

T.C. İNÖNÜ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



**REDEFINING AUTHORITY, ALTERITY,
AND SILENCE IN *THE EMPEROR'S BABE*
AND *WIDE SARGASSO SEA***

MASTER'S THESIS

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MALATYA – 2023



T.C.

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İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

**REDEFINING AUTHORITY, ALTERITY, AND SILENCE
IN *THE EMPEROR'S BABE* AND *WIDE SARGASSO SEA***

**(İMPARATORUN BEBEĞİ VE GENİŞ, GENİŞ BİR DENİZ
ROMANLARINDA OTORİTE, ÖTEKİLİK VE SESSİZLİK
KAVRAMLARINI YENİDEN TANIMLAMAK)**

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I can no other answer make but thanks,

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(William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*)

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ABSTRACT

Redefining Authority, Alterity, and Silence in *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Bernardine Evaristo and Jean Rhys, two pivotal figures in revisionist writing, blend fiction with fact, reality with fantasy, and black culture with British history in their poetic novels; *The Emperor's Babe*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. They present a compelling critique of historical erasure and politics of marginalization by race, gender, and culture. Through London's position intertwined with authority and norms, Evaristo and Rhys demonstrate how the colonial city and order devalue the existence of the 'othered' figures in these novels, especially Antoinette and Zuleika. Then, they challenge London's centralization as a hub for authority, control, and order by reawakening these 'othered' figures' connection to the natural world. From there, the thesis turns to the exploration of how 'alterity' loses its meaning adopted in the colonial language and culture. Evaristo and Rhys treat all the colonialist trials to define or make up a form of alterity as a disease and find the cure by incorporating multiple cultures and languages into their novels. They, so to speak, celebrate this cultural and linguistic diversity by confronting the prevailing myths that reduce the differences to a single unified form. By analyzing *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor's Babe* within the framework of these findings, this study delves into the ways in which both authors redefine 'authority,' 'alterity,' and 'silence.' Through an ecofeminist approach to the city/nature and order/disorder dichotomies, this research aims to shed light on the transformative power of nature and poetry in revising the socio-political norms and customs in the works of Rhys and Evaristo.

Keywords: Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Bernardine Evaristo, *The Emperor's Babe*, ecofeminism, alterity, deconstruction and revision

ÖZET

İmparatorun Bebeği ve Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz Romanlarında Otorite, Ötekilik ve Sessizlik Kavramlarını Yeniden Tanımlamak

Revizyonist yazımın iki önemli ismi olan Bernardine Evaristo ve Jean Rhys, *İmparatorun Bebeği ve Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* adlı şiirsel romanlarında kurmacayla olguyu, gerçeklikle fanteziyi ve siyahi kültürü İngiliz tarihiyle harmanlıyorlar. Bu iki revizyonist çalışma, tarihsel yok sayma ve ırk, cinsiyet, kültür temelli dışlama politikalarına karşı güçlü bir eleştiri sunuyor. Evaristo ve Rhys, Londra'nın otorite ve kurallarla iç içe geçmiş konumu üzerinden, sömürgeci şehir ve kültürün, 'ötekileştirilmiş' figürlerin varlığını özellikle de Antoinette'i ve Zuleika'yı nasıl değersizleştirdiğini iki romanda da net bir şekilde gösteriyorlar. Ardından, bu 'ötekileştirilmiş' figürlerin doğal dünyayla bağlantısını yeniden canlandırarak Londra'nın bir otorite, kontrol ve düzen merkezi olarak merkezileşmesine meydan okuyorlar. Buradan hareketle, tez, 'ötekiliğin' sömürgeci dil ve sömürgeci kültürde kabul görmüş anlamını bu iki romanda nasıl yitirdiği sorusuna yönelmektedir. Evaristo ve Rhys, ötekiliği bir forma oturtmaya veya onu tanımlamaya çalışan tüm sömürgeci uğraşları bir hastalık olarak ele alıyorlar ve çözümü farklı dilleri ve kültürleri romanlarına dahil etmekte buluyorlar. Farklılıkları tek bir birleşik forma indirgeyen mitleri çürütmek için her iki yazar da deyim yerindeyse romanlarında bu çok sesliliği kutluyorlar. *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz* ve *İmparatorun Bebeği* adlı romanları bu bulgular çerçevesinde inceleyerek, bu çalışma iki yazarın 'otorite,' 'ötekilik' ve 'sessizlik' kavramlarını yeniden nasıl tanımladıklarını incelemektedir. Kent/doğa ve düzen/düzensizlik ikiliklerine eko-feminist bir yaklaşımla bu araştırma, Rhys ve Evaristo'nun eserlerindeki sosyo-politik normları ve gelenekleri revize etmede doğanın ve şiirin dönüştürücü gücünü göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Jean Rhys, *Geniş, Geniş Bir Deniz*, Bernardine Evaristo, *İmparatorun Bebeği*, eko-feminizm, ötekilik, yapısöküm ve revizyon.

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INTRODUCTION

“I like shape very much. A novel has to have shape, and life doesn’t have any.”

Jean Rhys, Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography

Bernardine Evaristo and Jean Rhys, two pivotal figures in revisionist writing, blend fiction with fact, reality with fantasy, and black culture with British history in their poetic novels, *The Emperor’s Babe* (2001) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1960). The main thing that pushes their works into the limelight is their heartfelt endeavor to recreate a safe world from the ruins of history, culture, and myth. Evaristo indicates this intention very early on in her novel in-verse by making a reference to Oscar Wilde’s aphoristic quote that “[t]he one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it” (Evaristo 12). This quote, emphasized specifically on a blank page at the very beginning of *The Emperor’s Babe*, reveals Evaristo’s determination to redefine the concepts of what constitutes history and myth. Her revisionary novella presents a rereading of Anglo-Roman history and myths with their alternative figurations, as Gendusa remarks, “in an attempt to re-define Englishness and its traditional historical founding myths” (57).

The Emperor’s Babe traces the cosmopolitan and pluralistic nature of Roman England. Although the idea of Roman *Londinium*, where Nigerians once lived, may sound gripping or unbelievable, Evaristo attempts to show that Africans lived in London by combining this lesser-known historical fact with fiction. As she stated in most of her interviews, this very idea encourages Evaristo to travel to the past, to the deepest points of history that unites, not divides, but fuses. Evaristo achieves this fusion of history and fiction with her daring and quick-witted character, Zuleika, who is also referred to as Zuky-dot in the narrative. With her riotous and cynical style, Zuleika offers a counter narrative and an alternative perspective to the assumptions that overlook the existence of Africans in the history. More precisely, she recreates London with Roman antiquity and with the historical traces Nigerian people left on the British islands. Zuky sets out to explain in an ironic and striking way that Nigerians are an inextricable part of Anglo-Roman history, and this mission

she embarks on elevates her to a position where she is ultimately recognized, in capital letters, as “ZULEIKA – THE WOMAN WHO SHOCKED A NATION” (Evaristo 178).

Rhys pays off the debt mentioned in Oscar Wilde’s quote by delving deeper into Charlotte Brontë’s novel and completing each idea or theme that she thinks is missing in *Jane Eyre*. As shown through Wilde’s words, Rhys sees this debt she “owes to history” as an inevitable task and expresses this inevitability as follows: “one stupid thing I did was to read *Jane Eyre* too much. Then I found it was creeping into my writing. A bad imitation—quite dreadful. All had to be scrapped” (qtd. in Smith 115). She reads Brontë’s novel until she is sure that its corrosive content has somewhat changed in her imagination and then puts aside all of her previous rewriting trials of *Jane Eyre*. After making sure that she could give a new perspective to Brontë’s novel, Rhys reveals her interconnection with the latest version of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as follows: “I’m not quite in control of it now. It’s in control of me” (qtd. in Smith 116). Rhys’s statement here underscores the priority of ‘taking control’ over ‘being under control’ for her revisionist book since Rhys hopes that *Wide Sargasso Sea* would be read as a prequel to *Jane Eyre* and would reshape all the circumstances that we take into consideration to interpret *Jane Eyre*. It is also evident that this quote very clearly reveals the philosophy of revising a literary work by implying that the idea of revision is not aimed to completely eliminate or ignore the previous version of a literary work but to earn new perspectives to it. Rhys brings this new perspective to *Jane Eyre* by making the invisible visible and making the untold told about the myth of the *mad woman in the attic*, as well as revealing the hidden dynamics of imperialism.

The first chapter focuses on how the city shapes and controls the aesthetic standards for the Creole characters, Zuleika, and Antoinette, by deeply exploring London’s position intertwined with authority and norms in *The Emperor’s Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. With its image of imposing singularity (being one and only) against the postmodern mosaic/collage, London reinforces and strengthens the networks of authority in these novels. Regarding this postmodern mosaic emphasizing the multiplicity of voices, Bressler remarks that “a [mosaic] permits many possible meanings: the viewer (or “reader”) can simply juxtapose a variety of combinations of images, thereby constantly changing the meaning of the [mosaic]” (88). In line with Bressler’s definition of postmodern ‘mosaic,’ Zuleika implies

at the very beginning of the novel that a city should exist as a ‘mosaic’ rather than a single unified form by saying that “I dreamt of creating mosaics / of remaking my town with bright stones and glass” (Evaristo 17). With Zuky’s intention to remake her town, Evaristo suggests that her idea of revising is not limited to history and gender roles but also encompasses the city and the squares of the Roman empire. Moreover, Rhys and Evaristo scrupulously present the historical records of British colonialism with their descriptions of London and the colonized cities, and they show how London serves as a specific marker of order. As a matter of fact, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe*, the Creole figures are associated with ‘disorder’ just because of their scruffy appearances, creole languages and cultures, and thus they become a threat to the perfectly idealized British political and cultural legacy, or at least are envisioned as such in colonial logic. What makes this point valuable for critical analysis is that *Wide Sargasso Sea* deals with Victorian London, while *The Emperor’s Babe* focuses on much earlier, Roman *Londinium*. In other words, the comparative analysis of these two works in the context of the city, colony, and imperialism allows for analyzing both Roman and Victorian periods of London within the framework of common questions and problems.

Another topic discussed in the first chapter is the question of how the constructive, unifying, and reconciling power of nature contrasts with the destructive, imposing, and ignoring existence of the city in these novels. From this point of view, nature becomes a place where differences come together, and outcasts feel at home and take shelter from the city. Just as in Shakespeare’s plays such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or *As You Like It* in which the crux of the storyline revolves around the theme of the transformative power of nature, nature once again manifests itself as a unifying and reconciling force for those who could become one with it in these novels. To exemplify, Zuleika prefers to define herself in fluid terms as represented by her ‘watery’ statements in *The Emperor’s Babe*, since the water image serves as a gateway into freedom, change, and independence for her. Within this context, it is apparent that Evaristo’s *The Emperor’s Babe* opens in dialogue with Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which nature has chosen its own ‘side’—the side of the othered people. Interestingly enough, Rhys emphasizes this ‘side’ in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by implying that nature embraces the disenfranchised and the colonized characters in the novel while it

dismisses and finally punishes the representatives of colonial discourse by dragging them into fear and restlessness one by one. By focusing on nature thus, both Rhys and Evaristo aim to reach the wreck of colonial history to revise, or metaphorically speaking, to clean it in ways that could earn women a voice not just in their poetic narrative but also in historical narrative.

The second chapter offers a detailed examination of the ways in which both authors redefine the concept of alterity. What particularly captures attention here is that Rhys and Evaristo prioritize the concept of multiplicity in every way they apply. For example, when reconsidering history, they push aside the monolithic (one-sided and nationalist) understanding of historiography and its strict rules, and instead, they reveal their own understanding of history in a more pluralistic and subjective way. This idea closely aligns with Bakhtin's argument that the novel "[makes] possible a remarkable multiplicity of narrative combinations. The furthest reaches of the available world [are] incorporated into this complex, and the world [is] re-perceived in it and through it" (211). As Bakhtin proposes, Evaristo achieves this incorporation by bringing all the disdained figures that patriarchal history ignores to the stage of history with more assertive and challenging roles. The phrase 'the stage of history' here precisely reflects the theatricality of Evaristo's language, as she also confirms in her interview with Alastair Niven by saying that "I think quite a lot of my writing is performative. That is not intentional, but I do have a theatrical background...my writing does have an oral dramatic quality" (Niven 17). Aligned with her inclination towards theatricality and performative writing, Evaristo sees her novel as a stage and her characters as players by using her theatricality style in writing to convey that her characters are not unchanging figures with fixed views like historical figures. In her fiction, Evaristo delineates that change is inevitable not just for her Creole characters but also her historical figures by emphasizing that her characters act with exchangeable roles rather than with fixed roles and unchangeable mentalities. Briefly stated, the said 'theatricality' here helps to develop a fictionalized version of patriarchal history and real historical figures by removing all conditions that obstruct change and transformation in Evaristo's novel in-verse, *The Emperor's Babe*.

As an integral part of this pluralistic (non-excluding) approach, Evaristo gives voice to the silenced and marginalized figures in *The Emperor's Babe* by using many subtitles that relate to a specific moment or an event that these figures go through. Namely, though her novel is quite short, Evaristo divides her narrative into sections with different titles; and in this manner, Evaristo suggests that she does not bypass anyone or any experience that affects the whole of the novel. This fragmented narrative style in *The Emperor's Babe* provides a framework for postmodern thought that centers on the diverse and challenging representations of reality and shifting perspectives. By rejecting to centralize on a single perspective or fixed categories of gender, race, and culture, Evaristo captures the fragmented nature of life and existence; in Bakhtin's terms, she captures its 'inconclusiveness' i.e., its focus on diversity. In line with this diversity and shifting perspective, Evaristo fosters a space, not just for Zuleika's deceptive lovers, Septimus Severus and Aurelius Felix, but also for Zuleika's transvestite companion, an outcast who is called Venus, to express herself under the title of *Thus One May Go to the Stars*. As Bakhtin observes, with these shifting perspectives, Evaristo's novel "reflects more deeply, more essentially more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding... with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness" (7). *The Emperor's Babe*, in conformity with Bakhtin's observations, opens up to a world between the past and the present, and it enables retrospective examination of Roman England from the socio-cultural perspective of the present and with a more pluralistic understanding. In her interview with Alastair Niven, Evaristo also points to her uncommon style by saying that "these books are brought to light and that we re-examine British history from this perspective" (Niven 15). As Evaristo states, this novel not only tells a fictional story, but also aims to change the reader's point of view towards Roman period of England, as well as Africans' historical position there.

When Peter Burton asked Jean Rhys when she had begun writing, Rhys replied in her interview that "I used to write poetry when I was quite a little girl, perhaps thirteen or fourteen, but I didn't show it to anyone" (106). Even after years, Rhys did not lose her passion for poetry and thus exhibited a poetic quality with her use of evocative and concise language, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, to be able to break the monotony in the novel tradition. In her novella, like Evaristo, Rhys distances herself from the traditional (linear) narrative style and presents

the events in a more complex way by employing multiple narrators and a multiplicity of literary forms. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for instance, the longish passages are accompanied by poetic language or sometimes interrupted by excerpts from various songs and poems, as could be observed through Antoinette and Christophine's singing together: "*Hail to the queen of the silent night, / Shine bright, shine bright Robin as you die...*" (Rhys 49). These disruptive poetic additions to *Wide Sargasso Sea* heighten its emotional and intellectual resonance on the ground that these additions interrupt the silence and reflect the characters' innermost feelings, desires, and passions. Besides that, the events are narrated in turn by both the colonizer and the colonized in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This dialogic narrative style shows how Rhys creates a platform for dialogue between the colonizer and the colonized, the Creole and the English, the reality and the fantasy, by allowing for the reinterpretation of 'authority,' 'alterity,' and 'silence.'

Rhys and Evaristo's use of language transgresses all the socially constructed boundaries and limits since they do not adhere to a single language to retell the story of the past and the 'other.' On the contrary, their novels constitute a mixture of several languages such as Latin, suburb English, Nubian language, Patois, and many other minority languages. This is particularly one of the hallmarks of their 'multiculturalist' style. Sarah Song calls this 'multiculturalist' style as "the politics of recognition" and furthers her discussion regarding multiculturalism as follows:

Multiculturalists take for granted that it is "culture" and "cultural groups" that are to be recognized and accommodated. Yet multicultural claims include a wide range of claims involving religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race. Culture is a contested, open-ended concept, and all of these categories have been subsumed by or equated with the concept of culture. (Stanford, edu)

Through this mixture of several languages, Rhys and Evaristo suggest that the multiplicity of languages in a literary work allows for sharing knowledge, experience, and different stories. This is because Evaristo and Rhys do not build the special markers of humanity, such as being civilized or being modern on the dynamics of any language as it was historically done in British islands, or in the colonized territories. They, instead, create a community with the awareness that languages are not dividing but uniting, multiplying, and giving voice to all. Indeed, this mixture in the language reinforces the idea of racial mixing and shows that the world is not as homogeneous as the British colonialism lists it to be but a place where

differences are welcomed and cherished. Through the use of these multiple languages, they achieve to turn their novels into a postmodern collage / mosaic “uttering the defiant cry: “More Voices!” (Connor 15). Within this collage, societies, and races that cannot come together in the context of colonialism and power relations come together through languages in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe*. This shows clearly how languages could break down racial barriers when all the racial, cultural, and social opposites are brought together.

Last but not least, Evaristo and Rhys undermine the literary and historical narratives that disregard the existence of the ‘othered’ figures by reclaiming their marginalized voices in *The Emperor’s Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Despite Antoinette and Zuleika’s amplified voices and their dynamic presence in these novels do not mean that they have completely eliminated the colonial discourse and patriarchal order, they nevertheless achieve to present ‘alternatives’ to the deeply ingrained bias in the literary and historical narratives. That is, through these ‘alternatives,’ characterized by the transformative power of nature and poetry in these novels, Antoinette, and Zuleika call for a passive resistance against the oppressive systems instead of submitting to them. In this sense, these figures offer messages of female agency, self-determination, resistance, and they foster a critical engagement with intricate power dynamics by counteracting monolithic representations of the ‘other’ and decentering the colonial gaze. In view of this introductory information, this study aims to shed light on the transformative power of ‘nature’ and ‘poetry’ by analyzing the intersecting issues of race, gender, resistance, and empowerment in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe*.

CHAPTER ONE:
FROM ROMAN *LONDINIUM* TO VICTORIAN ERA:
LONDON'S AUTHORITY AND ORDER IN QUESTION

It stands to reason that cities have always been one of the most influential expressions of how grand an empire or a country is, as they constitute the centers of everything about culture, power, order, and hierarchy. The city of London embodies this domination and influence by culturally and symbolically holding sway over the 'othered' figures in *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Both Evaristo and Rhys reflect their own impressions of London and define it always in masculine terms since the notion of the city in their imagination is where tyrant figures feel most vibrant and where hegemony ramifies best. Drago Kos deftly touches on this connection between hegemony, city, and nature by pointing out that "God created the countryside, man created the town...Living in a town is; therefore, a punishment, expulsion from Eden, and the motivation to return to nature is very high" (130). As he proposes, the notion of the city overlaps with a bunch of rules, principles, and manmade constructs that the Creole characters cannot fit in. In other words, the town exists not as God's creation that exists on its own account but as man's creation directed by human nature, by his social and political constructs. Hence, whenever the 'othered' Creole figures of Evaristo and Rhys leave out of the borders of the city and head for nature, they regain their freedom and find their personal space to speak up without facing any constraint. In Drago's words, so to speak, they find their path to Eden, eliminating all the negativities on the way.

Building from this standpoint, this chapter will examine the role of the city and colony in directing and controlling the lives of Antoinette and Zuleika. Then, it will concentrate on the question of whether the ritual of marriage functions as a way of elevation in the social ladder or as a way of degradation fueled by the mirroring of colonial purposes in personal terms. Finally, this part of the thesis purports to argue the particular reasons behind Antoinette and Zuleika's desire to seek refuge in nature, showing how nature is working as a healing source—almost like a mother figure who is always ready to embrace these Creole characters whenever they need.

In the realm of literary inquiry, it is widely recognized that Romans were obsessed with the term ‘order,’ as could be seen as embedded in their culture, literature, art, and monuments. Thus, that word became a matter of obsession even among some neo-classic writers like Alexander Pope, who aimed at remolding Roman antiquity in the 18th century English Literature by stressing a set of ideals in his literary works such as order, accuracy, restraint, and decorum. Romans built their grand cities in a well-ordered style, for the order of cities was seen as a subtle expression of national honor and their hegemonic power. McDowall emphasizes this attitude of the Romans as follows:

[t]he most obvious characteristic of Roman Britain was its towns, which were the basis of Roman administration and civilization. Many grew out of Celtic settlements, military camps, or market centers. Broadly, there were three different kinds of town in Roman Britain, two of which were towns established by Roman charter. These were the *coloniae*, towns peopled by Roman settlers, and the *municipia*, large cities in which the whole population was given Roman citizenship. The third kind, the *civitas*, included the old Celtic tribal capitals, through which the Romans administered the Celtic population in the countryside. At first these towns had no walls. Then, probably from the end of the second century to the end of the third century AD, almost every town was given walls. At first many of these were no more than earthworks, but by AD 300 all towns had thick stone walls. (9)

That order, characterized by ‘towns, military camps, *municipia*, *coloniae*, and huge thick walls,’ determines not just the physical borders of the city but also the symbolic boundaries and limits for its citizens. This is particularly obvious both in Evaristo’s Roman *Londinium* and in Rhys’ Victorian London, where women are ostracized when they do not overstep these boundaries. In this context, it would be conceivable to assert that if the term ‘order’ is synonymous with power, and broadly speaking with the Western intelligentsia, the ‘disorder’ would be synonymous with the idea of weakness and with the non-western figures that Evaristo and Rhys heavily focus on.

Based on this conception of order, both novels categorize characters and spaces as either ‘ordered’ or ‘disordered.’ Indeed, Londoner or British authorities in these novels expect that order from newcomers, or they expect it in places where they visit, for they regard England as a place where all the questions concerning race, history, and power are replied with a great sense of accuracy. Being aware of the reflections of this accuracy, Zuky says for her husband, a rich Roman senator called Lucius Aurelius Felix, that “this was a man who knew his place / in the order of things” (Evaristo 148). The word ‘order’ here connotes the existence of hierarchy on the grounds that hierarchy itself contains an order in it as “a

situation in which rules are obeyed and people do what they are expected to do” (“order,” Cambridge Dictionary). That means there is an order whose limits are determined by a grand authority, which is Roman Empire in this context. This order holds sway over humans, their perceptions, as well as their aesthetic tastes. For this reason, Felix’s social position, or his place ‘in the order of things,’ mandates his outward appearance, thoughts, and emotions by forming him into a man he is not in reality. Just to be considered as perfect and to be able to fit into that order, Felix submits himself entirely to some imperial elements such as titles, rules, and principles. With his dedication of himself to these elements ‘in the order of things,’ Evaristo emphasizes how Felix as a noble man sacrifices his identity for the sake of having a title.

As for those who are colored, othered, and outcasted from society, things become ‘disordered’ in a way that there appears a sign of messiness, abjection, and abomination in the outward appearance of the non-British, or non-Roman characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe*. These disdained characters, regardless of their outward appearance or their cultural, racial background, constitute a deep contrast with the perfectly idealized Roman order and British political legacy. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for instance, Rhys deftly displays that Antoinette and her mother, Annette, are unsuitable for that kind of order, as could be understood even from their initial appearance in the novel. Upon meeting Antoinette, Annette, as well as the other Creole figures in the novel, Antoinette’s husband, who is kept anonymous throughout the novel, says: “A coloured man, a coloured woman, and a white woman sitting with her head bent so low that I couldn’t see her face. But I recognized her hair, one plait much shorter than the other. And her dress” (Rhys 28). Compared to London’s loftiness and well-ordered buildings, these Creole women’s appearances, especially Antoinette’s hair, ‘one plait much shorter than the other,’ constitute a huge contrast between the two, stressing the lack of harmony between Antoinette and her unnamed husband. As a recurrent motif, Antoinette’s disordered appearance, together with her silence, grabs her husband’s attention and moves him to feel disgusted when in contact with her.

Seeing that he deems Antoinette as a huge contrast to his so-called well-ordered life, he is bewildered by her ‘uncombed’ hair and fainted eyes. The husband, therefore, bluntly states that

[t]he door of Antoinette’s room opened. When I saw her, I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare. However, when she spoke her voice was low, almost inaudible. (Rhys 87)

Antoinette’s inaudible voice together with her dispersed appearance doubles down on her husband’s discomfort with that recurrent ‘disorder’ since she even seems to lack words and phrases to express herself. Coming from the noisy streets of London, the ever-vibrant city life, and from a society dominated by voice, speech, and expressing everything clearly with great precision, the husband is terrified by Antoinette’s rejection to speak, which serves as a passive resistance here. As Ciolkowski remarks, in Jamaica, the husband “must put his imperial house in order” to be able to easily follow his imperialist projections on Antoinette and other Jamaicans, but Antoinette’s dirtiness and scruffiness in appearance often disorder the ‘order’ he wants to set on the island (344). That disorder in appearance is not limited to Antoinette. Her husband evaluates all the Creoles from the same perspective, emphasizing how they are quite the opposite of what he has in mind—as ideal, ordered, and perfectly suitable for the Western mindset. Even for a young lady aged between twelve and fourteen, the husband says, “the dress was spotless but her uncovered hair, though it was oiled and braided into many small plaits, gave her a savage appearance” (Rhys 43). Almost like a fashion designer, the unnamed husband inspects the Creoles and makes negative and authoritative judgments about them by filtering their appearances through his ideals for perfection.

This idea similarly permeates Evaristo’s novel-in-verse, in which Zuleika experiences almost the same attitude towards her appearance. As eloquently illustrated by Evaristo, upon arriving at the coast of London, Zuleika reveals that “I was sent off to a snooty Roman bitch / called Clarissa for decorum classes, / learnt how to talk, talk and fart, / ...to ditch my second-generation plebby creole” (Evaristo 16). Upon her arrival, the only concern for the Romans becomes assimilating her into a form that is compatible with their aesthetic standards. In history, they aimed to assimilate those who were different from them into the same attitude

because the Romans wanted to see everything as homogeneous, or rather because they saw differences as a threat to the continuity of the empire. Zuleika, too, gets her share from this attitude, even though she is represented as a defiant woman who is conscious of the ancient and the modern perception of race and gender. When compared to the previous discussion done with reference to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this excerpt apparently delineates that there is a sense of continuity in the attitude of the colonizer, regardless of the transition of the time from Roman *Londinium* to Victorian London onwards. When brought together, it becomes crystal clear that both novels reinforce this sense of continuity by implying how colonization remains fixed in time and remains true to its essence. Engaging with the texts in that way provides the opportunity to make connections between Roman *Britannia* and Britain of the Victorian age, which was the pioneer of modern England, and helps the reader determine how a creole was treated and perceived in the course of history. Here, Zuleika, as a “plebby creole,” suggests in her sarcastic tone and in a comical manner that she is forced to act like a Roman so that she becomes worthy of being the wife of a Roman senate (Evaristo 16). Yet, herein lies the question of how she has been successful in this and, more significantly, the question of whether she really wishes to be Roman-like in appearance. In relation to that, Zuleika’s sister-in-law, Antistia, implies that change is not possible for stable Roman order, revealing that “you will never be one of us” because “a real Roman is born and bred” (Evaristo 62).

For Antistia, it is not that easy to change an established order in Roman London, but it is something possible for Zuleika because, as Zuleika’s “words revealed her,” “their ornate diction was [actually] a mask” (Evaristo 62). Here, Zuleika’s single word, ‘mask,’ sarcastically mocks what is expressed in the longish and unrhymed couplets of *The Emperor’s Babe*, i.e., the grandiosity of Romans and so-called weakness of Africans. It suggests that their ornate language ‘masks’ the reality that everyone has a potential for change. The ‘mask,’ which Zuleika uses as a metaphor while criticizing Antistia’s efforts to fit into a pattern that is set by patriarchy, refers to blurring of the boundaries between appearance and reality. In response to this ‘mask,’ Zuleika ironically states that “[y]et I was a Roman too / Civis Romana sum. It was all I had” to indicate the uselessness of a ‘title’ for women because she cares what her title takes from her freedom more than what type of

advantages it brings into her life (Evaristo 63). Indeed, being a Roman is all she had in Roman *Britannia*; there is nothing more to make her feel happy here. Nevertheless, Zuleika is aware that she has to lose all that she gained in Khartoum when she is counted to be a Roman; acquiring that title will, first of all, distance her from her Nubian heritage—from her real identity.

In *The Emperor's Babe*, city, colony, and urban life interrupt nature as well as Zuleika's comfort zone so heftily that she feels almost trapped within the boundaries of patriarchal imperatives. Hence, in Evaristo's revisionist fiction, Zuleika does not hesitate even a moment to take the liberty of ignoring the language that associates London with excellence and uniqueness. She implies that Romans' well-ordered London means nothing more than a row of 'low-lying concrete' buildings. In other words, London for her seems to be:

to its left lay several low-lying concrete
buildings, with a sign that announced
THE MITHRAS GLADIATORS TRAINING ACADEMIA.
A road cut through the forest from the north,
farmed land either side, carriages
and riders on horseback charged down it,
leaving clouds of dust and heat haze. (Evaristo 172)

Her final lines, where she means that roads cut through the forest, reiterate that nature is interrupted by urban life. This interruption, accompanied by 'clouds of dust and heat haze' (reminiscent of the industry), disturbs Zuleika, who is coming from the heart of Khartoum, from the moors of Sudan where she spent her hours with joy and ecstasy, because the bustling city atmosphere in London sparks her sense of disorientation and unease. Thus, she cannot help declaring in capital letters that "THE MITHRAS GLADIATORS TRAINING ACADEMIA" (Evaristo 172). Her reference to Mithras, the Iranian God of the sun who is believed to be born from a rock, has twofold significance here. On the one hand, it symbolizes Roman *Londinium* on which the sun never sets; and on the other hand, it shows how London is reborn of "low-lying concrete buildings." This means that London's pre-industrial setting here presents nothing but stones, buildings, and dust for newcomers, thus disturbing especially for Zuleika.

In the midst of the bustling cityscape, Zuleika feels isolated. So, she defines the colonial London, obsessed with order, as ‘strange’ enough to believe, as she says that “[w]as the world outside such a strange place?” (Evaristo 68). As evidenced by her words, after leaving home, Zuky becomes dislocated, an outsider in London, and accordingly, she feels foreign to all that she sees around her. Even though Bernardine Evaristo emphasizes the idea of racial mixing at every turn in her novel, she nevertheless underlines this mood of bewilderment that Zuky feels whenever she comes into contact with the outside world, *Londinium*. This ongoing and recurrent bewilderment leaves us with the impression that we are now outside of the home—in a place that leads to a sense of disorientation and unrest. Namely, the reader is moved to accompany Zuky-dot [Zuleika] not just in her historical journey but also in her sensations. Aligned with this feeling of shock, Evaristo prefers to call Roman England “Another World” in the title of a chapter to emphasize that it is a place where Zuleika does not fit in exactly (Evaristo 66). Roman *Londinium* and Zuleika’s hometown Khartoum are so radically differentiated from each other that Evaristo feels the urge to call them ‘worlds’: two different and incompatible ones.

Like Zuleika, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette sees London and England—i.e., in Zuleika’s expression, “the world outside,” or in Evaristo’s words, “Another World”—as noticeably unusual for the Creole people (Evaristo 68, 171). Therefore, she even doubts if such a place called London exists or not at all. In her dialogue with her husband, Antoinette doubtfully asks, “[i]s it true...that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up” (Rhys 47). To put it simply, London seems nothing more than ‘a cold dark dream’ for these Creole women as it appeals to some sort of misery, death, and oblivion in the Creole people’s imagination. After coming into contact with Jamaica’s warm, exotic, and bewildering landscape, we are again left with a sense of shock at the image of coldness here—almost like in a nightmare, as Antoinette implies, “a cold dark dream [she] want[s] to wake up” (Rhys 47). In parallel with what has been argued here, Lamb defines the image of coldness as a sign of emotional distance and lack of warmth. He furthers his discussion as follows:

[c]old is seen as negative throughout a number of artistic genres, including both traditional and contemporary literary examples. In such works, there is often a repetition of cold to increase the intensity of the feeling and image associated with that state of being. (qtd. in "Symbols of Hot and Cold")

As he evidently puts it, Rhys repetitively and deliberately uses this image to indicate the difference, the sharp contrast between the two: London as a 'cold' dream on the one hand and Jamaica as a warm land on the other hand.

This contrast is reiterated over and over in the narrative until Antoinette's husband answers her claims about London, England and their dreamy existence. The dialogue below touches on this contrast:

'Well,' I answered annoyed, 'that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.' 'But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?' 'And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?' 'More easily,' she said, 'much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.' 'No, this is unreal and like a dream,' I thought. (Rhys 48)

This dialogue is of great importance, as it best shows the contrast between nature and the city in the sense that both sides, Antoinette, and her unnamed husband, favor the things with which they are familiar as a measure of reality. Antoinette speaks through 'rivers,' 'mountains,' and 'sea,' while her husband speaks through 'houses,' 'streets,' and a huge crowd of masses. Even these concepts, enclosed in apostrophes, are enough to assert how robust and solid Antoinette's commitment to nature is since she initially sorts natural elements to define her sense of reality. In this manner, Antoinette strongly delineates that, as a mixed-race woman, she associates herself with nature and, more precisely, she finds herself 'within' nature. Her husband, however, trusts in artificial constructs while giving his own explanation of reality. What is particularly interesting here is that both refer to the opponent's home as a dream—almost like a fantasy that does not have a real substance in life. This idea is in line with Zuky's above definition of London: 'the world outside.' Yet, one side must be right, and his/her argument must be accurate so that they can wake up to reality from their dream. When Rhys prefers the transformative power of nature to the destructive darkness of the city by emphasizing that nature has its own 'side,' it becomes evident that nature once again wins over the artificiality of London, over its manmade constructs: 'houses' and 'streets.'

The same metaphor is used for justice in *Wide Sargasso Sea* in a way that the word ‘justice,’ or maybe its absence, invokes the feeling of ‘cold,’ as does London for Antoinette. Therefore, when Antoinette criticizes her husband for his blatantly exploitative approach towards her, she says:

[y]ou like the light brown girls better, don’t you? You abused the planters and made up stories about them, but you do the same thing. You send the girl away quicker, and with no money or less money, and that’s all the difference.’ ‘Slavery was not a matter of liking or disliking,’ I said, trying to speak calmly. ‘It was a question of justice.’ ‘justice,’ she said. ‘I’ve heard that word. It’s a cold word. I tried it out,’ she said, still speaking in a low voice. ‘I wrote it down. I wrote it down several times and always it looked like a damn cold lie to me. There is no justice.’ She drank some more rum and went on, ‘My mother whom you all talk about, what justice did she have?’ (Rhys 88)

In parallel with the aforementioned debate taking place between Antoinette and her husband, Antoinette uses the adjective ‘cold’ for justice this time so as to reiterate the meaning that there is no justice in this world for the Creole people. The image of coldness again provides the setting for negative feelings, pain, and despair because, as Lounsbury points out, “[i]t is associated with the extremities of cold weather and the uncomfortable feelings of being cold” (qtd. in “Symbols of Hot and Cold”). With the image of ‘coldness,’ Rhys physically represents the existence of oppressive forces that wipe away their sense of safety and justice.

England’s coldness also seems to have bewildered Christophine, who is mothering Antoinette as her nanny in almost all of her needs. Christophine defines England in a similar vein as ‘cold,’ thereby furthering the discussion about the cultural expression of England for the Creole people. Nevertheless, compared to Antoinette, Christophine is more direct in her claims regarding London because she describes it, beyond being ‘cold’, as a ‘thief’ as follows

I don’t say I don’t believe, I say I don’t know, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different, I hear it cold to freeze your bones and they thief your money, clever like the devil. You have money in your pocket, you look again and bam! No money. Why you want to go to this cold thief place? If there is this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing sure. (Rhys 67)

As could be understood from her thoughts about London above, Christophine depicts London, beyond being ‘cold,’ as a ‘thief’ and ‘clever like a devil.’ In her definition of London, she deftly implies that in this ‘cold thief place,’ it is pretty likely that one might lose not just her financial gains but also her freedom and independence together with her sense of identity. Laid out in this way, this excerpt could also be read as Christophine’s warning that Antoinette’s Londoner husband might seize her financial assets. However, most probably,

with that theft, Rhys conveys that England is a colonizer; above all, it is colonizing people's freedom and identity.

1.1 Downfall or elevation? Marriage as a representation of 'Authority' and 'Order'

The subtle correlation between marriage and city is worth noting in the sense that Zuky and Antoinette feel entrapped and locked in their marriages just as they feel in the city after leaving their homes. Like city walls, their marriage to a colonizer borders their lives by dragging them into silence and servitude. To exemplify, Zuleika's father introduces Zuky to the senator, Felix, like a merchant in the marriage market by saying, "si, Mr. Felix. Zuleika very obediens girl, sir / No problemata, she make very optima wife, sir" (Evaristo 25). He does not let her speak of her thoughts about that forced marriage; he just orders her to marry him so as to have some financial gains in return for that bargain. This situation clarifies the reason why Zuleika, in her speech, puts the word 'dead' specifically into the mid of two synonyms: 'dad' and 'father' upon watching the city ritual in which women were put into a cage to entertain the emperor, Septimus Severus. After this odd ritual, Zuleika feels shocked and reacts as indicated below:

my throat was sore / my eyes burnt,
I screamed so hard
my stomach hurt, I rocked....
and each time I woke up,
it was my first night
in the kingdom of the Dad, Dead, Father? (Evaristo 182)

With that ritual, Zuleika puts herself in those caged women's shoes and sees how women could be manipulated just to entertain some men strolling around awkwardly 'in the kingdom of the Dad, Dead, Father' (Evaristo 182). This trio [Dad, Dead, Father] is not just brooding but also a subtle combination of words implying that they are strictly interrelated to each other in Zuleika's imagination. That is to say, 'Dad' and 'Dead' are not put into the narrative just as simple homophones; they notably connote the reality that death comes from Dad—to be more precise—from patriarchal order. That's why Evaristo puts the word 'dead' into the middle of two synonyms: 'dad' and 'father' as if they are the stimuli for 'death' and 'destruction.' In this, Evaristo implies the notion that city rituals, patriarchal style of entertainment, and colonial purposes all go hand in hand throughout her novel-in-verse.

As could be inferred from Zuky's father's mercantile manner towards her, he pushes her to death by forcing her into that unexpected marriage. Hence, for her father, Zuleika says,

[y]eah, yeah, yeah, I thought, the father
who sold his daughter to the highest bidder
...sometimes I craved for the olden times
when he meant the world to me. (Evaristo 88)

Then, within brackets, Zuleika adds that "a time when my brain wasn't fully developed" (Evaristo 88). Her quote here foreshadows what she will do next in the forthcoming chapters of the novel. Referring to her past that way, she now deems herself fully grown-up and developed enough to be able to say that her father has been nothing more than a wrongdoer. This suggests how *The Emperor's Babe* closely captures Zuky's self-discovery, and her transformation from a young lady into a self-aware woman by dismissing the idea of fixation. Indeed, as the novel proceeds, Zuleika more intrepidly puts her transformative thoughts into words and action.

After her introduction to Felix the Senator, a man who is "thrice Zuleika's girth" and "thrice Zuleika's age," Zuleika is sure about where her life goes: "I got engaged. I wasn't allowed / out no more, I had to act ladylike / and Alba said it wouldn't be the same once I'd been elevated" (Evaristo 23). After getting engaged with Felix, she feels as if she has to succumb to the rules of the city since the way to conform to city life or the only way to get her place in the city is to conform to the codes of society. That is, Zuleika knows that marrying a nobleman would elevate her on the social ladder, but also, in its bitter oxymoron, it would never give her a chance to outstep the symbolic boundaries of *Londinium* and imperial culture. Therefore, regarding her marriage characterized by Felix's domination and her subordination in return, Zuleika states that "this becomes my world, to adjust / to married life, I am not let out" (Evaristo 41). As is evident from this quote, Zuleika's life in London is exacerbated by her struggle to find opportunities to speak and follow her own route in her marriage that seeks to subjugate her. That is, together with the existing obstacles in imperial London, her marriage to Felix doubles her stress on the way to independence and freedom. Hence, she turns to new alternatives, i.e., a new affectionate relationship with the Roman emperor, Septimus Severus.

Another reference to marriage and its relation to the city and colony is given when Felix implies that his wife should not be questioning everything; she should be quiet and a simple woman nodding all that comes her way. Felix says,

I have been looking for a nice
simplex, quiet, fidelis girl, a girl
who will not betray me with affairs
...unlike my pater's subsequent three wives
...determined to compete with the husband in all spheres
and prepared to argue until dawn on matters of politics, world affairs and the arts. (Evaristo 27)

Political issues are generally discussed in public areas in ancient Roman cities. Hence, it seems so attractive and daring for Zuky, who has spent most of her life in the little squares of her hometown Khartoum, to share her thoughts with people and to speak out loud about social matters on the streets of London. The reason Zuleika misses out here is that Roman culture, which emphasizes masculine individualism over any kind of femininity, does not allow a woman to talk about politics, and 'world affairs.' She is not allowed to speak of world affairs because, as a 'plebby-creole' girl, she is thought to be belonging to the spiritual realm (Evaristo 16). Thus, she embellishes Felix's dreams only as a spirit, not as a human that has a real identity. In other words, for Lucius Aurelius Felix, talking about world affairs, politics, and massive changes that will affect public life is not a thing that a spirit can deal with. Yet, Evaristo makes it clear later that Zuleika is entirely at odds with Felix's imagined wife, and that this awkward policy must be annulled for Zuky, as 'politics' is the only sphere through which she can reclaim her rights.

Even though all the ostentatious marriage rituals seem to offer overt luxury to her simplistic African life, she says that "all this is mine, but I am a stranger" (Evaristo 42). This quote is given due in part to the fact that she foresees what she might lose rather than what she could gain through those luxuries. That mood of being a stranger to all the things presented to her remains constant throughout the narrative. Accordingly, Zuleika deeply questions her 'self' whenever she catches her reflection in a looking glass: "[i]s it a girl? Is it a ghost? Is it a glamour puss? / Is it a grand dame? No, it's me mate, Zuky-dot!" (Evaristo 44). Her short sentences here show the earlier signs of her profound sense of alienation from her Nigerian identity, together with her determination to challenge and resist conformity.

What becomes toxic through her marriage is that she frequently experiences such identity crises because of her teetering between being African as a poor girl and having various luxuries as the wife of a Roman senate. In some parts of the novel, her self-questioning mood overwhelms her, so she interrupts the narrative:

[i]Identity crisis: Who is she?
Am I the original Nubian princess
From Mother Africa?
Does the Nile run through my blood
In this materfutuo urban jungle
Called Londinium?
Do I feel a sense of lack
Because I am swarthy
Or am I just a groovy chick
Living in the lap of luxury?
Am I a slave or a slave-owner?
Am I a Londinio or a Nubian?
Will my children be Roman or Nubinettes?
Were my parents vassals or Pharaohs?
And who gives a damn! (Evaristo 204)

Considering the identity crisis as a modern issue, this soliloquy complaining about the border identity deserves critical attention. Evaristo embeds this crisis into the narrative and the anachronical chain of events so masterfully that it becomes way harder to differentiate Evaristo's figure of Zuleika from a modern African/Nubian citizen who is aware of what it culturally means to be 'black,' or 'African.' To put it another way, Evaristo delineates how wise and assertive Zuky is for the age she lives in—as a Nubian girl living under the tyranny of the Roman Empire. As revealed in her speech, she holds an in-between position, both as a 'slave' and a 'slave-owner,' as a 'Londinio' and a 'Nubian.' Even so, she cannot help sharing her reckless attitude towards all that she goes through, saying self-confidently, “who gives a damn!” (Evaristo 204). As represented by her words, despite the challenges that life presents, Zuleika consistently demonstrates resilience and determination to overcome them.

As for *Wide Sargasso Sea*, from the early beginning of the novel, Rhys projects some symbolic elements and events that foreshadow where Antoinette's life is finally led to. In this regard, the Cosways' parrot called *Coco*, whose wings are clipped by Annette's husband, Mr. Mason, deserves critical attention since *Coco*'s plight has a symbolic value in the novel. *Coco*'s clipped wings disable it to fly out of the house during the great fire and die, just like Annette and Antoinette, who are slid into captivity and misery by their colonialist husbands,

also like Zuleika who is not 'let out' after getting married to Felix. Indeed, like the symbolic bird *Coco*, both Antoinette and her mother undergo a series of miserable events after they marry British colonizers who exert control over them and maintain the order of patriarchal society.

Like *Coco*, Christophine, also, has a figurative position in the novel, as she oftentimes feels the urge to warn Antoinette about the forthcoming perils of her marriage as follows: "[g]et up, girl, and dress yourself. Woman must have spunks to live in this wicked world" (Rhys 60). After Antoinette falls out with her husband, Christophine repeats the metaphor of 'spunks' by advising her to "[h]ave spunks and do battle for [her]self. Speak to [her] husband calm and cool" (Rhys 69). As could be seen in Christophine's initial warning in the novel, marriage is not just a cultural or social institution but also a ritual that moves or forces women to live with these 'spunks.' That is to say; Christophine implies that Antoinette should always be alert in her marriage as if living under a constant threat. This idea debunks the myth that she would get a sense of security in her marriage by exposing miseries and cruelties Antoinette has to face in her marriage. Accordingly, Christophine repeatedly counsels Antoinette to "have spunks and do battle for [her] self" (Rhys 69).

Words like 'dress' and 'spunks' are used metaphorically to imply that Antoinette is wearing fire on her body, almost like in a war where she has no way out apart from struggling and fighting to the death. With these metaphors, Christophine tries to motivate Antoinette by hinting at the power Antoinette owns to be assertive and stand up for her well-being and freedom against Rochester within herself. It would be plausible here to say that the warnings Christophine has given so far reveal her awareness of the challenges a woman has to face in a swiftly colonizing world that is often brutal to the Creole people. Hence, she is constantly taking a protective stance towards Antoinette and serves not just as a surrogate mothering figure for her but also as a censor of Rochester's aggressive approach towards Antoinette. As a matter of fact, Rochester is afraid of Christophine more than anyone else in *Wide Sargasso Sea* because, as a practitioner of obeah, Christophine is the only one that could reverse his plans for Antoinette. He knows that Christophine can do much more than constantly reminding Antoinette of her unnoticed potential with these special words, 'dress' and 'spunk.'

1.2 Seeking refuge in nature

*'So, this place is as lonely as it feels?' I asked her.
'Yes, it is lonely. Are you happy here?'
'Who wouldn't be?
'I love it more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person.
More than a person' Antoinette replied. (Rhys 53)*

As could be inferred from the above dialogue taking place between Antoinette and her husband, nature serves both as a support and a challenge, depending on the character's capacity and perception, as a third force in these novels. To reinforce the idea that nature has its own consciousness or 'side,' both Rhys and Evaristo attribute human qualities and emotions to nature. Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate nature as a person that has a dominant substance in the narrative, before understanding the reason why it becomes a source of relief for Antoinette while causing stress and delusion to the others. Rhys and Evaristo relocate nature "in opposition to all forms of domination and violence" and use nature's dominant position in the novel to reverse the relations between the civilized and the uncivilized, between the British and the African or Jamaican (Canas 27). In this way, both authors make ground for the rethinking of the past, present, and future of their Creole characters, detracting the concept of nature from its neutrality and making it more partial to their Creole characters who achieve to stay 'natural' throughout their fiction. In light of what has been revealed above, this part aims to explore how Rhys and Evaristo employ 'nature' as the literary landscape of their ecofeminist approach to the 'other' by ascribing the sense of motherhood to it. Besides, particular attention will be devoted to the harmony between nature and human in *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* and to the question of what it means to be 'natural' for Evaristo and Rhys, who, much like their characters, have creole identities in real life.

When Antoinette or Zuleika leave the imperial city with its rituals behind and resort to nature, they find themselves more rejuvenated and motivated to tackle the stress of their experiences. There are, noticeably, two reasons that fuel their desire to take refuge in nature by escaping from urban life: one is related to their parental relations, to be more precise, to both women's relations to their parents. The latter is that nature functions as a healing source

for these women whenever they are wounded psychologically or physically in their relations with the colonizer. Nevertheless, in any case, both reasons complement each other. To elaborate on the first reason, both Antoinette and Zuleika lack parental love, especially maternal care, in times of feeling alienated by their racial background. Indeed, Evaristo gives just a few moments in her novel where Zuleika shares her feelings with her mother while figuring her father like a merchant in the marriage market. Yet, from these limited moments, it might be deduced that Zuleika is all alone and figures almost like an orphan in the narrative until the author prioritizes her role and gives voice to her. Therefore, she feels the need to renegotiate her solitude and agony with nature and get lost within water until she can refresh her wicked memories.

When it comes to Antoinette, her situation is not different that much as her mother's preliminary attitude towards Antoinette displays: "she 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" (Rhys 11). After experiencing such parental disconnection and emotional detachment in their dire need of care, Antoinette and Zuleika seek refuge in nature since they are rejuvenated with it, as if nature is mothering them and giving them the composure and care that they lack in their family relations. Relating to this close link between nature and motherhood, the critic Catherine Roach argues that "[i]t is from the environment that we draw our oxygen, food, water, and all of the raw materials out of which we fashion the endless items that make up the materiality of our culture. The Earth or the environment is certainly life-giving and life-sustaining, as were and are our mothers" (48). As Roach puts it, the life-giving qualities of nature are overlapping with a mother's nurturing qualities, and this ecofeminist approach to motherhood and nature suggests how women and nature are interconnected and interdependent. Given this connection, it becomes evident that nature is functioning figuratively as a mother for Antoinette and Zuleika, and thus, these creole women seek a source of renewal, healing, and solace within the nurturing qualities of the natural world.

Roach furthers her discussion with a gentle warning that this relation should not be based upon the simple premises passivating women's role; instead, nature should be understood as "our active teacher and parent" (55). As Roach suggests, Evaristo and Rhys

visualize nature so effectively and carefully that they leave no doubt to think that their characters are simply sheltering nature by escaping from their troubles. That is, they present strong motifs pushing their characters all the way back to nature. Zuleika, for instance, wishes to go outside of the city in order to find her ‘self,’ her true ‘self’ in nature, as she believes wholeheartedly that nature and her quest for independence complement each other. She refers to the motherly influence of nature by saying outloud that “we’d try to imagine the world beyond the city, / that country a lifetime away that Mum / called home and Dad called prison; / the city of Roma which everyone went on about as if it were so bloody mirabilis” (Evaristo 22). It is noteworthy that Zuky’s mom sees the natural world, in Zuky’s terms, ‘the world beyond the city’ as ‘home’ because she also seeks solace and a sense of belonging in the natural world.

As revealed by Zuky’s quotes, the term city is layered with symbolism representing dependence, imprisonment, and captivity for the creole women. Thus, Evaristo frequently interrupts the narrative by pointing to Zuleika’s wicked memories there:

we’d talk about the off-duty soldiers
who loitered in our town, everywhere
they were everywhere, watching for lumps
on our chests, to see if our hips grew away
from our waists, always picking me out
plucking at me in the market
Is our little aubergine ready? (Evaristo 22)

As underlined deliberately in the excerpt above, the colonizer sees the Nubian masses as objects that have commercial value in the ‘market.’ Hence, as a part of this community, Zuleika feels more captive and susceptible to outside perils than ever before while in the land of the colonizer, *Londinium*. Yet, the thing that makes her plight so dire is that she is left alone, without any parental support she could hold on to, to cope with these challenges in her teenage years. Another thing that doubles her stress is her trying to express herself as a woman in a society where women are always pushed to the margins. In such dire moments, Zuleika is looking for a support she can hold on to, to put it metaphorically, a secret hand that will save her from the darkness she is dragged into. This support she seeks comes from nature, where there is, as Canas proposes, a great “respect for diversity” and there is “no privileged hierarchy” (27). If a hierarchy is to be mentioned here, nature only favors those

who do not attempt to dominate the nature and the natural with invented rules and justifications fabricated for malevolent purposes.

The significance of emancipation and confidence for Zuleika lies at the heart of water imagery on the ground that the ‘water’ serves as a symbol for escape and purification through which the speaker is purified from the racial and sexual clichés of society. As such, it is almost impossible to dismiss Evaristo’s use of water image while talking about Zuleika’s sense of freedom and confidence in *The Emperor’s Babe*. This is because “by imagining ourselves as irreducibly watery, as literally part of a global hydro-commons, we might locate new creative resources for engaging in more just and thoughtful relations with the myriad bodies of water with whom we share this planet” (Neimanis 28). Indeed, as Neimanis identifies, the image of water constitutes such ‘creative resources’ for Zuleika by presenting her a way out from the patriarchal norms. For example, Evaristo builds a subtle connection between Zuleika’s desire to escape and her desire to dive into the river, when Zuleika disappointedly says that “I was desperate to run into the night for ever, to find the river and disappear in it” (30). She utters these words right after coming to Roman London i.e., *Londinium*, where she thinks she will neither find the river to dive into nor the forest to get lost within for poise.

As is evident in her revelation above, Zuleika intends to retreat into nature so that she can freely expose her feelings, desires, and passions. When she finds that opportunity, she states heartily that

I screamed at the water
until my throat was sore and my spittle
had dried up...
I stayed for hours and when it was dark
the beach deserted, I stripped off, threw
my tatty green dress on to pebbles,
walked into the cold water and swam far out,
shivering. It was what I needed,
to calm me down.
I had done it before. (Evaristo 29)

These unrhymed lines, emphasized through punctuation marks, can be read as a symptom of her lack of maternal care or her emotional detachment from her parents in general. She, therefore, screams “until [her] throat was sore” to be able to appease her affliction, and after a while, she finds the peace that she longs for within the water: “[i]t was what I needed, / to

calm me down” (Evaristo 29). From the very beginning of Evaristo’s novel-in-verse to the end, Zuleika’s talk, always given in fragments, never come together to form a complete sentence, just as what she experiences through her ‘fragmented’ family relations. In other words, Evaristo not only shares Zuky’s victories but also her trauma and loneliness in her thought-provoking writing since Zuleika struggles with this state of division and in-betweenness more than racial and sexual cliches. She regards these cliches as more manageable and more ‘curable’ than her father’s mercantile treatment of her. Also, by giving Zuleika’s speech in enjambed lines, a postmodern technique, Evaristo aims to tease us by enabling us to stop and read the lines carefully with no haste. In a way, she invites us to feel emotionally connected to Zuleika by distracting our reading of her experiences with these broken sentences.

Upon her adaptation to *Londinium*, however, Zuleika “reclaims her connection with nature by asserting that she is closer to nature, closer than men because she has never lost the knowledge of her deep connection with all other life” (Roach 52). Despite the obstacles posed by her estrangement in London, Zuleika achieves to channel her feelings and motivation into her lines. She, for instance, states in her dismissive manner that “I want to be drippy, drippy, happy, happy” (Rhys 126). As evidenced by Zuky’s fluid diction, Evaristo’s revisionist work leans on such fluid terms as ‘drippy’ and ‘river,’ which serve as a catalyst for energizing Zuleika’s confidence and determination in the narrative. These parallels strengthen the idea that the image of ‘water’ connects well to the ideas of escapism and freedom.

As it is fueling Zuleika’s confidence, the fluidity of water also revives hope that there is always a way to peace and happiness. As opposed to many canonical works that offer ‘death’ and ‘oblivion’ for women as the only means of salvation from the miseries of life for women, Evaristo offers a more fluid solution either through water or through the work of imagination. This is best represented in Zuleika’s self-depiction in terms of all states of water, as noted below:

I will melt into a pool
on the ground,
I will vaporize, a puff of steam,
and my lengthy epitaphium,
listing my great achievements:
Zuleika Woz ‘Ere [Zuleika was here]. (Evaristo 81)

As it is understood from the italicized part, ‘Zuleika was here,’ Zuleika’s ‘melting into the pool,’ i.e., her death is not a step taken into oblivion. Her death does not involve disappearing and being forgotten as in the traditional perception of death. Instead, it hints at how Zuleika will act in the following chapters of the novel and shows her intention to be heard by the reader. That is, Zuleika will live her life so fully that we will speak of her influence even after her death by commemorating her presence coupled with the impacts she left behind: “Zuleika was here” (Evaristo 81). Regarding her prospective statements, which start with ‘I will’ as shown in the use of future tense above, it could also be argued that the novel is not limiting itself to past and present. It goes far beyond through Zuky’s “energetic refusal to conform to the usual parameters of time and space” (qtd. in Gendusa 51).

In parallel with the description of Zuky’s mother who is calling nature ‘home,’ Rhys suggests how Antoinette and her mother perceive nature as ‘home’ and as a place where they can live by their own terms. As an exponent of this connection, after hearing from Aunt Cora that “her mother was ill and had gone to the country,” Antoinette remarks for her mother—her companion in misfortune—that “this did not seem strange to me for she was part of Coulibri, and if Coulibri had been destroyed and gone out of my life, it seemed natural that she should go too” (Rhys 80). For Antoinette, the devastation of Coulibri’s natural surrounding explains her mother’s descent into sickness since her mother, Annette, is deeply intertwined with Coulibri. Much like Zuleika and Annette, Antoinette also views natural surrounding as ‘home’ and as a sanctuary of safety, as she says, “[t]here was a smell of ferns and river water, and I felt safe again as if I was one of the righteous” (Rhys 20). It is clear from the way she speaks that her unification with nature is—beyond bringing happiness to Antoinette—making her feel safe and always at home. For this reason, throughout the narrative, Antoinette sustains her trust in that sense of security: “there is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss, the barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains...the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers” (Rhys 16).

Antoinette’s way of seeing, understanding, and internalizing nature radically differs from her husband’s perspective, for whom nature “means nothing” more than a riot of color (Rhys 55). Rhys portrays him as indifferent and almost like a color-blind character whose thoughts are fixated on the degradation of nature as well as the domination of the ‘natural.’

Hence, when the husband figure grasps that he cannot dominate nature and all those who have been a part of nature in Jamaica, he takes a stance that tends to see the natural landscape of Jamaica, Granbois, and Coulibri as a creation of his imagination—as a delusive image that does not have substance in reality. In response to his degrading and othering attitude towards the natural beauties of Jamaica, Rhys uses more explicit images by invoking our senses and gives all the clues that will strengthen Antoinette’s assertion that “[t]his is [her] place, and everything is on [their] side” (Rhys 65). At this point, Rhys speaks through Antoinette’s mouth, giving the following speech:

[a]ll the flowers in the world were in our garden and sometimes when I was thirsty. I licked raindrops from the jasmine leaves after a shower. If I could make you see it, because they destroyed it and it is only here now. She struck her forehead. One of the best things was a curved flight of shallow steps that went down from the glacis to the mounting stone, the handrail was ornamented iron. (Rhys 79)

While Rhys appeals to our senses here, she evinces that Antoinette’s experience is so real and that this is the ‘side’ that challenges the views of a westerner as well as the binaries of the West. Indeed, every detail in nature and every delicacy that nature offers in the narrative serves as the source of happiness, propulsion, and energy for Antoinette, while they all become a sign of bad luck and vicious experiences for her husband.

Contrasted with the stimulating and vivid images from Jamaica, England figures like an ephemeral place in the narrative. Simply put, Antoinette’s connection to nature has such weight in her life that she views England and its huge cities as quite the opposite of her hometown. In her dialogue with her nursemaid Christophine, she says:

I wish to see England, I might be able to borrow money for that. Not from him but I know how I might get it. I must travel far, if I go.’ I have been too unhappy, I thought, it cannot last, being so unhappy, it would kill you. I will be a different person when I live in England and different things will happen to me. . . . England, rosy-pink in the geography book map, but on the page opposite the words are closely crowded, heavy looking. Exports, coal, iron, wool. Then Imports and Character of Inhabitants. Names, Essex, Chelmsford on the Chelmer. The Yorkshire and Lincolnshire wolds. Wolds? (Rhys 66)

With the images of ‘exports, coal, iron, wool,’ Rhys draws a picture of the quasi-dark vision of the urban life; that’s why, she calls England seemingly ‘rosy pink’ on the map, but quite the opposite in reality. A little further, she implies how her aspirations and sense of reality are disconnected from the ‘rosy pink’ reality of England, adding that “[i]n that bed I will dream of the end of my dream. But my dream had nothing to do with England and I must not think like this, I must remember about chandeliers and dancing, about swans and roses and

snow. And snow” (Rhys 67). With her dreamlike language, Antoinette denies the existence and reality of England by boiling it down to an ephemeral place that does not exist, or a place that would never exist for her life. In simple terms, Antoinette attains the profound tranquility through her refusal to speak of the colonial England since she posits that England will never exist for her if she does not speak of it and if she stops thinking and dreaming of it.

From the quote given above, it is noticeable that Antoinette seems aware of what she may go through when she arrives in England, as if she is foretold how women like herself are treated there. So, she just wishes to stick to where she belongs and what makes her who she is. She feels better when she finds that moment to stay connected to her reality as her husband says, “[w]e came to a little river. ‘This is the boundary of Granbois.’ She smiled at me. It was the first time I had seen her smile simply and naturally. Or perhaps it was the first time I had felt simple and natural with her” (Rhys 42). After her mention of England, always portrayed in a dreamlike language, Rhys exposes us to reality, reality as perceived by Antoinette, which is based on the happiness and joy that have come through “a little river.” Rhys contrasts the happiness Antoinette felt in Jamaica with the negative atmosphere that uneased her in England, to celebrate the simplicity of her life in Jamaica. Through her valorization of living close to nature, Antoinette finds solace in the simplicity of her life and learns how to deal with the complexities of civil society and urban life.

By portraying Antoinette as being in tune with nature, Rhys also reminds us of Rousseau’s concept of *noble savage*, which refers to the state of being free from the corruptions of civilization and the city. Rousseau’s concept of *noble savage* eloquently attests to the destructivity of urban life and civil society through which one “deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature” (wsu.edu). Indeed, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette strives to regain these advantages by taking refuge in nature, where she feels fiercely independent. One of these advantages Antoinette seeks in nature is to get rid of the stereotypes ascribed to her since nature serves like a mother’s womb where she feels safe and free from the stereotypes and corruptions of civil society. Namely, through nature, Antoinette is having a sense of purity akin to that of an infant and becomes unaffected by the corruptions and influences of society. Besides that, Rousseau observes that once humans were introduced to the property, they became corrupted and left their connection to nature and goodness

(wsu.edu). As Rousseau proposed, what brings Rochester closer to Antoinette is his desire to get wealth and property in return for his intimacy rather than any kind of love and affection for her. In this manner, Rhys suggests that Antoinette is a savage but a 'noble' kind of savage, while her husband represents the decayed state of British colonialism and its corrupted ideals. In order to support her idealization of nature in the face of this corruption, Rhys attributes some human qualities and emotions to nature as if it is an independent character witnessing Antoinette's emotional breakdown and then chooses its own 'side.'

As it is appositely prefaced with the above dialogue between Antoinette and her husband given at the beginning of this part, it would be correct to say that nature should be deemed like a living body by virtue of its impact on the contextualization as well as the characterization of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. To exemplify, the husband figure, Mr. Rochester feels restless and isolated in the heart of nature and even doubts that nature might have some evil intentions against him. So, he astoundedly says, "[s]ombre people in a sombre place" (Rhys 40). Soon, he adds that "...a wild place. Not only wild but menacing" (Rhys 40-41). As mentioned previously, the husband personifies nature as a force that is against him and will harm him in the first instance. He maintains his awkward attitude throughout his journey in nature, giving the impression that he is about to take leave of his senses. He finally comes to a point where he accepts his "violation of the limits," (Ciolkowski 344) by yielding to the fact that "...the feeling of something unknown and hostile was very strong. 'I feel very much a stranger here,' ... 'I feel that this place is my enemy and, on your side'" (Rhys 78). With his restlessness, Rhys points out that nature is not generous much for those stuck with the rules of empire, city, and kingdom, namely with all the political tools manipulated in the hands of colonizers. This argument elucidates the reason why Antoinette repeatedly calls nature on their 'side' in the novel by highlighting the dissonance and strife between the husband and the natural landscape of Jamaica. Antoinette's husband acts according to teachings of his patriarchal and imperial background rather than behaving naturally, and thus he feels 'out of place' and incongruous with the strong natural landscape of Jamaica. Closely relating to its aforementioned role for the Creoles, it would be wise to say that, as a living entity, nature once again rejects and 'deports' all the political constructs and artificialities that the colonizer left behind.

What seems pure and peaceful to Creole people seems vicious, extreme, and threatening to the husband, so he says in a mood of bewilderment that “[w]hat an extreme green,’ was all I could say,” (Rhys 41). With the extremity of the forest and with the excessiveness of colors petrifying him, he spurts out that

[e]verything 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. I have not bought her, she has bought me, or so she thinks. (Rhys 41)

His expressions here blur the boundary between the other and the Westerner since the elements of nature seem too extreme to the husband, who sees himself superior to nature and the Creole figures. His experience with nature as an immense power leads him to a kind of self-realization through which he realizes his weakness as man and colonizer—as opposed to patriarchal and colonial teachings that he has internalized back in England. Rhys evinces very strongly that even the simplicity of colors in Jamaica is enough to make him feel drunk and almost lose his senses. He adds, afterwards, that “I went back into the dressing-room and looked out of the window. I saw a clay road, muddy in places, bordered by a row of tall trees” (Rhys 44). Again, his reference to the trees as ‘tall trees’ symbolizes his distorted perception of reality. As the elements of nature enlarge or multiply in his perception, he diminishes and becomes insignificant to us since we focus more on nature and its vivid colors than his groundless fears and delusion.

In conclusion, Rhys and Evaristo present a compelling exploration of the city & nature and order & disorder dichotomies through the lens of Antoinette and Zuleika who seek solace and sanctuary in the natural world. Through these figures’ retreat into nature, Rhys and Evaristo highlight the transformative and embracing power of the natural world as a means of escaping the limitations of the colonial order, and cultural/political norms. Even though this interconnection between Creole figures and natural world is not completely eliminating the harsh reality of Antoinette and Zuleika’s experiences that push them to ambiguous ends, Rhys and Evaristo impart a message of self-discovery, liberation, and search for agency through their novels. Briefly stated, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe* serve as a catalyst for questioning the ‘alternatives’ by showing that there is still a struggle for emancipation despite victory is not fully achieved. Apart from that struggle, it

should be noted that Rhys and Evaristo expose the weaknesses of the colonizer as well as the complexities of creole lives through nature's anarchism against the confines of the West, or with its less political expression, through nature's exclusion of the 'unnatural.' The term 'unnatural' here reflects the colonizer's attempt to devalue creole identity since any socially/politically constructed belief or notion does not accurately represent the truth in nature. For this reason, Zuleika's father calls the city 'prison', or Antoinette's husband feels nervous and unsettled in nature.



CHAPTER TWO: ALTERITY REDEFINED

Bernardine Evaristo and Jean Rhys transition from nature's exclusion of the rigid boundaries and societal constructs to the fluidity of language and motifs in conformity with the postmodern use of language. What makes postmodern language intriguing and advantageous to these writers is that it calls every concept into question and shows that what exists through languages may not always exist in reality. Considering language as an unfixed phenomenon and the reality it refers to as fluid, Pennycook argues that

A postmodern (or postcolonial) approach to language policy...suggests we no longer need to maintain the pernicious myth that languages exist. Thus we can start to develop an anti-foundationalist view of language as an emergent property of social interaction and not a prior system tied to ethnicity, territory, birth or nation. (67)

Evaristo and Rhys, in Pennycook's expression, 'develop [this] anti-foundationalist view of language' and reconsider the term alterity, whose meaning is enmeshed in the body and ethnicity politics of the West. In this regard, they use the postmodern perception of language as flexible to challenge the rigidity and repetitiveness of canonical languages and show the range of ways in which that rigidity and repetitiveness are being deconstructed. That is, they refute specific ideas and concepts that have been imposed with some repetitions in languages to humiliate and exclude what Alfred Sauvy first calls, in *Three Worlds, and One Planet*, 'third world' and its citizens, i.e., creoles and African people.

Derrida states, "repeatability contains what has passed away and is no longer present and what is about to come and is not yet present. The present, therefore, is always complicated by non-presence" (stanford.edu). Derrida's statement here builds the core point of postmodern linguistic theories in that languages should avoid repetitiveness because repetitiveness ironically contains, as he says, 'non-presence' in it. Indeed, a word loses its loaded meaning when it is constantly repeated. From Derrida's statement, it could be inferred that the language of a literary work should be multidimensional and generative and "include a plurality of senses" without limiting itself to a single sense (stanford.edu). Reviewing *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* from this stance, it would be conceivable to argue that Evaristo and Rhys reveal how the repressiveness of colonial language is transformed

into a revisionist language where motifs, symbols, images, and above all, words dictate the form and meaning of their fiction. Building from this, this chapter endeavors to analyze the varied meanings of alterity and silence in *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* by exploring how they have been put under erasure by Bernardine Evaristo and Jean Rhys.

The most remarkable example of the abovementioned multidimensionality is that the novelist tradition is deconstructed at first within Evaristo's novel in-verse on the ground that Evaristo gives a new form to the novel by including long poetic lines into it. Thus, in her interview with Alastair Niven, Evaristo calls her work 'verse-novel' [a combination of two different literary forms], emphasizing her passion for this genre: "I have been increasingly interested in telling a story through poetry. So, in a sense for the form has chosen me" (Niven 17). In line with her mixture of two forms, some dualisms such as present and past, novel and poetry, epic style and English used in street talk, suppressed sexual motives, and extreme exuberance are all intertwined in *The Emperor's Babe* to the purpose that, as Long suggests, "telling women's lives often involves new or mixed genres" (qtd. in Waldron 2). That's why Evaristo says that "...the form has chosen me" (Niven 17). Evaristo's intertwining two forms of literature, poetry and novel, here can also be associated with the weight of the emotions felt by Zuleika since her poetic cries tell a lot about the social position of African women in Roman England, which can be best expressed through a mixture of poetry and novel as Long claims. In other words, instead of expressing these intense feelings, cries for freedom, and opposition to authority in a single literary genre, Evaristo takes advantage of the diversity of genres to invigorate their character's rhetoric by benefiting the powers of novel and poetry. As a matter of fact, it would be futile to compare and contrast the symbolic depth of poetry with the novel's power of expression, inasmuch as poetry and novel complement each other best when they are used synchronically in a single work.

Another literary asset that marks her divergence is that Evaristo writes in an epic style—in the style of ancients—so that her novel looks more authentic and more convincing rather than looking like a simple commentary made on history and myth. Yet, it is intriguing that in her mixture of various literary genres and styles, the classical epic tradition that we are closely familiar with loses its traditional characteristics, such as rigidly masculinized language, classical heroic figures, and a certain rhythm of words. This idea provides a basic

representation of what Bakhtin argues in his *Epic and Novel*: “the novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them” (5). For example, Evaristo deprives Senator Felix of many heroic elements by portraying him as sexually impotent and physically unable to run over the empire. This point serves as a reminder to T.S. Eliot’s *Fisher King* mentioned in *The Waste Land*, who brings bad luck to his people just because of his impotence. Evaristo reuses the myth that impotence brings nothing more than bad luck to people and attributes it to Senator Felix. As opposed to Felix's pompous words in the narrative, Evaristo depicts him as a useless, sexually impotent, and always incomplete figure at the outset of her novella in order to temper any lofty expectations one might have towards a man like Felix. To be more precise, Felix is tainted by what he never expected and will be most negatively affected by, namely, his masculinity. Through this ‘anti-foundationalist’ narrative strategy, Evaristo unsettles our vision that is fixated on the idealization of the political leaders by repositioning Felix as sexually inferior to Zuleika in the pyramid of power.

In her critical study of *Women as Mythmakers*, Estella Lauter demonstrates the necessity for women to be a part of the mythmaking process by underlining a myth’s persistence through the years:

[m]yths are not like scientific hypotheses; they do not vanish when proved untrue. The myths of heaven and hell, originally based on the image of a three-storied universe, have not lost their power for many people who know from their exposure to modern science that no such "places" exist. (2)

To this end, Evaristo feminizes the language and content of *The Emperor’s Babe* by giving more voice to Zuleika and her female companions, implying that the whole empire is ruled by a group of ladies instead of emperors, heroes, or kings. In this literarily reversed empire, Zuleika’s *maquillage*, dress, and anything that appeals to her femininity in a traditional sense dominate the imperial space. Zuleika says:

[m]e and Alba were the wild girls of Londinium
sought to discover the secrets
of its hidden hearts, still too young
to withhold more than we revealed,
to join this merry cast of actors. (Evaristo 19)

In her feminized epic, the theatricality of language and literature replaces all the gravity of historical topics and imperial elements. The gravity of war as well as the loftiness of the *Roman Imperium*, for example, become a matter of ‘theatricality’ and a piece of fiction when Zuleika ironically calls the emperor Septimus Severus ‘my actor emperor.’ She says out loud that “my actor-emperor, / I hold / the pumping cheeks that rule the world, / I do. Ditch the empire on your back” (Evaristo 140). At first glance, it can be surmised that Zuleika’s tricks primarily revolve around her sexuality. With the insights of contemporary postmodern theory, however, it becomes apparent that Zuleika here blurs the boundary between real and unreal, serious and unserious by making fun of the rigid concepts of the Roman Empire, such as ‘war’ and ‘emperor.’ That is, while war and emperor, in their traditional (historical) understanding, meant a lot for the continuity and prestige of the ancient Roman Empire, they mean nothing more than a theatrical term that resonates within theatrical/fictional contexts for Zuleika. Accordingly, Zuleika utilizes this sexual game with the emperor to the fullest in order to be heard by the people around her:

[s]ilver goblets of burgundy vino by my bedside
to toast the theatre of war
Close your eyes, you command, a freezing
blade on my flamed cheek, hand around my neck.
I am your hostage.
I am dying. I am dying of your dulcet conquest. (Evaristo 139)

Here, the terms like ‘theatrical’ and ‘actor’ ironically establish Severus’s authority as fictional by highlighting that Zuleika reduces the emperor to a theatrical figure. It means that the authority of Septimus Severus becomes more susceptible to Zuleika’s cynical and sardonic statements because his authority is not real. It is just theatrical and thus fictional.

Jean Rhys, similarly, develops the theme of theatricality, in a way parallel to that of Zuleika’s new lover, Septimus Severus, through Antoinette’s husband who is also acting in a way that is prescribed or taught to him. Like Septimus Severus, Antoinette’s unnamed husband confesses his assigned role that is expected of him to play within the colonial system: “I played the part I was expected to play” (Rhys 45). As he confirms, he is pretending to love Antoinette; but in his relation to her, he plays merely the given roles instilled by customs of colonization. Through his inability to act in accordance with his genuine self, Rhys underlines that Antoinette’s husband is trapped in a cycle of conforming to his authorities and unable to

liberate himself from this vicious circle. Therefore, Rhys deliberately leaves the husband figure unnamed in the narrative to showcase his lack of representation and free will, even though he is assumed to be a substitute for Mr. Rochester in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

The argument mentioned above resonates, at one point, with the argument shown in the first chapter that the husband follows an anti-romantic path in his relation to Antoinette. Indeed, he can never see how innocent and pure Antoinette's love for him because he seems and behaves differently than he naturally does. For this reason, he seems to be missing 'the natural,' 'the innocent,' and 'the pure,' acting as expected from him. With respect to this, he comes forward and says enthusiastically that "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" (Rhys 45). His false appearance here overlaps with the theatricality concept mentioned above. As in both Felix's and Septimus Severus' attitude, the unnamed husband displays, similarly, a faultless performance in terms of theatricality and pretension. Such parallelisms between *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* once again strengthen the idea that these men are just players of what they are assigned to, and performers that perform their roles terribly. Simply put, they are like constructs manipulated at the hands of the system rather than individuals with whom we can negotiate our selfhood. In this manner, Rhys and Evaristo conclude that these oppressive systems—colonialism and patriarchal order—not only marginalize and disempower women but also men by demeaning their agency and representation.

2.1. The sickness of possession: The colonizer has gone out of control

In his critical study titled *Black Skin, and White Masks*, Frantz Fanon argues how black people are considered a threat to white people not just in the social or political sense but also in sexual terms. He theorizes this idea as follows: "[to] suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological. For the Negro is only biological. The Negroes are animals. They go about naked" (Fanon 127). As he puts it, Fanon sees the term 'negro' as a signifier of the othered people and as a way of their stigmatization and dehumanization by the colonizer. Aligned with his explanation of 'negro,' Rhys and Evaristo use labels 'white cockroach' and '*Negreta*,' which refer respectively to Antoinette and Zuleika in *Wide*

Sargasso Sea and *The Emperor's Babe*. Even though these labels refer to Antoinette and Zuleika's liminal position between being 'negro' and being 'white' i.e., their creole identity, and even though they evoke some negative meanings such as lack of control, principles, and irrationality, Antoinette and Zuleika reclaim a measure of power and autonomy by controlling their sexual and emotional yearnings. Their husbands, however, seem to lack any ability to restrain their desires to such a degree that can be characterized as a form of sickness of possession.

That sickness is so overwhelming and controlling that Mr. Rochester, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, falls victim to it by forgetting his initial thoughts implying how he is well-controlled and restrained as a 'pure' British. To exemplify, when he feels motivated to take Antoinette wherever he goes, he says:

I'll take her in my arms, my lunatic. She's mad but mine, mine. What will I care for gods or devils or for Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. For me. (Rhys 99)

His word choice above indicates his idiosyncratic approach towards Antoinette in the narrative, mirroring the reality that he is obsessed with possessing anyone or anything he sees around him. He first calls Antoinette 'mad' and then repeatedly adds, 'mine, mine' as if he shares the thoughts of a mentally sick man, a paranoid. He is perhaps aware of his mental derangement dragging him to a state of impulsiveness, lacking self-control and principles. Accordingly, towards the end of the second chapter, the husband is trying to justify himself as 'sane' by saying that "[a]ll the mad conflicting emotions had gone and left me wearied and empty. Sane" (Rhys 103). Here, Rhys shows that without Antoinette, her husband is doomed to be incomplete, devoid of emotion, and coping with a huge sense of emptiness. This feeling of emptiness is not something that can be easily covered up because finding or capturing anyone and acting like an authority over her is essential for a man with a colonial mindset, like Mr. Rochester. Without this authority to show off, and without his power to manipulate, the husband figure knows that he cannot convince himself that he is superior to Jamaicans.

Even the possibility that Antoinette might leave him all alone is enough to make him go off the rails. For this reason, he maintains his obsession with Antoinette in the following pages:

Antoinette— I can be gentle too. Hide your face. Hide yourself but in my arms. You'll soon see how gentle. My lunatic. My mad girl, here's a cloudy clay to help you. No brazen sun. No sun . . . No sun. The weather's changed. (Rhys 100)

As implied in Rochester's possessive words and ellipses, Antoinette represents indispensability and dependence for him. It is evident from his short sentences that losing her can have as strong an effect on him as losing himself. He may even be mentally and physically devastated by not being able to control a Creole woman, and he may betray the promise he made to his father because, as an Englishman who has colonized almost the whole world, Rochester sees dominating Antoinette as an opportunity to show off his power in the face of his father. However, it is poignant that all this power game is again being played on the body of a woman, Antoinette, who is dragged into captivity by nothing but her love. In this, Rhys is perhaps trying to prove that colonialism is, above all, the murderer of innocence and love.

In *The Emperor's Babe*, Evaristo shows the possession sickness mentioned above through Felix's and Septimus Severus's hypersexuality (their compulsive sexual behavior). Zuleika, for instance, explains Felix's approach towards her as follows:

[h]e has grown more fond of me than expected
He needs me to love him, methinks
He wants to reach out to me,
but he can't reveal himself –
the son of a patrician is not taught how. (Evaristo 73)

As can be understood from Zuky's words, Felix becomes more intemperate than ever before Zuleika. He cannot balance his reason with his passionate feelings, so much so that "he can't reveal himself" (Evaristo 73). A bit farther on, Zuky adds that "...and without me he would be empty. / You make life real, he'd often said" (Evaristo 74). Felix cannot express himself and even put words together due to his unrestrained sexual impulses. With his lack of self-control, he appears almost as the 'negro,' who figures, in Fanon's terms, only as a 'biological/sexual threat.' Such dependency and a state of ecstasy turn upside down the colonial perception associating the Western colonizer with reason, control, and discipline.

When it comes to Zuky's intimacy with the emperor Septimus Severus, it is clear that Evaristo uncovers through those sexual moments between the emperor and Zuleika that, like her ex-husband Aurelius Felix, the emperor Septimus Severus acts not as he wishes but as expected from, or so to speak, as prescribed to him. To portray this situation the emperor finds himself in, one could aptly borrow the renowned phrase from *Andersen Fables*: "the emperor has no clothes" anymore. In its simplest form, the reality is right in front of us, as Septimus Severus incidentally confirms: "I am what I have to be" (Evaristo 144). The emperor comes up as exactly who he is forced to be. Even though, in such moments, a tune of imperium is felt through the voice of Septimus Severus in the narrative, the narrator, afterwards, reveals that "his breath suffused the room / with a sudden gust of melancholia" (Evaristo 144). Then, Severus finally confesses, "[w]ho I really am is lost" (Evaristo 144). Beyond his magnificence and self-esteem, we are witnessing his hidden agonies as follows:

I am tired, Zuleika, tired of barbarians,
 Clawing at my frontiers after good life,
 Tired of freedom-fighters, secessionist,
 Revolutionaries, seditious governors

 I'm tired of hearing
 What do we want? Freedom!
 When do we want it? Now!
 2,4,6,8!
 Who should we exterminate? (Evaristo 150)

From the emperor's sincere cry above, one may reasonably infer that he is exhausted with the duties he has undertaken against his will, thereby grappling with an identity crisis. Severus cannot name it an identity crisis as Zuleika does right after her marriage to a rude senator. Nevertheless, he, too, appears to be uncomfortable with what he is forced to do. Particularly striking here is that a glorious emperor, Severus, demands Zuleika's opinion on a significant issue (deciding to free or enslave the people at his service), while Felix does not want Zuleika to comment or even talk about politics. By being able to present herself almost like an empress standing next to an emperor, Zuleika indicates that she has already overcome some difficulties and has accomplished the most difficult one: turning from a 'plebby creole' into a well-esteemed empress whose thoughts quite matter for the emperor (Evaristo 16).

As for what precisely these sexual moments evoke for Zuleika, there is no doubt that Zuleika manipulates these moments and uses them as a means to declare her silenced and marginalized self. While it would be deemed obscene for a woman to come to the fore with such open and overt sexuality in Roman *Londinium*, Zuleika does the best she can, regardless of what is said. That is, she uses all the opportunities at hand to the fullest by showing herself behind her new lover's authority. She needs Septimus Severus's authority to validate her speech and actions in a swiftly colonizing Roman society that pushes women to the margins. Yet, while doing that, Zuleika suggests that Septimus Severus, like Mr. Rochester and Felix, shows a lack of mastery over his emotional and sexual yearning to an extent that could be deemed a form of affliction, akin to being consumed by the desire to possess. Through their portrayal of the authority figures in this manner, Rhys and Evaristo challenge the colonizer's so-called rational superiority energized by the renowned motto of the Social Darwinists: 'survival of the fittest.' Namely, Rhys and Evaristo debunk the myth of the superior & rational colonizer and the inferior & irrational colonized by highlighting the breakdown of racial values within the intricate power dynamics of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor's Babe*.

2.2. Having recourse to poetry for self-expression and self-historicization

Rhys and Evaristo attach special importance to 'lyricism' in their works composed of various literary genres and techniques by deeming poetic style as the most sincere and open means of self-expression and self-historicization for women like Antoinette and Zuleika. This is a crude demonstration of what Waldron argues in her critical study of *Risk, Courage, and Women*: "[p]oetry and narratives are bound together by the presence of an inner strength that allows a woman to claim and control her life and interactions" (15). This interest could be observed closely through Rhys and Evaristo's resort to musical elements in certain parts of *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*—through the songs Antoinette sing with Christophine, or through the part where Zuleika recites and sings her poem under the title of *Zuleika's Trip to the Amphitheatre* (Evaristo 166). This poetic language offers these writers and their personae/characters a medium where they can freely and loudly cry out their identities, selves, and ultimately their independence without being bound by stereotyped

rules, norms, and traditions. An alternative reading of this is that Zuleika and Antoinette create their own realities through poetry and that poetry helps them stay within the present and seize the moment by disregarding “the linear time of history, which would inevitably recall the history of slavery” (Erwin 145). Within this context, it would be plausible to contend that Evaristo and Rhys use poetry as a means of self-expression and self-historicization.

Zuleika writes poems basically to catch the attention of critical eyes. However, what is more interesting in her infatuation with poetry is that she wants to be noticeable and visible with poetry by declaring her motivation to exist and resist the impositions of the Roman Empire. Regarding this, she says, “my flesh, his breath the very air around. / We lay as three muses” (Evaristo 191). Evaristo replaces her authorial passion for poetry with Zuleika’s passion for it and shows what poetry means to be for Zuleika’s life as follows:

I needed a *raison d’etre* to make my mark.
I’d been working hard on my poetry,
I would work harder, yes, harder,
I would devote my every spare moment to it,
which meant most hours in any given day. (Evaristo 109)

As implied in the French phrase *a raison d’etre*, which means ‘a reason to be or to exist,’ poetry for Zuleika, beyond being a matter of passion or inspiration, represents existence [a reason to exist] and resistance [resisting for survival]. Most strikingly, it offers a free medium where Zuleika can express her feelings without being oppressed. So to speak, it creates an alternative world and order where Zuleika is free to choose among figures of authority and play with the concepts of power, hegemony, and colonialism.

Zuleika's fellow, Alba, confirms that poetry creates an alternative world where they can enjoy their freedom to the fullest, break the chains of silence to which they are condemned and shout out their identities with collective consciousness and with collective ‘I’ and ‘We.’ By saying that “there’s a place for us, / somewhere a place for us”, Alba reinforces that they build their existence, *a raison d’etre*, and survival all upon words, phrases, and rhythm of poetry (Evaristo 194). All they need is some exposure and to declare their goal because they just wish to be heard through poetry. To this end, Zuleika puts her intention into words:

I've been scribbling away for years now,
I want exposure. I want recognition.
I want a standing ovation.
...
I was so much more than just a pretty babe. (Evaristo 194)

Interestingly enough, Zuky here answers and challenges the title of the book, Evaristo's possessive word choice in the title, *The Emperor's Babe*. Evaristo deliberately uses such a possessive title because she wants us to see through our reading how Zuky turns from being a possessed lady into a possessive mistress at this very point of the novel. With such a title, the book, *The Emperor's Babe*, indeed calls up the image of an innocent baby trapped in the arms of a powerful and authoritarian emperor. Yet, as the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that the situation is quite the opposite. Zuky deconstructs this title and seeks a way to rename herself in a way that she can disentangle herself from the chains of being 'The Emperor's Babe.'

Zuleika confronts all the myths, discourses, or rules that condemn her to stay within the limitations of being 'the emperor's pretty babe,' revising all these myths and revealing how useless and non-sense stories they are. In this regard, the part where she refers to Homer and his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is noteworthy in that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are known as the earliest epics written in Greek, which influenced the other European epics and myths. Concerning *The Iliad*, Zuleika says:

I've been writing poetry...
I've been studying it with my professor...
He made me read Homer's *Iliad*,
which I found bloody tedious, quite frankly.
All about the siege of Troy. I mean, who cares?
Just an intsy-wintsy bit old fashioned? (Evaristo 91)

It is self-evident that Evaristo's authorial passion for poetry and Zuleika's desire to engage in poetry once again converge here, establishing a meaningful connection between the writer and the character. In the similar fashion, Zuleika's comments about Homer offer important clues about Evaristo's views on the concept of myth. Zuleika does not hesitate to define a masterpiece as 'bloody tedious' and 'intsy-wintsy bit old fashioned' with her slightly smiling yet serious tone because she sees *Iliad* as outdated and irrelevant to her experiences. For this reason, she engages in writing poetry as a form of personal expression and as a way to relate to her own experiences.

In the rhetorical venue of Evaristo, poetry has a lot to do with women's education and awareness of gender-based inequalities. Yet, she underlines that its education should not be provided by such “intsy-wintsy bit old fashioned” books like *Iliad* in which women are generally portrayed as seductive mistresses whose only concern is to pervert men. For this reason, like a student, Zuleika tries to make her way through poetry—only through genuine samples and true sources of poetry. She writes, reads, and shares her experience of poetry with others to arouse their curiosity and help them find their real *raison d’etre* in life. Once she discovers her reason to exist, she says aloud, “give a girl an education / and life becomes much too complicated” (Evaristo 104). As hinted at in her quotation, it is easy to suppress women’s rights in a colonial city like London. However, as Zuky implies, giving education to women makes their subjugation to the colonizer demanding and ‘complicated’ because women, through poetry, learn how to contest what they are given i.e., all the predetermined roles, norms, and expectations that are assigned to them. Indeed, as shown through Zuleika’s growth with poetry, Zuleika becomes less controllable and predictable through her education with poetry since she manages to question all these ‘givens’ critically.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a sense of musicality and lyricism is similarly added to the narration because it is a way to break the silence of years. Above all, it is a pause to all the problems that Creole figures go through. In accordance with this, the husband says, “I looked at her. She was staring out to the distant sea. She was silence itself. Sing, Antoinetta. I can hear you now” (Rhys 101). Then, Rhys speaks through Antoinette and interrupts her narration in italics to underscore each word and each phrase Antoinette sings. In a half-ecstatic mood, Antoinette sings:

[h]ere the wind says it has been, it has been
And the sea says it must be, it must be
And the sun says it can be, it will be
And the rain . . . ?

'You must listen to that. Our rain knows all the songs.'
'And all the tears?'
'All, all, all.' (Rhys 101)

Antoinette leaves all her troubles to the elements of nature, to the ‘wind,’ ‘sea,’ ‘sun,’ and ‘rain’ in a way that she keeps nature as her witness. On an island where there is no trust in people and in a family where she does not receive even half of the attention she expects from

her mother, nature once again appears as her best companion, best confidant, and as the truest witness to the events Antoinette has gone through. As a matter of fact, Antoinette's unfinished words somehow make it necessary for nature to complete these words. She makes fragmentary sentences like 'it has been,' 'it must be,' 'it can be,' or 'it will be.' However, she never says what these incomplete sentences aligned one under the other refer to because Antoinette's interconnection with nature disrupts her silence, just as the chorus was the voice of silent characters in epic Greek plays.

Education is not explicitly mentioned in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as in *The Emperor's Babe*, which shows how education complicates the act of reducing women to simple notions and makes them more complex individuals rather than simple beings. Nevertheless, it is clear that *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in its linkage of poetry and novel, represents epiphanic moments, which promote Antoinette's self-discovery, personal growth, and sense of independence. After singing the incomplete lines of her song, 'it must be,' 'it can be,' or 'it will be,' for example, Antoinette says in italics that "*You must listen to that. Our rain knows all the songs*" (Rhys 101). Within this epiphanic moment, Antoinette implies that there is much to be learned from nature. Even though she does not clearly share what this lesson is, it becomes apparent from her prospective sentences that nature is giving the wisdom and knowledge of her independence.

Rhys is portraying Antoinette as an incomplete figure and problematizing her existence through the postmodern elements characterized by her lack of agency, fragmented identity, and incomplete sentences in the narrative. Yet, she uses such a writing technique that she evokes musicality in her narrative by italicizing some sentences and demarcating them from other long passages. In the poetic quality of her narration, Rhys fosters a space for empathy, dialogue, and the questioning of established norms. Even though Antoinette appears to be an incomplete figure or a patchwork in postmodern sense, Rhys attempts to complete her as a character and as a woman by offering a more comprehensive understanding of her struggles, motivations, and aspirations. That is, Rhys's poetic style seeks to counter the incomplete representation of Antoinette with italic words and poetic lines that intensively touch on her character and emotions. Hence, Antoinette consistently reiterates the following fragmented lines, 'it will be,' and 'it must be,' to show that the completion of her incomplete

lines and character is a process—a process that challenges the fixed notions of race, gender, and identity, as well as the way “English men and women are made” (Erwin 343).

2.3. *Nostalgia is a most efficient enema: History is under attack*

Just like a tree rooting from the soil, humans position themselves in history or continue their temporal journey by constantly referencing history. This is a general habit that has been maintained for thousands of years, but here it should be underlined that the idea of writing history or positioning a nation or a race in history is also considered to be manipulated to exclude a certain segment of society or races. White explains this discriminative attitude as follows: “The historian...makes his story by including some events and excluding others, by stressing some and subordinating others. This process of exclusion, stress, and subordination is carried out in the interest of constituting a story of a particular kind” (qtd. in Ester Gendusa 49). Thus, Rhys and Evaristo, who wrote to revise certain exclusionary attempts and discriminatory politics, reconsider the concept of history for this particular group, which includes Antoinette and Zuleika, from a completely different perspective. The idea of rewriting history or, in a more literal way, writing one's own history predominates as a theme in both *The Emperor's Babe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* because Evaristo and Rhys show that when their characters manage to position themselves in history, their struggle for existence against the colonialist discourse becomes more important. Based on what has been said so far, under this subtitle, it will be discussed how rewriting history is used as a trump card for colonist discourse and how it benefits third-world citizens such as Zuleika and Antoinette when history is stripped of its extremely subjective state and left more neutral.

Venus, one of Zuleika's closest companions, expresses the concept of history and its importance detailed above in a very compelling yet epic way. With respect to her radical thoughts about history, she gives the following speech:

[t]he thing is, 'she'd say, 'a life without past
Is a life without roots. As there's no one
Holding on to me ankles I can fly anywhere,
I became the woman you see before you.
We didn't understand much of it then,
But whatever Venus said was memorable
And over the years her words sailed
Back into mind and made sense. (Evaristo 58)

As asserted by Venus, "...a life without past / Is a life without roots" since history gives us everything to build our identities in the safest and most steady grounds (Evaristo 58). While often emphasizing this notion, Evaristo's novel in-verse hints at the fact that Africans existed in the past, exist in the present, and will keep existing in the future. Indeed, when Zuleika's lines are sifted through, it can be understood that the time concept becomes ambiguous in this novel since Zuleika brings past, present, and future ineluctably together in her lines. In other words, like an all-time figure, Zuleika bridges the gap between the past, present, and future by expressing what she has to say in a single moment without any hesitation. In doing so, she aims to position herself in every stage of history by refuting the myth that she does not have history. Then, Zuleika marks the importance of her mission that was noticed belatedly among Africans: "We didn't understand much of it then, / But whatever Venus said was memorable" (Evaristo 58).

Zuleika describes all that Venus said above as 'memorable' because history turns out to be a wreck for third-world citizens when examined from the colonialist perspective. Its wreckage comes from the fact that history fuels the authority of patriarchy as deepening the tension between man and woman, African and European, black and white. It is that tension which forces Zuleika to act against patriarchal history since history, for her, "is not simply what happened in the past but, knowledge...about the past that we are aware of" (Burton 26). When she looks back in wonder, that is, her past, Zuleika can find nothing but, metaphorically speaking, an 'enemy' as she says, "nostalgia is a most efficient enema" (Evaristo 73). Hence, with her radical understanding of history, she says that "I'd sho nuff go down in history den, / sprawled all over the Daily Looking Glass: / ZULEIKA – THE WOMAN WHO SHOCKED A NATION" (Evaristo 177, 178). Here is where Evaristo implies that history is nothing but a 'wreck' by using the word 'den' as the substitute for 'wreck.' Looking at history from Evaristo's point of view, it becomes easier to figure out Zuleika's insistence on being heard within the narrative. While being a woman was closely associated with silence in history, Zuleika spurts out with the manner of a stubborn child that "[i]t wasn't fair. We hadn't spoken all day" (Evaristo 178).

Upon realizing the limited attention given to the right of women to express themselves, Zuleika puts herself to the fore and speaks whenever she gets the chance, be it next to the emperor, in front of her closest companions, or with a mean man like Felix. She adds a very different dimension to the typecasting of silenced woman and strong man, which has turned into a taboo in the course of history. For example, she says, “from the first days of our marriage / *silentium mulieri praestat ornatum* / silence is a woman’s best adornment” (Evaristo 147). Then, Zuleika deftly parodies Julius Caesar’s historical remark “*Veni, Vidi, Vici*” [I came, I saw, and I conquered], saying that

your back,
making the whole world Roman.
Vidi, Vici, Veni.
Take off your victory.
I am vanquished already, I can’t fight you,
just stab me to death, again and again,
stab me to death, soldier. (Evaristo 140)

At first glance, it could be realized that there is a word game here. Unlike what Caesar said, Zuleika deliberately swaps words. The message she wants to convey with this pun is that she is a nonconformist who wages a war against anything that does not conform to her self-perception, identity, and self by ‘seeing,’ observing, and experiencing things at first. Simply put, by rephrasing the symbolic adage *Veni, Vidi, Vici* as *Vidi, Vici, Veni*, Zuleika gives priority to the act of seeing or observing [*Vidi*] the things first and then approaching them with a critical perspective rather than taking direct action like gladiators, or Roman soldiers. This idea is of critical value because, unlike the actual war happening on the real battlefields, the war started with the following literary elements [with words, puns, and symbols] begins with the actions of seeing and feeling first of all. Zuleika’s literary counter-war against the forces of Roman empire can be aligned to Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s symbolic adage that “the pen is mightier than the sword.” Indeed, with the war she started, Zuleika makes it apparent that her ‘fictional’ battle against the dominant identities, derogatory terms and strict norms of various authorities requires as much enthusiasm and ambition as the real wars, and even more in some cases.

Although Rhys does not go so far in her survey of historical past like Evaristo does, she nevertheless succeeds in displaying the same theme of otherness through Antoinette by centering on the English past of the Victorian era. With a great sense of comfort and freedom, Rhys articulates the ‘unspoken truth’ of the Victorian era as well as the concepts, events, disappointments, hopes and expectations that, she thought, were not adequately described in Brontë’s novel. Illness or madness, as a concept highly manipulated to cover up many facts in Victorian age, turns out to be the starting point for Rhys in her attempt to shed light on important sociocultural realities of the age as reflected in *Jane Eyre*. Vrettos comments on this habit of Victorians as indicated below:

...illness [for Victorians] was much more than the reality that we read of in personal accounts of suffering; it was an imaginative construct for transforming ‘the abstract into the concrete’, for locating ‘in the body the source of sexual and social divisions’, thereby providing doctors and novelists with the narrative means for articulating wider social and cultural perplexities. (qtd. in Jane Wood 7)

In consideration of this, Rhys invites us to understand Bertha rather than pretending to be a doctor and diagnosing her or displaying a pathological approach to her as in *Jane Eyre*.

While the figure of Bertha is presented as a woman isolated in the attic and remains as a mysterious woman whose past is unknown, with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys purports to demystify her life by making her past more visible. In this, she aims to prioritize empathy over diagnosis and sympathy over pathology and shows that as we examine her past and look at the facts more objectively, it is clear that all the pathological concepts attributed to Bertha lose their magic. Namely, Bertha transforms from the mysterious *mad woman in the attic* to a young woman destroyed by Victorian colonialism, either by the English on national terms or by Mr. Rochester on personal terms.

While demystifying her life, on the other hand, Rhys uncovers Rochester’s aim “to reduce Antoinette herself to a kind of hiero-glyph: “a child's scribble, a dot for a head, a larger one for the body, a triangle for a skirt, slanting lines for arms and feet”” (Erwin 153). As defined by Erwin in the quotation given above, Antoinette means nothing more than a plaything for Rochester, just like the girl trapped in the arms of a man in Evaristo’s *The Emperor’s Babe*, as also suggested in the title of the novel. Hence, Erwin similarly defines Rochester’s imagined hieroglyph, like the emperor's babe, as “a child’s scribble, a dot for a head, a larger one for the body” (Erwin 153). Antoinette, however, is aware of her unnamed

husband's colonial plots when she reveals that: "you [he and his colonialist ancestors] abused the planters and made-up stories about them, but you do the same thing" (Rhys 88). What she describes as 'story' here directly refers to the colonialist's biased perception of history.

Nothing defined as 'story' is suddenly forgotten or completely erased from the mind, but at this point, Rhys highlights two important defense mechanisms for Antoinette: keeping silence whatever happens or ignoring all those around her. Indeed, Antoinette constantly hints that her painful memories can really disappear if she does not articulate or recall them. This becomes her strategy to survive not just physically but also mentally and psychologically against the chimerical pathologies of the colonizer. For example, upon seeing the dead body of her mother's horse very early on in the novel, Antoinette says, "I ran away and did not speak of it for I thought if I told no one it might not be true" (Rhys 10). At this very point, she sees how language can form her thoughts and also implies how it could be manipulated by evil hands to compose 'stories' about her racial origins, identity, and position in society. Nevertheless, no matter how the colonizer uses it, Antoinette uses language to her advantage by thinking positively against all the negation. In this, Christophine's role is significant since she also treats anything causing stress as if it does not exist and motivates Antoinette to do so when she is overwhelmed by despair. Indeed, Christophine's attitude becomes exemplary for Antoinette when she tells her that "[t]hink of calm, peaceful things and try to sleep. Soon I will give the signal. Soon it will be tomorrow morning" (Rhys 37). Christophine's recommendations refer to the mental power every individual owns with the message that good and bad are all products of our own minds.

Although the majority of literary critics have touted Antoinette's experience of discrimination as a prequel to Bertha's story in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys, with the character of Antoinette, also presents a break from the memories of the *mad woman in the attic*. As a matter of fact, all the remains of this attic together with its wicked memories are, in Erwin's expression, 'rehistoricized' with the burning of Manson's house (Erwin 154). To highlight *Jane Eyre's* rehistoricization into *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys perhaps prefers to use a different name, Antoinette, instead of using the name Bertha directly. In line with this, Antoinette feels uneasy at Rochester's persistent calling of her as Bertha and then uses the aforementioned strategy of ignoring or pretending not to hear by saying, "Bertha is not my name. You are

trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name” (Rhys 88). She denies the name Bertha since she knows that her husband tries to subject her to traumatic experiences like those of Victorian women. However, it is ironic that Rhys dehumanizes and degrades the husband figure with his state of anonymity, as he does not have even a name representing his identity and existence in the narrative. While diminishing him to an archetype, or merely to a symbol with his anonymity, Rhys cherishes Bertha’s presence with the name of Antoinette by creating a new perspective on the character of Bertha with a different name, Antoinette. *Wide Sargasso Sea* does not completely change the circumstances that entrap Bertha Mason because Antoinette, in the ambiguous end of the novella, dies with no clue of how she dies. Yet, with such nuances i.e., Rochester’s anonymity and Antoinette’s presence in the novel, Rhys underlines that there is a struggle for emancipation, which is energized by Antoinette’s interconnection to nature and the poetic quality of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In light of this, it could be concluded that Rhys’ Antoinette is ‘priceless,’ for she makes what is inscribable and unspeakable about Bertha more comprehensible and expressible.

2.4. Celebrating multiculturalism and diversity of voices

According to the Cambridge dictionary, the word ‘authority’ comes from the Latin root ‘*authoritas*’ and means “the power to control and demand obedience from others” (“authority,” Cambridge Dictionary). Another word deriving from this Latin root is the ‘author.’ In light of these two dictionary definitions, it would be conceivable to say that by using their *authoritas* in writing, Evaristo and Rhys highlight the ‘multiplicity’ of voices, races, and colors against the colonialist system and its authority, which adopts ‘othering’ and singularity as its principle. Namely, they dismantle the concept of ‘other’ and challenge the domination of fixed categories like gender and race through an approach that embraces the differences. In this manner, everything related to language, religion, race, gender, and difference in general is presented not as a field of conflict but as diversity and cultural richness in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe*. In view of these ideas, this part seeks to explore precisely how Evaristo and Rhys use the elements of multiplicity to redefine the concept of alterity.

There is no doubt that the existence of two imperial languages, Latin and English, could also be seen as an authority figure in these novels because they work as the transmitters of Roman civilization and British cultural legacy. Yet, neither Evaristo nor Rhys remain fully confined to one language. Rather, they use a variety of languages regardless of their spectrum in the hope that “sharing language would generate, would multiply that language facility” (colostate.edu). For instance, Zuleika articulates her radical thoughts in several languages such as English full of slangs used in street talk, noble Latin, Nubian, and so on. In one part of Evaristo’s novel-in-verse, Zuleika says, “[b]ut no! Numquam! It’s not allowed. / Sure, Felix brings me presents, when he deigns” (Evaristo 17). Interestingly, the venerable and the imperial Latin, which has been the source of many European languages, is used together with English slang. Though London is strictly associated with authority, order, and ‘oneness,’ Zuleika challenges this idea of ‘oneness’ by mingling different languages with each other and incorporating varied cultural elements into her lines. This is a kind of authorial strategy used to shake the authority of patriarchal forces and to celebrate multiplicity in the end.

In conjunction with the use of multiple languages in *The Emperor’s Babe*, Evaristo also brings forth all the exotic elements “that had remained stubbornly intolerable to English cultural imagination” (Gendusa 48). With the diversity in Zuleika’s language, Evaristo implies, on the one hand, that Zuleika takes a stand against the idea of being one and only, which is entrenched in the colonial language. She, on the other hand, shows a scene from Africa, and its abundant cultural heritage, which Zuko was forced to abandon as a child:

A flower-seller
Sold vibrant bouquets, an ivory-vendor
Sold tusks from Kenya, mirrors hung
From shop doorways, the scent of oils
From Arabia and Ethiopia floated
Out of perfumeries, others sold spices. (Evaristo 49)

The senses of smelling, seeing, and tasting are all invoked by this excerpt on account of the fact that Evaristo here intends to stimulate our sensations—to make us feel the richness of her native land. For Evaristo, it is clear that fiction is a journey into the freedom, which could be grasped not only by reason but also by sensations. It should be also noted here that while orthodox orientalist perspectives typically align such images, at this juncture of the novel,

we diverge from this line of ‘orientalist’ thinking and discern a harmonious interplay between her language and the cultural abundance of Africa.

Considering gender as a fluid term, Evaristo transgresses all the gender boundaries and expands the scope of the concept of multiplicity. Namely, her description of multiplicity also contains those who are pushed to the margins of society on the basis of gender. Her stress on genderfluidity challenges the supposedly cut boundary between man and woman, the colonized and the colonizer, as well as the relationship between the black and the white. Therefore, Evaristo does not hesitate, not even a moment, to give voice to queer characters including ‘hermaphrodite’ and ‘transvestite’ in her fictional Roman England. Zuleika’s close companion, Venus, for instance, stands out as a transvestite character whose gender vacillates between masculinity and femininity. Zuleika respects Venus’ feminine outlook, and hence she uses feminine subjects and pronouns [she, her] as addressing to her, while Alba insists on calling Venus a ‘fake’ woman (Evaristo 192). Yet even so, Venus appears to be at peace with herself and with her contrasting appearance which poses a huge threat to the binaries of Roman England. This is understood explicitly from her reply to Alba’s insult that “[w]rong! I’m true to what’s inside me / I allow the real Venus to float to the surface” (Evaristo 192). Such a fluid diction characterized by the terms ‘float’ and ‘surface’ here deserves critical attention since they suggest that Venus’ uncategorized gender, transvestitism, has a lot to do with the concept of fluidity which means the potential to change in any sense. In this context, it is seen that her struggle to ‘float’ her gender to the ‘surface’ connects her experience well to Zuleika’s experience of change from being the emperor’s babe to an empress standing on her own feet.

Rhys similarly incorporates the diversity of views and voices into *Wide Sargasso Sea*, insofar as her narration allows her to do it. While *Jane Eyre* presents Jane's personal experiences and socio-cultural realities of the Victorian age only through Jane’s limited perspective (her first-person narration), Rhys presents events in a more democratic way by integrating various characters, voices, and languages into her work. In doing so, Rhys puts the first-person narrative style aside to emphasize that her work stylistically challenges the colonizer’s monist ideas. To be more precise, Rhys begins the first chapter of her novella with Antoinette, a direct reflection of Bertha, who has already been silenced enough in *Jane*

Eyre. Antoinette herein tells her mother's story leading to her so-called madness and justifies the reasons of it. Then, Rhys switches to Mr. Rochester's biased perception about the Caribbean cultural heritage as if we are put in a position to listen to both 'sides' of the novella before deciding who is right or wrong. In order to emphasize this multiplicity, Rhys perhaps repeatedly uses the term 'side' in her novel, as Antoinette says, "[t]here is always the other side, always" (Rhys 77).

Through *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys deliberately makes some cultural elements more visible to display Rochester's intolerance of Caribbean multiculturalism. Christophine's mastery of the obeah culture, for example, frightens Rochester, who is used to seeing things through the lens of British imperialism and its monist attitude. As a sort of folk magic deeply rooted in the Caribbean culture, the knowledge of obeah helps Christophine make sense of the forthcoming perils coming together with Mr. Rochester to such an extent that Christophine uses the obeah as a means to intimidate Rochester and to resist his colonialist approach towards Antoinette. Even though Rochester deems obeah as primitive and superstitious, he is repelled by the power of it since he knows that it is an obstacle unknown to a British colonizer. It should be noticed here that the secrets and mysteries of the island once again become a source of fear for Rochester. In this, Rhys perhaps conveys the message that the Caribbean culture and the West Indian history are so rich and deep-rooted that an English colonizer cannot understand them. In this regard, it is reasonable to contend that even the title of the book *Wide Sargasso Sea* seems to support the idea that beyond the knowledge of the colonizer, there is a secret culture and civilization whose borders and width are uncertain. As illustrated by the image of the widening sea in the title of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the West Indian culture has its own merits and borders—too big to fit in the palms of an English colonizer.

Apart from the charm of obeah, Christophine's broken English, characterized by some grammatical mistakes in her English speech, challenges the order Rochester seeks on the island. Rochester sees that his perfectly idealized English is spoken with some flaws and imperfections in Jamaican islands. To exemplify, Christophine tells Antoinette that "[y]our aunty too old and sick" and then counsels that "[d]ont cry either. Crying no good with him" (Rhys 69). In line with the order and disorder dichotomy argued in the first chapter, Rhys

distinguishes Christophine's English not by its ridiculousness or lameness but by its being in tune with the characteristics of the Caribbean language, i.e., its power of expressing and embracing differences. Accordingly, Christophine often calls Antoinette in her native language, *Doudou ché cocotte*, while her husband insistingly calls her Bertha (Rhys 68). Considering that *Doudou ché* positively refers to 'dear' and 'darling' in English, it could be said that Christophine's calling *Doudou ché* contrasts with the negative connotations of Bertha as well as the power dynamics entrenched in English language.

In light of the arguments advanced thus far, it could be said that Evaristo and Rhys attempt to redefine alterity by using postmodern language and techniques varying from fragmented identities to incomplete lines and forms since postmodern language eliminates all the linguistic barriers between the colonized and the colonizer. As previously mentioned, this 'anti-foundationalist' language fosters a sense of fluidity and diversity by allowing the representation of all in multiple ways, and by rejecting the single unified representation of humanity. Through their poetic and innovative use of language, Evaristo and Rhys reposition the 'othered' figures of their novels in the literary and historical narratives by cherishing their differences.

CONCLUSION

The city shapes the cultural fate of these othered figures since the colonial London requires an 'order' and a sign of perfection in newcomers. However, as argued in the first chapter, Rhys and Evaristo deconstruct London's centralization as a hub for authority, order and control through Antoinette and Zuleika's retreat into nature. These authors welcome nature as presenting a new way of life to Antoinette and Zuleika by showing how the political, social, and aesthetical constructs of the city harm their sense of liberation and autonomy that they got from nature. That is, all the derogatory terms and labels lose their controlling effect in nature for the creole figures because nature dismisses such distinctions between the colonizer and the colonized, the European and the African or Jamaican. For this reason, Antoinette and Zuleika demonstrate a fervent eagerness to return to their essence through nature, i.e., to their natural 'self' that they see as independent of all kinds of ascriptions and discourses because, as the first chapter suggested, independence is not a state that they can reach in a 'cold dark dream', or in 'outside world.' Their return to nature, in ecofeminist terms, suggests the interconnection between nature and the outcasted figures in these novels.

If nature is one touchstone for the resilience and perseverance of Antoinette and Zuky, poetry is another. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor's Babe*, writers and characters meet in poetry because poetry as an effective means of expression breaks the silence of years and challenges the commonly held beliefs and assumptions in "the linear time of history, which would inevitably recall the history of slavery to consciousness" (Erwin 145). Antoinette and Zuleika want to be heard and noticed by poetry since poetry helps them rebuild their own realities in the face of egregiously abusive realities of the colonialist system. Based on the findings presented in the second chapter, it should also be noted that the poetic quality of these works elevates the narrative's emotional resonance by allowing for multiple layers of interpretation. The integration of verse into novel indeed enhances meaning, expands possibilities, and adds depth and complexity to *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor's Babe* through which Antoinette and Zuky reclaim their rights to speak within the cultural 'mosaic' of these novels.

Pluralism and diversity seem to be an inextricable feature of this ‘mosaic,’ which debunks the colonialist discourse reducing everything to ‘one and only.’ Evaristo and Rhys value this diversity in race and language because diversity provides a more nuanced understanding of race, gender, and colonialism and offers a thorough picture of how these issues affect the creole figures in these novels. The theme of diversity also indicates the complexity of human nature, which has been unjustly ignored or stereotyped by the colonizer figures in these novels, Mr. Rochester, Lucius Aurelius Felix, or Septimus Severus. Hence, these authors welcome nature as an idyllic place where their characters can turn back to their essence, i.e., their very nature untouched by these stereotypes. As a result of this pluralistic approach, the concept of alterity loses its meaning adopted in the West and colonial history because none of the Creole figures seem altered or marginal within this mosaic. They do not distort this mosaic with their Creole identities; on the contrary, they enrich and contribute to its inclusive nature with their differences.

Although Antoinette and Zuky do not entirely eradicate the colonial discourse and patriarchal order, Rhys and Evaristo promote the way that these figures seek alternatives for personal expression, and emancipation. As shown through the first and second chapters of this thesis, these Creole figures oftentimes seek opportunities to be visible to the reader and to express themselves freely in the narrative. That is, they struggle for personal expression, recognition, and emancipation by exhibiting a passive resistance against the stifling norms and customs of colonization. In this sense, it is evident that *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor’s Babe* impart a message of liberation and awareness by highlighting how their act of writing turns into a form of defiance in the end. This defiance, as Ciolkowski suggests, “reenact[s] the struggles over meaning that are embedded within the fictions of colonial identity and English imperial control” (340). Hence, Rhys and Evaristo refrain from presenting a conclusive and definitive end in their novels in order to highlight the ongoing nature of Antoinette and Zuleika’s journey. In other words, they convey that Antoinette and Zuleika’s quest for liberation and self-expression transcend these novels and create a profound effect on the reader. Here, it would be conceivable to contend that Antoinette and Zuleika’s death at the end of these novels represents a beginning, not an end. This beginning

points to a mental awakening characterized by Antoinette and Zuleika's resistance against the oppressive systems.

Ultimately, with the findings and conclusions it has reached, this thesis serves as a foundation for future research by offering an exploration of these novels within the context of the city / nature, and order / disorder dichotomies. This study also aims to contribute to the further investigations by showcasing the colonizer's attitude and its unchangeability from Roman times to Victorian era onwards—through this comparative analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Emperor's Babe*.



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