

Rochester's Search for His Mother and Meaning: A Psychoanalytic Reading of *Jane Eyre's* Hero

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Abstract

Charlotte Brontë's timeless classic, *Jane Eyre*, has provided scholars with the opportunity to use a variety of theoretical frameworks when analyzing the novel and its characters. The myriad of adaptations of *Jane Eyre* has further propelled the discourse surrounding the novel and has produced a pattern of scholarship that relies heavily on post-colonial theory. However, psychoanalytic theory has been underutilized when examining and understanding its characters, especially Edward Fairfax Rochester. Psychoanalytic theory aids in the understanding of the novels given how psychoanalysis attempts to go deeper into the psyche, desires, and motivations that cause people to act and react in various ways. Therefore, this thesis relies on psychoanalysis to explore and dissect the inner workings of Brontë's infamous Byronic hero, Edward Rochester, in the prime text *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys's adaptation *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and the most recent adaptation, *Mr. Rochester*, by Sarah Shoemaker. A psychoanalytic framework reveals Rochester's neuroses and conveys a holistic interpretation and understanding of his character. Simultaneously, it exposes the limits of a post-colonial framework.

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Introduction: The scholarship on Bertha, Jane, and Rochester

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë has been discussed, dissected, and argued over by innumerable scholars since its publication in 1847. For 175 years, Brontë's work has captivated its readers, generating numerous debates over its themes, perspectives, and mainly its characters. The myriad of adaptations of *Jane Eyre* reveals the significance of the classic and its effects on its readers. The adaptations convey countless perspectives on the mother text. The characters within this timeless tale ignite emotions within the readers, causing them to argue over and over again.

Most scholars who decide to take on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* have criticized and misunderstood Edward Rochester. The publication of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966 has further encouraged these scholars to take a bite out of Rochester. Critics of Rhys have spilt much ink in condemning Rochester's behavior toward the women in his life, usually blaming the colonization of the Other, imperialism, or his toxic masculinity for his rough and coarse behavior. Some scholars, like Clara Thomas, Caroline Rody, Peter Muste, Yurdakul Selin, and Lutfi Abbas Lutfi, have taken these accusations of Rochester to an even more damaging level when they frame him as the catalyst to Antoinette's madness. However, these scholars make the mistake of misreading Antoinette's insanity before she meets Rochester, as well as disregarding, to an extent, the prime text *Jane Eyre*. Theoretically an adaptation can stand on its own apart from the mother text, but it also stands as an interpretation of the mother text. Moreover, in this case, critics have used it to interpret Rochester as a colonizing villain who desires to control the female body. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is an adaptation of *Jane Eyre* where Jean Rhys takes Brontë's Bertha, Rochester's first wife, whom he cannot divorce due to the laws on marriage in the

nineteenth century, and manipulates her backstory. While Rhys refuses to name the male character in her novel, readers know that it is Rochester and that Antoinette is Bertha.

Rochester of *Jane Eyre* is a lonely and damaged man who was tricked into marrying the insane Bertha Mason by her and his brother Rowland and his father Mr. Rochester. Rochester does his best to ensure her safety by keeping her on the third floor of his home, Thornfield. Mental institutions in the nineteenth century were atrocious and treated the patients inhumanely, therefore Rochester understandably wants to protect Bertha from those brutal conditions. After trudging through his miserable life as the wedded man of a mentally ill woman, he meets his saving grace and governess, Jane Eyre. He falls deeply in love with her and finally finds hope that he can be happy. To obtain a firm grasp on this happiness, he tries to marry her, while still legally married to Bertha. While this may seem foul, he is stuck with virtually no other option. Rochester desperately searches for some answer and meaning to his seemingly meaningless existence. Given that Bertha was mentally ill before he married her and their marriage was a sham, he feels justified in trying to marry Jane. He feels he deserves happiness. In *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847, Bertha Mason, whom Rhys calls Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966, was insane before her marriage to Rochester. Rhys creates a background for Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea* that begins with Antoinette narrating her childhood. It creates a timeline of her disastrous marriage in Jamaica to the hero of *Jane Eyre* and the events that lead them back to Thornfield, where Antoinette burns down the house and jumps to her death. Rhys creates a story that invokes sympathy for Antoinette and attempts to rewrite Rochester as a harsh and unforgiving colonizer, emblematic of imperialist ideologies.

Critics have jumped at the opportunity Rhys has given them by reading and analyzing Rochester's character through a post-colonial lens. In her 1978 article, Clara Thomas claims that

Rochester is “motivated by pride and hate” and that Antoinette is “irreparably victimized by him” (343). Thomas sympathizes with the female character and holds Rochester responsible for all that is wrong, arguing that Rochester is “the activating agent of her tragedy,” fully blaming Rochester for Antoinette’s madness (347). Like many others who have blamed Rochester for Bertha’s madness, particularly with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Thomas uses him as a scapegoat and completely overlooks Antoinette’s own narration that clearly conveys a confused and chaotic mind before she ever meets Rochester. Caroline Rody, sixteen years after Thomas, likewise condemns Rochester. Rody suggests that Bertha is not mad because of genetics, but that both Bertha and her mother were “driven mad” due to “circumstances of loss, violence, and exploitation in marriage” (219). Scholars overwhelm the discourse with accusations that place Rochester as the colonizing abuser who drives Antoinette insane.

Yet, Antoinette’s narration, which comes before her meeting Rochester, emanates an unsound mind. Antoinette’s chaotic thought process rarely keeps one train of thought throughout her entire narrative. In part one of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, before meeting Rochester, Antoinette often jumps from one thought to another totally irrelevant thought. This thought process reveals that she has inclinations to “madness” before she is taken to England and before she meets Rochester. Many times, her thoughts trail off with no center to land on. Antoinette thinks to herself, “I wish I could tell him that out here is not at all like English people think it is. I wish. . .,” and then nothing else to follow through (Rhys 20). This leaves the reader to wonder where her mind goes and if it ever focuses on one thread given how she immediately bounds into another unconnected topic. However, like Thomas and Rody, Peter Muste in his 2017 article ignores the intentional chaotic narration by Antoinette. Despite the evidence that comes from Antoinette’s own thoughts and words, the pattern and proclivity of blaming Rochester and linking him to the

imperialist project is an incessant cycle with scholars. Muste asserts that Rochester attempts to redefine Antoinette's identity and causes her to become insane because he calls her Bertha. Muste argues that Rochester strips her of herself as "the Man begins actively turning Antoinette into the 'Bertha' of *Jane Eyre*, redefining her identity and contributing to her madness" (74). Yet, Bertha, in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, had already lost the battle with mental health long before Rochester arrives, which is significant because it highlights how Rochester was not the catalyst to Bertha's insanity.

Selin Yurdakul and Lutfi Abbas Lutfi also did not want to diverge from the paradigm of blaming Rochester and therefore followed suit. Yurdakul argues that the real sufferer in both novels is Bertha, as she was sane before she married Rochester, insinuating, like others have, that he drove her to insanity. Yurdakul adamantly states that "Even though, she is sensitive before her marriage, it is inferred from the narration that her husband's refusal to understand her social position and origin pushes her beyond control," implying that it is Rochester who drives her to madness (66). However, Yurdakul does not provide specific language from Rochester's narration that supports this statement, because none exists. Similarly, Lutfi Abbas Lutfi claims that Rochester desires to dominate the female body and reshape the identity of the "other" by refusing to call his wife the name she chooses. Lutfi insists that Rochester only wants to marry Antoinette for her money and his hatred and cruelty toward her drive her to infidelity, drunkenness, and insanity.

These critics ignore the fact that Rhys deliberately wrote Antoinette's thoughts and words as chaotic and reveals Antoinette's mental illness as early as childhood. As the disorganized narration continues in part one of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and as Antoinette nears the age that most

mental illness is diagnosed, young adulthood, her thoughts become more hectic and even harder to follow:

“Then there was another saint, said Mother St Justine, she lived later on but still in Italy, or was it in Spain. Italy is white pillars and green water. Spain is hot sun on stones, France is a lady with black hair wearing a white dress because Louise was born in France fifteen years ago, and my mother, whom I must forget and pray for as though she were dead, though she is living liked to dress in white.” (Rhys 33)

This passage exudes how Bertha’s mind springs from one thought to another in an instant. It seems as if multiple thoughts cloud her mind at one time, like a rail yard full of tracks, and she never stays on one train. Therefore, this evidence contradicts the claim that Rochester drove Antoinette into madness in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

In the forty years between Thomas and Muste, critics such as Bonnie Zare, Cecilia Acquarone, Paisley Mann, and Alexandra Nygren contributes to the discourse by painting Rochester as an imperialist monster in both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Understandably Yurdakul and Lutfi follow Thomas and Muste’s reasoning when they have even more scholarship to manipulate Rochester’s character into a vile creature who causes Antoinette’s lunacy. An inveterate paradigm encompasses the conversation around Rochester and his treatment of women. Many critics perceive Rochester’s treatment of the female gender as harsh and hostile. Bonnie Zare, in her 1993 article, argues that Rochester is a mental abuser who steals Jane’s independence and silences her through marriage. Zare believes that Rochester “vents his rage” on the female characters within *Jane Eyre* and is “obsessed with proving his absolute power over women” because of his “elaborate deceptions” which she describes as “infantile cruelty” (206-207). Only five years later, Cecilia Acquarone further propels this idea that

Rochester's innermost desire is to control the female body. Acquarone perceives Rochester as a character who is threatened by his environment and seeks to keep the patriarchal order intact; she reads the novel as one about a male taking over a female without permission and argues that Rochester's "actions are guided by the demands of the environment rather than by his inner feelings, wishes, or intentions," (23) making him seem like an unfeeling object and completely rejecting any psychological issue that may be a catalyst for his actions.

The dialogue centered on *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* is bombarded with critics, such as those previously mentioned, using a post-colonial lens in their attempts to understand Rochester and his treatment of female characters. These interpretations have made it into the twenty-first century. For instance, Paisley Mann, in her 2011 article insists that adaptations of *Jane Eyre* had to tone down Rochester's hostility in order to gain viewers. She asserts that the 1996, 1997, and 2006 adaptations use Bertha as "a demonstration of Rochester's kindness" which allows the "approval" of him (158). For the modern-day audience to accept Rochester, Mann argues that his colonizing ways had to be erased, implying that he is a harsh colonizer of the female body in the novel. Furthermore, to perpetuate this usage of a post-colonial lens, Alexandra Nygren argues that the character of Bertha Mason must be reexamined by scholars. Bertha should be read through the lens of "postcolonial feminism and disability studies" because she is "a casualty of patriarchal, colonialist, and ableist hegemony" (117). Nygren views Rochester as the colonizer and Bertha as the colonized. Nygren does not consider that he was tricked into a marriage with her by their families, as well as Bertha herself.

The deception committed by Bertha and her family, as well as Rochester's own, is perspicuously revealed in both the prime text, its adaptation *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and the most recent adaptation *Mr. Rochester* by Sarah Shoemaker. Shoemaker develops the character of

Edward Rochester through the treachery and betrayal of Bertha Mason and his own family. This Byronic hero is alienated from his community through the tragic marriage into which he is sold. He experiences “persistent loneliness,” even when in the physical entanglement of others. Brontë’s Rochester tries to make Jane understand the context of his first marriage and reveals the conniving plan.

“When I left college I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. My father said nothing about her money: but he told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty. . . Her family wished to secure me, because I was of a good race; and so did she. They showed her to me in parties, splendidly dressed. I seldom saw her alone and had very little private conversation with her. She flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments. . . There is no folly so besotted that the idiotic rivalries of society, the prurience, the rashness, the blindness of youth, will not hurry a man to its commission. (Brontë 273)

Brontë ensures that the reader understands that Rochester was tricked into his shell of a marriage. He was seduced and sold. Rochester became the object, the commodity, the colonized. Yet, there is only a fragment of critical discourse that considers the possibility of Rochester being colonized himself. Scholars such as Gail Griffin, Mona Fayad, Margaret Torrell, and Rachel Willis move closer to being outside of the pattern that portrays Rochester as the villainous colonizer. They venture to uncover some of what he has been through and consider how it impacts his actions. Only a few years after Thomas and her assertion that Rochester is motivated by hate and pride, Griffin offers an alternative to his motivation by claiming that Rochester, Jane, and Bertha are three in one, meaning that they are a “three-way mirror reflecting a common existence” (128). Rochester is motivated by discovering himself through the

characters of Bertha and Jane, emphasizing the female other. Rochester transitions from a masculine way of thinking into feminine.

Relatively along the same line of interpretation, Mona Fayad argues that Rochester feels outside of the patriarchal norm in the West Indies and immediately becomes agitated because he does not have power. Rochester's own loss of identity and control causes him to control the women around him. She further claims that Rochester is terrified of assimilating into the world that he has been forced into. To try and stave off the assimilation, Rochester defines Antoinette, the island, and the maternal body as other, something totally unidentifiable, because he is losing his identity. His guilt with the oedipal son/mother relationship is "displaced and projected 'safely' onto the whore," implying that Rochester himself struggles with the Oedipal Complex (445-446). Like Griffin, Fayad understands that Rochester suffers from an identity crisis, which she believes to be the driving force behind his treatment of women.

Furthering the discussion of Rochester's motivation behind the way he acts two decades after Fayad, Margaret Torrell explains that Rochester's re-transformation at the end of *Jane Eyre* signifies an alteration of "cultural attitudes about gender and ability" and insists that it creates a new model of masculinity that allows "more inclusive possibilities for male embodiment" (90). The new model of masculinity is non-oppressive due to Rochester and Jane's blending of identity, Jane's adoption of the masculine, and Rochester's adoption of feminine characteristics. Torrell examines the effects of disability and masculinity on Rochester's mind, and his motivation for acting and behaving the way that he does, moving beyond his supposed desire to colonize the "other." Furthermore, although scholar Rachel Willis utilizes post-colonial theory to examine Jane and Rochester, she ultimately understands that Rochester is also a victim of imperialism. She avers that Rochester's place in the hegemonic patriarchy is tenuous due to him

being the second son, a “subordinated position of power” (248). Rochester’s masculinity is defined by imperialism. Therefore, the combination of his possession of masculine power and marginalization reveals that he is both the colonizer and the colonized, which allows Jane the opportunity to resist being fully colonized herself. Due to Rochester’s manhood being marginalized, Jane can identify with him, making him even more attractive. Her “partial colonization,” prepares her for “Rochester’s compromised masculinity” and the creation of an “interdependent relationship” (251). Torrell and Willis’s consideration of Rochester’s masculinity and femininity begin to widen the conversation surrounding Rochester.

The few scholars who interpret him in a positive light move even further away from viewing Rochester as colonizing the “other.” As revealed, most of the scholarship leans toward demonizing Rochester and his actions. However, critics such as James Phillips, Kathryn Martel, and Claire O’Callaghan try to disregard the negative insinuations others have made and focus on how he impacts Jane and Bertha optimistically. Phillips examines both Rochester’s and Jane’s similar desires and blames the context involving marriage laws rather than Rochester’s inner workings for his behavior. Phillips argues that Rochester wants to marry Jane and have an equal relationship. Marriage would erase any inequality that stands between them. Because Rochester already sees her as his equal, in conversation and mind, their marriage should be lawful. Rochester attempts to redefine what marriage is and rebukes the law's definition. Rochester desires to leave the unfeeling and empty contract with Bertha, and move into a fulfilling conversation with his equal, Jane. Unlike other scholars, Phillips realizes that Rochester sees Jane, a female, as an equal, not as an object to conquer. Therefore, the argument that Rochester seeks to control women loses ground.

In keeping with the positive light reflected onto Rochester, almost a decade after Phillips, Kathryn Martel views his and Jane's relationship as beneficial to each other, rather than damaging to her or other females in *Jane Eyre*. Martel argues that Rochester is Jane's male alter-ego and is drawn to him because of their deep likeness and equality. As Jane's doppelganger, one can view Rochester as the only character that illuminates and encourages her repressed self, leading to her independence and freedom. For Phillips and Martel, Rochester benefits Jane. Martel asserts that Rochester gives her a voice and her experience with him liberates her mind. This psychological connection is what makes them equal and what allows their duality to become one despite Victorian social authority. Instead of viewing their marriage as a way of dominating and silencing Jane, it is through her marriage that Jane takes her "two selves" and becomes one, one who is independent of "Victorian societal standards for women" (18).

O'Callaghan, likewise, puts emphasis on the context of the Victorian era as well as queer theory to suggest Rochester had homosexual tendencies to highlight a different masculinity than the "norm." She claims that *Jane Eyre* exemplifies how "heteronormative ideals inhibit men as much as they do women" due to Rochester's constant struggles against nineteenth-century norms (133). O'Callaghan's emphasis on the queerness of Rochester, whether one uses the definition of odd or homosexual, reveals that Rochester does stand against the norms of Victorian culture. While Phillips, Martel, and O'Callaghan do not delve deeply into how this stand against Victorian societal norms affects his psyche, they start the conversation into what afflicts Rochester, causing him to act and react in ways that others have deemed imperialistic.

Despite the immense amount of scholarship that has dissected *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Paul Pickrel, Robert Kendrick, and Elizabeth Haller are among the modicum who analyze Rochester and attempt to understand and acknowledge the "why" of his behavior while

considering the impact others have on *him*. Pickrel uses a psychoanalytic lens to sympathize with Rochester. Pickrel claims that Rochester is crying out for help, that he wants to reclaim what he has lost, mainly himself. Rochester begs Jane for some “word of hope” that she will not let his “depersonalization” become complete (165). Due to his past and all the wrongs committed against him, Rochester had “no choice but to invest his feelings in himself,” revealing the neuroses of narcissism and self-estrangement (166). Like Pickrel, Kendrick also utilizes a psychoanalytic lens to understand Rochester. Kendrick argues that Edward Rochester feels he has lost phallic power and the ability to recognize himself as a masculine male according to the standards of Victorian society. Kendrick claims that Rochester is at odds with the “dominant narrative of being an ‘English Gentleman’” because of his forced marriage and time in Jamaica, resulting in his inability to follow convention in *Jane Eyre* (240). Rochester losing his phallic power means he ultimately suffers from Freud’s theory of the castration complex. Furthermore, Elizabeth Haller, a decade after Kendrick, argues that “Rochester’s need to mask his true identity is purely reactionary and instilled through past wrongs inflicted upon him by family,” reiterating that his behavior is in response to the initial wrong done to him (205). Haller understands and acknowledges that Rochester behaves and acts as he does because he was first done wrong. He is not a villain looking to drive anyone mad. He is a man trying to overcome the feelings of loss he has had for so long.

The infamous Edward Rochester has been and continues to be the focal point of much debate within the scholarship and discourse surrounding *Jane Eyre* and its prequel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Even though Rochester remains nameless in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*, no doubt to take away the phallic power he exudes (Muste 75), any reader of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* can make the connection, returning that power. Much time has been spent by

critics discussing Rochester's influence on other characters within the two texts, specifically Jane Eyre and Bertha or Antoinette Mason. Much of the scholarship reveals a negative perception of Rochester, with many blaming him for Bertha's mental illness and depicting him as the villain. Yet, scholarship and criticism focusing specifically on how other characters influence Rochester and his development are almost non-existent. While some scholars have responded positively to Edward Rochester, meaning they do not perceive him as villainous, their focus is on how he impacts Jane and Bertha and the results stemming from their relationship. A deeper analysis of the influences that ultimately shaped Edward Rochester is needed. The scholarship lacks a psychoanalytic approach to Rochester. His search for his mother, loneliness, repression, transference, and the search for subjective meaning causes him to act and react in the ways that he does.

Chapter I: Issues with the Post-colonial Lens When Understanding Rochester

The utilization of a post-colonial lens when reading Edward Rochester in *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations is a rampant but narrow-sighted perspective given how there is much more to his character than the need to control and have power over the “other.” Understandably scholars would want to take a post-colonial stance due to the context in which *Jane Eyre* sits, emphasized by Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, as well as Gayatri Spivak’s adamantly suggesting in “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” that those who ignore England’s “social mission” when analyzing nineteenth-century British literature reinforce the “imperialistic project” (243). In Spivak’s perspective, Rochester is only concerned with domination or colonizing the “other” who she argues is both Bertha and Jane. Spivak’s extreme accusation that if one “forgets” the “fact” of England’s “social mission” they reinforce imperialistic ideologies, would make any scholar hesitant to diverge from a post-colonial lens (253). However, when only using a post-colonial lens, Rochester’s character becomes misconstrued as a villain who is only concerned with conquering the “other.” The “evil” Rochester is not the Rochester Brontë created or intended, nor is it the character Rhys tried to reconstruct, although it was her intent.

Jean Rhys insinuates that Rochester of *Wide Sargasso Sea* embodies the characteristics of an imperialistic villain, allowing critics to jump at the opportunity to use a post-colonial lens in their analysis of him, ignoring how she first victimizes him. For many scholars of Rhys’s Rochester, he is the exemplar of a scoundrel, a dark conniving figure who uses Antoinette for his own greed and carnal pleasures. Rhys scholars commonly mistake Rochester’s marriage to Antoinette as motivated by avarice. They frequently quote the part of his narration where he says “The thirty

thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her (that must be seen to),” emphasizing that Rochester views Bertha as a commodity and has no intention of ever trying to love or value her (41). Yet, in the same statement, Rochester makes a mental note that the lack of “provision made for her” must be taken care of, meaning that since her own family did not ensure her financial safety, he will have to do it. The act of him making a mental note of what Antoinette deserves conveys a caring and considerate side of Rochester given how he does not have to, by law, make any provision for Antoinette. However, Rhys amplifies the derogatory perception made by critics when she has Christophine vehemently lecture Rochester, “*Your Wife!* She said. ‘You make me laugh. I don’t know all you did but I know some. Everybody know that you marry her for her money and you take it all,’” reiterating the idea that Rochester is naturally ignoble, a characteristic of a villain (92). It is no wonder critics judge him so harshly. Rochester’s presentation is what feminists continuously fight against, the power of a man to dictate a woman’s life and hold monetary sway.

The discourse surrounding Rochester is continuously plagued by post-colonial theory, magnetically drawing in scholars to perceive Rochester as a power and control hungry brute, some even claiming that he is a racist and bigot. Scholars like Thomas, Fayad, Acquarone, Muste, Yurdakul, and Lutfi claim that Rochester is motivated by an overwhelming desire to control the “other.” For these critics, Rochester takes advantage of Antoinette’s hybrid identity, her in-betweenness that adds to her mixed-up state of mind. Lutfi focuses on how Rochester exhibits ideologies of the British Empire. Yet Lutfi takes it a step further and claims that race plays a large part in his treatment of Antoinette. For Lutfi, the reason Rochester grows indifferent to Antoinette is because he is racist. Rochester is searching for his identity in a world that is alien to him. He feels threatened by their “otherness” and desperately tries to control those

he feels are inferior. Rochester is vulnerable and feels these people are his enemy, which for Lutfi, makes him a racist and bigot. He is a victim of familial Victorian values and “mistrusts the feminine as connected to emotions and nature” (81). For Lutfi, this distrust and the actions he believes follow as a result of it are signs of a prejudiced mindset in Rochester.

To make matters worse, Rhys reveals that Rochester uses Antoinette for sex, as revealed through Christophine’s condemnation “‘And then’, she went on with her judge’s voice, ‘you make love to her till she drunk with it, no rum could make her drunk like that, till she can’t do without it. It’s *she* can’t see the sun any more. Only you she see. But all you want is to break her up” (92). Christophine directs sympathy toward Antoinette through the dialogue. This man has entices her, and uses lovemaking to draw her in. Any female would take pity on her and would look at Rochester as villainous and colonizing as he physically and literally entered her space and took control over her in carnal acts. He got what he wanted and put it away. Even worse is that Rhys creates an affair that is nonexistent in *Jane Eyre* between Rochester and the servant Amelie, one that Antoinette undoubtedly hears considering his sordid behavior happened “behind the thin partition” that divided the promiscuous pair from his betrayed wife (84). The language used to describe this scene not only paints Rochester as naturally uncaring and cold, but it also lets readers know that Antoinette is fully aware of his betrayal, resulting in a heated argument that further emphasizes his imperializing ways and makes space for scholars to condemn Rhys’s Rochester. For instance, Lutfi insists that Rochester only wants to marry Antoinette for her money and his hatred and cruelty of her drive her to infidelity, drunkenness, and insanity. Lutfi states that “In post-colonial discourse, otherness is a product of domination carried out through establishing binaries that necessitates Western supremacy over the ‘other,’” implying that this definition fits Rochester (79). However, Rochester is searching for a sense of

self through healthy relationships with others rather than attempting to dominate and control the female gender. He has been forced into what one can perceive as a dominating position as a husband and is determined to be a good spouse to the one he believes can provide him with the love he has never known. It is convenient to regard Rochester as a power-hungry misogynist when one focuses only on the heroine and his treatment of her while completely ignoring Rochester's struggle with his own neuroses triggered by how others have treated and tricked him.

Because Rhys portrays Antoinette as a broken-down creature who is downtrodden by a heartless and callous man, the leap that many critics make in their claim that Rochester is an evil colonizer who drives her mad is understandable, although debatable. It is Bertha, in *Jane Eyre*, who tricks the "heartless" man into marriage, and her and his family's betrayal summons pity for Rochester. Rochester is a wounded man, a lonesome soul trying to overcome the tragic turn of events caused by the people who are supposed to love him the most. However, because of this tragedy the character of Rochester can be labeled a Byronic hero, one who needs help. Patsy Stoneman states that "Byron's heroes are not heroic because of any moral or social excellence. They may in fact be moral outcasts, yet have passed somehow 'beyond good and evil.' They are passionate, unpredictable, mysterious, irresistible to women, yet strangely vulnerable" emphasizing how Rochester is vulnerable and is searching for someone to help him find meaning (112). Sarah Wootton also discusses how Rochester's vulnerable character can be compared to Byron's numerous characters and discusses how Brontë herself was obsessed with Byron's literary works. Furthermore, while Rochester is not the traditional literary hero, he is a Byronic hero in every sense of the definition. The literary Byronic heroes "are associated with destructive passions, sometimes selfish brooding or indulgence in personal pains, alienation from their

communities, persistent loneliness, intense introspection, and fiery rebellion” (Wheeler). Brontë fully establishes this characterization, and Rhys does as well, although some critics may argue differently. Rhys intends for Antoinette to be pitied, and while there are moments that do elicit pity, the catalyst to it still remains her own trickery. Even *Wide Sargasso Sea*, albeit unintentionally, validates Rochester’s story. Similar to *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* reveals, through Rochester’s narration and the mentally composed letters to his father, that he was tricked into marrying a mentally unstable bride. However, what is more incriminating is that when he realizes the instability and distances himself, Antoinette resorts to poisoning him. Antoinette begs Christophine to give her something that will bring Rochester to her bed where she plans on tricking him once more through seduction, “But Christophine, if he, my husband could come to me one night. Once more, I would make him love me” (68). Once again, Antoinette connives with “family” to seduce and control Rochester. Antoinette’s own words “once more” imply that she was aware of the first time she tried to make him love her, before the wedding. While Antoinette is successful in getting Rochester to bed, both times, he realizes the next morning what she had done. In pain he states “she need not have done what she did to me. I will always swear that, she need not have done it” and proceeds to try and vomit what he believes to be poison (82). Rochester believes he has been poisoned, a traumatic experience that not only physically injures him but also mentally plagues him as he works through how to escape the pattern of betrayal committed against him by his wife.

Unintentionally by trying to produce sympathy for Antoinette through her begging and pleading with Christophine to make Rochester love her, Rhys extends a pattern of manipulation that Brontë started, adding more characters to the list of culprits that affect Rochester’s sense of

identity and eventually turns his heart to stone. The further manipulation and his full awareness of Bertha's insanity leads to Rochester's final decision to leave:

All wish to sleep had left me. I walked up and down the room and felt the blood tingle in my finger-tips. It ran up my arms and reached my heart, which began to beat very fast. I spoke aloud as I walked. I spoke the letter I meant to write.

'I know now that you planned this because you wanted to be rid of me. You had no love at all for me. Nor had my brother. Your plan succeeded because I was young, conceited, foolish, trusting. Above all because I was young. You were able to do this to me. . .'

But I am not young now, I thought, stopped pacing and drank. Indeed this rum is mild as mother's milk or father's blessing. I could imagine his expression if I sent that letter and he read it.

'Dear Father,' I wrote. 'We are leaving this island for Jamaica very shortly. Unforeseen circumstances, at least unforeseen by me, have forced me to make this decision. I am certain that you know or can guess what has happened, and I am certain you will believe that the less you talk to anyone about my affairs, especially my marriage, the better. This is in your interest as well as mine. You will hear from me again. Soon I hope.' (Rhys 97).

Rochester has hit his breaking point. He decides to fight back against the societal expectations he unquestioningly follows. Rochester burns with the Byronic hero characteristic of "fiery rebellion" (Wheeler). He is the dutiful second son who is burnt. Anger now joins his sorrow. In adding a layer to Rochester's already grief-stricken story, Rhys emphasizes the hero Brontë created, not the colonizing monster or villain who drove a woman into madness. Antoinette is already mentally ill, and she victimizes him doubly with the potion.

In establishing the damaged figure's past and the impact others have on him, one can better understand the driving force that leads Rochester to go to great lengths to marry Jane. The motive behind his desire to marry Jane is a desire to be loved, not an attempt to colonize her and exert his power over her as Zare and countless others claim. Rochester desires to abandon convention and pursue a marriage that is equal in love and in mind. He is looking for the remedy to his traumatic past. Acknowledging the perils he has been through and the manipulation by others, it is easier to understand his desire. Pickrel argues that Rochester is a victim of depersonalization stating that “Beneath his bantering tone he is crying for help out of that one sentient point that is left in the lump—his heart, presumably. He is beseeching Jane Eyre for some word of hope that the depersonalization that has been taking him over will not become complete” (165). After being abused and used by so many, Rochester must turn toward himself, he must delve into “intense introspection” in order to understand and work through the treacherous acts of family. Pickrel believes that his driving force is creating a family within Thornfield through Jane and Adele, “a human cluster in which he can invest what feeling remains in him” (166). Rochester wants to give all he has in order to create the life that was stolen from him for so many years. His need for reciprocal love drives him to search for healthy relationships that he believes will provide him with a sense of self.

Rochester is desperate and willing to defy the meaningless, to him, law, in order to find subjective meaning through his marriage to Jane. Through his Byronic “intense introspection” (Wheeler) he realizes that “law” has no significance to a true marriage of the minds. He realizes in his passionate proposal to Jane, “It will atone—it will atone. Have I not found her friendless, and cold, and comfortless? Will I not guard, and cherish, and solace her? Is there not love in my heart, and constancy in my resolves? It will expiate God’s tribunal. I know my Maker sanctions

what I do. For the world's judgment—I wash my hands thereof. For man's opinion—I defy it" (Brontë 230). Brontë's Rochester, through inner reflection, has come to realize that man's opinion and law are insignificant when it comes to pure love. Rochester truly believes that he is not married, that the dissonance in the minds makes the piece of paper, the marriage certificate, null and void, "That woman, who has so abused your long-suffering—so sullied your name; so out-raged your honour; so blighted your youth—is not your wife; nor are you her husband" (Brontë 277). In his belief that his "Maker" would approve of his marriage to Jane, a true marriage of minds, Rochester genuinely believes he is committing no crime nor does he intend to control Jane.

His belief that his previous marriage is not real, according to his definition of marriage, not the law's, makes him justified in wanting to be made whole, to give and receive, not take, love. In desperation, Rochester lowers himself to games and tries to trick Jane into professing her love. When Rochester dresses as a gypsy to talk to Jane it is out of desperation. While it may seem juvenile and conniving, his intention is to hear her confess her love, for his damaged psyche needs it. As the gypsy, Rochester tells Jane "You are silly, because, suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach; nor will you stir one step to meet it where it waits you" (Brontë 178); he emphasizes his motivation behind these "tricks" as he wants her to confess her feelings for him. Due to the continuous betrayal by those whom he believed loved him, Rochester needs for Jane to profess her love first. He needs the love from Jane to be real and concrete. Only when the love is solidified can he begin to find meaning. Pickrel believes that "There has to be something deeply wrong with a rich man in the prime of his life and in his own fine house full of servants who presents himself first as a filthy prisoner in chains and then as an outcast old woman in rags and imagines himself spat upon by the most elegant society the

countryside affords at the very moment that they are his own house guests” (168). Yet, the “deeply wrong” thing that haunts Rochester is his loneliness, caused by betrayal, and a hope that Jane’s love will remedy it all. Rochester has never known love and has never been able to find subjective meaning. He believes that Jane is his last opportunity to have a life that holds meaning, a meaning he needs in order to start to heal from the trauma he has suffered.

Rochester also desires redemption for the past mistakes of believing in false love. He knows that he has been foolish, that he has committed an error. However, the “error” is not his treatment of Bertha, for he has done all he could for her and did not seek her out as an “other” body to possess. As the victim of a young impulsive mind Rochester tries to heal himself from seemingly unrepairable trauma. Mary-Antoinette Smith has a similar analysis of Rochester’s need for redemption when she argues that Brontë’s agenda with *Jane Eyre* is to propel Jane and Rochester through “parallel evolutionary pilgrimages” resulting in Jane’s baptism of water and Rochester’s baptism by fire. Smith’s focus is to examine and reveal Rochester’s pilgrimage to self-redemption. Brontë “purposefully wrote with structural significance and intertextual complexities” derived from literary conventions that revolved around spiritual transformation and evolution (234). The fire that initiates Rochester’s heroic act aids him in finding that true self. The selfless act pushes Rochester to fight his demons and recover the faith he had lost. Rochester makes it through this stage and thanks God after Jane returns to him. Throughout *Jane Eyre*, Rochester confides in Jane. He opens up to her and trusts her in a way that is uncommon for a master and governess relationship. Jane helps him grow and melts the ice around his heart. She makes him laugh again when others would have him cry. As he is home for Jane, she is home for Rochester. Jane tells him, “I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home—my only home” (Brontë 221). Jane is his safe space, his confidant; he sees

her as spiritually equal, something he never had with Bertha, Blanche, or Celine. Yet, the reason she is a confidant is because he is continuously conflicted and haunted by his past. Rochester is haunted by convention and what man's law requires of him. It is an endless punishment of grief and sorrow. Rochester's regret and yearning for a chance are conveyed throughout the novel, but after the terrible reminder when Bertha stabs Mason his conversation with Jane is especially telling:

‘Well then, Jane, call to aid your fancy—suppose you were no longer a girl well reared and discipline, but a wild boy indulged from childhood upwards; imagine yourself in a remote foreign land; conceive that you there commit a capital error, no matter of what nature or from what motives, but one whose consequences must follow you through life and taint all your existence. Mind, I don't say a *crime*; I am not speaking of shedding blood or any other guilty act, which might make the perpetrator amenable to the law: my word is *error*. The results of what you have done become in time to you utterly insupportable; you take measures to obtain relief: unusual measures, but neither unlawful nor culpable. Still you are miserable; for hope has quitted you on the very confines of life: your sun at noon darkens in an eclipse, which you feel will not leave it till the time of setting. Bitter and base associations have become the sole food of your memory: you wander here and there, seeking rest in exile:’ (Brontë 196-197).

Through the conversation, Brontë reveals the level of anguish Rochester must face daily and an internal introspection. Rochester's despair is engendered by the harm done to him. This is why he dresses as a gypsy and why he encourages the belief that he is to marry another woman. He wants to break loose from the prison that has held him captive due to an error, an error that stemmed from his trust in others.

Rochester's behavior is a result of endless torment perpetuated by the ones who are supposed to care for him the most. It is not Rochester who "mentally torments" Jane as Zare, Nygren, and Yurdakul argue, but it is he who is mentally tortured by being stuck with no recourse. Rochester finds the possibility of escape in Jane. He loves her passionately: "You--you strange—you almost unearthly thing!--I love as my own flesh" (Brontë 229). He has finally found his equal and yet, she loves him just as deeply, "And if I loved him less I should have thought his accent and look of exultation savage; but, sitting by him, roused from the nightmare of parting—called to the paradise of union—I thought only of the bliss given me to drink in so abundant a flow" revealing the reciprocity of love that makes his pain that much stronger (Brontë 229). He now has hope, a possibility of breaking the chains that bind him to his misery, which is enough to make anyone go against convention.

Convention and societal norms shackle Rochester to a mentally ill wife, stealing from him the opportunity to have a true marriage. Phillips agrees when he claims that Rochester's marriage to Bertha has no substance. Marriage, for Brontë's Rochester, must have conversation, the joining of intellectual minds. He argues that *Jane Eyre* is ultimately a marriage treatise and believes that "What is at issue in *Jane Eyre* is a disentanglement of marriage and Christian duty" and that Brontë does not favor one over the other but does call for a separation of the two given how Jane sticks to the morals of Christian duty in reference to marriage but ends up marrying Rochester after the obstacle was taken care of by an act of God (209). According to the law, a lawful marriage only consisted of the act within the church and a piece of paper. To end the marriage would take an act of God, as there were very few grounds for divorce, and neither madness nor unhappiness was one. Phillips's argument makes one think of John Milton in his plea to Parliament in "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" to allow a divorce for a

cacophony of the mind, for not matching souls. Likewise, Rochester believes that a true marriage relies on an equal connectedness of the mind. Rochester was never married because there was never harmony between his and Bertha's mind and soul. For him to inwardly deny his marriage to Bertha is not a characteristic of a power-hungry colonizer, for if he was, he would be proud of his conquest of body, no matter how damaged it was. He explains to Jane:

“I found her nature wholly alien to mine; her tastes obnoxious to me; her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger—when I found that I could not pass a single evening, nor even a single hour of the day, with her in comfort: that kindly conversation could not be sustained between us, because whatever topic I started immediately received from her a turn at once coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile.” (274).

For England in this period and Milton's, marriage was centered around the physical aspect of the union with little care about the pair's happiness after the ceremony was complete. Rochester's words to Jane reveal that any attempt of transcending the perverse actions and conversation was non-existent. Rochester knows that through the act of “marrying” Jane he would transcend the physical and earthly pleasures. He would find contentment that comes with the entanglement of two equal minds able to move past the carnal pleasures and find harmony in each other's souls. Rochester knows that Jane is the piece of him that is missing. As Phillips states, “Rochester wishes to marry Jane because it is through marriage that he will be able to enter a relationship of equals” (203). Rochester was robbed of contentment by Bertha, her family, and his family. Their conspiring took away half his life. All Rochester is asking, desiring, and fighting for is to now live out his life in harmony with the soul that matches his.

Rochester compels sympathy due to a dreadful past. As a Byronic hero, he is also stuck in “intense introspection” that leads to his “fiery rebellion” against societal norms and conventions (Wheeler). Rhys reignites the pity for Rochester since her novel reveals the manipulation he faces as a pattern of behavior from his mentally unstable wife. As in *Jane Eyre*, Antoinette of *Wide Sargasso Sea* tries to use sex to secure Rochester and his love, resulting in his immediate physical pain and extended emotional pain. It seems as if Rochester will never escape the prison of his emotional wreckage. The colonizing villainous behavior of which scholars accuse him is a reaction to the real villainous actions of others. The emotional torment lasts until his escape through Jane’s love. Jane is brought to Thornfield by fate. Her own restlessness pushes her to him. He does not force her. There is no such thing as coincidence. Jane tames the seemingly cold and heartless beast and soothes his mind and soul. Rochester desires a relationship that he knows will transcend this world, a world full of human convention that imprisons him by preventing an escape through a divorce. Societal norms force him to “deceive” little Jane and hide his hollow shell of a marriage from her and the world. Rochester is not *naturally* a scoundrel or ignoble, the defined characteristics of a villain. He is made that way through the betrayal of his family and the manipulation of a conniving woman.

Therefore, it is imperative to widen the perspective and lens one utilizes when analyzing Rochester. Using post-colonial theory severely limits an understanding of his character. It shoves Rochester into a one-size-fits-all box that conceals the multiplicity of his character. A post-colonial approach to Rochester limits and confines an interpretation of him by ignoring the numerous and multifaceted aspects of his inner psyche, a psyche that deserves attention given how it has been ignored by much of the scholarship. Rochester’s past being wrought with traumatic betrayal and neglect also calls for a psychoanalytic lens. A psychoanalytic approach is

required in order to recognize the various elements embedded in the character of Rochester.

Without the psychoanalytic approach, he could continuously be misunderstood as a colonizing villain. Psychoanalytic theory allows for a deeper reading of *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations, an approach that is needed to widen the discourse and understand Rochester. The following chapters will demonstrate the benefits of a psychoanalytic approach.

Chapter II: Rochester's Search for Meaning and His Mother in *Jane Eyre* and *Mr. Rochester*

In both *Jane Eyre* and *Mr. Rochester*, Rochester's traumatic childhood and its psychological effects that plague him daily are conveyed through his thoughts, dialogue, and actions. Jane's thoughts and narration further reiterate Rochester's psychological struggles in *Jane Eyre*. In order to obtain a holistic understanding of Rochester's character, a psychoanalytic approach is imperative because it will reveal the various neuroses that plague him as well as convey how he is not a colonizing imperialist that a post-colonial lens tries to portray him as. Psychoanalyst, Nancy Chodorow, as revealed in *The Power of Feelings: Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender, and Culture*, describes the various ways one creates meaning and a sense of self. Self-meaning constantly changes given how one has different experiences with different people at various times. Transferences affect a sense of self, and transference is "the root psychoanalytic discovery" given how it engenders other neuroses such as resistance and repression (26). Through the theory of transference one can argue that emotion entwines with perception, cognition, language, and interaction. Transference is everywhere, and "without transference, our inner life, our relations to others, even our experiences of the physical world would be empty and devitalized," revealing that transference is a major part of one developing a sense of self, a way to make meaning of the world (23). Throughout Rochester's life he transfers his feelings for his mother onto the females he encounters due to his lack of healthy self-other relationships.

However, the sense and meaning one makes of the world must come from within. In various stages of Rochester's life, he goes through the process of projection, introjection, and

fantasy, to give life and meaning to his meaningless world. Transference, projection, introjection, and fantasy are “continuously active processes through which, in any immediate moment, we have the ability to bestow multiple emotional and cognitive meaning on perception or experience,” revealing that meaning is in constant change depending on the circumstances and how one perceives the context and relationships which they are in (21). Psychological transference is when a person diverts their desires and feelings about one person onto a different person. In transference, the emotions one feels about someone are directed at others when that person they feel them about isn't there. For instance, a person who may have negative feelings about their mother will transfer those feelings onto another female they encounter that reminds them of their mother, much like Rochester does with Bertha and Jane. Projection is when a person takes what is in their own mind and assigns those thoughts and feelings to others, believing they feel that way as well. An example of projection is when someone thinks negatively about themselves, unconsciously or consciously, they think that others are also having those same negative thoughts. Rochester believes that the world condemns his character because early in his childhood his father and brother view him negatively. Introjection is a defense mechanism where a person internalizes the ideas of another and adopts them as their own. When a person introjects, they accept someone else's expectation or projection and construct it as an element of their own self-image. Psychoanalysis suggests that people are driven to gain a sense of a meaningful life while also trying to manage unconscious and conscious threats in order to interpret and create outward experiences in ways that echo the internal experiences and senses of self-other relationships. Therefore, through psychoanalyzing Rochester one can see how he is in a continuous state of trying to find meaning.

Wide Sargasso Sea ignites a flurry of scholarship utilizing post-colonial theory due to Rhys's manipulating the backstory of Brontë's Bertha and Rochester. By contrast, *Mr. Rochester*, the 2017 novel adaptation by Sarah Shoemaker, provides a backstory from Rochester's perspective that allows an analysis of his character that is more aligned to the prime text. Shoemaker gives Rochester a defined past, starting as a young child of eight, and immediately begins with his remembering how he had desired his mother, not in the sexual sense, but of missing what he had never known because she died when he was an infant. He remembers staring at a portrait of her that hung in the parlor. However, after his father catches him, his father has it removed, leaving Rochester searching for it throughout his life. It introduces the reader to the malice of Rochester's father, George Rochester, and the nastiness of his brother, Rowland. Shoemaker establishes the plight of the second-born son in Victorian England and reminds the reader of this throughout all parts of the novel, as this fact drives much of what happens to Rochester and how he internalizes his position in the socio-economic structure. Rochester is largely ignored by the two male figures throughout the whole novel and spends his early years primarily with the servants at Thornfield. Shoemaker's adaptation provides the reader with an alternate version of Rhys's Rochester before his marriage and during his marriage to the mentally ill Bertha Mason, one that is in tune with the psychological trauma he has endured.

Given how *Jane Eyre* is the prime text, it is vital to highlight the instances within the novel where there are hints and insight into Rochester's psychological trouble. Reference to Rochester's past trauma through his own narration is first presented in *Jane Eyre* not long after his introduction to Jane. In one of the pair's first deep conversations he reveals a personal part of himself, telling Jane:

‘Yes, yes, you are right,’ said he; ‘I have plenty of faults of my own: I know it, and I don’t wish to palliate them, I assure you. God wot I need not be too severe about others; I have a past existence, a series of deeds, a colour of life to contemplate within my own breast, which might well call my sneers and censures from my neighbours to myself. I started, or rather (for, like other defaulters, I like to lay half the blame on ill fortune and adverse circumstances) was thrust on to a wrong tack at the age of one-and-twenty, and have never recovered the right course since: but I might have been very different; I might have been as good as you—wiser, almost as stainless. I envy you your pure peace of mind, your clean conscience, your unpolluted memory.’ (Brontë 124)

Here it is evident that he does not have any inward peace given how he envies Jane because of it. Rochester struggles inwardly. Moreover, Rochester discloses his own self-criticism that he has internalized from his father and brother. Due to Rochester internalizing these negative feelings he assumes that is how others see him. Therefore, he introjects these supposed critical feelings he believes others would have of him, causing him to be harsh on himself, as well as eventually transferring these feelings onto others. Yet, there has only been praise and understanding of his character by his servant Mrs. Fairfax, stating of Rochester that “his character is unimpeachable” (97).

Conspicuously, Mrs. Fairfax understands Rochester’s grief when she tells Jane, in response to Jane’s perceiving him as hard and abrupt, “True: no doubt he may appear so to a stranger, but I am so accustomed to his manner I never think of it: and then, if he has peculiarities of temper, allowance should be made. . . . Partly because it is his nature—and we can none of us help our nature; and partly, he has painful thoughts, no doubt, to harass him and make his spirits unequal” (Brontë 117). Mrs. Fairfax conveys an understanding of Rochester’s psyche in this statement

given how she considers the reasons for his actions and way of being. Chodorow's theory that "Both childhood psychological experience and cultural determinations are filtered, and in a sense personally created, in and through psychological activity, which is always contingent, historicized, individual, and biographically specific," pertains to Rochester as it reveals that a combination of nature, culture, and internal feelings contribute to one's psychological state which is conveyed through one's actions (4). Rochester's actions toward others are impacted by his self-criticism which has been ingrained into him by his male relatives and society. His self-criticism afflicts his psyche and causes trauma that he continuously attempts to work through. Clearly, Mrs. Fairfax believes this to be true of Rochester and attempts to make Jane understand it as well. Also, although the reader is privy to these positive and understanding reflections about Rochester, Rochester himself is not. His own self-criticism is engendered by the deceptive treatment of him by the ones he trusted most.

Mrs. Fairfax introduces and further reveals Rochester's "childhood psychological experience" and "cultural determinations" when she is conversing with Jane about his family. Mrs. Fairfax relays to Jane that he has no family alive and that Rochester had family troubles with his father and elder brother:

'I believe there were some misunderstandings between them. Mr. Rowland Rochester was not quite just to Mr. Edward; and, perhaps, he prejudiced his father against him. The old gentleman was fond of money, and anxious to keep the family estate together. He did not like to diminish the property by division, and yet he was anxious that Mr. Edward should have wealth too, to keep up the consequence of the name; and soon after he was of age, some steps were taken that were not quite fair, and made a great deal of mischief. Old Mr. Rochester and Mr. Rowland combined to bring Mr. Edward into what he

considered a painful position, for the sake of making his fortune; what the precise nature of that position was I never clearly knew, but his spirit could not brook what he had to suffer in it. He is not very forgiving; he broke with his family, and now for many years he has led an unsettled kind of life. I don't think he has ever been resident of Thornfield for a fortnight together since the death of his brother without a will left him master of the estate; and, indeed, no wonder he shuns the old place' (Brontë 117).

In the history of his past, provided by someone close to the family, Rochester's rocky relationship with the two older males is presented, as well as a reason for his pain, and no reference to his mother. These vital men in Rochester's life discard and use him and do not have a high opinion or respect for Rochester. Rochester exemplifies Chodorow's idea that "In projections and projective identification, we put our feelings, beliefs, or parts of our self into an other, whether another person with whom we are interacting, an internal object or part-object that has already been created through projective-introjective exchanges, or an idea, symbol, or any other meaning or entity," when he internalizes his father's and brother's negative feelings (15). Rochester's feeling of self is directly affected by how others feel about him and he projects those feelings onto others.

Not only does Rochester internalize the two dominant males' feelings of him, but he also lacks a mother. In *Jane Eyre* the mother is non-existent, there is no female other to counter-act the males' treatment of Rochester and thus no motherly love to shield and tend to Rochester's damaged feelings. In *Mr. Rochester*, Rochester searches for the portrait of his mother, who he never knew but always thinks of, because it once brought him peace as a young, neglected child. His mother, or the lack thereof, plagues Rochester's mind. The first sentence of *Mr. Rochester* emphasizes the lack of a mother when Rochester states "I know little of my birth, for my mother

died long before she could tell me—before I ever heard her voice or gazed at her face—” conveying that he never had a chance to know a mother’s love (Shoemaker 3). In the same breath, he also gives insight into the type of man his father was, one that viewed his mother’s death as “a waste to lose a good broodmare” (3). Rochester’s father is portrayed as a harsh and uncaring character. Rochester’s narration reveals that his “mother was never spoken of; I never heard her name pass anyone’s lips, and it was years before I even knew what it was” highlighting the carelessness of his father and older brother (Shoemaker 4).

However, he also divulges one of his earliest memories, that of a portrait of his mother hanging above the mantel in the drawing room, a “cozy” place and one which his “father rarely entered” (4). He loves the drawing room and the way it makes him feel like he is close to the mother he never knew. Rochester states that:

It became my habit, first thing in the morning and just before bedtime, to stand before that portrait, as if standing before the reality, as if waiting for her approbation, or when I had done some little thing which I might be ashamed, as if sensing her disapproval. My father caught me at it one day when I thought he was gone from the hall. He must have come back for some forgotten item and passed the half-opened door and seen me there. ‘Boy!’ he said, startling me. ‘Come away from there! You have no business in there.’ I stepped back, and then, fearing his quick hand, darted past him and up the stairs to the nursery, another place he never came. I stayed away from my mother for two whole days., but I kept hearing her *calling* me, until finally I crept back to the parlor and pushed the door open—and she was gone. In her place was another painting—a hunting scene . . . the sort of thing that hangs in public houses. There was nothing familiar or reassuring

about it, nothing to fill the *aching hole* that suddenly came to my gut. (Emphasis mine, 4-5)

Rochester's one comfort and solace is snatched from him, causing him to mourn the fantasy of his mother being with him, to praise and scold him. Rochester's thought conveys the love he has for his non-existent mother. She is the first and last thing he thinks of every day. He even imagines that she scolds him for the actions that cause his conscience to feel guilty. He fantasizes that she calls him, revealing a deep psychological trauma. Even when his harsh and intimidating father commands him to stay away his need and desire for his mother draws him back to her. Chodorow in "From Behind the Couch: Uncertainty and Indeterminacy in Psychoanalytical Theory and Practice" states that "fantasy is what makes reality meaningful instead of meaningless" (469). Rochester's lack of a mother causes him to fantasize about one in the way that Chodorow describes fantasy: making the meaningless meaningful. Rochester imagines how his mother would guide him. Even in his earliest memory he attempts to make his reality meaningful.

Yet even the fantasy is ripped to shreds by the father, causing Rochester to lose that meaning and thus continuously search for it. Furthermore, Chodorow, in *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities; Freud and Beyond* states that an "ingredient in how women and men love. . . arise from their negotiation of their relationship to their mother, or to a female caretaker and primary love object" revealing that a mother-son relationship directly affects the son's future relationships (84). However, Rochester is denied the relationship Chodorow describes, even the fake one he creates in his mind. Even more damaging to Rochester's psyche is his relationship with his father, epitomized by Chodorow when she asserts that "A primary way in which the closely intertwined cultures of gender and love may enter the family and the child's unconscious,

then, is through the father. Part of any investigation of how women and men love must include . . . attention to how this gender, power, and paternal appreciation for a child were experienced and helped shape a self” (87). The combination of Rochester not having a mother and the neglect by his father work together to create a lost sense of self in Rochester that bleeds out as transference into those he comes in contact with, including Bertha and Jane.

A deeper understanding of Rochester’s psychological trouble requires a summary of Rochester’s early life in Sarah Shoemaker’s adaptation *Mr. Rochester*. After Rochester’s mother and his fantasy is ripped away, at the young age of eight, Rochester’s father sends him away to learn. At his first stop, Mr. Lincoln’s home in Black Hill, he learns historical war strategies that his father intends him to use in future business dealings. It is here in this small setting where he finally gains two male friends whom he loves very much. However, they eventually leave and die. When Rochester is thirteen, his father finally writes to let him know he will continue his education by going to a mill owner, Mr. Wilson. Rochester enjoys his time at the mill and becomes close to Mr. and Mrs. Wilson. However, tragedy strikes, and Mrs. Wilson’s sister becomes mentally unsound and moves into the home, which puts more stress on Mr. Wilson, who ends up having a stroke and eventually dying. During his time away, his father and brother have been in Jamaica. When his father returns, he tells Rochester that Thornfield and everything he has in England will be Rowland’s. However, he will not be embarrassed by having a poor son, therefore he has set up a business in Jamaica for Rochester. Naïve Rochester believes that his father cares about him and desires to make him proud, even when George blatantly displays his favoritism to Rowland and treats Rochester as an afterthought. Rochester reveals that he was looking forward to Jamaica and has elevated expectations. Rochester must go to school at Cambridge. After his graduation, he states that he learned two things while there: One is that

anyone can hide themselves behind a mask and the other is that he deeply yearned for a home and companionship. His father does come to his graduation but only to discuss his future, and hints at his arranged marriage to Bertha, although he makes it seem optional. Rochester reflects at the end of book one as he is about to take his voyage to Jamaica that he feels like a fool for believing his father cared and for thanking him profusely for all he had done.

Rochester's psychological struggles begin at birth and plague him throughout his life as revealed in *Mr. Rochester*. Only when he finds his Jane does he begin to heal. For Rochester, Jane is not only his soulmate, but she also comes to symbolize and stand in for the lost mother. Pickrel highlights this loss when he writes, "Beneath his bantering tone he is crying for help out of that one sentient point that is left in the lump—his heart, presumably. He is beseeching Jane Eyre for some word of hope that the depersonalization that has been taking him over will not become complete," reiterating Rochester's inability to find an inward self and is the result of a harsh and neglectful father and the absence of the mother (165). Rochester's behavior is a reaction to his inability to find meaning. He has been searching for this meaning and when he thinks he has found a sense of self, it is stolen from him, just like his mother and her portrait. He begins to find meaning when he meets Jane and although he is eventually healed, while physically maimed, his journey to this discovery is one that is wrought with many "almosts." Jamal et al use a post-colonial lens to examine the character of Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and focus on what they believe to be his feelings of displacement and alienation that ultimately cause him to behave in a harsh manner to everyone he encounters. Jamal et al argues that "he felt displaced as he had travelled hundreds of miles from the comforts of his home country to a foreign one which was a strange new world," implying that the move to Jamaica is what initiated

his feelings of displacement and isolation (114). Although Rochester undoubtedly feels on the outside in Jamaica, his feelings of displacement began at birth and continue through adulthood.

Rochester never had the relationships that would provide him with subjective meaning. As Chodorow explains, there are two contradictory claims about human subjectivity. One is that meaning is created from within and that through analysis one comes to discover the unconscious fears and fantasies. The other one is an intersubjective view, that from birth we begin to form our self and understand the self through our relationships with others. Chodorow believes that in psychoanalysis both views must be considered. Rochester is displaced due to his lack of finding and understanding his “self” given how he lacked developing meaningful relationships with others. Rochester’s attempts at having a healthy significant relationship with another continue to be snatched away. Rochester transfers his own self-hatred to others because his hope is continuously shattered. In *Mr. Rochester*, Rochester is isolated in Thornfield and at the age of eight begins his education with Mr. Hiram Lincoln. At Mr. Lincoln’s home, Rochester begins to build his first healthy relationship. Rochester’s first lesson is on the history and geographical location of Jamaica due to his lack of knowledge about the place his father and brother were traveling to. He gets his first taste of companionship when he relays to Mr. Lincoln and the two other male pupils what he learned, stating that “It was the first time such a thing had ever happened to me: one adult and two other boys listening raptly to my accounts,” revealing that he had never had anyone to converse with and especially not ones that *listened* and *valued* what he had to say (25). On that day he had “fallen in love with Jamaica” due to its intriguing history and how different and exotic it was, as well as the fact that he wanted to impress his father (26). He and his friends reenact historical battles in the Caribbean and learn all they can about Jamaica,

while also romanticizing it. The focus on Jamaica begins the treachery inflicted upon Rochester, given how he desires and has a need to please his father who never had a kind word for him.

Rochester's tragic childhood continues to haunt him as he develops into a young man. The relationships he was beginning to develop were also stolen from him. Death took the life of one not long after Rochester began to love him. The other left Lincoln's not long after and ends up befriending Rochester's older and treacherous brother, Rowland. Rochester as a child spent an immense amount of time alone and ignored. When other pupils would come and go from Lincoln's for a holiday to see family, Rochester had no one, not even a letter to check on his wellbeing. Rochester "pined for a real home, with a real family" due to his never having had the experience of one (Shoemaker 32). Until Rochester finds Jane, he suffers from loneliness. Chodorow utilizes Adler, Bui, and Klein to help explain that "overwhelming loneliness and emptiness—the loss of a two-person psychology—can lead to the disappearance of evocative memory and even recognition" and how loneliness "emerges when the integration of good and bad objects and self is not able to maintain enough idealization and enough assurance that one won't destroy the good object" (276-277). Since Rochester lacks "the good-enough internal presence of the mother" he cannot have a healthy "aleness" (Chodorow 277). Therefore, Rochester continuously tries to find a true companion, one that can help him fill the void left by the ones who were supposed to protect him and help him find subjective meaning.

Instead of finding his subjective meaning in the early stages of life through relationships with others, Rochester is left with only shells of companionship. Chodorow's idea that the repercussions that are engendered by an unhealthy "aleness" can cause one to possibly destroy the "good object" helps explain Rochester's treatment of Jane when he attempts to marry her while being legally married to Bertha. Jane is the one and only good other that can satisfy his

loneliness and desire for *true* companionship. By understanding that unhealthy loneliness is a psychological defect created by the absence of a mother or mother-like figure, one can see the reason behind Rochester's choices and actions in reference to his "good" Jane. Stoneman also recognizes that Rochester attaches himself to Jane because she becomes his own mother figure (113-114). Holmes and Torrell also recognize Jane as the stand-in mother when they use disability studies to discuss Rochester's maiming and how it creates an opportunity for Jane to nurse Rochester back to health after Bertha burns down Thornfield (Holmes 165; Torrell 79). Torrell insists that Jane's unveiling of male bodies questions ability and gender hierarchies which in turn causes an intervention into the cultural attitudes about disability and masculinity that result in a "nonhegemonic model of masculinity" (71). This new model complements physical disability instead of contradicts because disability erases the dominance of one gender over another. Rochester's disability not only erases gender dominance, but it also places Jane into a mother figure role. Given how Rochester never had the role fulfilled, Jane becomes vital to his healing process as she asserts her motherly power over his caretaking. In Jane, he finds the mother and self he has spent a lifetime searching for. Their marriage is the healthy self-other relationship Rochester's psyche has needed. Due to Rochester never obtaining subjective meaning through healthy parental relationships he unconsciously looks to Jane to fill that void.

Chapter III: The Psychoanalytical Understanding of Edward Rochester

When reading and analyzing Edward Rochester's character, a psychoanalytic lens provides an opportunity for an understanding of who he is holistically and explains the "why" behind his behavior in *Jane Eyre* and all adaptations. Even though the novels were written in different time periods by different authors, all three works present a Rochester that suffers from the same neuroses. By using a psychoanalytic lens when reading Rochester, a new perspective as to how he is affected by other characters and his reactions to them, as well as his unconscious struggles are more clearly conveyed. A neurosis is a mental illness that is revealed through symptoms of stress, such as obsessive behavior or anxiety, without a complete loss of reality. Chodorow in "From behind the Couch" states that "all psychoanalytical theories find common ground in the assumption that much of psychic life is unconscious and that our minds operate in terms of unconscious defenses," revealing a commonality and baseline for all psychoanalysis (475). Rochester displays these "unconscious defenses," or neuroses as he works through his traumatic past that ultimately leads him to Jane. Rochester is in a constant state of searching for the mother he never had and for subjective meaning given how he never had healthy self-other relationships to engender a positive sense of self. By understanding that Rochester inwardly suffers and unconsciously uses defense mechanisms to deal with his traumatic childhood and ill treatment by others, one can better understand the motivations behind his acts in *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Mr. Rochester*.

Due to Rochester's continuous search for meaning, he is often let down once he gets his hopes up. In *Mr. Rochester*, immediately after arriving in Jamaica, Richard, Bertha's brother, begins to groom Rochester for Bertha, "Richard enthused that a more beautiful woman could not

be imagined—those were his exact words” (Shoemaker 171). Rochester’s young mind and naiveté are no match for the cunning of his worldly father, who connived in the scheme with Bertha’s brother and father to deceive Rochester into marrying Bertha. Bertha and her male relatives begin to seduce and encourage Rochester to be infatuated by Bertha’s beauty while keeping her out of reach in order to prevent any long conversations that might reveal her mental instability. However, despite the lack of conversation, Rochester’s need to be loved and desire to have a self-other relationship that would aid in his journey of subjective meaning tricks his naïve young mind into thinking he has found what he has been in search of. Rochester reveals that “When she stared directly into my eyes, which, unlike so many women, she often did, I felt she saw into my soul, saw all that I was, and when she smiled, I felt the kind of approbation I had always hoped for,” emphasizing his deep desire to be loved, something he has never had (Shoemaker 182). Here, Rochester transfers his feelings for his mother onto Bertha, whom he mistakenly believes knows him and praises him with her eyes, just like the portrait of his mother did when he was a young child. Chodorow, in *The Power of Feelings*, helps explain Rochester’s feelings when she states that “transference is ubiquitous, for it is the means by which we give personal psychological meaning to persons or experiences” and that “transference is psychologically necessary; without transference, our inner life, our relations to others, even our experiences of the physical world, would be empty and devitalized” (23). Therefore, one can understand why Rochester would so quickly, and mistakenly, feel that this beautiful woman could see into his soul. Rochester’s world has been emptied of any deep human connection. He yearns for the relationship that he fantasized about as a child staring at his mother’s portrait, thus he transfers those feelings he had for his mother onto Bertha. Rochester thinks he has found in Bertha what he has been in search of since birth, a deception fueled not only by his own

psychological neuroses, but also by his own father, Bertha's father and brother, and by Bertha herself.

Just like in *Jane Eyre* and *Mr. Rochester*, Rochester is motivated by his unconscious desires and obsessive need to feel and share love in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. However, many scholars, like Acquarone, have disregarded his psychological issues in their analysis. Acquarone argues that Rochester's "actions are guided by demands of the environment rather than by his inner feelings, wishes, or intentions," making him seem like an unfeeling object and completely rejecting any psychological issue that may be the catalyst for his actions (23). While Rochester is certainly affected by his geographical location, his inner psychological feelings propel his actions. Even in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the text from which Acquarone pulls her analysis, Rochester's actions are motivated by an inner feeling of emptiness, not by the demands of the environment, "She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it" (Rhys 103). Rochester believes he found the answer to his emptiness, he hopes the empty shell will be filled by Bertha. When he learns of her deception and mental instability, he is devastated. It is just another fantasy ripped from him. He yearns for someone to complete his soul, to heal him with their love, to provide the meaning he never had.

Rochester is tormented by his "almost" relationships that would have provided him with some of the healing that he desires. With these hopes repeatedly smashed, he becomes hardened. Brontë's Rochester in *Jane Eyre* tells Jane that,

"I once had a kind of rude tenderness of heart. When I was as old as you, I was a feeling fellow enough; partial to the unfledged, unfostered, and unlucky; but fortune has knocked me about since: she has even kneaded me with her knuckles, and how I flatter myself I am hard and tough as an India-rubber ball." (Brontë 121)

Rochester's dialogue reveals how he is downtrodden by a past that leaves him hard and empty, thus conveying how he suffers from psychological repression. As Rochester becomes hard as an "India-rubber ball" he unconsciously blocks the unpleasant thoughts, impulses, and emotions from his conscious mind. However, Rochester consciously feels his emptiness and, in his past, has actively attempted to fill the emptiness. Yet those attempts result in further loss and betrayal. Rhys's Rochester figure in *Wide Sargasso Sea* also becomes hardened when he can't find the meaning he searches for in Antoinette, "She's mad but *mine, mine*. What will I care for gods or devils or of Fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. For *me*" (Rhys 99). While some may read Rochester's thoughts as imperialistic and controlling, desperation and desolation motivate his thoughts, engendered by his ceaseless loss of hope in finding his other that would provide him with subjective meaning. The traumatic feelings and memories he repressed as a self-defense mechanism come barreling back, triggering his harsh response to the betrayal. Because he thought Bertha would heal him, he refuses to accept that his attempt at a healthy relationship with her has failed.

In *Mr. Rochester*, Shoemaker gives the gruesome details of Rochester and Bertha's marriage and the ways in which Rochester did all he could to salvage the marriage to the woman he thought would save him. She also emphasizes the physical and mental he went through when he realized Bertha could not provide for his psychological needs. Rochester mourns for the compatibility he thought he had found. The loneliness afflicts his mind for he has "No one with whom to sit of an evening and read, or sing, or play an instrument," no companionship that he has longed for (Shoemaker 221). Rochester's despair becomes unbearable, and he thinks to himself:

What kind of life is this? I asked myself. *It is hell. She is as sound of body as she is unsound of mind. She will live for years and years, and I will have to endure it all.* I suddenly felt I could not. I could not go on living in that hell, and I wished I had not talked Richard out of a duel, wished I had stood before him and let him shoot me as many times as it would take for him to find the target and kill me. For I felt, at that moment, that only death would relieve me of a burden that had become too heavy to bear.

(Shoemaker 237-238)

Rochester has not only lost a possible relationship that would help him find his meaning, but he is now shackled to a mentally ill woman whom he was tricked and deceived into marrying by the father that is supposed to protect him. While many scholars have sympathized and empathized with Bertha, to disregard Rochester's suffering because he is a male is a mistake. He too suffers and has no legal means to end his suffering. Rochester's suffering stems from his transferring his feelings for his mother onto Bertha, whom he thought would provide him with the love of the mother he desires. Chodorow, in *The Power of Feelings*, aids in understanding Rochester when she states that "What matters is not the presence of transference but whether transferences are incorporated into psychic life in a way that gives texture and richness to experience, whether one lives one's transferences or is lived or driven by them" (247). Rochester, driven by transference feelings, believed that he had found "richness" and fulfillment in life with Bertha. When the fantasy of "texture and richness" is extinguished, Rochester is desperate and finally decides to return to England where he creates a safe space for his mentally ill, *legal*, wife.

The suffering and neuroses that Rochester struggles with must be contemplated when analyzing the interactions between him and any other character, especially the opposite gender, given how he never had a mother or female guidance or a reflective other. Even in his own

suffering, Rochester ensures that Bertha is taken care of, revealing that he is not the cold and harsh colonizer that many scholars portray him to be. In *Mr. Rochester*, Rochester understands that a mental institution is not a humane place and swears to never subject Bertha to the harsh environment of such an institution. When Rochester realizes that Bertha is mentally ill, he visits the asylum where her mother resides and describes it as dark and depressing, it “smelled of urine and vomit and God knows what else” and had “several cells crowded with women” with only a bucket for their waste (Shoemaker 216). After Rochester’s visit, he thinks to himself “Bertha there, in that place? It was no wonder her father forbade it and *she* was *terrified* of it. I could not blame them. As I rode away, the horror of that place would not leave me, and I, too, became as determined as Jonas to prevent Bertha from ending up there” (emphasis added) (217). *Wide Sargasso Sea* also conveys how Rochester pledged to do all he could for her, “‘I will not forsake her,’ I said wearily, ‘I will do all I can for her’” (Rhys 95).

Rochester’s determination to prevent Bertha from suffering from the dismal asylum illustrates that he is not the cold-hearted villain that those who use a post-colonial lens paint him as. Rochester has the opportunity to rid himself completely of Bertha and his connections with Jamaica, while still having ownership over the female body and “foreign” land. However, he refuses to enact this colonization and instead takes her to England where he can provide as healthy and safe a place as he can for her. Furthermore, Rochester also could keep Bertha in a separate home, a good distance away from Thornfield which could provide the concealment of his first marriage in a more efficient manner. Yet, Rochester considers Bertha’s health and safety, proving that he is not cruel. In *Jane Eyre*, in his passionate pleas to Jane to understand his motivations and actions, he explains that Bertha had to be at Thornfield:

My plans would not permit me to remove the maniac elsewhere—though I possess an old house, Ferndean Manor, even more retired and hidden than this, where I could have lodged her safely enough, had not a scruple about the unhealthiness of the situation, in the heart of a wood, made my conscience recoil from the arrangement, Probably those damp walls would soon have eased me of her charge: but to each villain his own vice; and mine is not a tendency to indirect assassination, even of what I most hate. (Brontë 269)

Rochester refuses to put Bertha in dire conditions that could possibly kill her because he cares about her health and safety. Rochester does the best he can in an impossible situation.

Rochester cannot find healing with Bertha, and in his loss continues to battle with a loneliness he feels in his soul, causing him to travel to Paris in hopes of finding meaning in life. He thinks to himself in *Mr. Rochester*,

Have I not a right to a life? I asked myself. Have I not as much a right as the next man?

Time and again I had tried to do the moral thing had I not? And how had that worked out for me? *No*, I told myself, *this stops here*. I was done with it, done with Bertha, or as much as I could be. I would start over, and find love on my own terms. (Shoemaker 283)

Rochester's thoughts convey a deep-seated desire to love and be loved in a way he never had been, which motivates him to fight against the foul hand that had been dealt to him. In his quest to find an other that could help him heal from his traumatic experiences as a child and young adult he continues to encounter more "almosts" that raise and snatch his hopes away. Celine Varens is another woman whom Rochester believes he loves but is deceived yet again when he catches her cheating on him with another man. When thoroughly dissected, Rochester's life reveals a pattern of manipulation and deception committed against him, always placing him in a

reactionary position while continuously trying to repair the damage others have caused to his psyche. Therefore, his actions and behavior with Jane are understandable given how he is in a lost and desperate state and yearns for a deep connection that can provide him with the subjective meaning which he needs to start healing from the trauma.

Rochester's desire for a reciprocal love that can help him heal from his traumatic experiences motivates his actions toward the women in his life. However, Zare argues that "Rochester mentally tortures Jane" and claims that he "vents his rage" on the female gender through his teasing and trickery that he utilizes to get Jane to profess her love (205-206). Zare views Rochester's behavior as deceitful and avers that "with each new appearance Rochester reveals that he is obsessed with proving his absolute power over women" implying that a need for power and control, not love or a shattered psyche motivates his actions (207). Yet, reading with a psychoanalytic lens shows that Rochester does not wish to control Jane nor is it his intention to "torture" her. Desperate for unconditional love Rochester feels he has found it with Jane. Rochester vows to himself, "I would do whatever I must to not lose Jane" (Shoemaker 330). His actions are guided by love and desperation, and he is unsure of how to navigate through these feelings due to his lack of a maternal figure as well as the deception he has lived through. For Zare, Rochester's dressing as a gypsy and inciting her jealousy is a cruel act, "As Rochester engages in his elaborate deceptions, we register his infantile cruelty" (207). However, Rochester believes these "cruel" acts will bring him closer to fulfilling his desire to feel a deep human connection with the person he has finally found that completes his mind and soul. In understanding Rochester's actions, his psyche and neuroses must be considered given how the need for power is not the catalyst of his actions and because his heart has been continuously trampled upon. Rochester fears never obtaining pure love and is anxious because of a fear of

rejection, for rejection has been the only constant in his life. Therefore, to protect his damaged heart he works to guard it by trying to obtain affirmation of Jane's love first. Rochester believes that:

If there were to be anything between me and Jane Eyre, I would have to convince her to come to me. I must reveal to her my affections without expressing them directly; *show* her how she suited me far better than any other; then extend my hand and wait for her to take it. For this now seemed immutable; *she* must make the movement—I could not.

(Shoemaker 336)

For Rochester, Jane must come to him, not because he wants to control her, but because he needs her love to be real and solid. His own mental stability depends on Jane, “Oh, God in Heaven. Jane was my only hope for relief, for regeneration” (Shoemaker 336). Just as Rochester fantasized about his mother's love and approbation as a young child, he now fantasizes about a life with Jane. Yet, he fears that he could lose Jane and this fantasy of fulfillment just as he had lost his mother.

Rochester begins to heal as Jane admits that she does love him. He is elated, for she gives his life meaning when there has been none. Rochester tells Jane that “there is not another being in the world has the same pure love for me as yourself—for I lay that pleasant unction to my soul, Jane, a belief in your affection” illustrating that Jane is the medicine for his emptiness that has plagued him since birth (Brontë 236). Jane begins to peel back the shield Rochester used to guard himself. Haller also recognizes Rochester's attempt to protect himself when she states that “while Jane takes on the roles that will add to her character and make her more presentable and pleasant to others, Rochester takes on appearances that will detract from his character and keep people at bay. The most significant aspect of their similarity is their ability to recognize pretense

in one another, rendering it ineffectual” (209-210). Unlike many *Jane Eyre* scholars, Haller attempts to understand the armor Rochester put on in order to protect himself from further vile deception. She also sees how Jane can see through the armor and into Rochester’s mind and soul, a desire Rochester has had since staring at his mother’s portrait. Jane has become the one to provide him with meaning, *unconditional* love, to praise him while also dictating his moral compass, all the qualities of motherly guidance.

Jane is essential to Rochester's psychological healing because she represents all that he has lacked and yearned for. When she returns to him after Bertha burns down Thornfield, maiming and blinding Rochester in the process, Rochester can feel her presence before he knows she is there. As he steps outside of Ferndean he says that he “felt a kind of comforting presence” (Shoemaker 444). Although he is blind and ignorant to Jane being near him, he can feel her, emphasizing how just her physically being near soothes his soul and brings him peace, just as the portrait of his mother did when he was a toddler. In their reunion he laments “I have touched you, heard you, felt the comfort of your presence—the sweetness of your consolation: I cannot give up these joys. I have little left in myself—I must have you. The world may laugh—may call me absurd, selfish—but it does not signify. My very soul demands you:” (Brontë 387). Rochester consciously understands that his healing is dependent upon Jane. Through her love and motherly guidance, Rochester finds himself. He now has a positive self-other relationship that eradicates the loneliness and emptiness he has always known. In Rochester and Jane’s marital bliss, Rochester's healing is complete. There is no more searching for his mother or subjective meaning because he has found both in Jane. As he holds her, he thinks “You are my family, and I am yours,” emphasizing his completeness (Shoemaker 447). His fulfillment tears down his seemingly cold heart, revealing that he is not by nature a villain. If Rochester was a villain the

marriage would not have been as blissful as Jane claims it is, “I know no weariness of my Edward’s society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together” (Brontë 401).

Therefore, it was not a desire to colonize the “other” nor to control the female body that engendered his thoughts and actions, for if it was, they would have bled through in his marriage.

Conclusion: Moving Away from a Colonizing Rochester

Rochester is a character that battles through oppressive psychological issues that stem from his father's neglect and deception, his lack of a mother, and his wife's betrayal. He is not a character whose deepest desires are to colonize the "other" and assert his power over the female body. Rochester is also not the harsh or coarse man who treats others badly. Through the dissection of his character using psychoanalytic theory and a close examination of his behavior, thoughts, and actions, one can see how his deeds were motivated by a need for love and subjective meaning. Despite being deceived and duped, he did the best he could for the mentally ill wife to whom he was shackled to without any lawful recourse. Furthermore, his belief in what marriage is and is supposed to be is contradictory to what the law claimed it to be, therefore he adamantly believed that he was in the right for trying to marry Jane while still being *legally* married to Bertha. The act of trying to marry Jane was not an evil one, nor was it engendered by a need to "own" both Jane and Bertha for he felt that marriage would situate him on equal terms with Jane regardless of class or gender. Rochester values intellectual equality over class equality.

Charlotte Brontë's timeless novel *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847, continues to be a focal point within the literary world, and engenders a scholarly discourse that centers on the treatment of Jane and Bertha by the infamous Edward Rochester. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966, contributed to these scholarly discussions as a prequel adaptation to Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and provided more space and opportunity for critics to villainize and condemn Rochester's behavior toward women, inciting a pattern of reading Rochester through a post-colonial lens. Scholars such as Clara Thomas, Caroline Rody, Peter Muste, Yurdakul Selin, Lutfi Abbas Lutfi, and Bonnie Zare, to name only a few, have adamantly perceived, and thus

portrayed, Rochester as an imperialistic harsh man whose only purpose was to exert his toxic masculinity and colonize the “other.” However, *Mr. Rochester*, by Sarah Shoemaker, published in 2017, works as a prequel for Rochester and not only adds to the further interpretation of Rochester’s character but also provides the opportunity for scholars to continue the discourse surrounding his character. Just as *Wide Sargasso Sea* opened the door for post-colonial scholarship, *Mr. Rochester* paves the way for scholars to employ a psychoanalytic lens when discussing *Jane Eyre* and Mr. Rochester.

Furthermore, it has become commonplace to ignore the mother text, *Jane Eyre*, in a post-colonial reading of Rochester, or the unnamed man, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Ignoring *Jane Eyre* when reading, dissecting, and discussing Rochester is a fallacy given how Brontë originally created his character. While *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be read as a standalone novel, many readers and post-colonial scholars use it to interpret Brontë’s Rochester. While scholars have jumped at the opportunities Rhys provides to view Rochester as an unforgiving colonizer, they ignore the ways in which Rhys first victimizes Rochester. Understandably scholars would overlook the victimization of Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea* given how the focus of sympathy seems to be directed toward Antoinette. However, when entering a conversation about Rochester, his motivations for his actions must be considered. Post-colonial readings of *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Mr. Rochester* ignore the real motivations behind Rochester’s behavior and instead impulsively conclude that Rochester desires patriarchal power and control.

A post-colonial lens severely limits the understanding of Rochester’s character and misconstrues him into an evil villain concerned only with domination over the female body and space, a character type Brontë never intended for him. When one forsakes a psychoanalytic approach in analyzing his motivations and behavior Rochester's struggle with his own neuroses

that are triggered by habitual betrayal is either mistakenly ignored or purposefully neglected. A psychoanalytic lens reveals how Rochester's damaged and traumatic past is the driving force behind his reactions to the female characters in *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations. In order to see the multiplicity of Rochester's character he cannot be shoved into a one-size-fits-all box that post-colonialism insists he fits into. The post-colonial approach confines the interpretation of Rochester by disregarding the multifaceted elements of his inner psyche. Rochester's psyche deserves scholarly attention because it is key to understanding his behavior. Through Rochester's, and Jane's, actions, dialogue, and thoughts the psychological issues that afflict his mind are portrayed. Throughout *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Mr. Rochester*, Rochester vigorously attempts to give life and meaning to his meaningless world. Through transference, projection, introjection, repression, and fantasy, Rochester works through his neuroses to find the subjective meaning which he has never known. Chodorow, in *The Power of Feelings*, emphasizes that "transference is the vehicle for expressing unconscious fantasy, those constructions of self and object that we create through projections and introjections" and which are vital to a healthy ego and shaping of experiences (247). To attempt to find his subjective meaning and create healthy relationships and experiences, Rochester unconsciously fantasizes about being truly loved by his mother, and thus transfers those feelings for and about his non-existent mother onto Bertha and Jane. When the fantasy is shattered, he represses the anguish as a defense mechanism against a total mental breakdown and internalizes those negative feelings, leaving him battered and broken down. Yet, even in his oppressed state he still does the best he can for those around him.

While *Wide Sargasso Sea* provided an opportunity for scholars to take on a post-colonial lens, *Mr. Rochester* encourages one to enact a psychoanalytic approach that conveys a more

accurate and holistic interpretation of Rochester, one that is closer to the Rochester Brontë first designed. In order to clearly understand Brontë's Byronic hero, the three novels must be viewed through psychoanalytic theory, which reveals the same neuroses in all three. As revealed in the dissections of Rochester's character, there is ample evidence to support that Rochester is psychologically plagued, causing him to remain in a reactionary position at the onslaught of others' deception that ultimately impacts his relationship with others. Due to a discourse that has overwhelmingly used a post-colonial framework, employing psychoanalytic theory will widen the conversation and provide an analysis that acknowledges a veracious apprehension of Rochester and his impact on Jane and Bertha. Spivak's adamant argument ignited the pattern of post-colonial scholarship on *Jane Eyre* by making critics feel as if they had to use it. No scholar wants to be accused of reiterating imperialist ideas. However, applying a psychoanalytic framework moves the narrow-sighted perception of Rochester out of the contextual box that critics have contained him in without, as Spivak claims, reinforcing imperialistic ideologies, since psychoanalysis works to understand the individual subject, not colonize the "other."

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