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„'Walled in – Walled out': Boundaries, Liminal Spaces, and Identity in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004)“

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Maximilian Funnell, BA

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Introduction

The gradual increase of transnational movement, whether of voluntary or involuntary nature, has seen a steep upward trend in accessibility occur and develop on a global scale between the start of the twentieth century and the world of today. From the mass exodus arising in course of history's migration period to the many recent cases resulting from the countless wars being waged across the continent, the political persecution of Sudeten German, Jewish, Kosovar, and/or Syrian refugees representing only a few of the many tragic examples which came to pass during the last century, these instances of forced displacement demonstrate a radical form of transnational movement which has consequently made the geographical relocation from one space to another a necessary and almost everyday phenomenon. However, not only tragic and violent twists of fate have induced such situations as the numerous recent revolutionary and rapid advancements in technology, specifically in the areas of cross-national transportation and aviation, have made intercontinental travel a far easier endeavour for the broad mass than it was a hundred years ago, opening up a large amount of possibilities when considering where an individual would personally like to visit or even stay permanently. The progress in these areas has been made possible for various reasons; though, in regard to Europe, its growing international community in particular can primarily be led back to the increasingly facilitated development of opening up borders which its member states have legally recognized and enabled among themselves.

The breaking open of previously closed boundaries had already been initiated by Great Britain before Europe's vision of a togetherness and its subsequent decision to do so evolving in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-nineties, at least to a certain extent, as the former British Empire started to invite and offer the opportunity to people from all over the colonies to relocate to the British Isles ever since the end of both World War I and II. This opportunity was consequently taken up by many thousands of people and has remained a popular choice ever since the start of the decolonization period, an opening still frequently favoured today which has contributed to contemporary Britain becoming one of the most diverse melting pots in the world as a result of this accommodation of a wide range of people with different roots and transnational backgrounds across the former British Empire. A properly facilitated and ensured integration of these immigrating people, however, has often proved to be a difficult task to undertake and,

specifically over the last decade, tensions have increasingly built up due to the ongoing conundrum revolving around the 'Brexit' vote and the final decision to leave the European Union. Though the sources of and reasons for this precarious development are wide-ranging in a multitude of areas, the challenges brought by the refugee crisis back in 2014 have offered an excuse to drive these thoughts further on and have also offered the perfect breeding ground for hate and an increase in nationalist ideology and tendencies to evolve which have made the validation of ideas regarding the reversal of opening up borders and favouring a reverting back to closed ones once more all the more enticing to people with an anti-cosmopolitan mindset.

The disapproval of these arriving people, who are literally fleeing to save their very lives, has also had the effect that individuals, who are either immigrants or descendants from countries of the former British Empire, have also become targets of this radical aversion aimed at people illustrating a visible difference; people who have always believed to be certain in their assertion of belonging to Britain as genuine members of the Commonwealth and are now being shunned due to the fearmongering and spreading of archaic, small-minded ideals by parties such as the UKIP. These nationalistic backlashes cannot solely be restricted to within the United Kingdom due to a near global trend occurring over the past years as Donald Trump's recent endeavours to wall in his country and deport undesirable immigrants or Austria's recent reintroduction of a far-right party in government with its continuing crusade against migration represent only two of many examples. Britain has made itself a culprit in letting such thoughts be rekindled in the minds of its people again and again, and the situation surrounding the 'Brexit' narrative is merely the latest example of such, necessitating one to point out the problematic old and now again contemporary trend of a nation closing itself off as a result of an unfounded fear of the unknown.

While this recent trend in migration regarding former colonies is mostly occurring on a voluntary basis, a choice in these matters has obviously not always been afforded to, for instance, the coloured inhabitants of Jamaica who were not too long ago still subjected to the firm and relentless grasp of the Empire and its imperialistic endeavours. The forced relocation and uprooting of thousands of people, which the practices of English colonialism frequently involved, stand in stark contrast to such movement in today's world and, already back then, entailed several repercussions which had a profound bearing on these peoples' sense of belonging and home. For British citizens, however, the migration to the colonies has normally

always constituted an intentional and deliberate decision, frequently electing to immigrate to the former colonies in search of wealth and opportunities, often extending their stay indefinitely. While such movement today is usually done in favour of a simple change of scenery, the act of relocation to the colonies for a white person in the nineteenth century, however, is dominated by the fact that such a movement frequently came at the cost of the well-being of the local, coloured inhabitants, resulting in the sight of white faces on a Caribbean island such as Jamaica often being led back to former slavers whose descendants now lived in a place full of painful memories for the native population. Despite the role, which they played there, these white people were nevertheless also prone to developing a missing sense of belonging and a feeling of disconnect to their community living in England, something particularly apparent for their descendants, who might have been born in the West Indies amidst their British ancestry, yet were nevertheless virtually foreign and, more often than, this position resulted in the absence of any real connection to their place of birth. Even if a person only relocated and was otherwise of purely British descent, such issues could arise and were very much capable of having a massive impact on the social formation of a place such as Jamaica.

While luckily not due to reasons of conflict, colonialism, or political displacement, the reasoning for selecting the particular topics and works of literature, which this paper is determined to address, can be led back to a personal background that might not mirror the harsh conditions of the novels' protagonists, yet (partially) shares their anguish in matters of an identity marked by in-betweenness and a mind continually asking itself the same question as a result of entering a new community: *where do I belong*. As mentioned, the high amount of transnational movement due to open borders in Europe nowadays, as well as the general advancements in technology, has facilitated major increases in multiracial/ -national relationships arising over the past few decades which consequently no longer constitute rarities, even in the most rural of areas, and this trend does not appear to be changing anytime soon. Nevertheless, being able to decide to settle in a foreign community does not automatically guarantee that the people there will always await one with open arms, regardless of the years of attempting to fit in and integrate, as the mindset of certain individuals might very well continue to harbour prior established thoughts of cautiousness, distrust, or simply dislike towards a new face, even if the latter partially shares the same blood and heritage due to one parent originating from the moved-to destination. The difficulty of having been born in the one place and moving to another brings a multitude of

problems with it, reaching from language barriers to unknown surroundings and, arguably most importantly, a lack of knowledge about things such as culture, customs, or similar elements which, as trivial as they may seem, firmly bond local people together. Holding on to remnants of a culture to which one once belonged, things which might provide a foreign person in such a situation with comfort in times of displacement or a missing connection to one's new home, be it as simple as continuing to possess a certain kind of humour or to listen to the music of well-known figures which are however unknown in this new community, merely complicates the settling in process and contributes to alienating one unintentionally. The bottom line, however, is that these mentioned qualities are extremely tough to shed, even if one truly wants to do so, as one would be discarding preferences which have been accumulated over years and, essentially, make up who one is as a person.

This excerpt of personal history illustrates a position which is arguably a commonly shared occurrence in today's time as the migration into or residence in a new and/or foreign community represents a development which also affects the protagonists of the selected narratives that this paper intends to cover, making their stories a natural fit and coherent with the theoretical framework which will be resorted to for the purpose of this thesis. The journey of Antoinette Cosway in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) depicts the tale of a white woman who is likewise plagued by a birth-given burden as her European ancestors' decision to immigrate to the colonies has left her in a spot of neither being truly British nor Jamaican, a clash of cultures and ideals both ensuing and quickly escalating once she comes into contact with her future English husband and later 'tormentor', who is never able to accept her for who she is. Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) constitutes the second novel which is to be elaborated on in course of this paper as it offers a similar framework characterized by displacement; however, it does so from the perspectives of the two black protagonists Gilbert and Hortense, among other narrators, who, as a part of the famous Windrush Generation, possess multiethnic roots and relocate to an inhospitable postwar Britain. The individual stories portrayed in these novels might seem as if they showcase two very different starting positions for the respective protagonists considering their contrary complexions, yet their arduous paths have more in common than one might initially consider. As is the case with Levy and Rhys, the difference in skin colour ultimately does not absolve the depicted characters from sharing a similarly problematic position as certain aspects complicate and overshadow an individual's development towards achieving a personal

sense of belonging. These stated novels represent merely two instances within the larger landscape of postcolonial fiction and one could certainly choose texts similarly concentrating on such topics, with Sunjeev Sahota's *The Year of the Runaways* (2015) or Michelle de Kretser's *The Lost Dog* (2009) constituting particularly recent examples and both dealing with very similar themes in East Indies settings. For the purpose of this thesis and its focus lying on the Caribbean, however, Rhys and Levy are the more intriguing and harmonious choices.

From a theoretical perspective, I will draw on several thinkers who serve as the primary and thematically relevant theoretical framework for this paper. The most prominent of said aspects for this thesis is constituted by the element of the *community* and the role it has taken up and played for several centuries now, with Benedict Anderson's work on his concept of the "Imagined Community" (*Imagined Communities*, 7) acting as a starting point of reference. The community, which he refers to as being reliant on a feeling of "fraternity" to mark who does or does not belong among its ranks, is reflective of how the two novels' fictional societies function, the construct still having a profound bearing on the world of today as, in the face of recent transnational movements, the blurred lines are attempted to be restored with the help of the aforementioned subsequent development of nationalistic ideologies. In the context of a distorted sense of identity and attempting to escape an in-betweenness one has been pushed into by external influences, Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" (*Location*, 53), subjectively speaking, is visible in the situation of the novels' main characters, specifically that of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s Antoinette Cosway, when looking at the inability to overcome 'liminal spaces' and erected walls which come with and face such a difficult position in a communal space.

Stephen Clingman's work in *The Grammar and Identity* makes a considerable contribution in the area by creating his own specific framework to study pieces of (post)colonial literature. His method of connecting "navigation" to "transnational fiction", a metonymic allocation of a "grammar of identity", and "transitive" and "intransitive" (*Grammar*, 6; 11) borders addresses several similar topics when discussing how to conceptualize a literary analysis that focuses on transnational novels such as the one of Rhys, which this paper will be taking aim at in its own textual interpretation. While several of Clingman's analytical results and conclusions might be referred to specifically in regard to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, his theoretical framework will not be

employed in this thesis as the focus lies on the element and the role of the community and how it influences the construction of walls and one's sense of identity.

The lack of an inherent sense of belonging to a certain identity, which thinkers such as Salman Rushdie or Paul Gilroy speak of, and the difficulty to "position" (*Cultural Identity*, 225) oneself, as Stuart Hall mentions, are both visible in the protagonists of the two novels, who are in a similarly ambivalent situation to the one Bhabha refers to yet possess a completely contrary background to one another. Elaborating on such subjugated individuals, thinkers such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak with her view on the position of the 'subaltern' (*the Subaltern*, 1988) form an important part of the discourse as to how such situated people are affected in this kind of a disadvantaged position of exclusion. Spivak's work on, amongst others, the novels *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* (1847) provided a fundamental focus on, among many other things, the two's "structural motors" (*Three Women*, 244) in her article "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", and should thus not go unmentioned. However, as the correlation between Anderson and Bhabha's concepts works well in the context of this paper's two novels and in correspondence with the research question, as well as the notion of the 'subaltern' having a heavy background in regard to the aspect of social class, which is disregarded here, Spivak's approach is therefore not taken into consideration. One can naturally name a host of other important writers, theorists, or thinkers who have also invaluablely contributed to the discourse in these or adjacent areas, such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo'o, or V.S. Naipaul, but, to reiterate, in the context of this thesis the choices made are perceived as the most fitting for this paper's framework.

In course of the depiction of the correlation between the theory and novels, this piece of writing intends to answer the primary research question which is to constitute the main centre of focus: in how far does the aspect of community come into play and affect the protagonists of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Small Island* (2004) when dealing with issues of boundaries, liminality, and specifically the characters' process of establishing an identity? In addition, I propose the following hypothesis: the influence and power of the novels' portrayed, dominant communities, as per the concept of Anderson, constitutes one of the, if not the main, contributing factors that can be lead back to the creolized protagonists in Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* suffering from a missing sense of belonging and identity issues after

subsequently coming into contact with their mentally erected ‘Metonymic Walls’ of exclusion. This paper thus does not only aim to find an answer to the stated research question and hypothesis above, which it will be prevalently working towards resolving, but also intends to potentially come to several other conclusions and generally a host of insights on the matter which might not have been obvious prior; by initially elaborating on a body of theory relevant to the respective topics at hand, the two novels will subsequently be worked on primarily by means of a combination of a close reading and textual analysis, considering and consulting these referred to important theoretical concepts where appropriate and required. For matters of simplicity, *Wide Sargasso Sea* shall henceforth be sourced with the abbreviation “*WSS*” and *Small Island* with “*SI*”.

1. Theory

1.1. Understanding postcolonial studies

Evoking large amounts of debate ever since its emergence, ‘postcolonial’ studies, and the literature it incorporates, has generally constituted a vital source of looking back on and reappraising the past colonial history since the beginnings of its contemporary form in the second half of the twentieth century. Acting as a prime example of some of the division in this field, the deviating ways of spelling the term ‘postcolonial’ illustrates the disunity across its theoretical landscape, which may seem non-essential or even petty, but essentially gives the word an entirely different connotation. John McLeod importantly states that hyphenating the term “post-colonial” (*Beginning Postcolonialism*, 5-6; 38) leads to a temporal association connected to the word which conveys the impression that colonialism’s chapter in history has come to an end; however, without resorting to such a hyphen, the continuing effects of colonial Europe on the formerly colonized countries are shown to still be a contemporary condition, offering a potent way to “challenge” the past.

In regard to the topic at hand, one can assert that one of postcolonialism’s many goals lies in its efforts to “deconstruct colonial prose” (*Postcolonial thinking*, 1-2), as well as the remnants of the imperialist mindset still apparent in today’s Western society, as Achille Mbembe notes in an interview from 2008. For context, Jean Rhys’ postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in 1966 in the middle of the decolonization era and, as will be elaborated on extensively in the upcoming chapter, serves as an example of these attempts to “deconstruct” a work of prose as the author decided to rewrite a piece of literature from the past century in form of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. While these processes may not always achieve the desired result of causing a general change in thought, doing so and, at the very least, attempting to cause a change or improvement to the better is nevertheless imperative in order to both continue to account for Europe’s hand in colonialism, thereby laying the foundation for a future in which postcolonialism’s prefix rightfully refers to past (*Beginning Postcolonialism*, 40-41). Specifically Britain should see itself as having an obligation to make amends here as very few other nations in the world have had such a significant and long lasting impact on its colonized countries spread across the entire globe as the former British Empire. From the Jamaican sugar plantations to the displacement of Rhodesians, Kenyans, South Africans and many more, or even further to the acts

of genocide conducted against peacefully protesting Indians, the atrocities committed by Britain might nowadays lie in the past yet are still painfully palpable and in need of addressing.

British colonialism has played a massive role due to its large-scale involvement and this liability is therefore reason enough to justify having this thesis make Britain be at the centre of the discussion. The stage is therefore set for a discourse surrounding “postcolonial thought” (*Postcolonial thinking*, 3-4) which aids in dealing critically with ongoing issues linked to colonialism and ramifications caused by imperialism, giving the individual a way of critically dealing with the subject of colonialism. ‘Postcolonial thought’ remains a point of discussion which continues to constitute an integral part on the agenda of today’s former colonized and colonizer nations and its people, specifically in their individual attempts to one day conclude this chapter in the history books. The need for such a persisting endeavour has been highlighted by many people working on the subject of postcolonialism over the past decades as Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman’s show with their emphasis on noting the continuing danger of “neo-colonialism” (*Colonial Discourse*, 3). This particular form of colonialism illustrates the persistence of authority and power which states like Britain still harbour in many areas of their former colony’s state affairs, as well as this form of dominion being further pursued by the new native governments. One must note here that this thesis does not intend to relay the message that one should concentrate solely on the British Empire’s involvement in the history of colonialism by means of its focus on this particular nation as an “Anglocentric” (*Intro. to Post-Colonial*, 1) approach to a topic of such magnitude would be reckless and the wrong message, something which Peter Childs and R.J. Patrick Williams emphasize should be avoided in this field of discourse. However, given the role Britain plays in the two to-be-discussed novels, the primary focus on it seems necessary in this instance.

Furthermore, the stated critical reflecting on and accounting for colonialism’s dark past should generally not automatically be understood as a form of hostility or vindictiveness directed at Europe; rather, one should keep in mind that, as Mbembe phrases it, “postcolonial thought is not an anti-European thought” (*Postcolonial thinking*, 11) as the necessity to come to terms with an often tainted past of both the colonizers and the colonized increasingly originates in certain areas which no longer exclusively affect the inhabitants of former colonies such as Jamaica, which will be one of the two main settings in the interpretative sections further below. The relocating

between spaces such as the Caribbean and former “centers” of colonialism such as Britain, or also vice-versa, has seen several surges over the past century which have not always been well received, to say the least, and such reactions have frequently gone on to have a bearing on immigrating people once having been under the banner of the Union Jack, most prominently including the well-known *Windrush Generation*, which will represent an integral part of the second chapter.

The rise in twentieth-century transnationalism and the talk regarding a nation’s boundaries have led to issues of “place and displacement” (*Empire Writes*, 8) becoming a profound source of apprehension and a factor of impact in matters of a person’s “formation” (*Against Race*, 99) of who he or she is in course of the postcolonial era. Whether defining oneself or being defined as British, Jamaican or any other nationality, citizens with ambivalent roots are necessitated to deal with these problems in the interest of gaining a sense of belonging. In times in which borders are becoming increasingly blurred, movement between the lines of countries has become far easier than a century ago, yet, with the thought of sealing oneself off and potentially causing aforementioned displacement being as prominent as ever in countries such as the U.S. or Britain, identity therefore remains one of the hot topics which should be treated with the utmost importance in any literary work drawing on the aforementioned ‘postcolonial thought’. From the difficulty of establishing oneself in foreign communities of people, dealing with the matter of walls erected to keep one on the outside to the impact and repercussions such rejection can have on a person, critically dealing with this field and theoretical concepts connected with it is the primary aim of this paper in order to further the postcolonial discussion in this particular area concerning the construction of identity, a term which will be further elaborated on in the coming chapters.

1.2 Exploring Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community'

Diving deeper into this 'postcolonial thought' and where people, who are the subjects of the former, are able or unable to harbour a sense of belonging and attachment to a certain in the context of the 'formation' of identity, one must address a necessary and central theme of the postcolonial debate which is constituted by the idea of a *nation*, the consciousness and affiliation it evokes in the minds of its inhabitants within its boundaries, and how it opens itself up or closes itself off, particularly in the previous example of Britain. To obtain a better understanding of such a national space and how it works on a social level, one should first take a closer look at how the actual notion of the nation works and where its origins lie.

The task of formulating a consistent interpretation of how a nation can essentially be described has presented itself as being a considerable challenge to many theorists in the field over time and while one has mostly been unable to agree on the one right terminology or definite explanation for the term, its origins seem to be of a more comprehensible and concurrent nature in academia. If one is to believe the word of James Snead or Ernest Renan, the nation's centre of birth is designated to be eighteenth century "French Revolution" (*European pedigrees*, 231), not only rendering it a comparably recent invention, despite many political landscapes regularly attempting to make it appear like a millennia old institution, but therefore also a concept which has taken shape on a transnational level. Though an actual definition has been hard to come by, one of the most significant contributions provided in this area over the years has come in form of Benedict Anderson and his heatedly debated work in *Imagined Communities*. Here, the political scientist provides further context on the matter of the nation and offers his own conceptualization:

In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (*Imagined*, 5-6)

While Anderson goes on to speak about central elements defining the concept and also how it gradually developed with the help of the spread of "print capitalism" (*Imagined*, 44), meaning the uniting of people through their own, communal language, the essential aspect for this thesis's research is that here he perceives the nation to be filled with people as a community which are

bound together on a metaphysical level, despite never having been actually acquainted. The bonding with these unknown compatriots within a nation's boundaries, however, does not necessarily presuppose that its people will constantly keep a sense of fraternalism in mind or be as welcoming to others attempting to be a part of the collective. Factors such as the aforementioned trend in immigration flows have led to the concept of the nation and its limits becoming more and more permeable, especially if one takes the example of the European Union and its open borders between its member states into account. As such, to uphold a certain degree of individuality, a nation may not only trust in its inhabitants sharing similar inherent attributes amongst each other, but it builds on them "forgetting things" which could represent a "danger for (the principle of) nationality" (*What is a nation*, 11), leading to them being granted a vast amount of freedom in their actions towards non-members. Though these 'imagined communities' have been able to draw their own boundaries in the past and mostly retain them, the idea of the 'nation' itself has nevertheless become a far more porous one compared to its former self. Due to each country having its own interpretation of these stated concepts and the West having often imposed their perception of the notion on the rest of the world, political scientist Partha Chatterjee, for instance, has claimed that we are in need of making way for a different, more contemporary thought process, with a different "theoretical language" (*Postcolonial Histories*, 5; 11) being necessary to make the 'imagined community' work; a thought very much still viable today despite Chatterjee advocating for such already back in the nineties. Ultimately, whether or not the people living in such a communal space are willing to be, on a mental level, as open as the current geographical accessibility of borders suggests and embrace those who enter them, is a different story entirely and will go on to constitute one of the main focal points of this thesis.

In the context of the two novels, which are to be interpreted in the following chapters, the notion of an imagined bond between people within the community is based on several decisive aspects which contribute to its people upholding this socially constructed idea. While Anderson names several of them in connection to forming the basis of a community, with "memory" or the "census", "map" and "museum" constituting such factors, the two elements, which this thesis will concentrate on, are just as prominent in achieving the condition of being a unified community; namely that of language and the "ultimate sacrifice" (*Imagined*, 144; 163; 187). By advocating fraternalism within a community, emotions are created which are powerful enough to cause its people to go through with sacrificing their lives for their country, as was visible in the

case of Britain and its colonies during the Second World War, for instance, irrespective of whether one originated from Europe or any of its other dominions across the globe. The idea of making this sacrifice, and similarly extreme conceptions, constitutes one of the cornerstones of Anderson's 'imagined community' as, paradoxically, death is often perceived as the kind of glue which keeps its members bound together and enables those in power to ask others in weaker positions to give their lives in order to ensure this imaginative construct's continuing survival. Particularly in the interest and sense of the uneven relationship between colonizer and colonized, Fritz Fanon addresses the need for a perpetual "unity of a nation" (*Wretched*, 61) and emphasizes that the respective individuals in power are the ones who need to be protecting their people if a nation is to benefit all its members, regardless of aspects of class, colour, or any others. Yet, these groups fail to do so regularly, a factor which will be visible in the two novels addressed in the textual analysis. As such, this process and the many others arguably benefit the nation itself rather than being promoted for the good of its people, habitually serving as a possible basis for future exclusion if one is not inclined to follow suit with notions such as the romanticized one of dying for your country.

The second decisive aspect of establishing the mentioned sense of fraternalism in the nation is constituted by language; while the text of *Imagined Communities* discusses the area extensively due to the large part the latter plays in the development and history of the former, this paper intends to solely focus on its social aspect. Essentially, Anderson is of the opinion that "language is not an instrument of exclusion", but is rather "fundamentally inclusive" in regard to people becoming a part of society over time; by utilizing "vocabulary of kinship [...] or that of home" (*Imagined*, 134; 145), such as Small Island's "Mother Country" (*SI*, 141), the idea of a great and ancient nation and community is developed which begins to advocate for its population to strive for, what Anderson refers to as, "unisonance". By using such language, one feels more closely bonded to one's compatriots. The potential consequence here is, at least partially, the creation of an identity based on such unifying factors as they subsequently evoke a belief in the minds of a community's people that they are bonded together, often rendering those who do not partake in these acts as not representing one of their own and outcasts.

Furthermore, by appealing to the people's general need to possess a sense of belongingness to a community, the nation retains the ability to influence the minds of its inhabitants with

nationalistic thoughts which are able to influence or even manipulate them into thinking that these actions are in the interest of their country. Bhabha's work in his theoretical text *The Location of Culture* illustrates that the appearance of an omnipresent, all-including communality is specifically provided by "metaphors" similar to the 'vocabulary of kinship', which Anderson previously mentioned, offering both an immediate and comforting feeling of "home and belonging", thereby overshadowing the implicit "heterogeneity" (*Location*, 200-202; 212) which eventually affects the nation. The consequence is a social space which exists with a rigid perception of who belongs to a community compared to the aforementioned concept of togetherness evoked in one's mind by being simply of a specific nationality. Such a space is also comparable to Rushdie's description of his positive experiences of living in a "dream-England" (*Imaginary Homelands*, 10; 18) as it may have been inclusive towards him, due to his favourable circumstances in form of a lighter complexion and other characteristics usually associated with being traditionally British, but not necessarily towards people who do not fulfill such criteria.

When keeping the narratives of *Small Island* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* in mind, the question arises whether or not one is ever really able to speak of an actual "fraternity of equals" (*Imagined*, 84) in this context and illustration of a nation and its community. Despite being ready to learn a respective language or even die for a country, which might not even be one's own, as we will also specifically see in Andrea Levy's novel, the perception of being bonded together while also having no quarrel to let someone amongst one's ranks die is somewhat hypocritical. In any case, people, who do not suit certain standards which are taken as measurements in the inclusion process, be that due to the two referred to important aspects or any of the others Anderson mentions, are essentially exposed and made to live at the mercy of such factors when attempting to find attachment to a new environment. Given that recent historical events show that this mindset is still very much apparent, one can therefore adhere to the necessity of such a way of thinking as is perceivable in the conceptualization of Anderson's 'imagined community' as being nowadays as much in need of being viewed through the process of 'postcolonial thought' as it was back in nineteen-eighties.

1.3 Creating boundaries – thoughts of borders and ‘metonymic walls’

When addressing the topic of borders, one generally discusses a subject connected to “geography” (*What is a nation*, 18) which plays a pivotal role in the formation of such spaces; however, the process of establishing these geographical fringes can simultaneously be viewed as one of the most arbitrary acts of human imagination throughout history. Wendy Brown’s work in her book *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* offers insight into the matter at hand as she deals with a country’s reasoning in resorting to the act of (arbitrarily) placing boundaries. While she mainly takes aim at more recent and modern examples, as well as the deteriorating “sovereignty” (*Walled States*, 36-37) of these states due to achieving the exact opposite of the initially intended effect of becoming stronger through the usage of walls, Brown addresses several key aspects that can be led back to the aforementioned creation of a ‘dream-like’ nation, which, on the surface, conveys a sense of homogeneity, but, in reality, illustrates a tendency of excluding behaviour within its community by implementing an “inside/outside distinction” (*Walled States*, 37). A description of the beginning of such national boundaries is observable in Edward Said’s genre-defining *Orientalism* and, while his work specifically takes aim at the Orient, it can nevertheless also be considered as applying to this general thought of a nation’s limits being subjectively imagined:

It is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality. A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call "the land of the barbarians." In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I use the word "arbitrary" here because imaginative geography of the "our land-barbarian land" variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for "us" to set up these boundaries in our own minds; "they" become "they" accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from "ours." (*Orientalism*, 54)

The division caused by a border’s automatic development of an ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ therefore proves to be highly influential in regard to upholding a distorted sense of togetherness in an ‘imagined community’ which marginalizes the people who fits Said’s mentioned profile of the “barbarians”. Not fitting the traditional image of a perfect citizen, the consequence of the ‘inside/outside distinction’ Brown refers to leads to, for instance, immigrants becoming an

omnipresent threat who embody common stereotypes such as all of them being thieves and rapists. Essentially, these people on the ‘outside’ of a community are confronted with a reluctance to be let into a nation as a result of, on the one hand, fear and fearmongering and, on the other, an imaginary barrier which becomes apparent and which this paper shall term “metonymic walls”.

When speaking of such ‘metonymic walls’, one must first establish what a so called metonymy actually is and a simple online search in the Oxford Learners Dictionary provides a fitting definition for this paper’s cause by describing it as “the act of referring to something by the name of something else that is closely connected with it” (*Oxford Learners Dictionary*). The first thought which may come to mind when talking about a wall, is that it has the capacity to keep out whomever one desires to be on the other side of it. However, in a more appropriate context, if, for instance, a white British person becomes wary of something unfamiliar in his immediate surroundings, ergo within his or her community’s boundaries, and notices a person with a dark complexion, or any other features uncommon for the traditional image of a European, walk down the street then any existing, racially influenced preconceptions, which would have been indoctrinated through parenting, social groups, the internet, or such sources in the past, will consequently have a bearing on how the former perceives and reacts to the latter. Here, a person might resort to a certain negative, racist way of viewing his or her counterpart and would have a difficult time being persuaded to think otherwise after years of considering these thoughts as normal, notably visible throughout the refugee crisis and arguably remaining to be the case until this very day, if one considers countries like Hungary or precisely Britain’s policy of not sharing the burden of taking in refugees for reasons founded in prejudice. As such, a public aversion towards people from the ‘outside’ is thus created and maintained on a mental level which works as if it were a wall, not physically keeping out those unwanted but being associated with and having a similar effect as one by leading to confronting said immigrants with such imagined blockades. Alas, the ‘metonymic wall’ is born.

Already dwelling within a community, the method of highlighting non-members within society as “the alien” (*Walled States*, 129) is a result of employing these mental borders which imply that people entering a new country presently or in the past are supposedly capable of and seeking the destruction of a nation’s culture, economy, and ideals of safety. Thus, this immediate threat

warrants the internal classification of such a situation arising which allows any necessary measures to be implemented in order to keep out foreigners; if someone is nevertheless successful, an 'outside' person, who might manage to overcome all the physical hindrances put in his or her way, is ultimately still met with these stated 'metonymic walls' erected in the minds of people on the 'inside'. By forbidding these mental limits to be crossed, the "fantasy of impermeability" (*Walled States*, 131), as Brown refers to this sensation caused by walls, is preserved and, to a certain extent, appeased, thereby strengthening and justifying a tendentially xenophobic mindset built around attentiveness, distrust, and hostility aimed at foreigners.

At this current point in time, the threat of the 'outside' is popularly associated with refugees coming from the Middle East; however, from a (post)colonial point of view, transnational flows have arguably existed on a worldwide scale ever since the dawn of Europe's imperialistic aspirations, peaking over the past few centuries. People like Gordon K. Lewis have referred to these times of change as the showcasing of "colonialism in reverse" (*Slavery*, 304). Hereby, immigrants from places such as Jamaica or Kenya, both countries having been a part of the British Empire until the period of 'decolonization' in the twentieth century, are now the ones doing the colonizing by deciding to live beside their (or their ancestors) former oppressors in Western countries. As such, Lewis states that one has been able to perceive a gradually increasing number of cases involving the emigration of people from the (former) colonies to the so called "imperial centers" such as Britain. On a side note, it is worth mentioning that, while, for instance, the characters' experiences with immigration from Jamaica to England makes for primarily for a postcolonial focus in the context of Levy's *Small Island*, the thought process behind this reversal of roles has just as much spread to other fields. Stephen D. Arata is one of many scholars who has introduced the postcolonial concept of 'colonialism in reverse' to works of Gothic fiction and concentrates in his analysis on showing how Bram Stoker's fictional and as a threat marked, character of Dracula's own "reverse colonization" (*Occidental Tourist*, 623) to Britain leads to an uproar and dismay amongst the latter's population. As such, one could say that, over time, a general Western trend has developed to often portray individuals with a colonial background as immediately taking up a negative connotation due to their place of origin, something works of fiction intend to portray and call to attention.

The “colonized subject” (*Black Skin*, 78), as Fanon refers to people who have been negatively affected by colonialism, is generally perceived as embodying traits and prejudices which make a person with a colonial background represent something inherently lesser and unworthy, even a mere means to an end, thereby constituting a menace to the supposedly untainted vest of a European community. Despite being based on vague, subjective assumptions, which arise from the spreading of preconceptions made possible by the existence of ‘metonymic walls’, the quintessence of this term has arguably still survived into the present day. The existence of formerly colonized individuals carrying an inherent threat simply for not being white has recently been once again visible in the unfavourable treatment which people attempting to enter the limits of European countries during the events of the refugee crisis have been necessitated to endure, still being viewed through a lens tainted by bigotry. One must add, however, that oscillation has naturally played a significant role in changing this perception back and forth over time, both lessening and enhancing the degree of severity with which a person from a former colony has been actively pursued and marked with this idea of constituting the eternal ‘colonized subject’ between the early twentieth and the current twenty-first century, as with most issues that remain in discourse over such a long period of time.

Despite the consequent difficulties and often hostile receptions following an individual’s ‘colonialism in reverse’, the aim of leaving the fringes of one space and managing to gain a foothold within the borders of more economically and socially secure spaces represents an aspiration many people, who are looking to join a new community possess. This transition, however, is frequently made difficult or even rendered impossible from being achieved due to certain labels being imposed on ‘outside’ people before even having entered a community. Bhabha, for instance, illustrates such continually negatively associated markers, which are permanently regarded with prevalently antagonistic connotations, with his referral to the “daemonic double” (*Location*, 243) while referring to typical associations for certain geographical places; ones which serve as preconceptions and exact opposites of such. This conceptualization of an embodiment of evil and villainy for objects is just as much construable for a physical person as, for example, the demonization of people with coloured skin or a colonial background into representing all the bad features a white one is viewed as not embodying, constitutes a condition still frequently associated with today, especially in light of the fearmongering which saw numerous negative attributes be linked to the Syrian refugees over

the past few years, being considered to be rapists, thieves, or similar unfounded preconceptions. The area on the ‘outside’ of a national space is therefore frequently made out to be a “dangerous [one] beyond familiar boundaries” (*Orientalism*, 57) which consequently demands and justifies any means necessary to counter people literally on the (transnational) move, subsequently leading to the preferred solution of “walling out” (*Walled States*, 31) by means of erecting mentioned barriers.

In the specific case of Britain, the desire to establish physical walls during the heights of mass immigration to the “imperial centre” (*Empire*, 4) of the former Empire was not in need of being as actively pursued as in other European countries due to the Channel providing a natural border; however, this geographical advantage has not hindered border thought. One cannot go as far as claiming that each and every person in Britain has always been inherently racist towards and/or opposed to all individuals linked to immigrating to England over the years as enough examples of welcoming Britons exist that have actively attempted to help. However, if one takes the events portrayed in Andrea Levy’s *Small Island* into consideration, the natural advantage of the Channel and the openness of some were nevertheless not always enough to deter parts of the British population from perceiving their colonial counterparts as the aforementioned ‘daemonic double’; as “immigrant hordes” (*Walled States*, 81; 94). One can observe here that Anderson’s mentioned terminology of the nation as “home” (*Imagined*, 143) represents a popular way of creating a patriotic atmosphere, even in regard to a nation’s limits, as the enabling of the pursuit and sustaining of a distorted idea of a homogeneous society and an omnipresent “fantasy of an ‘us here/them there’” (*Walled States*, 98) mindset, fuels the discourse revolving around the mentioned ‘inside/outside distinction’ and the demonization of, as Said puts it, threatening “barbarians” (*Orientalism*, 54) waiting to pounce at the opportunity of entering the limits of a country like Britain. Despite originating in the thought of a border being in the interest of the general public, the bottom line is that, quintessentially, such limitations, whether of imagined or physical nature, are not able to ever bring about the desired effect of homogeneity; on the contrary, as will be illustrated in the interpretative chapters, these walls merely contribute to the sustaining of a heterogenetic society and the amplification of exclusion within a community.

1.4 The 'Third Space' - living in a state of in-betweeness

During and after its rise to power as an empire, Britain has already been mentioned to have contributed immensely to the establishment of borders through its numerous acts of founding colonies across the globe. Despite this era of colonialism bequeathing nations and their communities with these boundaries, one cannot simply equate a figurative drawing of lines on a map to the harsh realities which these circumstances have caused individuals with a colonial background or generally people on the fringes. With instances of mixed British reactions towards people from their (former) colonies constituting a prominent topic in Levy and Rhys' novels, the members on and from the 'outside' find themselves in a specific position after entering a community, at the very least initially.

Residing in a "liminal space" (*Location*, 5), as Bhabha terms it, compels a person to live his or her life in a state of in-betweeness, being, figuratively, left to be in motion and constantly on the move between the spaces of a community, as well as being necessitated to deal with any difficulties, which come with liminality. A person, or even an object or setting, definable as representing or being situated in such a space is one that hangs in the balance; is on his or her way from one familiar spot to a less or (un)known one while not halting along the way. This liminality is also capable of appearing in any given circumstance which sees people move from a familiar space to one outside of their comfort zone. One must note that these 'liminal spaces' need not necessarily have to do with postcolonialism as they tend to exist in all kinds of areas, a practical example being perceivable in a person taking up a temporal occupation as a consultant in an office without actually belonging to that firm (*Consulting*, 273). Providing that such a work space goes on to change permanently or, in the context of this paper, a community eventually accepts a person as one of its own, a journey within 'liminal spaces' might be able to be concluded at such a point, though a degree of unfamiliarity, even distance, will most likely always remain. However, in regard to people with a colonial background, who embody any of the aforementioned markers of difference, remaining a position of liminality is not as straightforward as one might initially believe. The endeavour to leave a 'liminal space' can also lead to an individual continuing into other adjacent spaces which emerge in course of one's movement through cultural and communal spaces, with specifically 'metonymic walls' contributing largely here. In the context of boundaries, a "sense of interiority and exteriority"

becomes apparent by means of erecting walls, creating a correlation which leads to Matthew Longo similarly referring to such a space as a “liminal zone” (*Politics*, preface xv; xvi), the area acting on a similar level to the ‘liminal space’. While this paper does intend to primarily focus on Bhabha’s ‘space’, Longo’s particular usage of the word ‘zone’ does particularly highlight the involved detachment which such a placement is capable of causing for an individual in such a situation due to the connotation of detachment involved with a zone.

Returning to Bhabha, the theorist talks about ‘liminal spaces’ as not only possessing, in theory, the capacity to rid society of binary distinctions such as that of the ‘inside/outside distinction’, but also being very much able of leading up to situations of in-betweeness which can evolve into what he refers to as the so called “Third Space” (*Location*, 53). This area is located between the lines of two differing spaces and ways of life, metaphorically speaking, creating a vacuum in-between. Any person finding him- or herself in this position subsequently constitutes a subject that challenges both the very boundaries and perceptions of both communities, as Bhabha explains:

The meaning of the [utterance the Third Space] is quite literally neither the one nor the other. [...] It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable [...]. It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; [...]. (*Location*, 53-55)

People situated in this ‘Third Space’ are, in theory, able to live or even embrace this subsequent spot between societies, though, taking the examples of Antoinette from *Wide Sargasso Sea* or Gilbert from *Small Island* into consideration, many of the ones affected frequently find themselves at a point where they might start to question their own identity and sense of emotional affiliation as a consequence of this displacement at and to the fringes. For further context, not only can people be characterized by such ambivalence, but one can just as much view material or non-physical objects, be these souvenirs like a Mexican Santa Claus doll influenced by two different cultures or even particular “language practices” (*Rethinking Diversity*, 286) in education, respectively, as being able to be defined as a ‘Third Space’. However, while such objects can be deemed to be fun or, in regard to language, also beneficial, for a *person* to embody such an inherent difference on the basis of roots, skin colour, cultural

background, or similar aspects, the 'Third Space' creates very different circumstances with lasting ramifications. This situation also represents a major reason why Bhabha's space possesses the tendency to cause a situation of being constantly in motion between two fronts; one which is capable of becoming a permanent condition for a person, thus differing from a 'liminal' one's usually temporal nature.

When analyzing the connection between borders and such spaces which act as transnational hotspots for a community, and not just the positions of the creolized and marginalized likes of Levy and Rhys's colonial protagonists, Avtar Brah's concept of the "diaspora space" becomes a different way of perceiving the varying dynamics taking place on a community-wide scale. For him, both sides of the colonial spectrum are in need of being discussed when being concerned with a specific part of a transnational space; one which finds itself at an "intersectionality of diaspora, border and dis/location" (*Diaspora*, 615) and in need of geographical allocation. However, due to the stated focus on the perspective of colonial individuals within a community in this thesis, as well as the mentioned 'Third Space's' capability of identity shaping in connection with border thought, the 'diaspora space' will hence not be further elaborated on and is merely mentioned for reasons of completion.

While Bhabha characterizes a person residing in a 'Third Space' as being constituted by an in-betweenness, he does add that this position may just as well one day serve as the key to achieving a sense of global communality. However, in order for this scenario to ever unfold, the struggle of coming to terms with and finding a solution to the stigma linked to in-between positioning of identity represents a lengthy and arduous path, with Bhabha naming several possible reactions to countering and/or trying to rid oneself of this state. Resorting to what the theorist refers to as "mimicry" (*Location*, 122) represents a popular choice for people finding themselves in a position such as that of the 'Third Space' as their copying of the behaviour and rites of a community serves as a frequent defense mechanism to attempt escaping; however, by doing so, one becomes somewhat of a similar replica to the 'inside'. This development then again leads to, for instance, someone like *Wide Sargasso Sea's* Antoinette becoming "*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (*Location*, 122, emphasis of author) for her present communities. Despite Rhys' protagonist sharing an uncanny similarity to both black and white people in ways of appearance, complexion, language, and/or similar features, she is rendered to

be nonetheless divergent from the norm of these groups and even implicitly turns into a threat as a result of this very resemblance, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Postcolonial fiction has often set out to deal with colonial characters whose ambivalent positions regarding their origins has led to them attempting to escape or fill the void caused by their missing feeling of belonging. Apart from, for example, this thesis's selected novel of *Small Island* and its female narrator Hortense's tendency to mimicking British life and culture, many other instances of 'mimicry' in the field of fiction can be perceived. V.S. Naipaul's male protagonist in "The Mimic Men" (2006) represents only one of several examples of fictional characters and their colonial communities feeling consciously or subconsciously necessitated to draw on a culture and/or a conduct not traditionally associated with their own native ones. Regardless, whether or not 'mimicry' can ever suffice to be fully accepted in a community and leave the 'Third Space' is a different story entirely, particularly when taking into consideration that the immediate environment and aforementioned 'displacement' does not simply disappear. Possessing a lack of options, an individual finding him- or herself in a 'Third Space', the resorting to imitation does not change the fact that this position can have a detrimental effect on a person's individual process of self-identification when brought into the situation of exclusion coming from two or more communities.

1.5 The difficulties of identity formation

A circumstance which arguably remains the same for any person, who has been pushed into an aforementioned 'liminal space' by means of producing 'metonymic walls', is represented by the placing of pressure to conform to certain rules or standards on people perceived as embodying an inherent ambivalence. The overwhelming drive to belong, which the position of a 'Third Space' often evokes, necessitates such an affected person to try and hide any degree of plurality in regard to heritage and roots in order to fit in with a native community and fully take on its culture. In such a position, the previously mentioned Rushdie serves as an example of a life which had the Indian citizen move to the United Kingdom as an adolescent to attend prestigious schools and later study at university at a time when the British Empire's reign in India was nearing its end. While his individual journey resulted in a more or less positive instance which saw his new yet also foreign environment let him gain a cautious acceptance and become "partly of the West", Rushdie himself emphasizes that his beneficial treatment has been less down to the aforementioned 'dream England' than due to his "fair skin" and "'English' English accent" (*Imaginary Homelands*, 15; 18). On the other hand, British writer Paul Gilroy's account of growing up in a postwar Britain as a child of a formerly colonized Guyanese immigrant offers the reader some insight into a very different scenario and the implicit necessities which frequently come with the adaptation to national customs, referring to his mixed experiences of getting to know Britain's culture and literary history as "an obligation" (*Against Race*, 2-3) as a child. As a person with a darker complexion in comparison to Rushdie, the path to integration and gaining a sense of belonging was to be a far more tedious journey and task.

Living one's life by continually adjusting to the will of a community's musings, especially while concurrently struggling with a constant sense of in-betweenness or non-belonging as a consequence of personal factors displaying difference, can very well profoundly shape people's sense of self. The keyword here is identity, as the well-known cultural theorist Stuart Hall remarks in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora".

Cultural identity [...] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. [...] identities

are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (*Cultural Identity*, 225)

When Hall speaks of the endless nature of this “transformation” in one’s identity, the question arises whether or not this assertion also has just as much of an affect on, in the context of the example of colonizer versus colonized individuals, the one as it does on the other. When taking the narratives of this thesis’s two novels into consideration, such “positioning” seems, at best, lobb-sided and to the disadvantage of the oppressed colonial characters considering the apparent unevenly distributed power relations. Essentially, one can claim that, an identity can be viewed as something mentally and psychologically constructed which is permanently in motion. Various sources regularly contribute in fundamentally shaping this process, even if it might not ever be fully completed, and therefore external influences have the capacity to continually impact an identity both positively and/or negatively along the way. James Procter is one of several scholars who have looked extensively into Hall’s work and addresses the latter’s stance on the older, even obsolete, idea of “identity politics” in the world of today in his introductory writing *Stuart Hall*. While Procter goes into detail about Hall’s envisioning of identity revolving around the more modern aspects of “*difference, self-reflexivity, and contingency*” (Hall, 118-119; emphasis of author), he also offers an explanation on the outdated ‘identity politics’, referring to these being visible in people’s dedication to a community and a rigidity in holding on to defining, even traditional, elements and markers which bond such a social space together. From this ‘identity of politics’, one can thus perceive a similarity in how the characters of *Small Island* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are forced to adhere to a standard, which, in their fictional setting, is still very much apparent and also difficult to adhere to for individuals with an ambivalent, colonial background, as will be elaborated on in the coming chapters.

The lengthy process of establishing an identity has been said to be able to profoundly affect an individual’s identification with a community due to such a social space’s ‘inside’ members possessing the tendency to evaluate whether to allow or impede an inclusion dependent on matters of sharing the same identity and background which bounds one together as a nation. Anderson extensively lists different aspects, which have a distinct influence on the process of shaping belonging, from a variety of areas as, for instance, the creation of national rites, “heroes” and “flags”, the chanting of “anthems”, and, most significantly, the bond to one’s native language – in short, “*emblems of nation-ness*” (*Imagined*, 28; 81; 133; 188) – all can play a part

in the development as an individual and add to his or her identity. Despite relying on such regular or daily acts seeming harmless at first, the potential effect, which these elements are able to have on people residing in an intermediate position such as the 'Third Space', can arguably be substantial, especially seeing that a person with a multiethnic heritage, for example, may never be able to fully identify with the 'inside' community and could thus possibly never shed his or her tag as an outsider.

The commanding influence of identity is furthermore tangible in some of the most integral areas of a citizen's self-definition, namely those of "belonging, ethnicity, and nationality", and, depending on the degree of deviation from a communally endorsed norm, not conforming with these aspects leads to a community consequently deciding on whether or not an individual can be perceived as a part of, as Gilroy titles this bond, its "we" (*Against Race*, 98-99). Here one must also differentiate between who feels the full force of exclusion for deviating from such factors and who is able to keep experiences with rejection and associations with a 'daemonic double' to a minimum. Circumstances relating to skin colour, European versus non-European heritage, or similar considerations tend to have a comparatively significant impact on such situations, with differences between a black and a white immigrant's reception most likely showcasing as much. The paradox aspect of this line of thought is that such a mindset once again stems from an entirely fictional construction similar to the setting of national borders, most crucially leading to the "reduction" (*Against Race*, 103) of a person's sense of belonging and positioning to dependent, usually inherent and thus unchangeable factors such as complexion or roots. While one must distinguish between generations, seeing that the younger ones will most likely have a somewhat easier time at integrating into a society compared to its ancestors due to being born into and having grown accustomed to in regard to the culture and rites, today's immigrant or person with an ancestral immigrant background will nevertheless still have to deal with persisting issues based on complexion, language, or race, as well as learning to deal with feelings of non-belonging when regarding their often far away originating roots. Fitting of this paper's themes due to Levy and Rhys' origins and portrayal of characters from the former West Indies, Hall also addresses European countries' involvement in causing the contradictory nature of, for example, "black Caribbean identities" which subsequently consist of both "similarity and continuity" and "difference and rupture" (*Cultural Identity*, 226-227). Ultimately, these actions of pressurizing people into possessing a certain identity and the frequent focus on achieving

communality by means of creating a pseudo-coherent “we” (*Against Race*, 99), as Gilroy notes, become potential instruments for achieving a state of possible omission, consequently making the lengthy processes of establishing an own identity virtually impossible in positions of national difference.

One of the long-term and influential consequences linked to a lack of belonging, which frequently leads to permanently damaging the perception of one’s own identity, is represented by a situation Bill Ashcroft et al. refers to as a “crisis of identity” (*Empire*, 8). Finding oneself in such a predicament, individuals characterized by ambivalent elements are often not able to dispose of the aforementioned connotations linking them to a ‘daemonic double’; connotations which are mostly constructed by a community’s intolerance and fueled by fear and fearmongering. This process gradually begins to contribute in shaping the identity of a person deemed to be on the ‘outside’ and eventually leads back to the position of the ‘Third Space’ for individuals like the two authors’ creolized protagonists, or even Rhys herself, being given no choice other than to accept the community’s role in ‘identity formation’. The impact of these circumstances can not only lead to a ‘crisis of identity’, but, fitting of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which will be addressed immanently in the next chapter, can just as much go a step further by culminating in what Clingman refers to as a state of “non-identity” (*Grammar*, 149) in his analysis of Rhys’ novel. An absence develops and is expressed in form of a position which permanently affects one in such an influential way that it ultimately renders the identity of an affected person as being “without solution” (*Grammar*, 149).

Solution or no solution, the question must nevertheless be pursued as to how a ‘crisis of identity’ or a state of ‘non-identity’ can be thwarted in the first place as the aforementioned methods, such as Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’, merely leads to the maintaining of a community’s extensive influence on its suppressed (non-)members. Putting a stop to the distortion of these peoples’ identities and ridding them of links to inherent and subliminal in-betweeness caused by the excluding capabilities of erected walls constitutes an integral notion in the achieving of equality and a genuine feeling of commonality in a community. Identities originating from outside of Europe are, at the very least partially, attempted to be kept away in form of a person with foreign heritage and reversing this tendency or finding a less extreme solution must therefore be of the utmost importance in the area of ‘postcolonial thought’. While this paper cannot provide any

quick fixes or an answer to the conundrum revolving around such positions of identity, as most likely very few can at this time, it nevertheless intends to make as good of a contribution as possible in the strive to find a solution and, as already mentioned in its introduction, aims to, at the very least, further the discourse revolving around the influence of communities on particularly the ‘colonized subject’, as well as the once again contemporary prominence and significant impact of apparent walls, in the approaching of Levy’s *Small Island* and Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

2. Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*

2.1 Introductory Remarks

When *Wide Sargasso Sea* was first published back in 1966, its, at the time, seventy-six year old author Jean Rhys had been living in England ever since her departure from her birthplace of Dominica as a teenager. Though later constituting one of the most well-known works of the twentieth century in the field of postcolonial writing, as well as her already having been a writer for most of her life, Rhys had been fighting an uphill battle to finish her novel for several decades and had only managed to finally conclude it in the twilight of her career. Despite all the elapsed time, which she required to finish, from the offset, Rhys always had a firm intention in regard to how she intended to approach and structure *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Being born in the Caribbean while simultaneously possessing British roots and ancestry, Rhys is what one used to refer to as a Creole. As a result, a constant feeling of being out of place no matter where she went accompanied the author throughout her life and eventually led to her developing an internal struggle with depression and, to a certain extent, psychic derangement, a fate which she went on to partially reflect in her book's female protagonist Antoinette Cosway. However, one of the main reasons for her decision to dedicate herself to the composition of her novel came after reading fellow British authoress Charlotte Brontë's nowadays globally renowned *Jane Eyre*. Rhys felt a strong urge to rectify the latter's literary portrayal of a woman she caught herself somewhat identifying with, namely the depicted colonial 'beast' who is worthy of being locked away for her savageness; the character of Bertha. The significance of this disadvantaged individual and her far more prominent role than one would initially suspect is addressed by the aforementioned Clingman, who specifically notes the following:

Bertha is the 'ghost' in the national machine, the secret that allows it to work in both psychic and symbolic terms – but only by remaining the hidden trace [...]. Jane, as we understand her, can exist only in the absence of Bertha. She comes to replace Bertha's memory [...]. (*Grammar*, 145-146)

As such, Rhys' portrayal of Antoinette's story can and should thus be defined as a so called postcolonial rewriting (of *Jane Eyre*) as the author sets out to write "back" to an "imperial centre" (*Empire*, 4) which had taken the liberty of depicting the difficult position of a person in such a one-sided and stereotypical fashion that it necessitated an answer. As Rhys herself stated

in one of her letters recorded in her compilation *Letters 1931-1966*, the author saw herself in need of reacting to Brontë's depiction as the latter had almost entirely ousted the Creole character Bertha to be "off stage" and thus called for an answer by letting this misunderstood female character "be right on stage" (*Letters*, 156), with the exact functions of doing so being elaborated on more extensively further down. The genre of rewriting in postcolonial fiction is not uncommon and examples of such can be perceived in several works produced in course of the second half of the nineteenth century, with Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* (1969) rewriting the similarly titled Shakespearean play or J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1987) providing a different perspective on the events surrounding *Robinson Crusoe*. However, in order to fully grasp the context of specifically the rewriting in form of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, one must first consider the one which Rhys' novel and thus Brontë's *Jane Eyre* becomes an important starting point when conducting a textual interpretation of the former.

Structured into 38 varying length chapters, the reader experiences Jane Eyre's story solely through her eyes as the female protagonist struggles with several prominent issues at the time of Brontë's writing, challenging traditional gender roles or the constrictions of social class. The author initially depicts the hardships and emotional torture which the young woman is necessitated to endure growing up; after arriving at Edward Rochester's Thornfield manor, a place Rhys' intentionally incorporates in her own work, Jane gradually develops a romantic relationship with her employer, but also becomes aware of dubious incidents at the manor. Nevertheless, the two protagonists become engaged; however, immanently before the wedding, Rochester's first wife Bertha, a 'mad' Creole he had married over a decade ago in the West Indies and had held locked up on the upper floors, emerges. Ultimately, despite the two initially separating and the mansion being destroyed by a fire caused by his first wife, killing Bertha, the two find to each other yet again and go on to live out a fulfilling and happy life.

While *Wide Sargasso Sea* differs to *Jane Eyre* in several distinctive ways, which will be addressed below, Jean Rhys' novel does illustrate several similarities with Brontë's piece. The usage of certain identical names, such as Richard Mason or Grace Poole, the characters' sharing of a similar background, such as Antoinette's in *Wide Sargasso Sea* unnamed husband, who the authoress intends to be portraying Edward Rochester, and specifically the female lead character showcasing an at first glance deceptively similar development to Jane in the early stages of her

life all demonstrate a closeness between the two novels. However, this similarity remains exactly that as Rhys pursued her writing of an entirely different story with the goal of it constituting the mentioned rewriting. Rhys' novel shows how Antoinette's voice is eventually taken away from her instead of Brontë's way of *solely* focusing on her madness, the Creole ultimately being degradingly ferried across the Atlantic to a foreign land like a formerly muzzled slave, though nevertheless never being quite the same as her black caretaker and surrogate mother Christophine due to her white ancestry.

Several of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s core elements, such as structure and/or narration, differ to Brontë's piece in essence as the former consists of three chapters and sees each of them told by a different character, allowing both Antoinette and Rochester's point of view and side to the story to be heard, an aspect which differentiates the novel from Jane's first-person narration in *Jane Eyre*. The way the narration takes place, however, allows one to associate the novels' respective narrators with a "stream-of-consciousness" (*Intertextual Status*, 65) account by means of the continuous sharing, for instance, of perceived personal experiences, various recollections of the past, and/or any emotions which is perceptible both in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Then again, by employing multiple narrators and not merely a sole one throughout the story, Rhys provides the formerly silenced Bertha in Brontë's writing with a voice which, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s case, means that Antoinette is granted the chance to deliver her own perspective of the events unfolding; events which paint a different picture to Brontë's fairly one-sided depiction of the pyro maniacal, violent 'monster' of colonial origins. Importantly, one can therefore view Rhys' novel not merely as telling the reader about the events prior to the plot taking place in *Jane Eyre*, but, first and foremost, as a *rewriting* of the latter, providing a vital understanding of how the portrayed events came to take place and rectifying the limited coverage, which the persona non grata, Bertha, receives in Brontë's novel.

Rhys's rewriting of *Jane Eyre* essentially allows the author to "right a few wrongs" (*Other Stage*, 156), as Sylvie Maurel phrases it in her own work focusing on the former's rewriting of Brontë's novel. Thereby, Antoinette is finally able to clarify how she is essentially left no other choice than to develop into a woman driven into insanity, implying that, to make use of a proverb, still waters run deep, and thereby debunking the myth of the automatically negative associations which come to mind in regard to a person of colonial origins. Briefly worded, Antoinette

purposefully receives the voice she needs and deserves by Rhys's decision to rewrite the events, no longer allowing the automatic labelling as the wild and incomprehensible woman in the attic. Due to this rewriting and thereby enabling the young woman to essentially recapture a part of her individuality in the end, it comes as no surprise that several texts have been subsequently dedicated to focusing on Antoinette, often choosing to look at the events from a feminist perspective. Jennifer Gilchrist, for instance, elaborates on how Rhys' female protagonist embodies the "slave metaphor" (*Women, Slavery*, 463) through her difficult position and is continually necessitated to conform to the dominantly upheld view of her as a Creole woman under the control of the white male characters. One must however broach the subject, which has already been briefly mentioned above; namely that Rochester, despite taking up a patriarchal yet somewhat ambivalent role himself, is nevertheless also given the opportunity to narrate a chapter of Rhys' novel and this decision therefore enables the reader to experience the story from both sides, showcasing the male protagonist's difficult life prior to his journey to the West Indies as the second son of a distant and resentful father and that even people in a position of authority and power can possess a tragic story which both shapes them and is thus worth telling.

Initially starting off with Antoinette's personal account of her troubling struggles during her childhood and early stages as an adolescent, a time is shown which undoubtedly leaves its mark on the girl due to being confronted with constant hostility by both the inhabitants of the Jamaican island she grows up on and her resentful mother. This situation climaxes once the family's estate is burnt down as a result of the decades of built up anger, sorrow, and tension caused by the colonial exploitation and enslavement of the native population at the hands of the white plantation owners, now being given a free pass to do so due to the abolition of slavery and the partial withdrawal of the British government, Antoinette's impeded brother being killed in the process and her mother being consequently driven into insanity. The second part follows up with a highly biased portrayal of events by Rochester after he marries Antoinette, gradually giving the reader a detailed and more insightful perspective into the male lead's actual mindset towards his new Creole wife. Rochester's thoughts also recount how the development of the two's relationship, which initially sees him hide his resentment towards her, continually deteriorates until he eventually develops into being the jailer for her as one can perceive in *Jane Eyre*. Lastly, the narration rotates back to Antoinette in chapter three, though she is preceded by a brief account of her overseer, Grace Pool; this change in narration not only serves as a filler to inform

the reader of the since then occurred circumstances in-between chapters, but Grace's unsympathetic description of the female protagonist's final position ultimately underlines once more how, from Rochester and the other British folk's perspective, these people believe that not showing empathy towards or an understanding for someone in Antoinette's situation is justified as a result of a suggested savageness and profound difference to the rest of them.

While one of the original purposes for Rhys to resort to a rewriting can be based on, on the one hand, the previously mentioned provision of voice for Antoinette and the clarification about how exactly she eventually evolved into Bertha in an effort to achieve vindication, on the other, a platform is offered for Rhys to indirectly take aim at issues she herself was necessitated to deal with in course of her life, making *Wide Sargasso Sea*, at least partially, a novel with autobiographical character. Seeing that the author also struggled to come to terms with possessing an ambivalent heritage as a white, female Creole born in Jamaica with British ancestry, the correlation therefore seems not too farfetched, especially considering how Rhys herself famously referred to many of her female protagonists, including Antoinette, with "I" (*Conversation*, 23). The author's own lonely isolation in-between communities will consequently have tempted her all the more to take the chance to correct the portrayal of the voiceless Bertha from *Jane Eyre* and do justice to this vilified character by making an effort to illustrate both sides of the coin, in contrast to the arguably one-sided portrayal by Brontë.

Furthermore, while Rhys' novel also allows one to address a host of different themes and topics such as race, gender, or social class, as is also the case in *Jane Eyre*, this thesis intends to focus on other prominent and strong issues. The way *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s story unfolds has a major bearing on why one is also able to refer to it as a 'transnational' novel, an aspect which in itself already entails several elements which quickly become visible to the reader. Despite moving in opposite directions, the presence of the 'transnational' is continually tangible throughout the narrative as more or less every character's residence on the island, be it explicitly portrayed or merely implied, can be led back to originating from a movement in this sense; each in its own way ultimately proving to be more than just disadvantageous to the respective person. Antoinette's involuntary move to England, for instance, does not only see the female protagonist arrive at a place which goes on to become her grave, but her presence brings the 'transnational' into a community ignorant and adverse to such ambivalence. Coloured characters such as

Christophine or Tia are also depicted as initially being born in Martinique and having ended up in Jamaica, a displacement triggered by colonialism. Then again, Rochester's marriage and removal from the midst of his family to the West Indies just as much serves as an example of the 'transnational' which goes on to have a bearing on his very self as a result of his reluctance to go through with the move; however, compared to his wife, the man arrives in a space which is no stranger to the 'transnational' which is already present in more than one way. This difference becomes particularly evident when considering how less prominent characters such as Aunt Cora, Mr. Mason, or Richard Mason are also able to resort to travelling back and forth between the borders of England and Jamaica on several occasions with an ease. Demonstrating this situation will primarily be done in form of, on the one hand, illustrating the prominent themes of spatial metaphors and walls, and, on the other, how these two are linked to the concept of the community and affect the characters' process in attempting to create their own personal identity.

The initial reaction to Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* back in 1966 can only be described as the novel almost immediately being well-received and becoming critically acclaimed throughout the literary community, giving it the status of one of the all-time greats of its genre and prompting an innumerable amount of different interpretations, angles, and readings ever since. Secondary literature on varying aspects and prominent themes can be found in abundance on a host of subjects, such as race, gender, or social class, but also several others. While someone like Lee Erwin focused on the "historical circumstances" (*History and Narrative*, 143) influencing Rhys's narratological approach in the book, Peter Hulme, for instance, works on *Wide Sargasso Sea* specifically in form of a "historical criticism" (*Locked Heart*, 72-88) with the intention to avoid the pigeonholing of the novel into the field of Caribbean/ postcolonial literature and to discuss how the author's personal ties come into play, putting emphasis on what is to be deemed 'historical', and taking the fact of it constituting a rewriting heavily into consideration.

Other focus points can be found in the aforementioned presence of the unique style of narration in the novel which saw the likes of Carine Mardorossian or Kathy Mezei elaborate and concentrate on the roles of the "subaltern" (*Shutting up*, 1071-1089) and "madness" and "memory" (*Narration, Memory*, 195-208) in relation to Rhys' employed narrative strategies, respectively. An entirely different approach is perceptible in Ronnie Scharfman's work on *Wide Sargasso Sea* as she compares and mirrors its characters, content and interpersonal relationships

to a second, French novel while primarily focusing on the observable “mother-daughter” (*Mirroring and Mothering*, 88-106) and surrogate relationships Antoinette develops with her mother, Christophine, and Rochester, as well as the repercussions these have on the female protagonist’s identification process, specifically in the context of Lacan’s concept of alienation. Maria Olaussen then again speaks out on how she believes Rhys’ personal experiences and her relationship to dark complexions has an autobiographical effect on Antoinette striving to utilize “blackness” (*Blackness*, 81) as a key to rid herself of her British ties. Ultimately, one can describe *Wide Sargasso Sea* in Paula Grace Anderson’s words as illustrating “an open-ended universe, where anything is possible, and anyone [...] capable of anything” (*Other Side/Both Sides*, 57). The sheer amount of variety in regard to topics and themes evoked from the novel’s highly enticing nature has no boundaries and simply invites to interpreting Rhys’s fictional world.

Keeping this in mind and moving closer to the areas which this paper targets to centre on, a highly valued piece of secondary literature for working on Rhys’ novel in regard to these topics also comes in form of the aforementioned Clingman’s *The Grammar of Identity*. Introducing his idea of the “horizontal” and the “vertical” lines to Antoinette/Bertha as the embodiment of the “transnational” (*Grammar*, 135) in both *Jane Eyre* and its rewriting *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Clingman elaborates on how the “horizontal” relationships in the novels are made difficult to impossible by the verticality of various walls, as well as how the latter represents the reason for Antoinette’s consequent repression and oppressed “threshold” position of “non-identity” (*Grammar*, 148-149). While this thesis aims to work on and possibly reaffirm, at least partially, several of the points raised and conclusions reached by Clingman, as has already been done above, this thesis will only sparingly resort to his theoretical work for reference, if at all, as stated in the theory chapter. One decisive and potentially influential aspect Clingman decides not to explicitly focus on, however, shall pose as a key component in course of this paper, namely the role which the omnipresent influence of the community takes up and plays in the context of boundaries, metaphorically depicted spaces, and, in the novel at hand’s case, Antoinette’s identification process.

In summary, I intend to discuss Antoinette’s attempts of forming an identity – or possibly being damned to a life of being never being able to achieve exactly that – and how this process seems

to be heavily impacted by various external influences, first touching upon the role which *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s community has in regard to this development, followed by Antoinette's struggles with 'Metonymic Walls' and her consequent confinement in a figurative space, and, thirdly, addressing the ramifications these effects have on her perception of her own identity in course of this chapter. Lastly, I will then come to a conclusion regarding how the presented findings correlate with this paper's posed research question and hypothesis.

2.2 To be the “white nigger” in *Wide Sargasso Sea*’s community

When Anderson published his *Imagined Communities* back in 1983, Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* had already been on the book shelves for more than fifteen years. The former’s work on his concept of the ‘imagined community’, including its controversial and strict sense of who can refer to him- or herself as belonging to a specific community, can nevertheless be perceived as being thematically apparent in Rhys’ novel. This perception becomes particularly evident in course of the narrative if one once again takes into consideration that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the aforementioned rewriting of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and is therefore intent on both demonstrating and emphasizing Antoinette’s difficult and voiceless position; a position, or non-position, within a communal space which has greatly contributed to this situation developing.

Wide Sargasso Sea’s story takes place only a few years after the declaration of the so called Emancipation Act of 1833; though slavery had hereby been abolished within the British Empire, the development nevertheless did not put an end to the period of mass imperialist expansion. On the contrary, the Empire was still very much on the rise and the situations of its ‘colonized subjects’ were thus more or less just as dire as beforehand, visible in the continuing presence and dominance of the British Crown in the colonies, as well as its persistence in the exploitation of the latter’s people, lands, and resources. The nature of this newly gained freedom can consequently be defined as having been nothing short of a farce at the time as the actual departure and attainment of a real sense of individuality for a later nation such as Jamaica would require more than another century to be achieved, a condition and atmosphere which are also very much tangible in Rhys’ novel.

Before being shipped off to England, Antoinette Mason, née Cosway, is born and raised on the fringes of a recently emancipated island community which is inherently split into several varying groups and has established its understanding of who possesses the ability to truly belong to a society by continually putting emphasis on what a person *is* or *is not*, showing a tendency to *contrast* oneself to those who differ from one. This visible sense of differentiation and question of acceptance or non-acceptance does not occur unintentionally on the part of Rhys, as Jean D’Costa underlines in her biographical text on the author’s written work, referring to “[...] alienation, rejection, and denial [...] [finding] full expression in the double narratives of Antoinette Cosway and the young Englishman whom she marries” (*Jean Rhys* 1986, 398). The

keyword in connection to belonging or non-belonging to a community in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is primarily represented by aspects such as that of skin colour as a person's complexion represents an integral marker of detecting and evaluating affiliation. Dependent on whether one possesses a light, dark, or even "yellow" (*WSS*, 79) skin colour, the characters are either regarded as a part of a respective community or, if the latter two are apparent, are immediately perceived as inherently outside of its limits.

In regard to Antoinette, the situation is the case that she does possess a light complexion and an English heritage, but nevertheless always remains a "foreign [body]" (*Jean Rhys* 1998, 52), as Maurel underlines to be customary for the author's novels; Antoinette neither really ever being a part of the British community nor of the recently emancipated black one. The female narrator's white skin colour acts as a similar deterrent for both sets of people for different reasons; for the natives, her complexion is not different to that of their former enslavers and therefore understandably constitutes a hostile marking serving as a reminder of all the cruelty perpetrated by the girl's ancestors despite her being born on the island. For the British though her lightness normally represents one of the essential necessities to be recognized as a part of the community, the combination of Antoinette's likeness in colour and her foreign, colonial origins becomes both a decisive and disrupting element. The young woman is regarded as a white, volatile, and insane abomination which threatens their own purity and constitutes the consequence of allowing ambivalence to enter the community. By being continuously told by others who she is or is not, Antoinette even starts to view her mother in a different light despite their shared fates as Creoles, visible in her referring to A as "so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either" (*WSS*, 17). While genuine hostility or violence, for instance, are reserved for people with the opposite skin colour outside one's respective community, as is perceptible in the black mob's attack on Coulibri Estate or the preceding unspeakably brutal events surrounding the enslavement of the natives by the English, a Creole like Antoinette nevertheless embodies the perception that her blood is tainted due to her colonial influences and consequent inherent differences from the British community.

Negative connotations linked to people characterized by difference are thus a frequent site in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and are, for instance, highlighted by particularly the white character Rochester's description of the island's natives, designating them all as "sly, spiteful, malignant"

and possessing a “savage appearance” (*WSS*, 36; 41). The man does so irrespective of any differences in complexion between the black natives on the island and the “blacker” (*WSS*, 6) foreigners such as Christophine, of which many still live and work in the service of the Cosway family after the official end of slavery. These stereotypical, overgeneralized half-facts spread by the colonizers have been indoctrinated into the minds of the depicted white people, in this case Rochester, over time and, regardless of whether it is someone born in Jamaica like the servant Baptiste or in Martinique like Christophine, figuratively speaking, the sentiment dominates that ‘black is black’. Yet, this mindset does change when a Creole is the subject of discussion as the same distinction is not made here; meaning that, in this case, white is not white as a firm line is drawn between a person of pure British descent and one who has been creolized by calling a colonial island his or, in this case, her birthplace, regardless of any logical consistency in such an assertion. Rochester’s association of Antoinette and her “dark alien eyes” being a “Creole of pure English descent” but “[...] not English or European either” (*WSS*, 37) demonstrates that, due to her being born and raised in the colonies like the formerly enslaved black people, such a factor already suffices to justify making a differentiation between his wife and himself. As such, one cannot help but describe the situation any differently than claiming that the arbitrariness of this racial reasoning essentially rests upon a simple yet nonetheless significant “geographical accident” (*Race, Creole*, 87) which is allowed to act as a criteria of affiliation within particularly the white community, a point also made by Vivian Nun Halloran in her comparative text on racial identities which includes Rhys’s novel. The importance of one’s birthplace thus represents a factor which is taken into account by people who could just as well have ended up in the same position, but ultimately remains a fixed burden to bear and live with for Antoinette, rendering her dependent on these elements, to an extent.

As such, a significant connotation can be perceived which constitutes one of the most powerful terms observable in *Wide Sargasso Sea*; the label of the “white nigger” (*WSS*, 21). Though never uttered by a white character other than the woman herself, Antoinette is confronted with being referred to as such on several occasions while being in contact with a coloured character. Historically and politically, the two words could not be more *contraire* if one considers their context; being white at the time might not have secured you wealth or a high social standing, but it did normally automatically elevate you above a person of colour, giving you freedoms and rights a black individual could only dream of at the time due to his or her status as the lowly and

highly stigmatized “nigger”. Thus, combining the two terms in this sense can and must be viewed as something highly paradox, constituting a so called oxymoron due to the words' self-contradicting nature and rendering the coloured characters' usage of the phrase for a Creole yet nevertheless white person such as Antoinette highly significant for the position of the female protagonist in the novel. Though her husband Rochester never titles her with these words, his prior stated description of Antoinette and overall treatment of her with contempt and distrust bear a heavy similarity with how one would expect a “white nigger” to be perceived from a British perspective in the nineteenth century.

Essentially, as a reader, one has the impression that, despite, on paper, a light complexion's ability to elevate one above those with a dark skin colour, being a Creole corresponds to embodying the worst thing one can be, marking Antoinette and her mother even beneath the recently liberated black population on the island. The idea persists that, as Rochester infers, a Creole has taken the cultural appropriation of the local, colonial culture and its way of life by being born into the midst of its foreign lands so far that one has more or less at the very least partially become one of them; tribalized and partially savage. When also taking into account that they have become, for white standards, severely impoverished, a key factor necessary of being considered in this context according to Veronica Gregg, the Cosway's consequent development into “niggers, isolated from the rest of white society” (*Historical Imagination*, n.p.) is all but confirmed from a British perspective at the time. From the point of view of the black community, not much changes as the white Antoinette and her ancestors remain inseparably connected to once having been the colonizing oppressors and enslavers who caused the natives so much harm and sorrow. By titling Antoinette or her mother as a “white nigger”, fundamentally acting as a leper in need of being pushed to the fringes of any society, the black mass in front of Coulibri, for instance, thereby regains some of the power they had initially lost when the British enslaved them as utilizing the most demeaning and dehumanizing connotation of the term ‘nigger’ against people, who are themselves not viewed as residing on the same level as the white community.

Throughout the narrative, Antoinette or any of the others affected by contrasting or a derogatory label given to them are, no matter the colour, never afforded the chance to contest these stereotypical markings as being a ‘colonial’ is already enough to be silenced, rendering Rhys' affording of a voice to her female protagonist by making her one of the narrators all the more

important. However, the subjective and automatic association of genuine Britishness and, more specifically, whiteness to traits such as being “benevolent” (44) or trustworthy is first and foremost perceptible in Rochester’s depicted world view as, for instance, the male protagonist’s description of Richard Mason in a written yet never sent letter to his father serves as a fitting example of how he is quick to laud his soon-to-be English brother-in-law for being “a good fellow, hospitable and friendly” (43) despite barely knowing him. Not being acquainted for all too long does not hinder the two English characters from creating an automatically emerging bond, as with the “Luttrells” (24) helping out the protagonist’s family in light of the tragic events at Coulibri Estate. Furthermore, any connections to Britain’s dark history with slavery are conveniently played down or portrayed in a completely different light by the white community, visible in Rochester’s linking of slavery to being a matter of “justice” (94) from a British perspective in conversation with his colonial wife, as well as when one is introduced to the plaques of former slavers, which describe them as honourable, kind, or even “pious” (77), gracing the local church in Spanish Town. The act of overlooking and/or conveniently forgetting the atrocities and mistakes committed by British citizens in the, at that time, not too distant past contributes to showcasing the idea of a white superiority in the novel’s depicted community which showcases an unwavering solidarity as long as certain aspects like skin colour or ambivalent roots are not involved.

A tangible influence of colour is thus linked to the perpetual repetition of both communities’ establishing of who belongs or does not belong to their respective inner circles in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and can be interpreted as intending to show the process of indoctrination such ideas evoke, making this situation the status quo in the novel’s depicted West Indies setting. As a result of all the external influences, both Antoinette and Annette go on to constitute and increasingly develop into ambivalent characters in regard to their belonging; by rewriting *Jane Eyre* and referring back to Bertha through her novel’s female protagonist, Rhys thus ultimately demonstrates that the novel’s Creole woman, or women including Antoinette’s mother, never possesses a final say in establishing who they are and to whom she belongs, as well as being unable to rectify the image painted of her as the mad and savage woman as which she is also portrayed by the people in the preceding events to Brontë’s narrative.

While a concentration on the colour of people's skin colour and/or place of birth should most certainly be named when speaking of prominent aspects which play a decisive role in *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s depicted power dynamics and chances of establishing belonging in a community, a further element can be attributed to another feature. Being branded as an "alien" (37) by Rochester for her ineptness in its usage, one of the most crucial elements for someone to be included in a community comes in form of language, as well as the utilization of such in spaces such as the portrayed island's society. Arguably, the command of the English tongue develops into a prominent marker of difference in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, with utterances such as Antoinette's referring to her stepfather Mr Mason as "white pappy" (15) or Christophine as her "da" (41) connoting difference compared to the standardized variants, regardless of the two terms demonstrating a closeness irrespective of factors such as skin colour or roots. Specifically these last two examples illustrate that, despite being able to call a white Englishman her stepfather and commanding over a black servant, Antoinette nevertheless feels a strong connection to the island and its culture, in this case showcased by her usage of colloquial yet creolized terms. How important language can be for someone in Antoinette's position is, for instance, also made clear by Rochester's visible disgust with his wife's tendency to resort to this said creolized English, especially in or after any contact with her caretaker Christophine (50; 112). Similarly, the female protagonist's utilization of Standard English, something which she is also very much capable of doing, in front of coloured natives evokes the same reaction and underlines her inherent difference to them, perceptible in her heated conversations with Tia or Amélie, both ending with the black natives insulting her (8; 61). The duality in the woman's language usage therefore provides both sets of people with an excuse to classify Antoinette as essentially never having been a part of neither the black nor the white community present on the island and thus being rightfully pushed to the fringes of their commune.

Furthermore, specific terms amplify the existing difference between the individuals who, subjectively speaking, adequately speak the English language and those who do not; labels such as the aforementioned "white nigger" (21) or the equally degrading "white cockroach" (61), which are drawn on by coloured characters such as the angry mob encircling the Mason family at Coulibri Estate or a spiteful Amélié, respectively. This kind of derogatory titling is attributed an immense power and long-term influence as its continuous repetition contributes to the growth of these terms having a massive impact on Antoinette's self-perception and her psychic condition,

as is visible when the woman speaks to her husband about the natives frequently referring to her as such. Anderson's idea of 'unisonance' becomes particularly apparent here as the *repetition* of choosing such distinctively hostile terms, or in the English characters' cases not explicitly stating them but illustrating them in their behaviour and mindsets, does evoke a feeling of like-mindedness. However, this superficially produced connection consequently leads to both the white and coloured people in their respective communities feeling strongly bonded amongst each other at the expense and exclusion of, in this case, the Creoles, thus rendering their repetitive, almost unanimous, usages of such stated terms as desirable and in their own interests. By doing so, one thereby lays the foundation for the creation and ensuring of a hostile environment, which becomes increasingly naturalized in the minds of the novel's non-Creole characters and demonstrates the ease with which the sentiment of everyone craving to be part of a 'communion' can be extorted to exclude those deemed to be different. The essence of a community is therefore shown to be of a much more complex nature than one might have initially expected as it is made painfully obvious by reading Rhys' novel that the idea of a 'unisonance' bonding together a communal space cannot simply be seen as a black and white affair or solely in a positive light.

While the depiction of Antoinette's life as a Creole in-between all of *Wide Sargasso Sea's* individual communities illustrates evident connections to her complexion and language usage, a consequence of the tendency to let such factors influence a group of people is the arbitrary exclusion of the female protagonist. The reactions of both white and black faces to Antoinette's roots and mere existence are not always easy to take in and process as a reader, but they do showcase a society which leaves out no chance to make the female Creole characters pay for things over which they have no control. Though the ease with which people in the position of Antoinette are shunned from society can no longer be deemed a generally contemporary and socially accepted state in today's world, the events unfolding in Rhys' novel must nevertheless be taken into consideration in order to fully grasp the context surrounding the female protagonist's spot in any of the present communities.

Despite the many animosities aimed at her in course of the novel, one of the most influential aspects in Antoinette's life comes in form of the cold and spiteful treatment which she is forced to experience from, of all people, her own mother Annette. This frequent rejection is typical of the relationship which the female narrator reluctantly has with her own flesh and blood in the

early stages of the novel. Rhys' decision to showcase the harsh status quo between the two characters in regard to their virtually non-existent bond could be led back to the intention of demonstrating which repercussions the harsh reality of being forced to live with the label of the "white nigger" on the fringes can have on such an individual. By making a Creole like Annette believe in the evil of this label by means of excluding her from the white community, the quest to rid herself and her family of this heavy marker becomes a priority and permits the mother to continue upholding the cycle of stigmatization and exclusion towards anything creolized by condemning Antoinette for her own colonial roots. One could optionally also interpret the author's choice to illustrate the two Creole women's relation as somewhat autobiographical in that it constitutes Rhys' way of sharing and dealing with how her own problematic relationship to her parents affected her sense of belonging in the past.

Annette's often emotionless relation to Antoinette is ultimately built on exclusion after the death of the family's father and Pierre's sickness befalling him during their regress into the island's obscurity as the situation between the two has significant ramifications for the female protagonist's later development. While such familial rejection may appear incomprehensible for a reader, for the mother, these reactions seem to occur naturally and necessarily, leading to Antoinette consequently developing a distorted perception of love and physical closeness, observable in Rochester's account of his wife's strange association of sexual intercourse with death (55). Antoinette acts as a constant reminder of what marks Annette as different to the white community, the former therefore being "useless to her" (5) in her personal endeavour to connect with the English folk on the island and to establish her own sense of belonging among its "ranks" (3), as her daughter recounts. The mother, being merely a young adolescent herself at the time, is described by her daughter as ardently attempting to evade this exclusion at every given opportunity; trying to invite guests to visit Coulibri, riding into town despite the many mocking calls of the people her late husband had once utilized as slave labourers, and eventually remarrying "a very wealthy" (4; 11) Mr Mason in order to better her own position, even at the cost of her relationship with Antoinette.

Regardless of her best efforts, Antoinette's mother is restricted to the same position as her daughter later finds herself in and, similar to the final outcome of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is driven into insanity after her son is left to die by his caretaker and she is consequently locked away

instead of receiving help against her crippling depression (85-86). This last point can also be led back to issues of gender and madness, which undoubtedly come into play when Annette is simply shipped off by Mr. Mason in order to keep her as far away from him as possible while never having taken his wife's condition seriously. In this position of power capable of doing with his colonial wife as he pleases, Mr. Mason embodies an authority still apparent even after the Emancipation Act caused a new situation to evolve for the Empire's subjects, working in the sense of the aforementioned 'neo-colonialism' by nevertheless retaining the most influence, his son Richard emulating this power later when handling Antoinette's fate. Returning to the topic at hand, prominent examples of rejection are evident in a number of situations throughout the novel; however, the commonality of these instances is perceptible in that Antoinette attempts to show closeness or emotional and physical affection for her mother but, by doing so, only furthers the rift between them. This discord becomes particularly apparent when the female protagonist's thoughtful advances are snubbed by Annette as the former attempts to show simple acts of affection towards her mother, but is almost instantly dismissed in favour of "peace and quiet" (5; 7). Furthermore, Annette even becomes "ashamed" (10) of her daughter when the young girl does nothing more than wear the dress of her friend Tia. The piece of clothing itself is of little concern to Antoinette and is exchanged in the innocence of a child; on the contrary, as a reader, one receives the impression that, despite the preceding heated exchange of racial slurs and Tia taking Antoinette's dress, the former is actually content with wearing her friend's one, much to the displeasure of Annette. The problem emerges that, as a child, Antoinette simply cannot fathom why her mother would view this exchange as problematic, being subconsciously happy to blend in more than before. In reality, this aversion towards Antoinette most likely emanates from the mother's own negative experiences with the island's two communities and her rejective stance is merely the outcome of constant exposure to the adverse attitude directed at her.

Antoinette's status as an outcast is not only illustrated by the relationship to her mother; in the eyes of Annette, this process has long been finalized when she voices her safety concerns regarding her son when the angry mob arrives at Coulibri, while completely disregarding the well-being of her daughter (16). As a result, this familial exclusion ultimately ends in Antoinette seeking affection and belonging outside her family as she develops an affinity to her natural surroundings, explicitly stating that such a choice is nevertheless "better than people" (11), though to little avail. A beacon of hope comes in form of the Cosway family's Martinique

servant Christophine who develops into a surrogate mother for the young Creole due to her taking up the motherly duties, as well as her shared difference in having her roots elsewhere and being excluded by the island's black community despite her dark(er) complexion. However, associating with Christophine, a woman feared for her intimidating appearance and her mooted affinity for "obeah" (13), a voodoo religion associated with bloody rituals and magic spells, merely contributes to Antoinette being perceived as an outsider. Most importantly, as Keith A. Russell's work on the language usage of the character of Christophine underlines, Antoinette's own speech is not only gradually and heavily influenced by her exposure to the Martinique woman's very particular style of Creole speech throughout her childhood, as demonstrated above, but this very influence and tendency to fall back into patterns of "Caribbean Creole" (*Christophine's Language*, 92-93) actually contributes to widening the already deep chasm between Antoinette and her later husband. With Christophine herself being essentially on the fringes of society, she is unable to ultimately prevent the consequently unfolding events affecting Antoinette and the exclusion the latter experiences; a matter which gravely hurts the former and shows that she is the sole person within the community that ever acts anything near to a mother for the latter.

Foreshadowing in *Wide Sargasso Sea* also plays a prominent role in alluding to how Antoinette/Bertha's final position is restricted to one outside of her known community, both figuratively and quite literally, and particularly the first chapter encompasses several such instances. Specifically, various settings convey an anticipating sentiment towards how the female protagonist's future is to be shaped as the Creole resides in or near spaces which both insinuate and underline her difference, continual exclusion, and final demise.

The first such an example of foreshadowing can be observed already in the opening stages of the novel as Antoinette gives an account of Mr. Luttrell's tragic suicide at Nelson's Rest; the latter's "[swimming] out to sea" and consequent decision to end the life of his dear dog together with his own is distinctively similar to the female protagonist's eventual fate of being necessitated to go out to sea and resolve to take her own life with Rochester at his English mansion, the resemblance between the two being highlighted by her damning statement of "[...] [the people] wouldn't go near [Nelson's Rest] And no one came near us" (3). Similarly, the burning down of Coulibri Estate mirrors the fire at Thornfield Manor in *Jane Eyre* as, while the latter one leads to

the death of Bertha, the former claims the life of the other Cosway child, Pierre, who has also previously been excluded from the island's community and only by his death is now able to pay the cost for a Creole to become truly "white" (19), alluding to why Bertha later draws on self-immolation to ultimately purge herself.

Following the burning to the ground of Coulibri, Antoinette's visiting of the house, in which her now mad and deserted mother is restricted to a particular space and is held at the mercy of her captors (85-86), illustrates an alarmingly similar outcome to her own fate, retrospectively emphasizing the vicious cycle out of which the female narrator is never able to break out of in her position outside of the community and under the fist of Rochester. Furthermore, Antoinette's innocent childhood prescience of a move to England being "not possible" (14), despite the actual events, which occurred up until this prediction and subsequently, insinuating the opposite, especially after Rochester's grip on his wife tightens in course of the second chapter, arguably proves to be right. The now subjugated woman may have physically left the West Indies and her body has reluctantly moved to foreign lands, but Antoinette's mind nevertheless remains grounded in Jamaica, unable to move on and come to any kind of closure after a life of everlasting exclusion and oppression.

Another example for such foreshadowing can be observed in form of a dream concerning Rochester, even though the latter only starts narrating in the second chapter. The male protagonist, as will still be elaborated on more extensively further down, suffers from a similarly broken familial relationship as Antoinette, though, instead of his mother, it is one to his father and older brother (39). Rochester is thus no stranger to exclusion and rejection throughout his life, something which is also apparent in *Jane Eyre* when Jane abandons him at Thornfield after becoming aware of Bertha, as him being sold off to marry a wealthy Creole in the West Indies, a person which he has never seen before, lives on the other side of the globe, and, from a British point of view, is stigmatized with prevalently negative connotations, only underlines his perception of constituting somewhat the black sheep of the family, an insight made possible by his narration. However, before learning of his situation, the reader is confronted with one of Antoinette's dreams during her last night at the convent; the premonition of being dragged along by a man with a "face black with hatred", who leads her from Coulibri to "an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees [being] different trees" (34), foreshadows the future

journey and eventual fate of the woman. Though no explicit referral to a specific person or geographical place occurs, the threatening shadow is highly likely embodied by Rochester, not only marking the end to the first part of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, but, metaphorically speaking, also the beginning of the end for the female protagonist. The familiarity of this scene to Antoinette's final outcome not only serves as a hint to her later imprisonment in the four walls on the third floor at Rochester's estate, but also to the fact that this result has always constituted an inevitability rather than a possibility, highlighted by the male protagonist's ability to return to English society and his wife's continued limitation to the fringes.

As a result, Antoinette's inability to establish a sense of belonging and the many impactful hardships, which the woman has been necessitated to endure throughout her life as the "white nigger" (22), can essentially be attributed to an interplay of aspects which boil down to Antoinette's presence and/or non-presence within, or better outside of, both depicted communities. The woman is forced to silently accept her positioning of exclusion in this communal space, its members' decision making being based on factors over which Antoinette wields no power, such as her complexion, ancestral roots, or her creolized English, and its major influence on the toxic relationship she reluctantly develops to her resentful mother. These elements all ultimately contribute to Antoinette having developed into a shell of her former self in the last section of the narrative as *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s illustration of her journey, as well as its usage of foreshadowing certain settings, provides possible explanations to the assertion made in this thesis' hypothesis.

2.3 Spatial Metaphors

2.3.1 Walls

The next step now is to take a closer look at how Antoinette, the Creole, and to a certain degree her mother Annette, is able to find herself perpetually stranded on the fringes, as well as how the influence of certain aforementioned metaphorical spaces comes into play in regard to her positioning or even non-positioning within her commune. The novel leaves much room for interpretation here as Antoinette appears to be in constant contact with socially originating, restrictive walls over which she has no control, quintessentially emphasizing once more why *Jane Eyre's* Bertha was in such dire need of an opportunity to voice her own account of the events leading up to her final condemnation to her room at Thornfield Manor.

As a reader, the existence of wall-like structures feels tangible throughout the narrative, not only taking up a prominent role in matters concerning instances of exclusion in the story, but, most notably, also being visibly reflected in the narratological structure employed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The novel's chapters are divided up into three parts, though Antoinette is reflecting on her experienced events in each of them. In the first, the female protagonist is looking back at her childhood as a grown woman while the second part is primarily narrated by her husband Rochester, being briefly interrupted by his wife's account of consulting her surrogate mother Christophine to help her seduce the former before reverting back to the male narrator. The start of the third section is initially narrated by Grace Poole, who is employed by Antoinette's husband to guard his wife in her room at the English estate, but the female protagonist takes over shortly after her jailer has finished catching up the reader on the events between chapter two and three. The reason for once again reciting the different narrators and the changes in perspective can be understood in how the walls between Antoinette and most prominently Rochester remain intact even when the woman is narrating her story. This division alludes to how the woman is not only limited in regard to her position within the island's communities, but also in her ability to narrate as her narration being divided up reflects her position within the story's narrative and her constant struggle to stay in control of her fate and sense of belonging.

Being the subject of exclusion has become and indefinitely remains a familiar condition for Antoinette, a sense of lonesomeness accompanying the woman on a constant basis already from an early age on and continuing to do so until her ultimate demise in the flames of the mansion.

Whether the actual physical structures or their just as constraining, mentally constructed counterparts, both variants of walls play a part in how Antoinette's life unfolds, ultimately impacting and shaping her fate and chances of forming a stable sense of belonging and identity. The makeshift road leading up to the female protagonist's family home at Coulibri is described as being no longer frequented, even avoided, by anyone but the estate's impoverished residents, and adequately embodies the lonely and arduous journey which lies before Antoinette at that point. While not the form of a physical wall, this path acts as a dividing partition, intentionally marking-off the Cosway family from the majority of the island's judgmental population. Once Mr Mason takes over the estate and restores Coulibri to its former glory, the reminding of painful memories for the people once affected by slavery, which this space firmly harbours, emphasized by the nearby presence of the "haunted" (*WSS*, 3) Nelson's Rest, both constituting homes of former plantation owners, lead to the consequent visit of a violent mob of locals, the crowd itself turning into a metaphorical human wall, an increasingly overwhelming space made up of people which is intent on encircling and detaining the outcast group within the flames of the set-ablaze mansion and has no quarrel with their actions causing substantial harm (21). The flood gates are opened to all the bottled up hate, which the coloured natives of the community had been temporarily suppressing due to the Cosway's gradual impoverishment, reappearing with Mr Mason's wealth, the and being let loose to openly show the natives' personal aversion against their oppressors.

One of, if not the, most infamous and meaningful spaces enclosed by walls in the novel is constituted by Jane/Bertha's room on the third floor of the mansion in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*. No other example develops into such a nexus of ambivalence and oppressiveness as is the case here and the reader becomes acquainted with the detrimental effects of all the past constraints coming together again in one spot where the woman is left to be forgotten to time. The role, which these partitions take up in regard to Antoinette finding herself simultaneously on the inside (physically) and also on the outside (mentally) of the room due to it neither constituting her home in the West Indies nor England to the woman, "never [believing] it" (119) to be the latter despite Grace Poole's insistence, is underlined by one of the wall's "tapestry" (116). Antoinette believes to be seeing an image of her mother in this rug on the wall which is very similar to the one which she describes of a deserted Annette being observed by her daughter through the window imminently before the latter's death, her mother being, as she informs

Rochester, “barefooted” (85) and wearing a similarly beautiful dress in her specific scene of abuse reflecting Annette’s own position and being referred back to shortly after when Antoinette does the same walking around her husband’s estate in the dark of night (116). Essentially, one can argue that this allusion reflects the continual existence of walls in their lives working as a mirror to both their intertwined fates, a path which has been heavily influenced by the community’s perceptions of the Creole women and has always come down to the residing in-between these very four walls. Antoinette’s choice of death in the flames in order to escape her situation seems somewhat predetermined and unavoidable as the same walls, which led to Annette’s demise, are now producing a very similar outcome for Antoinette. On a side note, one can notice a possible parallel to Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* here as the room depicted in her narrative’s setting also showcases a woman ultimately being locked up and left to herself as a result of being shunned by her community, thereby being driven into insanity in this restricted space and also perceiving a woman in the wall, more precisely the wallpaper, as is the case with *Wide Sargasso Sea*’s female protagonist.

Furthermore, Antoinette’s recollection of both her last encounter with her supposed half-brother Sandy, the sole love of her life, in a space in which “spread fans decorated the walls” (120), on the one hand, and the calming memory of walking around in Aunt Cora’s room on a sunny summer day, on the other, illustrates two sets of partitions which not only refrain from indefinitely limiting and excluding her and thus stand in stark contrast to the far more tenebrous portrayal of the ones which are currently confining the female protagonist to a “cold” room without “doors” (116) in the third and final chapter, but also highlight a condition which she is no longer, and essentially never has been, able to reside in. This position constitutes one in which she is perfectly content with her very being and can move around freely whenever and wherever she likes. By making this strong comparison of spaces between light and dark in Antoinette’s final thoughts, the inescapability and damning effects of these walls are underlined and become the exact opposite to the ones she remembers fondly in her mind, the only place where the actual ‘walling in/out’ cannot affect her at that moment. Back in reality, even though the young woman is capable of moving around more or less freely within the stone walls of the manor under the cloud of night, this movement is nevertheless restricted to the vicinity of a space which Rochester has marked out for and imposed upon his wife as she is never again able to return to her place of birth and is therefore left with both positive and negative memories of it.

The 'metonymic walls', firmly nested in the minds of the people, serve as a protective armor for the likes of Rochester which relieves him from critically dealing with whether or not his actions are fundamentally right or wrong, consequently never having to perceive Antoinette as an equal or with respect and dignity. Through the endless amount of spiteful actions and hateful speech, Antoinette is hindered from ever achieving any form of belonging, even implying as much when she melancholically asks "[how they can] know what it can be like *outside*" (34, emphasis of author), maybe even providing a possible glance into Rhys' own experiences dealing with such feelings of animosity. Tia, Antoinette's sole friend as a child who similarly had her roots outside of Jamaica, and her surprising yet violent act of rejecting her Creole friend constitutes such an example. A girl previously believed to be close to Antoinette, and completely disregarding the two's differing complexions, is now perceived to be standing on the other side of a metaphorical, dividing trench between the two girls which has been set up across the entirety of the island. While this said trench may not have been personally 'dug' by either of them, it nevertheless necessitates Tia to adhere to its caused division as a result of the influence of her contemporaries, a factor over which neither she nor Antoinette has any control. Tia's response to her throwing of the stone by running away in "tears" (23) exemplifies the sentiment that her actions have been forced upon her, whether the girl is in favour of her actions or not, most likely without even being able to grasp why she is supposed to keep her distance.

Rochester's narrow-minded prejudice aimed at Antoinette even before getting to know his wife further encapsulates that such alienating limitations being apparent from an early age onward leads to a state which cannot be easily removed or strived against. The repercussions of a mindset along the lines of the 'inside/outside distinction' are thus able to be attributed to the enabling of a state which allows unwanted, as different regarded individuals to be oppressed out of mere habit and on the basis of an unquestioned authority, as well as without immediate ramifications for the oppressors. However, the female protagonist does not constitute the only person being necessitated to deal with these kinds of consciously and unconsciously erected blockades in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as the likes of Christophine and Daniel Cosway are also forced to cope with this process of the community 'walling [themselves] in', with labels of difference, such as the former being a "much blacker" (6) woman and therefore being collectively shunned, making it difficult for them to be accepted. In contrast to Antoinette, however, the two coloured characters do not automatically appear out of place due to their skin colour guaranteeing them to

possess a shared, maybe similarly difficult history marked by the past torments of slavery, something which the white Creole characters do not possess.

2.3.2 Liminal Spaces

When speaking of spatial metaphors, Antoinette might be necessitated to deal with the aforementioned restrictions of limiting walls, but her journey through *Wide Sargasso Sea's* narrative nevertheless depicts a woman who is constantly on the move throughout her life, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Moving from Coulibri to the convent, from the convent to Granbois, and, finally, from Granbois to the mansion signifying *Jane Eyre's* Thornfield Manor; all these changes in space demonstrate that, regardless of Antoinette's struggles within the community, her story is "about displacement as much as inhabitation" (*Revisiting*, 53), as Trevor Hope points out in his work on Rhys and Brontë's novels' shared structural setups. However, physical settings they may be, but these places are also capable of constituting more than mere geographical locations.

The role of walls can be viewed as contributing to the creation of these spaces and, in a way, leading to Antoinette gradually moving from one place to next. Taking the tragic end of the Creole characters into consideration, the "temporal movement and passage" (*Location*, 5), which, fitting of Antoinette's journey as a voiceless individual up until the events of *Jane Eyre*, Bhabha speaks of in connection with his quoting of Renée Green, illustrates a female protagonist whose opposing ancestry and place of birth not only showcases the playing-out of a scenario in which a person resides in what is termed a 'liminal space', but also demonstrates the short- and long-term repercussions of finding oneself in such an area. Generally speaking, the residence in a space of such in-betweenness is not normally envisaged to constitute a permanent condition; Rochester's initially family-enforced departure to the West Indies and eventual, self-chosen return to his home of England after his father's "death" (*WSS*, 114) serves as a fitting example of a person, whose position within society is not publically questioned and is thus able to leave the realm of liminality. However, the exact opposite is the case for his wife as the ambivalent nature, which Creoles are seen as embodying, denies Antoinette time and time again the opportunity to leave her liminal hell, forcing her to remain idle in liminality. The woman also demonstrates a different perspective to the insinuated reasoning seen in Brontë's earlier portrayal of Bertha as one gets the impression in her depicting of the woman's fate at Thornfield that the message is sent that this situation has occurred naturally and without compulsion; this, then again, is something which Rhys intends to show not to be the case for her female protagonist at any time.

Generally, in-betweenness is observable in several other instances of ‘liminal spaces’ throughout Rhys’ novel as the mentioned ‘movement’ within the liminality of such places never truly stops for Antoinette. The two estates of the Cosway family at Coulibri and Granbois, which imitate an English architecture and seem completely out of place next to the exotic botany and fauna enclosing them, act as a portal to a foreign, far-away place and, as such, are able to be characterized as liminal. Crucially, these spaces operate differently depending on who the affected individual is and to which group he or she belongs to as, most prominently, the novel’s narrators illustrate the varying, even opposite, impact a lengthy stay has in a ‘liminal space’. The same can be claimed of the colonial convent promoting a European religion, which the female protagonist enters as a teenager as these areas are defined by an ambivalence created by cultural appropriation and act as thresholds to a foreign yet simultaneously familiar world which combines certain aspects of both. If one, for example, considers Rochester’s perception of Mr Mason’s room upon his arrival at Granbois, a space traditionally arranged and furnished as an English study, the man titles it a “refuge” (43). This room and its similarity to an image the man has of home serves as a proxy of a soothing piece of his beloved English soil while despite being located thousands of miles away from Britain, providing him with shelter from and the option of briefly forgetting all the hostility he perceives in everything ‘colonial’ surrounding him at the estate, including his wife. However, at the same time, this chamber signifies the exact opposite for Antoinette as, while it may function as a familiar haven for her husband, in her case, the room merely remains a constant reminder of a world she is alien to and unable to live in as an equal.

Of all the different spaces with which Antoinette is faced in course of the narrative, one seems to stand out particularly for very different reasons. Illustrating one of the rare instances of exuding an inviting aura towards the young woman, this, metaphorically speaking, safe haven is embodied by and located within the foundations of the mentioned convent in Spanish Town, which Antoinette joins shortly after the events at Coulibri, herself considering it to be her very own “refuge” (31). Having been built and majorly influenced by specifically the English community residing in the West Indies, this space represents a place which shares the female protagonist’s in-between nature due to its combination of being founded in the colonies yet seeing its religious foundations, rites, and objects of worship become culturally appropriated from Europe. The convent constitutes one of Antoinette’s *only* positive experiences with walls as

these partitions made of stone act as a safe space which, on the one hand, does exclude her from the world outside its limits, yet, on the other, simultaneously allows her to join a group which does not hold her complexion or ambivalent roots against her. The narration and depiction of her time here, however, nevertheless remains ambiguous as the young girl's shortly beforehand experienced incisive events involving her mother's tragic fate and Tia's betrayal have made her wary of her surroundings and increasingly melancholic. Her getting ambushed by two coloured children imminently before entering the convent amplifies these feelings and, as a reader, one cannot help but feel that all these experiences have caused permanent damage, weighing heavily on her and overshadowing her stay among the nuns. Antoinette therefore already somewhat predicts that she will one day have to leave the security of this threshold place embodied by the convent. Not hindering her journey down a path which eventually leads to and ends in the flames at Rochester's English mansion, the Spanish convent consequently only constitutes a temporary location for Antoinette while she is forced to continue moving towards her ultimate fate; the location might change but not the woman's marginalized position outside the depicted communities.

Similar to the other apprehensions and foreboding dreams she has in the course of the narrative, which will be more extensively elaborated on below, Antoinette's time at the convent sees her frequently compound positive aspects such as the invigorating "sunshine" or the incident "light" immediately with negative associations connected to what seem like premonitions about her future, naming things such as "death" (31) or the "dark" (32). All the positivity Antoinette attempts to associate with her current home fails and, in particular, once her step-father arrives for a visit, any hope of forgetting the past evaporates. The problems and hardships the female protagonist had involuntarily become accustomed to before her stay at the convent, "[feelings] of dismay, sadness, [and] loss" (33) are now standing in stark opposition to her description of Mr Mason's assurances and promises of company, her fears resurfacing as a result of the conversation between father and daughter, demonstrating once more the continuing reluctance to come in contact with a Creole.

Ultimately, this refuge is not able to fulfill its, for the reader, initially shown promise of offering a long lasting feeling of secureness and, with Antoinette loosely predicting both the looming change lying ahead and, figuratively speaking, the walls gradually closing in on her, her

movement between spaces continues to remain an ongoing process with a predictable ending. Antoinette's brooding over a certain "St. Innocenzia" (29) during her time at the convent seems particularly fitting as the latter's name derives from the Latin term innocence. The irony is not lost here in that specifically the blameless, unrightfully designated target of exclusion in form of Antoinette is the one to speak of a dead saint whose name is essentially embodied by the Creole girl and who reflects the narrator's own position without agency within the island's community as someone who is being lost to time.

Antoinette's inability to leave or, in the convent's case, remain in these stated spaces, however, is ultimately successfully challenged by the woman as setting Thornfield on fire during her stay in Rochester's recently inherited property during the events taking place in the third chapter showcases the female protagonist's attempts to escape these "thick walls, keeping away all the things you have fought till you can fight no more" (115) once and for all, no matter the cost. Antoinette, as already stated, is provided with the necessary platform to voice her final thoughts at the end of her personal journey, providing an explanation as to why the female protagonist ultimately draws on the extreme measure of allowing this particular "wall of fire" (122, emphasis added) to end her suffering by sacrificing her own life. While the imprisonment of his wife at Thornfield initially offers an easy solution for Rochester to resolve his problematic situation of having married, as he refers to her already at the start, an "alien" (37) by essentially silencing her, his wife's later death in the fire ultimately ridding him of all his problems, Antoinette's final act before her demise robs her husband of his power and authority to restrain her within both the physical boundaries of her room and the metonymic proximity of their minds. While such liminality should usually end at a certain point, Antoinette continually struggles to do so, though not for a lack trying, and, despite at one point possessing the opportunity to break the cycle, ultimately does not succeed in escaping her distinctive, imposed in-betweeness with which Creole women are portrayed to be burdened with in the novel.

Whether of physical or mental nature, walls erected in response to the 'alien danger' posed by people on the 'outside' of a community are existent in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and have differing effects on the characters. One of these said effects can be traced back to walls empowering the further existence of an emotional and social in-betweeness embodied by people like Antoinette, upholding this condition indefinitely in the minds of both the members of the communities and

the person actually affected. Subsequently, a permanent space is created and acts as a void in the midst of two or more communities, who are both rejecting a respective individual. Taking a closer look at the more intricate implications of the walls' presence in the novel allows one to gradually notice an all-consuming and long-term ramification particularly for the depicted Creole characters, being especially prominent in Antoinette's case.

The female protagonist's embodied ambivalence regarding her origins has a significant bearing on her life in several ways; not only is Antoinette forced to constantly deal with rejection coming from almost all sides, bar Christophine, but the woman is additionally pushed into and necessitated to remain within certain limits which have been set up on a mental level in her mind due to her negative experiences. This position is where Bhabha's aforementioned concept of the 'Third Space' comes into play as this metaphorical area acts as a space in-between the fringes of two individual communities which become adjacent through the space which, in the case of the Creole characters, develops out of the combination of a contrary ancestry and birthplace. Essentially, living in- or outside of this space makes a considerable difference for an individual's life as it equates to either belonging or not belonging to a specific community, therefore being able to be deemed as a possible gateway into such a gap.

The 'Third Space' differs from the previously stated journey of Antoinette through 'liminal spaces' in that the latter is supposed to serve as a "temporal movement and passage" (*Location*, 5), a link, to another place. After the female protagonist's initial attempts to belong and bring an end to her experienced liminality, this new space, however, now becomes the permanent position for Antoinette. In course of her life, the woman has reached the point where she has been openly rejected from the coloured community and, despite her light complexion, is nevertheless never capable of overcoming any apparent 'metonymic walls', either. Antoinette's fate as someone in-between societies is sealed at the point of wedding Rochester as her last chance of developing an affiliation with her English heritage are swept away by the initially half-dormant preconceptions her husband holds against the creolized people on the island. One must note that these notions are already present before the two protagonists' marriage as instances of visible difference are taken as an excuse by Rochester to back up his preconceptions against his Creole wife. A particularly powerful example of such is perceptible when the male narrator shares his thoughts of having "expected" (*WSS*, 60) the ugly truth about Antoinette, reading the factually highly

debatable letter of Daniel Cosway without ever challenging its contents, immediately believing all the slanderous half-truths and made-up assertions about his wife and her family. For Michael Thorpe, one of the earlier scholars to address Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its purposeful links to *Jane Eyre*, this outcome not only epitomizes how the coloured Daniel Cosway is driven on by an avidity for revenge based on factors Antoinette cannot influence, but just as much illustrates that, despite their initial superficial contentment, Rochester's subsequent acts of "cold alienation" aimed at his wife represent an outcome which was always likely to happen, stating that "[it] would have taken less" (*Other Side*, 107-108). The 'Third Space' consequently acts as an area in which Antoinette does not end up out of choice, but is forced into on the basis of her embodied inherent difference. Thus, the female protagonist's involuntary (dis)placement in-between the lines of both the black and white communities reluctantly becomes a decisive stage in her overall identity formation in *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s narrative and contributes vastly to her ultimate fate.

As a result of the omnipresence of the socially and mentally constructed 'metonymic walls' enabled by the mindset of both communities, Antoinette's attempts to try and establish a stable sense of belonging to either the native or English groups on the island are rendered virtually impossible by fitting the description of being someone who is "neither the one nor the other" (*Location*, 54-55) due to the ambivalence surrounding her origins,. The woman's recognition of not being emotionally capable to leave her birthplace and her subsequent wish to stay with Tia, the former gradually starting to identify with the island, is met with violent rejection by the latter and her coloured kin. The throwing of the "jagged stone" (*WSS*, 23) therefore symbolically forces Antoinette back into remaining in her initial position of not belonging and shatters any chance she ever had of developing a possible connection to the black community. The inherent 'ambivalence', which the female protagonist embodies, renders her a viable candidate for a spot in the 'Third Space' as she finds herself between neither being considered "English or European" (*WSS*, 37) like her mother nor a native of Jamaica. Daniel Cosway's sly dig aimed at his supposed half-sister Antoinette emphasizes the latter's precarious situation and the publically viewed importance of residing in more clearly defined spaces by referring to Amélie as truly "[belonging] to this island" (*WSS*, 60) in comparison to Antoinette. People such as Rochester, who *is* a part of a larger British community, or the coloured mob outside Coulibri Estate, are visibly intent on making Antoinette's life a living hell due to the aforementioned factors

surrounding her ambivalent origins. When the woman does ever start to approach a certain level of gradual closeness, any dawning feeling of attachment and home is almost immediately pried out of her hands.

The significance of finding oneself included in a society, being a part of its metaphorical “ranks” (WSS, 3), is already underlined by the very early mentioning of this reference in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The choice of this term might seem insignificant at first glance, but it describes a trend which carries on throughout the narrative, the ‘ranks’ being perceivable as representing a place *within* and at the *heart* of the portrayed communities; a position of comfort, acceptance, and outside the reach of uncertainty, which ‘liminality’ entails. Not belonging to these metaphorical ‘ranks’ consequently means that Antoinette and her mother are thus not a part of the present communities, being forced to live a “marooned” (WSS, 4) life, being abandoned to their fates, and generally falling through the cracks of society. In short, the Creole is condemned to loneliness and solitude by being necessitated to a ‘Third Space’ which includes those that are otherwise not included as a result of their personal ambivalence.

By finding herself in this constant and never-ending space in-between *Wide Sargasso Sea*’s communities, the ranks eventually become more and more distant to a point where the act of Rochester “[covering] a dead girl” (88) can be perceived as an allusion to the dawning death of Antoinette in this ‘Third Space’, a place where she is ultimately compelled to experience the seemingly endless agony of never knowing where she belongs. No matter how hard Antoinette has been forced or occasionally herself attempted to belong by means of adapting and blending in through switching to an English diet (16), adjusting to her mother’s wished European dress code (17), or striving to speak, as Rochester perceives it, Standard English instead of its creolized form (8), these actions all see the woman only move further away from both the British and the Jamaican community and underline the vastness of her journey through ‘liminal space’. Annette functions as the maternal driving force in encouraging her daughter to be embody more Englishness than anything else in order to conform to the island’s British population and finally become one with the ranks. Antoinette’s simultaneous leaning towards imitating the island population’s customs by copying Tia’s behaviour and enjoying doing so (7), as well as occasionally making use of the natives’ creolized variant of English (82) or wearing their clothes (9), even though many such actions are performed in childhood innocence, comes to be an easy

excuse for the mother to heap the blame on her daughter as to why the ranks become “closed” (3) and shun her own daughter despite residing in the same position of having been excluded.

The main problem of attempting to imitate while residing in this area is that both the British and, to a lesser extent, the Jamaicans feel inclined to view Antoinette as a potential threat, a danger as disturbing as the “alien” (37) woods or other unhuman objects. From Rochester’s perspective, Antoinette’s partially similar looks to Amélie (80), the preconception of her allegedly embodying the connoted deviousness and malice of the natives (88), her sharing of traits perceived to be characteristic of the natives by wearing no shoes (94), the woman being overly emotional in contrast to Rochester’s typically ‘stiff-upper-lip’ and emotionless upbringing (55; 63), or her apparently possessing an insatiable sex drive (107), is all enough to warrant a permanent demonization and no access to the ‘inside’ of both the community and his trust. The woman is never allowed to be anything else than this portrayed colonial opposite and, due to her only sharing certain, mostly negative resemblances with the British group, essentially makes her a worthy object of aversion and avoidance in the eyes of Rochester.

Ultimately, Antoinette’s involuntary position in a place such as the ‘Third Space’ illustrates the control which the community has over people like the female protagonist, allowing the former to continue existing indefinitely there though never permitting her to further pursue the thought of belonging to somewhere like its own ‘ranks’. Inclusion in this metaphorical, purely imagined space is impossible for Antoinette yet at the same time necessary for her to unfold as a person and, paradoxically, gain independence which Jane Eyre is able to gradually develop, visible in her abandoning of Rochester or rejection of St John River’s approaches. Antoinette’s mere existence, on the other hand, poses a threat to the existence of these ranks as diluting them would seemingly equate to the community’s demise, therefore calling for the harsh and ruthless treatment which sees the then already Bertha become imprisoned on both a mental and physical level. The effect of the female protagonist’s mimicking results in the exact opposite intention, not establishing a sense of belonging, but essentially remaining an abomination, a “white cockroach”. While Antoinette/Bertha’s final acceptance of her fate “in the dark” (87) might explain the eventual development and reasoning for her to ultimately feel inclined to such a vindictive solution in form of instigating a fire, this element showing a quality of cleansing that

which has become infested and unclean, the female protagonist nevertheless remains unable to belong to the closed ranks.

2.4 Antoinette: (non-)identity?

If one looks back to the aforementioned immigration stories of Gilroy and Rushdie settling in a postwar, twentieth-century Britain then one can observe how both had been compelled to adhere to a variety of, for them, unfamiliar customs and rites as the result of feeling necessitated to do so. Rushdie's stating of his capability in the English language and complexion playing significant roles in being perceived as a part of the native community and finally possessing a feeling of belonging to his new surroundings is similar to Gilroy's tale of having to carry out the duty of reading up on Britain's culture and history in order to not attract the kind of unwanted attention which would see him become ostracized (*Against Race*, 2-3; *Imaginary Homelands*, 18). In essence, the two writers were not simply welcomed with open arms into British society, but were reliant on individual, inherent factors going their way in order to be able to develop an identity including Britain.

In the context of Rhys' novel, Antoinette faces a similarly difficult task to fit in and conform to the 'inside' community, her struggle being tangible throughout the narrative though while the two examples above do share a colonial background they are not Creoles like the narrator. The female protagonist serves as an example of initial endeavours to be deemed British, specifically as a child, and Antoinette's mother fulfills an integral role in drilling and indoctrinating her daughter with the same narrow-minded ideas which were instilled in her in the past. The general attempts to speak Standard English and Rochester correcting her, always intending to be dressed 'properly' after experiencing her mother's disgust for wearing Tia's dress, or her efforts to never cause a "scandal" (*WSS*, 9; 70; 84) all constitute examples of how, in time, Antoinette becomes more and more influenced by external voices which then again shape her life in-between the fringes of the two clashing communities of Britain and Jamaica in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The already present ambivalence, which makes up the woman's very essence and gives reason for her to be silenced, is enhanced by Antoinette's eating of "English food" or living in, as Rochester refers to her inheritance, "the imitation of an English summer house", the preference of lighter instead of "darker" hair, and adhering to "English law" (*WSS*, 17; 24; 27; 40; 68) despite living in the Caribbean; attempts to establish a personal sense of belonging while possessing very little say in the choice whether or not they are to be successful.

Hall's "becoming" and "being", as well as "[positioning]" and being "positioned by" (*Cultural Identity*, 225), represent actions which, to an extent, can arguably be viewed in Antoinette's endless strive to form an identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, with her mentioned entanglement of a white ancestry and a colonial place of birth complicating this process of establishing belonging due to the way others' perceive her as a result. Initially, Antoinette's newly formed friendship with Tia sees her move closer to the native population, as well as her birthplace, yet also distances her from the local British people (*WSS*, 7), thus making the young girl feel as if leaving the island could never represent a viable option (*WSS*, 14). By doing so, the narrator gradually starts to identify more openly with the Caribbean island and chooses to do so out of her own free will, even though she mostly feels connected to the geographical space of Jamaica rather than its inhabitants in an attempt to spare her from disappointment (*WSS*, 11). However, this approach proves to be a turning point already very early on in the novel. As Mary Emery remarks in her text on Rhys's novel, by affiliating with the natives and, though involuntarily, wearing Tia's mentioned native dress and subsequently ripping her English one, "Antoinette's previous identity no longer fits" (*World's End*, 39) and, despite her best efforts to affect or change her situation to the better, is unable to do so, becoming somewhat lost. This state is all but confirmed after the tragic events at Coulibri and her later marriage to Rochester as Antoinette's freedom in choosing from her birthplace or ancestral roots as her home and one and only source of belonging disappears. Particularly Tia's physical and, most importantly, violent act of rejecting her former white friend initiates a blow to Antoinette which leads to the female protagonist being left in a position of uncertainty, becoming even less sure about where she ultimately belongs than before.

One of the most prominent and impactful sources of authority prior to Rochester is represented by the second dominant English character in the novel, Mr Mason. As the latter prohibits his step-daughter from seeing her "coloured relatives" (*WSS*, 17; 27), Antoinette is gradually and involuntarily 'positioned' by her step-father in order for her to become his notion of normal and closer associated with British society. Having trusted the father figure to act in her and generally the family's best interests, the bottom line is that the Englishman contributes vastly to Antoinette's situation developing the way it does, bringing "destruction" to the young woman by means of his passiveness "instead of offering them shelter" (*Abandoning and Re-Inhabiting*, 26), as Susan Lyndon notes in her text by highlighting the male characters' inability to provide a safe environment to develop for the female protagonist. Any remaining self-will in regard to

Antoinette making sense of who she really is and feeling a bond to her place of birth is later, quite literally, robbed by her husband Rochester whose chorus of disapproval for anything associated with Britain's "lazy" (WSS, 51) colony influences his new wife to distance herself from the island. The significant difference between what Antoinette personally strives for to be and what she is ultimately condemned to settle for becomes blurred in course of the narrative as the authority of the mentioned Mr Mason and Rochester take over the reins of the woman's life. As a result, one can perceive a regular fluctuation in Antoinette's own sense of home and belongingness as not even the adoption of a close-to-nature attitude can aid her in reclaiming the voice and capability to make her own decisions which she has been deprived of as Bertha in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

After her marriage to Rochester, Antoinette's formerly intimate connection to Jamaica is briefly reignited as their arrival at Granbois seems to once again strengthen her belief in belonging to the island due to the stark opposition and British-ness the man embodies. The female protagonist goes on to defend her birthplace in front of her husband on several occasions, the mocking of "England, England" and her preference of "St Pierre" (WSS, 37; 40; 46) over Paris showcasing that she tends to identify more with her current home than with the one of her ancestors and underlining this assumption with her demonstration of instinctive knowledge about the tropical weather which only a local would know. While Antoinette initially even explicitly refers to herself and the natives as "we" (WSS, 49), Rochester's dominant influence begins to become apparent as the 'metonymic walls', which the system he grew up in has gradually erected in his mind, makes his wife increasingly exhibit signs of sudden insecurity in her beliefs and start to doubt herself (WSS, 52; 55), once again underlining her inability to escape her spatial position on her own accord.

The outcome of this continuous and, for Antoinette, highly confusing back and forth in the matter of her sense of belonging ultimately results in the young girl herself no longer knowing whom she can refer to as *her* people, leaving her with, as Clingman refers to Antoinette's situation, the burden of a 'non-identity'. The building up of an affiliation and/or connection has been made near impossible for Antoinette as the mixture of her ambivalent heritage and the mindsets of the people around her give the woman no other choice than to turn to the open arms of nature, as she states herself:

Black ants or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin – once I saw a snake. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people. [...] It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder *who I am* and where is my country and *where do I belong* and why was I ever born at all. (WSS, 11; 63, emphasis added)

Antoinette's inability to independently ascertain a stable sense of where she belongs to and the woman's missing capacity to openly and publically speak up about her dire situation due to a lack of understanding and viable options results in the third and final chapter unveiling an Antoinette whose life-long spatial limitations have now been followed up by the addition of physical boundaries. Antoinette's time in this room on the third floor has emblematically turned into somewhat of a real life residence inside a 'Third Space', being in-between the rooms of the rest of the estate and shunned by its inhabitants, with the exception of Grace Poole, who is forced to reside next to Antoinette. The narrator has arguably both lost touch with reality and no longer possesses a sense of time and space within this room (WSS, 119). While Brontë's Bertha succumbed to the hopelessness of her situation without uttering a word, silenced to the mere act of immolation, Antoinette's journey does illustrate how the prior treatment by her community has made her no longer able to grasp who and where she is, incapable of accepting the idea of residing in a different space all across the sea in England, and has figuratively let her become a shell of her former self (WSS, 116-118). She is able to be heard in these concluding lines; however, the female protagonist is destined to end her story with the same fate as Bertha, essentially being left in a far worse position every time she attempts to secure her place within the community. Though by seeing herself "Antoinette drifting out of the window" (WSS, 116), the woman, to a certain extent, succeeds in making her final, fatal positioning in life count and be down to her own decision and not that of a community, walls, Rochester, or any other influence, Antoinette and a stable sense of her own identity remain out of synch and unattainable.

As a reader who possesses some degree of prior knowledge about Rhys' life and the events of *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha before reading, the narrative and its eventual outcome for *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s female protagonist bears several similarities with its creator. One is able to draw a number of parallels to the author's personal back story and, for instance, Clingman does well to note such likenesses by bringing in Rhys and Antoinette's resemblance in regard to the shared hopelessness of their situations and shared "non-place of identity" (Grammar, 138). While one

should be very cautious not to equate an author to his or her fictional piece of writing when establishing connections between the two, the possibility of the figure of Antoinette possessing a strong, autobiographical character in the novel does seem highly likely and, at times, rather uncanny. Given, the authoress was never necessitated to lunge herself to her death, but the inability to refer to a place as a home and a community as *her* people, as well as the feeling of repeatedly finding herself in a position not fitting in and being shunned, whether in England or her birth place in the West Indies, does likely mirror some of the emotions and issues Rhys was faced with until her death. Though one cannot say for sure, claiming that the novel was put to paper in an effort to debunk the myth of perilous events such as the ones depicted in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* being the fault of the mad and uncivilized Creole woman, does not seem farfetched and contributes to fathoming Rhys' reasoning for her particular portrayal of Antoinette and her fate of 'non-identity'.

2.5 Rochester: A character in-between?

Rochester may not initially appear to represent a character who is dealing with issues of being unsettled or not in touch with himself in the beginning stages of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, but, as the narrative progresses, one nevertheless starts to realize that the male protagonist embodies, to a certain degree, an ambivalence similar to the one of his wife, though emanating from a different source and holding an entirely opposite ending for him, in contrast.

Due to the aforementioned difficult time and oppression under his father's parentage and his life-long place in the shadow of his older brother, one can perceive several significant developments and repercussions which this adverse treatment has evoked in Rochester and one initially feels inclined to sympathize with the man. However, the male protagonist leaves out no opportunity to let the reader know of his unfortunate situation immediately after taking over the narration at the start of the second chapter, uttering: "I agreed. As I had agreed to everything else" (*WSS*, 37). Seemingly enjoying a traditional English upbringing, Rochester himself implies that he has been taught to suppress his emotions and "[never] be afraid" (55; 56; 63) from an early age on, having to uphold a stiff-upper-lip attitude, always attempting to maintain integrity in front of others, and exemplifying his natural affinity for his home by means of his regular bemoaning of how he misses England, whether that be down to the, in his view, dreadful language standard in the colonies or the closeness and emotional security which something as simple as the British "royal" (106; 107) botany provides. In fact, Rochester's love for his home goes as far as it being able to do no wrong in his perception, as his jumping to the defense of Britain and his disregarding of the repercussions its imperialistic aspirations have caused by referring to the actions as "justice" (94) illustrates, a particularly intriguing choice of word seeing that Rochester feels that *he* represents the one experiencing injustice by being exiled to the West Indies.

As Clingman states in his work, Rochester and Antoinette nevertheless have several aspects in common despite being contrary to one another at first glance, being much "*alike*" (*Grammar*, 153; emphasis of author). The male protagonist has been subjected to several instances of exclusion in course of his young life and his arranged marriage to Antoinette more or less equates to his father exiling him from his family's own form of "ranks" (*WSS*, 3). This omission from his familiar surroundings leads to the man's sporadic attempts to fill the resulting void with the "alien, disturbing, secret loveliness" (52) of his new exotic destination. Rochester also notes

how “peaceful” (39) the island makes him feel, and even makes a sort of love confession by stating that he “could not imagine [...] a different sky” (75) anymore. More specifically, in the closing stages of his narration, an unexpected wave of affection for the island overcomes Rochester as he briefly seems to identify with the awkwardness of the English-themed honeymoon estate in the middle of a foreign land, as well as being uncharacteristically apologetic towards Antoinette for his past lapses in behaviour (109; 111). This sudden change in attitude, as brief as it may be, and the immediate revolving back to a rejecting stance towards the island he refers to as an “abominable place” (104) bring one of two conclusions. Rochester possesses a similar position to Antoinette in that the pair are susceptible to other people’s influence(s), such as, in the former’s case, Daniel Cosway’s letter easily affecting his consequent decision making (“I felt no surprise. It was as if I’d expected it, been waiting for it.”, 60), and, in the latter’s case, her husband’s aversion towards her not deterring her from continuing to stay beside him and give in to his calls for “Bertha” (68-71; 87). The bottom line remains that both simply do not seem to belong to their current destination and will not be able to identify with it as a result of complexion, language usage, roots, and similar factors, the male protagonist consequently constituting a transnational character himself in this situation.

One of the key differences between Antoinette and Rochester, however, remains in the latter’s ability to return to England and its community as a free man at any time he chooses after his father’s passing, despite his emotional burden, ultimately contributing to exemplifying why he can never be solely considered to be embodying the poor, forcefully married person sent to the middle of nowhere who should be pitied, an image he continually intends to uphold by means of utterances such as “everything finished, for better or worse” (36) or “[...] do you think that I wanted all this” (104) in light of his publically held affair with Amélie and oppression of his wife. One could even go as far as arguing that his own ambivalence and subconscious inclination to switch between his identification with Antoinette and the island, on the one hand, and the rejection of everything associated with the former two, on the other, can be characterized as him exemplifying a slight bipolar tendency. As such, the English “gentleman” (71) may have his issues to deal with on a personal level, but, ultimately, he shrugs off any unstable sense of identity or ‘non-identity’ in favour of returning to a space which, on the scale of an entire community, will not meet him with hostility, something Antoinette is not able to call upon in both England and the West Indies. Rochester’s own dramatization and bemoaning of his

circumstances becomes as much a part of him as his British identity, yet, as a reader, one can perceive that he can nevertheless be characterized as somewhat of a broken man ever since the exclusion from his family.

By writing letters to his absent yet continually dominant father, Rochester further illustrates his internal struggle and reluctance to reflect on and deal with his past critically, repressing thoughts of hate or discontent towards the patriarch in a way which mirrors Antoinette's inability to acknowledge her own situation(s), even when she is explicitly confronted with it by Christophine (69). The male narrator continually delays writing the letters and does not ever post any of his correspondence despite his composing of them in his compatriot Mr Mason's former "refuge" (43) seemingly providing a source of comfort and his final ties to a, for him, better time, still holding on to thoughts of not wanting to be a "disgrace" for his father and showcasing the latter his own "competence" (37; 39). Upholding this communication is Rochester's way of hanging on to both the missing approval of Rochester Senior and a past in England where he may not have been fully accepted by his family, but was at least able to position himself among a community to which he possessed a connection and, more importantly, a familiarity. The uncertainty regarding whether or not he will ever have the opportunity to return most likely has a major impact on Rochester's mentioned time, decisions and behaviour in the colonies. As soon as the opportunity arises to move back, no matter what awaits him there in regard to his persisting family situation, the male narrator does not hesitate to seize the chance and leave his temporary home behind and him, deciding for the both of them with his superior authority, intent on his wife "[having] nothing" (111), and immediately reestablishing himself in England, consequently highlighting why the two protagonists may have several things in common, but, ultimately, their positions remain more contrary than similar in regard to their identities.

In conclusion, this chapter focusing on Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* has demonstrated that, as alluded to in the posed hypothesis, the character of Antoinette has always been forced to live a condition of impossibility regarding her search for belonging as a consequence of her two immediate communities' abiding to several connected aspects to determine and judge affiliation, ending with her resorting to the most extreme of measures. The stated importance of the idea of the community in the female narrator's development is shown to be a substantial one as the consequence of Antoinette's position between the lines of two very different communities from

birth onward leads to a condition which results in an insurmountable obstacle due to her deviations in complexion and/or ancestry; factors which she cannot influence yet nevertheless serve as reasons to exclude her and, at the same time, bond others together at her cost. The woman has been shown to be, metaphorically speaking, pushed into an in-between space which essentially hinders her from eventually ending up with a stable sense of identity and a conclusion to her journey through the 'liminal', ultimately succumbing to the external pressure of the community and remaining in a space of 'non-identity'. The significant role of walls in this development has been highlighted as being expressed by the common occurrence of mentally and implicit indoctrination of 'metonymic walls' figuratively erected in the minds of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s other characters, utilizing them as justification to treat the Creole characters' the way they do. Being offered the chance to voice her story due to Rhys' decision to rewrite Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and its depiction of the wild woman in the attic, Antoinette's perspective offers a different perspective on the concepts of togetherness in a social space such as the community which arguably still has its validity today. While Rhys' piece stems from a completely different day and age in both its fictional setting and also its time of publishing, this interpretation sought to contextualize and elaborate on *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s fictional portrayal of its female protagonist's near impossible position. By demonstrating the perceived excluding behaviour and social tendencies to resort to walls, yesterday's problems remind us that they are not too different to our contemporary community's influence on and recent problematic handling of issues linked to transnational movement, especially in Britain.

The following chapter will subsequently aim to maintain this above stated course and trail of thought by now analyzing the events unfolding in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*. Moving from the colonial outskirts of the Empire to a postwar 'imperial centre', Levy's piece of writing offers different yet just as thematically valuable perspectives in matters such as its depicted communities' roles in identity formation and will be shown to be a worthy continuation of the mentioned findings hitherto. While keeping the two novels' differences in things such as setting and time in mind, a better overview will thus attempted to be achieved in order to cover more ground, ultimately contributing to the providing of a more accurate answer to the research question, as well as to proving (or disproving) the general hypothesis.

3. Andrea Levy's *Small Island*

3.1 Introductory Remarks

Despite being written nearly forty years after *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its fictional time line taking place over a century after Antoinette's tragic fate, the second novel to be discussed in course of this thesis comes in form of Andrea Levy's critically acclaimed *Small Island*, a further literary work from the field of postcolonial writing. Apart from being selected for its unique structure and style of narration, as well as its riveting and emotionally laden narrative, Levy's novel, in the context of this paper, most notably distinguishes itself not only for its intricate play with different settings and spaces, but also for its literal and imagined 'inside' and 'outside' differentiations characterizing these said spaces, making it particularly interesting for the topics being addressed in this thesis.

In contrast to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Small Island* is not a rewriting of a specific book, but it can and should be described as a postcolonial novel which, as most pieces of postcolonial literature, is "[writing] back to a centre" (*Empire*, 6), the addressee being imperial Britain in this case. While many such works of fiction can be in some capacity characterized in such a way, Levy's particular one hits an especially contemporary note due to its portraying of and dealing with the fate of the so-called Windrush Generation, a group of former war volunteers who were encouraged to relocate and settle together with their families to postwar Britain as a gratification for their many contributions to the war effort. Regardless of this invitation, these newly arriving people's process of integration transpired into an emotionally arduous journey for the colonial immigrants and claiming that the home nation's population, as well as its general government structure regarding sectors such as accommodation, occupation, financial support and similarly integral areas, did not provide a welcoming atmosphere would be a gross understatement.

The currently ongoing and omnipresent debate concerning Brexit, with all the animosities aimed at non-British people consequently being allowed to flare up, and the political scandal revolving around the treatment and deportation of members of this aforementioned Windrush Generation only serve as further proof that these initial difficulties never really completely disappeared. It goes without saying that Andrea Levy could naturally not completely foresee that her narrative, even fifteen years after having published *Small Island*, would become as fitting and

contemporary as it is now and has been in recent years after the scandal became public; however, in a sense, she might have done just that as the hostile environment directed towards immigrants, which enables the stereotyping, stigmatizing and racializing of citizens of colour who possess Jamaican roots yet are just as much members of the Commonwealth and thus Great Britain as, for example, their Canadian or Australian contemporaries, does not represent a recent development in the United Kingdom and, in the case of the Windrush Generation, has been a continual theme ever since they arrived in the years after the end of World War II. While Gilroy makes the case that such developments contributed in leading to the birth of an overall black culture he terms that of the “black Atlantic”, something that in the narrative of the novel is yet to develop and only inferred with its open ending, he notably refers to how the process of ‘colonialism in reverse’ saw a fundamental change in people like *Small Island*’s Gilbert or Hortense’s ways of “identification” (*Black Atlantic*, 4-5; 10) at the time. As such, Levy’s literary work serves as a reminder of the significant beginnings to a life-altering, unprecedented shift in thought while reminding its readers of the hostility with which the British population frequently let immigrants feel their insecurity of this rise in transnationalism. Given the aforementioned contemporary surge which recently emerged in course of the refugee crisis, one must remember that the stated animosities from the postwar period have not just now resurfaced, but have never well and truly disappeared, making the possibility of Levy intending to shape *Small Island* as a ‘writing back’ to these times and to have it act as a source of remembrance all the more likely.

Moving on to the actual novel, the reader is presented with a host of characters, who move in and out of the story, though four main narrating protagonists emerge out of the events unfolding in Levy’s novel, being contrary or even opposed to one another in the sense of class, race, and origins. Yet, at the same time, one could also argue that, to a certain extent, they complete one another to the point that they become crucial to the developments of their counterparts on a certain level. *Small Island* introduces, on the one hand, the Jamaican and black *British* couple of Gilbert, a former Royal Air Force volunteer who keenly wants to rescue his self-appointed and unifying term of the “Mother Country” (*SI*, 141) from the grip of Nazi rule, and Hortense, an aspiring teacher with a tendency to an elitist self-perception who attempts to emulate her English counterparts’ every move while wanting as little as possible to do with her fellow West Indians; on the other, one has the typical British pair of Queenie, a self-proclaimed open-minded, middle-aged Englishwoman and highly ambiguous character in regard to her moral principles, and

Bernard, a former bank clerk who reluctantly volunteers to become a part of the Royal Air Force and does not share his wife's mildness and patience when it comes to immigrants and anyone with a dark complexion. These four seemingly quintessentially different people gradually become acquainted, interact, and, in Gilbert and Bernard's case for instance, even contribute to shaping their counterparts very self and view of society in course of the novel, leaving the former with an entirely different perception of his new home and himself as a whole while having a far more negative impact on the latter. *Small Island's* choice to see all protagonists eventually meet up at the (here quite literal) 'imperial centre' of London comes as no coincidence but much rather as a fateful encounter. While the four would never perceive this development as such, their coming together contributes immensely to the final positioning of one another and themselves in a distinct space, something which becomes increasingly evident in course of the actual narrative.

Small Island's story begins with the typical arrival of someone from the Windrush Generation at the time as a highly motivated Hortense is excited to enter the docks in London, but, shortly after, is shocked to gradually come to know of the harsh living conditions and many animosities that await her in Britain. Yet, the woman continually tries her best to fulfill her dream of settling in England and becoming a successful teacher who radiates being truly British, a passion her husband Gilbert initially shares, but, as the reader gradually learns, no longer pursues due to the many experiences of hostility aimed towards him by the home nation. In the mentioned 'before' chapters, one is subsequently informed about the background of the two as both individuals have in common that they are sometimes treated with contempt in the West Indies due to possessing ambivalent Jamaican and European roots and, as a result, have always felt different and thus destined for a life in Britain. Additionally, Hortense's marriage to Gilbert is explained as a kind of deal which would ensure both of them to relocate to Europe despite the former's reservations and initial feelings of contempt and dislike for her husband. Serving as one of the numerous colonial volunteers of the Royal Air Force, Gilbert's history becomes particularly foregrounded as his early encounters with American and British soldiers hurling racist slurs at him become common practice during his service as an airman, a title he is very proud to bear. Nevertheless, the Jamaican remains undeterred in wanting to return to the United Kingdom after the war and, during this time, also gets to know Queenie after a series of coincidences involving the latter's father-in-law Arthur.

Back in the present day of 1948, the reader also becomes acquainted with the adult version of Queenie after already getting a glimpse of her as a child in the prologue's portrayal of her first encounter with a black man. Being highly skeptical, not to say nosy, about the arrival of Hortense in the flat she is letting to Gilbert, the Englishwoman loses no time in her attempts to both welcome her new guest and reiterate how she has no problem with her while simultaneously making the coloured woman highly uncomfortable by means of actions which constantly remind Hortense of how she is not originally from Britain. After the portrayal of her backstory, her eventual marriage to Bernard, and her affair with Hortense's cousin Michael, who briefly lodged in Nevern Street during the war, the present day Queenie is shocked to encounter her husband returning from India after being away for over five years and having believed him to be dead, his time during the war being subsequently narrated and giving insight into how he became even more opposed to coloured people and generally foreigners than he was prior to his enlistment.

The final chapters and time skip to the year 1948 sees the accumulation of all the previous events unfold with every protagonist now being involved and taking turns in narration; Hortense's search for an occupation sees her encounter and, for the first time, realize the harsh reality of a newly immigrated person in Britain after being humiliated at the job office, only to be consolidated by Gilbert with the two starting to connect on an emotional level. Despite being threatened with being kicked out of their flat due to Bernard's return, the coloured man can finally catch a break after receiving a large amount of abuse since starting to work in England as he and Hortense are provided with an affordable house by a fellow Jamaican immigrant, making the pair no longer dependent on Queenie's flat. The final coming-together of the four protagonists then sees Queenie's revelation of being pregnant with Michael's child lead to the white couple attempting to offload the baby onto their former renters and the latter's reluctantly taking in the so-called half-caste as an act of solidarity.

Due to the length of the novel and the amount of narrating characters, *Small Island* is built up into fifty-nine varying long chapters and can be considered as being composed of overall ten sections. Occurring in a rotational order, four of these sections are titled as "before", each of them telling the backstory of one of the individual protagonists, and five as "1948", with all nine of them being preceded by the aforementioned prologue. One can perceive an intriguing usage of how Levy structures her story line temporally here as the narration continuously and frequently

utilizes time skips, switching back and forth between both the four individual protagonists and their experiences in the *post*-World War II Jamaican and British setting. However, whenever a character reports of his life *prior* to the events occurring three years after the end of the war, the respective part continuously utilizes the same narrator who reports about his familial roots and relatives, education and occupation, and the events which led to all four protagonists eventually meeting up beneath the same roof in Queenie and Bernard's home in Nevern Street, London, for multiple chapters.

By drawing on this alternating way of narration, the novel rolls up the origin stories of each and every one of its four main characters and provides the reader not only with insight as to how these characters developed into the people they are portrayed as in the present day of *Small Island*'s narrative, but also into the contrary mindsets and points of view made possible by giving a voice to both the black and the white British camps. Levy's reasoning for making use of this particular way of storytelling might be able to be led back to a similar explanation as with Rhys. On the one hand, the covering of the points of views from both sides of the spectrum, something which is also done in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by giving a voice to both Antoinette *and* Rochester, not only lends more credibility to the depicted events and an opportunity to empathize with the opposing situations of the characters, but simultaneously illustrates how differently their voices are perceived and how their positions change both from a personal and social perspective throughout the novel. On the other, the author's own familial background is similar to that of Gilbert and Hortense as her parents also emigrated to Britain as part of the Windrush Generation, leading to her being born there and witnessing the hardships their arrival caused for the family firsthand, lending the narrative a somewhat autobiographical character (*Andrea Levy*). When speaking about her inclination for the novel's narrative style and authorial elements, the 2008 held interview between Levy and fellow writer Blake Morrison gives sheds some light onto the former's reasoning to mould her piece the way she did. While Levy generally talks about her path to becoming an author and the difficulties the writing of *Small Island* entailed for her, the author also emphasizes that "certain aspects" (*Levy Interviewed*, 331) of her characters can in fact be described as reflective of people from her past and the experiences they lived through, as well as needing as many and diverse narrators as she did in order to tell such a story. By doing so, Levy gives her writing a personal touch and the reader a further reason to immerse him- or herself in the events taking place.

Since its publishing in 2004, *Small Island* has enjoyed an overly positive and successful reception and has featured on several listings of the most contemporarily influential books in Britain, gaining even more momentum in light of the recent events revolving around the aforementioned highly debatable treatment with which the Windrush scandal has been handled by the British government. Despite the novel serving increasingly as a primary text for secondary literature concerning a wide array of themes over the past fifteen years, one should note that the comparative recency of *Small Island* has unsurprisingly seen less work be conducted on the story as opposed to the forty years prior published *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Nevertheless, texts such as Sonya Andermahr's work on Levy's writing further illustrates the richness of the novel as the former's research views the book as one of "postcolonial trauma" (*Decolonizing*, 556), posing the question how the protagonists' pain of loss is or is not collectively accounted for in *Small Island*, focusing on the role of aspects such as humour in the process. One can also find work on the novel in completely different directions as, for instance, its contemporariness led to scholars such as Anouk Lang concentrating on varying reader perspectives in *Small Island* by conducting an empirical study with readers and analyzing their "reluctance" (*Reading race*, 321) to address precarious topics from Levy's depiction of events. In another area, research on the topic of gender is portrayed, for example, by Sarah Brophy in the context of the character of Queenie, whose ambiguous views in regard to immigration offer an intriguing basis for the question of how "white femininity" (*Entangled Genealogies*, 2) has developed since the postwar period. While these examples all constitute highly intriguing perspectives and research areas, this paper will however concentrate on the previously stated areas of interest, specifically as the latter one has a heavy focus on Levy's white characters instead of this paper's concentration on their creolized counterparts.

Thus, I intend to build on this paper's previously collected results regarding spatial settings and metaphors by beginning with an elaboration on and display of the difficult communal structure for the depicted characters in *Small Island*, followed by a critical look at the two coloured protagonists' confronting with the limits set by the narrative's wall-like structures, and, then, I will once again attempt to showcase the effects these particular spaces have on the pair itself and their positioning of identity within these constraints. While I will then subsequently present my conclusions and their validity in regard to the formulated hypothesis and research question, a

final verdict and comparison between both novels will be drawn in the final conclusion in the closing chapter of this paper.

3.2 Exclusion in *Small Island*'s community

While the analysis of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* has attempted to give insight on the subject how the community is able to impact a person characterized by and in the position of ambivalence, as well as the repercussions these bearings potentially have on one's sense of belonging in such a situation, the second novel called upon to potentially provide further answers to the research question at hand illustrates an equally strong presence of spatial metaphors and boundaries in which certain affected protagonists are involuntarily situated. Andrea Levy's acclaimed *Small Island* portrays four individual accounts of a postwar Britain which is able to be perceived as revolving around the aspirations of searching for belongingness in a partially foreign, partially familiar community for the two coloured protagonists, who essentially act as "familiar strangers" (*SI*, 71), after having lived under the rule and influence of the British Empire for the entirety of their lives, a closeness rarely reciprocated by their British counterparts. The setting of war conceivably provides both an excellent breeding ground for the gradually arising sentiment of an aggressive patriotism and, simultaneously, an excuse to allow distrust and hate be more openly directed at individuals branded as foreign, thus rendering simple immigrants from the colonies to be not too different from the then present threat of invasion posed by the evil of Nazi Germany.

The dynamics and balance of power between the white and black parts of the community manifests itself already early on in the novel's prologue, which is set several decades before the main story and gives some first insights into how the situation is to develop, the aspect of *rejection* playing a key part in how the narrative is subsequently to unfold. One of the female narrators and protagonists Queenie, who is no more than a very young, white farmer's daughter at the time, and her family's accounts of the Empire Exhibition showcase a very limited yet impactful mindset in that they essentially view Britain as the centre of the world, even a monolithic entity, which has these colonies in its possession and incorporated within its Empire to help it thrive, consequently not regarding anyone with a colonial background as a genuine part of its people and making the explicit distinction between these guests and themselves. As such, two very different, even contrary, worlds collide in *Small Island*, epitomized here by the fundamental differences which the white family believes to be perceiving between themselves and, for instance, the black African man in the exhibit's "jungle" (5; 6); the latter is characterized

in stark contrast to Queenie, being described in terms usually reserved for animals or objects (6). However, at the same time and to the surprise of Queenie and her companions, this very man displays a profound ability in English, is well-spoken, and reveals a kind and helpful nature, attributes which are normally only ever associated with a person of a light complexion, leading to a confusing and terrifying similarity which, for a rural British family in the nineteen-forties, would and could never be associated with a person of colour. The incomprehensibility of the situation leads to Queenie's father only being able to explain the circumstances with the postulation of absurd theories about how the backward "African man" must be of a "civilized [sic]" and noble heritage, as well as his prowess being merely down to the influence of "the white man" (6), thus setting an agenda bordering on backward phrenology and setting up for an uphill battle for the decades to come, a troublesome state of mind which is to also majorly affect the later depicted arrivals on board the Windrush vessel in the novel.

Despite this restricted perception shown towards their people, one which Gilbert, Hortense, and their other coloured compatriots do not know of initially, positive examples of attempts to become a cohesive community, no matter the skin colour, are almost exclusively restricted to situations initiated by immigrants from the West Indies. Gilbert's unconditional understanding, empathy and acceptance of the suboptimal living conditions simply being the way "everyone [lives]" (21) in England after the war, his "pity" (487) for an enraged Bernard making him lend a helping hand to the latter despite the white narrator having attacked the former only a minute beforehand, the general popularity among Jamaicans to "fight in the war" (66) for their Mother Country are all examples of his unconditional love for the country he is defending in the novel. Hortense and Celia's producing of essential utensils such as "socks" (70) for soldiers of all colours in Europe, these examples exemplify entirely voluntary actions performed by individuals who do not view themselves as 'colonized subjects' but, in a way, already as a part of a big family inside the Mother Country and will thus willingly serve. This drive to be one large and bonded community is also evident in instances such as Hortense fondly and proudly describing the rows of brave Jamaican RAF volunteers as "line after line of familiar strangers" (71), not being afraid to die for a country they have never even set foot on, or Gilbert doing similarly by warmly greeting an unfamiliar crowd of passing black soldiers and describing them as "from home" (463). These examples showcase how, for the colonized citizens in *Small Island*, banding

together constitutes one of the noblest of aspirations, the war representing a genuine reason to help brothers in arms and unite as all being children of the Mother Country.

However, if one compares these instances of genuine commonality and compassion mentioned above to the ones shown by white English characters in *Small Island* then one can perceive a very different conception of unity, with morality taking up a distorted and freely construable virtue for white characters such as Bernard or the pair of Mr. Todd and his sister. Occasional moments of altruism towards other members of the community are seldom the case, even when involving fellow Englishmen or –women and not merely people with a dark complexion. Situations such as Queenie’s recalling of her neighbor helping her with artisanal matters in the household during her husband’s absence might constitute a rare exception; however, even then, the female protagonist is quick to counter Mr Todd’s claim of “[their] own kind sticking together” (112-113) with an account of following events regarding how the latter immediately drops this helpful act as soon as she dared to let a flat to a person of colour. The shallowness of and volatility in Mr Todd’s good will and attitude are additionally underlined by a stance corrupted by class consciousness as “Cockney” (270) citizens come to be relocated to the novel’s main setting located on a fairly prestigious Nevern Street, the previously stated sentiments of sticking together consequently becoming long forgotten as the socially inferior group is immediately branded as both “not [their] sort” (277) and inherently different. Particularly Bernard showcases serious attempts to convince his wife to refrain from ever helping and providing these less fortunate Britons from the East End with the bare necessities, which stands in stark contrast to the very essence of how a community should be fundamentally based on togetherness and acts of altruism. Essentially, the ambivalent, mostly negative treatment of others outside this sworn in and superior-minded community on Nevern Street illustrates how these bigoted individuals are able to construct a false sense of homogeneity which is frequently altered to fit their needs and does not shackle them to a specific moral codex, an attitude which has seemingly spread across the country.

First and foremost, as soon as the aspect of skin colour comes into play, any flashes of kind behaviour shown by English characters towards their black counterparts tend to have been conducted out of self-interest, not for reasons which are to benefit both the local white community and the newly arrived immigrants; prominent examples of such coming in form of an

Englishwoman's invitation for some black soldiers to enter her home as a way of comforting herself to seem as a generous and inviting host before needlessly kicking them out or Queenie's taking in of coloured tenants boiling down to financial and logistical reasons rather than genuine acts of kindheartedness (113; 161). Another particularly distinctive example of this ambivalent, egoistic behaviour is perceivable when Gilbert and some of his fellow coloured soldiers are walking down a street while being stared at by English villagers as, despite an old man claiming that they are "all in this together" (138), this nice gesture is immediately eclipsed by, on the one hand, an elderly couple mocking the West Indies volunteers for their creolized accent and, on the other, an irritated man publically demonstrating his disgust for the colonial men's belief in fighting for the same honourable reasons and "country" (138-139).

The initial sentiment regarding the aspect of rejection occupying a prominent and tangible theme thus becomes increasingly conspicuous in course of a reading of the novel as rejection becomes intertwined with more or less every area of Gilbert and Hortense's lives in England, with the former being one of the main victims of exclusion in *Small Island*. One must lastly note that, despite the narrative's depicted lack of white characters demonstrating benevolence and commonality, it would be wrong to automatically claim that this piece of fiction's portrayal of these events automatically intends to convey the message that all English citizens at the time showed a tendency to ostracizing and rejecting behaviour. Rather, these events are supposed to call the reader's attention to a system which used to very similarly disadvantage and exclude certain, primarily coloured, groups of people from its existing community due to aspects such as social class or, most prominently, complexion, as is illustrated in *Small Island*. Gilbert is shown to represent an example worth emulating and aspiring to as the continuing strive to create and shape a Britain of equality and inclusiveness, no matter one's race or ethnicity, remains an ongoing hot-topic, especially in the decades of decolonization, which have followed, and given the aforementioned events surrounding the recent Windrush scandal.

3.2.1 The idealization of the “Mother Country” as a ‘dream England’

The lack of homogeneity in *Small Island*’s newly multiethnic community has been shown to leave Gilbert and Hortense in a difficult, not to say impossible, position in their attempts to build a new life and home for themselves as the two colonial protagonists are forced to cope with the backlash of settling in a place which they consider to already be a part of due to their ties to the Empire; yet, the majority of the encountered English characters does not. Despite this hostile environment, the black British couple nevertheless views Britain as their Mother Country throughout the narrative, something they frequently and proudly state, and thus do not give up in their attempts to connect with its community, especially after all the stories of greatness which people like Celia Langley tell and believe to be the truth in regard to “England” (*SI*, 11; 89-90), evoking an endurance which specifically Gilbert demonstrates in his tireless efforts to be accepted by becoming a regularly working, law-abiding, and tax-paying citizen (215; 313; 442). The belief of having arrived in and encountering a country, which one can thus title as a kind of ‘dream England’, plays a pivotal role in upholding the black couple’s strive to become accustomed with their new surroundings, the thought of this endeavour being persistently tangible among the two coloured protagonists as it gradually shapes their stay and makes the Jamaican narrators initially blind to any of the drawbacks.

England’s potential in offering a multitude of opportunities, wealth, and security, as well as it constituting somewhat of a second home as the ‘colonial centre’, is visibly embedded in the minds of the hopeful immigrants at a time of rebuilding and uncertainty in the aftermath of World War II, serving as a source of *comfort* for hopeful colonial immigrants like Gilbert and Hortense. The powerful allure of becoming a part of a seemingly securer world full of exciting and favourable “opportunity” (207) has awaked the natural desire for stability and prosperity within the coloured protagonists and continues to fuel specifically Hortense’s strive to see her dreams fulfilled until the very end of the novel, being initially evoked by her friend Celia Langley, who provides the former with the notion of England representing a space in which all one’s wishes and desires are fulfilled and satisfied (11-12). Celia is portrayed as being wholly infatuated with this idea of England providing each and every person within its boundaries with a life of luxury and the chance to be “far away” (*SI*, 11; 89) from any previous struggles in the West Indies, conveying the image of a place with a utopian atmosphere. Whether or not Hortense

has harboured similar dreams before her meeting with her friend is not specified in the novel, but, regardless, the female protagonist has adopted these aspirations of leaving the Caribbean island in order to find work as a teacher in Britain and begin a completely new life in opposition to the, in her opinion, unworthy one awaiting her if she were to stay in Jamaica.

Generally, the black British population arriving in England is depicted in a way which shows these new arrivals as relishing the chance to have been able to emigrate to their Mother Country, to which they have both an intimate, close relation due to their ties through colonialism, as well as a communal and patriotic duty when World War II breaks out. From a historical perspective, the setting of the groundwork for people to immediately volunteer to such a dangerous endeavour is something which has been set long before the start of Levy's narrative. Anna Grmelová points out in her writing on the actual people of the postwar Windrush Generation that coloured immigrants had often already been indoctrinated with a heavily influenced world view regarding Britain long before their journey across the Atlantic, thereby leading to a strong sense of an apparent "multicultural and multiracial" (*From Loneliness*, 72) bond between both communities. Consequently, the development of a patriotic mindset towards a foreign country is perceptible in, for example, Hortense's description of several highly excited and ecstatic coloured compatriots entrance to the docks in London, including herself, or her aunt's claim that joining the war effort represents a calling for men like her son to be "heroes" (*SI*, 14; 59) for their nation, a role which is idolized and plays an important part within a community. The pleasant anticipation and pride in perceiving himself to be an integral cog in Britain's machinery by serving in the Royal Air Force can also initially be observed in Gilbert's portrayal of his time prior and imminently upon relocating to Britain as the veteran claims "opportunity [to be] ripe" (207) in England and that he would do more or less anything to return, being not only underlined by the man's iron will to emigrate by basically selling himself to Hortense in order to fund his journey, but also by his wife explicitly stating that this move represents "a mission [and] a calling" (98; 211) for her husband. Essentially, while the two become highly infatuated with this idea of a 'dream England', this love is particularly apparent during their narrated scenes in Jamaica.

When Gilbert is subsequently confronted with the fact that he, as a Jamaican RAF volunteer, is forced to serve on the inferior work on the "home front" (140; 146) as a driver and not, as he was

promised by the British authorities, in an actual fighting capacity, a position which is affiliated with prestige and glory within the nation, his early motivation is met with a rude awakening after arriving in England (145). Gilbert's gradual noticing of this previously much lauded place actually possessing numerous initially well-hidden flaws becomes apparent for the first time when he depicts the West Indies soldiers entering the English harbour for the first time. Essentially, the black narrator is ultimately confronted with the dawning realization that he merely constitutes yet another cog in the massive imperial machinery apparent in Britain at the time, no longer in chains as his ancestors were, but nevertheless not entirely free from the Empire's imposed social and racial constraints, either. From having to live in a room with multiple other black British folk instead of a house of his own to struggling to establish himself in the job market and being constantly faced with racist slurs or deemed to be criminals due to their complexion, the man is confronted with all kinds of demoralizing setbacks after his arrival (214; 326). "[This] thought-I-knew-you place" (212) eventually leads to Gilbert's eyes gradually being opened to a place which certainly does not reflect a 'dream' setting. The combination of becoming aware of this harsh reality and the contrast to his first expectations of a far more welcoming reception by the local community is consequently underlined by two masterfully drawn on allusions which encapsulate the devastating disappointment with which Gilbert is faced; for instance, the aforementioned references of the lion's "bite" (326) or the "brown dog's shit [sic]" (213) by the ex-service man capture the shock and relentless wake-up-call which he and his coloured compatriots are necessitated to deal with as they are increasingly forced to bury, at least partially, their initial hopes and dreams. Though Gilbert ultimately maintains his drive to make a life for his wife and himself in Britain, this aspiration continues to be challenged and threatened on many occasions and, as a reader, one has an increasingly difficult time keeping up with the number of setbacks and racially-driven acts of expulsion and segregation with which the black protagonists are necessitated to deal with on a constant basis.

The process of Gilbert and, at least subconsciously, Hortense ultimately discerning the idea of a 'dream England' as exactly that, namely merely a fantasy and wishful thinking, demonstrates one of the reasons why Levy's *Small Island* can and should be referred to as a 'writing back'. By illustrating the coloured narrators' difficult journey and, at least in the former's case, the eventual realization of the near impossibility of this 'dream' ever materializing, the myth of both a far better life and a welcoming, open community awaiting members of the Mother Country and,

here, the Windrush Generation in postwar Britain is contested and attempted to be shown as not reflective of the actual situation at the time. The narrating couple's desire to settle in England due to a lack of opportunities in Jamaica is depicted as somewhat ironic as their so-called *Mother* Country has occupied a leading role in contributing to this situation evolving in its colony in the first place after centuries of exploitation for its own gain, making the choice of the term "mother" in this context a highly paradox one. Thus, the idea of Britain representing and embodying prevalently positive and exciting prospects and qualities for each and every person within its Empire, triggered by oral propaganda as is the case with Celia Langley evoking such aspirations in Gilbert and Hortense, is essentially not underlined by the depicted events. As such, not only is this image of a 'dream England' heavily questioned, but, to a certain degree, the 'imperial centre' is shown to be the architect of its own problems and that of such ghastly treatment affecting the coloured protagonists in course of *Small Island*'s narrative.

3.2.2 Signs of togetherness

Gilbert and Hortense's desire to begin a new life in the unfamiliar yet also somehow familiar space of the Mother Country has been shown to cause a rather rude awakening for the coloured protagonists and, similar to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, differences in areas such as complexion or language undoubtedly have a large part to play in specifically the married couple's position being under scrutiny from the local community. By assimilating English customs, having learned about Britain's history and geography, adapting eating habits, or perfecting a British accent, the black British characters believe to be displaying a likeness to and solidarity with their new community to whom they already believe to be broadly belonging as a part of the Mother Country.

The English tongue represents one of the most significant markers of showing affiliation and togetherness within the scope of *Small Island*, the "perfect English diction spoken by the King" (*SI*, 62) constituting a level of competence which is displayed as the standard which every person in reach of the Mother Country's grasp should aspire to, as Hortense's continuous vigour and tenacity in honing this skill underlines. As such, language has the capacity to act as an incredibly difficult obstacle for people to overcome, no matter the colour, and is thus held in very high regard by the likes of Mr. Todd who, for example, demonstrates this sentiment even towards a white, Cockney bomb victim who uses several swear words and showcases a behaviour the former deems at all times inappropriate, claiming that he would not "be using language like that" (275) even if he himself were a victim of the Blitz. The utilization of local, even colloquial, phrases, vocabulary, and pronunciation, a terminology rarely used in the West Indies due to usually more well-situated English folk being situated there, offers a way of establishing a bond to Britain and, at the same time, a feeling of inclusion; however, doing so is not always easy. Hortense serves as a fitting example here as her constant strive to make the correct choices in her usage of certain words like "sugar" and the pronunciation of its "vowels" (15; 62), as well as instances of correctly employed grammar and sentence structure, is based on the assumption that this diligence will let her appear to be no different to and in unison with the local population. This strive for the perfect accent, for instance, even goes as far as the coloured woman rejecting and speaking down to her own kin as she adopts a similarly rejective, superior mindset to that of many white British citizens when referring to her husband's own linguistic ability:

Anyone hearing Gilbert Joseph speak would know without hesitation that this man was not English. [...]. Whereas I, since arriving in this country, had determined to speak in an English manner. It was of no use to imitate the way of speaking of those about me, for too many people I encountered spoke as a Cockney would. All fine diction lost in a low-class slurring garble. No. To speak English properly as the high-class, I resolved to listen to the language at its finest. Every day my wireless was tuned to the most exemplary English in the known world. The BBC. (*SI*, 449)

As Hortense's thoughts display during her many chapters as a narrator, and even despite being forced to endure ridicule by people purposely acting as if they do not "understand" (16; 331; 455) the Jamaican woman, her resolve to emulate the highest standard of the language remains and reflects her firm belief in wanting to establish herself in England. Specifically, the usage of the term "Mother Country" (33) further illustrates how Hortense and also Gilbert feel a strong sense of belonging and filial duty towards a place which, even though they had never visited Britain beforehand, takes up an important role in their lives, providing an explanation for the former's infatuation with copying words or sayings in order to subsequently give the appearance of familiarity. However, typically colloquial English terms, which are typically drawn on in everyday situations, such as "blimey" (135), "crickey" (114), "bloody hell" (138), or even commonly utilized idioms such as "cat got your tongue" (227), convey a sense of unity to which the coloured narrators have little to no relation due to not being taught to be accustomed to such a phraseology in the West Indies, consequently either making Hortense inquire once more, misinterpret an utterance, or become understandably frustrated with both herself and the people with whom she is conversing at that moment.

Similar to *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s displaying of derogatory terminology such as "white nigger" and "white cockroach" (61) in order to humiliate and subjugate those believed to be inferior, *Small Island* contains a multitude of comparable terms resorted to in order to purposefully overemphasize the difference between a 'perfect' white community justifiably in uproar and the newly arrived, intruding immigrants as the drawing on these words' impact has the intention of further ostracizing the likes of Gilbert and Hortense. "Coon" (117), "nigger" (132), "jigaboo" (186), "darkie" (140; 316), or "coolies" (371) represent only a few of numerous slurs being utilized to spurn on bigotry and hate, being uttered for everyone to hear and thereby mark distinct differences between both camps which make the two incompatible, illustrating, even actively developing, a bond of togetherness in the unitary usage by the majority of the depicted Britons which only deepens the divide. This usage also showcases how very little has changed

between the fictional life times of Antoinette and Jane in the nineteenth century and the ones of Gilbert and Hortense in the late nineteen-forties. Additionally, by letting the temporal narration jump between the past and the present day of 1948, the novel thus illustrates that these racially and socially stigmatized insults are no recent development and constitute a commonly occurring trend as, from Queenie's experiences at the Empire Exhibition up until the postwar events, the persisting usage of such terms remains a condition which one can certainly argue to have survived up until the present day.

The ideas of heroism and sacrificing oneself for one's country are distinctively held in high regard on several occasions in *Small Island* as fighting against a foe for the sake of the Empire and, if needs be, paying the ultimate price, as Hortense believes her cousin Michael Roberts to have done next to countless other colonial troops in course of the conflict, represents a noble aspiration for a, metaphorically speaking, son or daughter of the "Mother Country" (78-80). Gilbert, for example, does not chase his ambitions of volunteering for the sake of glory or reward, but primarily for the mere reason of feeling such a strong bond to "[his]" (138) country that the young soldier is willing to do anything to keep it safe. However, while most white English veterans such as Bernard or his deceased friend Maxi become, in one way or another, idolized as heroes and are consequently considered to be exemplary citizens by their white contemporaries like Mr Todd, Gilbert and his comrades are excluded from the majority of such thanks and joyful shoulder patting; on the contrary, they are much more confronted with statements such as being able to "go home now" (196), being explicitly referred to as "colony troops" (133) rather than simply a generalizing term for all British soldiers, or just generally being hindered as much as possible in gaining a foothold in England after the end of their active duty. Gilbert's intention to study "the law" (144) acts as the prime example of this selective treatment regarding the access to occupations in the novel's postwar Britain, the application list simply not acknowledging the equal amounts of sacrifices which the Jamaican volunteers made to aid their Mother Country in its darkest hour and never being perceived as a hero.

Ultimately, while the argument can be made that numerous English citizens also had to deal with the described preferential treatment of men like Bernard for reasons of, for instance, social class, the way in which Gilbert, Hortense, and more or less any other coloured character are met, exemplifies the stance that the newly arrived black British are not allowed to be automatically

entrusted with the status or an occupation of a higher standing, completely regardless of their individual accomplishments during the war and personal sacrifices, with factors such as language or complexion also playing a decisive and incisive role in this condition being upheld at all times in the spatial and temporal setting of the novel. The fact that the creolized characters nevertheless hold on to their belief in Britain and their preference to relocate to the Mother Country for so long essentially reflects Grmelová's view of such a process having taken over a longer period, offering an explanation for the development of the prior mentioned 'dream England', but also why factors of language hold so much value for someone like Hortense.

3.3 Spatial Metaphors

3.3.1 Walls

The aforementioned endeavour of the formerly colonized people to make a life for themselves in their perceived Mother Country has, historically speaking, typically been associated with a similar development which shares a host of parallels with the original centuries-long process of colonial expansion; one refers to such (a movement) as ‘colonialism in reverse’ and, in the case of *Small Island* and the actual *Windrush Generation*, the West Indies arrivals are the ones bursting onto the scene and ‘colonizing’ lands virtually unknown to them, not the English. While the black British contingent’s advantages of and reasons for making such a life-altering decision have been touched upon above, the local community, on the other hand, visibly does not share the enthusiasm and blitheness for the former group taking up residence in their home.

Gilbert and Hortense’s movement to the heart of the Empire is, quite literally, equated to the act of “invading” (*SI*, 116), embodying the threatening metaphorical “wave of postwar immigration to the imperial ‘centers’” (*National Longing*, 47) which Timothy Brennan refers to in the context of this imagery evolving in the minds of the British Empire’s ‘inside’ after the Second World War. Almost the entirety of Nevern Street, the main setting for large parts of the narrative, are both outraged over this development and band together against these “darkies” (113) not only becoming their neighbors but also their compatriots, with Queenie forming the sole exception despite also displaying ambivalent feelings towards the subject on several occasions and referring to coloured men as “animals” (117). The hostility regarding the process of coloured folk relocating to the ‘imperial centre’ acts out in ways which see the English natives either subtly advise their colonial counterparts to say “goodbye” (454) and go back to their respective countries for their own sakes as soon as possible or, more or less, blatantly telling them that they do not belong to Britain, being underlined by calls such as “we don’t want you” (313) which can be found in similar collocations on several occasions throughout *Small Island*. The grievance on Nevern Street even goes as far as an irritated Mr Todd recounting the sentiments of several neighbors publically claiming that an occupation by the Nazis would have been a more preferred outcome than the arrival of people from the West Indies (*SI*, 117). This statement illustrates just how deep the hatred is felt against the likes of Gilbert and Hortense, especially considering the fact that a very long and bloody war just having ended and the overall attitude towards Germany

actually remaining incredibly adverse for the next decades is nevertheless not enough for the portrayed British to favour, accept, or even at least tolerate their black allies; people who had helped them win the war at a massive personal cost.

When taking the unfriendly, even belligerent, attitude of many English people showcased in course of the story into consideration, most prominently throughout the ninth chapter narrated by Queenie in which Nevern Street's thoughts on the immigrants are most prominently shared, one can perceive that the thought of invasion constitutes a major aspect and source in regard to the hostility with which Gilbert and Hortense are faced both during and after the war, particularly demonstrated by means of allowing Bernard to narrate his experiences and share his unfounded concerns. The years of constant fear of an imminent attack and occupation occurring has left its mark on the British population and the "ready, set, defend" mindset, which slowly developed during the daily Nazi bombing raids, has not yet disappeared within the novel's white community, even years after the end of the conflict. As such, the verbal and physical lashing out at and denigrating of the relocated West Indies people can be viewed as a behaviour which people such as Bernard or Mr Todd believe to be the only viable method of countering a situation believed to be an immediate threat and another invasion, thus remaining in the hope of reversing this state by expressing an overly excluding and rejective attitude. While this hostility is marginally dimmed down in England's darkest hour, both parties being briefly viewed as "all in this together" (138), as a reader, one never really gets the impression that this adversity is entirely absent at any time despite the Mother Country being actively aided by its 'colonized subjects', emphasized by the ease with which segregation is implemented in public areas such as the cinema in order to satisfy the present American soldiers; laws which are constitutional in "Alabama" (185) but not in England. Once Germany no longer poses this said threat, all these feelings of partially suppressed hatred are let loose once more and the focus is solely readjusted onto the coloured immigrants. At this point, one must note that the justification for Bernard and Mr Todd to treat the likes of Gilbert and Hortense in these ways due to intending to continue in defending their home island can never be deemed a valid explanation for the many depicted misdemeanours and acts of blatant racism directed at their "coloured brethren" (118); however, certain aspects allow them to get away with this treatment within the limits of their familiar community.

In order to counter this ‘new’ invasion, walls play a pivotal role in *Small Island* as they supply the necessary means and *excuse* to create an emotional and mental distance while being forced to be physically close to people of colour. No matter whether actual or ‘Metonymic Walls’, the utilization of such limitations allows people of the local community to sustain their denial of Britain’s colonial past, which is now catching up on them, visible in Bernard’s unwavering support and pride in the “Empire” (379) and convenient ignoring of its complicity in this current process of immigration to Britain now taking place. Thus, the idea of the metaphorical space of the all-including Mother Country, which Gilbert and Hortense believe in, is attempted to be blocked out by means of the aforementioned walls, refusing to succumb to being overrun by a threat which the white people on Nevern Street have self-proclaimed to be one. Consciously and/or unconsciously set-up borders can be perceived on numerous occasions in both the sections narrated as ‘before’ and ‘1948’ as, for instance, the newly arrived black soldiers’ forced detention within the walls of the US Army “camp” (128), the “makeshift barrier” (193) of policemen symbolically encircling and subsequently violently attacking exclusively black soldiers during the riot, not the equally troublemaking white ones, the intentionally established separation between “white” and “black [towns]” (159), and the mentioned division of the seat “rows” (187) between the two groups in the cinema all illustrate instances in which the white community has gladly allowed such walls to shape and have an impactful effect on the everyday of the consequently shackled coloured citizens within the now suddenly and, from Bernard’s point of view, reluctantly diversified community apparent during World War II.

As the method of spilling blood and firing bullets against a threat such as the Nazis can no longer be employed to counter and take care of this new invasion now embodied by the *colonial* danger in the aftermath of the war, no matter how intense the hatred is stirred up by the newly emerging circumstances caused by immigration, a part of the community thus feels inclined to resort to another way of putting a stop to this development by fully and relentlessly drawing on any means necessary drive away Gilbert and Hortense; this behaviour is where the excluding potential of ‘Metonymic Walls’ arguably becomes apparent. Due to the encountered strains of the conflict in Asia and the negative experiences with “brown people” (*SI*, 341), who were themselves necessitated to endure many hardships, Bernard has been hardened and reinforced in his fanatic belief to have “fought so people might live among their own kind”, now being prepared to go on the barricades once more in order to keep out the next potential invasion, this time taking place

“by stealth” (*SI*, 469-470). By specifically insinuating that the process of immigration is occurring prevalently due to slyness of black people rather than ever hazarding the guess that they might have been legally invited, one learns much about Bernard and the other depicted white male characters in the novel as this association demonstrates a severe anxiety and insecurity in matters concerning people of colour, thus unconsciously feeling the need to rely on any means necessary to effectively oppose or, ideally, block out this newly arisen threat.

Making life difficult for Gilbert and Hortense by, for instance, forcefully evicting them or declining simple pleasantries such as a handshake and slamming “the bloody door on [them]” (*SI*, 430; 471), Queenie’s husband has firmly established a range of preconceptions in his mind against anyone whom he presumes to be forcing their way into his house and, on a larger scale, ‘his’ country, prejudices which go beyond the mere colour of skin. Bernard is not alone in his reproachful and overgeneralizing perceptions as the following sentiment is shared not only by him but most others on Nevern Street, namely believing that the disapproval and rejection aimed at the immigrants is justified due to someone like Gilbert or his black friend Winston carrying an inherent and primal threat in them. By spreading unfounded rumours about the former West Indies residents immigrating to Britain for health benefits without even questioning the veracity of such an assertion or unhesitatingly making claims that they intend to turn England into a “jungle” and “bring down [the] neighbourhood” (*SI*, 111; 113; 117), the danger of letting this process of migration further happen is relayed among fellow compatriots in form of oral propaganda and underlines their perceived need to fight back against this self-imagined siege. The pretence of acting in the interest of one’s community is an aspect which fuels particularly Bernard to relentlessly pursue his aims in driving this new threat out of his home, not letting anyone deter him in his endeavour. Even after the touching and powerful speech he is given by Gilbert in regard to the equal amount of sacrifices for the Mother Country and the very similar position the two men find themselves in despite their varying complexion, Bernard does not let himself be deterred despite being visibly affected by the coloured veteran’s harshly but truly spoken words; a moment in which he nearly lets down his guard and consequently invigorates his perception of needing to continue his crusade of ‘walling out’ these potential invaders.

Furthermore, every kind of contact between a black man and a white woman, be it ever so brief or slight, is deemed to be a sexually motivated act which, apparently, only ever occurs due to a

tendency to lustful intentions or deviant sexual behaviour, as Bernard's sense of Gilbert only ever having "lust in his eye", as well as his calls for the latter to "get [his] filthy black hands off" (*SI*, 474; 524) Queenie after merely trying to comfort her, showcase. As a result, the white male characters are intent on minimizing interactions between white women and the Jamaican men due to perceiving people like Gilbert as carnal and ravenous beasts, consequently feeling the need to defame by animalizing them and also limiting their opportunities in their search for accommodation or occupation. By doing so, the white characters actually only mask their mentioned concerns and insecurities regarding their coloured counterparts, an uneasiness which is solely founded on preconceptions and not factual evidence, as well as condemning the black British citizens to a life on the outside of society to facilitate the comforting of their primitive phrenological understanding and male ego. After Queenie gives birth to her derogatorily referred to "impostor child" (*SI*, 508) Michael, the love child of herself and Hortense's missing cousin Michael Roberts, Bernard subsequently feels reaffirmed in his assertions of Gilbert and his 'kind' innately constituting a major threat to the existence of not only his own future with Queenie, but the community as a whole as it faces the previously stated secret invasion under their very noses.

The key to creating this general state of facing anybody, who either does not possess a light complexion or has his or her roots outside the white British community, with the above referred to hostilities and walls, is shown to come in form of sharing these sentiments from a very early age onward. *Small Island's* prologue purposefully provides the reader with the portrayal of such a situation in which an infant Queenie is already introduced and confronted with how these walls are effectively passed on from generation to generation. The white protagonist's experience at the "Empire Exhibition" (2) provides a haunting yet distinctive first indication of how preconceptions against someone in Gilbert or Hortense's shoes not only facilitates the normalization of white superiority over their coloured counterparts, but also makes the indoctrination of such ideas into the mind of the population already as children possible, only having occurred approximately a hundred years ago; examples, such as the female narrator's family voicing concerns about coloured people's frequent carrying of diseases or not naturally being physically capable of becoming civilized, highlight this process taking place in order to cement a hostile mindset towards anything associated with the detested 'colonized subject'. This practice continues to act as the status quo throughout the narrative as the vilification of the black

British, irrespective of any reasoning for such an intolerance being warranted, is driven on by means of continually exchanging and reaffirming these prior stated prejudices with and to one's fellow contemporaries within the white community, resulting in a consistently reoccurring cycle which is difficult to be broken; one with which today's society is still necessitated to deal with, at least partially, and therefore demonstrating *Small Island*'s notion of needing to 'write back' once more.

Essentially, the formerly colonized characters portrayed in Levy's novel are viewed as the personification of something threatening, enigmatic, and unpredictable which spells "nothing but trouble" (189; 469) and therefore justifies both being met with walls and the consequent effects of exclusion. Branded as undesirable regardless of any time and effort invested to adapt, the process of hindering a further invasion caused by the effects of 'colonialism in reverse' takes up one of the main priorities for *Small Island*'s white male characters and their adversity towards decent and hard-working people like Gilbert and Hortense even goes as far as their colonial brethren being ranked ahead of the danger and threat posed by Nazi Germany as a result of being driven on by their own fears and insecurities.

3.3.2 Liminal Spaces

The depicted events and journey of Gilbert and Hortense leading up to their long-yearned-for relocating to the beloved Mother Country might not see the couple arrive to the inviting and in high regard held place they had initially expected to encounter after the many famous stories with which they had grown up. Regardless, the coloured protagonists always seem to find solace in now residing where they have dreamt of and worked towards living for many years; for them, moving back to the West Indies, irrespective of the ambivalent reception and confrontation with these mentioned mentally erected barricades directed at them, never really constitutes a serious option and, in Hortense's case, is at no time ever contemplated. The aspect of return or, in other words, the aim to stay or go back to wherever one believes to be a home for oneself or others, however, is perceived in contrasting ways by the white and coloured protagonists and represents an omnipresent theme in connection with 'liminal spaces' in course of the novel. The residents of the globally acting metaphorical space embodied by the Mother Country, an area initially considered to be one of multinational inclusiveness by Gilbert and Hortense, provides ambiguous signals in regard to answering the recurring question where this stated home actually lies, most notably expressed by the mindset of Bernard in that everything has happened up until then in order for each and every person to "live among their own kind" (*SI*, 369). As a reader, one has a difficult time asserting whether or not the Jamaican protagonists will ever be able to fully arrive in England in the sense of them finding belonging on a social and personal level, even after the conclusion of the story; however, several of the novel's introduced geographical settings arguably give indications in the matter.

The Empire Exhibition takes up an important role in foreshadowing how the public perception is shaped in course of the narrative and showcases several 'colonized subjects' who are currently residing in Britain, acting as means of entertainment to the local community and not as guests. The exhibition constitutes a space of extremes as its exhibited colonial countries are made to stand in stark contrast to the far more cultured English. One is shown distorted and highly subjective depictions of degenerate and technologically impaired places within the Empire, such as "Africa", being thus shown to be in need of the grandness of Britain's technological brilliance and superiority at the time, highlighted by Queenie and her father's trip on the state-of-the-art "scenic railway" (5; 7). Though the exhibition is viewed as a fine leisure activity for an afternoon

or two, the coloured people as attractions and their primitive cultures of “jungle” and “mud huts” (5) merely constitute possessions which are “owned” (3). They are essentially supposed to make a brief appearance within the community’s space and hereafter return to their originating countries in order to once again “live amongst their own kind” (469). While it is never explicitly stated, the likelihood of some of these guests seeing their long-term future in England does not seem farfetched, given the context of the novel. The depicted British people are consequently doing their utmost to hinder any permanent relocation from happening by (over)emphasizing the insurmountable difference between their colonial counterparts and their selves by means of denigrating and animalizing these “monkey [men]” who are “not civilized [sic]” (5; 6). These events take place in the nineteen-twenties, a time where the Empire already finds itself in a state of change and decline after the very costly First World War and is slowly but gradually losing its once relentless grip around its colonies. The exhibition therefore intends to uphold a crumbling image of Empire by “freezing the past” (*Memories*, 443), as Graham Shane notes in his extensive analysis of Levy’s special setting, and reaffirming its power by showing racial supremacy; however, if one notices Queenie’s stating of the black man’s hand being “like anyone else’s” (*SI*, 6) the exact opposite effect is ultimately achieved. In this case, the colonial people’s stay in ‘liminal spaces’ thus demonstrates an expiration date, even if this development would still take many decades to be concluded.

An intriguing case for a further ‘liminal space’ can also be made for the U.S. Army base Gilbert visits during his service in the Royal Air Force. This camp is characterized as a space which appears to be firmly out of place on British soil despite the shared white complexion between both communities. While also being merely visitors in England, the American GIs are able to settle and continue their lives as if they were still residing in the U.S., a welcome and sign of inclusiveness which Gilbert and Hortense initially believe to be also awaiting them in England. This position of preferential treatment is highlighted by the fact that they are allowed to implement their own nation’s segregation laws both inside *and* outside the base, the incidents occurring in the English cinema visibly displaying the disparity in concessions and rights handed out between white and coloured guests (184). The US soldiers’ camp acts as a mere stop-gap before they are able to return to the comforts of their own country, a pleasing end to a journey between spaces for both sides as the American soldiers will happily oblige in order to escape the “[fucking] Limeys” (149), with the British community bearing similar feelings, as is shown in

the negative reactions to the U.S. Army's general behaviour during their stay in England, calling themselves "more civilized [sic]" (195). Similarly, Bernard and the Royal Air Force's expedition to India, a place which, on paper, can be considered to be a country inside the Mother Country's metaphoric family, also constitutes an example of how the former increasingly starts to feel out of place and becomes intent on returning to England as soon as physically possible, underlining his stated view that one does not belong anywhere else other than one's country of origin.

The main setting of the novel is made up by Bernard and Queenie's house on Nevern Street and, in contrast to the prior examples, this location serves as an example of a space which, on the one hand, seemingly invites the black British to settle and live out their dreams due to Queenie's hospitality, but, on the other, simultaneously conveys the message that the formers should return to where the portrayed white community believes their out-of-place colonial counterparts truly belong, being enforced by the creation of this mentioned hostile environment. The term "jungle" (113) comes up here once more and highlights the perceived ambivalence now embodied by both the street and rented flat by Gilbert, the settings now acting as, on the one hand, a beacon of hope for a developing, multicultural Mother Country and, on the other, an outrageously overpriced and exploiting expedient given Queenie's pricing of the "rent" (222). This development of increasingly non-English 'invaders' settling in the street is viewed as the end of the locals' community being solely inhabited by civilized and worthy English people. Despite Gilbert and Hortense's best efforts to establish themselves in a place to which they have quite literally been doubly invited by both the British government and one of its people, the same eventual fate awaits them which has befallen others before them coming through Nevern Street, the Jewish-German refugee and the Cockney family exemplifying this trend of foreign people being disparaged as out of place due to their origins or social class, being of a different "kind" (267; 269-270) even when possessing a light complexion and/or the same citizenship. Essentially, Gilbert and Hortense remain among the unwanted as long as the white community considers them to be deserving of such a title, making a potential ending to their journey through 'liminality' nearly impossible. If a certain person embodies characteristics associated with ambivalence or difference within the boundaries of the novel's white community, this individual is expected to return to wherever he or she initially originated from sooner rather than later, ending his or her journey through this specific 'liminal space'.

Taking these previous examples of ambivalent spaces and the general expectancy for the likes of Gilbert and Hortense to ultimately have to leave Britain and return to the West Indies into consideration, the question arises how their not complying with the wish for departure and, instead, perceiving their new destination nevertheless as home affects the coloured protagonists' ability to establish belonging in the eyes of *Small Island*'s portrayed white community.

While one should always be careful not to equate one of the author's utilized characters to be purposefully embodying a theoretical concept, Gilbert and Hortense's unlikely position in the novel's narrative nevertheless bears a significant resemblance with the in-betweenness which comes with residing in the 'Third Space'. The coloured couple's very nature embodies an ambivalence, which is not only intensified by their relocation to Britain, but further complicates their settling-in process. The two characters' origins see Hortense's incisive class consciousness, continuous compulsion to further her affiliation with anything deemed to be English, and talk of being "the colour of warm honey" (*SI*, 38) implicate that she might possibly possess both British and Jamaican ancestors, thus providing an explanation for her strong and seemingly suddenly developed affinity towards England and "the way the English live" (*SI*, 22). A similar situation applies to her husband whose backstory gives a detailed and explicit account of him being the son of a white Jew and black mother, thus finding himself, on a certain level, in a comparable position to the one of his later adoptive son, the half-caste Michael. As a result, this background illustrates how he is initially deemed to consider relocating to England as his "ambition" or "mission" (98) by his wife, who shares the same desire.

In course of the narrative, the coloured protagonists in *Small Island* gradually find themselves in a situation in which they are no longer considered to be purely Jamaicans, but also not entirely British, either. The two are heavily influenced by the Empire's teaching, Hortense's fascination with the "Wordsworth" (*SI*, 43) poem and blazing around her ability in reciting it correctly, as well as her obsession with anything signifying how British she really is, as her strive for a perfect English accent and attempts to master "the fountain of [Britain's] 'curriculum'" (*SI*, 86) all demonstrating this obsession. Furthermore, Gilbert's pride in wearing his RAF "colours" (*SI*, 125-126) offers an example in which he showcases a similar desire; yet, at the same time, Gilbert's love for the traditional dishes from his childhood or his love for the warmth of Jamaica's climate accompany and never leave him throughout the story. Consequently, the

coloured protagonists are both never really perceived as fully belonging to either of Britain and Jamaica, most notably underlined by Elwood's accusation that "you may look like one of us but not 'in gon' change the fact your daddy is a white man" (209) while speaking to his cousin Gilbert. This sentiment is also applicable to Hortense's position as her ambivalence in origins and also negative attitude towards her fellow people have left scorched earth back home, particularly visible in her relationship to Cecilia, enticing the female narrator to proceed in her quest to reach Britain.

A further example of an ambivalent character being necessitated to, in this case more figuratively, return can be observed in form of Queenie's illegitimate baby. The interracial infant, referred to as "half-caste" (522), epitomizes the previously stated label of an individual with a colonial background who is never able to escape the label of ever being more than "*almost the same, but not quite*" (*Location*, 122, emphasis of author), the possessing of an English mother ultimately not constituting enough for the baby to be viewed as capable of growing up in a white household at the time, therefore necessitating this, in the community's eyes, racial abomination to return to people to whom it, in Queenie's perception, truly belongs. However, initially, even his later adoptive parents are reluctant to take care of the child despite Queenie's excessive pleading for it to be among "its own kind" (521-522), the woman now echoing Bernard's prior similarly formulated sentiment though, arguably, for far less malignant reasons and, from her perspective, in the interest of baby Michael. A possible explanation for the child being rejected by not only the white but also the black British parts of the community is offered by Gilroy who states that "[when] national and ethnic identities are represented and projected as pure, exposure to difference threatens them with dilution and compromises their prized purities with the ever-present possibility of contamination" (*Against Race*, 105). Thus, the sentiment is born that the 'half-caste' needs to strictly grow up having solely coloured parents, the baby Michael being therefore ostracized and having no choice but to 'return' to people who are believed to be his true family purely on the basis of skin colour. Baby Michael consequently does not only embody the threatening possibility of 'dilution', but also constitutes a marker of inherent in-betweenness which would further highlight the difference between the pair of Gilbert and Hortense and the relentless white community spearheaded by the likes of Mr Todd and Bernard, thus explaining the former two's hesitance at first. Ultimately, the coloured protagonists reluctantly accept the responsibility as the otherwise even more difficult life ahead for the child

convinces them to admit him into their own familial community, an action unthinkable for the depicted white characters.

The juxtaposition of Gilbert and Hortense's unwavering desire to remain in England due to the thought of returning to Jamaica being impossible for them, regardless of any occasional doubts, and the wish of nearly all depicted white characters for the former two's 'kind' to leave reflects the in-between space in which the married couple consequently find themselves trapped and encircled. One can, however, observe a key difference between the two coloured narrators. Hortense either never wants to openly admit or simply cannot bring herself to fully grasp the severity of her position, as well as the purposeful contempt with which she is confronted. Her pride in and conviction of being able to be considered a Briton persists until the very end of the novel and makes Hortense oblivious to the inherent ambivalence of her current position, the reluctance to believe that her origins and/or complexion could ever have to do with the rejection at the job office by answering with "nothing" (*SI*, 458) to her husband's inquiry about her meeting serving as the prime example. Gilbert, however, begins to increasingly realize the precarious position which he is forced to take up as the airman gradually becomes aware of the mentioned metaphorical "lion's mouth" (326) cutting into his very self and hindering him from ever really fully arriving in Britain on a communal and social level. A subsequent struggle emerges within the Jamaican; on the one hand, he attempts to come to terms with this abject role in order to be able to stay in his Mother Country and not return to the West Indies, perceptible when the man even goes as far as that he "[drops his] head" (317) to the abusive English workers and unwillingly embraces his role as the inferior 'colonized subject' for the sake of not standing out in a negative way, and, on the other, he starts to develop the mentioned arising doubts in regard to his choice of relocating to Europe. However, despite being disappointed in England and its people, Gilbert never seriously contemplates moving back to Jamaica as the male narrator merely reminisces about a return to his birthplace.

Overall, one notices a familiar situation here as the difficult position of being confronted with hostility for reasons which cannot be influenced, both Gilbert and Hortense being born into this state, also affects Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*; however, the eventual results evidentially differ in the extreme. While the Creole narrator eventually sees no other choice than to resort to self-immolation to escape her isolation and thus her inherent ambivalence, *Small Island's*

coloured protagonists might be forced into their position of in-betweenness for the remainder of their lives, but are nevertheless capable of continuing their fight to achieve an equality between themselves and the rest of the community in theory. Also, the latter two *choose* to relocate to Britain on their own terms, always potentially possessing the option to return to Jamaica, even if they do not contemplate this option. For Rhys' female protagonist, a return never constitutes an actual possibility due to her husband not sharing the same kind of ambivalence in comparison to Gilbert, the character of Antoinette therefore in some ways mirroring the impossibility of such a movement as is the case with the 'half-caste' child, who also does not have a say in his 'return'. However, both novels' transnational protagonists share, can be perceived in that all three of them carry the burden of essentially not being able to change or adjust their positions in the 'Third Space' and establish a settled sense of belonging as long as people like Bernard or Rochester, continue to harbour the mindset that the formers represent uncivilized, invading, and threatening foes who pose an everlasting threat to their white community.

3.4 The question of identity or ‘non-identity’

3.4.1 “Who the bloody hell are you” – Gilbert’s journey to belonging?

Identity represents one of several key aspects Marilyn Herbert addresses in her reader focusing on *Small Island* and in elaborating on the topic she notes that one is already subtly hinted to how the identification process is to constantly see changes occur for the depicted characters by alluding to dimensions of differing “size” (*Bookclub*, 36) between the two main settings of Britain and Jamaica in the novel’s title. Continuing in that sense and constituting one of the most iconic and at the same time powerful lines from Levy’s novel, Gilbert’s gradual realization of the British community’s true colours sees the former airman begin to realize the cracks in the image of the loving Mother Country for the very first time at that point. As such, his situation makes him eventually pose the question “who the bloody hell are you” (*SI*, 139) to himself as a result of the unexpectedly cold welcome with which the English community receive its colonial guests; one he never thought he would ever have to ask himself. This particular question goes on to play a pivotal role in Gilbert’s journey towards establishing (or not being able to establish) who he is and where he belongs as a coloured man living in the twentieth century. The concern for retaining a formerly believed to be stable identity is increasingly omnipresent and on Gilbert’s mind in course of the narrative as he attempts to find an answer to his queries, consequently illustrating the power and impact which his dear Mother Country’s negligence has on his life and that of all those others viewed as merely a ‘colonized subject’ by their hosts.

Staying with the events occurring shortly before and after the mentioned quote above, the atmosphere perceptible in this pivotal twelfth chapter is gradually built up by a narrating Gilbert in a way which does not only convey a sense of confusion, but, first and foremost, a feeling of an incomprehensible incredibility for men whose image of the world, as they know it, is suddenly and unexpectedly shattered into a thousand pieces. The description of his first days and weeks in England as a black soldier gives an initial indication of what turns out to be a common and continuous theme for the remainder of the narrative as Gilbert and the other volunteers’ belief in the Mother Country is gradually chipped away by a wide array of unfounded, individuality-restricting constraints. The outlawing of “sucking [their] teeth”, a simple yet traditional action which is nevertheless ascribed an immense importance for Jamaicans due to it representing a common and popular conventionality back in the West Indies, might initially seem a weird

choice; however, by the English hosts titling this mundane bodily act one of “insubordination” (*SI*, 135), the floodgates to the alienation of Gilbert and his fellow countrymen are opened for the very first time in *Small Island*. This development of banning characteristic traits is consequently made to seem like a natural and necessary step due to putting the blame on the colonial troops themselves for having to resort to these drastic measures as wave after wave of impediments are directed Gilbert’s way and not only go on to affect his daily life, but also his perception of who he is and what he is worth to the Mother Country. As incomprehensible as the dog’s piercing glances are for the helpless “gecko” (*SI*, 136), to make use of Gilbert’s own allusion for his situation, the novel’s coloured characters’ involuntary referral to as an “awkward squad” (*SI*, 135) fundamentally underlines how their arrival and belief in being British citizens is met with outrage, rejection, and debasement while they are left baffled and have no idea why they are being constantly confronted with these reactions. In short, while one tries to restrict Gilbert and his black comrades in their acts of self-expression as Jamaicans, at the same time, they are simultaneously just as much feverishly denied the chance to ‘position’ themselves as regular British citizens; something specifically Gilbert originally identifies with and perceives himself as being.

Unprecedented in the novel up until this point, Gilbert’s decision to share his shock about the white community’s missing “welcome” (*SI*, 134-42) for their black counterparts’ arrival in England, as well as its reluctance to find out who they are and where they come from, not only serves as the starting point for the male protagonist’s gradual wake-up call, but it also allows the reader to obtain a better idea how the Mother Country is able to function as both this metonymy of a maternal embodiment and a machinery of exclusion. The coloured narrator once again resorts to the ideal of Britain constituting this stated mother figure for him as a man from the West Indies, with the role of the “daddy”, who has been telling Gilbert about the “refined, mannerly, and cultured” (*SI*, 139) nature of his said mother all his life, seemingly being occupied by Jamaica due to the Caribbean island being present and comforting the sons and daughters with an explanation for Britain’s absence in the West Indies. These allusions of parental figures appear to be acting as a fundamental source of and reason for upholding a belief in the Empire for Gilbert and his compatriots, providing them with the necessary vigour to continue to be its subjects from afar and possibly even filling the void left by colonialism in an attempt to sooth the pain of its still lasting repercussions, as well as allowing the lob-sided power dynamics between

the two countries to be sustained indefinitely. This loyalty for the Mother Country may have been purposefully indoctrinated in the minds of the colonial people who now attempt to move closer to their metaphorical mater as a result of its “calling” (*SI*, 98) in a time of dire need, an unwelcome development for Britain which should however not come as a surprise after the centuries-long schooling of this idea. Now, Gilbert has essentially begun to come to the realization that this love, which he has held for one of the most instrumental figures in his life, is ultimately not reciprocated, thus beginning to refer to this “Mother” as “stinking cantankerous hag” who is not even capable of giving something as simple as a “smile” or a “welcome” (*SI*, 139) to its invariably loyal children. This outburst not only marks the beginning of the end for Gilbert’s formerly unwavering faith in the veracity of this metonymy, but also leaves the coloured characters in an even more difficult position in their ‘formation’ of identity due to losing such an influential part in who they perceived themselves to be.

Even with the first seeds of doubt being sown during the war, Gilbert initially continues to hold the view that he is still just as much a member of the British Empire as any other person, ignoring his visible difference in complexion and the previously stated drawbacks of the Mother Country. One could even argue that, blinded with the aforementioned better life which a move to a place such as a ‘dream England’ promises, Gilbert chooses the, to him, unknown country of his biological father over his own, well-known birthplace, partially turning his back on Jamaica at the time which sees a several decades-long strive towards independence begin for the island, as Elwood so emphatically states in his futile efforts to sway his cousin into fighting against their English oppressors for “[an] independent Jamaica” (*SI*, 208). At first, Gilbert believes to be acting as any other Briton would by volunteering for the war, not hesitating to aid his beloved Mother Country and disregarding the prior rejection of coloured volunteers like his brother Lester, who was declined for not being of “pure English descent” (*SI*, 131). This close affiliation to the Empire becomes particularly visible in course of one of the most curious conversations in *Small Island* as the male protagonist attempts to explain to two black U.S. soldiers, which he picks up on his journey back to base, how he as a coloured person from Jamaica can perceive “England [as his] Mother Country” (*SI*, 156) in a predominantly white community. Despite the two Americans’ disbelief and inability to grasp how such a situation could ever possibly unfold for someone originally stemming from somewhere as far away as the West Indies, Gilbert’s dedication towards Britain never falters during World War II and he even decides to make his

stay on the island a permanent one after the conclusion of the conflict. Vestiges of doubts remain, nevertheless, as the uncertainty whether or not he is well and truly included here is not enough to deter the coloured protagonist from returning to England, yet the ambivalent, partially hostile reception has made him slightly wary.

Gilbert's search for an answer to the question "who the bloody hell are you" remains omnipresent and reaches its climax following his return to Britain after the war as his job hunt eventually ends in the employment as a postman; however, the combination of all the difficulties he was forced to experience before being afforded the opportunity to return and, now back in England, the continual and relentless abuse, which he is necessitated to endure at the hands of his white coworkers due to taking up work which "decent Englishmen" (*SI*, 318) should be entitled to, is beginning to affect a distraught narrator who cannot comprehend where all this despise and hate is coming from after having helped save his Mother Country. Gilbert's lowest point in *Small Island* is portrayed in a way which affects the reader on a highly emotional level as both his account of being rejected for several positions prior due to ludicrous reasoning, which he ultimately realizes can be led back to his complexion and colonial origins, and the now ensuing racial abuse being thrown at him at the hands of these stated English employees results in utter despair. These men, apparently fellow Britons, taunt him unprovoked with terms such as "[fucking] wog" (*SI*, 317), treat him like dirt, and refuse to help him, with one of them even going as far as physically attacking Gilbert despite the veteran only attempting to do his job; ultimately, he is unable to defend himself or fight back and is forced to give in to the communal pressure.

Come, let us face it, I could have just blown on him to push him to the ground. But if I was even to friendly tweak this man's cheek, or matey pat his back, I knew I would lose my job. Three white men looking on would have the story – the day the darkie, unprovoked, attacked this nice gentleman. Savages, they would say. And all would agree, we must never employ any more of these coons: they are trouble – more trouble than they are worth. What else could this Jamaican man do? I dropped my head. (*SI*, 317)

As a reader, one cannot but feel the immense, palpable pain Gilbert is necessitated to endure in this sequence as all seems lost for the male protagonist; his will has been broken and the 'metonymic walls' of the English are weighing down on him to such an extent that the former even contemplates giving up entirely, with whatever consequences this decision would have. The portrayals of events such as this particular one of abuse represents one of the huge qualities that

really does distinguish Levy as a writer and is the reason why scholars like David James decided to make her utilization of language the focal point of his study on *Small Island*'s ability to entice its reader. By means of the author's employed narratological strategy, she succeeds in "[vivifying] this scene of displacement" (*Immediacy*, 59) in such a tangible way that oneself feels relocated to the moment of this agonizing breakdown and the burning hatred aimed towards Gilbert. As a result of these supposed white 'compatriots' having no quarrel with resorting to the most drastic of measures in order to verbally denigrate immigrants through the formers' racial slurs, the immediate effect results in Gilbert becoming severely affected by their words to the extent that he himself claims to be close to believing his oppressors to be "talking sense" and that "there was indeed something wrong with [him]" (*SI*, 312; 313). Essentially, the Jamaican begins to reluctantly harbour and accept the thought of him embodying an inferiority in his mind due to all these pointed out differences to the rest of the community, the accumulation of all these instances becoming simply too much for Gilbert to handle and having a far greater impact on him than these English workers could ever fathom.

The thought of residing in a loving Mother Country therefore appears to be one which not only proceeds to be doubted but constitutes a belief which is slowly being dismantled within Gilbert's mind. The coloured protagonist's sense of belonging to Britain starts to be challenged by he himself more frequently, openly admitting to possibly having been wrong to almost entirely discard his feelings for his birthplace so blindly and rashly, now "[longing] to be once more in Jamaica" (*SI*, 314) and, from this point forward, no longer explicitly referring to himself as primarily British as he did with the two American GIs. Any negative emotions Gilbert once had for his West Indies birthplace seem to have been pushed aside as the remaining hope of still being able to arrive in the initially expected 'dream-England' is exchanged with feelings of uncertainty, distress and hesitation. "Stay in Jamaica" are some of the opening words which Gilbert utters in chapter thirty-two as he remembers one of his final conversations with his cousin before relocating to Britain, acting as an indication of just how large his disappointment has become and arguably even as one of several signs of a developing melancholia, referring to and acknowledging himself as a "joke" (*SI*, 325) due to his prior confidence in Britain, a sentiment which many members of the Windrush Generation will have presumably shared when having made similar experiences. A genuine act of kindness performed by an unknown, elderly women, however, provides a distraught Gilbert with a source of comfort and unadulterated

“salvation” (328) at this crucial breaking point in the novel as the sympathetic offering of sweets demonstrates a spark of empathy that not only rescues the coloured protagonist from the acceptance of this imposed position of inferiority and the Mother Country’s failure to hold its former promise of “[Helping] Those Who Helped” (99), but simultaneously serves as a lifeline for him, even a light at the end of the tunnel, in this postwar Britain, a place in which the coloured narrator would *still* so desperately like to settle in until the very end of the narrative.

Although Gilbert demonstrates his affection towards a Britain which he had always idolized for large parts of the novel, one must note that the male narrator nevertheless never stops referring to himself as a Jamaican, even during the previously stated initial period when Britain takes up a central role in his life, a preference which clearly distinguishes him from the ardent attempts of his wife Hortense to cut herself off from such affiliation. The former airman’s acknowledging of common traits and even, for him, harmless stereotypes associated with West Indies men, be it about his and his compatriot’s supposedly being the “undisputed master” (*SI*, 24) at curiosity, his joking around about Jamaicans possessing a healthy sex drive, or him making a joke regarding “darkie postmen [...] always getting lost” (*SI*, 500), all illustrate how Gilbert nevertheless continues to refer to himself as a proud Jamaican next to being (primarily) a member of the global British community. Whether directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, this continual affiliation with both communities further exemplifies how next to his self-stated perception of being British he nevertheless does not attempt to conceal his Jamaican roots, arguably also making him prone to, on the one hand, having to repeatedly pose the question “who the bloody hell [he is]” (139) due to continuing to be unsure of his true sentiments and, on the other, involuntarily inviting pressure from people such as Bernard and Mr Todd who perceive his persisting and publically admitted in-betweenness as a genuine threat.

Consequently, Gilbert’s intentions to establish a connection to the narrative’s depicted British community, a group to whom he believes Jamaicans to be a firm part of, renders him a grave threat to English folk protesting this duality and thus leads to them imposing the question “who the bloody hell are you” on the black protagonist on a daily basis. Enabling people like Gilbert, who are characterized by ambivalence, to untroubledly develop and uphold his double affiliation makes the coloured narrator an easy target for the likes of Bernard and Mr Todd who are vehemently opposed to such a self-perception, consequently reverting to the mentioned abuse,

which the Jamaican is necessitated to endure, and the white male characters doing their utmost to not let the former blend in and settle. Gilbert's arising ambiguous feelings towards the Mother Country, and subsequently also towards his own sense of belonging to the Empire, thus come as no surprise as he is condemned to a space where he is forced to continually question his decision of relocating to England while nevertheless having very few options, a return to Jamaica being never seriously contemplated. Of the two coloured protagonists, Gilbert can therefore be described as the most likely to be facing and struggling with a situation which, in some ways, relates and has some similarities to Antoinette's position of 'non-identity', but, ultimately, the male protagonist's beginning re-affiliation with Jamaica somewhat saves him from a fate as is the case with *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s female narrator. Nevertheless, taking Hall's idea of 'transformation' regarding one's identity into account, one can see that Gilbert's back and forth between the lines of attempting to find belonging and also answering the question "who the bloody hell are you" ultimately ends in an uncertain personal future, with his faith in the community waning at the conclusion of *Small Island*.

3.4.2 Hortense's determination to fulfill her British "destiny"

Hortense's arrival and attempts at settling in Britain's community may see her also be confronted with a hostile 'welcoming' committee, yet the way with which the female narrator deals with this particular reception and crude behaviour differs substantially to the handling of this situation by her husband. The woman's determination in succeeding in the process of establishing and then upholding a genuine relationship to the beloved Mother Country not only demonstrates Hortense's belief in Britain constituting a significant part of her "destiny" (*SI*, 100; 226), but, additionally, also showcases an unwavering determination to perceive herself as British before anything else. Rather than letting her ambivalence define her life, Hortense attempts to write her own story and her drive to settle in England revolves a great deal around the aspirations to be one of the "white women whose superiority encircled them like an aureole" (*SI*, 69). By doing so, the female protagonist leaves out no opportunity to 'position' herself as a like-minded spirit among the British community and to emulate her white counterparts in any way possible while simultaneously upholding the importance of skin colour being decisive in identity formation; an act which normally almost exclusively impedes this process for characters with colonial roots.

While Hortense does share Gilbert's habit of, at least initially, far more frequently referring to himself as British rather than Jamaican, the woman, in contrast to the male protagonist's remaining bond to the Caribbean island, is deeply unhappy with her colonial roots. This aversion acts out in the woman letting no opportunity go by to showcase a dislike for her colonial compatriots and roots. Hortense's contempt and even detestation of, for instance, the Anderson family, with which she stays briefly during her education, and the native children, which she teaches at a local Jamaican school, are exemplified in her referring to these coloured people as "idiots", "savages", and/or "boorish" (*SI*, 68; 84; 87). The woman's hostile and differing mindset is further underlined and put into perspective by an apparent favouritism which she publically showcases in her differing treatment of pupils as an animosity towards each and every coloured child reflects her previously stated disdain for Jamaicans; however, Hortense exempts one child who possesses a "fair-skinned" complexion and, therefore, is automatically given the benefit of the doubt by being labelled as "trustworthy" (*SI*, 68) in her mind without any factual evidence backing up her assertion. In this example and many more that follow in the novel, Hortense essentially allows skin colour to define how she views her contemporaries and, in contrast to her

husband's initial blindness to and later harsh realization of the importance of this factor, the ambitious woman, on the other hand, is at all times "hyper-aware" (*You're black*, 203) of it and even strengthens this racially driven mindset, as Mini McMann also concludes in his paper on a similar subject concerning the contrasting of *Small Island*. However, Hortense simply does not perceive that she belongs to this native category and therefore does not identify with Gilbert and the others, endorsing the significance of colour in her own forming of identity as a consequence of believing to be far more similar to the white British due to her slightly lighter complexion compared to the other darker West Indians.

Distancing herself from her black contemporaries such as Kenneth or even Gilbert, Hortense's severe aversion towards Jamaica becomes increasingly apparent even before her relocating to Britain as her back story climaxes when the female narrator tells the reader about her betraying of Celia, in order to take her place alongside Gilbert to Britain. She does so with a natural ease, without compassion, and narrates as if the outcome of the situation were not her fault but rather that of Cecilia as a result of her black friend possessing a typically mad mother. Any remorse is either non-existent or intentionally suppressed by the thought of a new life in a place where Hortense sees herself as belonging and, essentially, constituting a part of her "destiny" (*SI*, 226). As such, the female protagonist seems to, superficially, enjoy a far steadier sense of self-definition as she believes to know exactly who she is and where she belongs throughout *Small Island*, letting outside influences customarily not deter her in her endeavour to reach and establish herself in the believed-to-be 'dream England'.

Connecting with the Mother Country is shown to be constantly on Hortense's mind as the woman has set herself the objective to actively shape each and every area of her life in a way which makes the coloured narrator appear inherently British, continually posing the question to herself and conveying the sentiment to those around her whether or not "[this is] the way the English live" (22). The female immigrant works tirelessly towards maintaining her self-perceived resemblance, if not even parity with the local white inhabitants, as none of *Small Island*'s other characters embodies such sheer will and conviction to become one with the British community as Hortense does, the woman having no quarrel with dedicating the majority of her days to consistently furthering this intended image, even when encountering both an entirely

different space to the prior believed utopian 'dream England' and the mentioned stern resistance from people such as Bernard, Queenie, or the women at the job office.

Hortense's many acts of adopting certain behaviours prominent in the Mother Country surmount to a situation in which she slowly but surely begins to, from her personal perspective, succeed in shedding her ambivalence; attempting to cook "chips" (*SI*, 322-323) the exact way the English do, imitating a, to her, incomprehensible sense of humour by laughing about jokes she does not even understand or frequently emulating a "perfect English diction" and overemphasizing words to achieve a respectable British "accent" (*SI*, 13; 16; 62). The coloured protagonist's tireless endeavours to live up to her own high expectations are attempted to be shown publically through her actions in order for everyone within the community to clearly see how Hortense's mentioned self-perception has become one which, more or less, solely affiliates herself with Britain. In contrast, while her husband also initially tries to blend in in regard to certain areas, Gilbert attempts are far less in number and intensity as they gradually subside due to the aforementioned resistance he is consequently confronted with; in addition, his identification with the Mother Country is not considered to be a hindrance by himself, continuing to enjoy and prefer Jamaican food like "cow-foot stew" or "curried shrimp" (*SI*, 125) to that of the British. In the cases in which the RAF volunteer does imitate certain traits or things from his new community over Jamaica, Gilbert does so primarily in areas which one can determine as being relatable for a person living in a country characterized by change and a lack of opportunities at the time, meaning the aforementioned endeavour of the coloured airman to immediately settle in England by finding accommodation and work in order to pay bills and taxes like any other Briton would. While Hortense also aims to integrate quickly, she does not do so with the same intention to nevertheless still be aware of her black heritage as her husband.

Despite Hortense's best attempts to become one with the white community and solidify her sense of belonging to Britain, the woman, just like her husband, is never capable of fully swaying the locals to see her in the same light as she does herself. The female narrator is never able to fully rid herself of the remaining Jamaican elements which make up part of her identity, ones she so desperately tries to conceal. Hortense's continuous reverting back into a creolized variant of English when speaking to her husband demonstrates and highlights this difficulty, as sentences such as "[the] ones you busy making so nice for me you forget to come to the dock" (20)

illustrate in comparison to her discussions with English people or ones she regards as worthy. As such, the result of Hortense's desperate tendency to subconsciously revert to acts of imitation thus shares several parallels to Bhabha's idea of how 'mimicry' operates as her intentions to blend in with the community ultimately only leads to strengthening the beliefs of adversaries of immigration such as Bernard regarding the need for a stricter division between white and black. This development in immigration goes on to serve as reason enough for the British characters to be even more careful when dealing with people possessing gradually more similarities to their selves as Hortense increasingly does, for example in matters of her education to become a teacher. Bernard's assertion in regard to the coloured protagonists not trying "to blend" (467) despite seeing them well dressed on Nevern Street, the couple attempting the exact thing which the white Englishman alleges them of not doing, thus downplaying and denying their endeavours of integration into society, illustrates how hostile people like Bernard or Mr Todd automatically reject their colonial counterparts' identification with Britain, taking up the option of alienating them as a more viable solution for their postwar future than genuinely delivering any justifications for the many acts of hostility directed at Gilbert and Hortense in course of the narrative. The thought process behind this decision to exclude and reject the coloured protagonists can thus be led back to Bernard or Mr Todd believing that their actions might entice these black individuals to return to Jamaica rather than staying.

While the negative treatment of immigrants eventually succeeds in partially breaking Gilbert's spirit and his referral to himself as being primarily British, this hostile stance is nevertheless unable to make his wife Hortense change her belief in knowing where she belongs, never being successful in making her succumb to the pressure and restrictions of hindrances set by the community. Though the coloured teacher does implicitly give the impression that she is gradually starting to question her initial image of a perfect 'dream England', one cannot tell whether or not this trend will or would continue after the ending set by the narrative. Hortense's inner strength and iron will to make a better life for herself, even after encountering all the many humiliations and attempts to break her spirit, leaves the door open for the development of either scenario, meaning that she may at one point seek to escape her placement on the fringes, being in-between the lines of colonizer and colonized groupings, or she could continue to go down the same path by possibly endlessly striving for belonging in a British community which, at that time, still had a very long way to go before ever genuinely achieving an environment similar to

the contemporary one, one which still struggles with such problems today. In any case, the woman has been confronted with the very worst side of England and Hortense's ambitions to turn her new accommodation provided by Winston into a house worthy of the Mother Country at the end of the novel illustrates her continuous will to succeed in a country she has, as previously stated, deemed to be her "destiny" (100; 226), making a fate of constant uncertainty regarding her belonging far less likely. Ultimately, one can therefore certainly argue that the woman does not show any genuine signs of her encountered experiences having a lasting impact on her self-perception and most certainly does not seem to have led to her backing down anytime soon as the female protagonist continues to possess a far more stable sense of belonging and identity despite her ambivalent position within a place such as the 'Third Space' than the likes of Gilbert or *Wide Sargasso Sea's* Antoinette who are left in a position of either partial or complete 'non-identity', respectively.

Conclusion

Analyzing two novels such as Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, which both so masterfully portray the path of trial and tribulation that dealing with issues of belonging and identity so commonly entails for people characterized by ambivalence, was never expected to be in any way an easy endeavour. The challenge to form a permanently stable sense of identification is in itself a considerable, if not nearly impossible, task depending on who one asks, in particular for creolized characters such as Antoinette, Gilbert, and Hortense; however, once the notion of community also enters the fray, the complexity of the situation, at least in the case of the two novels, takes on an entirely new dimension. The desire to belong to a group constitutes a natural human reaction to a position in which one feels out of place, not to say lost. Yet, whether or not this aspiration is ever enough for a person situated in-between communities to move through all the space(s) necessary in order to ultimately end up on the 'right' side of the imposed boundaries is a different matter entirely.

Due to the contemporariness regarding the recent tendency to erect walls and thereby 'solve' the problem of often formerly colonized people increasingly relocating to a, for them, completely unknown country, with Britain ingloriously leading the way in this respect over the past decades and centuries, the need to address the omnipresence of exclusion and fearmongering, which has developed in addition to the attempts to freeze these people out, undoubtedly spurred on the writing of this paper. This Master thesis's research question therefore initially set out to inquire and ascertain how the aspect of community, such as the one in Anderson's conceptualization of the term, impacts the creolized protagonists in Rhys and Levy's novels, particularly when they come into contact with walls. Furthermore, the hypothesis was put forward that the perceived communities and their respectively enforced boundaries would go on to play a pivotal role in the creolized characters' identity formation. As of this conclusion, I believe to be now capable of asserting that, while the research question has been answered, the hypothesis has only been in part proven to be the case for *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Small Island*, as will be elaborated on shortly.

All three of Antoinette, Gilbert, and Hortense find themselves in a situation which has previously been described as being positioned in an in-between communities area such as Bhabha's 'Third Space' as, no matter the outcomes of their individual stories, they are all necessitated to proceed

going down a path which is marked by the constant battle to find a sense of belonging in a group or groups of people which do not share the same sentiments in regard to facilitating their inclusion. Exclusion frequently takes place for reasons which lead back to the perception of the novels' colonial characters possessing a mixture of ambivalent, multiracial roots which is reflected in their individual skin colours, ancestries, and/or colonial birth places. Allowing such aspects to have a bearing on whether or not one deems a person to be of one's own can and, as one is able to see in the novels, does have the capacity to have severe repercussions in the process of an affected human being's identity formation. This effect raised the question whether or not the three creolized characters mentioned above could thus ever be considered to be a genuine part of the depicted Jamaican or English communities, especially given the seeming impossibility of overcoming these wall-like reasons which would be hindering them from settling.

For Hortense, *Small Island*'s depicted British community imposes itself on the coloured woman already immanently after her arrival in England, thereby making an attempt to deter her from permanently settling in and affiliating herself with Britain. This treatment, however, does not seem to affect, deter, or impact her in the same oppressive way which manages to eventually see her husband become (partially) subdued at the hands of the white population and Antoinette become hostage to being locked away in her 'Third Space'-shaped hell at Rochester's mansion. One must note that Hortense *is* somewhat shook after the racially driven incident at the job agency, causing a slight flicker of disillusionment in the aftermath. However, ultimately, these factors are not enough to change her attitude and drive or impact her long-term relation to the British community despite its numerous attempts to achieve the opposite. While Hortense and Antoinette do embody similarly alienated figures due to their uncanny resemblances to the English in form of clothing, manners, language usage, and similar areas, in contrast to the latter, the former enjoys far more freedom in her actions, always holding on and never letting go to a degree of an agency which Antoinette does not, and never did, have the opportunity of possessing, regardless of complexion. Despite also finding herself on the receiving end of racially-enticed abuse and having to deal with unfounded preconceptions, Hortense stands firm throughout and successfully holds off the pressure coming from an 'inside' community which literally wishes to see her pack her bags. As such, while one can argue that the ambitious woman does seem to have a tenuous connection with her birthplace and thus can be viewed as

having to deal with feelings of disconnection towards her birthplace of Jamaica, Hortense is perfectly aware from start to finish where she sees herself, namely among the ranks of the Mother Country. While her embodied ambivalence in ancestry results in people like Bernard viewing her as firmly placed in the in-betweeness of the 'Third Space, Hortense does not hesitate to continually judge herself to be an important and unambiguous part of British civilization.

Gilbert, on the other hand, can be perceived as being closer situated to Antoinette, at least in regard to the question whether or not he is defined by 'non-identity', as he also eventually loses faith in ever being able to belong to either of the white and black communities. Essentially, however, claiming that the male protagonist's story ends in such a destructive position, as has been established to be the case for Antoinette in course of the chapter devoted to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, would most probably be a wrong assertion or, at the very least, a half-truth. No matter how often the likes of Bernard or his work colleagues attempt to push Gilbert onto the 'outside' of their community with racist antics and acts of physical violence, the former airman, geographically speaking, remains where he is. Mentally, the creolized protagonist has been driven to a state of constant doubt, not helped by his cousin Elwood symbolic throwing him out of Jamaica by claiming the former not to be truly from the West Indies due to his white ancestry and intentions to also belong to British society. Dealing with these mentioned issues of non-belonging and being seen as neither Jamaican nor British as a consequence of leaving the one island and being a foreigner in the other, Gilbert does nevertheless hold on to the communality connecting him with his fellow black immigrants present in England, therefore leaving him in a difficult position yet not as nihilistic one as Antoinette. In addition, *Small Island's* coloured narrators do also have the advantage of having each other to depend on, even if the two initially do not get along and only after Hortense begins to accept her husband for who he really is does their bond aid them in enduring the hardships, which come with living in a country harbouring a vast amount of negative emotions against them after many years of war.

At this point, one must clearly state that Antoinette's tragic circumstances and end to her life do differ profoundly to the outcomes of *Small Island's* coloured protagonists' stories in that the former, for one, possesses a light complexion in times when skin colour was arguably even more of a decisive factor in how one was treated and, from a historical perspective, calls people her ancestors who sat on the opposite side of the horrific events taking place during the very darkest

days of British colonialism. However, similarly to Gilbert and Hortense, any efforts of her to attempt to belong and identify with either of the Jamaican and English communities eventually result in rejection and acts of exclusion being directed at Antoinette from all sides, even her mother, and thus fighting an uphill battle when dealing with the pressure with which she is constantly countered in any attempts to settle in one or the other social space. Antoinette is heavily influenced by experiences she made growing up as a white Creole girl, branded both explicitly and implicitly as the “white nigger” (WSS, 21) throughout her child- and young adulthood. Additionally, despite Christophine’s ultimately fruitless endeavours to protect the young woman, Antoinette does not have the luxury of a support system as Gilbert and Hortense ultimately do as her only real family in form of the mentioned Christophine is chased away by Rochester and the latter’s capabilities as a husband have always been deeply overshadowed by his own personal problems and familial experiences. While Rochester does in many ways mirror his wife, as previously stated, Antoinette is nevertheless the one whose ambivalent starting point in terms of roots in life constitutes a major hindrance in ever being able to position herself on the same side of both communities’ ‘inside/outside distinction’ as Rochester. Rhys’ intention to rewrite Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* arose for a reason and giving Antoinette the necessary voice to showcase how she was not the one at fault for where her path led to but a society intent on ousting people like her who embody the same or a similar inherent difference. The white Creole is necessitated to ultimately give in to the relentless nature of the established ‘metonymic walls’ and stay in the abyss between communities, completely alone; as; an outcome which ends in a fate of ‘non-identity’.

On a literary level, the difference in time of approximately one hundred years between the fictional settings must of course be taken into account and not be ignored when comparing the two novels’ creolized protagonists as several decisive and progressive changes in the fields of class, gender, race and similar areas were achieved in this span of time, reminding one of two very different historical contexts and periods in history. However, solely from the perspective of how the aspect of community affects the characters, the bottom line is that both novels’ creolized protagonists share an inherent ambivalence and, despite very different endings to their stories, are situated in a similar position of exclusion for large parts of their individual narratives due to their encounters with their respective communities. The similarity in how the protagonists *experience* social rejection, essentially stranding them in a no-man’s land between the fronts of

different groups, is reflective of how the inclination to meet people defined by in-betweenness with hesitance, acts of resistance, and/or even hostility remains largely the norm in the two novels, irrespective of their differences in temporal settings and publication dates. The quintessence of all three of Antoinette, Gilbert, and Hortense's journeys leads back to their ambivalent starts to life, as well as the later treatment and confrontation with exclusion aimed at them acting out in form of either or both physical and/or 'metonymic walls'. Despite the thoughts of a border being in the interest of the general public, as Levy's character of Bernard embodies, ultimately, such limitations are not ever able to definitively bring about the desired effect of homogeneity; on the contrary, *Small Island* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s illustrations show that the portrayed communities and their erected walls merely contribute to the sustainment of a heterogeneous state and the amplification of social disunion within society.

To finally conclude, while this thesis cannot make the claim that the aspect of community constitutes the main or even sole reason for causing people with colonial backgrounds to live with a permanently absent feeling of affiliation and consequently deal with a 'crisis of identity' or, in the worst case, Clingman's mentioned state of 'non-identity', it can certainly affirm the argumentation that a community constitutes a factor which can play a massive role in and have a significant impact on all the areas stated in the research question. Whether boundaries, liminality, or, in particular, a person's identity, a community established and enforced by its 'inside' people, like Anderson's 'imagined' one, has the ability to create a domino effect which acts out in form of a near unstoppable wave which gradually pushes an individual to the fringes of society and traps him or her there without any immediate means to change this situation. All influential and socially defining characteristics, be they the here primarily considered ones of race, skin colour, birthplace or ancestry, or other not addressed factors like religion, social class, or age, essentially lead back to asserting Antoinette, Gilbert, and Hortense's senses of belonging and, to a varying extent, their paths through life. By means of keeping these aspects permanently in mind and thereby letting them heavily influence the judgement in the question of a person's suitability to be an inherent part of a social space, this paper's stated 'metonymic walls' are born and, even if their physical counterparts are torn down or non-existent, they remain invariably. In this paper's discussion, Hortense represents the sole example of a character somewhat successfully standing firm against these boundaries and not letting them deter her in the female protagonist's strive to form the exact kind of identity she has always intended for herself. Whether or not Hortense

would have ever been able to hold on to her ideal of belonging to the British community is uncertain, but, given that such hostile mindsets still very much exist across the globe and certainly did so long after the postwar period in Britain, her chances seem slim. However, Hortense's story and the less fortunate, even tragic, ones of Antoinette and Gilbert do undoubtedly offer themselves perfectly in highlighting exactly why the continuous addressing of such narratives is imperative if one ever aims to one day achieve a complete change of past thinking throughout all communities and ipso facto not even necessitate a reader to subsequently puzzle over someone Hortense's ultimate fate.

While Rhys and Levy's works of fiction are not the most contemporary pieces in the sense of depicting the past decade's events revolving around refugee crises and displacement, both novels showcase comparable scenarios of transnational movement. More importantly, *Small Island* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* reflect communities which have the power to let their fear of individuals of colonial origins prevail to such an extent that people like Antoinette or Gilbert and Hortense are solely the ones to pay the price for the insecurities of and fearmongering taking place in the more comfortable position of the two within the 'inside/outside distinction'. Therefore, this thesis' demonstration of the impact of a community on the fates of the creolized characters in these two pieces of postcolonial fictions has intended to contribute in two ways; firstly, in that the discourse continues to take place in this particular field of 'postcolonial thought' and, secondly, in that this specific illustration of the narratives serves as a cautious example of the past and as a reminder to Western society to remember its colonial history and treatment of people affected by colonialism when dealing with contemporary issues of transnational boundaries and immigration.

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Abstrakt

Funnell, Maximilian. “‘Walled in – Walled out’: Boundaries, Liminal Spaces, and Identity in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Andrea Levy’s *Small Island* (2004)“. University of Vienna.

Vertrieben aus dem eigenen Land und unerwünscht in aufnehmenden Ländern, die transnationalen Migrationswellen der zwanzigsten und ein-und-zwanzigsten Jahrhunderte und deren Zusammenbringen von verschiedenen Kulturen haben den westeuropäischen Raum, und spezifisch Großbritannien, mit unterschiedlichen Reaktionen reagieren sehen. Die Entwicklung einer ablehnenden Haltung gegenüber Menschen, die Fremdes und Unbekanntes verkörpern, nimmt laufend und tendenziell immer mehr zu; eine Entwicklung, die oft zu Problemen der Deplatzierung für Menschen mit einem (post)kolonialistischen Hintergrund in ihrer neuen Umgebung zu führen, insbesondere im Erörterungsprozess der Identität und des Zugehörigkeitsgefühls. Postkoloniale Fiktion bietet sich als probates Mittel sowohl um solche Themengebiete aufzuarbeiten und sich mit diesen auseinanderzusetzen als auch die Vergangenheit kritisch durch die Linse der heutigen Welt zu betrachten. Hier werden der klassische Roman *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) von Jean Rhys und der vergleichsweise jüngere *Small Island* (2004) von Andrea Levy im Laufe dieser Arbeit analysiert, um das Aufeinandertreffen von kolonisierende und kolonisierte Kommunen aufzuzeigen und deren variierende Auswirkungen zu illustrieren. Aufbauend auf Benedict Anderson’s Konzept der Nation als „vorgestellte Gemeinschaft“ stellt diese Arbeit die Frage inwiefern verschiedene Aspekte und die Dynamik dieses Konstrukts der Gemeinsamkeit den Identitätsformierungsprozess der fiktionalen Charaktere mit einem kolonialen Hintergrund beeinflussen, reichend von Schwellenpositionen bis zu Extremfällen der permanenten Strandung zwischen den Grenzen verschiedener Kulturen. Während die Rollen von physischen Grenzen und auch die von dieser Arbeit vorgestellten „Metonymischen Wände“ berücksichtigt werden, wird die Verkörperung ethnischer Ambivalenz anhand der dementsprechend vorgestellten Figuren von Rhys und Levy als entscheidender Faktor in der Frage des Prozesses der möglichen Integration oder Exklusion hier argumentiert.