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The Female Colonizer and Othered Woman in Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*

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Wide Sargasso Sea, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Paule
Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

The central issue of this thesis is the complicated relationship between the colonized individual and the constitutive as well as emblematic female colonizer in Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. Each of these novels displays colonization by a female (or females) and relates back to historical colonialism, but each characterizes the relationship between the oppressors and oppressed differently. Dinesen's and Rhys's works stem from historical colonization in which European colonizers conquered and ruled other territories; Annette and her daughter Antoinette, females born into slave-holding families in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, are fictional but empowered as a result of an actual colonial past, while the colonizer in Dinesen's memoir is Dinesen (née Karen Blixen), for she recounts her own autobiographical experience as a plantation owner living in Kenya in the early 1900s. Salih's and Marshall's novels are also based on the damaging effects of a colonial history, but simultaneously portray women who suffer from subordination and oppression within their own communities; Marshall details the relationship between an African-

Caribbean woman and an American female colonizer, while Salih presents the tumultuous affairs between four European female colonizers and an African-Sudanese man. Additionally, Salih's novel focuses on Othered Sudanese women who are expected to adhere to the patriarchal laws of the tribe, but who prove themselves as agents by disavowing these laws. This thesis relies on postcolonial, feminist, and womanist methodologies.

Introduction

Take up the White Man's burden
The savage wars of peace
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hope to nought.

-Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden"

At the height of the nineteenth century imperial resurgence, Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" conveyed the attitudes of the emblematic white colonizer who attempted to "aid" the "savages" of the East. In the poem, Kipling calls Americans to action and advises them to invade and institute colonial rule over the Philippines. One cannot mistake Kipling's sardonic tone as he refers to the Filipinos as "lazy heathens" who destroy the Americans' "goal" of abolishing disease and hunger on the Philippine islands, thereby labeling the Filipinos as the "White Man's burden." Although undoubtedly viewed as racist and unacceptable by modern standards, Kipling's poem accurately reflected the sentiments of many Westerners who lived at its time of publication in 1899. The colonizers often thought of themselves as altruistic individuals who attempted to civilize and improve the living conditions of foreigners, meanwhile inundating the colonized with Christian beliefs and practices in hopes of turning them

away from their ancestral worship. Many colonizers found the colonized to be ungrateful and intransigent, common beliefs also mirrored in Kipling's poetry.

Thus far, I have referred to imperialism as a man's endeavor, for one rarely encounters the female colonizer in accounts of colonialism represented in fictional or historical literature. If discussed, she often exists as an extension of her colonial husband, a point to which Chandra Talpade Mohanty refers: "As Helen Callaway (1987) states in her study of European women in colonial Nigeria, white women did not travel to the colonies until much later, and then too they were seen as 'subordinate and unnecessary appendages,' not as rulers" (16). Conversely, the focus of this thesis is to examine the sovereign female colonizer who is neither an "appendage" nor merely empowered because of her relation to a male colonizer; however, there are certain caveats that apply to the degree to which each female colonizer enforces colonial rule, and these will be discussed later in the introduction. The central issue that I wish to analyze in the thesis is the relationship between the colonized individual and the female colonizer. Additionally, I seek to investigate the ways in which each of the following four novels complicates this relationship: Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. I argue that each novel treats the female colonizer from a different perspective, yet similarly displays colonialism's effects on the female colonizer; colonialism proves detrimental to each female colonizer's behavior and/or psyche. Furthermore, each novel presents a similar treatment of man and woman as Other. Chapters two through four will particularly focus on females who are Othered because they have been stripped of agency in both colonial and patriarchal societies. I am not only interested in the role of

colonialism or the patriarchy in this process, but I also wish to explore how these subjugated women seek to regain agency.

When defining and representing the marginalization of a Third World woman from a feminist perspective, one must acknowledge the complications implicit in this process. Many feminist/womanist female critics outline the dangers of assuming that all women, Third World and Western, are similar in their experiences and therefore can be uniformly labeled as oppressed women. However, as Cheryl Johnson-Odim insists, the European or American woman's subordination based on gender differs from that of the Third World woman; Johnson-Odim asserts, "While it is true that the oppression of impoverished and marginalized Euro-American women is linked to gender *and* class relations, that of Third World women is linked also to race relations and often imperialism" (314). In light of these distinctions, she finds a focus on "gender discrimination...insufficient to redress the oppression of Third World Women" (315). Many Third World writers and scholars prefer the term womanist or womanism as opposed to feminist/feminism because they wish to eradicate the commonly-held assumptions of some white/Western/women critics who only blame the inequality of the sexes for woman's continued struggle for autonomy.

Mohanty stresses a similar contention in her essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." She posits that "[t]he assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, or contradictions, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally" (55). Here, Mohanty clarifies that to make such a presupposition would

undermine the Othered, postcolonial woman whose diminished existence results from the politics of imperialism; the Western woman often suffers from the effects of a patriarchal society that holds sexist views of women as inferior to men, but this struggle is not equated to that of the Third World woman who is discriminated against as a result of not only her sex, but also her race and class. By delineating these differences, I do not intend to diminish any woman's fight for agency and validation; to do so would be counter-intuitive to the thesis. Instead, I wish to discuss both feminism and womanism as necessary lenses through which to view many of the female colonizers and colonized individuals in the novels to be discussed. I rely on theories of Western feminist as well as Third World womanist critics because these arguments share the belief that women must assert themselves as agents in male-centered power structures, whether these be patriarchies, colonies, or both.

Each of the novels that I will discuss in the thesis displays colonization by a female (or females) and relates back to historical colonialism, but each characterizes the relationship between the oppressors and oppressed differently. Dinesen's and Rhys's works stem from historical colonization in which European colonizers conquered and ruled other territories; Annette and her daughter Antoinette, females born into slave-holding families in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, are fictional but empowered as a result of an actual colonial past, while the colonizer in Dinesen's memoir is Dinesen (née Karen Blixen), for she recounts her own autobiographical experience as a plantation owner living in Kenya in the early 1900s. Salih's and Marshall's novels are also based on the damaging effects of a colonial history, but simultaneously portray women who suffer from subordination and oppression within their own communities; Marshall details the

relationship between an African-Caribbean woman and an American female colonizer, while Salih presents the tumultuous affairs between four European female colonizers and an African-Sudanese man. Additionally, Salih's novel focuses on Othered Sudanese women who are expected to adhere to the patriarchal laws of the tribe, but who prove themselves as agents by disavowing these laws.

In chapter one, I argue that Karen Blixen participates in discursive colonization by writing a memoir that romanticizes and mythologizes Africa and, more importantly, omits the nefarious roles of European colonizers who settled in Kenya. Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* proves paramount to the discussion of Blixen's *Out of Africa*, as it traces historical accounts of colonization and focuses primarily on imperialism's effect on the colonizer rather than the colonized. I also incorporate criticism by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, for scholars accept that he wrote his novel *Weep Not Child* in response to Blixen. I cite his book *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* to further expound on his powerful critique of Blixen's memoir and his warning against literature that colonizes. Additionally, I include Alison Donnell's views of "literary decolonization." She believes that we must "develop a language through which to name, affirm and cherish the beauty and sustenance that is found in the Caribbean landscape" without "romanticizing" the harsh colonial history associated with the Caribbean (58). Although Donnell's theory refers to the Caribbean landscape, literary decolonization also applies to Blixen's numerous descriptions of the beautiful African landscape and complete disregard for the colonization that dehumanized the Kikuyu.

Chapter two engages with disparate criticism of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, including that of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Benita Parry. The scholars debate Christophine's

role as agent in the novel, with Spivak contending that “the articulation of the female subject within the emerging norm of feminist individualism during the age of imperialism necessarily excluded the native female, who was positioned on the boundary between human and animal as the object of imperialism’s social-mission or soul-making” (Spivak qtd. in Parry 247). Spivak believes that Christophine is merely a subsidiary character, while Parry argues for Christophine’s central position as challenger to both imperial and patriarchal law, an assertion with which I agree and further develop in this chapter. Moreover, I will analyze the character of Antoinette according to Simone de Beauvoir’s feminist beliefs on marginalized women as Others. I argue that Antoinette, although born into a settler family and by legacy a female colonizer, is subjugated by the European patriarchal system that influences her stepbrother and stepfather to “sell” her to Rochester in the arranged marriage.

Chapter three provides an analysis of Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*; I focus on the effects of colonialism with regards to Mustafa Sa’eed and his European lovers, women who submit to the Western obsession with exoticism and thereby align themselves with colonizers. Furthermore, I incorporate Marilyn’s French’s discussion of the inlaw and outlaw feminine principles in order to solidify my argument for an androgynous woman as agent. French maintains that the inlaw feminine principle aligns with the submissive, powerless woman, whereas the outlaw feminine principle is associated with “darkness, chaos, flesh, the sinister, magic, and above all, sexuality. It is outlaw because it is subversive, undermining of the masculine principle” (23). Bint Majzoub and Hosna Bint Mahmoud represent the feminine outlaw principles; Bint Majzoub openly discusses her sexual prowess with her male friends, while Hosna

murders Wad Rayyes in self-defense as he brutally attempts to rape her. Both women embrace androgynous roles to gain agency; I further rely on Carolyn Heilbrun's *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* to fully expound on the definition of androgyny.

For the final chapter, I examine the female colonizer's relationship to the marginalized woman through the characters of Harriet Amron and Merle Kinbona, respectively. As Joy M. Lynch argues in "'Beyond Recognition': Heritage and Identity in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*," Merle must face and accept her individual as well as collective colonial past before she can establish a postcolonial identity. I focus on Merle's agency recovery as a means of aiding her in reestablishing her Self so that she can move forward with her future. By concluding the discussion of the female colonizer and Othered woman with Marshall's *Chosen*, I attempt to end on a hopeful vision for the postcolonial female and male.

Chapter One: The Female Colonizer and Discursive Colonization in Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*

In chapter one of *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History*, Alison Donnell addresses the “problem of voicing the exploitation of the [formerly-colonized] landscape and its inhabitants whilst also seeking a language in which to celebrate its intense and affirming natural beauty” (57). The difficulty to which Donnell refers surrounds a writer’s ability to accurately convey the inherent splendor of nature while concurrently acknowledging and paying tribute to a scarred landscape’s people, particularly those who were once colonized individuals. Donnell suggests that we must participate in literary decolonization, or a process that “develop[s] a language through which to name, affirm and cherish the beauty and sustenance of a [postcolonial] landscape...without seeming to accrue those rhetorical structures that romanticise or sentimentalise [this landscape] within a eurocentric frame” (58). Although Donnell primarily calls for the literary decolonization of the Caribbean, she also speaks for any group of people who have seen their land invaded and exploited by colonizers.

In her 1937 memoir *Out of Africa*, Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen)¹ skillfully constructs an admittedly eloquently-written narrative that recounts the seventeen years she lived in Africa. Upon purchasing a four-thousand acre coffee plantation in the Ngong Hills, Blixen gains “ownership” of the squatters and other African inhabitants of the farm. Blixen’s memoir gives a realistic account of her relationship with Kamante, Farah, and the other Kikuyu and Somali tribe members who work on her farm, along with her various safaris, encounters with animals, and other experiences while living in Africa. By her actions, Blixen appears to be the opposite of most heavy-handed, abusive colonizers; she never admits to acting violently towards the workers and she describes herself as a kind and nurturing woman who takes great care in tending to their medical and physical needs. One gains the sense that, despite her role as a female colonizer, Blixen attempts to immerse herself within the culture of the colonized. Perhaps no critic better describes the dangers of Blixen’s prose than Ngugi wa Thiong’o in his book *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. He believes that “*Out of Africa* is one of the most dangerous books ever written about Africa, precisely because this Danish writer was obviously gifted with words and dreams. The racism in the book is catching, because it is persuasively put forward as love. But it is the love of a man for a horse or for a pet” (133). In this excerpt, Thiong’o precisely summarizes not only my argument for this chapter, but also a critique that many have failed to acknowledge.²

¹ Isak Dinesen is the pen name of the author; her given name was Karen Dinesen. After marrying her cousin, the Baron Bror Blixen, Karen Dinesen took her husband’s last name. Most critics still refer to her by her married name, as I will henceforth.

² Blixen’s memoir was made into a film in 1985, starring “America’s sweethearts” Meryl Streep as Karen Blixen and Robert Redford as Denys Finch Hatton, Blixen’s lover. Literary critics have argued that, much like the original work, the film’s romanticized version of Africa neglects to address the politics complicit with historical colonization. Furthermore, reviews of Blixen published as recently as 1989 describe her as “one of the finest and most singular artists of our

I suggest that Blixen's role as a colonizer becomes most evident in her discursive rather than corporeal colonization, and I implicate Blixen for the way she refers to herself and "the natives" throughout her narrative. Although she never purposefully mistreats her workers, Blixen views herself as taking on Kipling's version of the "white (wo)man's burden" and exudes a superior Saint or Christ-like attitude while repeatedly employing animal imagery to describe the Kikuyu. In many instances, she sympathizes more with the animals of the African plains than with her own servants. She regrets that the oxen are worked with whips and in constant toil each day, and admits that "in reward we have claimed their existence for ourselves" (253). What of the colonized whose "existence" the colonizers (including Blixen) have "claimed for [them]selves"? In another section of the novel, Blixen laments the loss of two giraffes that will travel by boat to a Hamburg menagerie; saddened by the giraffes' uprooting from Africa and their lonely journey ahead, Blixen believes the animals to have been seriously wronged. Ironically, she neglects to consider the colonized whose land has been stolen. Arguably, Blixen does much good for her employees (medical treatment, help in navigating government restrictions, negotiation of a piece of land for them to move to upon her departure from Africa, etc.), but this "good will" precisely indicates the level of hypocrisy pervasive throughout the memoir; Blixen envisions herself as an understanding, nurturing, mother figure to the tribe members, but fails to acknowledge herself as a colonizer. She attempts to mask her role with rhetoric that relays the "pleasures" of working with and assimilating to the Kikuyu tribe.

time" (*The Atlantic*) and "a writer with a powerful imagination and shrewd intelligence" (*The New York Times Book Review*).

Additionally, I argue that Blixen's colonizing language removes agency from the Africans and serves to "entrap" them within the confines of her pages, even though her writing of documents and letters for the tribe members seems to please and empower them. She describes a particular tribe member as exultant over a document that bears his name, and he often carries this letter on his person. Blixen's discourse simultaneously establishes and reduces the Africans' agencies to those of a mere epistolary existence, a contradiction that I will further investigate. I ultimately consider both Blixen's actual and discursive colonization as diminishing the Kikuyu to an Othered existence. I submit to Donnell's challenge to literarily decolonize Kenya by refusing to be seduced by Blixen's prose and, instead, aim to expose Blixen's narrative as the language of the colonizer.

In her chapter "Blixen, Ngugi: Recounting Kenya," Annie Gagiano displays a certain ambivalence towards Blixen's portrayal of Kenya and the Kikuyu. Gagiano proposes a thesis to investigate the significance of Blixen's writing along with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's criticism, and seemingly equates the two. With regards to Blixen and Thiong'o, Gagiano argues that "these authors fight different adversaries, but both Blixen and Ngugi eloquently affirm that 'This Kenya must not die' (96). To propose that Blixen, a former female colonizer and plantation owner, "eloquently" describes the same land that European colonizers stole from Thiong'o, a man born in Kenya under British Imperial rule, is illogical. Thiong'o's Kenya consists of its indigenous people, its spirit or soul; Blixen's Kenya consists of stereotypical notions of the colonized and the land, a land to which she claims ownership despite her foreign status. Gagiano acknowledges that Blixen views Africa in terms of "vivid glamour...a glamour to which [Blixen] considers herself naturally attuned and entitled, temporarily sojourning as if in the

world's best honeymoon and hideaway, in a love affair with the landscape" (96). Indeed, through Blixen's innumerable accounts of the beauty of the Ngong Hills farm, she projects her Eurocentric values on to an "exotic" land while ignoring the exploitive nature of her expressive prowess. In her opening lines, Blixen describes Africa in relation to Europe, explaining how "the landscape had not its like in all the world. There was no fat on it and no luxuriance anywhere...The trees had a light delicate foliage, the structure of which was different from that of the trees in Europe" (3). On the first page of her memoir, Blixen immediately juxtaposes Africa to Europe and thereby sets up the colonial power structure of the Other; she represents Africa as Other to Europe because she believes that Africa cannot function independent of the "Mother Land." Instead, Blixen must describe her new home through the creation of binaries since Africa is placed in opposition and as inferior to Europe; the lens of European "luxuriance" is used to view the "lean" and "simple" landscape of Africa. Blixen continues her introduction to the Ngong Hills by asserting that

[t]he views were immensely wide. Everything that you saw made for greatness or freedom...The chief feature of the landscape, and of your life in it, was the air...Up in this high air you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: Here I am, where I ought to be. (4)

Ironically, Blixen likens the open African plains to "freedom" and relishes the fresh outdoor air as validation of her place in Kenya, even though she achieves this liberty at the cost of the marginalization of the rightful owners of the land, the Kikuyu and Somali.

Immediately after admitting to Blixen's tendency to romanticize her surroundings, Gagiano contradicts herself by positing that those who claim Blixen's "writing [to be] no more than [a] display...of highly superior holiday snapshots or word paintings from parts other Europeans have not visited" are "grotesquely unfair to the delicacy of feeling and sheer intelligent responsiveness with which Blixen introduces Kenya to her readers," and yet ambivalently concludes that the aforementioned critique is "never quite untrue either" (96). I struggle to locate an example from Gagiano that proves Blixen as anything more than a self-righteous colonizer, and furthermore agree with the argument that her memoir proves as a series of anecdotal fragments that confirm its author's superiority complex. As stated in my introduction, Blixen does not acknowledge imposing bodily harm upon her workers, but we cannot consider her "introduction to Kenya" as "delicate" based on the discursive colonization that pervades the novel, particularly in the descriptions of the Africans.

Blixen's first encounter with her chef Kamante (when he is only a boy) leads her to characterize him as "leading a seclusive existence, like a sick animal" (21). After attempting to treat Kamante's illness, Blixen allows the Scotch Mission to keep him for several months because she is unsure of how to properly heal him of the disease. The mission proves successful in curing Kamante, and, although slightly disfigured and of smaller stature than most other boys, Kamante develops into a healthy young man. With reference to Kamante's physical characteristics, Blixen observes that "he always made the impression of being a dwarf, or in some way deformed...I myself did not think him bad-looking, but I may have looked upon him with something of a creator's eyes" (30). Blixen compares herself to Christ who, because He created each, must love His children

regardless of physical appearance; Blixen thereby aligns her status as resident farm doctor with God. She appoints Kamante as her chef, noting that “[n]othing...could be more mysterious than this natural instinct in a Savage for our culinary art” (35), and likening his gifts of Kikuyu cuisine to that of “a civilized dog, that has lived for a long time with people, [and] will place a bone on the floor before you, as a present” (37). In response to this same passage, Simon Lewis suggests that Blixen “diminishes the human effort Kamante put into his task” as well as “hides the fact that his cooking was, in fact, a task – a job, rather than the art Blixen transmutes it into” (67). By reducing Kamante’s identity to nothing more than a dog that thrives off its master’s approval, Blixen simultaneously reduces Kamante’s agency and furthermore confirms her role as the colonizer who sees herself as the ruler over the colonized (the master of the “animal”). Aimé Césaire comments on this relationship in what Robin D.G. Kelly’s introduction labels as his “third world manifesto” (7), *Discourse on Colonialism*. Césaire aptly argues that “colonization...dehumanizes even the most civilized [wo]man³...the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal” (41). Interestingly and unlike much postcolonial discourse, Césaire’s argument refers not to the dehumanization of the *colonized* who is treated as the animal, but rather to the *colonizer* who, far more than his or her subordinate, exhibits animalistic rather than civilized behaviors. Blixen refrains from physically abusing her servants and in doing so excludes herself from the extreme brute categorization

³ Although Césaire employs the generic “man” to refer to the colonizer, I also wish to include woman in this distinction and implicate Blixen for her role as the female colonizer who acts in accordance with Césaire’s assertions.

associated with many colonizers; however, she verbally abuses her workers through the colonizing language of her memoir and her treatment of Native as Other.

In her chapter entitled “The Savage in the Immigrant’s House,” Blixen recounts an important conversation that she has with Kamante regarding her ability to write a novel. Kamante is skeptical because he compares Blixen’s scattered sheets of typed paper to *The Odyssey*. ‘Look, Msabu,’ he said, ‘this is a good book. It hangs together from the one end to the other. Even if you hold it up and shake it strongly, it does not come to pieces’ (46). Kamante makes a logical observation, for he cannot read and therefore equates a book with its physical appearance rather than its words. Kamante then inquires as to what Blixen will write about, to which she answers, ‘I might write of you’ (46). Unsure of this response, Kamante asks Blixen which part of him she will write about. Kamante’s question here proves important because it points to his understanding of himself as a whole individual; Kamante knows that he is a whole person comprised of several parts, which greatly differs from Blixen’s projection of a subservient being who is only characterized by his deformity and ability to cook. Kamante’s unawareness of how books are bound and published is of no importance when compared to his enlightened view of himself as a multi-faceted, complex human being. Although the author of his story attempts to rhetorically diminish his existence to that of a poor, destitute animal who is taken in under a gracious master’s embrace, Kamante, through his own narrative, refuses to accept the role of Other through his attempt to establish him(S)elf.

Another important issue in *Out of Africa* is that of Western modernization. Blixen speaks not only of Christian civilizing missions present in Nairobi during her years on the farm, but also of Western “progress” and the machine. In her chapter “From an

Immigrant's Notebook" in a section entitled "Of Natives and History," Blixen explores the effects of Western modernity on the African "natives." In what appears to be her attempt at defending the Africans for their aversion to modernization, Blixen only succeeds in further Othering them, for she fails to acknowledge that Western progress is also associated with Western imperial rule and that this would explain why most colonized individuals would not readily embrace these values. Blixen writes:

The people who expect the Natives to jump joyfully from the stone age to the age of the motor-cars, forget the toil and labour which our own fathers have had, to bring us all through history up to where we are. We can make motor-cars and aeroplanes, and teach the Natives to use them. But the true love of motor-cars cannot be made, in human hearts, in the turn of a hand.

It takes centuries to produce it... (280-81)

In this selected passage, one first notices that Blixen places the Africans within the "stone age"; clearly she uses this epithet sardonically, for we know that she does not actually think that the Africans live in that time period, but she obviously believes that their behavior or lack of "progression" equates them to primeval man. Second, Blixen implies that "natives" cannot fully appreciate the modern machine because their simplistic nature does not allow for an understanding of the complexities that accompany inventions such as cars and airplanes. To conclude this section of her memoir, she proposes that the Africans will, in time, be able to cognitively embrace "sophisticated" Western thought: "We took these nations over not quite forty years ago; if we...allow them [Africans] to catch up with us...In twenty years they might be ready for the Encyclopaedists, and then they would come, in another ten years, to Kipling" (282). Blixen's suggestion that the

Africans can eventually comprehend Kipling, one of the most racist and tyrannical writers of the time, makes one seriously question her thought process, but also makes clear her role as a colonizer; she agrees with the colonizer's theory that the Other is of lesser intelligence and therefore must be instructed in Western ideology.⁴

Césaire also addresses Western modernization in *Discourse on Colonialism* and *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, and his treatment of Western progression engages directly with Blixen's imperialist views on the subject. Césaire cites M. Roger Caillois in *Discourse*, restating Caillois's beliefs that are strikingly similar to those of Blixen. Of Caillois, Césaire writes, "His doctrine? It has the virtue of simplicity. That the West invented Science. That the West alone knows how to think; that at the borders of the Western world there begins the shadowy realm of primitive thinking, which, dominated by the notion of participation, incapable of logic, is the very model of faulty thinking" (69). Césaire exposes Caillois's "faulty thinking" or belief predicated on the assumption that the East (the Other) is less capable than the West; Blixen shares this conviction in her statement regarding the Africans. Her treatment of the Africans' perceptual abilities aligns her with the colonizer's commonly-held view of "natives" as child-like and inept. Still, Césaire makes perhaps the most convincing argument against

⁴ Gagiano posits that Blixen "react[s] against modernization" (96), citing a passage that she believes to represent Blixen's "suggesti[on] that racism is itself the consequence of the historically and geographically different development of technological industrialization" (108). The quote to which Gagiano refers is one in which Blixen reflects on the "instinctive attachment which all Natives of Africa felt towards Berkeley and Denys" (a gross generalization), and she asserts that "white men of the past... would have been in better understanding and sympathy with the coloured races than we, of our Industrial Age, shall ever be. When the first steam engine was constructed, the roads of the races of the world parted, and we have never found one another since" (208). When compared to Blixen's previous statements regarding the Africans' dismissal of Westernization, this passage holds no weight in Gagiano's argument. Here, Blixen is merely confirming that the machine (ship, steamboat, etc.) allowed for exploitation and enslavement.

one of Blixen or Caillois in his poem *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*. With reference to the enslaved and colonized, Césaire writes:

Those who invented neither powder nor compass
those who could harness neither steam nor electricity
those who explored neither the seas nor sky
but who knew in its minute corners the land of suffering
those who have known voyages only through uprooting... (32-33)

In this excerpt, Césaire commemorates the persecuted slaves and colonized individuals for their *lack* of contribution to Western progress; he does so not to demean, but point precisely to the hypocrisy inextricably tied to the colonizer's quest for "development." He compares the Middle Passage voyage of the slave to the exploration voyage of the colonizer, as well as acknowledges the pain experienced by those who were forced from their land by these same "enlightened" Westerners. A colonizer such as Blixen does not take into account that Africans or other colonized peoples may refuse Western progress because it is this "progress" that has forced them into submission and has removed the land from their ownership, a fact that Césaire so poignantly states. To make a final comment on the complications implicit with Western modernization in Blixen's memoir, I point to the airplane accident of Blixen's lover Denys Finch Hatton and how it seems most ironic when one considers Blixen's claims about the Africans' inability to cherish this intricate machine. Finch Hatton owns an airplane and, on one of his flights back to the Ngong Hills to stay with Blixen, he collides with the trees; the accident proves fatal for Denys and Kamau, an African who Blixen claims "was terrified of flying" (334), but was his master's "boy" and therefore had no choice but to accompany Finch Hatton on

the trip. Aside from the tragedy of both men dying in this accident, the plane crash symbolizes the destruction caused by the Western machine, a product of Western progress.

Thus far, I have attempted to demonstrate how Blixen's colonizing language denies the Africans of agency and reduces them to one-dimensional, static characters devoid of complex human intellect and emotion; yet, Blixen's writing paradoxically subjugates and validates the Africans in certain instances. Blixen presents the acquiescent "native" who appreciates the love and support of his or her master. However, she also discusses Africans who seem to feel empowered by her writing. One such example is a man named Jogona Kanyagga whose son Wamai is killed by another young boy in a shooting accident. Due to tribal custom, the death of Wamai entitles Jogona to compensation from the killer's family even though the shooting was unintentional. When complications with the payment arise, Jogona asks Blixen to type up a report of the account so that he can take it before the District Commissioner. Blixen describes how Jogona appears to feel as if his existence is verified by the words on the page when she reads the report back to him:

Such a glance did Adam give the Lord when He formed him out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. I had created him and shown him himself: Jogona Kanyagga of life everlasting. When I handed him the paper, he took it reverently and greedily, folded it up in a corner of his cloak and kept his hand upon it. He could not afford to lose it, for his soul was in it, and it was the proof of his existence. (115)

She later describes how Jogona makes and wears a leather, bead-embellished pouch to contain his paper. He has Blixen read the document aloud to him on occasions, and “[a]t each reading his face took on the same impress of deep religious triumph” (119).

Arguably, Blixen’s prose in Jogona’s document proves valuable because it convinces the District Commissioner to award Jogona with what is rightfully owed him after the death of his son. Other Kikuyu members seek to claim Jogona’s payment by alleging that he is not Wamai’s biological father and therefore has no right to the money, but the Commissioner believes the written account over the testimonies of the prosecuting Kikuyu. However, the document’s legal significance does not necessarily achieve the magnitude of a “life-affirming” piece as Blixen suggests in the aforementioned passage. Again, Blixen compares herself to God and imagines that her rhetoric has somehow made Jogona self-aware; she fails to consider that this document may be the first ever written *for* and *about* Jogona. Perhaps Jogona values the paper because he knows that it verifies the true account of the events that transpired up to and after his son’s death; as any person would keep a legal contract or document in a secure location, Jogona carries this paper on his person because he knows that others are out to sabotage him. He may also feel empowered by owning an “important” and influential paper. In a time when one was forced to work his or her own land and expected to adhere to the laws enforced by white foreigners, establishing any form of agency, even if only through a paper that bore one’s name, history, and fingerprint, became important⁵. One could endlessly speculate on

⁵ Perhaps for the Africans, the written word, especially their own letters to one another, reminded them that they owned a voice that could still be heard through the form of writing. For this reason, they interpreted letters literally and refused to believe that any words might have been mistakenly transcribed by the Scribes who wrote them in Swahili. Blixen often had to read the letters to her workers because many of them were illiterate, and on one such occasion she discovered that a Scribe had written “I have cooked a baboon.” Blixen assumes that the sender

Jogona's reaction to the document as well as on the motivations for his behavior, but to agree that Blixen's words "proved Jogona's existence" seems reductive, especially considering that the words of her memoir serve to mute the African voice. Still, I find it refreshing that Blixen's discursive practices regarding Jogona's predicament proved helpful rather than harmful, despite her haughty assertions regarding her role as "savior".

In the final chapter of the memoir entitled "Farewell to the Farm," Blixen recounts the process of selling her plantation and aiding the squatters in securing new land on which to live: "The fate of the squatters weighed on my mind. As the people who had bought the farm were planning to take up the coffee-trees, and to have the land cut up and sold as building plots, they had no use for the squatters... This to the squatters was an unforeseen and bewildering determination, for they had lived in the illusion that the land was theirs" (357). I need not dwell on the hypocrisy of this statement since the land in fact *did* rightfully belong to the Kikuyu; however, Blixen appeals to several government officials and eventually secures a plot of land on which the squatters can relocate after the purchase of the coffee farm. In an unprecedented observation, Blixen claims, "It is more than their land that you take away from the people, whose Native land you take. It is their past as well their roots and their identity" (359). Her acknowledgment here paradoxically functions on two levels: first, it confirms that Blixen realizes the significance of seizing another's land and, in turn, stripping that individual of agency, identity, and livelihood. Second, this statement concurrently implicates Blixen for actively participating in

actually said, "I have *caught* a baboon," because "cooked" and "caught" were similar in Swahili (118). The recipient becomes angry when Blixen insists on the error, but Blixen dismisses the incident. By attempting to interpret the letter differently than the words written on the page, Blixen simultaneously takes the author's agency away; the recipient of the letter may feel uncomfortable with Blixen's interpretation because he knows that this form of expression is all that he and his friends and family have as colonized individuals, and he refuses to accept that this voice could also be diminished.

colonization despite her apparent knowledge of its effects on the Africans, as well as perpetuating the European munificent colonizer myth. If her memoir had addressed the exploitive enterprise of colonialism, an imperial force in which she was not complicit, then one could understand *Out of Africa* as a work worth commemorating for its revelatory and revolutionary purpose. Yet, Blixen's memoir omits the brutal and unjust effects of colonization⁶, and her narrative is thus still celebrated in the literary canon for its moving accounts of life within the African culture. This celebration is discussed in Thiong'o's chapter "Racism in Literature," in which he argues that "literature, particularly imaginative literature, is one of the most subtle and most effective ways by which a given ideology is passed on and received as the norm... So where there is racism, it will be reflected in the literature of that society" (127). Thiong'o develops his point by emphasizing the large amount of writing that circulated during the slave trade: "Popular and serious works of poetry and fiction were written carrying and reinforcing the images of the inherent inferiority of the oppressed and the inherent superiority of the oppressor" (130). Writers such as Kipling immediately come to mind. Thiong'o's assertions are imperative to one's understanding of the implicit dangers of Blixen's *Out of Africa*. To the unsuspecting reader, Blixen's prose paints an adventurous, romantic, and tragic

⁶ In her anecdote "Kitosch's Story," Blixen does expose European brutality by writing about a servant named Kitosch whose master has him flogged to death for riding a horse when instructed otherwise. After the flogging, the settler ties up Kitosch and leaves him to die. The case goes to court, and the prosecution relies on the cause of death relating to Kitosch's severe injuries sustained from the flogging, while the defense claims that Kitosch willed himself to die, based on the account of another servant who was present when Kitosch claimed he wished to die and then did such. Of the three charges, murder, manslaughter, or grievous hurt, the colonizer and two servants responsible for the actual flogging are found guilty on grievous hurt. Blixen finds it "humiliating" that the "Europeans should not, in Africa, have power to throw the African out of existence" and furthermore labels Kitosch's "firm will to die" beautiful and elusive. "In [the figure of Kitosch] is embodied the fugitiveness of the wild things who are, in the hour of need, conscious of a refuge somewhere in existence; who go when they like; of whom we can never get hold" (272). Ignoring the fact that Kitosch's "will to die" was inspired by his flogging, Blixen instead focuses on how extraordinary it must be to have the power to do so.

Africa. Her endless tales of exciting safaris lure the reader into believing in a commercialized Africa that only exists as a home to exotic animals, compliant, content “natives,” and lovely landscapes. Blixen’s role as “mother figure” to her African “children” elevates her as a benevolent and enlightened woman in a primitive, foreign land, and the tragic loss of her lover and eventual loss of her farm allows readers to empathize with Blixen and appreciate her plight as a woman who only wishes to bring prosperity to the impoverished “natives.” A European audience, particularly at the time of its publication, would most likely have read Blixen’s memoir as a glimpse into the far-off East; they might have even likened her work to a modern-day fairy tale complete with savage beasts, adventure, timeless romance, etc. For these reasons, it is apparent why Thiong’o labels Blixen’s work as “one of the most dangerous books ever written about Africa.” As already stated, even modern audiences fail to acknowledge the hypocrisy and racism at the heart of Blixen’s memoir, which is precisely why we, as readers, must remain vigilant against literature that colonizes. Thus, Blixen must be remembered for her role as a female colonizer rather than as a literary heroine.

Chapter Two: The Female Colonizer and Third World Woman in Jean Rhys's *Wide*

Sargasso Sea

In the introduction to her seminal manifesto *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir states the following: "If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change" (xxii). De Beauvoir cites classic misogynistic sentiments from both Aristotle and St. Thomas. Aristotle contended that "[t]he female is a female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities; we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness" (qtd. in de Beauvoir xviii). Similarly, St Thomas "pronounced woman to be an 'imperfect man,' an 'incidental being,' ...symbolized in Genesis where Eve is depicted as made from...a 'supernumerary bone' of Adam" (qtd. in de Beauvoir xviii). De Beauvoir posits that, by submitting to man's impositions, woman also submits to being established as Other, for "it is not the Other who, in defining [herself] as the Other, establishes the One [man]. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One" (xxi). The submissive female allows man to establish himself as the constant, or the One, and since she cannot be equal to him, the female is the variable, the opposite: the Other.

It is this concept of woman as Other that I wish to further investigate in this chapter. By "Other," I refer not only to De Beauvoir's definition of the woman subjugated by the patriarchal male, but also to the colonized and oppressed Third World woman. I wish to examine Antoinette in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and demonstrate that

Rhys presents her as a woman who, although a descendant of a slave-holding family, is portrayed as an Othered woman forced into an arranged, patriarchal marriage. Antoinette resists the marriage, but eventually must concede because she realizes that her desires are not valued by her domineering stepbrother. In this chapter, I will delineate Antoinette's dual role as colonizer and oppressed female, as well as her struggle for agency.

Antoinette feels ostracized because she is a white Creole in a former slave-holding family inhabiting a Jamaican estate. Additionally, Antoinette is forced to relinquish command over her life and the narrative; she begins as the narrator or the Self of the novel, but becomes the object and Other, while her husband asserts control over the narrative and, consequently, over Antoinette's life. Caught between a middle space as a woman born into imperialism but a victim of oppression herself, Antoinette seeks to recover agency in a society where she has little; however, her reclaiming of the narrative at the close of the novel suggests that Antoinette also reclaims her Self.

Additionally, I argue that Christophine, the formerly-enslaved and therefore Othered Obeah woman, also represents an agent in Rhys's novel. Although a servant to Antoinette's family, Christophine asserts agency through her actions and final speech to Antoinette's husband, the Rochester figure. One must especially consider her forthright speech to Rochester, for her words hold great power when compared to Antoinette's catatonic silence. Christophine's parting words to Rochester also stress Antoinette's confused status as white/woman/Other. Christophine tells Rochester that Antoinette "is not *béké* like you, but she is *béké*, and not like us either" (93). Of course, one could argue that Christophine refers to Antoinette as *béké* (white) because of Antoinette's skin color and remarks that Antoinette is unlike Rochester because Christophine clearly dislikes

him, whereas she cares deeply for Antoinette. However, Christophine might also use the word *béké* to imply that Antoinette is neither white nor black, again reinforcing Antoinette's lack of defined identity. I contend that Christophine is a strong woman and agent despite her servant status in the colony and explore how she defines her colonial identity.

Based on historical colonization and slavery in Jamaica during the nineteenth century, *Wide Sargasso Sea* begins with Antoinette's description of her secluded life on her family's Jamaican plantation. As a young girl, Antoinette cannot fully understand the effects of colonization. She wonders why her family receives no visitors, and asks her mother why many of their servants have left the plantation. Antoinette also worries that Christophine, her nurse and surrogate mother, will leave like many of the other former slaves, for Christophine is outraged over the apprenticeship system⁷ that replaced slavery: "No more slavery! She had to laugh! 'These new ones have Letter of the Law. Same thing. They got magistrate. They got fine. They got jail house and chain gang. They got tread machine to mash up people's feet. New ones worse than old ones – more cunning, that's all'" (15)⁸. Despite her lack of full comprehension of the effects of colonialism,

⁷ Judith L. Raiskin notes that Britain's Emancipation Act passed in 1833, but slavery still existed in the British colonies until 1834. From 1834 to 1838, "freed" slaves worked as apprentices, but were not paid for their labor. Enslaved under this new form of slavery masked as an apprenticeship, slaves worked for free and their owners still received compensation (9). Antoinette's family, the Cosways, are one such family, and this historical law accounts for why the Jamaicans feel animosity towards the Cosways, as well as why they eventually riot and set fire to the Cosway estate.

⁸ The "new ones" and "them" to whom Christophine refers are the "English entrepreneurs who came to the West Indies to take advantage of the depressed sugar market and to buy the estates and plantations being cheaply sold after emancipation" (Raiskin 15). Apprenticeship laborers were often tortured and punished worse than when they were slaves, which accounts for Christophine's assertions that the "new ones" are "worse than old ones," as well as for her description of the tread machine. The treadmill machine, one such torture device, consisted of frame that held a wooden cylinder with steps carved in it (resembling a larger and elongated

Antoinette is well aware that her family members, as former slave owners and white Creoles, remain perpetual outsiders in the land and to its inhabitants: “I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping dogs lie. One day a little girl followed me singing, ‘Go away white cockroach, go away, go away...Nobody want you. Go away’” (13). Growing up in a liminal state proves confusing for Antoinette because she cannot define her Self in relation to her family or her black caregivers and friends. When playing with her Jamaican friend Tia one day, Antoinette loses three pennies in what she deems an unfair bet. Upset and embarrassed over her loss, Antoinette calls Tia a “cheating nigger” (14). Tia retaliates by labeling Antoinette’s family as poor: “Real white people, they got gold money...Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger” (14). In a final act of mockery, Tia takes Antoinette’s dress so that Antoinette must wear Tia’s dress home that day. The contrast between Antoinette’s crisply starched, new dress and Tia’s old and tattered one, as well as Antoinette’s dismissal of the three pennies compared to Tia’s enthusiastic response to her winning, makes clear the class and race chasm between the two friends. Although Tia is correct with regards to the Cosway family having less money than the “new money” families on the island, she is far poorer than her friend Antoinette. By forcing Antoinette to literally wear a symbol of poverty, Tia simultaneously challenges Antoinette to consider her status as a white Creole and daughter of a former slave-owner amongst the colonized Jamaicans and European colonizers. In her article “Unquiet Ghosts: The Struggle for Representation in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*,” Mona Fayad refers to the aforementioned scene as one in

paddle wheel on a steam boat). With their hands tied to a bar above their heads, laborers were forced to turn the wheel of the treadmill by walking on the steps (Raiskin 96).

which “Antoinette resorts to cultural stereotypes to assert her power over Tia...Having set up the barrier of racial hatred between herself and her friend, Antoinette loses Tia permanently by labeling her as other” (440-41). Fayad is correct, for Antoinette and Tia’s next (and last) encounter occurs on the night that the protestors set fire to the Coulibri estate. Scared and refusing to believe that she must leave her home forever, Antoinette runs to Tia in hopes of staying and living with her. Antoinette recalls, “When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face...We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass” (27). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak believes this “mirror imagery” represents Tia as the “Other that could not be selfed” (250). Both Fayad and Spivak focus on Tia as Other, and both seem to suggest that Antoinette consciously subjugates her companion as Other; certainly Tia, as well as the other servants, represent Othered individuals, yet I contend that Antoinette’s vision of Tia as her reflection may also point to Antoinette’s eventual marginalization. Antoinette’s loss of agency after her marriage to Rochester certainly cannot (and is not intended to) compare to the brutal oppression of the Jamaican slaves; nonetheless, Rochester will establish himself as *the* Self and Antoinette as the silenced Other after they marry, and perhaps Antoinette glimpses her future role as an Othered woman in Tia’s mirror image.

Neither English nor Jamaican, Antoinette, as maintained by Benita Parry, is “caught between the English imperialist and black Jamaican...The dislocations of the Creole position are repeatedly spoken by Antoinette” (247). In addition to no sense of place, Antoinette lacks a defined identity; while her home, the Coulibri estate, becomes

dilapidated because the Cosways have no money to repair the leaks and other damages, Antoinette's relationship with her mother, Annette, also deteriorates. Antoinette has no recollection of the plantation during times of slavery, and only remembers her mother's post-Emancipation anxiety. Of Annette, Antoinette writes,

[S]he pushed me away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. She wanted to sit with Pierre or walk where she pleased without being pestered...I was old enough to look after myself. 'Oh let me alone,' she would say...and after I knew that she talked aloud to herself I was a little afraid of her. (11)

Distance continues to grow between Antoinette and Annette, for Annette dotes on Antoinette's brother, Pierre, because he is both mentally and physically challenged. After Annette remarries Mr. Mason, a wealthy English colonizer who owns estates in Trinidad and Antigua, Annette continues to express concern over the Jamaican former slaves who cause her to be paranoid about her family's safety. Mason dismisses his wife's worries, reassuring her that the Jamaicans are 'too damn lazy to be dangerous' (19) and 'children [who] wouldn't hurt a fly' (21). Mason's stereotypical vision of the "acquiescent native" and the myth of the mother country prove destructive, for the Jamaicans eventually protest against the colonizers by setting fire to Coulibri, beginning with Pierre's room; Pierre dies as a result. Only a short time prior to the attack, Antoinette holds her brother and promises him that Mr. Mason will take him to England to "be cured, made like other people" (22). Having never been to England, Antoinette views this mystifying place as one of healing for both her brother's disability and her mother's angst, failing to recognize that England is ironically responsible for the strife within her family. By

marrying plantation owners, Annette continues the cycle of colonialism within her own family and exposes Antoinette and Pierre to the harsh realities of colonized individuals who rebel against the colonizers for both their rights and land.

In part one of the novel, Antoinette only repeats what others say of Cosway, her biological father; attendees of Annette and Mr. Mason's wedding gossip about "old Cosway," his various affairs, and the "bastards" he fathered prior to drinking himself to death (17). With Antoinette's father a mere memory, Mason becomes Antoinette's father figure and, as such, asserts himself as the patriarchal head of the family. Fayad contends that, "[b]y presenting us initially with Antoinette as a child, Rhys immediately launches us into the basic problems of the self-representation of a female in a patriarchal society" (438). Fayad labels Mason's entrance into the family as the point when Antoinette begins to feel subjugated. Mason, along with his son Richard, will eventually arrange for Antoinette to be married to the English Rochester figure, even though Antoinette objects to the union. After Antoinette becomes a young woman of seventeen while living in a convent, her stepfather removes her from the care of the nuns and assures her that some friends from England will come to visit the next winter. Dubious of her stepfather's claims, Antoinette asks whether he truly believes that the visitors will come, to which he replies, "One of them will. I'm certain of that" (35). Antoinette writes, "It may have been the way he smiled, but again a feeling of dismay, sadness, loss, almost choked me" (35). After the conversation, Antoinette dreams of following a man into the forest. She describes "walk[ing] with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to stop myself... This must happen... He turns and

looks at me, his face black with hatred” (36). The man in the dream keeps insisting that they must stop. He continues to ask “Here?” and by the close of the dream, the question evolves into a demand. When speaking to one of the nuns the following day, Antoinette recalls the dream as a vision of hell. For Antoinette, the man in the dream represents her betrothed and she follows him to her nuptial bed, and subsequently to her loss of innocence. The white dress symbolizes both a wedding gown and a sign of chastity; Antoinette insists on keeping the dress clean until eventually she allows it to drag on the ground and become dirty.⁹ Antoinette “makes no effort to stop [her]self” and succumbs to the man, which represents her realization that she has no choice in the arranged marriage. She likens the marriage to hell, an image that foreshadows the fire that will eventually consume her prison in Rochester’s English home, as well as her own life.

As noted by many critics, Antoinette is not only forced into submission through the arranged marriage, but she is also silenced after marrying Rochester, for he takes control of the narrative for the majority of part two of the novel. Lee Erwin aptly argues that “[t]he shift to Rochester’s voice upon their marriage suggests that Antoinette’s own narrative is now ended, having reached its proper nineteenth-century conclusion (‘for better or for worse’), and that his desire now drives the narrative” (146). Antoinette’s retelling of her history becomes the only means through which she can maintain her identity; as the patriarchy strengthens, Antoinette’s agency is diminished. She must

⁹ After their marriage, Rochester is particularly fond of a white dress that Antoinette owns. On the night that Rochester confronts his wife about Daniel Cosway’s accusations, Antoinette wears the favored gown, but Rochester no longer finds it attractive. He observes that it “slipped untidily over one shoulder and seemed too large for her” (76). Due to the forced marriage, Rochester and Antoinette are strangers to one another, and this strained relationship only worsens after Daniel reveals that he is an illegitimate child from one of Cosway’s former relationships with a Jamaican slave, and thereby Antoinette’s half-brother. The white dress in Antoinette’s dream could also represent the one that she will own in reality, for it, too, becomes “spoiled” once Rochester becomes privy to his wife’s family’s secret past.

relinquish her physical life to the demands of her stepfather and stepbrother, but must furthermore abandon the only aspect of existence over which she has control: her writing. Still, Rhys simultaneously presents the character of Rochester as a man with reduced agency because he remains nameless throughout the novel's entirety. Critics have labeled him as "Rochester" or the "Rochester figure" because of his relation to the original Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, but Rhys purposefully never gives a name to the English stranger. Raikin notes that "Rhys wrote in a letter, 'I carefully haven't named the man at all'" (Rhys qtd. in Raikin 38). Fayad believes that Antoinette's husband is "unnamed in the text, significantly so because he is his own 'subject' and thus free from objectification by naming and also by not being named he becomes omnipotent, the god-like creator of Bertha's [Antoinette's] narrative text" (443). However, I also suggest that Rhys gives the Rochester figure no identifying name because she wishes to subvert the traditional colonizer/colonized and patriarchal male/submissive female roles; as a representation of the English colonizer and dominant husband, Rochester would be expected to exert power over the Jamaicans and his new wife. He attempts to do so by taking Antoinette's words from her, indulging in his sexual fantasies with both Antoinette and one of the servant girls Amélie, and renaming Antoinette as "Bertha" (again, to represent the mad woman in Brontë's host text). Although Rhys makes clear the struggle for agency experienced by both the Jamaican ex-slaves and the colonial Creole, she also seemingly seeks to "write in" a history for the subjugated women of the novel. *Wide Sargasso Sea* focuses primarily on the woman's plight and her need for validation in a colonial society; male characters appear minor in relation to the women in the novel. Cosway, dead before the novel begins, only receives recognition through the gossip of

others; his family members (with the exception of Daniel) scarcely acknowledge him. Similarly, both the Mason men all but disappear from the narrative, and are only mentioned in passing after part one. Rochester, although given authority over the majority of the novel's discourse, vanishes once Antoinette reclaims the narrative. Of course, he also has no true identity because he has no name and no past, a point reinforced by Antoinette when she says, "Names matter. Like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window..." (106-07). Rochester is a static, emblematic character who merely encompasses the stereotypical attributes of the European colonizer and patriarchal male. In the same way that Mason refers to the "natives" as child-like, Rochester views Antoinette as an "obstinate" child (56). Conversely, Antoinette and Christophine, the "white cockroach" Creole and Jamaican slave turned servant, respectively, remain at the forefront of the text and prove themselves to be strong women despite the oppressive societies in which they must live.

Conversely, critics such as Spivak contend that Christophine appears subsidiary because, after her final speech to Rochester, she vanishes from the remaining entirety of the narrative. Spivak maintains that Christophine is "tangential" and "simply driven out of the story, with neither narrative or characterological explanation or justice" (253). Furthermore, Spivak refers to *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a "novel which rewrites a canonical English text within the European novelistic tradition in the interest of the white Creole rather than the native" (253). Spivak argues that "[n]o perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self" (253). Parry's "Two Native Voices in *Wide*

Sargasso Sea” engages in a direct argument with Spivak’s claims, and Parry conversely disagrees that Christophine is “tangential” to the novel. Parry contends that “Spivak’s strategy of reading necessarily blots out...Christophine’s inscription of the native, female, individual Self who defies the demands of the discriminatory discourses impinging on her person...Christophine subverts the Creole address that would constitute her as domesticated Other, and asserts herself as articulate antagonist of patriarchal, settler and imperialist law” (248). With regards to Christophine’s abrupt disappearance from the novel, Parry judges the exit both natural and commonsensical, relying on the passages in which Christophine denounces England and “challeng[es] imperialism’s authorized system of knowledge” (249). I hesitate to fully agree or disagree with either scholar, for both raise valid points with regards to Christophine’s (dis)placement in the novel. The narrative structure of *Wide Sargasso Sea* precludes Christophine’s voice, for readers only gain the perspectives of Antoinette and Rochester. Furthermore, Rhys obviously focuses centrally on Antoinette’s marginalization and process of identity construction since the novel rewrites (or, in effect, writes) the story of the madwoman in Brontë’s novel. However, I do agree with Parry in that Christophine’s articulate words to Rochester give her more agency than her “mistress” who has completely lost all sense of self by the end of her honeymoon with Rochester. As noted by Parry, Christophine, in her last speaking scene, reveals a deep cognizance of Rochester’s role as a patriarchal oppressor, as well as his money-inspired motives:

Tell the truth now. She don’t come to your house in this place England they tell me about, she don’t come to your beautiful house to beg you to marry with her. No it’s you come all the long way to her house – it’s you

beg her to marry. And she love you and she give you all she have. Now you say you don't love her and you break her up. What you do with her money, eh? Her voice was still quiet but with a hiss in it when she said 'money.' (95)

Upon marrying Antoinette, Rochester receives part of Antoinette's inheritance, a handsome dowry of 30,000 pounds. Knowing the amount of money at stake, Christophine exposes the unjustness of the arranged marriage; Antoinette never had a choice in the matter and, even after forcing herself to love Rochester, her unrequited love left her emotionally empty. Christophine's logic makes Rochester uncomfortable and he forces her to leave, mockingly assuring her that she can write to Antoinette. Upon her departure, Christophine responds, 'Read and write I don't know. Other things I know' (97). A formerly-enslaved woman, Christophine is fully aware of a European man's vision of woman as Object and Other, and perhaps her last statement refers to this knowledge. She realizes that Rochester's dominance serves to diminish Antoinette's agency, which thereby affects Antoinette's psyche. Already unaware of her place as a white Creole in a Jamaican society married to an Englishman, Antoinette further loses sight of herself after Rochester sleeps with Amélie, a "light brown girl" (88) who is also neither entirely black Jamaican nor white. In his narrative, Rochester reduces Antoinette to a mere mad woman, but fails to concede that his own imperial attitudes have caused Antoinette's despair. Christophine's parting words are important because they specifically reveal her understanding of what Rochester calculatedly ignores.

In the novel's final pages, Antoinette returns as the narrator and finishes her story as the captive "mad" woman in the attic of Rochester's English estate, Thornfield Hall. In

Rhys's retelling of Bertha (Antoinette) Mason, Antoinette appears quite sane rather than mad. She takes notice of small details in her attic room, such as the absence of any mirrors, and carefully observes the behaviors of Grace Poole, the woman who oversees Antoinette and guards against her escaping the attic prison. Aside from bouts of temporary amnesia, Antoinette appears acute, for she is aware of her surroundings and circumstances. She writes to her stepbrother Richard Mason and asks him, '[P]lease take me away from this place where I am dying because it is so cold and dark' (108). Richard visits Antoinette, but only to tell her that he cannot "interfere legally" between her and Rochester, to which Antoinette responds by attacking Richard with a knife (109). Antoinette's rage against her stepbrother and the patriarchal arrangement is clear, for he interfered with her life when he sold her to Rochester in the arranged marriage, but he refuses to aid her once she is another man's "responsibility." According to Fayad, "In the *history* of patriarchy, the well-being of man depends on the reduction of woman to a ghost" (438). Both Richard and Rochester succeed in reducing Antoinette to a ghost who becomes invisible. The visitors to the house also refer to her as a ghost because, after Grace Poole falls asleep, Antoinette takes Grace's keys and slips out into the hallways to momentarily escape her secluded prison. By this same means, Antoinette sets forth to end the myth of England and free herself from Rochester's prison; after a final dream in which Antoinette sees herself setting fire to Thornfield Hall, Antoinette takes up a candle and ends the narrative: "I was outside holding my candle. Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draught for the flame flickered and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage" (112). Having finally reclaimed both her narrative

and her agency, Antoinette intends to destroy Rochester's home and thus undermine his power over her. Additionally, she will free herself from oppression, even if through death. Through her actions, Antoinette "proves that the 'sanity' of institutionalized patriarchy is self-destructive, for repression and suppression will burn it up from within...She is a representative of our constant, long struggle against suppression in a society that still persists in perceiving woman as object and not as subject" (Fayad 450; 452). In her final vision before the close of the novel, Antoinette dreams of calling out to Christophine for help: "[L]ooking behind me, I had been helped. There was a wall of fire protecting me" (112). Christophine's appearance in Antoinette's dream seems significant, for Antoinette could have asked for help from a number of relatives or friends from the past; however, she calls to Christophine, the mother figure and savior who has shared in Antoinette's struggle for identity. Much like her childhood vision of seeing herself in Tia, Antoinette seems to also see herself in Christophine. Although their relationship began as a result of colonization, Antoinette and Christophine both experience the life-altering effects of colonialism and marginalization. Additionally, both attempt to reestablish themselves through language, as Christophine exposes Rochester and Antoinette reclaims her story. To close, I refer back to de Beauvoir's quote cited at the beginning of this chapter: "If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change" (xxii). Refusing to accept herself as the inessential, Antoinette resolves to change her circumstances. Although she dies in the process, Antoinette, if only briefly, regains agency and becomes the essential, the agent, and the Self rather than Othered woman.

Chapter Three: The Female Colonizer and Androgynous Agent in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*

In her introduction to Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, Laila Lalami discusses Salih as a Nahda writer; the Nahda was "the literary movement that came into being in Egypt starting in the late nineteenth-century...Proponents of the Nahda were usually men who had gone on their own migrations to the north and returned to Egypt determined to emulate European civilization" (xv). Lalami asserts that *Season* differs from other Nahda novels not only in its depiction of the dangers of European modernity, but also in its presentation of sexually-uninhibited characters: "Whereas Nahda writers might have shied away from discussing sexuality openly, Salih lets his male characters gossip about their sexual escapades, and includes a woman in the group...Bint Majzoub" (xv). In addition to diverging from Nahda novels, *Season* differs from the novels analyzed in this thesis because it inverts the traditionally-depicted pattern of a European oppressing an African; the male Sudanese protagonist, Mustafa Sa'eed, manipulates and controls four European women when he travels to England to pursue an education. However, these women must also be implicated for their willingness to contribute to Mustafa's sexual deviance and maltreatment of the Sudanese culture. Unlike the female colonizers in *Out of Africa* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the European women present in Salih's novel are not complicit in historical or historically-based colonization; yet, Ann Hammond, Sheila Greenwood, Isabella Seymour, and Jean Morris all participate

in the exploitation of Mustafa and emulate rather than constitute colonizers who act upon despotic desires of exoticism. *Season* is the only one of the four novels that I discuss authored by a male, a detail that may hold certain implications for the novel's treatment of women. Salih might seem disparate in relation to the other works in this thesis since they are authored by women and focus on colonizing or subjugating practices of women; however, I find Salih's novel important to this discussion for several reasons.

First, *Season* inverts the conventional role of colonizer/colonized individuals by showing the devastating effects of colonization through an African-Sudanese man's eyes as he allows and encourages sexual exploitation by four separate European women. I refer to these women as "Othered colonizers" because they allow Mustafa to elicit their dangerous obsession with the non-European or the exotic, but they are also made to be Mustafa's love slaves (and hence Othered) in his ability to utilize their European fascination with the taboo "native" man to his disturbing advantage. Each woman commits suicide (Jean Morris's death being a form of sadistic ritualistic suicide) due to her psychological despair over her role as a female colonizer of Mustafa. Second, *Season* exposes the Sudanese female tribe members as women who are Othered by fellow tribesmen; these women are expected to submit to arranged marriage and male dominance of the patriarchal tribe. However, two Sudanese women, Bint Majzoub and Hosna Bint Mahmoud, claim agency in this male-centered society through their ability to embrace typically "masculine" characteristics (sexual liberty, capacity to kill, etc.), and I argue that these androgynous women serve as agents even though their culture certainly disavows empowered women. I find this discussion significant because, from a feminist

perspective, androgyny is one of the key components to deconstructing stereotypical male and female gender roles, as well as the objectified, Othered woman.

In recounting his life story to the unnamed narrator, Mustafa admits to seducing his European lovers by calculatedly eliciting their colonizing desires, referring to these desires as ‘still pool[s] in the depths of every woman that I knew how to stir’ (27). When speaking of Ann Hammond, a young college student, Mustafa labels her as his prey who ‘yearned for tropical climes, cruel suns, [and] purple horizons,’ and further adds, ‘In her eyes, I was a symbol of all her hankering’ (27). Through his manipulative speech and cunning design of his bed chambers, Mustafa leads Ann into a fantasy world surrounded by African incense, statues, and other purposefully-placed decorations, and, in this fabricated realm, Ann fulfills the role of slave to her male master. When retelling his story to the narrator, Mustafa remembers Ann’s fetish for him and his African heritage: ‘I love your sweat,’ she would say as though intoning rites in a temple. ‘I want to have the smell of you in full – the smell of rotting leaves in the jungles of Africa, the smell of the mango and the pawpaw and tropical spices, the smell of rains in the deserts of Arabia’ (118). Ann’s obsession with Mustafa proves too disturbing, for she eventually commits suicide and leaves a note that asks God to damn Mustafa Sa’eed (121). One may attribute Ann’s reckless behavior to girlish naïveté; she is young and susceptible to the influence of an educated, attractive, older man such as Mustafa. Certainly, these factors could logically account for Ann participating in Mustafa’s sexual role-playing and perverse fantasies; however, one must consider Mustafa’s reaction to the defense’s argument when he goes on trial for the murders of not only Ann Hammond, but also Sheila Greenwood, Isabella Seymour, and Jean Morris. Professor Foster-Keen, Mustafa’s lawyer, maintains

that Mustafa was not responsible for killing the women; rather, they were killed ‘by the germ of a deadly disease that assailed them a thousand years ago’ (29). Through his reference to an age-old disease, the professor implies that European colonization and the quest for power infected Mustafa’s lovers as they all consciously decided to engage in a relationship with a man who served as a physical manifestation of their mental fixation on the taboo of the East.¹⁰

Still, Mustafa seemingly disagrees with his professor’s argument. Mustafa believes himself to be responsible for the deaths of the women, and he compares his mind to a “sharp knife” (27), an appellation that serves as a metaphor to describe the ways in which Mustafa’s deceit has led each woman to commit suicide. Mustafa knows that his lies contributed to the women’s deaths since he is the one responsible for seducing them into embracing their obsessions. Nouha Homad asserts that Mustafa’s “domination has to be of the women of the ‘other’ culture. He sees the act symbolically as one of liberation...The sexual act becomes for Sa’eed, then, not an act of tenderness but one of wielding political power, an expression of distorted brutal love” (59). Certainly, one can agree that Mustafa’s views of “love” are “distorted” because his relationships are not based on love or even lust. As Homad argues, Mustafa seeks to free himself and his people from the colonial ties of their pasts. Perhaps Mustafa believes that, as a member of

¹⁰ Paradoxically, Mustafa later describes how Professor Foster-Keen showed prejudice towards him at Oxford. As a student of the professor’s, Mustafa learned that Foster-Keen was a member of the Supreme Committee for the Protestant Missionary Societies in Africa. Mustafa quotes the professor as saying, ‘You, Mr. Sa’eed, are the best example of the fact that our civilizing mission in Africa is of no avail. After all the efforts we’ve made to educate you, it’s as if you’d come out of the jungle for the first time’ (78). The professor embodies his European colonizing ancestor who believed that Africans were heathens and must be “civilized,” thus “justifying” invasion and brutality. Mustafa never explains why the professor comes to his defense in court, but implies that the professor is a hypocrite who only wishes to win the case rather than one who cares about his client.

a formerly-colonized Sudanese tribe, his mind is the only part of his identity that remains whole; as an African man living in and attempting to assimilate to Western European culture, Mustafa loses sight of himself and resorts to “fighting back” against the colonizers with the only weapon that he owns: his cunning, his mind.

Ironically, Mustafa’s comparison of his mind to a knife becomes manifest when he physically stabs his wife and fourth European “conquest,” Jean Morris. Mustafa pursues Jean for three years and during that time suffers from her violent verbal and physical attacks; Jean finally succumbs to Mustafa’s advances and marries him. Based on an abusive and tumultuous relationship shared between the couple, the marriage lacks love or companionship. Jean lies to her husband, while committing adultery frequently and blatantly. She also denies Mustafa any sexual pleasure, an act that places her in direct opposition to Mustafa’s former lovers who surrendered to his every lustful desire. When reflecting on his reason for staying married to Jean, Mustafa tells the narrator, ‘How often have I asked myself what it was that bound me to her! Why didn’t I leave her and escape? But I knew there was nothing I could do about it and that the tragedy had to happen’ (134). Unlike Mustafa’s previous three girlfriends, Jean refuses to submit to her husband’s control. Instead, she seemingly holds the power in the marriage, for Mustafa admits, ‘Having been a hunter, I had become the quarry’ (132). In an extreme role reversal that places him as the colonized, abused individual, Mustafa resorts to murder with an extant rather than emblematic knife:

Here are my ships my darling, sailing towards the shores of destruction. I leant over and kissed her. I put the blade-edge between her breasts and she twined her legs round my back. Slowly I pressed down. Slowly. She opened her eyes. What

ecstasy there was in those eyes! ‘Darling,’ she said painfully, ‘I thought you would never do this. I almost gave up hope of you.’ I pressed down the dagger with my chest until it had all disappeared between her breasts. (136)

According to Homad, “Killing Jean Morris symbolises for Mustafa Sa’eed his conquest of the invading culture, which had taught him to look up to it, to venerate it, while this very deed liberates him in the eyes of Jean Morris, making him at last worthy of her esteem” (62). In a final symbolic act representative of his revenge against the colonizer, Mustafa murders his wife in a perverse sexual encounter that seemingly fulfills a desire of Jean Morris. She appears to welcome her death and embrace it as if she has longed for Mustafa to prove himself by killing her. She kisses the dagger that will take her life, and at the climax of their final sexual act, Jean begs for Mustafa to ‘come’ because she ‘is ready now’ (136). The double entendre here is clear, but Jean seems to refer to being ready for death rather than pleasure, for Mustafa proceeds to stab Jean through the heart after her request. Having used his mind and body to mentally and physically control four European women who represent the female colonizer, Mustafa subverts the long-held seat of power present in the West.

In contrast to Mustafa’s lovers and female colonizers are the “Other” female protagonists of the novel, Bint Majzoub and Hosna Bint Mahmoud, the latter being Mustafa’s Sudanese wife whom he marries after moving back to Africa and settling in the village of Wad Hamid. Both Bint Majzoub and Hosna represent Othered women who must submit to the laws of the patriarchy. In the village, women are viewed as property to be bartered and sold into marriages that are always arranged by the male suitor and father of the betrothed female. The narrator’s close friend Mahjoub intimates the belief of the

village with regards to women when he states, ‘You know how life is run here... Women belong to men and a man’s a man even if he’s decrepit’ (83). Living in a society that clearly demarcates the male and female power structures, both Bint Majzoub and Hosna are resilient female characters who rise above the male domination present in their village.

The patriarchal society in which Bint Majzoub and Hosna live expects women to practice chaste behavior, to agree to arranged marriages, and to ultimately play the role of the submissive wife. Marilyn French presents the concept of inlaw and outlaw feminine principles, arguing for the classification of the aforementioned type of woman under the inlaw feminine principle. French contends that “the inlaw feminine principle is an expression of the benevolent manifestations of nature,” requiring “volitional subordination [and] voluntary relinquishment of power-in-the-world” (24). French further maintains that the feminine principle as a whole “does not admit the possibility of transcendence, nor the need for it. However, its inlaw side is pressed into the service of transcendence” (25). Bint Majzoub and Hosna do not exist within the realm of the inlaw feminine; rather, they are better understood as occupants of French’s “Other” principle of the outlaw feminine:

The outlaw aspect...is associated with darkness, chaos, flesh, the sinister, magic, and above all, sexuality. It is outlaw because it is subversive, undermining of the masculine principle. It claims both...the ability to give birth and the ability to kill, both of which actual females possess...it is sex as abandonment. (23)

In a village where women are expected to live according to French's concept of the outlaw feminine, Bint Majzoub conspicuously behaves like the male friends with whom she engages on a regular basis. The narrator emphasizes Bint Majzoub's outlaw principles when he comments on her "daring and uninhibited" conversations with other men, for she participates in discussions of sex and "swear[s] on oath of divorce like a man" (64). Bint Majzoub's rhetoric is indistinguishable from that of her male companions; she openly discusses husbands from her previous eight marriages and describes in detail how they pleased her during sex. Bint Majzoub's friends do not find her language inappropriate, nor do they treat her as a subordinate. Through her expressions and embracing of French's "sexual" and "subversive" aspects of the outlaw feminine, Bint Majzoub claims agency for herself through her capacity to transcend her village's patriarchal laws that force women to remain silent and submissive.

Additionally, Bint Majzoub can be characterized as an androgynous woman, thereby further allowing her to assert herself as an agent. In her introduction to *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, Carolyn G. Heilbrun explains that androgyny "defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned. Androgyny seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate" (x). She further posits that "androgyny suggests...a full range of experience open to individuals who may, as women, be aggressive...it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom" (x-xi). Certainly, Bint Majzoub represents a woman who refuses to live within what Heilbrun denotes as the "confines of the appropriate." Instead, she successfully positions herself as a powerful village woman who serves as an equal to

men. Bint Majzoub's androgyny negates custom and gives her the authority to "choose her place" as one of complete control in a village where women are almost completely devoid of any power.¹¹

Like Bint Majzoub, Hosna Bint Mahmoud also embodies an androgynous agent in the patriarchal tribe. After Mustafa's disappearance and assumed death, Wad Rayyes begins to pursue the recently-widowed Hosna because he wants to take her as his second wife. Hosna vehemently refuses Wad's proposal because he is approximately forty years her senior; however, once her father and brothers decide that they wish to "sell" her to Wad, she is forced into the arranged marriage. The narrator learns from Bint Majzoub about the atrocities that occur after Wad and Hosna are married for two short weeks. Bint Majzoub relays how she awoke to Hosna's screams, at first mistaking them for those of pleasure. She says, 'I thought that Wad Rayyes had at last achieved what he wanted – the poor man was on the verge of madness; two weeks with the woman without her speaking to him or allowing him to come near her' (103). She further elaborates on the situation, and reveals that the screams were actually those of pain, for Wad assaulted Hosna in attempts to rape her. As one of the first people to arrive at Wad Rayyes's house after realizing the circumstances, Bint Majzoub reveals the shocking scene to the narrator:

The red straw mat was swimming in blood. I raised the lamp and saw that every inch of Bint [Hosna] Mahmoud's body was covered in bites and scratches – her stomach, thighs, and neck. The nipple of one breast had been bitten through and blood poured down from her lower lip... Wad

¹¹ Of notable interest is Bint Majzoub's androgyny placed in contradistinction to that of Mustafa Sa'eed. Upon one of his first conversations with Mustafa, the narrator observes Mustafa's "look more of beauty than of handsomeness", "long and elegant" fingers, and face that shows weakness in laughter (8). Bint Majzoub shows strength and claims agency through her androgyny, while Mustafa Sa'eed proves weak in his.

Rayyes had been stabbed more than ten times – in his stomach, chest, face, and between his thighs...We found [Hosna] lying on her back with the knife plunged into her heart. (104-05)

The chilling aftermath of the attack proves that, similar to Bint Majzoub, Hosna occupies the realm of the outlaw feminine. Although she is forced into a marriage with which she does not agree, Hosna reclaims agency by her “ability to kill” (French 23). She retaliates against Wad Rayyes’s brutality and perhaps against the male-centered society as a whole; by stabbing Wad “between the thighs,” Hosna symbolically castrates Wad and positions him as female. Hosna also proves herself as an androgynous woman; according to Heilbrun, “the conventional view [of] ‘masculine’ equals forceful, competent, competitive, controlling, vigorous, unsentimental, and occasionally violent; ‘feminine’ equals tender, genteel, intuitive rather than rational, passive, unaggressive, readily given to submission” (xiv). In her fight against Wad’s attempted rape, Hosna asserts herself as active rather than passive, aggressive rather than pliant, and powerful rather than submissive. She knows that she cannot escape from the forced marriage through any other means than death, and she is willing to commit suicide in order to escape. Like each of her husband’s European lovers, Hosna takes her own life; however, unlike the female colonizers, Hosna’s suicide cannot be viewed as a response to the degeneration caused by colonization. Conversely, Hosna’s suicide represents her ability to reestablish agency and ultimately liberates her from the status as an Othered woman. Patricia Geesey asks, “Is Sa’eed’s widow the agent of change for customs concerning women and their status village?” (137). The answer remains unclear, for the novel ends prior to a discussion of future village rituals surrounding the arranged marriage. However, whether or not Hosna

is “the agent” remains clear; Hosna’s unprecedented reaction against patriarchal law might make the village males reconsider before forcing another of their women into marriage. The narrator’s grandfather laments the loss of Wad, his dear friend, and cries, ‘There is no power and no strength save in God – it’s the first time something like this has happened in the village since God created it’ (102). Having never witnessed a woman rise up against a man in self-defense, the grandfather and other villagers are in a complete state of bewilderment over the murder and suicide. With the exception of the narrator, the villagers blame Hosna for her actions, but no one implicates Wad for his. The narrator’s grandfather curses women and labels them all “sisters of the Devil” (102), while Bint Majzoub wonders why Hosna ‘accepted the stranger’ (Mustafa) and not Wad Rayyes (106). Homad finds Bint Majzoub’s reaction “puzzling since one would have expected her as a free spirit to sympathize with Hosna in her attempt to establish her worth as equal to that of men. Yet one cannot condemn her out of hand since she is the product of conditioning” (66). I agree that Bint Majzoub has been “conditioned” by tribal custom, and further suggest that her reason for questioning Hosna’s motives may stem from her androgyny; having embraced other traditional male roles, Bint Majzoub also endorses the values of the tribe’s male elders and therefore cannot sympathize with Hosna’s plight.

Additionally, Homad views Hosna’s refusal of Wad Rayyes as a result of Mustafa’s influence. She argues, “Although a savage rejecter of Western values, Mustafa Sa’eed actually brings those same values into his own home and, in refusing to acknowledge the fact, he becomes the instigator of a tragedy: a murder and a suicide” (63). Homad implies that Hosna’s rejection of Wad is not only based on her lack of desire to marry a man old enough to be her father, but is also due to her familiarity with

Western custom since her former husband spent years in England. Homad's assertions seem plausible, but she does not consider that, to fully embrace Western values, Hosna would also have to disavow polygamy, another marriage tradition in Wad Homid. Rather than marry Wad Rayyes, Hosna insists on marrying the narrator (who secretly loves her even though he is married to another woman). One can argue that, even though he loves her, the narrator never takes Hosna as a second wife due to his own Western conditioning after attending college in Europe; yet, it remains unclear whether Hosna's knowledge of the West completely accounts for her reaction to Wad Rayyes, for she is willing to become the second wife of the narrator in order to avoid the arranged marriage.

This chapter suggests that Mustafa engages in dual roles of both oppressor/exploiter and colonized. Geesey notes that some critics, such as Ali Abdallah Abbas, argue that "view[ing] Sa'eed's sexual conquests as a colonized person's vendetta is to fall into the trap of cultural stereotyping that is at once Sa'eed's weapon of seduction against the women and ultimately his own downfall" (129). However, one must examine the source of Mustafa's controlling desires, and fault colonialism for the actions of Mustafa and the women with colonizing attitudes whom he takes as lovers. Referencing the postcolonial reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the commonly cited Caliban and Prospero trope, Sylvia Wynter expounds on the effects of colonization and argues that "Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda...is an assault against all culture which accepts as the price of its existence the negation of any part of man's being...Caliban's attempted rape [is] a move towards wholeness" (347). Certainly, Wynter does not mean to condone attempted rape, but she aims to explain the colonized individual's desire for autonomy and agency. She further asserts that characters in postcolonial novels who fail in their

“struggle against circumstances” must still be viewed as “important” in those failures, for “failure...is a witness to the impossible odds against which they are pitted” (350).

Wynter’s statement, though directed towards men and women of West Indian novels, applies to any postcolonial figure who, in the words of Mustafa’s lawyer Professor Foster-Keen, becomes “broken” as a result of Western civilization (29). Colonialism engenders the appropriation of the colonized identity and contorts this identity into the Other. Salih’s novel makes clear the implications of the West’s fetish for exoticism, a fixation that can render deadly results. Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the oppressed victim’s need for what Wynter labels as “wholeness.” Mustafa empowers himself through his sexual prowess, attempting to assert himself as more than a Sudanese man of a formerly-colonized society; however, in the process he loses sight of the Self he seeks, and becomes involved in a perverse marriage that ends in murder. Perhaps a more hopeful glimpse into the future of the tribe would be found in Hosna and Bint Majzoub; as marginalized women, both seek to challenge the authority of the patriarchal laws of the tribe, and, although tragically, Hosna succeeds in reclaiming her agency and retaliating against her oppressors.

Chapter Four: The Female Colonizer and Agency Recovery in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*

Paule Marshall's novel *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* reveals the complications implicit in colonialism and neocolonialism, as well as in the relationship between the female colonizer and colonized female. In this novel, an American anthropological development team travels to the fictional island of Bourne to improve the living conditions in the poor, rural area of Bournehills. Marshall portrays Saul Amron and Allen Fuso, the team's overseer and head researcher, respectively, as good-natured, reputable men who truly mean to non-invasively aid the people of Bournehills. Conversely, Marshall characterizes Saul's wife Harriet as a prejudiced woman who is ideologically aligned with a colonizer and finds the Bournehillsians backwards and unappreciative. In a foreshadowing of Harriet's eventual degeneration, readers glimpse Harriet's colonizing attitudes towards the islanders early in the novel. Shortly after their arrival in Bournehills, Harriet tells Saul, 'I managed to get a peek inside some of the houses on what they call the main road... They were awful, Saul; worse, I think than anything I ever saw in North Philadelphia. I don't see how they can bear living in them' (146). Saul immediately reacts unfavorably towards his wife, reminding her that the Bournehillsians do not choose to live in poverty. Harriet vehemently denies implying

such; however, Saul fears that rather than mere ignorance, his wife's observations represent a deeper and perhaps more disconcerting meaning (146-47).

Similar to most accounts of colonizers who claim to help the colonized "progress" or become "civilized," Marshall's novel exposes Harriet as believing herself to be aiding the Bournehills people, though in reality she hinders them. Harriet's past plagues her, for her family comes from a line of slave traders. She envisions a "black stain" upon her body whenever one of the members of the community touches her in passing, and, after the revelation of Saul and Merle's affair, she is less disturbed by the act of infidelity than the knowledge that her husband has slept with a black woman. Harriet and Merle's relationship is particularly interesting because the colonizer leads the colonized to empowerment; after their final encounter when Merle realizes that Harriet attempts to subjugate her, Merle finally faces her past, forgives herself, and begins a new life as the novel ends with her journey to find her estranged husband and daughter. Harriet also accepts her past and relationship to former slave traders, as well as inherent discriminatory attitudes, yet her acceptance and realization of her identity lead to a drastically different outcome than Merle's; Harriet takes her own life after realizing that she holds no power over Merle.¹² Although the colonized female may never be able to return to her pre-colonization identity, I contend that she may attempt to construct a new identity (undoubtedly forever changed by colonization) and rebuild an independent life. I maintain that Marshall challenges the traditional role of the colonizer and also portrays a sense of hope for the colonized. From Marshall's perspective, the female colonizer

¹² Certainly, other scholars have applied postcolonial readings to Marshall's novel, so my claim here is not original; however, I hope to add to the scholarship by more specifically focusing on the contrast between Merle and Harriet as they both face their imperial pasts, and I devote a significant portion of this chapter to Merle's ability to reclaim agency after being Othered by two females.

becomes the silenced, submissive woman who, in contrast to the woman she tries to rule, cannot rise above her situation and submits to suicide because she knows that she cannot (and has no desire to) change.

In Paule Marshall's autobiographical essay "Shaping the World of my Art," she discusses the importance of knowing one's past and how the past affects an individual's identity construction. Marshall argues for an understanding of "the importance of truly confronting the past, both in personal and historical terms, and the necessity of reversing the present order" (110-11), and aptly concludes that "[t]he past offers much instruction for the present struggle" (112). Certainly, the colonized individual's past informs his or her present and future, and Marshall emphasizes this theme throughout *Chosen*. A diasporic community, Bournehills commemorates Cuffee Ned, the leader of their homeland's former slave revolt, by holding a yearly carnival celebration and masque. The annual production includes the reenacted death of Percy Bryam, the head estate owner and colonizer murdered by the Bournehillsians in the Pyre Hill Revolt. When relating to Saul and Harriet the story of Cuffee and the slave revolt, Merle reminds the new visitors that Bournehills owes much to its past, observing, "[S]ometimes strangers to Bournehills wonder why we go on about Cuffee and Pyre Hill when all that happened donkeys' years ago and should have long been done with and forgotten. But we're an odd, half-mad people... We don't ever forget anything and yesterday comes like today to us" (102). Merle's assertions summarize the town's devotion to the past and its occupants' unwillingness to change. Many teams attempt to develop Bournehills prior to Saul's team's arrival, but all are unsuccessful because the people of Bournehills repudiate most forms of modernization. Perhaps the Bournehillsians associate technological progress

with Western ideals and refuse advancements based on the historical resistance against European enslavement led by their ancestors. Symbolic of the West's ability to corrupt, Vere, one of the town's aspiring and self-educated young men, dies in a car accident in the Whitmonday annual race held in Bournehills's neighboring city of Spiretown. Marshall refers to Vere's American-manufactured Opel as "menacing" (346) and, as the Opel's brakes begin to fail during the race, the car is personified as if in a plot against Vere: "The collapse taking place around [Vere], which he was helpless to stop, flowed perhaps out of a profoundly self-destructive impulse within the machine itself, and Vere, foolishly allowing himself to be taken in by what he had believed was its promise of power, was simply a hapless victim" (367). By comparing the Opel to an American who seduces and then destroys Vere, Marshall reiterates the dangers complicit in embracing Western values, as well as the oppressive and callous nature of the colonizer.

In addition to the colonial rule that still haunts Bournehills's collective past, imperialism affects Merle's personal past and contributes to the disconnect from her family; this disconnect subsequently forms a chasm between Merle and her identity. Ashton Vaughan, Merle's father, descends from Duncan Vaughan, a former estate owner who "had sired the last of the forty children he had had from the black women who worked on his estate at the age of seventy-five" (69). Despite his marriage to a white woman, Ashton Vaughan impregnates a sixteen-year old young black woman named Clara who gives birth to Merle. Clara is murdered when Merle is only two years old, and, although never proven, Vaughan's wife remains the prime suspect in the murder. Merle renounces her father due to his lack of involvement in her life, as well as his apathetic display following Clara's murder. Divulging her repressed memories to Saul, Merle

confronts her father's ghost and censures his unforgivable behavior, thereby disavowing Vaughan as her father:

‘Can you,’ she continued, her voice rising, ‘call someone a father who never said a word when the child’s mother, who was supposed to be his favorite out of all the women he kept at the time, was murdered in cold blood?...And Ashton Vaughan never even tried to find out who did it. Maybe because he knew the Backra woman he was married to was behind it. No, bo, that man was no father of mine.’ (357)

Merle blames herself for not being able to identify her mother's killer, even though no rational person would expect a toddler of two years old to remember and recognize the face of a stranger. Merle's strained and virtually non-existent relationship with her father, coupled with the untimely death of her mother, perpetuates a loss of self, for she cannot relate to her sordid past that stems from the effects of colonization. Lâle Demirtürk develops my point by delineating Merle's inability to define her self, contending that “[t]he problem of constituting identity within the ‘self-Other’ dichotomy imposed by imperialism highlights Merle’s problem of constituting her own identity that stems from the confused state of ‘in-betweenness’...She seems to be entangled by the...Eurocentric discourses on the island and also by her past life” (99).

In addition to a separation from her immediate family, Merle's loss of husband and daughter compound her identity crisis. In a symbolic mirroring of her mother's death, Merle's marriage “dies” when her husband Ketu takes their baby girl and flees to West Africa after learning of Merle's former lesbian relationship with an older European benefactress she met while attending college in England. As in her childhood,

imperialism infects Merle's adult life because the Englishwoman attempts to enslave and exploit Merle, similar to the way in which a colonizer would keep a colonized female mistress. Merle bitterly recounts the relationship to Saul: 'She mostly used the money to buy foolish people like me. She collected people the way someone else might paintings or books, the bitch,' and later adds, 'There was nothing she enjoyed more than sitting up like some queen bee in that big drawing room of hers while we buzzed and fawned around her...yours truly did her share of the entertaining. In more ways...than I care to say' (328-29). After completely breaking ties with the woman, Merle meets and marries Ketu; however, the benefactress begins to mail Merle checks after much time passes. Although Merle immediately sends back the money at first, her independence weakens after she becomes pregnant; she resorts to cashing some of the checks to help with the expenses accompanying the new baby. To further debase Merle, the Englishwoman sends a messenger to inform Ketu of the previous affair and recently-accepted money. Armed with letters, photos, and proof of the cashed checks, the messenger proves believable, and the sabotage leads to Merle's eventual separation from Ketu and her little girl. Admitting her role as exploited woman, Merle says, "I stood for the worst that could happen to those of us who came to places like England and allowed ourselves to be corrupted. I wasn't Merle to [Ketu] any longer, a person, his wife, the mother of his child, but the very thing he had tried to avoid all his years there" (334). As if in penance for her transgressions, Merle continues to wear a pair of heavy saint engraved earrings that the European woman gave to her as a present. The earrings serve as a daily reminder not only of Merle's persecution, but also of her failed marriage. Although she was victimized by a female oppressor, Merle blames herself for the estranged relationship between herself and Ketu,

similar to the guilt she suffers for not remembering Clara's killer. Reinforcing my assertions that Merle's past defines her present, Joy M. Lynch asserts that Merle must negotiate and transcend her past in order to release the bonds of colonization that have held her for so long. She believes that "the colonial encounter...marks the ways that bodies are created, defined, owned, and inhabited by the characters in the novel," and further posits that "Merle...exhibits in specific ways the material evidence of the conflict between colonizer and colonized on her body and, more importantly, in her subjectivity" (175).

After framing the chapter with Merle's experiences as a colonized female, I now turn to Harriet Amron's experiences as a female colonizer, along with her dark past and attempts to repress inherent colonizing attitudes. On the plane ride to Bourne Island, Harriet associates the "restful green fields" of the island with her childhood home's "gently sloping lawn outside the house in Delaware" (20). The moment of reverie annoys Harriet, and she clears her mind of the image: "Although the memory was innocuous enough, she was irritated with herself for having allowed it to slip past her guard. She disliked having her childhood intrude" (21). Readers gain the sense that Harriet's hasty decision to avoid her past reveals aspects of her character, as well as her family history. Adam Meyer notes that "[Harriet's] first image of Bourne Island, her likening it to the lawn of her childhood home, puts her squarely in the mold of the plantation owner" (109). If we agree with Meyer's plausible observation, then, as Harriet likens Bournehills to a plantation from her past, we may also liken Harriet to Bournehills's original plantation owner Percy Bryam. Furthermore, Harriet could be aligned with Merle's grandfather Duncan Vaughan, the plantation settler who owned and fathered many

slaves. Harriet not only becomes a representation of the island's former colonizers, but also a symbol of contemporary neocolonial relationships between America/Europe and the Caribbean. Unable to avoid the sight of Bourne Island from above, Harriet senses a foreboding feeling when she subsequently spies Bournehills from her aerial view:

It struck her as being another world altogether, one that stood in profound contradistinction to the pleasant reassuring green plain directly below...To add to matters, the hills were filled with shadows...Because of the shadows Bournehills scarcely seemed a physical place to her, but some mysterious and obscured region of the mind which ordinary consciousness did not dare admit to light. (21)

Harriet further begins to feel as if she is being "borne backward in time" away from Saul, "back to the past which she had always sought to avoid" (21). She again copes by completely forcing the thought from her mind, a method that accentuates Harriet's eagerness to extricate herself from her past. Unlike Merle, who symbolically "resurrects" the past and plagues herself to remember it so that she may bring her mother's murderer to justice, Harriet elects to "bury" her family history along with her deceased relatives so that she might forget a past deeply rooted in colonialism.

Like Merle, Harriet descends from a family of slave traders; ironically and disturbingly, the Center for Applied Social Research or CASR, the agency funding the Bournehills development project, branched from a company originally created by Philadelphia's wealthiest slave-trading families. A descendant of one such family, Harriet hypocritically uses her inherited "blood money" to support the CASR's development

projects. Marshall informs readers of Harriet's imperial ties quite early in the novel when describing Harriet's ancestor, Susan Harbin:

[Harbin] had launched the family's modest wealth by her small-scale speculation in the West Indies trade, which in those days consisted of... making the twice-yearly run between Philadelphia, the west coast of Africa, and then back across the Atlantic to the islands. In a stained, faded ledger still to be seen in a glass display-case at the Historical Society, the widow had kept careful account in a neat, furbelowed hand...the number of slaves taken on in Guinea and then just how much her portion of that cargo, both human and otherwise, had brought in crude sugar, rum and molasses in the islands. (37-38)

One cannot directly blame Harriet for her family's involvement with the slave trade, just as one cannot blame Merle for descending from colonizers; however, Harriet, as much as she tries to repress her past, embodies and exhibits the colonizing and prejudiced traits of her relative Susan Harbin. Harriet's attempts to ignore her roots prove futile, for Bournehills elicits and makes evident her role as a neo-colonist. Meyer suggests that what Harriet "discovers during the course of her stay on Bourne Island...is that, as much as she has wished and tried to put this part of her past behind her, it has clearly continued to guide many of her actions" (109). Many of Harriet's acts, thoughts, and words reflect a race-based aversion to the Bournehillsians, as well as a disparaging position towards their lifestyles and customs. As previously mentioned, Lyle Hutson, one of Bourne Island's elite lawyers, touches Harriet's arm on her first night in Bournehills, and "when she had glanced down somewhat disconcertedly at that black hand, she had had the

impression...that it was not his hand resting on her...but rather some dark and unknown part of herself which had suddenly...surfaced, appearing like a stigmata or an ugly black-and-blue mark at the place he had touched” (96-97). Later remembering the feelings of discomfiture caused by Lyle’s touch, Harriet refers to his hand as “some dark and submerged part of herself, painful aspects of herself she denied existed. She could not quite forgive him for the presumptuous touch” (195-96).

In the dark recesses of her mind, Harriet knows that she cannot escape her colonizing past by simply donating money to the CASR, and the symbol of her corrupted thoughts resurface in the form of the imagined stain on her skin. Black skin repulses Harriet, and she associates blackness with a curse. She observes the light-colored soles of Merle’s feet and recalls how, as a child, she marveled “at the maid Alberta’s pink palms” and “often wondered how this had come about; why had this part of them been spared?” (440). Additionally, Harriet “had once believed the fairies had turned [Alberta] black because of something naughty she had done when little” (458). Admittedly, Harriet’s childish thoughts must be considered exactly as such since they were formed in her childhood; however, one also realizes that Harriet’s notions of black skin as “tainted” prevail even in her adulthood, notions made palpable in her reaction to Saul and Merle’s sexual relationship. Content to convince herself that Saul’s indiscretions must be attributed to “too much carnival” (427), Harriet eventually reveals her true problem with the affair: “Looking out into the late afternoon sunlight at the doorway, she said – and her face had tightened in a clearly perceptible grimace, ‘I think,’ she said, ‘of your touching someone like that and I can’t understand it’” (430). Clearly more incensed by Saul sleeping with a black woman than the act of infidelity itself, Harriet invokes her childlike

visions of blackness as corrupt and evil; in doing so, she reveals her true identity. Placed in direct contradistinction to the black community of Bournehills, Harriet reminds us of her white colonizer descendant, for Marshall describes the portrait of Susan Harbin as revealing a “face whose missionary mien and pallor triumphs over the obfuscating gloom of the painting” (38). Indeed, Harriet’s “pale wheat-colored” hair (430), “oatmeal-colored linen skirt,” and “white blouse... which might have been treated with some special chemical that kept it permanently fresh” (175) all characterize her as the Anglo-American female colonizer who, like her ancestor, believes her whiteness to be superior.

I conclude with an evaluation of Harriet’s colonizing attempts, efforts that prove to empower rather than defeat Merle. In Marshall’s inversion of the traditional effects of colonization, Merle finds agency and reclaims her life after Harriet attempts to “buy” her, an act reminiscent of the European benefactress as well as slave holders. Upon first meeting Harriet, Merle recognizes a familiarity in her, and we later understand this recognition to represent the English benefactress. Merle first sees Harriet in the drawing room of Lyle Hutson’s home, a meeting place symbolizing the drawing room in which the European woman found entertainment from her lovers. Merle “had glanced quickly across at Harriet upon entering the room, but now she turned and faced her directly... She gave what almost seemed a start of recognition. ‘Why, if you don’t put me in mind of someone I knew in England years ago,’ she said in a wondering, strangely uneasy tone” (71). Merle never fully trusts Harriet from their first encounter and forward because, in Harriet, she recognizes the same imperial force that ruined her marriage and, in essence, her life¹³. After Harriet learns of the affair between Saul and Merle and offers to pay

¹³ In a personal interview with Joyce Pettis, Marshall discusses her characterization of Harriet and contends that “Harriet permits me to find a means by which Merle will finally be able to

Merle to leave the island, condescendingly referring to the payment as a “gift” or “token of appreciation” for helping her and Saul settle into Bournehills (438), Merle finally realizes that Harriet signifies her former lover; Harriet’s reference to the payment as a gift calls to mind the various gifts that the European woman offered Merle in order to keep her under control. Harriet also suggests that Merle return to England, a suggestion that serves as the final catalyst for Merle’s agency recovery.

In response to Harriet’s proposal, Merle screams in scornful laughter: “It was an ugly anguished scream torn from the very top of her voice ...she forced it out, sounding like a woman in labor with a stillborn child, who screams to rid herself of that dead weight. Merle might have also been trying to rid herself of something dead inside her” (439-40). The dead weight represents the benefactress, “that face perhaps which had attached itself like an incubus to her mind, sapping her strength and purpose over the years” (440). Eugenia DeLamotte posits that, in addition to Merle’s “birthing process” symbolizing the Englishwoman, “Harriet herself, like the Englishwoman, is described here as a stillbirth. She seeks a securely colonial, maternalistic relation with Merle, but Merle...refuses the role of child” (236-37). Merle asserts herself in an act of defiance, refusing to leave Bournehills and telling Harriet, ‘I don’t like people ordering me about like I’m still the little colonial. I’ve had too much of that...When they say go, I stay. And stay I will. Right here in Bournehills where I belong’ (442). It is also interesting to note the relationship between the imagery of Merle’s “stillborn” weight of oppression and Harriet’s two previous miscarriages she experienced in her first marriage. If we equate Harriet’s miscarriages with the “infection” of colonialism, then we may conclude that her

overcome that relationship with the English woman...It was important that [Harriet] reflect in an American way the same pattern of dominance and exploitation that the English woman represents in the novel” (Marshall qtd. in Pettis 125).

past has essentially remained within her; it has never been “birthed.” In contrast, Merle expels the weight of her past after Harriet’s demeaning proposal. DeLamotte convincingly argues that, “[h]aving triumphed over Harriet, Merle gives birth to herself. By rejecting her false progeny...Merle liberates herself, in a paradox akin to the freedom-through-stasis of Bournehills people, to travel to Africa and claim her daughter – her true progeny, her entitlement to the future” (238). Aware that she must no longer punish herself, Merle removes the saint earrings, and Saul later notes that she looks “unburdened, restored to herself” (463). Merle finally decides to leave Bourne Island in order to find her husband and child who live in Uganda. Through her ability to reject the objectified status as Othered colonized woman, Merle regains both agency and her identity as she traverses the metaphorical and literal landscape of a colonized Bournehills to the freedom that lies beyond and awaits in the form of her family.

After Harriet writes to her uncle, the head of the CASR, and convinces him to pull Saul off the Bournehills project, Saul informs Harriet that their marriage is over. Lacking control over Merle, Saul, and her own life, Harriet submits to suicide. She leaves no suicide note, nor speaks to anyone of her plans. Unlike Merle’s loud and vocal representation of her recovered agency, Harriet maintains silence in the last confrontation with her imperial past. On the morning of her suicide, Harriet sees a final image of the morning and night, the light and dark, merging as the night gives way to dawn:

They embraced – the darkness and the light, so that when she finally rose and opened out the shutters she had the impression that the night, bedding down in the great folds of the hills, contained the dawn, and the dawn the darkness. It was as though they were really, after all, one and the same,

two parts of a whole, and that together they stood to acquaint her with an essential truth. (459)

This “essential truth” holds many possibilities for interpretation. Perhaps Harriet accepts that the culture of Bournehills remains an intrinsic part of her life, for without her family’s money made in the slave trade, Harriet’s privileged life would not exist. One may also construe the image of the “night bedding down” and becoming “whole” with the dawn as a representation of the relationship between Saul and Merle and the implied completeness in their acceptance of one another; Harriet acknowledges that she will never be able to provide Saul with the friendship that he cherishes with Merle.

DeLamotte posits an equally viable explanation of the “essential truth.” She claims, “To Harriet black is a symbol of evil...her vision of herself as black expresses her sudden, unevadable recognition that she has been implicated in a struggle for power...trying to gain power through Saul by gaining power over him,” emphasizing that “...in its racist equation of Black skin with evil, Harriet’s revelation reenacts the very will-to-power she is finally acknowledging as the evil in herself” (239).¹⁴ Harriet’s truth leads her to the sea where she presumably drowns herself, for her body is never recovered. Lloyd Brown suggests that, “appropriately, [Harriet’s] defeat culminates in her suicide in the very sea which symbolizes destructive White power” (9); here, Brown alludes to the sea as the passage through which slave traders navigated and transported human cargo years prior. By returning to the violent, unforgiving waters which took the lives of African-Caribbean peoples at the command of Harriet’s descendants, Harriet relinquishes her role as female colonizer and accepts defeat. Perhaps as a concluding emblematic image, the sea is

¹⁴ Harriet finally recognizes that her disgust with blackness actually reflects her own “heart of darkness” (459), Marshall’s obvious reference to Conrad and the despotic behavior of Kurtz.

portrayed “like...new. The water, a clear, deep-toned blue that absorbed the sunlight to a depth far below its surface, looked as though it had been endlessly filtered to remove every impurity. And all the trace of the unsightly seaweed it had sloughed off like so much dead skin over the weeks was gone” (461). Aligned with Merle’s renewal, the sea represents the old self that Merle sheds in her transformation from marginalized woman to independent agent. Perhaps the sea also reminds readers of the tranquility that Merle will experience in the quest to reconnect with her family and, equally important, with her Self.

Conclusion

The works discussed in the thesis differ in many degrees; authors include colonial European, white Creole, and African-American women, along with a Sudanese man, and the novels range from historical portrayals of colonization to fictive reconstructions of the effects of colonialism, as well as depictions of colonization by both European and American enterprises. To cogently tie these works together, I wish to focus the conclusion on what might be learned from each novel's representation of the relationship between the female colonizer and the colonized; how does one implicate a woman for seeking hegemony in a patriarchal culture in which she herself might represent the colonized or oppressed in some instances? How must we negotiate the politics of imperialism as well as woman's universal oppression without elevating the female oppressor as well as undercutting the colonized woman's experience? These are questions that scholars continue to debate and for which there are no concrete answers; however, I hope to conclude by focusing on the significance of this enduring debate, as well as by offering ways in which we might seek to understand woman's quest for validity without muting her voice of resistance or necessarily advocating for her dominance over (O)thers.

Some scholars argue that colonial women occupied an unclear place within the imperial system, for they served as subservient wives and mothers who had no voice

when juxtaposed with their dominant male husbands, but nonetheless exerted power over the colonized. Anne McClintock broaches this conversation and concludes:

[C]olonial women made none of the direct economic or military decisions of empire and very few reaped its vast profits... the rationed privileges of race all too often put white women in positions of decided – if borrowed – power, not only over colonized women but also over colonized men. As such, white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting. (6)

Karen Blixen, former wife to a plantation owner and then owner/colonizer herself, represents the colonial woman to whom McClintock refers; although a woman in a male-dominated colony in Kenya, Blixen still held power because she was white and European. Sidonie Smith echoes McClintock and reads Blixen as one who understood her marginalized position as a woman in the British colony, arguing that Blixen “sought to ‘achieve something *as myself*’” which “encouraged her to embrace native African culture in more sympathetic ways than the British colonials who assumed their privileges and their cultural superiority unquestioningly” (427). Smith contends that Blixen “resists the colonizing tendency to stabilize, explain, judge, and hierarchize the other’s differences, as if to recognize that to do other/wise would be to...oppress the racial other, and ultimately to repress her own subjectivity” (427). By suggesting that female colonizers such as Blixen appropriated the lives and land of individuals because their own oppression necessitated such actions and thereby caused them to seek “achievement,” Smith seems to become entangled in a feminist fallacy; a woman’s quest for autonomy

should not simultaneously include Othering, for this act only serves to reinforce and (re)present subordination by means of a female rather than male oppressor. Furthermore, Smith's discussion of Blixen's "pronative" attitudes and actions is incongruous considering that Blixen participated in the colonization of Africans, albeit perhaps less harshly or violently than other colonial rulers.

I maintain that, unlike Karen Blixen, Antoinette of Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* aligns with McClintock's definition of the female colonizer who is "ambiguously complicit both as colonize[r] and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (6). Blixen's agency is clear rather than blurred; she serves as a land owner of thousands of acres and "master" to a large group of individuals. Her status as European woman in a patriarchal colony proves irrelevant when considering her role as an autonomous colonizer rather than a tangential wife to a colonial male. However, born into a family of colonizers, Antoinette makes no conscious decision to exercise power over others. After becoming a young woman, she continues to keep ex-slaves in service to her and Rochester when they honeymoon, but at this point in the novel Antoinette is also in service to her new English husband. I hesitate to compare her to the colonized (as McClintock does in her aforementioned passage), but I do contend that Antoinette suffers at the hands of colonial men who force her to marry against her will and eventually force her into confinement. To consider the degree to which Antoinette and Christophine are victims of the dominating male enterprise requires one to engage with the womanist/feminist issues presented in the introduction, for Antoinette is subjugated not as a result of her race or class, but as a result of her sex, while Christophine is colonized and oppressed because she is black/woman/Obeah/non-European. In her chapter

“Feminism in/and Postcolonialism,” Deepika Bahri contends that “[f]eminist theory and postcolonial theory are occupied with similar questions of representation, voice, marginalization, and the relation between politics and literature,” and further notes that “[g]ender issues are thus inseparable from the project of postcolonial criticism” (201). Bahri’s argument proves relevant for the leading women of Rhys’s novel, for, although they experience marginalization differently, both Antoinette and Christophine must assert themselves in societies that consider women as ancillary to men.

Perhaps the colonizing women of Salih’s *Season* most closely resemble the female colonizer complicit as both exploiter and exploited. The women fall victim to Mustafa’s seduction and are made to be his sexual “slaves” by choice, but, by allowing themselves to succumb to hidden desires for and obsessions with exoticism, the European women also accept the role of the colonizer who seeks to indulge in fantasies of the Other. McClintock also expounds on this phenomenon, contending that “long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination – a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears” (22). I return to a point mentioned briefly in the introduction when I implied that Salih’s male perspective might affect his interpretation of the Western colonizer and subjugated Sudanese woman. Unlike Rhys’s sympathetic version of the white Creole experience (an experience to which she can relate) or even Paule Marshall’s elevation of an African-Caribbean female character, Salih presents Mustafa as a Sudanese man who has questionable ethics and intentions and, furthermore, subverts the traditional role of the *European male* colonizer and *Third World female* colonized concubine. In doing so, Salih complicates the role of

the colonizer and colonized, as well as exposes the perilous effects of colonialism to all involved, regardless of sex. The European women symbolic of female colonizers degenerate and take their own lives, while Mustafa, too, loses his sense of self and assists in his wife's suicide/murder; whether or not his eventual disappearance and assumed death is a result of his own actions remains a mystery. Additionally, through the character of Hosna, Salih calls into question the patriarchal laws of the Sudanese tribe. Sonia Ghattas-Soliman views Salih's novel as an "attack on conservative practices that conflict with the spirit of Islam... Traditional values do no more than perpetuate conditions that favor men" (102).

Although the subjugated female of Salih's novel claims agency through retaliation and death, one must recognize that she effectively resists the constructs of the patriarchy. Similarly, Rhys and Marshall allow their female colonized characters to assert themselves in postcolonial societies. Merle is the most hopeful character of those discussed in the thesis, for she truly accepts her identity as a female/black/postcolonial individual, and, in both a real and symbolic journey, sets forth to reclaim her life. Although Harriet has no authority in Bourne and her attitudes and actions liken her to a female colonizer (as opposed to an actual colonizer such as Blixen), she still serves as an important reminder that the term "postcolonial" does not necessarily imply an end to colonial endeavors. Marshall's novel warns against neo-imperialism masked as development or aid, and also makes clear the long-term effects of a colonial past; these effects are revealed in Harriet's conflicted feelings towards her slave-holding relatives and descendants of the enslaved people of Bournehills. Through Harriet, we become aware that one's past is never far away, and the desire for power still threatens to resurface.

Mohanty offers a solution to the thorny question of how we should hope to resolve the female's need for representation without further perpetuating the cycle of imperialism. In the introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, she posits the concept of the imagined community, defining such a community as “[i]magined’ not because it is not ‘real’ but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries” (4). Mohanty further contends that the “imagined community is useful because it leads us away from essentialist notions of third world feminist struggles, suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance...women of all colors (including white women) can align themselves with and participate in these imagined communities” (4). With regards to the novels discussed in this thesis, the idea of the imagined community applies to the women of these texts, including those who colonize, marginalize, or Other, as well as those who are forced into the role of the colonized. Blixen, Mustafa's European lovers and first wife Jean, Antoinette, and Harriet would all benefit from realizing that a woman's struggle for validity must be overcome not through a perpetuation of the colonial cycle, but through a universal understanding of woman's need for an established, self-sufficient identity apart from man. Rather than focus on female discrimination and subjugation in terms of sex, race, class, or location, the imagined community allows for a space where women can unite against collective inequity, and therefore prove that they represent empowered, individual women rather than female colonizers, oppressors, or Others.

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