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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku
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Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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1. INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that the discrimination and marginalisation of different social groups and communities is a present and ongoing problem in our society. These social divisions and marginalisation of certain groups are usually based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion, or sexuality. There has always been a tendency to divide one group from the other, to marginalise the 'Other' in society. As Simone de Beauvoir, a famous philosopher and feminist, explains in the introduction to her book *The Second Sex*, the category of the Other is fundamental to human society since the sense of duality can be found in the most primitive societies and mythologies (26). De Beauvoir took this concept from Hegel, who first used it to explain that in one's self-consciousness, there is a fundamental opposition to any other consciousness, i.e., "the subject posits itself only in opposition" (27). According to Berenson, Hegel made an important insight about self-knowledge: one cannot understand the single self entirely without examining his or her relationship with others (77).

Nowadays, the term 'Other' is usually used to label the ones who are different and located on the outside, on the margins of society. Gallaher et al. suggest that it can be explained both as a noun and a verb. As a noun, it designates individuals or groups of people who are considered different from the centralized self, while as a verb, it has a meaning of distinguishing, categorizing, and excluding these groups which fail to fulfil social expectations. The process of making someone the 'Other' is called 'othering' and is the cause of discrimination among different communities. This process of othering happens through frequent repetition of characteristics that create the norm and characteristics which deviate from the norm. Thus, the group of people who are considered to deviate from the societal norms becomes the 'Other'. Social scientists and philosophers, as well as feminists, have studied this process for a long time; they have been dealing with the concept of the Other to explain women's oppression (328).

Simone de Beauvoir was the first one who, following Hegel's philosophy, used the concept of the Other to present the issue of inequality between men and women. Her book *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, contributed greatly to feminist studies since she was one of the first feminists to propose that gender is a socially constructed characteristic. As it is said in her most cited and famous statement: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Beauvoir 330). Although she did not reflect much on the experience and othering of black and mixed-race women, her work significantly influenced second- and third-wave feminism. The third-wave of feminism differs from the previous two in that it considers individuality, diversity, and black and mixed-race women who were and still are underprivileged due to both their race and gender. This paper will therefore attempt to demonstrate issues of double marginalisation of mixed-race and black women in Charlotte Bronte's J*ane Eyre*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. My analysis will focus on female protagonists who struggle with oppression due to being Creole, mixed-race, and/or black. Before the analysis, I will elaborate on Simone de Beauvoir's concept of woman as Other and briefly explain the importance of postcolonial feminism for black and mixed-race women.

2. WOMAN AS OTHER

By publishing her book, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir set a cornerstone for the 20th-century feminism. She took the concept of the Other and applied it to the inequality between men and women. The perception of women in society is one of the main reasons for the continuous disparity between sexes. That is, the category of women in society is constructed by men based on their perspectives and experience of the world, as de Beauvoir

explains in her book: “The representation of the world as the world itself is the work of men; they describe it from the point of view that is their own and that they confound with the absolute truth” (196). Thus, women are a part of men's world where they depend on the circumstances and men's power. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that men set themselves up as the essential subject in opposition to the dependent object – women. Men, therefore, have their identity independently from the context, whereas the category of woman is designated by its relation to men: “She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (26).

The problem with these constructions of women is that they become societal norms if they are persistently imposed on them. Despite the legally equal rights and numerous victories feminists have achieved, sexism and patriarchal oppression are perpetuated because of these social conventions. Another problem with constructing the category of woman in relation to the category of man is that women are seen as being incomplete, deviant, and lacking certain qualities. Women are seen only as “sexed beings” from a male point of view, and they are, therefore, equated with their sex (de Beauvoir 26). As a consequence of this male-dominated worldview, it is often perceived that a man’s understanding of women is the “right” one, and any other opinions are seen as contradictory to the societal norms. Furthermore, man is the absolute human being who represents both positive and neutral norms. The term 'man' has been used for a long time to refer to all human beings and general experience of human society. However, this terminology has lately received negative attention; it is considered sexist and non-inclusive because it does not recognize female and male experiences as equally important. Nowadays, instead of the terms 'man' and 'mankind', words like 'humans' or 'humanity' are preferred.

When it comes to the experience of black women, Simone de Beauvoir does not exactly articulate the experience and oppression of black women in her book, but she does draw an analogy between the situation of women and the black people: “Both are liberated today from the same paternalism, and the former master caste wants to keep them “in their place,” that is, the place chosen for them” (32). By doing so, the oppressors characterize these groups by certain virtues that make a “good black” and “true woman,” and these virtues are obedience, childishness, irresponsibility, etc. In both cases, these groups are subjugated and inferior to men (32-33). Thus, it is difficult for them to embrace their freedom because they are kept in the position of inferiority. For that reason, as it will be explained in the following section, the development of postcolonial studies and third-wave feminism has greatly contributed to improving the lives of oppressed groups. These movements have considered the experience of doubly marginalised groups and given voice to black, mixed-race, and non-Western women.

2.1. POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM

Both the first and the second-wave feminism brought numerous positive changes and improvements for women, such as legal victories relating to gender equality, divorce, family, workplace, reproductive rights, and many more. However, the problem with the first two waves was that they focused only on the issues of stereotypical white, heterosexual, Western women, while they overlooked different experiences of women belonging to lower classes, women of colour, and Third-world women. Consequently, a new wave of feminist politics and ideas emerged. As Claire Snyder claims, the third-wave movement in the 1980s appeared primarily as a way of critique of the second-wave feminists. However, it also consisted of important goals such as reconfiguring the universal and over-generalized image of the category of a woman and embracing the multi-perspectival and non-judgemental approach

(175). Furthermore, the third-wave feminists wanted to consider the racial and socioeconomic inequalities among women instead of addressing only the obstacles that white, middle-class women faced. These were relatively better off and had more access to resources and education compared to women of colour and financially disadvantaged women.

The third wave thus considered the reality and viewpoints of women who suffer double oppression. They are marginalised due to their gender, but also due to their lower class, race, and 'wrong' sexuality. In her essay "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay", Snyder states that the third-wave, as a new generation of feminists, wanted to distinguish themselves from earlier generations by creating their own different version of feminism, a kind of feminism that concentrates on the specific social conditions they find themselves in and the challenges that are brought with it (177-178). Third-wavers, as Snyder puts it, consider themselves more flexible and open-minded compared to their "antimale, antisex, antifemininity, and antifun" mothers' generation. Moreover, they believe it is their right to interact with men as their equals, embrace their sexual desires, and experiment with their sexuality and femininity (179). What is more, they see their movement as all-embracing and multiracial as opposed to second-wave feminism (180).

Around the same time as the third-wave feminism emerged, another form of feminism was developed, known as postcolonial feminism. Although Sunder Rajan and Park claim that postcolonial feminism should not be considered merely as a part of postcolonial studies, or just another variety of feminism, it deals with similar problems that the third-wave feminists recognized. Sunder Rajan and Park argue that postcolonial feminism is influencing the structure of postcolonial and feminist studies, as it is "an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neo-colonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights" (53). According to McGlinchey et al., postcolonial studies deal with the perception of

international relations by the society in former colonies and how colonial and imperial histories continue to influence the worldview and the idea of the non-Western marginalised world (65).

Moreover, McGlinchey et al. argue that there is a significant overlap of postcolonial studies with feminism, particularly with the third-wave feminism, which aims to include the experiences of women who remain on the margins of society, politics, and economy. Both the third-wave and postcolonial feminists are concerned with how women experience sexism in relation to their social class and race. For example, if two women share the same ethnic identity but belong to different social classes, one of them will be privileged due to her higher social class. However, if a black woman is privileged due to her social class, that does not free her from oppression on account of her race. Thus, the authors claim that these movements highlight how the intersection of race, gender, nationality, class, and sexuality create distinct forms of oppression and indicate that all these aspects need to be considered to understand oppression (68). A feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins also applied the idea of intersectionality to feminism and in her work *Black Feminist Thought*, written in 1990, argues that "intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (18).

Consequently, if looking from a postcolonial feminist point of view, as McGlinchey et al. state, women of colour are triply oppressed: firstly because of their race/ethnicity, secondly, because of their class status, and lastly, because of their gender (68). Furthermore, apart from intersectionality, postcolonial feminism focuses on the neglected experiences of marginalised women of the Third World and former colonies. This is connected to the process of 'othering', which Chandra Talpade Mohanty used in her essay "Under Western Eyes" to illustrate how Western feminists have othered the feminists from non-Western countries by producing a particular image of the "Third World Woman" (61-63). Postcolonial feminism,

therefore, fights against the misrepresentation of non-Western women, rejects the generalised idea of a homogenous category of women and criticises mainstream feminist ideas. This form of feminism wants to take into account how the effects of colonialism, racism, and political and cultural oppression have influenced the experience of non-white and non-Western women.

3. BERTHA MASON – THE COLONIZED OTHER

Long period of British colonialism was based on the exploitation of other people's countries and unequal power between the colonisers and the colonised. One of the territories which were under British colonial rule was the Caribbean. Colonialism resulted in the mixture of cultures and contacts between the oppressed indigenous people and the colonisers. On the one hand, Creoles identified with British heritage and culture, but on the other, they were not accepted by that same culture because they were mixed race. The black community rejected them as well, in this case, for not being black enough and having a privileged position in the colonies. Women suffered all the more due to the patriarchal framework imposed on them. These issues are significant for analysing the chosen novels, especially *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, since their mixed-race female characters are directly affected by British colonial power. Therefore, we will be reading these female protagonists as the colonised Other.

Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, written in 1847, was a revolutionary novel because it embodied feminist ideas about women's independence, education, and personal beliefs. In addition, it has been praised for its social criticism and topics such as class, religion, and sexuality portrayed through the eponymous heroine from her childhood to adult life. The mysterious and ambiguous character of Bertha Mason, Mr Rochester's first wife, makes this novel even more intriguing. Her description as "some strange wild animal"

(Brontë 321) can be quite unsettling for some readers. It is interesting that the story behind this mysterious madwoman is revealed only towards the end of the novel. We only know about Bertha's life from Jane and Rochester's perspectives, and we see her portrayed as this mad and deviant woman mostly because of her 'exotic' West-Indian descent.

There are various interpretations and symbolic readings of Bertha Mason's character. One of the most famous interpretations of Bertha is her character being the double of Jane Eyre, a personification of her repressed feelings. Gilbert and Gubar illustrated this in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination,* one of the most influential feminist studies of the 20th century. The authors argue that they have found recurring images "of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves" in the works by female writers of the 19th century (xi). They discuss how the confinement of women in the male-dominated world influenced their writing. Women felt oppressed and frustrated because of the misogynistic environment they lived in and the unreal expectations of 'angelic' Victorian women they had to fulfil, so they usually created an opposite 'monstrous' image of a mad woman in their novels as a way of expressing their anger and liberating themselves from social and literary confinement (Gilbert & Gubar xi-xii). Thus, Bertha Mason can be seen as the opposite of Jane Eyre's admirable calm and pure nature. In other words, Bertha's behaviour represents Jane's repressed anger caused by oppression, and fear of Victorian marriage, which comes with the lack of autonomy and freedom.

However, there have been new interpretations of Bertha and much more profound readings of her character, which I will focus on in this paper. These recent interpretations are concerned with the consequences of the British Empire, colonialism, and the process of othering the colonised. In the novel, Bertha does not have a voice of her own. Since Jane Eyre is the main protagonist and the narrator, the image that we have of Bertha is mostly Jane's

construction. In contrast to her typical and pale British countenance, Jane sees Bertha as a "maniac" with a "purple face" and "bloated features" (Brontë 321). Another perspective comes from Rochester, which additionally degrades Bertha's character. By not allowing her to speak for herself, Brontë portrays Bertha as a minor and passive character. Bertha is, therefore, represented by others; by Jane and Rochester, who lived in and werea part of the 19th-century British society and were influenced by its imperial and colonial values.

According to Susan Meyer, Brontë wrote fiction about British colonies in Africa during her adolescence, which indicates that she was familiar with British colonialism in Africa and the British West Indies (247). Moreover, in her writings, Brontë used a figurative treatment of race relations which indicates an opposition between empathy for the oppressed and racism, especially in *Jane Eyre* (250). Meyer argues that in *Jane Eyre* Brontë "responds to the seemingly inevitable analogy in the nineteenth-century British texts" to emphasize the control of the white male by drawing comparisons between white women and blacks. Brontë used this analogy to represent generalised oppression rather than shared inferiority, and even though this figurative technique creates some sympathy for oppressed black people, it does not exclude racism (251). Thus, the terms Jane uses for describing Bertha imply racist thoughts, which Brontë, according to Meyer, has associated with blacks since her childhood (254).

Rochester's perspective of Bertha is crucial in creating her character in the novel since everything the reader knows about her comes from the story that he tells Jane. He explains to her that he went to Jamaica and married Bertha for her wealth. Bertha's race is not explicitly mentioned in the novel, but when Rochester talks about his first impression of Bertha, he uses the terms "tall, dark, and majestic" for her charming appearance (Brontë 332). This also alludes to Europeans' exotic and sexual perception of non-Western people. Moreover, after Rochester and Jane's wedding ceremony is stopped by Richard Mason, Bertha's stepbrother,

Rochester describes Bertha as a mad woman, coming from "a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" He mentions that her mother, "both a madwoman and a drunkard", was a Creole (Brontë 320). It is also unsurprising that Rochester has racist attitudes towards mixed-race Bertha and believes her mental fragility and madness are directly associated with her race. Once again, his views represent Western perception of the colonised Other.

When he talks about Bertha, Rochester refers to her as some "kind of being" that he was "cheated into espousing" (Brontë 320). Only after the wedding did he find out about the mental disability that ran in Bertha's family, which he believes to be inheritable. Even though at first he was "dazzled" and "stimulated" by her and thought he loved her, as he explains to Jane, his perception changes after finding out the insanity that was apparently a part of Bertha's family: "I found her nature wholly alien to mine, her tastes obnoxious to me, her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger" (Brontë 333). Therefore, Rochester instantly limits Bertha's possibilities and reduces her worth on account of her race, expecting nothing more from her than to be mad. He further explains that her mental state worsened rapidly, becoming unbearable for him. Thus, he returns to England with her and based on the justification that she is mentally unstable, he decides to imprison her in the house in Thornfield:

> To England, then, I conveyed her; a fearful voyage I had with such a monster in the vessel. Glad was I when I at last got her to Thornfield and saw her safely lodged in that third-story room, of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast's den – a goblin's cell. (Brontë 336)

After being imprisoned and maltreated for years, Bertha turns more and more violent, and her looks are destroyed. Thus, when Jane sees Bertha for the first time in the middle of the night, destroying her wedding veil, she is horrified by her appearance. She sees her as a

"fearful and ghastly" being with a "savage face", "red eyes", and "swelled and dark lips" (Brontë 311). Later, on the day of the wedding, when Jane sees her again, she gives a rather disturbing description of Bertha:

> What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell; it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as mane, hid its head and face. …the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind-feet. … The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors. I recognized well that purple face – those bloated features. (Brontë 321)

By comparing her body parts to those of animals, Jane degrades Bertha not only as a woman but as a human being. Moreover, when referring to her, Jane does not use personal pronouns but rather addresses her with "it". Not unlike Rochester, Jane has a racist attitude towards Bertha and sees her as a lunatic, a disabled and animal-like creature.

As already stated, how both Rochester and Jane see Bertha reflects the 19th-century British society, which created a false image of a non-Western identity. As we will see later in my analysis of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, however, Bertha can be read in a completely different light. In that novel, Bertha finally speaks for herself. As Alexandra Nygren states, for a true understanding of Bertha's insane behaviour and consequent death, her mental state and subjugated position must be considered. Moreover, the development of postcolonial studies and postcolonial feminism helps one recognise Bertha as a victim of patriarchal, colonialist and discrimination oppression (117). Imperialistic, patriarchal, and colonial values were deeply rooted in the society of the British Empire, so Jane naturally, as a part of that society, was influenced by the same values which affected her judgement of Bertha. From the start, Jane recognises Bertha as the colonial Other, as dark, and primitive, contrary to her

[Jane's] pale and typical English features (Nygren 117). Nevertheless, according to Spivak, while reading the 19th-century literature, one must be aware that imperialism played a significant role in the English perspective of the cultural representation of England (243). Hence, in understanding Bertha, Jane may not be degrading her intentionally, but influenced by British imperialistic values, she immediately sees herself as superior and Bertha as the Other.

Bertha's situation was ill-fated from the beginning. After marrying Rochester, she becomes dependent on him, but her "inferior" race further intensifies her position as an inferior female. Once in England with Rochester, Bertha loses every prospect of having a normal life. Away from her home in Jamaica, she depends on her husband, has no money, no family, and therefore no access to any source of help and support. Considering her mental disability as a result of her "inferior" race, Rochester neglects Bertha's illness as a serious issue that should be treated professionally. Instead of providing her with proper care, he confines her to a dark room for ten years and decides to keep her existence a secret. This also reflects attitudes on mental illness in the Victorian period, when little was known about possible treatments, and women were usually advised to simply stay at home and rest. Naturally, all these circumstances exacerbated her mental illness. Assuming that Bertha did suffer from a mental illness while still in Jamaica, her imprisonment in Thornfield definitely worsened it.

It is not surprising that in *Jane Eyre* Bertha does not have a voice of her own. Although she is one of the characters, she never speaks but is spoken for. Her husband portrays himself as a victim of a mischievous monster, his wife. Rochester tries to justify his cruelty against Bertha by describing her as a demonic creature and referring to her origins, the West Indies, as an exotic and fiery place that influences the rational mind of the Westerners. For him, Bertha is barely a human, an obstacle when it comes to his marriage to Jane, who, on

the other hand, represents the Victorian ideals of femininity. Since Bertha does not conform to the social norm of the 'Angel in the House', and belongs to the 'inferior' race, she is perceived as a deviant and mad woman.

However, if Bertha is analysed from the perspective of postcolonial and feminist studies, her character can be understood as a casualty of patriarchal colonial society. Her rage and violence could be explained as a reaction to her inability to liberate herself from the unjust position she found herself in. 'Civilised' British society pushed her to the margins due to her gender, race, and mental disability. Bertha is not seen as a 'normal' human being, but as the inferior Other, and functions instead as an instrument to emphasize both Rochester and Jane's superior Western identity. As Nygren claims, the intersection of patriarchy, colonialism and racism should be acknowledged to truly comprehend Bertha's behaviour and mental disability, which eventually led to her suicide (119). Nevertheless, Bertha will become the heroine of her own story, as we will see in the next chapter.

4. BERTHA / ANTOINETTE ACQUIRING A VOICE

When drawing comparisons between Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, we have to bear in mind that Brontë was a white British 19th-century woman, whereas Rhys was a 20th-century woman of Caribbean descent, just like the protagonist of her novel. Rhys wrote her novel as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, where Bertha finally acquires a voice of her own, but this time as Antoinette Cosway. Rhys decided to offer another version of Brontë's "madwoman in the attic" because she grew up in Dominica and was familiar with the history of the West Indies. According to Stephen Clingman, Rhys was ashamed of her mother's side slave-owing Dominican inheritance, which was something she could identify with Bertha. As Clingman also states, Rhys felt estranged in the Caribbean, but

England could not replace the home she had left behind, so her identity, just like Antoinette's, was somewhere in between (138). She was "the non-Creole in Dominica, the monstrous Creole in England" (139).

Rhys explains that there are several reasons why she set out to rewrite *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of the colonised female Other. First, she was upset by Brontë's misrepresentation of the West Indies and "never believed in Charlotte's lunatic" (qtd. in Clingman 139). Thus, she wanted to allow Bertha to speak for herself and present a more realistic portrait of the West Indies. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is, therefore, significant from both postcolonial and feminist perspectives. It focuses on the experiences of the marginalised and neglected protagonist and articulates issues such as the oppression of women and colonial otherness. According to Carine Melkom Mardorossian, critics nowadays recognise this intersection of the categories of sex and nationality in Rhys' novel and no longer reduce Antoinette's inability to think rationally solely to her female gender (81). Moreover, by changing Bertha's passive character into a protagonist of the novel who narrates her own story, Mardorossian states that Antoinette symbolises the resistance of the colonial Other to British imperial power (81).

In contrast to *Jane Eyre*, where Brontë uses first-person narration, Rhys wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* using a multi-voice narrative technique. That is, she uses several narrators, one of whom is finally Bertha/Antoinette herself. Antoinette narrates the first part, where she talks about her childhood and growing up in Coulibri. In part two, the narration is taken over by an unnamed character, but we can assume that it is Richard since he talks about his arrival in Jamaica and honeymoon with Antoinette, whom he later renames Bertha. This part is interrupted by a short section narrated by Antoinette again. The third part is the shortest, and before it returns to Antoinette's perspective, it opens with a conversation between Grace Pole, Antoinette's keeper, and Lea, one of the characters.

It is also important to say that the novel is set after the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which ended slavery in the British Empire. This additionally complicated the life of Creoles in the West Indies and, consequently, Antoinette's family. The novel opens with the following lines: "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we are not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self' Christophine said" (Rhys 15). The reader is thus introduced to the protagonist's family situation, where they were frowned upon by the black community. They were alienated both by their own community and British colonial society. As Spivak explains, since Antoinette grew up as a white Creole during the emancipation period, she is "caught between the English imperialist and the black native" (250).

Another event that contributed to Antoinette's struggles with her identity is the incident with her childhood friend Tia. When still a child, Antoinette is forced to leave Coulibri with her family due to the riot of black servants who put their house on fire. Instead of being comforted by her friend Tia, she is hit by a jagged rock, which injures her head and causes bleeding. At this moment, Antoinette's self-image is shattered because up to that incident Tia was her friend and someone she could identify with. By being rejected by her best friend, she feels completely excluded from the black community. Moreover, when Antoinette visits her mentally unstable mother, she refuses to speak to her. Along with being an outcast in a black community, Antoinette is rejected by her own mother, which consequently has a strong impact on her mental state and self-perception. She is perceived as the Other both by white and black communities. For the black community, she is the daughter of a former slave-owner, not black enough, pejoratively addressed as a "white nigger" or "cockroach". On the other hand, there is no place for her in the English community either, because she is not white enough. Thus, Antoinette begins to doubt her existence and cultural identity as she does not belong to or identify with either community:

> ...a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (Rhys 93)

Narrated from Rochester's point of view, the second part of the novel gives insight into his perception of Antoinette and the West Indies. His racist attitude is the same as in Brontë's novel: "Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (Rhys 61). His perception of "very brightly coloured, very strange" Jamaica – as he describes it – is built on the comparison with England's pure and natural landscape (Rhys 69). Rochester's viewpoint again mirrors the values of the European West, which associates the Caribbean with an exotic, fiery, and dangerous place. In accordance with these ideals, Rochester places Antoinette in the image he created of the Caribbean, refusing to hear and accept her side of the story, and changes her name to Bertha. Mardorossian states that by following his Victorian racist ideologies, Rochester frames Antoinette as a madwoman, and the letter he receives from Daniel Cosway only serves him as a proof of his predetermined beliefs (82).

However, despite Rochester's perception of Antoinette, which is the same in both novels, her character is portrayed differently in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As opposed to *Jane Eyre*, where others speak for her, and she expresses herself through screams and animal sounds only, in Rhys's novel, as we already said, Antoinette is the narrator of her story and is able to speak for herself for much of the novel. An important protagonist in the book is Christophine, Antoinette's black nurse, who becomes her second mother after Annette (Antoinette's mother) is sent away because of her mental state. Christophine is an important figure in Antoinette's life because she supports her, helps her and gives her advice when she starts having problems in marriage. By introducing Christophine's character, Spivak claims that

Rhys "creates a powerfully suggestive figure" and "assigns her some crucial functions in the text" (252-253). She is the one who confronts Rochester about his actions:

> Everybody know that you marry her for her money and you take it all. And then you want to break her up, because you jealous of her. She is more better than you, she have better blood in her and she don't care for money… She is a Creole girl, and she have the sun in her. … And she love you and she give you all she have. Now you say you don't love her and you break her up. (Rhys 138-143)

Finally, at the beginning of the third part, the readers get a perspective of Grace Pole, another character 'borrowed' from Bronte's novel. In this section, Grace Pole reflects on why she accepted the job of Antoinette's guardian and her first encounter withAntoinette: "She sits shivering and she is so thin" (Rhys 159). Grace says that maybe one of the reasons she stayed in the house was to protect herself from "the world outside" that "can be a black and cruel world to a woman." She points out that Antoinette does not have the same opportunity to choose between staying or going and therefore "lives in her own darkness" (Rhys 160). When Antoinette takes over the narration again, she is already confined to the solitary life in the third-story room at Thornfield. At the novel's end, she dreams about unlocking herself from the room and the house going into flames. When she wakes up, she decides to fulfil her vision: "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (Rhys 171). Unfortunately, Antoinette saw death as the only solution to her miseries and a way to free herself from the oppressed social position she was put in.

Having analysed the novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be defined as a postcolonial feminist work since it emphasises the inevitable connection of race and gender in the colonial context where women were subjugated (Wickramagamag 28). Furthermore, according to Wickramagamag, by explaining Bertha's historical background, Rhys highlights how racial, class, and gender aspects of inferiority play an essential role in determining her capabilities

and eventual destiny in the socially and culturally complex situation in the West Indies, both in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (28). In the next chapter, we will see how the intersection of these categories still have impact on women's lives and how contemporary British women are still affected by the consequences of British colonial history.

5. MULTIPLE VOICES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN *GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER*

Girl, Woman, Other is a novel written by Bernardine Evaristo, first published in 2019. In the previous two novels, we have analysed one mixed-race character in the context of the female Other. However, this novel portrays not one but twelve female protagonists, primarily marginalised because of their skin colour and secondly because of their gender. The novel also deals with other social issues, such as politics, patriarchy, love, relationships, and sexuality. This is not Evaristo's first novel that deals with the marginalisation of black women in Britain. Since she herself is a black British woman, she has been interested in exploring the history of black people in Britain. She explains this in an interview with Anita Sethi (2019) and discusses writing *Girl, Woman, Other*:

> I wanted to put presence into absence. I was very frustrated that black British women weren't visible in literature. I whittled it down to 12 characters – I wanted them to span from a teenager to someone in their 90s, and see their trajectory from birth, though not linear. There are many ways in which otherness can be interpreted in the novel – the women are othered in so many ways and sometimes by each other. I wanted it to be identified as a novel about women as well. (Evaristo)

Girl, Woman, Other follows the lives of twelve black British women as they grow up, become women, and struggle with being perceived as the Other due to their skin colour, gender, and sexuality. The novel, therefore, explores how the intersection of racial, gender, sexual and economic oppression defines and determines their life experiences. The book has five chapters. Each of the first four chapters contains narratives of three different women who are somehow connected, either by a mother-daughter relation, friendship, love relationship, or a teacher-student relationship. All characters, whose stories are set in a particular time and circumstances, come from different generations and backgrounds. However, their lives still intertwine at some point. Moreover, Evaristo gave voice to each of these female characters by making them narrators of their own stories as well.

By allowing her female protagonists to speak out, Evaristo perfectly demonstrates the challenges and struggles of oppression they face as women of colour in contemporary British society. The narrative constantly shifts back and forth in time. With this narrative technique, Evaristo indicates the connection between each character, direct or indirect, the importance of their history, and how the intersection of various circumstances plays a significant role in creating their identities. Moreover, although they are oppressed and vulnerable as black British women, Evaristo portrays them as resilient and strong female characters. As Merve Sarıkaya-Şen argues, these marginalised black British women show "resilience by challenging the upholders of power and patriarchy" and by developing a deep sense of solidarity among one another (306). Moreover, by giving them voice, Evaristo represents stories of women usually outside the official narratives and outside British culture and history.

The first chapter starts with Amma, a black lesbian woman and a playwright whose new play, *The Last Amazon of Dahomey*, premiers at the National Theatre in London. The reader gets insight into racism and discrimination that black British women experience from the beginning of the novel through her perspective. In Amma's case, the marginalisation

interferes with her career as a playwright since she "spent decades on the fringe, a renegade lobbing hand grenades at the establishment that excluded her" (Evaristo 2). Due to her race, she was only offered degrading stereotypical roles "such as a slave, servant, prostitute, nanny or crim" (Evaristo 6). Nevertheless, Amma is just one of the characters in the novel that shows resilience and rejects to follow the social framework and conventions. She refuses to follow her friend Roland's advice to direct classic plays since, in his view, plays about black women "will never have popular appeal, simply because the majority sees the majority of *Les Négresses* as separate to themselves, an embodiment of Otherness" (Evaristo 406).

Ultimately, Amma finally gets her opportunity to direct a play at the National Theatre, which becomes a great success and is praised by everyone, even the mainstream audience. Therefore, despite her doubly marginalised position as a black woman, she manages to achieve her goal and become successful. Furthermore, if we compare Evaristo's heroines with Bertha in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, these female characters are in a better position since they live in a period when feminism has already improved many aspects of women's lives. In both novels, (even though she acquires a voice in *Wide Sargasso Sea*), Bertha has the same destiny: death, the only escape from her miserable life in confinement. On the other hand, the characters in Evaristo's book accomplish their goals through resilience and persistence despite the struggle with social constructions and stereotypes of the "inferior" race. Similar to Amma's character, Evaristo portrays other characters as strong and resilient women. For example, Carole rises above her traumatic experience of being gang-raped and becomes a successful investment banker; or Shirley, who accomplishes her dream by obtaining a Certificate in Education and becomes "the Family Success Story" (Evaristo 219). Another character, Winsome, "had Barbados to return home to", unlike Bertha/Antoinette, who did not have the choice of returning to the West Indies (Evaristo 252).

On the other hand, the novel also demonstrates how some characters struggle to embrace their racial identity. They are aware that the dominant white society perceives them as different and therefore feel self-conscious because of their darker skin colour. This is illustrated in the intersection of Megan/Morgan's and Hattie's characters. Megan/Morgan is Hattie's great-granddaughter and the daughter of Grace, whom she describes as "almost white in a family that's proudly got lighter with every generation" and blames her for ruining it "by marrying Dad, an African". Megan/Morgan clearly expresses her desire for lighter skin and wonders: "how mum couldn't see Dad's colour when that was all most people saw" (Evaristo 311). Although the girls in the school are jealous of her "natural suntan", she does not feel comfortable in her skin (Evaristo 312). When Hattie takes over the narration, she reflects on her past before she had grandchildren and says that "neither of her children liked being coloured and she didn't know what to do about it" (Evaristo 356). Thus, affected by the judgement of white British society, these characters struggle with accepting themselves and their identity, the same as Antoinette struggled in *Wide Sargasso Sea.*

Another important topic discussed by the characters throughout the novel is feminism. Sarıkaya-Şen says that Evaristo discusses transcultural feminism in *Girl, Woman, Other*, beginning with transsexual feminism. She exemplifies this with Dominique's belief that transwomen cannot comprehend how oppressed women feel and Amma's opinion that transwomen should be praised because they are reconstructing feminism (309). In the first chapter, Amma introduces the problem of feminist organisations that focused only on the problems of white women and "made them feel unwelcome" (Evaristo 13). This illustrates the failure of the first wave of feminism to include black women in their activism, which was discussed in previous chapters.

Furthermore, when Megan/Morgan starts exploring her sexuality and questioning her gender, she meets Bibi online, who helps her understand feminism and gender as a social

construction. In contrast to biological sex, it is often assumed that one's gender is determined by society and that fixed male and female roles are also defined by society. However, a person's gender can differ from their biological sex. Bibi explains to Megan/Morgan that she "became a feminist after I'd transitioned, an intersectional feminist, because it's not just about gender, but race, sexuality, class and other intersections which we mostly unthinkingly live anyway" (Evaristo 323).

The novel also deals with individuality, motherhood, and female solidarity. Evaristo constantly shifts from present to past which helps her illustrate different circumstances and challenges that her heroines must face. Therefore, she shows that not all black and mixed-race women share a similar experience of marginalisation. This contradicts the stereotyped image which associates all women of colour with specific traits, which are usually negative. As Sarıkaya-Şen says, Evaristo considers "them as individuals rather than as a stereotypical group" (310). Further, Sarıkaya-Şen argues that the characters' resilience and empowerment are connected to their motherhood since some characters do not conform to the patriarchal and conventional image of motherhood. An example of this are Amma and Bummi, who are black, single parents, and working mothers and do not fit into conventional gender roles (310-311). Lastly, according to Sarıkaya-Şen, the sense of solidarity and support groups for women are important because they help oppressed women heal their wounds and feel less alone (308).

The fifth and final chapter of the novel is set at the afterparty for Amma's critically acclaimed play, which had its premiere that evening. As many of the characters interact and cross paths at this event, the intersection of their lives is once again demonstrated. Finally, the culmination of this interconnection is the reunion of Penelope and Hattie in the novel's epilogue. After discovering she was adopted at sixteen, Penelope feels that her identity is destroyed, and years later, she decides to take a DNA test. Considering herself to be a pure white British woman, she is shocked when she sees that she has African roots. However, once

she meets Hattie, her biological mother, she comes to realise that "this is not about feeling something or about speaking words, this is about being together" (Evaristo 452). Thus, Penelope's realisation shows that it is important to embrace all parts of one's identity, no matter what one's origins are. And when it comes to Otherness, instead of excluding each other based on skin colour, women should stand together, support and accept one another.

6. CONCLUSION

In this final paper, I have attempted to demonstrate how British imperial and colonial history contributed to producing the image of the colonised Other and consequently put non-Western women in a doubly marginalised position. Moreover, I have argued how black and mixed-race women struggle with the perception of their identity, self-image, and self-acceptance as a consequence of double oppression. The intensity of women's oppression has decreased over the years, and the perception of women has changed due to many postcolonial and feminist studies. However, black and mixed-race women still feel the effects of the colonial values that were embedded in British society for a long time. I have analysed these topics in Charlotte Brontë's Jane *Eyre*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea,* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other.*

Brontë's "Madwoman in the attic" has been the subject of numerous studies, and her character has been read and analysed both from feminist and postcolonial perspectives. According to these approaches, Bertha is unjustly put on a margin as an outcast from society, and a wholly dehumanised person, whose voice is not important. It is obvious that Charlotte Brontë could not fully understand the consequences of colonialism and racial discrimination. She portrayed Bertha as the colonial Other – a woman mentally ill because of her "lower"

race. This viewpoint of Bertha was changed by Jean Rhys and her 1963 novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rhys showed that there is always the other side of the story, and by giving Bertha a voice, she humanised her character. Such a portrayal of Bertha allowed the readers to understand her madness as a consequence of the intersection of many aspects of oppression she had to endure. Rhys' character Antoinette, therefore, represents the unheard voice of the marginalised non-Western women and their experiences in British colonial society.

Finally, Bernardine Evaristo's novel demonstrates how the marginalisation of black and mixed-race women continues and is still a part of contemporary British society. Her characters' stories illustrate the problems of racism, gender oppression, and social constructions. Many of the characters struggle not only with accepting their racial identity but also with questioning their gender and sexuality. However, by intertwining narratives of as many as twelve women in her novel, Evaristo deconstructs the stereotyped image of a black and mixed race woman and suggests a different cultural perception of Britain. She creates an image of diverse, strong and resilient black women, whose stories are often misread and not written about in British literature.

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8. Mixed-race Woman as other in *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea,* and *Girl, Woman, Other*: Summary and key words

This final paper sets out to analyse black and mixed race female protagonists in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* in the context of double marginalisation. Using feminist and postcolonial theories, the paper argues that Bertha in *Jane Eyre* is seen as the Other thus reflecting imperial and colonial values imposed on women of non-British origin. The analysis of black and mixed race women in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Girl, Woman, Other* demonstrates the importance of giving voice to the unheard and silenced women in 20th and 21-century British society. Analysing the selected texts, the paper argues that it is crucial to recognise the intersection of various aspects of oppression, racism and marginalisation of women of non-British origin.

Key words: the Other, black women, mixed-race women, double marginalisation, *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea,Girl, Woman, Other*

9. Žena miješane rase kao Drugo u *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea,* i *Girl, Woman, Other*: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Cilj ovog rada je analizirati protagonistkinje crne i miješane rase u romanima *Jane Eyre* autorice Charlotte Brontë, *Wide Sargasso Sea* autorice Jean Rhys i *Girl, Woman, Other* autorice Bernardine Evaristo u kontekstu dvostruke marginalizacije. Koristeći se feminističkim i postkolonijalnim teorijama, rad tvrdi da je Bertha u *Jane Eyre* prikazana kao Drugo, što odražava imperijalne i kolonijalne vrijednosti nametnute ženama ne-britanskog podrijetla. Analiza likova crnih i žena miješanih rasa u *Wide Sargasso Sea* i *Girl, Woman, Other* pokazuje važnost davanja glasa ušutkanim ženama čiji se glas ne čuje u britanskom društvu 20. i 21. stoljeća. Analizirajući odabrane tekstove, rad pokazuje da je ključno prepoznati sjecište različitih aspekata potlačenosti, rasizma i marginalizacije žena ne-britanskog podrijetla.

Ključne riječi: Drugo, crna žena, žena miješane rase, dvostruka marginalizacija, *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea, Girl, Woman, Other*