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DIPLOMARBEIT

She gave him the eye, he gave her mon-ey.
- a Lacanian reading of *After Mrs. Rochester*
by Polly Teale

verfasst von

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Introduction

This thesis deals with British playwright Polly Teale's stage play *After Mrs. Rochester*. This successful and acclaimed play can be thought of as a dramatization of Carole Angier's biography of the Dominican expatriate authoress Jean Rhys. The play's text draws heavily on this biography which in turn relies mainly on Jean Rhys's oeuvre of, admittedly highly autobiographical, novels. Her short stories are worked into it to a much lesser degree. In crafting the text of her play, Teale does not only peruse Angier's book as a source for general biographical details and for psychological insights into Rhys's personality, she does in fact lift whole chunks of text out of the biography and introduces them into her play. Such passages are often fittingly presented as utterances of the play's character, the fictional Jean Rhys. Thus it should be borne in mind that the concept of the personality of Jean Rhys Teale supposedly holds and transports in her play is actually almost the same as that held by Carole Angier.

In comparing the biography to the play I got the impression that Teale did sometimes not go back to the actual works of Rhys but contented herself with the digest offered by Angier. Since this volume is a very apt and knowledgeable digest, and at 700+ pages comprehensive indeed, this is not meant as a criticism at all but as a tip of the hat towards both Teale's diligence and economy. Since this biography does in turn make copious use of verbatim passages from Jean Rhys's works, the reader and analyst of the play has to cope with a two step process of text appropriation. Adding to this the level of the original texts by Rhys we firstly arrive at three text levels. If we now take into account that the novel which takes center stage, as it were, in the play, namely *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* we arrive at the fourth level.

This has also been mentioned by Mildorf (2007) in her short study of the play:

However, *Jane Eyre* is not the only intertext that is foregrounded in the play through direct or modified quotations as well as re-enacted scenes between Jane and Rochester. Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Carole Angier's biography of Jean Rhys are equally important. *After Mrs. Rochester* thus becomes the interfacier of various narrative trajectories which are linked on at least three levels [...] (ibid 347)

At this point I would wish to caution and also reassure the reader that the present paper will, in trying to analyse and read Teale's play from a Lacanian viewpoint, treat the text of Angier's biography as the ultimate horizon or lowest text level, rather, to be directly accessed. In the illustrative figure given in appendix 1: *The Textual Universe* the texts within solid bordered blurbs will be considered in actuality and worked into my literary equations and ruminations directly. The texts within the blurb bordered by the broken line, comprising all of Jean Rhys's works besides *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which is at the heart of *After Mrs. Rochester*, will only be considered insofar as they are part of the dense biographical narrative of Carole Angier.

In thus restricting the scope of this text and refusing to even try to follow up the “vast array of cultural texts and assumptions concerning madness and womanhood” (Mildorf. 2007. 347) I hope to avoid certain failure.

The Lacanian approach suggested itself to me since the elements of *gaze*, *eyes* and *mirror* lending themselves to an interpretation in the tradition of the great and controversial French psychoanalyst, while being present on all textual levels mentioned, really catch the eye and captivate the mind of the reader in Teale's play *After Mrs. Rochester*. The superabundance of terms belonging to the semantic field of *eye* and *gaze* struck me forcefully at once when first encountering the play during my university studies. This encounter happened before the backdrop of the academic treatment of various modern adaptations of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, which immortal classic, given the title (and thus *name* within the symbolic order) may not be wholly disregarded but can only be dealt with cursory in the present paper.

The justifiability of this observation is further borne out by Mildorf: “[...] Ella experiences men's gaze [...] [w]hen a male visitor [...] pays a compliment about her eyes” (2007. 359). Mildorf places this in the context of the seminal writings of Gilbert and Gubar about the role of women in nineteenth and early twentieth century European literature and continues: “Men's regulatory gaze gradually becomes a 'self-gaze', which is shown in the [...] recurring mirror image” (ibid.).

Finally I want to stress the point that I will in this thesis endeavour to deal with the play on the textual level of the script and not on the level of the actual theatrical enactment. Furthermore I will also not analyse hypothetical thoughts

or possible motives of the actual persons involved in generating the texts, namely Polly Teale, Carol Angier and Jean Rhys. This would amount to conjecture, since the minds of people both living and passed away will always remain an ultimately unfathomable mystery to their fellow men and women and themselves. Instead I will try to offer to the reader a new look at or perhaps even insight into something of unchanging, immortal and thus scientifically treatable substance: the text itself, the text, and nothing but the text.

What has gone on before: research history

Luckily for the writer of these pages the play has not been academically dealt with to any exhausting depths. The articles by Macedo (2010), Mildorf (2007), and Starck (2007) are briefly discussed here in alphabetical order and not in any order of imputed relevancy. Finally there are some performance reviews of the play to be found both online and in print all of which are not aimed at an academic audience and are not of immediate relevancy to my analysis of the text.

In her article “After Mrs. Rochester: Rewriting as re-vision” Macedo takes the play as a launching pad for far-reaching thoughts on intertextuality as re-visioning, reforming and writing-back. She rightly points out that Teale's text is not only a *revisitation* of *Wide Sargasso Sea* but also of Angier's biography of its authoress. A thought that fully coincides with my understanding of the case and even though this thought proceeded my perusal of Macedo's text, the honors of originality have to belong to her. She goes on to make a case for intertextuality as not creating a morass of quotes and citations but as being a highly meaningful and anti-hegemonic process. With the word “wrighting” Macedo coins a new phrase, which comes with a rather distinctly normative or at least partisan flavor, for this process. She claims that intertextuality is especially relevant for women. That it constitutes a rewriting of cultural history, as it is set down in the literary canon, into feminized *herstory* and that that is a question of empowerment and even survival. The article furthermore deals with the inter-mediality of text, play and the stark lithographs and pastels created by London-based but Lisbon-born artist Paula Rego, which have reportedly inspired Teale's

writing process time and again.

Mildorf also deals with the intertextuality of the pertinent works of Brontë, Rhys, Angier and Teale but treats them under the overarching concept of mad intertextuality in the tradition of Kaup (1993) and places the play firmly within the stream of post-modern feminist or women's literature. She offers first glimpses of the insights hopefully given in the present paper.

Starck only mentions *After Mrs. Rochester* in her treatment of an earlier play by Teale, *Jane Eyre*. But her article, with its elegant look at Teale's plays in the light of mainstream feminist literary criticism, is highly relevant for the understanding of the intertextuality present in politically aware stage adaptations.

Why we are entitled to a psycho-analytical reading

But are we entitled to a psychological, a psycho-analytical even, reading and interpretation of Teale's play? Is this not an all too common high-handed impertinence of modern literary critique often leading to commonplace observations not asked for and sometimes forced and superfluous? Cannot we experience and value a text at face value without trying to stir up the psycho-analytical mire we suppose must lie hidden somewhere underneath?

Perhaps, but in the case of *After Mrs. Rochester* the dark stratum does not own to the quality of being underneath, the hidden darkness is out there, right there in the limelight of the shared experience theatre stage before our very eyes.

The whole setting, plot and mise-en-scene place the reader immediately in a world *not* to be taken at face value. The time flow continually springs from the past into the present, the action switches back and forth between scenes from well-known novels to scenes from a real-life authoress's biography. Characters appear and disappear, dissolve into one another as if in a dream. Right away it becomes obvious that the reader/viewer is to be placed *within the mind* or at least the highly subjective, first-person phenomenological world of Jean Rhys and not the actual world (or its stage representation) ostensibly inhabited by all of us and to be viewed from the slightly more objective third person perspective. And there is nothing subtle about this. Right from the start the presence of the

character of Bertha Mason in the room together with the older Jean Rhys makes it clear: this is a mad woman's world or world view we are to visit. Her imaginings and the inhabitants of her haunted mind are not only to be guessed at by her actions and words, as if we were to spy at her voyeuristically from behind the one-way-mirror in a psychiatric ward, they are out there, physically before us, incarnated.

This fact was already noticed and commented upon by Mildorf (2007) in her article on *Mad Intertextuality*:

After Mrs. Rochester in my view participates in the language of madness both because it thematises Jean's madness and embodies it in Jean's alter ego, Bertha, and because the play's stylistic rendition marked by fragmentation, incoherence, repetition, double-voicedness and silence can be said to constitute 'mad' language. (ibid. 350)

Of course *madness* has to be taken here as *literary madness*, with all the rather more positive than negative connotations it has acquired in the parlance of feminist post-modern literary critiques. In reality Jean Rhys was never diagnosed with any actual *mental health problem*, to use the currently politically correct term, even though Angier (1990. 656-658) hints at mental health specialists having, upon being made acquainted with Rhys's life and work, voiced the opinion that the authoress might have shown symptoms of a borderline personality.

So besides just leaning back or leaning *forward* and gripping our chairs, rather, and letting the experience sink in and do its work, we have to, if we choose to interpret and analyse the text at all, interpret and analyse it psycho-analytically.

It cries out for it.

A note on Lacan

To use the terminological universe of Jacques Lacan as the frame of reference for a literary reading is both convenient and dangerous. Every intellectual likely to be interested in literary analyses will be familiar with the terms *mirror phase*, *nom du père*, the *imaginary*, the *symbolic* and the *real*. At the same time one will hardly find another established terminological universe where the consensus on the exact meaning of the terms is as thin and bound to crack when trod on with

too much self-assurance.

As Ort (2014) aptly formulates in her recent brilliant study:

Das Werk Jacques Lacans ist umgeben vom Nimbus des Rätselhaften, des überwältigend Komplizierten und sogar des Monströsen, seine Lehre gilt als schwer zugänglich, seines sprachliche Attitüde als letztlich einfach unverständlich. (Ort 7)

Or, in the words of a psycho-analyst personally known to me, when reading Lacan you not only have to *understand* his arguments, you have to *believe* in them.

What I believe is that, while each text can certainly and legitimately be read from various perspectives, some texts show a determined affinity with certain discourses. As stated above *After Mrs. Rochester* seems to be cut out to be interpreted along the lines of Lacan's work.

This French psycho-analyst and philosopher wanted to effect a new reading of Freud's writings, a going-back to Freud, at a time when the international psycho-analytical discussion was dominated by US-American analysts who were stressing the predominance of the Ego and had established the so-called *Ego psychology*. Lacan set out to *out-Freud* Freud.

Die von Jacques Lacan begründete strukturelle Psychoanalyse definiert sich vor allem durch eine Relektüre und eine Revision des Werkes von Sigmund Freud sowie dessen Weiterentwicklung im Lichte neuer wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse [...] angesichts jener Entwicklungen, welche die Psychoanalyse in eine mit ihren ursprünglichen Intentionen und Auffassungen nicht mehr zu vereinbarende Richtung gelenkt haben (wie etwa die amerikanische Ich-Psychologie). (Ruhs 9)

And, even more interesting from a literary critic's point of view:

In dieser Rückbesinnung kommt der Kategorie des Sprachlichen besondere Bedeutung zu, da [...] Psychoanalyse ihrer Hauptsache nach als eine Sprachanalyse [...] verstanden wird. Demnach fiele der Psychoanalyse vor allem die Aufgabe einer Untersuchung der Wirkung der Sprache auf den Menschen zu, wobei sich das Unbewusste als ein Effekt der spezifisch menschlichen Sprache erweist. Unter der Prämisse, dass die Sprache den Menschen macht, kommt Lacan zur Behauptung, dass *das eigentliche Milieu des Menschen* nicht biologisch, auch nicht soziologisch, sondern *linguistisch ist*. (Ruhs 9) (*emphasis added*).

That *language makes the man* (or woman) may or may not be entirely true in the world of incarnated beings but it is most certainly true for the world of

literature. So even if some tenets of structural psycho-analysis may be inadequate for therapy they may still be highly relevant for text analysis.

Two Lacanian principles

I will now proceed to outline the Lacanian terms that will be used in this thesis and thus also outline the version of Lacanianism I will use as a working model. Any errors and misunderstandings found therein are strictly my own and I would like to apologize for them in advance.

Two principles have to be borne in mind in approaching Lacan. Firstly, that in structural psycho-analysis there are no cut and dried phases and sequences of development, no clearly drawn borders and no straight-forward lines of cause and effect. All structural elements are present at the same time, all intermingle and bleed into each other. The structure is forced unto the real thing and not revealed as underlying. Nevertheless this structuring is not an act of rationalistic rape of some sublime, never to be grasped truths. It opens a doorway to understanding, or at least to the idea of understanding, how we come to experience what we experience.

Perhaps the nature of language may act as a metaphor here. Even though language will ever be fraught with double meaning and does not offer absolute certainty about whether we have properly decoded a message sent to us by an interlocutor, no one will maintain that we know less about the message's content after we have received it than before we have done so.

Secondly, that in Lacan's world the subject is neither autonomous nor autarkic. It is forever determined by ever-changing frames of reference and perspectives. It projects and constructs itself as much as it is constructed and projected by outer circumstances. Thus there is no need for any mystical origin of the subject, no need for a point in the development of a person when the subject suddenly appears.

The mirror-phase

The classical mirror-phase (on this see Ort 39ff. and Widmer 26ff) denotes a point in the child's development when it, at an age of not above eighteen months, interacts with its mirror-image. During this interaction the child shows both jubilant and highly aggressive reactions. Jubilation being a result of the realization that there are *others* around, others one may desire and who may desire one in return. Aggression resulting from the realization that one is not the only entity in the universe, and therefore not omnipotent and invulnerable. This disappointment leads to murderous intent, which has, of course, self-destructive aspects. The mirror-phase concludes with the child accepting the image as an image of him/herself. For this it needs the confirmation of an adult attachment figure, usually the father, who *names* the mirror-image as being a representation of the child, thus freeing him/her from the purely imaginary order and admitting him/her into the symbolic order of names.

Das Spiegelstadium weist auf diesen entscheidenden Moment hin: Das Kind sieht sich außen; es nimmt nicht nur seine eigene Gestalt wahr, sondern es erfährt seine Objektivation, d.h. es merkt, daß [sic] auch andere seine Gestalt sehen können – so wie es andere sehen kann. (Widmer 30-31)

To become fertile for literary analysis the mirror-phase is not taken to happen at a specific point in a person's development, but is seen as an illustration of both the importance of the self *as other* (in the mirror), and the importance of the gaze of others for the image of the self. While we crave to be seen and desired by others (thus becoming like them, *mirroring* them) this very craving makes us vulnerable and this vulnerability can lead to aggression and hatred. Thus we may view the importance of the image of the mirror in literary works to be based on its psychologically highly charged importance as a symbol of interaction of the subject with other subjects and with itself. This interaction forms a strong link between *desire* (the nature of interaction) and the *gaze* (its primary medium).

The gaze

In the Lacanian discourse the gaze is all important. During the mirror-phase the child realizes that it can see him/herself and that it can thus be seen by others. Soon it starts to wonder, *how* others see it.

Wie sehen sie mich? Wie bin ich für die anderen? Es möchte sich dann am liebsten mit den Augen der Mutter sehen, zumindest ihren Blick beeinflussen können. Es *begehrt ihren Blick* [...] (Widmer 30-31) (*emphasis added*).

Gazing at someone and being gazed at by someone does primarily mean to *exist*, but as a natural next step to *desire*, to *be desired*.

Denn der Blick (des Anderen) ist ein grundsätzlicher Träger des Begehrens, freilich als bereits sublimierter Blick, da er nicht von vornherein liebend und gütig ist, sondern, als Ausdruck seiner elementaren Triebhaftigkeit, bannend, verschlingend kastrierend und böse. Im (guten) Blick trifft sich das Begehren nach Anerkennung mit der Anerkennung des Begehrens, welches als Wunschformation das Wünschen des anderen zum Ziele hat und damit den Wunsch beinhaltet, vom anderen gewünscht zu werden. Das Sichtbare ist demnach abhängig von etwas, das vor dem Auge des Sehenden ist, es ist abhängig von der Präexistenz eines Blicks. Ich sehe, so Lacan, zwar nur von einem Punkt aus, bin aber in meiner Existenz von überall her erblickt. (Ruhs 111)

It is this nature of the gaze, not only as a symbol of desire but as a fully valid *manifestation* of it, that I will try to highlight in my interpretation of *After Mrs. Rochester*.

The imaginary, the symbolic and the real

When we now take a brief look at the three realms or orders of organization of the psyche within Lacan's terminology we have to remember the concurrency of those orders for the adult subject, even though they were first illustrated by Lacan before the background of child development.

Bei diesem als Spiegelstadium bezeichneten Vorgang, der um den 6. Lebensmonat herum einsetzt, konstituiert sich im Medium des *Imaginären* ein primitives Ich durch Identifizierung mit dem Bild des Ähnlichen als einer Gesamtgestalt, konkret erfahren in der Wahrnehmung des eigenen Bildes im Spiegel. Dieser grundlegende Identifikationsvorgang ermöglicht dem damit zu sich selbst kommenden

Individuum einen Vorgriff auf die Wahrnehmung seines Körpers als einer Einheit, die wiederum sein Ich strukturiert, *bevor* sich ein Subjekt in der Dialektik der Identifikation mit dem Anderen *durch Vermittlung der Sprache* entwickelt. (Ruhs 25) (*emphasis added*)

Thus the *imaginary* stands for the direct and unmediated perception of things, the realm where a tree is just a tree, love is just love and no encoding and no deciphering is necessary. This realm is, of course, a kind of lost paradise that allegedly existed before the advent of speech and code. Inhabiting this realm wholly is infantile and impossible to regain and yet, visiting it temporarily lies perhaps at the core of all religion, wisdom and deeper human understanding.

As a conclusion of the mirror-phase, the child is introduced into the *symbolic* order, the realm of speech and names.

Es ist in der Regel ein Elternteil, der bei dieser Erfahrung anwesend ist und etwa das Kind vor dem Spiegel hält und dabei in irgendeiner Weise Anerkennung ausdrückt, welche als ein »Das bist du!« verstanden werden kann. Damit wird *symbolische Bedeutung* eingeführt, dem *imaginären anderen* gesellt sich [...] ein *symbolischer Anderer*, welcher *spricht*, hinzu [...] Es vollzieht sich hiermit das, was man üblicherweise als Triangulierung bezeichnet, in verschiedenen Registern: Differenzierung von *imaginär*, *symbolisch* und *real* (Bild, Signifikant, Referent). (Ruhs 28) (*emphasis added*)

Another succinct description of the realms is given by Ort: "The *symbolic* is the realm of laws, rules and necessity, that of signs and signifiers."

Der Bereich des Symbolischen ist der Bereich des Gesetzmäßigen, Regelhaften, der Ordnung und des Notwendigen, es ist der Bereich des Signifikanten, der Zeichen [...] (Ort 61)

The *imaginary*, on the other hand, "is a realm of pre- or a-signification, a realm of images, phantasmata and (deceiving) illusions: mirror-images in the widest metaphorical sense." (ibid.)

De[r] Bereich des Imaginären [ist] weniger ein Bereich des Zeichenhaften [...] als eine Art prä-zeichenhafter oder an-zeichenhafter Bereich der Bilder, der Phantasmen und der (täuschenden) Illusionen: eben Spiegelungen im weitesten metaphorischen Sinne. (Ort 61)

Let us finally take a look at the third realm, at the *real*. Lacan's *real* must not be misunderstood as reality. It is that which separates the *imaginary* from the *symbolic*. A not-to-be-signified, not-to-be-felt foundation of reality.

Das Reale [...] bezeichnet keine Wirklichkeit, sondern den a-

signifikanten und nicht sensiblen „Grund“ der Realität. (Ort 61)

Since the real is neither *symbolic* (representing) nor *imaginary* (presenting) it is “without meaning, it is a pure and disturbing kind of presence and at the same time a rip and therefore: nothing. Because of this negative definition Lacan calls the *real* the *impossible*.” (ibid.)

Das Reale ist weder symbolisch (Repräsentation) noch imaginär (Präsentation) – es ist vollkommen a-signifikant, und das bedeutet: Es ist unsinnig, ohne Sinn, es hat keine Bedeutung, es ist eine reine, unmögliche Art von Präsenz und zugleich ist es ein Riss, also nichts – das Reale ist das, was Lacan aufgrund dieser negativen Bestimmung das Unmögliche nennt. (Ort 61)

For the present thesis it is important to remember that the realm of the *symbolic* is structured mainly like a language (i.e. using signs) while the *imaginary* is structured like a collection of images. Dealing with the one is like reading a printed text, dealing with the other is like looking at a picture-book. Thus when I will be citing the utterance *you have beautiful eyes* we will inhabit the imaginary realm. But when I will be claiming that the action of giving money in lieu of affection *signifies* such a substitute offer and will be backing this up by the fact that money may act as a symbol, albeit a poor one, for affection and safety, we will certainly have entered the *symbolic* realm. The whole business of literary close reading (see Bennett, and Royle 289) consist of borrowing from one of the realms to get a better grasp on the other.

The *real* behind love, affection and safety, that what the characters in *After Mrs. Rochester*, and we as subjects in the real world also, yearn for and strive to achieve, transcends both the power of images and words. To attain it is probably grace.

Female and male looks and gazes in the play

Two themes or tropes intertwine in Polly Teale's play: the *gaze* and *money*. I will proceed to show that the gaze, our own and especially that of the other, is, as Lacan has shown, in essence the same as acknowledgement, empowerment, and love. It is desire. The desire to be desired and thus to exist. Now this love is hard to be gained, this desire is hard to be fulfilled. In this play, which is written and has to be read from a feminine or womanly point of view, the desired gaze is that of the male, the father, the lover, the protector. But that loving gaze is not readily forthcoming. A substitute is offered instead: *money*. Thus the desired male gaze turns into its caricature, into the coveted but offending *man-eye*.

I will proceed to give an analysis of the individual looks and gazes as they happen in the text, both within the stage instruction and in the actual speeches.

Introduction and opening note

In the published text of *After Mrs. Rochester* (Teale. 2003) an interview with playwright Polly Teale is used as a form of introduction to the highly inter-textual adaptation. On two-and-a-half pages a little of the background behind the action is clarified. For the literary analyst this part of the text acts as the counterpoint to the text of the play proper in the use of visual imagery. There we look in vain for a single member of the semantic fields which will dominate the rest of the book. If this textual figurehead, the part we first confront when approaching the text, may be regarded as a kind of tip of a textually as yet submerged and thus subconscious iceberg, the importance of what is *not* mentioned may be underscored by the very fact of its absence.

Next, the reader encounters a *Note* (xv) which offers profound insight indeed. We are told which psychological realities of which characters are going to be staged. A fact which limits the interpretative autonomy of the reader significantly. We are told that the scenery *actually* depicts "a room in the remote Devon countryside" but in Bertha Mason's "reality the room is the attic of *Jane Eyre*" (ibid.) - an imagined imaginary and fictional room. Still there are no gazes and looks here.

Act One

Act one is firmly grounded not only in space, see above, but also in time – the stage directions tell the reader that the year is 1957. Three women will interact in the first scene of act one: Jean Rhys of 1957, her daughter (who is not given a name in the play and thus may be regarded as less of an autonomous character and more of a personalized function, more of which, like *mother*, *father*, *husband*, will appear on stage later) and Bertha Mason, “Rochester's first wife from *Jane Eyre*” (3). JEAN and DAUGHTER are the only actual flesh-and-blood persons in the play. All the others are either memories come to life and belonging to Jean's biography, or characters from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. BERTHA possesses a double nature as a character drawn from both the Victorian classic and *Wide Sargasso Sea* on the one hand and as a personalization of Jean Rhys's subconscious on the other. As such she acts feral and animal-like, impersonating and acting out the deep feelings and inner drives of JEAN.

This first scene sets the tone for the whole play which consists of a sequence of confrontations between Jean and some *other*. At the centre of these confrontations lies the gaze or non-gaze the participants cast at each other. JEAN, while craving the other's attention and love conveyed by the gaze, often is disappointed by receiving not appreciation and love via the predominately male gaze but only cold *money*. At this point I would like to propose the idea that *money* can fittingly be read as *man-eye* and that, because of the language-like structure of the subconscious, this equation is not coincidental at all. Sometimes JEAN refuses to be seen altogether and locks herself away like Bertha Mason is locked away in *Jane Eyre*.

The situation of the opening scene of act one is one of refusal. JEAN is not willing to open the door to her daughter, whom she summoned herself but cannot bring herself to see for fear that she might discover JEAN's dark side present in the form of BERTHA. This tension will be solved in the final scene of act two, the play's finale, when DAUGHTER will have entered the room and by reading JEAN's text will be helping to make BERTHA disappear into JEAN's past. This disappearance off the stage may be seen as a picture of integrating the festering energies of childhood trauma and reconciling JEAN with her

biography. The reading of her writings by DAUGHTER, which facilitates and symbolizes this integration, may be viewed as DAUGHTER's acceptance and appreciation of JEAN's attempt at entering the *symbolic* order by putting her emotions *into words* and making some sense of life in general and the *gaze of others* in particular.

The first utterance in the play is a direct quotation from *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

JEAN. Standing by the river looking at the stepping stones. The round unsteady stone. The pointed, the safe one where you stand and look around. The next one not so safe, not so safe. (5)

It introduces both the concept of dealing with the world around mainly by *looking* or *gazing* at it and that of safety, or rather the lack of safety. The words are those put into the mouth of Antoinette Mason, the young Bertha Mason, by the actual Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (WSS hereafter). In the present play Teale follows Angier's lead in surmising that Jean Rhys put her own life and dispositions into that character. For her whole life the JEAN of the play (as well as Jean Rhys of actuality) will try to be safe, will try to attain a safety that was denied her by a cold and even cruel mother and an incompetent and detached if kind father. Her craving for safety and groundedness in the *symbolic* order will be exploited again and again.

Also foreshadowed on the very first page of the play is the double meaning of *glass* as both a *container for drink* and a *mirror* which we will encounter again on page 36 of the play in a scene featuring JEAN and LANCELOT, the prototypical owner of the male gaze in the play. That scene will be analysed in a section of its own. JEAN makes her first appearance with "a glass of wine in her hand" and when her daughter knocks on the front door, she "checks herself in the mirror" while "BERTHA stirs in her sleep" (3). When DAUGHTER has arrived right in front of her chamber door JEAN "checks herself again in the mirror", she plays for time not daring to let the other in because "BERTHA stirs" and she "looks at her panic-stricken" (4). The scene ends with mother and daughter saying good-night through the door without having gazed at one another. But not before BERTHA actually gains a voice by mumbling "half audibl[y]" a line from WSS. The dark side speaking out in articulate words. That seems to signify manifest madness of the main protagonist, indeed.

Scene two takes place in the morning light of the next day. Again JEAN, BERTHA and DAUGHTER interact. DAUGHTER tries to get admission but is again refused because JEAN is ashamed of BERTHA who murmurs of her traumatic history. We slide right into that past, or rather the past enters the stage *in personam*, and we are shown how MOTHER (JEAN's mother) treated ELLA (the young JEAN). The past depicted here is a blend of the life story of Bertha Mason as given in *WSS* and Jean Rhys's as told in Angier's biography.

JEAN's MOTHER enters the room dragging ELLA, JEAN's younger self. She beats her. They both wear Victorian clothes. ELLA is left alone stifling her tears as JEAN *looks on*. After a while ELLA becomes aware of JEAN *watching* her. (7) (*emphasis added*)

That exchange of gazes establishes a discourse between the past and future of a single person, a discourse that is only possible on an inner psychological level. Now the situation of JEAN refusing to see DAUGHTER gets strangely mirrored in that of ELLA wanting JEAN to go away.

ELLA. Go away.

JEAN. I can't. (7)

The next gaze in the play is the first that is clearly a carrier of esteem and acknowledgement. It is not a male gaze yet. It is the gaze of TITE, ELLA's childhood friend of colour who takes on some features of the noble savage in Teale's play. *WSS* tells a slightly different story. This child of nature dares ELLA, the offspring of white settlers, to dive to the bottom of a pond. A feat ELLA claims to be being able to do.

TITE. I dare you swim to the bottom [...]

ELLA. I can.

TITE. I ain't never seen you. (8)

After trying and not being able to prove her success, JEAN's dress and money will be taken by TITE and she will be left unacknowledged and powerless at the mercy of her vengeful mother. There ensues a dialogue about the real wealth and worth of ELLA's impoverished family which is dubbed one of "white niggers" by TITE.

TITE. Real white people [...] don't even *look* at you. (10) (*emphasis added*)

Here we find the power of looking starkly spelt out. After receiving a bad beating and a nightmare-troubled sleep we find ELLA at the family's breakfast table. The scene is all about gazes and FATHER enters the picture – by staying out of it.

ELLA's MOTHER is looking at her watch. She addresses ELLA's FATHER who is *hidden from view* by a newspaper. (12) (*emphasis added*)

The newspaper is an apt symbol for the symbolic order of the father. As is the watch in MOTHER's hand. MOTHER wants FATHER to act according to his role and berate the sluggish and insubordinate servant, META. But he is lenient and weak hiding behind his formal powers (the newspaper) and not exercising them.

MOTHER. [...] (To FATHER) It's time you said something. (12)

The gaze can also be defiant and thus, coming from a servant, dis-empowering.

MOTHER. [of META] You ask her to hurry. She *looks you right in the eye* and goes even slower. (12) (*emphasis added*)

Then follows an important scene of sexual triangulation which, since it does not use the image of gaze, will be dealt with in the section on the symbolism of the mango below. It marks a turning point because we now enter the realm of the male gaze. The pre-sexual desire of the child for being desired by a loving mother's gaze slowly transforms into the desire for the father to empower her, for the male lover to make her whole as a desirable woman. Fittingly the medium of written language as a symbol for the symbolic order plays a major role in this transition as it is enacted in the play. While FATHER only looks up from his newspaper to comment on totally pointless cricket news instead of taking the part of his daughter in her struggle against a cruel and overbearing mother, ELLA turns to printed fantasy to find relief. She immerses herself in her favourite book, *Jane Eyre*. A complete scene out of the novel is enacted on stage. It is the heavily charged first interview between Jane and Rochester in Thornfield Hall. Rochester commands the reluctant governess to converse with him and comments on her eyes. A more beautifully wrought description of the *gaze* we are not likely to read anywhere again.

ROCHESTER. Come out of the shadows Miss Eyre. I cannot see you.

But he wants to see her, he desires her and Jane (and with her the reader, ELLA) desires to be desired. Here she finally finds a male that does not hide

behind a newspaper, but takes action. Alas, Rochester is a fictional male, himself confined to the pages of literature.

ROCHESTER. [...] I read as much in your eyes. Beware what you express with that organ Miss Eyre, I am an expert at reading its language. (14)

The equation father = Rochester becomes even more apparent.

ROCHESTER. [...] I am old enough to be your father. (15)

Another theme, namely that of the gaze possibly being corrupted to the level of payment is also foreshadowed.

JANE. [...] I am, however, paid to receive your orders. (ibid.)

After reading Jane Eyre to TITE, we find ELLA back with her parents in another sexually charged situation. Outside the carnival procession passes by and while MOTHER, quite in character, disapproves, FATHER explains it as an ancient “fertility right [sic]” (16) and “harmless” (17). Naturally the young girl wants to know what that may be and, when catching sight of TITE who is with the revellers, she wants to join in. MOTHER and FATHER start a discourse about what it means to be a woman in society, how men enjoy freedom while women have to learn to fit in. Of course, that discourse is one-sided. In the midst of this argument MOTHER utters a key question to ELLA:

MOTHER. [...] Who do you think will love you? (17)

This question will echo through the girl's mind for the rest of her life and the rest of the present text. Who will love her, marry her, desire her, gaze at her? It will remain unanswered. While ELLA ruminates on this question, JEAN armed with the hindsight of advanced age gives a lucid description of the gaze as the desire of the other in the sense of both Lacan (desire) and Levinas (definition of self by other).

JEAN. When you are a child you are yourself and you know and see everything. And then suddenly something happens and you stop being yourself. You become what others want you to be. (ibid.)

I would wish to point out another Lacanian element in the text right here. We are still at the point in time when child turns into woman, when the *imaginary* is left behind for the *symbolic*, or at least when the *symbolic* starts taking precedent over the *imaginary*. While ELLA ponders the question of who might love her, she

finishes a piece of embroidery, and JEAN, looking on, tries “to remember the sampler” (17)

JEAN. [...] It wasn't the alphabet ... or a poem ... or a flower. It was ... a... butterfly. (18)

We have to note the regressive hierarchy of terms here: alphabet → poem → flower → butterfly. The *alphabet* is the prototypical vessel of the symbolic order. The *poem* is almost by definition a blending of the symbolic and the imaginary, employing letters to convey images. The *flower* is a pure image, but passive. The *butterfly* is actively alive and as a result vulnerable to being killed.

ELLA. [...] Oh ... oh ... It's broken. (ibid.)

Here the unsettling quality of the *real* can be felt. Death also features in the next scene. Little ELLA discovers that she had a baby brother who died before her birth. She believes that she was only born to right this loss, but since she turned out to be a girl, she could not. That makes her envious of the dead child, she wishes she were dead herself, because:

ELLA. [...] Perhaps if I was dead my mother would cry for me. (19)

In the next scene we are back in the mind of ELLA reading *Jane Eyre*. The famous *burning bed scene* is enacted. This part of Brontë's novel incidentally bears the hallmark of a classical Freudian *primal scene*. The protagonist, Jane, is awakened at night by strange sounds and laughter. She approaches the bedroom of a desirable yet fatherly figure and finds him in a bed *set on fire* by his *wife*. Consequently this wife must be Jane's rival or dark twin that dares to live out what she barely dares to imagine. Since she cannot as yet identify with her lust and substitute herself for the dark mysterious female, the fire has to be extinguished and the secret covered up again. It must have been Grace Poole running rampant.

Here also the first real male gaze in ELLA's life, which she is to experience in the next scene, is foreshadowed by Rochester's words, taken almost verbatim from *Jane Eyre*: “I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you. Their expression [...] did not strike delight into my very inmost heart for nothing.” (Teale. 20)

Next day a GENTLEMAN visitor of her MOTHER's will take erotic interest in the girl or budding woman. Significantly after the burning bed scene MOTHER tells

the GENTLEMAN about the burning of the estate by emancipated and vengeful ex-slaves. ELLA all the while watches the GENTLEMAN and describes him as having “pale green eyes.” She “had never seen anyone so beautiful.” (Teale 21). Thus the first contact is actually made by the girl. Perhaps this stranger will take her father's place and take her away from her terrible MOTHER? *She gives him the eye!* Both in the conventional sense of looking at him full of desire, and by ascribing to him a beautiful eye, the power to gaze at her. She wants to be gazed at and, as JEAN comments, inevitably he does.

JEAN. I knew without looking up that he was watching me. (21)

And, after tantalizing talk about ELLA losing her clothes, he *speaks* what she only *thought*, mirroring her.

GENTLEMAN. Do you know you have beautiful eyes? (ibid.)

Then she knows, that she would “always be watched”, that “her body was [her] only means of survival” (ibid.). But this fate is partly self-chosen, is a result of her desire to be looked at, to be defined, to gain individuality.

ELLA. [...]. That evening I spent hours watching myself in the mirror. Hypnotised. (ibid.)

She fantasizes about the GENTLEMAN watching her and covering her with kisses. She is still full of *images* because the *male other* recognized her by recognizing her power to gaze. MOTHER interrupts these fantasies and ELLA returns to *Jane Eyre*. She reads about another mirror scene in the Victorian classic. Bertha Mason has entered Jane's bedroom before her impending marriage to Rochester and *rips* apart her bridal veil before a mirror. This may be read as the sudden appearance of the Lacanian *real*. Jane will now want to know who this woman, Rochester is trying to hide away, really is.

During the following talk with that child-of-nature, TITE, ELLA gets uneasy about the facts of life. Does one need to be married to get children? She has a fight with her mother about these facts and the facts of poverty. In the face of stark realities she rips apart her embroidery (like Bertha ripped Jane's veil) and leaves the presence (world) of her mother whom she now recognizes as a liar. When MOTHER tries to chastise ELLA, the child flies at her in physical aggression. On stage this scene is played out alongside the confrontation of

Jane Eyre with Bertha Mason in the attic prison whence Rochester has taken his would-be bride after the abortive marriage ceremony. The animal ferocity of Bertha is has a parallel in ELLA's outbreak. From then on BERTHA is ostensibly following ELLA/JEAN around bodily.

Since ELLA "will never learn to be like other people" (26) she is sent away to a convent. And for some time this brings peace. ELLA learns to cherish and preserve her goodness, her virginity, "[t]hat flawless crystal that once broken could never be mended." (27)

JEAN. The convent was my refuge ... from myself. (ibid.)

But a visitor calls. It is the GENTLEMAN coming with bad intent. At first, JEAN tells us, the girl is afraid she would no longer appeal to his gaze. "My eyes are no longer beautiful." (ibid.) But this is far from true. He fills her mind with sexual imagery, tells her that at fourteen she is "[q]uite old enough to have a lover" (28) and touches her breasts. While fanning her sexuality he does not nurture any illusions.

GENTLEMAN. Love is not about happily ever after. It is about violence. Violence and humiliation. I love you. (28)

All this pleases her and she keeps it from her MOTHER. She has entered the symbolic order of the GENTLEMAN. His message is: violence symbolizes love, love equals violence, the gaze is sexual. The parents that could have provided her with another approach to the *real* have failed miserably due to self-prepossession, ignorance and simple lack of affection. ELLA is sent to England to finish her schooling. FATHER is there to see her aboard the ship, MOTHER stays home with a headache, "[l]ocked up in her room with the shutters drawn" (29) – another locked up madwoman in a crazy world.

Arrived in England, ELLA is again confused about the symbolic order. On the train, the stage directions tell us, "[e]veryone [is] hidden behind newspapers" (ibid.), just like FATHER was at home. Real persons hiding behind incomprehensible words and phrases. The orderliness of this realm is nevertheless forcefully pointed out to ELLA in the form of pointless rules of behaviour at the boarding school.

TEACHER. And follow the rules I'm sure we will get along fine. (30)

It is the mainstream symbolic order ELLA is meant to enter. It consists of behaving oneself and learning about “spelling and punctuation. The content of the story was never mentioned” (ibid.). Since she comes from the West Indies and speaks with an accent, ELLA becomes the victim of racist marginalization and discrimination by both teachers and fellow pupils alike. In a world of white people she, whom TITE already abused as a white nigger back home, is suddenly *of colour*. When the girls read *Jane Eyre* in class, the teacher compares ELLA to Bertha Mason. Again she does not fit in. Who will love her?

A nice contrasting of the *imaginary* and the *symbolic* is given by the

TEACHER. For next week five hundred words on the use of flower imagery in chapter forty two. (31)

ELLA wants to get away from the school and tries to enter the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, but due to her incorrigible accent she gets dismissed again soon. Incidentally these details, like any other details about the life of Jean Rhys, are taken out of Angier's biography. While her MOTHER sends her a letter with good advice on as how to acquire a passable husband, ELLA at eighteen sets about leaving the world of words and re-entering the world of looks and gazes and sensuality. She becomes a chorus line in glitzy musical shows. There she is given a new set of rules and guide-lines. Hard work for little pay, no rights but a host of obligations. Interestingly enough in a scene that is all about the wages and expenditures of the theatre girls (34) the word *money* is not used. We read of *shillings* and *six pence*, *money* seems to be reserved for the currency men offer girls in return for certain consolations.

This currency is not long in the waiting. ELLA receives a letter from an admirer and one GIRL advises ELLA to see him on the weekend, because

GIRL 2. They always spend more money at the weekend. (35)

Here it is. As soon as the talk turns to men the word *money* is used. The girl's message is clear: After you *give them the eye*, they will *spend man-eye on you*. JEAN and ELLA prepare themselves to meet the man using a mirror. The man is LANCELOT, Jean Rhys's great love. The importance of this scene warrants its treatment in a separate section.

In a glass, d[sp]arkly: the main mirror scene

Right in the middle of act one of the play we find a highly significant *mirror scene* which is interesting even when viewed out of the Lacanian context. The scene is pivotal to my argument and to understand its texture correctly we have to unravel the intricately interwoven strands of *stage directions* and *characters' speeches*. Thus the real impact can only be felt by the reader and not by the watcher of the play. It is to be found on page 36 of the published text. In this scene JEAN relives her first meeting with "Lancelot, the love of her life" (Angier 37ff). ELLA (the young Jean) and JEAN *mirror* (mimic) each other's movements on stage while viewing themselves in an actual *mirror* (looking-glass). In the stage directions the terms *mirror* and *glass* come to be intermingled in a fascinating and highly suggestive way:

ELLA has put on the dress. She tucks under the cuffs. JEAN *mirrors* her as she looks at herself in the *glass*.

LANCELOT appears on stage. He is dressed in expensive clothes. He is pouring champagne into a *glass*.

[...]

ELLA (looking at herself in the *mirror* of JEAN). (36) (*emphasis added*)

Please note the transformation of terms in the sequence:

mirrors (verb; = mimics) → glass (noun; = mirror) → glass (noun = container) → mirror (noun = looking-glass).

The hub of this wheel of significance is *glass*. This *glass* can be taken to stand for Jean's fragile personality. While ELLA herself and her future self, the narrator JEAN, fill the glass (= mirror) with an image of themselves, an image hopefully pleasing to the male beholder, LANCELOT, he fills the glass (= container) with champagne, something to be devoured. By doing so LANCELOT rejects the authentic other, ELLA, and reduces her to an empty husk. He fills her up with a little attention only to drain her and finally smash her against the wall of his own indifference and helplessness. The forlorn emptiness she will feel after realizing that men will not provide the safety she craves cannot be filled up with *money*. That travesty of acknowledgement, which may be empowering to males in a money-dominated, disillusioned world, acts as cruelty on women who desire to be taken up and enveloped wholly by the male gaze in order that they may be

secure in the exclusive affection of a carrier of the symbolic order. This safety, perhaps, would also mean enjoying the equally exclusive control over such a man and thus the ultimate security of being in charge of life.

During the development of this first meeting with LANCELOT ELLA will start to feel safe. We hear JEAN speak as she remembers that evening.

JEAN. I am safe. I am safe. There is the warm fire and the smell of furniture polish and the thick carpet. There are the servants and the door man and the tall railings. I am safe. I am safe. (38)

Then LANCELOT empowers her by telling her about her *beautiful eyes* which means (in the Lacanian sense) by gazing at you *I desire your gaze*.

LANCELOT. You have beautiful eyes. Did you know that?

He carries her to bed. (38)

Then the drama takes its inevitable next step:

JEAN. Afterwards he put some *money* into my bag when he thought I wasn't *looking*. (38) (emphasis added)

Instead of the male gaze she receives money, the cold *man-eye* the giving of which is supposed to relieve LANCELOT's bad consciousness. Even for ELLA this substitute seems to work at first, filling her up, rounding her. Even though the driver, knowing which business his employer is wont to transact with young ladies, winks at her disrespectfully, she ignores this and her "voice sounds *round and full*. Instead of small and thin" (38). JEAN comments on ELLA's feelings.

JEAN. That was because of the *money*. (38) (emphasis added)

ELLA will spend this *man-eye* on an expensive fur coat and will experience the added esteem this spending power generates amongst her fellow humans. That this power is really gratifying even on a deep level becomes obvious by "BERTHA nestl[ing] her face in the folds of the fabric and sniff[ing] hungrily" (39).

ELLA's improved status is again proven by a looking-glass. When trying on the fur coat at the estimable venue Cohen's, we read:

ASSISTANT. Would you like to *see yourself* in the *mirror*, madam? (39) (emphasis added)

Of course, she would. Since the mirror is the crystallized gaze of others, the proof that having been given man-eye by LANCELOT *has* changed something must be *in there*. The mirror-image shows how *others* perceive us.

She looks at herself in the *mirror*. It is *everything she hoped* it would be. (39) (emphasis added)

The change seems material. It is to be discerned in the *looks* of others she receives when walking home with her new fur-coat on.

ELLA. [...] Everything was different now as I'd known it would be. [...] Men were courteous not *leering*. I saw women in thin shabby clothes *look* at me with envy. Twice somebody asked me for *money*. I felt like a queen. (40) (emphasis added)

As ELLA and LANCELOT find an agreement about their relationship this power of money, and what ELLA really wants, is spelt out by Teale:

JEAN. [...] He gave me *money* every week. It was both humiliating and exciting. I was a kept woman. It meant I belonged to him and I *wanted to belong to him, completely*. (41) (emphasis added)

Of course the substitute is not the real thing and being a demi-monde creature has its immediate drawbacks. MAUDIE, the other chorus girl sharing a room with ELLA, demonstrates these bodily by having a “bruised eye” (41), which she suffered from *her* current paramour and benefactor.

The introductory mirror scene, which takes place before JEAN and her DAUGHTER come face to face, has already been mentioned. It leads up to the ELLA/LANCELOT scene analysed above. It serves the additional purpose of introducing BERTHA as the dreaded dark face looking back at JEAN out of a looking-glass in Dorian Grey fashion.

Further mirrors are encountered when ELLA fantasizes about the GENTLEMAN while posing before the glass immediately before the bridal veil scene from *Jane Eyre*, also including a mirror, is read aloud.

Act One continued

MAUDIE, she of the bruised eye and some worldly wisdom, wants to warn ELLA against becoming dependant on her admirer's affection and urges her to pump him for more money.

MAUDIE. Whatever your do don't fall in love with him. [...] you could do well out of this. [...] When your think he's really fallen. That's the moment to get what you can. (41)

But it is too late.

ELLA. He says he loves me.

MAUDIE. He does does he.

ELLA. I love him. (ibid.)

She has fallen for him instead of the other way round. She is prepared to take *man-eye* for the real thing, for love. Or at least she is too naïve to realize that the substitute and the original cannot co-exist for any length of time. LANCELOT is not aware of the importance of his words and actions, as men often are not. His affection instantly becomes existentially important for the girl.

ELLA *runs to* LANCELOT. [...] BERTHA *nuzzles his hand*.

ELLA. I never wanted to live before I knew you. I always thought it would be better if I died. Why did you make me want to live? [...]

For some time, a spring of love, ELLA enjoys the illusionary comfort and safety of the relationship. JEAN comments that “she had no idea that England could be so beautiful” (42). Like a picture or an *image* made beautiful by everything being *in order*, we are tempted to add. But it cannot last. LANCELOT wants to move on, has to move on, if he wishes to retain his place in his own world, the world of upper class gentlemen amusing themselves by spending some time with pretty and unconnected girls. Gentlemen having liaisons that work on the basis of *money* and can usually be ended by spending some *more money*. He had been taking his flame into society and she had committed a social blunder by telling people that she worked in the chorus. He would prefer her to say that she were “an actress” (42) but she does not understand the significance of appearances.

ELLA. I was only telling the truth.

LANCELOT. Yes but you saw the way he *looked* at you. [...] (ibid.) (emphasis added)

ELLA does not care about this appraising and judging *gaze*, but LANCELOT does. To be seen with an actress is acceptable in his circles, to have a mere chorus line dangling on one's arm obviously is not. The conversation comes to a head: is it about love?

ELLA. Tell me you love me. (ibid.)

He reacts evasive, he cannot understand what his attentions have provoked and how childlike ELLA is for all her outward womanhood.

LANCELOT. *Look* there' something. [...] I'm going to New York [...] but when I come back I ... I don't think we should see one another. (43) (emphasis added)

[...]

LANCELOT. It's not that I don't love you. I do. In fact I think you're worth more than this. (43)

LANCELOT, the man of the world, does not understand that to be loved unconditionally by a man is ELLA's only protection from annihilation, from the real. This is expressed by

BERTHA. [...] Him not understand. Think I want more than I do. As long as I can see him sometime. Whenever. Where ever. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

and

BERTHA. If I never see him again I die. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

LANCELOT offers the old substitute for affection, *money*, which for men of his order seems to be a totally satisfying way out of embarrassing closeness.

LANCELOT. I'll arrange for you to receive some *money* each week. [...] (*Reaches in his pocket for his purse.*) Here's something to tide you over. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

The stage directions tell us that

She stares at the money. He puts it into her pocket. (ibid.)

Even though the end must have been obvious from the start, LANCELOT certainly supposed it to be so

LANCELOT. But you must have known ... [...] That it wouldn't ... It couldn't ... (ibid.)

ELLA (and BERTHA) are completely taken by surprise. They are inhabiting the

imaginary where the *symbolic* significance of receiving *money* from a man, namely that where there is *money* involved there is *no* real appreciation and lasting love, is not and cannot be understood. "He puts the money in her pocket", *she* is completely passive and dependant. She neither rejects the cash nor takes it herself. At least he does *something* with and to her.

After this temporary break-up has smashed ELLA's beautiful *images*, she tries to make some sense of her situation by attempting to enter the *symbolic* order. She writes *letters* to LANCELOT.

JEAN. I found a room. [...] For two days I wrote letters. (44)

While ELLA wants to get LANCELOT to see her again, for "only half an hour" (ibid.) BERTHA speaks and acts out her and ELLA's pure desire for affection which starts to take a decidedly desperate turn.

BERTHA. Me love you. Me love you. Me love you. You can't do this to me. [...] I wish I was your dog [...] lick your shoes and have your beat me ... (ibid.)

ELLA actually writes these words down, words dictated by her dark self, trying to make *him* understand. Of course she does not post these stark lines. She keeps them, though, puts them in a chocolate box and locks them away in a suitcase. Then Teale reproduces a saying of Jean Rhys. "When you've written it down it doesn't hurt so much. But you're finished. A part of you is gone." (ibid.) Thus the authoress describes her creative process. By putting the *imaginary* into words and forcing it into the *symbolic*, she takes away something from the pain it causes her but also from its raw power. During this trade-off art is created. Literature that makes the reader sense the presence of the *real*.

ELLA "want[s] to be dead" and succumbs to self-pity and misery until MAUDIE gets her to go on a double date with her because she feels her friend needs "a laugh" (45). Of course, the encounter between the two young men and women gets physical soon. ELLA lives through the scene, her older self, JEAN, comments on it.

[...] *He begins to undress her.*

ELLA. Why am I doing this?

JEAN. You're *looking* for him. (emphasis added)

ELLA. He's in New York.

JEAN. For a part of him. (ibid.)

For a moment ELLA “resists as he pulls up her skirt” but finally

He has sex with her. Leaves money. (ibid.)

The path she is taking, namely accepting *money* not only from a particular man but from men in general, seems clear-cut to the observer. ELLA, however, is still “shocked” when MAUDIE finds the right words to describe this reality.

MAUDIE. *Never* go back to his. [...] Hotel's best. Make sure he's paid for it mind. [...] (*Picks up money left by MAN.*) You should be charging more than that. (ibid.)

ELLA (*shocked*). I'm not ... I didn't ...

Even after she had had sexual intercourse with a stranger who gave her *money* in return for the act, she does not realize what this game is all about. She is just a child standing before a confusing mirror-image waiting to be acknowledged by a kind parent telling her *that is you, you are wonderful, I love you*.

Meanwhile MAUDIE offers her to mirror *her*.

MAUDIE. You can move in with me if you like. *Look* out for one another. It's safer that way. We'll do well. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

Another complication ensues. ELLA is pregnant, ostensibly she was impregnated by LANCELOT. This is dealt with callously but efficiently by MAUDIE. *Money* is the way out, not suicide as ELLA suggests. That she does not think of the unborn child as being a part of her beloved, a connection with him, or else as a possible lever to be used to coerce his attention, is a clear sign of ELLA's immaturity and infantility even. Becoming a mother is not an option for one who is yet without sense of an operative self.

MAUDIE. I know someone. It'll cost you more because you left it so long. (46)

ELLA writes to LANCELOT about the pregnancy and he sends a cheque to cover the expenses and a big box of chocolates. There is as little thought or talk of acknowledging the child as there is of acknowledging its mother. He even visits ELLA, bringing her flowers and telling her how much he loves her. But soon he reverts to type by returning to New York “without a word” (ibid.) and sending her a letter. It is about *money*, of course. She is to receive a weekly allowance via a lawyer. Having borne his child for some time obviously entitles ELLA to further monetary considerations. Or is he grateful of the fact that by seeking an abortion she did not confront him with his duty as a father with all its

embarrassing side-effects for a man of his class? A course of action that had not even crossed her mind. Nevertheless ELLA feels the sting.

ELLA. Who does he think he is. To pension me off like some servant. (ibid.)

Deep down she is now aware of the facts. BERTHA voices them.

BERTHA. [...] like a prostitute. A whore. Like a slave. (ibid.)

Against MAUDIE's advice she wants to destroy the writ but, of course, in the end she does not.

ELLA. The next day I cashed the cheque. And every week after that. (47)

We may believe that she does so not only, or even mainly, out of materialistic or pragmatic considerations, but because this *money* represents a real connection to LANCELOT, a symbolic surrogate for his loving gaze.

In the following scenes (47 – 49) Teale relates ELLA's meeting and marrying the successful Dutch journalist (and fraudster) JOHN LENGLET during the troubled years of the Great War. Interestingly for this thesis, the whole story of their meeting on a tram, marrying, going abroad and living a high life of luxury in Vienna and Paris after the war is told without any reference to *beautiful eyes*, *male gazes* or *mirrors*. There is no use of these symbols even when ELLA writes to LANCELOT about the marriage telling him that his cheque will no longer be needed. In the play these happy years are plagued by worrying memories, uttered by BERTHA, of ELLA's childhood poverty. It is the memory of once having been a *white nigger*, the nagging feeling that there is no security in present comforts.

I read into the absence of the male *gaze* the fact, that JOHN, perhaps by the very fact of surrounding her with all she wants, is not fulfilling this role is no real successor to LANCELOT. JEAN comments on this purportedly happy time.

JEAN. Oh great God money. (48)

In this grandiose phrase we have to note the capitalization of *God*. Money here seems to be just money for once and has nothing to do with affection or esteem. The image of Mammon on his ultimately toppling throne is too trite to move us. With JOHN it is just about the cash and what it can buy, not about the *symbolic*. Perhaps this could have been a recipe for a less troubled relationship

than that with her *true love*. Also Maryvonne, the real historical person behind DAUGHTER of the play, will spring from this union.

The end of act one of *After Mrs. Rochester* brings us “back into the present” (49), which is 1957, Devonshire. DAUGHTER is still stuck before the door of JEAN's room clamouring to be let in. JEAN still refuses this, claiming to have a “visitor”, who we know to be BERTHA. While DAUGHTER threatens to leave again, we are told by JEAN that ELLA wept when the doctor congratulated her on being with child by JOHN.

Act Two

Even though the two acts are separated by an *Interval*, which in the printed version consists of half-a-page of blank paper, act two returns right to the situation at the end of act one. The cut is so sudden that we may safely surmise it to be deliberate. The action resumes right where it left off on both time levels. We find DAUGHTER “still standing at the door” (51) in 1957 and ELLA and JOHN still sitting side by side with JOHN's hand on his wife's stomach in 1922. There is a striking difference though. ELLA is now described to be “heavily pregnant”, a fact certainly made clear on stage by the use of some theatrical prop. So the viewer, more than the reader of the play, would get the impression that in the 1922 time-line some *months* have passed during the interval while in 1957 *no time* has gone by at all. That may be the main reason for placing the interval at this very point. A suddenly waxing belly would run the risk of appearing comical on stage. Having it come about during the interval seems a rather ingenious device to manage the fact that on the psychological level there is no change in Jean Rhys between being told of her condition and it becoming obvious to the world, while in the real world it inevitably takes many weeks.

The pregnancy and her child, the very DAUGHTER standing before her door right now, is another thing JEAN received from a man. But it is more than cold *money* or real affection even, it is something belonging to the *real*, real empowerment and creativity.

JEAN. Did I want a child?... No.

[...]

JEAN. But [...] I felt a sense of power. (51)

This experience is so close to the *real* that it cannot be understood (by the *symbolic*) or even described in coherent pictures (the *imaginary*).

JEAN. As though I were a magnet. I was absorbed. Exalted. Lost. (ibid.)

A magnet would draw things to itself and absorb them, yet *she* feels *absorbed*. She feels exalted and lost at the same time. What is going on? It is about experiencing the pure fact of living and dying, of being or not being.

BERTHA. The smell of death. Decay. And a fresh ... living smell. (ibid.)

We may notice that at this level of the *real* we find no use of *gazes*, *looks* or *mirrors*, those belong the other orders which are the orders of interaction and showing and giving things to one another. However, ELLA will not be able to make any use of the power she feels. As an outward symbol of this rejection DAUGHTER disappears, goes off-stage.

DAUGHTER. Right. That's it. [...] *leaves* (ibid.)

JOHN LENGLET is found out to be a fraudster, who has lost other people's money, and the couple has to flee the country by night. In the play police officers search their apartment before the flight. Historically this would have to be the Hungarian police (the couple had been staying in Budapest at that time, for biographical details see Angier 103ff) but this probably never happened and Jean and John fled before the authorities could act. Now a big question looms ominously.

ELLA. Where will I have the baby? (52)

The real Jean is going to have the baby in a small Belgian town near Brussels and will be giving it away into the care of a clinic after just two weeks. The empowerment of being really creative, of being a mother will be given away. Of course because of *money*, actually because of the lack thereof. In *After Mrs. Rochester* the rejection of the child, who she gives birth to in “[a] place for people *without money*” (52, emphasis added), is foregrounded even more starkly.

JEAN. [...] When they try to put her into my arms I refuse.

ELLA. I don't like her. I have been too much hurt (ibid.)

Here a case of split personality, of not integrated dynamics, ensues. JEAN is literally “[t]urning on ELLA”. (ibid.)

JEAN. I promise I will come and get her as soon as I have a place to live,
(*Turning on ELLA*) you promise. (ibid.)

And again:

JEAN. You promised. (ibid.)

What about JOHN, the male who did not *gaze* at her with *beautiful eyes*, like LANCELOT and the GENTLEMAN, but who impregnated her and would have made her a mother? He gave her something *real* but, characteristically, precisely at that moment he lost his *money*. They have to hide from the *gazes* of the world, their social esteem is lost.

ELLA. He goes away to *look* for work. If we can get *money* we can get a better room. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

In the following dialogue between JEAN and her earlier self, ELLA, JEAN tries to force ELLA to face the fact that she abandoned her child, her daughter Maryvonne. But ELLA only dwells on her own grievances and failures to be good at any odd job she tries to take on. Her husband gets arrested and “is sentenced to eight months for fraud” (53). That man being powerless behind prisms walls, at least for some time, ELLA seeks out another male. This man will be FORD MADDOX FORD, “famous editor of *The English Review*, discoverer and champion of such wild and shocking young men as D.H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis” (Angier 130). The historical Ford was not only a prolific writer himself but an editor cum mentor to young writers of fiction. He was also, even though married and “fifty, fat and wheezing” (Angier 131) sexually attractive for many women. James Joyce once wrote two verses about him containing this couplet:

*O Father O'Ford you've a masterful way with you,
Maid, wife and widow are wild to make hay with you...* (cited in: Angier 131)

The sequence of first talking about *beautiful eyes* and later turning to, or degenerating into, the giving of *money*, as had been the case in ELLA's relationship to LANCELOT, is reversed in her meeting and interacting with FORD. She takes the “letters she wrote to LANCELOT in Act One” and adds “another twenty pages” (53) and hands the result to FORD. The remains of her

first relationship act as a gateway to her next. Will this one work out differently, even better? The editor rejects the story. It is “too melodramatic”, characters besides the narrator “have no life of their own” because “[t]hey are seen entirely *through her eyes*” (54). FORD, the male, rejects this *literary product of her gaze* at first and wants her to change the text.

FORD. I want you to rewrite. (ibid.)

ELLA cannot bear to be rejected. She needs sustenance, both material and emotional. Sustenance which can only be given by a *male other* acknowledging her. She cries out for the male gaze in its monetary disguise.

ELLA. Money. I need money.

First FORD takes this need at face value.

FORD. I'll pay you two hundred francs. (ibid.)

Those two hundred francs do not come for free. ELLA has to change the ending of her story which describes the suicide of the heroine. FORD does not accept this narrative cul-de-sac, but he likes the young writer's style instantly. It is “[d]ark” and “[t]ruthful”, he has “never read anything like it” (ibid.). ELLA complies with his demands and when she returns to deliver the rewritten version of her letters to LANCELOT, she meets STELLA whom the play presents as “FORD's wife” (55). In actuality Stella Bowen and Ford were not married. The Australian painter, who was one of many women in FORD's life, had been living with the author and editor since 1919, but they never married. So JEAN' s comment in the play: “She was definitely of the species of wife” (ibid.), is a story plot implemented by Polly Teale to paint the contrast between her and ELLA more glaringly than it actually was in real life.

The suicide that did not happen finds a parallel in ELLA's life. She is pulled back from the edge of stark poverty and despair by FORD. He invites her to stay for dinner. During the conversation at table, which turns to the costs of daily living, it is interesting to note that STELLA, as a woman, does not utter the word *money*. She uses *penny* instead.

STELLA. [...] where we live like peasants and never spend a penny. (ibid.)

He however, addressing himself to ELLA, does.

FORD. Stella thinks that *money* is the root of all evil. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

Shortly ELLA will be offering herself to FORD, she will again be a vessel for male attentions. This time *she* herself is providing the symbolic glass, the double nature of which as *mirror* and *drinking vessel* was discussed above. The stage directions tell us that...

JEAN waits on them as if she were a servant carrying a tray with wine and glasses. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

There follows a soliloquy by JEAN about how only rich people complain about the evil nature of money. This passage, though its contents is possibly true, amounts to a strangely out of place exercise in political correctness. It is an excursion into non-Lacanian territory which sticks out from the rest of the text like the proverbial sore thumb. But afterwards the dense interaction continues. FORD starts to fill the girl with attention

FORD (to ELLA). More wine?

ELLA. Yes please. (56)

With STELLA gone to bed, FORD invites or rather pressures ELLA to come and live with them permanently. She is to do translations for him and to learn “how to tell a story” (ibid.) properly. In a give-and-take of long speeches FORD tells her about the *symbolic order* of literature. He lures her into his world of letters, which according to him is all about covering over the *existential angst* described by ELLA.

ELLA. What if life is just [...] [o]ne big mess, with no one to pick up the pieces?

FORD. We are all [...] adrift [...] alone and afraid [...] That is why we write [...] hoping to bridge that great chasm between ourselves and others. To find ourselves in a story. (56-57)

That is precisely what the *symbolic* is there for: to make the ungraspable *real* manageable for the human mind after the childish technique of purely staying in the *imaginary* has ceased to work. We see here a fatherly male who tries to introduce ELLA into this order. This time the father-figure actually wants to empower the young woman to do the symbolizing herself by making her a writer, by refining her as yet uncouth skills. Insofar FORD is a more positive or more developed Lacanian figure than LANCELOT, who did not even try to empower ELLA by taking her into his world, the world of the social upper middle class of the newly rich. He just dallied with her life and foolishly cried at her

misery which he himself was mainly to blame for.

After the philosophical talk

FORD *kisses* ELLA. (57)

The always present BERTHA, dwelling in the *imaginary*, promptly delivers the fitting image.

BERTHA. You are thirsty [...] yet you don't know it until someone hold up water to your mouth and say 'drink'. (57)

Right then, right after he has lured ELLA with offering her a glimpse of the *symbolic* and with giving her an idea of becoming empowered, right when she is like wax in his hands, he tragically reverts to the *imaginary* himself.

FORD. Do you know you have *beautiful eyes*? (57) (emphasis added)

We have come full circle. ELLA does not fetch Maryvonne, the phallic symbol of her creativity and of her empowerment by JOHN, from the clinic but stays with FORD and STELLA and becomes FORD's lover. In the words of STELLA she becomes his creature even.

STELLA. [...] slow to realise they were in love [...] how exciting it can be for a middle-aged man to rescue a foundling (57)

That FORD really acts as a father figure in ELLA's perpetual *mirror-phase* is made clear by him giving her a *new name*, making her to change her name (historically from Ella Lenglet to Jean Rhys). He also really introduces her to the world of published authors.

STELLA. [...] He published her first book of stories [...] Changed her name [...] He created her. (57)

That changing of her name takes her *symbolically* away from her husband LENGLET and her child and creates the personality-rift between ELLA and JEAN. After STELLA has found them out, ELLA wants to leave before FORD “gets sick of [her] and “throw[s] [her] out” (58). There follows a bitter scene between the clandestine lovers. FORD maintains that he “kept off [her]” but that she “did[...] want this as much as [he] did” (ibid.).

FORD. [...] Trailing around the apartment half dressed. Looking at me with *those big eyes*. (57)

Here we read about the *gaze* from another point of view, that of the *male*. The

lascivious, desiring gaze of the young female makes the older man lose his head, endangering his well defined place in the world. But not really. STELLA does “not believe in making scenes about things” (57) and FORD is the one owing the *money* and thus the one able to make a getaway from the painful *real* of love and into the world of crude substitutes.

FORD. Look. You've every right to be like that [...] I've every right to take advantage of it. But don't come to me with all this sob stuff. (57)

Another flimsy illusion is brutally torn apart, another affectionate *male gaze* turns into cold *man-eye*. BERTHA, again finding the correct image, spells it out.

BERTHA. Sob stuff. That's the way *men* talk. They look at you with their *cold eyes*. (58) (emphasis added)

FORD finds ELLA a room at a hotel. He visits her, daily at first, and she “dress[es] up and wait[s] for him [...] [her] heart beating” (59). But this carnal relationship cannot last. FORD always hurries back to STELLA, leaving ELLA an empty vessel in “a room that smells of stale scent.” (ibid.) His esteem and thus his *gaze* is withdrawn, he just keeps her and pays for her.

BERTHA raves about her pain and confusion and ELLA writes down her words, proving that she has not lost touch with the *symbolic* entirely. *If she would just give up her dependency on men*, the reader is tempted to think. But she cannot. Her *mirror-phase* is not complete, it keeps her caught up in abusive relationships. Fear, the stark *real*, stares her in the face.

ELLA. If I could put it into words it might go. Sometimes you can put it into words and get rid of it.

JEAN. But there aren't any words for this fear. The words haven't been invented. (60)

The appreciation of and assessment by *others* is again expressed in terms of the *gaze*. When ELLA, at the instigation of FORD, goes out and visits a café “people *stare* at [her] because [she is] alone” (ibid.) (emphasis added). A woman without a man is not complete in this patriarchic society, she must at least be looking for men, *giving them the eye*. ELLA has fully internalized this notion. She knows the rules which are as strict as those in her old school.

ELLA. Of course I know the rules. I can't go to his house or telephone or put a note through the door. (60)

BERTHA voices more vivid imaginings.

BERTHA. I can't throw a stone through his window. Smash a bottle in his face.
(ibid.)

But her dark self is silenced by JEAN.

JEAN. Be quiet. Shut up. (ibid.)

Instead of placing her aggressions where they perhaps rightly belong, ELLA transfers them to STELLA, the woman she futilely competes with. ELLA's attraction for FORD lies primarily in her not being able to compete with STELLA for the position of partner. Partnership needs a certain equality and autonomy in both parties. What arouses FORD is his seemingly absolute power over this girl, a power her psychological disposition allows him to wield. In fact he is as replaceable for ELLA as she is for him. They are not individuals to each other but temporary functionaries in a tragic farce of the psyche.

FORD. [...] how foolish you *appear* to me when you insult Stella.

ELLA. Insult her. I'd like to kill her. I'd like to smash a bottle over her head and *watch* her ... (61) (emphasis added)

When FORD becomes angry with her, she falls into hysterics and becomes self-abusive asking him to "hit [her] and hurt [her]" (ibid.). They have sex.

Of course, this scene is the end of their relationship. Of course, he tries to pay her off in cold currency.

FORD (hands her a bundle of notes). There is some *money*. It won't last forever but [...] (61) (emphasis added)

She spends this token affection freely, "[j]ust [for] the sensation of spending" (62). But this time it is not like when she purchased the fur coat and felt elated and rounded. She is an empty vessel now and she will not see FORD again. But she must *gaze* at something.

BERTHA. You spend days, weeks, crying. *Staring* at the wallpaper.

ELLA. And after that?

BERTHA. The ceiling.

ELLA. And then?

BERTHA. The wallpaper. (63) (emphasis added)

Just at this time a letter arrives carrying the news that ELLA's mother is dying. She wants to go to her, but the letter had been posted six months before. This time her identity crisis is complete. Being a daughter, a kept woman, a wife and

mother, and finally an authoress-lover of a man of letters, nothing has worked out properly, nothing has worked out at all.

ELLA. Who am I? How did I get here? (*To BERTHA*) Who are you? Where did you come from? (*ibid.*)

These are the questions one faces in experiencing the *mirror phase*. Who is that person in the mirror? Is it another, or is it me, and: where is the difference? At this point ELLA fittingly remembers her one act of real creativity and power.

ELLA. I need to see my daughter.

BERTHA. Fresh. Living ... (*ibid.*) (emphasis added)

To be able to do this she has to change her appearance, to change the way she looks like, the way people perceive her.

ELLA. [...] to see her. I spend [...] putting on make-up [...] clothes. Trying to make myself look like other people.

JEAN. Trying to make myself look like someone who might be somebody's mother. (*ibid.*) (emphasis added)

It seems significant that she tries this now, when her own mother, the one who wanted her to look and be like other people and despaired of it, is dead and gone.

Soon ELLA faces her child. It will be a meeting governed by the *imaginary* order. The child does not recognize her mother, does not even speak to her at first. All is silence between them.

Silence.

ELLA. Let's ... make up a story. You start. (64)

On stage the child does not speak, JEAN speaks in her place.

JEAN (as DAUGHTER). What about.

ELLA. Whatever's in your *imagination*. (*ibid.*) (emphasis added)

The child cannot think of anything and tragically ELLA projects her own dire situation on her daughter by inventing a story about a "woman locked in a room who can't remember how she got there." (*ibid.*) Of course, the child is frightened and tries to hide away. ELLA, "close to tears" (*ibid.*) reverts to the only affection and reassurance she has learned really exists out there – *money*.

ELLA. [...] I'm going to come back for you. I'm going to get some *money* and then [...] (*ibid.*) (emphasis added)

She is back on track, back on her quest for the affection and the acknowledging *gaze* of men. A quest which she knows will most probably end only in the acquisition of money at best. She goes back to England to find a literary agent. She will find one and marry him. This man, Leslie Tilden Smith (for biographical details see Angier 223ff) only features as HUSBAND in Teale's play. The actual Jean Rhys divorced JOHN LENGLET in 1933 and married Smith the year after. Smith was really devoted to Rhys and, though desperately poor most of the time of their marriage, they tried to have Maryvonne live with them. In the play their meeting and relationship is summarized in a dialogue between ELLA and JEAN.

JEAN. [...] find a literary agent.

ELLA. Do I find one?

JEAN. You marry him.

[...]

ELLA. Has he got *money*.

JEAN. No. But he's kind. He loves you. He *can read* your dreadful hand writing. (65) (emphasis added)

So he has got no money but love *and* he is able to make head and tails of her efforts in the *symbolic* realm. He actually acts as a go-between between the extravagant authoress and her convoluted ideas and the ordered world of published literature and “types up [her] novel” (65). Does this relationship have in it the makings of happiness? Can it work out, will it? No, it will not and most likely cannot. ELLA is not mentally stable enough to let go of her creations, to let them out into the world where they will be read, *gazed at* by the public. Just like she was not able to fulfil the role of being a mother to her child, which necessarily involves the bitter sacrifice of giving the child up and letting it lead a life of its own, even helping it along in doing so, ELLA is not able to send forth the offspring of her mind. Always there are “the corrections. And then the corrections of the corrections. And the...” (ibid.). Her tremendous creativity does not become the key to fulfilment and happiness but increases her pain and suffering. She is unable to balance out the *imaginary* and the *symbolic*. The driest of symbols, the *full stop* and the *comma* take on imaginary qualities for her. In the following speech she is reading from one of her manuscripts. Again we encounter the *gaze*, a *gaze* through the panes of a window, a *gaze* that gets

caught up in the structure of the window and does not penetrate outside.

ELLA. [...] I watched it through the window, divided into squares like pocket handkerchiefs. A small tidy look it had. Everywhere fenced off from everywhere else. (*To her HUSBAND.*) There should be a full stop after window, so that the words are fenced in like the meaning. A full stop instead of the comma. (ibid.)

This is an *image* created by the very elements of the *symbolic*. A highly artistic and poetic process to be sure, but taken to the brink of insanity. Anyway it is too late, her HUSBAND has sent the manuscript to the printer's to do her and himself a favour. ELLA is furious. It is not out of choice that she clings to her texts, that she continues to shape and re-shape them.

ELLA. [...] Do you think I have a choice? (ibid.)

In her argument with HUSBAND she accuses him of “doing things behind [her] back” and treating her like “some kind of imbecile” and physically “attacks him.” (66) But her real concern is that she fears that she will be rejected by the beholders of her text.

ELLA. [...] They'll hate it. I know they will. (ibid.)

But the novel is accepted and gets published. Commercially it is not a big success. “A few brave souls” (ibid.) buy it. What do the critics, that wardens of the *symbolic*, write about it? The comments range from “[f]lawless” and “[s]ubtle and tender” at the positive end of the spectrum to a “sordid little story” and “gloom to an incredible degree” (ibid.) at the other extreme. On stage JEAN and ELLA concentrate on the bad reviews and are of one mind: it is BERTHA's fault. The personalized dark side with all its depression and brooding but also its unbridled passion is to blame.

ELLA. (*looking at BERTHA*) That's her fault.

JEAN. Yes.

ELLA. Why is she here?

JEAN. The door's locked. (66-67)

That door being, on a superficial level, the door which Rochester closes on Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

BERTHA. Four walls. A door. Room empty. (ibid.)

But closer at hand and more subtle, it stands for JEAN's study door, which is utilized to shut out DAUGHTER, who is incarnated proof of both JEAN's *real*

creativity and failure as a mother. If that door between the generations could be opened, as it will be opened soon in the play, integration and healing could come about. Meanwhile, inside the study the dialogue between present and past continues with imputations within the person of the fictional Jean Rhys.

ELLA. But why is she here ... with me?

JEAN. You brought her here. (67)

ELLA tries desperately to get the better of the dark side.

ELLA *grabs* BERTHA, *putting a hand over her mouth and wrestling her to the ground*.

ELLA (to JEAN). My daughter's coming. I don't want her to know ... She mustn't ... (ibid.)

JEAN. I know.

ELLA and JEAN manage to subdue BERTHA by feeding her red wine. The meeting of mother and daughter as it happened in the past, i.e. between ELLA and the child-variant of DAUGHTER, now takes place on stage before the face to face meeting of JEAN and the grown-up DAUGHTER will be finally enacted.

As a child ELLA could not comply with her own mother's demand to be *like other people*. But obviously she has completely internalized this demand. For now she wants to put on the mask of normality for her own daughter. ELLA is "[d]oing her best to be 'normal' although she has been drinking." (68) The wine used to put BERTHA to sleep had, of course, to be imbibed by ELLA herself. The dark side is momentarily pacified, but at the price of numbing intoxication. In addressing the little girl, who will not utter a single word in reply, ELLA again walks on the tightrope high above the *real*, swaying drunkenly from the side of the *imaginary* to that of the *symbolic*, not finding her balance.

ELLA. I bought you some books. Story books. With *pictures*. (*She shows her the pictures*.) (ibid.) (emphasis added)

She wants to make a good impression, but is at a loss how to do so "searching for something to talk about." (ibid.) Her suppressed side whimpers pitifully.

BERTHA. [...] Please forgive. Forgive me. (ibid.)

ELLA proceeds to give the child her version of how to become an adult.

ELLA. [...] if you like dressing up. You can pretend to be someone else. Anyone you like. That's what grown ups do [...] (ibid.)

At least that is what she herself is doing at the moment. Dressing up as a normal woman, pretending that she is not drunk and incapable of taking responsibility that little girl. But the girl stays with them. That is not because of her but because of the actions of the male, of the HUSBAND. The scene in question offers the reader a fascinating dance of projecting and mirroring between the characters of the play. When the girl goes “to the toilet [and] locks herself in and won't come out”, just like JEAN locks herself away from DAUGHTER on stage, he “breaks the door down” (ibid.).

JEAN. [...] Fortunately they get on rather well. He's very good with children. (ibid.)

When verbal interaction ceases to function, male force simply smashes the barrier. We should note that DAUGHTER in the time-line of the present does not resort to this possibility even though it would perhaps not be beyond her physical powers. It is just not the way females act according to the established discourse. It would perhaps be a break in *symbolic register*, so to say, and thus could not be deemed a successful solution at all. If this brute male way of establishing contact worked out psychologically in everyday life, is perhaps to be doubted, but it does so in the play. The child remains in the household for some time. But soon insurmountable difficulties arise. DAUGHTER gets in the way of ELLA's work as an authoress, becomes a hindrance to her excessive work habits. HUSBAND and DAUGHTER had been sent away to let her work undisturbed. But because of the rain they return early to find “ELLA in bed with BERTHA writing, surrounded by a sea of pieces of paper.” (ibid.) She is still striving to enter the *symbolic* order, but BERTHA is too close. Her presence compels ELLA to write and write, obscuring the presence and needs of her child.

HUSBAND. She's eight. You haven't said 'hello'

ELLA. I'm. I'm busy. I ... (69)

ELLA is also very upset about the noise her neighbours make and bangs on the floor. BERTHA acts out ELLA's real and more violent desires and shouts aloud. ELLA is shown to wrestle with BERTHA trying to stifle her shouted abuses. But obviously her savage other prevails in the end for we see ELLA in court for abusing a neighbour “us[ing] language so vulgar he refused to repeat it to the

police officer" (70) and physically assaulting him by biting his arm.

ELLA is sent to Holloway prison for penal servitude. BERTHA is with her constantly muttering and talking. "[T]o shut her out. To shut her up" ELLA "ask[s] for books from the library" (71). Among inane volumes of practical advice the prisoner is given a copy of *Jane Eyre*. Rochester's description of Bertha Mason from this novel, complete with the listing of all of that West Indian woman's vices, is read aloud by ELLA while BERTHA "shouts obscenities" (ibid.)

How is ELLA to deal with that ferocious entity in her bosom, an entity that Rochester dubs a "wild beast"? For answer she turns to her older self, JEAN.

ELLA. (to JEAN) What can I do?

JEAN. Write it.

ELLA. What.

JEAN. Her story.

ELLA. My story.

JEAN. Right back. From the beginning. From the start. Everything.

That is what the historical Jean Rhys did. She wrote up Bertha Mason's life in *Wide Sargasso Sea* to give that locked away other of Jane Eyre a voice and a *herstory*. This dialogue leads up to the optimistic finale of *After Mrs. Rochester*. The process of writing down the trauma and the pain and thus of reconciling the *imaginary* with the *symbolic* by creating art is presented as a viable way to erect a wall against the ever threatening *real*.

TITE, the positive *wild one*, reappears and "swipes Jane Eyre from JEAN's hand" - the dusty classic is swept away and the path is opened for a new take on BERTHA, the mad woman in the attic. At the same time DAUGHTER makes her presence known again by knocking on the still closed door.

DAUGHTER. Mother ... I'm still here. (72)

She has not been able to get a taxi and a woman in the village has asked her a haunting question. A question which she has to put to her mother.

DAUGHTER. Mother ... [...] Were we ... Are we ...

JEAN. Yes?

DAUGHTER. Close. (73)

Now DAUGHTER develops a real voice and JEAN starts to listen to her. We

may view this as an important step towards a real relationship, a step out of the quagmire of a neurotic world of self-centredness dominated by inner voices. DAUGHTER, talking through the door, tells JEAN that all the time when her mother had visited her in the convent and had made up stories, she had actually seen through the make-believe and had known the real JEAN, had been aware that she was not allowed to live with her mother because of the dark hidden other by her side, because of BERTHA. BERTHA acknowledges this fact.

BERTHA (*standing*). Yes. (*ibid.*)

TITE *runs*. BERTHA *follows*. (74)

The solution is at hand. The stage directions let the disappearance of BERTHA and the appearance of DAUGHTER happen at the same time.

JEAN watches TITE and BERTHA as they run using the furniture like a landscape.

[...]

JEAN pulls the latch across the door. The door opens. Her DAUGHTER enters the room [which] is in chaos with several weeks hard drinking in evidence. As JEAN starts to write her DAUGHTER begins to clear up.

Gradually the figures of ELLA and BERTHA merge thus integrating psychic energies that were pent up and blocked by trauma. They finally disappear together with TITE into the past, leaving

JEAN and DAUGHTER [...] alone on stage. JEAN writes as her DAUGHTER reads. (74)

Finally JEAN has admitted her child into her own space, has admitted her own living creation into her room and into her mind. They communicate via the written word, via writing and reading and thus are navigating the *symbolic* order successfully. In the play this happens without any male *deus ex machina*. Thus in the end the female protagonists manage alone and are no longer dependant either on the *male gaze* or its materialistic derivative, *money*. Insofar *After Mrs. Rochester* may be read as a positive feminist statement.

Alas, the historical Jean Rhys seems not to have been as fortunate as her alter-ego in the stage adaptation of her biography.

The mango: changeable symbol of the male and its absence

Normally the mango (*Mangifera indica*) is, quite understandably, considered a female symbol not only in Europe but also in the Caribbean islands where *Wide Sargasso Sea* is set.

Thus, across the English-speaking Caribbean long and hard foods like sugarcane are seen as an appropriate metaphor for an erect penis while a juicy, ripe mango is considered the best representation of a woman's genitalia. (Spang 2011)

Nevertheless I will undertake to show that once we leave behind the imaginary and its superficial likening of things to each other on the basis of appearances, not to say *looks*, the mango may well turn out to be used as a symbol for the male in a certain context. This context is the symbolic realm of letters and words where we first see and react to the printed word before we let our imagination run rampant on the pictures that may have been evoked after processing the same letters and words. It is a context where the sexes are not necessarily defined by the conventional shape of their procreational organs and a *cigar is just a cigar*.

In *After Mrs. Rochester* we encounter the mango at a time when the *male goes away*, when FATHER completely fails in his role as Lacanian *père* inciting the wrath of his frustrated wife. Mango becomes *man-go* or *no man here*. Since there is no male at the table, mangos are also forbidden, they shall rot where they drop. Perhaps, in being a symbol for the absence of man, the mango may here also act out its traditional role as a symbol of its opposite, the female presence. But the situation is not so easy and the presence of the female without the male would be a rotten one according to the text. It is the scene at the breakfast table (12-13) in which FATHER hides behind the newspaper and rejects to act out his authority to regale the lazy servant or to chastise his daughter according to the wishes of MOTHER. Things have come to such a pass that MOTHER threatens to take the male power into her own hands, a move she neither wants to take nor will be able to effectively.

MOTHER [talking of the servant]. She can't afford to keep the children she's got. Lord knows what she wants another one for. If you don't say something to her, I will. (13) (original emphasis)

But she will not speak just yet. Since the FATHER refuses to utter ordering words, silence reigns.

Silence as META enters with a large tray and places it on the table. (ibid.)

Enters the mango. It is symbol of FATHER's negligence of his male duties to keep ELLA in line and as such it grows hateful to MOTHER who will ban it from the house.

ELLA reaches out and takes a mango from the fruit bowl. She peels it with her teeth and sucks at the juice. MOTHER drags ELLA from her FATHER's knee. (ibid.)

MOTHER cannot bear this savage and untamed behaviour and appeals almost pleadingly to the male gaze.

MOTHER. *Look at her, eating like an animal. [...]*

[...]

MOTHER (to FATHER). You see. You see now what happens. Letting her run wild. [...] (ibid.) (emphasis added)

But FATHER remains silent and is not prepared to set up and uphold the rules of civilization as would be proper. At this point the mango becomes a symbol of the failure of her husband and it must go. If the male will not speak, MOTHER will set herself up in his place as law-giver and ban the offending fruit.

(To META). There will be no mangos at the breakfast table. There will be no mangos in the kitchen. There will be no mangos in the house. Do you understand. (ibid.)

Is this act of repression likely to work? Facts do not just disappear if we remove them from our sight and consciousness. Things hidden away tend to go ripe and then bad. The text duly bears this out.

META. What happens when them drop from the tree?

MOTHER. They rot. [...]

JEAN. They lay swollen and sticky. Littering the ground like tiny bloated corpses buzzing with flies. (ibid.)

I will return to the *corpses* later. After this incident affairs in the household go from bad to worse. MOTHER's word has become the *nom-* and *non-du-père*.

JEAN. [...] Every morning in the sticky heat we ate porridge. It was not as strange as it sounds. Everything we owned came from England. Our clothes, our food, our newspapers. (ibid.)

And for once FATHER's male gaze is lifted from the newspaper, but the words

he utters are a damning testament to his absentmindedness. He is the man that is not here, the man-go.

FATHER. (looking up from his newspaper). Grace has got another century at Gloucestershire. (ibid.)

After which irrelevant bit of cricket news, ELLA can but turn to her favourite book for support.

ELLA *opens Jane Eyre and begins to read.* (ibid.)

Jane Eyre – another story about absent, dead and therefore impotent fathers, cruel foster-mothers and the quest for recognition by the male gaze. In that classical case the heroine will manage to attain empowerment when the male is finally blinded and has to depend on her care completely. ELLA/JEAN will never be so lucky or mature, however.

Why now does MOTHER in *After Mrs. Rochester* struggle so hard to uphold an essentially patriarchic system without the patriarch? I will answer my own rhetorical question with a counter question. What else is she to do? For a grown woman with the fully developed habitus (I use the term according to the intentions of Bourdieu) belonging to the colonial upper middle class *going native* is just not an option, it is not even possible. She *has* to instate herself as a pseudo-male which can, of course, hardly work out psychologically. Perhaps it could if FATHER was actually away or dead, but not with him sitting at the breakfast table acting the ostrich. Polly Teale gives her thoughts about the dark mother figure in Rhys's life and in her play in the introductory interview included in the published volume of *After Mrs. Rochester*.

I wanted Jean's mother to represent that whole system. The fear that underlay so much of the way the colonials behaved – their obsession with control and order in the face of the unknown. Although she behaves monstrously, I see her as a tragic figure born to a regime that was based on repression. (viii)

If MOTHER is a monster, FATHER is certainly shown to be a freak with the child being the sufferer of not being enabled to enter the symbolic aided by capable parents.

Further uses of the mango

As mentioned above ELLA's black childhood-companion TITE acts as a positive role-model of unrestrained frolic, freedom and noble savageness in TEALE's play. JEAN, as narrator, introduces this character thus:

JEAN. I was not allowed to play with Tite. She could peel a mango with her teeth. Fires always lit for her. Sharp stones didn't hurt her feet. She would laugh like crazy. I never once saw her cry. (8)

In her memories this child of former slaves is even endowed with almost magical properties and abilities – a stereotype commonly used for othering the racial other still more. And it is indeed impossible for ELLA to become like TITE as Rhys artistically points out in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It is the scene of the last meeting between the girls just after a black mob has burned down the Coulibri estate. They find themselves on opposite sides. The erstwhile suppressed ex-slaves have turned with murderous ferocity on their former lords and there is no bridge between their respective worlds.

Then, not so far off, 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. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. 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 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. (Rhys 24)

That both crying and cruel face in the mirror cannot be or become Antoinette's (that is ELLA's name in *Wide Sargasso Sea*) own face. She will not be accepted by either side and will end up in Rochester's attic until she finally does follow the example of Tia's people and sets the torch to her oppressor's and incarcerator's house. The Lacanian implications of this scene have also briefly been dealt with by Smith (2000. xxi).

In fact Jean Rhys does not use a positively connotated mango in her description of Tia's (TITE's) and Antoinette's (ELLA's) youthful games in the first place.

Then Tia would light a fire (fires always lit for her, sharp stones did not hurt her bare feet, I never saw her cry). We boiled green bananas in an old pot and ate them with our fingers out of a calabash and after we had eaten she slept at once. (Rhys 9)

So before it gets laden with Lacanian meaning later on, the *mango* makes its first appearance in *After Mrs. Rochester* as a conventional symbol of rejoicing in the world's immediate and simple pleasures. The child ELLA demonstrates this symbolic content when she tries to peel a mango the same way TITE does while sitting on her FATHER's knee at breakfast. For MOTHER it becomes much more than that, it becomes a symbol of her husband's and therefore indirectly her own failings. If there is no man (man equaling order), there shall be no *mango* (mango equaling pleasure) also.

But it gets deeper still. In the scene when ELLA finds out that there was a baby, a baby-brother who died before she was born, and she sees her MOTHER dishevelled and bent with grief petting the dead child's garments, we are told that "that baby is under the stone beneath the mango-tree" and "that is why our garden is haunted." (Teale 19). We have to remember the description of the fallen mangos around the tree as being *like tiny bloated corpses*. MOTHER perhaps views and feels the death of the infant as her own failure within the order of things, her damning failure as a wife to present her husband with an heir. The *mangos* from a tree growing out of the child's grave must remind her daily of this pain and when FATHER does not act according to the habitus she heaps her own guilt on him via projection. ELLA's main fault, of course, is not having turned out to be boy. The *mango* she wants to suck on luxuriously becomes unbearable for MOTHER. Why does this girl live to eat a *mango* while the boy has died on her? The boy is gone and the husband has retreated into his paper world of English cricket news, so the *mango* has to go, too.

The next *mango* tree we encounter in the play features in an allegedly direct quotation from *Jane Eyre*. After her disturbing encounter with the VISITOR ELLA reads from this her favourite book.

ELLA (reading). I walked amidst the dripping *mango* trees of my wet garden. Amongst its drenched pomegranates and pineapples. Mosquitoes hummed ... (24) (emphasis added)

The discerning reader pauses and asks himself if there really were *mangos* in Rochester's narrative about meeting and marrying his first wife in the West Indies. Let us have a look at the actual passage as written by Charlotte Brontë here for comparison.

While I walked under the dripping orange-trees of my wet garden, and amongst its drenched pomegranates and pine-apples, and while the refulgent dawn of the tropics kindled round me [...] (Brontë 305)

Since I believe we can safely discount the possibility of either ELLA or Polly Teale having perused an abridged or modernized version of *Jane Eyre*, this adaptation of the original seems significant. The *mango* is clearly meant to be symbolic in *After Mrs. Rochester*. Young Rochester's garden is said to have contained *mango* trees just like the one of JEAN's childhood. The *mango-ing* of *Jane Eyre* continues in the following scene. ELLA has entered school in England and the girls are said to be "studying Jane Eyre." (30)

[...] *They are reading aloud.*

SCHOOLGIRL. [...] I fell instantly in love with that tropical with that tropical clime where the light is golden and the air is warm. *Mangos* grow on the trees Jane. [...] She was an exquisite creature. Raised to enchant. To seduce. To entice. A marriage took place before I knew it. (ibid.) (emphasis added)

Of course these words are not to be found in any non-fictional volume of *Jane Eyre*. Brontë's Rochester never fell in love with "that tropical clime", nor did he see (or remember) any *mangos* there. We quote from the original text:

When I left college, I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. [...] I found her a fine woman [...] I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited [...] Her relatives encouraged me; competitors piqued me; she allured me: a marriage was achieved almost before I knew where I was. (Brontë 303)

Teale is making up a whole section of *Jane Eyre*. The sentence containing the appellative *Jane*, a feature that stresses the (fictitious) authenticity of the section, also contains the reference to *mangoes* underlining their importance as a symbol in the play. Does this symbol involve a simile, an image comparing Bertha (Antoinette) to fruit from the forbidden tree? Was Rochester seduced by a latter day Eve to sacrifice his cool English detachment to erotic abandon in the hot and heady environment of the Caribbean? In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Antoinette certainly is described to have grown up in a

[...] garden [that] was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. (Rhys 6)

If this is the case, we have to deal with the *mango* in *After Mrs. Rochester* as a real motley symbol changing between the imaginary (*mango* as representative

of female allure and genitalia) and the symbolic (*mango* as *man-go*, absence of the male). As mentioned above this equation of the *female* being the *absence of the male* is psychologically neither impossible nor surprising.

The second and third Jane Eyre: Teale quoting Teale

Let us make a further endeavour at textual criticism at this point. In her creative quoting process Polly Teale does, of course, not use a corrupted version of *Jane Eyre*, neither does she rely on her own, perhaps faulty, memory of the text. She actually quotes her *very own version* of the classical narrative. In the late nineties, some years before she decided to work on the life of Jean Rhys, Teale wrote and staged a theatrical adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's novel. The play, also a *Shared Experience* production in name and style, was first performed in Ipswich in 1997 and published as a paperback by Nick Hern in 1998 (Teale, *Jane* 5). But even between the two text versions by Teale, which we could dub *pseudo-Jane Eyre 1* (found in *Jane Eyre* from 1997) and *pseudo-Jane Eyre 2* (found in *After Mrs. Rochester* from 2003) there are differences. Let us go back to Mr. Rochester's explaining to the shaken and cruelly disillusioned Jane, how he ever got married to Bertha Mason in the first place.

Pseudo-Jane Eyre 1:

ROCHESTER. You consider me accounted for, is that? You consider me married? It was my father who contrived for us to marry. She possessed a great fortune and he was a grasping ambitious man. I arrived in *Spanish Town*, a young man full of the excitement of six weeks on the open seas. I fell instantly in love with that tropical clime where the light is golden and the air warm. *Oranges* grow on the trees Jane. There are flowers that open at night and blaze like fires. It was as if I had arrived in Paradise. She was then just seventeen and a great beauty. (Teale, *Jane* 66) (emphasis added)

A completely different story is told in the original *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, from which I quote here more fully than above:

"[...] When I left college, I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. My father said nothing about her money; but he told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie. I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram: tall, dark, and majestic. Her family wished to secure me because I was of a good race; and so did she. They showed her to me in parties, splendidly dressed. I seldom saw her alone, and had very little private conversation with her. She flattered me, and lavishly

displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments. All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her. There is no folly so besotted that the idiotic rivalries of society, the prurience, the rashness, the blindness of youth, will not hurry a man to its commission. Her relatives encouraged me; competitors piqued me; she allured me: a marriage was achieved almost before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act!—an agony of inward contempt masters me. I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature: I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners—and, I married her:—gross, grovelling, mole-eyed blockhead that I was! With less sin I might have—But let me remember to whom I am speaking.” (Brontë 302-303)

But we may also note significant differences between the two versions of Rochester's tale as written by Polly Teale.

Pseudo-Jane Eyre 2, also in a fuller version of the quote given in the previous chapter, runs thus:

SCHOOLGIRL. Just give me a few moments Jane. That is all I ask. Just a few moments and you shall see how the case stands. I arrived in the *West Indies*, a young man full of the excitement of six weeks on the open seas. I fell instantly in love with that tropical clime where the light is golden and the air is warm. *Mangos* grow on the trees Jane. There are flowers that open at night and blaze like fires. It was as if I had arrived in Paradise. She was an exquisite creature. Raised to enchant. To seduce. To entice. A marriage took place before I knew it. (Teale, *After* 30-31) (emphasis added)

The insertion of *West Indies* for *Spanish Town* (in Jamaica) becomes necessary because Jean Rhys was born on Dominica and *After Mrs. Rochester* deals with Rhys's youth, while the island-home of Bertha Mason is Jamaica. For the biographical play the focus has switched from Jamaica to Dominica, so Rochester gets redirected or his destination gets shrouded in any case, ex post. The next change is in the description of Bertha/Antoinette. From being sweet “seventeen and a great beauty” (Teale, *Jane* 66) the enticing lady is made into an “exquisite creature. Raised to enchant.” (Teale, *After* 30-31). A difference necessitated by the description given of Antoinette from Rochester's point of view in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

She was sitting on the sofa and I wondered why I had never realized how beautiful she was. Her hair was combed away from her face and fell smoothly far below her waist. I could see the red and gold lights in it. She seemed pleased when I complimented her on her dress and told me she had made it in St. Pierre, Martinique. (Rhys 49)

We also may observe that the *mango* grew on the text between the two

versions. While in Teale's stage adaptation of *Jane Eyre* Rochester uses *oranges* in colourfully painting for Jane the natural lures of the West Indies as a background for its more carnal temptations, these are supplanted by the discussed mangos in *After Mrs. Rochester*. Why is that? I can offer two explanations, both of which may actually contribute to the fact. Firstly, Teale seems to want to present a thoroughly positive image of the West Indies throughout her work. Mr. Rochester has to be in love with the islands, the natives, ex-slaves and coloured creoles in BERTHA's/Antoinette's youth are made out to be noble savages revelling innocently in the natural beauty of the islands which are stylized to be a counter world to the puritanical Victorian England of the colonizers.

This takes certainly legitimate, but also rather liberal liberties with the original text. The Rochester of Brontë never talks exotic fruit before he decides to flee back to Europe not out of a paradise but from exile and damnation. Again in a fuller version of the quotation given above:

A wind fresh from Europe blew over the ocean and rushed through the open casement: the storm broke, streamed, thundered, blazed, and the air grew pure. I then framed and fixed a resolution. While I walked under the dripping *orange-trees* of my wet garden, and amongst its drenched pomegranates and pine-apples, and while the refulgent dawn of the tropics kindled round me—I reasoned thus, Jane—and now listen; for it was true Wisdom that consoled me in that hour, and showed me the right path to follow. (Brontë 350) (emphasis added)

Not *mangos* but *oranges*, and growing in a garden he has decided to flee from. Never was he enamoured with the tropics as he, in his Tealian incarnation, tells Jane to have been.

These very oranges are still in pseudo-Jane Eyre 1 but get transformed into mangos in pseudo-Jane Eyre 2. The astringency and sourness of the citrus fruit is exchanged for the uncompromising sweetness of the mango.

A similar critical tone as regards the merits of the West Indies reigns in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Here we read the thoughts of young Rochester as he accompanies his newly wed wife to their honeymoon retreat.

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. And the woman a stranger. (Rhys 42)

The second reason why the mango plays a prominent and conspicuous part in *After Mrs. Rochester* may perhaps also be found in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. While the first part of the novel gives the story of Antoinette's childhood and is told from her viewpoint, the narrators of part two are both young Rochester and grown Antoinette Mason. At its outset the reader finds himself in the mind of the English bridegroom on his way to his "honeymoon house" (Rhys 39). He tells of his marriage not in terms of joy and expectations both in those of battle and finality.

So it was all over, the advance and the retreat, the doubts and hesitations. Everything finished, for better or for worse. There we were, sheltering from the heavy rain under a large mango tree, myself, my wife Antoinette and a little half-caste servant who was called Amélie. (Rhys 39)

They are *under a mango-tree* as one may be *under a shadow* of doubt and danger. It may shelter them from the rain but cannot shelter them from the misunderstandings, madness and despair that they will soon suffer instead of the happiness or at least tolerable comfort and safety they had hoped for.

The tropics- a dubitable paradise

Polly Teale's strong effort to turn the West Indies into an exotic paradise can also be observed in the first scene of her play *Jane Eyre*. This effort serves the purpose of creating a rather simplistic or didactic dichotomy of a detached and inhibited Europe of the colonizers versus an unrestrained and lusty island paradise of the colonized and ex-slaves, a dichotomy which is not present in the hypo-texts and inter-texts of her plays. In the classic *Jane Eyre* little Jane tries to escape her dreary existence at Gateshead by devouring the wood engravings in Bewick's famous *History of British Birds*. In the original novel scenes of Arctic desolation catch the child's attention.

I returned to my book—Bewick's *History of British Birds*: the letterpress thereof I cared little for, generally speaking; and yet there were certain introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as a blank. They were those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of "the solitary rocks and promontories" by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded with isles from its southern extremity, the Lindeness, or Naze, to the North Cape—

“Where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls boils round the naked, melancholy isles of farthest Thule; and the Atlantic surge pours in among the stormy Hebrides.”

Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with “the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space,—that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole, and concentrate the multiplied rigours of extreme cold.” Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking. (Brontë 10)

These lines may presage the Gothic vistas of Thornfield Hall and its surrounding moors over which Jane will have to flee and on which she will almost die of hunger and exposure. In vain do we look for images of the tropics, of warmth and ripening fruit in Jane’s childhood fantasies. Pseudo-Jane Eyre 1 turns Bewick’s erudite tome of utter Britishness into an anonymous “large book” (Teale, *Jane* 7) which contains *both* the ghastly fearsome Arctic realms and, in stark relief, the tropical paradise of the Caribbean. After reading part of the text quoted above, the JANE of Teale’s play “shivers” (ibid.) and her passionate alter-ego BERTHA takes the book away from her.

JANE *shivers*. BERTHA *takes the book and turns to her favourite page*.

BERTHA. The tropical clime of the West Indies has been described as a paradise on earth.

JANE. The sunshine and heavy rainfall give rise to abundant growth.

BERTHA. *Plucks imaginary fruit from the air and feeds it to JANE*.

Oranges and pineapples grow on the trees. Huge tropical flowers scent the air. The sea is warm as a bath and the light is golden day in, day out. (ibid.)

It gets more sensuous still when JANE reads about “the women [who] dance and sing to bring the rains” and shows BERTHA “a picture of a naked woman dancing” (ibid.). The girls act out the dance and mimic waves and hurricanes with their bodies, until they are interrupted by JANE’s hateful foster-brother JOHN REED.

Of course, we have to remember that in this play BERTHA is made out to be JANE's repressed emotional and sexual other, the dark one she is afraid of and is not permitted to show in a Victorian world of repression. It is actually an interesting twist to have this dual nature of a protagonist not only represented on stage by having two actresses for two sides of the personality of one and the same person, but to have it also represented in the symbolic world of the book in which the double-faced girl reads.

I can, however, not refrain from commenting on the naiveté of the noble savage topic. Even though the eclectic mystery religions of the Caribbean, with their deities taking possession of their devotees, are certainly full of ecstatic and not only covertly sexual dances, a “rain dance” will hardly be met with in a climate where water is rather too plentiful. The average yearly rainfall in Dominica is among the highest in the Caribbean and the world. The making of rain belongs to the magical traditions of more arid areas of the globe and is commonly found in Africa, Europe and North America.

Also, even if Bewick's work contains, perhaps surprisingly, a tail-piece engraving depicting a man “[t]hat Pisseth Against a Wall” (see wikimedia.org for a reproduction) it certainly does not contain any pictures of naked women.

Teale is not alone in this modern mystifying exoticism. One of her main sources, Angier's biography of Jean Rhys, falls into a similar trap. Even though Angier hastens to put the shadow right beside the light in her description of Rhys's island home:

And nowhere on earth are life and beauty more abundant than on the island of Dominica where Jean Rhys was born.

[...]

All this careless, cannibal life is beautiful, but also sinister. 'Beauty and violence, beauty and decay: that was the island,' wrote another Dominican novelist, Phyllis Shand Allfrey. (Angier 3)

She gets still carried away by romanticism, when she claims that:

The rain forest of Dominica is so dense and wild it is still mostly unexplored. (ibid.)

As everywhere else on earth so on Dominica humans are relentlessly encroaching on natural habitats and conservation efforts by the government and

international organizations are needed to protect what little is left of them. And even if

Dominica is the largest and most pristine of the Windward Islands, boasting high species diversity and endemism. (Reillo & Durand 53)

its rainforests can hardly be called *unexplored*.

The Jane of canonical *Jane Eyre* harbors not tropical but highly Nordic and, perhaps morbidly, forbidding fantasies possibly inspired by her Thanatos. They are not of paradise, but of *Paradise Lost*. During her first in-doors meeting with Mr. Rochester she shows her employer, on his demand, her portfolio of bleak and brooding sketches.

These pictures were in water-colours. The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as my pencil could impart. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn. (Brontë 127)

The first image is of a cormorant, which was a well-known symbol of a “greedy fellow, a glutton” (Webster 407) for readers in Brontë's time and it is commonly taken to act as a preview of Jane's rival, Blanche Ingram, going about its grisly business of robbing a hapless corpse.

The second picture contained for foreground only the dim peak of a hill, with grass and some leaves slanting as if by a breeze. Beyond and above spread an expanse of sky, dark blue as at twilight: rising into the sky was a woman's shape to the bust, portrayed in tints as dusk and soft as I could combine. The dim forehead was crowned with a star; the lineaments below were seen as through the suffusion of vapour; the eyes shone dark and wild; the hair streamed shadowy, like a beamless cloud torn by storm or by electric travail. On the neck lay a pale reflection like moonlight; the same faint lustre touched the train of thin clouds from which rose and bowed this vision of the Evening Star. (ibid.)

No lush forests here, also, or bath-like seas. The second image is derived from Greek mythology and is placed correctly by Rochester at once.

Where did you see Latmos? For that is Latmos. (ibid.)

The third one, even though Jane claims that

The subjects had, indeed, risen vividly on my mind. As I saw them with the spiritual eye, before I attempted to embody them, they were striking; but my hand would not second my fancy, and in each case it had wrought out but a pale portrait of the thing I had conceived. (Brontë 126)

is simply an illustration of some of Milton's darkest verses. An illustration of Death himself who is introduced by the blind poet significantly on line 666 of book II of *Paradise lost*. Brontë herself acknowledges this inspiration by putting Milton's words between quotation marks.

The third showed the pinnacle of an iceberg piercing a polar winter sky: a muster of northern lights reared their dim lances, close serried, along the horizon. Throwing these into distance, rose, in the foreground, a head,—a colossal head, inclined towards the iceberg, and resting against it. Two thin hands, joined under the forehead, and supporting it, drew up before the lower features a sable veil, a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair, alone were visible. Above the temples, amidst wreathed turban folds of black drapery, vague in its character and consistency as cloud, gleamed a ring of white flame, gemmed with sparkles of a more lurid tinge. This pale crescent was “the likeness of a kingly crown;” what it diademed was “the shape which shape had none.” (Brontë 126)

Dark imaginings for a young lady, indeed. Even the hardened and haunted Mr. Rochester is taken aback.

“Were you happy when you painted these pictures?” asked Mr. Rochester presently. (ibid.)

But Jane identifies with her work, death and paradise lost have been the daily fare of her young life up to this point and will continue to be so for some time yet.

“I was absorbed, sir: yes, and I was happy. To paint them, in short, was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known. (ibid.)

For a further analysis of the above scene and of the role it plays in Teale's plays let us return for a space to the comparison of pseudo-Jane Eyre 1 and pseudo-Jane Eyre 2. The main idea in *Jane Eyre* by Teale is to paint BERTHA as the dark and repressed side of intellectual Jane which leads to BERTHA being present up to the very happy ending when almost blinded ROCHESTER and JANE are finally united, leaving them on stage as a contented threesome.

ROCHESTER *kisses JANE's hand*. BERTHA *pulls his hand towards her face, guiding his fingers over her hair, cheeks, eyes, mouth and neck*. ROCHESTER and JANE *kiss*. (Teale *Jane* 85)

Whether this interpretation is a correct one (as far correctness goes in literary interpretation) is a question not so easily answered as main-stream feminist theory may have us believe. The Jane of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* seems to be an admirably rounded character complete with both impressive strengths and aspirations and foibles, self-doubt and dark childhood secrets as well. She is capable of love and hatred and acts first childish, then maidenly and finally motherly. In my opinion Mr. Rochester is much more in need of a dark side making a personified appearance in the world. It is *his* house, where the mad woman is kept, so there is certainly something wrong upstairs with *him*. He has lived the outrageous life of an incorrigible rake but is not aware of it, all his grievances seem to have been foisted on to him by others, by his father and by various females. He actually believes to be doing good by keeping Bertha locked up in a tiny chamber away from society. He is married to his own madness and wants to take yet another woman down the path to disgrace by making her his mistress without cleansing his mind of the depravity and evil lurking there. Not before he becomes blind and crippled and has finally realized that he is not in charge of his life, when his dark side has perished in the burning and downfall of his father's mansion, does love come to him as grace and deliverance.

But let us turn back to Polly Teale. When it comes to *After Mrs. Rochester* we may distinguish between two main thrusts or topics, one conscious and overt and one subconscious and covert. The overt thrust being to show that via creative writing and transforming her experiences into autobiographical novels Jean Rhys manages to overcome her childhood traumata and the fallacies of her adult life. BERTHA, impersonating JEAN's dark yearning for being wild and free and belonging to the black people of her home island, gets integrated and thereby disappears into her past while she makes contact with her real DAUGHTER. The covert topic, as I have tried to uncover in this thesis, is simply Lacan's mirror-phase and how and why it has not been successfully concluded leading to an unhealthy dependency of the heroine on the male gaze.

A token of the first topic is that BERTHA is no longer present in the end, she has joined hands with ELLA and both have run away into the landscape of JEAN's youth. DAUGHTER remains on stage and reads from her mother's manuscript

communicating with her in the symbolic order which those two women have now conquered without further aid from any male. A sure token of my Lacanian interpretation of the more recent play is that the *gaze* has entered the text in pseudo-Jane Eyre 2. The second meeting of employer and governess as given in *After Mrs. Rochester* repeats ROCHESTER's powerful words in a form tolerably akin to the original. I place both versions here one beneath the other.

ROCHESTER. [...] You are silent. You think me insolent. You think I have no right to command you in such a way. I read as much in your eye. Beware what you express with that organ, Miss Eyre, I am an expert at reading its language. (Teale 14).

In *Jane Eyre* this comment is actually made several weeks after the second meeting and it reads thus:

Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man, Miss Eyre; one of the better kind, and you see I am not so. You would say you don't see it; at least I flatter myself I read as much in your eye (beware, by-the-bye, what you express with that organ; I am quick at interpreting its language). (Brontë 136-137)

What is important for the present study is that in Teale's stage adaptation of the classical matter the gaze is completely missing. There is no reference to it in Pseudo-Jane Eyre 1. The *gaze* is a feature of *After Mrs. Rochester* entirely.

A book dissected

I will now take a closer look at further structural and textual features of the published text and try to offer some psychological insights that may be gained thereby. The cover design and any illustrations will find no room here since they may change from one edition to the next and cannot be considered part of the text proper. This is particularly true since the author him- or herself more often than not has no say in the final appearance of a volume.

The Devil Man

The first feature I want to draw the reader's attention to is the name of the publishing house: *Nick Hern Books*, theatre publishers and performing rights agents. Both *Nick* and *Hern*[e] being designations for the devil, it is a name that might raise eyebrows and send a shiver down the spine of the knowledgeable. *Old Nick* is widely known as denoting the Evil One.

Nick, n. the Devil; Satan: usually *Old Nick*. (Webster 1210)

Herne is the name of an a little more obscure nature spirit akin to Jack-in-the-Green. He makes his first literary appearance in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act 4, Scene 4).

MISTRESS PAGE.

There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle
And makes milch-kine yield blood and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received and did deliver to our age
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

(Shakespeare)

Herne the Hunter has cropped up as a synonym for the Devil ever since. For modern Bohemians and artists the main feature of the Devil is, of course, his ostensible non-conformist nature as an entity who would not serve authority

(*non serviam*). A fitting name, one would think, for a publishing house dealing with “some of the most exciting emerging writers.” (NHB website).

On the other hand, since *Nick Hern* is at the same time simply the name of the firm's proprietor and publisher, this may all just prove to be a Gothic red herring. Nevertheless, the very first printed words of the book set the tone for the reader of the play. *Jane Eyre* can certainly be described as a Gothic novel and *Wide Sargasso Sea* is also full to the brim with elements of the uncanny. Being published by the *Devil Man* may be *After Mrs. Rochester* subconscious contribution to the tradition. At any rate, Teale sees the character of JEAN as “rebellious” and “misunderstood” (Teale. Vii) cast right in the mould of the angel who would not bow to man.

A programmatic programme

On pages vii to ix we find a brief background interview with Polly Teale, reprinted there from the original theatre programme. The message conveyed by this interview is that the present play is actually about Jean Rhys, i.e. not about Bertha Mason, Jane Eyre or any allegorical figures, but about the historical West Indian authoress. The full title of the play and book, as printed on the published text, theatre programmes and the educational pack released for schools and teachers, also runs: *After Mrs. Rochester, the story of Jean Rhys, author of Wide Sargasso Sea*.

What made you decide to write a play about Jean Rhys?

I read Jean's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* whilst doing research [...] (vii)

That the point of view taken in the play is Rhys's, is borne out by Teale describing the anti-heroine's situation in life as being that of a

[...] prisoner of her own psyche, of the conditions that had created the unhappy life, the schizophrenia of growing up as a poor colonial [...] (viii)

Yet the deep down and fundamental role of the mirror-phase for both the life of the actual Jean Rhys and for the play by Teale, is not mentioned. A more conventional explanation for Rhys's actions is offered.

It must have been very confusing for Jean, she saw – and longed for – the freedom of the islanders, yet her head was crammed full of Western notions of respectability and superiority. (ibid.)

And

The need to conceal the parts of herself that she knew to be unacceptable was a constant theme in Jean's life. Her obsession with her appearance and her clothes was in part due to this.. (ibid.)

I would venture to say that very little actual concealing was being attempted by Jean Rhys. She could not help living out her violent passions, but they did not lead her to happiness or fulfilment. Not because they were unacceptable for her contemporaries or because she was a woman condemned by the dominant discourse for things that are pardoned in men with money, but because they were rooted in a failed completion of the mirror phase. She was not able to enter the *symbolic* and balance it out with the *imaginary* and the threat of annihilation and emptiness posed by the naked *real* kept staring her in the face. This section in Angier's book uses Jean Rhys's own words taken from her autobiography:

She wanted even more to be identified with this beautiful mysterious place. Once, 'regardless of the ants,' she lay down and kissed the earth and thought, 'Mine, mine.' But really she wanted to belong to *it*, 'to identify with it, to lose myself in it.' Sometimes she came near it, 'this identification or annihilation that I longed for.' (Angier 22)

This loss of self is the return to the mother, the all-in-all of the womb (here fittingly represented by the motherland, by mother Earth) and it is, of course, impossible once we are born into the world. And fittingly the text continues

But it eluded her, and the place eluded her, 'it turned its head away, indifferent.' (ibid.)

How else but indifferent should the soil react to a human's kiss? The proper addressee of this longing, JEAN's mother, did also turn away and moreover did, when asking her daughter at the breakfast table

MOTHER. [...] (To ELLA.) Who do you think will love you? (17)

cruelly insinuate that nobody ever would! For a child this is as close to a psychological death-sentence as it can get. As a result these questions will ring in the girl's mind forever:

ELLA. Who will love me? (17)

ELLA. Who am I? How did I get here? (63)

Questions that will, never be properly and satisfactorily answered, torment a

highly creative mind and lead to the writing of some of last century's most haunting and brilliant texts of women's literature.

Jean Rhys reportedly discovered writing as an outlet for her pent-up frustrations and emotions at an early age, about thirteen.

But one day she discovered a way of working her sadness off by herself. She got an exercise book [...] 'I had found out that writing poetry took away sadness, doubled joy and calmed the anxious questioning feeling that tormented me then.' (Angier 23)

Writing did not make her happy, but it kept her alive for ninety years.

After Mrs. Rochester continues with a time line of Jean Rhys's life strengthening the impression that we are to read a faithful, if artistically transformed, rendering of a part of that person's life. It gives the rough dates for her marriages and affairs. For her later life some of her misdemeanours are listed, pressing home the point that by the age of forty-five she had become an alcoholic with a violent temper.

After a blank page the reader is told in a *Note* what he or she is to think of the scenes that are to unfold before her or him. The first paragraph contains a misleading typo turning *Jean* into *Jane*. Obviously Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* continues to act as the prototype of the feminist heroine. Furthermore the *Note* gives the impression that the staged character of Bertha Mason is not only a barely repressed part of Jean Rhys's psyche but an actual person.

Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's first wife, remains in the room throughout the play. She is dressed in Victorian undergarments [...] (xv)

If we take the *Note* seriously, BERTHA is a full-blooded human being with a perception and psyche of her own.

In Bertha's reality the room of the play is the attic of *Jane Eyre*, where she is held captive. She is remembering her life. (original emphasis) (ibid.)

Of course, Bertha Mason is a fictitious character while Jean Rhys is not. They cannot logically be held to be on the same level of being real. Also we have to remember that BERTHA will eventually disappear into JEAN's past hand in hand with ELLA which is a clear indicator of BERTHA standing for a dissociated part of the main character's psyche that finally has become reintegrated. That *Note* may be a testament to Rhys's getting really carried away in her

identification with Antoinette while writing *Wide Sargasso Sea* – it took her nine long and tortuous years to finish a slim novel of not more than 135 pages in the paperback edition, and a testament also to Teale's similar involvement with Rhys and Brontë.

Of proper names and proper functions

When we turn the page, the *Note* is followed by the *dramatis personae*, titled simply *Characters*. What is noticeable in this list is which characters are given real names, such as TITE, and which are relegated to their functions in relation to the main character, such as HUSBAND. We may conjecture that characters bearing given or family names have a stronger tie to the *imaginary*, while functionaries belong more to the *symbolic*. Of course this has to be taken with a grain of salt since the giving and receiving of names of any kind is one of the mainstays of entering the *symbolic*. The second thing to be noticed is that the *dramatis personae* groups the characters according to their context. Now the nature of these contexts is not at all uniform. It may be a context of locality, for example *DRAMA SCHOOL*, of inter-text, such as *FROM JANE EYRE*, or even an intratextual context, such as *SECOND ACT*. I personally do not believe in any conscious system on the part of Teale here, but this shifting nature of the contexts makes it abundantly clear that we are about to enter not a realistic depiction of the outside world but the convoluted cosmos of the psyche, the post-modern universe of text and inter-text. Nevertheless I will try a detailed examination of the *Characters* in the sequence in which they appear on paper.

JEAN, *Jean Rhys in later life*
ELLA, *younger Jean*
DAUGHTER, *Jean's daughter* (2)

This is the first group and it is not given a context of its own. It does itself, as it were, provide the overarching context for the other characters. It is a list of the real, incarnated human beings presented on stage. JEAN and ELLA being the same person at a different age in life carrying on an inner dialogue throughout the play. They are both identified by their given names. DAUGHTER, even though a real person with whom JEAN will actually communicate in the last scene, is the first functionary on the list. Blood relations do not figure as persons

with names in the world of JEAN. True to the teachings of psycho-analysis they are potent forces for good or evil and not just men and women with all their little merits and faults. Next come characters to encountered

IN THE WEST INDIES
TITE, *Ella's friend*
META, *a house servant*
MOTHER
FATHER
GENTLEMAN (ibid.)

The main players in a human's early life are listed. The parents, given here as mere functionaries, and the peer group, represented by the black girl TITE. There are also two characters that illustrate the failure of the parents in guiding ELLA/JEAN through the mirror-phase. META who by her insolence demonstrates FATHER's weakness and by her rough caresses casts into even stronger relief MOTHER's incompetence to comfort her daughter and finally the GENTLEMAN who, by twisting the child's sexuality and need to be recognized, further mars her experience of the mirror-phase and her self-perception.

FROM JANE EYRE
JANE
ROCHESTER
BERTHA, *Rochester's first wife* (ibid.)

We may notice that in good old patriarchic fashion the ladies are listed by their first names while the man of consequence bears his family, his father's name. Also BERTHA is further defined via her husband as *Rochester's first wife*. What is perhaps intended as a pedagogical move towards the literarily uninformed part of the audience may come across as a feminist social blunder. As a side note I wish to add that on the other hand this being defined by one's father's name does tend to reduce men to functionaries of the dominant discourse, leaving women to enjoy the luxury of having a personality in addition to having an obligation to one's father to carry on his name. As pointed out above, BERTHA is again placed in the context of the classical novel and not in the context of the life of Jean Rhys.

The next three groups are rather straight-forward.

ENGLAND, BOARDING SCHOOL
TEACHER
PUPIL

DRAMA SCHOOL
VOICE TEACHER
THEATRE WORLD
THEATRE MANAGER
MAUDIE, Chorus Girl
GIRL 2, Chorus Girl
GIRL 3, Chorus Girl (ibid.)

I could point out the importance given to the VOICE TEACHER, another person trying to introduce ELLA to the proper *symbolic* order. Here meaning the proper pronunciation of the works of the literary canon in which ELLA fails miserably.

[VOICE] TEACHER. Frankly. (*Beat.*) You sound like a nigger. (33)

Under the same context heading, namely THEATRE WORLD, but separated by a paragraph, so that it may safely be considered a distinct, if untitled, group of its own, follow the next five characters.

LANCELOT
ASSISTANT, *shop assistant*
LANDLADY
MAN, *lover*
JOHN, *Ella's first husband* (ibid.)

This is the context of the male gaze, as we have encountered it with the GENTLEMAN, as it deteriorates from appreciation and acknowledgment into cold *money*. Lancelot, the first and perhaps only man Jean really loved and adored, is also the first to put into effect that deterioration inaugurating a highly dangerous series of exploitative relationships in Jean's life. ASSISTANT, LANDLADY and MAN (no longer even a *gentle* one like the first) are functionaries in the cold world of money and its uses. JOHN's weak position in JEAN's psychological drama, even though he is the father of DAUGHTER, is shown by him being defined as being *Ella's first husband*. A fact that makes him more human but less effective, less proper as a male. As we know he will be replaced once he, being put behind bars for fraud, can no longer provide the surrogate appreciation become by now the main thing: *money*.

The last group of characters is held together by coming on stage during the second act.

SECOND ACT
POLICE OFFICERS
FORD, *Madox Ford*
STELLA, *his wife*

HUSBAND, *Ella's second husband* (ibid.)

FORD, the man of Joyce's *Father O'Ford* fame, is most interestingly defined by his own name. While the character of MAUDIE, for instance, is further explained by being a *Chorus Girl*, a useful hint as to her occupation, FORD's, that man of letters, occupation is being *Madox Ford*. Since we can assume that Teale does not fear her readers and audience will confuse Madox with Henry Ford there has to be some psychological meaning behind this strange fact. A name defined by its name, that has a theological ring to it. I am who I am. Is Ford Madox Ford the keeper of the *nom du père* or even of the *phallus*, the Lacanian signifier behind all processes of signification? It certainly seems so. In the play he introduces JEAN to proper creative writing and therefore acts as a midwife at her delivery into the *symbolic* even if his human and moral qualities may be sadly lacking. STELLA, being *his wife*, is cast into the shadow of JEAN's professional benefactor. That is, as has been pointed out, a bit unfair to Esther Gwendolyn "Stella" Bowen, who not only had a name of her own but was never married to Ford and later, after her separation from him, became a recognized painter and author in her own right. The last character is HUSBAND, unnamed again (the historical Leslie Tilden Smith) and a functionary. Even though he probably does more for her writing career than anyone else he is *symbolically* dwarfed by FORD, just like JOHN, even though he is the father of her daughter is *symbolically* dwarfed by LANCELOT. The crueller the men are the more desperate JEAN's attachment to them seems likely to be.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to show conclusively that reading and interpreting the play *After Mrs. Rochester* by British playwright Polly Teale within the psycho-analytical framework provided by the French innovator of Freudian thought, Jacques Lacan, may offer profound insights into the structure and meaning of the text. Central to my argument is the fact that the fate of the heroine/narratrix, the historical writer Jean Rhys, as presented on stage may be understood to be the result of an unsuccessful completion of the so-called mirror-stage.

This approach first suggested itself to me because of the superabundance of members of the semantic field “gaze” within the text under scrutiny.

During my research and deep reading of the play's text the tension between the female protagonist JEAN's craving for love and recognition by the *male gaze* and the all too often forthcoming substitute for real affection, *money*, led me to equate *money* with *man-eye*. I believe that my suggestion is at the same time well-founded and original.

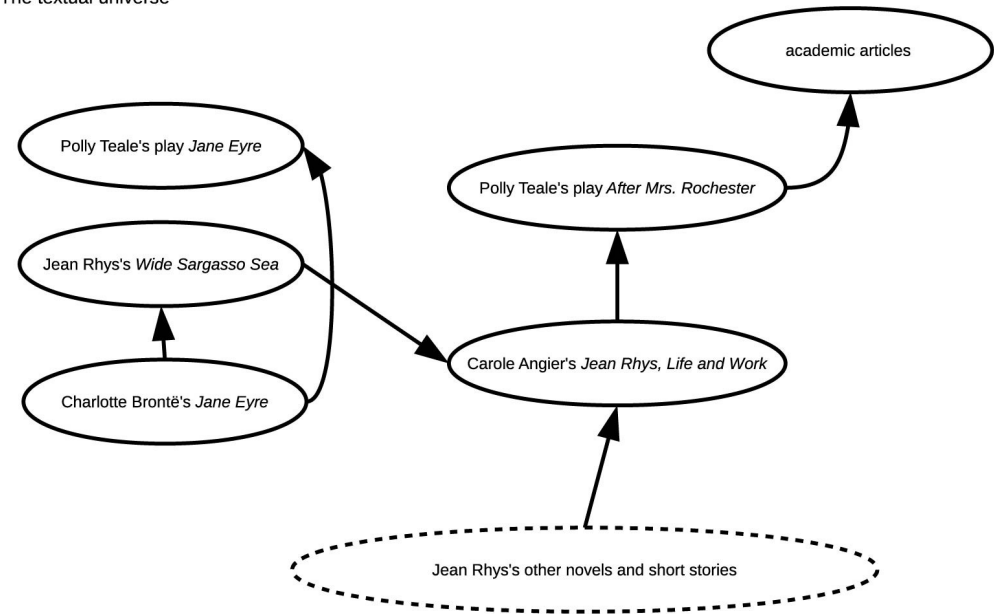
In the second part of the thesis I have offered some further analyses of parts and features of the play along psycho-analytical and text-critical lines.

I have dealt with the *mango* as a symbol of the male and its absence and have also pointed out that Polly Teale, when referring to and quoting from one of her hypo-texts, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, does often in acutality refer to and quote from her own version of that story which she has adapted for the stage some years before starting work on an adaptation of Jean Rhys's life. Her reason for this is perhaps to bring the classic into line with her concept of a dichotomy between a free tropical paradise and an inhibited (Victorian) Europe. This concept appears somewhat simplistic but is certainly currently more politically correct.

Further research could be directed at revealing whether the mirror-stage is also a prominent feature of the other plays by Polly Teale or whether the Lacanian approach does only offer a key to the understanding of *After Mrs. Rochester*.

Appendix 1: The textual universe

The textual universe



Appendix 2: Semantic Field “Gaze”

Here is given a word count of the various occurrences of the members of the semantic field of *gaze*. The high number of these words suggested a Lacanian reading of the play. In accord with my arguments the uses of the word *money* have also been listed. Page numbers refer to Teale *After* 2003.

Text proper								
looking (gerund)	look (verb) mostly imperative	looks (verb)	look at	look like	look.in lk. after lk. out	to see	saw	seen
3; 17; 18; 21	3; 11; 13; 13; 16; 16; 18; 18; 24; 24; 37; 38; 38; 39; 42; 43; 45; 46; 55; 62; 68; 73	6; 12; 14; 24; 31; 33; 35; 36; 37; 39; 39; 68; 74	10; 22; 36; 66; 66	9; 9; 10; 34; 45; 63; 63	10; 11; 45; 48	6; 6; 12; 13; 13; 14; 17; 19; 21; 22; 25; 26; 28; 29; 30; 34; 43; 43; 44; 61; 62; 63; 63	8; 12; 20; 23; 23	6; 8; 10; 15; 15; 21; 22; 27; 72
look total: 55						see total: 37		
mirror (noun)	gaze (verb)	watches watched	watching (gerund)	stares stared staring	spotting (gerund)	eye eyes (noun)	money	
3; 4; 22; 23; 36; 39; 39	23	21; 22; 23; 29; 34; 65; 74; 74	7; 16; 21; 22; 22; 58	16; 16; 25; 26; 26; 26; 27; 31; 60; 63	66	12; 14; 20; 21; 22; 22; 23; 26; 27; 36; 38; 40; 41; 41; 54; 57; 58; 58	10; 10; 25; 35; 38; 38; 39; 40; 40; 43; 43; 45; 45; 48; 48; 48; 52; 52; 54; 54; 55; 56; 56; 62; 64; 65	

Stage directions									
looks (verb)	looking	look (aspect)	mirror (verb)	mirror (noun)	stares (verb)	eye (noun)	watches watching	view (noun)	money
4; 7; 8; 35; 36; 37; 39; 39;	12; 12; 36; 38; 46; 55; 66;	3	36	36; 39; 39	12	41	7; 8	12	9; 10

Appendix 3: Abstract

The present thesis tries to offer a psycho-analytical reading of the post-modern and expressionist play *After Mrs. Rochester* by British playwright Polly Teale. Central to the author's approach to interpreting the text is the assumption that the underlying logic can best be understood by taking recourse to the concept of the *gaze* and the related *mirror-stage* and the three orders of organization of the psyche, namely the *imaginary*, the *symbolic*, and the *real*, as put forward and developed by the French psycho-analyst Jacques Lacan.

The thesis starts with a brief look at the play's research history before outlining the Lacanian scaffolding that will be used later on. The core of the work is a scene-by-scene and speech-by-speech analysis of instances of use of words belonging to the semantic field of gaze in the play's text. In this both the actual speeches and the stage directions get equal attention. The female gaze which desires the desire and acknowledgement of males is apostrophised as *giving the eye* while the totally inadequate male response as *giving mon-ey* instead of love and affection. After that the highly symbolic role of the mango is scrutinized along with the role of the Caribbean as a lost paradise in Teale's play. Finally the deep structure of the *dramatis personae* is considered.

The thesis does not content itself with *After Mrs. Rochester* alone but, to arrive at a deeper understanding, it does compare it to its hypo-texts, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys and *Jean Rhys: Life and Work* by Carole Angier as well as to its inter-text *Jane Eyre* (the stage adaptation of the classic also by Polly Teale) and its hypo-text, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. In comparing the two plays by Polly Teale the fact that the authoress, or rather her characters, while ostensibly quoting from the classic novel are actually quoting Teale's own version of the text, is uncovered.

As a conclusion the thesis puts forth the suggestion that while on the surface level the play is about Jean Rhys's eventual coping with her life's traumata by telling her story to her daughter and thus allowing her dark side to recede into the past, it is on a deeper level rather about the not adequately mastered mirror-stage which resulted in a career of highly abusive relationships to men.

Appendix 4: deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit versucht das postmoderne und expressionistische Stück *After Mrs. Rochester* der britischen Bühnenautorin Polly Teale psychoanalytisch zu lesen. Zentral für die Herangehensweise des Autors ist die Annahme, dass die innere Logik am besten durch Rückgriff auf die Konzepte des französischen Analytikers Jacques Lacan verstanden werden kann. Es sind dies die Begriffe *Blick*, *Spiegelstadium*, *Imaginäres*, *Symbolisches* und *Reales*.

Die Arbeit leitet nach einer knappen Behandlung der Forschungsgeschichte zu einem Überblick der verwendeten Lacanschen Ideen über. Das Herzstück des Textes ist eine Szene-für-Szene und Rede-für-Rede Analyse aller zum semantischen Feld *Blick* gehörenden Wörter und Redewendungen. Dabei werden die Redetexte und die Bühnenanweisungen mit gleicher Genauigkeit betrachtet. Der weibliche Blick, der den männlichen Blick und das männliche Begehren und die männliche Anerkennung begehrt, wird dabei als *giving the eye* angesprochen während die völlig unangemessene männliche Antwort, die sich vom Geben von Liebe und Zuneigung freikaufen will, als *giving mon-ey* erscheint. Hernach wird die symbolische Rolle der Mango, die Rolle der Karibik als verlorenes Paradies und die tiefe Struktur der Liste der handelnden Personen im Tealeschen Stück beleuchtet.

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschränkt sich nicht auf die Analyse von *After Mrs. Rochester* allein, sondern vergleicht den Text zwecks tieferem Verständnis sowohl mit seinen Hypotexten, *Wide Sargasso Sea* von Jean Rhys und *Jean Rhys: Life and Work* von Carole Angier, als auch mit seinem Intertext, *Jane Eyre* (Bühnenfassung des Klassikers von Polly Teale) und dessen Hypotext, *Jane Eyre* von Charlotte Brontë. Beim Vergleich der beiden Stücke von Polly Teale wird aufgezeigt, dass die Autorin, oder genauer: ihre Bühnencharaktere, wenn sie augenscheinlich aus dem Klassiker zitieren, in Wirklichkeit auf die Tealesche Fassung des Stoffes zurückgreifen.

Die Arbeit schlussfolgert, dass die Bewältigung ihrer Lebenstraumata durch Jean Rhys, indem sie nämlich ihrer Tochter ihre Geschichte erzählt und es ihrem dunklen Selbst so erlaubt, in die Vergangenheit re-integriert zu werden,

nur den oberflächlichen Inhalt des Theaterstücks bildet. Die tiefere Struktur des Stückes würde durch das nicht angemessen gemeisterte Spiegelstadium und die daraus resultierende Reihe von hochgradig missbrauchenden Beziehungen zu Männern gebildet.

Appendix 5: Curriculum Vitae (akademischer Lebenslauf)

Kai Mundprecht

date of birth: 8th March 1965 in Vienna

nationality: Austrian

marital status:

married to: MMag. Dr. Eva Mundprecht since 1990

two children: Alarich (* 1991) and Isabella (* 1995)

Academic Education

University of Vienna:

- as of 1st March 2011: Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch und Psychologie/Philosophie
- 1984 – 1986 Studium der Translationswissenschaft Englisch/Spanisch
- 1983 – 1984 Studium der Ur- und Frühgeschichte/Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft

Matura: 1983 at Bundesrealgymnasium Wien I, Schottenbastei 7-9

Kai Mundprecht

geboren: 8. März 1965 in Wien

Staatsbürgerschaft: österreichisch

Familienstand:

verheiratet mit: Mag. Dr. Eva Mundprecht seit 1990

zwei Kinder: Alarich (* 1991) und Isabella (* 1995)

Akademische Ausbildung:

Universität Wien:

- seit 1. März 2011: Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch und Psychologie/Philosophie
- 1984 – 1986 Studium der Translationswissenschaft Englisch/Spanisch
- 1983 – 1984 Studium der Ur- und Frühgeschichte/Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft

Matura: 1983 am Bundesrealgymnasium Wien I, Schottenbastei 7-9

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for samples of the engravings of Thomas Bewick see:
<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:That_Pisseth_Against_a_Wall_tail-piece_in_Bewick_British_Birds_1804.jpg>

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Disclaimer

I hereby confirm that this thesis was written by myself. I have clearly marked as a quote everything that was taken over verbatim from secondary literature. I have also indicated when I have taken over ideas from secondary sources.

Signature