



Identity Crisis: A Comparative Study between Antoinette in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

أزمة الهوية: دراسة مقارنة بين انطوانيت في رواية بحر سرقوسة الواسع لجين رايس و نازنين في رواية شارع بريك لين لمونيكا علي

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Authorization

I, Reem Mohammad Abu-Samra, hereby authorize Middle East University to provide libraries, organizations and even individuals with copies of my thesis upon request.

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This Thesis titled "Identity Crisis: A Comparative Study between Antoinette in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" was successfully defended and approved on 23/5/2016.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely and wonderful parents whom I love the most. They provided me with great support along the whole path and lit my way with their guidance and unconditional love. I also dedicate this thesis to my sisters and brothers who were very supportive.

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Abstract

This thesis includes a comparative study between Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It investigates identity crisis that is experienced by both heroines and their struggle to overcome this crisis in a society where they are triply marginalized by class, gender, and race. It explores the differences and the similarities between Antoinette and Nazneen in their search and struggle for an independent life and examines the extent to which they succeed or fail in articulating their identity.

Adopting the techniques and methods of comparative literature, the postcolonial, the feminist and the psychosocial theories, the study explores the two works through emphasizing the external forces that can be supportive and encouraging or undermining and discouraging through the two heroines' long and arduous search for an identity and an independent self. The thesis examines the basic similarities and differences between the two writers' treatment of the question of identity and the way the female protagonist in each novel struggles to achieve her goals. Each protagonist perceives herself differently depending on the circumstances and the external forces that impact the construction or destruction of her identity. Each character reaches a resolution where she builds her own world on her own terms and in her way, depending on her own decision.

Keywords: comparative study, identity crisis, Rhys, Ali, Antoinette, Nazneen.

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شارع بريك لين لمونيكا علي

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الأستاذ الدكتور توفيق يوسف

الملخص

تقوم هذه الرسالة بطرح دراسة مقارنة بين عملين أدبيين وهما رواية "بريك لين" للكاتبة مونيكا علي ورواية " بحر سرقوسة الواسع" للكاتبة جين رايس حيث تناقش قضية أزمة الهوية التي خاضتها كل من بطلتي العملين الأدبيين المذكورين. وتناقش الرسالة أيضا صراع البطلتين في تخطي هذه الأزمة في مجتمعٍ قام بتهميشهما بناء على الطبقة الاجتماعية، والجنس، والعرق. كما أن هذه الدراسة تقوم باستكشاف أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين شخصية انطوانيت ونازنين اثناء بحثهما عن حياةٍ مستقلة وكفاحهما للحصول على هوية خاصة بهما ، وتناقش هذه الدراسة أيضا مدى نجاح كل منهما في التعبير والافصاح عن هويتها.

ومن خلال تبني تقنيات وأساليب الادب المقارن ونظرية مدرسة ما بعد الاستعمار والنظرية النسوية والنظرية النفسية الاجتماعية عملت هذه الدراسة على استكشاف هذين العملين من خلال التركيز على قدرة العوامل الخارجية على أن تكون داعمة ومشجعة او العكس، وذلك من خلال مسيرة البحث الطويلة عن الهوية والذات المستقلة التي قامت بها الشخصيتان. تبين الدراسة اوجه التشابه والاختلاف الرئيسية بين الكاتبتين من حيث تصويرهما لقضية البحث عن الهوية . ان كل بطلّة من بطلتي الروائيتين ترى نفسها بشكلٍ مختلفٍ عن الأخرى ، وذلك لأن الظروف المحيطة والعوامل الخارجية تساهم بشكل مختلف في بناء هوية كل واحدة منهما وبالتالي فإن كل شخصية منهما قد توصلت الى قرار تقوم فيه ببناء عالمها الخاص بها بشروطها الخاصة بها ، وبشكل تعتمد فيه على قرارها الخاص .

الكلمات المفتاحية: دراسة مقارنة ، أزمة الهوية ، رايس ، علي ، أنطوانيت ، نازنين

Chapter One

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Wide Sargasso Sea is a masterpiece of the British woman writer Jean Rhys who was one of the first post-colonial female writers of the wind rush generation. It is a postcolonial-feminist novel in which its events explore the tragic fate of the female protagonist, Antoinette, which arises from the deeply-rooted ideologies about women being triply marginalized for their class, gender and race. Therefore, it exposes the life of the Afro-Caribbeans (Jamaicans) who were invaded and occupied by the British back in 1655. Antoinette suffers a lot in a failed attempt to reach the point where she can have a life of her own and articulate her identity away from the oppression of her society, the colonizers and her patriarchal husband.

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is also considered as a masterpiece and one of the best-selling novels that has gained the interest of a large number of readers. This novel depicts the life of the East Indians (Bengalis) who migrated from Bangladesh (a former British colony) to live in London. The events revolve around the female protagonist Nazneen who suffers from the oppression of a male- dominant society and who fights forcefully to gain her independent identity. Nazneen's suffering evolves from her being caught between two worlds where she feels exiled. Eventually, she manages to overcome the difficulties facing her on her quest for her true identity.

Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

Wilson (2004) provides information about the history of Jamaica and how it became a British colony. He states that Jamaica was ruled by Spain for more than 150 years. After that, the British invaded Jamaica in 1655 and made it one of their colonies. They cleared more of the land in order to create more room for the large farms, called plantations, where they were used to growing sugarcane and also for the smaller farms where they used to grow tobacco, coffee and cotton. During the Spanish rule and before the British invasion, Spain brought some west Africans to Jamaica and made them work as slaves and when the time of the British invasion came, they increased these numbers of slaves and brought hundreds of thousands more to work in their plantations and homes. Eventually, Jamaica gained its independence in 1962.

Jean Rhys is a British novelist; she was born in Dominica in 1890, and was 16 years old when she went to England to attend school. The place where she was born had influenced so much of her writing. In 1966, she wrote her most successful novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* as an attempt to explain the character of Bertha Mason in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. In this novel, Rhys portrays women as victims and that was not accepted at that time by the feminist theorists. Readers enjoy this particular novel for having many issues discussed in it: the story of a lonely woman who was desperate for love, sexual exploitation of women, the damaging effect of colonization, and the 19th century life and culture of the people who lived on the Caribbean islands. This novel contains various conflicts; the most important one is the inner conflict of the protagonist Antoinette between her emotions and her rational state of being (Gale, Cengage Learning, 2015).

Sharma (2013) explains that *Wide Sargasso Sea* begins after the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire and talks about a woman called Antoinette. She is a Creole; she belongs neither to the white Europeans nor to the black Jamaicans. The events depict her life from her youth until her unhappy marriage to an unnamed English man who was a great example of the patriarchal society. This novel discusses lots of themes such as assimilation and racial inequality.

By reading *Wide Sargasso Sea*, we can notice the huge resemblance of the events of the story with the real experience of the writer herself. It is a semi-autobiographical fiction in which many of the events are taken from Rhys's experience and her own relationship with her homeland. Al Deek (2016) explains how Rhys's unhappiness had an impact on most of her writings. It reflects her alienation and reveals the three ways in which she feels displaced: as a female marginalized by her male relations, as a Creole, and as a displaced individual in foreign places and languages. She has spent most of her life running and displaced from her homeland. Furthermore, Rhys can be considered to be a postcolonial writer and a modern feminist.

Ali's Brick Lane (2003)

Bangladeshi community that had its first wave of migration in the late 19th and early 20th century is considered to be one of the largest and the fastest growing communities in England. Britain's colonial expansion was the main reason behind the Bengali immigrations into England and London in particular. After the two world wars, the governments encouraged the first wave of immigration for many reasons: many changes in immigration laws, the Bangladesh Liberation War against Pakistan, and the desire to escape poverty.

The British Bengali immigrations have reached their peak in the 1970s; Most of them settled in the borough of Tower Hamlets. The area around Brick Lane which is located in the west of the borough contains 23 percent of the community. Besides, the immigrant families were from a middle class because other Bengali families couldn't afford the cost of traveling. At the same time, we cannot put British middle class families at the same level with Bengali's. What could have worsened their situation among all ethnic groups living in Britain is that they were uneducated and unqualified, the problem that led to unemployment. As years passed, their economic situation became better and they were able to send support to their families in Bangladesh (Rasinger, 2007).

Monica Ali is a British novelist; she was born in Dhaka in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1967. Her mother is English and her father is Bengali. In 1971 during the Bangladeshi War of Independence, she moved with her family to England and completed her education at Wadham College, Oxford. She was named by Granta as the Best of Young British Novelists.

Ali's first novel was *Brick Lane* (2003) which has been granted a number of prizes including the British Book Award for the Booker Prize. This novel depicts the life of Bengali immigrants in East London. *Brick Lane's* events revolve around the life of the female character Nazneen, who is forced into an arranged marriage with Chanu, a man twice her age. She emigrates with her husband to live in London. Ali was successful in portraying the life of Nazneen who at the beginning of the novel spends the time struggling for existence and longing to go back home. With the passage of time, everything has changed for her, especially after her relationship with Karim, a community leader who is

bringing her garments to sew. At the end, her husband starts planning to go back home but for her she eventually finds her own home in London and refuses to go back to Bangladesh.

By reading Ali's *Brick Lane*, we can notice that Ali focuses on whether people can manage the course of their life outside their own country, and whether they consider themselves as outsiders or as insiders. It is worth mentioning that this particular novel has received criticism because of Ali's representation of Bangladeshis. She was accused of planning for a negative perception by British people, especially after the film adaptation of *Brick Lane* in 2007 for which Ali was attacked by Germaine Greer in *The Guardian*. (Stade and Karbiener, 2009).

Al Deek (2016) explains that *Brick Lane* is a novel that includes and depicts different generations of displaced migrants and explores the life of these migrants in further details. It also includes different cultures and geographical areas (East Pakistan, Bangladesh, and England), particularly after the 9/11. Furthermore, he notes that this particular novel contains various themes, such as mental and cultural ghettoisation, memory, representation of identity, the meaning of home, and the multicultural society in London.

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* represent the post-colonial feminist approach which explores the life of the East Indians (Bengalis) and the Afro-Caribbean (Jamaicans). Both novels can be considered to be semi-autobiographical fictions for which they expose events from the real life of both writers. The main focus of this study will be the experience of the female protagonists of both novels; Antoinette and Nazneen.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study investigates the identity crisis which is experienced by both Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It investigates their struggle to articulate their identities within the restricting borders of class, gender, and race. This is even furthered by the society within which they are triply marginalized by man, ethnicity, and class. The researcher is going to identify the reasons behind this kind of crisis and to make a contrast between the two different generations that each protagonist belongs to by exploring the extent to which they succeed or fail in articulating their identities.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. Investigating the identity crisis which is experienced by Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* by exploring their struggle in order to articulate their identities within the restricting borders of class, gender, and race in a society in which they do not belong.
2. Identifying the reasons behind this kind of crisis by exploring both communities of both novels.
3. Contrasting the two different generations that each protagonist belongs to by exploring the extent to which they succeed in articulating their identity.

1.4 Questions of the Study

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of experience do Nazneen and Antoinette undergo that makes the crisis of identity for both characters grow in both novels?
2. What are the reasons that cause the identity crisis throughout both novels?
3. What are the differences between the two different generations that each protagonist belongs to and to what extent do both succeed in articulating their identity?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Due to the popularity of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, many researchers have talked about each one of the two novels especially from feminist and post-colonial perspectives. All studies that have been done deal with each novel separately and no one has put these two novels together in a comparison. In this study, the researcher will try to compare between these two novels by linking them to the colonial and feminist perspectives along with emphasizing one female protagonist from each novel. Most importantly, this study explores the way the two novels depict the experience of two different generations: Rhys's novel represents the first generation while Ali's novel represents the third one. Hopefully, this study will fill a gap in the literature, regarding these two important works.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

This study will be concerned with discussing and analyzing two female protagonists: Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Antoinette in Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). In addition, it will use the comparative approach as a foundation for its discussion.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

As this study is limited to the two novels of Jean Rhys and Monica Ali, the findings cannot be representative of other writings of the same genre or the same generations of both writers. Furthermore, this study registers the wide gap and the socio-cultural developments of the 1960s and of the new millennium.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Comparative literature: “the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, and music), philosophy and history” (Remak, 1906, p.1).

Feminism: movements and ideologies that aim at establishing and achieving equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women including equal opportunities for women in education and employment. Freedman (2001) notes that feminists:

concern themselves with women's inferior position in society and with discrimination encountered by women because of their sex. Furthermore, one could argue that all feminists call for changes in the social, economic, political or cultural order, to reduce and eventually overcome this discrimination against women". (p.1)

Post-colonialism: a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled "Third World" cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments. Tyson (2006) states that postcolonial criticism "defines formerly colonized peoples as any population that has been subjected to the political domination of another population."(p.417)

Colonialism: The imperialist expansion of Europe into the rest of the world in which it had control and influence over its colonies. This control expands to involve many exchanges. J. Kozlowski (2010) defines Colonialism as " a system of direct political, economic, and cultural control by a powerful country over a weaker one" (p.1).

Identity: The way in which an individual and/or group define themselves. Identity is important to self-concept, social mores, and national understanding. Abrams & Hogg (1988) define identity as "one's conception or definition of who one is (one's identity) is largely composed of self-descriptions in terms of the defining characteristics of social groups to which one belongs" (p.7).

Identity Crisis: a feeling of unhappiness and confusion caused by not being sure of what type of person one really is or what the true purpose of one's life is. It is a

psychological state or condition and role confusion occurring especially in adolescence as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations, often producing acute anxiety.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Studies

Comparative literature

Zepetnek (1851) defines comparative literature as "the knowledge of more than one national language and literature, and/ or it means the knowledge and application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature" (p.13). He states that the main focus of comparative literature was on European literature and later on both European and American literature. At the same time, comparative literature pays more attention to other literatures than the attention it pays to any of the national literatures.

Jost (1974) clarifies the importance of basing comparative literature on the study of several national literatures in order to realize the different forms of European and universal literature and also to appreciate their unity beyond all appearances. He elaborates that the comparatist should be concerned with the connection of literature to other disciplines. Furthermore, the comparatist's efforts will be concentrated on literary works, but it is important to draw upon other fields such as philosophy, sociology, religion, psychology, history and political science.

It is worth mentioning that comparative Literature includes two main schools: the American school and the French one. Shamsuddin & Abd Rahman (2012) note that the Americans have a main role in expanding the domains that comparative literature can explore. Also, they state that there are many scholars in American universities who helped

in developing the American theory in comparative literature such as René Wellek and Henry. H. H. Remak. Wellek represents the American trend which doesn't have any limits and includes the open comparison and the relationship between art and the various branches of other sciences.

Feminism

Hooks in her book *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (2000) proposes a positive representation of feminist movement by stating that this movement is for everyone. She notes that feminist movement is not about women being against men, it is all about rights and how women fight in order to gain equal rights as men. The thing that makes men practice patriarchy is the assumption that they are superior to women and their belief that the only way to maintain this patriarchy is by dominating, exploiting and oppressing women. Apparently, men do not understand what feminism actually is all about or what it means because they treat women in a way that reveals how much they are afraid of losing control or losing the benefit of being superior. Hooks (2000) states how men with all this power and superiority are considered to be captivated by patriarchy. Moreover, female bonding and their good relationship with each other is not accepted in the patriarchal society. This bonding is considered to be an act of betrayal or a threat for men as superiors.

Furthermore, in her other book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (2000), Hooks talks about sexism by saying that: "between women and men, sexism is most often expressed in the form of male domination, which leads to discrimination, exploitation, or oppression" (p.48). This means that there are conflicts between men and women which are basically the result of sexist discrimination, exploitation and oppression. The point is that

feminism created a new way of thinking to help this conflict between the two sexes stop by creating a kind of relationships marked by intimate feelings and mutuality rather than alienation and dehumanization. She has concentrated on the sexist oppression because it is the most important kind of oppression that most of the people either as discriminator and exploiter or as discriminated against and exploited could go through or experience.

Moreover, Hooks connects feminism with the importance of the family in the sense that domination begins within the members of the family when children are dominated by adults and wives by husbands. She asserts that this particular movement will help to improve and strengthen the family life from breaking down through the acts of aggression, humiliation, abuse and violence. The assumption that men are superior to women led women to think that they are useless and value nothing without men, and women's relationships with each other will bring them no good. The role of feminism here is to eliminate this way of thinking. Eventually, women should first detach themselves from sexism before resisting male domination.

Rogers (2013) defines Feminism as "the advocacy of social, economic, and political equality between men and women" (p.122). Apparently, feminism is all about the inequality, oppression and discrimination along with other related social issues. Feminism cannot be restricted to one specific theorist in the sense that it includes many theorists who have different notions and ideas, which means different branches of feminism.

There are three main branches of feminism, which belong to the second wave of feminism which was concerned with achieving equal rights in education, work, and at home. Rogers proposes the branch of Liberal Feminism; it first appeared in the 18th century

when Mary Wollstonecraft called for equality between men and women. Liberal feminism supports the idea of distributing equal rights between men and woman in different aspects of life such as education, politics and economics regardless of their biological differences. He also proposes Social Feminism. Unlike Liberal Feminism, it focuses on the economic equality and justice between men and women rather than the political equality and justice. Another branch is Radical Feminism; it focuses on the idea that male domination and hierarchy are the main reasons for the inequality that most women suffer from. Besides, it involves the notions that men are superior, aggressive and intellectual while women are weak, emotional and irrational.

Third wave feminism overlapped with second wave feminism. It started to address the issues of women who belong to different races, ethnicities and classes which are issues beyond the middle class white women. Castle (2007) clarifies that third wave feminism concentrates on the experience of women of color in the west and other locations around the world. He states that Hooks's *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) is the milestone of third wave feminism in which she focuses not only on white women but also on women of color and the role of race as an issue of identity, gender, and sexual violence. At present, feminism has become more global and more open to the experiences of women of all kinds.

Post-colonialism

Ashcroft et.al (2000) point out that Post-colonialism is all about how cultures and societies are affected by colonization. Literary theorists and critics have been going through this particular term from the 1970s in order to clarify the kind of effects that colonialism has on

cultures and societies. They introduced several terms such as Other, Creolization, hybridity, anti-colonialism and double colonization.

The term "Other" represents how one feels separated and does not belong to one's self. The term was also used to refer to the colonized subject; and that is what creates the difference between the colonizer as the superior and the colonized as the inferior and primitive. Additionally the term Creolization embodies "the process of intermixing and cultural exchange that produces a Creole society" (p. 51). This term also refers to the postcolonial societies that happen to be mixed populations as a result of the European colonization and it is more applicable to "new world" societies like the Caribbean and South America. They highlight the term hybridity which expresses the potential in which one's identity and culture are affected by others' identity and culture to the extent that one would feel that he/she belongs to both identities at the same time. Hybridity refers to the creation of new transcultural form which refers to "the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species" (p.108). Besides, Ashcroft et.al explain the term anti-colonialism by saying that this term is all about how the colonized people are standing against the notions and ideologies that belong to and are produced by colonization. They also propose double colonization which indicates the struggle and the suffering of women from two different kinds of domination: the male patriarchal domination and the colonial domination. In this case, females are being marginalized and oppressed for the fact that they are females and colonized objects.

Parker (2008) discusses the main domains of Postcolonialism by mentioning some of the main contributing figures in Post-colonialism such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak

and Homi Bhabha. He talks about colonization and how there were large proportions of world's population that were colonized and under the control of a small number of nations like the British Empire that ruled one quarter of the earth's land. As Parker (2008) points out, Postcolonialism pays much attention to the racial, national, political and ethnical aspects in which all these were affected by colonization. He states that the colonizing nations were described as "metropolitan" and there were two kinds of colonies. The first one is settler colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States in which they settle in the colony permanently and to the extent that they are no longer realizing that this land is not theirs; they form a larger population than that they have colonized. The second type is occupation colonies in which the colonized form a small number of population and the colonizers settle temporarily in the colony until other colonizers or powers come to the land.

The terms "Self" and "Other" seem to be a production of Post-colonialism in the sense that "Self" is connected with the colonizer subject and "Other" is connected with the colonized object. Afaf Al-Saidi (2014) argues in her article that:

Politically as well as culturally the *Self* and the *Other* are represented as the colonizer and the colonized. The *Other* by definition lacks identity, propriety, purity, literality. In this sense he can be described as the *foreign*: the one, who does not belong to a group, does not speak a given language, and does not have the same customs; he is the unfamiliar, uncanny, unauthorized, inappropriate, and the improper. (95)

She also clarifies that "the concept of *Otherness* is a pattern of divided opposites: the *Self* is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the *Other* is chaotic, irrational, feminine, and evil"(96).

Identity

Woodward (2004) explains the difference between identity and personality by saying that personality describes the characteristics that one can have like being clever or shy, while identity is all about the element of choices that we might have when identifying with the world around. One's identity can be recognized by the fact that one is similar or different from others. Identity can also be considered to be the production of the society we live in; it is a combination of how I view myself and how others view me by taking into consideration that identity can be stable or changing depending on the constraints that could be exercised over an individual.

Ferguson (2015) explains identity and how it is shaped and affected by different aspects, such as gender, race, and class. Identity is derived from our experience that can also shape our own identity. It is very unique just like one's signature that allows him/ her identify with the world around. Race is a very relevant aspect that could form one's identity because if a person is associated with a racial group, the person's race would affect how he/she is seen and treated by others. Furthermore, racial identities could bring discrimination and inequality. At the same time, it could be the source of pride, motivation and belonging. As for gender identity, it refers to one's inner sense of oneself as female or male and gender refers to the behaviors and personality characteristics that are produced culturally. As for social classes, it has a significant role in forming one's identity by which

he/she can belong to a certain group that has the same social status in which he/she could be recognized differently in relation to others; it also may be a source of discrimination or a pride. Ferguson argues that our environment and society are the elements that affect the aspect that helps shape our identity for which they decide what is appropriate and what is not.

Generally speaking, identity crisis is created through the existence of different social classes and different races where the lower class feels discriminated against by the upper one and where the black people feel alienated and oppressed by the white. When it comes to gender, this means that females are the essence of the identity crisis and what creates this kind of crisis is the fact that we live in a patriarchal society where male is the superior and dominant subject, while female is the marginalized and oppressed object.

Erik Erikson is one of the most relevant psychologists on the question of identity; he is known for his most popular psychosocial theory of human development which is considered to be a revision of Freud's ego psychology. Erikson focuses in his theory on the social interaction with the outside community that helps developing one's personality in which the person him/herself can be a part of these developments which gradually occur across one's lifespan through eight different psychosocial stages. [Schultz](#) and [Schultz](#) (2012) explain the psycho-social theory of human development proposed by Erikson by explaining how this theory is considered to be a revision of Freud's psycho-sexual theory, but with more concentration on the psycho-social factors which are related to social and cultural developments rather than the sexual matters. They also explain in further details the eight psychosocial stages of personality growth: Basic trust vs. Basic mistrust, Autonomy

vs. Shame, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. stagnation and Ego Integrity vs. Despair. At each stage there is a new developmental life crisis that needs to be resolved in either an adaptive or maladaptive way.

In this research, there will be a more concentration on the fifth stage where one's identity starts shaping. Erikson was the first to have an explicit interest in the concept of identity and identity formation process. Furthermore, Identity development is the most important psycho-social task and identity crisis (a term coined by Erikson) plays a major role in human developments. In the stage of adolescence (12 to 18), the ego identity (self-image) integrates our ideas of what we are and what we want to be is formed. People who succeed in forming a cohesive self-image will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self-identity and will face adulthood with confidence, while people who fail to achieve this image will probably experience the identity crisis which will lead to identity or role confusion in which they do not know what they are or where they belong.

2.2 Empirical studies

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* has been the main focus of many literary studies. There are many studies that have discussed and analyzed this particular novel from various perspectives, especially from feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Likewise, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* has been of a great interest for many literary studies and literary theorists. The researcher will be introducing several studies that are related to the topic of this study by going through the themes and subjects they covered. Furthermore, the researcher will be

focusing on the studies that have dealt with these two novels while paying more attention to the female protagonist of each novel.

Rao (2003) explains how Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is considered to have a colonial discourse that proposes the issue of Creole identity. The situation of a Creole woman in the novel represents alienation and struggle and raises the question of identity in which this woman does not belong to a specific society. Furthermore, the novel illustrates the differences between place and displacement that are considered to be the main focus of Post-colonialism and how displacement leads to social alienation. More importantly, the main focus of this novel is the struggle for independence or identity; it also explores the attempts of women to be liberated from the male domination. Moreover, the Creole woman in this novel, who is Antoinette, is given the chance to speak for herself and narrate her own story; and this shows how Rhys is trying to humanize and give this woman a voice that can be heard.

Nurminen (2012) discusses in her M.A Thesis Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* by focusing mostly on the cultural identity of the white Creole. She states that cultural identity is considered to be the main theme in postcolonial literature which in its sense includes the notion of belonging. Besides, she proposes the concept of double oppression which is very essential in postcolonial literature through mentioning the concept of double colonization, when being a female colonized object. Antoinette, the white Creole, is oppressed by her husband as a male and as a colonizer. Nurminen elaborates on the concepts of liberal and social feminism by stating that liberal feminism is embodied in Antoinette's struggle for gaining equal rights as her husband and the patriarchal society he belongs to. Whereas

social feminism is embodied in the loss of wealth that drives her and her family into a difficult situation which indicates that they were oppressed by the capitalist society. As a result, Nurminen mentions three forms of oppression in this novel that are linked strongly with each other: colonial, patriarchal and capitalist oppression. She points out the complex relationship between Antoinette as a colonized weak object and Rochester as a colonizer who represents the colonial center and its strength. This particular relationship contributes a lot in building Antoinette's identity in the sense that Rochester establishes colonial practices upon Antoinette. We can notice that when he changes her name just for the sake of taking control over her as if she were a slave.

Chen (2014) in his article discusses *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a great portrayal of Rhys's life. He focuses on analyzing the female protagonist Antoinette, a white Creole in West Island of Jamaica who is marginalized and oppressed by both the blacks and whites because of the fact that she belongs neither to the black Jamaicans nor to the white Europeans. This novel focuses more on the question of identity along with female survival. Furthermore, he explains how females are marginalized and oppressed in western patriarchal society and exiled culturally and sexually. Antoinette's marriage to Rochester represents the gender and racial inequality for which she feels oppressed by him as a male and as a colonized. He further explains that:

for Antoinette, she has identity crisis. As a white Creole, Antoinette is neither treated as part of the black slave community nor accepted as part of European, a lack of belonging. And the problem of displacement and a shaky sense of one's own identity are already well established in the first part of the novel, long before the marriage takes place. (p.21)

Al Deek (2016) explains Rochester's character by saying that he is a very materialistic man who is incapable of love; he represents the upper-middle class Englishman and has a colonial mentality. His relationship with Antoinette reveals his domination over weakness and that is very obvious when he changes her name and starts calling her Bertha as if he is trying to eliminate her hope of having an identity of her own. At the same time, he feels insecure and afraid to lose his power and domination, so he tends to have an affair with the black servant, Amelie, in order to gain his authority. That supports the fact that Rochester seeks oppression and domination because he is a colonizer subject and a good representative of the patriarchal society.

Bennet (2005) states that Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* reflects her own experience as a Bengali woman living in England. Additionally, he explores Nazneen, the female protagonist, by concentrating on a major theme of Nazneen's struggle for identity and desire to find acceptance and what to adopt from her current environment relying on the fact that she represents the life of Bengali women living in London.

Hiddleston (2005) talks in her article about Brick Lane and describes it as a geographical area, which is separated from the rest of society. She states that this separation makes it easier to describe the area as backward and nonconforming. Also, this area becomes a center of cultural conflicts and racial attacks especially with the rise of radical Islam in which the Muslim community seeks its own identity and fights against discrimination.

Sinha (2008) discusses *Brick Lane* by stating that Ali is considered to be a new voice of Postcolonial Britain. Through her representation of gender, history and

displacement, she paves the way for the migrants' voice to be heard out loud in Britain. Furthermore, Ali gives us a glimpse about the multicultural society in London by focusing on a place in East London's Brick Lane that is occupied mostly by Bengalis. In other words, she highlights a place that is foreign for most of its citizens. Moreover, Sinha (2008) clarifies that "the book gives a rich insight into Bengali culture. A tender and touching story, the novel captures the struggles, the cultural clash and frustrations of a family caught between two worlds" (p.233). That opens the gates for Ali to focus on the experience of exile and the pain of belonging. Therefore, she portrays the experience of Bengali immigrants by shedding light on the obstacles and conflicts they encounter along with their struggle for identity. Clearly, this novel focuses on their inner desires and fears of the female protagonist.

Arıkan, and Koçsay (2010) explain in their article how the idea of double alienation is essential and dominant in Ali's novel by pointing out how the female protagonist Nazneen is considered to be alienated as both a Bangladeshi immigrant and as a woman coming from a patriarchal society. They state that:

The difficulty of belonging to the society and experiencing alienation as an immigrant is the one facet of the locket; the other determiner of Nazneen's alienation is her gender, being a woman. This fact makes the situation more painful for Nazneen as a Bangladeshi immigrant woman. (p.8)

Al Deek (2016) identifies Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* by describing the different changes and transitions she undergoes and how she has different roles throughout the novel. He notes that:

Nazneen goes through a series of successful and considerable transitions: a displaced female who is brought to a foreign land; a wife to an unappealing, traditional, culturally-ghettoised emigrant husband, Chanu; she is also a Bengali and an idea of 'home' to Karim, her black Briton lover; a mother to Shahana, a black Briton; and a daughter-in-law to Mrs. Islam, an earlier arrival and emigrant. Nazneen's identity is therefore bound by culture, race and gender (219).

He also explains how the migrants go through several changes as the novel goes on; they shift from being closed and passive to being open and active. Another shift that the novel incorporates is the shift from national to religious identity after the events of 9/11 which is embodied in the character of Karim.

Apparently, all the above mentioned studies have dealt with both novels separately and none has put them together in a comparative study. Therefore, this study will provide a comparison between both novels by concentrating on the female protagonists of both novels (Antoinette and Nazneen). By holding this comparison, the researcher will draw an unprecedented attention to the wide gap between the two different generations that both novels represent.

Chapter Three

Methods and Procedures

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Methods and Procedures

3.1 Methods

The researcher will be using the analytical and descriptive methods in this study with a view to discussing the question of identity crisis in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Special concentration will be made on the female protagonists Nazneen and Antoinette. In addition, the researcher will be utilizing a few related critical approaches including feminism, post-colonialism, psychosocial theory, race and cultural studies to explore the issue of identity crisis from which each of the two protagonists is suffering. The methods and techniques of comparative literature will also be deployed in the discussion to compare and contrast the different ways each of the protagonist reacts to her identity crisis.

3.2 Procedures

The following steps will followed in doing this research:

1. Reading the two selected novels.
3. Analyzing the similarities and the differences between the two novels by focusing on the female protagonists of each novel.
4. Citing critical opinion about the novels to enlighten the discussion.
5. Discussing the findings.
6. Writing the references according to the APA style.

Chapter Four

Discussion and Analysis

Chapter Four

Discussion and Analysis

This Chapter will be dealing with the investigation of identity crisis as experienced by Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and their struggle to articulate their identities within which they are triply marginalized by man, ethnicity, and class. It will provide a discussion of the reasons behind this kind of crisis and will hold a comparison and contrast between the two different generations that each protagonist belongs to by exploring the extent to which they succeed in achieving independence that would enable them articulate their identity and build their independent personalities. Hopefully, the researcher will present the different kinds of struggle that the protagonists launch and the important factors that are very influential in constructing their own identities in order to arrive at a conclusion that shows the extent to which each of the two heroines succeeds in so doing.

4.1 Identity

Identity is a concept that has become so much important in contemporary cultural studies and literary criticism. It expresses how one can see or define him/herself as different or similar to others. Hence our identity helps us identify our place in this world when being recognized by others for our race, gender, class, religion, ethnicity, etc. One's identity gives him/her a strong sense of individuality and uniqueness. Basing his argument on the views and theories of various theorists, Yousef (2011) in his article explains that identity has been broadly defined as "the distinct personality of an individual. It is also the individual characteristics by which a person is known or by which an individual sees himself/herself

as a discrete, separate entity” (p.674). He also points out that this particular term has been the core of argument for many psychologists such as, Freud, Lacan, Fenichel, and Erikson among many others. Freud and Lacan view the process of identity formation as beginning at an early stage in the individual’s life when the child starts interacting with the mother and the world around it. Lichtenstein was the first psychologist to conceive the notion of identity as a principle which needs to be preserved and maintained by the individual at all costs. Though Erikson built up on Freud’s theory of the ego and the id where the latter was for him the most essential part of the psyche, Erikson considered the ego more important than the id. Erikson considered the environment surrounding the child as s/he grows is very important in bringing them to self-awareness or to the formation of their identity. For him, the process of identity formation begins at later stages of the child’s life especially during adolescence. Many people consider Erikson’s theory about identity more relevant than other theories as it explores the individual’s identity when personality is being created as a result of the interaction with his/her community.

Identity formation could be a very challenging task when one finds him/herself surrounded by a new culture, place and society which may end up with some complications of identity crisis. Identity formation and all its related issues have been the interest of many theorists. Erik Erikson discussed the issue of identity crisis from a psycho-social point of view by explaining how it springs from a failure or difficulties in the process of forming one’s identity in adolescence. There are two possibilities in this process; the contradictions of life may be able to build a bridge of strong will into experience, true independence and personal growth, or it may be able to create nothing but confusion in which one feels alienated and lost. For example, immigrants who are displaced from their homelands are

the ones who experience this kind of crisis to the ultimate level, in the sense that there are many obstacles they face abroad regarding social, political and cultural changes. Consequently, they are supposed to fight forcefully in order to accommodate themselves to these almost intolerable changes. Particularly impressive is the fact that women within these immigrant communities are the ones who suffer the most, for the precisely observed truth that they live not only in a foreign land where they feel strange and don't belong, but also for the fact that they come from a patriarchal society where they feel discriminated against and where they are deprived of the least of their rights. Therefore, women's experience within displaced migrant communities, where they need to build a world of their own, is more difficult and their journey is too much longer. This idea will be examined later.

There are different kinds of identity including cultural, ethnic, national, political and religious identity. Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging to a group or culture. An ethnic identity is the identification with a certain ethnicity, usually on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry. A religious identity is the set of beliefs and practices generally held by an individual, involving adherence to codified beliefs and rituals and ancestral or cultural traditions, writing, history, and mythology as well as faith and mystic experience (Yousef, 2015, p.53). Generally speaking, forming one's identity is not that easy; sometimes it is very demanding and even overwhelming. When it comes to females, the task becomes all the more difficult for they often live in a patriarchal society where the male is the dominant figure while the female is the subordinate. Accordingly, she tends to build relationships with the world around her in order not to feel left out and to construct her own identity and existence so as not to suffer any feeling of alienation, segregation or exile. Ireland (1993)

discusses how women face great difficulties in constructing their own identity especially in patriarchal societies. Ireland (1993) points out that: “Friendship is one vehicle of adult development in which, through a selective process of identification and complementarity, a woman expands the meaning and texture of her female adult life” (P.12).

Normally, there are differences between males and females either for their differences in biological construction (sex) or for their social differences (gender). Each one of them goes through different kinds of development process from infancy until adulthood, and that what makes the construction of one’s identity different from male to female. Gardiner (1981) gives more importance to the social rather than biological factors and discusses female personality from infancy until womanhood. He discusses that according to Nancy Chodorow, the formation of female identity depends mostly on the relationship between the daughter and her mother in the sense that this relationship and this bond are very essential factor in constructing the girl’s identity. At the same time, the young girl should find her own way a part from her mother in order to develop an identity of her own that helps her reach independence and individuality. Chodorow offers an explanation for the differences between the two sexes where boys define themselves as different than their mothers to gain independence and inequality while the girls form their identity by becoming similar to their mothers which needs to be recreated and developed at later stages in order to gain independence and most likely through building social relationships with others or by getting married and becoming mothers.

Critical Approaches Related to Identity

The study of identity has been dealt by various critical approaches including feminism, gender studies, psychoanalysis and post colonialism and cultural studies. All these

approaches have a direct or indirect bearing on understanding and analyzing the complexity of the concept of identity and identity crisis as experienced by the two principal female characters, Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick lane*.

Feminist Theory

From a feminist perspective, society has dealt with gender in a way that harms women in which men are brought up to believe that they are superior to women and it is their right to punish, discipline or intimidate women. Generally speaking, Feminist theory looks at how aspects of our culture are inherently patriarchal or male dominated and so feminism tries to reexamine literature and culture from a female point of view. Calling herself a patriarchal woman who is oppressed and socially programmed by patriarchal or traditional gender roles, Tyson (2006) explains some ideas that are related to the feminist theory which include traditional gender roles, patriarchy, and all women- related controversial ideologies and notions about equality. She mentions that the ideas of feminism can differ from one region to another and from one theorist to the other. She defines feminist criticism by stating that:

Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women... some feminists call their field *feminisms* in order to underscore the multiplicity of points of view of its adherents and offer ways of thinking that oppose the traditional tendency to believe there is a single best point of view. (2008, p.83)

She further explains how “Traditional Gender Roles cast men as rational, strong protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive” (p.85). Patriarchy and such gender roles exclude women from equal rights and prevent them from taking central decisions in their lives. Tyson (2006) discusses how patriarchy is sexist; it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men and this belief is called “biological essentialism” because it is based on biological differences between the sexes. For example, patriarchal ideologies suggest that there are only two identities a woman can have. If she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal rules, she is a “good girl”; modest, self-sacrificing, has no need of herself, completely satisfied by serving her family. For Victorian culture, she was the “angel of the house”; she made the home a safe haven for her husband. If she doesn’t, she is a “bad girl” “who violates patriarchal sexual norms in some way, and is not good enough to bear a man's name. The Victorians viewed women in terms of how they relate to the patriarchal order. Another patriarchal assumption that shows how women have been given the position of the inferiority in the patriarchal societies is that the hysterical behavior has been considered solely to be a female disease or problem and if a man suffers from the same behavior he would be described by using a less damaging name such as shortness of temper. Moreover, Patriarchal gender roles are destructive for men as well as women for the fact that men are not permitted to fail at anything they try because their failure in any domain implies failure in one’s manhood. For example, men’s failure to provide adequate economic support for their families means that he has failed at his biological role as provider. Tyson (2006) states that:

anger and other violent emotions are the only emotions permitted, even encouraged, in men, for anger is a very effective means of blocking out fear and pain, which are not permitted, and anger usually produces the kind of aggressive behaviors associated with manhood. (p.88)

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial studies are related to the study of the concept of identity with all its complications. The effects of colonialism have been connected with several issues of identity, such as loss of identity, hybridity, multiculturalism which may affect the colonized people's thoughts and make it difficult for them to assimilate other cultures when the feelings of alienation and exile prevail. The most dominant figures of postcolonial studies are: Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Franz Fanon.

Edward Said is considered to be one of the most dominant figures who have dealt with many aspects of postcolonial theory. In his most outstanding book *Orientalism* (1978), Said argues that the West (Occident) has constructed a colonial discourse that produces the idea of the Orient (East). His ideas can be applied to the Islamic Middle East, East Asia, and Africa, racial minorities of the West and the rest of the colonized world. In other words, Said introduces the relationship between the West and the East and how the West perceives the East as inferior, lazy, savage, primitive, uncultured and ruled by emotions and themselves as hard-working, modern, civilized, cultured and the center of the world. Said argues that this description generated a discourse that continued to reproduce the East, the colonized or the formerly colonized in such terms till the present day. Parker (2008)

discusses Said's orientalism by saying that it is somehow related to the binary opposition of gender between male and female. Parker (2008) elaborates on this idea:

Orientalist discourse finds qualities in the East that overlap with the qualities that misogynist discourse finds in the feminine (women as supposedly irrational, emotional, promiscuous, seductive, dishonest and lazy), and the qualities it sees in the West overlap with the qualities that it sees in the masculine (men as supposedly rational, dependable, hardworking, and strong. In that sense, colonialism often feminizes the colonized, partly in an effort to masculinize itself. (p.248-249)

In his *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha describes the cultural hybridity which comes from the way that colonized people and colonizers have taken many of each other's way of living and thinking. For him colonization may affect the culture and the identity formation of the colonized, especially in terms of cultural hybridity of cultural multiplicity. He also came up with the concept of mimicry when colonized people often end up mimicking their colonizers which means adopting their language, educational system, clothing, music and so on. Some see this mimicry as internalized colonization or imperialist act. This feeling would impact their sense of their identity

Gayatri Spivak is an Indian theoretician and critic who has been interested in postcolonial and feminist studies. Her contribution to Post-colonialism is seen in her famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) where she discusses the issue of the occupier and the occupied. The term subaltern refers to people who are less powerful and her example in this essay was Indian woman in particular in which she discusses the issue

of how women of the third world are viewed by the women of the metropolitan world as weak and inferior. For her, subaltern women everywhere should care about their identity

Frantz Fanon is one of the most influential theorists of anticolonial resistance. In his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), he discusses the destructiveness of colonialism and the inner suffering of the colonized. He also explains how racist colonialism could strip colonized people, including blacks, of their sense of self-respect and be proud of their history. He argued that anticolonial violence is the only thing that can overthrow colonialism and achieve a feeling of independence for the colonized. The colonized should resist the internalized racism that allowed the colonized people to believe they are inferior.

Identity Crisis Proposed by Erikson

Erik Erikson is considered to be the father of psychosocial developmental theory that can be applied through the entire life span with more concentration on the relationship and the social factors rather than the sexual drives. He believes that what motivates any person and affects his/her behavior is his/her attachment to the world around. This particular theory expresses the child's relationship with the family and the outside society. Baucum (2006) discusses the eight psychosocial stages that are introduced by Erikson which trace the personality development from infancy until adulthood. Each one of these stages involves a certain kind of crisis that is needed to be resolved. Basic trust versus mistrust is the first stage which occurs during infancy (0-1 years old), the children here become more curious and develop a general sense of the world around them as safe, welcoming or as dangerous and neglected place, depending on the caregiver who is responsible for the

child's physical and psychological needs. In this stage, if the child shows some signs of secure attachment that means that he fails to resolve the crisis which results in becoming less curious and less willing to explore the world around. Autonomy versus shame and doubt is the second stage (1-3 years old); it is the beginning for a child to acquire a sense of self-reliance and independence by practicing some activities like eating, dressing up and toileting. If the child feels some kind of mistrust, this means that he will have difficulty in gaining independence. Initiative versus guilt is the third stage (3-6 years old), the child has the desire to make choices of his own, displaying initiative and achieving short term goals, then experiencing guilt punishment by others. In this stage, the child's expanding autonomy should be moderated to fit the society around. Industry versus inferiority is the fourth stage (6-12 years old); the child in this stage is so much involved in the society and the world around by starting to have longer term goals to achieve. Children tend to show their abilities by competing with each other. If they resolve the crisis they will become self-confident and superior, if they don't they will back away from challenges and become inferior. Identity versus role confusion is the fifth and the most important stage for our discussion (12-20 years old); it involves the question of who am I? and where do I belong? Here the person starts exploring attitudes in order to integrate a single and coherent personality with clear goals, it is the most stressful time for an adult for which he/she should identify with his/her own self and the failure to gain identity results in role confusion or identity crisis where one is no longer capable of achieving independent identity. Intimacy versus isolation is the sixth stage (20-40) where one starts to form close relationships with others in order to achieve marital intimacy and companionship. If one fails to do so, he will have a sense of estrangement and isolation. Generativity versus

stagnation is the seventh stage (40-65); one is trying to achieve a productive work life, successfully rearing children and taking care of the family. If one fails to do so, he will suffer lack of purpose in life and becomes disappointed. Ego integrity versus despair is the final stage (after 65 years old); old adults tend to assess whether it is meaningful and the result of the crisis in this stage depends on the previous stages about whether one finds intimacy or not. If they fail to do so, they will suffer a crisis and a sense of despair and miss something in life.

It is very essential for the discussion of identity crisis to focus more on the fifth stage that is introduced by Erikson which involves identity versus role confusion. This stage includes the transferring from childhood into adulthood when one wants to identify with his/her own self and wants to find his/her place in the world as an attempt to belong and fit in a society. Furthermore, the formation of new relationships, new careers and new ways of life begins; it is like a desire one seek to fulfill in order to feel that his/her life means something. One begins to construct an identity of his/her own that is different and able to distinguish him/her from others. One starts exploring the world around as an attempt to find his/her own self and identity. According to Erikson, this exploration involves a crisis that needs to be resolved immediately. On the other hand, if one fails in constructing or building an identity of his/her own, it will lead him/her to a role confusion or identity crisis. In this case, one starts the journey of struggling in order to get rid of this confusion and reenter a new world where he/she belongs. The next essential stage in our discussion is intimacy versus isolation. If one succeeds in figuring out their place in this world, they will move to this stage where they can form strong relationships with others and consequently form a strong sense of identity and independent self.

There are many psychologists who have been interested in discussing and exploring the concept of identity. James Marcia is one of the psychologists who discuss the theme of identity by giving further details about the possibility of achieving it or undergoing different levels of identity crisis, depending on the person him/herself. In his book *Ego Identity: A Handbook for Psychological research* (1993), he explores the concept of identity by defining four different identity statuses that one could go through in adolescence. Identity diffusion is an identity status that occurs when adults are unable to confront the development of their identity and avoid exploring the world around by being detached and isolated from others. In this case, adults don't make any effort to question anything. Because they are not committed to anything, they don't suffer an identity crisis. Another status is identity foreclosure which occurs when adults accept the values of others and adopt them without questioning them like those of mothers, fathers and teachers. In this case, they don't rebel against the expectations of others and prefer to take them as they are rather than creating an identity of their own. Moratorium is another status of intense identity crisis; in this status, one starts giving much attention to their decisions and starts exploring the future plans using their own point of view. Marcia argues that in this stage there is no full commitment but yet it happens in a constructive way because here they use plans before taking final decisions and the struggle is embodied in those plans. Finally, he explains the status of identity achievement which happens after the identity crisis is experienced and resolved.

4.2 Identity Crisis Experienced by Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Identity crisis is considered to be a central theme in postcolonial literature. The colonized or formerly colonized nations suffer a lot in reconstructing their identity and survival in a world where they feel less important, oppressed and marginalized politically, economically or culturally. Therefore, this kind of crisis refers to the impact of power being used to dominate and oppress the colonized which includes racial and gender discrimination where the identity of the colonized is defined by the colonizer. For example, the Caribbean region where some of the events of *Wide Sargasso Sea* take place can be considered to be one of the lands that suffered from identity crisis because it is the land which underwent different kinds of colonization over time which included emigrants from all over the world, an act that led to the existence of a variety of cultures in that area.

Women in this case are suffering the most from the identity crisis for being women living in a colonized country. The effects of patriarchy and the colonization play a significant role in augmenting the identity crisis that the colonized are expected to face in such a situation. Consequently, women have to struggle in order to get rid of any feelings of alienation, oppression and exile. As women often suffer from the negative effects of patriarchal oppression and segregation, they are likely to reach the peak of identity crisis when colonization and patriarchy join hands in oppressing them.

As mentioned previously, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is considered to be an autobiographical fiction that explores the writer's own life through the character of Antoinette who is marginalized for being a Creole colonized woman. Jean Rhys was born

and grew up in the Caribbean island of Dominica, but lived for some time in Europe where she experienced feelings of alienation because of her own personal background and multicultural upbringing. Schapiro (1994) proposes that “Jean’s feelings of rejection and marginality in relation to her family were only intensified by her experience of being a white colonial child on a West Indies” (p.88).

In general, Rhys’s writings focus much on the theme of her female characters ‘survival and their search for identity. In most of her works, we often notice that all her main female characters are marginalized for their race, gender and class. They are dependent on men and their love or marriages frequently turn into business arrangement. Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* is considered to be a postcolonial-feminist prequel or reference to the events described in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* which depicts the life of the Jamaican Creole woman Antoinette who lives in an oppressive and colonial society where she belongs neither to the European nor to the Jamaican community. Hogan (2000) explains in his introduction how the colonial contact interferes in creating a crisis that is related to cultural identity in general and gender identity in particular. He writes:

Wide Sargasso Sea, in many ways, is the story of a woman who is denied positive cultural and gender identity because of her intermediate position in the colonial structure. Her final madness is, in effect, the manifestation of this denial. Moreover, discussing this madness allows us to clarify the constitution of personal identity in relation to cultural identity, colonialism, and gender. (p.xiii)

The cause of Antoinette’s crisis of identity is her unnamed white English husband who is a representative of both colonial and patriarchal systems. In the novel, Rhys tries to

humanize the marginalized protagonist Antoinette by giving her a voice to speak out about her own suffering and to express her own feelings. Rhys explores the fragmentation of Antoinette's identity, her inner fears, her quest for her belonging and existence and the ways that race, gender, and class affect her identity.

The events of the novel start with a portrayal of Antoinette's childhood after her father's death and after the emancipation act in 1833. The ex-slave owners are waiting for a compensation for their loss of fortunes from the British people. Antoinette and her family are part of the fading colonial order because they used to own plantations and slaves, and now they have lost their wealth and their social status as well. We can notice how class plays a significant role in creating a crisis of identity for Antoinette because she doesn't feel that she is one of those people and doesn't feel safe or secure among them. After the emancipation act, the suppressed hatred of blacks and whites has been released and increased. Antoinette's childhood has been fully occupied with racial violence, discrimination, anxiety, poverty and fear that much affected the construction of her identity or her independent self. As a white Creole in the West Island of Jamaica, she suffers a confusion of self-identity and existence. She is in the middle between the pure white people and the black people; the black people consider her to be a hybrid (of a mixed origin) and view her as being poor while British colonizers consider her to be alien, stranger and outsider.

Antoinette's struggle for her identity, her belonging and her existence began when she was just a little child where she could not define her own self properly; she was marginalized for being of a mixed blood, for being a female, and for being the colonized

object. El Quardi (2013), in her Thesis, studies the fragmentation of Antoinette's identity and shows how ethnicity, class and gender become a reason for discrimination, oppression and marginalization. She states that:

Antoinette has a fragmentary identity that is constructed through various constituents; being these her race and ethnicity (Creole), her gender (a woman), a past colonized, and also because of shifting class and status. All these constituents or dynamics help to the understanding of Antoinette's identity (first to the creation of her identity, and then to the process of her identity destruction). (p.23)

Antoinette faces some problems connected with her identity from the blacks in her community. The black slaves release their hatred when they set fire on their plantations as a kind of protest for what has been practiced over them. That shows the racial violence that is experienced against Antoinette and her family. Antoinette talks about how the blacks perceive them: "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches" (Rhys, p.9). The blacks call Antoinette and her family white cockroaches because of their mixed race. This kind of attitude or treatment creates a kind of confusion for Antoinette when she wanted to define herself and reach some point of recognition and self-realization.

The first part of the novel is narrated by Antoinette as an attempt from Rhys to give her a voice of her own in order to express her own feelings and to create an independent self for her. Antoinette's dreams are one of the ways that express her inner fears: "I dreamed that I was walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight, I could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though I struggled and

screamed I couldn't move" (Rhys, p.11). These inner fears don't come to her out of the blue; they are one way that shows how much Antoinette will continue to struggle throughout the novel. She is surrounded by fear to the extent that she prefers solitude in nature to this cruelty of her society just because of her race. Indeed, Nature becomes Antoinette's only friend because of the purity and honesty that lie within trees, plants and all the small details within the beauty and the purity of nature.

Friendship is a bridge that Antoinette can use to know herself just like a looking glass that reflects one's own identity. Her friendship with Tia can be considered as a way of recognizing herself through looking at Tia. Tia has shown Antoinette the extent to which black people don't like her and her family., she used to refer to Antoinette as a white nigger, and also she once took Antoinette's clothes and gave her hers:

She had taken my dress – not my underclothes, she never wore any – but my dress, starched, ironed, clean that morning. She had left me hers and I put it on at last and walked home in the blazing sun feeling sick, hating her. (Rhys, p.10)

Tia shows how much racism is controlling her behavior and her treatment of her friend Antoinette. Tia continues to refer to Antoinette as poor and dirty; she also tries to underestimate her by cheating on her and by taking her clothes. Identity crisis is revealed after fire is set to the house of Antoinette's father. Antoinette tries to run toward Tia hoping to stay with her and find a sense of comfort with her presumed friend. However, Tia behaves in an offensive manner. She throws a rock at her. Antoinette is looking for someone to be identified with whether Tia or Coulibri where she can feel at home:

As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face... We stared at each other. Blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking glass. (Rhys, p.24)

The idea of having a friend makes Antoinette feel more secure and helps a lot in the construction of her identity. Antoinette is also looking for a place that she loves and to which she belongs. Antoinette recalls the house she used to live in before it was set on fire and compares it to the Garden of Eden. She says: “our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the bible- the tree of life grew there” (Rhys, p.6). Carriere (2007) explains Antoinette’s desire to identify with her homeland through her relationship with the black people such as Tia. She states:

The island is all that she knows, and she is desperate to identify with it through Tia, for Antoinette feels that they have shared the same experiences. She wants to be a part of *something*, so she clings to the hope of Tia and being “like her.” This desire manifests itself most strikingly when Antoinette looks directly at Tia as if she were looking into a mirror. Of course, her illusions are shattered when Tia throws the stone in her face, breaking the mirror image and jolting Antoinette to the realization that she does not belong and that she is not like Tia. (P.84-85)

The marriage of Antoinette’s mother to Mr. Mason; the wealthy Englishman creates hopes inside Antoinette for solving her identity crisis by inspiring into her the feeling of

having a protective family that will make her feel more secure . Their desire to have a better life forces them to imitate the English society in order to indulge into their world. They even start eating their food as they find that this way is the only one for them to choose an identity distinguishes them from others. In other words Antoinette and her mother try to imitate the colonizer and to find comfort in adapting their modes of behavior as well as their lifestyle. In postcolonial terms, this behavior can be called “mimicry” to use Bhabha’s phrase. We can see that when Antoinette begins to eat English food in the English way: “We ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings. I was glad to be like an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine’s cooking” (p.17). However, this feeling does not solve Antoinette’s identity problem. Her sense of her “hybridity” still persists when Antoinette and her mother view themselves as Creole women who neither belong to the Europeans nor to the Jamaicans. They are half way between the two identities, not knowing what to choose as a fixed representation of their identity.

Antoinette’s mother’s marriage also brings lots of gossip by the black people; they are not convinced how this wealthy man marries a woman who owns nothing now. All these talks drag Antoinette and her mother to the edge of a scary and insecure world within a community they used to live with. They begin to feel worried and Annette wants to leave but Mr. Mason keeps taking her for granted. She tells him: “for the time being. The people here hate us. They certainly hate me. Straight out she said that one day and it was then he laughed so heartily” (Rhys, p.15). Mason simply replies that these black people are harmless and “too damn lazy to be dangerous” (p.16). He couldn’t understand their fears or what these people are capable of because of the undeniable fact that he looks down on these

people and finds himself superior to them. Nevertheless, Annette continues to express her fears : “They can be dangerous and cruel for reasons you wouldn’t understand” (p.16).

Antoinette is looking for someone other than herself to protect her and even to define her, and this attitude may be taken as a sign of weakness. She sees her mother’s marriage as something that is capable of bringing them security, strength and a better life. That is why she sometimes mistakenly considers Mr. Mason to be a savior or a redeemer for them:

In some ways it was better before he came though he’d rescued us from poverty and misery, only just in time too. The black people didn’t hate us quite so much when we were poor. We were white but we had not escaped and soon we would be dead for we had no money left.”(Rhys, p. 16)

Antoinette and her feelings of insecurity and loneliness make her so much attached to her step father. She refers to him as a man who has come to bring her and her mother out of their misery, but somehow Mr. Mason takes her and her mother for granted and never listens to their fears, maybe because he represents the colonizer subject or the patriarchal system which marginalizes the females and never listens to them. Antoinette seems to be submissive to this patriarchal or colonizing system because she finds herself depending on Mr. Mason financially and because he has control over her and her mother. Nevertheless, Antoinette accepts his custody and doesn’t mind changing her name into Antoinette Mason, although she once overhears that he comes to the island not to get married but to gain money: “He didn’t come to the West Indies to dance- he came to make money as they all do” (p.13). This situation shows the difficulties Antoinette is facing in

the construction of an independent identity or selfhood. Mr. Mason does not really love Antoinette's mother nor does he like Antoinette. He is acting merely as a patriarchal, wealthy Englishman who is just taking advantage of them.

Antoinette is so much in need for anyone in order to feel safe and protected especially because she was neglected by her own mother. Dibelkova (2013) discusses how Antoinette seeks attachment to objects, places and the black people around her as an attempt to simply define herself among all people around her. She also states that: "it is because of having an unloving mother that Antoinette searches for love among the black people. Annette doesn't help her daughter to identify with herself, and yet forces her to accept the white identity"(p.25). In the novel, Christophine is one of those people who bring a sense of comfort and security to Antoinette. She refers to Christophine as an extraordinary woman: "Her songs were not like Jamaican songs, and she was not like the other women" (Rhys, p.7). We can notice that Christophine provides support or protection to Antoinette and in this way she helps her in feeling stronger and more able to construct her own identity. Christophine's absence makes her feel afraid and insecure about everything around her as she needs her support or the maternal care that all girls in her age need:

I left a light on the chair by my bed and waited for Christophine, for I liked to see her last thing. But she didn't come, and as the candle burned down, the safe peaceful feeling left me. I wished I had a big Cuban dog to lie by my bed and protect me. (Rhys, p.19)

Dibelkova (2013) clarifies that “the question of belonging to a particular place is very important in the novel because Antoinette cannot identify with people and cannot trust them. Hence, she identifies with the estate and other physical things which surround her” (p.26). The fact that Antoinette is living in a place that she likes is another thing that makes her feel a little better because she sees this particular place as home to her. She even prefers solitude in such a place:

I took another road, past the old sugar works and the water wheel that had not turned for years. I went to parts of Coulibri that I had not seen, where there was no road, no path, no track. And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think ‘it’s better than people’. (Rhys, p.12)

When Antoinette moves to the convent school, she finds a shelter from all the corruption, cruelty and hatred that were directed to her before from the outside world. Antoinette finally feels safe and nothing can harm her anymore, not the colonial, not the patriarchal or even the racial acts. Dreams become part of Antoinette’s life and her search for identity. The second nightmare that she has is after Mr. Mason’s visit, when he tells her that she is going to leave and live with him. In this dream she is following a man into darkness; she is sad and begins to cry. The dream becomes like a nightmare:

I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen... He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry, He smiles slyly. ‘Not here, not yet’ he says, and I follow him. (Rhys, p.34)

This shows how the upcoming events of the story are not going to be on Antoinette's side but against her. It also foreshadows the suffering she is going to experience because of the fact of being Creole and a woman living in a society where she is seen as other and outsider.

Antoinette's identity crisis reaches its peak with her marriage that has been arranged by Mr. Mason and his son. Before, she used to find hope in her home, her friend Christophine, but now, and with this marriage, the hope is diminishing. Antoinette's husband is shown as a representative of the patriarchal society and the colonial powers, but this time the oppression, discrimination and marginalization are practiced more on her. Her life with her husband Rochester is summed up in her last dream about following a man into darkness; he never supports her but tries to eliminate her identity and her presence. Rochester devalues every image in her head about ever becoming an independent woman. As a matter of fact, he doesn't marry her out of love but for money and he never hesitates to fulfill his needs of control as a colonizer and a man and makes her feel lost. This is clearly shown in his letter to his father: "Dear father. The thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition... I have sold my soul or you have sold it" (Rhys, p.42). As El Quardi (2013) observes:

We can see Antoinette's identity depicted, especially from the beginning of the novel until her marriage. However, from her marriage, we can see a withdrawing Antoinette, instead of being given a self. Her identity becomes to fade progressively, until she disappears at the end of the novel. (p.30)

Actually, for El Quardi, Antoinette is gradually losing her identity. But in my opinion, this interpretation can be contested as will be explained later in the discussion.

The second part of the novel is narrated by Rochester (His name is not directly mentioned) who treats Antoinette in a bad way that leaves a great impact on her attempt to realize her individualism and to define her identity. Jamal, Kaur & Mani (2014) write: “It can be argued that the unnamed character treats Antoinette badly out of frustration, because of his feelings of alienation and estrangement that render him powerless in a foreign environment” (p.112). They also add that “Antoinette’s husband had no one that he could relate to” (p.114). Rochester has no friends or family in the Caribbean, which increases his feeling of estrangement in such a place. Rochester is portrayed as a domineering, racist man who feels alienated in a land he doesn’t belong to. When Rochester and Antoinette go to spend some time in the Windward Island which in the past belonged to her mother and contains lots of natural landscapes, Rochester still feels alienated and strange even in such a place. Rochester tries to find anything that can remind him of England; in the same way, Antoinette feels alienated when she begins thinking about England and the city of London: “She said this place London is like a cold dark dream. Sometimes I want to wake up”. Rochester replies: “that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream” (p.49). Accordingly, Rochester’s actions and oppression over his wife come out of his feeling of alienation in a land that formerly belonged to her wife’s family and from a land where he doesn’t feel at home. He tells Antoinette: “I feel very much a stranger here, I said. I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side” (p.82). Throughout her life with Rochester in the West Indies, Antoinette seems to be submissive and under her husband’s control. she never feels

safe with him and their relationship has nothing to do with passion or love. Rochester elaborates:

As for the happiness I gave her, that was worse than nothing. I didn't love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did... the sight of a dress which she'd left lying on her bedroom floor made me breathless and savage with desire. When I was exhausted I turned away from her and slept, still without a word or a caress (p.58)

El Quardi (2013) explains that "the deprivation of love that Antoinette undergoes is another element involved in her identity crisis and intensifies the process of her complete disappearance" (p.36). Antoinette feels deprived of the love she needs and so she finds herself alienated and unsettled. Rochester's sexual abuse makes Antoinette an inferior human being and reduces her sense of her own identity. Pollanen (2012) explains Rochester's sexual desires towards Antoinette and the impact of lack of love in their relationship:

Soon the roles are reversed as h [Rochester] starts to suppress her identity, and sex itself becomes a way of control for Edward to achieve domination over her. He cannot access her culture and country, but he can become sexually superior by using Antoinette's desire and later completely rejecting it. (p.13)

The problem gets more complicated when Rochester receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, one of Alexander Cosway's bastard sons. In the letter, he is warning Rochester from Antoinette and telling him about her family, her mother's mental disorder and the

bad character of their father by claiming that he is protecting him from this family: “you have been shamefully deceived by the Mason family... wicked and detestable slave-owners since generations... wickedness is not the worst. There is madness in that family” (Rhys, p.59). Rochester’s situation gets worse when he reads the letter. He becomes more worried about what he has done when he married a woman like her. When he enters the house and sees how Antoinette’s temper is getting bad, he gets more annoyed. He regrets this marriage without acknowledging that he himself is driving her into these bad feelings and hysteric temper.

Antoinette’s submissiveness and her being a passive girl who does nothing to articulate her identity makes her in need of Christophine who is the only support for her. Christophine is an independent woman who never attaches her happiness to any man and never depends on a man in any aspect of her life. She makes her own decisions and knows her place in this world. She says:

I have my house that your mother gives me so long ago and I have my garden and my son to work for me. A lazy boy but I make him work. Too besides the younger master don’t like me, and perhaps I don’t like him so much. If I stay here I bring trouble and bone of contention in your house. (p.63)

Lois Tyson proposes that the hysterical behavior is considered to be something related only to women and that it comes from within the patriarchal assumptions that have been internalized in women’s minds. In the case of Antoinette, it is very easy to accuse her of being a mad and crazy woman along with her mother as a result of the patriarchal gender roles as explained by Tyson. Antoinette justifies her bad temper with the servant

Amelie to Rochester, which indicates how she is still trying to please him and never realizes that he is the one who drives her into this bad temper and madness. She justifies the situation and sums things up by telling him:

It was a song about 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 and I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (p.64)

The irony here lies in how Antoinette is explaining her suffering because of her mixed blood and the discrimination that is practiced against her to a man (her husband) who treats her as a stranger and an alien. Therefore, it is a kind of ignorance on her part not to notice that she is living with the man who represents racism and patriarchy, a man who marries her because of his need for her money not because he loves her. Antoinette never realizes that he is now determined to turn against her after he has read Daniel Cosway's inciting, though false, indeed, this letter was the trigger for him to reveal his hatred for her as a Creole woman and as a colonized object as well.

Antoinette's dependency and weakness are evident when she goes to Christophine asking her for a love potion because she notices that Rochester is changing and is turning against her. She wants to win his love back no matter how. Antoinette always attaches her happiness to Rochester's presence in her life, although he is one of the reasons of her suffering. For a long time, she has been submitting to him and through her life with him, she never does anything to reconstruct an identity of her own:

Christophine, he does not love me, I think he hates me. He always sleeps in his dressing-room now and the servants know. If I get angry he is scornful and silent, sometimes he does not speak to me for hours and I cannot endure it any more, I cannot. What shall I do? He was not like that at first. (p. 68)

Although Antoinette admits that she is no longer capable of handling this situation, she chooses the love potion to solve the problem. Christophine; the independent woman who never depends on a man in her entire life and who has three children each one from a different father and never gives a penny to a man, tells her to pack her things and go. This is the suitable action to make in this particular situation. Instead of fighting to gain her spirit and reaches deep down into her own soul, Antoinette prefers being passive and dependent to being active and independent woman. Christophine tells her about men in general and says: "If you love them they treat you bad, if you don't love them they after you night and day bothering your soul case out" (p.69). Antoinette never listens to her and still prefers staying with her husband Rochester. Unlike Christophine, she depends financially on her husband because of the British law that allows him to take all what she owns. This aggravates her plight and increases her suffering. She tells Christophine, "He will not come after me. And you must understand I am not rich now, I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him" (p.69).

Antoinette is aware of the fact that their relationship is getting worse. He keeps calling her Bertha as a way of eliminating her identity and destroying her sense of existence or belonging. By changing her name, Antoinette realizes the he has discovered all things about her mother's madness and has started calling her by her mother's name. Although

Antoinette doesn't like the name Bertha, we can notice that she does nothing to make that stop. Thus, that shows how much she is submissive and weak.

Viewed in the light of traditional gender roles as explained by Tyson we can see how Antoinette is programmed to follow her traditional gender role as an inferior, weak, emotional human being who is unable to take central decisions, while her husband is cast as a superior, strong and rational being. Changing his wife's name into Bertha, Rochester starts treating her as a doll and considers her as his property. Rochester is always trying to eliminate her and prevents her from taking any central decision in her life. In Tyson's concepts of "good girl" and bad girl", we can consider Antoinette as the good girl who submits to the patriarchal assumptions about gender roles.

Rochester treats Antoinette as Bertha, not Antoinette. Though Antoinette got married in order to prove herself, it turns out that she is doing exactly the opposite and losing what has remained of hope to get an independent self. In postcolonial terms and especially in light of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) we can notice the othering attitude of Rochester when he considers his wife to be the other for he is the subject, the superior western colonizer, while his wife represents the inferior Creole colonized object. Carriere (2007) views Antoinette's lack of identity as a kind of death in life:

Antoinette's real death comes under the oppression of Rochester, symbol of English rule. She is colonized into a slave figure and thus enters a death-like sleep, a zombie state, just as her mother did. Upon closer inspection, the death is also the one imposed by Western literature through voicing the Other's history instead of allowing the Other to tell her own history. (p.98)

In addition to her husband's attempts to obliterate her identity, Antoinette is still suffering from the mistreatment by the black people as mentioned earlier. She has never forgotten the way blacks treated her and her mother as people of a mixed blood. Indeed, the same notion is still living with her. Nor does she forget the stone that Tia threw at her as a way of alienating her from her local community and of stigmatizing her as an alien and a stranger.

Ironically, Antoinette's passive character and her desire to win back her husband's love lead her to the edge of the precipice. She uses the love potion to get her husband's love back but obviously everything is turning against her. Not before long, she learns that her husband is having an affair with the servant Amelie. Emery (1990) considers Antoinette's resort to love potions to win her husband's diminishing love and her ultimate failure to achieve that as evidence of her identity crisis. She clarifies that: "These reasons [the failure of the obeah] belong to the larger one of Antoinette's lack of place in this society. ... Her reliance on obeah for individual, personal matters cannot succeed, for as an individual she hardly exists" (p.44). In fact, Rochester never cares about his wife's feelings, for he keeps underestimating and marginalizing her by having an affair with one of the servants: "For I had not one moment of remorse. Nor was I anxious to know what was happening behind the thin partition which divided us from my wife's bedroom" (p.89). Becoming more aware of her need for an identity of her own, Antoinette finally tells Rochester not to call her Bertha:

Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name...I loved this place and you have made it into a place I hate... I used to think that if everything else went out of my life I would still have this, and now you have spoiled it...I hate it now like I hate you and before I die I will show you how much I hate you" (p.94).

The above quotation indicates that Antoinette is gradually moving, though slowly, towards achieving a kind of epiphany or realization of what is going on and her need for an independent self and an identity of her own. When Rochester talks to Antoinette about justice, she simply replies: “I have heard that word. It’s cold word. I tried it out. I wrote it down. I wrote it down several times and always it looked like a damn cold lie to me. There is no justice” (p.94). Antoinette feels disappointed and reacts strongly: “She smashed another bottle against the wall and stood with the broken glass in her hand and murder in her eyes” (p.95).

Christophine, the independent strong woman is the only support for Antoinette. She is the only one who tries to strengthen and defend her. After knowing about Rochester’s affair, she accuses him of being impassionate and incapable of loving his wife because he has married her for money and that he wants to eliminate her presence by calling her another name and by accusing her of madness:

Everybody knows you marry her for her money and you take it all. And then you want to break her up, because you jealous of her... you fool the girl. You make her think you can’t see the sun for looking at her... it’s she can’t see the sun anymore.

Only you she sees. But all you want is to break her up. (p.98)

When Christophine asks Rochester to give Antoinette the money and let her take care of her, he asks Christophine to go and never come back and blames her for everything that has been going on. We can say that Rochester is taking the only support from Antoinette and leaving her broken and weak. Confronted by Christophine, Rochester feels that his patriarchal and colonial roles are being eroded. Consequently he decides to get rid

of Christophe in order to get back his control over his wife, whom he now considers as mad and out of temper.

Antoinette constantly questions herself about her identity. She tells Rochester: “I know that you planned this because you wanted to be rid of me. You have no love at all for me. Nor had my brother. Your plan succeeded because I was young, conceited, foolish, trusting. Above all because I was young. You were able to do this to me” (Rhys, p.104). Now, there is no passion or love in their relationship anymore. Antoinette and Rochester have reached a point of no return. Hatred now characterizes their relationship but Rochester will not leave her alone. He insists on destroying Antoinette:” You hate me and I hate you. We’ll see who hates best. But first, first I will destroy your hatred. Now. My hate is colder, stronger, and you’ll have no hate to warm yourself. You will have nothing” (p. 110). Rochester treats her like a doll which he can move wherever he wants and whenever he wants: “The doll had a doll’s voice, a breathless but curiously indifferent voice” (p.110). As mentioned previously, Rochester’s bad treatment of Antoinette comes from his feeling of alienation in a place that formerly belongs to his wife’s mother, a place where he feels alienated and estranged. He also feels alienated among those people who belong to different races and classes. These suppressed feelings force Rochester to treat his wife as his own property. Expressing his hatred and racism, Rochester exclaims:

I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears. Their flattery and envy, conceit and deceit. And I hated the place... I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged

to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirsty longing for what I had lost before I found it. (p.111)

Rochester is the nameless creator who has no clearly-stated name but can easily name others and, as a white man, his authority and privilege allow him to confer identity on others. As mentioned earlier, he decides to rename his wife, calling her "Bertha" in an attempt to obliterate her identity. Later, he tries to take away Antoinette's voice along with her name, refusing to listen to her side of the story. As he continues to fragment her identity, he creates the new name of "Marionetta," a cruel joke that reflects Antoinette's doll-like pliability. He ultimately refashions Antoinette into a raving madwoman and treats her as a ghost. He says: "I'll take her in my arms, my lunatic. She's mad but *mine, mine*. What will I care for gods or devils or for fate itself. If she smiles or weeps or both. *For me*" (Rhys, p.107)

Rochester announces that Antoinette has become his own property and now he is planning to take her against her will to live in England. He simply locks her in the attic as an attempt to eliminate her from existence. Antoinette's passive character and her ignorance of her need for independent life prevent her from discovering herself and lead her to the disaster prepared by her husband. Antoinette feels that she lives in darkness to the extent she cannot recognize herself in a looking-glass which can give her a sense of identity and a recognizable independent self: "I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass... there is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now" (p.117). She doesn't even believe that this is England, it is not how she imagined the place to be: "They tell me I am in England but I

don't believe them" (p.117). As a matter of fact, Antoinette is submissive enough to reach this level of identity crisis, at least before she knew what she is but now she couldn't even recognize herself and everything is dark, destructive and vague.

Antoinette has nothing now but her dress in order to recognize herself and reconnect with her past self before she came to England: "time has no meaning. But something you can touch and hold like my red dress, that has a meaning. Where is it?" (p.120). In fact, the red dress and the red color itself represent an element of the Caribbean : "The scent that came from the dress was very faint at first, then it grew stronger. The smell of vetivert and frangipani, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees when they are flowering. The smell of the sun and the smell of the rain" (p.120). We can see that once she realizes that she lives in a real darkness where she cannot recognize her own self, she starts looking for anything to identify herself and her independent being such as her home in West Indies, Tia as a friend, Christophine as a mother figure and even her marriage. Drake describes in her article *Race and Caribbean Culture as Thematics of Liberation* (1999) how this scene depicts Antoinette as a zombie that is reawakened and takes its revenge:

Frangipani, vetivert, cinnamon and lemon are all Caribbean salts which awake the zombie from its slumber. The red dress which Antoinette fears "they" have taken from her – the act which she calls "the last and worst thing," to change its smell – steal the freeing salts which confirm her identity – she sees transmute itself, to flame; and she identifies it, in the comment quoted, with the flamboyant tree. Antoinette converts Thornfield Hall itself into a flamboyant (flaming) tree; her own soul rises up as it "blooms. (p.108)

Antoinette's restlessness and instability seem to stem, in some part, from her inability to belong to any particular community. As a white Creole, she becomes the combination of the European world of her ancestors and the Caribbean culture into which she is born. An exile within her own family, a "white cockroach" to her disdainful servants, and an oddity in the eyes of her own husband, Antoinette cannot find a peaceful place for herself. The only place she finds is the dark attic because she is simply doomed to a form of enslavement by being forced to depend on her husband. Antoinette's upbringing and environment exacerbate her inherited condition, as she feels rejected and displaced, with no one to love her. She becomes paranoid and solitary, inclined to horrible dreams and violent outbursts.

At the end of the novel, we can notice Antoinette burning down the house. There are several interpretations of her act at the end. Some interpreters view this particular act as a withdrawal of her identity while others view it as a construction of her identity. Finally, Antoinette chooses death as a way of resolving her problem. Whether this ending of her life is a defeat or a triumph depends on the perspective we look at it. For the first look, this can be easily recognized as a definite defeat. Looking more closely at the matter and in light of a feminist perspective, we can consider it as a moment of triumph. Unable to achieve her goal of having an independent identity because of the various factors conspiring against her as explained earlier, Antoinette realizes that by ending her life, she can do what she likes. Her last deed is setting Thornfield on fire, and with this she ends a story of long suffering. El Quardi (2013) believes that:

the freedom that she[Antoinette] aimed at took place at the end of the novel; however, freedom could only be achieved through disappearance, to get rid of all the imprisonments from which she suffered. When she dreams of burning Thornfield house, she is thereby liberating herself. (p.37)

Commenting on Antoinette's death, Pollanen (2012) clarifies that Antoinette undergoes several kinds of struggle and she had to repress the sense of her identity among other people around her because she is not able to relate to them. She interprets Antoinette's act at the end of the novel by stating that "Antoinette defies and destroys the limits others have tried to set on her and decides to free herself" (p.15). She argues that Antoinette's failure to reconstruct an identity of her own leads her to choose death as a door out to freedom. Drake (1990) in her article explains how Antoinette's death at the end of the novel cannot be considered as real:

Antoinette's "real" death is not the demented suicide in the flames of Thornfield Hall. That projected death is really the one "everyone knows about" – through reading *Jane Eyre*, the European colonizer's writing of history, and of Antoinette's history. Her "real" death is her subjugation by Rochester – by the colonizer – the long slow process of her reduction to the zombie state chronicled in the novel. (p.109)

In my opinion Antoinette prefers to die as an attempt to build an imaginary world for herself where she can be with the ones she really loves like Tia, Christophine, Aunt Cora and Sandi, and away from her unloving patriarchal husband in order to go to a place where she feels loved, recognized and defined. In fact, we cannot avoid the fact that Antoinette throughout the novel couldn't build a world of her own or reach an independent

self with a recognizable identity. Instead, she ends up locked in the dark attic in Thornfield as a result of her incapability to fight against the external forces that try to oppress her and eliminate her identity. Actually, her husband is considered to be the most dangerous of these external forces to oppress and marginalize her. At the same time, she chooses the easy way to take a central decision and commit suicide. She chooses death as a way of becoming a distinguished woman and reaching a high level of a sense of identity.

Antoinette's difficulties in constructing an identity of her own, her submissive character from the beginning till the end, and the series of struggle she undergoes can be applied to the two stages of Erikson's psychosocial theory that involves "Identity versus Role confusion" and "Intimacy versus Isolation". As a Creole woman, Antoinette has a problem with defining her own self because she belongs neither to the white Europeans nor to the Black Jamaicans. By the time she was supposed to construct an identity of her own away from the values and expectations of others, she gets married to Rochester who was an obstacle in the way to an independent self. This marriage makes her suffer from a role confusion or identity crisis because her husband was attempting all the time to eliminate her and her own sense of identity. If she decides to fight against the obstacles that are presented through her husband and begins to find a way out to self-realization, she would succeed in resolving the crisis and begin a life with the intimacy among the people she loves. Instead, Antoinette decides to be submissive and passive; she never fights her husband or thinks of leaving him, so she moves to the next stage of isolation where she finds herself locked in the dark attic. We can see also from the beginning, how she prefers solitude in nature to exploring the world around her by referring to nature as a pure and honest place.

Antoinette's struggle and the different circumstances she goes through can be seen against James Marcia's identity statuses. Antoinette goes through identity diffusion after the emancipation act. When she starts feeling that she doesn't belong to the place she was born in, Antoinette is unable to confront all these obstacles and prefers nature as a pure place for solitude and detachment, to establishing relationships with others. In this case, Antoinette somehow doesn't suffer from a crisis because she is not committed to anything around her. Another status she goes through is identity foreclosure, when she accepts to marry an English man she doesn't know well. In her marriage, she never rebels against anything that Rochester says. For example, she is not satisfied with his calling her Bertha, but she doesn't do anything about it. Also, when she has doubts about his love for her, instead of leaving him, she goes to Christophine to make her a love potion. This particular status is embodied in Antoinette's submissive character to her husband and even to her step father Mr. Mason. She prefers taking everything in her life as it is to creating a world and an identity of her own. Moratorium is another status of identity which Antoinette succeeds to go through by choosing death, a part that involves taking decisions, planning to reconstruct her identity, and building a world of her own away from life and away from all the oppressing external forces. Accordingly, Antoinette somehow succeeds in going through the next status that involves identity exploration and achievement, because she chooses death as a way of identity exploration.

4.3 Identity Crisis Experienced by Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

The 19th century is the century that witnessed the peak of imperialism and colonization. After WW2, the colonizing countries started to lose their control over the colonized ones, many of which gained their independence such as Jamaica. As a result of all these changes, we can notice the increase in massive migrations which resulted in the formation of multicultural societies. These migrations have had a great impact on those who migrated as well as on the people they mixed with. The mixing of different races and cultures led to cultural conflicts. All these changes and especially the immigrant experience have had great effects on women in particular because they suffered the most for being immigrants and for being ruled by their own patriarchal societies. Espin (1999) proposes that:

The degree of integration of the women of a given immigrant group in the host society- rather than the integration and/or success of men- indicates the significance of transformation occurring in the immigrant community. It signals their adaptation to the new life. (p.4)

Espin (1999) clarifies that women have a great contribution in the transformation and the adaptation in a new society and the idea of immigration itself opens up different possibilities for them rather than men, especially because those women who migrated from the traditional societies had the chance to explore the modern country. Thus, Women encountered new social roles in the host culture which allowed them a possibility to live a new way of life. Some women worked outside home and some others worked inside; others were educated and some others just stayed at home taking care of the household. Espin (1999, p.6-8) states that immigrant women usually don't have any control over their

decision to migrate due to political circumstances or because of their patriarchal families that leave them no choice or decision to make. For immigrants in general, it is easier to preserve control over the private residence than over the public life and everything which requires social interaction with others. Espin elaborates on the immigrant experience and struggles faced by men in their new society.

The immigrants struggle with the strain and fatigue derived from the new society, which affect self-esteem and may lead to alienation; confusion in terms of role expectations, values and identity; shock resulting from the differences between the two cultures; and a sense of uprootedness and impotence resulting from an inability to function competently in the new culture. (1999, p.19)

Identity crisis is an essential theme in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. Throughout the novel, the protagonist Nazneen struggles between tradition, multiculturalism, nostalgia and notion of home in an attempt to define her identity in her new community. Duff (2014) clarifies that Monica Ali's *Brick lane* is a representation of identity formation within the Bengali immigrant communities which focuses more on the domestic space. In this sense, we can find how Ali is addressing the issue of identity as a matter that springs from race, class and even gender. The novel's heroine Nazneen is a female who comes from a patriarchal society and lives in a foreign country where she finds a new community and a new social environment where she must strive to define her identity and determine the course of her life. Al Azawi (2013) proposes that Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*:

Deals with the same issues postcolonial writers discuss in their works, such as racial prejudice, discrimination, displacement, and issues of exclusion and (un)belonging. *Brick Lane* examines the emotional effect of the experience of immigration in terms of the shock of arrival and the cultural consequences and problems resulting from moving from one place to another, all of which are important to the construction of one's identity. (p.144)

The events of the story start with the birth of the female protagonist, Nazneen, in 1967 and how she was left to her fate to decide whether she is going to live or not. At first, Nazneen is controlled by her mother's notions and thoughts about fate and how one can be stronger when he/she leaves everything unchanged until fate decides to change it:

Fighting against one's Fate can weaken the blood. Sometimes or perhaps most times, it can be fatal. Not once did Nazneen question the logic of the story of How You Were Left to Your Fate. Indeed she was grateful for her mother's quiet courage, her tearful stoicism that was almost daily in evidence. (Ali, 2003, p.15)

Bentley (2008) explains the idea of fate and how it reflects on Nazneen herself. He states that:

Nazneen's future is already mapped out, restricting her power to change her situation, and it is this belief in fate that forces her to accept the arranged marriage with Chanu resulting in her being bundled of her loving home in Bangladesh to the alien environment of the East London. (p.89)

As a matter of fact, Nazneen survives and lives in her Bengali environment until early adulthood before she is dispatched by her father to her Bengali husband in Britain. Nazneen's marriage marks a turning point in her life. Nash (2012, p.37) states that Nazneen with her forced marriage from a man twice her age, is given a second chance or the "green card" to walk through the journey of self-discovery and slowly fights her mother's fatalism when she first moves with her husband Chanu to live in London. It was a slow process of getting out beyond the confinements of being a Bangladeshi woman who lives in a foreign country. Accordingly, Nazneen has to fight against the feeling of alienation and exile by getting rid of these ideas that enforce leaving everything to fate and standing still waiting to see what will happen next. From now on, Nazneen's life becomes a series of struggles in a long search for finding her true identity and eventually asserting herself and starting a life of her own that depends on her own choice and not on the dictates of her fate.

Nazneen's journey of struggle for identity and freedom begins when she first moves to London where she starts searching for alternatives that could tell or inspire her to find her identity and to find herself in a place where she feels home. Obviously, Nazneen has an extraordinary experience when she is watching television and sees a girl ice-skating. She feels captivated by this woman on television as she moves freely and seems to be fully independent and in control:

She stopped dead and flung her arms above her head with a look so triumphant that you knew she had conquered everything: her body, the laws of nature, and the heart of the tight-suited man, who slid over on his knees, vowing to lay down his life for her. (Ali, p.36)

Bentley (2008, p.89) explains the images of the ice skating on television. He argues that the ice-skating holds a romantic image of the woman freed from the constraints of dress and any image of subordination to the male and the gravity itself. He states that all these images “represent an alternative world to Nazneen who is weighed down with domestic duties, and the figure of the ice skating becomes a symbol of freedom in the novel”.

The ice-skating scene shows the performance of an independent lady and forces Nazneen to be torn between the old and the new Nazneen: “The old Nazneen was sublimated and the new Nazneen was filled with white light, glory..... when it ended and she switched off the television, the old Nazneen returned” (p.41). Therefore, we can notice that from the beginning of the novel, Nazneen feels the need for transformation and liberation and it was just a matter of time for her to truly succeed in this transformation and get to the other part of herself which yearns for independence and freedom.

Living in a foreign country with a man much older than her reinforces Nazneen’s feeling of alienation and exile. Al Deek (2016) discusses how Nazneen fights forcefully and struggles persistently to reconstruct an identity of her own. Now she finds herself amidst a new culture and a new race and has to face these new challenges in addition to the issue of gender. In fact, the novel shows how Nazneen is on a long journey of awakening and self-discovery.

People who migrate from their homeland and come to host land usually form a kind of “ghetto”, such as the Bengali community in the district of Brick Lane. Al- Azawi (2013) discusses in her thesis how London is portrayed by the first generation of female

immigrants through new levels of gender, class and race in which London becomes an imperialist and oppressive place. She also discusses the position of these non-western women living in the metropolitan. She clarifies that:

Brick Lane portrays a community, which is more localized, segregated, and cut off from the mainstream society. Within this community women are overwhelmed with a sense of isolation and alienation. The novel presents a conservative Bangladeshi community which attempts to maintain and perpetuate its traditions and culture within its new context in England.(p.142)

Living in this self-enclosed and restrictive community, Nazneen tries to find a way out in order to find liberation, freedom and independence. Most of the Bengalis living in this area are trying to protect themselves from the encroaches of modernist English society and western culture. Thus, we find Nazneen's Bengali husband Chanu telling Dr. Azad about his plans of going home before the children get spoiled: "Our community is not educated about this, and much less besides. But for my part, I don't plan to risk these things happening to my children. We will go back before they get spoiled" (Ali, p.32). Voicing his great concerns about this issue, he tells Dr. Azad that he doesn't want his son to grow up in an English society nor to absorb English culture: "I don't want him to rot here with all the skinheads and drunks. I don't want him to grow up in this racist society. I don't want him to talk back to his mother. I want him to respect his father" (Ali, p.111). Dr. Azad informs Chanu: "This is another disease that afflicts us.... I call it Going Home Syndrome" (Ali, 32).

Chanu appears at the beginning of the novel as representing a traditional and patriarchal society that tries to impose restrictions on both women and children. With the passage of time, he comes to realize the racism in the British culture especially when he was expecting a promotion and never got it. This realization increased when he started working as a taxi driver, which made him feel disappointed and desperate: “Chanu had begun, she had noticed, to talk less of promotion and more of racism. He had warned her about making friends with them” (Ali, p.72). Razia never agreed with Chanu’s ideas about discrimination and the racist Britain; she says: “There are good ones, and bad ones. Just like us. And some of them you can be friendly with. Some aren’t so friendly. But they leave us alone, and we leave them alone. That is enough for me” (p.73). Chanu undergoes an experience that makes him think more of the clash between the two cultures; the western and their Eastern culture. He explains his thoughts and this tragedy clearly to Dr. Azad:

I am talking about the clash between western values and our own. I’m talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one’s identity and heritage. I’m talking about children who don’t know what their identity is. I’m talking about the feeling of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent. I’m talking about the terrific struggle to preserve one’s sanity while striving to achieve the best for one’s family.(Ali, p.113)

Mrs. Azad represents a Westernized Muslim woman who succeeds in assimilating the new culture to an ultimate level. She finds Chanu’s thoughts complicated and shouldn’t be acknowledged. She replies to his explanation about their tragedy by saying: “listen, when I’m in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I’m just one of them “(Ali, p.114). So, she

finds herself one of those British girls and finds it not a difficult task to assimilate and to be part of this new society and culture. There is a sharp contrast between Mrs. Azad and Razia, Nazneen's best friend. Mrs. Azad is considered as westernized Muslim woman who is unattractive and knows nothing about the household, while Razia, in contrast, can be considered as a role model to all immigrant women living in London and a good representative of womanhood because of her self-confidence and her sense of caring as a mother. She is the woman who manages to stay in London after the death of her husband and succeeds in building a new identity of her own.

It is this tendency for self-imposed isolation and alienation that Nazneen has to grapple with during her long search for a way out of this restrictive and isolationist societal environment. As we find, there are many memories of her past life in Bangladesh that pull her toward her life back home. In fact, this attraction to the past is engendered not only by her husband's predilections towards home and Bengali culture and tradition, but also by the letters of her sister Hasina who keeps informing and reminding her of the village and the people she left back home. Hence the internal struggle we find inside Nazneen who is torn between her memories of the past and the new situation in which she finds herself. This internal conflict forms the main focus of the events of this novel and the basic factors that will determine Nazneen's life in Britain:

You can spread your soul over a paddy field, you can whisper to a mango tree, you can feel the earth beneath your toes and know that this is the place, the place where it begins and ends. But what can you tell to a pile of bricks? The bricks will not be moved. (Ali, P.87)

Patriarchy is one of the main obstacles in Nazneen's strife for self-discovery and independence because it is a part of her traditional origins. This is apparent in her mother's words: "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (p.80). There are many examples of patriarchy that is practiced fully on Nazneen herself. For instance, when she tells her husband that she wants to "learn some English" (p.37) as an attempt to adjust to the host society, he simply takes her for granted and tells her: "where's the need anyway?" (p.37). Another time, she asks him to let her go with Razia to college to learn English. He simply ignores her and tells her that this will not be useful and she should take care of the baby and the household. Obviously, Chanu is attempting to make the house a prison for Nazneen because he doesn't want her to adjust and get in touch with the new society. Cuevas (2008) illustrates that:

by trying to minimize their wives' contact with British society, Chanu and other Bangladeshi men in the novel are under the delusion that this can somehow preserve their own 'authenticity' – even decades after migration – something they do not find inconsistent with the assimilated life they lead themselves" (p. 390).

However, Nazneen's desire to adjust is very apparent throughout the novel. Thus, we see her determination to be part of this new society and to create a hybrid identity where the Bangladeshi and the English culture can co-exist. When she is wandering in the streets of London for the first time exploring the outside public world, she speaks English to a stranger for the first time and says "sorry": "she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something" (p.61). This particular walk makes her feel more confident about what she can do in order to reach her eventual empowerment and

independence. When Chanu tells her that women are incapable of doing anything without the help of men, she simply replies:

Anything is possible. She wanted to shout it. Do you know what I did today? I went inside a pub...I walked mile upon mile, probably around the whole of London...I found a Bangladeshi restaurant and asked directions. See what I can do! (Ali, p.62-63)

Furthermore, learning English was the beginning of her endeavour to fit in this new society by learning the language because she really starts feeling as if she is trapped: “She looked and she saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity” (Ali, 76). The patriarchal system which still surrounds her prevents Nazneen from doing whatever she wants and makes it difficult for her to fit in, but she is determined to overcome this obstacle and to accommodate herself to the new society and its different culture. Noufal (2014) discusses the issue of Chanu’s intentions behind discouraging Nazneen to learn English:

Since English is not Nazneen’s language, her learning English language means getting into the public sphere of the foreign land. Entering into others’ domain might distance her from “her own” domain, which might be problematic for her patriarchal husband. As long as his wife is ignorant of the language he can dominate her and deny her from having a social access. It is a subtle form of oppression inflicted by Chanu, an educated and “modern” South Asian husband. (P.452-453)

Nazneen’s journey of searching for herself is somehow fulfilled when she gets pregnant and has the first child Raqib. The feeling that she has made something makes her

feel satisfied and happy, but the fact that Chanu is a part of all this makes her feel dissatisfied and disappointed: “She was astonished that she had made this creature, spun him out of her flesh. When she remembered that Chanu had made him too she was stunned” (p.89). When Raqib gets sick, the first thing that Nazneen does is forgetting about her mother’s notions about fate and how one should never question or do anything to defeat fate. And so she takes her son to the hospital to get the necessary medical care. She believes that God is with her wherever she goes. It is part of Nazneen’s struggle to gain independence away from others’ viewpoints and ideas through making central and independent decisions about her own life. Although Nazneen feels confident about what she does when Raqib gets sick, she is still stuck between accepting fate or revolting against it (Ali, p.143).

Acting under the dictates of a traditional system, Chanu tries to apply it against his wife and later on to his two daughters. He starts feeling that he is losing and that everything is getting out of his control, so he begins treating his daughters in a very bad way by beating them: “beatings were becoming a frequent ritual”(Ali, 180). Al Deek (2016, p.223) explains the division between the first generation of the displaced migrants in London and Nazneen’s children in the sense that the concept of home differs from one generation to another. For example, Nazneen’s daughter, Shahana who has never been to Bangladesh and behaves as an English girl, reflects these differences about what home is because she knows no home other than England. She makes this clear when she tells her father: “I didn’t ask to be born here” (p.181). That is also obvious when she begins to correct her father’s language and hate to listen to anything her father says about

Bangladesh. It is also clear from the way she dresses, from her favorite food and from her writing skills:

Shahana didn't want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest. (Ali, p. 181)

Perianova (2013) suggests that Shahana's identity is built according to the British cultural rules and norms because her feeling of belonging refers only to England, regardless of how much her father Chanu tries to strengthen the connection between her and Bangladesh. The fact that her favorite food and clothes differ from those of Bangladesh offer a kind of protest against and rejection of the Bangladeshi culture so as to fit in the new land. That is one of the things that sadden Chanu and make him grieved because her daughters are born in this new society and have become part of it. Chanu cannot deny this fact; all he can do is to insist on going back home, hoping to get them back to their roots and the original culture. We can notice how his accusation of the British culture as racist and unfair is rejected throughout the novel by different characters, especially his daughters. Avtar Brah (1996) discusses this relationship between the different generations by clarifying that:

clearly, the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to re-orientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities. (p.194)

Tongur (2013) explains the experience of immigration and how it has effects not only on the first generation but also on the second and the third ones. She states:

The second- and third-generations are also exposed to racism, ignorance, segregation, alienation and deprivation in their daily lives but, unlike the first-generation parents, they are obliged to maximize their contact with the British people through schooling, internet, and products of popular culture such as music, fashion, entertainment and food which shape their belief, attitude and behavior. (p.257-258)

With Chanu's decision to go back home, he becomes more racist. The girls are not allowed to speak English inside the house and Nazneen does nothing about it and leaves this problem to the girls and their father: "When Chanu went out the girls frequently switched languages. Nazneen let it pass. Perhaps even encouraged it" (p.194). Vlasta (2015, p.80) points out that by ignoring Chanu's orders once he gets out, Nazneen is getting closer to the new society and the new language and her daughters provide some support in this particular situation. However, Chanu starts talking more about history because he believes that the effects of colonialism are still on but in a different way. He says:

All these people here who look down at us as peasants know nothing of history...in the sixteenth century, Bengal was called the Paradise of Nations. These are our roots. Do they teach these things in the school here? Does Shahana know about the Paradise of Nations? All she knows about is flood and famine. Whole bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her." (Ali, p.185)

Chanu's family need to save more money in order to be able to return to Bangladesh, Chanu agrees to Nazneen's suggestion that she can start working in a sewing job. And so he brings her a sewing machine. He is so desperate to go back home and wants to save money before he leaves. He sees his return to Bangladesh as his life's dream. As he tells his daughters: "Your mother is doing everything to facilitate our dream through the old honorable craft of tailoring" (Ali, p.208). Because he is a patriarch, he is afraid to lose control if Nazneen works and begins earning money because this may loosen his control over his family. Chanu considers himself to be superior to his wife because of his good education and his adherence to his old traditions and moral values. Believing that he is a highly educated man, he tells Nazneen: "Some of these uneducated ones, they say that if the wife is working it is only because the husband cannot feed them. Lucky for you I am an educated man" (p.184). Vlasta (2015) discusses Chanu's character and views him as a man who tries to express his social role as an immigrant who succeeds in preserving his origins and traditions. At the same time, Chanu doesn't want his family to be identified with the new society because he thinks that in this way he is protecting them from getting involved with the negative culture of this society and protecting them from undergoing this undesirable experience.

Nazneen spends almost half of her life struggling and stuck with her responsibility towards her family, daughters and husband because she always feels that she has to be devoted to them all: "She has to concentrate hard to get through each day. Sometimes she felt as if she held her breath the entire evening" (Ali, p.205). Sewing garments was the huge step for her towards self-confidence and independence socially, culturally and economically.

Having a job and earning enough money become her means of becoming an active member of her community and consequently a means of her self-realization.

This particular job introduces her to Karim, the man who is bringing her garments to sew. Her relationship with Karim develops and leads her to change her whole life. Being in love with him makes her face a conflict between her own beliefs, faith and religion and her own desire to be with him. He begins to visit her frequently and through his first visits, she forgets to cover her head. An internal conflict occurs inside her between falling in love with him and between the Islamic, cultural and traditional rules which prohibit her from having such a relationship. Mansoor (2011) discusses Nazneen's relationship with Karim and states that: "Nazneen's marriage could not remain impervious to the impact of the society to which they had been transplanted. Her taking on Karim as a lover becomes an indicator of the impact of the libertarian of British society" (p.13). She sees in him a man who knows what he wants and where he belongs. This is what brings her closer to him. Nash (2012) illustrates that "one of the reasons why Karim impresses Nazneen is that she believes that he, as a second generation immigrant, has formed a settled identity which she as a migrant lacks (p.39). Karim is Nazneen's way of escape from the alienation and exile she feels within herself. Furthermore, when Nazneen falls in love with Karim, she starts seeing in him what Chanu lacks. For example, Karim used to give her something to read to enlighten her; on the other hand Chanu, "had never given her anything to read" (Ali, p.234). She starts reading as a way to find her own self and her own identity: "Reading became a sweet and melancholy secret, caressing the phrases with her eyes, feeling Karim floating there, just beyond the words" (Ali, p.243).

Nazneen usually agrees on everything that Chanu suggests. Now with Karim never leaving her mind, she starts regretting it and begins to feel insecure: “ She smelled disaster, and for the first time it occurred to her that it was not only Shahana she would have to worry about if they ever went to Dhaka”(Ali, p.256). Nazneen feels that Karim has important characteristics that make him different when compared to others:

She thought about his certainty, how he walked a straight line while others turned and stumbled. And most of all she thought of what he had that she and Hasina and Chanu sought but could not find. The thing that he had and inhabited so easily. A place in the world. (Ali, p.264).

Nazneen’s sense of identity and existence develops gradually throughout the novel. Clothing plays a significant role in indicating her cultural identity. Nazneen starts looking differently at her reflection on the dressing-table mirror: “she was gripped by the idea that if she changed her clothes her entire life would change as well... for a glorious moment it was clear that clothes, not fate, made her life” (Ali, p.277-278). She starts feeling herself as a part of this community by imitating the way the British girls dress. Most importantly, we can notice early in the novel that Nazneen tries to be like those white girls: “She imagined herself swinging a handbag like the white girls: “She pulled the skirt higher, and examined her legs in the mirror” (p.141). This is an implication that she has started to discover herself more through recognizing more about herself through her reflection in the mirror. Noufal (2014) in his article explains Nazneen’s situation:

Ali analyses the ways her protagonist views her dressing style which indeed can be considered an obvious marker of the culture. Nazneen feels that the sari symbolizes a chain which restricts her freedom and which pulls her back from getting

acclimatized to British culture. After wearing the sari, she feels happy at first and she even thinks of dancing in sari. But, “the next instant she was seized by panic and clawed the silk away as if it were strangling her. She could not breathe. The sari...became heavy chains (*Brick Lane* 297). Here the sari can be considered a symbol of her old Bangladeshi culture which she wanted to throw away (p.453).

As a matter of fact, clothing also represents Razia’s assimilation into the British culture: “Since gaining her British passport she had acquired a sweatshirt with a large Union Jacket printed on the front” (Ali, p.188). It is an indication of her acceptance and integration in the new culture. In this way, Nazneen can find in Razia her model that can provide her with some guidelines about the way she can dress and behave in this new and different society. Al Mamun (2014) explains in his article Razia’s assimilating character. As he points out, Nazneen’s close friend Razia positively influences the process of Nazneen’s self – awakening (p.513). Razia quickly realizes the potential of her new home country and decides to live independently. This process can be attributed not only to her husband’s death but mainly to Razia’s strong character. She begins learning English, then she cuts her hair short and stops wearing sari. Nazneen tries to do something similar but without completely losing her traditional way of life while trying to assimilate the new culture.

The trip Chanu and his family have together shows that Chanu never gets out of his thoughts about what he sees as the racist Britain and reveals how much he is drawn down into himself all the time. Ironically, this is his first time they tour around in London: “I’ve spent more than half my life here...but I hardly left these few streets” (Ali, p.289). Actually, Chanu never left those streets physically and mentally. Now he feels that Britain will no longer form a threat to him because he is already planning to go back home. As a

result, he feels relieved and starts wandering and exploring the place. Cuevas (2008, p.391) clarifies that this particular trip with Chanu being a tourist expresses his refusal to be identified with the British society because he actually suffers from 'Going Home Syndrome'. Obviously, the task for Chanu to accommodate becomes too difficult to the extent that he finds it better to go back home in order to find himself there. As Tongur (2013) explains:

He [Chanu] cannot find any permanent solutions to his familial, social and financial problems in Britain. After his failure at work, failure in society, failure in family matters, Bangladesh is the only safe haven he can dream of and the sole place where he can regain his dignity. (p.260)

In this way Chanu looks different from the rest of the family members who view themselves differently. For example, Shahana considers herself to be a British girl and when asked about her origins, she replies: "I am from London" (Ali, p.296). Nazneen also becomes more attached to this new world especially after her relationship with Karim, who makes her feel free from all the previous constraints that are internalized within her. The fact is that she is a woman in a strange world. Karim and his way of life make Nazneen feel an independent woman. When he wants to come up and see her, she often watches him from the window and starts giving him signs to tell him if he can come up or not. This role makes her feel as a woman in control and who is able to make decisions and determine her relationships with others:

She watched from the window. When he appeared, she raised her hand as if she were about to scratch her face. Then he would come up. If Chanu was still at home, she

leaned her head against the glass, and he didn't wave or smile or do anything other than continue his walk across the yard. (p.299)

This behavior shows that Nazneen is developing an independent self and free from the constraints of her husband and his traditions. It also shows her open-mindedness and foresight for she sees in Karim, with his multiculturalism, as a potential husband after Chanu goes back home after severing all relations with her.

Gender roles are an important subject that is closely related to the theme of identity. Nazneen finds herself compelled to play her role as a female. It is well known that as a part of the traditional gender roles, wives depend mostly on men who work and bring money, while women are staying at home caring for children and the household, a really demanding task. Nazneen is considered to be the "good girl" according to Tyson's definition of the good and the bad girl because she has always been devoted to her husband, her daughters and the household as well. Nazneen wakes up from her illness to find everything is messed up: "For years she had felt she must not relax. If she relaxed, things would fall apart. Only the constant vigilance and planning, the low-level, unremarked and unrewarded activity of a woman, kept the household from crumbling" (Ali, p. 329). During Nazneen's illness, nobody took care of the house as if all the house chores were the responsibility of the wife. This provides further evidence of how women's role in this community is strictly traditional. Women's role is restricted to the household duties and men have nothing to do with the house work. This indicates that women are almost imprisoned within their own homes.

Nazneen builds a relationship with Karim because she sees in him an independent man who knows his place in this world and who treats her in a way that helps her speak out and has a voice. Nazneen's later decision to leave Karim is an undeniable part of the new woman she becomes, an independent woman who is able to make central decisions in her life. The decision itself needs a woman in control who knows exactly what she is doing. This particular decision comes to her mind because she begins to realize that Karim is forcing her to be someone she is not and she begins to see the resemblance between Chanu and Karim in one way or another: "At the same time she thought, only my husband and this boy are thinking all the time about New York and terrorists and bombs. Everybody else just living their lives" (Ali, p.382). Another resemblance comes to her mind when she asks Karim "why do you like me?" and he answers: "You are the real thing...a girl from the village" (p.385). She realizes here that Karim thinks of her as Chanu does and in fact uses her as a way to prove the patriarchy in himself and his own Bangladeshi origins: "She was his real thing. A Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her" (454). Thus, Nazneen realizes that Karim is not much different from Chanu. Like Chanu, Karim belongs to the traditional patriarchal mentality that views the genders on a discriminatory basis that assigns women in a position lower than that of men, a mentality that believes that a woman's place is in the home and women have to be subservient to men. It is this belief that Nazneen is struggling to resist and overcome.

At the end, Nazneen starts to feel more independent and more belonging to this society, She starts to have a world of her own to build: " I will decides what to do. I will say what happens to me. I will be the one" (p.405). There are many situations that show that she finally has a voice to speak up with. She leaves Karim and starts to stand up for

Mrs. Islam's taking advantage of her and her family. She decides to stay with her daughters in London and begins to view London as a home to her. We can also see her dancing and singing as an evidence for her independency and her happiness. Eventually, she does the thing that she has always wanted to do. Razia and her daughters prepare for her a surprise to go ice-skating and Razia Adds: "This is England...You can do whatever you like" (p.492). Accordingly, these incidents indicate that Nazneen in London can be whatever she wants; she can combine between the girl from the village and the new independent woman she has become which means reaching a sense of hybridity where English and Bangladeshi cultures can co-exist. Thus, we can say that Nazneen succeeds gradually in finding her way out from the role of a traditional Bangladeshi housewife who after experiencing the rules of her patriarchal husband, begins to enter a new world of freedom, liberation and self-confidence. It is this feeling of independence that enables Nazneen to find her true identity.

Nazneen can be considered as a representation of the women who live in a state of "double bind" (a term proposed by Lois Tyson) where she feels oppressed and imprisoned first by her husband, who represents all the traditional men within the Bengali community and second by England itself as a new culture, with different people and different language. Eskstein (2008, p.389-392) explains that the main obstacles which stand on the way of Nazneen's plans of self-determination and liberation are embodied in how her husband treats her as an object who has no voice to speak for herself and no opportunity to give her own opinion or view about anything. He also states that this novel combines between the solidarity of females and cultural integration. He comes to the conclusion that the female characters, such as Razia, Nazneen and her children are the ones who succeed in integrating culturally and socially in the new community away from the patriarchal community they

come from. They find a possibility of integration and assimilation by working independently and by doing jobs from which they can earn their own livelihood and become free and independent individuals.

The new environment and the feeling of alienation had impacted Nazneen's behavior at the beginning of the novel. Nevertheless, Nazneen determines to fight the alienation and isolation caused by this new environment. Van Lente (2014) explains one of the things that help in constructing Nazneen's Identity. She states that "through the contact with other characters, e.g. mediators such as Razia and Nazneen's daughters, Nazneen learns about the new opportunities she has. Nazneen starts to question the patriarchal system, gains more self-confidence and finally makes her own decisions" (Ali, p.72-73). Lente points out that Nazneen herself doesn't want her daughters to go back to Bangladesh because it is actually a foreign country for them and she doesn't want them to undergo the same struggle she experienced when she first moved to London. Rather, she wants them to enjoy the modern life in London and to live their own lives away from all undesirable restrictions and unnecessary constraints.

Lietonen (2011, p.6) explains the effects of Nazneen's children in helping her to adjust and assimilate with the new society by overcoming all her fears. They know the language well and teach it to her as a way to get rid of the captivity of the Bengali traditions. She also mentions how Nazneen in the end is capable of making her own mind and controlling her fate away from the starting-point at the beginning of her life's journey towards self-realization and identity achievement.

Always following someone else's rules and meeting their expectations, always a step behind her husband. In the end she breaks free from the role of a traditional Bangladeshi housewife and becomes an independent woman who still carries her inheritance and religion with her, but now on her own terms. (p.6)

She also compares between Hasina's [Nazneen's sister in Bangladesh] and Nazneen's struggle for independence. Though Nazneen has gained her freedom from the restrictive and rigid patriarchal society and lives according to her own way, Hasina is incapable of reaching this kind of freedom. This shows that the British society offers more chances for women to integrate, assimilate and ultimately to be free. Mansoor (2011) proposes that:

Unlike Nazneen, Hasina "kicked against fate", and though she clings on to hope, she emerges as a victim of a cruel patriarchal system. Through her letters, one notices that Bangladesh is not the paradise that Chanu imagines it to be. It is a corrupt victimizing system where the vulnerable are played upon. (p.19)

Finally, Chanu goes back to Bangladesh while Nazneen stays with her daughters in London. Chanu's leaving gives more space for Nazneen and her children to feel better and liberated from all the confinements of the traditions and the patriarchal system that Chanu represents. Vlasta (2015, p.80) explains how Chanu is the only member of the family who cannot adjust in the new society of London and prefers to go back to his homeland. She states that "Chanu enables the other family member to finally lead a life that allows them to construct a respectable identity and also fully accept their new homeland" (p.80).

Brick lane is a multicultural novel which includes the experience of people who have different cultures. When we see Nazneen ice-skating wearing a Sari at the end of the

novel, we can say that she succeeds in developing a hybrid identity by adopting elements from the English society without giving up some elements of her original culture. Simply, she succeeds in creating an identity of her own according to her own conditions, not her husband's, not her traditions and not the new society, because all these were just external forces which worked as a motivation for her in order to gain her independence and discover her own self. Alghamdi (2011, p.133) explains Nazneen's accomplishment at the end of the novel: "Ultimately, she finds that constructing a new home in England is not merely a matter of assimilation to English life, but involves the acquisition of agency" (p.133). Accordingly, Nazneen's struggle to assimilate brings her to the right path to self-discovery and the articulation of identity. Alghamdi's (2011) comment on the ending of the novel summarizes Nazneen's great achievement:

Nazneen has achieved a coherent identity, a sense of home, and a mode of systemic participation in her new society. The narrative recounts different distinct strands of the 'journey' Nazneen undertakes: dealing with legacy of her birth and her mother's suicide, coming to terms with the fatalism and disempowered position that the Muslim world view has impressed upon her, and, finally, assimilation in the English society.(p.139)

Nazneen's struggle throughout the novel comes to an end when she has become able to build an independent self that enables her to do whatever she wants way from all the constraints of her husband and her community. This achievement becomes crystal clear at the end of the novel through the symbolic image when we see her ice-skating, a thing that she always had in her mind as an attempt to reach this satisfying ending:

Here are your boots, Amma.’ Nazneen turned round. To get on the ice physically – it hardly seemed to matter. In her mind she was already there. She said, ‘But you can’t skate in a sari.’ Razia was already lacing her boots. ‘This is England,’ she said. ‘You can do whatever you like.’(Ali, p.492)

Apparently, there is a sharp contrast between the conformist old Nazneen who was taught to follow her fate, her husband and her traditions and the new independent Nazneen who has a work of her own in which she earns money capable of making her independent of her husband. Marx (2012) elaborates on this idea by stating that “work liberates Ali’s protagonist to dance and sing along with the radio in the novel’s final pages, to go ice-skating, and to endorse possibilities available to her as an independent contractor” (p.205-206).

In the light of Erikson’s psychosocial theory particularly through the two stages of “Identity versus Role confusion” and “Intimacy versus Isolation”, Nazneen’s quest for her identity can be clearer and more comprehensible. Nazneen got married to Chanu when she was only 18 years old. At this age, Nazneen should be forming or finding a sense of her own identity. When her family forces her into an arranged marriage, they were affecting the way she would define herself because she was doing something against her will and contradicting her plans for her life in the future in order to be independent and free. Her family and their traditions are a negative external force that prevents her from reaching a point of self-realization. As for her husband Chanu, he was another external force that made it difficult for her to find her own way of living. Chanu is considered to be part of the traditional community she belongs to and who is a good example of a patriarchal husband and father. The society of London and their new culture and traditions form

another force or another obstacle for Nazneen to integrate and assimilate. Her strong desire to integrate into this new community is the only thing that helps her in creating an identity of herself away from the constraints of her husband and her old traditions. London is an external force that affects the construction of Nazneen's identity in a positive way because this society acts as a motivation for her to fit in and find her own place in the world. Throughout the novel and as a result of this role confusion that is created by the society around her, Nazneen never surrenders to these forces and spends a long time struggling and fighting in order to reenter a world where she can be recognizable and understood in her own way. Her achievement and the successful attempts in identifying her own self help in moving her to the next psychosocial stage of "Intimacy versus Isolation" where she can have strong relationships with others such as Razia and even her own daughters where she can receive love and support from them.

Nazneen's development and the different situations she undergoes throughout the novel have been seen also from James Marcia's identity statuses. Nazneen goes through an "identity foreclosure" when she agrees and doesn't rebel against her parents' will to force her to marry a man old enough to be her father. At first, she conforms to her mother's ideologies about fate and doesn't question the notion until later in the novel. In this phase, she is a submissive adult who just conforms to the expectations and the values of others. Nazneen goes through the status of "identity diffusion" when she first moves to London where she prefers staying at home isolated from the outside world rather than confronting the challenges in her life. She is passing through the "detachment status" because at first she accepts almost everything Chanu tells her. She doesn't realize that she needs an identity of her own to construct and articulate. Another status Nazneen goes through is

“Moratorium” which is embodied in her realization that she needs to construct an identity of her own using her own expectations and her own point of view, not others’. Her getting her son to the hospital can be considered as part of this “status of Moratorium” where she forgets all about her mother’s ideologies and notions about fate. Finally and most importantly, the status of “identity achievement” is embodied in the struggle of Nazneen throughout the novel in order to find her own sense of identity and view of herself as an independent woman, and also in the outcome of this struggle which indicates her being successful in constructing an identity of her own. That is evident when she finally decides to stay in London with her two daughters and refuses to follow her husband on his home-return or to accept his traditions and notions as guidelines for her future life.

4.4 Antoinette and Nazneen Compared and Contrasted

As the previous discussion has demonstrated, both protagonists (Antoinette and Nazneen) are triply marginalized by their gender, class, and race. Gender discrimination plays a significant role because the events of both novels revolve around a female protagonist who is discriminated against on the basis of her gender. Both females belong to a lower class on the social ladder and are often deprived of their rights of achieving full independence, socially, economically and culturally. In both cases, British colonization plays a major role in the issues of identity crisis, especially in Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Antoinette is a Creole woman living in the Caribbean and suffers a dilemma of whether to belong to the white European or the black Jamaican society. She ends up being locked in a dark attic away from everything that is able to define her. Antoinette’s tragic fate to choose death as a gate of emancipation and redemption comes from the series of struggle she

undergoes through throughout the novel for being a Creole woman who is married to a patriarchal colonizer who diminishes all her hopes of a free life and liberation and viciously seeks to undermine if not to eliminate her existence.

On the other hand, Nazneen starts being taught not to revolt against her fate and to accept it as it is, especially when she is forced to marry a man twice her age and moves with him to live in a multicultural society where she is motivated to seek her true identity. Nazneen never gives up to the external forces that are conspiring to eliminate her as a human being. Instead, she fights forcefully to get rid of all the constraints of her patriarchal husband, her traditional background and community and even the racist multicultural society she chooses to be part of at the end of the novel. She finally finds her place in between the two worlds by building a world of her own and reaches a greater sense of her true identity and her independent self through a series of exploration work throughout her life.

The previous discussion shows that there are similarities and differences between both novels that are related to the identity crisis that is experienced by the female protagonists in both novels. Both works can be discussed from a postcolonial-feminist perspective. In this study, the researcher has explored both novels from various perspectives including a socio-psychological one. Antoinette and Nazneen somehow share the same experience in which both of them suffer an identity crisis in a society that they don't belong to. Each one of them has her own way to explore and look for herself within her society where she is triply marginalized by different external forces such as gender, class and race. However, Nazneen succeeds where Antoinette has failed.

Antoinette's and Nazneen's struggle for identity is portrayed through the oppression and the marginalization imposed and practiced by the patriarchal system represented by their respective husband. Chanu does not listen to what Nazneen says and takes her for granted; he prefers her staying within the boundaries of their house to exploring the outside world in which she might find a potential of an independent life away from him and free of his rigid control. Both characters try to free themselves from the constraints they face along their way to self-realization but with different results. Antoinette remains imprisoned within the restrictive walls of the house whereas Nazneen is able to go outside the boundaries of her home and her traditions and seek a free space where she can feel free and able to do what she wants and chooses. For Antoinette, the home remains a prison from which she cannot easily escape. It is only by destroying the house by setting it on fire that she is finally capable of becoming free from the restrictions of the home. This symbolic act marks Antoinette's way of achieving a sense of freedom in the end. It is a great paradox that Antoinette can only achieve freedom and a sense of independence through a destructive act that actually symbolizes her ability to do what she wants and to make her independent decision.

On the other hand, the patriarchal assumptions that are rooted in Chanu's mind force him to think this way because losing control makes him feel less of a man, especially that he feels estranged and alienated among the British society. Thus, we can see him trying to control his daughter's way of dressing and to prevent Nazneen from going to college and learning English with Razia. Even more, we can see his hatred of Razia because of the independent woman she is. As for Rochester, we notice that throughout his life with Antoinette, he also takes her for granted and never listens to her. He even changes her name

and starts calling her Bertha as an attempt to eliminate her presence and prevent her from reaching a recognizable and independent self. Rochester's patriarchal assumptions and his feeling of alienation in a land that formerly belonged to Antoinette's mother also makes him feel less of a man, a thing that leads him to the desire of possessing her as his property and to imprison her in the dark attic in his house in England where she cannot interact with the outside world, erasing every hope in her for an identity of her own.

At the end of the novel, Chanu leaves Nazneen to live her independent life because he is no longer capable of living in this society where he doesn't belong. As for Rochester, he prefers to go back to his homeland but forces Antoinette to go with him without ever stopping practicing oppression on her. In the process of their identity formation both Nazneen and Antoinette seem to be isolated at the beginning of the novel as a result of that feeling of alienation, Nazneen in her domestic space and Antoinette in the purity of nature. Nazneen succeeds in breaking the walls, while Antoinette ends up captivated in the attic. Antoinette seems to be very submissive woman from the beginning of the novel. As a way to indulge in the British society, Antoinette gets attached to her mother's English husband Mr. Mason by referring to him as savior in order to maintain their social class, she also starts eating and imitating the English society and she never minds changing her name to Antoinette Mason. On the other hand, Nazneen seems to be fighting against the external forces from the beginning of the novel to the end. This is shown clearly when she asks Chanu to let her learn English as an attempt to become part of her new society and as a way of achieving an independent self. To get a better way of living, Nazneen depends on herself by working in a sewing job whereas Antoinette remains wholly dependent on her husband. Both Chanu and Rochester are portrayed as racist men who are living in a place where they

feel alienated and strange. Neither of them accepts the social milieu he lives in and both of them eventually decide to go to their country of origin, having failed to accommodate themselves to the new place they happen to be living in.

Both protagonists show their keen desire to achieve their true identity but in different ways. Antoinette is so much attached to her home in Coulibri Estate and also to Tia in whom she recognizes herself just like a looking glass, while Nazneen shows no desire to go back home after all despite her early reflections on the possibility of going back home on the suggestion of her husband. Instead, she makes up her mind to stay in England inspired by the woman she sees skating while she was watching television. Nazneen's objective is to stay in England, hoping one day to be an independent and free individual just like the girl on the screen.

Friendships or relationships with other people play a significant role in the life and development of both heroines. As for Antoinette, she feels safe, secure and protected when she is with Christophine and Aunt Cora who are considered as a mother figure for Antoinette. Tia Also represents a girl whom Antoinette wants to resemble. Antoinette's friendship with Tia makes her feel more confident about her own self. Similarly, Nazneen finds in Razia a protective, motivating and encouraging figure. She encourages her to work and to be independent of her husband. Even Nazneen's relationship with her children motivates her and strengthens her so much and contributes positively to her endeavours to gain an independent identity. We cannot deny the fact that both Antoinette's and Nazneen's mothers discourage them to create an identity of their own, each in her own way. Antoinette's mother never takes care of her and never helps in the creation of her

daughter's identity; she even forces her to accept the white identity without questioning. By the same token, Nazneen's mother always teaches her that she shouldn't revolt against fate and should accept it without questioning. Nazneen fights forcefully in order to get out of her mother's fatalism, but Antoinette accepts and submits to everything. Among all these relationships, Razia and Christophine represent the independent woman who never attaches her happiness to the existence of a man in their lives. By adopting that attitude in their life they become more independent and consequently serve as a model for other females such as Nazneen and Antoinette. They represent a more protective and encouraging figures for Antoinette and Nazneen. When Antoinette tells Christophine that Rochester no longer loves her and asks for a love potion, she advises her to stop depending on him and pack her things up and leave. Razia also encourages Nazneen to stay in London and convinces her that this is the place where she can escape the confinements of her husband, her traditions, and the Bangladeshi community and so be able to do whatever she likes even "ice-skating while wearing a Sari".

Generally speaking, Antoinette is a submissive and a passive figure and doesn't pay attention to the question of her identity. By contrast, Nazneen is presented as aware of and caring a great deal about her identity. She tries to assert herself in the midst of the various problems coming from different sides, including her original Bengali culture, the Islamic traditions, her husband, the British society and other people she meets in England. She is motivated through the letters of her sister Hasina. Often she compares her situation with that of her sister and determines to follow a different course for the search of her identity. Unlike Antoinette who prefers to choose death as a way to build a world of her own in order to meet the ones she loves and free herself from the oppression of her husband and

the community, Nazneen chooses to challenge the oppressive forces surrounding her and to live the kind of life she has chosen for herself and effectively for her daughters.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

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5.1 Conclusion

Having explored and investigated the issue of identity crisis in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, we can see how both novels can be approached from different perspectives relating to identity crisis such as post-colonialism, feminism and psychosocial theory. We can also notice that patriarchy, traditional gender roles, hybridity, ethnicity, class and gender play a significant role in the discussion of identity crisis as portrayed in the two novels examined in this thesis.

Although there are wide and generational, temporal and spatial gaps between the two novels, some similarities and differences between the two works can be found. Both protagonists share similar experience, which resulted in a crisis of identity caused by the external forces, which affected their sense of their existence and their beliefs in themselves as independent entities. These external forces come into being because both characters are triply marginalized for their gender, class and race. As for gender, Antoinette and Nazneen are discriminated against by their societies and husbands just for the fact that they are women who are considered to be less important and inferior to men according to the traditional gender roles and the patriarchal norms that have been internalized in their societies as something taken for granted. Thus, Rochester reaches a point where he starts treating Antoinette as his property, first by changing her name as an attempt to eliminate her existence as an independent and free individual, and second by locking her in the dark

attic away from everything that might intrude in the process of finding her own self and her true identity. Chanu as well plays a patriarchal role and makes the house a prison for Nazneen, a thing that motivates her to break out of these walls and go out to the outside world and explore her own self and her true identity as shown at the end of the novel.

As for class, Antoinette and her family lose their fortune and their social status after the emancipation act in Jamaica in 1833. As an attempt to maintain their social class, Antoinette's mother marries an English man Mr. Mason whom Antoinette unwittingly refers to as their savior. Antoinette also marries an unnamed English man, hoping to find herself with him but unfortunately she loses what has remained of herself instead. Unfortunately, according to the English law, all Antoinette's fortune has been transferred automatically to her husband right after they got married. When Nazneen first moves to London with her husband Chanu, both of them were in need to work in order to live a better life in London. As an attempt to increase their income, Nazneen works in a sewing job inside the house. When Chanu loses his hope of getting promoted, he starts working as a taxi driver. Furthermore, when he decides to go back to Bangladesh with his family, he asks Nazneen to work more and he starts borrowing money from others such as Dr. Azad. Therefore, Nazneen's social class and his need for money can be considered as another obstacle that stands against the creation of her identity and independence.

Thus, both Antoinette and Nazneen are in need of financial support as the first has lost her inherited property to her husband and the second has limited financial resources after her husband has left his job. Feeling poor, Nazneen's chances for improving her social status is limited; and deprived of her property and possessions, Antoinette loses any chance

of improving her social status. Nevertheless, Nazneen is not inhibited by her social background and continues to struggle until she reaches a point where she can assert herself and claim some kind of financial independence which plays an important role in her identity formation and in making her independent decisions. In contrast, Antoinette is left with hardly any opportunity to change her financial and social status until she finally decides to take a fatal decision that would end her life and put an end to her suffering and failure.

As for race, being a Creole of a mixed blood or a hybrid, Antoinette feels alienated and exiled in her community, feeling that she neither belongs to the black Jamaicans nor to the white Europeans. This is another obstacle that stands in the way of her identity creation or construction since her husband is considered to be a white English colonizer who views her as weak and inferior to him because she is the Creole colonized object. Furthermore, we notice how he treats her like a doll. Being an Asian Muslim living in an English society, Nazneen has to find her way in a multicultural society that makes it more difficult for her to become part of it. The colonial background seriously affects her view of her identity especially because such a society would be influenced by the idea of perceiving the East as the inferior Other and themselves as the superior Self. The effect of colonization is actually felt in both novels and acts a deterrent for the two female protagonists and limits their interaction with their English society. In light of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), we can say that Monica Ali creates a binary opposition between the superior West and the inferior East. The West is represented as a place for liberation and freedom and the East as a miserable place where there is hardly any room for change or transformation. Throughout the novel, we can see how the Bangladeshi

community has been treated as inferior, weak and irrational and seen as Other while the West is the incarnation of the independent and free Self.

The role that some characters play in the identity crisis and the identity formation of both Nazneen and Antoinette has also been noticeable. Nazneen's relationship with Razia works as a replacement for her relationship with Chanu, Karim and even her sister Hasina. Antoinette's relationship with Christophine, Tia and her Aunt Cora works as a replacement of her feeling of inferiority when she is with her husband. Razia in particular is one of the factors behind Nazneen's successful assimilation and integration into the new society in the same way that Christophine is a factor behind Antoinette's decision at the end of the novel.

Nazneen prefers maintaining her relationship with Razia to attaching her connection with a man who will bring her nothing but oppression, marginalization and dependency. Chakravorty (2014) states that Nazneen's ability to work confirms the idea of her being a woman who has become a good worker as the only available form of integration for working class migrants" (p.181). Mansoor (2011, p.18) states that Nazneen succeeds in creating a balance in her life by overcoming the complexity of living in a place while belonging to another. She succeeds in getting out of the consequences of an arranged marriage to reconstruct an identity of her own and on her own new terms. Nazneen's integration and assimilation in multicultural London at the end of the novel can be explained through her relationships with other characters such as Razia, Mrs. Islam, Mrs. Azad and her own daughters who play a significant role in paving the way for Nazneen to define and shape her new identity. These relationships give Nazneen a sense of identity

and in effect serve as decisive factors in resolving her identity crisis and in a positive and fruitful manner. By the same token, Antoinette's way of articulating her identity at the end can be explained through her relationship with Christophine, Aunt Cora, Tia and Sandi in which she draw an imaginable world where she can escape her husband's oppression and feels safe, protected and identified. In one way or another, these relationships give her a chance to take decisions and find her sense identity at the end.

The struggle for a true identity and an independent self reaches its resolution for Antoinette and Nazneen at the end of the novel in which each of them appears. Antoinette's struggle and her hope for an independent self finally diminishes when her husband starts treating her as his property and then locks her in the dark attic in Thornfield where she is isolated from any external human contact. By contrast, the last phase of Nazneen's life marks a tremendous change for the better and actually includes her great achievements when she becomes able to challenge her husband's decisions and is free to take decisions by herself and in accordance with her best interests. Nazneen chooses to stay in Britain but Antoinette chooses death as the best solution to get herself out of her misery by burning the place where she is imprisoned and kept away from other people and normal human life. Thus, Antoinette somehow reaches her own identity but on her own terms and through her own and not others' decision. On the other hand, Nazneen's perception of the search for her identity differs; she has been fighting from the first moment she came to London with her husband, although sometimes she seems to be submissive and controlled by the different external forces. Nazneen's struggle for an independent self and a true identity away from the confinements of her husband and her traditions is seen at the end of the novel when Chanu goes back to Bangladesh and leaves her a chance to find her own self. Finally, we

see her ice-skating, wearing a Sari, a thing that she would never have the courage to do before, but now everything is so different for her. She succeeds in building her own world and in this way bridges the wide gap between the world she was stuck in before she came to England and which continued through her patriarchal husband and the English world where she tries hard to assert herself and prove her own identity and independent self.

5.2 Recommendations

There are many studies that have focused on the identity of Antoinette in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and many others that have concentrated on the identity of Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. However, there are no studies that have tried to make a comparison between Antoinette and Nazneen in their struggle and their identity crisis. One of the recommendations that can be made is the need for more comparative studies that deal with these two particular novels and these two heroines with special focus on the cultural, sociological and psychological forces that affect identity formation such as friendship, sisterhood, neighborhood, food, the original and the host society, religion and family members as effective factors that contributed a lot to Antoinette's and Nazneen's struggle in their attempts to reach a resolution of their identity crisis in the end.

Another recommendation to make is that a more comprehensive comparison should be made between other characters such as, Christophine and Razia with regard to their key role in determining the outcome of the two heroine's search for identity in the novel in which each of them makes her struggle. Though this subject has been treated in this thesis in one way or another, further research can be done to shed more light on the important role these two characters play in the life of Antoinette and Nazneen respectively.

Finally, a comparison should be made between the two heroine's husbands Rochester and Chanu respectively for each of them is one of the most effective forces that have a direct impact on Antoinette and Nazneen whether in their feeling of belonging or in their feeling of alienation and exile.

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