The emotional dialogue between *Wide Saragasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*

How hate comes alive in *Wide Saragasso Sea* and love comes alive in *Jane Eyre*

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to analyze *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* through the lens of Sarah Ahmed’s theories on emotions and Benedict Anderson’s theories on imagined communities. These novels have been addressed many times from a postcolonial perspective where the analysis has focused on how *Wide Sargasso Sea* angrily writes back to *Jane Eyre*. I want to contribute to the discussion by making an attempt to illustrate how the emotions of love and hate are manifested in the novels and what they signify. Further, I am interested in showing how our understanding of the emotions in one novel, carries over into our reading of the other, thus affecting our interpretations of the characters and their relationships.

While the tendency is to think of these two novels as the stories of Antoinette and Jane, they also write the life-story of Rochester from youth to middle-age. How can we make sense of the character of Rochester, a brutal, ugly, secretive and criminal man, who is the link between the main characters from *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*? Why does Rochester generate strong emotions of love and hate in these women and vice versa? Why are these women loved and hated in general? What fuels and channels hate and love?

I will argue that love and hate here are the responses towards the British social context, which is the space that the characters move within. Since Rochester is the connecting point between the two women depicted in novels where gender, class, ethnicity and religion clearly play an important role in deciding who is loved and who is not, I will interpret Rochester’s character in terms of these power-structures by using the concepts and theories of Sara Ahmed and Benedict Anderson.

It is important to be aware of a chronological complexity in the reading of these novels: the authoring of *Jane Eyre* predates the authoring of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, while the story in *Wide Sargasso Sea* predates the story in *Jane Eyre*. My decision to read these novels synchronically is relevant because I want to focus on how emotions are generated in the novels by continuous power-structures.
2. The imagined community and sticky words

Before presenting my descriptive analysis on how the emotions of love and hate come alive in Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre, I approach the fundamental questions regarding which forces create love and hate, why certain characteristics are loveable or hateable and by whom. I have chosen a perspective where Rochester is understood as the personification of an imagined community, produced and perpetuated by power structures of race, gender, and class, aspects discussed by Benedict Anderson and Sara Ahmed. To begin with, Rochester is male, rich and white, thus representing as well as embodying the powers that rule both the English and colonial societies in these two novels. Jane’s story is depicted in England. However, her inherited fortune is from an uncle with a colony in Madeira. In comparison, Antoinette’s story is mostly depicted in a colony where Rochester marries her and takes away her inherited fortune. Undoubtedly, Rochester’s existence as a powerful aristocrat is only possible through the British colonies. As Anderson explains, British domestic wealth, power and privilege could only exist due to “their overseas possessions” (Anderson 150). This illustrates how Jane’s and Antoinette’s lives and fates depict the same reality from two opposing points of view. As a result, the novels engage in a conversation with each other over Rochester, the common denominator that represents the English ruling class who feeds on its colonies and the conditions under which the colonial imagined community can be produced and sustained by the dynamics of love and hate. Furthermore, Ahmed argues that group-cohesion is “formed through a shared orientation” (Ahmed 130). What Rochester loves and hates is greatly determined by his British ideals and what he wishes to identify himself with. Consequently, Rochester’s emotions are created within and commanded by the English society, a power that is higher than him and fills him with a deep “anxiety of boundary formation” (Ahmed 125). This anxiety is caused by a wish to protect the nation against threats towards its nostalgic past and is perceived as love for the nation (Ahmed 131). On the other hand, Rochester shares the British nation’s wish to be open, diverse, loving and welcoming to those who are not from within its boundaries. However, this comes with certain conditions, such as sharing, mixing and giving back to the nation by speaking its language (Ahmed 133-134) in order to be accepted. Anderson supports the same idea regarding the importance of language: “the nation was conceived in language, not in blood” (Anderson 145). Undoubtedly, this is a question of communication, where being able to share
and transmit emotions successfully is crucial if a relation is to be successful. Similarly, this applies to Rochester in his interactions with Jane and Antoinette. Understanding Rochester as the embodiment of an imagined community helps us see that he functions as a departure and arrival point, from which a dialogue between *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* starts and ends. As a result, the societal forces present in these two novels surface as the emotions of hate and love and are channeled through the representation of these emotions as words.

For this reason, emotions will be explored as words in this essay. A central theme in Ahmed’s arguments is the notion of “sticky words” (Ahmed 46) and the effects these have: “the more signs circulate the more affective they become” (Ahmed 45). Furthermore, words of hate or love stick associations together. Through repetition, words come into circulation and become increasingly affective. Moreover, it is not the “subject” (Ahmed 46) itself that fills us with hate or love, but the associations and histories which are connected with this subject. Undoubtedly, the emotions of love and hate do not come naturally, but are consequences of society and culture. These associations reside in the “sticky words” (Ahmed 46) that circulate by being used repeatedly. Ultimately, this produces the emotion of hate or love. Words, whether they are pronounced, thought or just felt, are the carriers of people’s appraisals and judgments of others, stick to bodies and have tremendous power in shaping them. This transformation not only affects other people’s opinion about the body but also the body’s self-image. To begin with, the greater amount of words that are brought into circulation and consequently stick to a body, the more shaped it becomes into the emotion that is attached to and carried by these words. As a result, words create self-fulfilling prophecies since words feed emotions when brought into circulation, as well as emotions bouncing between bodies do give birth to new ones. Consequently, a hated body has the tendency to attract even more hate, making it difficult to escape from a downward negative spiral. The same is at work with a loved body, which has the tendency to attract even more love. By paying attention to the noise which the sticky words create while following Rochester’s, Antoinette’s and Jane’s interactions and destinies, an emotional dialogue becomes audible. Furthermore, Anderson’s words on epithets as expressions of racism and enmity are highly applicable to *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* because he explains how one nation can hurt or diminish an adversary country by calling its citizens derogatory names (Anderson 148). This way of expressing emotions combines with the importance which Ahmed gives to sticky words. Undoubtedly,
Jane, who becomes loved, has words representing characteristics which are attractive to Rochester. In comparison, Antoinette, who is hated, has words representing what is repulsive to Rochester. Further, the common denominators of the loveable characteristics match well with the underlying powers at work in society and consequently create an advantageous position for the carrier of these words. In contrast, the hateable characteristics do not match well with the underlying powers, therefore creating a disadvantageous situation for its owner. While Jane is and acts in accordance to the loveable characteristics, harmony is reached in the emotional conversation between her and Rochester. Therefore, she is loved and loves the community he represents. The opposite applies to Antoinette, who does not act accordingly, therefore creating disharmony in the emotional conversation. Consequently, she is hated by and hates Rochester and everything he embodies. To finalize, Rochester is a central figure who generates, gives and receives the emotions of love and hate in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Nevertheless, he is not the only one who does that. Instead, a series of characters embody the powers at work and engage emotionally with the characters of Antoinette and Jane. As Ahmed explains, emotions are not inherent but produced in the meetings between people. They are effects rather than origins. Throughout their lives, Antoinette and Jane experience how hate or love is produced in their interactions with other persons. These meetings shape their bodies as they are impressed and touched upon by the feelings and actions which come alive between them and the other characters. This illustrates that emotions are impossible to experience alone, since “bodies ‘surface’ as an effect of the impressions left by others” (Ahmed 10). The fact that society’s hate towards Antoinette increases as her power decreases and that society’s love towards Jane increases with her power is the consequence of the powers at work in society, performing emotions through words.
3. *Wide Sargasso Sea* – a chronological analysis of how hate is projected at Antoinette and becomes her identity

**Antoinette at Coulibri Estate**

Throughout her entire life, Antoinette suffers under the powerful forces of gender, class, ethnicity and religion. These structures create, come to surface and manifest themselves in form of the emotions of hate. Already during her early childhood Antoinette experiences how hate is directed at her and she also comes to hate others since these forces affect all aspects of her being. First of all, Antoinette’s ethnicity fuels hate from both the white and black population. She is a Creole, an outcast who, after the emancipation of slaves, is considered to be a burden to the black community of the West Indies and the bottom of the white community’s hierarchy: “They hated us. They called us white cockroaches” (Rhys 8).

Clearly, Antoinette, her mother and her brother Pierre, are outsiders of the white high-class society: “we were not in their ranks” (Rhys 3). As a result of belonging nowhere, Antoinette becomes an easy target who lacks protection against the hate that is directed at her from all sides, hurting and making her lonely. What is worse, Antoinette is not even loved by her own mother whose own suffering, as a female, miserable Creole, cripples her emotionally, making her treat Antoinette in such a cold and loveless manner that the only physical contact she gives her daughter is the act of pushing her away. Consequently, the pain of rejection induces Antoinette into hating her own mother (Rhys 5) thus affecting the deepest part of her own soul. The increasing hate finally culminates when the local population set their home on fire (Rhys 22). Naturally, this is a clear act of hate which traumatizes and leaves wounds for the rest of Antoinette’s life. The first wound the anger Antoinette feels against religion. She finds it cynical that while God allows her brother to die, as a consequence of the fire, he seems benevolent towards Mr. Mason. As soon as he stops swearing and shifts into an annoyingly loud and exaggerated pious prayer the yells stop (Rhys 25). The second wound is the anger towards the ethnical displacement Antoinette perceives herself in. Antoinette feels disappointment and deception when Tia, her childhood friend, chooses the black side and transforms herself into a hating enemy and throws a stone on her head (Rhys 25). This incident is something that Aunt Cora erroneously appraises: “won’t spoil you on your wedding day” (Rhys 29) in an attempt to give Antoinette some comfort after all the traumatic events. But, these events do leave
horrendous marks, spoiling Antoinette emotionally for the rest of her life. The final wound is the inflicted damage against her class and gender. Antoinette’s mother, who cannot cope with the loss of her son or the frustration of a life that is impossible to change, becomes crazy and violent. Because of that, and as an illustration of her powerless position, Mr. Mason, who at first is her ticket out of poverty, through marriage, leaves her locked in and surveyed by a couple who sexually abuses her: “I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all soft and limp in his arms and he laughed. The woman laughed too, but she was angry” (Rhys 104). Undoubtedly, every action and word of hate that Antoinette and her mother are subjected to takes place because of their inferior position within a society that does not accept a poor, Creole woman’s attempt to climb the power-ladder, where those at the top are loved. Naturally, being the victim and the witness of terrible circumstances creates bitterness and molds Antoinette into a hating and hated body which functions as a magnet that attracts and collects words telling her that she is an outcast, unlOved by both black and white, rich and poor, and the worst of it all, by her mother and God.

**Antoinette at Mount Calvary Convent**

During her later childhood, Antoinette increasingly experiences life under the powerful forces which rule the world, continuing a damaging performance that is manifested as hate. As Antoinette grows, she becomes more aware and at the same time confused about the emotions which are directed at her as well as the emotions she directs at others as a consequence of gender, class, ethnicity and religion. First of all, Antoinette starts noticing which features belong to different ethnicities and the emotions these elicit in her as well as others. As an example, she is threatened by a boy with an interracial appearance, on her way to school. Consequently, feelings of disgust, hateful thoughts and a mean perception of people surrounding her are brought to surface: “ugly white covered with freckles, his mouth was a negro’s mouth” (Rhys 30). Encounters such as this nourish a scaring conviction that what she hates in others is a reflection of what is hated in her. The hate which possesses Antoinette, makes her walk away from the hate-filled words that the boy pronounces over her and her mother, saying that she has zombie-eyes, and that she is crazy like her mother, a lunatic, who made an attempt to kill her own husband (Rhys 31). In contrast, Antoinette meets her cousin Sandi, who amongst other endearing and attractive qualities possesses the courage of
offering her protection. Referring to the boy, Sandi promises that “[h]e won’t bother you again” (Rhys 32). Consequently, despite all the shame Antoinette is taught to feel about her “coloured relatives” (Rhys 32) she has the unusual experience of being loved as well as to love someone.

Moreover, the religious beliefs taught at the convent fill Antoinette with more doubts regarding gender, class and ethnicity. Antoinette displays an array of irresolute emotions regarding the nuns. First of all, Antoinette disapproves of their ethnicity by indicating several times that they are “coloured” (Rhys 32). On the other hand, she is soothed by their “gentl[e]” and “soft” (Rhys 33) treatment. In addition, Antoinette is puzzled by their doctrines, such as that all the saints are “very beautiful and wealthy” (Rhys 35) and the importance of “[c]leanliness, good manners and kindness to God’s poor” (Rhys 35). These are in sharp contrast to a reality where guilt and shame is connected to caring for their own appearance in the simple ways their own poverty-vows allows: “I saw the young nun from Ireland looking at herself in a cask of water, smiling to see if her dimples were still there” (Rhys 36). Unfortunately, when the nun discovers that Antoinette sees her vanity, she directs hate towards her. Consequently, Antoinette is entrapped by the feeling of being a perpetual scapegoat for other people’s unhappiness, something that is illustrated in thoughts such as:”she will always dislike me” (Rhys 36). Undoubtedly, Antoinette’s growing conviction that she is guilty and condemned no matter what she does or is applies to all levels of power, thus making it impossible to be loved: as a woman, she must be beautiful, but not care for her appearance, as a Christian, she is expected to be rich so she can give to the poor and still live simply, and as a Creole, she cannot posit herself as a black sinner, nor a white saint.

Finally, even though the convent functions as her “refuge” (Rhys 37) from the harsher world outside, it still lacks “happiness” (Rhys 37) despite the safety she finds in its religious routines. Consequently, she just “gabble [s]” (Rhys 38) the daily prayers without internalizing their content. Antoinette’s disillusion with the world is blended with her unhappiness. As a result, she develops a death wish and starts praying for its fulfillment. Although she discovers that this is a “mortal sin” she feels “bolder, happier, more free. But not safe” by this possibility (Rhys 38). Antoinette’s emotions, deeply rooted in her painful experiences of hate are blended with confusing doctrines and transform themselves into haunting nightmares about hate, fear, hell and her inability to flee from it. Antoinette feels lost in a strange, incomprehensible world that
only makes her suffer, since she is neither a white, rich believer, nor a black, poor heathen. Therefore, she is an outcast who experiences hate surrounding her through words teaching her shame, guilt and condemnation, thus continuing their work on molding her body to attract an increasing amount of hate as well as developing hate against the world around her.

**Antoinette meets Rochester**

By the time Rochester enters the scene of Antoinette’s life through a marriage for money and not for love, Antoinette is already a hated body. In addition, Rochester has developed hate, through anger, bitterness and resentment against his father and the financially favored elder brother but directs it against Antoinette since she is molded into attracting this emotion. Rochester is trapped inside his own poor psychological state, fighting against love, since the social powers at work are unfavorable. As an example, Antoinette cannot, despite her ability to speak the English language, grasp the idea of what England is or the English view of the world. Consequently, Rochester and Antoinette find each other’s languages “untranslatable” (Anderson 146). Therefore, she cannot accept or be loved by Rochester. Undoubtedly, Rochester becomes the climax of Antoinette’s emotional life, giving her the death stroke of hate when he becomes the representation of an imagined and desired community and gains power over her.

Firstly, Rochester has his own sticky words torturing him. He is in an exotic place, in a culture he does not understand and feels uncomfortable with a marriage that has two main purposes: get money and please his father. These unhappy feelings are translated into words the local nature persecutes him with during the entire novel, telling Rochester that everything is going terribly wrong: “It was not a safe game to play – in that place. Desire, Hatred, Life, death came very close in the darkness” (Rhys 70). The fact that Rochester is tortured by his own thoughts becomes clear during crucial situations, where it is almost tangible how social structures are in the background, pulling the strings and playing with his life. When arriving at their honey-moon house, Rochester begins his critical examination of Antoinette, where neither her ethnicity nor her different approach to life suits his taste: “Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either” (Rhys 46). Rochester’s alienation
towards his wife grows dangerously fast, making him feel that his “woman is a stranger” (Rhys 49). In addition, more dark sides of the story are revealed in the passages where Rochester writes to his father telling him how he feels that he has “sold his soul” (Rhys 49) while entering a marriage for “thirty thousand pounds” (Rhys 49), as well as considering it to be a good “bargain” because “The girl is thought to be beautiful” (Rhys 49). The final words “And yet…” (Rhys 49) reveals though, how he already has some internal sticky words, which are caused by his ambivalent feelings and have started to circulate and are already building the foundation of the hate he soon will direct towards Antoinette.

Secondly, Daniel Cosway adds more sticky words into circulation. During what for Rochester is an intimidating stay at Grandbois, the tension is built up by his interactions with Antoinette, Amélie, Christophine and other locals, whose demonstration of cultural incompatibility not only annoys but scares him, leaving no place for love (Rhys 66-69). Consequently, when Rochester receives Daniel’s letter, he is susceptible to all evil, destructive ideas that are fed into his mind. Amongst the sticky words which Daniel reveals is that Rochester has been “deceived” into marrying Antoinette and that Antoinette’s family are “wicked and detestable slave-owners”, there is “madness in that family” and when Antoinette’s father died, her mother married again and “tried to kill her husband”, who had to lock her in. In addition, they “lie”, Antoinette’s mother was a “raging lunatic” and Antoinette will go the same way. Finally, Daniel gives Rochester the final verdict: “Money is good but no money can pay for a crazy wife in your bed.” (Rhys 71-73). Naturally, these words are so strong, that they not only circulate, but stick together forming dangerous associations inside Rochester’s mind and are translated into suspicious thoughts and irrevocable damage in his feelings towards Antoinette. From this moment forward, the process of hate is irreversible and makes Rochester slide in a downward emotional spiral. Undoubtedly, Daniel seeks Rochester persistently. Through his devilishly dramatic and persuasive rhetoric he succeeds in defaming and accusing Antoinette by using more sticky words, for instance, that Rochester was “not the first”, “they fool you about that girl”, “she worse than her mother”, and Sandi, who is “more handsome” than Rochester, was the one who “first” kissed Antoinette and suggests that he is still does that. Worst of all are Daniel’s allegations that all these things are being camouflaged by Antoinette through her “sweet talk” and “lies” (Rhys 96-97). Doubtlessly, Rochester falls into despair as these words stick together making him perceive Antoinette as a highly promiscuous and deceitful liar clearly worthy of hate.
Thirdly, Amélie confirms and repeats the sticky words, thus making them more affective. Amélie, who has been referred to, by Antoinette, as “the devil himself” (Rhys 75) certainly displays characteristics throughout the novel, as being tempting and putting doubts in Rochester’s head. Naturally, she takes every opportunity to sow more hate into Rochester’s head during crucial moments. The first is when Rochester asks Amélie if what Daniel states in his letters, such as Antoinette’s and her mother’s madness, the mother’s attempt to kill her husband, and her incarceration, can be trusted. Naturally, by answering, with rhetorical innocence: “He don’t tell you that?” (Rhys 91) Amélie maliciously confirms Rochester’s fears. To make things worse, she talks about a supposed marriage between Antoinette and Sandi. Undoubtedly, by using a body-language which contradicts her words stating that everything Daniel says is “foolishness” (Rhys 92), added to the sharp contrast in her suggestion to “ask Miss Antoinette” (Rhys 92) about the truth, Amélie convinces Rochester that every accusation towards Antoinette is true. Consequently, these words stick to Rochester and plant the idea of a prophecy that will fulfill itself regarding Antoinette. The condemning effect these words have on his emotions towards his wife creates hate because it convinces him completely that she is a hopeless case and therefore an eternal torture. The second opportunity comes the morning after Rochester has had sex with Amélie as a desperate expression of his perpetuated hate against Antoinette. By saying “I am sorry for you. But I find it in my heart to be sorry for her too” (Rhys 110), Amélie harms the couple even more, since these words stick to Rochester’s mind confirming that he is in a hellish situation. As a result, he perceives Antoinette and everything surrounding him as being “hostile”, “threatening” and “dangerous” (Rhys 117). In other words, Rochester’s fear and hate feed each other simultaneously.

Finally, Antoinette fulfills the prophecy of the powerful sticky words. Antoinette’s situation becomes unbearable as Rochester, convinced by all the circulating words treats her with increasing suspicion, disdain and hate. Consequently, Antoinette experiences such stress that she starts acting in accordance to what Daniel and Amélie have said about her and she also provides Rochester with even more sticky words. Antoinette is trapped by and defenseless against what has been uttered about her. As a result, Antoinette synchronically loses control of her vocabulary and her emotions. Undoubtedly, this perpetuates her position as a loser. To begin with, Antoinette becomes crazily upset, pushes Rochester away and makes clicking sounds of annoyance, demonstrating her despair and frustration while telling her
painful side of the story, where Amélie and many others, degradingly calls her a “white cockroach” and “white nigger” (Rhys 75-76). Unfortunately, Antoinette’s sincere explanation about her outcast situation as neither English nor black does not wake any sympathies because she is incapable of understanding and speaking Rochester’s language. Naturally, this is something that is intimately connected with her inability to use her insights about society’s power-structures for her own benefit. Instead, they transform into more sticky words that finally convince Rochester of her complete madness: “I often wonder who I am” (Rhys 76). Furthermore, when Rochester and Antoinette are tired, hopeless and overwhelmed by the hateful situation they are caught in, Antoinette sadly asks Rochester: “Why do you hate me?” (Rhys 97) in a desperate attempt to win his love. Unfortunately, Rochester is biased by everything that she has been accused of and annoyed by everything she does to please him (Rhys 97). Undoubtedly, Rochester automatically perceives all the moves of her body and everything she says as an illustration and confirmation of her guilt. Finally, a sad and nervous Antoinette makes her last attempt to reach Rochester by following Christophine’s advice: “speak to your husband calm and cool” (Rhys 88), and tell the truth about her mother, which did include madness, drinking and ultimately, incarceration after an attempt to kill her husband. Unfortunately, what first causes a positive emotive result in Rochester ends up confirming his fears about Antoinette’s alleged madness and inherited tendency to imagine, distort and lie (Rhys 102-103). Consequently, Rochester completely internalizes the negative charge from these highly sticky words.

Undoubtedly, the sticky words which circulate, stick and are internalized by Rochester finally makes him respond by hating Antoinette so intensely that he makes her life a living hell. Antoinette is taken to England, where she is incarcerated, thus making her fall into despair and madness. The final scene, where Antoinette first dreams and then wakes up only to fulfill its prophetic content, of incinerating Rochester’s house while the wind catches her hair (Rhys 151-152) shows her scaring calmness before committing suicide, and demonstrates the power that the sticky words have to bring death, hate and destruction if they are repeated enough times. To finalize, it also demonstrates how the hate between Rochester and Antoinette reflects society’s hate against those at the bottom of its hierarchy and the results of it.
4. *Jane Eyre* – a chronological analysis of how hate is projected at Jane and becomes her initial identity followed by how love starts being projected at her and becomes her new identity.

Jane at Gateshead

During the first part of her childhood, Jane suffers under the powerful forces of gender, class, family-ties and religion and these structures create, come to surface and manifest themselves in form of the emotion of hate. Jane is not an entirely loving and loved character in this novel. Undoubtedly, Jane is hated by and hates others as a child. First of all, Jane is an unwanted outcast living under the roof of her snobbish Aunt Reed, who does the minimum, expected of a Christian, wealthy lady, bound to a promise towards her brother, to care for Jane. Aunt Reed shows, in every possible way, that Jane is an invading outsider she wishes to keep “at a distance” (Brontë 9). In contrast, Aunt Reed loves her own children blindly, thinking that they possess lovely qualities such as “contented, happy” (Brontë 9). But the reality is in sharp contrast to this belief, since John constantly bullies and scares Jane. Furthermore, Jane is treated with “indifference” and “aversion” (Brontë 16) and suffers from abuse, neglect and unfair treatment blended with devastating religious threats, used by all adults living at Gateshead, to foster her into submission: “if you don’t repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch you away” (Brontë 15). Undoubtedly, Jane is taught, by all means available, that she does not belong to their class: “you are less than a servant” (Brontë 14), nor is approved by their religious beliefs: “All said I was wicked” (Brontë 18). Consequently, all negative emotions entrap Jane in a psychological jail of frustration, fear and hellish circumstances, from which she cannot escape. Similarly, she is locked in the red room (Brontë 20). As a result, the combination of physical and psychological incarceration leads her into a complete breakdown.

However, instead of internalizing the feeling of abomination like Antoinette does, Jane demonstrates a remarkably precocious capacity of defying the powers at work, while making early attempts to understand which are the rules that decide who is loved, who is hated and why. In fact, the pain Jane goes through
transforms into the ability to question her situation: “why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever condemned?” (Brontë 16) As a result of the emotionally demanding circumstances, Jane develops a clear-sightedness that allows her to perceive that hate is directed at her since she is an unattractive, poor, ugly, girl, living under the roof of an unwelcoming relative. However, there is a huge difference between Jane, who is white and automatically belongs to the ethnical context in which she resides and Antoinette, a Creole that is unaccepted in any context. Undoubtedly, whiteness is a power-factor that gives Jane a clear advantage when climbing the love-ladder. Nevertheless, Jane notices clearly how she is in contrast to her cousin Georgiana, considered ugly, to her cousin Eliza, completely disrespected (Brontë 16) and regardless whatever mean behavior John displays, Mrs. Reed will always see him as “‘her own darling’” (Brontë 17) since they share close physical similarities. In contrast, Jane knows that she cannot commit any fault and has to fulfill every duty, including keeping herself unnoticed. Regardless of her success in achieving these goals, Jane is always regarded as “naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking” (Brontë 17) and therefore unloved. Undoubtedly, being the victim and the witness of Mrs. Reed’s unconditional love towards her own, rich children, while unconditional hate is directed towards her, creates bitterness and molds Jane into a hating and hated body that attracts words of hate. On the other hand, Jane overcomes conclusions stating that she is noxious, wicked and has “a tendency to deceit” (Brontë 35) because she grows in the ability to transform painful experiences into useful knowledge regarding how gender, class, religion and family-ties work. In other words, Jane starts building the right muscles to enable her ascendance on the emotional and societal ladder.

Jane at Lowood Charity School

During the second part of her childhood and her early adulthood, Jane continues experiencing life under powerful social forces. However, during prosperities as well as adversities, Jane starts attracting love instead of hate. As Jane matures into a young woman, she increasingly makes appraisals regarding gender, class and religious structures surrounding her. Consequently, Jane develops a sharp awareness of the emotions which are directed at her as well as the emotions she directs at others. As a result of the information Jane takes in, she makes conscious decisions to develop and perform skills that are crucial to
help her move upwardly in the societal ladder. Similarly, Jane increases her powers by internalizing certain beliefs while dismissing others. To begin with, Jane’s inquiring mind helps her to notice and question a set of religious double-standards which come to surface at Lowood School. From the first day, Jane understands what is expected from a poor orphan living in a Christian charity institution: “[B]e a good child” (Brontë 45). Naturally, this means to work hard, be silent, keep order and read the Bible, then, forced by famish, eat disgusting food whose smell is “far from inviting” (Brontë 47). Similarly, this harsh discipline is applied to their appearance. The poor girls are kept plain by meticulously calculated measures which take away any chance to look pleasing (Brontë 49). This illustrates how the preached message is that the poor should be ugly, starved and disciplined. In contrast, Jane sees how the opposite applies to the rich. As an example, Mr. Brocklehurst, a regarded clergyman, enjoys a completely different life, inside the comforts of “a large hall” (Brontë 52). In addition, Jane notices how rich ladies, such as Mrs. Brocklehurst and her daughters enjoy other rules regarding appearance. Naturally, they are fashionably dressed, wear hats with rich plumage and have their hair beautifully curled. This deeply annoys Jane, who angrily wishes that they should hear Mr. Brocklehurst’s sermons on the simplicity which is expected of Christians (Brontë 67). As a result of these disparate messages depending on social status, Jane is confused and continues her hate-filled appraisal of the world.

However, Jane meets Helen Burns, who shares her thoughts, humble ways and personal beliefs. As their friendship develops, Helen affects Jane deeply since this time religion is taught by someone whose purity gives it credibility instead of hypocrisy. Consequently, a transformation takes place where Helen’s perceptions, appraisals and beliefs increase Jane’s knowledge about success, power and love. To begin with, Helen trains Jane in social skills. Jane sees herself taking steps, which are “contrary to [her] nature and habits” (Brontë 51) such as feeling sympathy and sharing common interests with others. In addition, Jane learns the importance of being calm, collected and concise in order to make people believe, accept and ultimately love her. As an example she acts “as a good girl” (Brontë 72) through pleasant behavior and smart rhetoric when telling a simplified and more credible version of her “sad childhood” (Brontë 73). Secondly, Helen demonstrates the importance of getting “an education” (Brontë 57) through the endurance she displays in the face of the cruel and unfair treatment at Lowood. As a result, Jane takes her own studies seriously, appreciates knowledge and enjoys sharing her skills with others (Brontë 75). For
this reason, Jane becomes a teacher after completing her studies. Further, Jane internalizes many Christian beliefs, such as “return good for evil” (Brontë 58) instead of exercising her initial behavior based on payback. In addition, she becomes happy through Biblical teachings stating that it is better to have love in the middle of privations instead of hate within a wealthy context (Brontë 76). Finally, Helen releases Jane from fear of “heaven and hell” (Brontë 80) and from the emotional trap where she interpreted hate from humans as hate from God. Naturally, setting Jane free from feeling like a “scapegoat” (Brontë 17) as well as promising her that she will meet the same “mighty universal Parent” (Brontë 83) after this life completely transforms Jane and boosts her appetite for life.

Undoubtedly, Jane’s ability to analyze society from a power-perspective is intimately connected to her language-skills. These enable her to act pragmatically, simultaneously control her vocabulary and emotions and respond sensibly to highly affective situations. This makes her a winner. Jane’s emotions, once deeply rooted in painful experiences of hate, change thanks to the love she receives and the socially functional skills she is taught. To sum up, Jane deepens the knowledge that helps to climb the love-ladder of life through the mediums of gender, class and religious beliefs. As a result, Jane starts feeling safe in a world she increasingly understands despite its contradictions. In conclusion, despite being poor, she has an education, despite meeting contradictive religiosity she has developed her own faith, and despite being an orphan, she has grown in the confidence of becoming socially accepted. Naturally, she excels in friendliness and experiences how love begins to surround her, working at remolding her body to attract love instead of hate.

**Jane meets Rochester**

By the time Rochester enters the scene of Jane’s life through an employment for money and not for love, Jane has lived a life that molded her initially into a hated body, then, through increasingly positive interactions, Jane was remolded into a loved body. In comparison, Rochester has, throughout his earlier life, developed hate against persons possessing characteristics he despises, especially his wife Bertha. Consequently, Rochester is prone to direct love towards Jane, the body perfectly molded into increasingly
attracting this emotion, since she is the opposite of all he hates. Throughout the novel, it is perceivable that Rochester and Jane speak the same language, which means everything that contains the English way of perceiving the world. This is something they clearly share and is in sharp contrast to Bertha. Undoubtedly, it is almost tangible how societal powers pull and push Rochester’s body towards loving Jane and becoming the climax of her emotional life, that is, an imagined community where Jane is welcomed and loved.

Firstly, Rochester has his own sticky words torturing him. He is tired of living an unfulfilling and mundane life, where women passed and left sticky marks as beautiful but at the same time deceitful and promiscuous. Bertha, “the wild beast” (Brontë 209), secretly hidden in his attic, is for Rochester the worst specimen belonging to a category of women which, in his opinion, possess bad qualities. The attributes Rochester sees in these women are stuck inside his soul in the form of words that have haunted him for many years. Because of his emotional wounds, Rochester is “gruffly” (Brontë 122) and full of hate.

Furthermore, when Jane meets Rochester, he is returning to a familiar place, to a culture he understands and perceives as normal but is still imprisoned by the marriage he entered into a long time ago, the main reasons being to please his father and to get money. Rochester’s unhappy feelings are connected to sticky words that reside Thornfield Hall and persecute him during the novel and are materialized through the screams and dangerous attacks that his mad, lying and hateful Bertha threatens him with (Brontë 111). Consequently, Rochester’s emotions, while haunted by Bertha, prepare him to love Jane. Nevertheless, when Rochester first critically examines Jane, neither her plain physiognomy, lack of money and class, nor her level of education suits his taste. Examples of Rochester’s first appraisals of Jane are that she is “over-modest” (Brontë 123), not used to “society” (Brontë 124) and has “lived the life of a nun” (Brontë 125). In other words, Rochester looks down on her due to her lack of power.

However, by persistently displaying many good qualities, Jane plants positive words into Rochester’s mind which compensate for the negative ones and make Rochester discover that Jane is a remarkable woman despite her humble appearance. As an example, Jane is smart and amuses Rochester with her efficient rhetoric. Since Rochester never experienced such a sharp and examining intellect, he becomes tremendously attracted to Jane (Brontë 132). In addition, Jane develops her talents, is good-hearted,
honest and sincere (Brontë 136). Consequently, these positive connotations provide Rochester with the safety he needs and connects him emotionally with Jane. Furthermore, more radiant sides of Jane surface and are demonstrated when Rochester entertains haughty friends that have ceased to impress him. His annoyance peaks when finding out that Lady Ingram wishes to marry him for money (Brontë 201). Ironically, this was the same opportunistic interest that made him marry Bertha. Since Rochester is tired of malicious women and his own dark past, and is convinced that Jane is the opposite of everything he wishes to leave behind, Jane becomes the “bride” (Brontë 251) he longs for and perceives as an “equal” (Brontë 252). These are the positive sticky words that are circulating and building the love he “passionately” (Brontë 253) directs towards Jane, who he discovers is the “best earthly companion” (Brontë 252). In other words, a great match for him.

Secondly, Jane adds more sticky words of love into circulation. During, what for Rochester is an encouraging and reassuring stay at Thornfield Hall, the romantic tension is built up by his interactions with Jane, whose cultural compatibility gratifies and makes him “love [her] as [his] own flesh” (Brontë 253), leaving almost no place for the hate that has made him “eccentric” (Brontë 261). Consequently, when Rochester receives Jane’s devoted feelings; he is in a susceptible mood for all good, constructive ideas and positive sticky words that are fed into his mind. However, the positive words that make Rochester love Jane also torture him because they remind him of his marriage with Bertha. Consequently, while his hate towards “possessed” (Brontë 149) Bertha grows, so does his love towards Jane. Moreover, Jane continues her beneficial performance by putting more lovely words into circulation regarding her own person, such as being sincerely “religious” (Brontë 125), “tenacious of life” (Brontë 123) and a good steward of her time by studying hard, becoming a teacher and developing her artistic skills as means to be “happy” (Brontë 127). As a result of her efforts and hard earned achievements throughout life, Jane does not accept being trampled upon. On the contrary, Jane demonstrates an admirable rhetorical compatibility in her many argumentations with Rochester: “I was thinking, sir, that very few masters would trouble themselves to inquire whether or not their paid subordinates were piqued and hurt by their orders” (Brontë 135). Naturally, Jane’s eloquence is based upon the positive underlying qualities of sincerity, truth and an unembellished approach to life. These words are so strong, that they circulate, stick together forming associations of innocence, trustworthiness and safety inside Rochester’s mind. Undoubtedly,
these qualities deeply impress Rochester as they become the new, positive words which all attach to Jane’s body. From this moment forward, the process of love is irreversible, making Rochester rise in an upward emotional spiral. Jane constantly attracts Rochester, who despite his teasing rhetoric during their conversations actually finds out that her calm and collected answers works in favor of her since it makes him desire her “peace of mind”, “clean conscience” and “unpolluted memory” (Brontë 136). In addition Rochester is convinced that Jane is “different” (Brontë 152) and has “saved” (Brontë 152) his life. Consequently, since these are contrasting qualities to all previous experiences he has had with women, Rochester falls in love as words conveying purity, honesty and innocence makes Jane clearly worthy of love.

Thirdly, Jane confirms and repeats the sticky words of love making them more affective. As an example, Jane demonstrates that her moral standards, amongst other positive qualities, are the opposite of Bertha’s. Jane is perceived as being a cool, steadfast and righteous pure woman, when choosing to leave Thornfield after having discovered Rochester’s deceitful attempt to lure her into a bigamous marriage (Brontë 289). Naturally, Jane flees the “temptation” (Brontë 316) of staying in a situation which would only stain her impeccable moral. Despite the “misery” (Brontë 318) Jane puts Rochester in when leaving him, this actually impresses on Rochester and establishes the positive words about Jane. By being the first and only woman with this type of behavior, she works as a contrast to Bertha, who did not leave Rochester. Undoubtedly, this is something which works in Jane’s favor, since this empowers, flatters and attaches a high degree of value to Jane’s body.

Moreover, Jane solidifies her high qualities during her stay at St. John’s house. She develops her skills as an educated, creative, intelligent and fulfilled woman (Brontë 365), who not only earns money through her “labors [on ]the village school” (Brontë 362), but most graciously divides her inherited fortune with her cousins because of her “fraternal and sisterly love” (Brontë 383), despite not having any legal obligation to do that. This illustrates her moral as well as her kindness and empathy. In addition, Jane never falls into temptations, such as marrying somebody for any other sake than pure “love” (Brontë 408). In fact, when Jane battles against St. John’s persuasive attempts to marry him to become a missionary in India, she has a supernatural experience which reinforces her own strong religious beliefs. As a consequence of the
The intensity of Rochester’s and Jane’s love, nature itself carries the message through powerful words which travel all distance and fuel their mutual love. Jane hears Rochester calling her: “Jane! Jane! Jane!” (Brontë 414) and answers heroically: “I am coming” (Brontë 415). Finally, as to underline her victory, not only over St. John, but over everything that has ever held her back, Jane tells that “It was my time to assume ascendancy. My powers were in play and in force” (Brontë 415). Consequently, these highly affective words flatter Jane’s self-perception, molding her personality into the strongest argument, ready to convince Rochester that she is the hope of his life and therefore a heavenly bliss.

Finally, Jane fulfills the prophecy of the powerful sticky words. The crucial final passages of the novel illustrate how Jane’s life becomes wonderful as Rochester, convinced by all the circulating words, treats her with increasing trust, admiration and love. As a result, Jane experiences such favor that she continues acting according to what Rochester has perceived in her as well as providing Rochester with even more positive sticky words. These words empower Jane and set her free to enjoy life. To begin with, when Jane arrives at the manor-house of Ferndean, to meet Rochester, she is fearless: “do you think I feared [...]?” (Brontë 426), boldly active: “Give the tray to me; I will carry it in” (Brontë 427) and powerful: “I am an independent woman now.” (Brontë 429). In contrast, Rochester is a blind, crippled man who knows that he has “little left” (Brontë 430). Consequently, Jane fills pity and enormous love for Rochester and wishes to “console and revive him” (Brontë 431). However, they pass a final barrier before their romantic reunion. Rochester’s possessive jealousy makes him cross-examine Jane on where and with whom she has been. Undoubtedly, this only makes Jane even more aware of “his dependence” (Brontë 434) on her. As a result, Jane answers every question, in a defiantly rhetorical manner by first torturing Rochester, letting him clearly understand that she has lived with her cousin St. John. Naturally, Jane confirms that he was good, active, able, educated and wanted to marry her. Finally, when Rochester cannot endure anymore, Jane graciously releases Rochester’s tension by adding that she declined St. John’s proposal, since Rochester is the one she loves (Brontë 435-438).

Undoubtedly, the words which circulated, stuck and were internalized by Rochester, made him finally respond by loving Jane so intensely, that he made her life a living paradise. Jane took great care of Rochester: “I married him.” (Brontë 444) and loved him well, thus healing him emotionally and physically,
since Rochester “recovered the sight” (Brontë 446). The final scene, where Jane summarizes her and Rochester’s happiness: “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine” (Brontë 445), shows her self-confidence, and works as a demonstration of the power that the sticky words have to bring life, love and restoration if they are repeated enough times. To finalize, it also demonstrates how the love between Rochester and Jane, is a reflection of society’s love towards those at the top of its hierarchy and the results of it.
5. Conclusion

Reading *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* through the lens of Sarah Ahmed’s theories on emotions and Benedict Anderson’s theories on imagined communities demonstrates how emotions are generated in these novels by continuous power-structures such as religion, colonialism, sexism, racism and class-conflict. These structures create, surface and manifest themselves as love and hate. Reading one novel affects the interpretation of the other, because the characters and relationships presented in one gives the opposing and completing view of the other. Rochester’s, Jane’s and Antoinette’s loving and hating are the results of, as well as the different reflections of the same society. While Jane’s emotions tell the story from the English metropolitan perspective, Antoinette’s does that from its colonial.

Rochester embodies the powers that dominate the English and colonial societies regarding gender, class and ethnicity, since he is male, rich and white. Consequently, he hates what is not British and loves what is British. In addition, Rochester welcomes and loves Jane, since she speaks his language while he hates Antoinette who is unable to grasp the emotional vocabulary which describes his English view of the world. Rochester is the common denominator that makes the novels engage in an emotional conversation with each other, thus revealing societal power from an unembellished perspective where the white, rich, male part of the population are the ones that attract most love in the societal ladder. Undoubtedly, Jane’s control over her emotions as well as her language flatters and empowers her, while the opposite applies to Antoinette, who loses control over her emotions, her language and consequently, her power.

Words, whether they are pronounced, thought or just felt, are the containers of people’s appraisals and judgments of others and have tremendous power in shaping them. Antoinette and Jane were affected by and suffered under the power-structures of gender, class, ethnicity and religion that were at work in their society, molding their personalities during their lives. As a result, their bodies were shaped into attracting hate or love. Antoinette is neither a white, rich believer nor a black, poor heathen. Consequently, she is an unloved outcast. Jane is transformed by the love she receives and is taught and uses her knowledge regarding gender, class and religion to become a loved member of British society. Since Rochester embodies a society that decides what is hated or loved, he becomes the culmination that fulfills the love
directed to Jane and the hate directed to Antoinette. Loveable characteristics are the ones that match well with the powers at work in society and create an advantageous situation for its owner. In contrast, hateable characteristics do not match well with the underlying powers at work in society and create a disadvantageous situation. Sticky words represent two opposing groups of gathered characteristics: the loveable, represented by Jane and the hateable, represented by both Jane and Antoinette.

Throughout my analysis on Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre, I have proven how Ahmed’s sticky words play a central role in making Rochester hate Antoinette and love Jane since they circulate, stick, create, fuel and channel these emotions. In addition, I have demonstrated how important persons create and make these words circulate and carry messages about Antoinette and Jane. Also, how Antoinette and Jane, biased by these words, confirm many things which are suspected of them and add more sticky words regarding their persons. These words not only circulate, stick and cause Rochester to hate Antoinette and love Jane, but go further, causing repercussions beyond imagination. The consequences of Rochester’s hate ultimately cause Antoinette to fall in despair, kill herself and destroy Rochester’s home. In contrast, Rochester’s love ultimately causes Jane to raise herself in cheerfulness, confidence and trust, build a happy home for Rochester and herself and spend their remaining days in joy and hope for the future.
List of works cited


