ways. During this rather positive, nonalienated period, she also revisited Dominica, which enabled her to revive her childhood memories.¹⁸ Although this period seems to be a great triumph for the Caribbean immigrant, the novels were not particularly successful.

According to Savory, after publishing *Good Morning, Midnight* she fell into disappointment again because the novel was not taken into notice. However, it was not caused by the bad quality of the novel but rather by the dark fascist pre-war period. Notably, during this collapse, she burned her first version of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Coupled with this displeasure, the war itself caused greater damage to her well-established career. Furthermore, the war separated her from her daughter thus Rhys lived in constant fear of her daughter’s life. Moreover, her husband died of a heart attack in 1945 and she lost his “loving support.”¹⁹ Savory claims that “[d]uring and after the war she seems to have worked on short stories and her habitual notebook entries, but after 1939 she entered a long period in which she vanished from public view as a writer and in literary circles was assumed to be dead.”²⁰ During this silent post-war period, she married Max Harmer, who was a cousin of her previous husband, nevertheless, he was not able to help her with publishing. Furthermore, Rhys’s “alcoholism worsened”²¹ and Max was arrested in 1950.²² Rhys was left alone for two years in quite miserable conditions. Her family moved from the West Indies to Britain, however, their relationships were rather hostile, thus Rhys was rather alienated from them.

¹⁶ SAVORY 2009, p. 8

¹⁷ SAVORY 2009, p. 8

¹⁸ SAVORY 2009, p. 9

¹⁹ SAVORY 2009, p. 10

²⁰ SAVORY 2009, p. 10

²¹ SAVORY 2009, p. 10

²² SAVORY 2009, p. 10

Similarly, the contact with her daughter was not frequent as well because she lived in Holland with her husband.²³

Savory claims that “[i]n late 1950s, she applies herself to completing *Wide Sargasso Sea*.”²⁴ It was very demanding to finish the novel because she worked in worsened conditions. Before she published the novel Max died. Publishing *Wide Sargasso Sea* brought sudden triumphant success, the novel also won the Royal Society of Literature Award and the W. H. Smith Award. Due to this sensational comeback, Rhys continued working on “her old stories and [she also] wrote some new ones, which resulted in two volumes, *Tigers Are Better Looking* (1968) and *Sleep It Off Lady* (1976) [...]”²⁵

Rhys died 14th May 1979 “after a fall which broke her hip and resulted in an operation.”²⁶ Her life seemed to be full of let-downs; nevertheless, these periods, mainly those from her young age, enriched her novels by the rough life experience of one’s struggles in alienated word. As it was written, Rhys was alienated for many moments of her life, on the other hand, she never gave up and was constantly searching for male’s protection if it was needed.

1.1. Jean Rhys’s Cultural and Literary Identity

It is not clear where Jean Rhys as a writer belongs and she does not fit into clear cultural identity either. As mentioned in the previous chapter she was of mixed ancestry, born in the Caribbean but lived most of her life in Europe, immensely resisting England and, on the other hand, keeping strong sympathy with French culture and literature.²⁷ Elain Savory states: “The irony is that, despite her love of Europe and dislike of England, Rhys found success as a writer in England. [...] It was British reviewers who first recognized her as a gifted new stylist [...] and eventually she would become highly praised as an English novelist.”²⁸ However, according to Lucy Wilson, the recognition of Rhys as a prominent writer, mainly her revival during the sixties, came too late for her.²⁹ She had never tasted the sense of belonging, as she mentioned in her later age. She was not truly happy most of her life. Savory argues that Rhys was not convinced if she or any outsider can ever adapt to a

²³ SAVORY 2009, p. 10

²⁴ SAVORY 2009, p. 11

²⁵ SAVORY 2009, p. 11

²⁶ SAVORY 2009, p. 11

²⁷ SAVORY 2009, p. 12-13

²⁸ SAVORY 2009, p. 13

²⁹ WILSON, Lucy. European or Caribbean: Jean Rhys and the Language of Exile. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* [online]. 1989. Vol. 10, no. 3. pp. 68–72. JSTOR, [Accessed 12 November 2019]. Available from: www.jstor.org/stable/3346446. p. 69

new culture.³⁰ What is more, it is said that “Rhys suffered from what [A. S.] Saakana describes as “the mental condition of double alienation”³¹; that means she was not only alienated after the migration from the West Indies but also before it during her childhood. It was caused by her mixed origin and race which distanced her also from the Afro-Caribbean inhabitants in the West Indies. There is no wonder that most of the critics of her literary work take her belonging to no place into consideration.

This cultural consideration can be closely connected with her literary identity, which is also developed in this chapter. Mary Lou Emery points out that “Jean Rhys’s writing marks a crossroads of powerful literary forces: those of Caribbean literature, modernism, women’s writing, and emergent postcolonial literatures.”³² Rhys is unquestionably a modernist writer and it could be seen on her writing experimentations and in using modernist narrative modes such as the stream of consciousness, vivid flashbacks, interior monologues or using ellipses. During her stay in Paris in the 1920s “the modernist movement was taking the city by storm, and, whilst she walked her own aesthetic road, inevitably she was influenced by ideas vibrant in contemporary literary circles.”³³ Moreover, she was even inspired by prominent writers such as Joyce and she had knowledge and perception of their writing style and even used some allusion to their work in her own fiction.³⁴ Despite this, influenced also by her complicated cultural identity, it can be claimed she was not fitting to the modernist mainstream. Rhys brought and used topics well known also for European writers (Joyce, Eliot, Hemingway) because most of the modernist writers were also familiar with migration. However, she used the topic in a different form. Mary Lou Emery states that her novels from her first writing period (the 1930s):

“gained her an outsider’s place within modernism, and ironic position to hold in a movement often known for its outsider sensibility. Rhys’s colonial Caribbean background found its way into her early novels, giving them a perspective, tone, and aesthetic that though sharing a great deal with modernist styles and themes of homelessness, did not quite fit. In retrospect, we might argue that the themes of homelessness and alienation often attributed to modernism were actually shaped by the

³⁰ SAVORY 2009, p. 17

³¹ qwt. In WILSON 1989, p. 72

³² EMERY, Mary Lou. Misfit: Jean Rhys and the Visual Cultures of Colonial Modernism. *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* [online]. 2003. Vol. 3, no. 3, pp. xi-xxii. JSTOR, [Accessed 12 November 2019]. Available from: www.jstor.org/stable/40986138. P. xii

³³ SAVORY 2009, p. 14

³⁴ SAVORY 2009, p. 17

dislocations of empire and colonial migration that became unsettling subtexts in Rhys's early fiction."³⁵

Her difference was, however, seen since the beginning of her writing career; it was Ford Madox Ford who highlighted and valued distinction in his introduction to Rhys's first short story. What can be also highlighted in Rhys's literary work is her unique writing style. She mostly focused on short fiction and her ability to compose the short forms was probably gained by writing short stories at the beginning of her career. The plot of her stories was also preferably minimalistic. According to Steve Padler, the praised thing on Rhys is "[t]hat the stories are told with a very scrupulous [...] style [...] and that she maintained in order and a structure and a shape."³⁶ Rhys wrote in the fragmented modernist style, however, her language is very simple, clear and readable. Inspired by French poetry, which she adored, her language was also very poetic and, notably, she uses lots of repetition.

Her fictional characters are very impressive as well. In general, her autobiographic style brought the Rhysian protagonists into existence. These protagonists are women of the West Indian origin, who are torn out from their native country, they become "the trespassers on masculine territory, [...] living on the edges of respectability, sanity and dignity"³⁷. Rhys thus focused on dispossessed women psyche and cognizance of fractured and alienated identity. Like many other modernists, she dives into inner worlds of her protagonists, focusing on their feelings, senses and thoughts. By doing this, she mirrors the external modern world. Rhysian protagonists rarely find a solution to their situations, they are imprisoned in a dark state of uncertainty thus "[t]he cycle of [their] experiences always ends back down at the bottom."³⁸ According to article *Narrative Discourse in Jean Rhys's Fiction*, "[she] highlights the heterogeneity of human existence and exposes the provisionality of truth and the instability of meaning by employing multi-vocality, irony, parody and images of doubles."³⁹

To summarize, it can be claimed that Rhys was undeniably affected by her cultural background which shaped her writing style. Her topics and motifs are certainly distinct and due to her difference she was a modernist standing rather on the edge. Her

³⁵ EMERY, 2003

³⁶ *Jean Rhys - Women Writers: Voices in Transition (3/4)*. Open Lean from The Open University. [online]. 4 Aug. 2008. Youtube, [Accessed 23 November 2019]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6K2wrzR5fY>.

³⁷ *Narrative Discourse in Jean Rhys' Fiction*. In: De Gruyter [online pdf], 2014. [Accessed 25 November 2019]. Available from: <https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/books/9788376560687/9788376560687.5/9788376560687.5.pdf>

³⁸ *Jean Rhys - Women Writers: Voices in Transition (3/4)* 2008

³⁹ *Narrative Discourse in Jean Rhys' Fiction* 2014

revival came in 1966 and resulted also in critical attention and focus on her early work. Hellen Carr points out that Rhys was rediscovered because the time and new way of thinking of the sixties accepted her unusual themes, which were strongly criticising the society, much more than the thirties. Carr claims that “her attacks on the established order, on snobbishness, on conventional English sexual mores, on racism, were now in tune with the times.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ CARR, Helen. “Jean Rhys: West Indian Intellectual.” In: Bill Schwarz, ed. *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. p. 98

2. The Concept of Alienation

This chapter focuses on explaining the key concept of this diploma thesis – the theme of alienation. In general, alienation refers to estrangement, feelings of loneliness and isolation. The term comes from Latin *alienatio* (nom.) that means “a transfer, surrender, separation.”⁴¹ The concept of alienation is applicable mainly on social science; nevertheless, it is also a key part of art which usually has a natural tendency to reflect social feelings of human beings.

As written in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the concept was first described “implicitly or explicitly in classical sociological works of the 19th and early 20th centuries by Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tönnies, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel.”⁴² Marx was influenced by Hegel’s conception of alienation, who developed ideas of Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Undoubtedly, Karl Marx’s usage of the term was, significantly, one of the most developed. He observed the alienation of labour workers who, according to Marx, were alienated from the product of their own labour and simultaneously were alienated from each other due to the capitalistic system of manufacture. Marx elaborated on the concept of alienation in his works: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology* and he “is still considered one of the most important thinkers on the concept.”⁴³ These philosophical and social works were deeply inspiring for artists who more than ever before were presenting alienation as the theme of their literary works.

2.1. The Theme of Alienation in Literature

Mary Horton states that alienation as a literary theme can be found much earlier than it was properly named by philosophers of the nineteenth century. It occurs since the existence of the *Bible* and we can follow its way in many literary movements throughout the literary history, for instance, in Greek Antiquity or Renaissance. The theme of alienation has been also shifted and shaped according to problems connected with a certain literary context, thus the displaying the alienation has many forms. What is more, most literary critics who have studied the concept claim that it prevails in the literature of the twentieth century.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Alienation. In: *Online Etymology Dictionary* [online]. [Accessed 29 November 2019]. Available from: <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=alienation>.

⁴² Alienation. In: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [online]. 20. 7. 1998. [Accessed 29 November 2019]. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/alienation-society>.

⁴³ MCCLINTON-TEMPLE, Jennifer. *Encyclopedia of Themes in Literature*. New York: Facts on File, 2011. p. 4

⁴⁴ HORTON, Mary. “The Literature of Alienation.” Special Issue: Sociological Review Monograph Series: The Sociology of Literature: Applied Studies, Issue Editor: Diana Laurensen, vol. 26, no. S1, 1 May 1978. p. 197

According to Nancy Gray Díaz, whose theory is used for the further analysis of this thesis, “[a]lienation as a literary theme may be described as the estrangement of the literary character or persona from something with which he/she has been, should be, or would like to be in conformity and consonance.”⁴⁵ In comparison, Díaz states that there exists also an opposition of alienation – the theme of reconciliation – which, on the other hand, brings an ideal state between two divergent entities and it can be also a solution to alienation. Moreover, the alienation is also often attached to the theme of solitude; nevertheless, never with the state of pleasant solitude, such as peaceful meditation in nature.⁴⁶ Having said that, it may seem that alienation does not constitute positive input at all. However, according to Jennifer McClinton-Temple’s definition, it certainly does: “Alienation is a powerful force, one that moves humans toward the negative impulses of self-pity, vulnerability, and [violence], but it can also result in the positive results of deep introspection and intellectual independence.”⁴⁷ It appears that Rhys’s fiction does not implement this.

As mentioned, alienation survives in various forms, reflecting on the concrete nuisance of a certain period. Nancy Gray Diaz distinguishes six types of alienation in the literature that is “based on the entity from which the individual is alienated.”⁴⁸ The first type is alienation caused by separation from a certain place, for instance, a country or nature. The second type is alienation from “one’s own epoch, as in T. S. Eliot’s poem, *The Waste Land* (1922).”⁴⁹ However, the second type of alienation is probably not included in Jean Rhys’s fiction. The third, very frequent type, is alienation from the society or a certain community, caused by the clash of individual beliefs or one’s lifestyle with a prevailing social system. This type was significantly developed in the Romanticism movement. Another one is “alienation of self”⁵⁰ and is closely connected with the state of being mentally ill. Finally, the sixth type of alienation is “the existential, that is, estrangement from the condition of being human.”⁵¹ Additionally, the last type is mostly used in Existentialism.

To illustrate the theme of alienation even more, there exist also “certain literary genres and modes”⁵² which naturally supports the theme of alienation. It can be lyric poetry

⁴⁵ DÍAZ, Nancy Gray. “Alienation.” *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs A-J*. London: Greenwood Press, 1988, pp. 31–43. p 31.

⁴⁶ DÍAZ 1988, p. 31

⁴⁷ MCCLINTON-TEMPLE 2011. p. 3

⁴⁸ DÍAZ 1988, p. 31

⁴⁹ DÍAZ 1988, p. 31

⁵⁰ DÍAZ 1988, p. 32

⁵¹ DÍAZ 1988, p. 32

⁵² DÍAZ 1988, p. 32

and its focus on an individual, who is solitary in most cases; then it can be “satire, the pastoral, and the picaresque.”⁵³ Díaz also renders some genre representatives of drama, it is, of course, tragedy but also the Theatre of Absurd.⁵⁴

2.2. Alienation in Modern Literature

The usage of the theme of alienation, as Díaz claims, was widely accepted by writers of the twentieth century. They naturally assumed the theme from the previous generation’s canon⁵⁵, mainly from the Romanticism movement, in which the development of alienation was eminent. Horton presents that alienation appeared in works of significant twentieth-century writers; it was, for instance, Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, also Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.⁵⁶ By enumerating these striking names, it can be assumed that the theme has been distributed over the large circle of writers of American and European literature. Díaz states that “[t]he figure of the outsider, the isolated and alienated protagonist, becomes one of the predominant types in fiction[;]”⁵⁷ however, some of these named writers did not use the theme in the same way. To develop this argument, there are demonstrated three forms of alienations. James Joyce in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), for instance, displays an artist “alienated from religion, family and culture.”⁵⁸ Alternatively, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible* portrays Afro-American as hated and literally invisible to society. Different alienation is shown in Albert Camus’ *The Stranger* (1942)⁵⁹ where the protagonist is alienated from self which results in problems with expressing emotions. Moreover, he also applies his absurdist view on everyday life. On the contrary, the usage of alienation as a theme might have been also unintentional. One must admit that it may have been a natural reaction to a changing modern world, for instance, response to urbanization, to the WWI or general development of lifestyle.

The theme grew noticeable also in literary work depicting certain groups of people. For instance, in Thomas Mann’s *Death of Venice* “the suggestion of homosexuality

⁵³ DÍAZ 1988, p. 32

⁵⁴ DÍAZ 1988, p. 32

⁵⁵ DÍAZ 1988, p. 40

⁵⁶ HORTON 1978, p. 197

⁵⁷ DÍAZ 1988, p. 40

⁵⁸ SALEEM, Abdul. Theme of Alienation in Modern Literature. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* [online]. Sep. 2014. vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 67–76. [Accessed 29 November 2019]. Available from: <http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Theme-of-Alienation-in-Modern-Literature.pdf>. p. 73

⁵⁹ SALEEM 2014, p. 73

marks the protagonist as an outsider [...].”⁶⁰ This form of alienation is frequent at the beginning of the 20th century.⁶¹ Moreover, writers who felt different or oppressed in some way came to light with the similar pattern of protagonists: “[A]lienation engendered by oppression, neo-colonialism, and the established literary canon emerges during the twentieth century in a host of important writings by peoples of colo[u]r, citizens of developing countries, and by women.”⁶² Notably, Díaz writes that during the twentieth-century people occurred to be interested in exotic cultures as non-European writers appeared. Significant users of the theme of alienation were thus the blacks, Indian writers and Latin American writers who wrote mostly in semi-autobiographic style.⁶³ Significantly, also women writers, desiring for equality and speaking for their oppressed sex, formed another group who portray mostly alienated protagonists in patriarchal word.

⁶⁰ DÍAZ 1988, p. 40

⁶¹ DÍAZ 1988, p. 40

⁶² DÍAZ 1988, p. 42

⁶³ DÍAZ 1988, p. 42

3. Alienation in Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*

3.1. Introduction of the Novel

Voyage in the Dark was published in 1934 and written after Rhys's return from France to Britain. It is Rhys's third major novel and can be classified as her early work. Concerning her biography, it is immediately clear that the novel is highly autobiographical. Moreover, central to the novel is also the fact that it is styled in the first person narrative which allows readers to enter into the protagonist's inner self and it presumably reflects feelings and memories of Rhys. As Rhys's majority of novels also *Voyage in the Dark* is set in England, the country is criticized and compared with Rhys's birthplace – The West Indies. This style, according to Frickey, "brings it very close in temper to the literature of negritude"⁶⁴ and exile. The *Voyage in the Dark* is by some critics considered a failed bildungsroman. It has certainly a characteristic of this literary genre that is associated with a positive ending for a yet developed protagonist; however, Rhys's novel's ending is the opposite.

The storyline revolves around a dark period of 18 years old Anna Morgan, who had left her beloved the West Indies, working as a chorus girl in hostile and cold England. Anna is left alone without parents and proper financial support, living only in dark boarding rooms all around England. Consequently, she finds temporary delight in a love affair with Walter, who supports her financially. However, Walter is soon bored by the relationship with Anna and leaves her. The protagonist is heart-broken and depressed, though, she finds decent work and flat for a while. Nevertheless, she misses the chance and returns to the previous rhythm of life very soon, encountering other males and falling again into the darkness of drinking and promiscuity. Finally, she conceives a child with a man who is interested in Anna only sexually, and she has to ask Walter for money in order to pay abortion. In a dreadful final scene, Anna lies alone in a bed after the abortion and balances between life and death. At the end, her life is spared, nevertheless, she not released from her doomed solitary life.

⁶⁴ FRICKEY, Pierrette M., editor. *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys* [online]. Three Continents Press, 1990. [Accessed 30 November 2019]. Available from: [https://books.google.cz/books?id=e2vvsI9jXYUC&pg=PA200&dq=Voyage in the dark is one of the most moving of the West Indian novels of exile, and its critique of English life against the background&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiwn7fZn_vIAhXKYcAKHbsCB2sQ6wEIMTAA#v=onepage&q=Voyage in the dark is one of the most moving of the West Indian novels of exile, and its critique of English life against the background&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=e2vvsI9jXYUC&pg=PA200&dq=Voyage+in+the+dark+is+one+of+the+most+moving+of+the+West+Indian+novels+of+exile,+and+its+critique+of+English+life+against+the+background&hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiwn7fZn_vIAhXKYcAKHbsCB2sQ6wEIMTAA#v=onepage&q=Voyage+in+the+dark+is+one+of+the+most+moving+of+the+West+Indian+novels+of+exile,+and+its+critique+of+English+life+against+the+background&f=false). p. 200

To briefly characterize the title in the view of alienation, it can be pointed out what it means – *voyage* represents a motif of movement. It can be thus assumed that the protagonist is developing or changing throughout the storyline. On the other hand, she may be searching for a certain emplacement into English society. More relevant to the issue of alienation is a second part of the title – the word *dark* can relate to fear, depression or it can be a reference to something unknown, for instance, unknown place, new sexual experience or Anna's uncertain future. Another key interpretation of the title is, according to Savory, that “[*dark*] has a particular emphasis [in the novel] because of the juxtaposition of Anna's romantically remembered bright colo[u]red Caribbean and the absence of bright colours in England.”⁶⁵

3.2. Alienation from a Place

The first part of the analysis concentrates on alienation from a place. The protagonist, Anna Morgan is alienated from the West Indies, her initial home, and also from England, where the novel is set. The chapter is thus subdivided into two principal parts concerning the two places and its effect on alienation.

3.2.1. Anna Morgan's Alienation from the West Indies

The novel importantly begins with: “It was as if curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known. It was almost like being born again.”⁶⁶ The opening sentence can refer to the intense fear of separation from safety and security of the protagonist's homeland, again, the fear is here connected with darkness thus the first sentence is directly connected with the title of the novel. Moreover, the simile of birth indicates Anne's lack of experience and immaturity that complicates her metaphorical voyage into the new world. She is a young woman thrown into a reality of the modern world that crusher her immature soul under the weight of its cruelty, Anna is left without real support giving her any direction where to proceed.

Anna's alienation from the West Indies is represented mostly by her memories and so-called flashbacks. It can be said that Anna misses her initial home; however, she never admitted it directly. The juxtaposition of vivid, colourful, childlike memories full of fresh senses with cold and dark England induce a feeling that the West Indies are much more preferable place for Anna. “The colours are red, purple, blue, gold, all shades green. The colours here are black, brown, grey, dim-green, pale blue, the white of people's faces – like

⁶⁵ SAVORY 2009, p. 54

⁶⁶ RHYS, Jean. *Voyage in the Dark*. London: Penguin Group, 2000. p 7.

woodlice.”⁶⁷ Nevertheless, nothing left in the West Indies for Anna, her father is dead, their estate is sold and money was taken by her stepmother, Hester. What is more, Anna’s beloved uncle Bo believes he has no responsibility for Anna, as he writes in a letter for Hester (p. 52). It can be thus assumed that it is impossible for Anna to return and escape the alienation. Notwithstanding, she is actually returning all the time, she is always escaping by daydreaming about her homeland, being unable to look into the future. This may cause her alienation from a present moment and also from the other people whom she is not paying much attention.

It can be assumed that Anna’s alienation originated even before she came to England, this fact support Sakaana’s conviction about Rhys’s “double alienation” which she inserted into this novel as well. Alienation of Anna is caused mainly by her race in the West Indies. Her family is white, nonetheless, as she is mostly surrounded by males (father and uncle), her only female ideal is Afro-Caribbean Francine, their household servant, who is always friendly and caring to Anna. The protagonist feels utterly happy with Francine.⁶⁸ Moreover, the majority of Caribbean inhabitants are the Afro-Caribbeans and that is also the reason Anna feels different and wants to be black. Being the Afro-Caribbean has also a certain meaning for Anna delivered presumably from Francine’s characteristic, who seems to be cheerful and content. Anna thought: “Being black is warm and gay. Being white is cold and sad.”⁶⁹ To develop the idea of double alienation, it is relevant to mention that Anna felt a slight resistance in Francine’s look: “But I knew that of course she disliked me too because I was white, and that I would never be able to explain to her that I hated being white.”⁷⁰ By presenting this it can be recognized how the protagonist is not satisfied by “being white” on the island where the majority of the population are the Afro-Caribbeans. The distance between the two races obviously originates in colonial history and slavery. Since the blacks still feel aggrieved by the past both, races cannot live in harmony in Dominica, even if Anna appreciates Francine and the Afro-Caribbeans. Anna’s alienation thus came into being very early. Zita Rarastesa demonstrates that “[i]nstead of feeling privileged to be white and superior, Anna feels alienated from her own society of white people in Dominica, “a ‘white cockroach’ to the black and a ‘white nigger’ to the English” (O’Callaghan 107) [...]”⁷¹

⁶⁷ RHYS 2000, p. 47

⁶⁸ RHYS 2000, p. 58

⁶⁹ RHYS 2000, p. 27

⁷⁰ RHYS 2000, p. 68

⁷¹ qtd in RARASTESA, Zita. *The Sense of Loss in Jean Rhys’s Voyage in the Dark: The absence of Mother and Imaged Black Identity* [online]. Paradigma, pp. 253–267. [Accessed 29 November 2019]. Available from:

The secondary oppression by the whites commenced when her father married an Englishwoman Hester, who simultaneously represents a typical English woman. Hester becomes a subject who causes the alienation from whites because Anna perceives her as everything she does not want to become: “Being white and getting like Hester, and all the things you get – old and sad and everything.”⁷² Hester might also represent Anna’s own superego that brings her racial difference into consciousness, telling her not to behave like “the nigger” all the time. Furthermore, since Hester wants Anna to become a white lady, she tries to separate her from Francine, thus secluding her from the most desired identity that she associates with the homeland. The double alienation of Rhys penetrated in the *Voyage in the Dark* quite significantly, it could be seen that even the place where she was born and raised does not mean a home for Anna.

The other fact that should be taken into consideration is oppression that originated in the West Indies as well – growing up, becoming an adult. As mentioned Anna’s recollections are mostly from childhood and one of them captures her initiation into a woman. The day Anna’s first period occurred Francine explained what does it mean and Anna felt “all right”⁷³; however, then Hester came and made Anna felt different:

“[...] I began to feel awfully miserable, as if everything were shutting up around me and I couldn’t breathe. I wanted to die. [...] I kept thinking, ‘No. ... No. No.’ And I knew that day that I’d started to grow old and nothing could stop it.”⁷⁴

According to Caren Houwelingen initiation into a woman Anna associated with becoming an adult and growing old.⁷⁵ Anna was suddenly frightened of adult life. She did not want to become Hester who in Anna’s notion also represented adulthood as unhappy, serious and *cold*. The extract induces a feeling of the unstoppable and inescapable condition – adulthood means a destructive being for Anna. This sudden conscious awareness of Anna’s destiny resulted in her spontaneous decision to end her life: “I thought, “Well, all right. This time I’ll die.”⁷⁶ Anna then took her hat off and stood in the direct sun, which had a great power back in the West Indies. She was standing there until she felt immense pain and headache.

https://www.academia.edu/36167681/THE_SENSE_OF_LOSS_IN_JEAN_RHYSS_VOYAGE_IN_THE_DARK_THE_ABSENCE_OF_MOTHER_AND_IMAGINED_BLACK_IDENTITY_-_Zita_Rarastesa. p 256.

⁷² RHYS 2000, p. 62

⁷³ RHYS 2000, p. 59

⁷⁴ RHYS 2000, p. 59, 62

⁷⁵ HOUWELINGEN, Caren van. *White Women Writing the (Post)Colony: Creolité, Home and Estrangement in Novels by Rhys*. 2012. Stellenbosch University, pp. 30–49. p. 46.

⁷⁶ RHYS 2000, p. 63

Thereafter she was seriously ill, nevertheless, she survived it.⁷⁷ Her suicidal attempt was rather childish, though almost fatal for Anna. Rhysian protagonists often stand between life and death, the close approximation of the death is firmly connected with their alienation. Similarly, the fear of ageing is a very significant theme in Rhys's novels. Even though the theme is not that repetitive in *Voyage in the dark* because Anna is the youngest of Rhys's characters, it can be still seen quite evidently. Houwelingen points out that "[...] *Voyage in the Dark* adheres to, but also extends the conventions of the modernist novel as "the newness, youth, and refusal of conventional adulthood that are the modernist Bildungsroman's signature traits" culminate only in "stasis and paralysis" (Seshagiri 497)."⁷⁸ This sense of stasis, which is immediately depicted as an illness emerged from the shock of woman initiation, is later on repetitive in the novel by various forms. Anna fell, for instance, ill right after she was out with Walter, her lover, for the first time. She also spends a lot of time in bed doing nothing throughout the period. The most importantly her social status is generally frozen and Anna is unable to change it.

Even though Dominica is portrayed as an ideal place for the protagonist and it certainly was during her childhood, when she was growing up she began to comprehend that the oppression and alienation in the island are unavoidable. She is, firstly, alienated from the Afro-Caribbeans of Dominica when still living in the island thus the alienation begins at an early age. Secondly, her alienation from the whites began when Hester came into her life because perceived Anna more like "a nigger" than a white English lady. In a third place, there is alienation from the West Indies while she is living in England. The protagonist is unable to return there because there is nothing to go back for, simultaneously she misses the peaceful landscape and the warmth of the land, constantly thinking about her "homeland" and her past.

3.2.2. Hated and Cold England and Its Effect on Alienation

According to Carol Angier, Rhys had sworn she will never return to England⁷⁹; nevertheless, she married an Englishman and she spent there most of her adult life. It is known that Rhys despised England. However, the writer's hatred towards the environment was not portrayed that strongly at the beginning of the novel. "I didn't like England at first. I couldn't get used to the cold. [...] After a while I got used to England and I liked it all right: I got used to

⁷⁷ RHYS 2000, p. 63-64

⁷⁸ HOUWELINGEN 2012, p. 46

⁷⁹ ANGIER, Carol. "Introduction." *Voyage in the Dark*, Penguin Group, 2000, pp. V-XIV. P. V

everything except the cold and the towns we went to always looked so exactly alike.”⁸⁰ The beginning of the novel suggests that although Anna did not like England when she moved there, she became acclimatized after a while. Nonetheless, this statement does not seem to be truthful. Throughout the storyline, it seems that she has never been adapted to the environment at all because motifs of cold and sameness are very repetitive and the protagonist has never truly considered England her home. She rather desired to escape the land.

Almost everything about England was *cold* for Anna. By the recurring word cold, she described not only the weather but also the hostility of Englishmen. Furthermore, Anna herself was also described as cold: “When he touched my hand he pretended to shiver. He said, ‘Oh God, cold as ice. Cold and rather clammy.’ ‘She is always cold,’ Maidie said. ‘She can’t help it. She was born in a hot place. [...]’”⁸¹ Though it was impossible to gain a physical feeling of warmth for Anna, it is important to add that in comparison with most of the women in the novel she was always shy, showing a lack of confidence and emotions, thus she was cold for the others as well. By this attitude she was sometimes misunderstood by others: “He said: ‘You mustn’t be sad, you mustn’t worry. My darling mustn’t be sad.’ [...] and I said, ‘I’m not sad. Why have you got this soppy idea that I’m always sad?’”⁸² This coldness of Anna must have been also a result of her alienation because she was often referred by others being so sad, sleepy and absent from a present moment and for men it does not certainly mean attractive.

The hatred of England is not as vividly described as the hatred of London. The metropole, where the protagonist spent most of her time in the novel, is always described as oppressive and it causes a strong feeling of estrangement: “I don’t like London. It’s an awful place: it looks horrible sometimes. I wish I’d never come over here at all.”⁸³ Katherine Mullin contends that “the alienated modernist self is a product of the big city rather than the countryside or small town.”⁸⁴ This theory definitely works for *Voyage in the Dark*. When Walter took Anna to the countryside for a few days she was surprised how England is suddenly changed. Moreover, Anna mirrored this shift and she behaved differently. She woke up early, she was not sleeping most of the day as usual, she smelled the fresh air and

⁸⁰ RHYS 2000, p. 8

⁸¹ RHYS 2000, p. 14

⁸² RHYS 2000, p. 33

⁸³ RHYS 2000, p. 40

⁸⁴ MULLIAN, Katherine. Cities in Modernist Literature. In: *British Library* [online]. 25 May 2016. [Accessed 20 January 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/cities-in-modernist-literature>

felt happier than ever before; what is more, she perceived the beautiful colours of flowers all around the place as she did in the West Indies.⁸⁵ Anna described this feeling as follows: “I was very happy, happier than I had ever been in my life. I was so happy that I cried, like a fool. [...] ‘I like it here,’ I said. ‘I didn’t know England could be so beautiful.’”⁸⁶ Besides, the juxtaposition of the urban area and the English countryside is very similar to the constant comparing of the West Indies and England. Rhys uses this conflict between rural and urban similarly as some key writers of modernism. Some of them even consider the rural areas as a possible solution or escape from the oppression caused by the flux of the cities, like in *Howards End* by E. M. Foster. However, most of the literary works do not provide this kind of solution and rather: “reflect the ways in which cities generate states of shock, exhilaration, alienation, anonymity, confusion or thrill.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Anna cannot avoid her alienation caused by life in urban London, she is chained to the cities because of her financial problems; cities provide her with an income. She yearned to escape the city. She even intended to:

“For several days after that I kept on planning to leave London. The names of all the places I could go to went round and round in my head. (This isn’t the only place in the world: there are other places. You don’t get so depressed when you think that.)”⁸⁸

Nevertheless, these plans were destroyed by Anna’s unexpected pregnancy and, again, she is powerless in changing her fate.

The strong aversion to London and England was mainly caused by the theme of sameness and repetitiveness: “Everything was always so exactly alike – that was what I could never get used to. And the cold: and the houses all exactly alike, and the streets going north, south, east, west, all exactly alike.”⁸⁹ Even though Anna moved from one city to another, and afterwards when she spent time in London, she moved from one boarding room to another, everything stayed the same in fact. Even landladies were always alike – wary and hostile – setting an ungracious atmosphere in these rooms, which can never be called a home. This monotony of the cities, houses and rooms sometimes created a dream-like vision of Anna’s life. In addition, she is sometimes unsure of what is more real; is it her current life in England or her past in the West Indies? Anna claims that sometimes she feels she is back

⁸⁵ RHYS 2000, p. 66-67

⁸⁶ RHYS 2000, p. 66 – 67

⁸⁷ MULLIAN 2016

⁸⁸ RHYS 2000, p. 136

⁸⁹ RHYS 2000, p. 152

there again. She can feel the home by all her senses and England suddenly becomes only a dream and sometimes it is an opposite, she cannot find the synthesis of these stages.⁹⁰

This sameness of the English environment is supported by Rhys's usage of repetitive language. Similarly, to the repetition of words cold and dark, when describing England and its monotony, some words were also repeating again and again, supporting the feeling of oppression and inescapable cyclic routine:

“[...] London – hundred thousands of white people white people [repetition of Rhys] rushing along and the dark houses all alike frowning down one after the other all alike all stuck together – the streets like smooth shut-in ravines and the dark houses frowning down – oh I'm not going to like this place I'm not going to like this place I'm not going to like this place [...]”⁹¹

This stylistic repetition, either of Anna's action and the language, importantly supports creating a gloomy, miserable and insistent atmosphere of the novel that even deepens the alienated impression of the protagonist.

The alienation from England is portrayed very clearly by Rhys, supported primarily by the repetitive motifs and the language. Even though, the protagonist claimed that she got used to this land the readers must be convicted of the opposite. The strongest alienation is felt in urban London that creates the contrast with idealized the West Indies and a rural part of England. The protagonist felt an urgency to escape the city, however, her financial situation did not enable it.

3.3. Alienation from the Society

As written in the theoretical part of the thesis, the alienation from the society is the most utilized amongst modernist writers and Rhys also applies this form of alienation profoundly. Not only are England and London monotony, but also Anna's life is portrayed as a routine. Her initial employment, for instance, was typically routine, she became a chorus girl, as described by Ania Spyra “she [became] one of the ‘girls’”⁹², who wore an identical costume and had similar makeup as all girls on the stage, repeating always the same show and same movements.⁹³ Afterwards, she became the mistress of Walter, thus it can be claimed she desired to develop her role and become unique and independent. Nevertheless, Walter

⁹⁰ RHYS 2000, p. 8

⁹¹ RHYS 2000, p. 15-16

⁹² SPYRA, Ania. “Language and Belonging in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*.” *Rhys Matters: New Critical Perspectives*, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2013, pp. 67–84, p. 72.

⁹³ SPYRA 2013, p. 72

provided her with this feeling only temporarily and Anna soon realized the diversity in her life is unachievable. What is more, she became even more dependent on men, their money and attention. Supporting the estrangement Anna was not able to entertain herself during the time she was alone. While waiting for a message from Walter she was lying in bed for most of the day then she went for a walk and she went back.⁹⁴ This repeated all the time. She did not know anybody to visit or meet in the city, thus she spent most of the time in lethargy. The sameness and boredom was another factor causing the alienation of Anna and it also refers to the “stasis and paralysis” mentioned in the previous subchapter. As with the previous type of alienation, she desired to escape it; however, she has never found a way to do it. According to Nicole Flynn, she is always looking back to the past and thinks how she would change things instead of thinking about future: “Anna does not simply mention the possibility of a different future: she clings [to her prostitution’s way of life] as if it were her only chance of survival.”⁹⁵ This also shows that she desired to gain control over her life and simultaneously it is revealed that she is unable of this action.⁹⁶

This fact also demonstrates how immature Anna still was. Even though she has entered the world of adults, trying to gain independence by this “voyage”, her status in this world is merely inferior. This position, together with comprehension of Anna by the rest of the characters, is directly shown in the novel. To give an illustration, Vincent, relative of Walter, perceives Anna as a child: “Vincent said, ‘Well how’s the child? How’s my infantile Anna?’”⁹⁷ The emphasis is also put on her childlike appearance throughout the novel: “Germaine was staring at me. ‘She looks awfully young, this kid,’ she said. ‘She looks about sixteen.’ ‘Yes,’ Vincent said. ‘Dear old Walter [...] has been doing a bit of baby-snatching, I’m afraid.’”⁹⁸. All things considered, it can be claimed that Anna’s immaturity causes that most of the characters do not perceive Anna with any respect. They, on the other hand, exploit her as Walter did, who was attracted only by the chance of having a young mistress.

To continue with the factor of monotony, it can be shown how the repetitiveness and Anna’s inability to enhance her life are strengthened by the ending when Anna was saved from the death, though probably punished more than by the death.

⁹⁴ RHYS 2000, p. 34, 37, 77, 152

⁹⁵ FLYNN, Nicole. “Clockwork Women: Temporality and Form in Jean Rhys’s Interwar Novels.” *Rhys Matters: New Critical Perspectives*, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2013, pp. 41–65, p. 49.

⁹⁶ FLYNN 2013, p. 49.

⁹⁷ RHYS 2000, p. 69

⁹⁸ RHYS 2000, p. 73

“He said, ‘You girls are too naïve to live, aren’t you?’ Laurie laughed. I listened to them both laughing and their voices going up and down. ‘She’ll be all right,’ he said. ‘Ready to start all over again in no time, I’ve no doubt.’ [...] I lay and I watched it and thought about starting all over again. And about being new and fresh. And about mornings, and misty days, when anything might happen. And about starting all over again, all over again...”⁹⁹

The beginning and the ending thus created a similar structure of a new start, but both are rather negative. Rhys’s original ending was different. She let Anna die; however, the editor of the novel, Saidler, asked Rhys to change the end, he intended to create the novel more positive. As Savory claims: “The irony is that, whereas the revised ending satisfied Sadleir, it isn’t really positive at all, and can still be read as a subtle suggestion that Anna’s spirit and will to live are broken.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, it can be said that Anna’s wish would be to die than live in the routine – she personally did not understand “how people live when they know exactly what’s going to happen to them each day.”¹⁰¹ This ending suggest that her doom is unavoidable and she will continue living in alienation.

3.3.1 Alienation from Women

As mentioned many times, Anna often spent her time in loneliness, she had a few woman friends; however, none of these friends appeared to be very close to Anna. The only woman who was able to create a deeper relationship with Anna was Francine, the black maid, who was almost as her older sister. Nevertheless, the analysis of their relationship was made in the previous part of the thesis and it showed that even their relationship cannot be regarded as ideal because of their racial difference.

Anna cannot rely on the support of her mother either. Her true mother has never been mentioned in the novel, probably died very soon, and her step-mother after a short time gave up to accept Anna as her daughter. Both women have been estranged since they know each other. Hester, the representation of typical English woman of patriarchal society, ladylike and cold, obedient to men, insisted to make Anna more English-like during her childhood and adolescence. Hester knew that Anna’s nigger-like manners would be seen as peculiar in England. Even though she had not known that Anna’s father will die very soon, she supposed that Anna will visit England one day and this was probably one of her justified reason to re-educate Anna:

⁹⁹ RHYS 2000, p. 159

¹⁰⁰ SAVORY 2009, p. 53

¹⁰¹ RHYS 2000, p. 64

“‘I don’t know what’ll become of you if you go on like that,’ Hester said. ‘Let me tell you that you’ll have a very unhappy life if you go on that. People won’t like you. People in England will dislike you very much if you say things like that.’”¹⁰²

Hester also desired to send Francine away, knowing that she has too much influence on Anna, and Anna began to dislike Hester even more. Moreover, she refused to become anyhow similar to Hester. On the other hand, Hester wanted to give Anna a real chance to survive in England¹⁰³ and get accustomed to the social tradition of this country. Hester might have provided her with a certain direction. However, Anna refused this chance immediately because it was against her Caribbean nature. She thus stood in opposition to the British social system, admiring the Caribbean way of life more. Jed Esty claims that: “For Anna, the incomplete and impossible transition from “nigger” to “lady” assures her social vulnerability [...]”¹⁰⁴ Importantly, by Anna’s rejection of “being like Hester” Anna simultaneously rejects white English femininity in general, by this she was unable to create a relationship with almost any woman in England and she lost her chance to a good marriage as well. According to Anna Cunningham, “Rhys narrativizes negative feminism in her depiction of Anna, a subject who refuses to cohere, who chooses to disintegrate, rather than to activate the self under the models of femininity available to her.”¹⁰⁵ Later on in England, Hester was not willing to support Anna financially anymore, after their appointment in London they were not in any contact.

Another woman who appeared to be unable to help Anna was Ethel. She began to live independently as a private masseuse and initially provided Anna with a decent job of a manicurist and offered her a nice accommodation. Ethel was alienated as Anna, old, without any friends, family and a man. She might thus have empathized with the young women. However, she rather needed Anna’s financial support to build her business. What is more, Ethel probably chose Anna as her flat-mate to run a business with prostitution, supporting Anna to find “friends” and male company. She had estimated Anna’s tendency to seek support in men¹⁰⁶ as she needed new customers for her massage business, where Anna could bring some men. Ethel exploited young and immature Anna as Walter did. Though it was quite unnatural and rather false, it seemed that Ethel soon started to be

¹⁰² RHYS 2000, p. 61

¹⁰³ RHYS 2000, p. 56

¹⁰⁴ ESTY, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and Fiction of Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. p. 172.

¹⁰⁵ CUNNINGHAM, Anne. “Get on or Get Out”: Failure and Negative Femininity in Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 59, Number 2, Summer 2013, pp. 373-394. p. 340.

¹⁰⁶ RHYS 2000, p. 92

attached to Anna; however, Anna was not able to requite her feelings. Similarly, but in a different way than Hester, she gave Anna a slight chance to survive by mutual help. Anna, again, lost in passivity, missed this chance. Subsequently, Ethel's whole business was not as profitable as she had imagined and she soon became very anxious, blaming Anna for everything. What is more, Anna began to meet her acquaintance Laurie and new men and Ethel became incredibly jealous of her: "Well, I hope you enjoyed yourself," she said. But I knew from the way she looked at me that she had started to hate me. I knew she was going to make a row sooner or later."¹⁰⁷ Ethel became labile and one of her emotional outburst really came, she, again, blamed Anna for her own mistake: "Well, clear out and stay out. I don't want you here, you're no use. [...] 'I'm always alone,' she said. 'It's awful to be always alone, awful, awful.'"¹⁰⁸ Ethel also threaten Anna with her suicidal intentions. These emotional outbursts and tension between both flat-mates caused that Anna never felt comfortable even in such a decent flat. After Anna told her about the pregnancy, Ethel did not want to help her in any way, Anna thus moved from her flat to a prostitute Laurie.

Ethel probably desired to manipulate Anna since she met her. It can be thus said that their relationship was not created only from pure interest or with an intent to create a real friendship. Ethel's plans with Anna were soon destroyed by Anna's passive way of life, she has never brought a customer for a massage and Anna's income from prostitution was quite poor. Besides Anna was always tired, sleeping, not working as a manicurist either. Rhys gives her female protagonists no chance to become independent, secured or well socialized. The dependency on someone was also portrayed as pathological for basic social needs. These women were not able to create a healthy friendship with other women, being, on one hand, a burden for others or, on the other hand, being manipulated by someone who needed help. Ericca Smilowitz comments this: "[s]ymbolically, women, for Rhys, are not up to the task of providing anyone with sufficient protection"¹⁰⁹ Only men have such a power in her fiction, though, they provide only financial protection and no emotional support.

Notably, independent women, mostly landladies, were depicted in a sophisticated way – they were mostly hostile, suspicious and peevish to Anna. They were a representation of something like a super-ego of these dependent girls, similarly as Hester

¹⁰⁷ RHYS 2000, p. 122

¹⁰⁸ RHYS 2000, p. 124

¹⁰⁹ SMILOWITZ, Erika. "Childlike Women and Paternal Men: Colonialism in Jean Rhys's Fiction." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* [Online], 17.4 (1986): 93-103. Web. 8 Nov. 2014. qwt in Dibelková, Veronika. *Identity and Migration in Jean Rhys's Novels*. Masaryk University, 2015.

was: “‘No this is no way for a young girl to live,’ Mrs. Dawes said,”¹¹⁰ criticising Anna’s way of life. Moreover, these women created even deeper alienation in Anna’s life, creating a hostile atmosphere in places she lived. A rather different type of independent woman was Laurie, a very successful prostitute, who owned a flat and her customers were men from the upper class only. Laurie was, in comparison with Anna, open and very rigorous, active and clever in earning money. She represented a woman unprotected by a marriage but still quite successful. Her difference from other women included the knowledge of how to treat with males. She was also frequently admired by other women, for instance, by Ethel: “‘Now, that’s the sort of girl I should want if I were a man,’ Ethel said. ‘Look at the way she wears the clothes. My god, that’s what I call smart.’”¹¹¹ Laurie, similarly to the landladies and others, criticized Anna for her passivity, telling her that nobody likes girls who are half asleep all the time. She also suggests that she is quite a fool, that she is unable to adapt.¹¹² These more or less independent women were not depicted as alienated by Rhys, able to secure themselves financially, they represented a type of woman that was unachievable for Anna to become.

Anna’s alienation from society was portrayed very intensively. It was clearly perceived how impossible is to gain control over her social status, which must have been seen as inferior because of her nationality and “nigger-like” behaviour. In *Voyage in the Dark* the alienation of women from other women was quite significant. In general, women in the novel are unable to create a female friendship or provide sufficient help to one another. The main conflict connected with Anna’s alienation was that she was not able to escape it – this was grounded either by her inexperience in life and by her passivity. Moreover, her inexperience resulted in deepening social (and also financial) problems, leading her almost to death. Nevertheless, the escape by death was not gained, thus Anna was condemned to continue her inescapable alienated existence.

¹¹⁰ RHYS 2000, p. 78

¹¹¹ RHYS 2000, p. 121

¹¹² RHYS 2000, p. 110

4. Alienation in *Good Morning, Midnight*

4.1. Introduction into the Novel

Good Morning, Midnight was published in 1939 in the dark pre-war period, where there was not enough time to admire this masterpiece. Rhys, already experienced writer in 1939, became even more cultivated in her style, and *Good Morning, Midnight* proved it perfectly; however, this perfect stylization could not avoid the poor sale of the novel. The poor interest disappointed Rhys, who then disappeared as an active writer for many years.

The novel is divided into four parts. Some smaller sections are also arranged by gabs that mostly separate different timelines of the novel. Rhys enriches the novel by frequent, mostly associative shifts from present to past. Elaine Savory states that the novel is “mordantly funny and at times highly satirical, very stylized and brilliantly observed, but it has generally been far less noticed and definitely far less loved than her two novels of tragic love for young women, *Voyage in the Dark* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*.”¹¹³ The novel seems to be less autobiographical than *Voyage in the Dark*, but still highly inspired by Rhys’s experience in Paris, where the novel is set. The protagonist’s name is Sasha, which is a name she gave herself for better luck in life. As *Voyage in the Dark*, it is styled in the first-person narrative, which is according to Mellown Rhys’s most logical narrative technique because by that she depicts how human world and mind works.¹¹⁴ The title of the novel was taken from the first verse of Emily Dickinson’s untitled poem. Interpreting the poem, it can be claimed that it portraits a state of a woman who is rejected by a man and she is searching for stability. However, the stability is found with difficulty because the refusal is a rather cruel state of being:

“Good morning, Midnight!
I’m coming home,
Day got tired of me –
How could I of him?
Sunshine was a sweet place,
I liked to stay –
But Morn didn’t want me – now –

¹¹³ SAVORY 2009. p. 66

¹¹⁴ MELLOWN, Erdin. Character and Themes in the Novels of Jean Rhys. In *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys*. Washington, Three Continent Press. 1990. pp. 103-118. p. 112

So good night, Day!”¹¹⁵

The poem refers to the main theme of the novel – the destruction of a woman’s life caused by her husband’s decision to leave her and simultaneously blaming her for the end of their relationship; leaving her in an unknown city without any financial support. To compare the theme with Rhys’s biography, a certain synthesis can be found because she was left in Paris by her first husband in 1922, the past of the novel is set in the twenties as well.

In general, the storyline concerns ageing of the protagonist Sasha Jensen, who has been living in England by on a two pounds twenty inherited income. Sasha travels from England to Paris encouraged by her friend who lends her some money. She sleeps in a shabby hotel room, roams the streets alone in the city she used to live in the twenties, sits in cafes and restaurants, contemplating about her young-self and trying to avoid places where would be recognized by the Parisians. The plot of the book is much poorer than the Rhys’s stylization and shifts, it is thus sometimes very challenging to maintain with the main storyline. By these shifts and loops, Rhys creates a feeling of entering the real psychological inner world of the protagonist. Anna B. Simpson declares that:

„[r]ecurring confrontations with the disjointed, the symbolic, and the elliptical work to structure the reading experience of this novel. Rhys thereby exhorts her audience to share in the overdetermined chaos, and the attempts to exert control, of the protagonist Sasha Jensen’s life.“¹¹⁶

Through the inner monologue of Sasha, her personality is gradually assembled. Sasha Jensen’s soul is wrecked by an unpleasant past and current monotonous existence. She is lonely, depressed by her age and fading beauty. The decay of her life was predominantly caused by her unfortunate marriage, also by the death of her new-born son, which resulted in alcohol abuse and suicidal period.

4.2. Alienation from Society

The protagonist in *Good Morning, Midnight*, Sasha, is unmarried, without stable living and also her nationality is not revealed in the novel. She is, according to Savory, “[...] a woman falling into self-destructive middle age, and abandoning even the will to survive”.¹¹⁷ The

¹¹⁵ RHYS, Jean. *Good Morning, Midnight*. London: Penguin Books, 2016. p. -

¹¹⁶ SIMPSON, Anne B. *Good Morning, Midnight: A Story of Soul Murder*. In *Territories of the Psyche: The Fiction of Jean Rhys*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. pp. 87-111. p. 87.

¹¹⁷ SAVORY 2009. p. 66

“self-destructiveness” does not only include her suicidal attempts but also her detachment of any deeper social contact. Sasha experienced a very painful past thus she rather chooses alienation, which makes her certainly unhappy; however, she aims to protect herself from any deeper scars. She is basically afraid of any relationship with people, convinced that there is not a chance of attachment to anyone. The alienation is a necessary part of her personality. She has lived alienated for many years, however, it would be very unconvincing to claim that she got used to it. Her attitude toward her alienation is quite ironical: “Saved, rescued and with my place to hide in – what more did I want? I crept in and hid. The lid of the coffin shut down with a bang. Now I no longer wish to be loved, beautiful, happy or successful. I want one thing and one thing only – to be left alone.”¹¹⁸ While in Paris, she quickly gets rid of all people who become closer to her; moreover, the readers can clearly notice that she is completely incapable of creating a bond with a woman, which is analysed in the next subchapter.

The novel, on the other hand, depicts some male-female relationships. Sasha met three men in Paris who are quite friendly. She felt very comfortable in their company, mostly with Delmar and Serge, two Eastern Europeans. The main reason for their healthy relationship must have been because “[they were two] of few men in any Rhys’s novel who neither condescends to the protagonist nor treats her as a sexual object.”¹¹⁹ When spending time with them, Sasha was very happy. She even thought that Delmar is a brother she has never had.¹²⁰ Moreover, Delmar offered her an emotional support, he promised to get to know more of his friends. He must have desired to make Sasha happier. Subsequently, when she met Delmar again after some appointments, he wished to see her again. Sasha promised she will try, however, she lied that it is hard to find extra time for him. What she really thought is: “I can’t stand this business of not being able to have what I want to drink, because he won’t allow me to pay and certainly doesn’t want to pay himself. It’s too wearing.”¹²¹ As she has spent many years in loneliness, she is easily irritated by small imperfections in human relationships and thus she favours her comfort over her friendship. After that, she did not meet Delmar and Serge. All things considered, it can be claimed that a desire to seek a remedy for her alienation has mostly disappeared in the protagonist.

¹¹⁸ RHYS 2016. p. 32

¹¹⁹ LINETT, Maren Tova. *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. p. 164.

¹²⁰ RHYS 2016. p. 52

¹²¹ RHYS 2016. p. 84-85

According to Frank Baldanza “a train of ... incidents [...] illustrates the hideous irony that the more desperate one is, the more cruelly people treat one: the more one needs help, the less one gets.”¹²² The final scene of *Good Morning, Midnight* shows it perfectly. The third man, a gigolo named René, who met Sasha in Paris, was the total opposite of Delmar and Serge. He was initially very friendly and kind to Sasha. She immediately wanted to disappear from his company as usual; however, he tried very hard to seduce her. In Sasha, a desire to hurt someone arose: “I should manage to hurt him a little in return for all the many times I’ve been hurt[,]”¹²³ thus she became interested in the man. René soon became quite attached to Sasha and she stopped defending herself. He must have reminded of her younger self. Moreover, they were both very similar, thus able to share their wounds from the past. By the relationship with René, she must have wanted to escape her alienation at least for a little while, her intentions to hurt him disappeared. After their farewell appointment, René sneaked into the hotel, where she lived, desiring to make love with her. Sasha invited him inside, feeling quite happy: “I stand there hugging him, so terribly happy. Now everything is in my arms on this dark landing – love, youth, spring, happiness, everything I thought I had lost. I was a fool, wasn’t I? to think all that was finished for me. [...]”¹²⁴ However, this openness, which arose also from her desire to become young again, resulted in everything she had been feared of. Just after this short moment of happiness René and Sasha had a terrible row, mocking each other. Sasha asked him to leave her, thus she changed her mind about spending a night with him. Importantly, René’s presence reminded her of some abusive trauma from the past and she was unable to continue, rather adhered to her alienation. However, she revealed too much to René. He also knew that she is unable to call for help because she feared a scene in the hotel. He sexually abused her.¹²⁵ While trying to intrude into her, Sasha metaphorically dies, closing her eyes and firmly, trying to be calm and quiet, feel nothing. However, before the worst happened she comes to life again: “I feel his knee between my knees. My mouth hurts, my breasts hurt, because it hurts, when you have been dead, to come alive...”¹²⁶ After this renewal she was finally able to get rid of him, trying to hurt him by mean words, as she initially wanted. She offered him her money

¹²² DAVIDSON, Arnold E., and Jean Rhys. *The Dark Is Light Enough: Affirmation from Despair in Jean Rhys's 'Good Morning, Midnight.'* In: *Contemporary Literature* [online]. 1983. Vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 349–364. JSTOR, [Accessed 5 February 2019]. Available from: www.jstor.org/stable/1208082, p. 351.

¹²³ RHYS 2016. p. 58

¹²⁴ RHYS 2016. p. 147

¹²⁵ RHYS 2016. p. 150

¹²⁶ RHYS 2016. p. 151-152

thus she “reduce[s] their relationship to a transaction.”¹²⁷ While speaking to him she felt suddenly split into two persons, alienated from herself for a while. According to Flynn:

“the narration reveals an irrevocable split in her consciousness that Rhys literally assigns to two different voices, I and She. [René left the room.] After this psychic break, Sasha becomes drunk. These are the circumstances that induce her hallucination of the enormous steel machine.”¹²⁸

It could be seen that René wounded her easily, even though he initially seemed to be helpful to Sasha. He seemed to empathize with her miserable life but, ironically, brought her even worse harm.

At the end of this affair, she felt incredibly damaged and abandoned, Arnold Davidson states that “the final action in the novel [...] constitute[d] Sasha’s most humiliating defeat.”¹²⁹ Sasha was defeated mostly by her own powerlessness in relationships with men. Though she was defeated, hurt, ridiculed and robbed by the man, she vividly imagined René’s return, thus regretting the loss of the man, proving that she was attached to him as well. During her collapse, she called him back repeatedly and she clearly saw him coming back to the hotel, thus she left the door opened and she took off her clothes¹³⁰ in a desire to fix everything. However, here it is not clear what is reality and what is only an imagination. Instead of René, a different man came into her room - a “commis voyageur”, her old and ugly hotel neighbour – a symbolical male oppressor, whom she was terrified every time she met him. However, she welcomed him:

“[...] his mean eyes flickering. He doesn’t say anything. I look straight into his eyes and despise another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time. ... The I put my arms round him and pull him down on to the bed, saying: “Yes – yes – yes. ...
“¹³¹

The ending part has been interpreted in various ways. The commis might either represent an abusive man from her past (maybe the man was even her father) and by her embrace she releases her abusive experience from her unconsciousness, forgiving her father and herself thus coming to a resolution¹³², on the other hand, it can be seen as a devastating state of mind in which old wounds from past that were gradually suppressed throughout her

¹²⁷ SAVORY 2009. p. 78

¹²⁸ FLYNN 2013, p. 61

¹²⁹ DAVIDSON, Arnold E., and Jean Rhys 1983, p. 349

¹³⁰ RHYS 2016. p. 156-7

¹³¹ RHYS 2016. p. 157

¹³² SIMPSON 2005 p. 99

life have been opened again. If the overall tone of the novel is taken into consideration, the second option appears to be more reasonable

By this conclusion of the novel, it can be seen how one's openness, a momentary escape from alienation, which was certainly created by Sasha to protect herself, can result in the disastrous consequences. One slight desire to become young and enjoy a sexual company, which has been denied by Sasha's "unattractive" older age, took more than she wanted. Davidson claims: „Indeed [...] the book is a devastating critique of a society callously unconcerned with the desperate.“¹³³ Even though Sasha was much stronger than Anna from the *Voyage in the Dark* and she consciously resisted any contact with people, the alienation was too disheartening and she could not resist everything.

4.2.1. How One Becomes Alienated from the Society

When René was persuading Sasha to make love with him, he was curious why she is so afraid, suggesting that something bad must have happened to her. The protagonist answered René: ““It wasn't one thing. It took years. It was a slow process.””¹³⁴. In *Good Morning, Midnight* Rhys describes how one becomes alienated, she showed it by several shifts from present to past. It can be claimed that Anna Morgan, the younger protagonist of Rhys, was alienated because of her passivity, also by her exotic origin and inexperience, however, Sasha's alienation is caused mostly by the wickedness of the society. Even though the novel does not reveal everything about Sasha, it can be claimed that her gradual doom must have started in the twenties. However, it could have been even earlier, if she was abused by her father as one of her dreams indicates.

By revealing the experience from a younger age, it can be explained how an ordinary woman becomes easily alienated in Rhys's world. In the twenties, she married a journalist Enno, who was eager to move to Paris in order to earn more money for writing. However, during their journey to the city, they spent all their money. They had to sell all extra clothes and beg for money from their old acquaintances. Sasha began to feel incredibly humiliated during this period: “[...] shabby clothes, worn-out shoes, circles under your eyes, your hair getting straight and lanky, the way people look at you ... I didn't think it would be like this.”¹³⁵ Even though Enno persuaded her that in Paris everything will be much better, they reached the city in terrible condition and he did not initially earn much money.

¹³³ DAVIDSON, Arnold E., and Jean Rhys 1983, p. 351.

¹³⁴ RHYS 2016. p. 145

¹³⁵ RHYS 2016. p. 100

Moreover, after a month he suddenly left Sasha for the first time, blaming her for passivity in their sexual life: “[...] you’re lazy, you bore me. I’ve had enough of this. Goodbye.”¹³⁶ By this moment, Rhys portrays her own experience of how a woman can be unprotected even if married, thus the power of marriage is strongly distrusted in the novel. Even though Enno came back afterwards and they were both able to earn enough money, he left her again right after their new-born son died. Enno represented men who were careless about their left wives’ fate, irresponsible enough to let them almost die. Subsequently, Anna lived in the destructive poverty alone, starving for several weeks, desiring to commit suicide by chloroform, which she could not afford. By contrast with Anna Morgan, Sasha proved also distinctively tough personality while she resisted a sexual proposal that would bring her some money. When she intentionally revealed a man that she is incredibly poor and she does not want to derive benefit from him by sex, the man immediately showed this ruthlessness of society and without a word of pity left her in the middle of a street.¹³⁷ Mellown states that “[t]he respectable world views such women as commodities to be bought.”¹³⁸ If they cannot be bought they are simply left. Davidson describes it as “devaluation” of social behaviour and norms. This devaluation portrays the modern world by Rhys in a very distinctive way. Sasha’s all attempts to become a respectable citizen thus result only in a repetitive defeat.¹³⁹

To illustrate these attempts, it can be described how the protagonist was unable to find and hold a casual job in the past. Even though she was trying, she was easily deceived in all her jobs, not paid very well: “I try but they always see through me. The passages will never lead anywhere, the door will always be shut. I know...”.¹⁴⁰ The system of society described in Rhys’s novels does not enable unmarried poor women to earn money decently. Savory states that if women are unmarried it is very challenging to make a living by a work that is regarded proper by the society, thus she indicates that those women often slip in prostitution. Furthermore, the Rhys’s fictional environment is “pre-feminist”, thus women are viewed stereotypically¹⁴¹ and the characters feel very humiliated by these views and comprehensions. Interestingly, people in the novel recognize these poor women very easily. Sasha is thus constantly haunted by their looks and judgement. The atmosphere of this looks is always connected with an aversion of Sasha.

¹³⁶ RHYS 2016. p. 105

¹³⁷ RHYS 2016. p. 73

¹³⁸ qtd. In DAVIDSON, Arnold E., and Jean Rhys 1983, p. 351-2

¹³⁹ DAVIDSON, Arnold E., and Jean Rhys 1983, p. 352.

¹⁴⁰ RHYS 2016. p. 23

¹⁴¹ SAVORY 2009. p. 68

In order not to be recognized as the poor, thus inferior in the eyes of people, Sasha has a tendency to pretend to be someone else from time to time. Her Parisian visit can be associated not only by hiding from people's sights but also with her fear of ageing. Sasha's status is revealed mostly by her appearance, clothes and her solitude while wandering around the city and when sitting alone in cafes and bars. Her visit should have been her transformation into a younger, different self. She had her hair dyed, she bought a new hat to look differently. She had wanted to buy a new dress before her money was taken by René. However, her status is unchangeable. Though she sometimes tries to appear as a rich woman, she is quickly recognized: "[t]hey all know what I am. [...] They have a drink, these women, and then they have another and then they start crying silently. And then they go into the lavabo and then they come out – powdered, but with hollow eyes – and, head down, slink into the street."¹⁴² Moreover, when she met her Russian friend for the first time she told them how she is happy, rich, having a lot of friends, enjoying her shopping in Paris. However, one of them cannot believe her: "I feel a great sadness in you."¹⁴³ Notably, Rhysian protagonist is unable to hide from the judgement of society that always reveals her real status, Sasha thus cannot deceive almost anybody even if she visits an unknown environment, this recognition also made impossible to escape her poverty in the past. Moreover, the judgement of her surrounding oppresses her a day by day. To illustrate her feelings, this metaphorical portrayal of her perception of injustice can be shown:

"If you like have money and friends, houses are just houses [...] – friendly houses were the doors opens and somebody meets you, smiling. If you are quite secure and your roots are well stuck in, they know. They [...] waiting for the poor devil without any friend and without any money. Then they step forward, the waiting houses, to frown and crush. No hospitable doors, no lit windows, just frowning darkness. [...]"¹⁴⁴

To conclude these chapters, the protagonist in Rhys's *Good Morning Midnight* was alienated because of her disheartening past experience with society. Sasha's alienation was notable almost in every contact with people. Importantly, her oppression probably began in the twenties when she found herself in the unprotected marriage, later on, she was abandoned in Paris unable to find a casual job – this era can have been a start of her doom. In her return to Paris after many years, she tried to avoid any closer relationship with people. Even though her alienation intended to protect her from a bad experience with people and

¹⁴² RHYS 2016. p. 87

¹⁴³ RHYS 2016. p. 36

¹⁴⁴ RHYS 2016. p. 23

she was aware of that, she was not able to resist Rene's seduction. The exceptional openness of Sasha resulted in a destructive state that was caused by the disastrous affair. Alienation is thus portrayed by Rhys in a depressing way, but if escaped, even for a while, it causes deeper damage to one's personality.

4.2.2. Alienation from Women

The alienation of Sasha from women is brilliantly depicted in an allegoric flashback about a kitten. One of her associative memory was about a poor kitten that often encountered tom-cats and had "a sore on her neck".¹⁴⁵ She lived in a flat with a couple who wanted to get rid of her because her neck was "disgusting".¹⁴⁶ Especially the woman did not like kitten's male company because they were "on to her like one o'clock".¹⁴⁷ Maloney claims that the kitten can be a representation of women that are promiscuous or unmarried without a stable relationship. These types of women are often seen by other females as the kitten – disgusting.¹⁴⁸ Subsequently, the kitten tried to find refuge in Sasha's flat. Sasha let her in but she "shoed her out"¹⁴⁹ very soon. However, she could not stop thinking about kitten's fate and she regretted her decision. Unfortunately, she found out at the end of the day that "the merciful taxi went over her."¹⁵⁰ The kitten had had something about her fate in her eyes - that is also why people did not want to care about her. Sasha, therefore, seems to be very similar to the kitten because people, mostly women, desire to get rid of her. Moreover, exactly as the kitten's eyes Sasha's appearance and behaviour reveal what is her fate. According to Caitlin Moloney, the anecdote "reveals that women's treatment of one another is often the source of their own demise."¹⁵¹ In Rhys novels these alienated, poor women are strongly segregated from the female community and they are also closer to death. Sasha, for instance, almost starved to death, almost died by alcohol poisoning, and she was saved from drowning in the river Seine. The kitten death is described as "merciful", however protagonists of Rhys are unable to gain death even if they want to. Anna and Sasha desire to die and they literally dice with death but they always survive.

¹⁴⁵ RHYS 2016. p. 42

¹⁴⁶ RHYS 2016. p. 42

¹⁴⁷ RHYS 2016. p. 42

¹⁴⁸ MOLONEY, Caitlin. Alienated Women: Competition and Degradation in Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight. In: *The Common Room* [online pdf]. [Accessed 5 February 2019]. Available from: departments.knox.edu/engdept/commonroom/Volume12.2/Caitlin_Moloney_files/Moloney.pdf

¹⁴⁹ RHYS 2016. p. 43

¹⁵⁰ RHYS 2016. p. 43

¹⁵¹ MOLONEY

Women in Rhys's fiction have a natural tendency not to be associated with a certain type of people, they are worried to be perceived similar to these people by others, thus they are rather not in contact with them. Sasha's friend Sidonie, for instance, gave her money to enjoy the time in Paris; however, the friend did not give her any mental support that Sasha needed in a depressive period. Her friend sent her away into the city full of strangers who would not help Sasha to cheer up. Moreover, the city opened old wounds that Sasha had from the past. Her friend probably saw an opportunity on how to get rid of her:

"I came into somebody who said: 'I can't bear to see you looking like this.' 'Like what?' I said. 'I think you need a change. Why don't you go back to Paris for a bit? ... You could get yourself some new clothes – you certainly need them ... I'll lend you some money,' she said. [...] I had not seen this woman for months and then she swooped down on me ... Well, here I am."¹⁵²

Most of the women in the novel create a certain rivalry between one another as well. Caitlin Moloney asserts that hostility and rivalry are mostly felt through eye contact. The protagonist is able to interpret what women (and also men) think of her only by looking into their eyes.¹⁵³ The eye contact has great importance; in general, it often substitutes a conversation with other women because she interprets their opinions about her. These interpretations are predominantly very cruel towards her. Another key fact about the eye contact between women is that Sasha is sometimes afraid to look into women's eyes. By this she positions herself to a submissive and weak woman: "I would give all that's left of my life to be able to put out my tongue and say: 'One word to you,' as I pass that girl's table. I would give all the rest of my life to be able even to stare coldly at her. As it is, I can't speak to her, I can't even look at her."¹⁵⁴ Sasha must have suppressed her anger to a woman who gossiped about Sasha's past with her friend and a waiter. She was notably not able to protect herself in similar situations.

Despite this Sasha was sometimes able to show the hostility to other women in the past. In one of her flashbacks, she worked as a receptionist in a dress-house. An old lady and her daughter came into the shop. The lady suddenly stopped to try some more hats on the lowest floor. She took off her hat, revealing her bald head. The lady's daughter, hatefully looking at her mother, wanted to go away from the shop. Sasha, on the other hand, sympathized with the old lady, probably thinking about her own ageing. She was suddenly

¹⁵² RHYS 2016. p. 43

¹⁵³ MOLONEY

¹⁵⁴ RHYS 2016. p. 40

able to show her hostility towards the daughter by a cold look.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, this flashback gave an illustration of antagonism between other women, who should normally have a good relationship. The daughter was mean to her old mother: “As they go towards the door the daughter bursts out. A loud, fierce hiss: ‘Well, you made a perfect fool of yourself, as usual. You’ve had everybody in the shop sniggering. If you want to do this again, you’ll have to do it by yourself. I refuse, I refuse.’”¹⁵⁶ The daughter probably perceived her mother unattractive and did not see her wish to buy something new in her old age logical.¹⁵⁷ The mother, on the other hand, ignored her daughter completely. That may mean that she is, like Sasha, unable to protect herself or that she is not interested in the daughter’s opinions at all. What is more, the daughter threatened the mother by words about leaving her. By this part, Rhys may have intended to show how miserably are older women perceived by others, and even the closest relation, like mother-daughter bond, can be destroyed by disrespect to old people, thus the old women are endangered by alienation the most.

Women’s alienation is also apprehended by some men. One of Sasha’s weeping moment reminded Delmar, her male friend, a memory about an alienated mulatto woman, who lived in the same house with him. One night he found her in front of his door. She was drunk, weeping on the floor. He took her into his flat and she urged a drink. She told Delmar her story of alienated life. She lived with a man without being married and people hated her because she was a mulatto.¹⁵⁸ ““She said that every time they [(people in the house)] looked at her she could see how they hated her, and the people in the streets looked at her in the same way.””¹⁵⁹ The mulatto became scared of people after a certain period and she did not leave her flat during the day for two years. According to Delmar, she has something strange in her eyes: “I had all the time this feeling that I was talking to something what was no longer quite human, no longer quite alive”.”¹⁶⁰ By this portrayal Rhys certainly connected the alienated mulatto with the poor kitten and with Sasha as well; they had the same fate – doomed to stand at the edge of society and be very close to the death. Furthermore, the mulatto’s fate was inescapable because that day she had decided to go out for a walk during the afternoon, she met a little girl from the house “the child [...] told her that she was a dirty woman, that she smelled badly, that she hadn’t any right in the house. “I hate you and I wish

¹⁵⁵ RHYS 2016. p. 14

¹⁵⁶ RHYS 2016. p. 15

¹⁵⁷ MOLONEY

¹⁵⁸ RHYS 2016. p. 78

¹⁵⁹ RHYS 2016. p. 78

¹⁶⁰ RHYS 2016. p. 78

you were dead,' the child said."¹⁶¹ By this *Good Morning, Midnight* demonstrates terrible behaviour of society toward this type of women, deepening their alienation day by day by a total hostility. Importantly, also the cruelty of the child immensely stressed the hopelessness that Rhys displays in her novels: "Only seven or eight, and yet she knew so exactly how to be cruel and who is safe to be cruel to."¹⁶² Even a child could recognize the fragile people and had a desire to hurt them, simulating the behaviour of others. By this story, Delmar revealed that the alienation of women is also noticed by others who are able to empathize with them. Delmar realized that women are cruel to each other, noticing their evil eyes as Sasha does.

The last point about the alienation from women is how inescapable it is. The same effect of Rhys's alienation was shown in *Voyage in the dark*. Rhys depicted it when Sasha was buying a hat. She chose a shop where she encountered a very friendly woman and she suddenly felt very calm in her company: "I have been nearly two hours in the shop, but her eyes are still quite friendly."¹⁶³ Significantly, this woman was not cruel at all to the protagonist and Sasha had a strong desire to invite her for dinner. However, she was not able to do it because she did not believe in a possibility of creating a harmonious friendship with a woman: "If I asked her to dine with me, it would only be a failure."¹⁶⁴ By this it can be certainly claimed that also because her doubts in female friendship her chances for any are impossible.

As seen in this chapter, alienation from female sex is significantly and repetitively depicted in *Good Morning, Midnight*. The main character is strongly segregated from other women, unable to create a simple friendship. Her fate of loneliness is inescapable again - there is no possible solution for her alienation from women. Interestingly, the hostility of women is mostly perceived by Sasha through women's eyes that are almost always cruel. The looks of people create a very significant motif connected with alienation and have much greater power than human's words. Moreover, Sasha is often unable of the eye contact thus positioning herself into a weaker person, basically refusing to communicate. Moreover, some repetitive reactions of alienated women were noticed. According to critic Stanford Sternlicht: "women in [Rhys] earlier novels are always hostile, and the protagonists are either hostile in return or they repress anger or flee in tears."¹⁶⁵ This was clearly seen

¹⁶¹ RHYS 2016. p. 79

¹⁶² RHYS 2016. p. 79-80

¹⁶³ RHYS 2016. p. 55

¹⁶⁴ RHYS 2016. p. 55

¹⁶⁵ Qtd. In MONEY

during the analysis of alienation from women. Sasha repressed her anger in the restaurant when two women were gossiping her. She was able to show her hostility as well, even if in a smaller extent. She was also very often weeping and the mulatto woman wept as well – these reactions to hostility were thus very frequent in *Good Morning, Midnight*.

4.3. Alienation from a Place

Even though the alienation from a place is not depicted very clearly and frequently in the novel. It is known that Rhys loved the city of Paris, thus she did not portray it in such a depressive way as London. However, there still could be found some important elements for the analysis.

Sasha is often wandering around Paris, remembering the old times. Some places are quite oppressive because they are connected with her traumatizing past, on the other hand, a few places are full of nice memories. To stay safe, she organized her visit of certain places in Paris quite strictly.¹⁶⁶ She wanted to avoid places where she can be recognized by some people. Moreover, at the beginning of the book it seems that she built a certain discipline in it: “[...] So, no excitement. This is going to be a quiet, sane fortnight. Not too much drinking, avoidance of certain cafés, of certain streets, of certain spots, and everything will go beautifully.”¹⁶⁷ However, Sasha disobeyed her plan more than once and it resulted in a disaster. When she visited Théodore’s restaurant, which was forbidden according to her plan, she was recognized by a waiter and gossiped by him and two young women. In such a place, Sasha felt the most dejected and oppressed: “My throat shuts up, my eyes sting. This is awful. Now I am going to cry. This is the worst...”. This illustrates how miserable feelings were induced by these places because of their connection with the past. Even though these feelings of oppression are closely connected with alienation, it cannot be claimed it directly causes alienation. Despite this, these places can support the overall alienation of the protagonist, which was caused mostly by society. Moreover, these forbidden places were often areas where Sasha met oppressors. As in the restaurant, she met René at the second forbidden place, in the Dôme. She was not able to get rid of him and he caused the final destruction of her relatively stabilized psyché, thus the connection with Sasha’s alienation and some places in Paris is apparent. In contrast with this statement, it can be mentioned that in safe places she met people who were safe for Sasha as well, such as Serge, Delmar and the friendly shop assistant.

¹⁶⁶ RHYS 2016. p. 3

¹⁶⁷ RHYS 2016. p. 8

Rhys also used a similar stylization of repetitiveness and sameness of rooms where Sasha lives; however, this stylization does not seem to be as oppressive as for Anna Morgan. According to Barbara Freeman, Sasha perceives her rooms as an area with certain protection where she can hide from the world and people.¹⁶⁸ However, she did not feel completely protected in Paris because of the commis' (male oppressor from the past) presence. After the commis knocked on Sasha's door and she chased him away, she felt terrified. Importantly, Sasha had an attempt to avoid this oppression, thus she searched for new accommodation immediately, desiring to have a light-filled room this time, not a shabby one. Thus it is seen that the impression of the room is important for her mood. However, she changed her mind probably because she wouldn't be able to pay for it. It is important to remind that the commis probably existed only in her imagination or subconscious, thus the oppression can have been irresolvable. Moreover, the supposed protection by the rooms was also ruined by René's abusive seduction. Asaad Lava also claims that the hotel room cannot be considered a private place and Sasha does not seem to belong in any permanent place in general, thus the stability of her security is diminished. Moreover, her psychic condition suffers because of instability.¹⁶⁹

To conclude, Sasha alienation is not primarily caused by the place. However, she is often oppressed in certain places in Paris, mostly by those connected with her past. Sasha is certainly aware of the oppression but she still unable to avoid it. Sasha's overall alienation is thus supported by this oppression because the places remind her of trauma. What is more, she considered her rooms protective; however, it is hardly convincing mainly because of the conclusion with René.

¹⁶⁸ FREEMAN, Barbara Claire. "Strange Bedfellows." *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction*, University of California Press, 1995, pp. 68–105. p. 93.

¹⁶⁹ ASAAD, Lava. "Phenomenological Analysis of Private Places in Modernism: Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*." *Spring Magazine on English Literature*, 2017, pp. 56–60. p. 57.

5. Alienation in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

5.2. Introduction to the novel

Wide Sargasso Sea, first published in 1966, belongs to Rhys's later novel, which was written after decades of her so-called writing death. Being Rhys's most famous novel it brought her fame as a writer and caused rediscovering of her earlier novels. Moreover, the story is famous for its intertextuality with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The novel, again, is styled in the first-person narrative. However, it differs from her early novels by using two main narrators, Antoinette and her husband, Rhys's first male narrator. The difference is also seen in its departure from the modern setting and an urban area. This time the novel is set in the West Indian islands during the nineteenth century and later on at Thornfield Hall, England. Rhys also "created a story full of Gothic romance, entirely different in tone and style from [...]"¹⁷⁰ her earlier novels. The Gothic style is highlighted by motifs of "zombi" and so-called power "obeah" (something like woo-doo). Rhys's style remains similar mostly in using flashbacks; however, they are divided much more clearly from the presence of the novel. Furthermore, the flashbacks are not that associative as in previous novels.

In general, the story depicts the life of Antoinette (also called Bertha by her husband) and her disastrous marriage with Mr Rochester,¹⁷¹ thus it is a prequel of *Jane Eyre*. Savory describes the story as a "devastating betrayal of sexual trust."¹⁷² Moreover, it must have been shocking for readers of English literature because Rhys "reveals the horrifying reality that might lie behind a man's claim that a woman is mad [...]"¹⁷³ and she hugely transforms the readers' view on Brontë's novel and beloved Mr Rochester. The plot is the richest of all Rhys's novels. The storyline covers a major part of young Antoinette Cosway's life in the West Indies as a daughter of a sugar plantation owner and a mad mother, hated white family who becomes poor after The Slavery Abolition Act of the British Empire. Antoinette's father dies and her mother marries rich Mr Mason; however, the family is ousted by the great fire made by the ex-slaves. Later on, Antoinette becomes an heiress of wealthy Mr Manson and is married to Rochester, who married her only because of her dowry. Majority of the plot is set in one of the West Indian islands during their honeymoon.

¹⁷⁰ SAVORY 2009, p. 80

¹⁷¹ Antoinette's husband is unnamed in the story; however, it is certain that Rhys used the character from *Jane Eyre*.

¹⁷² SAVORY 2009, p. 81

¹⁷³ BIDISHA. An Introduction to *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In: British Library [online]. 26 May 2016. [Accessed 5 February 2019]. Available from: www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/an-introduction-to-wide-sargasso-sea.

Rochester feels uncomfortable in the exotic surrounding, alienated from the place similarly like Rhys's female protagonists from England. Though Antoinette is trying to make the husband love her, Rochester is driven by passion, unable of love. Moreover, Antoinette's half-brother writes Rochester a letter about the madness in the Cosway family and the husband easily believes this defamation. It invokes the husband's attention, but he is not able to understand Antoinette's personality and past, thus her madness is rather caused by his physical deprivation and then by his sexual unfaithfulness. The novel concludes in Thornfield Hall, where Antoinette is locked and humiliated, living in insanity. When she grabs a candle and escapes her prison the readers certainly know what will follow.

The alienation is the crucial element of the book. However, it is portrayed quite differently than in previous novels mostly because there are two main protagonists and the prevailing voice is not given to the woman. Nevertheless, the husband is alienated as well, mostly from the West Indies. Antoinette is strongly alienated from the Afro-Caribbean inhabitants, also from some female characters. Significantly, the couple is primarily alienated from each other. Furthermore, Antoinette is the only protagonist of Rhys, who is later on alienated from self for a longer time, thus the theme of alienation occurs in several levels of the novel. The title of the novel can also hint that alienation is not portrayed only as oppression from one side; however, it is rather a complex problem, minimally "double". Olasupo believes that the Sargasso Sea is located between the West Indies and the Atlantic Ocean and like Antoinette it is positioned between two "worlds" and two races, belonging fully to neither.¹⁷⁴ However, it is still, like Antoinette, closer to the West Indies and further to England – this geographical layout roughly and metaphorically portraits heroines position in the fictional world.

5.3. The Connection of Two Alienations

This chapter aims to show how alienation from the place is interrelated to alienation of the married couple, Antoinette and Rochester. The *Wide Sargasso Sea* is mostly set in Jamaica and in Granbois, a small island, where the married couple travels for the honeymoon. The prevailing narrator in Granbois is Rochester, thus his feelings are depicted more than Antoinette's inner world. Her husband experienced a totally different world in comparison with his English home. For Rochester, Jamaica was like a dream, something that was

¹⁷⁴ OLASUPO, Akintunde. Alienation and Madness: A Literary-Psychopathological Approach. In: *Open Science Repository Language and Linguistics* [Online]. 13 February 2013. [Accessed 14 February 2019]. Available from: <http://www.open-science-repository.com/alienation-and-madness-a-literary-psychopathological-approach.html>

unreal.¹⁷⁵ The colours of the island were too varied and bright, and the air was too hot for Rochester. It can be claimed that Rhys logically uses opposite motifs to describe the alienation of the man in comparison with female alienation in England. Rochester also fell ill as Anna Morgan did after their arrival to a foreign country, which can be a metaphorical expression of not fitting in the place. By this empathetic depiction of Rochester's feelings, Rhys highlights that the alienation is not only a matter of women and England in her fiction but it is a feeling that can strike anybody.

Even though Rochester initially appreciated the beauty of the place, many things were alien to him and the initial appreciation quickly disappeared. Rochester was strongly annoyed by the place at the end of their honeymoon. He thought: "I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunset of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know."¹⁷⁶ Importantly, in some way he was frustrated by the fact he could not reveal the positivity, this magic and the secret of the place. It is certainly closely connected with the reconciliation of his wife because Antoinette is strongly connected to the place. Antoinette was surely different from the *cold* women in England, she was active, enthusiastic and sexually passionate. Staley Thomas argues that their relationship was not destroyed by Rochester's intention to marry Antoinette for money but by their mutual difference of which Rochester was scared. Moreover, Antoinette was too difficult to understand; she, according to Staley, required too much "by a desperate urgency to bring him into her private world, to live naturally and passionately within the rhythms of the natural environment she knows. But it is a world which Edward can neither accept nor understand."¹⁷⁷

To give a detailed illustration of this difference, it can be said that she not only seemed to be very active, full of life, enthusiastic about the nature in the West Indies but also about England. What must have been incomprehensible for Rochester, was also the melancholy and sadness of his wife. It appeared mostly after the sunset and was certainly caused by her traumatic experience from childhood. Despite Rochester's coldness, Antoinette fell in love with him. However, Rochester could not get accustomed the exotic world and the exotic wife; moreover, he intended to take everything by power, as he was used to in patriarchal England, and this manner caused the main crisis.

¹⁷⁵ RHYS, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: Penguin Books, 2011. p 58.

¹⁷⁶ RHYS 2011, p. 136

¹⁷⁷ STALEY, Thomas. "Wide Sargasso Sea." *Jean Rhys A Critical Study*, London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979, pp. 100–121. p. 109.

His alienation from the place was directly proportional to his alienation from his wife. He has never loved Antoinette but he was only “savage with desire.”¹⁷⁸ However, Antoinette’s intentions were different, her primary need was to be loved and she required the love. By this she did not position herself as a commodity, thus Rochester reacted by the power. Gildersleeve states that by this attitude he can be a representation of a British coloniser:¹⁷⁹ “Rochester [...] wish[es] to conquer women in the same way they conquer and colonize the island: [he] want[s] ‘what it *hides*.’”¹⁸⁰ By the dissatisfaction of his desire to reveal the hidden and his wife’s desire for the love he reacted by a strong hatred towards the place and Antoinette: “[...] Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and loveliness. She had me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it.”¹⁸¹ What is more, he felt surprised by himself and his savageness, thus he tried to suppress his lust. Furthermore, to illustrate the connection of the place and Antoinette, it can be shown how slyly he destroyed the meaning of the place and simultaneously Antoinette’s sanity. Rochester intentionally made love with Amélie, the black maid, right next to Antoinette’s bedroom to make her hear everything. After this she slipped in “madness” but it was not primarily because he destroyed the marriage:

“Do you know what you’ve done to me? It’s not the girl, not the girl. But 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.”¹⁸²

After the affair, Antoinette became hysterical as her mother did when she lost her beloved Coulibri estate. Moreover, Rochester declared the house in the island his property and when leaving the place, he sold it, what can be considered an act of intentional attack on Antoinette’s identity. For Rhys the houses or flats had a certain connection with one’s identity, her heroines are mostly without any stable housing. Antoinette’s first house was destroyed by the Afro-Caribbeans, her second house was transformed from the beloved place into the place of filth. Rochester was able to deepen Antoinette’s alienation of place by one single act, by this Rhys shows how powerful men are in her fiction. Furthermore, in comparison with the female protagonists, Rochester’s alienation from the place was escapable, he easily got rid of the place and then he left the West Indies.

¹⁷⁸ RHYS 2011, p. 69

¹⁷⁹ GILDERSLEEVE, Jessica. “Gender in Wide Sargasso Sea.” *Encyclopedia of Themes in Literature*, Facts On File, 2011, pp. 901–902. p. 901

¹⁸⁰ GILDERSLEEVE 2011, p. 902

¹⁸¹ RHYS 2011, p. 137

¹⁸² RHYS 2011, p. 115

Because of the interconnection, he can easily escape his wife as well: “I too can wait – for the day when she is only a memory to be avoided, locked away, and like all memories a legend. Or a lie ...”¹⁸³ However, Rochester escaped her in a very cruel way. As he was incapable to leave his wife in the West Indies, he insisted to take her to England with him; thus he turned her into the commodity and literally locked her away. He, of course, had another option but his savage desire and colonizer’s manners were stronger. Despite Christophine’s (the closest person of Antoinette) warning, he rejected her plan to leave Antoinette with half of her dowry in the island. The rejection was uttered right after Christophine said that Antoinette will be certainly happy again and that she has a chance to be married again. Rochester could not bear this jealousy and sent Christophine away. Subsequently, he thought about his wife as about something less than human, a creature that serves men. He thought: “Vain, silly creature. Made for loving? Yes, but she’ll have no lover, for I don’t want her and she’ll see no other. [...] She’s mad but *mine, mine.*”¹⁸⁴ By locking her in the attic, he keeps her as a possession or a trophy from the exotic world, a trophy which is locked and easily forgotten, thus he partly dismisses his alienation from her. However, as mentioned, he stayed “thirsty” of the desire, thus he stayed alienated in some degree from the West Indies and his wife for the rest of his life.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys works with oppositions of two different countries and characters who are strongly connected to their part of the world, thus unable to understand one another and their different culture. In the novel, Rhys brings the readers to her exotic “motherland” and portrays the female protagonist in the rhythm of this place. The main crisis is created by their mutual difference and mainly by Rochester, who is unable to accept the difference of his wife as something to live in harmony with. He attacks her identity, breaking her soul by the destruction of her beloved place and their relationship.

5.4. Alienation from Society

The double alienation is portrayed again in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Being a white Creole and the daughter of a former slave owner alienated Antoinette from most of the Afro-Caribbean inhabitants. Since childhood Anna was aware of this tension between the two races: “They hated us. They called us white cockroaches.”¹⁸⁵ As a child she was living a solitary life and she was even bullied by Afro-Caribbean children. Later on, she and her mother lived more

¹⁸³ RHYS 2011, p. 137

¹⁸⁴ RHYS 2011, p. 131

¹⁸⁵ RHYS 2011, p. 8.

and more in fear of the Afro-Caribbeans mostly after mother's second marriage with Mr Mason, who saved the family from poverty, and people began to hate them more and more. The fear was even worse after the sunset thus it can be said the *darkness* has a profound effect on Antoinette also in her adult age. Furthermore, the hatred of the Afro-Caribbeans resulted in the burning of the Coulibri estate during which the younger brother of Antoinette died. The burning of the house can symbolize the beginning of her (yet unclear) identity lost. This loss appears to be gradual and it certainly escalates by Rochester's destructive manner, which results in the damage of Antoinette's sanity.

Alienation of the protagonist from society can be also depicted on a childhood relationship of Antoinette and Tia, an Afro-Caribbean girl. Tia and Antoinette could not become real friends because Tia chose to be hostile. After all, she perceived Antoinette's race as an unbearable difference. However, Antoinette naturally desires to belong somewhere, have an identity, thus when the Afro-Caribbeans set their house in the fire she ran towards Tia, who was watching their escape from the distance. Antoinette desired to live with them rather than with her white family whose identity is lost. Tawfiq and Abu-Samra argue that through their friendship Antoinette would be able to identify with the West Indies, she would be able to consider it a home.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, when she was closer, Tia vigorously ended this desire by hitting Antoinette by a stone. According to Thomas Staley this "confirms Antoinette's ultimate separation from the black culture [.]"¹⁸⁷ Since this moment Antoinette became quite distrustful of the Afro-Caribbeans. However, to not see everything in black and white - after Tia threw the stone, the girls were looking at each other for a while and Antoinette could see a reflection of herself in Tia. The reflection can show that Antoinette and Tia are actually the same – human beings; however, they live in the wrong time to identify. By the reflection, Rhys indicates that Antoinette feels more like the Afro-Caribbeans. Moreover, Tia was crying thus it can be said she made this violent act only to cohere with the rest of the Afro-Caribbeans thus she feared to lose her identity by showing friendly emotions to Antoinette. Importantly, Antoinette is able to have good relationships with some Afro-Caribbeans after the fire, mostly with her nun Chtistophine. Later on, it is revealed that she probably had an affair with Sandi, her coloured distant relative.

During the storyline, the hatred between the two races can be noticed repetitively. One of the most hostile act is, for instance, made by Antoinette's mulatto half-

¹⁸⁶ YOUSEF, Tawfiq, and Reem Abu-Samra. "Identity Crisis in Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea Revisited." *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, Feb. 2017, pp. 109–121. p. 112-113.

¹⁸⁷ STALEY 1979, p. 104

brother, Daniel. He sent a letter to Rochester about the madness in the Cosway family, creating even greater distance between the couple. Daniel also denigrated Antoinette's chastity by telling Rochester about her childhood love Sandi: "You're not the first to kiss her pretty face."¹⁸⁸ The letter was very convincing, on the other hand, as Staley suggests, it helped Rochester to get rid of his husband role and find an excuse for their separation.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Daniel warned Rochester to be wary of Christophine, who was described as an untrustworthy liar. She was, on the other hand, a person who was honest about Antoinette's past. The letter marks the end of their relationship and it is also a turning point of the novel. Another hateful act happened after the fire. Antoinette lived in her aunt's house and when she went to school she was followed by an albino boy and an Afro-Caribbean girl who both tried to frighten the young girl. She was probably bullied by these children on a regular basis. Despite this fact, Savory notices how "racial barriers are constantly breached."¹⁹⁰ Even though she had been warned by her white family to distrust all her mulatto relatives, she was saved from these two children by Sandi.¹⁹¹ Though the heroine cannot become a part of Afro-Caribbean cultural identity and has many enemies among people in the Caribbean, she is not purely hateful towards them.

When the Cosways became poor during Antoinette's childhood also the whites began to ignore them: "They didn't look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger."¹⁹² This shows the second side of the protagonist's double alienation. The money played a great role in alienation from the whites and without the money the whites lost their identity and position. Anna perceived it during her childhood: "Real white people, they got gold money."¹⁹³ During this period mostly Antoinette mother suffered, she watched how her house and children were fading. She must have also noticed how Antoinette grows like a small savage. Even deeper alienation from the whites was seen after the fire incident at Coulibry, the family of Antoinette estranged from each other. The strongest alienation, for instance, began between Antoinette's mother and Mr Mason. Notably, this alienation had a similar pattern as Rochester and Antoinette's one because "[...] when she lose her son she lose herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad, they act like she is

¹⁸⁸ RHYS 2011, p. 97

¹⁸⁹ STALEY 1979, p. 110

¹⁹⁰ SAVORY 2009, p. 87

¹⁹¹ SAVORY 2009, p. 87

¹⁹² RHYS 2011, p. 9

¹⁹³ RHYS 2011, p. 9

mad. [...] But no kind word, no friends, and her husband he go off, he leave her.”¹⁹⁴ Antoinette almost lost the contact with her family after the fire. Her stepfather occasionally visited her, but he did not spend most of his time in the West Indies. Antoinette lived with her aunt for a while; however, she soon travelled to England as well, thus the girl had to be sent to a boarding school. Rhys indicates that the protagonist was reunited with the family for a while after many years, probably taken her from the boarding school in order to prepare her for the marriage, thus treated her as with a commodity as well. Interestingly, Rochester’s family is portrayed as divided as well. His father seemed to be very authoritative and preferred the firstborn son over him. He was driven into the marriage probably by a duty he felt towards his family. Though he could have experienced unloved family setting, he certainly identified with Englishness and the white race.

Rhys again uses double alienation of the Creole character, who cannot identify either with whites or the Afro-Caribbeans, thus stuck in between two cultures. However, Antoinette has desired to belong somewhere since her childhood and when her family does not provide her with the desired identity she tries to associate with the Afro-Caribbeans. Nevertheless, she is strictly rejected and her identity suffers. Importantly, she is not purely alienated from both races because she still has some relationships among both.

5.4.1. Alienation from Women

During the storyline, several female relationships are portrayed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Antoinette is clearly alienated from her mother Annette. Since they are poor Antoinette was not only unkempt, but her mother also did not provide her with parental love. One such a moment is described by Antoinette: “I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once for all that I was useless to her.”¹⁹⁵ Moreover, it seems that her mother favoured Antoinette’s brother Pierre, who was disabled, because she spent most of the time with him. Though alienated from each other, they appear to be similar in many ways. Both women, for instance, had a quite similar destiny, both were told to be mad and locked away. As it could be seen in *Voyage in the Dark*, the maternal love was often problematic in Rhys’s novels and it was replaced by the care of an Afro-Caribbean woman. It was clearly Christophine who was the closest person to Antoinette. Their relationship seemed to be as a real mother-daughter bond. However, Adjarian states that: “Although Christophine clearly cares for Antoinette, race and

¹⁹⁴ RHYS 2011, p. 124

¹⁹⁵ RHYS 2011, p. 5

class difference keep them separated: Antoinette will always be “béké” (that is, white or white Creole), she will always be black.”¹⁹⁶ Both women were certainly aware of this difference, but there were no “cold” looks between them, nothing that would indicate their alienation from each other. It can be thus stated that Antoinette was not purely without female support in the West Indies. Furthermore, after the affair with Amélie, Christophine had to calm Antoinette down, then she tried to persuade Rochester to leave her at the island or try to love her. Nevertheless, Rochester sent her away and the women have never seen each other since that day. Antoinette thus lost the only woman she trusted, again, by the power of a man. Another female character who was quite close to Antoinette was aunt Cora, who cared for the young girl after the fire accident. Their relationship was not that strong as with Christophine; however, there was no negativity either. Moreover, aunt Cora disagreed with the Masons about the marriage with Rochester, she wanted the best for Antoinette. The illustration of these two relationships showed that Antoinette was not completely alienated from other women. Similar relationships were not seen in the analysed novels by Rhys.

The tension and rivalry, which was already seen in Rhys previous novels, was noticed in behaviour of Amélie, who later on seduced Rochester. She also cooperated with Daniel Cosway and they both tried to destroy the new marriage. She, for instance, intentionally provoked Antoinette when she noticed that the letter came, thus she may have wanted to show some bad attributes of Antoinette. Rochester witnessed:

“‘Christophine don’t like this sweet honeymoon house.’ Turning round she saw me and laughed loudly. ‘Your husband [...] [m]ust be tired of the sweet honeymoon house too.’ Antoinette jumped out of bed and slapped her face. ‘I hit you back white cockroach, I hit you back,’ said Amélie. And she did.”¹⁹⁷

The hatred is predominantly caused by their racial difference and probably by Amélie’s envy. Importantly, the tension between them was demonstrated by the violence, which Rhys seldom depicts between two women. By this, she highlights the strength and the passionate temperament of the protagonist, who is determined to protect herself. Amélie was, on the other hand, frightened of Christophine. After seducing Rochester, she left the island to escape Christophine’s anger. However, before leaving she admitted she pitied Antoinette

¹⁹⁶ ADJARIAN, M. M. Between and beyond Boundaries in ‘Wide Sargasso Sea.’ College Literature [Online]. 1995. Vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 202–209. JSTOR, [Accessed 20 February 2019]. Available from: www.jstor.org/stable/25112175. Accessed 25 Feb. 2020. p. 203

¹⁹⁷ RHYS 2011, p. 74

little bit¹⁹⁸, thus she was not purely hateful about her as it had seemed before. Antoinette indicated the same when she had a row about her husband's affair.

The alienation from women was mostly seen in the mother-daughter relationship with her mother Annette, this bond was replaced by the relationship with Christophine. Moreover, the protagonist was strongly alienated from two Afro-Caribbeans, Amélie and Tia (analysed in the previous chapter), and this alienation became even a result of a violent clash between the woman. In general, Antoinette has also some deeper bond with other women, thus she is not strictly alienated from every woman in the novel.

5.5. Alienation from One's Self

The alienation from the self is closely connected with Antoinette's loss of identity that was described in previous chapters. Even more profound loss of self is depicted at the end of the novel. When the alienation from her beloved place was done by Rochester, she did not keep her sanity, which seems to be natural for humans; however, these uncontrolled emotions were immediately seen as the madness by Rochester. Importantly, the hysteria was accepted very calmly by him and he did not try to help his wife either. When leaving the honeymoon house, Antoinette's behaviour was completely changed, from an enthusiastic and lively young woman became a passive, cold and hateful Bertha. "She was staring out to the distant sea. She was silence itself. [...] She was only a ghost. A ghost in the grey daylight. Nothing left but hopelessness. [...] I scarcely recognize her voice. No warmth, no sweetness."¹⁹⁹ Interestingly, the weather on the island changed as well - the sunny and hot weather disappeared and "a cold wind" began,²⁰⁰ thus the connection between her and the place can be seen again.

The change of Antoinette's sanity, as indicated before, was caused by various effects. Her husband, for instance, began to call her Bertha and by this change of the name she was also driven to the insanity and the loss of identity: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name."²⁰¹ Antoinette thus believed that names have significant meaning for one's self. Rochester was basically transforming his wife into his own shape because he was afraid of the passionate woman he married. Though the change had a profound effect on her, she tried to resist; however, the resistance was not what the husband would expect, thus his attack on her identity harden.

¹⁹⁸ RHYS 2011, p. 110

¹⁹⁹ RHYS 2011, p. 133, 135

²⁰⁰ RHYS 2011, p. 131

²⁰¹ RHYS 2011, p. 115

According to Adjarian “Rochester coerces his wife to subsume her identity and all the cultural and personal associations that go along with it into one he has constructed for her.”²⁰²

Antoinette’s alienation of self was noticeable mostly in the Thornfield Hall when she was locked in the attic, absorbed in her loneliness and insanity. In the West Indies when she was talking about England she highly idealized the country. Rochester knew that he will not change her notion of the land and he surmised that this idealization can unsettle her when she experiences the reality.²⁰³ Rochester’s belief was correct. Moreover, while they were travelling to England, Antoinette’s psychical condition was already poor and it probably caused that she believed they have never reached England. She claimed that they were in some cold, unknown country, thus the alienation from England is portrayed most deeply.

The attic was described as almost unfurnished and cold place. After her arrival, she was immediately locked there and never visited by her husband again. She was looked after by Grace Pool, a woman who always counts her money and drinks a lot and according to Antoinette someone who did not deserve name Grace.²⁰⁴ The only positive thing about the attic was the fireplace because Antoinette/Bertha enjoyed watching the fire, which certainly symbolizes her bygone temperament and her beloved country. The motif of red fire was mentioned repetitively at the end of the novel. She was surely longing for the West Indies, the only connection with her homeland and the attic was not only the fire but also her red dress. When she smelled it, she imagined every detail of her beloved country, the dress associates also a memory of Sandi, her old love. It also reminded her of her “intemperate and unchaste”²⁰⁵ self she must have suppressed. The red dress was another symbol of her passion manner.

While in the attic, the self of her was lost or somehow elusive, the protagonist wondered who she actually is. She remembered the looking glass that was taken away from the attic. When she looked into it she desired to kiss her reflection, which was her metaphorical younger self: “[b]ut the glass was between us – hard, cold and misted over with my breath.”²⁰⁶ This scene shows that the self was hardly achievable and it proves how she missed herself. Rhys uses the mirrors with the connection of the character’s perception of self in the novel. During the early days of the marriage, Antoinette often smiled at herself in the mirror. During that time, she must have been satisfied with herself, probably believed

²⁰² ADJARIAN 1995, p. 207.

²⁰³ RHYS 2011, p. 70

²⁰⁴ RHYS 2011, p. 143

²⁰⁵ RHYS 2011, p. 148

²⁰⁶ RHYS 2011, p. 144

that Rochester will help to find her identity. Moreover, she sometimes escaped the attic and walked around the house, once she heard about a female ghost, not realizing that it is her. Importantly, she also behaved as she has forgotten about something - about the reason she came here. In the attic Antoinette's "downward spiral"²⁰⁷ basically reached the bottom.

However, everything changed in the final part of the novel when she dreamed about setting a great fire in the house; she suddenly knew who the ghost was. The dream serves as a resurrection of the self, as the final stream of consciousness that reminded her of who she really became – a shell of a woman broken by the man with patriarchal power. She resisted this role for the last time. Adjarian believes: "Thus, when Antoinette dreams of setting fire to Rochester's house at the end of the story, she unconsciously employs the fire imagery and its associations to express the rage she feels at having been used, like the ex-slaves, for another's profit."²⁰⁸ By this association she became similar to the ex-slaves who destroyed their Coulibri estate, she was suddenly able to identify with them because she became the same. Thus the circle of the identity loss reached its end/beginning and she finally found herself. Standing on the battlements, she sees Tia by the pool from their childhood, "[S]he beckoned to me [...] I called "Tia!" and jumped and woke."²⁰⁹ After the dream Antoinette knew why she was brought to the place, she grabbed the candle, escaped the attic and went to finish everything.²¹⁰ Even if the protagonist was at the weakest condition of human existence, she was able to resist and demolish the control over her by the revenge. Adjarian writes that "she steals [her identity] back"²¹¹ by the fire, the symbol which is so similar to the West Indian sun and her soul.²¹²

The novel portrays the gradual loss of one's own identity. The loss begins with burning down the Coulibri estate, then it escalates and results in almost utter emptiness of the one. This identity loss is perceived and described as madness. The novel, however, solves in the powerful attack on the initial aggressor of the protagonist, who can regain her identity back by the association of herself with her former Afro-Caribbean enemies. Furthermore, she frees herself by the purifying death and steals herself from Rochester's possession.

²⁰⁷ ADJARIAN 1995, p. 204

²⁰⁸ ADJARIAN 1995, p. 207

²⁰⁹ RHYS 2011, p. 151

²¹⁰ RHYS 2011, p. 152

²¹¹ ADJARIAN 1995, p. 208

²¹² ADJARIAN 1995, p. 208

6. The Comparative Analysis and Reflection of Rhys's Influence

The thesis analysed three novels of Jean Rhys, two of them were written in her earlier period of the writing career and the third was written after more than twenty years of so-called authoress' literary death. Though the date of publishing is quite contrasting, all the novels have many similarities. All of them use the theme of alienation remarkably, focusing especially on female protagonists who are victims of alienation.

All three novels show the protagonist's alienation from society, which can be certainly highlighted as the most significant type of alienation. Anna and Antoinette are of the same, West Indian, origin and thus suffer the similar alienation which is portrayed as *double*. Both protagonists are alienated from the Afro-Caribbeans and the whites, belonging to neither of two races. Sasha does not share the *double* alienation because Rhys does not mention her origin; however, she is also strongly alienated from men and women. To illustrate the similarity of their alienation from society even more, it can be claimed that the men were the most destructive oppressors, causing alienation in Rhys's novels. Anna, Sasha and Antoinette suffered from unfulfilled love and also from betrayal and male's patriarchal behaviour. Moreover, Sasha and Antoinette's destiny depicted that marriage is not a way of protection for women. Central to the novels is also the low social status of Anna and Sasha that is conclusively frozen. They both cannot gain a better position in the society and this is closely connected with the impossible escape from alienation. Alienation, on the other hand, has a great tendency to be deepened by various circumstances that happen throughout the novel. Another strong similarity can be found in the problematics of female relationships, any deeper bond with women is not gained by Anna and Sasha. In *Voyage in the Dark* the women are mostly unable to help each other whereas in *Good Morning, Midnight* the women are prevalingly portrayed as hostile. The last novel, on the other hand, depicts some genuine female relationships thus the protagonist is not purely alienated from all female characters. There is, however, strong antagonism between some women and Antoinette, resulting in violent conflicts. Furthermore, one should not forget that Anna and Antoinette are strongly alienated from the representation of mother figure, thus seeking protection rather in their Afro-Caribbean nuns/maids - this alienation emphasises that they are both alienated from their early age.

Such a portrayal of alienation from society can have been influenced by various factors. The double alienation is undoubtedly inspired by Rhys's own double alienation caused by her Creole origin. Savory writes that "[s]he had an intense ambivalence towards

both the Caribbean and England and was, in her culturally complex identity as she grew older, unable to entirely belong anywhere.”²¹³ The mother-daughter unfulfilled portrayal can have been also inspired by her own complicated relationships with parents. She felt unwanted and her younger sister seemed to be more preferred.²¹⁴ Rhys, on the other hand, was as her heroines well cared by the Afro-Caribbeans at a convent school. Because of their strong impact, her desire to be black arose²¹⁵ as in her heroines. To illustrate her influence even more, it can be mentioned that she had a very bad experience with relationships with men. She had lost her illusions about love very early, thus this male destructive power in her novels is also inspired by her life. Her disappointments with men were repetitive; however, she looked for protection again and again. Stanley states that “[it] reinforced for her female dependence and male dominance as a fact of life.”²¹⁶

The alienation from a place is also significant in the novels; however, the analysis shows more differences. Each of the three novels is set in a different place, thus the alienation from a place is naturally more complex. The most different is Sasha’s alienation, who seems to be not that strongly alienated from Paris or any other place. The city is depicted occasionally as oppressive because of its connection with Sasha’s past; however, some places are portrayed as beautiful and pleasant. Paris thus causes only minor alienation. Rhys’s affection for Paris and French culture could cause that this geography was not as alienating as England in her fiction. The other novels, on the other hand, illustrate strong and obvious alienation from a place. Anna’s one is caused by the difference of England that is very oppressive for her. Especially London and the rooms she lives in are the most alienating settings of the novel. Importantly, Rhys uses motifs of cold, darkness and repetitiveness, which considerably strengthen the atmosphere of Anna’s alienation from the place. In addition, Anna uses juxtapositions of the West Indies that are always idealized to highlight the difference between the two places. The character, on the other hand, prefers rural areas, which are not that alienating. Antoinette is influenced by the motifs of coldness and darkness as well, however, not in such an extent. The motif of darkness is connected rather with the alienation from the Afro-Caribbean society. Moreover, the protagonist is very melancholic

²¹³ SAVORY, Elaine. *Jean Rhys*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pdf.p. 3

²¹⁴ REDEMACHER, Marie Géraldine. *Narcissistic Mothers in Modernist Literature: New Perspectives on Motherhood in the Works of D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Rhys*. Transcript, 2019. p. 23

²¹⁵ STALEY, Thomas. “Art and Experience.” *Jean Rhys A Critical Study*, London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979, pp. 1–20. p. 3

²¹⁶ STALEY 1979. p. 7

and sad after the sunset and it is caused by her fears from the childhood trauma, not from the place. Though alienated from England, Antoinette's estrangement is crucially different because she is not even aware of being at England. As she is locked in the attic, the aspect of the urban and rural environment and its influence on alienation cannot be seen, therefore it occurs only in *Voyage in the Dark*. Despite the difference, both women are longing for their bygone homeland and they temporarily escape the oppressive place by vivid flashbacks full of colours and scents. However, it is not possible to return to the country physically for both. What is evidently significant about the women's alienation, is that Antoinette once owned a house and identified with it; however, it was easily destroyed by Rochester, thus she lost part of her identity. Anna and Sasha, in contrast, do not own any house or flat and this supports their alienation because most of these rented rooms are antagonistic to them. Interestingly, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* alienation of Rochester is portrayed as well. He is, similarly as the women, unable to adapt to the environment and is alienated from the exotic place. Rhys, therefore, shows how men can be alienated and how the foreign country influences the alienation. Moreover, the magic of the place causes the rise of his savage lust, thus he gains a position of the coloniser. By his antagonism, he is gradually alienating from both the place and his wife, this alienation is therefore closely connected. In contrast with women, Rochester could escape his alienation from the place, this proves the general power of men in Rhys's novels.

Rhys's postcolonial view is closely connected with the depiction of alienation from the place. The heroines' alienation from the place can be a reflection of Rhys's own alienation. It is known that she hated England since her early age. The West Indies and England are diametrically different in the environment and the writer uses the depiction of the difference quite often. According to Staley "[s]he was physically overwhelmed by the English climate, which nearly killed her [the] first winter. The drastic climatic change becomes a constant metaphor in her work to dramatize the parallel, chilling psychological effects of England."²¹⁷ What seems to be a key fact about her life is that she often lived in rented rooms and she used this rather negative experience in her novels. Rhys, in general, experienced several periods of alienation during her life and that is why she described the feelings of her protagonists and the overall atmosphere of the loneliness perfectly.

The last analysed type of alienation in the three novels was alienation from self; however, it was clearly depicted only in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Sasha, on the other hand, has

²¹⁷ STALEY 1979, p. 5

only a minor loss of self during the final stream of consciousness. Antoinette loses her identity gradually and for a longer period. She lives utterly without her identity for several years in the attic. The alienation of self is also connected with her insanity – this portrayal fits with the theory of alienation by Nancy Grey Díaz. The protagonist is longing for the self, having doubts who she is or how does she look like. This type of alienation and the other types of her alienation are, however, defeated in the conclusion of the novel. Antoinette is the only character who can escape it. The other two novels do not provide such a portrayal of alienation from self thus similarities cannot be found. The three individuals are relatively different in psychology; however, it seems that Anna and Sasha are “[...] manifestation of the same psychological type [...]”²¹⁸ only differed at age. It is estimated that protagonists in Rhys’s early novels are the same person growing old and changing name, being probably her own alter-ego. However, the time distance of *Wide Sargasso Sea* from her early novels probably changed the authoress style in the depiction her heroines. Antoinette is not as similar as Anna or Sasha and the writer. The reason for such a portrayal of alienation, resolution of the novel and writer’s inspiration cannot be found.

What can be also analysed is the reason for the heroine’s alienation. The cause of the alienation of the three women is similar in the pitilessness and hostility of society that destroys the three women. Society misuses the weakness of the women’s difference and uses its power against them. That is why alienation from society is the strongest one in all the novels. However, other reasons for the alienations are various - it is also Anna’s immaturity, passivity and her poverty that supports her alienation. Staley claims that Rhys herself used to be shy mostly during her younger age. She was a faint-hearted woman who believed that people do not really respect her.²¹⁹ Sasha’s alienation is, on the other hand, caused by her ageing, her miserable past experience and her sudden openness to a man. After the first love affair that ended by a catastrophe, Rhys lost her trust in men, she began to be less open. However, it appears that she was not fortunate in most of her relationships, she was thus frustrated by men more and more. Rhys knew how “in [women’s] desperate search for protection, they can so easily be exploited and torn apart.”²²⁰ Antoinette’s reason for alienation is also caused by men’s patriarchal power, thus it is relatively similar to Sasha’s reason. Moreover, it also caused by her origin that differentiates her from her husband. The reasons of alienation are therefore various; however, in the core of all this stands society as

²¹⁸ MELLOWN 1990, p. 112

²¹⁹ STALEY 1979, p. 9

²²⁰ STALEY 1979, p. 13

the evil antagonist, who is strongly criticized by the Rhys's portrayal of alienated female protagonists.

Conclusion

The thesis focused on the analysis of the theme of alienation in three novels of Jean Rhys: *Voyage in the Dark*, *Good Morning*, *Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It particularly concentrated on the three female protagonists Anna, Sasha and Antoinette, who suffered from strong alienation and isolation, rootlessness and sadness. The minor part of the thesis was also focused on Rochester, the only male character, and it was emphasised that his alienation is quite different by the ability to escape easily from it. The main aim of the thesis was to analyse the theme of alienation in the three novels in detail, which was done according to the structure given by the theory of alienation by Nancy Grey Diaz. The structure was the alienation from society, from a place and self – the alienation of society was also supported by chapters concerning alienation from women because during the analysis it appeared that this type is very noteworthy and more detailed attention is needed.

To conclude the main aim, the analysis revealed that the novels depicted the protagonists' strong alienation from society and it was demonstrated that it is the most significant type of alienation in Rhys's fiction. All three protagonists were alienated from the society, this is, thus, the greatest resemblance of the novels. The theoretical part showed that this type of alienation is also eminent in the modernist literary canon, thus, similarities with other writers would be probably seen as well. Central to the Rhys's theme is also the double type of alienation depicted in two of the analysed novels (*Voyage in the dark*, *WSS*). Moreover, it was indicated that this alienation bothered the writer herself, the inspiration is therefore derived from her life experience. Female protagonists were especially alienated due to patriarchal power caused by male characters; moreover, their relationships with other women were also not possible or decayed. The alienation from a place appeared to be prominent in the novels as well; however, the analysis showed more complexity and differences. The most similar was the alienation of Anna and Antoinette, who underwent the relocation from their beloved West Indies and longed for their place of origin. They, therefore, lost their former identity. Sasha, in contrast, did not suffer by alienation from a place in such a way. However, the setting of the novel was alienating because of its partial oppression. To continue with the third type of alienation, it was noticeable that alienation from the self was developed only in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and was connected with the insanity of the character. It can be summarized that the portrayal of alienation in Rhys's novels had a lot of common traces. Most of the similarities were seen in alienation from society, some were also depicted by alienation from a place. However, the minor type of alienation was

the last one, portrayed only in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, thus also quite significant differences could be seen.

Though the time span of publishing *Wide Sargasso Sea* showed the differences in the setting and the style of the novel, the main theme of Rhys remained relatively similar. However, the last aspect to point out is that there is one significant difference that can strike the readers. According to the interpretation, the alienation was a prevailingly inescapable condition, showing the terrible condition that tends to repeat again and again. However, the resolution of *Wide Sargasso Sea* for me and some critics is a very different from the previous novels because of Antoinette's escape. The writer thus provides the very positive ending in the last novel. The character was suddenly strong enough to defy her oppressors and frees herself by the liberating death. The thesis, however, cannot provide a reason for such ending, Rhys basically could have perceived Brontë's ending for Bertha as positive.

The initial consideration, which was provided in the introduction, was partially correct. The novels of Rhys certainly illustrated the similar portrayal of alienation and the style of depicting is mostly analogous. However, the types of character were not always the same because Rhys's last greater novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* introduced the character of a different temperament. Even though her difference did not protect her from alienation, which, on the other hand, seemed to be even stronger because of alienation from the self is included, it cannot be ignored that Antoinette was the only one character who escaped her alienation at the end. Furthermore, the final reflection proved that the main factors of influence were taken from the writer's life events and some similarities with her novel were found, the assumption about this was therefore proven correct. The portrayal of alienation from society and a place was directly inspired by the writer's unique life experience, which added remarkable value of her fiction. The main inspiration was, for instance, caused by Rhys's repetitive disappointment of her relationships with men. She therefore always created a male character who was oppressive or causing even deeper alienation. It was not, on the other hand, seen what was the writer's inspiration for the portrayal of alienation from self. In general, because of her vivid experience, the writer was able to depict the alienation in a very complex way, as analysis showed the novels were provided with various motifs supporting the dark atmosphere of alienation.

As the last point, it can be recommended how to make future research of the novels by Jean Rhys. This thesis found out that some moments of Rhys's life influenced her novels. It would be very interesting to create a detailed analysis of these moments in all her novels in comparison with her real-life experience and find out which of her novels is the

most autobiographical. For such analysis, I would personally recommend biography: *Jean Rhys: Life and Work* by Carole Angier.

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