The Celtic Creole in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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In 1888, two years before the birth of West Indian Creole novelist Jean Rhys, James Froude published *The English in the West Indies*, an account of his travels to and study of the Caribbean. However, Froude's analysis of the past and present British presence in that region also took into account contemporary, *worldwide* imperial crises, including calls for Home Rule in the West Indies, India, and especially in the Celtic Fringe of the British Empire. He writes: "Local administration is demanded everywhere; England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, can each have theirs, and the vexed question of Home rule can be disposed of in the reconstruction of the whole" (p. 368-69). Indeed, Froude explicitly linked anti-imperialist movements (avatars of contemporary post-colonialism) in Ireland with similar projects in the Caribbean:

> in the West Indies we are treading over again the too familiar road. The Anglo-Irish colonists petitioned for a union with Great Britain. A union would have involved a share in British trade; it was refused therefore, and we gave them the penal laws instead....We have simply armed them with the only weapons which enable them to revenge their wrongs upon us.

The history of the West Indies is a precise parallel. (p. 370)

Froude's conflation of the historical and contemporary British colonialism in the Caribbean and the Celtic Fringe is a trope also employed by Rhys in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a recovery and rewriting of the figure of the West Indian Creole Bertha Mason from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. However, Rhys's association of Celt and Caribbean has been ignored by most contemporary post-colonial critics. In their decision to read Rhys's novel in the too-limiting contexts of the West Indies or the Third World, these critics ignore the worldwide nature of the British imperial discourse, in both its early modern and twentieth-century configurations. This elision of the Celtic subtext from analyses of *Wide Sargasso Sea* severely limits an understanding of the worldwide contexts and anti-colonial content of the novel. Celtic figures and themes appear in a work that is set in a period in which Ireland battled for its independence from Great Britain and was written and published in the aftermath of Ireland's successful struggle for independence from the British Empire.1 This struggle provided a model for other anti-colonial movements. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the creation of a writer who identified herself and her Dominican plantocratic ancestors as not only West Indian Creoles but non-English Celts.8 In its construction of the figure of the Franco-Celtic Creole, the novel problematizes definitions of colonial and post-colonial identity by foregrounding Irish and Scottish characters—linked by blood and culture with
England’s French enemies—who appear, as both oppressed peoples and colonizers.

The failure to recognize Celts as the earliest victims of English imperialism (and, in the case of the Irish, the first colony since America to win its independence from the empire), while a feature of criticism of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is, more troublingly, an aspect of most post-colonial criticism in general, which myopically chooses to focus only on instances of colonialism in the Third World. If Fredric Jameson has exhorted literary critics to “[always] historicize” (p. 9), it should also be said that the post-colonial critic must everywhere historicize. In a reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Peter Hulme argues the need for “a properly historical criticism,” maintaining that Jameson has not historicized enough, defining the “First” and “Second” worlds in terms of their systems of production...while the “Third World” is defined exclusively in terms of the externally introduced experience of having suffered colonialism and imperialism...Terms such as “Third World” (and—one could no doubt add—“post-colonial”) run the risk of imposing a single and simple (and usually metropolitan) label on an extraordinary variety of national and other traditions. (p. 73)

Hulme, however, also does not historicize enough. While he quite rightly describes the need to define the Third World in terms other than its history of colonial subjugation, he also needs to define the Celtic Fringe of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in terms of its experience of imperialism and its history of anti-colonial resistance. This refusal to consider the Celtic Fringe’s colonial experience, or to recognize 1921, when Ireland gained (limited) independence from England, as the Year Zero of modern post-colonialism, is typical. Again, the focus is on the Third World, as seen in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman’s introduction to their *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. They write: “Beginning in 1947, the formal dissolution of colonial empires and the granting of independence to previously colonized countries followed various campaigns of anti-colonial resistance, usually with an explicitly nationalist basis” (p. 3). The location of post-colonialism’s origins in 1947, the year of the granting of India’s independence, indicates yet another narrow focus on the Third World and on a conception of the Other through skin color alone. Williams and Chrisman, however, do consider the problematic sites of the British Empire’s “former white settler colonies—Canada, Australia, New Zealand”—ultimately refusing to grant them the status of post-colonial countries: “They were not subject to the sort of coercive measures which were the lot of the colonies, and their ethnic stratification was fundamentally different. Their subsequent history and economic development...have been very much in the metropolitan mode, rather than a (post-)colonial one” (p. 4). What, though, of the “white settler colonies” Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, which appear nowhere within this essay? Like so many post-colonialists, Williams and Chrisman refuse outright to deal with the anomaly of the First World colony and its resident “white Other.”
Perhaps this willful ignorance is influenced by the exclusion of Celtic issues from some of the seminal works of post-colonial studies, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985). Certainly, *Orientalism* fails to consider the Celtic Fringe as well as the Orient as a contender for the status as "the place of Europe's...oldest colonies, the source of...one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (p. 1). This omission can be forgiven on account of the study's focus on the East and because of Said's later consideration of the worldwide nature of the colonial discourse in *Culture and Imperialism*, which takes into account not only the colonization of the Celts but British culture's complicity in that project. Spivak's failure to address imperialism in the First World in her essay, however, is more troubling, considering its landmark post-colonial reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In the opening salvo of "Three Women's Texts"—which focuses on Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Shelley's *Frankenstein*—Spivak challenges her peers to recognize the collusion of British literature in England's imperialist enterprise. This complicity must be remembered; evidence of it must be recovered. Spivak declares:

> It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism...was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious 'facts' continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. (p. 243)  

Spivak's ensuing attempt to recover "a narrative, in literary history, of the 'worlding' of what is now called 'the Third World'" in the works of Brontë, Rhys, and Shelley evinces her own ignorance of the truly worldwide nature of British imperialism. The narrow focus on the Third World fails to consider the presence of the Celtic Fringe and the history of British imperialism there in the three works she explores. Spivak, though, is not alone in this oversight: almost all post-colonial readings of the texts considered, and especially of Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, have ignored allusions to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and the colonial histories of these nations. Admittedly, references to these oft-forgotten sites of British imperialism in Rhys's novel are brief and sub-textual. Yet this near-absence only highlights the need to acknowledge its presence. A recovery of Rhys's cryptic allusions to the Celtic Other and her conflation of the Celt with the Third World Other would indicate Rhys's own acknowledgment of and resistance to the marginalization of these subaltern peoples in English literature. It would also remind Spivak and other post-colonial critics that "worlding" should include the whole—and not just the Third—world.

Despite the failure of most post-colonial readers to acknowledge the truly worldwide nature of the colonial discourse, paradigms exist for such a cross-cultural, comprehensive reading of the connection between the Celtic Fringe and the Caribbean, and especially between the "white Others" of Celt and
plantocrate Creole and the black Creole, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) provides an example of a cultural history that seeks to transcend the narrow definition of subaltern subject that Spivak and Williams and Chrisman embrace. Gilroy counters the "Third Worlding" of these critics

the lure of ethnic particularism and nationalism has provided an ever-present danger. But that narrowness of vision which is content with the merely national has also been challenged from within that black community by thinkers who were prepared to renounce the easy claims of African-American exceptionalism in favour of a global, coalitional politics in which anti-imperialism and anti-racism might be seen to interact if not to fuse. (p. 4)

While emphasizing black contributions to the construction of modernity, Gilroy is willing to acknowledge the interactions between African-Americans and Euro- and Anglo-Africans and white subaltern peoples, especially Irish and Scots, and their collective, anti-imperialist efforts. This transnational, transracial cooperation is perhaps best embodied in the African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who, Gilroy notes, named himself after a Scottish nationalist hero from Sir Walter Scott's novels (p. 41, 58) and first "learnt of freedom in the North from Irish sailors" (p. 13). Celts involved in both the anti-imperialist "international seafaring proletariat" (the Irish sailors) and in the dominant discourse of British literatures (the Scottish Sir Walter Scott) thus provide examples of resistance for the African-American, proving the applicability of "a global, coalitional politics" to post-colonial criticism. As Gilroy implies, the black Atlantic is part of an imperial palimpsest that also maps the history of a Celtic Atlantic.

Gilroy's example, while indicating the possibility of interaction and cooperation between oppressive and oppressed peoples and discourse, also foregrounds the need to consider the liminal nature of Rhys's subjects—the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh West Indian Creoles—in, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin discuss in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), the "wider hierarchy of oppression" (p. 32). Using Max Dorsinville's concept of the complex interrelationships between dominant and dominated communities, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin propose a "comprehensive comparative approach" for post-colonial analysis. This approach, they argue, can link such diverse cultures as the Celtic and the Caribbean (both white and black Creole communities). To define their notion of "dominated and dominating," Ashcroft et alia use Australia's various literatures as an example: "Aboriginal writing provides an excellent example of a dominated literature, while that of white Australia has characteristics of a dominating one in relation to it. Yet white Australian literature is dominated in its turn by a relationship with Britain and English literature" (p. 32). In a Celtic context, if writing in Irish or Scots Gaelic (for example, Brian Merriman's *The Midnight Court*) characterizes a dominated literature, then an example of a dominating literature would be Anglo-Irish or Anglo-Scottish literatures in English (William Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* or James Thomson's *The Seasons*).
Indeed, Ashcroft and his collaborators view this paradigm as the solution to the problematic inclusion of the Irish, Scots, and Welsh and their literatures in the formulation of a post-colonial identity:

While it is possible to argue that these societies were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial. Dorsinville's dominated-dominating model forcefully stresses linguistic and cultural imposition, and enables an interpretation of British literary history as a process of hierarchical interchange in internal and external group relationships. (p. 33)

The hybridized identity of the Celts—oppressed and oppressor—and the resultant liminal situation of them in the hierarchy of empire, persists even when the Irish, Scottish, or Welsh subject is displaced into the imperial periphery (in roles ranging from indentured servant to plantocrat) and redefined as Creole. These Celtic Creoles, dominated by the “pure” English (of Anglo-Saxon descent, metropolitan birthplace, and Protestant religion), yet often dominating the African-descended Creole (whether under the aegis of the British, French, or Spanish empires), can draw on their own linguistic and cultural traditions, as well as the traditions of both their oppressors and victims, to resist colonial oppression and, conversely, to perpetuate their own oppression of others. Yet the “hierarchical interchange” between Celtic Creole, African Creole, and English colonizer, if viewed as necessarily fluid rather than fixed, also enables alliances between these groups in acts of cultural, linguistic, and physical-force resistance to and imposition of colonial oppression. England's divide-and-rule policy can as easily be met with pan-Creole unite-and-resist strategies.

The Celtic Creole identity is instrumental to an understanding of Jean Rhys's post-colonial project in Wide Sargasso Sea. The novel's heroine, Antoinette Cosway Mason Rochester, like Rhys herself, possesses a Franco-Celtic heritage. This lineage complicates her ostensibly white Creole position and its situation between the African-descended Creoles and the metropolitan English and French colonizers. Antoinette’s go-between status allows Creoles of Irish, Scots, and Welsh descent to experience both dominated and dominating positions in the colonial hierarchy. Although Wide Sargasso Sea presents Celts as complicit in the colonial enterprises of Britain and France, it ultimately identifies them, through the figure of the Franco-Celtic Antoinette, as victims and enemies of English imperialism. This positioning ultimately aligns them with the black Creoles of the novel. By establishing Celtic Creoles as anti-imperialist allies of the black Creoles, Rhys recovers and rewrites the history of worldwide British imperialism, the literatures complicit in and resistant to the English colonial discourse, and the history of her own family in the Caribbean. In her construction of Antoinette and her resistance to imperial coercion, Rhys refers to the appearance of a Creole Celt in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre; she reexamines the history of English imperialism in the Celtic Fringe and the Caribbean and the anti-imperial and imperialist activities.
of Irish, Scots, and Welsh in these theaters; and she re-inscribes the history of her Scottish-Welsh-Irish family and its complicity in the imperial enterprise in the West Indies. Antoinette's acts of linguistic and physical-force resistance against her English oppressors, paralleling those of black Creoles, recuperate Celts as historically anti-colonial subjects. Furthermore, Rhys links Celts with other subaltern peoples of the British Empire and with England's imperial rivals, the French. Rhys also perhaps alludes to contemporary Celtic anti-colonial efforts, ultimately establishing a more comprehensive post-colonial identity inclusive of the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and West Indian Celtic Creole.

Rhys's recuperation of the figure of Antoinette Cosway Mason—Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*—finds her countering Brontë's (and the dominant British discourse's) depictions of the white settler, or Creole. While this obviously involves the Caribbean Creole in the person of Bertha, it also involves an allusion to "Creoles" closer to the empire's core—specifically, the Anglo-Irish. Certainly, Brontë's depiction of Bertha suggests Irish stereotypes common on the English stage of the nineteenth century:

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, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (p. 321)

This simian stoop and unruly black hair, while markers of the African, were also obvious signifiers of Irishness in Brontë's time, when the Irish population in England exploded with the arrival of refugees from the Great Famine of 1845-49. These visual signs of Irishness are confirmed by Bertha's behavior which involves alcoholism and physical violence, also characteristics attributed to the Irish (the latter especially following the bloody United Irishmen Rising of 1798). Thus, like the Famine emigrants, Bertha is a figure of the return of the repressed, a damaged colonial cast-off and visible reminder of the more unsavory ramifications of England's imperial policies. Brontë's use of Irish stereotypes to mark the West Indian Creole's alterity suggests that, within the colonial discourse, some white Creoles were considered to be as savage as the colonized native.

This conflation of Caribbean Creole and Celt in Brontë is reinforced in the brief appearance in *Jane Eyre* of the Anglo-Irish Mrs. Dionysius O'Gall, who presents yet another permutation of the concept of the Creole Celt. Unlike those included under that rubric in *Wide Sargasso Sea*—Irish, Scots, or Welsh who, willingly or not, have traveled from their native countries to the Caribbean—O'Gall is a resident of Ireland who appears to be descended from one of the early English settlers in Ireland (Anglo-Normans first invaded Ireland in 1169). She is introduced by Rochester as a possible employer for Jane after she resigns from his service: "I have already, through my future mother-in-law, heard of a place that I think will suit: it is to undertake the education of the five daughters of Mrs. Dionysius O'Gall of Bitternutt Lodge,
Connaught, 'Ireland' (p. 279). Whether Mrs. O'Gall is a fictitious construction that Rochester employs to trick Jane into revealing her true feelings (indicated by the overwrought punning on "Gall" and "Bitternutt") or not, the description offers further insights into contemporary English conceptions of the exilic white settlers of the British Empire. As with the novel's depiction of Bertha, this passage appears to allude to many Irish stereotypes: they are overly fertile (five surviving daughters); they are drunkards ("Dionysius," the Roman god of wine); they are in need of a "civilizing" English education. Ironically, the O'Galls might not even be of "pure" Irish descent. Gall, the Irish Gaelic for "foreigner" (and a metonym for "English") indicates that Jane's prospective employer is really of English extraction, a descendant of colonizers who dispossessed the native Irish. But if the O'Galls are not Celts by blood, they appear to be Celts by culture, as indicated by their Hibernicized name and their need for an English tutor. Here, then, is a depiction of the failure of the colonial enterprise. The white settlers whose duty it was to make the world England have instead become Irish; the dominating discourse has been dominated. As Terry Eagleton writes in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*: "if hegemony is relevant here at all, it is in reverse: by and large, it was the native Irish who culturally assimilated the Anglo-Norman interlopers, converting them gradually into the Gaelicized group of the so-called Old English" (p. 29). The Anglo-Irish Mrs. Dionysius O'Gall, like Bertha Mason, suggests that Brontë, like other writers and readers complicit in the English colonial discourse, viewed all white settlers born in the colonies as cultural (if not racial) Others. And while the passages concerning these Celtic Creoles indicate their potential for physical-force and cultural resistance, *Jane Eyre* ultimately relegates these figures—and the hybridized colonial cultures they represent—to the margins. Edward Said details this literary exploitation of the colonial periphery and its inhabitants in *Culture and Imperialism*.

The continuity of British imperial policy throughout the nineteenth-century...is actively accompanied by this novelistic process, whose main purpose is not to raise more questions, not to disturb or otherwise preoccupy attention, but to keep the empire more or less in place...The idea is that...outlying territories are available for use, at will, at the novelist's discretion, usually for relatively simple purposes such as immigration, fortune, or exile. (p. 74)

This Anglocentric construction of the British colonial discourse is the dominating power that Rhys upsets in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. As she wrote in a letter to Diana Athill in 1966: "Charlotte Brontë makes her own world, of course she convinces you, and that makes the poor Creole lunatic all the more dreadful. I remember being quite shocked; and when I re-read it rather annoyed. 'That's only one side—the English side' sort of thing" (Letters p. 297). Writing from and for the non-English side, Rhys recovers the demonized Bertha Mason and O'Galls in the person of Antoinette Cosway Mason Rochester, Celtic Creole and anti-colonialist.
Antoinette's construction as a non-English, Creole, and Franco-Celtic subject is perhaps based on Rhys's determination to counter Brontë's English-centered text. Yet it is also certainly influenced by Rhys's own Irish, Scottish, and Welsh heritage and her recognition of the treatment of Celtic ancestors, in their native countries and in the Caribbean, as subalterns by British imperial policy and the English colonial discourse. Peter Hulme has helpfully argued the importance of Rhys's family history to readings of Wide Sargasso Sea:

The local and the particular, even, I have suggested, the familial, should be validated as appropriate and necessary areas for postcolonial research: after all, if one of the strategies of colonial discourse is the homogenisation of cultural difference, then counter-strategies must include the affirmation of those differences, the insistence that the local and the particular do matter.

But once the local has been fixed,... the critical movement has finally to be outwards, towards the larger picture of which the locality forms only a part. (p. 84-85; emphasis added)

Hulme's reading of Rhys's family romance, however, fails to follow his dictum to discover the "outward" movement of "cultural differences" ramifying from the "familial." Although Hulme is aware of Rhys's Scottish heritage, he fails to mention the Irish and Welsh strands of her extended family. Hulme does not recognize the racial and cultural heterogeneity of whites in the Caribbean or link these instances of differences in the West Indian locality to the "larger picture" of a British Empire that also encompasses Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Elaine Savory provides a more nuanced reading of Rhys's Celtic descent in relation to the history of English colonialism in the British Isles and the Caribbean. Like Carole Angier before her,8 Savory records that Rhys's ancestors came from all three nations of Great Britain's Celtic Fringe: Scottish Lockharts and Maxwells; Irish Pottses; Welsh Rhyses (p. 4, 9, 26-27). And, more than any other critic of Rhys, Savory understands that the writer's Celtic heritage shaped her self-fashioning as an enemy of British colonialism. Savory writes:

She rarely mentions Britain or the Celts in her surviving texts, but there is no doubt she constructed herself as Celtic in the context of British society. The Celts, and most especially the Welsh, have historically been the colonised people of Britain...

It was her father's Welsh and her mother's Lockhart Scottish ancestry which meant Gwen Williams [Rhys's given name] could choose to consider herself a colonised Celt rather than a colonising Anglo-Saxon....

Even as a Celt, she must have felt that surviving Celtic cultures in the UK were partitioned by centuries of turbulent history and colonisation as well as class and cultural divisions within, and she perhaps had a sense of the divisions symbolised by the very different emotional qualities of her parents, her father Welsh, her mother Creole of Scottish descent. (p. 26-27)

While Savory is correct that Rhys's allusions in her work to the subjugation of Celtic peoples by the English are brief and subtextual, it must also be noted that the few references to this aspect of British colonialism in Wide Sargasso Sea are instrumental to an understanding of the novel's (and Rhys's) anti-
colonial politics. The conflicted nature of Rhys's national self-identification—"she saw herself as a Celt in the UK...; always as Creole in the West Indies" (Savory p. 235n.43)—manifests itself in the hybrid heritage and the anti-English politics of Antoinette, the heroine of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and her extended family. Rhys displaces her Scots-Welsh-Irish ancestors and her family history onto Antoinette and her clan; this displacement constructs Antoinette as a Creole of Celtic and French descent (the French being the traditional allies of the Celts against the English). This hybridized identity links Antoinette to the history of English oppression of Celtic peoples and to Irish and Scottish resistance to English imperialism, as well as to Celtic collusion in French and British imperialism, in the Celtic Fringe and the Caribbean.

The first indication of Antoinette's Celtic heritage in *Wide Sargasso Sea* indicates that she, through her mother Annette, carries Irish (and French) blood. Rhys's foregrounding of her Irish heritage (from her paternal grandmother, Sophia Potts Williams) finds her significantly rewriting her family history, for her Irish ancestors do not appear to have been resident in the West Indies. Instead of employing her family's past to create a model for Antoinette, Rhys fashions a Franco-Irish Antoinette based on her own childhood experiences of the Irish on her home island of Dominica and her understanding of the history of the Irish in the Caribbean. This use of personal experience and colonial history inspires an Irish Creole subject strongly associated with Catholicism, black Creoles, and England's imperial rival, France, thus embodying strategies of linguistic and physical-force resistance to English colonialism.

Antoinette discovers her Irish heritage—and the unstable nature of this identity—while searching through her mother's possessions: "She may have sold her last ring, for there was one left. I saw it in her jewel box—that, and a locket with a shamrock inside" (p. 27). The shamrock, the national symbol of Ireland—and metonym for Ireland's Gaelic, Catholic alienness to Anglo-Saxon, protestant England—established Antoinette and Annette as not "pure" English. There was a large Irish (and Scottish) population in the Caribbean; and its presence there resulted from an English imperial policy enacted in the seventeenth century. As Peter Linebaugh writes: "Cromwell's God, we should not forget, was a God of work and of conquest: of Jamaica, of Scotland, and, as shall not be forgotten, of Ireland. . . . William Petty, who followed in the train of the English marauders with his surveying equipment..., later estimated that, between 1651 and 1654, 40,000 Irish people were transported" (p. 203-04). These human spoils of war were forced to work as indentured servants and were often treated no better than slaves. Cyril Hamshere relates: "Even after Negro slaves had been introduced white labourers worked in the canefields, as an observer recorded in 1667: 'I have seen thirty sometimes forty Christians, English, Scotch, and Irish at work in the parching sun without shoe or stockin, while their negroes have been at
worke at their respective trades in a good condition” (p. 94). Rhys, then, situates Annette and Antoinette in the history of English colonialism in Ireland and the Caribbean. This historical contextualization draws parallels between the Irish and black Creoles: both were forcibly removed from their homelands, treated as racial and religious Others, and coerced to work on English plantations without pay.

After Antoinette’s discovery of her Irishness, she begins to recognize her Irish mother’s (and thus her own) difference from her new English stepfather. Interestingly, she links the conception of her racial alterity to the former slaves: “I looked...at Mr. Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English. And at my mother, so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either” (p. 36). This problematic failure of the gaze to mark the Irish as either white or black greatly disrupted the English colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha has argued that the colonizer relies most heavily upon visual surveillance from the trumvirate of “looking/hearing/reading as sites of subjectification in colonial discourse” (p. 76). The Anglophone Creole of partly Irish descent, Antoinette discovers, is not so easily marked. As Luke Gibbons notes when he applies Bhabha’s formulation to a specifically Irish context:

It is clear that a native population which happened to be white was an affront to the very idea of ‘the white man’s burden’, and threw into disarray some of the constitutive categories of colonial discourse. The ‘otherness’ and alien character of Irish experience was all the more disconcerting precisely because it did not lend itself to visible racial divisions. (p. 96)

Antoinette, then, achieves through her Irish lineage a fluid status in the colonial hierarchy that enables her to forge alliances with both the dominating power (the English Mason) and the dominated subaltern (her friend Tia and nurse Christophine, both black Creoles). Attempts, however, are made to reform the Celtic Annette and Antoinette through the creation of a “Little England” at the Coulibri Estate: “We are English food now, beef and mutton, pies and pudding. I was glad to be like an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine’s cooking” (p. 35). Antoinette’s seeming willingness to abandon her just-discovered Irish heritage for an English identity is undercut by her final admission of a preference for Creole ways, a sentiment paralleling her mother’s recently avowed refusal to remain at Coulibri. The Irish mother provides Antoinette with an example of linguistic resistance against the English oppressor, although Mason’s “civilizing” project is, as Bhabha has argued, doomed to failure: “to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English” (p. 87). The non-English Antoinette, only now becoming aware of the significance of her Irish heritage, is placed by that bloodline in the liminal position of Franco-Celtic Creole.

Rhys continues to characterize Antoinette as Franco-Irish through her depiction of the girl’s embrace of Catholicism. For Rhys, this religion is closely associated with not only the Irish and the French but also the black Creoles, thus presenting a possible alliance between these groups in acts of resistance.
against English colonialism. In her autobiography *Smile Please*, Rhys remembers the unification of blacks and Irish at the Catholic cathedral in Dominica: “Instead of the black people sitting in different parts of the church, they were all mixed up with the white and this pleased me very much. I thought it right. Of course, very few white people were Catholics, but there were some Irish families on the island” (p. 65). The lowest groups of the British imperial hierarchy—the Catholic blacks and Irish—not only manifest their non-English alterity but, in their interracial religious service, also display the potential for solidarity against the English colonizer. Rhys reworks this biographical experience of admiration for (and possible anxiety toward) an Irish-black Creole alliance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. She presents Antoinette with a more direct (if ambivalent) desire for communion with her fellow Irish. While boarding at a Catholic convent following her mother’s manifestation of insanity, Antoinette reveals this desire: “I saw the new young nun from Ireland looking at herself in a cask of water, smiling to see if her dimples were still there. When she noticed me, she blushed and I thought, now she will always dislike me” (p. 54-55). Antoinette’s surveillance of the Irish nun, and the nun’s return of her gaze, following the nun’s narcissistic stare into the water, anticipates Lacan’s notion of the Imaginary. Homi Bhabha defines Lacan’s formulation and applies it to a post-colonial context:

The Imaginary is the transformation that takes place in the subject at the formative mirror phase, when it assume a discrete image which allows it to postulate a series of equivalences, samenesses, identities, between the objects of the surrounding world. However, this positioning is itself problematic, for the subject finds or recognizes itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational. This is the basis of the close relation between the two forms of identification complicit with the Imaginary—narcissism and aggressivity. It is precisely these two forms of identification that constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power exercised in relation to the stereotype which, as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it. (p. 77)

Bhabha’s conception of the dichotomy of narcissism-aggressivity finds its confirmation in Antoinette’s liminal positioning as a Franco-Celtic Creole, which places her within the overlap of dominated and dominating. Recently the somewhat willing object of her stepfather Mason’s attempts to Anglicize her, Antoinette seeks to position herself as a non-English Celt by peering into the face of the Irish nun, her pseudo-mirror image. (Indeed, the nun is something of a doppelganger for Antoinette: she, too, recently arrived at the convent; and like Antoinette, who has been “transformed” by the loss of her hair’s plait (p. 45), the Irish nun searches for a transformation in her physical features.) Although implicated in the colonial enterprise through her association with the English plantocrat Mason, Antoinette attempts to disavow that identity by her embrace of Catholicism and her looking to the nun as a fellow Irishwoman. Antoinette, however, rejected by her mentally ill mother of French and Irish descent, and fearing rejection by the Irish “sister,”
incarnates the difficult middle space occupied by the Franco-Celtic Creole in the hierarchy of the English colonial discourse.

Antoinette's seeming inability to unite with the Irish mother and Irish nun parallels her ambivalent relationship with the African-descended Crowles in the novel. Again, Rhys's autobiographical memory in *Smile Please* of the Irish and blacks of Dominica mingling at Catholic service is reconfigured in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, indicating the possibility (and difficulty) of an alliance between Celtic and black Creoles against the English and the potential for the use of physical-force violence against the English. Perhaps Antoinette's final encounter with Tia best exemplifies the conflicted interaction between peoples of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh descent and those of African heritage. After learning of her Irish lineage, Antoinette faces Tia during the emancipated slaves' assault on Coulibri. Antoinette decides to reject her new, Anglicized identity, imposed by the English father, Mr. Mason, for the past, dominated by the Irish mother, her black Martinican nurse Christophine, and her black Creole playmate Tia:

I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been.... As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. 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 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. (p. 45)

In Tia, like the Irish nun, Antoinette recognizes her sister and her nemesis, illustrating the double bind of narcissism-aggressivity. The Celtic Creole's attempt to unite with the black Creole results in rejection—anticipating Antoinette's attempt to befriend the Irish nun—and in violence—as in her later attempt to reconcile with her mentally ill mother (p. 48). Initially, Antoinette's attempts to unite the Irish subject with the black subject appear to end in failure.

While the history of the transported Irish (and Scots) in the Caribbean intersects with the experiences of Africans in the region, it is also inextricably intertwined with the French presence in the West Indies. Indeed, Rhys manifests this traditional Franco-Hibernian alliance in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by portraying Annette's connection to the French colony of Martinique, like her Irishness, leads to her Othering by the Englishwomen of Jamaica:

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother....

She was my father's second wife, far too young for him they thought, and, worse still, a Martinique girl. (p. 17)

Certainly, English hostility toward Annette is easily explained by her partial French descent, since the French were the bitter imperial rivals of the English in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Daniel Cosway's letter to Rochester explains
English hostility toward Annette as based on her French heritage (and perceived Gallic political sympathies): "she have no friends, for French and English like cat and dog in these islands since long time. Shoot, Kill, Everything" (p. 96). Daniel Cosway's "since long time" records a sustained imperial struggle that found England facing a France variously governed by Bourbon absolute monarchs, revolutionary Jacobins, and Napoleon. One of the constants across this centuries-long colonial contest was English anxiety over the loyalty of the Irish in the Caribbean. As Kerby A. Miller writes: "on numerous occasions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, colonial officials in...the West Indies feared that Irish 'papists' were plotting insurrection with Negro slaves or foreign enemies; indeed, Irish Catholics in the Leeward Islands did assist several French invasions" (p. 146-47). Annette and Antoinette, then, through their probable Franco-Hibernian ancestry and their association with their black Martinican servant Christophine, embody a potential tripartite threat to British colonial hegemony in the Caribbean: a union of Irish, French, and African Creoles.

Indeed, from these three groups, Antoinette ultimately finds exemplars in her struggle against the English. From her Franco-Irish mother and the black Creole Tia, Antoinette learns methods of linguistic and physical-force resistance to employ against the "colonizers" Richard Mason (her stepbrother) and Rochester. After the burning of Coulibri, Annette employs a combination of linguistic and physical violence against Mr. Mason, who she believes is to blame for the attack. The Irish mother defies the English (step)father. Antoinette remembers her mother threatening Mason: "I'd been awake before and heard my mother screaming...Don't touch me. I'll kill you if you touch me. Coward. Hypocrisie. I'll kill you." I'd put my hands over my ears, her screams were so loud and terrible" (p. 47). From her mother, then, Antoinette learns the power of linguistic violence. The Irish mother's model of verbal transgression, though, is coupled with her example of physical violence as well. Ironically, Antoinette first learns of this option through two black Creole children: "Your mother walk about with no shoes and stockings on her feet, she sans culottes. She try to kill her husband" (p49-50). Antoinette later admits this incident to Rochester: "my mother hated Mr. Mason. She would not let him go near her or touch her. She said she would kill him, she tried to" (p. 133). Linked with the French revolutionaries and, perhaps, the United Irishmen who staged their 1798 Rising in emulation of and in alliance with them, the Franco-Irish Annette displays her willingness to employ physical as well as linguistic violence against the linguistic violence against Rochester (the implied threat of her own possible attack on him).

Ultimately, Antoinette employs both physical and linguistic violence against her English oppressors, Richard Mason and Rochester. As earlier, she patterns her attacks on those committed by her Franco-Irish mother and black Creole childhood companion. During her confinement in England by Rochester, Antoinette is visited by Richard Mason; she attacks him with a
knife, wounding him before he can subdue her. As Antoinette’s warder Grace Poole relates: “You rushed at him with a knife and when he got the knife away you bit his arm...And where did you get that knife? I told them you stole it from me but I’m much too careful...You got no knife from me” (p. 183). Here, Antoinette reenacts her Irish mother’s attack upon the tyrannical English father: the Celtic, Creole sister assaults the English stepmother, challenging his illegal authority over her. Rhys’s displacement of the Irish-English, Creole-English struggle becomes clear when Antoinette admits how she obtained the knife while on an outing with Grace Poole: “A little way off there was a cart and horse—a woman was driving it. It was she who sold me the knife. I gave her the locket round my neck for it” (p. 184). This locket—presumably the locket containing the shamrock so treasured by Annette, the final link to the lost Irish mother and an erased Celtic heritage—is transformed from a sort of semiotic resistance (the shamrock as a symbol of Irish nationalism) to physical-force resistance. Both of these forms of opposition to an English colonizer were employed not only by Antoinette’s Irish mother, but by her Irish ancestors (whether royalist Jacobites or United Irish Jacobins) and her coevals and near-contemporaries. Robert Emmet staged an abortive rising in 1803; threats and acts of violence occurred during agitation leading up to the passage of Catholic Emancipation in 1829; the Young Ireland movement would stage an insurrection in 1848. Mid-nineteenth-century English anxiety over an Irish insurrection was not limited to Ireland. English administrators on Dominica—Rhys’s home island—feared the possibility of an Irish uprising as late as the 1860s.

The even greater sources of uprising anxiety in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century West Indies, though, were the peoples of African descent, both during the French Revolution and after. Indeed, the history of revolutionary violence in the Caribbean links black Creole rebels with the French and the Irish in their common struggle against Great Britain. In the 1790s, the uprising slaves in Haiti (then San Domingo), Martinique (the home island of Annette), and the other French islands were inspired by the French Revolution, which would also help to launch the Irish rebellion of 1798. As C. L. R. James records: “in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and other French colonies, the black slaves, singing the Ça Ira and the Marseillaise and dressed in the colours of the Republic, began to drive the British out of the French islands, and then carried the war into British territory” (p. 12). In the same decade, then, the English were beset by simultaneous colonial rebellions and wars of revolution in the Caribbean and Ireland—both of which were inspired and abetted by the French. And, long after the cessation of these hostilities, even following the Emancipation of slaves in 1833, African Creoles continued to engage in violence against the English planters. Their post-Emancipation destruction of several planters’ houses, and the planters’ reprisals, Peter Hulme argues, involved Rhys’s ancestors, and such incidents obviously appear in the novel’s depiction of the burning of Coulibri (p. 80-84). Hulme, though,
only hints at the reprise of the sack of Coulibri, which coincides with Tia’s assault on Antoinette, in Antoinette’s destruction of Rochester’s manor house in England.

This ultimate act of anti-English, physical-force violence, though, draws upon the examples set by Antoinette’s Franco-Irish mother and the black Creoles Christophine and Tia. As Antoinette girds herself for this final act of resistance, she invokes her exemplars: “Looking at the tapestry on day I recognized my mother dressed in an evening gown but with bare feet” (p. 180). This remembering of her mother without shoes or stockings recalls her as she was dressed when she attacked the Englishman Mason; she is a “sans culottes” (“without breeches”), evoking the lower-class insurrectionaries whose violent revolts helped to precipitate the French Revolution. The allusion to the French Revolution is reinforced by Antoinette’s reference to her mother’s dress. Early on in the novel, Antoinette envisioned her mother as the very incarnation of France: “France is a lady with black hair wearing a white dress because...my mother, whom I must forget and pray for as though she were dead, though she is living, liked to dress in white” (p. 55). Rhys’s image of the mother-as-France links Annette with Marianne (or La Liberté), the icon of the French Revolution. Joan B. Landes writes of the the white-clad Marianne as a hybrid and a “re-membering”: “Syncretically combining Christian and republican symbols, this virginal figure wears the phrygian cap, yet is surrounded by an aureole. She is figured as young, innocent, and pure....Happily, the sinful female body, the corrupt aristocratic or royal whore, is made over into a virtuous (and virginal) republican body” (p. 19). A similar transformative trope occurs in Antoinette’s envisioning of her mother. The corrupt, plantocratic Annette, complicit in the British colonial enterprise through her marriages to the slaveowner Cosway and landlord Mason, becomes, through her attack on Mason, the anti-colonial, Franco-Celtic “sans culottes.” Her example will provide Antoinette with a model for her own anti-colonial transformation.

After imagining the Irish-Martinican Creole mother, Antoinette calls on African Creoles to help her in her destruction of the colonizer’s manor house. First, she addresses Christophine: “I dropped the candle I was carrying and it caught the end of a tablecloth and I saw flames shoot up. As I ran...I called help me Christophine” (p. 189). Finally, in the dream that plots her burning of the manor, she apostrophizes Tia: “when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there....Someone screamed and I thought, Why did I scream? I called ‘Tia!’ and jumped and woke” (p. 190). The recollection of Tia also evokes the similar encounter with the Irish nun. In the novel’s final movements, then, Franco-Irish Creole and black Creole achieve solidarity, forging an alliance that had raised anxiety in English planters since the seventeenth century. As Mary Lou Emery argues: “[Antoinette’s] return to the Caribbean in her final vision unites her with all of its peoples—the transported English and white Creoles of her family, but also the older native
races, and finally the blacks from whom her 'real' life had inevitably estranged her” (p. 58-59). While Emery inexplicably refers to Antoinette's ancestors as "English," ignoring the novel's Celtic subtext, her argument can be extended to include the Celtic Creole in. its vision of Rhys's construction of a transnational, transracial post-colonial identity in the figure of an Irish Antoinette. Probably the descendant of Irish people either forcibly transported or self-exiled following Cromwell's depredations or the "Flight of the Wild Geese" (1691), Antoinette finds allies and exemplars in her struggle against her historical and contemporary English oppressors in peoples similarly transported and oppressed, the African-born and African-descended peoples of the Americas. Rhys's depiction of these shifting allegiances, then, anticipates Peter Linebaugh's contention that the historically documented contacts between militant Anglo-African radicals and the French-allied United Irishmen of 1798 probably also included connections to Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian revolutionaries who expelled the British from Haiti in the 1790s (p. 214). Thus, while Annette and Antoinette are, through their plantocratic origins, initially implicated in the British or French colonial projects, they ultimately, through their Irish heritage and insurrectionary acts, point to the potential for an anti-colonial alliance between Celtic and African Creoles.

To reinforce her construction of Antoinette's Celtic origins, Rhys also draws upon her own Scottish lineage, rewriting the actions of her Scots ancestors and neighbors to fashion them as anti-English rather than complicit in the imperial enterprise. Paralleling her creation of Antoinette's Irish heritage, Rhys adds Caledonian elements to her heroine that draw upon Dominican childhood and an understanding of the history of English oppression of Scots in the Celtic Fringe and in the West Indies. The conflation and revision of personal and political history results in a Scots Creole subject. As with the Irish Creole, Rhys associates the Scots, through Antoinette's and her Scottish relatives' linguistic and physical-force antagonism toward the English, with Jacobitism and African-descended Creoles, again indicating the potential for a wider conception of post-colonial identity.

As Rhys displaced her Irish ancestry from the British Isles to the West Indies to create a non-English Creole in the person of Antoinette, so she somewhat rewrites the history of her Scottish plantocrat ancestors in the Caribbean to situate them as potential enemies of the English (and allies of the African-descended Creoles). In her autobiography *Smile Please*, Rhys admits her Scottish relatives' complicity in the British colonial project: "My mother was Miss Lockhart, a granddaughter of the James Gibson Lockhart who had arrived from Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century. He died before the Emancipation Act was passed and as he was slave-owner the Lockharts, even in my day, were never very popular" (p. 25). Rhys's admission here of her Dominican ancestors' employment of slaves, while replicated in the portrayal of the Cosways as former slave-owners in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is hardly so
straightforwardly presented in the novel. As Peter Hulme argues in his discussion of the "creole family romance" (p. 76) of the novel: "Wide Sargasso Sea itself offers a certain kind of negotiation of its nineteenth-century materials, a 'vindication' in Rhys's own word, or perhaps better the 'compensation' referred to on the opening page of the novel as slow in coming to the Dominican estate owners" (p. 81). Certainly, the Cosways (analogues for the Scottish Lockharts) hardly appear as tyrannical overlords. Instead, the family demonstrates a somewhat benevolent treatment of their slaves. As island gossip relates, Antoinette's father remembered his illegitimate children by his slaves: "Presents and smiles for the bastards every Christmas" (p. 29). While Rhys hardly portrays Cosway as an abolitionist, she provides him with some measure of humanity, evincing possible "unions," sexual and social, between Scottish and black Creoles. This sets her ancestors apart from the English, incarnate in Rochester, who prove the more coercive colonizers. Rochester recalls Antoinette's parroting of his words following his dalliance with the black Creole Amelie:

'She won't stay here very much longer' she mimicked me, 'and nor will you, nor will you. I thought you liked the black people so much,' she said, still in the mincing voice, 'but that's just a lie like everything else. You like the brown girls better, don't you? You abused the planters and made up stories about them, but you do the same thing. You send the girl away quicker, and with no money or less money, and that's all the difference.' (p. 146; emphasis added)

The English Rochester, an avowed abolitionist, appears worse than the Scottish Creole planters. Antoinette's mimicry—a form of linguistic resistance—defends her presumably Scottish father's somewhat enlightened treatment of his slaves, intimating that the Celtic Creoles enjoy better relations with the black Creoles than the English. Rhys's reconstruction of the hated James Gibson Lockhart as the dissolute yet benevolent Dosway recuperates the Scottish Creoles as friends of the emancipated slaves and establishes them as alien (and morally superior) to the English.

Rewriting her own ancestors, Rhys constructs Antoinette's Scottish forebears as political enemies of the English, portraying them as anti-imperialists and Jacobites. Again, she draws from family history and revisions of her Scottish neighbors on Dominica to create her fictional Celtic Creole heroine. One of the memories of her childhood home in Dominica that Rhys recalls in *Smile Please* indicates that her family held pro-Stuart (and thus anti-English) sympathies. The signifier of these sympathies is a portrait of Mary Stuart, the Catholic Queen of Scots, at her execution: "Mary Queen of Scots was tall and stout, dressed in black velvet, her right foot eternally advanced, walking daintily to extinction. The crowd behind her was male, also dressed in black. I have often since seen their narrow eyes, their self-satisfied expressions" (p. 17). Rhys portrays the spectators and executors of the Scottish queen's beheading as male and presumably English; they echo her portrait of Rochester, the English patriarch and voyeur, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
Although no direct analogue of this autobiographical memory appears in the novel, the pro-Stuart, anti-English sympathies manifest themselves in other incarnations in the novel, suggesting linguistically rather than visually represented resistance to the English.

These verbal assaults on English oppression—manifested in Scottish literature and Jacobite songs that parallel the subversive lyrics of the black Creoles—find Rhys revising the biographical reality of her experience of the Scots on Dominica and Scottish complicity in imperialism. In *Smile Please*, Rhys remembers family gatherings at which a neighbor sang Scottish military songs:

‘The Siege of Lucknow’—that was Mrs. Miller. I didn’t know where Lucknow was but I’d get very excited hearing about the sick Highland woman who heard the bagpipes of the relieving Highlanders before anybody else, ‘The Campbells Are Coming’ at the end, and my hands damp with emotion. (p. 52)

Presumably, Rhys eventually learned the location of Lucknow and its relevance to the history of English imperialism. The city, located in the Uttar Pradesh state of Northern India, was besieged by the British during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. The martial song depicts Highland Scots—themselves once, like the Indian Sepoys, opponents of English imperialism—now co-opted into the expansion and protection of the British Empire. Biographically, at least, Rhys admits her own and her family’s erstwhile enjoyment of jingoistic anthems that situated the Scots as enemies of the empire’s other subaltern peoples.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, though, Rhys reconstructs this family history, portraying the Cosways as readers of anti-imperialist literature by Scottish writers and singers of Jacobite songs. These instances of linguistic resistance to English colonialism echo the similarly subversive songs of the African-descended Creoles. Upon his arrival at Granbois, Rochester uncovers the first indication that the Cosways harbor Scottish sympathies, politics, and blood. The Englishman peruses the meager library of the cottage and finds most of the works to be written by Scots: “There was a crude bookshelf made of three shingles strung together over the desk and I looked at the books, Byron’s poems, novels by Sir Walter Scott, *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, some shabby brown volumes, and on the last shelf, *Life and Letters of...*The rest was eaten away” (p. 75). Certainly, the preponderance of books by Scottish writers suggests that Antoinette’s father Dosway, the presumed original owner of the collection, was of Scottish descent. His sympathies, incarnate in the books, appear to be Jacobite, anti-English, and anti-colonial. Some critics, though, have argued that the books exhort imperialism. As Veronica Gregg maintains: “Walter Scott and Lord Byron are two English writers whose writing showed clear connections to the enterprise of empire” (p. 101; my emphasis). Beyond Gregg’s puzzling identification of the Scots Byron and Scott as Englishmen, there exists her failure to consider these writers’ texts and political views as anti-English and anti-imperial. Scott’s novels included *Waverley*, which
presented the eponymous hero as a Scottish Jacobite at the time of the 1745 Rising, fighting against the English. Byron's works punctured English social mores. Furthermore, he gave his life while serving to free Greece from Turkish imperialism. Finally, even the partially disintegrated volume might point to Antoinette's lost Scottish heritage. Spivak ties the appearance of the moldering book to "the loss of the patronymic"; however, Spivak links this lack of "the Name of the Father" not to the Franco-Celtic Antoinette, but to the English Rochester: "In Wide Sargasso Sea, the character corresponding to Rochester has no name" (p. 252). Spivak's reading ignores England's marginalization of the Scots and their culture, though, arguing that Rhys's elision of Rochester's name subverts his patriarchal authority. Alan Riach comes closer to the mark in "Tradition and the New Alliance: Scotland and the Caribbean," which describes England's co-optation and erasure of Scottish culture. Riach maintains the need for a post-colonial identity that incorporates both the Third World and the Celtic Fringe:

Literary history was an eighteenth-century invention, along with the Encyclopedia and the Dictionaries. It is less often noted that English literature itself was an eighteenth-century Scottish invention and that its earliest moments are the record of a remarkable instance of colonialist subjugation, a few years after the disastrous massacre of Jacobite forces at Culloden, in 1746….

In other words, the original moments of the discipline known as English were locked into a colonial political situation and were empowered by a colonial ideology….

In a sense, therefore, the Scottish condition is paradigmatically colonial. What the Scots write is not what they read. (p. 13; emphasis added)

The disintegrating book, perhaps written by a Scot, parallels the hidden shamrock in the locket as a fragmentary, metonymic survival of Antoinette's Celtic heritage. The literature of the Scots (or Irish) is erased or commandeered by the English to mark the Celts and the other subaltern peoples of the empire as alien, to deprive them of a medium of linguistic resistance, and to codify their practices. This project of literary dispossession is evident not only in the renaming of Byron and Scott as "English" or "British" (an act of epistemic violence perpetuated by Gregg and other contemporary post-colonial critics) but in a Caribbean context: Rochester's attempt to study (and thereby resist) the obeah religion of Antoinette's ally Christophine. Rochester tells Mr. Fraser, whom he refers to as "an Englishman" (p. 76) despite the Scottish surname—reinforcing the English marginalization of Scottish identity through language—that he intends to write "a book about obeah" (p. 142). This study will allow Rochester to contain Christophine as well as Antoinette. The black Creole and Franco-Celt are thus conflated in their identification as alien Others who need to be subjugated through force of arms (coercion) and of language (hegemony). The Celt's attempt at anti-English, anti-imperial linguistic resistance through the book is contained and co-opted.
Rhys, however, indicates that the potential for linguistic resistance remains for both Celtic and African-descended Creoles through the medium of the oral tradition, specifically the folk song. Again, Rhys rewrites her family history to recuperate Creoles of Scottish heritage as anti-English Jacobites. It is through the singing of a Jacobite song that Rhys most explicitly indicates Antoinette’s Scottish heritage. Immediately after mocking Rochester for his hypocritical imitation of the planters, Antoinette marks herself as non-English by singing lyrics that arise from the Jacobite Rising of 1745. Rochester recalls her words:

‘didn’t Aunt Cora say to me don’t marry him... And a lot of other things she told me. Are you talking about England, I said, and what about Grandpappy, passing his glass over the water decanter and the tears running down his face for all the friends dead and gone, whom he would never see again. That was nothing to do with England that I ever heard, she said. On the contrary:

*A Benky foot and a Benky leg*

*For Charlie over the water.*

*Charlie, Charlie*

she sang in a hoarse voice. (p. 148)

The subject of this song, passed on from the Scottish (grand)father to the Scottish surrogate mother (Aunt Cora replacing the lost Irish mother Annette) to the hybrid Irish-Scottish Creole Antoinette, is Prince Charles Edward Stuart. “Bonnie Prince Charlie,” the “Young Pretender” to the British throne, invaded England with a Scottish army that included several Irish officers in a failed attempt to wrest power from the Hanoverians. Indeed, Charles Stuart was himself something of a Creole, a Scot-born and raised in France following his grandfather James II’s abdication. (Benky, probably a corruption of the Scots *binkie*, “gaudy; trimly dressed,” perhaps refers to the tartan stockings or trews in which the prince and his followers were popularly depicted.) Antoinette’s grandfather, likely a veteran of the final Jacobite campaign exiled after the outlawing of its survivors, provides her (through Aunt Cora), as did Annette, with an example of both linguistic resistance (the subversive song, with its allusion to “Bonnie Prince Charlie” barely concealed) and physical-force resistance to the English. Similarly, Aunt Cora transmits not only Jacobite, but slave spirituals like “Before I was set free” (p. 47) to Antoinette. This act—recalling Christophe’s singing of patois songs (p. 20) and Rupert the Rine’s satirical songs about the British governor’s wife (p. 152, 163-64)—suggests the potential for Franco-Celtic Creole-black Creole interaction and alliance against the English, an alliance that can ramify from verbal to insurrectionary violence.

Rhys underscores the importance of these militantly Anglophobic Scottish exemplars in the novel’s conclusion. Here, Antoinette plots her intended destruction of Rochester and his manor house, Antoinette’s synecdoche for England: “When I was out on the battlements it was cool and I could hardly hear them....Then I turned round and saw the sky. It was red and all my life
was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora's patchwork” (p. 189). Antoinette's imagined return to her West Indian homeland, and her African-descended Creole allies Tia and Christophine, becomes a return to her Celtic ancestral homelands, Scotland and Ireland, as she recalls her Aunt Cora—surrogate for the Franco-Irish mother—and, through the grandfather clock, her Scottish grandfather. The threat of the Jacobite lyric sung earlier to Rochester is realized in Antoinette's firing of the house; a Creole of Scottish, Irish, and French descent attacks England, the Celts' oppressor, as the black Creoles razed Coulibri.

Yet the divisive struggle between the black Creoles and the plantocrats evinced in the burning of Coulibri and Tia's injury of Antoinette is ultimately reconfigured by Rhys, along with her own Scottish-Welsh-Irish family's history of complicity in the imperial enterprise, in the final alliance of the Franco-Celtic Creole Antoinette with her black Creole nurse and erstwhile childhood companion. Such seemingly dichotomous, interactions—now antagonistic, now cooperative—appear to have been the norm for the West Indies and, by extension, for any colonial situation in which a hierarchy of oppressor/Creole/subaltern existed. Barbara Bush avers: "In the Caribbean, the subtle dialectic between the opposed cultures of African and European ensured that Creole society was formed in an atmosphere of conflict and resistance, but also adaptation and reciprocal assimilation between all strata of the population, black and white” (p. 8). The complex racial, national, political, and religious hierarchy that existed in the Caribbean, historically and in Rhys's own era, really transcends any African-European, black-white dichotomy, as Rhys's formulation of the Franco-Celtic Creole hybrid illustrates. Bush's conception of "reciprocal assimilation," though rings true. White Creoles of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh descent mixed—socially, sexually, and politically—with Creoles of African descent, defining themselves as non-English. Collaboration between these two groups, and others like them, in the Caribbean and beyond, fueled the worldwide anti-colonial and post-colonial projects. This anti-imperialist alliance between peoples of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh descent—English imperialism's first "Others"—and the subaltern peoples of the Third World preceded the nineteenth-century setting of Wide Sargasso Sea and continue to this day. That Rhys was aware of the history of colonial oppression of the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh in their homelands and in the West Indies is apparent in Wide Sargasso Sea's Antoinette and her acts of linguistic and physical-force resistance against her English oppressors, which mimic and collaborate with those of both French and black Creoles.

Rhys's envisioning of a nineteenth-century Franco-Celtic Creole-black Creole alliance against English colonialism also suggests that transnational, transracial cooperation needs to continue in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and that post-colonial critics must consider this interaction. Moira Ferguson writes of Rhys's recognition that the anti-colonial struggle persisted in the First World: "Wide Sargasso Sea...comments obliquely on post-
emancipation race relations in Jean Rhys's own period with the eruption of the Notting Hill Riots in London in 1958. In that sense Jean Rhys directly and indirectly challenges two worlds of post-colonial emancipation" (p. 91). Racial violence following the arrival of West Indian black Creoles in England, Ferguson suggests, in part inspired *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its presentation of worldwide colonial contexts. Yet the novel's conception and much of its composition (a draft existed as early as 1940) preceded these English disturbances, indicating, perhaps, the influence of twentieth-century Celtic anti-colonial contexts on *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Before 1940 and beyond the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966, Irish nationalists continued their struggle to liberate all thirty-two counties of Ireland from the English. Ireland was the only former British colony to have won its (limited) independence as the Irish Free State, following the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21. In 1937, the Irish Free State repudiated the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty and created itself Eire, initiating an "Economic War" with England. In 1939, the Irish Republican Army began a bombing campaign in England. And, from 1956-1962, the IRA waged a guerrilla campaign along the Northern Ireland border. Rhys, who traveled through Ireland between 1932-39, perhaps noticed the carnage wrought during the Anglo-Irish War, including the burned-out Big Houses of the Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendancy (Ireland's Creoles) incinerated by Irish Republicans, twentieth-century analogues of Coulibri and Thornfield Hall. Rhys, however, saw the English as the villains of these struggles. David Plante records a diatribe she made against colonial violence in Ireland: "War! War! War! Martyrs, and for what? For what? There was boy from the West Country, died in Belfast...Oh they killed him, they killed him" (p. 21). Northern Ireland, as much as Notting Hill, weighed on Rhys's mind.

The continued Anglo-Irish struggle over Ireland in the twentieth century, which spilled over onto the English mainland, thus provides another contemporary context for *Wide Sargasso Sea* and the construction of Antoinette Cosway Mason Rochester as a Franco-Celtic Creole. By linking the Creole of Irish, Scottish, and French descent with the black Creole, and by displacing the anti-colonial violence of the eighteenth-century Celtic Fringe and twentieth-century Ireland onto the nineteenth-century West Indies, Rhys creates a broader and more comprehensive post-colonial identity, bridging the divisions that England's "divide and rule" policies, and her own ancestors' complicity in those strategies, maintained. Ironically, the divisions between subaltern peoples are perpetuated by many post-colonial theorists, who refuse to recognize the colonial experience of the Irish, Scots, and Welsh. Like Rochester, who refers to the obviously Scottish-surnamed Mr. Fraser as an "Englishman," most post-colonial critics choose to ignore the Celtic subtexts of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and other literary works. Their attempts to read texts implicated in and critical of the English colonial discourse solely within the context of the Third World, while laudable, is myopic, ahistorical, and
arguably racist. At a time when the peace process in Northern Ireland continues and Scotland and Wales; move ever closer toward devolution from the United Kingdom, the failure to consider the Irish, Scots, and Welsh as historical and contemporary victims of English colonialism signals, to paraphrase Homi Bhabha, discrimination in the discourse of post-colonialism. Certainly, many Celts participated in the creation, expansion, and maintenance of European empires; many other Celts, however, suffered at the hands of the British Empire. By concentrating only on the colonial subjects of the Third World periphery of the British Empire and ignoring the subjects in its First World Celtic Fringe, post-colonialism seems all too willing to allow the earliest victims of English colonialism to remain isolated in that subaltern position. As Jean Rhys and Antoinette, the Franco-Celtic Creole subject of Wide Sargasso Sea, indicate, the recovery and recognition of all marginalized subaltern peoples is necessary to complete the post-colonial project. Only then can we burn down the actual and notional Big Houses of the colonizer and the colonizer's collaborators, whether Mason's Coulibri, Rochester's Thornfield Hall, Belfast's Stormont Castle, or a post-colonial command post that limits its theater of operations to the Third World.

NOTES

1It can, of course, be argued that the anti-colonial struggle for Irish independence continues to this day. The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty resulted in the Partition of Ireland, which, while establishing the twenty-six county Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland), created the six-county state of Northern Ireland, which remains a part of Great Britain.

2Throughout her letters, Rhys disavows the notion of her lineage as predominantly English: “can my one sixteenth of English blood be showing up or is it my Welsh desire to preach” (Letters p. 51); “I am not a Scot at all. My father was Welsh—very. My mother’s family was Creole—what we call Creole. My great grandfather was a Scot” (Letters p. 172). Despite her denial of a purely Scottish identity, Rhys’s self-construction of a pan-Celtic Creole identity is clear.

3For instance, in Culture and Imperialism, Said writes: “The one relationship that does not change is the hierarchial one between the metropole and overseas generally, between European-Western-white-Christian-male and those peoples who geographically and morally inhabit the realm beyond Europe (Africa, Asia, plus Ireland and Australia in the British case)” (p. 106). Although Said fails to link Ireland to the other two members of the Celtic Fringe, his Irish example could easily be applied to the cases of Scotland and Wales.

4The term is Peter Linebaugh’s, from “All the Atlantic Mountains Shook” (p. 208).

5Elsie Michie’s Outside the Pale: Cultural Exclusion, Gender Difference, and the Victorian Woman Writer (p. 52-53) and Terry Eagleton’s Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture (p. 3) describe these characteristics as typical markers of Irishness.

6Contemporary Guyanese poet David Dabydeen (a Creole of Indian descent) interestingly links the construction of the Creole (originated, of course, in a West Indian context) to the “Northern” Other of the “Green Man” in the medieval Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: “the Green Man is monstrous and misbegotten, a symbol of our latent capacities for sexual mayhem…. Over 600 years later, Conrad published a ‘version’ of the Gawain story, Heart of Darkness, in which it is the Black Man who satifies the English demonology, the man who stands outside the pale of civilization and issues sexual and
linguistic threats against that civilization" (p. 29). Yet Dabydeen, who declares the medieval era "precolonial" and states that he "can read the literature of the period without engaging with ethnic or colonial issues" (p. 29), fails to consider the beginnings of imperialism in the medieval English invasions and occupations of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

"J. O. Bartley notes the portrayal of the stage Irishman on the nineteenth-century English stage as both "pugnacious and amorous" (p. 193-94) in Teague, Shenkin and Sawney.

Carole Angier discusses Rhys's Welsh, Irish, and Scottish descent in her biography of the writer (p. 6-7). Rhys mentions her Celtic heriage—as well as her possible Spanish-Cuban lineage—in her unfinished autobiography Smile Please (p. 20, 25-26, 30, 57). Helen Nebeker's Jean Rhys: Woman in Passage argues that Rhys used figures from Celtic mythology to name characters in Voyage in the Dark (p. 78-81, 206) and perhaps in Wide Sargasso Sea (p. 150). Elgin W. Mellown's "Character and Themes in the Novels of Jean Rhys" describes Rhys as "the daughter of a Welsh doctor and his English Creole wife" (p. 459). While Rhys's father was of Welsh heritage (and, through his mother, Irish), her mother was a Scottish, not English, Creole.

Rhys writes in Smile Please that her "Irish Granny" (Sophia Potts Williams, her paternal grandmother) resided in England (p. 50), indicating a biographical case of Celtic exile.

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is said to have used the trifoliate shamrock to teach the doctrine of the Trinity as he converted the pagan Irish to Christianity. Apparently, Liliane Louvel is the only critic to have noted the significance of the shamrock and its importance to the construction of Antoinette's Irish identity. In her essay "Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea: The Locket and the Shamrock," Louvel argues that the locket and the shamrock are keepers of memory, of both the lost motherland, Ireland, and a loved one who is now dead (p. 161). However, Louvel fails to consider the importance of these emblems to a politicized, post-colonial reading of the novel or to link them to the novel's Scottish subtext.

James Froude evinces this fear of an Irish-backed uprising in the Caribbean in The English in the West Indies: "The telegrams to the West Indies pass through New York, and often pick up something on the way. A warning message reached a certain colony that a Yankee-Irish schooner with a Fenian [militant Irish Republican] crew was coming down to annex the island, or at least to kidnap the governor....A governor-general had been threatened seriously in Canada, why not he in the Antilles?....The next day dispelled the alarm. The schooner was the creation of some Irish telegraph clerk, and the scare ended in laughter. But under the jest lies the wretched certainty that the Antilles have no protection except in their own population, and so little to thank England for that scarcely one of the inhabitants, except the officials, would lift a finger to save the connection" (p. 162-63). Froude alludes to the abortive Fenian invasion of Canada in 1867, an attempt to incite a war between the United States and Britain (Anglo-American tensions were strained by British support for the Confederacy during the Civil War) in the hope that an American victory would lead to Ireland's independence.

Emery's identification of Rhys's ancestors as "English" ignores the complexities of heritage that Rhys employs in her construction of Antoinette; while an acknowledgment of the specific Celtic blood identified (Irish, Scottish) in the character would be best, the denomination "British" would certainly improve on the incorrect "English" and rather vague "white."

"The "Wild Geese" were members of the Gaelic aristocracy of Ireland who, following their defeat by the British at Aughrim in 1691, were allowed by treaty to lead their clansmen into exile (and foreign military service, usually with the Spanish and French, their Catholic coreligionists). Rhys was certainly aware of this phenomenon, as is evinced by a letter to Diana Athill. In it, Rhys quotes Marie Edme Maurice de MacMahon (1808-93), a descendent of one of the Irish exiles. MacMahon became Marshal of France, the President of the Third Republic, and a military hero: "Vous etes negre? 'Oui, mon general.' 'Alors—continuez mon
enfant. Continuez.' I daresay he did and so will I' (Letters, p. 260). Appositely, Rhys's quotation finds MacMahon (to stretch the term, a Creole) exhorting a soldier of African descent into battle. Even in her correspondence, Rhys hints at the potential for Celtic Creole-black Creole cooperation and seems to draw strength from this possibility.

In Britons, Linda Colley marks the linguistic shift "of 'English' and 'England' giving way to 'British' and 'Great Britain', as they were in both official and everyday vocabulary by the 1750s" (p. 13).

This song appears to be a variation of two songs cited in William Donaldson's the Jacobite Song. The first, "O'er the Water to Charlie," anticipates the 1745 Jacobite Rising: "O'er the water, o'er the sea/O'er the water to C—lie;/Go the world as it will,/ We'll hazard our lives for C—lie"; The second, "Over the Water to C—lie," focuses on the aftermath of the rebellion: "but since that o'er the seas he's gone,/The other side landed fairly,/I'd freely quit wi' a' I have,/To get over the water to C—lie" (p. 81).

The definition of Benky/binkie comes from Jamieson's Dictionary of the Scottish Language (p. 45).

In Inventing Ireland, Declan Kiberd offers examples of the interactions between Irish nationalists and Third World nationalists (especially Indians) in "Ireland and the End of Empire"; Kiberd also compares instances of British cultural imperialism in Ireland and the Caribbean in "Writing Ireland, Reading England."

Carole Angier writes that "a first version of Wide Sargasso Sea was written before 1940" (p. 233); Rhys's own correspondence indicates a draft as early as 1939 (Letters, p. 50).

Rhys wrote a letter to her daughter Maryvonne in 1949 in which she recalled a trip to Ireland ("we went from Galway to Dublin") (Letters, p. 52) that they had made together; the visit would have occurred during one of Maryvonne's holidays with her mother between 1932-39.

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