Wide Sargasso Sea

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JEAN RHYS

Ella Gwendolyn Rees Williams was born in 1890 to a Welsh doctor and a Creole woman of Scots ancestry on the Caribbean island of Dominica, then a British colony. At sixteen she was sent to England, where she studied to be an actress. Williams struggled in her studies with being ostracized for her Caribbean heritage and accent, and eventually was taken out of school because her instructors deemed her unable to rid herself of the West Indies accent that would prevent her from gaining significant stage roles. She then subsisted in Britain for nearly a decade on small acting roles and chorus girl parts, with brief stints in nude modeling and prostitution. After suffering a near-fatal abortion paid for by a former lover, Williams began to write. In 1924, in the midst of a tumultuous marriage, Ella Williams made the acquaintance of the acclaimed English novelist Ford Madox Ford. Ford took her in as both a protégé and mistress, suggesting that she change her name to Jean Rhys, and eventually facilitating the publication of her work, which often dealt with her own experiences of alienation as a woman at the hands of unjust lovers and an exclusionary society. The three major novels that Rhys produced during the 1930's—*After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, *Voyage in the Dark*, and *Good Morning, Midnight*—were met with mixed critical success. It wasn't until 1966, after several decades of anonymity marked by two more failed marriages and an ever deepening problem with alcoholism, that Rhys published *Wide Sargasso Sea* and was rocketed to literary fame. *Wide Sargasso Sea* remains her most acclaimed work, having garnered her several major literary awards and a place in the canon of postcolonial literature in English. Rhys died in 1979, in Exeter, UK.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Wide Sargasso Sea, which takes place in colonized Jamaica and deals with problems of identity and inequality that arose as a result of French and British colonization in the Caribbean, was completed and published during an era of widespread decolonization. The 1960's in particular saw many important gains in political independence among the British colonies in the Caribbean, including Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago, which achieved independence from Britain in 1962, followed by Barbados in 1966, the year *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published. The issues of conflicted cultural identity and alienation that Antoinette and Jamaican society at large face in the wake of emancipation from slavery in *Wide Sargasso Sea* mirror many of the issues these newly independent nations faced in their time of fledgling political emancipation from their former colonizers. Jean Rhys came of age and had already begun her career as a writer during the later years of an era of feminism known as "first-wave" feminism in the United States and Europe. This movement sought to overturn *de jure*, or officially mandated, gender-based inequalities, particularly restrictions on women's voting and property rights. Many of the reasons for Annette's and then Antoinette's unhappiness in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are a direct result of these inequalities, and are discussed at length between Antoinette and Christophine, who bemoans the legal constraints that prevent Antoinette from retaining the financial independence to leave her husband. By the time *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published, second-wave feminism, or women's liberation, had already begun in the United States and was spreading to the U.K. and the rest of Europe. Among many other issues, second-wave feminism brought into the spotlight *de facto*, or unofficial, inequalities, such as domestic gender roles and standards of beauty, which are also thematic subjects of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Wide Sargasso Sea is a rewriting of Charlotte Bronte's classic nineteenth-century gothic bildungsroman *Jane Eyre* (1847). In Bronte's novel, Bertha Mason is more monster than human, locked away for a decade in secret, in the attic of Thornfield Hall, where her demonic laughter and "savage" snarls disturb the residents of the mansion, including Jane Eyre. Evidence of her existence enters the novel through unexplained violent incidents, including the attack on Richard Mason that is included in Part Three of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Her identity is only revealed when Rochester attempts to marry Jane Eyre, without ever having mentioned that he is already married to Bertha. Rather than being told from her point of view, Bertha Mason's story in *Jane Eyre* is given only in terms of Mr. Rochester's history and psychology. Her violent suicide, which ends *Wide Sargasso Sea*, merely clears the way for Jane and Rochester to marry in Bronte's novel. Other major postcolonial novels published in the same period as *Wide Sargasso Sea* include Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which deals with the influence of British colonialism on a nineteenth-century Nigerian village, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* (1964), which deals with the Mau Mau Uprising against British rule in Kenya, and Tayib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), which follows a young narrator's return to his native Sudan after spending seven years studying in England. These, like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, are written by authors who hail from formerly colonized nations, and deal with themes of cultural identity, alienation, assimilation, inequality, racial discrimination, and other issues that arise as a result of colonialism and subsequent decolonization. The novel

published during this period that is perhaps most closely related to *Wide Sargasso Sea* is *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), by fellow Caribbean author V.S. Naipaul. The novel describes the island of Trinidad during the final decades of its status as a British colony, from the perspective an Indian immigrant.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Wide Sargasso Sea*
- **When Written:** early 1950's–1966
- **Where Written:** Cornwall, UK, and Devon, UK
- **When Published:** 1966
- **Literary Period:** Postcolonialism, Postmodernism
- **Genre:** Postcolonial novel, revisionist novel, coming-of-age novel (bildungsroman), 20th-century feminist writing, postmodern novel
- **Setting:** 1830's Jamaica
- **Climax:** Antoinette and Christophine return to the house at Granbois to confront the husband after his infidelity, Christophine and the husband argue, he makes the decision to leave Jamaica
- **Antagonist:** The husband, Daniel Cosway
- **Point of View:** First person, multiple points of view; Part One is in Antoinette's point of view, Part Two switches back and forth between Antoinette's and the husband's points of view, and Part Three between Antoinette's and Grace Poole's. In all sections of the novel, each narrator is looking back at the events that occur from an unspecified future vantage point. For Antoinette in Part Three, this means that she narrates from beyond the grave.

EXTRA CREDIT

The Madwoman In the Attic. Jean Rhys was not the only author moved to feminist critique by the character of Bertha Mason. In 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published *The Madwoman In the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. In it, Gilbert and Gubar use the work of female authors like the Bronte sisters, Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, and George Eliot to show that nineteenth century women were confined to portraying female characters as either "angels" (like Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre) or "monsters" (like Bertha Mason). They urge female writers to break down this dichotomy. Though published a decade before this seminal work of feminist criticism, *Wide Sargasso Sea* seems to enact precisely what Gilbert and Gubar call for in their book. Rhys takes the "monster" figure of Bertha and revises it with Antoinette, who is neither angel nor monster, but contains elements of both in a fully imagined, if deeply troubled, female character.

PLOT SUMMARY

Antoinette Cosway, a creole, or Caribbean person of European descent, recounts her memories of growing up at her family's estate, Coulibri, in Jamaica in the 1830's. Her family, consisting of her mother, Annette, and her mentally disabled younger brother, Pierre, are destitute and isolated after her father's death and the passage of the Emancipation Act of 1833, which freed Jamaica's slaves. Annette becomes withdrawn and depressed, shunning Antoinette and talking to herself. Antoinette seeks refuge in the **gardens** and the company of her nurse Christophine, who is known for her practice of obeah, a voodoo-like folk magic. Antoinette has a short-lived friendship with a little black girl, Tia, until the two fall out over a bet while they're swimming, and Tia runs away with Antoinette's money and clothes. After seeing Antoinette in Tia's dirty dress, Annette resolves to lift the family out of poverty. She soon marries Mr. Mason, a wealthy Englishman. Mr. Mason has Coulibri completely renovated. The show of ostentatious wealth causes resentment in the neighboring village of poor ex-slaves. Annette and Aunt Cora, fearing retribution, urge Mr. Mason to move the family out of harm's way, but he ignores them. One night, a mob sets **fire** to the house at Coulibri. The family narrowly escapes, but Pierre is badly injured. Antoinette descends into a fever for six weeks. When she finally awakes, she learns that Pierre has died, and that her mother Annette is being kept at a convalescent house in the country. Antoinette goes to visit her, but finds her mother unrecognizable, mad with grief.

Antoinette begins to attend an all-girl's convent school. The nuns there instill the values of chastity and good behavior in their students, and place a high premium on **appearance**. Antoinette is comforted by the routines of the convent, but fails to find faith or solace in prayer. After eighteen months, during which time Annette has died, Mr. Mason comes to visit her and informs her that he is taking her out of the convent school, implying that there is a suitor waiting for her. Antoinette has a recurring nightmare about a stranger leading her through the woods and up a flight of stairs.

Part Two of the novel begins during Annette and her new husband's honeymoon, on the island of Granbois, near Jamaica. This section is narrated from the point of view of the husband, an unnamed Englishman who feels menaced by the strange landscape, language, and customs of the Caribbean. He distrusts the servants, particularly Christophine and the young and defiant Amelie. He has married Antoinette for her money, and sees her as a beautiful but unsettling stranger. The two spend afternoons swimming and nights making passionate love, until one day the husband receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, who claims to be Antoinette's half-brother, the product of an illicit relationship between her deceased father, Old Cosway, and one of his slaves. The letter warns the

husband that madness runs in the Antoinette's family on both sides, relating rumors that both Antoinette's mother and father died "raving." Daniel Cosway insists that Antoinette's family, especially Richard Mason, deceived the husband when making the marriage arrangements. The husband does not mention this letter to Antoinette, but becomes distant and cold. Christophine leaves Granbois because of her dislike of the husband, which devastates Antoinette. Shortly after Christophine's departure, the husband gets lost in the woods and is sure he sees a 'zombi,' or the walking dead, near an abandoned house. He is finally found by Baptiste, the butler, who refuses to answer his questions about the house.

The narration switches to Antoinette's point of view. She goes to Christophine's house to beg her to use obeah to make the husband love her again. Christophine refuses at first, advising Antoinette to act for herself. Antoinette eventually wears her down, though, and Christophine supplies her with a bottled liquid.

The narration shifts back to the husband's point of view. He goes to see Daniel Cosway, who attempts to blackmail the husband into giving him five hundred dollars. That night, the husband and Antoinette argue, and he demands to know the truth about her past. She tells him of Coulibri burning, Pierre's death, and her mother's descent into madness. It is revealed that her mother was sexually abused at her convalescent home. The husband begins to call her Bertha, which disturbs her. The two go to bed, and Antoinette hands him a glass of wine, after which point the husband loses all memory of the rest of the night. The next morning, he realizes that Antoinette has drugged him, and runs into the woods. When he returns, Amelie tends to him, and they sleep together. When he emerges from his room, Antoinette, who listened to their tryst from the next room, has fled the house. She returns with Christophine several days later. As a distraught Antoinette barricades herself in her room and drinks to excess, Christophine and the husband argue. When the husband threatens to go to the police and report her practice of obeah, Christophine, though outraged, has no choice but to relent. She leaves without saying goodbye to Antoinette. The husband decides that they must leave Jamaica. Antoinette is numb and silent on the day of their departure. The husband is overtaken with remorse, but the hatred between himself and Antoinette soon outweighs it.

Part Three opens in the point of view of Grace Poole, Antoinette's caretaker in England. It is revealed that Antoinette is being kept against her will in the attic of the husband's house, in conditions that make Grace Poole uncomfortable, but she is paid twice what the other servants are for her silence.

The narration switches to Antoinette's consciousness. She is unsure of where she is or how much time has passed. She often steals Grace Poole's keys and explores the rest of the house at night. One day, Grace Poole tells her that the night before she, Antoinette, was visited by Richard Mason and attacked him with a knife. Antoinette does not remember this. That night, she has her recurring nightmare for the last time. It is clear that the stairs she has dreamt of her whole life have led here. In this version of the dream, she takes a candle and sets fire to the house, sits out on the roof watching it burn while recalling the fire at Coulibri. In the dream, she hears the husband calling to her and jumps to her death. When she wakes, she is filled with a sense of purpose, lights a candle and descends into the house to act out her dream.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Antoinette Cosway – The protagonist and partial narrator of the novel, Antoinette Cosway is a creole, or person of European descent born in the Caribbean. Throughout the novel, her relationships with others are marked by alienation, exclusion, and cruelty, so that she consistently seeks solace in the natural world. She watches her family home burned to the ground by a mob of disenfranchised former slaves, and witnesses her mother's descent into madness as a result. She is married to an Englishman she barely knows, for his financial benefit. After a disastrous honeymoon, her husband finally locks her away in his attic, from which her only escape is suicide.

The Husband – Though never named in the novel, Antoinette Cosway's husband is understood to be *Jane Eyre*'s Mr. Rochester, an English gentleman. The husband is deeply disoriented, even disturbed, by the Jamaican **landscape** and culture, and sees Antoinette as emblematic of both. Though he experiences a short period of passion with Antoinette during their honeymoon, his feelings of distrust and animosity eventually outweigh his love, so that he ends up imprisoning her in the attic of his English manor.

Christophine – Antoinette's nurse, Christophine is respected and feared among blacks and whites alike. She is a practitioner of obeah (a voodoo-like magic), which both accounts for her power over others and ultimately gets her in trouble with the law, rendering her powerless to help Antoinette. Other than the **landscape**, Christophine is the only real constant in Antoinette's life, until she too abandons her to her fate with the husband.

Annette – Antoinette's mother, Annette is a widow at the start of the novel, sunk into debt after the death of her husband. Her relationship with Antoinette is distant, owing partially to her preoccupation with her sick, mentally handicapped son, Pierre. She marries a rich man, Mr. Mason, in order to save her family from destitution in the wake of Emancipation, and goes mad with grief as a result of the destruction brought about partially by his failure to listen to her warnings about the anger of the

black residents at his shows of wealth.

Mr. Mason – Annette's second husband, Mr. Mason is an Englishman who, like the husband, seems incapable of understanding Jamaican culture. He ignores Annette's warnings of the danger presented by the nearby village of disgruntled former slaves, preferring to view them as benign children. As a result, he is unprepared when the villagers burn down Coulibri.

Daniel Cosway – Possibly the half brother of Antoinette through an illicit affair between her father Old Cosway and one of his slaves, Daniel Cosway is deeply embittered by his exclusion from the Cosway fortune. He writes to the husband, informing him of the madness that runs in Antoinette's family, and attempts to blackmail him. Daniel Cosway is obsessed with gaining vengeance for his disenfranchised and marginalized existence, for which he holds Antoinette and her family responsible.

Grace Poole – Antoinette's caretaker in the husband's manor in England, Grace Poole is paid handsomely for her discretion, which she maintains despite her misgivings regarding the husband's treatment of Antoinette. A partial narrator of Part 3 of the novel, she often drinks to excess and falls asleep, allowing Antoinette to steal her keys and roam the rest of the house.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Amélie – A maid at Granbois, Amélie is disdainful of both the husband and Antoinette, but fears Christophine. She engages in a sexual relationship with the husband within earshot of Antoinette, and expresses to the husband her plans of moving to Rio and using men for money.

Aunt Cora – A rich widow, Aunt Cora represents a stabilizing force in Antoinette's life. She takes her in after Coulibri is burned, arranges for her education at the convent school, and attempts to provide for her by giving her jewelry to sell after she is disinherited by her marriage.

Richard Mason – The son of Mr. Mason and stepbrother of Antoinette, Richard Mason oversees Antoinette's marriage arrangements following the death of his father, signing over the entirety of Antoinette's inheritance to the husband. When he visits the husband's manor in England, Antoinette attacks him with a knife.

Old Cosway – Antoinette's, Pierre's, and possibly Daniel Cosway's father. He is dead before the start of the novel, but his licentiousness, brutality, and potential madness affect the lives of his family members for years to come. He leaves his family deep in debt when he dies.

Tia – A black girl, Tia is Antoinette's only childhood friend. They share a close friendship until they fall out over a bet. During the attack on Coulibri, Tia hits Antoinette in the forehead with a rock and they both weep.

Sandi – The second cousin and lover of Antoinette, Sandi actually appears in the novel only once. The ramifications of his affair with Antoinette, however, return repeatedly to trouble Antoinette's relationship with the husband, and later to haunt her memories during her imprisonment in the husband's attic.

Godfrey – The butler at Coulibri, Godfrey is caught between the black community and his white employers. He maintains a detached moral stance as the conflict between the Cosway's and their black neighbors escalates, but is ultimately horrified at the attack on Coulibri, calling the mob "brute beasts."

Baptiste – The butler at Granbois. He quietly distrusts the husband and is sympathetic with Antoinette, giving her rum to calm her down after the husband's affair with Amelie.

Louise de Plana – A fellow student at the convent school, and role model to Antoinette. Louise de Plana and her sisters are revered for their deportment, cleanliness, and beauty.

Mr. Luttrell – A neighbor of the Cosway's, Mr. Luttrell is a former slaveowner who commits suicide early on in the novel, unable to adjust to the changes in Jamaica post-Emancipation. His death rattles Annette, who feels completely isolated without his presence.

Mr. Fraser – A magistrate, or member of law enforcement acquainted with the husband in Jamaica. Mr. Fraser informs the husband that Christophine is a practitioner of obeah with a criminal record, and he considers her dangerous.

Pierre – Antoinette's younger brother, Pierre is mentally and physically handicapped. His death from injuries suffered in the fire at Coulibri precipitates Annette's grief-stricken decline into madness.

The Young Bull – A porter who accompanies the husband and Antoinette on their journey to Granbois, and attempts to impress the husband with his knowledge of English and his disdain of his fellow servants.

Sister Marie Augustine – A nun at the convent school who offers Antoinette hot chocolate after she wakes up from her recurring nightmare. She is unable to answer Antoinette's question about why terrible things happen in the world.

Hilda – A young servant girl at Granbois, Hilda fears the husband and communicates mainly in bashful giggles.

Mannie – One of the few servants who remained in the Cosway family's employ after Emancipation. He and Sass play an instrumental role in helping the family escape when fire is set to the house.

Servant boy – The unnamed servant boy at Granbois weeps disconsolately when the husband and Antoinette leave for England. According to Antoinette, he weeps because he loves the husband, and wants to continue working for him, without pay.

Sass – One of the few servants who remained in the Cosway

family's employ after Emancipation. His full name is Disastrous, because his godmother liked the sound of the word.

Jo-jo – Christophine's son. Christophine likens him to a "leaky calabash" because of his inability to keep a secret.

Mrs. Eff – The housekeeper at the husband's manor in England, Mrs. Eff is very loyal to the husband and defends him against Grace Poole's suspicion.

Leah – A maid at the husband's manor in England.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

OTHERNESS AND ALIENATION

The problem of otherness in the world of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is all-pervading and labyrinthine. The racial hierarchy in 1830's Jamaica is shown to be complex and strained, with tension between whites born in England, creoles or people of European descent born in the Caribbean, black ex-slaves, and people of mixed race. The resentment between these groups leads to hatred and violence. Antoinette Cosway and her family are repeatedly referred to as "white cockroaches" by members of the black population, and are eventually driven from their home by a mob of discontented former slaves. These dynamics are further complicated by the fact that inclusion and exclusion in the novel are based not solely on race, but also on geographical origin, **appearance**, **wealth** and status, and fluency in shared cultural symbols and values.

As such, the major characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are primarily defined by their separateness from any cultural group. The novel opens with Antoinette explaining, "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and the white people did. But we were not in their ranks." Antoinette and her family, though white, do not belong to the dominant class of white Jamaicans, for many reasons including local disapproval of her mother Annette Cosway's behavior, **appearance**, and French origins, as well as the family's poverty after the death of Alexander Cosway, Antoinette's father. Christophine, Antoinette's black nurse, suffers a similar type of exclusion. A native of Martinique, she is set apart from the other black people of the region. As Antoinette describes, "Her songs were not like Jamaican songs, and she was not like the other women." The novel makes repeated reference to Christophine's headdress and clothing, which she styles "Martinique fashion," despite having lived and worked in Jamaica for many years. When Rochester arrives in Jamaica to wed Antoinette, he is repeatedly disoriented and paralyzed by his failure to understand Caribbean culture and custom.

It is alienation that leads the characters of the novel to the destructive acts at its center. Annette, driven by her family's exclusion from white society, is driven to seek remarriage to the wealthy Mr. Mason, a union that ultimately brings about the tragic loss of her son, her home, and her sanity. The mob at Coulibri, angry at the disenfranchisement and exclusion that the Mason's opulent house symbolizes, is driven to commit the violence and arson that destroys Annette and Antoinette's family. Later in the novel, Daniel Cosway, the mixed-race, illegitimate child of Alexander Cosway, is obsessed with avenging his marginalized existence. His exclusion from the Cosway family leads him to write a series of letters to Rochester maligning Antoinette and her family. These letters disturb Rochester, and form the catalyst for his ultimate distrust and distaste for Antoinette.

The consequences of alienation become both increasingly isolating as well as increasingly dire as the novel progresses. The tensions at the start of the novel are between groups, "us" vs. "them." Race and class difference leads an entire mob to burn down the house at Coulibri, and the family escapes damaged but together. Over the course of the novel, however, the family is drawn apart, and by the end, Antoinette is alienated even from herself. Rochester denies her even her own identity by repeatedly calling her "Bertha," and in her madness and captivity she speaks of "the ghost of a woman they say haunts this place," unaware that she is referring to herself.

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

Freedom in the novel is double-edged and troubled. Its ideal is presented in stark contrast, again and again, to its reality. At the start of the novel, we see that the Emancipation Act of 1833 leaves discontent and violence in its wake. Mr. Luttrell, a white former slaveowner and neighbor to the Cosways, commits suicide after Emancipation, unable to adjust to the new social and economic landscape. At Coulibri, the local population of black former slaves is deeply angry. As Antoinette remembers at the start of the novel, "They hated us." Even the children threaten and enact violence on white people. A girl follows a young Antoinette singing, "White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you." Antoinette's one-time friend Tia, a black girl, ends up hitting Antoinette in the head with a rock as the mob burns her family's house down.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, freedom can mean abandonment or isolation, the fear of which leads many to enter complacently and sometimes even willingly into their own imprisonment. We see this with various black servants who elect or wish to stay on with their former slave masters, including, notably, one young boy who cries "loud heartbreaking sobs" because Rochester

refuses to bring him to England to continue in his service. Of this boy, Antoinette tells Rochester, "He doesn't want any money. Just to be with you." This holds true for relationships as well. After Annette's marriage to Alexander Cosway, which was characterized by repeated infidelities, ends in his death, she becomes preoccupied with her isolation, referring to her new status as being "marooned," and enters into another marriage, to Mr. Mason, with restrictive and then disastrous results. When Antoinette's marriage to Rochester first begins to deteriorate, she imagines leaving him, and is urged by Christophine to "pack up and go," but does not. This decision leads to her literal imprisonment by Rochester.

Even if it is violent and ultimately tragic, freedom is shown to be inevitable, the necessary path to redemption in the novel on both a societal and personal level. Oppression and imprisonment are unsustainable. Antoinette ends the novel and her life by setting **fire** to the house in which she is imprisoned by Rochester. Her narration ends with a sense of purpose and self-knowledge that she lacked in the rest of the novel. In reference to her own emancipating destruction, she says, "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do." This fire connects her to the angry mob that, in an act of protest against their own oppression, sets fire to her family's house early on in the novel. Both seek freedom in the flames.

WOMEN AND POWER

The female characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* must confront societal forces that prevent them from acting for and sustaining themselves, regardless of race or class. The two socially accepted ways for a woman to attain security in this world are marriage and entering the convent. Marriage ends disastrously in most cases, especially for the Cosway women. Husbands have affairs, die, ignore their wives' wishes with tragic results, imprison them, take their money, drive them to madness. In Annette Cosway's case, her marriages destroy not only her life, but also her children's lives. Her first husband, Antoinette's father, carries on multiple affairs publicly, one of which yields a child, Daniel Cosway, who eventually has a hand in destroying Antoinette's happiness. When Alexander Cosway dies, he leaves the family destitute. Annette's second husband, Mr. Mason, ignores her pleas to move the family away from Coulibri, leaving them vulnerable to the attack that destroys their home, kills her son Pierre, and precipitates Annette's decline into madness. For Antoinette's part, it is clear that her marriage is for the financial benefit of Rochester, who sleeps with their servant Amelie within earshot of Antoinette while still on their honeymoon, and eventually imprisons Antoinette in the attic of his home in England. It is claimed in a letter from Daniel Cosway to Rochester that madness runs in the Cosway family, but for both Annette and Antoinette, their descent into madness is a direct result of the grief and desperation brought to them by their husbands. The nuns at the convent school, though seeming to be outside of this system, spend their lives training their female students to be respectable wives of wealthy men.

The female characters who embody strength and agency are those who elect to remain outside of these structures. The most notable example is Christophine, a powerful and respected figure in her community. Other servants fear her, largely because of her expertise in obeah, a Caribbean folk magic, and Antoinette depends on her. Christophine tries to counsel Antoinette to protect herself and her fortune by telling her that "Woman must have spunks to live in this wicked world," and, "All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank my God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man." There is also Aunt Cora, a widow who does not remarry. She is a relatively stable force in Antoinette's life, able to control her own health and movements, able to provide for Antoinette's childhood. She promises safety for the young Antoinette and follows through on it. Amelie, though a minor character, is also pivotal in demonstrating that power comes to women only outside of traditional marriage. She manipulates sex to exercise control over her employers, Antoinette and Rochester. After sleeping with Rochester, she receives money from him, and speaks of her plans to move to Rio to continue this tactic: "She wanted to go to Rio. There were rich men in Rio."

Female independence is shown to be temporary, though. Women who do assert themselves outside of or in direct defiance of the system of marriage are ultimately thwarted by men in some significant way. It eventually comes out that Christophine is wanted by Jamaican law enforcement for her practice of obeah, and Rochester plans to turn her in. Even Aunt Cora is ignored when she attempts to persuade Richard Mason to secure Antoinette's inheritance, and she despairs to Antoinette, "The Lord has forsaken us."

TRUTH

Wide Sargasso Sea is a revisionist novel, written to complicate and push up against the accepted truth of Antoinette or "Bertha" Cosway's character as it is put forth in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*—the archetypal "madwoman in the attic." The novel questions the very nature of truth in its premise, form, and content.

Within the novel, truth is shown to be slippery at best, difficult if not impossible to recognize and trust. Every story has at least two competing versions. The narration itself is unstable, switching between the perspectives of Antoinette and Rochester, often giving the reader contradictory perspectives and opinions on the same characters and events. Daniel Cosway, in his letters to Rochester, provides a troubling version of the history of the Cosway-Mason family, at odds with Antoinette's narration, thereby injecting a third competing

narrative. Cosway's version highlights Alexander Mason's depravity, and casts Annette, Antoinette, and Christophine as self-serving liars.

Many of the characters' identities are forged in gossip and hearsay. Christophine, in particular, is a character with multiple backstories. When Rochester writes to Mr. Fraser inquiring about her, there are shown to be conflicting accounts of her whereabouts ("my wife insists that she had gone back to Martinique... I happen to know that she has not returned to Martinique") and even her name ("the woman in question was called Josephine or Christophine Dubois.") When Rochester decides to turn her in, he highlights the indeterminacy of her identity in the novel, "So much for you, Josephine or Christophine. So much for you, Pheena." Even Antoinette is not entirely sure of Christophine's abilities, and can only speculate at the scope of her obeah prowess. Rochester's interactions with Antoinette are also riddled with confusion about the truth. He tells her, "So much of what you tell me is strange, different from what I was led to expect," and in his narration remembers, "She was unsure of fact—any facts."

Even the senses are not to be trusted. Vision plays tricks on people, and hallucinations abound. As a child, Antoinette cannot be sure whether she sees or imagines seeing feathers and chicken's blood, remnants of obeah rituals, in Christophine's room. While at Granbois, Rochester becomes lost in the woods and stumbles upon a paved road, where he frightens a child walking by. Later, he is assured that there was never a road there. Of Granbois and the mysterious instability of the senses that he experienced there, Rochester remembers, "it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing—I want what it hides."

Denial or madness are shown to be the two alternatives for dealing with the crushing and confounding nature of truth in the novel. Either a character can "turn her face to the wall," and deny the complexity and tragedy before them, as Christophine accuses Aunt Cora of doing, or go mad with grief, as Annette and Antoinette both do. Rochester ultimately takes the path of denial by imprisoning Antoinette, shutting her away forever rather than reconciling the truth of her nature and their marriage with what he'd expected, or been led to believe. Even Christophine finally retreats into denial, or refusal, when Rochester and Antoinette leave for England. Rochester offers, "You can write to her," to which Christophine replies, "Read and write I don't know. Other things I know," and walks away without saying goodbye.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE: GARDENS, JUNGLE, TREES

Throughout the novel, the natural world reflects Antoinette's and the husband's respective feelings of comfort and/or alienation. When Antoinette is rejected by her mother and ridiculed by her peers, she hides in the gardens at Coulibri and feels that even biting ants and sharp, stinging foliage are "Better, better than people." Conversely, a major feature of her nightmares, which turn out to be of England, is the unfamiliarity of the trees. The husband, on the other hand, who finds the people and customs of Jamaica disorienting and even disturbing, is similarly disoriented and disturbed by the Jamaican landscape. He becomes lost and delirious in the jungle, and says that the landscape is, "not only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you."

CLOTHING AND HAIR

The state of women's dresses and hair represent their desirability as well as their agency in the novel. When Tia and Antoinette fall out early on in the novel, Tia humiliates Antoinette by stealing her dress. Annette's effort to lift the family out of destitution begins with the making of new dresses for herself and Antoinette. When Antoinette wakes from her fever, she knows that she has been ill and a great change has occurred because she sees that her hair has been cut. Louise de Plana, the ultimate ideal female in the novel, is constantly dressed in white, and has hair that Antoinette tries and fails to emulate. The husband's physical attraction to both Antoinette and Amélie is at various points directed towards their dresses, and in the case of Antoinette even her dress on its own, without her in it, is enough to arouse the husband. Christophine's intimidating presence is often connected with the bold colors of her dress.

FIRE

Fire is the ultimate destructive and redemptive force in the novel. The fire at Coulibri is an act of retribution and defiance on the part of the nearby black community, but it destroys the life that Antoinette has known as a child. Both Coco the parrot and the moths that fly into the flames of candles throughout Antoinette's and the husband's honeymoon foreshadow Antoinette's own fiery suicide, through which she finally gains freedom at the end of the novel.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the W.W. Norton & Company edition of *Wide Sargasso Sea* published in 1992.

Part 1 Quotes

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

As the novel begins, Antoinette lays out the complex social and racial dynamics in her Jamaican home. Following the emancipation of all slaves in Jamaica, the white population of the island "closes ranks," excluding their former slaves (who are black). And yet the dynamic in Jamaica is far more complicated than "black versus white." The Jamaican elite also look down on Antoinette's family because they're of French descent, whereas the majority of Jamaican elites are English. There's more than one way to be an outsider in this novel, and the passage establishes such a point right away. While she's certainly better off than the former slaves in her country, Antoinette and her family are still alienated by the other whites around them.

The Lord make no distinction between black and white. Black and white the same for Him.

Related Characters: Godfrey (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the family servant, Godfrey, discovers the family's prized horse dead underneath a tree. Godfrey is sure that the horse has been murdered by an angry black mob, furious with Antoinette's family for representing the "old order" that accepted slavery in Jamaica. And yet Godfrey continues to serve Antoinette's family. As such, he takes a curiously detached point of view, claiming that God makes no distinction between different races.

Godfrey is in a difficult position: he's not at home with Antoinette's family, because of his race and low-class status, but he's certainly not one of the mob, since he continues to work for Antoinette. He's "neither here nor there"--an outsider everywhere he goes. In the absence of a real community, Godfrey turns to religion, believing that ultimately, all divisions are meaningless.

Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger.

Related Characters: Tia (speaker), Antoinette Cosway

Related Themes:

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Antoinette quarrels with her former friend, Tia. Tia is a black woman, and she's keenly aware of the shifting racial politics in Jamaica at the time. Tia bets Antoinette that she can do a somersault--she does so, and Antoinette is reluctant to pay her bet, disputing the validity of the somersault instead. Tia mocks Antoinette, suggesting that Antoinette, in spite of her white pedigree, doesn't have any real power in Jamaica anymore--ever since the Emancipation Act, white families have lost some of their power, and many are newly poor and alienated. Tia, who's been poor and socially persecuted for years now, is more used to surviving under such circumstances--thus, she's "better than" Antoinette, who's not only new to her powerlessness and relative poverty, but also is part of a group that supported or condoned slavery. This past makes Jamaican whites more morally bankrupt, in Tia's eyes, than any black person.

And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think 'It's better than people.' Black ands or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin—once I saw a snake. All better than people. Better. Better, better than people.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

As Antoinette grows up, she becomes more and more isolated from other people, even her own family members.

The racial and political tensions in Jamaica are so distressing to her that she prefers spending time with herself; or rather, time with the natural world.

Although Rhys suggests here that Antoinette has a strong connection to the natural landscape (particularly that of Jamaica), it's also clear that the relationship between Antoinette and nature is far from idyllic. Antoinette only focuses on the negative aspects of nature here--sharp grass, biting ants--and only prefers such a world because it's better than the world of race and civilization.

> I was bridesmaid when my mother married Mr. Mason in Spanish Town...their eyes slid away from my hating face. I had heard what all these smooth smiling people said about her when she was not listening and they did not guess I was.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker), Annette, Mr. Mason

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

Here Antoinette watches with horror as her mother remarries (Antoinette's own father has died, leaving the family deep in debt). Anette's new husband is an Englishman named Mr. Mason. Though Anette herself is of French extraction, she seems to be giving in to the social pressure to "become English." Moreover, Antoinette is disgusted by the people she sees at her mother's wedding: she knows very well that most of the English guests there secretly despise Anette for being French and remarrying a Englishman to repair her decaying household. The scene is an important part of Antoinette's coming-of-age, since it shows her becoming even more disillusioned with the artificial ceremonies of life in white Jamaica: to be a part of society is to lie and be hypocritical, and Antoinette can't stand it.

> Mr. Mason did not approve of Aunt Cora, an ex-slave-owner who had escaped misery, a flier in the face of Providence.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker), Mr. Mason, Aunt Cora

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Antoinette is sent to live with her Aunt Cora, who used to be a prominent slave-owner before the Emancipation Act. Now, Cora has somehow managed to escaped punishment from Jamaica: she gets by despite having lost her entire labor force (unlike Antoinette's own family, which is immediately devastated by the Act). Cora's philosophy of life is at odds with that of Mr. Mason, Anette's new, mysterious husband. It's tempting to think of Mr. Mason as the "good" character here, by virtue of the fact that he rejects slavery (or at least rejects Cora the unpunished slaveowner). And yet, as we'll come to see, the truth is more complicated: Mr. Mason is hardly a progressive figure, and actually regards black people as sub-human.

> No one had ever spoken to me about obeah— but I knew what I would find if I dared to look.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

Christophine is one of the most interesting characters in the novel, and one who is respected, feared, and alienated by both black and white people. Christophine is rumored to use a powerful form of voodoo magic called obeah; while Antoinette doesn't describe what, exactly, obeah is, we're left to assume that it's a powerful and frightening kind of ritual.In this scene, Antoinette learns a little more about obeah: she wonders what she'd find if she were to look through Christophine's things, and imagines that she'd find magical objects for casting spells.

The scene is a good example of how the line between truth and reality is often blurred in the novel. Antoinette assumes that she "knows" what she would find if she looked through Christophine's things, but she also admits that she knows almost nothing about obeah itself. As in other parts of the novel, Antoinette will confuse dreams or imagination with reality, and is haunted by this blurring of just what is "truth."

You have lived alone far too long, Annette. You imagine enmity which doesn't exist. Always one extreme or the other. Didn't you fly at me like a little wild cat when I said nigger. Not nigger, nor even negro. Black people I must say... they're too damn lazy to be dangerous, I know that.'
'They are more alive than you are, lazy or not, and they can be dangerous and cruel for reasons you wouldn't understand.'

Related Characters: Annette, Mr. Mason (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Mr. Mason and his wife, Anette, have an argument. Anette is worried that their black neighbors have become so angry with her family (and Mr. Mason's new, ostentatious show of wealth) that they'll attack the house. Mr. Mason dismisses Annette's worries as "hysterical," and suggests that the black neighbors are too foolish and lazy to plan anything so daring.

The passage is important because there's no real hero or villain in it. Annette's comments about her black neighbors suggests that she sees them as very "alive" but also dangerous and antagonistic. Mr. Mason, by contrast, is incredibly condescending toward black people, insulting them with slurs and dismissing them as childish. Annette is smarter about the ways of the world--she knows that her black neighbors are smart and powerful enough to destroy her--but she continues to regard them as monsters, not people. Annette *does*, however, show some sympathy for the plight of former slaves in Jamaica--as a longtime resident of the island, she knows about their suffering in ways that Mr. Mason cannot understand.

We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker), Tia

Related Themes:

Page Number: 45

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Antoinette has lost her home: an angry mob has burned it to the ground. Antoinette staggers away from the wreckage, hoping for some connection to her old, peaceful life. She stumbles upon Tia, who's standing with a group of sympathetic-looking black women. But instead of showing any compassion for her old friend, Tia throws a rock at Antoinette. Antoinette is shocked by Tia's actions--indeed, both of them begin to cry.

The passage shows the basic division between Antoinette and the rest of society, and the division *within* Antoinette. Antoinette is trapped in the middle: she's made to be representative of the white elite in Jamaica (the reason that Tia throws a rock at her), and yet she's also an outsider among such an elite group--as a "creole" and a woman, she has no real power. She's the victim of other larger social forces over which she has little to no control. Rhys captures the paradoxes of Antoinette's existence when she describes Antoinette looking into Tia's face and seeing "a looking-glass." Antoinette and Tia are similar enough to be friends, bot also total opposites. They have a peculiar relationship: they see a lot of themselves in each other, and yet know that they'll always be different.

'Such terrible things happen. Why? Why?'
'You must not concern yourself with that mystery. We do not know why the devil must have his little day. Not yet.'

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway, Sister Marie Augustine (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

After the fire that destroys her family's home, Antoinette is sent to a convent school, where a nun named sister Marie Augustine takes care of her until her stepfather returns to get her. In the convent, Antoinette thinks about the horrible things that have happened to her in the last few years: she's lost her only friend, her mother has gone mad and died, and her home is in ruins. Antoinette asks the Sister for some explanation of *why* horrible things have happened to her, but the Sister can't answer such questions. She advises Antoinette to stop thinking about the past and questioning God's will.

The passage is important because it shows how powerless people come to make peace with their own pain and suffering. Antoinette is still young and optimistic enough to think that it's possible to better her situation--but the Sister assures her that all her attempts will be in vain.

Part 2 Quotes

This a very wild place — not civilized. Why you come here?

Related Characters: The Young Bull (speaker), The Husband

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narration has shifted to the point of view of a new character, Antoinette's husband. Antoinette and her new husband have traveled to a town called Massacre. During their time in the town, a porter named the Young Bull asks the Husband, seemingly a rich, sophisticated man, why he's brought his wife to an uncivilized area.

The word "civilized" carries with it many connotations. As the passage suggests, civilization is a kind of shorthand for whiteness and wealth: the Young Bull's definition of "civilized" is, of course, biased by a colonial history of language in favor of white, English-speaking people like the Husband. The Young Bull is hoping to raise himself up socially by being especially submissive to the Husband and showing his disdain for his fellow workers.

If she were taller, one of these strapping women dressed up to the nines, I might be afraid of her.

Related Characters: The Husband (speaker), Antoinette Cosway

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Husband discussed Christophine, the black nurse who knows the art of obeah. The Husband finds Christophine a little intimidating, but also chooses to try and deny her power based on her clothing. The Husband seems to conflate Christophine's appearance with her humanity: he'd change his opinion of her if she changed her clothing (or, more to the point, her race and class).

The passage also shows that Christophine has power that goes beyond her race or sex. The Husband seems perfectly comfortable around the other characters in the novel, regardless of their race or gender. And yet there's something about Christophine--perhaps because of her confidence and her association with magic--that intimidates him.

As for my confused impressions they will never be written. There are blanks in my mind that cannot be filled up.

Related Characters: The Husband (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 76

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the Husband flashes back to discuss how he and Antoinette came to be married. He acknowledges that there are some "holes" in his story, which he's unable to remember totally.

By establishing that his narration isn't perfect, the Husband raises the possibility that his account of the facts isn't particularly reliable at all--once again adding to the effect of questionable truth and reality within the novel. In a more profound sense, though, the Husband's statements suggests the gaps in his soul, too--he's a flawed, exceptionally weak person, who marries Antoinette because he thinks doing so will make him "a man." The Husband marries because he wants to be stronger, than blames Antoinette when he remains exactly the same.

I take up my pen after long thought and meditation but in the end the truth is better than a lie...you have been shamefully deceived by the Mason family...That girl she look you straight in the eye and talk sweet talk— and it's lies she tell you. Lies.

Related Characters: Daniel Cosway (speaker), Antoinette Cosway, The Husband

Related Themes:

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Husband receives a mysterious letter

from Daniel Cosway, one of the illegitimate children of "Old Cosway," Antoinette's father. Daniel claims that the Husband has been deceived in marrying Antoinette: she is not, in fact, a virtuous young woman, but rather the product of an evil family with madness in their blood. Daniel will go on to explain that Antoinette's family was hated in Jamaica for trafficking in slaves, and that Old Cosway had sex with many of his slaves. Furthermore, Daniel claims that there's a history of insanity in the Cosway family.

Notice that Daniel never actually levels any criticisms at Antoinette as an individual, and yet because of her genetic relationship to Old Cosway, Daniel is saying she's somehow "guilty" of her family's evils.

But they are white, I am coloured. They are rich, I am poor.

Related Characters: Daniel Cosway (speaker), Antoinette Cosway, Annette, Old Cosway

Related Themes:

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

Daniel Cosway's reasons for writing the letter to the Husband are clear enough: he's justly upset about being mistreated by Old Cosway and all of society for so long (because he's alienated even from the Cosway family itself because of his mixed race), and having no other avenue that would allow him to get justice, he writes the Husband a letter just to "getting even."

Daniel's complaints about the Cosway family may be well-founded, but Daniel is also clearly an unreliable source, biased by his bitterness and anger. He seems to think of the Husband as a tolerant, understanding man--hence, his decision to write to him and reveal the "truth." As we know by now, the Husband is hardly tolerant to black people at all--on the contrary, he's constantly dismissing them or misunderstanding them.

Woman must have spunks to live in this wicked world.

Related Characters: Christophine (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 101

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Antoinette realizes that her nurse, Christophine, is about to leave her home altogether. Christophine explains that she and the Husband don't get along, so it'll be easier if she just leaves permanently. Antoinette is heartbroken, since Christophine--while not exactly her friend--is one of the last links between Antoinette's current life and her past. Without Christophine, Antoinette will be cut loose in a frightening new world.

Christophine's parting words to Antoinette show that she's survived because she's tough and confident in herself--necessities in a world that's already so hard for women. Christophine could be considered a model for how to survive in an unjust world: she has a confidence and strength that most other characters lack, but with this comes a callousness (she turns her back on Antoinette, after all). The fact that Christophine uses magic might also be a signal to us that she's a true anomaly in the world of the novel: a woman who's completely free (for now).

These people are very vulnerable. How old was I when I learned to hide how I felt? A very small boy.

Related Characters: The Husband (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Husband wonders to himself why the Jamaican people are so open with their feelings. He dismisses any such openness as an abnormality, and a sign of immaturity and foolishness. The Husband contrasts the Jamaicans' openness with his own English-style nurturing, where he learned to be polite and adept at hiding his true feelings.

First, the Husband is wrong to assume that only civilized people are good at hiding their emotions: the English culture of the "stiff upper lip" (i.e., never giving away one's inner feelings) is world-famous, and yet it hardly proves that English people are the best. (In fact, it arguably leads to all kinds of neuroses and an unhealthy society altogether.) Second, the Husband's claims of having total control over his feelings is ironic, since by now it's clear for all to see that he's had an affair with his maid: he hasn't done a good job of hiding his true feelings at all.

But I cannot go. He is my husband after all.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker), The Husband

Related Themes:

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Antoinette talks with Christophine about her unhappy marriage to the Husband. Antoinette knows that her husband has had an affair with at least one other woman; she also senses that her husband doesn't really love her at all. Christophine earnestly suggests that Antoinette leave the Husband, but Antoinette refuses--there's no way she can leave, since she's dependent on the Husband in every way. (He controls her money, where she travels, etc.)

The passage reminds us that at the time, husbands had the power of life and death over their wives--they could control their money, have them declared insane, etc. Antoinette's helplessness reminds us how incredible Christophine's achievement is: she's somehow made a life for herself without becoming dependent on anyone, male or female.

All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I have. One living in this world, each one a different father, but no husband, I thank my God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man.

Related Characters: Christophine (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Antoinette gets some tough advice from Christophine: leave the Husband altogether. Antoinette refuses to do so: she'd be too embarrassed, society would reject her, and she has no money anymore. Christophine is disgusted with Antoinette's weakness, and she accuses her, along with all women, of being weak.

The passage is important because it gives us some more information about Christophine, and reminds us that while she's a woman, she's not like any other woman in the novel. Christophine insists that all woman do what she's done: remain financially independent. Notice that Christophine hasn't turned her back on love or sex: she has children, but she refuses to marry a man. There are obvious limitations to Christophine's way of life (she never feels a sense of security from having a permanent companion, for example), and yet she's impressive in finding a way to survive on her own.

It doesn't matter what I believe or you believe, because we can do nothing about it.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Antoinette and the Husband are having dinner. Antoinette thinks that she'll never be able to make her Husband love her--she'll always be trapped in a lonely, unhappy marriage. Her despair is palpable in this scene: the Husband, immediately after noticing that Amelie and Antoinette look similar, asks Antoinette if she believes in God. Antoinette's response is incredibly fatalistic--surrounded by reminders that her Husband is unfaithful to her, she expresses her supreme indifference to life.

Antoinette's claim that she can do nothing about God's existence or nonexistence reflects her own powerlessness in her life. But it's important to remember that Antoinette's situation reflects her *own* refusal to run away from her Husband, as Christophine suggested. Her prison is at least partly her own doing.

Justice. I've heard the word. It's a 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...My mother whom you all talk about, what justice did she have? My mother sitting in the rocking-chair speaking about dead horses and dead grooms and a black devil kissing her sad mouth.

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker), Annette

Related Themes:

Page Number: 146-147

Explanation and Analysis

Antoinette's marriage to the Husband has deteriorated to

the point where she refuses to listen to him at all: she's well-aware of his adultery, and doesn't want to listen to his hypocrisies any longer. Here, Antoinette accuses her husband of having sex with his black servants--essentially the same actions for which he criticized the white slaveowners previously. When the Husband claims that the slaveowners' actions were worse than his own, due to issues of justice, Antoinette laughs, claiming that justice is an empty word.

Antoinette's claims about justice reflect her fatalistic view of life, as well as her despairing acceptance of her marriage (and of her mother's tragic fate). Antoinette knows that no amount of socially-approved justice could remedy the pains of her own life--her pains are far subtler and more psychological than any system of justice could "solve." Moreover, notice that Antoinette begins to identify herself with her dead mother: she's now of an age where she can see that she's turning out just like her mother, married to a corrupt adulterer, being coerced into kissing (as Annette was by her abusive caretaker) with her "sad mouth."

❝ 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 loveliness.

Related Characters: The Husband (speaker), Antoinette Cosway

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 172

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the second Part of the book, the Husband has essentially separated with his wife, Antoinette. Moreover, the Husband has become deeply disillusioned with Jamaica and Antoinette both. He notes that he despises the Jamaican people, dislikes their language and culture and customs, and even hates the beauty of the Jamaican landscape and sky. This hatred, it's suggested, comes not from any kind of reasonable aversion but rather from pure bitterness: the Husband hates what he can't have, what remains "magic and lovely" and unreachable to him.

As the novel comes to a close, the Husband makes Antoinette a "representative" of Jamaica itself. Antoinette, the Husband has recognized before, is a good woman--and yet the Husband, because of his own weakness and coldness, struggles to appreciate such beauty--just as he struggles to embrace the beauty of Jamaica itself. Ultimately, then, it's because of the Husband's own weakness and inability to appreciate beauty that the marriage breaks apart. Although he pretends to be a just, progressive liberal, he ends up seeming like a shallow fool who doesn't know how good he had it until it's too late.

Part 3 Quotes

❝ *The rumours I've heard— very far from the truth. But I don't contradict, I know better than to say a word. After all the house is big and safe, a shelter from the world outside which, say what you like, can be a black and cruel world to a woman. Maybe that's why I stayed on...Yes, maybe that's why we all stay— Mrs Eff and Leah and me. All of us except that girl who lives in her own darkness. I'll say one thing for her, she hasn't lost her spirit. She's still fierce. I don't turn my back on her when her eyes have that look. I know it.*

Related Characters: Grace Poole (speaker), Antoinette Cosway, Mrs. Eff, Leah

Related Themes:

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

At the beginning of the third part of the book, we're introduced to Grace Poole, who takes care of "Bertha" (i.e., Antoinette) in England. (By now the novel is more closely following the storyline of *Jane Eyre*.)Grace has heard plenty of rumors about how the Husband came to meet Antoinette. Grace knows more about the truth than her peers, since she's been working for the Husband for longer, but she also isn't sure of anything, and doesn't dare gossip about what she knows: if she's found out, she could be fired and sent far away.

In a way, Grace and Antoinette aren't so different: they're both frightened women who are imprisoned in a particular place. Grace knows that she has nowhere else to go; if she were fired she'd end up back in the "black and cruel world." By the same token, Antoinette was trapped in a horrifying marriage to the Husband, knowing that she could never escape him. With the notable exception of Christophine,

women in the novel are often the prisoners of their husbands or employers.

What am I doing in this place and who am I?

Related Characters: Antoinette Cosway (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

As the novel comes to a close, Antoinette has lost everything: her home, her family, her money, her freedom, and--perhaps most tragically--her name. Without an identity of any kind, Antoinette is truly her husband's prisoner, forced to spend her time in the attic of his large manor house. Antoinette can barely remember why she was moved to England--it's as if being stripped of her identity has literally deprived of her of the past; i.e., deprived her of memory. While Antoinette is a relatively minor character in *Jane Eyre* (Bertha), she's the protagonist of Rhys's novel, a move that shows how 19th-century literature marginalized women, treating them either as angels or demons, never doing justice to them as complex human beings. Rhys has tried to remedy the gender problems of *Jane Eyre* by showing Antoinette as a full-fledged, complex protagonist.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PART 1

The novel opens with Antoinette's narration, looking back at her childhood in 1830's post-Emancipation Jamaica. Antoinette and her family are isolated, socially and geographically. Antoinette explains that their exclusion from white society is a result of disapproval by "the Jamaican ladies" of her mother Annette's youth, physical beauty, and origins from Martinique. When Antoinette asks her mother why they have so few visitors to Coulibri, their estate, her mother tells her that it is because of the poor condition of the road leading from the nearest town, and that "road repairing was now a thing of the past." Antoinette laments the loss of her father, of regular visitors, of feeling safe in her home, as all things that now belong to the past.

The complexity of Caribbean racial dynamics is introduced. Antoinette does not explain that Annette's Martinique background divides her from white society because Martinique is a French colony. This makes Annette Creole, while the Jamaican ladies that Antoinette mentions are of English descent. Instead, Antoinette addresses the reader as if we are insiders who would understand these distinctions naturally. This mode of address is a central feature of her narration, and it means that many key truths are implied rather than stated directly. Here we are similarly left to deduce that her father is dead, and that the deteriorating roads are a consequence of a diminished workforce in the wake of Emancipation.

Antoinette overhears her mother one day speaking to Mr. Luttrell, a white neighbor and Annette's only friend. He laments the delayed arrival of the financial compensation that white former slaveowners such as himself were promised as part of the Emancipation Act of 1833. Not long after, Mr. Luttrell, "tired of waiting," commits suicide. His property is left abandoned, pronounced unlucky by local whites and considered by the black population to be haunted. Annette is left completely friendless after Mr. Luttrell's death, and the Cosway's are now the only white people in the immediate area. Now when Annette travels around the area she is alone, and the family's black neighbors often gather to jeer at Annette as she rides by, particularly at the increasing shabbiness of her **appearance**.

Mr. Luttrell's discontent and suicide are the first things that Antoinette explicitly associates with the Emancipation Act, setting the tone for her troubled understanding of freedom. The parallel superstitions of the white and black populations regarding Mr. Luttrell's abandoned estate indicate the close, if fraught, relationship between these two cultural groups. The tension between Antoinette's family and the nearby population of former slaves is introduced, as well as the family's relatively recent poverty. Annette in particular is increasingly vulnerable, having now lost the protection and support of both her husband and the only other white man she trusted.

One day, Antoinette finds her mother's horse dead underneath a **tree**, and tells no one, because she believes if she doesn't speak of it, it might turn out not to have happened. When the horse is discovered later by their servant and former slave, Godfrey, it is clear that it has been poisoned by their black neighbors. While Godfrey maintains a kind of detached moral stance, ("The Lord make no distinction between black and white"), Annette angrily holds him responsible and places him on the side of their hostile neighbors, saying, "The old hypocrite...He knew what they were going to do." Without the horse to travel, Annette pronounces the family "marooned."

Godfrey's reaction to the killing of the horse introduces the difficult position of the black servants who've chosen to remain in the employ of former masters in the novel. Rather than declare his loyalties one way or the other, Godfrey attempts to remain neutral. Annette's desperation increases after this crime, as her means of independent mobility is taken form her with the loss of the horse. Antoinette's belief that she might be able to make something not true by not speaking of it is also introduced. The complicated connection between words and truth plays a major role in the novel.

A doctor comes to pay a visit to Antoinette's younger brother, Pierre, who is disabled. Antoinette is never told what the doctor says during this visit-- she knows only that afterward her mother descends into a depression, and refuses to leave the house. Annette instructs Antoinette repeatedly to leave her alone, and begins to talk to herself, which frightens Antoinette. When Annette does stand outside of the house , to look at the sea, she is gawked at by passersby. Antoinette describes how the **gardens** at Coulibri during this time are allowed to grow beautiful and wild from neglect, without anyone to work on them now that slavery has ended. She remarks on the smell of dead flowers mixed in with the fragrance of living ones.

Annette's helpless retreat into herself foreshadows her later descent into madness, and marks a shift in her relationship with Antoinette. Antoinette is perplexed by the alienation she feels from her mother, and lacks even the means to understand its cause, because she is kept in the dark about the truth of Pierre's condition. The garden and the natural world are introduced as a refuge for Antoinette as well as a symbol for the tension between order and freedom that pervades the novel. The garden, like Antoinette, is being left in neglect by its caretakers. While it is free to grow beautiful and wild, it is also permeated with decay.

To avoid her mother, Antoinette begins to spend most of her time with her nurse Christophine. Christophine is also from Martinique, and therefore just as isolated in the black community as Annette and Antoinette are among white society. Antoinette describes her distinctly Martinique songs and attire. She also observes that the girl servants who help Christophine with the washing are afraid of her, and that it is this fear that keeps them working for her. She doesn't pay them, and they even bring her presents of fruit and vegetables.

Christophine is introduced as a foil, or contrast, to Annette. Though they are similar in some respects, particularly their Martiniquais heritage, Christophine is strong and able (and black) where Annette is weak and changeable (and white). Christophine nurtures Antoinette and keeps her company when Annette shuts her out, and while Annette's relationships with her servants are often fraught, as we saw with Godfrey, the girls who work for Christophine fear and revere her. Christophine's mysterious power over others is referenced here, but not yet explained.

When Antoinette asks her mother about Christophine, it is clear that she is the only servant that Annette still trusts. Annette believes all the others have stayed at Coulibri only "because they wanted somewhere to sleep and something to eat," and angrily denounces them. Antoinette offers to fan her mother in the heat after this angry outburst, but Annette again shuts her out and tells her to leave. Antoinette reflects on times when she was allowed to remain close to her mother almost constantly, and remembers in particular a feeling of safety and comfort while watching her mother comb her **hair**.

Annette's distrust of her servants is reiterated and emphasized—she can't understand why they would choose to keep working at Coulibri after being set free, unless their goal was to take advantage of her. Christophine's powerful status in the house is further emphasized as the sole servant who remains in Annette's good graces. The rift between Annette and Antoinette grows, and hair is introduced as a symbol of female security and comfort.

One day, Antoinette is followed down the road by a little black girl singing, "White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you." Antoinette hides in the **garden**, where Christophine finds her many hours later, lying on the ground covered in moss.

Antoinette feels the sting of racial hatred personally for the first time, and seeks refuge in the garden, her place of freedom and escape. The term "white cockroach" implies the way that the native blacks who were enslaved and now freed see the whites as an infestation, something that doesn't belong.

The next day, Christophine introduces Antoinette to Tia, the daughter of Christophine's only friend, another non-Jamaican black woman. Tia and Antoinette become good friends for a time, until one day they get into an argument over a bet. Christophine has given Antoinette some pennies as spending **money**, and Tia bets Antoinette three pennies that she cannot do a somersault under water. Antoinette ups the ante to all of the pennies, and when she does the somersault there is a dispute over its adequacy. Tia takes the money, and Antoinette calls her a "cheating nigger." Tia replies by mocking Antoinette's poverty, saying "old time white people nothing but white nigger now." When Antoinette looks away, Tia leaves with her money as well as her **clothes**, forcing Antoinette to walk home in Tia's dirty dress.

Tia and Antoinette briefly provide a model for cooperation between their respective cultural groups. However, when money is brought into the equation, the girls quickly fall out. This childish bet and disagreement reflects the socio-economic disparity between whites and blacks that is at the center of racial tension in the area, and drives the growing discontent among the black neighbors surrounding Coulibri. The girls, in their argument, even repeat language and opinions clearly drawn from adults in their respective communities. The fact that Tia steals Antoinette's dress as well as her money highlights the symbolic significance of appearance and attire with respect to female power and security in the novel.

When Antoinette arrives home, her mother has visitors, relatives of Mr. Luttrell who have come to claim his estate. These visitors laugh at Antoinette's dirty **clothes**, causing her to run away and Annette and Christophine to argue about the state of Antoinette's wardrobe. Annette insists that Antoinette must have another dress for Christophine to put her in, and Christophine tells her angrily that she does not, that it is shameful and caused by neglect, "She run wild, she grow up worthless. And nobody care." Christophine dresses Antoinette in an old dress that is too small for her, while bitterly criticizing the new Luttrell relatives for their treatment of Antoinette and their attitude of ownership in the area. She tells Antoinette that though there is no more slavery, the new white people in power still have the law on their side and are worse than the old.

Antoinette's disheveled appearance mortifies Annette because it highlights the family's poverty and exclusion from the ranks of polite society, to which the Luttrell's belong. The symbolic significance of clothing expands further into an argument between Annette and Christophine about the poor nature of Annette's parenting as indicated by Antoinette's inadequate wardrobe. As Christophine dresses Antoinette in a dress that is too small for her, a further humiliation, it is clear that the Luttrell's reaction to Antoinette's attire sparks an even larger topic of discontent—Christophine sees in their disdain the very nature of the new white power in Jamaica.

The rest of the night, Annette does not look at or speak to Antoinette, and Antoinette is sure that her mother is ashamed of her. Antoinette has a nightmare that night, that she is walking through a strange forest with someone who hates her, out of sight. She screams and wakes up, to find her mother there. Annette chastises her for waking up her brother, Pierre. Antoinette goes back to sleep watching the light in Pierre's window. The next day, Annette has "yards of muslin" and ribbon purchased to make new dresses for herself and Antoinette. Antoinette suspects that her mother has sold the remainder of her jewelry to make these purchases. Her mother also begins to spend whole days at parties given by the new Luttrell's, and Antoinette responds by roaming the Coulibri estate, seeking solace in nature, which she proclaims, even when being bitten by ants or cut by sharp grasses, to be "Better, better than people."

The incident with the Luttrell's pushes Annette and Antoinette even further apart. It also moves Annette to seek security and belonging through the only method available to her—courtship and marriage. She takes action, in the form of ordering new dresses to be made, to make herself and Antoinette appear to be a part of the society to which she aspires to belong, though she does so as a last resort, selling off her jewels, which must be close to her last source of money. Meanwhile, in her alienation from her mother, Antoinette again finds refuge and order in nature, and sees nature as being better—less cruel—than people. In this part of the novel Antoinette's nightmare is introduced, and associated with newcomers and courting.

Annette remarries, to Mr. Mason, an Englishman. Antoinette, serving as a bridesmaid, regards the English guests at the wedding with hatred, because she remembers overhearing many of them gossiping about her and her family while visiting Coulibri: they gossiped about Mr. Mason's predatory financial motivations for being in Jamaica, about Antoinette's father, Old Cosway, whom they called an alcoholic and philanderer with many illegitimate children, and claim also that Annette "encouraged" him. They also gossip about Christophine and her practice of obeah. After the wedding, Antoinette and her brother are sent to stay with their Aunt Cora, a wealthy widow, while Coulibri is renovated and restored with Mr. Mason's money.

Annette attains the security and inclusion that she sought through marriage. Information that Antoinette has not shared in her narration enters the novel through gossip and hearsay. It is unclear whether Antoinette does not know the truth about her father before now, or whether she leaves it out of her narration for the same reason that she doesn't speak of the poisoned horse to her mother, in hopes that not speaking of it might erase its truth. The idea is introduced that Christophine's power in the community might come from obeah, a voodoo-like folk magic. Antoinette mentions obeah in her narration without explaining its significance. Again, she is addressing the reader as an insider, assuming the reader has enough contextual knowledge to just understand (though of course the reader doesn't, creating a bit of a sense of being lost and alienation in the reader that mirrors Antoinette's own alienation from the white and black societies around her).

When the family returns to Coulibri, Antoinette finds that much more than its appearance has changed. The new black servants brought by Mr. Mason gossip about Christophine and obeah, instilling a new fear of Christophine in Antoinette. Antoinette says that though no one has ever spoken to her directly about obeah, she knows what she would find if she looked around in Christophine's things. One day, she sees or imagines seeing "a dead man's dried hand" and a bleeding chicken in Christophine's room.

Antoinette returns to her home to find it a completely alienating environment. This change is emphasized by her new fear of Christophine, whom she has grown up trusting and being nurtured by. Her fear is based on overheard gossip, however, and she struggles to determine what is true. It is unclear to both Antoinette and the reader whether the evidence of obeah that she sees in Christophine's room is real or imagined.

Annette is also affected by the new gossip, particularly the constant and increasingly hateful commentary among the surrounding community of ex-slaves about the new wealth brought to Coulibri by Mr. Mason. A year into their marriage, Annette feels so threatened by their black neighbors that she tries to convince Mr. Mason to move the family away from Coulibri, but he laughs off the idea, saying that the ex-slaves are too lazy to be dangerous. Annette cautions him, saying that he misunderstands and underestimates black people, that they are "more alive" than he is, and accuses him of failing to recognize their capacity for both good and bad. Mr. Mason agrees that he does not understand, but does not agree to leave Coulibri, though Annette continues to insist that they must.

The disenfranchised black population is growing increasingly embittered at the new show of opulent wealth at Coulibri now that Mr. Mason has renovated it. Annette, who has lived among these people for many years, knows that the family is in danger, but Mr. Mason ignores her appeals. It is clear that he, an Englishman, lacks the cultural fluency to understand the black people of Jamaica or even take them seriously. He also doesn't take his wife—or, maybe more broadly, the opinions of women—seriously. And Annette, though desperate to leave Coulibri, must acquiesce to her husband's wishes. She has no power to refuse or sway him.

One evening, on their way back to Coulibri estate from an outing, the family notices that the huts of their black neighbors are abandoned. Mr. Mason thinks they must be at a dance or a wedding, but Antoinette and the rest of the family are uneasy, saying that there are never weddings in the community, and that they would be able to hear drums if there was a dance. This sparks another argument about leaving Coulibri. At dinner, Mr. Mason speaks of importing workers from the East Indies, and is warned by Aunt Cora not to speak about this in front of the black employees whom he'd be replacing. Mr. Mason again expresses his belief that black people are too childlike to be a real threat.

Mr. Mason continues to display his ignorance and his unwillingness to understand the black people who live and work among them, as well as his disregard for the wishes and fears of his wife and sister-in-law. Meanwhile Antoinette, Annette, and Aunt Cora can easily read the signs of danger, recognizing the abandoned huts as an indicator of some unusual activity in the village, and Mr. Mason's insulting and prejudiced remarks as potentially quite damaging to their safety.

On her way to bed, Antoinette goes into Pierre's room to say goodnight, and finds him already asleep. As she watches him sleep, she thinks to herself that Mr. Mason has promised to bring Pierre to England to be cured, and wonders what that might mean. She concludes that it would mean making Pierre "exactly like other people," and questions whether this would be a good thing. She leaves his room and goes to sleep in a state of unease, sure she has heard whispering among the bamboo outside Pierre's window.

Antoinette's suspicion that the true nature of Pierre's possible cure would mean merely making him "exactly like other people" amounts to a questioning of whether the rewards of belonging in a community are worth the cost, harkening back to her claim that anything the natural world has to offer, even pain and sickness, is "Better, better than people." The whispering outside Pierre's window raises the suspicion of the angry black neighbors gathering secretly outside the house—though it's unclear if she really hears these whispers or they are just manifestations of her nervousness.

Antoinette is awoken in the middle of the night by her mother, who tells her to dress quickly and come downstairs. Antoinette is struck by the disheveled state of her mother's **hair**. When she gets downstairs, Antoinette sees that all of the adults are up, and many of the servants are missing. There is an angry mob outside. Mr. Mason attempts to address the mob, still not believing that they are there to hurt the family, and is greeted with rocks thrown at him. Annette worries about whether to wake the still sleeping Pierre. Even as Mr. Mason tries to insist to the family, yet again, that the crowd is harmless, the servant Mannie notices smoke coming from under Antoinette's bedroom door-- the mob has set **fire** to the house.

The previously hinted at discontent in the black community comes to a head, and the depth of Mr. Mason's capacity for denial is revealed, as he maintains his insistence that the family is not in danger even in the face of a violent mob. It is clear that many, but not all, of the servants have left the house to join the crowd, a further illustration of the split loyalties among black servants remaining in white employ post Emancipation.

As Aunt Cora embraces Antoinette and tells her not to worry, that she is "quite safe," Annette rushes to Pierre's bedroom to save him, carries him out in her arms. He is badly burned, and she herself is singed. The servant who was supposed to be caring for Pierre had left the house to join the mob. As Aunt Cora tears her own petticoat into strips to bandage Pierre, Annette alternates between whispering in shock and screaming angrily at Mr. Mason for not taking her warnings seriously. The loyal remaining servants, under Aunt Cora's instruction, help the family out of the house and toward their carriage.

As Mr. Mason proves paralyzed and ineffectual in this crisis, the women of the family take action. Aunt Cora comforts Antoinette and takes charge of the family's escape, while Annette risks her own safety to save Pierre. When it is clear that Pierre is badly injured, Annette's rage at Mr. Mason's failure to protect the family overtakes her ability to act rationally.

As a hysterical Annette is being lead to the carriage, she struggles ferociously to get back into the house to retrieve her parrot, Coco. The mob laughs and hurls insults at the family, becoming more and more worked up. Antoinette notices that many of the people in the mob are carrying weapons. The crowd suddenly goes quiet as Coco the parrot emerges from an upper window of the house, screeching, his wings on **fire**. Antoinette begins to cry, remembering that it is considered very bad luck to kill a parrot or even to watch a parrot die. The members of the mob seem to remember this as well, for they begin to flee. As the family and Christophine reach their carriage, a man in the crowd confronts them, but Aunt Cora threatens him calmly with hellfire and eternal damnation, and he falls back.

Amid the confusion of the family's attempt to escape the violence brought onto them as a result of racial and economic disparity, the image of Coco the parrot dying in flames briefly unites the two sides of the conflict. Both whites and blacks recognize the dying parrot as a bad omen. Aunt Cora's cool-headed navigation of their escape and encounter with one particularly angry man from the crowd illustrates her role as one of the few strong and independent women in Antoinette's life.

Antoinette turns before entering the carriage and sees women in the crowd who are crying, insisting they only came to see what had happened. As she watches the house and the **gardens** burn, Antoinette mourns the loss of the beautiful trees and flowers. She sees her former friend Tia in the crowd, and runs to her because she sees Tia, in that moment, as the only remaining token of the life she had known. Antoinette think that if she can stay with Tia she will not have to leave her home, that they will be able to go back to the time that they played together as equals. Before she reaches Tia, though, Tia throws a jagged rock at her, hitting Antoinette in the head. The two look at each other and both weep as Antoinette bleeds, and Antoinette sees herself in Tia, "Like in a looking-glass."

The lines of the conflict are blurred as chaos reaches a fever pitch. Black women from the village are in the crowd weeping for Antoinette's family, denying their own involvement in the attack. After Antoinette watches the destruction of the garden, her one place of freedom and refuge, she throws herself desperately into a brief fantasy of harmony and safety when she runs toward Tia, seeing a kindred soul in Tia despite their earlier disagreement. Lines are quickly redrawn, however—and the violent reality of the situation made clear to Antoinette—when Tia hits her with a rock. The final image of the scene, with Antoinette seeing a weeping Tia as a mirror image is profound: a mirror image is both the same and opposite, both familiar and completely inaccessible.

Antoinette wakes up with Aunt Cora by her bedside, at Aunt Cora's home in Spanish Town. The first thing she notices is that her **hair** has been cut off, and she asks Aunt Cora about it. She learns that she has been very ill for six weeks, which is why her hair had to be cut. Aunt Cora also tells her that Pierre is dead, and that her mother is in the country, recovering. Antoinette remembers hearing, during her fevers, her mother raving with grief and alternately echoing the parrot Coco's signature phrase, "*Qui est la?*" and screaming accusations and threats at Mr. Mason.

Antoinette's next moment of consciousness is marked by confusion. Despite Aunt Cora's nurturing presence, Antoinette feels displaced and disoriented without her mother and her brother. The loss of the family home has coincided with the destruction of her family, and her disconnection from herself. Her disconnect with her identity is symbolized by the loss of her hair, and echoed by her recollection of the parrot's question, "Qui est la?" or "Who is there?"

Antoinette does not mention her awareness of the truth to Aunt Cora, who promises her that she is safe and sings to her to try to get her to go to sleep. Antoinette interrupts her and asks her to sing a song entitled, "*Before I was set free.*" Antoinette only remembers one lyric before falling asleep, "The sorrow that my heart feels for."

Again, Antoinette elects not to speak of troubling truths to those around her. The song that she requests that Aunt Cora sing to her, or at least the specific excerpts of the song that Antoinette remembers, suggests a complicated and troubled attitude toward freedom.

One day, Antoinette is taken to visit her mother at the house where Annette is recuperating. Antoinette insists that Christophine go with her, and no one else. When they arrive, Antoinette runs as fast as she can from the carriage to the house in her excitement to see her mother. At first, Antoinette does not recognize her mother, and only sees that there is a black man, a black woman, and a white woman in the room. She cannot see her mother's face, but soon recognizes her by her damaged **hair**. They embrace, and Antoinette struggles to express to her mother that, though Pierre is dead, she is here for her. In response, Annette flings Antoinette away from her and loudly refuses her. Christophine takes Antoinette back to her aunt's house, and they do not speak of what happened.

Annette has been driven mad by grief. But Antoinette relays the events of her visit to her mother without emotional commentary or analysis—as readers we are left to conclude the fact of her mother's madness by the presence of the two caretakers and Annette's treatment of Antoinette. The silence between Christophine and Antoinette on the ride home is a further indication of the trauma of the event, as Antoinette is rejected by her mother. She has no family any longer.

After a time of living and getting well at Aunt Cora's house, Antoinette is sent to the local convent school. On the way to school on her first day, she is bullied by two children, one black and one mixed race. The girl mocks her, saying, "Look the crazy girl, you crazy like your mother," and goes on to harass her by saying that her mother had tried to kill Mr. Mason, had tried to kill Antoinette as well, and that they both have eyes "like zombie." The boy threatens repeatedly that he will, some day soon, catch her alone, implying physical violence. They begin to push her around, but when a boy named Sandi comes over to them, the bullies run away. Sandi is a relation of Antoinette's through one of her father's affairs, ands he refers to him as her cousin. He promises to make sure the other children don't bother her again.

In a move that is by now typical of Antoinette's narration, clearly stated information about emotionally difficult events enter the novel through the talk of strangers. Annette's madness, and her acts of violence against her family, are now subjects of gossip in the town. The dynamics of belonging and otherness in this scene are shifting and complex. Children who are black and of mixed race menace Antoinette, but are close enough to her socially to know details of gossip about her family. Sandi, on the other hand, is technically a member of Antoinette's family, though he also belongs to the black community. It would seem that both cruelty and mercy here transcend racial boundaries.

Antoinette is crying and dirty when she arrives at the convent. The nuns clean her up and offer her milk to sooth her, but she chokes on it. When one of the nuns tells Antoinette to look at her, that Antoinette will not be afraid of her, she takes in the nun's clean and pleasant appearance and begins to calm down. The nun tells her that she will not have to walk to school alone anymore, and then introduces her to Louise de Plana, a fellow student. Louise connects with Antoinette by joking with her about the nuns, and as they walk through the convent Antoinette is comforted by Louise's beauty as well as by the trees and flowers in the convent's **gardens**.

Antoinette is comforted by order and beauty upon arriving in the alien environment of the convent—she calms down when she observes the pleasant look of the nun, and the beauty of Louise de Plana. She also welcomes the presence of the convent's well-kept gardens, a much more orderly version of the gardens in which she has grown up seeking solace. The nun, as well as fellow students like Louise de Plana, represent a new kind of woman in Antoinette's life: calm, unmarried, and in control.

At the convent, in a hot and sticky classroom, Antoinette and her classmates practice needlework while listening to the nuns read from a book about the lives of the saints. Antoinette notices that all of the saints they hear about are beautiful and wealthy, "loved by rich and handsome young men." When it is claimed during one of these lessons that a rose belonging to one of these saints has never died, and still exists, Antoinette privately questions this, thinking, "Oh but where? Where?"

The point that Antoinette takes away from her lessons is that the major feature of saints is their wealth, beauty, and handsome suitors. Antoinette seems to have a hard time taking the nuns' teachings at face value, as she questions the existence of a supposedly eternally preserved rose formerly belonging to a saint.

The nuns place high emphasis on appearance, as well as chastity and deportment. Though there are no mirrors at the convent, Antoinette once sees a young nun admiring her own appearance, in a cask of water. Louise de Plana and her sisters are repeatedly held up by the nuns as examples of impeccable manners, hygiene, and beauty. Antoinette greatly admires them and envies one of the sisters' **hair**, asks her how to style hers to look the same. Antoinette admires Louise in particular. When listening to the nuns read about the saints and their European origins, Antoinette constructs an image in her mind of France that is "a lady with black hair wearing a white dress," and says that this is because Louise, who was born in France, has black curly hair, and her mother, who is also of French descent, liked to wear white dresses.

Though the nuns are celibate, it is clear that they are training their students to be good wives in polite society. The premium placed on appearance and manners even affects some of the nuns themselves. Antoinette becomes caught up in these values as well, fixating on the de Planas as models of ideal femininity. She idolizes Louise and comes to associate her closely with her own mother.

Antoinette prays for her mother as if she is dead, though she is still living, and says to herself that she must forget her. The rest of Antoinette's family drifts from her-- Christophine goes away to live with her son, and Mr. Mason visits only rarely. Eventually, Aunt Cora travels back to England for her health, and Antoinette moves into the convent full-time.

The nuns and fellow students gradually replace Antoinette's family as the closest and most nurturing people in her life. Her education at the convent school connects the narrative of Wide Sargasso Sea even further to Jane Eyre, in which the orphan Jane is educated at a boarding school, and goes on to teach and find companionship at a school run by a clergyman.

Antoinette thinks of the convent as a refuge, finding its structure and routine comforting. She learns and recites her prayers by rote, but wonders about the low premium placed on happiness in their teachings-- "But what about happiness, I thought at first, is there no happiness? Oh happiness of course, happiness, well." Antoinette marvels at the clear-cut contrasts in convent life, between light and dark, Heaven and Hell. She learns from one of the nuns that a feature of Heaven is that all its inhabitants are transcendently beautiful, and prays to be dead so that she might experience this Heaven. She then remembers that this, like so many other thoughts, is considered a mortal sin, and gradually stops praying. This makes her feel happier and more free, but less safe.

Though comfortable at the convent, Antoinette struggles to really connect with and believe in the doctrine of the church. Eventually, the contradictions she finds within Catholic teachings lead her to abandon prayer altogether. This brings Antoinette again to the compromise that seems at the center of the notion of freedom in the novel—one can be happy and free or safe, but not both.

After living in the convent for eighteen months, Antoinette is paid a visit by Mr. Mason. He brings her a dress, and tells her that he is taking her to live with him and Aunt Cora, who has returned from England. Antoinette greets this information with dismay. He asks her if she has learned to dance, and she replies that she has not. Mr. Mason tells her that he has invited friends from England to come and stay with them, that one in particular is coming to see her. Antoinette immediately feels a suffocating sensation at her stepfather's mention of a suitor, but refuses to mention it because, she feels, again, that if she doesn't speak of it might not be true. She notes that the nuns and the other girls know why she is leaving, and she resents their cheerfulness, envies them for their continued safety at the convent.

Mr. Mason's news means that Antoinette's time of safety and inclusion in convent life is coming to a close, and she has no choice in the matter. Her feeling of suffocation and dismay is augmented by the mention of a suitor—the prospect of marriage is thereby linked to a loss of freedom, to suffocation. This sensation is so distressing to Antoinette that she cannot even speak of it, again half-hoping that her refusal to verbalize it might erase it from reality.

The night before she is to leave the convent for good, Antoinette has her nightmare for a second time, now relayed in much more detail. In it, she is being lead through a forest of unfamiliar **trees** wearing a beautiful white dress. She does not know the man leading her, but she sees that he hates her and begins to cry. Nevertheless, she makes no effort to save herself, and in fact knows that if anyone were to try to save her, she would refuse. The stranger leads her up a flight of steps and the dream ends. Antoinette wakes and shares her dream with Sister Marie Augustine, telling her that she has dreamt she was in Hell. The nun tells her to forget the dream, because it is evil, and gives her chocolate to drink.

Antoinette's recurring nightmare foreshadows many of the details of her marriage to her future husband, who will eventually hate her, bring her to an unfamiliar place, and imprison her in his attic. In both the dream and real life, barring her final suicide, Antoinette makes no effort to escape. And when she shares the dream, she is told by those who are preparing her for life as a wife that it is the dream that is evil, rather than the suffocating truths of marriage which she senses in the dream.

The chocolate reminds Antoinette of drinking chocolate after her mother's funeral, which had taken place more than a year before. This is Antoinette's first mention of her mother's death. She thinks about the fact that no one told her how her mother died, and she never asked. She remembers that she tried to pray at the funeral, but the words gave her no solace. She does not share any of this with Sister Marie Augustine, but merely asks her tearfully why terrible things happen in the world. The nun tells her sadly not to concern herself with such a question, because "We do not know why the devil must have his little day. Not yet," and puts her back to bed to wait for her stepfather's arrival.

Antoinette's unwillingness to allow her mother's death into the narrative until a full year after it has happened is a testament to the trauma of the event. The funeral is characterized by Antoinette's feeling of disconnection from the proceedings, from the truth and circumstances of her mother's death, and from the solace promised to her by prayer. The ultimate failure of religion (and by extension the failure of inclusion in a religious group) to provide order and answers is expressed with finality in Sister Marie Augustine's sad and inadequate answer to Antoinette's question.

PART 2

Part Two begins with Antoinette's new husband's narration. He is never named in the novel. He and Antoinette have just married and are on their way to spend their honeymoon in the Windward Islands at Granbois, an estate that had belonged to Annette. They are stopped in a town called Massacre, and it is raining. He and Antoinette, along with several servants, wait underneath a **tree** for it to stop. One of the servants is Amélie, whom the husband finds "lovely" but "sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like so much else in this place." The husband asks Antoinette about the name of the town, whether slaves were massacred there. Antoinette seems shocked at the idea, and tells him that no one remembers the event that the town is named for. Three little boys come to stare at them, and when the husband smiles at one of them, he runs away crying.

The husband is disoriented. The locals, the servants, the weather, and the landscape all seem unwelcoming to him. His opinion of Amélie can be extended to cover his view of Jamaica and Granbois in general-- lovely in appearance, but malignant. The symbolic significance of names is introduced in this section. The town named Massacre, of which no one remembers the history, presages the tragedy and loss of identity that will befall Antoinette as a result of this marriage. The fact that the husband himself is never named in the novel heightens his sense of non-being in this foreign place.

Antoinette recognizes a woman in the door of a nearby hut, and goes to speak to her. The husband analyzes her appearance critically. He thinks of her eyes as "too large" and "disconcerting... long, sad, dark, alien eyes." He remarks to himself that he had not had time to notice things like this about Antoinette before their marriage, as they had married only a month after his arrival in Jamaica, and he had spent three weeks of that month ill with fever. He listens to Antoinette and the woman speak French patois, which he thinks of as "debased." Despite his private complaints that the rain is adding to his feelings of discomfort and melancholy, the husband refuses to take shelter in the woman's house when Antoinette offers, claiming to not mind getting wet. At this, Amélie gives him a look that he feels is so malicious and intimate that he has to look away.

The husband's detachment from Antoinette is clear. He thinks of her as a stranger, and this enables him to analyze her appearance critically, without emotion or tenderness. Also clear is his contempt for and misunderstanding of the local culture, as he considers the language inferior, and refuses to take the shelter offered to him by a local woman. The strange power that Amélie will eventually capitalize on with the husband begins to take shape here, communicated only through a look.

The husband leaves the shelter of the **tree** to speak to the two porters also accompanying them on their trip. One of them introduces himself as "the Young Bull," and tells the husband that this island is wild, and the locals are "not civilized." He demonstrates by showing that the other porter, who was born in Massacre, does not know his own age. The husband notices that this porter is "by far the gayest member of the wedding party." The rain stops, and as the group gets ready to depart, the Young Bull sings to himself in English while glancing sideways at the husband, who finds him boastful and foolish. As they ride away from Massacre, the husband remembers waking very early the previous morning while Antoinette was still sleeping, and feeling a sense of contentment as he watched black women walk through the streets selling cakes and sweets.

The Young Bull's self-given name perfectly illustrates his aggressive desire for dominance. His attitude toward his own countrymen is yet another demonstration of the complicated social hierarchy among the black people of Jamaica at this time. His behavior also indicates the enduring position of privilege, despite emancipation, that the English occupy. The Young Bull is desperate to impress the husband merely because he is English, and he seeks to do so by demonstrating his knowledge of and respect for what he considers to be English values-- fluency in the English language, education, being "civilized." As the husband observes that the less educated porter is the happiest, happiness is set in opposition to other desired qualities in the novel, just as it was during Antoinette's stay at the convent school.

They ride up into the mountains toward Granbois. the husband understands why the Young Bull called the place wild, and thinks to himself that it is, "Not only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you." The husband finds the colors and scale of the landscape overwhelmingly alien, and thinks of Antoinette as a stranger. As they ride, he imagines writing a letter to his father in England, in which he reports that as part of the marriage arrangement he, the husband, has been paid thirty thousand pounds "without question or condition," and that, as planned, no provision has been made in the contract to leave any of the money in Antoinette's name. In this imagined address to his father, the husband remarks that he has sold his soul so as not to have to beg his father or older brother, "the son you love," for money any longer.

Unlike Antoinette, her husband is as alienated from and threatened by the landscape as he is from the people in it. Information about the financial basis of their marriage is revealed, and the husband's estrangement from his own family is implied.

They ride on and arrive at Granbois. Antoinette offers the husband a drink of water from the mountain stream at the boundary of the estate, and the husband remarks to himself that it is the first time he has felt "simple and natural" with her, and that she "might have been any pretty English girl." He enjoys the water, and finds its color beautiful. They arrive at the house, which the husband describes as "more awkward than ugly, a little sad as if it knew it could not last."

As Antoinette and her husband begin to connect, their differences are made more and more clear. Antoinette's attempts at affection are channeled through her love of the land, and the husband's tentative affection for her can only be expressed in terms of how closely she resembles an English girl. His discomfort with the place rests in his personification of it-- he attributes malicious intent to the trees and mountains, as well as sadness to the house they are to stay in.

Antoinette introduces the husband to the servants, whom she has known since childhood. Among them is Baptiste, a dignified man who speaks English well and reproaches a younger girl servant, Hilda, when she begins to giggle during the introductions. the husband observes that Hilda's dress is spotless, but thinks that her **hair**, arranged in many small braids, makes her look "savage." Hilda runs into the house because she cannot cease giggling. Antoinette introduces the husband to Christophine. The husband takes in her **clothing** and decides to himself that she seems "insignificant." They stare at each other for a minute, and when the husband looks away first, Christophine smiles to herself.

The husband equates appearance with content of character in a similar way to the nuns in the convent. His dismissal of Hilda and Christophine is based on the appearance of their hair and clothing. Just as the manipulative dynamic between Amélie and the husband was introduced and communicated merely through glances, the tense power struggle that will ensue between the husband and Christophine begins here, with a silent stare-down.

Antoinette shows the husband to their suite, where they toast their happiness with rum punch, and see that two wreaths of flowers have been laid on the bed for them. The husband wears his for a moment, then drops it on the floor and steps on it. Antoinette explains her connection to Granbois: "This is my place and everything is on our side." They discuss Christophine briefly, and the husband remarks that if she were taller, and "dressed to the nines," he might be afraid of her. The husband goes into his private dressing room and writes a real letter to his father. The letter informs him simply that the marriage "has gone according to your plans and wishes," briefly describes Granbois, and explains the husband's delay in writing as owing to his fever. The letter also reveals that Mr. Mason died before the husband arrived in Jamaica. The husband puts the letter in a drawer without sending it.

It is unclear whether the husband crushes the wreath intentionally or not, but his careless treatment of their wedding wreaths foreshadows his careless treatment of their marriage. He verbalizes his conflation of appearance and dress with personal character in his and Antoinette's discussion of Christophine. The real letter that he writes to his father lacks all of the emotional content that his imagined letter did, and it is unclear whether he ever sends it.

The husband's narration looks back to his initial courtship of Antoinette, and their wedding. Of Jamaica and Antoinette, he says they both "meant nothing to me." He describes all of his actions in the courtship as merely playing a pre-scripted role, delivering "a faultless performance," and remembers that only the black servants seemed to doubt his sincerity. At the wedding ceremony, he suspects that his guests are looking at him with pity or ridicule, and he wonders why, since he has benefitted so much financially from the union.

The truth of the husband's intentions with Antoinette are explicitly stated for the first time. The remembered scene of their marriage is an echo and an inversion of the earlier scene of Annette's marriage to Mr. Mason. This time, though, it is the groom rather than the bride seeking financial security, and the black servants rather than the white guests who suspect. Despite his success in delivering the performance necessary to guarantee his financial security, the husband feels powerless and pitied.

The husband describes the morning before the wedding, when a panicked Richard Mason, who in the wake of his father's death is now in charge of arranging the financial particulars of Antoinette's wedding, informs him that Antoinette is refusing to go through with the wedding. The husband responds with impatience, wanting to know why. He thinks to himself what a fool he would seem, returning to England "jilted by this Creole girl," and so goes to Antoinette to find out why she's changed her mind. He speaks softly to her, kisses her, promises her peace and happiness, and she relents.

It seems that Richard Mason, Antoinette's step brother, is complicit and perhaps even has a person interest in the financial arrangement of the marriage. The extent of the husband's deception is demonstrated, as he shows affection and promises happiness to Antoinette, despite the fact that he is motivated by financial interest and a desire not to be embarrassed by a Creole, someone he considers to be of a lower caste than himself.

The husband falls asleep remembering his wedding day, and when he wakes up he finds Antoinette waiting for him, the dinner table set lavishly with flowers and candles. He wonders why he has never realized how beautiful she is, and compliments her dress. At dinner Antoinette asks him if England is "like a cold dark dream," as it was described to her in a letter by a friend who married an Englishman. The husband replies, annoyed, that the West Indies seem like a dream to him, "quite unreal." During dinner, moths repeatedly fly into the candles and fall dead on the tablecloth.

As the husband warms toward Antoinette, he understands and expresses his feelings through commentary on her apparel. Even as the two grow closer, they remain entrenched in their oppositional cultural identities, discussing their conflicting understandings of each other's native landscapes. The moths that fall to their deaths in the candles' flames harken back to the burning parrot at Coulibri, which was a bad omen recognized by all who saw it.

After dinner, the husband and Antoinette go for a walk. Antoinette tells him of a night during her childhood, while spending the summer at Granbois, that she awoke to find two very large rats on the windowsill staring at her. She spent the night on the veranda in a hammock, sleeping under the full moon. The next morning, according to Antoinette, Christophine chastised her, telling her that it was "very bad to sleep in the moonlight when the moon is full." Antoinette asks the husband if he too thinks she has slept too long in the moonlight. He replies by holding her close and singing to her. Antoinette listens to him sing, and joins in, singing the refrain with him, "*Shine bright, shine bright Robin as you die.*" They return to their bedroom and drink to their happiness.

Antoinette's allusions to sleeping underneath the full moon imply madness and melancholy, which will eventually overtake her. As the husband and Antoinette continue to grow closer, their affection continues to be colored by symbolic premonitions of doom-- his song again recalls the symbolic burning bird, aborted flight.

The next morning, the husband wakes to find Antoinette already up and dressed, and Christophine serving breakfast. Christophine offers the husband coffee, calling it her "bull's blood," which makes the husband remember the Young Bull. He observes her attire closely, and criticizes her habit of not lifting her skirt off the ground as she walks, commenting to Antoinette that her dress must get very dirty. Antoinette explains to him that when the women in Jamaica don't hold up their dresses, it's a sign of respect. She tells him that it is also meant to indicate status, to show that they can dirty their dresses because they have others. The husband touches a rose on the coffee tray and its petals fall off. Antoinette sends him off to the bathing pools on the estate.

When Christophine calls her coffee "bull's blood," her aggression is connected to that already demonstrated by the Young Bull. Her offering "blood" for the husband to drink also subtly references obeah. Again, the husband channels his opinion of a person (in this case, Christophine) through his observation of her attire, and again is shown to lack understanding of local cultural values. The rose that the husband touches recalls the eternally preserved rose from the nuns' teachings. Where that rose endured as a romantic symbol of virtue and blessedness, though, this rose is in decay, suggesting a wickedness connected to the romantic relationship between Antoinette and her husband.

The husband describes the pools and the surrounding **jungle** as beautiful and untouched, "with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness," and yearns to possess the secret of this loveliness. He spends afternoons swimming with Antoinette, and observes that she is "undecided, uncertain about facts- any facts," for example the presence of poison in certain or other of the snakes in the swimming hole. He also observes that Antoinette throws like a boy when she throws a rock to protect him from a type of crab whose name she can't remember. He asks her who had taught her to throw, and she tells him simply that it was a boy named Sandi.

Just as in the case of the town called Massacre, facts in this world are shown to be unclear, fluid, the truth mutable. The husband finds the landscape to be disturbing in its quality of withholding secrets, a quality that is soon implied to belong to Antoinette as well, as she refrains from explaining to the husband her relationship with Sandi.

The husband describes watching the sunset each evening with Antoinette, when he would wait for the scent of the flowers that bloomed only at night. During one such moment, Antoinette tells him about their neighbors at Granbois, who are either hermits or drunks. The husband asks her if the place is as lonely as it feels to him, and she replies that it is, and that she loves it more than anywhere else in the world, and more than she loves any person. She describes the re-opening of Granbois after her mother's marriage to Mr. Mason. She tells him that Granbois had been almost completely overgrown, and was transformed largely by the efficient and trustworthy Baptiste. The husband keeps his opinion of the black servants to himself-- Antoinette trusts them, but he does not. Antoinette tries to teach the husband patois songs, which he mispronounces.

The husband repeatedly conceals his true feelings from Antoinette. His interest in the flowers that bloom at night is a symbolic manifestation of his fascination with the difference between his and Antoinette's days and nights. During the day, their are constant reminders of the distance and incompatibility between them, as exemplified by their conflicting understandings of the same landscape. But at night, when the flowers bloom, the come together.

During the day, Antoinette is silent and distant, often "chattering" to Christophine in patois. But at night, she opens up and tells him intimate things, like that she never wished to live before meeting him, and he questions his initial hesitation to marry her. The husband describes a period of frequent and passionate lovemaking with Antoinette. One of these nights, she says to him that if he said so, she would die: "Say die and watch me die." Despite all this passion, the husband knows that he does not love her. One night he is aroused merely by the sight of her dress on the floor, and makes love to her "without a word or caress." He considers their relationship a dangerous game, during which "Desire, Hatred, Life, Death came very close in the darkness." Each night he listens to the rain, of which there is very little evidence in the morning.

At night, Antoinette is completely under the husband's power. The husband's desire for Antoinette is not fueled by love, though. His arousal by the sight of her empty dress, as well as the conflation of love and death here, suggest that he is aroused not by Antoinette, but rather the idea of the negation of her. Here, the natural world mirrors the emotional reality of the characters of the novel again-- all trace of the rain, as well as all trace of the couple's passion, disappears during the day.

One day, Amélie delivers a letter to the husband, from someone who identifies himself as Daniel Cosway, the "*most unfortunate and poverty stricken*" of Old Cosway's many illegitimate children, the product of one of his affairs with his slaves. The letter tells the husband, in slightly broken English, that Daniel Cosway has heard about his marriage to Antoinette and feels compelled to warn the husband about her. He claims that the husband has been "*shamefully deceived*" by the Mason family, that they've duped him into marrying Antoinette without telling him that madness runs in both sides of her family. The letter describes the Cosways as wicked slaveowners, hated all across Jamaica. He also claims that Old Cosway was an alcoholic who eventually went mad, died "*raving just like his father before him.*" He explains that Annette was left friendless and destitute after Cosway's death because she is French Creole from Martinique, and the French and English in Jamaica are enemies "like cat and dog."

Daniel Cosway is a vicious and embittered product of an implied coercive sexual relationship between a slaveowner and his slave. His letters offer an alternate version of Antoinette's childhood to that given in Part One of the novel. In addition to contradicting much of what Antoinette narrates, it also fills in some of the gaps she leaves, for example about the character and death of her father, and the reason that her mother's French Creole heritage would isolate her from English society in Jamaica. The vindictive nature of his letters call into question his reliability as a narrator, and this invites the reader to in turn question the motives and reliability of the other narrators and speakers in this story.

The letter goes on to tell the husband that in the wake of "*the glorious Emancipation Act*," the estate at Coulibri went to bush because no one would work for Annette. It describes her as "*worthless and spoilt*," and says that the madness latent in her "*and in all these white Creoles*" came out during this time, that many can attest to seeing her laughing and talking to herself. Daniel Cosway claims that Annette's madness became worse after her marriage to Mr. Mason, whom she tried to kill and was then shut away, and who according to gossip "*love her so much that if he have the world on a plate he give it to her*."

Daniel Cosway's letter presents a completely different understanding and opinion of the Emancipation Act, as well as of Annette and Mr. Mason, than those which Antoinette expresses in Part One. It is also clear that collective gossip is the source of much of his knowledge of Antoinette's family. The letter neglects to mention the fire at Coulibri, and so glosses over the circumstances of Pierre's death and Annette's grief.

Daniel Cosway then explains that when he heard that the Masons were planning on marrying Antoinette off to an Englishman "*who know nothing of her*," he thought about warning him, but didn't because "*they are white, I am coloured*." He writes that upon hearing that the two were to honeymoon at Granbois, near where he lives, he became certain that God had made it his duty to tell the husband the truth, because he is a man who he's heard is "*young and handsome with a kind word for all, black, white, also coloured*." Cosway challenges him to ask "*that devil of a man*" Richard Mason to tell him the truth if he doesn't believe what's in the letter. He ends the letter with a request that the husband come see him, assuring him that Amélie knows where he lives.

Daniel Cosway's feelings of resentment and alienation are rooted largely in racial identity. His image of the husband is also incongruous with what the husband's own narration presents us with-- the husband constantly distrusts and misunderstands the black people around him.

The husband is not surprised by the letter, in fact he feels as if he's been waiting for it. He walks back to the house after reading the letter and tramples some orchids that he remembers recently admiring and likening to Antoinette's beauty. He feels overcome by the heat. When he arrives at the house, Amélie is informing Antoinette that Christophine plans to leave. Antoinette is upset, and Amélie teases her sarcastically about both Christophine's and the husband's dissatisfaction with the "sweet honeymoon house," at which point Antoinette slaps her. Amélie calls her a "white cockroach" and hits her back, and the two women struggle. The husband tells Amélie to leave and fetch Christophine. She complies, but leaves the room singing, "*The white cockroach she buy young man/ The white cockroach she marry*."

The husband's interaction with the natural world again mirrors his interior landscape. Disillusioned and suspicious of Antoinette after reading Daniel Cosway's letter, he tramples the flowers that he previously admired for their connection to Antoinette. When Amélie's comments rattle Antoinette to the point of violence, it is made clear that Amélie's insolence toward both the husband and Antoinette is also rooted in racial tension and disparity.

As Antoinette waits for Christophine, she ignores the husband and begins to shred her bed sheet in quiet distress. When Christophine arrives, Antoinette asks her why she is leaving, and pleads, "What will become of me?" Christophine tells her to get up and get dressed, that "Woman must have spunks to live in this wicked world." She cites a mutual dislike between herself and the husband as a reason for leaving, not wanting to cause tension in their marriage, and she insists "I have a right to my rest." During the conversation, Christophine catches Amélie giving the husband a sly and insolent smile. Christophine tells Amélie in a quiet voice that if she sees her do this again she will mash her face "like I mash plantain." She goes on to threaten Amélie with sickness: "Perhaps you don't get up again with the bellyache I give you." Amélie leaves quietly, clearly frightened of Christophine.

All women in Christophine's vicinity seem to bow to her influence. Antoinette feels panicked and lost when she decides to leave, and Amélie is uncharacteristically terrified and obedient in the face of her threats.

Christophine calls Amélie worthless, and likens her to a centipede. She kisses Antoinette on the cheek and leaves. Antoinette asks the husband if he heard the song Amélie was singing, and he says he didn't understand it. Antoinette explains that she, and all white people on the island, "all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders," are what Amélie referred to as the "white cockroach." She tells him that she's also heard English women call her and her family "white niggers," so she wonders, "between you I don't know who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all." Before the husband has a chance to say anything, she tells him to leave the room so she can dress.

The lines of affinity and alienation in terms of race and class among these people are shown again to be tangled, complex. No one is at home in any group. Amélie refers to Antoinette and the husband as white cockroaches, but Christophine calls Amélie, who is of the same race and class, a centipede, which is not so very far off from a cockroach. Antoinette and the husband are both white and are united in marriage, but Antoinette when expresses her frustration at being excluded from English society, she includes him as a culprit. Also, though Antoinette has displayed comfort with and respect for black people throughout most of the novel, here even she espouses a deeply racist account of the history of the slave trade in her anger toward Amélie.

After a while, the husband knocks on Antoinette's door and receives no answer. He sits down to eat, and sees that Baptiste looks demonstratively mournful as he serves lunch, and he thinks to himself that the people here in the Caribbean are very vulnerable. He remembers that he, unlike them, must have been five or six years old when he was taught to conceal his emotions. When his meal is done he goes into the bedroom to find Antoinette asleep, and is disturbed by the silence of the afternoon. He decides to go out walking.

The husband explicitly articulates a clear difference between his and Antoinette's culture, in terms of emotional expression. He views the Caribbean way of displaying emotion as weak, vulnerable as compared to the English reserve he learned at a young age.

While walking, the husband thinks of all the people who must have known the truth of Antoinette's background and not told him-- his father, his brother, Richard Mason, Amelie. He reaches the forest, which he sees as hostile, and walks into it. As he walks deeper into the **trees**, he wonders how one can ever discover the truth, and concludes that it is impossible, because no one will speak the truth to him. Along the way, he becomes sure that someone is watching him. He comes upon the ruins of a paved road and a house, overgrown, and notices bunches of flowers, tied with grass, left underneath a tree near the house.

The husband's aimless wandering through the forest mirrors his emotional turmoil. He loses track of his way as he walks, and becomes paranoid that someone is watching him, in much the same way that he loses a handle on the truth, and becomes paranoid that all are lying to him.

This mysterious place calms the husband, but not for long. He soon sees a little girl carrying a basket, approaching the clearing. When she sees him, she screams, drops her basket, and runs away. He tries to call out to her, but this frightens her more. When he attempts to find the path he'd been on, he cannot, and becomes "lost and afraid among these enemy **trees**." He hears footsteps and a voice calling to him-- it is Baptiste, who has been looking for the husband for hours. The husband does not recognize him at first, and does not answer.

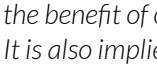
The husband's senses seem to be playing tricks on him in the hostile environment of the woods. He is sure he sees and frightens this young girl, but his failure to see where she has gone, find the path he had been walking on, or recognize Baptiste call into question the reliability of his senses.

Once the husband recognizes Baptiste, he follows him back toward the house. He asks Baptiste about the abandoned house in the woods, and Baptiste tells him that a priest once lived there, long ago. The husband asks him about the paved road on which he found the and frightened the young girl, but Baptiste tells him that there was never a road there. The husband asks if there is "something wrong about the place," but Baptiste says nothing. The husband presses him, asking if there is a ghost or "a zombi" there, but Baptiste insists that he doesn't know anything about it, and repeats that there was never a road there.

Baptiste's insistence that there was never a road where the husband says he saw one casts further doubt on the scene the husband has described. Either the husband was hallucinating, or Baptiste is hiding something. Either way, the ideas of perception and truth are muddled. This is the first mention of zombies in the husband's narration-- presumably he has heard the term used and has a vague sense of what it might be.

Back at the house, the husband goes into his private drawing room and pulls out a book called "*The Glittering Coronet of Isles*," about the West Indies, and turns to a chapter entitled, "Obeah," to the section about the "zombi," and reads it to himself. The book says that a zombi is "*a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead*," but that it can also be "*the spirit of a place*." It goes on to explain that a zombi is usually a malignant force, to be placated with gifts of flowers and fruit. At this point, the husband remembers the tied bunches of flowers near the abandoned house. The book goes on to explain that black people usually refuse to talk about obeah, and often lie about it when asked, and that white people "pretend" to dismiss it all as nonsense.

The husband does not narrate his reaction to what he has read. We are left to imagine the impact of this description on his understanding of the experience he's had in the woods. It would seem that this description of the zombi, and obeah, confirms the husband's suspicions about what he's seen as well as his mistrust of the people around him, black and white alike. However, it is clear that this book was written by an outsider, probably a white man, for the benefit of outsiders, so even its reliability is left open to question. It is also implied that the girl was so frightened of the husband because she believed him *to be the ghost or zombi that occupied the place.*



The narration switches to Antoinette's point of view. She is on horseback, on her way to Christophine's house. Her horse stumbles along the way, so she gets off and walks. When Antoinette arrives at Christophine's house, she finds her old nurse sitting on a box underneath a mango **tree**. Christophine offers Antoinette a box, but Antoinette kneels on the ground close to Christophine instead. She breathes in Christophine's familiar, comforting smell of clean and starched cotton, and remembers watching Christophine washing her **clothes** at Coulibri. Antoinette looks around, takes in the beauty of the wildlife and the sky, and feels a desire to stay in this place, her home. After a moment she tells Christophine that her husband does not love her, that he barely speaks to her and will not sleep in the same room with her, and asks Christophine what she should do.

In the face of her husband's growing distance, Antoinette seeks comfort in the closest thing to home that she has, Christophine. Unlike the husband's, Antoinette's journey into the woods yields comfort, security, and connection with her past and identity. Clothing again takes on emotional valence, as Antoinette draws comfort from her memory of Christophine washing clothes at Coulibri.

Christophine lights her pipe, and after a moment replies, "You ask me a hard thing, I tell you a hard thing, pack up and go." Antoinette balks, asks Christophine where she would go and says that she would be laughed at by all who know her if she left, that there must be something else she can do. Christophine replies that it is the husband who will be laughed at, not her, and tells her that she cannot force the husband to love her, that trying to will only make it worse between them. When Antoinette continues to refuse this advice, Christophine spits over her shoulder and says, "All women, all colors, nothing but fools." She tells Antoinette that for a rich white girl, she is more foolish than the rest, and tells her again to go.

Christophine again possesses the power and wisdom that other women, especially Antoinette, lack. A rare thing that unites people across race and class divides, according to Christophine, is female foolishness in relationships. Though Antoinette is unhappy, she is too afraid to take Christophine's advice and leave her husband.

Antoinette now explains to Christophine that she is no longer rich, that after the marriage she has no money of her own, as it has all been signed over to the husband. Christophine is furious, and blames Richard Mason for the arrangement, calling him, "worse than Satan." She continues, however, to advise Antoinette to leave the house, this time suggesting that she ask her husband nicely for the money to visit a cousin, and when she gets away to stay gone. She tells Antoinette that the husband will eventually come to see where she's gone, and when he realizes that she can get along without him, he'll want her back. Antoinette says if she goes, she'll have to go far away, and says that she'd like to see England.

Christophine is surprised and angry at Antoinette's disenfranchisement, knowing that financial security is key to a woman's ability to act for herself. Nevertheless, she sticks to her advice, believing that Antoinette can still be free of her unhappiness if she tries.

Antoinette imagines what it might be like to go to England alone. She thinks that she could be a different person in England, and pictures England to be “rosy pink,” the way it appears in the geography book map she studied in the convent. She remembers the page in the geography book that named its towns and regions, all unfamiliar to her. She mentally compares fields of corn to fields of sugarcane, and thinks that England’s hills must be half the size of Jamaica’s. She thinks over what she knows of the seasons in England, wonders what snow is like- "White feathers falling? torn pieces of paper falling?" She then has a sudden vision of the house in which she will live with her husband in England, and feels that she already knows it. She fears that in this house she will finish the recurring nightmare she’s had since childhood, but then stops herself.

Antoinette again equates setting and landscape with inner life, emotional reality, and identity. She believes that if she goes to England, it will be possible for her to become a different person. Even while she hopes, though, she fears this unknown place.

Christophine, who has been watching Antoinette closely while she daydreams, interrupts her by asking her if she really believes that England exists. When Antoinette expresses surprise at this question, Christophine replies, "I never see the damn place, how I know?” Antoinette asks her incredulously if she really does not believe that there is a country called England. Christophine answers testily that she hasn’t said she doesn’t *believe*, but rather that she doesn’t *know*, because she only knows what she sees with her eyes and she’s never seen it. She goes on to say that what she has heard of England makes it sound like a freezing cold place where people steal your money, and wonders why Antoinette would want to go there in the first place.

Christophine’s and Antoinette’s understandings of truth, evidence, and belief differ greatly. Unlike Antoinette, who relies on and trusts her geography book’s account of England to shape her knowledge of it, Christophine treats the entire idea of England, a place she has never personally experienced, with skepticism.

Antoinette briefly questions her own trust in Christophine’s good counsel, wondering why she is seeking the advice of someone who might not believe in the existence of England. She presses on, though, saying to Christophine, "You knew what I wanted as soon as you saw me, and you certainly know now." Christophine tells Antoinette to hush, that she cannot make the husband love her, but Antoinette insists, "Yes you can, I know you can...You can make people love or hate. Or... or die." At this, Christophine laughs loudly, and tells Antoinette that everything she’s heard about obeah is “foolishness and folly.” She warns her that “bad bad trouble” will be the result if they use obeah to meddle with this.

For the first time, Antoinette questions Christophine’s authority and wisdom. She persists, however, and for the first time in the novel speaks of the subject of obeah with Christophine. Her fear of the topic is evident in her continued refusal to name what she is referring to, asking for what she wants from Christophine only through hints. Christophine warns Antoinette against this plan, pointing out that Antoinette's knowledge of the truth of obeah is insufficient, that she does not understand what the consequences might be.

Antoinette continues to insist that Christophine use her power to make her husband come to her bed for just one night. She is confident that she will be able to make her husband love her again if this happens. Christophine warns her that even if he sleeps with her, he'll hate her afterward, that nothing can make him love her. Antoinette replies that her husband hates her already, that he refuses to even call her by her name. Instead, he calls her Bertha. She explains desperately that she cannot go away, that the husband would never allow it. Christophine then explains to Antoinette that she knows why the husband has cooled from her, that it is because someone is slandering Antoinette and her mother to him, and he doesn't know what to believe. She warns her not to trust anyone in Jamaica.

The power of speech to alter reality is implied to be more powerful than the magic that Antoinette is after. It is speech, gossip and slander that have manifested the trouble in their marriage, and the husband's refusal to call her by her real name has at least as profound an effect on her as the one Christophine believes that obeah would have on him.

When Antoinette asks if this extends even to Aunt Cora, Christophine tells her that Aunt Cora is now a resigned old woman, and that "she turn her face to the wall." Antoinette demands to know how Christophine knows this. She is shocked at Christophine's phrasing, because she remembers that Aunt Cora did in fact turn her face to the wall, when Richard Mason was arranging the financial agreement of Antoinette's marriage. Antoinette remembers overhearing a quarrel between Aunt Cora and Richard, in which Aunt Cora urged Richard to have Antoinette's interests protected legally. Richard ignored her, telling her to shut up and calling her an old fool. Antoinette went to her after the quarrel and found her in bed shaking, with her face to the wall. She told Antoinette, "The Lord has forsaken us," and did not speak again except to give Antoinette two of her rings to sell in case of an emergency.

Where Antoinette questioned Christophine's wisdom just moments before, she is now in awe of her knowledge. She cannot imagine how Christophine knows exactly what happened when Aunt Cora fought for her and was defeated. Christophine's strength is amplified in contrast to Aunt Cora's surrender.

Christophine again instructs Antoinette to "have spunks," to "do battle for yourself." She tells her to go to the husband and tell him the truth about what happened at Coulibri, and explain what caused her mother to fall sick with grief. She warns Antoinette to do it calmly, without crying. Antoinette responds that she has already tried this, and that it is too late, and thinks to herself that "it is always too late for truth." She and Christophine finally agree that if Antoinette first tries to speak to the husband calmly, then Christophine will do what she asks. Christophine's son Jo-jo arrives, and Christophine warns Antoinette not to speak in front of him, because he will surely tell everyone anything that he hears-- "Nothing but leaky calabash that boy."

Christophine's warning that Antoinette should not trust anyone is amplified here, as she apparently does not even trust her own son not to spread rumors. While Christophine still believes in Antoinette's power to remedy her situation by telling the truth, Antoinette seems to share her husband's distrust in the adequacy or attainability of truth.

Antoinette and Christophine go into Christophine's two-room house while Jo-jo prepares Antoinette's horse for her departure back to the house at Granbois. Christophine hands her something wrapped in a leaf and tells her to listen while she explains what to do. Antoinette tries to give Christophine money in exchange, but Christophine will not take it. When Antoinette leaves, she looks back and sees that Christophine is talking to Jo-jo, and that he seems curious and amused by what she is telling him. She hears a cock crow, and remembers that this signifies betrayal, but cannot discern who the traitor is in this situation. She thinks of the "ugly money" that she offered Christophine, and how she refused to take it, and she thinks of Judas. She leaves with the image of Christophine, with her headscarf tied Martinique fashion, frozen in her mind "for ever like the colours in a stained-glass window."

Antoinette is disoriented. It seems to be implied that Christophine, for all her talk of not trusting anyone, and not telling Jo-jo any of her business, may now be telling Jo-jo what is going on. Antoinette feels a sense of betrayal, but cannot tell whether she is the traitor or Antoinette is. Belief systems class across cultures here, as concepts of guilt and devotion that were taught to her in the context of Catholicism become bound up in this, her first personal interaction with obeah. When she leaves, her image of Christophine is as of a saint. Considering Antoinette's experience with Catholic religion, this implies that Antoinette's trust in and devotion toward Christophine is now shifting and ambivalent, on the verge of disappointment, but still steeped in a longing for peace and rootedness.

The narrative re-enters the husband's consciousness. On the day that Antoinette goes to see Christophine, Amélie delivers another letter from Daniel Cosway to the husband. The letter begins by asking the husband why he hasn't written back, and threatens that if the husband does not come to see him, he will show up at the Granbois house, "*and bawl out your business before everybody*." The husband stops reading and sends for Amélie. As he waits for her, he pictures the white dress that he knows she will be wearing, pictures her **hair** and her bare feet. As he looks out at the mountains, now familiar to him, he feels that he is in a nightmare.

Daniel Cosway's second letter is more urgent and hostile than the last. He now resorts to blackmail in order to persuade the husband to come see him. This implies that his motivation must not purely be a desire to get the truth to the husband, on the grounds that the husband is a good and unsuspecting man. The husband's preoccupation with Amélie's dress and appearance foreshadows the sexual relationship that they will soon enter into

When Amélie arrives, the husband asks her if Daniel Cosway is a friend of hers. She says no, but she knows him. He instructs her to tell Daniel Cosway not to write him any more letters, that they annoy him, and that if he does give her a letter to deliver to the husband, to give it back to him. Amélie smiles at him in a way that makes the husband feel as if she is about to laugh loudly at him. To stop this, he keeps talking, and asks her why Daniel is writing to him. She teases him, saying that if the husband himself doesn't know after reading two of his letters, how should she know. Then the husband asks if he is really a Cosway, and Amélie replies that some people say he is and some say he isn't, but that's what he calls himself.

The husband wishes to have no more contact with Daniel Cosway. Not even Amélie, who is cited by Daniel Cosway as the person that knows him, is sure of his real name or his origins, and like, everyone else, relies on general gossip to draw her conclusions. Amélie's flirtatious mockery of the husband continues.

Amélie goes on to describe Daniel Cosway as a "very superior man," who read the Bible and lived like a white man. When the husband asks what she means by this, she explains that Cosway has a house "like white people, with one room only for sitting in," and that he has portraits of his parents on the wall. The husband asks if his parents are white, and she says no, they are both black. When the husband protests that Daniel Cosway told him his father was white, was Antoinette's father, Amélie just shrugs. She says it is all too long ago for her. She is plainly uninterested in the past.

The truth of Daniel Cosway's identity is further confused for the husband. It is clear, though, that Daniel Cosway, like the Young Bull, behaves in a way that indicates his desire to be included in, approved of by the white upperclass.

Amélie warns the husband that he should go and visit Daniel Cosway before he comes to the house to make trouble for him, that he is a bad man who speaks like a preacher, and perhaps once was a preacher. She also tells him that he has a very wealthy brother in Spanish Town named Alexander Cosway, whose son Sandi, she heard, once married Antoinette. She goes on to express her belief that this marriage never happened, because Antoinette is rich and white, and would never marry "a coloured man even though he don't look like a coloured man." As Amélie walks away, the husband again believes her to be on the verge of laughing at him. He hears her say in a very low voice, "I am sorry for you," but when he asks her what she said she denies saying anything.

Here we get from Amelie yet another account of the family connections in the Cosway family. This is the first time that Sandi is mentioned since the husband asked Antoinette where she learned to throw, and it is the first time anyone has implied to the husband that Antoinette and Sandi had a romantic relationship. With this new information, the expected power dynamic between the husband and Amélie is flipped completely, and the reason behind all of her mocking looks is revealed.

The narration now jumps to the husband in Daniel Cosway's sitting room. It is very hot, and there is no breeze, because his house is much further down the mountain than Granbois, almost at sea level. The first thing the husband describes is the large table in the room, covered in a red fringed cloth that seems to make the hot room even hotter. Daniel is telling the husband that he's been waiting for his reply, and wondering why it was so slow, all the while staring at a framed text hanging on his wall that reads, "Vengence is Mine." He addresses the wall hanging, saying "You take too long, Lord... I hurry you up a bit."

Daniel's Cosway is deranged with bitterness, and his home is a kind of miniature inferno. The red tablecloth, the heat, his home's location at the bottom of the mountain, and Daniel's obsession with vengeance, all give Daniel a devilish, fiendish quality.

Daniel tells the husband that his name is actually Esau, and that the only things he ever received from his father were curses. He describes his father's tombstone, which calls him "pious," "loved by all," and "merciful to the weak," as nothing but a tablet of lies, which he hopes will "drag him down to Hell in the end." He reiterates that he is telling the husband all of this so that he will be fairly warned about the family he's married into. As the husband listens, Daniel relays an encounter between himself and Old Cosway when Daniel was sixteen years old, when, as Daniel claims, Old Cosway put a curse on him. He describes walking five hours to see his father at Coulibri to talk to him about his "rights" as his son, and being received casually, but with disdain.

Esau, which Daniel claims is or should be his real name, is the name of the older brother of Jacob, son of Isaac, in the old Testament. The biblical Esau is famously cheated out of his birthright by Jacob, just as Daniel feels that he has been robbed of his birthright. It seems that the topic of discussion that Daniel really wants to discuss is his own disenfranchisement, rather than Antoinette.

In Daniel's memory, Old Cosway cannot remember Daniel's name, and laughs in his face when he makes a claim on his right to a portion of the Cosway fortune. He accuses Daniel of constantly pestering him for money, which Daniel explains to the husband as having been merely so that he would not have to "go barefoot like a nigger. Which I am not." When Old Cosway denies his paternity of Daniel, Daniel becomes angry and taunts Cosway for his age, his proximity to death, and the youth of his new wife. Old Cosway becomes enraged, curses him, and throws a silver inkstand at his head. Daniel leaves, and never sees or hears from his Old Cosway again, except for a small sum of money that was delivered without a note.

Daniel Cosway's desire to be distinguished from other black people in the eyes of Old Cosway as well as the husband is expressed again through his insistence that he is not "a nigger." He even wishes to separate himself from his own mother. The issue of Daniel's paternity is Old Cosway's word against his; the truth is never clarified.

While Daniel is relaying this story to the husband, he drinks rum steadily. The husband asks him why he wanted to see him. Daniel tells him it is because there is no one else who will tell the truth, and that he should be careful who he trusts. He explains that his half brother Alexander would never tell him the truth because he has become "two-faced" in his prosperity. He also names Christophine as untrustworthy, saying that she is the worst of them, and tells the husband that she is on this island because she had to leave Jamaica after being sent to jail. The husband asks what she did to be arrested, and Daniel cannot provide any details. He merely says that she is an "obeah woman," and she was caught. Daniel claims not to believe in the "devil business" of obeah like many others do. The husband feels a strong desire to leave.

Daniel's version of reality is, like all versions of reality in the novel, shown to be suspect, biased. He, like Christophine, espouses the belief that no one can be trusted, even while calling his own reliability into question with his inability to give details of Christophine's arrest. It seems that his information is as untrustworthy, as based in gossip and hearsay, as anyone else's. Daniel's insistence that he does not believe in obeah is completely in line with the husband's book's assertion that both black and white people will lie and pretend not to know or believe in obeah. The husband does not reflect on any of this explicitly in his narration, but merely wishes to escape.

Daniel goes on to imply that Antoinette had a sexual relationship with Sandi, his half-brother Alexander's son, whom he describes as "like a white man, but more handsome than any white man." At this, the husband gets up to leave, but Daniel stops him. He tells him again that Antoinette and her family have all lied to him with "sweet talk," and that if he wants him, Daniel, to keep quiet about it, he will have to pay him five hundred pounds. The husband becomes disgusted and enraged. Daniel sees this, and steps aside to allow him to leave, but not without yelling abuse at him, reminding him that he was not Antoinette's first, and threatening again to retaliate if the husband does not produce the five hundred pounds. The husband exits the little house, and, dazzled by the light after the darkened room, rides home.

Daniel repeats and elaborates the rumor that Amélie introduced, of Antoinette's relationship with Sandi. When it is clear that the husband does not want to hear any more, Daniel gets to the point, and demands money in exchange for silence. It seems that all of his correspondence was fueled by a desire to regain a portion of the Cosway fortune, which he believes to be his birthright, and to enact revenge on the Cosway family for wrongs committed against him.

The husband and Antoinette are having dinner, with an "endless procession" of moths again flying into the candles and dying on the tablecloth. They argue. The husband notices that she is wearing the same dress that once aroused him so, but that now it looks sloppy and too large for her. Antoinette demands to know why the husband will not come near her, kiss her, or talk to her. She demands to know if he has a reason, to which he replies, "Yes, I have a reason, my God," and Antoinette mocks him for his apparent belief in God. He notices that in this moment she resembles Amélie, and wonders if they are related. He asks her if she believes in God, and she replies that it doesn't matter what either of them believe, because they cannot do anything about it, like the dead moths on the table.

The rift that is expressed verbally between Antoinette and the husband also manifests itself symbolically in this passage. The dying moths return in greater numbers in this scene, bringing with them their symbolism of bad luck and doom, and the husband's impression of her dress becomes disappointed, where before it was admiring. Their respective belief systems are brought into direct conflict here as well-- where the husband believes in God, Antoinette only trusts the vocabulary of symbols in the natural world that she's grown up with.

The husband asks Antoinette if her mother is alive, and Antoinette responds that she died not long ago. The husband then demands to know why she told him that her mother died when she was a child, and Antoinette tells him that it is because she was told to say this, and also because it is true: "She did die when I was a child. There are always two deaths, the real one and the one people know about." The husband then tells her that he's been in contact with Daniel Cosway. Antoinette quickly tells him that the man who calls himself Daniel Cosway has no right to the name, and is actually named Daniel Boyd, and that she knows exactly what he would have said to the husband: that her mother was mad, her brother born an idiot, and she herself also mad. The husband asks her if it is true, and Antoinette pauses.

Antoinette's belief system and understanding of truth is again shown in contrast to the husband's. The husband assumes that Antoinette lied to him when she said her mother died when she was young, but Antoinette believes in a different understanding of death than he does--the mother that Antoinette knew and loved did die when she was a child, even if her body continued living. This fluid understanding of death is in line with a belief system that includes zombies, as described in the husband's book, "a dead person who seems to be alive or a living person who is dead."

The husband becomes uncomfortable and suggests that they talk about it another time. Antoinette demands that they talk now, and asks him in a mocking tone ("imitating a negro's voice") if he is frightened to hear the answer to what he's asked. He asks why they can't talk about it the next day, in the daylight, and she says she might not be able to tell him in any other place or time, and tells him he has no right to ask about her mother and then not listen to her answer. He relents, but adds that he feels like this place is an enemy to him, that it is on her side. She tells him that he is wrong, that the place is not for either of them, it is "as indifferent as this God you call on so often."

Again, Antoinette's emotions are inseparable from the landscape, the setting-- she feels she cannot speak what she needs to in any other time or place. While the husband here attributes human qualities like malice to the landscape, Antoinette places it in the realm of the divine by comparing its indifference to that of God.

Antoinette tells the husband about her mother. She tells him that after her father's death Annette was very poor and very lonely, but that her beauty must have given her hope. She says that they were alone in the loveliest place on earth, that there could never be a place as beautiful as Coulibri. She describes the royal palm **trees**, which had been cut down, as lost trees, and tells of the poisoning of her mother's horse. She tells the husband how her mother would stay out in the **garden** working long after the sun was too hot for her and "they" would tell her to go in. The husband asks who "they" were, and Antoinette names the servants who had remained after emancipation--Christophine, Godfrey, and a boy named Sass, whose real name was Disastrous, because his godmother liked the sound of the word.

This conversation offers yet another shade or version of the events of Antoinette's childhood, this time intended to counteract the version that Daniel Cosway has given to the husband. Though this telling and the account in Part One are both in Antoinette's point of view, even these two versions contain subtle discrepancies and differences in emphasis. The information about Sass's real name, for example, is new to the novel. It is present in this conversation and not Part One, perhaps because the symbolic significance of names is something that grows in intensity over the course of the novel.

Antoinette says that her family would have died if Christophine had not been there to care for them. She explains that many people died in those days, especially the old, but that no one speaks of it now, that the only thing people remember are lies, because "Lies are never forgotten, they go on and they grow." The husband asks what Antoinette remembers of herself, and she says that she was happy in the mornings, and in the **garden**, where "every flower in the world" existed, and she often drank rainwater from the leaves. She tells him that she was not often happy in the afternoons, and never at night, because the house was haunted. She goes on to remember "the day when she saw I was growing up like a white nigger," that after this day her mother worked feverishly to remarry, for their security.

One thing that is present in both versions of Antoinette's story is the comfort she finds in the natural world. The pessimism about the truth that she articulates here is echoed throughout the novel, by the husband, Christophine, Daniel Cosway, herself, and Grace Poole later in the novel.

Antoinette mentions the night that Coulibri was burned, and becomes upset and very pale. She does not go into detail about what happened that night, but merely laments, "They trampled it. It was a sacred place. It was sacred to the sun!" The husband wonders silently how much of her story is true, how much of it distorted or imagined. Antoinette goes on to explain that after that night, she spent a long time with fever at her aunt's home in Spanish Town, during which time she remembers hearing screams and loud laughter. There, she was told that her mother was ill and in the country. She says that this made sense to her, because her mother was a part of Coulibri, and if Coulibri was gone then it was natural for her mother to be gone as well.

Antoinette cannot bring herself to detail the events of the night Coulibri was burned, despite the fact that these events are crucial to understanding her mother's collapse into grief and madness. Antoinette's belief that her mother was a part of Coulibri and therefore should have disappeared with it again blurs the distinction between setting and emotion in the novel.

Antoinette tells the husband that a rock was thrown at her head the night Coulibri burned. She recalls that Aunt Cora told her it would heal and not "spoil" her on her wedding day, but she fears that it did spoil her, not only for her wedding day but "for all days and nights." At this, the husband tries to comfort her by telling her that her days and nights are not spoiled, and urges her to put the past behind her. Even while he is saying this, though, be feels his heart to be "heavy as lead."

When Aunt Cora says that the rock will not "spoil" Antoinette on her wedding day, she is referring to her physical appearance only. Antoinette, however, is more concerned with the lasting emotional trauma of the event, and considers this to be a more significant type of spoiling. Rather than giving comfort or solace to the husband, Antoinette's tale unsettles him and fills him with more dread.

Antoinette goes on to tell of her one visit to her mother at her country house, with a man and a woman caring for her in her madness. Antoinette remembers that her mother was in a fine evening dress, but barefoot, and that the man gave her glass after glass of rum so that she would "forget." When her mother threw one of the glasses and smashed it, the man told the woman caretaker to clean it up or Annette would walk in it, and the woman replied that if she did it would be a good thing, that then maybe she'd keep quiet. Antoinette describes how her mother walked back and forth and addressed Mr. Luttrell, who at that point was long dead, and that when she sat down the man caring for her forced her to kiss him. After this, Antoinette ran from the house.

The neglect and sexual abuse of Annette by her caretakers is something that Antoinette as a narrator would not or could not include in Part One. Reasons for concealing, revealing, or glossing over the truth in the novel are myriad and complicated. It is possible that the younger Antoinette glossed over this trauma for the same reason that she refused to speak to her mother about her poisoned horse-- in hopes that not speaking about it could make it not true. The fact that Annette's caretakers were black further complicates the situation, making it an echo and reversal of the abusive, coercive sexual relationships that went on between masters and their slaves before emancipation.

Antoinette finishes her story, and says quietly, as if speaking to herself, that she has said all she wants to, and nothing has changed. She laughs, and the husband says, "Don't laugh like that, Bertha." She replies that her name is not Bertha, and asks why he calls her that. He answers that Bertha is a name he is fond of, so that is how he thinks of her. He asks her where she went off to earlier that day, and she tells him that she went to see Christophine, and that she will tell him anything now, because she sees that words are no use. She tells him that Christophine has advised her to leave him. He is surprised, but replies that perhaps Christophine is right, that he wants to do what is best for both of them and maybe this will help.

Antoinette sees that her story has not brought about a change of heart in the husband, just as she predicted when Christophine urged her to tell him the truth. The husband's insistence on calling her "Bertha" at this point both deepens the distance between them and shows the husband's desire to control his perception of Antoinette, to make her something he is "fond of," rather than afraid of and disconcerted by. Paradoxically, now that Antoinette has decided once and for all that the truth will have no power over him, she feels free to tell the husband anything he asks her about.

They get up to go in to bed, and the husband again calls her Bertha, despite her protests. When they get into the bedroom, the husband sees that there is white powder on the floor, which Antoinette claims is to keep cockroaches away. He notices that there are six candles lit on the dressing-table, and three on the table near the bed. He feels that the light changes Antoinette, makes her more beautiful than he's ever seen her. She hands him a glass of wine to drink, and he insists, in his narration, that he desired her before she gave him the drink, that "she need not have done what she did to me. I will always swear that, she need not have done it." He puts out the candles, and that is all he remembers of the night.

The husband takes note of and wonders about the specific number of candles in the room, and the powder on the floor, all presumably put there under instructions from Christophine, though he does not know this at the time. Despite his feeling of alienation from Antoinette, and his refusal to use her name, he insists that he felt love for her on this night, without the enchantment she attempted to put on him.

The husband awakes before the sun rises, having dreamt that he was buried alive. He is cold and sick, in pain. He believes he has been poisoned. He gets up and staggers to his dressing room, where he retches and vomits for what "seemed like hours." When he is finished, he gets up, weak, and returns to the bedroom. He watches Antoinette sleeping, feeling a cold hatred for her despite her beauty. He picks up his wine glass from the night before and dips his finger into it to taste it, discovering that it is bitter. He immediately dresses and runs from the house. He runs through the woods, exhausted, and finally finds himself at the ruined house of the preacher, where he falls to the ground and sleeps through the day.

Christophine's predictions are proven correct-- when the husband wakes from the enchantment that Antoinette has attempted to put on him, he feels hatred for her. In his distress, he runs through the woods and finds himself at the place where he either saw or was mistaken for a zombie-- a living person who is dead, or a dead person who appears alive.

When he returns to the house, the husband is fed and cared for by Amélie, and they spend the night together. Though Amélie expresses a small amount of apprehension at Antoinette's being right next door, on the other side of a thin partition dividing the two rooms, the husband says he feels no remorse. The following morning he recognizes the complication he's created, and feels "satisfied and peaceful, but not gay." Amélie dresses, and he admires her **dress**. He gives her a large sum of money, which she accepts without thanks. The husband asks her what she plans to do with her life, saying that she is beautiful enough to have anything she wants. She agrees matter-of-factly, and says that she plans to go to Rio, because there are rich men in Rio. He asks her if she still feels sorry for him, and she says she does, but that now she feels sorry for Antoinette as well.

It is clear that the husband' tryst with Amélie is overheard by Antoinette, and that the husband commits this act of infidelity in full knowledge of this fact. His lack of remorse seems to signal his complete rejection of his marriage to Antoinette. Again, he is taken by and attracted to clothing, this time Amélie's. Amélie, who would have been a slave just a few years before this, uses manipulation and sex to gain power over both the husband and Antoinette in this instance. She clearly recognizes the power that she possesses, and plans to continue capitalizing on it in Rio.

The husband goes back to sleep, and is woken by Baptiste telling him that the cook is leaving, quitting. He notices that, though Baptiste does not comment explicitly on The husband's behavior, he no longer calls him "sir" or "master." Antoinette has gone away from the house, and stays away for several days. The husband is content, spending most of the day in a hammock on the veranda. On the third day, he writes a letter to Mr. Fraser, the magistrate. The letter says that the husband has been reading a book about obeah, and remembers a particular case that the magistrate had mentioned, about a woman. He asks if Mr. Fraser knows the whereabouts of this woman now.

Baptiste's behavior, and the cook's resignation, imply that the staff also overheard the husband's indiscretions with Amélie. Rather than feeling chastised, the husband seems to grow even more pleased with himself, spending his days lounging in the hammock, more comfortable and content than he's been since before his marriage to Antoinette. His letter to the magistrate suggests that he is formulating a plan of retribution against Christophine.

Fraser writes back at once, saying that the woman's name was "*Josephine or Christophine*," and she was imprisoned in connection with obeah before becoming a servant at Coulibri. He says that her whereabouts now are unclear, but that she is considered a "*most dangerous person*." He tells the husband that if she lives near him and gets up to "*any of her nonsense*," that he should report it to the police immediately, and Fraser himself will make sure that she does not get off lightly. After reading this, the husband thinks to himself, "So much for you, Josephine or Christophine. So much for you, Pheena."

In his imagined address to Christophine, the husband uses all three names for her- the erroneous name that Fraser uses, her real name, and Antoinette's pet name for her. His desire to obliterate her extends to every possible version of her-- the rumor of her, the real her, and the idolized pet version that belongs to Antoinette.

One afternoon, Antoinette returns to the house, closely followed by Christophine. Antoinette goes to her room without looking at the husband, and rings for Baptiste. Baptiste fetches a bottle of rum to bring her, and ignores the husband when he tries to intercept him. When the husband goes to Antoinette's room, he discovers that she has blockaded the door with a heavy piece of furniture. He pushes the door open enough to see her lying in bed with the empty rum decanter next to her on a chair. He leaves and waits on the veranda. After a while, Antoinette wakes and begins ringing and yelling for Baptiste and for Christophine. The husband goes in to her room to find her extremely disheveled, with her **hair** hanging tangled and her face swollen. He is at first too shocked to speak.

Like her mother before her, Antoinette is given rum to calm her in her distress. The servants' loyalty to Antoinette, though, is clear. The husband sees that his actions have upset Antoinette so deeply that her appearance has completely changed, and for the first time feels a shock of emotion in relation to what he's done.

Antoinette reaches for another bottle of rum, and the husband tells her not to drink anymore. She snaps back that he has no right to tell her what to do. She accuses him of hypocrisy, of having committed with Amélie the same acts of sexual coercion that went on during slavery, after he'd expressed distaste for these very acts. She accuses him acidly of liking "the light brown girls." The husband counters that what went on during slavery "was not about liking or disliking, it was a question of justice." She scoffs, saying that justice is a cold word, a lie. She refers to her mother, demands to know what justice her mother had, and likens the husband to her mother's abusive caretaker, the "black devil kissing her sad mouth. Like you kissed mine."

In her grief, Antoinette feels a strong connection to her mother's experience. She seems to identify the husband with all three of the destructive males in her mother's life, implicitly or explicitly: When the husband tells her not to drink, she bristles at being told what to do by a man who has ignored, betrayed, and abandoned her, recalling Mr. Mason's ignoring, control and abandonment of Annette. Next, her condemnation of the husband's actions in the context of race and class coercion recalls her father's notorious indiscretions with his slaves. Finally, she explicitly connects the husband to her mother's sexually abusive and neglectful caretaker.

The husband opens the window because it has become unbearably hot in the room. When he turns back, Antoinette is drinking again, and he reproaches her, saying simply, "Bertha." She rails against him, saying that he is trying to make her into someone else by calling her by a different name, and warns him that this too is obeah. She begins to cry, and tells him that, worse than his infidelity is the fact that he has destroyed this place for her, this place that she once loved. She tells him that she hates him, and before she dies she will show him how much she hates him. She then quite suddenly stops crying, and asks the husband, "Is she so much prettier than I am? Don't you love me at all?" The husband replies that he does not, not at this moment.

Here, Antoinette is disempowered and alienated from herself on three symbolic fronts. First, the husband again imposes a false name on her, and she feels that he is forcibly enacting a magic that is robbing her of her identity. Next, she expresses alienation from the landscape that has always been so connected to and emblematic of her feelings and cosmology (for Antoinette, this is the worst of all possible offenses). Finally, she displays a loss of faith in her own beauty, which, after learning from a young age (through her mother and the convent school) that appearance is the locus of power for a female, amounts to an expression of disempowerment.

Antoinette laughs a crazy laugh at this, and says that the husband is cold, a stone. She says that it serves her right, because Aunt Cora had warned her not to marry him, "not if he were stuffed with diamonds." She begins to speak and sing incoherently, and takes another drink from the bottle of rum. The husband tries to take the bottle from her, and she bites him. He drops the bottle. She smashes another bottle against the wall and threatens him with the broken half of the bottle in her hand, "Just you touch me once. You'll soon see if I'm a dam' coward like you are." She proceeds to wildly curse the husband, and every part of his body. The husband feels as if he is in a dream. She only quiets when Christophine comes in and tells her to stop crying. She collapses onto the sofa and sobs.

Having lost all emotional or symbolic power in the situation, Antoinette reaches a fever pitch of distress and turns to physical violence. Just as he has described the hostile landscape of the Caribbean as dreamlike, the husband again feels like he is in a dream, faced with the hostility of his wife. The only person who can still reason with and calm Antoinette is Christophine.

Christophine turns to the husband and asks him sadly why he did what he did with Amélie, why he didn't at least take her somewhere else to do it. She says that he and Amélie both love money, which must be why they came together. At this, the husband leaves the room and goes out to the veranda. As he wraps his bleeding arm, he looks out to the **trees** and feels that they are menacing him, have menaced him since his arrival. He hears Christophine singing softly to Antoinette while she cries.

The husband does not answer Christophine's accusations. In the face of this conflict, as well as the conflict that has just occurred between himself and Antoinette, he is mostly silent, paralyzed. He feels powerless, menaced again by his surroundings.

He goes back to his room, where Christophine finds him. They argue. She tells him she hopes he's satisfied, that she knows what he's done and there's no use lying to her. The husband demands to know what happened when Antoinette was with Christophine these last few days. He calls Antoinette "my wife," and Christophine laughs maliciously at this. She tells him that everyone knows that he has married Antoinette for her money, that he has taken everything she has and now wants only "to break her up," because he is jealous of her goodness. She says that the first time she, Christophine, saw him, she could tell that he was cold, that he fooled Antoinette into thinking he loved her. The husband thinks silently that she is right, but allows her to go on.

The husband knows that Christophine speaks the truth, that the coldness that she sees in him is the true core of his feelings. This again silences him, allowing Christophine to continue speaking. As has been the case many times throughout the novel, here it is speech that holds the power to shape reality, so it is Christophine who wields the power in this instance.

She accuses him of making love to Antoinette until she couldn't do without it, until she was completely in love with him, when all he wants is to hurt her. Her words begin to echo loudly in the husband's head, as she accuses him of pretending to believe the lies that Daniel Cosway has told him, so that he can have an excuse to leave her. He accuses her in turn of poisoning him. She corrects him, telling him that Antoinette begged her for something to make him love her again, but that he doesn't love. She says that she knows he started to call Antoinette by a different name in an effort to control her, and that when that didn't work he bedded Amélie and let Antoinette hear it, that he meant her to hear it.

The power of Christophine's speech enacts a kind of magic or hypnosis on the husband. It echoes and expands in his mind, so that, at this point in his narration, everything she says appears at least twice. He is left with no space, in his mind or on the page, to respond or reflect, further amplifying Christophine's dominance over the moment. It is unclear whether these echoes are created by actual magic, or are an effect of the husband's remorse.

The husband again knows that she is right, that he meant for her to hear what happened. Now in addition to Christophine's words echoing in his mind, he can hear Antoinette's voice as it sounded or must have sounded when she went to Christophine, telling her what happened between the husband and Amélie, that she stayed up all night listening, "*O Pheena, Pheena, help me*." Christophine goes on to explain that she gave Antoinette something to help her sleep these last few days, to calm her, but that the husband's telling her he doesn't love her has undone all of her good work. She tells him that she thinks he is neither the best nor the worst, but that he can love Antoinette again if he waits and tries.

Now Antoinette's voice enters the fray, further crowding out the husband's thoughts and agency in the conversation. It is unclear, again, whether the husband is imagining Antoinette's distressed pleas through a movement of mind inspired by remorse, or whether these thoughts have been planted in his mind by Christophine. Either, or both, are possible and implied.

When he shakes his head, Christophine repeats that everything Daniel Cosway told him is a lie, and that she would have warned him but there was no time. She reminds him that it is not Antoinette who traveled to England to convince the husband to marry her, it is he who came here to beg her. She asks him what he is going to do with her money now that he doesn't love her. At this mention of money, the husband stops feeling "dazed, tired, half hypnotized," and is ready to defend himself. Christophine asks him why he can't just leave Antoinette half of her dowry and go back to England, if he doesn't want her. The husband asks exactly what sum she has in mind, and she replies that he can fix it up with the lawyers, and she, Christophine, can take care of Antoinette. The husband thinks to himself that Christophine means that she will also take care of the money.

Just as was the case with the husband's encounter with Daniel Cosway, any inclination toward compassion or remorse is extinguished when the conversation turns to money. The husband's priority becomes his own defense. Where just moments before, he had listened to Christophine and knew she was right, he now suspects her of planning to take Antoinette's money for herself.

The husband asks Christophine if she and Antoinette would both stay here at Granbois, and she says no, they will return to Martinique. She says that Antoinette will marry someone else and forget him. At this, a pang of jealousy and rage shoots through the husband, and he laughs at Christophine. He tells her coldly to leave, that all that has happened is her fault. She tells him that he has no power to tell her to do anything. In response, he reads aloud to her the part of the magistrate's letter that tells the husband to report Christophine to the police, that she won't get off lightly this time. He says that he knows that she gave Antoinette the "poison" that she put in his wine, that he's saved the wine glass and will use it against her.

While remorse seems to paralyze the husband, he is driven to decisive action by jealousy, anger, and desire for vengeance and control. When the idea of Antoinette marrying another man comes up, he acts immediately and silences the once powerful Christophine by utilizing his knowledge of her arrest history, which he has by right of his position of privilege with white law enforcement.

Christophine relents, but demands to know what he will do with Antoinette. He says he will consult doctors and her brother and follow their advice. She spits on the floor in outrage, tells him that she knows he means to pretend that she is mad, that she will end up like her mother, who, she says, was abandoned to the care of a man who "take her whenever he want, that man, and others." She says that if he is willing to do this for money, then he is "wicked like Satan self!" He shouts back that he did not choose any of this, that he would give his life to undo it. She says this is the first word of truth he's spoken so far. When the husband next looks at her, it looks as if there is a mask on her face, "and her eyes were undaunted." The husband feels respect for her strength.

Christophine too connects Antoinette's current misfortune and apparent future of imprisonment with the abandonment, imprisonment, and abuse of Annette. For all their clashing and enmity, the husband recognizes in Christophine the same talent for concealing emotional vulnerability that he possesses, and respects her for it.

He asks Christophine if she wants to say goodbye to Antoinette, and she tells him that she has given her something to sleep, and she will not wake her up to misery, that that is for him to do. He tells her stiffly that in that case she can write to Antoinette, and Christophine replies, "Read and write I don't know. Other things I know." She leaves the house without looking back.

Remorse seems to creep back into the husband's demeanor, as he offers to allow Christophine to speak to, and then write to, Antoinette. Christophine's refusal is her final assertion of power in the novel.

Agitated after his confrontation with Christophine, the husband paces his room and speaks aloud to himself a letter he wants to write to his father. In it, he accuses his father of setting up this marriage in order to get rid of him, that his father and his brother had no love at all for him. He says that their plan succeeded because he, the husband, was young, conceited, and foolish. the husband thinks to himself that he is no longer young, and sits down to write a real letter to his father. In this letter, he merely informs his father that "unforeseen circumstances" have dictated that he and Antoinette return to Jamaica very soon, that his father can likely guess what has happened, and that the less he speaks of it to anyone else, the better. He then writes a letter to his lawyers in Spanish Town, requesting that they set up a house with two separate wings and discreet servants.

For the second time, the husband mentally writes a letter to his father before physically writing it. As is the case with the first example of this, the husband's thought or spoken letter contains his true emotions, which are then concealed in the written version. These letters provide yet another example of the possibility for multiple versions of each reality, each utterance within the novel.

While he is writing, a cock outside crows persistently. the husband throws a book at it, but it merely walks further away and keeps crowing. Baptiste comes into the room, and the husband requests more rum-- he is drunk. He asks Baptiste what the cock is crowing about, and Baptiste replies indifferently that it is for a change in the weather. The husband sees Baptiste looking toward Antoinette's room, and shouts at him that she is asleep. Baptiste scowls and walks away. The husband realizes that he will never be able to buy discretion from Jamaican servants, that as long as he and Antoinette are in Jamaica they will be gossiped about constantly. He draws a picture of an English house surrounded by English **trees**, with a woman on the third floor.

The cock, symbolizing betrayal, returns here louder than before. Unlike Antoinette, the husband does not mention the symbolism attached. His annoyance, however, his desire to silence the creature, suggest that he understands its import and desires not to acknowledge it. When he realizes that he will not be able to control the stories that will be told about himself and Antoinette in Jamaica, he begins planning their return to England. Even now, he envisions Antoinette in the attic of their future home.

The next day is cool and misty. He watches the royal palm **trees** with respect, imagining that they will stand tall and defy the hurricanes that are coming soon, while the bamboo will merely lie on the ground and let them rage past. He thinks of his own revenge as a hurricane, and wonders why there is no pity for him, who is "tied to a lunatic for life." He remembers Christophine telling him that Antoinette loves him, thirsts for him, and thinks to himself that Antoinette thirsts for *anyone*, that she makes love like only a mad girl can, not caring who she's loving. He thinks about locking her away, to prevent her from seeing anyone again. He then thinks that if he watches and sees Antoinette display any real emotion, "one human tear" when they leave Granbois for good, then he'll drop all of this and take her in his arms gently, because "she's mad but she's *mine, mine*."

The husband's prideful cruelty, as well as his passion and longing for Antoinette, are locked in conflict here, as two equal and opposing forces. On the one hand, he desperately wants a reason to feel tenderly toward Antoinette and treat her gently, but on the other, he is consumed by his own jealousy, rage, and need for control. He equates his own desire for revenge with a coming hurricane, and his respect for the royal palm trees that will defy the hurricane suggest that he longs for Antoinette to defy his rage, in this case by displaying an emotion that will soften it.

On the morning of their departure, the husband and Antoinette are dressed and packed for the journey, and Baptiste, along with some remaining servants, are waiting by the horses to see them off. Antoinette's face is blank, and the husband wonders if she remembers or feels anything. He remembers her telling him the names of the mountains, and that a green sunset is called an Emerald Drop, and it brings good fortune. He is caught by surprise by the sadness he feels looking at the house for the last time. He feels its shabbiness, feels that it is crying to be saved from desolation. He blames the forest for the house's inevitable destruction, addresses the house in his mind, "Don't you know this is a dangerous place? And that the dark forest always wins?" Though Baptiste addresses him politely, the husband feels his contempt and dislike strongly.

The lack of emotion displayed by Antoinette upon their departure from Granbois unsettles the husband. Rather than seeming an indication of strength in concealing emotional vulnerability, he fears that her outer blankness reflects an inner blankness. As he looks at the house at Granbois for the last time, feelings of sadness take him by surprise and cause him to reflect. In his mind, he pities the crumbling house, and blames the forest for its destruction. This pitting of the natural world against the domestic realm, or the realm of people, is consistent with the husband's viewpoint throughout the novel.

The husband is filled with a bewildering and sudden certainty that everything he'd imagined to be true about Antoinette these last few days was false, that "only the magic and the dream are true-- all the rest's a lie." He looks at Antoinette staring blankly out to the sea, and wishes that she would sing to him as she once did. He imagines what he should say to her-- to not be sad, to chatter and laugh as she used to, to tell him stories. He remembers their nights together tenderly, and wishes for them both to give everything they have to each other. He says to her, "I have made a terrible mistake. Forgive me." When he sees that she looks at him with hatred, he feels in himself "a sickening swing back to hate". He vows to himself that his hatred will be stronger than hers, that she will be left with nothing.

The nostalgia of leaving affects the husband deeply, and he is filled with the desire for things to be as they were when he and Antoinette were in sync. Once again, the his remorse weakens and quiets him, but gives way quickly to the solidity of his vengeful anger. Where his tenderness and remorse are accompanied by sad wishes and a tentative apology, his anger comes with hatred and an absolute vow.

A servant boy begins to cry "loud, heartbreaking sobs," and the husband thinks that he could have "strangled him with pleasure." The husband asks Baptiste why the boy is crying, but Baptiste ignores him. Antoinette tells him, in a detached voice that the husband hardly recognizes, that upon their arrival the boy asked to be taken with them when they left Granbois. She explains that the boy wants no money, merely to be with the husband, because he loves him very much. Baptiste has told the boy that the husband won't take him, and this is why he sobs. Antoinette says the boy has tried very hard to learn English. The husband becomes angry at her for speaking for him, and making promises to the boy, and says he will certainly not bring the boy with them.

In the face of Antoinette's silence, the boy's display of bald emotion at first gives the husband intense pleasure. The weeping boy is a feebler, defeated echo of the Young Bull, the porter who appears at the start of the honeymoon. The Young Bull was a black man who vied confidently for the attention and approval of the husband. But now, after the emotional destruction that has taken place at Granbois, the novel is left with only a desolate young black boy, who sobs powerlessly at his rejection.

They leave, and the husband notices that when Antoinette says goodbye to Baptiste she very nearly cries, but recovers her cold composure at once. He feels exhausted and empty, but sane. He feels tired of the place and its people. He feels hate for the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the sunsets "whatever colour." Above all, he feels hate for Antoinette, for "she left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it." The boy follows them some distance as they leave, crying still. The husband marvels that a boy would cry like that, "for nothing."

The husband's feelings of alienation and exhaustion are directed at everyone and everything in his sight. After a sizable struggle between the forces of compassion and bitterness within him, bitterness finally takes the upper hand.

PART 3

Part Three opens in the point of view of Grace Poole, Antoinette's caretaker in England. She is speaking to Leah, another servant in the husband's house. Grace recounts a conversation she's had with Mrs. Eff, the housekeeper, where Mrs. Eff reprimands Grace for gossiping. Grace replies that servants always gossip, that it can't be stopped, and furthermore she is not sure the job suits her. She does not know what to think of Antoinette and the condition she is being kept in. Mrs. Eff offers to double her salary, under orders from the husband, who is apparently away. Grace replies that she will not serve the devil for money, and Mrs. Eff bristles. She tells Grace that to call the husband the devil is a mistake, that she knew him as a boy and a young man, that he was generous and brave, and that his stay in the West Indies destroyed him.

Grace Poole's narration takes the form of gossip about gossip. These layers of remove open the final part of the novel on a note of mystery and hearsay, and highlight the deeply biased and unreliable nature of all utterances, including and especially supposed 'truth' telling, in the novel. Grace Poole's narrative implies that Antoinette is being held against her will, in questionable conditions. Mrs. Eff provides a perspective on the husband that has not appeared yet in the novel-- a tender, compassionate, generous one.

Mrs. Eff tells Grace that she will double her pay, but that she will be replaced if there is any more gossip. Grace tells Leah that after this conversation, all of the servants but herself were sent away, and Leah and one cook were hired. She says that there is no way to stop those people from talking, though, and the rumors she's heard are very far from the truth. Nevertheless, she says, she does not contradict them, because she does not want to be fired--the "thick walls" of the house protect her from a world that "can be a black and cruel world to a woman." Grace thinks to herself that this is the reason she, Mrs. Eff, and Leah stay at the house. She reflects that Antoinette, "that girl who lives in her own darkness," does not have the luxury that she does, of choosing to stay or go.

Grace Poole's decision to stay at the house, and to not add to or contradict the talk that she hears about the husband and Antoinette, is rooted in a realistic understanding of the options available to her as a woman in this world. She is acutely aware of the vastly fewer options available to Antoinette, who is imprisoned in the house.

The narration switches to Antoinette's consciousness. She is watching Grace Poole light the **fire** in her attic room. She gets up and puts her face very close to the fire, admiring its beauty. As she watches the fire, she wonders why it is she was brought to this place, feels that there is something she must do. She remembers that when she was first brought here and locked in the attic, she planned to plead with the husband to let her go, but she never saw him again and never got the chance. She watches Grace Poole count money, and drinks Grace's liquor after she falls asleep.

Antoinette's narration is now quite hazy. She does not reflect at length on things as she's done before. She simply observes things that happen around her, and cannot always connect these observations into lucid trains of thought or conclusions. Her fascination with the fire recalls the flames at Coulibri and foreshadows her final act of arson and suicide. It is unclear how long she has been imprisoned.

Antoinette looks at a tapestry hanging on her wall and sees her mother in it, looking away from her. She does not tell Grace about her vision, and thinks to herself that the name "Grace" does not fit Grace Poole, that "names matter," remembering when the husband refused to call her Antoinette, that as a result of this she felt the sense of herself as Antoinette, her identity, float away. Antoinette does not have a looking-glass here, and no longer knows what she looks like. She feels that this means everything has been taken from her. At night, after Grace Poole has had a few drinks and fallen asleep, Antoinette steals her keys and walks through the rest of the house. She knows that people tell her that she is in England, but she does not believe them: "The cardboard house where I walk at night is not England."

Antoinette hallucinates, and does not quite know where she is. Her inability to look at her reflection or retain knowledge of her appearance makes her feel completely disconnected from her identity. Her distrust of Grace Poole is shown to have some connection to Antoinette's feeling that "Grace" is not an apt name for the woman, does not reflect her true qualities. Despite her inability to reason about her circumstances, Antoinette does still act on her impulse to escape the attic, even for a short time, when she wanders through the rest of the house at night.

One morning, Antoinette wakes up aching, with her wrists red and swollen. Grace Poole tells her that the day before, "a gentleman" had come to see her. Antoinette does not remember anything about this. She only remembers stealing the keys and walking through the house, seeing a girl in a white dress who runs away from her and afterwards speaks of seeing a ghost. Grace tells her that her brother, Richard, came to see her and didn't recognize her. Grace says that Antoinette ran at him with a knife, and when the knife was taken from her she bit him. "You won't be seeing him again," Grace tells her. Antoinette is convinced that if she were wearing a red dress, her brother would have recognized her. She demands to know where her red dress is, and Grace shows her.

The girl in the white dress that Antoinette sees at night, who thinks she is a ghost, is probably Jane Eyre. Antoinette is further and further disconnected from herself-- she cannot remember her violent actions from the previous night. She believes that the core of the problem with Richard Mason was her recognizability, the unity of her identity with her outward appearance, and thus fixates on her red dress.

As Antoinette looks at and smells her red dress, she is reminded of the colors and smells of her home, "the smell of the sun and the smell of rain." She recalls that she was wearing a red dress that last time that Sandi came to see her, before her passage to England. At this time, Sandi asked her to leave with him, but she declined. She recalls that Sandi often came to see her when the husband was away, that the servants all knew about it but didn't tell. She recalls that she and Sandi often "kissed," but that this last time their embrace was "the life and death kiss." She does not share any of this with Grace Poole. She drops her dress on the floor and thinks that it looks like the **fire** has spread across the room, and it reminds her of something she has to do, but can't think of what.

The red dress triggers a memory that was left out of Antoinette's earlier narration. We see now that the rumors about her relationship with Sandi were true, that her loyal servants knew about it but didn't tell. We, as readers, were left out of this inner circle of trust until now, weakened with madness and grief, Antoinette finally narrates it. Her red dress is in contrast with the virginal white dress that the Jane Eyre figure was wearing in the previous scene. It symbolizes passion, and the image of it spreading across the floor like flames brings Antoinette one step closer to realizing what she is about to do.

That night, Antoinette has her dream for the last time. It is clear to her that the stairs in the dream lead here, to her attic room. In her dream, she takes Grace Poole's keys and descends into the house. She is quiet, for she doesn't want to disturb the "woman they say haunts this place." She goes into a sitting room and lights every candle she can find. She hears a clock ticking that is made of gold, and thinks, "Gold is the idol they worship." She becomes angry, and knocks over all of the candles. This sets the curtains **aflame**. She goes into the hallway and sees what she thinks is a ghost, a woman with streaming **hair**, surrounded by a gilt frame. She drops her candle, and it catches the end of a tablecloth, which goes up in flames.

Antoinette is simultaneously connected to her identity and her past by this recurring dream, and completely separated from an understanding of who she's become. When she mentions "the woman they say haunts this place," she does not realize that she is referring to herself. Likewise, when she sees herself in her dream in what is obviously a mirror, she does not register it as her own reflection and is frightened by what she believes to be this other being, this ghost.

In her dream, Antoinette runs back up to the attic and climbs out onto the roof, all the while calling out to Christophine. Sitting out on the roof and watching the **flames**, she remembers Aunt Cora and Tia and Coco the parrot calling "*Qui est la*?" She hears her husband, "the man who hated me," calling to her in a panic, but calling her Bertha. She hears someone scream, then knows that it is she who is screaming. In the dream she jumps, and then wakes up. Grace Poole wakes up at the sound of Antoinette's scream and comes over to check on her. Antoinette waits for Grace to go back to sleep, and then steals her keys. She lights a candle and descends into the house with a sense of purpose, thinking, "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do."

As has been true throughout the novel, Antoinette's dream shows her what is going to happen before it does. When she wakes and descends the stairs with her candle lit, having finally realized what she needs to do, it is clear that she is going to set the house aflame. Her emancipation is shown to require the end of her life, and the complete destruction of the place in which she is imprisoned.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

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