

# John Duigan's 1993 Film Adaptation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Repossessing and Reclaiming Rhys's Liberated Antoinette/Bertha<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's famous novel *Jane Eyre*. It is the story of Antoinette Cosway, a white but Creole heiress, from the time of her youth in Jamaica to her unhappy marriage to a certain English gentleman who is never named by the author. This English gentleman soon renames her Bertha; declares her mad; seizes her property and then forces her to come to England. Arresting an oppressive patriarchal society in which she belongs neither to the white Europeans nor to the black Jamaicans, Rhys's novel re-imagines Brontë's devilish madwoman in the attic. As with many postcolonial works, the novel deals largely with the themes of racial inequality and the harshness of displacement and assimilation. According to Linda Hutcheon any adaptation must be examined in its context of creation. John Duigan's 1993 film adaptation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is in

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fact an appropriation re-canonizing Rhys's novel as an extension of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Duigan's intentions become more manifest in the light of Australia's problems and anxieties over its native population of aborigines. By introducing very conspicuous changes and deviating from the original text, the movie re-silences the oppressed characters of Jean Rhys's novel (who can stand for Australia's native population) and re-grants the oppressor characters (who can stand for white Australians) full agency and power. In this process, the movie reclaims the superiority of the British culture, justifies the rightness of the British colonial and "civilizing" missions, and grants a kind of psychological pleasure to its white audience ensuring them that they still have power and control over their former aboriginal 'slaves'. In this paper the researcher attempts to show the hidden purposes of the movie.

**Keywords:** Counter-discursive novel, adaptation, aborigines, civilizing mission, othering.

## Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* has a canonical status in English literature. It is a bildungsroman describing the coming to maturity of a female character from dependence to independence and self-worth. More than one hundred years after the publication of this novel, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, two major feminist critics, used the image of "the mad woman in the attic" (as cited in Lane, 2006a) in this novel to stress the terrible psychological pressure placed on nineteenth century women writers:

Images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors... along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. (p. 132-3)

These critics suggested that the anxiety of authorship which resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity only belonged to men produced a psychological duplicity in women writers projecting a monstrous counter figure to the idealized heroine epitomized by Bertha Rochester, the mad woman in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (Lane, 2006a, p. 133). They argued that such a figure is "usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage" (as cited in Abrams, 2009, p. 113).

This is a very brilliant insight by Gilbert and Gubar into the novel; the conditions that have led to Antoinette/Bertha's madness in the first place can also be promising. The image of Antoinette/Bertha has been used in order to show the oppression of women writers at the hands of men. However, she has been denied a voice of her own. It is this denial and critical shortcoming with regard to race and social milieu which Jean Rhys counters in her famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

The mad wife in *Jane Eyre* has always interested me. I was convinced that Charlotte Brontë must have had something against the West Indies and I was angry about it. Otherwise, why did she take a West Indian for that horrible lunatic, for that really dreadful creature? I hadn't really formulated the idea of vindicating the madwoman in the novel, but when I was rediscovered I was encouraged to do so. (Rhys, 1968, p. 5)

Jean Rhys was born Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams on the island of Dominica in the West Indies. She was the daughter of a Creole mother and a doctor of Welsh descent. She came to England at the age of sixteen and was educated at the Perse School in Cambridge where she was mocked as an outsider for her accent. She worked as a film extra, chorus girl, and as a volunteer cook during World War I. In 1919 she left England so that she could marry the first of three husbands that she had in her life and for many years lived abroad, mainly in Paris. (Abrams, 2000, p. 2437)

In 1924 Rhys was influenced by the English writer Ford Madox Ford. After Rhys met Ford in Paris, she wrote short stories under his patronage. Ford perceived in her work a link between her vulnerability as a person and her strength as a writer and spoke of her “terrifying insight ... and passion for stating the case of the underdog.” (Abrams, 2000, p. 2438).

After returning to England, Rhys did not write for many years until the enthusiastic reception of a radio adaptation of *Good Morning, Midnight* in 1958 prompted her to write again. She began her masterpiece, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which she returns to the Dominica of her childhood and in a brilliant and imaginative act of sympathy recreates herself as the first Mrs. Rochester, the mad woman in the attic of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (Abrams, 2000, p. 2438). *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's famous novel *Jane Eyre*. It is the story of Antoinette Cosway, a white Creole heiress, from the time of her youth in Jamaica to her unhappy marriage to Rochester—in fact he is never named by the author—who soon renames her as Bertha, declares her mad, seizes her property, and then forces her to come to England.

Rhys died in Exeter on 14 May 1979 before completing her autobiography, which she had begun dictating only months earlier, at the age of 87 (Paravisini, 2009). The incomplete text of her autobiography appeared posthumously under the title *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* in 1979.

## Methodology

In her book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon, argues that “Neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. xvi). In other words, adaptations take place in different countries depending on the cultural needs and demands of people living in those countries. Hence, the adapted and the original works may be as different as night and day; so much so that “when and where are the keywords for the exploration of what can happen when stories “travel”—when an adapted text migrates from its context of

creation to the adaptation's context of reception" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. xvi). This change is more manifest when the culture of the original work and the culture of the receiving people are very different from each other, what Hutcheon calls "transculturation": "with what I call *transculturation* or indigenization across cultures, languages, and history, the meaning and impact of stories can change radically" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. xvi). Hutcheon (2006) further argues that adaptation can be a process of appropriation:

What is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents. Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators. (p. 18)

This is why John Duigan's Australian adaptation of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1993 is so different from Rhys's text. John Duigan "reinterpreted" and then "recreated" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8) Jean Rhys's novel. In Hutcheon's terms, he "appropriated" and "took possession" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 18) of Rhys's story. As Malcolm Bradbury argues (as cited in Hutcheon, 2006, p. 142), the values of the original story, its myth and meaning are also adapted in "the process of translation from novel to screen" and "it can take very little time for context to change how a story is received". In other words, as a work is produced in a specific time and place, so it will be received differently in another specific time and place because "context conditions meaning" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 45). Hutcheon uses the metaphor of an adapter plug and the electrical convertor to explain how adaptation works in a different context:

Power comes in different forms, in addition to AC/DC and 120v/220v, of course, and it can be adapted for use in different contexts (different countries); the adapter plug and the converter allow the transformation of power to a useable form for a particular place or context. This is how indigenization functions as well. (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 150)

Concluding her remarks about adaptation, Linda Hutcheon says: "adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 176). With regard to the specific time and place, an adaptation can totally change from the original work. This is exactly what happened to John Duigan's 1993 film adaptation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

In this paper, along with Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Edward Said's contrapuntal reading strategy has been used. In his ground-breaking book *Orientalism* Said demonstrated how the inferiority that the orientalist discourse attributes to the East or the other simultaneously constructs the superiority of the West. The westerners' orientalist discourse attributes sensuality, despotism, irrationality and primitiveness to the East or the other and defines the westerners in the process as rational, democratic and advanced (Bertens, 2001, p. 205). Said believes that Orientalism made primitivism inherent to the Orient: *Primitiveness therefore inhered in the Orient, was the Orient, an idea to which anyone dealing with or writing about the Orient had to return, as if to a touchstone out-lasting time or experience.* (Said, 1978, p. 231).

To show the machinations of colonialism and imperialism Said employs a reading strategy called contrapuntal reading which has been taken from an expression in music, that is, counterpoint. Contrapuntal reading is a reading back from the perspective of the colonized to show how the hidden but crucial presence of the empire rises in canonical texts. In other words, it is a kind of resistant reading which entails not yielding to the demands of the author to interpret the text as he or she would have the reader do. By doing so the reader will find very different significations and meanings compared with the intended meaning of the author. Contrapuntal reading gives voice to the text's silences and illuminates its dark spots. This is reflected by Pierre Macherey who said "what is important in the work is what it does not say" in his *A Theory of Literary Production* (Macherey, 1978, p. 87). A contrapuntal reading of a text gives voice to the marginal unheard other. By contrapuntal reading, a 'counterpoint' is established between the imperial narrative and the postcolonial perspective or 'counter-narrative' that penetrates beneath the surface of texts revealing the presence of imperialism even in the most innocent- and politically-neutral-looking novel or poem. Said's well-known instance is Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. As Said points out:

In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. In the same way, I believe, we can read and interpret English novels, for example, whose engagement (usually suppressed for the most part) with the West Indies or India, say, is shaped and perhaps even determined by the specific history of colonization, resistance, and finally native nationalism. At this point alternative or new narratives emerge, and they become institutionalized or discursively stable entities. (Said, 1994, p. 51)

In other words, Said's contrapuntal reading takes both or all dimensions of the text into account rather than the dominant one so that other potential meanings and significations of the text concealed and suppressed by the dominant reading of the text are revealed. Moreover, by this reading strategy one may see canonical texts "as a polyphonic accompaniment to the expansion of Europe" (Said, 1994, p. 60) showing in the process the deep interrelationship of imperial and colonial societies. Contrapuntal reading reveals the interrelation of cultural and political practices in imperialistic projects demonstrating the role culture played in imperialistic pursuits. Said believes that the justification for empire and the discrimination of colonizer and the colonized had grown somewhere else: in fiction, political science, travel writing, and racial theory (Said, 1994, p. 107).

Hence, culture, represented in works of fiction, political science and travel writing, has been at the service of colonization and imperialism. Imperialistic powers have always used narratives in order to justify their subjugation of other nations and countries:

stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world...The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but

when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. (Said, 1994, p. xii-iii)

The barbarity and savagery that colonizing powers attributed to other nations in their narratives deprived those nations from the right to possess their own lands long before they were actually and forcefully subjugated by colonizing powers. Hence, according to Said the roots of the colonization of other countries must be sought in cultural manifestations such as novels, travel writings, anthropology and political science.

### ***Wide Sargasso Sea:* Jean Rhys's Counter-Canonical Project**

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* exemplifies the process of 'writing back' against the established western literary canon (Lane, 2006b, p. 18). This is one of the novels considered "counter-discursive" as defined by Ashcrof, Griffiths, and Tiffint (2007):

[Counter-discourse] has been adopted by post-colonial critics to describe the complex ways in which challenges to a dominant or established discourse (specifically those of the imperial center) might be mounted from the periphery, always recognizing the powerful 'absorptive capacity' of imperial and neo-imperial discourses. As a practice within postcolonialism, counter-discourse has been theorized less in terms of historical processes and literary movements than through challenges posed to particular texts, and thus to imperial ideologies inculcated, stabilized and specifically maintained through texts employed in colonialist education systems. (50)

Rhys rewrites and reinvents a classic story in order to attract the attention of the reader to the imperialist discourse of canonical western literature and thus her novel functions as its counter-discourse. By putting Antoinette/Bertha in a specific time and place and telling the story again mostly from her perspective and rewriting the conclusions and ethics of the text, Jean Rhys subtly criticizes Charlotte Bronte's unfair and one-sided portrayal of Antoinette/Bertha and shows how her madness cannot simply be taken for granted (as Jane Eyre tells Rochester that "she cannot help being mad" (Bronte, 2001, p. 257) and is in fact the result of others' (particularly Rochester's) cruel treatment of her. Rhys demonstrates how Antoinette/Bertha is ostracized not only from the company of white Europeans who call her and other white creoles "white niggers" (Rhys, 1982, p. 94) but also from the community of black natives who call her and other white creoles "white cockroaches":

It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (94)

Clearly the themes of racial prejudice and lack of belonging are manifest in this quotation. By reimagining the circumstances of Antoinette/Bertha's life prior to her madness, Rhys shows how Antoinette/Bertha is not inevitably mad as Jane tells Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (Bronte, 2001, p. 257) but rather becomes so with Rochester playing the main role in the process.

John J. Su summarizes three ways by which the narrative assists ethical issues in counter-discursive novels:

[F]irst, it [narrative] provides a description of the world that we could not otherwise have, thereby making us more likely to empathize with the values and needs of others ... second, it acts against the abuses of ritualized commemoration by offering the opportunity of "telling otherwise" ... third, it exposes the ambiguities and aporias of any ethical project. (as cited in Lane, 2006b, p. 28)

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys provides the opportunity of telling the story "otherwise". She renames Charlotte Bronte's 'Bertha' as 'Antoinette'. This literal renaming shows the terrible and complete distortion of identity that Antoinette has gone through by being represented by others (most conspicuously by Rochester) rather than being able to represent herself. In the middle of the novel, Rochester begins to refer to Antoinette as 'Bertha':

'My name is not Bertha; why do you call me Bertha?'

'Because it is a name I'm particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha.'

...'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too.' (Rhys, 1982, p. 122-133)

The process of renaming, labeling, and pigeonholing others, allows the colonizer to control and possess them in the way he desires. Antoinette compares the power of this renaming process to the natives' practice of magic called "obeah". Thus, renaming can be as powerful in its effects as the natives' magical practices. *Wide Sargasso Sea* gives voice to Bronte's marginalized character letting her narrate the story from her own point of view, contrary to Bronte's treatment of Antoinette/Bertha whom she considers a shame to be silenced and locked up in the attic. From Antoinette/Bertha's account, it turns out that she had lost her father in childhood, was lonely as a child, had almost no friends (except for Tia who also betrayed and left her), and was totally neglected by her mother who never asked her where she had been or what she had done (Rhys, 1982, p. 21). Following a series of losses, Antoinette also loses her little brother when the black natives set fire on their house. Finally, she is deprived of her property by being encouraged to marry an opportunistic English gentleman. Therefore, Rhys provides a new dimension to Antoinette's character: she has always been a victim.

Nevertheless, Rhys does not sentimentalize her situation by giving all the narrative voice to Antoinette. By giving the narrative voice also to Rochester in the next section of the novel, Rhys provides another dimension to Antoinette's victimization: Rochester's stream of consciousness shows his true colors. Undermining Charlotte Bronte's idea of Rochester as a Byronic hero, Rhys pre-

sents him not as a romantic Byronic hero wandering in the world in order to escape from himself. Rather, he reveals himself as a cynical, hypocritical, cruel, opportunistic man of the world who very soon rejects his wife after he has been successful in seizing her possessions.

Rochester explains his hasty wedding. He tells himself that there was a very powerful motivation for this marriage: his new wife's stepbrother has given him unconditional control of her entire possessions. This money enables him to be financially independent. If he does not do so, he will inherit nothing under the English law of primogeniture because he is the second son of the family:

Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger. Her pleading expression annoys me ... Dear Father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must be seen to). I have a modest competence now ... I played the part I was expected to play ... Every movement I made was an effort of will and sometimes I wondered that no one noticed this. I would listen to my own voice and marvel at it, calm, correct but toneless, surely. But I must have given a faultless performance. If I saw an expression of doubt or curiosity it was on a black face not a white one ... I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did. (Rhys, 1982, p. 63-85)

This extract gives key information about Rochester's true motivations in marrying Antoinette. Revealing his boredom both with the nature of Jamaica and Antoinette the woman he is going to marry, this extract also shows that not love but gaining a great deal of money is the real reason for Rochester in marrying Antoinette. He feels stifled by the bounty and copiousness of the island and the feeling he has for her is indifference at the best and dislike at the worst so much so that he is annoyed even by her smile. However, he knows well how to win her trust. Rochester is also a thoroughgoing race-conscious man: "Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (Rhys, 1982, p. 61).

Rochester is also a cruel fantasy maker. In order to justify himself in having destroyed Antoinette, he fantasizes that she was already mad and sexually promiscuous: "She'll loosen her black hair, and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She'll not care who she's loving). She'll moan and cry and give herself as no sane woman would - or could. *Or could*. Then lie so still, still as this cloudy day. A lunatic who always knows the time. But never does" (Rhys, 1982, p. 149). That is why Christophine rightly admonishes Rochester. As acknowledgement he admits that he intentionally destroyed Antoinette, especially, by sleeping with Amelie in the next room so that Antoinette could hear everything:

*'Your wife!'* she said. 'You make me laugh. I don't know all you did but I know some. Everybody know that you marry her for her money and you take it all. And then you want to break her up, because you jealous of her... You young but already you hard. You fool the girl ... But all you want is to break her up ... So you pretend to believe all the lies that damn bastard [Daniel Cosway] tell



you ... So that you can leave her alone ... 'You bring that worthless girl [Amelie] to play with next door and you talk and laugh and love so that she hear everything. You meant her to hear.' Yes, that didn't just happen. I meant it. (Rhys, 1982, p. 138-140)

In these lines, Rhys provides the reader with a more objective viewpoint toward Antoinette and Rochester by bringing the ideas and judgments of a third person regarding what Rochester has done. Christophine clearly reveals the sordid motivations of Rochester in marrying Antoinette and also his cruel treatment of her justifying himself by pretending to believe the lies told by Daniel Cosway who claims to be Antoinette's half-brother. By saying "yes, that didn't just happen. I meant it", Rochester confesses his guilt and intentionality in driving Antoinette mad.

As John J. Su says, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* succeeds in breaking the British imperial project in general and the master narrative of *Jane Eyre* in particular by giving the suppressed Bertha Mason a voice, giving her a different name (Antoinette, thus showing how she has been defined and forced into another identity than her own by the colonizing figure of Rochester), relocating the action to the West Indies, and changing the frame of reference (Lane, 2006b, p. 27). The novel can be seen as Rhys's retort to the biased and unfair representation of the other by Charlotte Bronte who takes Antoinette/Bertha's madness for granted (Bronte, 2001, p. 257). By creating parallels with Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* tells the story again from a different angle or perspective, rewrites the conclusions and ethics of the text, and critiques the canonical text in question.

### **John Duigan's 1993 Film Adaption of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea***

As was mentioned above, adaptation always takes place in a context. The first adaptation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* was made in 1993 in Australia which had always had its own anxieties over its appropriation of land from its aboriginal population. The British had declared Australia as terra nullius ("land belonging to no one") (Davison, 1999, p. 5-7) so that they could seize land from the native population with the approval of law. The British colonizers of Australia chose not to consider the native population as human beings so that even until 1920s the government department that was responsible for aboriginal affairs was referred to as the "Department of Fisheries, Forests, Wildlife and Aborigines" (Ashcroft, et al., 2007, p. 43) considering the native population in the same category as fish, forests, and wildlife. The colonization of Australia had another terrible impact on the native population: the emergence of the Stolen Generations. The indigenous population, estimated to have been between 750,000 and 1,000,000 at the time European settlement started, declined for 150 years following settlement. A government policy of "assimilation" starting with the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 led to the removal of many Aboriginal children from their families and communities (Attwood, 2005). It was only in

1992 that the ownership of land by the native population was recognized in Australia when the High Court case *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* overturned the legal doctrine that Australia had been terra nullius before the European occupation (Davison, 1999, p. 5-7).

Bearing in mind the psychological loss of control over the aborigines that the white population felt after this High Court decision, it becomes clear why in adapting Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* into a film, the Australian John Duigan changed so many things. These changes undermine the strategies that Rhys had used in order to give voice to Antoinette/Bertha who had been silenced by the manipulative hands of Charlotte Brontë. By doing so, Duigan manages to repossess and re-incarcerate the liberated Antoinette/Bertha who represented the aboriginal population in Australia giving a kind of psychological pleasure and comfort to his mostly white audience. However, this experience was very challenging and unsatisfying for Duigan:

It was probably the only really unsatisfying interaction that I've had with a production company and I found that I had major disagreements with them and with the producers. It was unfortunate. Jan Sharp, the producer of the film, had the tenacity to get the film made, but she and I had differences of opinion. She was very well informed on the book, and I'm sure her opinions were arguable, as I like to think mine were, but when you have a situation like that, I think the overall project can suffer. I think the film did suffer from that division. (Interview with John Duigan)

Though Duigan did not enjoy the experience of making the film because of the quarrel he had with the producer about whether to stick to the text or to the new medium of movie, he was highly successful in undermining and countering the liberating effects that Rhys had achieved. In this process his strategy mainly consisted of exonerating Rochester from any guilt and putting all the blame on Antoinette by introducing several changes to the text delineated below.

John Duigan's 1993 film version of *Wide Sargasso Sea* comforts the injured (by the 1992 decision of the High Court in recognizing the aborigines' right of owning land) egotism of the previously colonizing white audience ensuring them that despite the new land laws they still had control and power over their former aboriginal 'slaves'. In contrast to the novel which begins with Antoinette's narrative, the opening of the movie begins with the entangling weeds of the Sargasso Sea within which Rochester later in the movie dreams to be struggling and choking. The scene brings Ezra Pound's poem, "Portrait d'une Femme" to mind in which the Sargasso Sea and its weeds symbolize the infertility and stagnancy of the mind of the lady the poem describes. The scene foreshadows the danger and uncivilized nature of Jamaica in general and Antoinette in particular.

Creating an inferior 'other' has always been an effective strategy for the west to rule over other nations and people in the name of a 'civilizing mission'. Similarly, Duigan introduces several changes to the novel so that it becomes Antoinette's fault that she has to be destroyed and to commit suicide. Distinguishing itself from the people it has colonized has always been an effective

strategy of imperialism to prove its superiority. The first change that Duigan brings to his movie involves Antoinette's rather unsmooth English accent making her different from the British norm thus justifying Rochester's cruel treatment of her as 'abnormal' and 'exotic'. Rather than representing Antoinette as a British subject, Duigan turns her into an exotic entity to be consumed by the white audience by introducing her different English accent into the movie. Another 'othering' strategy used by Duigan in the movie (in contrast to the text of the novel) is his bringing the issue of race into his movie by deciding to have an almost colored Karina Lombard play as Antoinette. In this way, she can stand for the nonwhite native generation of Australia; that is, the aborigines. The racial difference between Antoinette and Rochester in the film can stand for the power struggle between the white Australians and the aborigines in the minds of the white Australian audience. Moreover, in this way, Duigan introduces the charm of the unfamiliar to the movie in order to arouse the interest of the white audience enabling them to fantasize about the possession of a colored female 'slave' figure by the white male 'master' figure. Another major difference which Duigan introduces to his movie in contrast to the text of the novel is representing Antoinette as liking the native music and dancing the frenzied native dance of Jamaica (characterized in the movie by its highly rapid tempo and quick and violent movements). This negative representation of the native dance of Jamaica is contrasted in the movie with the 'normal', 'smooth', and 'civilized' music and dance of Britain. In the last scene of the movie, Antoinette is shown dancing the native dance of Jamaica on the roof of Rochester's mansion after setting fire on the house and before throwing herself down. All these differences function to turn Antoinette into an 'other' in the minds of the white audience. It justifies her destruction at the hands of Rochester because she refuses the oppressive yoke of assimilation and must pay for her refusal with her life. Hence, Duigan's target audience, the white Australians, gain a kind of psychological release and pleasure (even though it may be quite unconscious) from Antoinette's fall.

In addition to the changes mentioned above, Duigan counters Rhys's strategy of not naming Rochester in her novel as a retort to Bronte's unfair representation of Bertha by naming not only Rochester but also Jane Eyre as the future wife of Rochester several times in his movie. Duigan has also brought many explicit content scenes to his movie in contrast to the novel so that the movie was given an NC-17 rating (Grimes, 1992) restricting its audience to those older than 17. In this way, as Laura Mulvey (2001) argues in her "*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*", the white audience can easily identify (p. 2187) with the sadistic Rochester as he sexually dominates and later destroys Antoinette. The white audience gets psychological pleasure since the possession and destruction of Antoinette at the hands of the colonizing figure of Rochester become synonymous with the suppression and defeat of the aborigines. Mulvey (2001) observes:

[A] film opens with the woman as object of the combined gaze of spectator and all the male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualised. But as the narrative progresses she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property, losing her outward glam-

orous characteristics, her generalised sexuality, her show-girl connotations; her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too. (p. 2188)

To sum up, in this paper John Duigan's strategies in his 1993 film adaption of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by which he managed to re-silence Antoinette, the oppressed protagonist of Rhys's novel who can stand for Australia's native population, were discussed. Duigan's intentions become more manifest in the light of Australia's problems, anxieties, and needs over its native population of aborigines. By introducing very conspicuous changes and distancing itself from the original text, the movie re-grants the previously dominant characters (who can stand for white Australians) full agency and power. In this process, the movie reclaims the superiority of the British culture and justifies the rightness of the British colonial and "civilizing" missions. It also grants a kind of psychological pleasure to its white audience assuring them that they still have power and control over their former aboriginal 'slaves' even if the new land laws recognize the right of the aborigine population in owning land. The way the movie manages to suppress all the strategies that Rhys had used to give voice to Charlotte Bronte's Bertha was also discussed. Duigan's movie becomes an allegory of repossessing the colonized (represented by Antoinette). Through the medium of film, *Wide Sargasso Sea* can no longer stand in its own right and becomes merely an appendix to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

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