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Abbreviations

The primary sources quoted in the text are abbreviated as follows:

JM Carey, Peter. *Jack Maggs*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.

GE Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. Ware: Wordsworth, 1992.

JE Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

WSS Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Victorian period has enjoyed a considerable revival in recent years. The fascination with the nineteenth century, which can be observed in both popular culture and academia, is usually linked to the celebration of Britishness and the cultural heritage it entails. As the era has yielded many novels which are now part of the traditional English canon, literature is often made central to this nostalgia. Due to their aesthetic value, the relevance of their topics and their representation of a past people like to dwell on, they are not only part of educational curricula, but still popular with a wider readership as well. The works of Dickens or the Brontë sisters have become real classics which every averagely educated person has to have read or at least know about. This assumption, however, disregards that those novels are highly influenced by their particular historical and social circumstances and cannot be interpreted as a truthful account of the past.

Apart from this nostalgic view, another more critical approach to British history has thus emerged within the scope of literature: The concept of rewriting may not be new, but in its postmodern form it provides writers with the possibility to revise what they perceive as misrepresented or missing altogether in the classics. Having been published in 1966, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys's prequel to Brontë's influential novel of female development *Jane Eyre*, is usually regarded as the first in a long line of postcolonial rewritings and is still discussed by literary critics. The more recent novel *Jack Maggs*, published in 1997, by Australian author and twice Booker Prize winner Peter Carey narrates the plot of Dickens's *Great Expectations* from a different angle.

Critical accounts on *Jack Maggs* often refer back to Rhys's text, but fail to set them in relation to each other. The point of departure for both novels is to foreground those characters that have been marginalised and dehumanised in the classics: the Australian convict Magwitch on the one and Rochester's first Creole wife Bertha on the other hand. They also resemble each other with regards to the targets of their attack: They do not only question the status of classics as such or the idealisation of the Victorian past and its culture, but they also attempt to lay bare the imperial

discourse that the nineteenth century wanted to justify and conceal at the same time. Since *Jack Maggs* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* were written at different stages in the formation of the neo-Victorian and postcolonial novel, they, however, go about their criticism differently. Hence, the aim of this thesis is not only to relate the two rewritings back to their source texts, but also to compare them to each other. Being dependent on the texts from which they try to liberate themselves, the question remains whether these works can destabilise or rather assert Brontë's and Dickens's superior position in the canon of English literature. By revealing their intertextual and metafictional strategies, the analysis also attempts to find out what kind of meaning – or if any at all – the rewritings can add to the understanding of the classics.

2 BETWEEN CRITICISM AND CELEBRATION

2.1 Canon formation and literary classics

As its title already suggests, this thesis does not focus on any nineteenth century novels, but on the so-called classics, in other words, those works of literature which are of continuing popularity and significance in modern society. Literary critics, publishing houses, and book lovers are often quick to attach this label to a large variety of books for multiple reasons. Asked about the distinct features that make a novel a classic, they mostly have difficulties in finding a single straightforward answer. Based on the idea that a classic is “a work of enduring value” (Mukherjee, *What is a Classic?* 1027), Mukherjee (*What is a Classic?* 1030) refers back to the definitions provided by the French literary critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve in the middle of the nineteenth century. According to him, a classic is basically a work that broadens the human mind and is aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, it is at the same time original and timeless since it has the power to continuously renew itself and gain relevance for contemporary audiences. Most significantly, “it is a living entity, open to endless intervention in successive acts of reading and interpretation” (Mukherjee, *What is a Classic?* 1030).

The notion of classics is frequently brought into relation with the literary canon. Although they overlap in many aspects, they do not necessarily denote the same thing. The meaning of the term derives from the Greek word for “measure” or “authoritative” (Harris 110) and was initially applied to biblical texts. Even though the literary canon “is not as fixed and closed as the religious canon but open to changes and exchanges” (Assmann 101), it is nevertheless largely based on a normative process which is marked by selection, value, and duration. Classics and canonical works may agree on the first two points since they are both read long after they were written and are usually also assigned the same high value. More than classics, canons are “essentially strategic constructs by which societies maintain their own interest, since the canon allows control over the texts a culture takes seriously” (Altieri 22). This implies that they are highly selective for they

only include those texts which “foster national unity and identity” (Grabes 314) and reinforce those moral values and social norms that are regarded as desirable.

Canons are also closely intertwined with educational context and the “idea of the curriculum, a narrower, programmatic idea about what students should be made to study rather than a wider, trickier assessment of what members of a cultural group happen to value or how artists in a culture happen to think” (Gorak 253). As the canon is institutionally embedded and constantly interacted with, it remains in circulation and is thus less susceptible to change. Not only is this particular selection of texts handed down from generation to generation, but since it is often presented as the best that has been produced in the field of literature, students are usually not encouraged to critically examine it. It is also in this respect that the notions of classics and canonical works possibly diverge. Although classic novels, like canonical works, are promoted by universities and schools, their status is more strongly subjected to the tastes and interests of the readership. They are thus continuously reconsidered and checked for relevance within modern life. This implies that a canon might also contain books which are solely read within educational contexts, but may lack popularity outside classrooms or lecture halls.

Recent discussions on the significance of the literary canon in modern society focus almost exclusively on its negative aspects. By foregrounding its possible misuse as an instrument of exclusion that reinforces ethnic and sexual assumptions as well as transports a fixed set of values and norms (Gorak 1-2), its enabling functions are often overlooked. Grabes, however, argues that the “canon will not die. Too strong is the desire to be canonized, too useful the canonizing for cultural memory, and too welcome the need to constantly rewrite it for literary and cultural historians” (318). Hence, the canon may still be a valuable part of the engagement with literature, but only if it ceases to be regarded as “an unchanging, unquestioned body of received opinion” (Gorak 253). Professional readers have to realise that a canon does not so much constitute a body of texts, but, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (186), a set of reading practices sustained by particular social institutions such as schools or publishers. A subversion of the canon does not mean that particular works or the concept as such has to be dismissed; its aim is rather to

raise awareness for ideological discourses that are at work in the formation of a canon. This implies that canonical works as well as those texts considered classics can no longer be treated as sacred cultural artefacts, but need to be opened up to various interpretations. The best examples for such a critical engagement can be found in the ever-growing field of neo-Victorian and postcolonial rewritings, which will be more closely looked at in the following chapters.

2.2 Neo-Victorian literature

Although the everyday use of “Victorian” suggests a homogenous historical era, the term “is at best an academic flag of convenience” (James 1). According to Adams (2), it was coined almost immediately after Queen Victoria’s death by journalists who wished to summarise her 64-year reign (1837 – 1901). Many critics see the problematic of applying the term to nineteenth century literature mostly in the fact that it denotes political circumstances rather than literary developments and encompasses a far too long time span. In spite of its imprecision, modern Britain still seems to attach significance to the term Victorianism and often equates it to a historical caesura. The period is not only viewed in terms of a “radical break with established institutions, habits, and ways of life” (Adams 2), but it was also shaped by the emergence of new and ground-breaking technologies. Both aspects had a huge impact on the literary market. The changes taking place in English society were directly addressed in contemporary novels whose availability to a larger readership was only made possible due to the revolution in printing.

Like no other literary period, the nineteenth century still figures prominently today. Many Victorian authors are considered canonical and are thus firmly established in every educational curriculum. Since their works are continuously adapted for TV and cinema or transformed into comics or even video games, Victorian novels are no longer confined to the academic sphere, but have already conquered popular culture or as Heilmann and Llewellyn put it: “Historical fiction sells, and Victorian

historical fiction sells better than most.” (27) How we interpret a particular period crucially depends on our own historical position and its distance to the past under consideration. Indeed, the Victorians are “[c]lose enough for us to be aware that we have descended from them and yet far enough away for there to be significant differences in life-styles” (Hadley 7). Being removed from them by several generations, modern readers do not have to clearly distance themselves from the values and norms of the Victorian era to the same extent as their direct descendants in the modernist period, but view them in a more sympathetic and nostalgic manner. Since modern heterogeneity in a way provokes society’s wish to reaffirm a clearly defined national identity and cultural heritage, one can observe the attempt to “highlight similarity more than difference, continuity more than rupture in constructing our relationship to the Victorian past” (Mitchell 55).

The nostalgic discourse that attempted to stylise the Victorian era “as a ‘golden age’ from which the present has dropped off” (Hadley 8), however, did not manage to disperse neither the ambiguous attitudes of modern Britons towards their Victorian ancestors nor the contradictions within nineteenth century society itself: “A period that can be cast in terms of its elegance, propriety, and imperial grandeur and, equally, in terms of its squalor, poverty, discrimination and humanitarian neglect, offers ample resource for praise or censure, emulation or disclamation.” (Mitchell 177) It might precisely be this tension between repulsion and attraction that motivates many contemporary authors to reinterpret Victorianism and its significance for modern life in the form of so-called neo-Victorian novels. While Hadley (4) proposes a rather broad definition of the genre which seems to include all kinds of contemporary fiction that refers to the Victorian period either on the level of plot, structure, or both, Heilmann and Llewellyn (4) clearly distinguish between historical fiction and neo-Victorian literature proper. Whereas the first uses the nineteenth century merely as setting as well as presents an unreflecting stereotyped view on Victorian culture, the second is “self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 4).

Although neo-Victorian novels such as Carey's *Jack Maggs* might and even have to convey some nostalgic flair, it is the subversion that predominates. Accordingly, it is this interplay between deconstructive on the one and affirmative elements on the other hand that establish these novels within the realms of postmodernism (Hutcheon 1-2). By continuously confronting their own narrative with the established forms of representation, they self-consciously refer to the constructedness of texts, culture and the past. At the same time, they highlight that they cannot escape these conventions and presuppositions either. According to Allen, postmodern literature thus applies a so-called double-codedness, which "questions the available modes or representation in culture whilst recognizing that it must still employ those modes" (Allen 183). This becomes especially apparent in the novels' engagement with history: They knowingly draw attention to the fact that they are rewritings by employing a double perspective. In other words, they seem to tell the story simultaneously from a present and a past point of view. According to Mitchell (1-2), this can be brought about by creating either a dual story line or a Victorian setting that is clearly informed by twentieth century attitudes and knowledge, even though this is never explicitly stated. This does not only illustrate that historical fiction "is defined as much by the period it evokes as by the period it is written in" (Hadley 6), but it also shows that history itself does not constitute an objective account of factual events, but is the act of "shaping and producing cultural memory" (Mitchell 178).

2.3 Postcolonialism: writing back to the imperial centre

As the rise of the British Empire crucially shaped Victorian society and culture, literature soon became central to the representation of Britishness to the nation itself and all over the world. As Schmidt-Haberkamp points out, "on the one hand, it helped to justify imperial possessions, and, on the other, it supplied a national/colonial culture with an exalted self-image of its geographical and material provenance" (250). While the Victorian novel celebrated English superiority, the

colonies and the concrete imperial practices “often amount to only a ‘shadowy presence’ ” (Purchase 58). As the intention of neo-Victorian fiction is to reveal the silenced and tabooed elements that are hidden beneath the surface of the Victorian master discourse, they also engage critically with Britain’s colonial past. Both novels dealt with in this thesis, Carey’s *Jack Maggs* and Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, cannot only be regarded as postmodern, but are also part of postcolonial literature. According to Slemon (1), those two approaches even share the same concern with marginality and ambiguity and attempt to subvert the dominant (historical) discourse by similar means such as parody and intertextual reference.

Over the past few decades “postcolonial” has certainly become a fashionable term. Not only has it found its way into European academia, but also contemporary marketing and literary criticism is quick to assign this label to any author living in a country that has once suffered from colonial oppression. However, defining it as the amount of works produced after independence has been achieved falls by far short of grasping all there is to postcolonialism. On the contrary, postcolonial “does *not* define a radically new historical era, nor does it herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured. Rather, ‘postcolonialism’ recognises both historical *continuity* and *change*” (McLeod 33). Postcolonial literature is to be regarded as a possibility to critically assess the colonial power imbalance and to resist continuing imperial attitudes of the European centre towards the margins. With this in mind, postcolonial literature is not something that is to be seen as taking place after colonisation, but primarily represents a “symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings” (Boehmer 3) and is thus actively involved in the process of decolonisation.

The British Empire used fiction as a teaching resource to establish and assert its “cultural and moral superiority while at the same time devaluing indigenous cultural products” (McLeod 140). Similarly, literature now serves former colonies as a tool for national self-definition and self-identification. Since forms of cultural domination often cut much deeper than military oppression, after years of colonisation people were often left wondering about who they are and what defines their nationhood. They even found it easier to grasp the idea of them not being

English than to determine what makes them distinctly Indian, South African, or Australian (Newman 3). This is due to the fact that Britain, even though it has lost much of its economic and political power, maintained much of its cultural influence: “[T]hrough the literary canon, the body of British texts which all too frequently still acts as a touchstone of taste and value, [...] the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 7).

Rewriting a canonical work of English literature provides the opportunity to present an alternative outlook on imperial Britain and its cultural practices. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys’s prequel to Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, was published in 1966 and relates the story of Bertha Rochester, Rochester’s first Creole wife. As this novel is commonly considered to be the first postcolonial rewriting, it has “become a canonical text of postcolonial studies” (Su, *Jean Rhys* 388). Not only did it change the way readers perceive Brontë’s classic, but it also set a trend that was to be followed by many postcolonial writers. The process of rewriting is not to be seen as the mere retelling of a canonical work from a different point of view, but engages in a much more complex relationship with the pretext since the Eurocentric structuring of the world cannot be challenged by simply “reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 32). A successful rewriting thus offers a multiplicity of perspectives in order to counteract against one dominant representation of “the world through a white, imperialist lens” (Edwards 52).

The relation between classic and rewriting, and hence between European centre and colonial periphery, is intrinsically paradoxical: In order to challenge the canon, the rewriting has to engage with it. In other words, by relying on another piece of literature and acknowledging it as the original, postcolonial authors do not only criticise them or even call “the very notion of canon into question” (Letissier 113), but they also assert their status at the very same time. Based on these assumptions, rewritings are occasionally rejected by both critics and authors for giving the impression “that non-metropolitan culture can only rework, has no creativity of its own, and is fundamentally dependent for its materials on the centre” (Newman 5).

Rewritings, however, are far from being a mere echoing of classical English works, but rather constitute “a transformative and transgressive reimagining” (Mukherjee, *Missed Encounters* 131), which should help “to read the older work in new ways” (Edwards 53).

2.4 Intertextuality

Intertextuality forms an integral part of literary rewritings. The following chapter, however, is not intended to give an exhaustive account on the controversial debate of what Allen calls “one of the most used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary” (2), but rather seeks to outline its most basic preliminaries in order to prepare the theoretical ground for the analysis of *Jack Maggs* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The point of departure of every discussion on intertextuality is the concept provided by Bulgarian-French literary critic Julia Kristeva who was the first to coin the term on the basis of Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. According to her, a work of literature does not originate in an author’s mind, but “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read at least *double*” (Kristeva 66). Since every text is constructed from already established discourses and thus “not an individual, isolated object” (Allen 35), meaning can never be directly mediated from author to reader, but is filtered through and established on account of other texts.

Since the focus of this thesis is on the intentional application of intertextual references in literary works, the analysis will not primarily refer back to Kristeva, but to Gérard Genette’s influential theory. Interestingly, he does not take up the term intertextuality, but coins the term transtextuality (9) for the relationship, whether hidden or obvious, between two or more texts and distinguishes five different sub-categories (10-15), which, however, frequently occur side by side in a literary text. In his model, he uses the term *intertextuality* (10), a bit confusingly,

only for one type and reduces its significance to concrete manifestations of one text in another such as quotations or plagiarisms. Transtextuality also comprises *paratextuality* (the relation of a text to its paratext, that is to say its subtitles, prefaces, epilogues and the like), *metatextuality* (one text refers to another in the form of a commentary) and *architextuality* (the text's relation to a certain convention, genre, or sub-genre). The most important sub-category is *hypertextuality* which also forms the core of Genette's model and refers to "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not commentary" (qtd. in Allen 104). To put it differently, we speak of a hypertextual relationship when one text refers more or less clearly back to what Genette calls hypotext, and what is most commonly termed inter-text or pretext by other critics (Allen 104), without explicitly quoting it as the source. More than Kristeva, Genette is concerned with the intentional use of intertextual references in literary works. As they are formed either due to a simple transformation or, more indirectly, an imitation (Genette 18) and thus owe their existence to another text, their meaning strongly depends on the reader's knowledge of the hypotext.

Neo-Victorian and postcolonial rewritings are full of intertextual references. They might only occasionally allude to nineteenth century authors, literary works and historical events or, more frequently, rewrite a concrete Victorian text as "a prequel, sequel or parallélquel, in which novelists explore tangential, marginal or background events and/or characters" (Mitchell 2). Carey's *Jack Maggs* and Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* clearly engage in a hypertextual relation to Brontë's and Dickens's novels. Even though it might be highly entertaining for an educated readership to detect the more or less well hidden references to their source text, intertextuality goes beyond playful allusions and references, but crucially takes part in postmodern deconstruction of narrative, cultural and historical conventions. Texts which intentionally refer back to another literary work are usually denoted either parody or pastiche. Genette (40), however, distinguishes between various different concepts: He claims that *parody* only entails a change in meaning due to a minor transformation; *travesty* is the stylistic degradation; *persiflage* refers to the satiric pastiche, which has formerly been called parody; *pastiche* finally constitutes

a serious imitation. Hutcheon, on the contrary, attempts to establish parody as an umbrella term that can be used synonymously with pastiche, ironic quotation or appropriation and “has a wide range of forms and intents – from that witty ridicule to the playfully ludic to the seriously respectful” (94). Indeed, novels frequently show that these terms are not that easily distinguishable. This already implies that a parody can paradoxically neither subvert without legitimising nor can it mock its literary model without paying homage. In the case of the novels analysed in this thesis, the aim of a parody is also not to crudely ridicule, but to undermine the status of classics as timeless cultural products and call into question notions about “our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property” (Hutcheon 93).

3 POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM IN THE NOVELS

3.1 Reading the (post)colonial into Dickens and Brontë

The works of Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë are among the uncontested favourites of what is considered great English literature. Still being read and loved by a large audience, they are no longer part of the English literary canon only: As they have already entered popular culture and are adapted for film or other media, their appreciation is no longer confined to Britain and the English-speaking world. In accordance with the common definition of classics, they are often considered timeless as they appear to convey values and images that are still relevant for a modern readership. Such an assumption, however, neglects the fact that these novels are nonetheless products of their time. Educational institutions, in which classics are usually encountered for the first time, do not normally encourage a critical attitude towards them, colonial and imperial inscriptions in novels such as *Jane Eyre* or *Great Expectations* often go unnoticed until they are challenged in postcolonial re-readings by critics such as Edward Said who critically interrogates in his work *Culture or Imperialism* the hidden subtext in works by Jane Austen or Joseph Conrad.

Both classics are part of a “nineteenth-century Eurocentric literature in which the colonized other is present but hidden” (Diamond 11). Colonialism and imperialism might not seem to be the main concerns of Dickens and Brontë, but those concepts nevertheless constitute a major force in both novels. In *Great Expectations* the convict Abel Magwitch, who is about to become the Australian Other, is introduced at the very beginning of the novel and it is only the money he earns in New South Wales that makes it possible for Pip to turn into a gentleman. A similar type of commercial success founded on the economic exploitation of the colonies can be found in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. Most prominently this is represented by Rochester’s first marriage to the mad Creole Bertha Mason, which should secure his financial situation after he, the younger son, has been denied a share in his father’s heritage. Additionally, it is also Jane herself who benefits from colonial practices. Equality between her and Rochester can only be achieved after she has

been granted economic independence due to the money she inherited from her uncle who lived in Madeira, a Portuguese colony which was occupied twice by the British in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Müller 66). More marginal to the plot, but still worth mentioning, is the allusion to the missionary activities in India, which St. John Rivers intends to pursue together with Jane as his wife.

Although these colonial aspects are crucial to the development of the plot, they are presented as rather minor details and thus tend to be overlooked. When reading nineteenth century British novels, a reader, however, should always keep in mind that literature formed “a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English” (243). Literary texts thus did not only express common opinions of their times, but also tried to reinforce them. Dickens and Brontë are no exception to that. In contrast to Brontë, who living in the relative solitude of her home town Haworth was largely unaffected by colonial practices (Ingham 66), Dickens can be said to have had a closer connection to overseas territories as he visited the United States and even toyed with the idea of migration (Sanders 67). This, however, does not mean that he criticised the oppression in the colonised lands in any way. It can rather be said that “Dickens, for all the empathy his work evinces with the poor and oppressed classes in Britain, the victims (no less than the peoples of the lands Britain colonized) of British capitalism, finally remains very much a man of his time” (Vanden Driesen 314). Not only did he fail to observe the wrongdoings of the British Empire, but he also became increasingly convinced of the superiority of European civilisation that entitled the British to use imperialism as a tool to “help” the less developed places of the world.

Great Expectations and *Jane Eyre* can be said to display “no interest at all in non-European subjects or the interrelationship of metropolis and colony” (Thieme 77). They do not only deny the characters Bertha and Magwitch the possibility to tell their own story or define their identity themselves, but it is also their protagonists, otherwise described as compassionate human beings, who seem to be ignorant of colonial cruelty and injustice as well. For instance, Jane Eyre, “who is critical of (male) authority and (female) repression, never applies her critical intelligence and moral consciousness to a wider context” (Müller 68). She does not inquire into the

source of her uncle's success and she is all too willing to accept Rochester's accusations of his first wife's madness. The downsides of colonialism are deliberately ignored by putting colonial settings off-stage and by pushing their "representatives", who are stigmatized as either lunatic or criminal, to the margins of society. The colonies are solely defined in terms of their assistance to Britain's economic growth and, in the case of Magwitch, they might also be seen as a possibility to remove the unsuccessful and the criminal from the British centre. All of this was of course justified by claiming British moral superiority which was reinforced even further by the colonial missionaries like St. John Rivers who considered themselves "to be bringing justice, light, and emancipation, not suffering; *Jane Eyre* and other novels of its era likewise explicitly endorse those ideals" (Su, *Once I Would Have Gone Back* 158).

As colonial and imperial practices are thought to be a thing of the past, modern readers usually fail to recognise the marginalisation of places and characters. Moreover, it is also the text itself that imposes, even if only indirectly, a Eurocentric perspective. By silencing and dehumanising those characters that do not conform to the established set of norms while at the same time painting the English protagonists' feelings and thoughts in most vivid pictures, readers are just not prompted to feel any sympathy for Bertha or Magwitch. In an interview Peter Carey concludes that what *Great Expectations* "encourages you to do – what so many of the books we grew up reading encourage you to do – is to take the British point of view. And with that view, you love Pip, he's your person, and so suddenly Magwitch is this dark terrible Other" (Koval 667). *Jane Eyre* is by no means different, but presents as well "only one side – the English side" (Rhys, *Letters* 297). As the first Mrs Rochester is not a fully developed character, but only presented as the obstacle to Jane's happiness, one is, like Jane, only too eager to believe Rochester's explanations and feels relieved by Bertha's eventual removal from the narrative.

Peter Carey and Jean Rhys are often referred to as postcolonial authors and it is precisely their sense of belonging to a former colony of the British Empire – Australia and the West Indian island Dominica – that is responsible for their

heightened awareness of hidden colonial discourses. Rhys explains her motivation for writing *Wide Sargasso Sea* in one of her letters as follows: “So reading ‘Jane Eyre’ one’s swept along regardless. But *I*, reading it later, and often, was vexed at her portrait of the ‘paper tiger’ lunatic, the all wrong creole scenes, and above all by the real cruelty of Mr Rochester.” (Rhys, *Letters* 262) She does not only comment on the possibility of overlooking imperialistic attitudes in the novel, but also lays emphasis on the fact that she herself is a Creole and, therefore, in the position not only to discern such notions, but to challenge them as well. Along the same lines, Carey describes his disappointment about the convict’s portrayal as his main impulse for rewriting Dickens’s novel: “Then one day, contemplating the figure of Magwitch, the convict in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, I suddenly thought THIS MAN IS MY ANCESTOR. And then: this is UNFAIR!” (qtd. in Ho 124).

Clearly related to those rather emotional exclamations is the reproach that Dickens and Brontë did not only create those characters, the very embodiments of the Other, to reflect the attitudes of their times, but, even more importantly, to suit their own fictional ends. Both postcolonial authors appear to share the same assumption that the great English novelists did not write about the “real” Magwitch and the “real” Bertha. To put it differently, they did not draw them as realistic characters, but as mere shadows emerging from the Empire’s periphery. Similarly to Carey, who explains that “[t]his is not the real Magwitch. He lied about my ancestor and so I was a little mad with [Dickens]” (Koval 671), also Rhys “never believed in Charlotte’s lunatic” (Rhys, *Letters* 296). Their intention behind writing their novels thus seems to be built on the wish to set things right: This, however, does not only refer to a challenge of the literary representation of marginalised characters, but it is also the historical truth which those texts claim to present that both postcolonial writers seem to destabilise.

3.2 Places of Otherness

Places of otherness are mostly defined in relation to the imperial centre England. In both the classics as well as the rewritings many characters constantly relate the colonised space back to the mother country. This complex relationship built on mutual dependence, on the one hand, and constant demarcation from each other, on the other hand, is brought into over-simplified binary oppositions that should not only set them apart, but also define the hierarchical order between them. While *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* cling onto these assumptions in order to maintain the British superiority, the postcolonial novels *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jack Maggs* “might provide a different way of understanding colonial relations: no longer a simply binary opposition, black colonized vs. white colonizers; Third World vs. the West, but an engagement with all the varied manifestations” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 200) of difference between England and the colonies, but also within the colonized space.

Considering the fundamental distinction between “*settlement colonies*, established by Europeans who had left (or been sent from) their homes for religious, political or economic reasons; and *commercial colonies* (including military bases), used as sources of raw materials” (Walder 37), the relation to the British centre might differ significantly among the colonies. Their national particularities, however, were largely ignored. Instead, they were “subordinated to their common difference from Britain” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 18): the exotic and the uncivilised provided the imagination at the same time with a taste for adventure and a fear of the unknown. This ambivalent attitude already shows that the Victorian discourse concerning the colonies is not as simple as the classics want to make believe.

3.2.1 The West Indies: hellish place or paradise?

The West Indies in *Jane Eyre* and Australia in *Great Expectations* can be best described as off-stage settings for actions which have taken place before or parallel to the actual events. Their relation to the main plot is revealed rather late in the

novel. This also implies that colonies are never referred to as such and their economic exploitation is not spelled out. By silencing the immoral downsides of colonialism British superiority is underpinned as something natural which does not need any justification at all. However, it also means that colonial practices were considered to be something that decent English people do not want to be closely associated with.

The portrayal of colonial space strongly depends on the evocation of landscapes and their continuous contrast with their English counterparts. In the classics those descriptions are highly biased and usually reduced to a few short passages. In *Jane Eyre* several allusions to the West Indies, to Madeira, and to India “create a complexity of landscapes suggested but never made real” (Loe 53). The colonies are not only pushed to the fringes of the Empire, but to the textual margins as well. As they are filtered through the eyes of one character only, the novels can provide neither the reader nor any of the characters with an objective description. One is forced to believe this one person as others such as Richard Mason or Bertha Rochester are silenced. As Rochester’s narration in Brontë’s novel functions as a justification for the incarceration of his wife, his life in the Caribbean is painted in rather bleak pictures (McLeod 154):

[...] it was a fiery West Indian night; one of the descriptions that frequently precedes the hurricanes of those climates. [...] The air was like sulphur-streams – I could find no refreshment anywhere. Mosquitos came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room; the sea, which I could hear from thence, rumbled dull like an earthquake – black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannon-ball – she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. (JE 305)

Rochester’s narration does not account for any scenic beauty that one might expect in a description of a Caribbean island. All aspects of West Indian nature – the sea, the climate, the animals, and even the moon – are depicted as an uncontrollable force and a threat to civilisation. The passage strongly appeals to the senses; it is above all the rendition of sounds and the various comparisons that create a rich image that draws not only Jane in, but also wins the reader over. The depiction of the allegedly abominable place peaks in Rochester’s contemplation of suicide which seems to be directly linked to his state of being “physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene” (JE 305). His account of the Caribbean as a hellish

nightmare that nearly destroys him is contrasted with the idealisation of Europe as a redemptive force that is evoked in the subsequent passage: It is only “[t]he sweet wind from Europe” (JE 306) that prevents him from going insane and eventually raises his hopes.

Another passage in the novel evokes a similar contrast between England and the colonial space. Here the country that is referred to is not Jamaica, but India, where St. John Rivers is about to embark on a life as a missionary. With the exception of the Ganges, it is not the Indian landscape that is alluded to, but the English scenery which is described by Jane in all its beauty:

“The breeze came from the west: it came over the hills, sweet with scents of heath and rush; the sky was of stainless blue; the stream descending the ravine, swelled with past spring rains, poured along plentiful and clear, catching golden gleams from the sun, and sapphire tints from the firmament. As we advanced and left the track, we trod a soft turf, mossy fine and emerald green, minutely enamelled with a tiny white flower, and spangled with a star-like yellow blossom: the hills, meantime, shut us quite in; for the glen, towards its head, wound to their core.” (JE 396)

This paragraph can be read in direct relation to Rochester’s account of the Caribbean as it is similar in its evocation of sensual experiences. The exact rendering of the colours and their symbolic meaning is especially striking: The shades of blue, yellow, and green are opposed to the nightly colours of the West Indies. In fact, Rochester mentions only two – red and black – which can be associated with hell and thus allegorize the land even more as a sinful and uncivilised place. In England, on the contrary, it is not the night and the tempest, but the day and its brightness that predominate. The extremes of the colonial spaces and the possible danger that it constitutes are rejected, while Britain seems to explain its superiority on grounds of its temperateness. The two images provided by Rochester on the one and Jane on the other hand are linked more closely to each other than one might think at first. Not only can the motif of the wind be discerned in both, but they also stylise the mere memory of England in a similar way as the only thing that can keep Rochester as well as St. John Rivers alive and sane. The latter asserts: “ ‘And I shall see it again,’ he said aloud, ‘in my dreams, when I sleep by the Ganges; and again, in a more remote hour – when another slumber overcomes me, on the shore of a darker stream.’ ” (JE 396)

In Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* the Caribbean is given much more importance. It is not only defined as the novel's main setting, but it also actively shapes the character's experiences and feelings. The natural spaces are more than a mere backdrop against which the story is narrated, but there seems to be a "characteristic interdependence between characters and their perceptions of their landscapes" (Loe 49). Most significantly, Antoinette's and Rochester's attitudes towards the land metaphorically mirror their relationship. Even though the Jamaica of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is obviously not the "bottomless pit" (JE 305) that Rochester suggests in *Jane Eyre*, it is not presented – as Maurel rashly claims – as "an idyllic, ideal world [...], a modern Eden" (157) either, but as a place of ambiguity. The West Indies are depicted at the same time as an idyll that offers security as well as comfort and as a menacing place that harbours a secret. These assumptions cannot be clearly attributed to either Antoinette or her English husband as both their descriptions show their vague and uncertain feelings towards the island and, in extension, towards each other.

In contrast to Brontë's Rochester, the unnamed husband in Rhys's novel is simultaneously fascinated and repelled by the West Indian landscape finding it beautiful as well as menacing and oppressive (Loe 55). In the same way the exotic and sensual beauty of his Creole wife initially casts a spell over him. Both attraction and repulsion are the result of Antoinette's and the West Indies' fundamental otherness from England and English attitudes. The strangeness Rochester experiences manifests itself rather early in a passage that closely reminds the reader of his description in *Jane Eyre*: "Not night or darkness as I knew it but night with blazing stars, an alien moon – night full of strange noises." (WSS 55) The unbridgeable difference between the temperateness of the English civilisation and the extremes of the Caribbean wild runs like a red thread through Rochester's narrative: "Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near." (WSS 42) His association of the "wilderness of his surrounding with excess and danger" (Mardorossian, *(De)colonization* 82) is a direct result of his continuous comparisons to English paradigms of landscape which ultimately "displays the imperialistic encoding of difference as irredeemable

inferiority” (Nixon 278). As the West Indian landscape seems less contained within civilisation and less controlled than English nature, it can only be perceived as exaggerated and unnatural from an English point of view. It is this failure to interpret and appreciate the West Indian landscape on its own terms that obstructs a possible adaptation.

His “realization that Jamaican reality cannot be fully incorporated into the bulk of prior knowledges” (Maurel 159) is also the reason for Rochester’s increasing discomfort and final hatred of the West Indies as well as its representative figure Antoinette. His inability to exercise colonial power is already shown in the first few weeks of his stay in the Caribbean: The fever from which he suffers does not only weaken his senses, but also undermines his pretentious self-image as strong white Englishman. It is also the island itself that seems to actively refuse signs of English civilisation. In other words its “geography resists or exceeds map-making” (Maurel 160). The “paved road” (WSS 65) Rochester discovers is not only something familiar that establishes order in the savage territory, but it also appears as a symbol of colonisation. However, as one of the oppressed locals, the black servant Baptistes, strongly denies its existence, the imperial power is rejected.

Contrary to Brontë’s madwoman in the attic, Antoinette is given a voice and is thus able to express her feelings towards her native country. As her descriptions of landscapes in the first part of the novel do not use English nature as a reference point, the Caribbean is not characterised by unbearable extremes:

I could not sleep, but I wasn’t quite awake as I lay in the shade looking at the pool – deep and dark green under the trees, brown-green if it had rained, but a bright sparkling green in the sun. The water was so clear that you could see the pebbles at the bottom of the shallow part. Blue and white and striped red. Very pretty. (WSS 9)

In contrast to Rochester’s account, her narration only evokes the beauty of West Indian nature. Although we can detect that colours take on an important aspect of perception for both characters, the husband claims them to exceed what is conceived to be natural, whereas Antoinette attempts to adjust the language of the coloniser to suit the particularities of Caribbean landscape. Unlike Rochester, she does not identify the colours as deviation or exaggeration by employing the particle

“too”, but finds new ways to distinguish the various colour shades like “deep and dark green”, “brown-green”, and “sparkling green”.

Antoinette perceives the nature surrounding her not only as “the most beautiful place in the world” (WSS 83), but it also has a sheltering and comforting function for her. As it is neither her family nor her uncertain membership of the group of white Creoles that provides her with security, she only feels protected within the familiar West Indian space: “I lay thinking, ‘I am safe. [...] There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers.’” (WSS 12) The assumption that nature shelters her against foreign forces that may harm or patronise her is soon to be proven wrong by Rochester’s arrival. However, nature and the sea in particular cannot only be a barrier, but they also constitute a connection between the colonising and the colonised culture. Since the imperial forces constantly attempt to invade the space she calls her own, her “desire for a homeland, or a native place to hide” (Winterhalter 221) is nearly impossible to satisfy. To see the protagonists’ perception of nature in a simple binary opposition like Maurel, who claims that the Caribbean is alternately “a hostile, menacing presence for ‘Rochester’ or a friendly, benevolent one for Antoinette” (158), falls short of capturing nature’s inherent ambivalence in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Like Rochester, also Antoinette detects a potential menace hidden behind the sensuous beauty and even applies a similar colour imagery contrasting black and blue: “I knew the time of the day when though it is hot and blue and there are no clouds, the sky can have a very black look.” (WSS 12)

The possible threat is made even more obvious by the close connection between natural space and traumatic incidents in Antoinette’s childhood that did not only destroy the “comforts created by such a soothing, intimate identification with the warmth and color – the sensuality of the landscapes” (Loe 54), but also had a crucial impact on Antoinette’s further life. Of particular importance is the garden at the Cosway’s family estate Coulibri:

Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. Underneath the tree ferns, tall as forest

tree ferns, the light was green. Orchids flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. [...] The scent was very sweet and strong. I never went near it. [...] All Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone bush. (WSS 6)

The depiction of the Edenic garden growing wild alongside with Antoinette's reluctance to go near the place where nature prevails against civilisation reinforces the lurking danger of nature. Moreover, the wild garden is linked to the decline of Coulibri Estate and thus symbolises the uprooting of the Cosway family after the Emancipation Act. Just as Antoinette feels excluded from the thicket of her garden, she is also cut off from her past and her background as a member of the white ruling class. Nature, however, does not only denote the detachment from the past as rulers, but also marks the problematic of finding a new identity. The bathing pool where her friend Tia does not only estrange her from the white Creoles, but also denies her a possible membership to the black community becomes a symbol of cultural and ethnic alienation. Even though some of her most traumatic experiences are linked to natural spaces, Antoinette's identity is inevitably linked to the West Indies: "This is my place and this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay" (WSS 68). Antoinette, who is ultimately left without any familial ties and almost no person to turn to, overemphasises the value of nature: "And it the razor grass cut my legs or arms I would think 'It's better than people.' Black ants or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin – once I saw a snake. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people." (WSS 12)

As an Englishman, Rochester can never be as intimately acquainted with the island as his wife. Being unable to accept neither his status as outsider nor his loss of control, he senses a secret hidden in the island that he cannot fully grasp: "It was a beautiful place – wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking. 'What I see is nothing – I want what it *hides* – that is not nothing.'" (WSS 54) According to Maurel, the topos of the secret is "the only means available to him to designate the unknown, the unthought, the inassimilable" (159). Antoinette's beauty seems just as enigmatic to him as the island itself. The only way by which he can re-establish himself in the position of the coloniser is to break, according to Loe (59), the symbiotic relationship between the Creole and the landscape she initially perceived

as soothing and her own: “But I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate. I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you spoilt it. It’s just somewhere else where I have been unhappy, and all the other things are nothing to what has happened here. I hate it now like I hate you [...]” (WSS 94-95).

3.2.2 Australia: penal colony or workingmen’s paradise?

In Dickens’s *Great Expectations* Australia is made even less of a topic than the West Indies in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. The colonial space is only indirectly evoked by Magwitch. Through the short description of his work – “a hired-out shepherd in a solitary hut, not seeing faces but faces of sheep till I half forgot wot men’s and women’s faces was like” (GE 273) – the reader gets the idea of Australia being a rural space. Even though the convict is the only person who has seen the place with his own eyes, none of the other characters shows any interest in asking him about the exotic land. It rather seems that it only needs the reference to place names like New South Wales and Botany Bay to stir the contemporary readership’s imaginings of the atrocities in the penal colony. In *Great Expectations* Australia is thus reduced to “a repressed shadow image of English society’s criminality - not just a physical locus for penal servitude, but also a psychic escape valve that allowed middle class England to persuade itself that society could be purified by the banishment of ‘evil’ to the hellish, nethermost regions of the earth” (Thieme 106).

Pip’s reaction to Magwitch is emblematic of society’s fear of the convict re-entering the country. Although transportation to Australia had stopped by 1868, “the stereotype of the returned convict, who had known nameless horrors in Australia, and been guilty of nameless crimes, had almost been a convention of English fiction” (White 22). As so often, literature did not simply reproduce facts, but also formed to a great extent this picture of Australia that got stuck in people’s imagination. According to White (18), one aim of propagating this horrific image was to deter people most effectively from committing crimes. The English middle

class (White 20), however, did not so much worry that they themselves might meet such a fate, but that the criminal would infiltrate society once again. In the case of Magwitch, he does not only return, but his life is closely entwined with the novel's respectable English characters: Pip depends on his money and Miss Havisham's ward Estella is his biological daughter.

Australia in *Great Expectations* remains the invisible penal colony on "t'other side of the world" (GE 281) and it is the very absence of any description that reinforces the exoticism and the danger of the colonial space even more. Interestingly, the postcolonial author Carey does not make Australia the main setting of his novel *Jack Maggs*. In fact, it is only on the last few pages that the action is transferred to Australia, which has been solely referred to by Maggs or other characters as part of his past. Unlike Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the reversal of centre and periphery is not brought about by a marginalisation of England and the foregrounding of the colony. *Jack Maggs* rather provides a critique on the power structures from within the imperial core, which is continuously pervaded by Antipodean images. During his mesmeric sessions, Tobias Oates does not only gain insights into Maggs's past, but also into Australian wild life and vegetation: "This Australian of ours holds his life in his cerebrum. He carries pelicans and parrots, fish and phantoms, things the Royal Botanist would give a sov or two to hold." (JM 88) Additionally, Carey's novel does not only render the colonial place visible, but it also tries to expose the inhuman punishments in the penal colonies. In *Jack Maggs* Australia and its criminals are no longer solely alluded to. Not only does the title character's trance reveal the cruel treatment of the English system of justice that convicts had to endure, the brutal floggings with the double-cat is also permanently inscribed onto Maggs's body: "the sea of pain etched upon the footman's back, a brooding sea of scars, or ripped and tortured skin" (JM 86).

After Maggs's real identity as Australian convict has been uncovered, he begins to consciously refer to the penal colony. In contrast to Antoinette's affection for her West Indian home, Magg's attitude towards the Australian landscape is largely characterised by hostility. He does not feel connected to the colony in any way, but it is only the other characters in the novel that designate him a distinctively

Australian identity. His perception of the Australian climate even bears resemblance to Rochester's account of the West Indies as a hellish place. Similarly, it is also the image of England that enables him to endure his plight in Australia: "Underneath the scalding sun, which burned his flesh as soon as it was mangled, Jack Maggs would imagine the long mellow light of English summer." (JM 321-322). The contrast between the two natural spaces is again based on English temperateness and exotic excess. This time, however, it is not a representative of the colonial power, but the one person who is assigned the role of the Other, the Australian, who makes this comparison. His idealization of English scenery is thus not only a recognition of English superiority, but also shows his denial of an Australian identity.

When *Great Expectations* was published in 1861, transportation had more or less stopped. On the contrary, between 1830 and 1850 Australia began to attract more and more free English settlers who "were lured by a new image of Australia as a land of opportunity for all comers, and above all for the working man" (White 29). Very soon it came to be associated with a workingmen's paradise. Unlike Dickens, Carey shows this transition in the perception of Australia: Maggs might have been exiled to Australia as a convict, but upon being pardoned he was able to achieve the financial success and respectability that England had denied him. Being considered a place of freedom, where the class system was suspended and where practically everyone was given the chance to make something of one's self, Australia came to be considered by many people as a better version of Britain. Since this, of course, clashed with British notions of superiority, the colony was still stigmatised by those remaining in the hegemonic centre. White settlers were claimed to have not been apt enough to succeed at home (Innes 42-43) and, even more degradingly, they were still brought into connection with the depravity of Australia's convict history claiming that "to be Australian, whether convict, native-born or free settler, was to be tainted with the brutality and depravity of the convict system" (White 23).

The colonial space may not be of any importance in *Great Expectations*, but English nature is also far from being an unambiguous place of beauty. Dickens's

novel already starts out with a description that has very little in common with the ones that can be found in the novel of his contemporary Brontë or in Carey's novel in which Maggs speaks, for instance, of "as pretty a scene as you would see in all of England – the land divided by hedges into fields and orchards" (JM 242). The marshes on which Pip's first encounter with Magwitch take place are described as a rather bleak place: "The marshes were just a long, black, horizontal line then, as I stopped to look back after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long, angry, red lines and dense black lines intermixed." (GE 7) Pip's description of the marshes resembles Rochester's account of the West Indies in *Jane Eyre* since he also uses dark and menacing colours like red and black to paint a gloomy atmosphere which underlines Magwitch's violent behaviour. Magwitch might not be as closely linked to Australian space as his literary stand-in Maggs; nevertheless, it is the very combination of Magwitch and the surrounding landscape that is remembered by Pip.

Generally, in both *Great Expectations* and *Jack Maggs* natural spaces are of considerably less importance than in Brontë's or Rhys's novel, but the emphasis is rather put on the urban centre of the Empire. Carey's novel appears even more precise in mapping nineteenth century London than its Victorian pretext. Not only are the characters' journeys through the city depicted in great detail, but it is also the frequent reference to street names that provides readers with a seemingly authentic picture of English urban life. Carey's accurate representation of London is mirrored on the story level by the author-figure:

Now, each day in the *Morning Chronicle*, each fortnight in the *Observer*, it was Tobias Oates who 'made' the City of London. With a passion he barely understood himself, he named it, mapped it, widened its great streets, narrowed its dingy lanes, framed its scenes with the melancholy windows of his childhood. (JM 182)

Like Carey, Oates is not simply describing London, but he is rather manipulating and fictionalising reality. The image he creates, however, is fundamentally disturbed by the intrusion of the social outcast Maggs into "the heart of the former Empire itself" (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 178). Maggs's very appearance does not only lift the veil on Britain's imperial practices, but also on the discrepancies within English society. In fact, London is at the same time characterised as a city of

literature as well as culture and a city of industry. Since this dichotomy “was already a familiar one in the nineteenth century, spurred by a general interest in urban life and the new social conditions” (Meinig 59), it can be found to a great extent in Dickens’s novels as well. Pip’s initial perception of London is by no means favourable. It is described as “a very wicked place” (GE 147), where the young man’s mood is “oppressed by the hot exhausted air, and by the dust and grit that lay thick on everywhere” (GE 140). On the other hand, London surpasses the rural environment he grew up in not only in its immensity, but is also designed to be the place in which Pip can make something of himself: “No more low wet grounds, no more dykes and sluices, no more of these grazing cattle [...] farewell, monotonous acquaintances of my childhood, henceforth I was for London and greatness.” (GE 124-125) Carey highlights London’s inner contradictions even more by explicitly showing the shabby and even criminal aspects of Victorian London such as child prostitution, illegal abortion, or thievery and by contrasting them to society’s hypocritical demands for morality and respectability. This ambivalence is already expressed at the very beginning of the novel in the juxtaposition of the “gas light, blazing and streaming like great torches” (JM 2) as a symbol of progress and the poorer side streets which being dark and gloomy reveal the social downsides of the Industrial Revolution. By revealing the contradictions of the imperial centre, Carey makes clear that a simply binary opposition can neither grasp the complexity of the colony and the centre nor the relationship between the two.

3.2.3 Hierarchical structures

Not only is a contrast established between England and the colonies, but the two spaces are also brought into a hierarchical relation. The classics focus on the description of colonies as exotic and adventurous, but at the same time savage place to underline their inferior status. Rhys and Carey, on the other hand, show that the colonial periphery and the imperial core are not as different as the Victorian authors make believe. Most significantly, their similarity is brought about

by the parallels between colonial buildings in both spaces. The Cosways's family estate Coulibri in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, for instance, is in many aspects similar to Rochester's Thornfield Hall. Not only are they both impressive buildings, but they also share the same fate of burning down to their grounds. The need of strong male guidance in order to maintain the grandeur of a house is already pointed out by Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield Hall: "[...] it is a pretty place; but I fear it will be getting out of order, unless Mr Rochester should take it into his head to come and reside here permanently – or, at least, visit it rather oftener. Great houses and fine grounds require the presence of the proprietor." (JE 101) Estates are predominantly associated with male power, while nature is typically interpreted as the female sphere, whose potential wildness has to be contained by male domination. This is made most clear in the decline of Coulibri Estate that is triggered by the death of Antoinette's father and can only be detained by another male character, Annette's second husband Mr Mason. The parallel between the two buildings hints at the fact that they have both been built on grounds of the same exploitative practices and are thus "doomed estates, domestic and colonial, as products and eventual casualties of the same cultural phenomena of imperial decline and the rebellion of empire's former subjects" (MacKay 163).

In *Great Expectations* Australia is never liberated from its image as a savage land. Despite the fortune he has made in the colonies, Magwitch is not entitled to be the owner of a respectable Australian household. In contrast to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is not the demolition of symbolic buildings that marks the disempowerment of English supremacy, but Carey sets out to revise the negative image of the colonial space by describing its civilisation as equal to Victorian Britain. Maggs, unlike his alter ego Magwitch, is described to be living a comfortable life there: "I have a grand house in Sydney town. There is a street named for me, or was when I sailed. I keep a coach, and two footmen. I am Mr Jack Maggs Esquire, and I left all that so I might end up here today." (JM 280-281) The similarity between British and Australian society that is established here is further developed by the end of the novel. Maggs's and Mercy's social ascension in the new world is critically viewed by Woodcock, who claims that "Carey shows no wish to condemn patriarchal or imperial law and that, far from escaping England, Maggs rebuilds it in Australia

through his business, his pub, his presidency of the Cricket Club” (Woodcock 136-137). However, as the colonial space allows for two social outcasts, the former child prostitute and kitchen maid Mercy and the criminal Maggs, to start over with a clean slate, the author suggests that Australia does not imitate British society, but creates a better version of it. In other words, the colony is “a ‘Britain transported’ but with fewer taboos, which constructs Australia as an idealized version of colonial society” (Heinke 215). As the Antipodean space gets considerably associated with high standards of living, London, on the contrary, changes in the perception of the characters and becomes an increasingly disagreeable place. Not only is the rain pouring down heavily and almost continuously throughout the last thirty pages, but the imperial capital also becomes the abominable and “hellish” place that Australia once was:

The London they left behind had been a sunny place where daffodils grew in the window boxes. The London they returned to seemed hellish – broken cotton bale, cracking whips, an omnibus alight on St. Martin’s Lane – all the streets awash with a weary sulphurous kind of evening light [...]” (JM 291).

The colonies and the imperial centre cannot only be seen in terms of male domination and female subjugation, but their relationship may also be interpreted as filial. Already *Great Expectations* describes London as a “metropolis” (GE 138). According to Meinig (58), using this term in a postcolonial context is not only appropriate due to London’s complex composition. As the word is formed by combining the Greek words for “mother” and “city”, it suggests the comparison of colonies to children who are in need of parental help provided by their mother country Britain. This common metaphor should offer a convincing justification for the Empire’s oppressive and exploitative practices. In the rewritings the assumption of England coming to the rescue of the savage peoples and countries of the earth is seriously called into doubt by those characters who are defined as the Other by the imperial centre. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the former slave Christophine questions not only England’s supremacy, but its very existence: “I don’t say I don’t *believe*, I say I don’t *know*, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it.” (WSS 70) To some extent, this mockingly reverses the positions of colony and the imperial centre: It is no longer the Victorian master discourse that veils the existence of the colonial periphery, but it is the Other who refuses to take the supremacy of the mother country for granted.

For Antoinette England seems to constitute a mystical place in the same way as the Caribbean does for Rochester. It appears to be unreal and almost dreamlike:

‘Is it true,’ she said, ‘that England is like a dream? [...]’ ‘Well,’ I answered annoyed, ‘that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.’ ‘But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?’ ‘And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?’ ‘More easily,’ she said, ‘much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.’ ‘No, this is unreal and like a dream,’ I thought. (WSS 49)

Even when she is brought there, it does not become an actual setting for her since “Rochester’s England exists in the novel primarily as a cold room in its half-dozen pages” (Loe 58). English landscape is significantly absent from the novel and fails to fulfil the hopes Antoinette has attached to it back in the West Indies: “I will be a different person when I live in England and different things will happen to me.” (WSS 70) Antoinette is unable to reconcile the place where she is staying with the image of the British Empire that she has formed on basis of her school books. However, her denial of her prison being part of England – “They tell me I am in England but I don’t believe them.” (WSS 117) – does not at all destroy her idealisations of the country, but even strengthens them. “That afternoon we went to England. There was grass and olive-green water and tall trees looking into the water. This, I thought, is England. If I could be here I could be well again and the sound in my head would stop.” (WSS 119) The glimpse she is given at what she believes to be the real England expresses once again her close connection to nature, but, even more significantly, seems to make her blind to the evil that has befallen her. Her inability to recognise British supremacy finally seals her fate as the colonial other.

The inclusion of the Other’s perspective in the rewritings distinctly shows that the hierarchical system between mother country and its dependent colonies is made up of contradictions. This may be best described by the title of Rhys’s novel as the Sargasso Sea which is “situated in the North Atlantic between the West Indies and the Azores, both divides and unites the opposite worlds of the old and the new hemispheres” (O’Connor 145). As Loe (52) points out, the Sargasso Sea does not merely situate the narrative in a concrete geographical locus, but also serves as a metaphor for the ambiguous colonial situation that can still be felt in the postcolonial world. Moreover, it epitomises Rochester and Antoinette’s marriage:

being drawn to each other, an equal relationship is nevertheless impeded by "[t]heir closed vision and their mutual inability to transcend the geographical and conceptual barriers between them" (O'Connor 149–150). The title becomes even more significant as the novel refuses "the sea its proper name and present[s] the sea as receding from access or awareness" (Kimmey 116). Whereas the sea in the West Indian scene of *Jane Eyre* seems to form a crucial part in Rochester's rescue, Rhys's novel seems to deliberately confine it to the background: "The sea was not far off but we never heard it, we always heard the river. No sea." (WSS 83) The sea appears to be a barrier sheltering Antoinette from the intrusion of foreigners. Its function as a connection to Europe, however, is questioned by Antoinette, who is convinced that they "lost our way to England" (WSS 117). Ultimately, it seems to be precisely this link that enables to reinforce British supremacy as it is only the imperial centre that decides when it is convenient to use the passage, whereas the same power cannot be claimed by the colonised.

3.3 The Other

3.3.1 Dehumanisation and identity loss

Postcolonial rewritings such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jack Maggs* do not only flaunt the supposed binary oppositions between colonial and English space, but they also call into question the very notion of the colonial Other. During colonialism, constructing the Other as complete opposite seems to have formed an integral part of defining the English Self. Boehmer, for instance, explains that "such characterizations of the European were asserted in relation to an opposite, a 'rest' of the world, an Other [...]: a category of representation which subsumed within itself those other significations of difference" (81). According to Heinke, the concept of otherness is not based on a mere exclusion. Instead, society paradoxically insists on "integrating the Other according to [its] dominant values, social roles, and cultural codes" (206). The two concepts are thus mutually dependent: the Self cannot exist without the Other and vice versa.

Popular authors, even though they had no or only little insight into Britain's colonial practices or the colonised peoples' lives, participated considerably in this discourse by inserting common images of the Other into their works. Dickens's Magwitch as well as Brontë's Bertha are far from being complex or round characters, but only serve the purpose of affirming common stereotypes. Their description is constricted to relatively few pages in the novels and is for the most part in accord with Boehmer's assumption of colonised people being "represented as lesser: less human, less civilised, as child or savage, wild man, animal, or headless mass" (79). The Other is not only different, but considered inferior. In order to justify their colonial practices, the British claimed that the Empire has been established to help the simple people of this world by bringing them civilisation and development. In reality, however, the Other could never become entirely European no matter how educated or how well adapted to English norms they were. They needed to remain the Other in order to keep the power imbalance.

Both Bertha and Magwitch have to experience dehumanisation and society's refusal to grant them an identity. Rochester's first wife Bertha is never seen as a human being. Her life is reduced to the shadowy existence of a ghost or a vampire haunting Thornfield Hall:

'[...] I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face – it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments.' 'Ghosts are usually pale, Jane.' 'This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?' [...] 'Of the foul German spectre – the vampire.' (JE 281)

Even before Rochester reveals that it is in fact his wife that lives in the attic, Bertha is already denied an identity of her own. Jane mistakes the mad laughter and the growls she hears resounding through the mansion to be Grace Poole's: "When thus alone, I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh: the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha! which, when first heard, had thrilled me: I heard, too, her eccentric murmurs; stranger than her laugh." (JE 111) However, it is also Bertha's humanity as such that is called into doubt by likening her appearance to a ghost. Jane's description also alludes to Bertha's savage and foreign West Indian nature that is not only presented as despicable, but also as dangerous. Bertha's frightful appearance is reinforced by her comparison to an animal throughout the novel. Her

aggression towards her brother Richard Mason, who explains that “[s]he worried [him] like a tigress” (JE 211), sustains the interpretation of her being an instinct-driven beast. This metaphor is taken up again in the description Jane gives when she meets Bertha in person:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hit its head and face. (JE 291)

In this account Jane does not only deprive Bertha of a human identity by reducing her “to the state of a wild creature who can express herself only through violence, historical laughter or arson” (Diamond 10), but even more so by using the impersonal pronoun “it”. As she is not given a voice to express herself, she is degraded to an object that is gazed at and can thus be easily made sense of due to its simplicity and inferiority. As Walker explains, Bertha has “no identity, no true self; she is simply *other*, defined only and always by the center” (39).

Her story is told in one single chapter by Rochester, who assumes the role of the coloniser and thus evokes common images of the colonised (Maurel 155): His first impression of her is that of an exotic beauty – “a fine woman [...]: tall, dark, and majestic” (JE 302) – and it is precisely her foreignness that makes him susceptible to her charms. This, however, quickly changes when he no longer perceives her difference as alluring, but finds “her nature wholly alien to mine, her tastes obnoxious to me, her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly capable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger [...]” (JE 303). In order to seal her fate as the Other for good and assert his own supremacy, it does not suffice to simply denote her as inferior to English manners. Rochester additionally draws on “a familiar pattern, with European rationalism being contrasted with non-European bestial passion” (Thieme 76) which is exemplified by her “continued outbreaks of her violent and unreasonable temper” (JE 303). As Bertha is not only described as being of another race, but also considered as Rochester’s possession, she is likened to the slaves in the West Indies. All of this serves to justify Bertha’s incarceration and to diminish Rochester’s guilt. In this scene Brontë also “gives over the narrative completely to a colonizing master discourse and provides no

critique of the assumptions working within it” (Nixon 274-275). This is made most apparent in the fact that it is not only Bertha who is silenced, but also Jane is in a way forced to hand over her narrative authority to the male coloniser, Rochester.

Bertha is neither human nor independent since she is only seen in relation to Jane. One of her main purposes is to highlight “by contrast, the naturalness and purity of Jane as the potential wife” (Nixon 271). The opposition between the two women is most clearly established by Bertha’s physical appearance as a “big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides” (JE 291) that significantly contrasts Jane’s delicate and small figure. In this context, Rochester also claims that he “longed only for what suited me – for the antipodes of the Creole” (JE 308) and thus clearly admits that he can only accept the very opposite of the colonised, an Englishwoman, as an equal partner in marriage. Furthermore, Bertha does not only serve as a contrast figure to Jane, but has often been interpreted “in psychological terms, as Jane’s dark double” (Spivak 248) embodying the heroine’s negative character traits such as her quick temper. Hence, Brontë’s protagonist “must define herself against Bertha” (Diamond 11), whose eventual removal from the story signifies Jane’s transition into a respectable Victorian Englishwoman.

The portrayal of Dickens’s Other Abel Magwitch is not entirely consistent since his appearances at the beginning and towards the end of the novel are marked by opposing descriptions. While he is depicted as a “fearful man” (GE 3), who acts violently towards the child Pip, Magwitch is later shown as a pitiable and helpless being. Although he does not talk about his time in Australia in great detail, it is clear that his forced exile has broken him. His apparent change of personality might be positively connoted since it transforms him into a more even-tempered person. However, it is rather proof of the successful subjection of everyone who does not conform to English norms and expectations as well as of the assumption that penal colonies provide criminals with the possibility to repent their sins far away from England presents another convenient justification for imperialism.

Like Bertha's proposed similarity to a beast, also Magwitch is compared to an animal throughout the novel. When Pip brings him some food at the beginning of his tale, the boy, for instance, notices "a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating and the man's. The man took strong, sharp, sudden bites, just like a dog" (GE 17). Even though he is no longer that frightful being from the first pages when he calls on Pip in London, his defamation persists. Not only is his physical appearance described as rather unpleasant and appalling, but even more significantly the way of eating his breakfast echoes the scene on the marshes:

He ate in a ravenous way that was very disagreeable, and all his actions were uncouth, noisy, and greedy. Some of his teeth had failed him since I saw him eat on the marshes, and as he turned his food in his mouth, and turned his head sideways to bring his strongest fangs to bear upon it, he looked terribly like a hungry old dog. (GE 280)

Magwitch's behaviour causes Pip to feel "repelled from him by an insurmountable aversion" (GE 280), but it also shows that he has not changed at all, but is still the despicable Other that resembles more closely an animal than a person. Being a colonial object, he is not granted any personal growth or development. Pip's dependency on Magwitch and his money signifies, by extension, also his connection to the colonies, which only seems to be acceptable if Magwitch is described as an inferior creature and equalled to a helpless child that cannot be taken seriously by the novel's hero. Likewise, he has to be stripped of his English identity and reduced to the criminal and colonial aspects of his personality:

To my thinking, there was something in him that made it hopeless to attempt to disguise him. The more I dressed him, and the better I dressed him, the more he looked like the slouching fugitive on the marshes. [...] from head to foot there was Convict in the very grain of the man. The influences of his solitary hut-life were upon him besides, and gave him a savage air that no dress could tame (GE 286)

The fact that he will always stick out as the Other shows the impossibility of Magwitch to become part of English society. As he still clings to the idea of being an Englishman or at least being the foster father to one, the only way to re-establish the hierarchical structures is Magwitch's eventual expulsion from the fictional world in form of his death.

As both novels do not make imperialism their main topic, the control that Europe in general and the British Empire in particular exercise over the colonised peoples of the world is not explicitly stated. Colonial attitudes, however, are indirectly

conveyed through the unfavourable portrayal of Bertha and Magwitch. Both are presented as beings that, like children, cannot sufficiently look after themselves and thus need to be helped by the supposedly more civilised English parent society. In line with the dominant imperial discourse the confinement of Rochester's mad first wife to the attic with a nurse to take care of her as well as Pip's attempt to help his benefactor to get back to his Australian exile have to be interpreted as an act of mercy. The Other is unable to ever become part of English society and is eventually eliminated from the fictional world. Britain's justification for colonialism, namely to bring civilisation and development to the savage places and peoples of the world, can only be sustained if Bertha and Magwitch remain one-dimensional. Even though they go about it differently and with another outcome, the rewritings by Carey and Rhys seek to humanise the Other in order to overthrow the hierarchical colonial system on a literary level. They do not simply reverse the roles of coloniser and colonised, but rather mirror those hegemonic structures and subvert them at the same time by giving the Other the chance to speak for themselves.

Rhys's intention behind *Wide Sargasso Sea* was to "write [Bertha] a life" (qtd. in Thorpe 178). This, however, does not mean that she simply places the Creole woman into the subject position by assigning her the sole narrative authority over her story. Her voice rather constitutes one among several. Not even her own narration begins "with an assertion of an 'I' that differentiates itself from the other. Instead, that self is presented as objectified by society" (Fayad 438): "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks." (WSS 5) Even though Antoinette is no longer the mere embodiment of colonial stereotypes, she is neither depicted as an entirely positive character nor is she able to assert a stable identity. The rewriting does not revise Antoinette's final dehumanisation as the madwoman suggested by Brontë's classic, but it differs from its pretext with regard to the reasons for her mental instability. While *Jane Eyre* suggests the interpretation of her lunacy as natural givens, which directly results from her Creole ancestry and her upbringing in an exotic environment detached from English manners and norms, Rhys's novel shows that it is the imperial

mechanisms and the control of a male coloniser, Rochester, that turn her into the mad monster of Brontë's novel.

Antoinette's identity is not only lost, but she is never really given the chance to fully develop one. This can already be observed in the description of her childhood which is significantly marked by the estranged relationship to her mother Annette. As a child Antoinette continuously seeks her mother's affection, but is "pushed [...] away, not roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her" (WSS 7). Instead, she gives her entire love to Antoinette's developmentally challenged younger brother Pierre. It almost seems that Annette cannot bear having her daughter around as she perceives her to be destined to the same fate that she had to endure: being oppressed and colonised not only by English hegemony, but also by a husband.

However, it is her relationship to Rochester and the dissonance between her own perception of who she is and the coloniser's attempt to define her that eventually makes it impossible for her to develop a stable identity. The unnamed husband's early accounts of Antoinette resemble Rochester's initial description of his Creole wife in *Jane Eyre* as an alien yet intriguing woman: "The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet..." (WSS 42) This impression, however, does not change due to her growing lunacy, but it is precisely her exceptional beauty that makes him despise her. It does not only make him the slave of his urges, but it also remains – like the landscape – a mystery to him that he will never be able to fully understand:

And I hated the place. I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it. (WSS 111)

His hatred and rejection of the island and its representative Antoinette is the only way to free himself from the grasp they seem to have on him and regain the upper-hand to reassert his colonial superiority. Attempts to patronise his young wife can be found throughout the novel, which cumulate in his complete denial of her humanity. By becoming a marionette and "only a ghost" (WSS 110), she is not

even granted a real existence. In the last part of the novel this is acknowledged by Antoinette herself when she sees her reflection in a mirror: “It was then that I saw her – the ghost. The woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her.” (WSS 123) Her inability to recognise herself is evidence of her self-alienation. In other words, she has ultimately lost her identity as Antoinette as “Rhys makes Antoinette see her *self* as her Other, Brontë's Bertha” (Spivak 250).

The process of robbing Antoinette of her identity is most significantly marked by Rochester's continuous attempt to rename her. By substituting the French-sounding Antoinette with the English name Bertha, he intends to turn her into something he is familiar with: the stereotypical Victorian woman. Only after he has ripped her of everything that is exotic and different about her, he can fully control her in “an act of male possessiveness” (Müller 71). Changing her name does not only indicate his wish to Europeanize her, but also “his need to deny her a reality” (Winterhalter 227) by cutting her off her past and her familial roots he despises. This is most obvious in Antoinette's observation: “He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother's name.” (WSS 71) By trying to turn her into someone else, he is guilty of the same uncanny and manipulating customs that he accuses the island's inhabitants of practicing. Antoinette even attempts to refuse his control by claiming it to be just another form of obeah. She is sure that names matter and define a person's identity “like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass” (WSS 117). Her name appears to be her only safety net: the loss of her name thus equals the loss of her identity and makes her transition into Brontë's madwoman in the attic definite.

Even though Antoinette clearly provokes the reader's sympathy, Rhys avoids portraying her as an entirely positive character. She might be presented as the victim of colonial, racial, and gender constraints, but she strongly “participates in her own destruction: her choices matter, and she chooses badly” (24). The problem, however, is not that she makes the wrong decisions, but that she is apparently unable to make any decisions at all. This can already be observed in the dream at the end of the novel's first part, in which she anticipates her marriage to Rochester:

I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. (WSS 34)

Antoinette remains inactive, although she clearly sees the threat that lies ahead of her. Her assertion that "this must happen" even points to a force outside Antoinette's own fictional world: Everything she does or does not do seems to be determined by her eventual fate in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette is not shown as a rebellious character since she neither fights the constraints of her society nor the narrative embrace, but rather makes herself a victim by interpreting "her own experiences and her resultant identity as passive, subordinate, and finally untenable" (Dehn Kubitschek 25).

In contrast to Antoinette, Jack Maggs is defined as an active character who is willing to take matters into his own hands. Concerning his physical appearance, the narrator neither classifies him as the beastly creature that Pip encounters in the graveyard nor as the pitiable figure he has become by the end of the novel. Already on the first page of the novel, he is described as "a tall man in his forties, so big in the chest and broad in the shoulder that his fellows on the bench seat had felt the strain of his presence" (JM 1). He is strong like Dickens's Magwitch, but "his ferocity is turned into a positive quality, into power and strength" (Schmidt-Haberkamp 255). Rather than with animal-like force he comes to be associated with manliness, which also explains his apparent appeal to other characters such as Buckle's kitchen maid Mercy Larkin and his fellow footman Edward Constable. The image of Maggs's physical superiority is even reinforced by its direct contrast to the hardly flattering portrayal of his antagonist Tobias Oates: "He was short [...] but Oates was also slight and his face, were it not for his lopsided smile, might have been described as cherubic." (JM 25)

Carey's novel, however, does not only present the reader with the narrator's well-meaning perspective towards the protagonist, but also with the ways in which other characters see Maggs. The motif of disguising the Other, which is introduced in *Great Expectations*, is taken up in *Jack Maggs*. Unlike his alter ego Magwitch, Maggs is quite able to hide his real identity at first and does not stand out as a

criminal or an Australian. This does not mean that his appearance does not puzzle his fellow beings, but it is frequently interpreted in rather positive terms. On the coach journey to London, for instance, “[o]ne privately imagined him a book-maker, another a gentleman farmer and a third, seeing the excellent quality of his waistcoat, imagined him an upper servant wearing his master’s cast-off clothing. His face did not deny the possibility of any of these occupations” (JM 1). This already shows that Maggs is granted the status of a complex human being who cannot be reduced to his convict identity only.

Once his background in the Australian penal colony is revealed, the convict’s humanity is subverted by several means. Maggs is turned from a respectable servant into “an object of curiosity and entertainment” (Savu 153) that is gazed upon in the course of the mesmeric sessions. The comparison of the convict to all sorts of animals mirrors “the dehumanizing treatment convicts received by the imperial authorities” (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 183). His objectification and his total subjugation is most prominently marked by the use of possessive pronouns to refer to him: He is no longer “Jack Maggs Esquire” (JM 6), but degraded by Buckle to “our Jack Maggs” (JM 138). Additionally, like Rhys’s Antoinette, Maggs is also associated with the uncanny and the intangible. He is not made into a ghost by the coloniser, but Oates, a stand-in for the oppressive British colonial system, implants the image of a phantom, “a creature who wishes [him] harm, who lives within [him] like a worm lives in the belly of a pig” (JM 47), into his mind. All of these practices targeted at dehumanising him clarify once more that it is not the Other who is inherently different, but an individual is defined as such by the imperial centre. The way by which Maggs reveals his innermost secrets and submissively obeys the English authority, Oates, during his trance can be interpreted as “his mesmerised subjection to England” (Woodcock 121). As the following chapter will show, this form of psychological manipulation often has more impact on the colonised Other than violent means.

3.3.2 Falling in-between: ethnicity, nationality, and social class

Even though nineteenth century discourse attempts to put the world into neat categories separating Britain and the rest of the world, such binary oppositions cannot be that easily established as colonised people do not constitute a homogenous group at all. In fact, their only correspondence seems to be that they are suppressed by British hegemonic practices. Looked at more closely, not even this proves to be entirely correct as it is not always that simple and straightforward to distinguish between coloniser and colonised. In contrast to Dickens and Brontë, both rewritings show that there can be no strict dividing line as the oppressed beings – the Cosways of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and convicts as well as free settlers in *Jack Maggs*'s Australia – are of English descent and have once belonged to the colonising force. The novels' protagonists thus appear to be torn characters: torn between two places, but also between various ethnicities and identities. Their feelings of dislocation and alienation might be of another sort than the experiences of slaves or indigenous peoples that have been conquered (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 9), but they also find themselves estranged from their roots as well as unable to settle in their new surroundings.

The rewritings' male protagonists, Rochester and Jack Maggs, seem to express similar attitudes toward the colonial centre. They recognise English superiority, even though they both have been cast out of their home country: Maggs because he is a criminal and Rochester because he is the younger son. It is the metaphor of the English family depicting England as the parent country and the colonies as dependent children that seems to influence this unconditioned bond. Not only do both characters seek for approval by their actual families, but they want to be accepted by their metaphorical parent England as well. In the case of Jack Maggs, both concepts are joined in the person of his foster mother Ma Britten who is not only described as "the Queen of England in that little whitewashed room" (JM 92-93), but whose iconic name, an obvious variation of Mother Britain, directly links her to the Empire (Savu 132). Ma Britten, however, does not only abuse her parental role by exploiting him, but she also remarks constantly that she did not even want him in the first place. The picture of Maggs being found in the mudflats

of the Thames aptly illustrates his fate as one of England's unwanted children and as someone at the lower end of the social spectrum. According to Gaile (*Rewriting History* 181), Ma Britten's occupation as backstreet abortionist becomes emblematic of Britain's rejection of its unwanted offspring, that is to say everyone that does not adhere to Victorian norms and standards. The motif of England as an unloving mother is taken up once again by Percy Buckle, who exclaims upon talking about his transported sister: "[...] God help us all, that Mother England would do such a thing to one of her own." (JM 89) His tough childhood indicates that the convict is more sinned against than sinning himself. Chronicling the persistent mistreatment of one single human being, however, does not seem to be Carey's only concern. By making "irresponsible parenting symbolic of the lack of sustenance offered by the 'Mother country' to its dependencies" (Savu 132), he interprets Maggs's fate as a direct result of the more abstract system of colonial practices. Paradoxically, it is the mistreated being himself that is most oblivious to England's share in his misfortune. When confronted by Mercy with the King's responsibility for his flogging, he, for example, insists that they "were beyond the King's sight. Not even God Himself could see into that pit" (JM 318). His statement – "I also was to be cast out of my dear England" (JM 263-264) – reinforces his denial of England being the source for his expulsion even more since it employs a passive structure obscuring a possible agent. That Maggs and Rochester only blame single individuals and thus fail to see the complex colonial mechanism can be explained by the fact they "remain *within* the linguistic and legal system, from which they are physically excluded by being punished and sent away, and, at the same time, from which they cannot escape, because it is their (only) cultural point of reference" (Heinke 209).

The wish to be a member of the English family is a persistent one. It is not only shown by the convict's wish to be called son by his foster mother Ma Britten epitomising his desire to be accepted by Britain as one of its own (Sadoff 177), but it also explains why he neglects his real Australian children:

'You have babies in the place where you have come from.' His mouth tightened in denial. 'My son is an Englishman.' 'I meant your real children.' 'I am not of that race.' 'What race?' 'The Australian race,' he said. 'The race of Australians.' 'But

what of your babes?’ ‘Damn you, don’t look at me like that. I am an Englishman.’ (JM 312-313)

Maggs appears to be unable to take responsibility for his children because this would imply his acceptance that he is no longer English. Instead, like his literary ancestor Magwitch before, “Maggs tries to invent his own English family” (Taylor 97) by turning his “adopted” son Henry Phipps into a respectable English gentleman. Interestingly, Maggs thus tries to reverse the father-son relationship, which “allegorically addresses the relationship between colonial child and metropolitan parent” (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 152) and is exemplified by Rochester being forced into exile by his father.

The pure English lineage of his offspring is a topic that also occupies Rochester’s thoughts. His relief at having no children with Antoinette is caused by her doubtful English ancestry because she and her fellow Creoles are considered “racially ‘impure’ for being born and raised outside of Britain” (Su, *Jean Rhys* 389). Along the same lines, Rochester interprets his Creole wife’s madness as a hereditary illness failing to see its connection to the pain that the colonial rule inflicted on her. While in Brontë’s classic it is her mother that represents the dangerous impurity of Creolity, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* it is rather her father’s sexual indiscretion and his several illegitimate children that contaminates superior English lineage. At some point Rochester even wonders if the servant girl Amélie could possibly be Antoinette’s sister (Ciolkowski 344): “For a moment she looked very much like Amélie. Perhaps they are related, I thought. It’s possible, it’s even probable in this damned place.” (WSS 81) Rochester also disapproves of the intimacy of his wife and her black former nanny Christophine: “Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?” I’d say. “Why not?” “I wouldn’t hug and kiss them,” I’d say, “I couldn’t.” (WSS 57) Therefore, the reason why he finds interracial relations of any sort so unsettling might not so much be the sexual component he often seems to foreground, but rather the destruction of a clear social hierarchy neatly separating the spheres of blacks and whites.

Rochester’s and Maggs’s persistent worship of their English motherland against which they have to define themselves inhibits them from accepting the possibility

of a new and successful life in the colonies. They rather seem to bring the assumptions about class of the old world to the new one. In accordance with Sanders, Rochester as well as Maggs “aspire to achieve what had been denied them in England, but they both look intently over their shoulder at English definitions of success” (68). These cultural influences remain for both the “subtlest and most persistent forms of embrace” (Heinke 213). This bond to England sets the two male characters apart from Antoinette: While they at least think that they know where they belong, Antoinette is left with no ties at all. Both measure the particularities of the colonies against their conception of Englishness, which they recognise “as a cultural identity only within a European setting” (Halloran 101). His years in Australia provided Maggs with an opportunity to fulfil all that is valued by the English centre such as material success and he is even, not without mockery, claimed to have “become such an Englishman” (JM 322). However, he “cannot cherish the liberty and respectability Australia offers him as a released convict” (Schmidt-Haberkamp 256), but thinks that he can never assume that status unless he is reunited with what he conceives as home. This is emphasised even more by his allegation that he would “rather be a bad smell here than a frigging rose in New South Wales” (JM 230).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rochester’s strong sense of his own Englishness is juxtaposed with Antoinette’s ambivalent attitude towards it. As she has never been to England, her attachment is solely based on the assumptions of its superiority that she grew up with. This results in a “confusion of the Creole woman who is caught between the increasingly separate moral and economic logics of England and the West Indian colonies” (Ciolkowski 341). Antoinette’s unclear cultural membership is mirrored in Rochester’s remarks on her beauty: “Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either.” (WSS 40) However, it is not only others who try to define her, but she herself also finds herself in-between two cultural systems – “I was glad to be like an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine’s cooking.” (WSS 17) – and even questions her belonging to any nation altogether: “[...] I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all.” (WSS 64) In contrast to this, Englishness and its superiority does not seem to

be questioned at any point in Brontë's novel. In fact, Bertha is never brought into connection with this concept at all, but is only assigned the role of the Creole, who completely opposes English nature and culture. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, however, Antoinette's status of being caught between two cultural poles crucially inquires into the production of Englishness. Rochester's attempt to turn Antoinette into Bertha exposes "national identity itself as an imperial fiction that is always subject to confusion" (Ciolkowski 350) as it paradoxically enforces her British status while it asserts at the same time that she can never be truly English.

Above all in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is not only the maintained relation to England, but also the unclear social hierarchies and ethnical tensions in the new home that make it difficult to form a distinct identity. The seizing of both colonial spaces went hand in hand with the eviction of indigene peoples. After the discovery of the Caribbean islands, the Caribs and Arawaks (Edwards 6) were nearly extinct due to genocide, disease, slavery, and suicide leaving only a few thousand of them still living in the West Indies. In Australia, the British went even so far as to call the land *terra nullius* proclaiming it to be made up of "white spaces without inhabitants, open for development/exploitation" (Wisker 47). The Aborigines, who were considered a primitive people, were not only colonised on their own territory like black people in Africa, but slaughtered, pushed to the fringes and almost denied any existence at all. Both novels exemplify Britain's preference to cover up all of these atrocities in its history. In *Jack Maggs* the unlawful seizing of the land is only once hinted at when Percy Buckle explains that Maggs's property would be subsumed as "*nullus contredris*" (JM 270) if he was to be arrested. The Latin phrase that Buckle uses is obviously misguided and does not only show his ridiculous desire to come across as sophisticated and to cover up his apparent lack of education, it also alludes to the term "*terra nullius*" (Woodcock 128). Maggs is thus likened to the indigenous peoples since the English characters do not only want to control him, but also deny him any property of his own. The suffering of the indigenous is also concealed by the characters in Rhys's novel. This, for instance, becomes clear in Antoinette's attempt to evade Rochester's inquiries about the town name Massacre: "Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now." (WSS 39) The incident Antoinette pretends to have

forgotten is an atrocious genocide, namely “the murder in 1674 of 60-70 Carib men, women and children, including Thomas ‘Indian’ Warner, the half-Carib son of Sir Thomas Warner, the Governor of St. Kitts” (Burrows 39).

Social and racial composition is made even less a topic in the classics than the already rather sparsely described landscapes of the colonial spaces. Rhys, on the contrary, attempts to create a thorough and complex portrayal of West Indian society in her novel. It is above all the concept of race – even though the nineteenth century claimed it to be easily determinable on the basis of skin colour – that makes it once again clear that neat boundaries are almost impossible to establish. In order to have her story take place after an important historical caesura, the Emancipation Act of 1833, which “decreed the eventual freedom of the slaves in all of the British colonies and the racial conflicts and social and economic turmoil that surrounded it” (Erwin 143), Rhys deliberately shifted dates. In fact, due to Jane’s recently published copy of *Marmion*, Mardorossian (*Shutting Up the Subaltern* 1086) determines that the events of *Jane Eyre* are set around 1808 and not after 1833. This after-Emancipation period is of great importance as it caused a fundamental change within the power relations in the colonies. As the wealth and status of the white plutocracy in the West Indies was predominantly based on the exploitation of the black population, the abolition of slavery did not only have an impact on their financial situation. More significantly, the whites were “faced with a process of a considerable restructuring which left many of them destitute” (Olaussen 66). The legal power relationship between slave owner and dependent slaves was replaced by a social turmoil that was based on racial differences only on the very surface. The period after the Emancipation Act reveals that race is not something natural, but rather a “historically and discursively constituted identity” (Mardorossian, *Shutting up the Subaltern* 1073). Hence, it is less the skin colour than money and the power which structures the relationship between blacks and whites. This is apparent in the situation of the Cosway family: They may be white, but they do not belong to their elite circle (Walker 40, Halloran 101), they are “not in their ranks” (WSS 5).

The reasons why the Cosways are not considered proper white people by neither blacks nor whites are manifold. The Jamaican whites disapprove of them not only because Antoinette's mother Annette is, in Christophine's words, "pretty like pretty self" (WSS 5), but also because she is from Martinique, one of the Windward Islands ruled by the French, and thus inherently different. The black population despises them because they represent their former torturers, but they do no longer respect them because the loss of their wealth also lowered their social status. They express their hatred by calling them degrading names such as "white cockroaches" (WSS 9) or "white niggers" (WSS 10). It is also against this background that the arson of Coulibri has to be interpreted: As the black's hatred reaches its peak only after her mother remarries and thus acquires wealth, it becomes clear that it is not the family's racial identity as such that triggers the resentment of the former slaves, but, as Erwin (144) suggests, rather their regained economic power: "The black people did not hate us quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we would be dead for we had no money left. What was there to hate?" (WSS 16) The connection between race and power is most poignantly described by Tia, who after being called a "cheating nigger" (WSS 10) by Antoinette, claims: "Real white people, they got gold money. They didn't look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger" (WSS 10). When Tia calls the members of the former ruling class niggers, "the word's meaning does not inherently denote a specific racial profile nor describe a moral flaw but, rather, it signifies poverty" (Halloran 91). Tia does not only observe her friend's loss of status, but also contrasts it to "her own class stability as 'black nigger' whose material circumstances have not deteriorated as a result of emancipation" (Halloran 91).

The instability of class and race that Tia describes results in what Olaussen calls "the fear and the possibility of losing one's whiteness" (69). Antoinette's mother Annette and her aunt Cora, who were part of the pre-Emancipation society, seem to have no apparent difficulty with asserting their identity, even though they can only do so by clinging to stereotypes about what the relation between blacks and whites and their behaviour toward each other should be like (O'Connor 201). On the

contrary, Antoinette, who grew up in a time of social uncertainties, does not seem to be especially committed to her family's understanding of whiteness. As Uraizee explains, Antoinette rather feels "insecure because she is perpetually caught between the former slaves and the former slave owners, without a clear identity of her own" (268). To her mind, being black or white even appears to be "simply a matter of choice" (Olaussen 78). Being no longer part of the prestigious white class, she wants to identify with the black community and seeks comfort with her nanny Christophine and her friend Tia. Both eventually deny her access to this group: Tia's insurmountable race consciousness already surfaces in the scene at the bathing pool and climaxes when she throws a stone at her former friend Antoinette who is turning to her for help after a black mob has set her home on fire:

As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and will be like her. [...] When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass. (WSS 24)

Although the girls can be seen as each other's mirror image being both alienated from their respective communities, the racial divide cannot be overcome. Put into a wider context, the "breakdown of their friendship serves as a symbol of the breakdown of the relationship between whites and blacks following the abolition of slavery" (O'Connor 198). Ultimately, also Christophine, who appears to be Antoinette's closest confidant, turns away from her. She explains to Rochester that "[s]he is not *béké* like you, but she is *béké*, and not like us either" (WSS 100).

Not being entirely accepted by any of the communities, "[s]he falls into the gaps in many of the binaries that structure society" (Walker 45). As a consequence, Antoinette attempts to establish an apparently impossible compromise between all of those identities. Even though she seems unable to think of herself as entirely white, she cannot fully commit herself to the black community either. She pretends to understand them as she "can explain their actions to the outsider, and she is quick to jump to their defence when her husband misunderstands their behaviour" (Wickramagamage 36). However, she also reproduces stereotyped attitudes of the white ruling class towards the blacks, above all when they do not behave according to her expectations. For example, Antoinette refuses Christophine's advice to leave

Rochester by degrading her nurse to an “ignorant, obstinate old negro woman” (WSS 70). In the arson scene she is apparently unable to discern individuals in the furious mob and thus dehumanises and bestialises them just as she herself is objectified by the English coloniser Rochester: “They all looked the same, it was the same face repeated over and over, eyes gleaming, mouth half open to shout.” (WSS 22) In applying common stereotypes to stabilise her white identity, Antoinette fails to acknowledge the blacks’ action as a revenge for their mistreatment, enslavement and subjugation. The Creole becomes an accomplice with the hegemonic discourse of the “real” whites Mason and Rochester whose concept of Englishness depends on generalisations about the black community (Ciolkowski 352). Mason, for example, claims: “They are children – they wouldn’t hurt a fly.” (WSS 18) The comparison of the former slaves to children is not uncommon within British imperialism and asserts Mason’s position and his right to look down on the blacks. However, his utterance is immediately refuted by Antoinette’s aunt Cora, who seems to reveal “the self-serving expedience of such a platitudinous manner of thinking” (Brown 578) which has no foundation in reality. Those Englishmen like Mason or Rochester who came to the island after the Emancipation Act has been passed might consider themselves to be morally superior as they generally condemn slavery and proclaim its abolition as “a question of justice” (WSS 94). Christophine, however, observes the hypocrisy within these assertions: “No more slavery! She had to laugh! ‘These new one have Letter of the Law. Same thing. [...] New one’s worse than old ones – more cunning – that’s all.’” (WSS 11)

Despite Antoinette’s intent to make the reader believe in a homogeneous black community, “as an undifferentiated and unreasoning mass of hatred and betrayal” (Mardorossian, *Shutting up the Subaltern* 1077-1078), the group of former slaves parallels the inconsistencies that could already be perceived within the white society. According to Halloran, the “racial instability and the hybridity [is] inherent in various Caribbean Creole identities” (101) and thus applies to black and white individuals alike. Christophine, just like Tia and her mother, is alienated from the rest of the blacks as she is not a Jamaican native, but was born in Martinique. Parallels between the so-called “old” whites like the Cosways and the blacks can

also be observed in the term Creole that is used to denote everyone who was born on the island disregarding of race. Having been forcefully stripped off their traditions and their language, the term might provide the blacks with the possibility to define a new identity for themselves, whereas it distances the whites even further from their English self. This might also be the reason why Antoinette doesn't call herself or any other person a creole in her narrative, but "describes her society either through racial categories – blacks, whites – or else by making references to nationalities" (Halloran 100). Her English husband, however, often uses exactly this fuzzy term in order to underline her non-Englishness and her proximity to the black population. Not only does this finalise her status as colonised being, but it also parallels her situation to slavery as she "is captured, sold, given a new name, transported across the sea, and locked up" (Olaussen 79). In a similar way her mother Annette has already made this connection by comparing the family's precarious circumstances after her husband's death to that of the maroons: " 'Now we are marooned,' my mother said, 'now what will become of us?' " (WSS 6) The term "maroon" had been used since the early seventeenth century to denote runaway slaves and their descendants. As Burrows points out, a century later the term came "to refer to the act of putting a person ashore, leaving him or her on an island or coast as punishment [...], abandoned without resources or hope to almost certain death" (32) and thus is poignantly used by Rhys as a metaphor for the trauma of the white Creoles in the post-Emancipation period.

Rhys has often been reproached with concerning herself with the perspective of the white Creole only while "her descriptions of the Afro-Caribbean characters lack subtlety and border at times on caricature" (Su, *Jean Rhys* 393). This might hold true for the character of Tia, who is defined only in relation to Antoinette, as well as for the servants at Granbois, who seem to solely exemplify the prejudiced flaws of the black community such as reckless sexual behaviour depicted in Amélie's seduction of Rochester or laziness. Antoinette's black nurse, however, is "not like the other women" (WSS 7), but is crucially set apart from all the other blacks in the novel and given a special status. Just as Christophine's personality is described as considerably different from her black fellow-beings, her loyalty does not belong with them, but with her white mistress. In this context, Jausing even spots "a

dichotomy between good and bad blacks” (824) that also Rhys herself seems to have commented on in one of her letters:

The most seriously wrong thing with Part II is that I’ve made the obeah woman, the nurse, too articulate. I thought of cutting it a bit [...] but after all no one will notice. Besides there’s no reason why one particular negro woman shouldn’t be articulate enough, especially as she’s spent most of her life in a white household. (Rhys, *Letters* 297)

Even though this might be interpreted as racist, it rather reflects the attitudes of West Indian society of these days. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that Rhys herself “was a product of certain historical and racial positioning” (Burrows 39) still prevailing in the 1960s. Christophine, however, is not only portrayed in a more positive light than other black characters, but she also seems to be a more self-contained and even more likeable person than most of the white characters in the novel. Unlike Annette and Antoinette, she also sets herself deliberately apart by employing visible markers of her otherness: She does not only wear her handkerchief in the Martinique fashion, but also distinguishes herself language-wise by speaking a creole version of French. In spite of being just as marginalised as her white mistresses, both by the imperial centre and other members of her racial community respectively, she uses her status as outcast to her own advantage. According to Walker, “she sees through deceit and hypocrisy because she stands outside it” (Walker 40). This ability that can neither be captured nor confined by the English norm system also allows her to confront Rochester with his wrongdoings: “Read and write I don’t know. Other things I know.” (WSS 104) Despite Christophine’s exceptional position in the novel, she nevertheless cannot be fully contained by a novel that is written to redeem the white Creole’s reputation. She even has to leave the narrative for good so that Antoinette’s fate can take place.

3.3.3 A possible new West Indian or Australian identity?

The colonies’ independence from Britain did not only bring about a new liberty, but also meant that the new nations had to define a distinct identity. While African colonies could return to their pre-colonial traditions, this was not possible for white

Australians and West Indians who still felt tied to their English ancestors and had “no indigenous culture to retreat to in order to escape the towering culture of the metropolis” (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 221-222). White settler colonies like Australia did not win their freedom violently or through any real political resistance and were irrevocably connected to England due to their shared language, history and culture. Therefore, they often continued to refer to England as their home and remained caught between “Australianness and Britishness, between the impulse to be distinctively Australian and the lingering sense of a British heritage” (White 47). This also explains the feeling of exile that not only convicts but all settlers experienced. Likewise, for white Creoles “Jamaica or Barbados was where one *lived* but England was still one’s *home*” (Ciolkowski 341).

Even though both characters, Maggs and Antoinette experience what Haliloğlu calls the “vital presence of the myth of the English family in the colonial psyche” (44), their way of dealing with it differs considerably. Maggs stubbornly clings to his idealisation of England that has “sustained him in exile, offering solace to his traumatized consciousness” (Savu 140), even though it is the same country that has expelled him. According to Carey himself, Maggs’s unconditioned yet unreciprocated love for England is “such an Aussie story” (Koval 669). The convict’s experiences cannot thus be merely read as an individual biography, but seem emblematic for a whole nation. In contrast to this, Antoinette, who is only told by others that she is English, does not seem to think of the Caribbean as exile, but rather considers it her home. This also explains that “Antoinette’s sense of self comes through her identification with the landscape into which she has been born and raised” (Low 54) and not so much with her English ancestry. While Maggs’s inclination to England and its value system is based on his own wish to belong to the imperial centre, it is forced on Antoinette by her environment. Whereas the Eurocentric classics deny the Other-figures any possibility of defining a new identity for themselves, liberation seems possible in the rewritings, but is realised differently by Maggs and Antoinette. Although both have to suffer from similar dehumanising and oppressing practices, their reaction to them is different. While Rhys’s white Creole woman seems to passively accept her fate, Carey’s protagonist is not only taken aback by Oates’s manipulation, but is about to actively rebel

against his oppressors. At the same time, however, he is unable to see the connection between the individual perpetrator and the more abstract colonial system of his beloved England. Like Antoinette, he submits to English rule as he denies his Australian identity by constantly reminding himself and others: "I am a fucking Englishman, and I have English things to settle. I am not to live my life with all that vermin. I am here in London where I belong." (JM 128)

Even though both characters are still experiencing colonial rule, Carey and Rhys clearly represent them as postcolonial beings who are "caught between incompatible cultures or dispersed among multiple cultures" (Edwards 139). Finding a new identity, therefore, is inevitably linked to the process of freeing themselves from English control and possession. In his position as footman Maggs is not only oppressed by his master Buckle or the author Tobias Oates, but, even more significantly, both "think that they own Maggs's life" (Heinke 209). While Buckle claims legal ownership over Maggs, Oates's embrace is even more pervasive as he does not only try to control Maggs's body, but also his mind and his memory. In a similar way also Antoinette is owned by Englishmen, first her stepfather Mason and then her husband, who both make decisions for her and attempt to define her in relation to English standards.

Their liberation is partly achieved by their depiction as full human beings with all their virtues and flaws. Instead of being described as mere walking stereotypes that should support British superiority, they are given the possibility to narrate their own story and to convey their own point of view. By writing letters to Phipps that are of a literary quality one normally does not expect of a criminal so lowly bred, Maggs does not only prove that he is not the dehumanised being of *Great Expectations*, but in a way he also sets out to "transform himself, and so to escape from his deprived and criminal London childhood, then from his imprisonment, then from New South Wales, and finally from his attempt to reinvent himself, in the person of Henry Phipps, as a Victorian gentleman" (Hassall 197). According to Hassall, writing about his past helps him to gain distance and eventually enables him to define a new identity for himself that is no longer shaped by his former life as an exiled criminal. Although Antoinette's narration in *Wide Sargasso Sea* may

not constitute the largest part of the novel, it nevertheless frames and even interrupts Rochester's account of events giving her the power to finally find her Self.

Their final disengagement from their English ties is caused by a violent rupture. Despite Mercy Larkin's attempts to convince Maggs of England's share in his misfortune, he himself is able to acknowledge it only after his beloved adoptive son Henry Phipps, who "has kept [him] alive these last twenty-four years" (JM 148), tries to murder him. Ironically, Maggs mistakes him for the phantom that Oates has implanted into his mind and that has become synonymous with the hardships he had to endure in the Australian penal colony: "There, in the firelight, he beheld his nightmare: long straight nose, fair hair, brutal dreadful uniform of the 57th Foot Regiment. The Phantom had broken the locks and entered his life." (JM 323) Not only does Maggs perceive him as the creature which is responsible for his *tic douloureux*, but Phipps also decides to become the King's soldier in the very regiment that inflicted almost unbearable pain on Maggs's in Australia (Hassall 202). As he announces that he has acquired "a new benefactor" (JM 295) and is "not going to be a dancing boy for a criminal" (JM 295), his betrayal of Maggs is complete. Interestingly, Phipps was familiar with the identity of his benefactor all along and has even written him letters to ensure Magg's on-going financial support. What Carey suggests here is that Dickens's character Pip knew as well but chose not to believe it in order not to be associated with the colonies. Maggs's illusory assumptions about Britain are shattered for good as he realises that his " 'demons' originate not in the penal colonies, but in the very heart of the empire, which is London" (Savu 160).

In contrast to Maggs, Antoinette does not deny the West Indian part of her personality at any point of the story, but unsuccessfully tries to merge her Caribbean and her European identity. This conflict can only be resolved by her final act: On the one hand, her arson, which hits Rochester "where it will hurt him most, in his quintessential Englishness" (Fayad 450), signifies her emancipation from England. As this scene clearly parallels the burning of Coulibri Estate, Antoinette's act is likened to the black people's rebellion against their oppressor.

On the other hand, her suicide also seems to reunite her with her West Indian self since she symbolically seems to return “to the island and her ties with its culture and people” (Emery 428). Not only does she cry out for help to Christophine, but she also evokes images of her past life in the Caribbean:

Then I turned around and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora’s patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. I saw the chandelier and the red carpet downstairs and bamboos and the tree ferns, the gold ferns and the silver, and the soft green velvet of the moss on the garden wall. (WSS 123)

The appearance of Antoinette’s childhood friend Tia is given the most significance by many critics: “But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? And I heard a man’s voice, Bertha! Bertha!” (WSS 123) Her final leap presents the rejection of the male domination since she does not only ignore Rochester’s call, but also denies him his proper name solely referring to him as “a man”. The movement towards Tia signals her desire to make up for her failure at maintaining the friendship with the black girl – a failure which seems to have haunted her all her life. Even though the actual suicide is only part of a dream, Thieme (82-83) regards it as the first real action she takes after having been almost entirely passive throughout the novel: “Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do.” (WSS 124)

Even though Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and her alter ego Bertha in *Jane Eyre* have to suffer the same fate, the scenes differ in several aspects. On the one hand, Rhys does not only allot another meaning to the scene as Antoinette’s arson is not presented as an act of lunacy “and thus part of the logic of a plot which is targeted at a happy ending” (Müller 67), but as active resistance to English oppression. On the other hand, the novel’s ending is a rather open one since the incident is only narrated as a dream and thus leaves the reader in doubt whether she really sets fire to the place. The woman’s death can only be inferred on the basis of Brontë’s novel. As the text lacks fixity at this point, the rewriting tries to escape its pretext and leaves her protagonist “in a state of possibility, suspended between the victim Antoinette and the vicious Bertha” (Walker 47). However, the fact that the ending does not change fundamentally makes clear that Rhys “does not or cannot

create a new destiny or closure to the one set in place for her by Brontë; she can only destabilize it and make it ambiguous” (Uraizee 264).

In this respect the novel also differs considerably from Carey’s *Jack Maggs* since it outlines a whole new future for its protagonist, which deliberately deviates from Magwitch’s fate in *Great Expectations*. As Antoinette can be neither deemed English nor fully accepted by the heterogeneous Jamaican society, her reunion with the West Indies remains a fantasy that cannot be accomplished in real life. Carey’s Australia, on the contrary, is not as charged with racial and social tensions and presents itself as a place of hope and freedom, as “the promised land” (Bauder-Begerow 133). Being denied a respectable life in England Jack Maggs “achieve[s] prosperity and happiness in an environment where there is no need to disguise identity” (Thieme 122). Australia as a place which ensures personal freedom and the right to be one’s self is already alluded to in *Great Expectations* when Maggs tells Pip about his life in the colony: “[...] for all I was a-growing rich. Everybody knowed Magwitch, and Magwitch could come, and Magwitch could go, and nobody’s head would be troubled about him. They ain’t so easy concerning me here, dear boy – wouldn’t be, leastwise, if they knowed where I was.” (GE 371) This prospect, however, cannot be realised in Dickens’s classic since this would affirm the possibility of an alternative, possibly better, way of life than the English one. Magwitch, therefore, has to die before he can return to Australia in order not to undermine English superiority. The ending of Carey’s novel also attempts to reconcile Australia with its convict history, which undeniably constitutes the founding moment of the nation, but is still considered an uncomfortable topic. Carey points out himself: “Australians do not like to celebrate this moment when the nation is born, and it has been something of a passion for me to do just that. We carry a great deal of self-hatred, denial, grief, and anger, all unresolved”. (qtd. in Ho 124) Carey’s protagonist Maggs may carry the stigma of convictism like his alter ego Magwitch, but by embracing a new Australian identity, he is able to liberate himself from this image and rehabilitate his reputation in order to establish “himself as founding father of many members of the Australian race” (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 41).

3.4 Issues of language

The spread of English is largely due to Britain's imperial history, in which the implementation of the language in the colonies did not only serve "the civilising mission but also – and more importantly perhaps – the imperial mission of exerting better control over them" (Talib 9). As English has become a world language which, according to Walder (44), is spoken by between 300 and 400 million people as their mother tongue, the British can no longer claim sole ownership of it: English "no longer belongs to one place" (Edwards 37). This already implies that it has developed a range of different varieties that should capture the population's particular experiences in the new nations. However, English has also caused native languages to disappear or, at least, to radically minimise their significance in society. Given the fact that linguistic domination is one of the most significant and lasting signs of colonialism, the question arises whether postcolonial writers should use the oppressor's language or if English should be dismissed altogether. Its use is criticised by some due to concerns that it might perpetuate British domination on a subtler level, "virtually unnoticed, in the minds of the native population" (Talib 105). Others, however, claim that the cultural embrace can only be overcome once authors actively appropriate and decolonise the English language to suit their communicative needs.

As native languages have largely been extinct, Australian and Caribbean authors do not have the choice to use a language other than English. Therefore, the main concern in this context is what variety (or varieties) of English should be integrated in a postcolonial piece of literature. In Australia, the English language constantly reminds the former settlers of their ongoing connection to Britain, while at the same time the inadequacies of describing a new land with a language that "carries many associations with European experience and so can never be 'innocent' in practice" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 134) are laid bare. After having found out about Maggs's life as a criminal in the Antipodean penal colony in one of his mesmeric sessions, Oates suddenly perceives Maggs's language as distinctly Australian. He claims that "[y]ou can hear the cant in his talk. He has it cloaked in livery but he wears the hallmark of New South Wales" (JM 87). The attempt to

mark the protagonist as particularly Australian can be most prominently seen in his family name Maggs which is often claimed to refer to the Australian slang word “magsman” meaning trickster or raconteur. It is not so much the inclusion of specific Australian words that set his language use apart from that of the English individuals. Generally, Carey’s novel rather mimics nineteenth century language, for example by including archaic expressions such as “six of the clock” (JM 1). This imitation, however, is not without criticism, since it is continuously disrupted by ironic comments in the form of Maggs’s honest speech which frequently diverts from standard English. Although Dickens is known for virtuously rendering dialects and sociolects in order to authentically mirror the character’s social standing, the highly colloquial and even vulgar slang that Carey’s protagonist employs, for example “move your arse” (JM 260), “fart-catcher” (JM 252), or the frequent use of the intensifier “frigging”, cannot be found in *Great Expectations*. At the same time, Maggs is also able to blend in with the conceived standard variety of English and even reveals himself as a versatile speaker of it in his well-expressed letters to Phipps. Considering this, *Jack Maggs* cannot be interpreted as a plain imitation, but rather conveys, as Woodcock explains, a “mildly-flavoured historical feel” (119). Since this is referred to self-reflexively throughout the novel, the readers are continuously made aware of the fact that the text they are reading is not an authentic Victorian novel. Just as Carey chooses to have the story take place in the very centre of the Empire and not in the colonial margins, it is also not the Australian variety that dominates the narrative. It is rather by displaying and at the same time deconstructing the Victorian’s pretentious language that his mockery of imperialism is most effective.

In contrast to Carey’s imitation of Victorian English, Rhys employs modern English while at the same time providing the reader with a detailed insight into the Caribbean’s language continuum. In contrast to Australia, English in the Caribbean was initially the native tongue of the small white elite only. However, it quickly became the major and almost sole means of communication since the indigenous languages of the Caribs and Arawks perished together with their speakers. Moreover, the masses of black slaves shipped over from Africa were forced to adopt the language of the rulers since they were deliberately separated from their

language group in order to limit the possibilities of rebellion and thus gradually lost their native tongues (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 144-145). While English remains widely spoken in large parts of the Caribbean, “its form has been radically changed by its users” (McLeod 128). Appropriating the language of the oppressor was in a way the prerequisite for establishing a new identity. The result is a linguistic multiplicity which “outlines both the complexity of the society and the complexity of a language in the process of formation” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 74). *Wide Sargasso Sea* shows that variance and difference is not an exception, but the norm in a postcolonial setting by blending the English standard, mainly represented by Rochester, with creoles, pidgins and patois. As their meanings overlap in several aspects, these three terms cannot be neatly defined. Both creole and pidgin (Walder 46-47) arise as contact languages in trade, employment, or slavery, their main difference being that the latter is no one’s mother tongue. While pidgins constitute a very restricted code merely serving the purpose of facilitating the communication between speakers who do not share the same knowledge of a more established language, a “creole is more stable than a pidgin, and gains prominence when it becomes the first language or mother tongue of a group of people” (Talib 124). Patois (Walder 50) is a less frequently used term usually applied to refer to an unwritten regional dialect of relatively low prestige.

There seems to be no doubt about the fact that the inclusion of these language variants might create a more authentic tone to the story. As language also functions as a social marker, the rendition of creole alongside with the standard provides a rich picture of the social hierarchy in the Caribbean. Talib (137) discerns two different ways of presenting linguistic variety, which can both be found in Rhys’s novel: the dialects or languages are either merely described or they are actually used. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (71), it is mostly the narrator who reports in the English standard, whereas the unmediated speech of the characters depicts the Caribbean language continuum in all its facets. In the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea* such a clear-cut boundary between the voice of the narrator and the characters cannot be established as the one who tells the story, above all Antoinette, is not a neutral observer, but part of the West Indian society. The white Creole’s code-mixing (Talib 142-143), that is to say her continuous and natural

integration of creole words such as “calabash” (WSS 9) into her narrative account without clarifying their meaning, signifies that the use of a particular language variety can no longer be seen as a marker of social status. It rather emphasises the function of the creole to express properties specific to the West Indies that Standard English cannot account for. Additionally, the untranslated use of Creole words also “forces the reader into an active engagement with the horizons of the cultures in which these terms have meaning” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 64): as the reader is not guided through a society of linguistic heterogeneity by the narrator, but rather thrown into it, the experience is rendered more intensely.

Even more apparent than in Antoinette’s narration, the language variance manifests itself in the dialogue of the characters. The language that is used by the blacks in the novel is not so much the Jamaican creole, but rather a minimalistic form of English in which functional words such as articles are left out or the verbal inflection is disregarded. Such elliptical forms are also imitated by Antoinette in her narrative account, for example in utterances like “All better than people. Better. Better, better than people.” (WSS 12). This does not only show her emotional involvement, but also illustrates her attempt to belong to the black community language-wise. Interestingly, she also uses the reduced version of English when she only indirectly reports what black people such as Tia are saying: “That’s not what she hear, she said. She hear all we poor like beggar.” (WSS 10) The turmoil of languages and language varieties in and around her, including the language of the colonials (the standard English), the creoles based on English as well as the blends of French and patois, can be seen in relation to Antoinette’s unstable identity. According to Winterhalter, this constitutes a problem that most (post-)colonial subjects have to deal with. In other words, Rhys’s “characters cannot merely tell their stories and join in an established community of language. Because of the complex social system in which they live, no single dialect is sufficient to represent their complicated lives; they often speak in manners inconsistent with the expected linguistic markers of race, class, and gender” (Winterhalter 215).

In a colonial or postcolonial context language is never only a means of communication, but gains a significance of its own. It is not only the environment

that influences the people's way of speaking, but even more so it is the language itself that has the power to shape reality. This implies that hierarchies and binary oppositions between coloniser and colonised are not natural, but are mainly realised because they are named as such. This becomes apparent in the quarrel between Tia and Antoinette at the bathing pool, in which they call each other "cheating nigger" (WSS 10) and "white nigger" (WSS 10). Focusing on the linguistic dimension of this scene, the girls' estrangement does no longer appear to be due to their visible racial difference only. According to Fayad, the "word becomes reality. Having set up the barrier of racial hatred between herself and her friend, Antoinette loses Tia permanently by labeling her as other." (441) Similarly, Jack Maggs becomes the social outcast only after this stigma is attached to him by exclusively referring to him as "criminal" or "convict". Undoubtedly, language has a huge influence on how society perceives its surroundings. Deliberate silence, however, might be just as powerful (Mardorossian, *Shutting up the Subaltern* 1082). The West Indian whites signal their power by veiling unpleasant incidents that might undermine their moral superiority or reveal the brutal aspects of their reign. With regard to the slave trade or the slaughter in Massacre, Antoinette claims that "no one speaks of those days now" (WSS 84). Similarly, also Antoinette's mother Annette appears reluctant to speak about Christophine's origins which are clearly connected to slavery: "She was your father's wedding present to me – one of his presents. He thought I would be pleased with a Martinique girl. [...] I don't know how old she is now. Does it matter? Why do you pester and bother me about all these things that happened long ago?" (WSS 8) Antoinette herself uses this strategy at the very beginning of her narrative account when she discovers her mother's dead horse, but "seeks to obliterate the unpleasant situation by refusing to speak of it" (Fayad 440): "I ran away and did not speak of it for I thought if I told no one it might not be true." (WSS 6) Silence, however, may not only be deliberately chosen, but it can also be forced upon others. In fact, the marginalisation of the colonised is frequently established by language and the issue of who has the right to speak and who does not. In contrast to Antoinette who herself exercises power by not talking about certain things, her alter ego Bertha can never make that decision for herself. Paradoxically, the text "seeks to contain and

define Bertha through language” (Walker 39), while at the same time she is denied any possibility to communicate herself to the world.

In the same way language shapes reality, it also forms a crucial part of a person’s identity. Blacks were not only forcefully robbed off their native tongue, but they also had to adopt the language of the coloniser. The varieties of English that developed in the West Indies helped the people to find a new identity, but those new forms naturally were not as prestigious as the centre’s standard but marked as inferior. A character in the novel who does not succumb to any stereotypes attached to a specific language variety, but rather benefits from the possibilities that the different idioms offer her, is Christophine. She does not at all conform to the cliché of the uneducated black servant, but is fluent in more than one language (Russell 91). Antoinette explains that the black woman “though she could speak good English if she wanted to, and French as well as patois, she took care to talk as they talked” (WSS 7). Christophine thus makes smart use of the languages present in the Caribbean. As it becomes clear from Antoinette’s remark, she does not talk the Jamaican creole because she does not know better, but because she wants to blend in. It might be precisely her linguistic dexterity that makes Rochester so frightened of her. Remarkably, however, Christophine’s voice is much more present in his narrative account than in Antoinette’s, even though he tries to present her speech, particularly her use of French patois, as unintelligible to him and thus less worth. He asserts, for instance, that “[h]er coffee is delicious but her language is horrible” (WSS 52). Christophine is not a narrator provided with an opportunity to tell her own story and her utterances are only rendered within the white characters’ narration. This, however, does not confine Christophine to a white person’s perspective, but as the “first interpreter and named speaking subject in the text” (Spivak 252), the importance of her voice is already established at the very beginning of the novel and “emerges, submerges and resurfaces throughout the novel” (Russell 101). She is also the only one who is not afraid of Rochester and confronts him face-to-face.

It is not only Christophine’s language that seems to bother Rochester, but he generally seems to be very conscious about language use. Even though Antoinette

might occasionally comment on the linguistic abilities of others as well, it is the Englishman who judges people as to their capability to speak proper English or only a “debased French patois” (WSS 40), which he hears in Granbois and on occasions even mockingly imitates, for instance when he tells Christophine “Your *doudou* certainly knows some filthy language” (WSS 100). As his narration proceeds the inclusion of creole and patois words and phrasings such as “Ma belle ka di” (WSS 96) or “béké” (WSS 99), above all in Christophine’s speech, becomes increasingly frequent. However, those utterances are never directly translated. This does not only leave the readers in the dark about their exact meaning, but they are also placed in the same outsider position as Rochester, who expresses a heightened and almost paranoid anguish of everything that he does not understand: “But whatever they were singing or saying was dangerous. I must protect myself.” (WSS 96) Ultimately, Rochester’s power seems to have been increasingly destabilised since the “frequent interruptions of voices in his narrative reveal how impotent Rochester is to bring the unpredictable world under the signs of his control” (Winterhalter 224). His power in the West Indies is ultimately broken in his confrontation with Christophine when he seems no longer able to think straight (Russell 98). The echoes of Antoinette’s and Christophine’s voices can be interpreted as “counter-languages that break through colonized subjectivity” (Kimmey 129), which undermines the authority not only of the English language, but of British culture in general.

4 WRITING BACK TO THE CLASSICS

4.1 Intertextuality: between similarity and difference

4.1.1 Intertextual play: prequel and rewriting

Rewritings engage in a complex and somewhat paradoxical relationship with their classical pretexts. As they consciously draw on other literary works, they are dependent on their pretext on the one hand and struggle to free themselves from the values, norms and literary conventions of their forbearer on the other. Being at the same time “a derivative from a Victorian classic and an original work of postcolonial fiction” (Müller 63), the novels examined in this thesis illustrate this possibly problematic dual character of rewritings: Reading *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jack Maggs* as autonomous texts without knowing anything about *Jane Eyre* or *Great Expectations* might be possible and even entertaining, their full meaning, however, can only be grasped if the intertextual references are detected and correctly interpreted. Rewritings are homage and discourse at the same time. Their intention may be to deconstruct the world view presented in the originals or question “the legitimacy of the concept of a literary ‘classic’ as such” (Bauder-Begerow 120), but they can never be entirely oppositional. Paradoxically, it is the enduring interest in those texts, even if it is stirred by a serious disagreement with its contents, that assures their status as canonical works.

Due to its form as prequel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* seems to be more closely bound to its pretext than Carey’s rewriting of *Great Expectation* since “its boundaries lie outside the novel in another woman’s text” (Olaussen 68). As Rhys’s novel precedes the events depicted in *Jane Eyre*, the readers know from the very beginning about the protagonist’s tragic fate and her eventual death. McLeod even compares this dependency on the classic to “the colonial relationship between Britain and its Caribbean colonies, with Rhys’s novel ‘governed’ by the dictates of *Jane Eyre*” (166). Indeed, the bond to Brontë’s novel places considerable limitations on both narrative and characters. Antoinette’s passivity and her reluctance to act may be interpreted as a direct consequence of her life being

determined by Brontë's text. This does not mean that she is not given other possibilities, but they are never taken. Instead, the novel is "pervaded by a strong feeling of doom and predestination" (Ariziti 42). The reader is left wondering what could have happened if Antoinette had left her husband on Christophine's advice or had not married him in the first place. In the end the one person who would have the power to change the course of events is expelled from the surface of the text. Christophine needs to "walk away without looking back" (WSS 104) so that Antoinette can fulfil her destiny as Bertha.

Rhys draws on her reader's background knowledge about the pretext *Jane Eyre*, which "plays a particularly relevant role in the formation, realisation and frustration of mental spaces in *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (Ariziti 46). Since the novel constantly and self-reflexively refers to its dependence on Brontë's text by establishing intertextual allusions, the readers are never too much drawn into the story. According to Su (*Once I Would Have Gone Back* 168), the parrot that falls to its death from the roof of the burning Cosway Estate evokes rather early in the narrative the image of the madwoman's suicide leap at Thornfield Hall. A similar case of foreshadowing can be discerned in Rochester's yearning "for the day when she is only a memory to be avoided, locked away, and like all memories a legend" (WSS 112). Additionally, it is also his drawing which hints at Antoinette's incarceration in England and, by crudely sketching her as a stick woman, at her eventual dehumanisation (Friedmann 122):

[...] I drew a house surrounded by trees. A large house. I divided the third floor into rooms and in one room I drew a standing woman – a stick woman – a child's scribble, a dot for a head, a larger one for the body, a triangle for a skirt, slanting lines for arms and feet. But it was an English house. (WSS 105-106)

The most obvious allusion to *Jane Eyre* probably occurs in the last dialogue between Christophine and the English husband. His assertion that he "would give [his] eyes never to have seen this abominable place" (WSS 104) is mockingly commented on by the black woman: "And that's the first damn word of truth you speak. You chose what you give, eh? Then you choose. You meddle in something and perhaps you don't know what it is." (WSS 104) This cannot merely be interpreted in terms of a prediction, but due to her power as an obeah woman, Christophine might also be considered the one who inflicts this pain on him. At this

point of the story it almost seems that the power relations between Rhys's and Brontë's text have changed. Its status as prequel might cause the novel's determinism; paradoxically, it also enables the rewriting to escape from the overbearing shadow of its pretext. Written after, but set before *Jane Eyre*, "Rhys's novel reconstitutes itself as the 'mother text' or point of origin of the English novel" (Edwards 57).

The last part of *Wide Sargasso Sea* can no longer be termed a prequel, but rather constitutes the rewriting of a fragment of Brontë's novel. This "clash of fictional worlds" (Müller 65) becomes apparent in the visit Richard Mason pays to his stepsister in Thornfield Hall. Rhys does not deny Antoinette's attack on her stepbrother in any way, but as the event is experienced through the madwoman's eyes, its meaning changes significantly. It can no longer be interpreted as an act of lunacy, but signals her desperation because Richard cannot help her claiming that "I cannot interfere legally between yourself and your husband" (WSS 119-120). By the end of the novel, Antoinette's is not lying "smashed on the pavement" (JE 423) like her alter ego Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. As her suicide leap is only part of a dream, there is still the possibility of a different fate for her. The reader's expectations that were built up throughout the novel are not thoroughly met, but the novel distances itself "from its pretext at the very moment when it is about to be assimilated into it" (Müller 75).

Carey's *Jack Maggs* is not a prequel like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, but it does not constitute a rewriting in the conventional sense either. In fact, it retells a relatively small segment of Dickens's novel and "begins with the convict's return to London rather than with his first encounter with the brave orphan Henry Phipps" (Brittan 48). The only direct rewrite, namely Dickens's dramatic opening scene on the marshes that strongly determines the plot lines of *Great Expectations*, is narrated very late in Carey's novel (Thieme 108). While the circumstances of their encounter – "It were a rainy autumn day [...] a bitter wind blowing low and hard across the marshes" (JM 262) – are the same, Maggs is not the frightful creature, but is "much affected" (JM 264) by the little boy and instantly promises that he "would come back from my exile and take him from his orphanage, that I would

spin him a cocoon of gold and jewels, that I would weave him a nest so strong that no one would ever hurt his goodness” (JM 264). Carey, therefore, does not only refuse the classic’s authority by forcing his own chronology of events onto the plot, but he also places Maggs in the centre as this key scene is no longer told by Pip, but contained within the convict’s speech.

In contrast to Rhys’s protagonist, Maggs rejects the fate envisioned for him in Dickens’s classic much more decisively. He does not die a criminal, but a well-respected and beloved citizen and family man after having finally embraced his Australian identity. Once the dream of Englishness embodied by his protégé is expelled from the narrative, it is also the text which “finally sunders its bond with its English ‘original’” (Thieme 109). The relationship between the two texts was never that tight as in the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* since the novel suggests many parallels to the pretext, which do not seem to fit all that neatly. Carey rather “holds a distorting lens up to his pre-texts” (Thieme 115). This enables the novel to comment in a more humorous tone on its literary forbear, which, however, does not make its critique any less fierce. *Jack Maggs* is not only “arguing with one of the great works of English literature” (Gaile, *A “contrarian streak”* 14), but its literary allusions go beyond *Great Expectations* and include snippets from the whole of the Dickensian literary universe. Carey recreates a typical Dickensian atmosphere by making London come “alive with the specificity of Dickens’s own graphic evocation of the smells, textures, tastes, sounds, and feel of the metropolis, from its stylish houses to its back lanes and snuggeries” (Savu 136–137). Moreover, the “background Carey gives Maggs is strikingly similar to that of many Dickensian protagonists: orphanhood, poverty, dreadful labour, abandonment, betrayal, social humiliation, and oppression” (Savu 137). The most obvious intertextual reference can be found in Maggs’s account of his childhood experiences: Not only do they closely correspond to *Oliver Twist*’s life as a boy thief, but it is also Silas Smith, the man who finds the infant Maggs and abuses him as an accomplice in his raids, who strongly resembles Fagin, the leader of the boy thieves in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*.

Additionally to the intertextual references to Dickens's novels, Carey also alludes to other influential works and authors such as Thackeray who appears as a rival to Oates or Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, whose eponymous character is likened to Maggs. The inclusion of the great classics illustrates the power of literature to not only invade all spheres of life, but also shape the self-perception of a nation. The thief Maggs, who belongs to a social group with normally no inclinations to what is considered to be high culture, is strongly influenced by the image of Englishness that is promoted through literature, even though it has only very little to do with his real life:

[...] the home to which he would one day return, not the mudflats of the Thames, nor Mary Britten's meat-rich room at Pepper Alley Stairs, but rather a house in Kensington whose kind and beautiful interior he had entered by tumbling down a chimney, like a babe falling from the outer darkness into light. Clearing the soot from his eyes he had seen that which he later knew was meant by authors when they wrote of England, and of Englishmen." (JM 322)

This concept of Englishness, however, is constantly deconstructed as the classics are brought into connection with characters who do not at all adhere to the high moral standards or class conceptions that are upheld by Victorian society. Mercy Larkin, for example, likes to compare herself to the eponymous character of Richardson's *Pamela*. As Buckle's lover, she is nothing like the chaste servant in the novel, but it is nevertheless "clear as day to her that she, like Pamela, might one day be mistress of the house wherein she had been called to serve" (JM 151). It is also the status of the classics and the notion of high literature that is mocked and demystified by characters such as the former fish monger who strives to live up to his newly acquired status by stylising himself as a book lover and a "Man of Letters, a Patron of the Arts" (JM 328). Similarly, it is also the criminal Silas Smith who wants to pass for a sophisticated Englishman: "He was an educated man, and once walked beside the sea with Mr Coleridge, or so he claimed. In any case, he could recite whole scenes from Shakespeare, and often did, sitting in our room at Pepper Alley Stairs." (JM 95) His position at the lower echelons of society and his humble living conditions, however, comically counter this description.

4.1.2 Neo-Victorianism: nostalgia or critique?

Carey and Rhys do not only rewrite two great classics, they also allude to the whole of the Victorian period and thus clearly stand in the tradition of neo-Victorian literature. In contrast to the vast amount of adaptations whose aim it is to present the audience with an unreflecting Victorian flair, the two novels do not merely imitate, but consciously draw attention to their status as rewriting. The modern point of view is extremely prevailing in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The novel is placed in the context of the nineteenth century only on account of its intertextual relationship to *Jane Eyre* and the reference to precise historical dates such as the Emancipation Act, which was passed in 1833, at the beginning of the novel. It, however, breaks in every other aspect such as narrative technique or language with the conventions of Victorian literature and “does not employ the elaborate pastiche of Victorian writing styles characteristic of many neo-Victorian literary texts” (Su, *Jean Rhys* 392). *Jack Maggs*, on the contrary, appears to be more nostalgic as it imitates more closely the literary style of the period. The expectation of a traditional Victorian account, however, is built up only in order to further enhance the subversive effect, which is achieved when this anticipation is disappointed.

This distortion can, for example, be traced in the description of the setting which appears to be very important in neo-Victorian novels. The reference to a precise historical location can be found on the very first pages of Carey’s novel, which instantly present the readers with the exact date of Maggs’s arrival in London, the fifteenth of April 1837, and thus significantly place the novel “at the very cusp of the Victorian era, in the months before Queen Victoria ascended to the throne” (Hadley 156). These temporal details alongside an exact rendering of London with its street names and landmarks might make the novel seem more authentically Victorian to a modern audience. At the same time this accurate description emphasises the novel’s distance vis-à-vis this period as a Victorian would not have needed this explicitness. As Hadley comments, it is “the very commitment to the historical specificity of the Victorian era in neo-Victorian fiction [that] highlights their position as neo-Victorian novels and prevents a passive replication of Victorian literary forms” (156).

The subversive element in neo-Victorian novels becomes even more obvious in the readers' confrontation with their own highly stereotyped and nostalgic reconstructions of Victorian society. Most misconceptions about this period centre on the middle class. Since they used the novel to assist their social rise and to promote their self-image built on individualism, sensitivity, and intelligence (Young 49-50), it no longer seems surprising that some readers today are still tempted to regard the Victorians as morally upright and cultivated beings living in a nation of refined manners and tastes probably superior to modern-day society. The fact that the protagonists of the novels are not only already established members of the middle class, but, even more significantly, individuals in the "process of *embourgeoisement*" (Young 46) explains the popularity of the so-called Bildungsroman or novel of development that "grounded narrative in the experiences of a unique and developing individual" (James 44). However, the rise from rags to riches that characterises the biographies of many Victorian heroes, mostly orphans like Pip or Jane Eyre, was bound to remain a literary illusion in a society as highly constrained as Britain. Neo-Victorian novels mockingly comment on this by taking up, but considerably distorting this literary genre. While the depiction of Antoinette's youth might resemble the experiences of a typical Victorian heroine, the reader's expectation of a possible development is ironically disrupted once she comes into contact with British middle class values. In Carey's novel the possibility of psychological development and social climbing is still there, but not attributed to the young aspiring gentleman, a "young fellow of great expectations" (GE 117), but to the middle-aged convict and benefactor Maggs who has "High Hopes" (JM 74).

The intention behind both rewritings is to "undermine the nostalgic ideal of the Victorian era as a time of great values and civic virtue" (Hadley 157). In Rhys's novel it is the Englishman Rochester himself who destroys the idealised image of society due to his lack of typical middle class values such as compassion or moral sense. In *Jack Maggs*, criticism takes on a more satirical form as Carey shows how the lowly aspects of Victorian life invade the spaces of the middle. Maggs, for example, calls the idea of respectability into question when he talks of Ma Britten as a "respectable" (JM 4) woman:

Mary Britten was not an educated woman, and there was about her tall raw frame a great rude energy [...] and yet she had a passion to be genteel [...] and she made this front room an altar to her passion, filling it with expensive flounces, and ruffles, with jardinières, with doilies, and status of dusky maidens whose outstretched hands could accommodate a lighted candle. (JM 211)

Her aspirations to be respectable are shown in her attempts to disguise what is really going on in her household. Ironically, however, the decorum she displays is accounted for by Silas Smith's burglaries and her illegal abortions take place next door. Similarly, "Mr Buckle's chaotic household" (JM 7), a place owned by a former fishmonger and overrun by cats as well as comical employees, "is presented as a mockery of an ideal, sophisticated nineteenth-century household" (Heinke 207) and even ridiculed by the servants such as the footman Constable: "Oh, we are a *most* fashionable household [...] There is not a coster or a crossing sweeper who is not laying plots to dine with our Mr Buckle. As for authors, why they are forever knocking down our door." (JM 32-33)

The illusion of reading a Victorian novel is most strongly disrupted in *Jack Maggs* by the introduction of "topics that were considered taboo in the Victorian period" (Maack 231). This includes the adultery of Tobias Oates, Ma Britten's flourishing business as an abortionist, homosexuality, Buckle's exploitative sexual relationship to the maid Mercy Larkin and the history of prostitution of the latter. Sexuality is sometimes only alluded to and thus seemingly "couched in a semblance of Victorian propriety" (Hadley 47): "Elsewhere in the household he heard a flurry of whispering and the fast shuffle of bare feet, and then, not too much time after, the old familiar music of a squeaking bed." (JM 40) Other passages, for instance the mention of Constable's homosexual relationship to Phipps, reflect the sexual act less euphemistically: "For two weeks in 1836, Edward Constable had been drunk with Henry Phipps, dreamed of Henry Phipps, had been reamed, rogered, ploughed by Henry Phipps so he could barely walk straight to the table." (JM 167) According to Gutleben, the overt inclusion of sexuality seems to transform "a scrupulous imitation into a modernized form of reproduction, it changes the imitative mode into a subversive one, pastiche into parody" (174).

4.2 Criticising Victorian society and its values

4.2.2 Victorian women: wives, mothers, and madwomen

The Victorian middle class did not only dictate the moral values to which people should aspire, but it also determined the roles of men, and above all, women in society. Rhys's Antoinette is not only marginalised because of her status as the Other, but just like every other woman in Victorian society at home in Britain or abroad her marginalisation is caused foremost by her gender. In a postcolonial context, the women's status is thus often described in terms of a so-called double colonisation referring "to the ways in which women have *simultaneously* experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy" (McLeod 175). However, that does not mean that all women in the British Empire could be placed in the same position their only difference being their place of birth. English women, as powerless and oppressed they might be, nevertheless incarnate European higher moral and civil standards, whereas colonised women being represented as sensual and wild posed a potential threat to those values. Women like Brontë's Jane Eyre and Rhys's Antoinette thus cannot simply be seen as two sides of the same coin. Even though they both may be regarded as "victims of the workings of a homogeneous system of sexual domination" (Mardorossian, *Double (De)colonization* 81), their fate differs considerably from each other and is ultimately determined by a complex web of ethnicity, language and social background.

Considered by many as "a cult text of feminism" (Spivak 244), Brontë's *Jane Eyre* nevertheless refuses the Other-figure Bertha the possibility of self-discovery and self-determination that it grants its protagonist. In other words, Brontë "has sensitively understood the plight of disenfranchised women and yet, as a Victorian English citizen, she had been unable to see her own Creole, the first Mrs Rochester, as fully human" (Simpson 111). In order to justify Bertha's oppression and her final expulsion from the narrative, Brontë seems to try hard not to have them appear in any way similar. As it has already been outlined, Bertha is only presented as an "impediment" (JE 287) to Jane's happiness with Rochester and as the young

woman's darker self. Rhys's novel attempts to set things right by liberating Bertha from her animalistic existence, but also by deliberately drawing parallels to Brontë's heroine. According to Thorpe (180-181), it is most of all Antoinette's first person account of her youth that bears closest resemblance to the first ten chapters of *Jane Eyre*. They, for instance, share a similar background as unloved children: Jane as an orphan and unwanted foster child to her aunt, Mrs Reed, on the one hand and Antoinette, who after her father's death has to contend with her younger and disabled brother for her mother's affection on the other hand. Both grow up poor and have to constantly endure social humiliation caused by their position as outsiders. A further rather obvious parallel can be drawn between Lowood School of *Jane Eyre* and the convent in which Antoinette has to live after Coulibri's destruction and her mother's descent into insanity. Even though Lowood appears to be a much harsher environment than the Jamaican convent, both educational institutions are feminine spaces. Antoinette refers to the convent as her "refuge" (WSS 31) since it is "the only place that provides Antoinette with security, safety, and trust" (O'Connor 178) and shields her against a male-dominated and oppressive outside world. However, it is already at this early stage in their lives that the path and the personalities of the two protagonists diverge. While the white Creole enjoys her state of inactivity in which she is not forced to make any decisions that would automatically upset her world view anew and thus finds "it very comforting to know exactly what must be done" (WSS 32), Jane eventually rejects the structured yet confining surrounding of Lowood:

My world had for some years been Lowood: my experiences had been of its rules and systems; now I remembered that the real world was wide, and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real knowledge of life amidst its perils." (JE 86)

Unlike Jane who decides to leave Lowood on her own account and thus takes a further step towards emancipation, Antoinette is removed from the convent by a man, her stepfather Mr Mason. The forced departure, therefore, does not give her a new freedom, but only drives her further into the dependence of men.

The first part of Rhys's novel suggests "the heroine's parallel ascendance to Jane's by alluding to the same romance paradigms" (Nixon 276), but as it soon becomes

clear, this potential can never be realised. The apparent similarity between Antoinette's imprisonment in Thornfield Hall and Jane's incarceration in the red-room at the same time marks the complete oppositeness of their biographies. In other words, Antoinette ends in the confinement from which Brontë's heroine is allowed to gradually free herself. The women's experiences might be similar on the surface, the meanings attached to them, however, differ considerably. While Jane's development clearly follows the tradition of the Bildungsroman (Burrows 43), in which every experience along the way enables the protagonist to grow, Antoinette is only restricted by them. The limitations she encounters are mostly caused by her dependency on men like Mason or Rochester: Her "identity and fate are defined and controlled by men – by fathers, husbands, or seducers" (Young 119). The Creole's constant search for a strong male figure appears to be triggered by the early death of her father which is seen to be the origin of her family's troubles. The women of the house are left without any protection and lament the times when Old Cosway was still alive and provided them with a comfortable life: "My father, visitors, horses, feeling safe in bed – all belonged to the past." (WSS 5) However, the omnipotent father does not correspond to the real-life person who cheated on her mother and ran down the plantation (Wickramagamage 32). Hence, Antoinette is seeking in other men what has never existed in reality.

Even though Brontë's novel foregrounds female liberation, she nevertheless reproduces the assumptions about womanhood of her times in the same way as Dickens. According to Ingham (50-52), women in the Victorian period were considered second-class people whose ultimate aim consisted in getting married and having children. Everyone who did not adhere to these values and norms was stigmatized and regarded as a failed woman such as the eccentric Miss Havisham in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Jane may enjoy a relatively independent life in her position at Thornfield Hall and even claims in a very modern and emancipated manner that it is narrow-minded to say that women "ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex" (JE 111). However, marriage represents "quintessential female wish-fulfilment" (Nixon 271)

for Jane as well. Not even her work as a governess suggests, as one might be inclined to believe, “emancipation from conventional femininity, since [it is] associated with the traditional female roles of the teaching and nurturing of children or of otherwise ministering to the needs of others” (Young 122). Finding her true self means that she ultimately embraces her suitable role in society. In the end it is also not her own achievement that makes her social climbing possible, but her uncle’s heritage and her marriage to Rochester.

The assumption that marriage brings women happiness and fortune is deconstructed in *Wide Sargasso Sea* since Antoinette, “unlike Jane, is not rewarded by marriage but victimized by it” (Nixon 275). As a woman, Antoinette is urged by her stepfather to enter the “marital marketplace in which she would be displaced as commodity to be consumed by the most promising bidder” (Simpson 127). The business transaction that marriage thus entails is revealed by Rochester’s attempt to resolve Antoinette’s doubts about the wedding: “I’ll trust you if you’ll trust me. Is that a bargain?” (WSS 48) The predominance of the economic aspect can also be seen in the description of their marriage which is by no means romantic, but is rather quickly disposed of: “So it was all over, the advance and retreat, the doubts and hesitations. Everything finished, for better or for worse.” (WSS 39) These first sentences of Part Two, which are uttered by Rochester after the narration has been bestowed upon him, display his resignation rather than any positive feelings about his honeymoon.

In contrast to this, Jane and Rochester’s love is claimed to be built on mutual attitudes and a shared cultural background. Their marriage is commonly interpreted as “the true union of innately suited souls” (Nixon 268) or as Jane expresses it in the last chapter of the novel: “All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character – perfect concord is the result.” (JE 446) The reality of women’s marital status in Victorian society, however, is already hinted at in the classic. Mrs Fairfax, for instance, claims that “[e]quality of position and fortune is often advisable in such cases” (JE 263) and that “[g]entlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses” (JE 264). Brontë wants to make believe that the married Jane “is herself still,

autonomous and self-defined” (Oates 52). This is underlined by her statement in the novel’s last chapter – “Reader, I married him” (JE 444) –, which clearly puts her into the subject position. Their equality, however, can only be achieved by her newly acquired financial security and Rochester’s physical damage which visibly undermines his manliness: he is no longer in control, but “helpless, indeed – blind, and a cripple” (JE 424).

Read against the foil of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the power balance between Jane and Rochester can already be revealed as illusory in Brontë’s novel. This, for instance, can be seen in the scene in which Jane encounters Bertha for the first time. Not only is it the mad Creole who is excluded from any direct address, but also Brontë’s heroine is, like Bertha, “objectified by Rochester’s invitation to the men to examine the two women and then subjected to their judicial gaze” (Nixon 272). They become “this” and “that”: “This is *my wife* [...] And *this* is what I wished to have’ (laying his hand on my shoulder) ‘this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout.” (JE 292) Despite having a strong and independent will, Jane does not in any way protest against this subjection. She even lets the narrative authority be taken from her since it is Rochester’s account of his marriage and the West Indies that dominates the scene. Likewise, the narration in *Wide Sargasso Sea* abruptly shifts from Antoinette to Rochester once their marriage has been administered suggesting “that his desire now drives the narrative” (Erwin 146). Rochester does not only objectify Antoinette and Jane by denying them the status as narrator, but also by renaming them. He turns Antoinette into Bertha during their honeymoon and applies a similar practice to his beloved Jane as soon as their wedding is in sight (Müller 72). That is to say he emphasises her new name as a married woman, Jane Rochester, and even renames her Janet: “‘Soon to be Jane Rochester,’ he added: ‘in four weeks, Janet; not a day more. Do you hear that?’” (JE 257) Even though it is never made plain in *Jane Eyre*, the act of renaming hints at what is spelled out in *Wide Sargasso Sea*: The loss of her name causes a woman to become her husband’s property.

Although Antoinette “shows the least knowledge of the possible relationship between money and possession, between money and power” (O’Connor 163), it is money that temporarily reverses their gender-defined roles in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rochester feels that he has been bought by Antoinette and claims “I have sold my soul” (WSS 42). In the beginning it is indeed the English husband who depends on his Creole wife. Antoinette is in power since she is more familiar with the island, its vegetation, customs and people and tries to advise him on how to find his bearings in this strange place. Soon, however, Rochester attempts to free himself from the unmanly position of someone who is in need of help and to regain the upper hand in their relationship by belittling her knowledge:

She was undecided, uncertain about facts – any fact. When I asked her if the snakes we sometimes saw were poisonous, she said, ‘Not those. The *fer de lance* of course, but there are none here,’ and added, ‘but how can they be sure? Do you think they know?’ Then, ‘Our snakes are not poisonous. Of course not.’ (WSS 54)

As their relationship is an “enactment of a colonial as well as a sexual encounter” (Mardorossian, *Double (De)colonization* 81), he perceives her as his inferior in two respects. Their marital union may thus be compared to the relation between mother country and its colonised nations. The civilised world of England is symbolised as masculine, while the colonies are depicted as frail and given stereotypically female attributes. Consequently, the colonial master discourse argued that “these feminine nations needed benevolent (but firm) male governance, just as English law enforced the belief that wives should be subject to their husbands, should not participate in politics, and should not possess property of their own” (Innes 139). As Rochester sees his marriage to Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* only in terms of financial support, he becomes the exploitative coloniser and can no longer be regarded as the victim of the restrictive Victorian marriage laws. In fact, the Creole woman, the source of his misfortune in *Jane Eyre*, is the one who is trapped by these laws and is turned into “no more and no less than a colony, to be caught and possessed, enclosed and controlled by the male governor” (O’Connor 217).

The connection between colonialism and patriarchy also becomes apparent in his assertion of Antoinette’s madness, which is interpreted as a direct consequence of both her upbringing in an excessive colonial environment and her gender. Brontë hereby mirrors common assumptions of madness as “a state in which whatever

symptoms there were resulted from the overthrow of reason by passion” (Ingham 61). As women were regarded as more sensitive and less reasonable, they were “more likely than men to cross the borderline from sanity to insanity” (Ingham 65). Additionally, we find that madness is strongly associated with female sexuality. Rochester laments about his wife’s aberrant sexual desires already in the classic: “Bertha Mason, the true daughter of an infamous mother, dragged my through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste.” (JE 304) Bertha’s passion clashes with Victorian assumptions of womanhood and appears to be “the negative polarity to a natural chastity and refinement” (Nixon 272). This impression is even reinforced by the depiction of innocent and pure Jane who by repressing her desires and refusing to become Rochester’s mistress proves to be the ideal woman. By claiming that only madwomen and prostitutes can take pleasure in sex and that “[h]iring a mistress is the next worse thing to buying a slave” (JE 309), Rochester clearly reproduces common Victorian attitudes of Victorians towards sexuality.

In *Jane Eyre*, the readers witness “the precarious moral status of men in the Victorian Age” (Müller 69) as they learn about his multiple affairs and cannot say for sure if his ward Adele is in fact his illegitimate daughter. He tries to make Jane jealous by flirting with another woman, Blanche Ingram, and is even willing to commit bigamy. This, however, does not seem to conflict at all with his image of the romantic hero since he wants to make himself out to be in the position of a victim who constantly has to fight against female seduction. *Wide Sargasso Sea* challenges Rochester’s moral superiority by revealing the hypocrisy within his attitudes. Rhys’s unnamed English husband is obviously attracted to his passionate Creole wife and clearly enjoys their brief honeymoon at first: “Very soon she was as eager for what’s called loving as I was – more lost and drowned afterwards.” (WSS 57) Therefore, it is not so much the possible threat that she might pose to his English standards of decency which Rochester fears. He is rather afraid that her passion will enslave him and make him not only succumb to his desires, but lose control over her as well. Like his alter ego in *Jane Eyre*, he accurately separates sex and love by claiming: “I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love.

I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did.” (WSS 58)

It is not Rhys’s primary intention to raise questions about the mental state of Rochester’s first wife. Antoinette succumbs to madness in the same way her literary ancestor Bertha does. However, her insanity is not objectively diagnosed, but it is only her English husband who makes the connection between her sexuality and her mental instability: “She’ll loosen her black hair, and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She’ll not care who she’s loving). She’ll moan and cry and give herself as no sane woman would – or could.” (WSS 106) Additionally, her insanity is no longer explained as an innate personality trait or a hereditary illness like in Brontë’s novel: “Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard!” (JE 290) Christophine, for example, attempts to explain the madness of Antoinette’s mother as a condition that is caused by her surrounding: “They drive her to it. When she lose her son she lose herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad, they act like she is mad.” (WSS 101) In the case of Antoinette, her mental instability is brought upon her not only due to her isolated childhood, her lack of a stable identity but, most significantly, by her husband’s rejection. Just like her mother before, she is gradually urged into believing that she is insane. It is thus herself who provides Rochester with a reason to finally claim total possession over her as it guarantees “that she cannot participate in a logical discourse and present (lucidly) her own defence or challenge” (Nixon 274). The Creole’s madness appears to be a justification that serves both Rochester and Brontë to liberate themselves from the chains of colonial history. Rhys reveals the constructedness of Antoinette’s madness since she shows that the Englishman is trapped by “his own madness and mania, his own obsession [that] has created, by design, the very monster he now fears” (O’Connor 167-168). By showing the male protagonist just as prone to mental instability, not only the Creole’s madness as such is called into doubt, but also womanhood in general and female sexuality in particular is freed from its inclination to insanity.

Although Antoinette impersonates the opposite of the Western woman, she does not rebel against this image, but rather assists in its creation. In contrast to the passive and devote Antoinette, it is rather the black character Christophine who deviates most clearly from Victorian expectations concerning femininity. Not only is she different because of her ethnicity, but, even more importantly, her attitudes and opinions establish her as a modern woman who claims independence for herself by claiming: “Women must have spunks to live in this wicked world.” (WSS 63) Despite being a former slave, she has never been enslaved by a man: “All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank God. I keep my money. I don’t give it to no worthless man.” (WSS 69) In her opinion, the institution of marriage “subsumes the female, deprives her of liberty and autonomy” (O’Connor 195). Unlike Antoinette, she sees through the exploitative practices connected to marriage and is shocked when she learns about Antoinette’s complete dependency on her husband. She may not be the protagonist, but in her role as surrogate mother and confidant she represents “female power and mystery, wisdom and autonomy” (O’Connor 208). Representing everything that is alien to Englishness such as her position as an obeah woman who foresees Rochester’s blindness she is made into a counter-image to the constrained and dependent English woman.

In Carey’s *Jack Maggs*, female figures are not as important as in Rhys’s novel and the story does not broach the topic of gender struggle explicitly. It, however, is above all Buckle’s housemaid Mercy Larkin who plays a significant role in the story. Like Jack Maggs, she is of a low social rank and dreams of becoming respectable. As she is strongly influenced by society’s expectations of women, Mercy likes “to fancy that the day had come when she was finally Mrs Buckle” (JM 124-125). However, she is far from being a stereotyped Englishwoman of lower middle class standing. Opposed to all the other characters in the novel, she is the only one who really cares for Maggs and does not judge him by his criminal past. The maid seems to actively and stubbornly pursue her goals and, like Rhys’s Christophine, she has the courage to stand up to men. Not only does she explicitly condemn Buckle’s behaviour towards the convict, but it is also due to her insistence that Maggs finally sees what England has been doing to him all along

and ultimately even save his life. As Schmidt-Haberkamp points out, mercy “literally comes to Maggs in the character of Mercy Larkin, a woman as scarred by experience as he is himself, who helps him to abandon his illusions and to reconcile him to his Australian identity” (Schmit-Haberkamp 255). Her strong will and her determination mark her singularity and cast her as the one person responsible for the happy ending of the story. This also explains why there is “no character like Mercy in *The Death of Maggs*, no young woman to help the convict recognize the claims of Richard and John to have a father kiss them good night” (JM 327). Mercy thus directly opposes Dickens’s depiction of women who “neither lack intelligence nor integrity, but [...] do not look far beyond the boundaries of marriage, home, and family life in order to explore their identity and to forge their destiny. In creating them Dickens was developing a stereotype of the virtuous wife and mother that very many of his bourgeois contemporaries, both male and female, cherished” (Sanders 72). Mercy might ultimately also find her happiness in her marriage with Maggs, but as their bond is based on equality rather than on domination, she creates a new, more modern image of the wife and mother. Not only does she escape the fate envisioned for her in England, but she even becomes the one “who is now remembered best” (JM 327) of Maggs’s family. If Maggs is seen as a founding father of the new nation Australia, Mercy surely can be called its devoted mother.

Mercy is able to succeed in the marriage market only in the less restricted society of Australia far away from the constraints of nineteenth century England. Although Mary Britten considerably destructs the very ideal of the harmonic and loving English family as well as the woman as its caretaker in *Jack Maggs*, the absence of a devoted mother is already a topic in the classics. Both protagonists are orphans and the only mother figures in their lives – Pip’s elder sister and Jane’s harsh aunt – fail to provide them with guidance or affection. This, however, does not seem to leave them with the same lasting trauma or hinders their emotional development as it does in the case of Antoinette and Maggs. Pip, at least, is able to look up to another caring parent figure, his sister’s husband, and Jane eventually even succeeds in having a family of her own. Mary Britten is in many ways similar to the mother figures depicted in the classics. In analogy to Jane’s aunt, Maggs

remarks: “We were both, Sophina and I, instructed to call her Ma, but did so knowing that we would be often reminded that we were not her children.” (JM 212) As their relationship is based on exploitation and abuse, it portrays in a way a “demonic familial structure which parodies the nurturant model of the ‘normal’ family” (Vanden Driesen 310). However, even more natural families do not guarantee a safe environment. Mercy Larkin, for instance, has a family, but it is her own mother who forces her to work as a child prostitute in order to make ends meet. In accordance with the image of marriage as an institution that “needs to be regulated strictly to keep the borders for the holy English family intact” (Haliloğlu 160), Victorian society also seems to determine which women are suited to bear the offspring of the great English nation. Accordingly, Sophina, who is not only of a lower class but also a criminal, is denied the role as mother just like Antoinette cannot be cast as “the chaste mother of English sons” (Ciolkowski 343) due to her own lack of Englishness. In contrast to this, the rewritings show that the most unlikely mothers, who are not tied legally or by blood to the children they take care of, prove to be the most devoted ones. Since they do not strictly adhere to British moral codes for women – Christophine as a former black slave and Mercy Larkin as Buckle’s housemaid and mistress –, they also destabilise the hypocritical façade of the Victorian family idyll.

4.2.3 Victorian men: gentlemen and criminals

Victorian England is characterised by male domination, both at home and in the colonies. This, however, does not mean that the roles of men in society were any less well-defined than those of their female counterparts. The genders were even determined in direct opposition to each other with men being “more logical, more rational, and more in control of their emotions than (oversensitive) women” (Ingham 146). Moreover, it is the concept of the English gentleman that significantly shaped the image of manhood in the Victorian age. The term initially referred to a man of high social standing belonging to the gentry or the minor aristocracy, but underwent, as Young (5) explains, a major change in the nineteenth century. It was adopted by the middle class to assist its rise in social and cultural

dominance. A gentleman was no longer determined in relation to genteel birth, but his prestige came to be “defined as something that has been formed rather than ordained” (Young 21). In other words, gentlemanliness was something that should be acquired on one’s own account by displaying good manners, refined sensibilities and chivalry. Although classics clearly reassert the image of the English bourgeois gentleman in the person of Brontë’s Byronic hero Rochester and Dickens’s protagonist Pip, it is, in fact, far from being a stable social concept. As the nineteenth century progresses, it becomes a rather “value-laden term that is paradoxically empty of meaning” (Young 6) since it is used as an umbrella term for all types of social accomplishments or positions such as the gentleman of birth, of wealth, of education or of religion to name only a few. This instability can also be detected in the rewritings by Carey and Rhys, who attempt to deconstruct and mock the Victorian ideal not only by showing the classics’ protagonists as not so gentlemanly after all, but also by including additional characters who unsuccessfully aspire to become respectable English gentlemen.

In *Jane Eyre* Rochester is represented as the perfect English gentleman (Ingham 149–150) whose masculinity is never seriously called into doubt. He is depicted as someone who is able to overcome every obstacle by means of reason. His morally questionable actions such as his various affairs in Europe or the incarceration of his first wife in the attic are not so much covered up by himself, but it is rather the narrative itself that seems to downplay and to a certain extent even justify his flaws. This contrasts dramatically with his representation in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Not only is it a younger version of himself that is portrayed, but “Rhys even reduces Rochester, in Brontë a ‘master’ and Byronic character, to a mediocre and petty man” (O’Connor 188). Since he is thrown into an arranged marriage with a stranger by his father and forced to live in a completely alien surrounding, the reader might be initially inclined to feel some sympathy for him. Soon, however, we learn that the unnamed husband does not at all embody the image of the gentleman as which Brontë’s heroine describes him: “I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes” (JE 148) While Jane believes that “his moodiness, his harshness, and his former faults of morality [...] had their source in some cruel cross of fate” (JE 148), the young

Rochester in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is already, as Christophine discerns, “a damn hard man” (WSS 101) who only feels pity for himself. His attempt at controlling his environment, which has been associated in Brontë’s novel with male strength and reason, is revealed as the brutal seizing of power. Since he betrays his wife and lacks any refined manners, he is the very opposite of a morally upright Victorian gentleman and “no more than a pretender” (Ciolkowski 349).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* the motif of the gentleman is further put into question by Daniel Cosway and his aspirations to become a gentleman. As Rochester inquires about him, the servant Amélie claims “that Daniel was a very superior man, always reading the Bible and that he lived like white people. I tried to find out what she meant by this, and she explained that he had a house like white people, with one room only for sitting.” (WSS 76) Being a colonial object, a half-caste and an illegitimate child, Daniel represents everything that was considered despicable and lowly by Victorian society. He thus constitutes the very antipode of Englishness. Similar to Antoinette and Jane, Rochester and Daniel seem to be the mirror image of each other since they “appear to occupy the opposite poles in a spectrum of segregated colonial bodies but they ironically share the same fixations and dream the same dreams” (Ciolkowski 348). Both see themselves as sons who have been done wrong by their fathers: Rochester’s accusation that his father has left him without any money – “I have sold my soul or you have sold it” (WSS 42) – in a way resembles Daniel’s claim that his father “was a shameless man and of all his illegitimates I am the most unfortunate and poverty stricken” (WSS 59).

In *Jack Maggs* the intent to destroy the image of the respectable gentleman takes on an even greater centrality than in *Wide Saragasso Sea*. Indeed, the novel is densely populated by characters who do not exemplify but ridicule the virtues and assets that this concept usually entails. The attempt to rise socially is not only depicted by Pip’s alter ego Phipps, who is a marginal figure in the novel, but most prominently by the author Tobias Oates and Percy Buckle. However, it soon becomes clear that they are, just like Rochester, mere pretenders who are constantly trying to obliterate their mean origins. Buckle, for instance, is a former fish monger and grocer who becomes a gentleman due to an inheritance practically

overnight and without any effort of his own. When he is introduced, the narrator already comments, not without mockery, on his social status: “Mr Percy Buckle was the owner of a gentleman’s residence at 29 Great Queen Street, but he was no more a gentleman than the man who was presently entering his household in disguise.” (JM 9) Throughout the novel he is referred to as the “little grocer” (JM 324) whose physiognomy – “sunken cheeks and bandy little duck-legged walk” (JM 61) – further underlines his inability to detach himself from assumptions of class and social standing in Victorian Britain.

Due to his literary endeavours Oates may be closer to the ideal of the educated and refined Englishman; being described as “a young gent decidedly undistinguished in manner” (JM 26), it is nevertheless his plain appearance and his insecurities that decisively undermine the image of the talented writer: “Tobias Oates did not seem, to Jack’s mind, to warrant any of the excitement his name had stirred in Mercy Larkin’s imagination. [...] He was edgy, almost pugnacious, with eyes and hands everywhere about him as if he were constantly confirming his position in the world [...]” (JM 26) Not only is it his physical shortcomings, but also his constant striving for social recognition and financial success that make him a caricature of the English gentleman. When he is invited to dine with a group of surgeons, he self-consciously compares himself to them:

They were taller than he was. They had been to Oxford and Cambridge had grown up with Greek and Latin, with Plato and Aristotle. And if they had admired their guest’s novel, they were obviously having great difficulty accepting that this was the same chap who used the English language like a lyre. He felt their disappointment even as he shook their hands. (JM 135)

In order to make up for his background, he tries everything to impress them and be accepted as one of their own only to realise afterwards that “he had not behaved like a man of letters but like a common conjurer, a street magician. Would Thackeray have acted thus? Never. *Never.*” (JM 136)

Interestingly, it almost seems as it is their very status of being a gentleman or the wish to become one that corrupts them. Since they constantly fear being exposed as intruders into social spaces where they do not belong, they do not even back away from criminal acts. Buckle, for instance, feels belittled by the imposing appearance of Maggs who at one point of the story discloses to him that his belongings are not

worth stealing and thus accuses him of unrefined tastes. His injured pride ultimately motivates him to advise his neighbour Phipps to kill his benefactor Maggs in order to keep his house. This marks his transition from a likeable character to one corrupted by the expectations of the English class system: “Gone was the mild apologetic little grocer [...]. In his place was this hissing, dark-shelled incubus whose alien and agitated presence strained the young man’s already over-stretched emotions.” (JM 324) Oates cannot be described as a moral character either since he betrays his wife, exploits Maggs and ruins his sister-in-law. Furthermore, Phipps is represented as a superficial, arrogant, and narcissist young man. For most of the time, he remains a shadow image for the reader as well as for Maggs who desperately clings on to a photograph that does not even show him, but “George IV dressed as a commoner” (JM 262). A description of Phipps is provided rather late in the novel, when Constable calls on him in his hide-out:

He sat himself down heavily with his long legs stretched out and the contours of his manhood immodestly displayed beneath his doeskins. He was a tall, well-made man of conventionally handsome appearance. He had straight fair hair, long side whiskers, a good straight nose, and clear blue eyes, but it was the mouth which was the most expressive aspect of his physiognomy: being one moment utterly persuasive of its charm, and the next distinguished by its churlishness. (JM 162)

Although his portrayal might prove to be more in tune with the image of a tall and handsome gentleman, it is immediately juxtaposed with his bad manners. It is also his licentious life style and above all his homosexual encounters with Buckle’s footman Constable that presents the reader with a “reflection on the cultural construction of ‘manliness’” (Letissier 126). Unlike Pip, who finally acknowledges his misbehaviour, abandons his shallow self-bearings and develops an affectionate bond to his benefactor, Phipps does not grow personally in any way, but is, just like Oates and Buckle, prepared to do everything in order to keep his property and reputation.

In connection with the concept of the English gentleman, it is also the notion of the benefactor that is ridiculed. In *Great Expectations* Magwitch’s generosity is set in a positive light as it allows for a poor orphan to make his way in the world and rise socially. In Carey’s novel this assumption is perverted in the characters of Silas Smith and Percy Buckle who both take advantage of their “protégés” Maggs and Mercy under the pretence of helping them. For example, Buckle’s abuse of his

status to sexually exploit the young servant girl Mercy Larkin, which he calls “My Good Companion” (JM 112) is ironically juxtaposed with his self-stylisation as her saviour and guardian (Sadoff 178). Likewise, Maggs’s role as benefactor cannot merely be interpreted as gratitude for young Phipps’s help, but also implies “the desire for revenge on the genteel society that ostracize and vilified Maggs” (Savu 141). In line with Magwitch’s claim in *Great Expectations* – “If I ain’t a gentleman, nor yet ain’t got no learning, I’m the owner of such.” (GE 275) –, Maggs also buys himself a gentleman. He thus reveals that respectability is chiefly a matter of money and not achieved by “one’s merits or the quality of one’s character” (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 186-187).

The stereotypical characters that are so neatly set apart in Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, the English gentleman and the deported criminal, are deconstructed in *Jack Maggs*. Similar to Rhys’s technique of likening Antoinette’s and Jane’s youth, Carey undermines the illusion of a stable class system most notably by establishing several parallels between the biographies of Oates and Maggs (Thieme 113). Maggs, for example, is strongly influenced by his modest social background and his exploitative foster father Silas Smith who brought him into contact with criminality at a very early age. This also explains his wish to establish a stable family of his own. Being the son of a thief himself, Oates gives an account of his life that bears striking resemblance to Maggs’s experiences: “Having come from no proper family himself, or none that he could remember without great bitterness, he had for all his short, determined life carried with him a mighty passion to create that safe warm world he had been denied.” (JM 36) They are also similar to each other regarding their secret and tragic love story (Woodcock 133): Not only do both their lovers have to abort a child, but the death of Lizzie in a way mirrors that of Sophina and leaves Oates, like Maggs before, devastated. More significantly even, Oates’s talent is not singular in the novel, but also Maggs turns out to be a good story-teller and astonishingly well-read for a thief since he refers to Macbeth and King Lear in his letters.

Like Antoinette who is marginalised because of her status as a woman and a colonised subject, also Maggs is colonised in two respects: he is a social outcast

due to his criminal past and his lack of Englishness. However, he is no longer reduced to his status as the Other in Carey's novel. Similar to Rhys, who tries to explain that Antoinette's madness is not innate, Carey sets out to show that his protagonist's criminality is "the direct result of the harsh social injustice making up Victorian society" (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 180). Being cast out as a newborn, "discovered lying in the mud flats 'neath London Bridge" (JM 75) and exploited by Ma Britten and the thief Silas Smith, he is presented as "more sinned against than sinning" (Savu 142). The British justice system of the nineteenth century makes things even worse. It does not only turn a blind eye on those most in need of help, but even judges them the hardest: Maggs gets convicted for a crime he did not commit and Sophina's corporal punishment is by no means proportional to her crimes. This is to say that it punishes all the characters "who – to judge by the moral standards of the novel – are decent and righteous [...], and lets go unpunished all those who are guilty morally and ethically [...]" (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 184-185).

Thievery is not only associated with the Australian convict, but runs as a motif through the whole of English society. Moreover, it is not only people who are guilty of some sort of crime, but also the nation itself is held responsible for stealing Maggs's life and identity. London appears as a place of crime in which "[d]eception and treachery are the order of the day" (Maack 238). The legal system, however, appears to be the most perverted in the person of Tobias Oates, who is a thief as well as manipulator and can be held responsible for several deaths without suffering any legal consequence. His main victim Maggs, for instance, claims that he "had no choice but to stand like a fool as the man who had robbed him walked ways undamaged" (JM 34). Oates's scrupulous methods of getting what he wants are most obviously shown in his mesmeric sessions which he only pretends to conduct out of "human sympathy" (JM 46) in order to help Maggs get rid of his pain, whereas his "true motives are commercial and his commitment self-serving" (Savu 152). While Oates is prepared to do everything in order to keep up appearances, Maggs who on several occasions proclaims that he is not a gentleman, turns out to be "far more humane and, indeed, more honourable than the so-called English gentleman" (Vanden Driesen 315). It is the former convict who takes a

stand for his fellow footman Constable when he is about to get dismissed, shows compassion for Buckle's butler who has fallen ill as a consequence to Oates's ill-fated prank, and even soothes the anxious author who cannot cope with Lizzie's pregnancy. In contrast to those who have built their success on a heritage or, as in Oates's case, on the expense of less fortunate ones, Maggs's wealth as well as his freedom are hard-won in a harsh country. Just like his literary forbear Magwitch – who claims: "I've done wonderfully well. There's others went out alonger me as has done well too, but no man has done nigh as well as me. I'm famous for it" (GE 271) –, Maggs is not granted any recognition. Still stigmatised as the representative of the transported convicts, he can never be accepted as a true English gentleman.

Maggs's stay in London is marked by his intrusions "into the heart of British values, into the body of the English house" (Heinke 208-209): Not only does he sneak into Oates's house, but he also has to break into Phipps's home, which is legally his own. "For this he laboured? To stand in Henry's hallway like a thief, his breeches smeared with London soot?" (JM 35) As he is forced to become a burglar once again, he is degraded to "a slow and smudgy phantom" (JM 41) that haunts respectable English homes. Both intrusions re-enact the burglary trips of his youth when he entered wealthy households through the chimney. The link between past and present is established through the evocation of strong English smells since the description of Maggs's first burgled house – "It was the smells that first impressed themselves, the smell of apples and oranges, and what may have been cinnamon, but in any case something sweet and strange." (JM 99) – bears close resemblance to Oates's home: "Its smells were English smells – polished oak, coal dust, Devon apples. The intruder breathed these strange yet familiar odours [...]" (JM 41). Those smells might be familiar to him, but their identification as "strange" signals at the same time that nothing has really changed; he is not recognised as the Englishman he wants to be, but is still entering places where he does not belong. Maggs might be denied the participation in English culture, at the same time, however, the convict's capability to gain access to English homes whenever he chooses to shows once more the destabilisation of the imperial hegemony from the margins.

4.3 Characters: renaming and reversing

Despite being easily recognisable to any literate reader as alter egos of the madwoman Bertha Mason and the convict Abel Magwitch, the main characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jack Maggs* are not replicas of their literary ancestors. On the surface this is most obvious in the changes the authors make to their names. In accordance with Antoinette's realisation in Rhys's novel that "[n]ames matter" (WSS 117) and are thus an integral part of someone's identity, the decision to rename a literary character does not only constitute a creative entanglement with the classics, but mirrors the complex relation between the rewritings and their pretexts. While new names might certainly enable the authors to construct their own versions of the characters, they nevertheless bear still enough resemblance to the original ones.

In the case of *Wide Saragasso Sea*, it is not only the male protagonist who changes his wife's name on the story level, but the practice of renaming is also carried out by the author herself. Rhys changes the name of her female protagonist by means of deletion and substitution (Müller 70-71): By taking the madwoman's middle name in *Jane Eyre* and changing it from Antoinetta to the French sounding Antoinette, Rhys manages to link her heroine closer to her West Indian background and the origins of her mother who was born on the French ruled island of Martinique, while at the same time loosening her connection to England. Additionally, her family name is changed to Cosway. As this does align her much more directly to the Jamaican slave owning class that her family was a part of, her deracination following the Emancipation Act is further intensified. The change of her name into the one known from Brontë's text eventually realises what "the reader has already thought" (Kimmey 123), namely that Antoinette is a stand-in for the madwoman. Simultaneously, it also signals that she has not been Bertha all along, but was gradually turned into her: firstly, by her mother's second husband who turns her into a Mason and finally by her husband who substitutes her real name for Bertha. The conglomerate of names – Antoinette Bertha Cosway Mason Rochester – does not only depict the complexity of her character and life story, but also shows how she "is always defined in relation both *to* men and *by* men"

(McLeod 167). Rhys also suggests Brontë's complicity in maintaining this male authority by claiming that the author has deliberately misnamed the Creole. Having destabilised the English writer's narrative authority in this way, Rhys argues that Brontë's Bertha is neither the same character as in her own version nor the real Creole woman: "I think there were several Antoinettes and Mr Rochesters. Indeed I am sure. Mine is *not* Miss Brontë's, though much suggested by 'Jane Eyre'" (Rhys 263). This does not mean that Rhys negates the connection between Antoinette and the lunatic of *Jane Eyre*, but she "emphasizes that her madness exists only under the organizing principle of Bertha Mason" (Winterhalter 227).

Rhys does not only engage in the process of renaming her female protagonist, but she also carries out some kind of poetic justice by not naming Brontë's romantic couple at all. While namelessness in Jane's case can be explained by her practical absence and her little importance for the plot, it has more serious implications for Rochester's identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Ironically, the one person who claims to have the power of defining others is not granted a name and has to suffer from the same impairment of identity that he inflicts on his Creole wife. Hence, he is not only refused his place in the English master discourse due to his removal from the imperial centre, but, even more strikingly, by being denied "the patriarchal name which is the very token of social dominance and generational power" (Walker 43). Contrary to this interpretation, other critics have also discerned another possible explanation for his namelessness. Simpson (114), for instance, argues that this makes him a generic stand-in for all Englishmen. Since the husband also serves as the narrator of the second part, he might also remain unnamed, as Fayad comments, because "he is his own 'subject' and thus free from objectification by naming and [...] becomes omnipotent, the god-like creator of Bertha's narrative text" (443).

The idea of characters being similar but not quite the same can be found in Carey's *Jack Maggs* as well. The renaming of Dickens's convict is just like in Rhys's novel not incidental. Not only does the new name clearly refer back to the literary ancestor, but it also carries additional hidden meaning that underlines the character's identity and life story. Thieme (111) proposes that Jack's family name is taken from the colloquial Australian expression "magsman" that came into usage

in the nineteenth century and refers to a “confident trickster” or “raconteur”. Letissier (124), on the other hand, sees his name as being derived from “to magg”, a Victorian slang word for “to pilfer”. It can be argued that both interpretations are valuable and even encouraged as they explain Maggs’s complex personality. Both are colloquial terms which associate him with the lower classes of society and at the same time entrench him within both cultures, the Australian as well as the English. Furthermore, they illuminate two different aspects of his identity. As his name is not patronymic, but has been “slapped on him by his foster mother Mary Britten” (Mukherjee, *Missed Encounters* 125), the Victorian word behind it seems to be all the more carefully chosen determining his fate as a thief from the very beginning. The Australian word, of which most of the English characters in the story might be largely oblivious, also marks his criminal activities. It is even used by Maggs himself in this meaning in relation to Silas Smith whom he claims to have “more schemes than knaves in a Magman’s deck” (JM 77). However, its other meaning, “raconteur”, links him to the act of storytelling. On the one hand, it is the author Oates who employs the expression in reference to Maggs’s transition into a literary character, when he explains that “as yet he had no actual drama for his Magsman to act out” (JM 129). On the other hand, it might also hint at the possibility that he himself becomes the author of his own story.

Not only are the characters not the same as their predecessors in the originals, it is also their position, their character traits and their significance to the plot that have been reversed. Rochester’s first Creole wife and the Australian convict are not merely placed in the centre of the narration, but they also push the protagonists of the classics, Pip and Jane, to the very margins from which they themselves emerged. Whereas in *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* the colonial beings are flat characters, whose sole purpose seems to move the action forward or support the protagonist’s self-discovery, the rewritings do not only portray Maggs and Antoinette as multi-dimensional and complex individuals, but also grant them the self-development and self-definition that the English writers deny them.

The changed constellation of literary figures becomes most apparent in the comparison of the characters to ghostly appearances. In *Great Expectations*

Magwitch appears as a character only at the very beginning and towards the end of the story. For the most part of the narrative, however, he remains a shadowy image, “the terror of childhood” (GE 196) that every now and then seems to find his way into Pip’s consciousness like “a stain that was faded but not gone” (GE 226). In much the same way, Rochester is haunted by his first wife and the past in the West Indies, which he intends to forget by locking them away. For Jane, Bertha remains for a long time an unruly ghost whose violent laughter is the only sign of her existence. The shape she takes on rather late in the novel does not by any means weaken her image as a savage being devoid of all humanity. In the rewritings the ghost metaphor is taken up as well, but ironically applied to Dickens’ and Brontë’s protagonists. The only glimpse we get of Jane in *Wide Saragasso Sea* is the reference to a girl in a white dress who remains unnamed and thus cannot be definitively identified as Brontë’s heroine. In this scene, Antoinette’s presence is interpreted by “Jane” and another girl as a ghost: “She ran. She met another girl and the second girl said, ‘Have you seen a ghost?’ - ‘I didn’t see anything, but I thought I felt something.’ – ‘This is the ghost,” the second girl said [...]” (WSS 118) This dialogue obviously alludes to the Creole’s role as an inhuman, ghostly appearance in *Jane Eyre* and ridicules it at the same time because Antoinette seems to the reader much more real than the two anonymous girls.

In *Jack Maggs* the reversal of positions between the benefactor and his protégé is marked even more explicitly. As Thieme states, their roles “have effectively been reversed, with the absent Henry replacing the convict as the shadowy offstage figure and Jack, at least partially, assuming the role of Pip” (109). Just as the convict Magwitch triggers the further action due to his frightful appearance in the marshes at the beginning of the novel, also Phipps plays an important role in the rewriting as it is only because of him that Maggs returns to England. He is mostly seen through the eyes of the main character and associated with a highly idealised image of Englishness. Like Magwitch, Phipps enters the stage only fairly late in the novel being presented in a fragmented manner for most of the novel. The two characters are described as the very opposite of each other (Bauder-Begerow 121-122): While the convict shows compassion and moral sense, Phipps despite being considered a respectable gentleman is shallow and feels no responsibility for his

benefactor, although he owes him all his success. In their final encounter he does not turn out to be the longed for son, but is revealed as the Phantom that has been torturing Maggs all along. In this respect, it is not only the characters and their positioning in the story that are reversed, but on a more figurative level Carey also “reverses the relationship between Australian ghost and English host” (Brittan 43). This consolidates the postcolonial assumptions that it is no longer the colonial past that haunts the English centre, but that it is rather the English heritage that impedes Australians from developing a new identity. Phipps’s violent attempt to get rid of his unwanted benefactor destabilises the father-son-relationship that has been proposed at the end of *Great Expectations*. As the convict’s death can no longer be explained as part of the narrative’s logic, but is brought about by Dickens’s stereotypical gentleman himself, the wish to eliminate any possible colonial contamination of the English centre while still profiting from its resources is highlighted even more. In retrospect, it also causes the final reconciliation of Magwitch and Pip to appear unrealistic since it serves the sole purpose of signalling the protagonist’s moral growth.

4.4 Narrative structure and techniques

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* are written in the form of an autobiography exclusively told from the perspective of their main characters. Dickens’s and Brontë’s use of this narrative format was by no means unique, but enjoyed great popularity in the Victorian period and was closely linked to the genre of the Bildungsroman. In the rewritings the formerly marginalised and completely or largely voiceless characters are entitled to tell their own story and, at least partially, take over the roles of Jane and Pip. In Dickens’s novel we only find out about those parts of Magwitch’s life which are of some relevance to the main character. Additionally, not only is his background story confined to a single chapter, but even he himself “opens his account by denying the biographical impulse” (Hadley 40): “I am not a-going fur to tell you my life, like a song or a story-book.” (GE

292) In contrast to this, Jack Maggs's first-person narration in his letters to Phipps shows his emergence as an individual character who is no longer only to be seen in relation to his protégé. As he ceases "being constructed from outside as the embodiment of fearsome, if redeemable criminality, and of colonial alterity, he becomes a narrative agent in his own right" (Thieme 115). Similarly to Antoinette's account in the first part of Rhys's novel, the memories of his childhood and youth that he relates in the letters to his adopted son bear striking similarities to another text. While Antoinette's background clearly resembles Jane's, Maggs's recollection of his early life as a child thief reminds the reader not so much of the main character in *Great Expectations*, but of another prominent figure in Dickens's fictive universe: Oliver Twist (Thieme 115). The aim of these parallels that manifest themselves on the discourse as well as on the story level appear to be the same in both cases: By equalling Antoinette and Maggs to Jane and Pip and by giving them a voice, they are unchained from their existence of two-dimensional literary figures, but presented as human beings.

Carey and Rhys, however, do not simply reverse the narrative situation by putting the formerly oppressed and silenced characters into the same position as Jane Eyre and Pip, who wield sole narrative power over the story and control "the dominant mode of perception" (Bauder-Begerow 121). Since we witness Pip and Jane grow up, see everything filtered through their perspective, and share in their emotional growth, we are inclined to believe everything they narrate and tend to overlook the subjectivity of their accounts. Both texts thus exemplify narrative homogeneity and the "dominant characteristic of Victorian novelistic art" (Gutleben 178), namely literary realism, which aimed at reducing "the distance between literature and life so that it imitates 'reality'" (Purchase 186). This indirectly also points to the nineteenth century assumption that human beings are capable of truthfully describing the world around them. Even though their concrete realisation might differ considerably, both rewritings take a stance not only against realist fiction, but against any kind of stability proposed by the Victorian world view. By employing multiple perspectives instead of one single narrator, who is never really called into doubt, the incoherence of both fiction and reality is foregrounded.

Although the focus in Carey's *Jack Maggs* "is reallocated from the English boy to the returned convict" (Gaile, *Rewriting* 175-176), the title character does not act the part of the narrator like Antoinette in the first and the last part of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The novel is rather marked by an authorial narration in the tradition of Victorian literature. The narrator's omniscience towards the fictive universe can already be made out in the beginning of the story. While Jack assures Mary Britten that he would come back the next day, the narrator foretells: "There is no doubt that Jack Maggs planned to keep his promise, but the morrow held events he could not foresee. Three weeks would pass before he would call at Cecil Street again." (JM 5) Some critics such as Hadley claim that the use of this narrative strategy in neo-Victorian literature "can be understood as part of a backlash against postmodernism. Such accounts position Victorian literature as more entertaining because more simplistic than the self-reflexive questioning of postmodern fiction" (151). This, however, does not mean that these texts are any less subversive vis-à-vis their Victorian forebears. Carey rather uses his narrator's command over time and place as well as over his characters' feelings and thoughts to provide detailed and biting insights into the social spectrum of English society of the nineteenth century. The Australian convict may be placed in the centre of the novel as he is not only the first character to make an appearance, but it is also his story that is told and not his adopted son's. However, it is also the other characters' life and perspective that is given considerable attention. Oates, Buckle, Phipps, or Mercy Larkin are not merely defined by their relationship to Maggs, but are entitled to have their own background stories. This multi-perspective can be interpreted as a direct critique of Dickens's portrayal of Magwitch who is exclusively seen in relation to the main character Phipps.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys brings about a multiplicity of voices since the story is told by different first person narrators. The novel is divided into three segments of unequal length (Burrows 43): Part One is narrated by Antoinette and covers her whole youth, but only makes up approximately thirty pages. In contrast to this, Rochester's narrative account, which takes up most of Part Two and describes their short honeymoon, covers more than seventy pages. The narrative authority of the last part is divided between the white Creole and Grace Poole, her English minder

at Thornfield Hall. Rhys does not only include the voice of her protagonist, but also of rather marginal characters such as Grace Poole or even Antoinette's alleged coloured half-brother, who relates his point of view in the form of a letter to Rochester. This "technique works to engage the sympathy of the reader not only for Antoinette" (Brown 576), but also for relatively minor characters, who are shown to have their own troubles and fears. Especially interesting is this in the case of Grace Poole who, like Bertha, is marginalised and objectified. Not only is she never regarded as an individual and assigned a false identity by Jane who mistakes her as the source of the mad laughter, but she is also degraded by the protagonist's not very flattering description: "Her appearance always acted as a damper to the curiosity raised by her oral oddities: hard-featured and staid, she had no point to which interest could attach." (JE 112). Her promotion to a narrative authority thus formally illustrates Antoinette's claim that "[t]here is always the other side, always" (WSS 82) and deconstructs Brontë's pretext not only from the imperial, but from the narrative periphery as well.

Even more importantly, the multiplicity of voices can be directly interpreted in relation to postcolonial discourse as it does not only question narrative consistence, but, on a larger scale, also the English authority that promotes it. The rewritings' intention is not to replace one narrative authority with another by laying sole focus on Antoinette or Maggs. Carey and Rhys rather celebrate plurality and contest the empire's claim to "fixity, monocentrism, and closure through the ambiguities and absences" within the narrative" (Uraizee 270). Both novels are thus primarily marked by the two strong opposing voices of oppressor and victim. In *Jack Maggs* the supporters of English hegemony such as Buckle or Oates are used as focalisers of the narrative. Similarly, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the representative of the colonial system even tells the longest part of the narrative. Rhys comments on the difficulty and at the same time necessity to examine both points of view in one of her letters:

There are two I's - that is the trouble. In Part I she is I, in Part II (the longest), he speaks, in Part III she is 'I' again. [...] Well, I'm not satisfied with this. I'd prefer a long smooth story told by the girl - Afterwards of course the mad Mrs Rochester, I have tried and tried but cannot do it. I can only do it with two voices - as yet. (Rhys, *Letters* 186)

While a successful overthrow of Rochester's power cannot be achieved by Antoinette on the story level, it is accomplished in the narration itself. Rochester's account might be the longest, Antoinette, however, does not only interrupt him, but it is also the white Creole who is the "first and last narrator, making her husband's narratives contained inside hers" (McLeod 165). In analogy to his expulsion of Christophine from the narrative, he is practically absent from the last part of the story as his "voice has been reduced to quotations in others' narratives" (Simpson 132). Hence, he has to endure the same shadowy existence to which his literary ancestor has condemned his first wife in *Jane Eyre*.

As Antoinette and Rochester are directly opposed to each other as narrators, their views and assumptions are exposed as highly subjective since all of their experiences are filtered through the different values and attitudes which are caused by their particular socialisation. This cultural dissonance is most plainly highlighted in Antoinette's intrusion into Rochester's narration. She requests a love potion from Christophine being convinced that if "my husband, could come to me one night. Once more. I would make him love me" (WSS 71). To her mind, passion seems to be the only way to regain her husband's love, while for Rochester this behaviour only detaches her even further from the ideal of a Victorian woman. In her short narrative account of the visit to her black nanny, Antoinette might appear as desperate, but does not equal the madwoman Rochester evokes later on. The direct contrast between her self-image and Rochester's view of her reveals the subjective and manipulative aspect of the narration: "Rhys draws attention to the selectivity of all of the character's perceptions as they choose and define essential details according to their operative conceptual frameworks" (Dehn Kubitschek 24).

In *Jack Maggs* the clash of two perspectives is made even clearer. When the novel heads towards its climax, the two strands of the plot, involving Mercy and Maggs on the one and Buckle and Phipps on the other hand, are gradually brought together. This does not only increase the dramatic tension, but as the minutes immediately before "the pistol was raised and pointed at Jack's heart" (JM 324) are narrated from two different angles, the rewritings make once again "obvious that each version of the facts is only compartmental: no narrator has a full knowledge of

the events, each account represents only one in an infinite number of possibilities” (Gutleben 140). Similar to Rochester and Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the doubling of the novel’s key scene also represents a cultural and imperial struggle. While the English centre, impersonated by Phipps and Buckle, interprets violence as a legitimate means to defend its hegemony against a colonial subject, Maggs as the representative of the Australian Other longs for a reconciliation with his English mother country, but is only confronted with the horrors of imperialism.

Carey’s narrator is not only omniscient, but also comments on the action and obviously sides with Maggs, whereas “[n]o single voice steers us through *Wide Sargasso Sea* because Rhys thwarts facile identification with any speaker’s point of view” (Winterhalter 214). Rhys does not provide any authorial commentary that would prescribe the perspective or attitude that should be assumed by the reader. As she does not “spell out her characters’ viewpoints” (Thorpe 178) either, but rather points out their unreliability, the readers are prevented “from settling into any privileged or comfortable narrative site” (Friedmann 123), but are made aware of the impossibility of narrative unity. Neither Antoinette nor Rochester conform to the Victorian idea of a stable narrator who is either a likeable protagonist with which the reader can easily identify or an “omniscient narrator, an all-knowing figure in whom the reader can have complete confidence” (Hadley 151). Additionally, these “techniques of narrative intersubjectivity and shifting points of view decenter the traditional ‘character’ as unified self” (Emery 419).

Unlike *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which Rochester’s and Antoinette’s confusing narration makes it difficult to fully grasp their personality, Carey’s *Jack Maggs* seems to create less unstable literary figures. Upon closer examination, however, Magg’s identity appears just as fragmented since he can only be characterised on account of multiple sources: the protagonist’s own biographical report in his letters to Phipps, the information he discloses publicly and what he reveals unconsciously during the hypnosis. According to Hadley, this suggests that “it is only by piecing together the information from these various accounts that the reader is able to understand” (41) the complexity of Maggs’s life.

Antoinette's and Rochester's fragmented identity can be seen as a reason for their unreliability as narrators and is reflected on the discourse level. For example, both of them do not depict the events in a strictly chronological order: Instead of a continuous action, their narratives rather consist of at least partially interchangeable episodes that seem to be organised according to their emotional involvement. This effect is even reinforced by the fact that Antoinette relates her point of view in the form of "a highly selective, impressionistic, interior monologue" (Thieme 80). In the last part of the novel, her narrative becomes increasingly confusing and resembles fairly closely the stream-of-consciousness technique. All of this significantly contrasts the realist depiction of the Victorian novel and destabilises the readers's identification with the protagonists as well as their readiness to take the values presented in the novel for granted. More than *Jack Maggs*, Rhys's novel does not only criticise the pretext content-wise, but also challenges the form of the Victorian novel by contrasting the nineteenth century setting with an overt postmodern literary aesthetic.

4.5 Metafiction: thematising literature and authorship

The term metafiction refers to any "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2). This literary practice is often brought into connection with postmodernism and, indeed, metafictional novels have flourished over the last few decades. However, the term might be new, the "practice is as old (if not older) than the novel itself" (Waugh 5). Even in Brontë's novel *Jane*, the narrator and protagonist of the book, constantly transgresses the boundary between fictional world and reality by directly addressing the reader or by reflecting on the nature of novels and novel writing: "A new chapter in a novel is like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader – you must fancy you see a room in George Inn at Millcote." (JE 95) Alongside with intertextual references, both rewritings, even if to a varying

degree, include metafictional comments in order to express their distance as well as their proximity to their concrete literary pretext in particular and the (classic) novel as such.

Metafiction in Carey's novel manifests itself most obviously in the inclusion of the author figure Tobias Oates who is only a very thinly disguised Charles Dickens at the very beginning of his literary career, when he "was not yet the bearded eminence he would finally become" (JM 325). The parallels between the fictional character and the real-life author are diverse and have been identified by several researchers (among others: Savu 145-148, Bradley 659-660, Renk 62). Dickens's father, for instance, might not have been a thief like Oates's, but was involved in a history of debt. As Sanders points out, the great English writer was afflicted with "the kind of social disadvantage not shared by most of his male literary contemporaries" (14) having never attended a fancy public school or university. Like Oates, he could not have been considered a proper gentleman by birth, breeding, or education according to the Victorian definition of the term. As young authors, both have to earn their living with sketches of London life and journalistic writing. Oates's first literary success was the tale of Captain Crumley, which alludes to Dickens's serialisation of *The Pickwick Papers* in 1837. Similarly, the publication details of the novel Oates is planning to write in *Jack Maggs* closely resemble those of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, which was "begun in late 1860, appeared in serial form from December of that year and was published as a single volume less than a year later" (Bradley 660): "*The Death of Maggs*, having been abandoned by its grief-stricken author in 1837, was not begun again until 1859. The first chapters did not appear until 1860 [...]" (JM 328)

Carey does not only include biographical details of Dickens's life, but also ironically comments on character traits of the great English writer. For instance, he is "locked in the same ideological position vis-à-vis Australian convicts as Dickens" (Savu 153). This clearly disagrees with the sympathy for the underprivileged classes in Britain, which he displays in his novels. Carey directly links the fact that the author "wrote passionately about the poor" (JM 197) to his modest background and his constant fear of sliding into poverty: "For Tobias had

been a poor child too, and he was fiercely protective of abused children, famously earnest in defence of the child victims of mill and factory owners.” (JM 130) Oates is not only seen as constantly calculating his incomes, but he also mirrors Dickens’s life-long and “insecure craving for applause” (Sanders 35). As Oates “feels inordinately pleased to feel himself esteemed by [...] strangers” (JM 225), he tirelessly seeks to ensure his appreciation by travelling “from city to city like a one-man carnival act, feeding off the applause of his readers” (JM 38) and by entertaining others with his “great talent for all kinds of dialects and voices, tricks, conjuring, disappearing cards, pantomime performances (JM 83)”. This obviously evokes the success of Dickens’s public readings later in his life and his fancy for dramatic performance.

The inclusion of historical personalities, above all writers, from the nineteenth century is a common feature of neo-Victorian novels. By blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, texts such as *Jack Maggs* allude to their historical distance vis-à-vis the Victorian period and their status as rewritings. Furthermore, “[a]ppropriating the dead writers of the nineteenth century in ways that imply they are only figments of a shared cultural imagination” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 20) further destabilises the idea of a reality outside the text. As entertaining as it might seem for an educated reader to look for biographical traces in the novel, the inclusion of a fictive stand-in for Dickens more importantly triggers a reflection about the fictionality of literature. The relation between fact and invention is even more highlighted by “metafictional reflections [which] draw the readers’ attention to the nature of storytelling” (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 89). Like *Great Expectations*, *Jack Maggs* can be seen as depicting the genesis of a novel. However, while we perceive Dickens’s novel as the autobiographical account written by the protagonist Pip, the author Tobias Oates “is not the narrator, nor is the novel ‘The Death of Maggs’ written by the end of *Jack Maggs*, the narrative we read” (Mukherjee, *Missed Encounters* 122). The author and his creation are rather placed on the same narrative level; Oates is nothing more than a literary figure himself. This implies that he cannot claim narrative authority as he does not have any control over the course of the story or the characters in it. The reader glimpses at parts of Oates’s novel such as various versions of the first chapter or its very first

sentence, but “like the letters with Maggs’s story addressed to his son, which do not arrive at their destination, these texts form part of the book we are reading” (Maack 236). The discrepancies between Carey’s narrative and the embedded story provided by Maggs himself on the one and Oates’s sketches for his novel on the other hand raise questions about authorship, originality and the manipulative practices behind the creative process.

The picture Carey paints of Oates, or Dickens for that matter, is in fact far from flattering. He may appear as a skilled craftsman in the literary field, but has to make up for his lack of imagination by exploiting the lives of others for his story. His obsession with finding material for his novels, which is outlined by his servant when Maggs first enters Oates’s house, brings to mind “Dickens and his peculiar method of collecting characters based on real-life criminals” (Savu 150):

He cannot help himself. He saw your livery, and thought: there’s a chap with dirty livery. Just what would think or I would think, but Mr Oates, he can’t stop there – he’s thinking, how did that fatty-spot get on his shoulder? He’s wondering, in what circumstances were the stockings torn? He’s looking at you like a blessed butterfly he has to pin down on his board. [...] he is an author, as I’m sure you don’t need telling, and he must know your whole life story or he will die of it. (JM 42)

Oates’s use of mesmerism to extract hidden secrets mirrors Dickens’s own interest in this technique (Mukherjee, *Missed Encounters* 126–127). As Oates hypnotises Maggs under the pretence of helping him to get rid of his *tic douloureux*, Dickens treated a certain Madame de la Rue for the same condition (Savu 148). Having come across this information in the course of his research, Carey himself claims that he has been most intrigued by “the notion of the writer raiding, burgling the soul of his subject” (Koval 671). Maggs discerns Oates’s real intentions immediately after he had first been subjected to hypnosis – “He was burgled, plundered, and he would not tolerate it.” (JM 32) – and from then on continuously evokes the author’s “very low scheming thieving thing” (JM 280).

Confronted with the reproach of having stolen Maggs’s memories to use them for a book, Oates first tries to explain himself by claiming that his novel would preserve the memory of the convict’s beloved Sophina: “It’s a memorial I am making. Your Sophina will live for ever. [...] I write that name, Jack, like a stone mason makes the name upon a headstone, so her memory may live for ever. In all the Empire,

Jack, you could not have employed a better carver.” (JM 280) Since this does not meet the convict’s approval, Oates “tries to further justify his actions by reasserting the distinction between fact and fiction” (Hadley 52). This becomes especially clear in his response to Jack’s accusation of planning to kill him: “Not you, Jack, a character who bears your name. I will change the name sooner or later.” (JM 280) The writer, however, does not change but even mentions Maggs’s name in the very title of his novel and thus shows that he has no interest at all in protecting the convict’s identity. Indeed, Oates modifies parts of the story only in order to suit his own fictional ends. In this context, several critics perceive a parallel between Britain’s imperial practices and the writing process of English authors, who can be seen as “the worst megalomaniacs of all, controlling their self-created fictional worlds and characters in a quasi-colonial exercise of authority” (Thieme 114). In analogy to the proclaimed inferiority of the colonial Other, it almost seems as if Oates does not perceive people, above all marginalised individuals from the lower echelons of society, as human beings, but to him they are only subjects and possible characters in a novel:

Toby had always had a great affection for Characters, reflected Lizzie Warriner: dustmen, jugglers, costers, pick-pockets. He thought nothing of engaging the most gruesome types in Shepard Market and writing down their histories in his chap book. The subject of this Mesmeric Exhibition did not know it, but he was likely to appear, much modified, in Toby’s next novel. (JM 81)

The author, however, has the power not only to shape his fictional world, but accordingly also the attitudes of his readership. He cannot possibly write down Maggs’ real story as this would destabilise the hegemony and moral superiority of England and call into question its justice as well as colonial system. By contrasting Oates’s version, which is informed by common cultural stereotypes about the Other, with the man the reader has come to know, it is not only Dickens’s one-dimensional portrayal of the convict that is denounced, but on a more general level it is also “the role of stories in constructing culture” (Bradley 662) which is brought to attention.

Maggs is conscious of the author’s exploitation of his life and ironically comments on his own fictional status after having read a character sketch by Oates: “‘You get a good laugh out of the old biddy, I must say.’ The convict opened the book again.

‘She is a comic figure.’ ‘I reckoned it were me that were the comic figure.’” (JM 226-227) The convict, however, does not intend to remain in the position assigned to him by Oates. As the plot develops, he is seen to gradually free himself from the author’s embrace. Oates’s self-perception as god-like creator of fictional worlds and his arrogance concerning his work – “he has glimpsed at the greatness of his book [...] he had a premonition of the true majestic of the work that he would one day write” (JM 198) – is the target of constant mockery. When Maggs responds to Mercy’s announcement of a famous author dining with Buckle, his answer – “I’m afraid [...] I don’t know no Tobias Oates.” (JM 18) – ironically “destabilises the power of creator over creation” (Woodcock 133) since it shows a character who is oblivious of the writer who authored him. The shift of control is even more significantly marked by the fact that Maggs turns into an author himself.

As the two men change places, it becomes obvious who constitutes the real criminal in the story: “The convicted thief is the author of his story, but the author Oates becomes a thief in order to write.” (Maack 234) This is further highlighted in their different intentions behind the writing process. While Oates is interested in making profit and assuring his success, for Maggs, writing down his story is an “attempt at self-explanation, his bid for recognition by Phipps and England as a ‘real’ person with his own history, and not least, an act of fictional self-creation, liberation and defiance” (Woodcock 131). As he writes backward and uses invisible ink, Maggs attempts at the same time to “reveal and conceal his troubled past” (Savu 138). This paradox is not only due to a reluctance to tell, but rather mirrors his inability to vindicate himself publicly given his status as the criminal Other. According to Hadley, Carey’s protagonist might write himself a biography, but “the only account which remains of Maggs’s life at the end of the novel is Oates’s fictional version *The Death of Maggs*” (44). In the end, Magwitch’s fate of having erased his real identity from the dominant discourse repeats itself. Maggs is nevertheless shown to exercise control over his creator since he does not only write down his own story, but also “appropriates and describes his own author first” (Woodcock 131). He later even claims: “You are just a character to me too, Toby” (JM 280). Similarly, the information that Oates derives in the course of the mesmeric session can only be interpreted later on account of Jack Maggs’s letters.

The convict's tale is thus established as the source text, to which the author has only limited access. The author's inability to get to the quintessence of a character is also aptly remarked on by Maggs: "You can hoodwink me into taking off my shirt, but you don't know a rat's fart about me." (JM 252)

While reading *Jack Maggs* we are inclined to believe the sympathetic portrayal of the criminal and Oates's vilification to be the truth that Dickens tried to conceal in *Great Expectation*. However, we tend to forget that Carey also manipulates reality by appropriating the plot of the pretext and by including a character that is clearly modelled on the great English writer. The relation between the real author and his fictional stand-in character is nevertheless not as straight-forward as it might seem at first (Bradley (660). Readers familiar with Dickens's life quickly detect "parallels that almost fit, but cannot be neatly matched with their supposed antecedents" (Thieme 110). Rather than giving a truthful biographical account, Carey admits in an author's note preceding the novel to have "stretched history to suit his own fictional ends". Lizzie Warriner, for example, clearly echoes Dickens's sister-in-law Mary Hogarth, who lived with the family and whose death left the author devastated. As Savu (147) points out, even the death-days, 7 May 1837, of both women correspond. Although many "biographers and critics have dwelt at length on this profound 'affectionate' attachment to Mary" (Sanders 17), none has documented a love affair between them as the subplot of Oates's domestic misery suggests. Additionally, the authors do not only differ with regard to their private, but also to their professional life since Dickens was never that involved in the lives of his subjects as Oates. By changing considerable instances of Dickens's life, Carey transforms a real historical person into a mere fictional character and thus mirrors the author's literary revilement of Maggs/Magwitch. As Carey "could be considered guilty of the same crimes that Maggs accuses Oates of" (Hadley 53), the motif of the thief is present outside and inside the story engaging in a form of *mise-en-abîme*. As the author raises awareness for his own manipulative practices, he clarifies "that 'theft' - in the sense of textual and cultural appropriation - is an inevitable part of the creative and transformative process" (Savu 145).

The truthfulness of any kind of written text is called into doubt. Although Oates's writing is clearly regarded as telling lies about Maggs, we cannot be sure whether the convict's account is not a distortion of reality as well. In other words, Carey "presents us with a perfectly postmodern paradox where one lie is more truthful than another, but still remains a lie" (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 52). In fact, the question is raised whether there is even such a thing as a truth outside fiction on which a narrative can draw. Indeed, Kristeva's (66) argument that every text is made up of other texts is mirrored in *Jack Maggs*: Not only does Carey himself make use of written sources such as Dickens's biography and his novel *Great Expectations*, but Oates does not seem to be capable of depicting reality either. The first sentence of his later famous novel – "As certain birds to declare themselves unto their intended, so the Murderer returned to court his beloved England, bold as cock robin in his bright red waistcoat" (JM 231) – takes up the beginning of Carey's novel: "It was a Saturday night when the man with the red waistcoat arrived in London." (JM 1) Since the author obviously does not only appropriate his own reality, that is to say Maggs's experiences, but quotes from the fictional frame he himself is caught in, it is made clear that no reality can escape fictionalisation. The author might be the one who turns reality into fiction, but once fictionalised he can no longer exercise control over the narrative world or his characters that develop a life of their own on the pages. Dickens might have attempted to manipulate the convict's story to fit his own attitudes towards imperialism and morality, but it is nevertheless possible for readers to grasp Magwitch in his entirety. In this sense, Carey calls attention to the possibility of reading other aspects than the ones intended by the author into a literary figure by having Oates gradually lose control (Brittan 52) over his "subject" (JM 202). Maggs, on the contrary, is seen to "emancipate himself, to regain control over his existence out of the hands of those who had predestined his life to become a tragedy" (Gaile, *Rewriting History* 175) by claiming that he is "not [Oates's] comic figure" (JM 228) and that he "would be no one's servant any longer" (JM 148).

Metafiction does not figure as prominently in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as it does in Carey's novel. There is neither a fictional stand-in for Charlotte Brontë nor is the

process of writing directly referred to. Rhys's text, however, refers self-consciously to its own fictionality, even if in a subtler way than *Jack Maggs*. As it has already been outlined, due to its status as a prequel, the events in Rhys's novel are strongly determined by its pretext *Jane Eyre*. According to Kimmey (115), the inevitability that is felt throughout the novel can be interpreted as an instance of metafictionality. As Antoinette is "caught up in an activity staged outside the text" (Kimmey 115), it is her position as a fictional character that is foregrounded. *Wide Sargasso Sea* might not be so much concerned with depicting the writing process, but it is the experience of reading that is included in both protagonists' narrative accounts. According to Kimmey (124-125), the way in which they engage with written texts once again refers to the difference between them. The text on England in Antoinette's geography book is only represented in the form of fragmented chunks:

England, rosy pink in the geography book map, but on the page opposite the words are closely crowded, heavy looking. Exports, coal, iron, wool. Then Imports and Character of Inhabitants. Names, Essex, Chelmsford on the Chelmer. The Yorkshire and Lincolnshire wolds." (WSS 70)

Her confusing and incomplete textual reproduction seems to stem from her being "subjected in/to the text" (Kimmey 124). In other words, she cannot distance herself from the written text because she is part of it. On the contrary, as Rochester neatly quotes a paragraph from *The Glittering Coronets of Isles*, his way of reading mirrors the critical distance the reader assumes while reading *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The most significant metafictional reference can be found in the last part of the novel, when Antoinette describes how she departs from her prison in the attic and enters Rochester's Thornfield Hall:

Then I open the door and walk into their world. It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard. I have seen it before somewhere, this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it. As I walk along the passages I wish I could see what is behind the cardboard. [...] The cardboard house where I walk at night is not England. (WSS 117-118)

According to Spivak (250-251), this "cardboard world" can be directly interpreted as a novel's cardboard covers and thus refers to the physical book of *Jane Eyre*. As some critics such as Friedmann (118) or Kimmey (126) have pointed out, the last pages of *Wide Sargasso Sea* show that a novel is in the making. A close reading reveals that Antoinette's walk through the corridors of Thornfield Hall reflects the

act of reading itself (Kimmey 127): The “passages” (WSS 117) which are mentioned several times do not only refer to the corridors of Rochester’s house, but can also be understood as the (important) sections of a text. Similarly, the reading process with one’s eyes moving over the pages is reflected in her movements: “Sometimes I looked to the left or to the right but I never looked behind me.” (WSS 122) The phrase “[t]urning a corner” (WSS 118) evokes the image of a reader, who turns the page by its corner. Finally and most significantly, the mirror in which Antoinette sees but does not recognise herself is “surrounded by a gilt frame” (WSS 123). Here, a parallel can be drawn to “the gilded edges of a book—specifically the edges of a canonical book, decorated so as to boast its status as “great literature” (Kimmey 127). Her inability to identify herself in the mirror thus signifies her complete transition into Brontë’s fictional character Bertha who, in analogy to Maggs and his literary ancestor Magwitch, has only very little in common with the “real” person Antoinette.

5 CONCLUSION

Although almost thirty years separate the publishing dates of Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Carey's *Jack Maggs*, both writers show similar concerns about identity, history and cultural heritage. Being postcolonial writers, they both act as advocates of the periphery of the former British Empire by giving a voice to the marginalised representatives of nations that are still struggling to find a distinct identity and liberate themselves from the overbearing shadow of their colonial past. Being postmodern, they share the critical attitude towards the illusion of any kind of historical or narrative stability. In order to deconstruct Britain's prevailing cultural hegemony and the idealised version of its past, there seems to be no better way than to attack its very core and one of its central institutions: English literature.

The Victorian novel was the most important means by which British society stylised itself as a grand nation. Although this should serve as a justification for British imperialism, colonial experiences seem to be of minor importance in the classics. The rewritings reveal these blind spots in Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* by providing highly dehumanised minor characters with the possibility to tell their own story and by allowing them to emerge from the narrative as well as social margins. The novels, however, do not aim at replacing one dominant discourse with another. The power balance is not simply reversed, but completely turned upside down by dissolving the binary opposition between English Self and colonial Other and by substituting it with plurality. This also means that neither the colonial places, Australia and the West Indies, nor the Other-figures, Bertha and Maggs, are depicted as entirely positive entities, but are rather charged with ambiguity.

The master discourse is not only destabilised by making the colonial periphery visible, but it is also the very centre of the British Empire that is deconstructed by laying bare the hypocrisy behind its values and norms. In fact, since none of the English characters seems to conform to them in any way, the concept of Britishness being equivalent with refined manners and high moral standards is revealed as a mere construct. For instance, those characters considered gentlemen are neither honest nor strong or sensible, but rather present a sometimes even comic distortion

of this ideal. Similarly, the image of the perfect woman who finds happiness in her role as housewife and mother is revealed as female oppression. Finally, the illusion of stable social hierarchies is unsettled since it is no longer possible to clearly distinguish between criminals and respectable Englishmen, between colonisers and colonised, or between lunatics and sane people.

English hegemony is also criticised on the discourse level since it is not only the Victorian set of morals, but also the form of the Victorian realist novel that is attacked. Rhys's novel, for instance, is not only postmodern in tone and style, but it also includes a wide range of English varieties and thereby undermines homogeneity. Although Carey seems to imitate Victorian style more closely, he constantly disrupts this impression by employing vulgar expressions that mock the pretentious language of the English characters. Plurality is also marked by employing multiple and partially conflicting perspectives. Not only does this illustrate the unreliability of both narrators and characters, but it also deconstructs the Victorian assumption that literature is capable of truthfully depicting reality. This is further reinforced by metafictional comments which either blur fact and fiction by including a literary stand-in for a real author as in *Jack Maggs* or highlight the own fictionality by continuously referring to its determination by another novel as in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

No matter how fierce their critique may be the rewritings are still caught in a paradoxical relationship to their source texts: They are dependent on the classics and try to set themselves apart from their narrative techniques, attitudes and norms at the same time. Novels like *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jack Maggs* seem to be aware of this tension and even ironically comment on it by making metafictional and intertextual references, which simultaneously mirror and distort their source texts. The rewritings might be restricted by their pretexts, but they also alter the way we perceive Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Carey's and Rhys's intention is thus not that the English classics are no longer read. They rather oppose their idealisation and attempt to encourage readers to take a more critical look at them in order to reveal their hidden ideologies. That is to say, classics "require a new sense of their place in the changing world, the modern multicultural world of today, if they are to retain their freshness and relevance" (Walder 4).

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APPENDIX

8.1 Abstract

Due to the revival of the Victorian period in the last few decades, nineteenth century literature is as popular today as never before. Not only do the works of Victorian authors such as Charles Dickens or the Brontë sisters figure prominently in educational curricula, but they have already invaded popular culture as well. It is mainly because of their aesthetic value and their continuing relevance for a modern readership that they are frequently considered timeless classics. Such an assumption, however, neglects the fact that these novels are nevertheless products of their time and promote certain ideologies which may be more or less well hidden. Hence, since the 1960s the unreflecting and nostalgic view towards these canonical works has been increasingly challenged by postcolonial or neo-Victorian rewritings. Novels such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1998) do not only question the notion of classics as such; even more significantly, they critically investigate into the construction of a British identity and past as well as Britain's role as coloniser by foregrounding two of the most marginalised characters of English literature, the Australian convict Magwitch in Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Rochester's mad Creole wife Bertha in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The aim of this thesis is to show how the novels make use of intertextual and metafictional strategies in order to engage with the great classics. By analysing their parallels and discrepancies, the means by which the rewritings resolve or sometimes deliberately maintain the tension between dependence on and liberation from the source texts and its narrative structures, attitudes, and ideological discourses should be revealed.

8.2 Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Nicht nur die Viktorianische Epoche, sondern vor allem die Romane des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts erfreuen sich immer größerer Beliebtheit. So nehmen die Werke bedeutender Viktorianischer Autoren nicht nur in den schulischen und universitären Lehrplänen einen großen Stellenwert ein, sondern haben bereits Einzug in die Populärkultur gehalten. Aufgrund ihrer literarischen Qualität und der Relevanz ihrer Themen für eine moderne Leserschaft werden sie oft als zeitlose Klassiker bezeichnet. Eine solche Annahme lässt jedoch vergessen, dass auch diese Romane Produkte ihrer Zeit sind und ihnen somit, mehr oder weniger gut getarnt, bestimmte Ideologien eingeschrieben sind. Seit den 1960er Jahren wird dieser unreflektierte und oftmals nostalgische Blick auf kanonisierte Werke zunehmend in Form der sogenannten postkolonialen und neo-Viktorianischen „rewritings“ beziehungsweise Neufassungen kritisiert. Romane wie Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) oder Peter Careys *Jack Maggs* (1998) stellen nicht nur den Status von Klassikern in Frage, sondern sie versuchen vielmehr die literarische Konstruktion einer britischen Identität und Vergangenheit sowie Großbritanniens Rolle als Kolonialmacht kritisch zu untersuchen, indem sie zwei der meist marginalisierten Figuren in der englischen Literatur in den Vordergrund stellen: der australische Strafgefangene Magwitch in Dickens' *Great Expectations* und Rochesters wahnsinnige kreolische Ehefrau Bertha in Charlotte Brontës *Jane Eyre*. Das Ziel der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit ist es zu zeigen wie die Romane mithilfe intertextueller und metafiktionaler Strategien in Dialog mit den großen Klassikern treten. Auf Grundlage einer Analyse der Parallelen und Unterschiede soll versucht werden zu klären wie die „rewritings“ die Spannung zwischen Abhängigkeit und Ablösung von den Originaltexten und deren narrativen Strukturen, Einstellungen und ideologischen Diskursen lösen, aber mitunter auch beabsichtigt aufrecht erhalten.

8.3 Curriculum Vitae

Birgit Polt

geboren am 7. Dezember 1988 in Krems/Donau

2007-2013	Lehramtsstudium Englisch und Französisch an der Universität Wien
Juli-August 2011	Aupair-Aufenthalt in Lausanne, Schweiz
seit 2009	Lehramtsstudium Englisch und Deutsch an der Universität Wien
1999-2007	Bundesgymnasium Rechte Kremszeile in Krems/Donau
seit 2007	Nachhilfelehrerin für Englisch, Französisch und Deutsch
Juli 2006	Sommerakademie für Hochbegabte am Semmering (Thema: English Literature and Films)