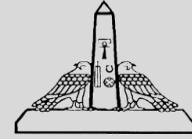


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Colonial and Postcolonial Uncanny Encounters: Examining *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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Abstract

This paper explores the relation between the uncanny and Empire literature. It examines how manifestations of the uncanny can be used in colonial and postcolonial contexts. In order to do that, the paper examines how Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), a colonial novel, and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a postcolonial rewriting of Brontë's text, employ the uncanny to promote or subvert colonial ideologies. The paper relies on Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny. It is divided into two main parts. The first part briefly outlines the meaning and manifestations of the uncanny as expounded by Freud in his monumental essay "The Uncanny" (1919). The second part examines how *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* engage with the uncanny to express conflicting colonial and postcolonial concerns.

This paper explores the relation between the uncanny and Empire literature. It examines how manifestations of the uncanny can be used in colonial and postcolonial contexts. In order to do that, the paper examines how Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), a colonial novel, and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a postcolonial rewriting of Brontë's text, employ the uncanny to promote or subvert colonial ideologies. The paper relies on Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny. It is divided into two main parts. The first part briefly outlines the meaning and manifestations of the uncanny as expounded by Freud in his monumental essay "The Uncanny" (1919). The second part examines how *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* engage with the uncanny to express conflicting colonial and postcolonial concerns.

Anneleen Masschelein notes that although the concept of the uncanny was first introduced by psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch and the philosopher Friedrich Schelling, it was Sigmund Freud's foundational essay "The Uncanny" (1919) that made the concept popular (3). She explains that throughout the years the concept acquired a number of additional meanings and evolved beyond the psychoanalytical framework until it became a tool for critical analysis (4). In his essay, Freud notes that the uncanny is an elusive term that has several manifestations. He notes that the uncanny "undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror" (75). However, he adds that not all what is frightening is necessarily uncanny. The uncanny is "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar," but it became "uncanny and frightening" (76).

In his essay, Freud lists the properties of people, objects, situations, experiences and sensations that arouse the feelings of uncanniness to infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from what they all have in common (76). According to Freud, the first factor that creates uncanny feelings is intellectual uncertainty. He refers to the opinion of another psychologist, Ernst Jentsch, who believes that the uncanny emanates from uncertainty (76). Similarly, Andrew Bennett's and Nicholas Royle believe that the uncanny has to do with "making things uncertain: it has to do with the sense that things are not as they have come to appear through habit and familiarity, that they may challenge all rationality and logic" (36).

Freud explains how a writer can create uncertainty and doubts and disorient his readers by not letting them know whether "an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate" (80). Bennett and Royle add that writers can create this kind of uncertainty by employing animism, where inanimate or lifeless objects are given attributes of life or spirit, anthropomorphism, which is a more specific mode of animism as it involves giving human attributes to what is not human (37).

In addition to intellectual uncertainty, Freud notes that manifestations of epilepsy and madness can be another cause of uncanny feelings because “the ordinary person sees in them the workings of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-man but which at the same time he is dimly aware of in a remote corner of his own being” (92). He explains that in the Middle ages, people believed that these maladies were the result of enigmatic daemonic forces, hence the uncanny feelings associated with them (92).

Another major source of uncanny or unheimlich experiences is the “constant recurrence of similar situations, a same face, or character-trait, or twist of fortune, or a same crime, or even a same name recurring throughout several consecutive generations” (85-86). This unexplained repetition stirs an unsettling sense of helplessness against something fateful and unescapable (86). Freud refers to different situations where someone feels lost and disoriented in a certain place where he involuntarily keeps returning to the same spot over and over without being able to find his/her way. He gives the example of someone trapped in a dark unfamiliar room where he keeps bumping with the same piece of furniture many times in his search for the electric switch. The same feelings of helplessness and something unheimlich are stirred when someone is lost in a misty high altitude forest, but keeps returning to the same place without finding a way out. This feeling coincides with physical and cultural entrapment in colonial contexts. He adds that the repetition creates an uncanny atmosphere because one feels that this repetition has a secret meaning that one is unable to decipher.

In addition to intellectual uncertainty, animism and unexplained recurrence, “omnipotence of thoughts” or “instantaneous wish-fulfillments,” and “the secret power to do harm” are some of the factors that evoke uncanny atmospheres. Freud explains that the primitive man actually believed that these things were possible. Nowadays, the modern man has surmounted these primitive superstitious beliefs, but they still exist within us waiting for any confirmation of their validity. When something that supports the old set of beliefs actually happens, we experience the feelings of the uncanny (90). Similarly, an evil character can be seen as uncanny if it is capable of achieving its evil motives through having special powers that enable it to achieve its harmful wishes. Freud notes that “the question of these secret powers brings us back again to the realm of animism” (92).

In addition to the above mentioned factors, death and dead bodies are some of the elements that create strong unheimlich sensations. Freud notes:

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, feet which dance by themselves—all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove able to move of themselves in addition. To many people the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead is the uncanniest thing of all. (92)

Similarly, the return of the dead in the form of spirits and ghosts that continue to haunt the living is one of the most striking instances of the uncanny. He adds that modern man has an ambivalent attitude towards death. In spite of the fact that modern man should no longer believe that the dead can return in the form of spirits and ghosts, “the primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface at any opportunity. Most likely our fear still contains the old belief that the deceased becomes the enemy of his survivor and wants to carry him off to share his new life with him” (91). That is why, occurrences that validate old beliefs create extremely uncanny feelings.

Freud explains that all the above mentioned sources of uncanny or unheimlich feelings belong to that class of the uncanny which proceeds from forms of thought that have been surmounted (98). This brings us to Freud’s definition of the uncanny which according to him is:

nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old—established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression. This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling’s definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light (90).

After briefly exploring the meaning of the uncanny, the researcher examines how *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* employ each of the features mentioned by Freud to voice conflicting ideologies.

In colonial texts, the colony with its foreign landscape and different elements of nature can be given animistic and anthropomorphic qualities that stir unsettling and uncanny feelings in the colonizers. Fear of the geographical and cultural other results in the depiction of the inanimate colony as a hostile human being or a malignant force that threatens the colonizers’ physical and psychological wellbeing. Nature is compared to a manipulative and vengeful human being/primordial force that lures the colonizers and destroys them to avenge colonial invasion.

In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester portrays the West Indies as a dangerous place by depicting normal elements of nature as being intentionally vindictive:

The air was like sulphur-streams— I could find no refreshment anywhere. Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room; the sea, which I could hear from thence, rumbled dull like an earthquake black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannonball she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. I was physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene. (437)

The place stirs strong feelings of anxiety and despair. He feels trapped and entombed in this hell on earth and becomes desperate to the point that he actually considers committing suicide to get rid of his agony. Rochester

believes that his negative description of the place and its damaging effect on his health gives him a moral excuse to marry Bertha, take her money and then travel back to safety and normalcy. However, fear of the other that can tarnish the healthy heart of England result in threatening uncanny atmosphere in the supposedly safe England.

This fear of the racial and cultural other is manifest when Brontë compares Rochester's destiny to the witches that appeared to Shakespeare's Macbeth to lure him and foreshadow his downfall. Rochester's destiny is represented as a malignant witch that casts a spell that prevents him from liking Thornfield because of the presence of the Creole Bertha which is depicted as a monstrous other. His destiny is given uncanny animistic features as it talks to him, casts a spell on him and even challenges him to feel happy in Thornfield:

During the moment I was silent, Miss Eyre, I was arranging a point with my destiny. She stood there, by that beech-trunk—a hag like one of those who appeared to Macbeth on the heath of Forrest. 'You like Thornfield?' she said, lifting her finger; and then she wrote in the air a memento, which ran in lurid hieroglyphics all along the house-front, between the upper and lower row of windows, 'Like it if you can! Like it if you dare!' (207-208).

Imbuing Rochester's destiny with animistic attributes heightens the uncanny atmosphere that Rochester and Jane experience in Thornfield as a result of its colonial history. Bringing the Creole mad wife and imprisoning her in the attic tarnishes the healthy heart of England and stirs fears of regression and reverse colonization. Because the Creole Bertha is imprisoned in Thornfield, the house becomes a contact zone between civilized England and the inferior colony which results in uncanny encounters with the racial other. The fact that Rochester does not stay in the house more than two weeks reflects his fear of contamination. His words about the curse fill Jane with questions about the secret that lurks in the house. She spends sleepless nights trying to decipher this enigma, "I could not sleep for thinking of his look when he ... told how his destiny ... dared him to be happy at Thornfield 'Why not?' I asked myself. 'What alienates him from the house?'" (214).

Challenging Rochester to like the house implies that his destiny knows the secret of the house which eventually compromises his happy future with Jane. Bertha's presence in Thornfield is depicted as a threat to Rochester's and Jane's happiness and safety. The uncanny presence of Bertha justifies her incarceration and Rochester's harsh treatment and prevents the readers from sympathizing with her after she commits suicide.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, animism is felt by both Rochester and Antoinette. Sylvie Maurel notes that the novel depicts the Caribbean as a place which exhibits "primitive animism in which things and

places are granted human feelings and powers” (158). Both Antoinette and Rochester experience uncanny feelings as a result of the animistic qualities of the colony. Both of them feel unsafe and alienated because of British colonial atrocities that keep haunting them.

For example, Young Antoinette did not feel safe in her house and she used to carry a stick with her in her own room to defend herself as she felt that “everything was alive, not only the river or the rain, but chairs, looking-glasses, cups, saucers, everything” (34). Marina MacKay suggests that the animistic attributes of objects bought at the expense of slaves ironically throw light on the process dehumanization and commodification that they go through as a result of atrocious colonial practices (161). In spite of her immense love for the island, her family’s brutal colonial history haunts her and prevents her from belonging or feeling safe.

Similarly, Rochester exhibits a typical colonial attitude as he believes that the island is both tempting and threatening. He feels threatened by his desire for his Creole wife and her black servant Amelie and blames his transgression of colonial taboos on the seductive atmosphere of the tropical island. His colonial desire creates anxiety because it contradicts with fear of miscegenation and racial contamination. Moreover, he feels threatened by the intense vibrant colors and smells of the island, as well as, its exotic mysterious beauty not because they are inherently menacing as Brontë suggests, but because he is afraid of what he does not know and understand. He blames his loss of control and his own transgression on the island. That is why, he decides to go back to England, a familiar safe setting, where he is in control.

His fear of contamination and losing control in the tempting island makes him see the place as his enemy. He tells Antoinette:

But the feeling of something unknown and hostile was very strong. ‘I feel very much a stranger here,’ I said. ‘I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side.’ ‘You are quite mistaken,’ she said. ‘It is not for you and not for me. It has nothing to do with either of us. That is why you are afraid of it, because it is something else. I found that out long ago when I was a child. I loved it because I had nothing else to love, but it is as indifferent as this God you call on so often.’ (117-18)

Arguing about whether the colony is hostile or indifferent reflects the animistic qualities that create uncanny experiences in the island. Unaware of her feelings of alienation and marginality, Rochester mistakenly believes that since Antoinette is born in the Caribbean, the place is sympathetic to her and this threatens his control as a colonizer over both Antoinette and the island. This results in his feelings of hate and alienation in the West Indies.

Not only does Rochester feel that the Caribbean landscape is animistic, he also feels very uncomfortable in Granbois, the house they live in after their marriage. The first time he sees it, he feels that the house “seemed to shrink from the forest behind it and crane eagerly out to the

distant sea. It was more awkward than ugly, a little sad as if it knew it could not last” (65). These words are significant because they reflect Rochester’s uncanny fear of the surrounding elements of nature to the point that he believes that the house itself is similarly cowering from the huge forest. Moreover, the house can foretell that it is not going to last, a foreshadowing of the tragic fate of Antoinette who is going to be taken to England against her will.

Although both Brontë and Rhys employ animism, it is important to note that there is a major difference in the manner they use it. Unlike Brontë, Rhys makes it clear that colony poses no real physical or psychological threat to Rochester. She illustrates that it is his own colonial fears and prejudices that affect his perception of the place and make him react negatively and experience uncanny feelings in the Caribbean. The colony is not intentionally vindictive or malicious as Brontë suggests. Rochester’s inability to understand and control his surroundings makes him believe that the colony is malicious.

The second point that stirs uncanny feelings, according to Freud, is strange repetitions and odd coincidences. The unexplained recurrence of certain characters, feelings, coincidences, situations and twists of fate evokes unheimlich sensations because it suggests that things are fated to happen and that a certain unseen force controls the character’s fate. Consequently, the characters feel helpless and doomed. In a colonial context, the recurrence of incidents and experiences stirs uncanny feelings in the colonizer who feel that an evil enigmatic force in the colony tries to threaten their safety and the safety of the Empire. In a postcolonial setting, the horror is relocated “from the locus of the colonized to the violence and abuses perpetrated by Empire” (Procter and Smith 96).

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane experiences uncanny feelings when she repeatedly hears eerie laughs, incomprehensible murmurs and unnatural shrieks throughout her stay in Thornfield. Although Bertha is revealed towards the end of the novel, her presence is strongly felt through these recurrent ominous sounds which create a frightening uncanny atmosphere since almost every time Jane hears a laugh or a shriek, a threatening situation ensues. Her laughs become associated with danger and gloom. Thus, the readers become apprehensive of Bertha’s presence and unsympathetic towards her death at the end.

The first time Jane becomes aware of Bertha’s presence in Thornfield is when her “curious,” “distinct,” “formal” and “mirthless” laugh strikes her ears, “It passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to wake an echo in every lonely chamber” (158). Consequently, Jane becomes extremely afraid and begins to wonder if there is a ghost in the house. However, she was told that the recurrent laughs belonged to Grace Poole, one of the inmates of the house.

The second time Jane hears this ‘unnatural’ and ‘goblin laughter’ is when Bertha was trying to burn Rochester while he was sleeping in his room at night. Jane experienced an uncanny ‘marrow-freezing’ incident the moment she heard Bertha’s ‘demoniac’ and ‘lugubrious’ laugh and murmurs. Her heart ‘beat anxiously’ and she was ‘chilled with fear’ and she wondered if Grace Poole was ‘possessed with a devil’ (215-16). Right after this incident, she found Rochester unconscious in his bed amid ‘tongues of flame’ (216) as his room was set on fire. At this point, Brontë conveniently portrays Bertha as a threat to British protagonist’s safety and wellbeing.

The third time Jane experiences uncanny feelings is when she hears ominous shrieks and then later discovers that Mr. Mason was attacked and was severely wounded. Brontë’s description of the incident paints Bertha in a very negative light and casts her as a vampire or a monster:

Good God! What a cry! The night - its silence - its rest, was rent in twain by a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall. My pulse stopped: my heart stood still; my stretched arm was paralyzed. The cry died, and was not renewed. Indeed, whatever being uttered that fearful shriek could not soon repeat it: not the widest-winged condor on the Andes could, twice in succession, send out such a yell from the cloud shrouding his eyrie. The thing delivering such utterance must rest ere it could repeat the effort. (295)

All these frightening descriptions of Bertha’s shrieks pave the way to the final revelation of her secret as the Creole mad wife of Rochester. Depicting her as a source of threat deprives her of the readers’ sympathy and justifies her death because it removes obstacles that hinder the happiness of the British characters. It is ironic that despite her eerie laughter, murmurs and shrieks, Brontë deprives her of her voice and a possibility to tell her own story like Jane. As a racially inferior other, she belongs to the realm of the uncanny.

In addition to Bertha’s eerie laughs and shrieks, Jane’s recurrent dreams make her go through uncanny experiences. Although her dreams stir unheimlich feelings, they help her achieve her goals and avoid Bertha’s fate. Her dreams reflect her increasing fears concerning her relationship with Rochester particularly before her marriage.

These recurrent dreams usually precede her encounters with Bertha and some of them have clairvoyant aspects as they foreshadow future events. For example, one of her dreams foreshadows the destruction of Thornfield at the end of the novel, “‘I dreamt another dream, sir: that Thornfield Hall was a dreary ruin, the retreat of bats and owls. I thought that of all the stately front nothing remained but a shell-like wall, very high and very fragile-looking” (402). She wakes up after this fearful dream to find Bertha tearing her wedding veil, a sign of their impending separation and shortly afterwards, she discovers the truth about Rochester’s marriage to a

Creole which acts as an impediment to their union. The dream foreshadows Bertha's role in destroying the English house and compromising their safety and happiness.

Moreover, her dreams act as a warning that promotes her interests and leads to the happy ending after Bertha's death. For example, after the discovery of Rochester's secret marriage, he asks Jane to elope with him to Paris and live with him as his mistress, a compromise she is unwilling to accept. On that night, she has an uncanny dream in which her mother advises her to flee temptation and leave. Although these dreams heighten the uncanny atmosphere, they eventually guide her until she achieves her goals and finds a happy ending.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, repetition and coincidences pervade the life of Antoinette and give it an uncanny quality because they prove that Antoinette's fate will be always controlled by the Empire. She feels helpless in front of her colonial history which haunts her till the end of her life. First, Rhys repeats or directly engages with certain episodes of Brontë's text. On the one hand, this repetition evokes Freud's notion of inevitability and suggests that Antoinette's fate is destined and inescapable. On the other, it gives Rhys a chance to vindicate Bertha and represent what was silenced in Brontë's colonial text. Antoinette tells Rochester, "There is always the other side, always" (116). Second, Rhys, according to Heta Pyrhonen, uses repetition as a structural tool. The second and third parts of the novel repeat preceding parts to comment on them and reveal both Rochester and Antoinette's reaction towards the same incident (84). This helps Rhys to achieve her postcolonial agenda: giving Bertha/Antoinette a voice of her own.

Similar to Jane, Antoinette experiences uncanny feelings due to the recurrent gloomy dreams that she has. Their dreams express their feelings of anxiety and alienation, on the one hand, and foreshadow future events in their lives, on the other. However, there is a major point of difference between their dreams. In spite of being disturbing and unsettling, Jane's dreams eventually help her to save herself from experiencing Bertha's fate and to eventually achieve a happy ending as a white British protagonist. Antoinette's dreams, on the other hand, are more uncanny because they reflect, in Freud's words, an "unsettling sense of helplessness against something fateful and unescapable" (88). Rhys makes the readers sympathize with Antoinette/Bertha because they feel that she is persecuted and her fate is sealed.

Throughout the different stages of her life, Antoinette experiences three manifestations of the same unsettling dream that foreshadows her fate as Brontë's Bertha. Antoinette's first dream takes place in her childhood after her black playmate Tia steals her money and calls Antoinette a 'white nigger' (22). Her vague dream reflects her feelings of fear as a result of her

alienation and feelings of rejection because of the horrific colonial history of her slave owning family. It, also, foreshadows the coming of Rochester into her life, "I dreamed that I was walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight. I could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though I struggled and screamed, I could not move. I woke crying" (24).

The second dream is less vague and more sinister than the first one as it takes place when her step father tells her about his intention of marrying her off. Through these dreams, Rhys directly engages with Brontë's text as they offer Bertha's story which was omitted in *Jane Eyre*. The readers sympathize with Antoinette as they see her as a vulnerable human being and not a threatening colonial monster:

Again I have left the house at Coulibri. It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk 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 save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. "Here?" He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. "Not here, not yet," he says, and I follow him, weeping... We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them. There are steps leading upwards. It is too dark to see the wall or the steps, I know they are there and I think, "It will be when I go up these steps. At the top." I stumble over my dress and cannot get up. (55)

This dream is extremely significant because it anticipates many of the events that will take place in her future. The white dress is her wedding dress and the man black with hatred is Rochester. The sense of impending doom and helplessness is reflected in her resignation and inability to resist. Her relocation to England is symbolized by the different trees that she could not identify. The 'steps,' 'the wall' and 'the darkness' refer to her gloomy life in Thornfield.

The third dream in which Antoinette burns Thornfield and jumps off the roof adds a significant uncanny thrust, not only because of the unheimlich feelings that Antoinette experiences, but also because it creates uncertainty as it blurs the boundaries between reality and dreams which creates intellectual uncertainty, another source of the uncanny. Rhys cleverly shows how tragic Bertha's/Antoinette's fate is by presenting her version of the suicide scene in a dreamlike state where the reader becomes uncertain about what really happened to her. This adds an air of mystery and

sympathy at the same time. In this dream, repeated scenes from her childhood and adolescence in the Caribbean mingle with repeated scenes from the suicide episode in *Jane Eyre*:

I heard the parrot call as he did when he saw a stranger, Qui est là? Qui est là? and the man who hated me was calling too, Bertha! Bertha! The wind caught my hair and it streamed out like wings. It might bear me up, I thought, if I jumped to those hard stones. But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? And I heard the man's voice, Bertha! Bertha! All this I saw and heard in a fraction of a second. And the sky so red. Someone screamed and I thought Why did I scream? I called "Tia!" and jumped and woke. (170-71)

This dream is of immense importance because it illustrates that burning Thornfield was not an act of madness as Brontë contends. It becomes a tragic solution to escape her dark gloomy existence in Thornfield. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë highlights the black color of Bertha's hair which emphasizes her racial background, whereas in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys depicts her streaming hair as wings that might save her from this ill fate. The horrific loud incomprehensible cry that is meant to distance the readers in *Jane Eyre* and deprive Bertha of any sympathy is substituted by her childhood's playmate's name.

In addition to recurrent dreams, Antoinette and her mother experience recurrent death of close people, family members and even pets. These repeated references to death, which, according to Freud, is one of the most prominent triggers of the uncanny, create an unheimlich atmosphere and heighten Antoinette's sense of fear and loneliness in her deeply divided postcolonial Caribbean island. It is important to note that all the deaths that take place in the text are instigated by colonial reasons. This reflects the uncanny ramifications of the Empire which still haunt the Caribbean even after independence.

The first time Antoinette faces the uncanny consequences of death is when her father, a member of the slave owning plantocracy, drinks himself to death and leaves her with her young Creole mother and her mentally challenged brother in their dilapidated plantation house. She experiences loneliness, fear and inability to belong, "my father, visitors, horses, feeling safe in bed - all belonged to the past" (15). Her unheimlich feelings of threat and isolation are heightened when her only neighbor, Mr. Luttrell, another plantation owner who fell into ruins after the emancipation of slaves suddenly commits suicide. He could not wait for the compensation that plantation owners were supposed to receive after the emancipation, so he shot his dog and drowned himself. His house was believed to be haunted by

his ghost, "soon the black people said it was haunted, they wouldn't go near it. And no one came near us" (16).

The increasing hostility and hatred that flare up between the crumbling Creole plantocracy and the resentful ex-slaves result in repeated acts of violence that end in death. This is manifest when some ex-slaves poison the family's horse which is their only means of transport. Young Antoinette, to her horror, is the one who discovers the dead body of the horse:

Then one day, very early, I saw her horse lying down under the frangipani tree. I went up to him but he was not sick, he was dead and his eyes were black with flies. I ran away and did not speak of it for I thought if I told no one it might not be true. But later that day, Godfrey found him, he had been poisoned. 'Now we are marooned,' my mother said, 'now what will become of us?' (16).

The discovery of the dead horse heightens her sense of alienation and entrapment in a hostile postcolonial world. Young Antoinette tries to pretend that this tragic episode did not happen, but this does not make her fears go away. This incident makes her acutely aware of her helplessness against the uncanny ramifications of the Empire on her life.

Moreover, Antoinette constantly experiences uncanny feelings of fear and threat as acts of revenge escalate to the point that the slaves set Coulibri on fire. This results in the destruction of the house, the death of her mentally challenged brother, the mental breakdown of her mother and the burning of her parrot. During this tragic incident, the images of her brother's and her parrot's dead bodies stir uncanny feelings, "I thought, Pierre is dead. He looked dead. He was white and he did not make a sound, but his head hung back over her arm. as if he had no life at all and his eyes were rolled up so that you only saw the whites (36). The murder of the innocent brother proves that the horrible colonial past can still haunt innocent people in an unending cycle of death and violence.

In addition to her brother's death, the death of her parrot, Coco, whose wings were clipped by Mr. Mason, her English stepfather, is deeply symbolic and highly uncanny:

I opened my eyes, everybody was looking up and pointing at Coco on the glaxis railings with his feathers alight. He made an effort to fly down but his clipped wings failed him and he fell screeching. He was all on fire. I began to cry... and I hid my face ... I heard someone say something about bad luck and remembered that it was very unlucky to kill a parrot, or even to see a parrot die. They began to go then, quickly, silently, and those that were left drew aside and watched us as we trailed across the grass. They were not laughing any more. (39)

The death of the parrot which could not escape the fire because Antoinette's English step father has clipped his wings is deeply symbolic because it foreshadows Antoinette's/Bertha's death by jumping off the roof of a burning house. The clipped wings of the parrot symbolically stand for Antoinette's helplessness and the compromising situation in which Mr. Mason put her in by offering a huge dowry to whoever marries her, which eventually makes her a desirable prey for the greedy Rochester. The image of the helpless burning parrot evokes uncanny feelings as watching a dead parrot is considered a bad omen in the Caribbean culture.

In addition to recurrent dreams and repeated deaths, the repeated fate of both Antoinette and her mother creates uncanny feelings and evokes a sense of an inescapable gloomy end as a result of past colonial atrocities. According to Freud, the recurrence of the same situation or twist of fortune throughout several consecutive generations is one of the sources of the uncanny (85-86).

From the very beginning, Rhys alludes to this uncanny repetition through the choice of nearly identical names: Annette and Antoinette. Both of them suffer financially and socially after the Emancipation Act leaves them poor, isolated and hated. Both women are rejected by the English who are born in England because of their Creole heritage, a sign of their close mingling with the black population which tarnishes their racial and cultural purity. Both are rejected by wealthy Creole population because of their impoverished state after emancipation and both are despised by the black population of the island because of their slave owning history. Both women suffer terribly because of colonial prejudices which lead to perpetual feelings of fear and anxiety. Both women marry purely English men who are unable to understand their culture and who exhibit stereotypical bigotry against both white Creoles and the black population of the island which eventually leads to their mental breakdown. Finally, both are dubbed mad and confined by their British husbands till they are pushed to their breaking point.

Their endless cycle of suffering highlights the uncanny consequences of colonial atrocities that cannot be undone. Through this repetition, Rhys proves that the horrible effect of colonial prejudice, hate, fear and alienation can forever haunt the protagonists and drive them towards madness and death. This repeated cycle stirs an uncanny sense of helplessness and impending doom.

In addition to intellectual uncertainty, unexplained repetitions and the depiction of death, Freud notes that manifestations of madness evoke uncanny feelings because "the ordinary person sees in them the workings of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-man but which at the same time he is dimly aware of in a remote corner of his own being" (92). In a colonial context, madness is believed to be racially determined and is usually

attributed to moral laxity and secret transgressions of the colonized which might also affect the colonizer and lead to his regression. In a postcolonial context, on the other hand, madness, while still evoking uncanny feelings, is usually justified and the role of the Empire in instigating madness is exposed.

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë's madness imbues her with uncanny qualities. Her eerie laughs, nocturnal wandering and violent acts are seen as symptoms of this mental instability. Freud believes that madness is uncanny because it alludes to the presence of an unseen force that controls human behavior. In a colonial context, Bertha's mixed racial background is depicted as the main cause of her violence and madness. Rochester makes the connection between her racial makeup and her madness clear when he reveals her identity in front of his wedding guests, "Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations? Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard!" (415).

The presence of the mad intemperate creole element can tarnish the healthy, safe and racially pure center and create an uncanny atmosphere. This revelation paves the way to her supposedly final act of madness, the burning of Thornfield and committing suicide. Her madness makes her a threat that has to be annihilated so that the image of the English house as a place of safety and peace remains intact.

Unlike Bertha's representation in *Jane Eyre*, where her rage and madness are related to her racial background, Antoinette's actions in Rhys's text are justified and logical as they are instigated by the Empire. Rhys gives her a voice to tell her side of the story concerning the infamous incidents that took place in Brontë's text to justify her actions and illustrate the injustice of taking her money, locking her away and calling her a monster which eventually leads to her psychological breakdown. Even her mother's madness, which is depicted as a source of the uncanny in *Jane Eyre*, is vindicated and justified in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Christophine, Bertha's black maid, tells Rochester that the mother's madness is the result of colonial atrocities that led to hatred and violence, "They drive her to it. When she lose her son she lose herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad, they act like she is mad. Question, question. But no kind word, no friends, and her husband he go off, he leave her... She give up, she care for nothing" (142-43).

Christophine's words illustrate the injustice of Brontë's condemnation and present logical reasons for the mother's breakdown. Christophine argues that her madness is not related to her Creole origins as Rochester claims, but is a consequence of the Empire. In this sense, Antoinette's and her mother's breakdown is justified and logical, so it no longer becomes a source of the uncanny.

In addition to animism, unexplained repetition and repeated scenes of death and madness, uncanny feelings, are evoked when repressed colonial secrets, crimes and desires come to light. In his essay, Freud agrees with Schelling who believes that the uncanny is synonymous with “everything that ought to have remained . . . hidden and secret and has become visible” (4). He adds that the uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old which has been estranged only by the process of repression (90). Thus, the revelation of suppressed colonial histories, atrocities and desires becomes a source of extremely unheimlich experiences for both the colonizer and the colonized.

In *Jane Eyre*, the repressed colonial history of Thornfield Hall is the cause of many uncanny encounters between Bertha and Jane. Rochester’s Creole wife, who is implicated in the history of the British Empire and whose slave induced money sustains Thornfield Hall, is depicted as a dark colonial secret that is both hidden in the attic of the house and is silenced by the text. Rochester tells Jane that the “infamous conduct of the wife my father had selected for me was such as to make him blush to own her as his daughter in-law... He became as anxious to conceal it as myself” (439). Penny Boumelha explains that Bertha is portrayed as a “skeleton in the closet, the “dark” secret, the maddening burden of imperialism concealed in the heart of every English gentleman’s house of the time” (113).

Although she was meant to remain a dark secret as Rochester wanted to conceal her identity, Bertha manages to make herself visible and make her presence increasingly haunting and pervasive in both Rochester’s house and Brontë’s text. In spite of being deprived of a language to narrate her story, her presence is felt through her eerie laughs, monstrous shrieks and nocturnal wandering around the house which alienate Rochester and terrorize an unassuming Jane who is puzzled by the secret that lurks in the house. Jane wonders, “what crime was this that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?” (302).

Her visibility increases as the mysterious laughs turn to threatening mad actions as she sets Rochester’s room on fire, attacks her half-brother and tears Jane’s veil before her wedding. Bertha’s transition from a mere presence, a ghost, to a very realistic physical threat, a vampire, prepares the readers to the last uncanny encounter where the colonial secret that Rochester has been hiding for years is finally exposed. Up till this day, Rochester’s attempts at hiding the secret of his monstrous mad Creole wife were extremely successful. No one knew about her. Even the clergyman was shocked to hear about a first Mrs. Rochester, “Impossible! I am an old resident in this neighborhood, sir, and I never heard of a Mrs. Rochester at Thornfield Hall.’ This prompted Rochester to admit that he “took care that none should hear of it - or of her under that name” (414).

The exposure of Thornfield's dark secret and Jane's final encounter with Bertha who attacks Rochester before Jane's eyes create a disturbing uncanny experience because Jane is unable to determine whether Bertha is an animal or a human being:

A figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face (416-17).

Jane experiences an eerie feeling because of her inability to identify the creature before her. Blurring the line between human and animal creates intellectual uncertainty that heightens the uncanny effect of the revelation of the suppressed secret.

As a postcolonial text that recreates Bertha's silenced history, *Wide Sargasso Sea* explains and justifies what ought to have remained a secret in *Jane Eyre*. Giving Bertha a voice to narrate her own story eradicates her status as a dark colonial secret and cancels the uncanny feelings associated with her character. However, Rhys employs the uncanny to expose suppressed colonial crimes of the British Empire such as sexual abuse, miscegenation and mass murders. These atrocities should have remained a secret and their revelation deeply disturbs Rochester and Antoinette and heightens the uncanny atmosphere of the former colony.

Rhys employs the trope of colonial secrets to expose the hypocrisy of both Creole plantocracy and English characters regarding their crimes against the black population of the Caribbean. Rochester experiences an uncanny feeling when he discovers that the name of one of the villages they pass by on their way to their honeymoon house is 'Massacre'. When he asks Antoinette about the reasons behind this name and whether slaves were massacred in this village, she "sounded shocked. 'Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now'" (60). Depicting Antoinette as being offended and astonished because of Rochester's question illustrates her ambivalence and willed amnesia towards her people's violent colonial history. It, moreover, illustrates that there are colonial secrets lurking in the mysterious island. However, Rhys suggests that even if no one remembers what exactly happened in the past, colonial secrets will always haunt the present and will always be remembered.

In addition to suppressed mass murders, Rhys heightens the unheimlich atmosphere of the former colony by exposing repressed secrets of Coulibri itself. In *Jane Eyre*, it is the presence of a Creole monster that imbues Thornfield with its uncanny atmosphere. Whereas, in Rhys' text,

Coulibri has an unheimlich atmosphere because it conceals horrific British colonial transgressions such as exploitation of slaves and miscegenation. Antoinette's father had a habit of keeping many black mistresses, but he did not acknowledge his black children from them. His house is haunted by secrets of slavery, miscegenation and illegitimate children. Elaine Savory explains, "As a former slave-owner's place, the Coulibri great house carries with it the suppressed rage and agony of the past" (138).

Moreover, Rochester experiences extremely disturbing uncanny feelings when he receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, the black alleged half-brother of Antoinette, in which he reveals all the suppressed disgraceful atrocities of Antoinette's family. The letter exposes her father's secrets such as his madness, alcoholism, affairs with black slaves and illegitimate children. Daniel advised Rochester to ask "the older people sir about his disgusting goings on, some will remember" (87). In addition, Daniel reveals her mother's and brother's mental disorders. He, moreover, claims that Antoinette had a secret incestuous affair with one of her black half-brothers. This shocking revelation evokes uncanny sensations and leaves Rochester "sweating and trembling" as he could not "force" himself to think (90).

In Brontë's text, the secret of the Creole monster is the cause of the uncanny feelings that the English characters experience in the healthy heart of the Empire. Consequently, Bertha's incarceration, abuse and death are justified. By annihilating the colonized monster, the threat is removed and normalcy is restored. In Rhys's text, on the other hand, the atrocities of the Creole and British characters are the main reasons of their uncanny experiences. Thus, the island and its natives are vindicated.

After examining how animism, repetitions, revelation of secrets, madness and death stir uncanny feelings in colonial and postcolonial contexts, the researcher explores how Brontë and Rhys use "omnipotence of thoughts," or "instantaneous wish-fulfillments" and "the secret power to do harm" to highlight the complicated uncanny ramifications of the British Empire. In a colonial context, the power of naming and typecasting the natives and turning them into manageable stereotypes to facilitate their control and justify their abuse can be seen as a form of this instantaneous wish fulfillment that creates uncanny encounters. Postcolonial texts, on the other hand, explore the absurdity of this practice and try to explore ways to escape its ramifications on the natives' postcolonial identity.

In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha's humanity is annihilated and the usurpation of her voice, freedom and money is justified because Rochester's colonial power of naming instantly turns her to Bertha Mason, a "bad, mad, and embruted partner!" (416), "intemperate and unchaste" (436) and a "hideous demon" (448). He has power over her depiction and fate through instantaneous wish fulfillment that turns her into a manageable stereotype. In Brontë's text, the omnipotence of Rochester's thoughts, which are

ingrained in colonial ideology, stirs strong uncanny feelings that justify robbing her of her money and locking her in the attic till she commits suicide.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys cleverly highlights the uncanny effect of this colonial practice on Bertha/Antoinette. She examines the complex relation between the uncanny and the dissolution of identity or fragmentation that she, as an impoverished Creole, experiences as a result of typecasting practiced by English characters, ex-slaves and wealthy Creoles. As a white Creole, Antoinette is called “white nigger” by purely British characters, who are afraid of racial contamination. Moreover, she is labeled “white cockroach” by black ex-slaves who gloat over the loss of her wealth. She explains to her husband how the thoughts, views and wishes of others can shape her identity and turn her in to a projection of their thoughts, “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” (93). The ability of other people to construct her identity at will evokes uncanny feelings and disorients her.

Moreover, Rhys illustrates that Antoinette is aware of Rochester’s attempts to turn her from Antoinette to Brontë’s Bertha. She tries to escape this trap by confronting him, “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” (133). The word obeah echoes Freud’s view that “an evil character can be seen as uncanny if he/she is capable of achieving its evil motives through having special powers that enables him to achieve his harmful wishes” (14).

Although Rochester is not using any magical powers, Antoinette experiences the uncanny because in a colonial context, changing her name gives him power over her as he forces a new identity upon her. He, moreover, calls her “marionette” to signify her total transformation. The word marionette reflects Rochester’s status as a voodoo master who, according to Patrick Colm Hogan, changes Antoinette into “a puppet, a piece of wood, without reflection or autonomous action, without social connectedness, without identity” (93). Thus, Rhys demonstrates the process by which Antoinette metamorphoses to Bertha to illustrate the injustice of this practice and vindicate Brontë’s Creole monster.

In conclusion, after comparing how *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* engage with the uncanny in colonial and postcolonial contexts, one can conclude that Rhys creatively appropriates manifestations of the uncanny to subvert Brontë’s racist colonial ideology and vindicate Bertha who is responsible for the uncanny atmosphere in the text. She proves that the representation of Bertha and the West Indies as sources of the uncanny is directly related to the colonizer’s own colonial fears and biases and does not reflect the true nature of Bertha or the colony. She shows how they are conveniently depicted as sources of threat to justify atrocious colonial practices and promote the rightfulness of the Empire. Moreover, unlike

Brontë, who believes that the racial and geographical other evokes unheimlich feelings, she illustrates that the Empire with its colonial atrocities is the true source of the uncanny. Finally, Rhys's innovative reworking of the uncanny allows her to achieve her aim to humanize the Bertha and tell her side of the story, "she must be at least plausible with a past, the reason why Mr. Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the reason why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad, even the reason why she tries to set everything on fire, and eventually succeeds" (156).

المخلص:

استخدام مفهوم الغرابة في سياق مرحلتى الاستعمار و ما بعد الاستعمار :
دراسة لروايتى جين آير و بحر سارجاسو الواسع
ياسمين أحمد عبد العزيز

يتناول البحث العلاقة بين أدب الاستعمار و مفهوم الغرابة كما طرحه سيجموند فرويد في مقالته "الغرابة" (1919). كما يكشف البحث كيف يمكن استخدام مظاهر الغرابة المختلفة في سياق مرحلتى الاستعمار وما بعد الاستعمار. و يقارن البحث كيف استخدمت رواية جين آير (1847) للكاتبة تشارلوت برونتى والتي تنتمى لأدب الاستعمار و رواية بحر سارجاسو الواسع (1966) للكاتبة جين ريس والتي تنتمى لمرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار تلك المظاهر لتعريف و تقيض الايديولوجيات الاستعمارية. و ينقسم البحث الى قسمين رئيسيين، يتناول القسم الأول بإيجاز بعض مظاهر الغرابة على النحو الذى طرحه فرويد، و يعقد الجزء الثانى مقارنة بين نصين لتوضيح كيف استخدم كل منهما تجليات الغرابة للتعبير عن ايديولوجيات متضادة.

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