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The Role of Female Subaltern in Conrad's *Heart Of Darknes*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Rhys's
Wide Sargasso Sea

Marginalizirana uloga žene u Konradovom *Srcu Tame*, Ačebeovom *Svijet se raspada* i Rhyovom
Širokom Sargaškom moru

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in the works of three different writers, Conrad, Achebe and Rhys, is quite specific since all three books that will be analyzed below arose in different temporal, social and literary circumstances. What connects them is the suppressed position of a woman in a colonial society, and this particular work would, to a large extent, refer to the analysis of the way each of these three authors dealt with this important topic. A prominent theoretician of postcolonial studies Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak employed the term “Subaltern”, which refers to all those who lived on the margins, voiceless and disenfranchised. The paper will analyze in detail the role of the woman in all three works and compare the literary practices that the selected writers applied in relation to these issues, and shed light on how each of them specifically presented the female characters. This paper will present research about the role of Female Subaltern in these three novels carried out in two high schools. This research raised the students’ awareness of the ways in which the “Subaltern” is presented in the novels. At the end of each class, students completed a questionnaire from which we can assess how the students of that age experienced these three works, whether they agree with such an approach to women, whether they still witness similar situations, and whether the introduction of the subordinate characters increased their empathy towards women. The study was conducted in March 2019.

Keywords: women, subaltern, patriarchal, colonization, literature

APSTRAKT

Uloga žene u djelima tri različita pisca, Conrada, Achebea i Rhysa, sasvim je specifična jer sve tri knjige koje će se analizirati u nastavku nastale su u različitim vremenskim, društvenim i književnim okolnostima. Ono što ih povezuje jest podređeni položaj žene u kolonijalnom društvu, a ovaj rad bi se u velikoj mjeri odnosio na analizu načina na koji se svaki od navedena tri autora bavio ovom važnom temom. Istaknuta teoretičarka postkolonijalnih studija Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak prva je upotrijebila izraz “Subaltern”, koji se odnosi na sve one koji žive na margini, obespravljani i bez prava glasa. U radu će se detaljno analizirati uloga žene u sva tri romana i usporediti književni postupci koje su odabrani pisci primijenili u odnosu prema tim pitanjima, te će se pružiti uvid u to kako je svako od njih na svoj specifičan način predstavio ženske likove u ova tri romana. U radu će biti predstavljeno istraživanje o podređenoj ulozi žene u ova tri romana provedeno u dvije srednje škole. Ovo istraživanje razvilo je svijest učenika o načinima na koje je u romanima predstavljen “Subaltern”. Na kraju svakog sata, učenici su popunili upitnik iz kojeg možemo procijeniti kako su učenici tog uzrasta doživjeli ova tri djela, da li se slažu sa takvim pristupom prema ženama, da li još uvijek svjedoče sličnim situacijama, te da li je upoznavanje sa podređenim likovima povećalo nivo njihove empatije prema ženama. Istraživanje je provedeno u martu 2019. godine.

Ključne riječi: žene, potlačenost, patrijarhalnost, kolonizacija, književnost

1.0 Introduction to the study

Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out.¹

“In the Old Testament, Genesis 1 (v. 27), God stated that men and women were equally created in the image of God and neither attained more of the image of Him than the other.”² This statement confirms that even the story of Genesis, and the Holy Scripture, presents the notion of the equality among sexes. In other words, the supreme deity, that is to say God, formed or created the basic equality among both men and women respectively. Both genders carry the Creator's image in their own right and therefore neither men nor women were granted more privilege or dominance over one another. Thus, both received equal measure of His favor.

Farough Fakhimi Anbaran notes as follows: “Gender discrimination was not conspicuous till the time literature started to have an important rule in the life of people.”³ As we will see hereinafter, literature played an important role in portraying women and their position in society.

It is easy to identify yourself with people who live around you, but once you identify with people who are far away, then you begin to understand them, even though their culture or skin color is different, even strange. Literature was used not only to entertain the readers, but also to familiarize them with different cultures. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina were under the scrutiny of the patriarchal system(s) for ages, and even today men think of themselves as superior in many aspects. A similar situation is present all around the world. Women who were faced with patriarchal system lived in a world where men had full right to dominate and rule over them. Chris Weedon's definition of patriarchy in *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* tells us that:

¹ G. E. Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco, 1987, p. 18.

² Jean Damascene Ngendahayo, *The Impact of women oppression on the societal destruction: a case study of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, Academia, 2014, p. 1, https://www.academia.edu/9781742/The_Impact_of_Women_Oppression_on_the_Societal_Destruction_A_case_study_of_Chinua_Achebes_Things_Fall_Apart, accessed 22 October 2019.

³ M. K. Booker, *A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism*, Longman, USA, 1996, p. 89., cited in F. F. Anbaran, 'Multiple Perspectives Toward Women in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: A Feministic Overview', *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, vol. 66, SciPress Ltd, Switzerland, 2016, p. 129.

“The term ‘patriarchal’ refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning given to biological sexual difference.”⁴

This biological sexual difference was presented in many works of literature written predominantly by men. As a response, many feminist movements emerged to fight against women’s subjection. Spivak, one of the most important literary critics gives her own definition of a word ‘woman’ which in her opinion has to do with the oppression of women: “my own definition of woman is very simple. It rests on the word ‘man.’”⁵ There is no doubt that that the word ‘woman’ rests on yet another lexeme, which is in this case ‘man’. Thus it becomes apparent that the word ‘woman’ is inherently connected to the word ‘man’ caused women’s subjection in every sphere of life while empowering men to set the rules and make women live according to them.

2.0 Theoretical background of the study

Nelson Mandela, one of the greatest human rights activists, emphasized, among other things, that the full stability and equality in society can not be achieved without the total liberation of women of all kinds of coercion and allowing women to participate in the social, political and economic spheres of life. Mandela said:

“Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression, ... unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of the women of our country has radically changed for the better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life as equals with any other member of society.”⁶

Women in Africa were oppressed physically, mentally and socially. Whenever the traditional African rules were not followed, women would be rejected and expelled from their families. Practices like polygamy, the inheritance that went to the husband’s family, or the

⁴ C. Weedon, *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p. 2, cited in S. Hodgson-Wright, *Delarivier Manley: Printed Writings 1641–1700: Series II, Part Three, Volume 12*, Taylor & Francis Ltd., Aldershot, 2006, p. 3.

⁵ G. C. Spivak, *Feminism and Critical Theory*, in: D. Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, Pearson Education Inc, New York, 2000, p. 477, cited in F. F. Anbaran, op. cit., p. 130.

⁶ S. Baden, H. Shireen, and S. Meintjes, *Country Gender Profile: South Africa*, Women’s Net, 1993, <http://womensnet.org.za/links/genderpr.htm>, accessed 30 March, 2019.

unemployment, further empowered men's position. Women's suppression and violation of their rights is an issue that has been present for ages, but since it was limited to the sphere of private life, culture and tradition, none dared to tackle these issues. During the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period, respectively, women all around the world were dealing with similar problems. Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe and Jean Rhys in their literary works depicted some of the aforementioned issues.

2.1 From Colonialism to Postcolonialism

As Daniel Butt points out: "In 1955, Aimé Césaire wrote of the 'great historical tragedy' that befell Africa in its encounter with European colonialism, an encounter that led Césaire to conclude that 'Europe is responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses in human history'.⁷"⁸ Colonization had an important impact on colonized people(s), and not only that their countries were colonized, but also their diverse cultures, religions and their languages. Europeans were those who considered themselves as saviors of the 'Other'. After the colonization, indigenous people had the colonizers who 'helped' them make progress, but rather than improving the situation, wherever Westerners appeared, civilization was out of its place. That turned into a process of acculturation and total domination that led to the disappearance of many indigenous nations, many voices that could not be heard, many nations that existed as the 'Other'.

2.2 The Other

"We often categorize people into different groups based on our understandings, perceptions and experience. In this process, we tend to distinguish between people who have something in common with us (e.g. race, ethnicity or religion) and people who are different from us."⁹ One of the negative consequences of such categorization is Othering. The 'Other' is a description of colonized people who were exploited, dominated, denigrated. As people of neither the First

⁷A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2000, p. 45, cited in D. Butt, *Colonialism and Postcolonialism*, ResearchGate, 2013, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313988703_Colonialism_and_Postcolonialism, accessed 30 March 2019

⁸ D. Butt, op. cit. 45.

⁹ J. Jackson, *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*, Routledge, New York, 2014, p. 158.

nor the Second, but the Third World countries, their lifestyle was considered as barbaric and primitive. Favoring one's own group, if followed by the exclusion of outgroup members and lack of knowledge about them, can have serious negative consequences such as stereotyping, prejudice, bias and discrimination based on race, gender, age, etc.

2.3 Subaltern

The term 'subaltern' has been extensively researched by Spivak. She explained the idea of how those individuals who are colonized, regardless of their former status or position, become vividly subjugated. The lower layers of society, primarily the homeless, the unemployed, the subsistence farmers, the day laborers, become even more marginalized within the colonized communities. Daniel Butt emphasized the importance of her notion further elaborating that:

“Among all postcolonial theorists, [she] has most consistently focused on what in postcolonial studies has come to be called the subaltern: literally, the category of those who are lower in position or, who, in the military terms that are always appropriate to the colonial situation, are lower in rank. Spivak employs the term (which derives from Gramsci) to describe the lower layers of colonial and postcolonial (or... neo-colonial) society: the homeless, the unemployed, the subsistence farmers, the day laborers – in short, those groups with the least power of all.”¹⁰

The most vulnerable category in society were women. The restrictions imposed on them by men, who, even though themselves were part of the subaltern as colonized people, did not allow women to fight for their rights, thus making them the most oppressed group of the 'subaltern'. Spivak further argues that: “If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.”¹¹ Jalal Mostafee highlights the importance of Spivak's 1988 essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, where Spivak explained in more detail the differences in the understanding of certain rituals and the social arrangement by Indians and British colonizers. Mostafee commented on the essay and the ritual 'widow-sacrifice', and further stated that Spivak: “examines the nineteenth-century... [controversy between] the colonized Indians and their British colonizers”¹² over “what she calls 'widow-sacrifice'.”¹³ In contrast to India, Westerners

¹⁰H. Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 170.

¹¹ G. C. Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1988, p. 37.

¹² J. Mostafee, *Investigating the Female Subaltern, Colonial Discourse and False Consciousness: A Spivakian Marxist-Postcolonialist Reading of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and No Longer at Ease, Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 5, Australian International Academic Centre, Australia, 2016, p. 222.

disapproved widow sacrifice in order to justify other brutalities that were done to Indian people. First, it is important to emphasize that Western women, even though they appeared to be in a better position than African women, actually had minor roles in the society. Back then, housework was the only way in which women could earn some money along with the housework, looking after the children and preparing meals. Women were nurturers of their husbands and 'locked' in the safe zone which protected them from the outer world. Commenting on Pennington and Westover's overview of homework in the 19th and 20th centuries, Patricia Malcolmson states that:

“Women who work at home have usually done so to accommodate the demands and social expectations surrounding their roles as wives and mothers. And they have suffered for it. Homework, though it has taken many different forms, ranging from nail making to the assembly of matchboxes, has always been one of the most exploited forms of labor and one dominated by unskilled women... Such work can obscure the deficiency of male breadwinner's earnings and leave intact the appearance of traditional patriarchal domesticity”.¹⁴

Malcolmson also directly quotes Pennington and Bestover, adding that “homework has not only exploited [women] but has also, to some extent, played a part in perpetuating women's subordinate socio-economic position.”¹⁵ As a result of this subordinate socio-economic position in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we could see many Western women who were both the actual shelters for their husbands and nurturers of their children, without any participation in social or political affairs. This oppression was not only reflected through the exclusion of women from these affairs but also through the literature which had shown how the life of women back then was shaped by duty and tradition.

The way Conrad named female characters exemplified how women were always intended for someone else, for some other male figure who will shape her life and be the ruler of it. Marlow's aunt, Kurtz's Intended, the Company's two women, etc., show how female characters always depended on someone else. In our modern world, both men and women, in principle, have equal responsibilities and equal dignity in society. “The term ‘Angel in the House’ has lost its relevance, so the way Conrad presented women appears shocking to us,

¹³ J. Mostafee, op. cit., p. 222.

¹⁴ P. Malcolmson, Shelley Pennington and Belinda Westover, *A Hidden Workforce: Homeworkers in England, 1850–1985*. (Women in Society.), Macmillan Education, London, distributed by New York University Press, New York, 1989, pp. Xi, 191., in: C. Dyhouse, *Feminism and the Family in England, 1880 – 1939*, Basil Blackwell, New York, 1989, p. 1544.

¹⁵ S. Pennington, and B. Westover, *A Hidden Workforce: Homeworkers in England, 1850–1985*, Macmillan Education, London, 1989, p. 191, cited in P. Malcolmson, op. cit., p. 1544.

contemporary readers.”¹⁶ How women were presented by Conrad, Achebe, and Rhys and what was their role in the society in the period when these works were written was the subject of interest by many critics and readers all around the world.

3. The historical background of *Heart of Darkness*

“*Heart of Darkness* (1902) by Joseph Conrad was written at the turn of the 19th century when the atrocities of Belgian colonialism under the rule of the king Leopold II had begun to be revealed to the world.”¹⁷ *Heart of Darkness* is a novella which provoked both positive and negative criticism. The biggest criticism of Conrad for the way he portrayed African characters and their culture, was addressed by Chinua Achebe, African writer and critic who wrote in response to Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* in another novel *Things Fall Apart*. As Harold Bloom further noticed:

“Discussion of the novella gained significant momentum in the 1950s and 1960s, peaking in the late 1970, as the work came under fire when novelist Chinua Achebe alleged that Conrad was simply and undeniably a racist. While many scholars came to the author's defense, Conrad was also criticized heavily by feminists during this time for his depiction of women.”¹⁸

In this way, professor Bloom exemplified how Conrad came under the attack from different feminist critics who viewed his own writings as derogatory when it comes to the depiction of female characters. Not only that, but Bloom likewise explains that Achebe considered Conrad racist due to his literary opus. John G. Peters provides an overview of criticism directed against Conrad's portrayal of female characters:

“Perhaps the earliest extended commentary on women in *Heart of Darkness* is Grace Isabel Colbron's *Joseph Conrad's Women*, in which she commented about Conrad's women in general, that, although, they are often present in his works, including *Heart of Darkness*, it is not their development or psychology that matters to Conrad but rather that of his male characters [...].¹⁹ Some other important commentaries on women in *Heart of Darkness* include those by

¹⁶ Nandi Saikat, *Conrad's Treatment of Women in Heart of Darkness*, *The Criterion*, An International Journal in English, Vol. 5, Issue 1, 2014, p. 114. Accessed 15 June 2019.

https://www.academia.edu/6708785/Conrads_Treatment_of_Women_in_Heart_of_Darkness

¹⁷ A. Hoschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1998, p. 142.

¹⁸ H. Bloom, *Bloom's Guides: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, Infobase Publishing, New York, 2009, p. 17.

¹⁹ G. I. Colbron, *Joseph Conrad's Women*, The Bookman, Grand Haven, 1914, pp. 176-179., cited in J. G. Peters, *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and the World of Western Women*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, Vol. 37, Issue 1, Newberry College, Newberry, 2012, p. 106.

Johanna M. Smith, who argues that Marlow tries to colonize and pacify women in *Heart of Darkness* [...] ²⁰; Addison C. Bross, who argues that Marlow seemingly unconsciously represents women as linked with evil [...] ²¹; and Valerie F. Sedlak, who argues that in fact Marlow's views of women do not follow from the evidence in the text and thus his comments about women are undermined by the text itself [...] ²².²³

The critics have commented on the novella *Heart of Darkness* and the way Conrad portrayed female characters. Whether he wanted to lull them and leave in their world of illusion, or he wanted to wake them up with rather harsh comments and descriptions is a matter of debate of many critics.

3.1 The Role of Women in *Heart of Darkness*

One of the first female characters that Conrad introduced was Marlow's aunt who helped him to become the Company's employee. She believed that Marlow would successfully spread Western thoughts and bring civilization to African people. However, surprisingly, Marlow stated the following:

“It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there has never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over.”²⁴

These comments about women were quite misogynist and that is why it is important to understand why Marlow states them. In this novella, women were not the only ones whom Marlow considered as delusional and indifferent. After his return from Africa, he saw the people around him differently. The journey to Africa made him start questioning people's knowledge about the world around them. Sanctuaries which the colonizers built did not allow

²⁰ J. M. Smith, *Too Beautiful Altogether: Ideologies of Gender and Empire in Heart of Darkness*, in R. C. Murfin (ed.), *Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad*, Bedford, New York, 2011, pp. 189-204, cited in J. G. Peters, op. cit., p. 106.

²¹ A. C. Bross, *The Unextinguishable Light of Belief: Conrad's Attitude toward Women*, *Conradiana*, Vol. 2, 1969-1970, pp. 39-46, cited in J. G. Peters, op. cit., p. 106.

²² V. F. Sedlak, *A World of Their Own: Narrative Distortion and Fictive Exemplification in the Portrayal of Women in Heart of Darkness*, *College Language Association Journal*, Vol. 32, 1989, pp. 443-465, cited in J. G. Peters, op. cit., p. 106.

²³ J. G. Peters, op. cit. p. 106.

²⁴ J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Dover, New York, 1990, p. 59. *Heart of Darkness* will be hereinafter referred to as: HOD.

them to experience life as it was, and that did not discriminate them from the world of women. Marlow stated:

“They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend.”²⁵

Marlow sees the citizens of the “sepulchral city” as ignorant to the very existence of the world where things can be disorganized, vague, irrational, suggestive, and dark. As he had discovered this dark side of the world, along with seeing these people as deluded, sometimes it looked like he envied them for being so detached from reality. The Russian, for instance, is a character who is even more ignorant about the world around him than women and those of the “sepulchral city,” however, unlike those others, the Russian who, although in the unreal reality of colonialism, did not yet comprehend it. As Marlow further remarked:

“I was seduced into something like admiration—like envy. Glamour urged him on, glamour kept him unscathed. He surely wanted nothing from the wilderness but space to breathe in and to push on through. His need was to exist, and to move onwards at the greatest possible risk, and with a maximum of privation. If the absolutely pure, uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth. I almost envied him the possession of this modest and clear flame.”²⁶

Marlow considered people as delusional, since they were detached from reality and did not experience what he did. However, he accepted the fact that we all need to have a shelter to escape from that harsh reality. When he came to Africa he became aware of this dark side of the world. In order to detach himself and make a comfort zone that will resemble the world of women he has made a sanctuary admitting that even though he had negative comments about the world in which women lived, the life without them and their tendance would be impossible. So, when he came to Africa, he started to do the routine tasks and to build a shelter which resembled the world of women, which he missed, despite the negative comments about them. “While Marlow considers the world of women to be delusional, he also considers it to be a place of refuge from an otherwise desolate existence.”²⁷ Kurtz’s place of refuge was his Intended. The only person who could save him from this desperate life was

²⁵ HOD, op. cit., p. 152.

²⁶ HOD, op.cit., p. 126.

²⁷ Peters, op. cit., p. 93.

the Intended. Kurtz's Intended was again presented as a typical woman of the nineteenth century. As Kharbutli argues in a more detailed way:

“The female world is to be kept inviolate against the encroachment of reality to serve as a haven for men, who are invariably harassed by the brutalities of life and whose miseries will, consequently, be alleviated by the thought that at home a woman angel will salve their bruises and cater for their comfort.”²⁸

The patriarchal system in which they lived enabled men to have a bird-like view of women, seeing them as their property. Anna Yeatman states that: “under the condition of household economy wives, children, and household servants were located within the private property of masculine individuals.”²⁹ This view of a man over a woman is clearly seen in the novella when the narrator describes Kurtz, “You should have heard the disinterred body of Mr. Kurtz saying, ‘My Intended’.”³⁰ This sense of possession is mentioned constantly in the novella as: “‘My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—’ everything belonged to him,”³¹ and “‘my Intended, my station, my career, my ideas.’”³² The possessive adjectives, such as ‘my’, which are aligned with the description of the Intended, imply the notion that the female character actually belongs to Kurtz, hence emphasizing her position as a woman and her objectification, she is his, she belongs to Kurtz. The only comfort that Kurtz could have had was his Intended, and the only world where he could be whatever he wanted to be was in the sanctuary of his Intended.

After Marlow returned from Africa he was so affected by his experiences in Africa that he could not destroy the Intended's world of illusion. Once more women remained protected from the darkness of the outer world. After telling the Intended that Kurtz's last words were her name rather than “The horror! The horror!”, Marlow remarks:

“It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle. Would they have fallen, wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due! Hadn't he said he wanted only justice. But I couldn't. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark—too dark altogether.”³³

²⁸ M. K. Kharbutli, *The Treatment of Women in Heart of Darkness*, *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters*, 17, Assen, 1987, pp. 244-245, cited in J. G. Peters, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁹ Ed. by Linda J. Nicholson, Anna Yeatman, *A Feminist Theory of Social Differentiation. Feminism/Postmodernism*, Routledge, New York, 1990, p. 287.

³⁰ HOD, op. cit., p. 99.

³¹ HOD, op. cit., p. 100.

³² HOD, op. cit., p. 142.

³³ HOD, op. cit., p. 149.

Conrad, in this novella, has created a world where we have two opposites that can not function without each other. As he states that it is not right to live a life which is delusional, ignorant and out of touch with truth, Conrad also points out that without the female part in society, the lives of men would be bleak and depressing. While recreating his experience of darkness, he wanted to make his readers peek into their own dark and mysterious hearts.

After anti-feminist and misogynist descriptions of women, one would not expect the Knitting women to appear in the novella. As Marlow introduced us with his aunt and stated his opinion about the world of women, something that has made Conrad less anti-feminist were the Knitting women. Unlike the aunt, these two women whom Marlow meets in the office of the Company and who, unlike the aunt, are quite familiar with the world to which Marlow travels and his destiny there. When Marlow meets them, they are busy: “knitting black wool.”³⁴ “Conrad made these characters symbolic. The black is a reminder of death whereas knitting is associated with fate: The women, like the Greek Fate Sisters, were knitting the dark destiny of Marlow and others, as it were.”³⁵ He moved from this illusionary world to the world of colonialism. Again at this important moment when he is about to leave the Company and start the trip, his aunt appears as a sign that now he leaves this ideal world and goes to the place where ideal is far from that. Even though women were familiar with the colonial enterprise, they were never allowed to be part of it. Apart from the Knitting women, we could not see any other female character to be a part of the colonial enterprise. As Nandi Saikat remarks: “a perceptive reader can feel that they, at least, are quite acquainted with the colonial enterprise, though they have no role to play in it. Conrad reduces them to mere symbols.”³⁶ Marlow’s aunt even helped him to become Company’s employee, which is a proof that women had an insight into the economic affairs. However, a small number of them were part of it.

Apart from being men's property, women were also seen by men as objects for sexual pleasure. As Anbaran has pointed out: “looking deep into the philosophy of partnership or marriage and putting aside the conventional convincing mottos of men towards this phenomenon, nearly all men confess that one of the main reasons for marriage or partnership

³⁴HOD, op. cit., p. 33.

³⁵R. Ray, op. cit., p. 145.

³⁶Nandi Saikat, *Conrad's Treatment of Women in Heart of Darkness, The Criterion - An International Journal in English*, Vol. 5, Maharashtra, 2014, p. 113, accessed 1 April 2019.
https://www.academia.edu/6708785/Conrads_Treatment_of_Women_in_Heart_of_Darkness

is sex or pleasure.”³⁷ While men see marriage as a means of meeting the needs, for women, marriage has a completely different purpose. It is believed by Stephanie Hodgson-Wright that:

“Women had no recourse to law for equality of pay and conditions, and married women had no legal independence from their husbands. This latter condition was exacerbated by the fact that it was very difficult for women to achieve economic independence, and so marriage was one of the few ways in which women could secure their future.”³⁸

There was no equality in the sense that women were paid the same as men. Hereby, women could achieve some economic security only through marriage. The mere fact that you do not have your own money to meet basic human needs, such as the need for food, clothing, a roof over your head, has given the right to men to manipulate women and manage their lives. While women sought safety through marriage, men saw it as a way of satisfying their sexual needs, so that women were viewed more as sexual objects rather than capable human beings. Marlow's sexual desire towards Kurtz's African mistress is clearly seen through his description of her:

“And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman. She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.”³⁹

African mistress presented Kurtz's colonial life. After Kurtz's departure, she no longer had the security and the man who could protect her. Through a rich description, Conrad presented the typical view of women as objects for sexual pleasure, and a colonized black woman deprived of her right to go with Kurtz as his mistress. She was left alone just as the Intended, to live with her illusion about Kurtz, just as the Intended one continued to live. On the one side, there

³⁷Fakhimi F. Anbaran, *Multiple Perspectives Toward Women in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Feministic Overview*, *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, Vol. 66, SciPress Ltd, Switzerland, 2016, p. 131.

³⁸H. S. Wright, *Early Feminism*, in: Sarah Gamble, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 4.

³⁹HOD, op. cit., p. 126.

were Western women in their world of illusion, while on the other side were colonized women deprived of any right to speak for themselves, left alone on the shore, at the margin of 'subaltern'. Conrad portrayed women as either evil or good. In the patriarchal society, where rules were set by men, a good woman was an angel who acted according to the rules of society. For Marlow, African mistress was not an angel since he remarked: "she put out her hands, shouted something, and all that wild mob took up the shout in a roaring chorus of articulated, rapid, breathless utterance."⁴⁰ She is rather presented as a maleficent character, firstly because she belonged to this Dark Continent, secondly, because, as a woman, she was not allowed to be stronger than any man, to have importance in Kurtz's life and his decision making; or to make the other men feel inferior. The Russian boy was scared of her and that is why she no longer could be seen as an angel woman but rather as a harsh one. Whenever a woman goes out of her framework, that is considered as an act of rebellion. She is no longer the angel, but the mad woman who should be locked. In the male-oriented society men could not allow their inferiority, and that is why in many cases they suppressed women making them the Subaltern since it was the only way to maintain the male domination.

4.0 Gender stratification in *Things Fall Apart* - The historical background

Like it or not, every society determines and imposes its own construction of gender on its people. It formulates its own image of gender, that is to say, how men and women will behave. Since the creation of the world the human community functioned, primarily, as a male-oriented society. Women were subjected to inhumane treatment, suppression, and humiliation. While one could think that was not the case in developed civilizations like the British or French, after deeper analysis it may be visible how women all around the world were dealing with the same or similar difficulties.

For many years, literature written by the white authors presented the culture and people of the Dark Continent as undeveloped, helpless and ineffective. The idea of African women as unproductive and useless circled all around the world. The contrast between the situation that was presented to the world and the actual happenings in Africa can be understood only when both sides of the story are presented to the readers. What is surprising is that African women had more rights than presented in the literature of that period. Only after the first native

⁴⁰HOD, op. cit., p. 140.

African writers had emerged on the literary scene, the unknown traits about African culture and the position of women were presented to the world. As Achebe pointed out:

“The last four or five hundred years of European contact with Africa produced a body of literature that presented Africa in a very bad light and Africans in very lurid terms. The reason for this had to do with the need to justify the slave trade and slavery.... This continued until the Africans themselves, in the middle of the twentieth century, took into their own hands the telling of their story.”⁴¹

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* offers to the readers the other side of the story. His critique of *The Heart of Darkness* gave us a better insight into the the viewpoint of the oppressed and colonized people(s).

The colonization process itself did nothing good to the people of Africa. Imposing on the culture of colonizers meant disrespecting the culture of the colonized people. “Hence, by showing how the European power destroyed an already well-functioning society, Achebe criticized “the European civilizing mission” and conveys to the reader that a violation does not necessarily have to be violent”.⁴² He also emphasized in one of his interviews for the Atlantic that what authors such as Conrad and Cary did, that is, the way they portrayed African characters and their culture, is inexcusable:

“It was difficult to excuse and justify, and so the steps that were taken to justify it were rather extreme. You had people saying, for instance, that these people weren't really human, they're not like us. Or, that the slave trade was in fact a good thing for them, because the alternative to it was more brutal by far.”⁴³

Many reasons which were used to justify happenings in Africa provoked Achebe to write another in a series of essays with which he wished to restore dignity of the African people and to emphasize the beauty of their culture which was destroyed by the arrival of the colonizer. As he noted in his influential essay published in the early 1960s:

“African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is

⁴¹Chinua Achebe, *Quotes*, BrainyQuote.com, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chinua_achebe_463982. Accessed 26 March, 2019.

⁴²Mia Söllwänder, *How Achebe Included the African People in the Story of Imperialism - A Comparison of Things Fall Apart and Heart of Darkness*, English Studies Centre of Language and Literature, Lund University, Sweden, 2012, p. 8.

⁴³ News participation , *An African Voice*, Chinua Achebe's interview on *The Atlantic*, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/08/an-african-voice/306020/> , accessed on 26 October, 2019.

this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this they must regain now.”⁴⁴

Apart from Achebe, there were other authors who tried to give the voice to African people and criticize the way they were presented to the world. For many African intellectuals in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, to be colonized, as Walter Rodney further pointed out: “meant a great intensification of exploitation within Africa – to a level much higher than that previously in existence under communalism or feudal-type African societies.”⁴⁵

The image of the helpless, dependent, unproductive African people, especially women, was presented to the world, mainly through literature. Achebe was an African author whose works tried to change that image, even though the position of women stayed the same, unchanged. It is clear that Achebe presented Igbo society as patriarchal. In all respects, men were more powerful than women, and they were the one who provided for the family and set the rules. Many critics view Achebe as the anti-feminist, since throughout the novel the protagonist Okonkwo treated women badly, and with the lack of respect. He also admitted during one communal ceremony, which goes in support of the view that women did not have as much rights as they should and deserve to have, that: “It was clear from the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders”.⁴⁶ In discussing the status of women in pre-colonial and post-colonial periods in an Igbo tribe, taking into account the elements presented in *Things Fall Apart* we can see that pre-colonial women had more freedom than their colonized descendants, male domination, nonetheless, was an integral part of the societies they live in. Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* further explains that African societies were patriarchal, however, many were ‘flexible’, which meant that women in these societies had much more rights and even important functions. Nevertheless, it was Colonialism that imposed this ‘rigid European gender definitions’.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi, *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, p. 8.

⁴⁵Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, London and Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar-Es-Salaam, 1973, Transcript from 6th reprint, 1983, p. 270.

⁴⁶Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Penguin, London, 2006, p. 85. All the references to *Things Fall Apart* hereinafter will be referred to as: TFA.

⁴⁷Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 14.

4.1 Pre-colonial Women in Igbo society

Women of the pre-colonial Igbo tribe had rights that seemed quite unexpected, even today. With the superficial reading of the novel, we could see the minor roles of women, like preparing the dish for the husband, looking after children or working on the farm. Such roles are clearly presented in Achebe's novel, but there is much more than the superficiality that this novel requires in order to be understood in terms of women's rights and roles they had as part of the society they lived in.

Certain rights were clearly presented in *Things Fall Apart*, and need no explanation, while some of them could be understood with a profound analysis. Such are the rights that women have had in the Igbo society, and which held the gender balance more than was presented to the world's readers.

In his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe says: "There was a man in the Okonkwo's village named Nwakibie who had three huge storehouses to preserve grains and had nine wives and thirty children. This was the man for whom Okonkwo initially worked to earn his first yam seeds."⁴⁸ Polygamy was part of Igbo culture where the wealthy men could marry more than one wife. This was clearly presented in *Things Fall Apart* where Okonkwo, the protagonist, had three wives who lived in a perpetual fear from him. In order to understand his treatment of women, Achebe described Okonkwo's past to prompt his readers to think whether all men from the tribe had had difficult personal history and treated women in the same way.

Struggle, hard work, and ambition were prized Igbo values. Achebe makes the struggle part of the plot. On an individual level, Okonkwo wants to distance himself from what he perceives as his father's weaknesses. Okonkwo, consequently, wishes to become a warrior, a strong man in the traditional Igbo value system. As Bloom further remarks:

"For Okonkwo, Christianity is the antithesis of the masculine values of the Igbo. He believes that these masculine values have preserved the Igbo throughout their history. The feminine values introduced by colonial rule, then, appear to threaten the very existence of the Igbo people."⁴⁹

⁴⁸TFA, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴⁹Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, Infobase Publishing, New York, 2010, p. 143.

Okonkwo's strong wish to promote masculine values which represented Igbo culture, over the weak feminine values which were promoted by the colonizers were his way of fighting against the colonizer's imposed power. His position in the tribe, which at that moment was greatly threatened by the colonizers who wanted to have complete authority over the colonized people had provoked Okonkwo and made him even more aggressive.

As Okonkwo had wished to be far more successful than his father Unoka, he always feared that someone will identify him with his father. His harsh temper and attitude towards the women was one of the ways to present himself as a total opposite to his father. Okonkwo had three wives, who lived in three different huts. His first wife was unnamed, and with her Okonkwo had two children, Nwoye and Obiageli. His second wife was Ekwefi who had left her first husband for Okonkwo, mother of Ezinma, and the youngest wife was Ojiugo, the mother of Nkechi. Since he was economically sound, a well-to-do male, Okonkwo could afford for each wife a separate hut in which they cooked food for the children and Okonkwo, as well as ancillary facilities for livestock and other necessities.

Okonkwo's fear to show fondness towards his wives and children was because of his father Unoka, who had left him without inheritance. Unoka's soft and artistic nature did not allow him to toil in hard labor, and when we add his practice of borrowing money that he, in the most cases, did not give back, it is not surprising that Okonkwo stayed without inheritance. He had to advance in life on his own. As Bloom remarks: "he embraces traditional Igbo values, appreciating the value of the yam, accepting the significance of wrestling and hard work. Moreover, he pays his debts and keeps his wife and children in line with a strong hand."⁵⁰

Okonkwo's wives, like all other women in society, had certain roles that they had to fulfill. Some women did not see their role in society as oppression but rather as complementary to men. They had responsibilities for raising the children, farming, and other agricultural activities. As Okonkwo noted: "His mother and sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women's crops, like coco-yams, beans, and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop."⁵¹ From this quote and as we have seen so far, although women played important roles in society, these same roles were not considered as significant as those of a man. Men represented the strength and knowledge of how to produce the most important agricultural

⁵⁰Bloom, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁵¹TFA, *op. cit.*, p. 22-23.

products for society, while the role of women was to assist and participate in less significant agricultural activities. However, given the other role of women as educators of children, we can still say that this role is equally important, because if a woman fails to properly raise a boy or girl then their society remains without successful members who will continue the tradition of Igbo society.

With the arrival of the colonizer, a new government arrived, which sought to change the way of life of the colonized people. This was also related to administrative changes, that is, the way a colonized society should function under the colonizer's government. Igbo society was also one of the colonized societies that did not want to change its administrative structure, culture, that is, lifestyle. What is surprising is that women as much as men fought for the survival of old Igbo customs, rights and culture that they did not want to give up at any cost. This has led to another in a series of women's protests against the women's oppression. The Igbo, too, experienced a female-headed riot against the new British colonial practices. Before we mention this riot, it is important to present the pre-colonial political and administrative arrangement of the Igbo nation. There were no specialized offices or elders from the tribe who ruled or imposed their rules over the other tribe members. Disputes at all the levels were settled by group discussions in which both men and women participated. Titles were an important part of Igbo culture. The only way to get the title was to be hard-working, determined, generous and a skillful warrior. This means that women, as well as men, could have the title. No rule forbade women to partake in consultations or to work on getting their title, however, just a few older women would be called to participate in consultations, or would get the highest titles. That is why women organized their own gatherings, during which they discussed different issues:

“Since Igbo society was patrilocal and villages were exogamous, adult women resident in a village would almost all be wives, and others were divorced, or widowed "daughters of the village", who had returned home to live. Women generally attended age-set gatherings (*ogbo*) in their natal villages, performed various ritual functions, and helped to settle disputes among their ‘brothers’.”⁵²

One of the most important gatherings of women was known as *mikiri*. *Mikiri* was a village-wide gathering of adult women and one of the most important functions of it was trade. As Leith-Rossa has pointed out:

⁵² M. M. Green, *Igbo Village Affairs*, Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., London, 1947, p. 217-32, cited in Judith Van Allen, *Sitting on a Man: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women*, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., London, 1972, p. 169, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/484197>. Accessed 11 April, 2019.

“The gatherings which performed the major role in self-rule among women and which articulated women's interests as opposed to those of men were the village-wide gatherings of all adult women resident in a village which under colonialism came to be called ‘*mikiri*’ or ‘*mitiri*’.”⁵³

Achebe also emphasized that one of the most important women's organizations was Omu society. That organization gave women positions which allowed them to punish people who disrupt market peace:

“No man could dare to provoke the anger of the appointment holder woman. Such women would normally cover their face with a mask because these were confidential councils supported by the Oracles. No one dared to contend their judgment, or try to disclose the identity of the individual behind the mask, even if someone happened to recognize the voice or the walk of that masked person.”⁵⁴

Important functions performed by women in a pre-colonial Igbo society say that they were quite flexible regarding the gender roles. Along with men, women were also allowed to perform jobs that were quite significant. Women on such positions were respected and none of the men dared to look at them disrespectfully. Through gatherings and women's organizations, women have fought for their rights. Apart from these gatherings, women used boycotts and strikes to fight for their position in society. Van Allen gave an example of a strike where women had refused to stop trading at the distant markets, and he further explained:

“When the men of a village decided that the women should stop trading at the more distant markets from which they did not return until late at night, because the men feared that the women were having sexual relations with men in those towns. The women, however, refused to comply since the opportunity to buy in one market and sell in another was basic to profit-making. Threats of collective retaliation were enough to make the men capitulate.”⁵⁵

Having this power, it was difficult for Igbo women to adjust to the British colonial rule which weakened their traditional autonomy. “As colonial power was established in what the British perceived as a situation of ‘ordered anarchy’, Igboland was divided into Native Court Areas,

⁵³Sylvia Leith-Rossa, *African Women*, Faber and Faber, London, 1939, p. 106-08, cited in Van Allen op. cit. p. 169. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/484197>. Accessed 11 April, 2019.

⁵⁴TFA, op. cit., p. 66.

⁵⁵Van Allen, op. cit., p. 170.

which violated the autonomy of villages by lumping many unrelated villages into each court area.”⁵⁶

The administrative changes that were monumental for the people of Nigeria had made them feel desperate. One of the most important strikes which the women organized against the colonial rule was The Aba Women’s Revolt. As Van Allen further explains:

“It was, for example, the first major revolt of its type that was organized and led by rural women of Owerri and Calabar Provinces, which had contained a population of two million people, located in a total landmass of about 6,000 square miles.”⁵⁷

The revolt took place as a protest against the colonial interference which had imposed tax paying for women, which was not the practice in Igbo society. With the emergence of numerous female heroes and activists, The Abba Women’s Revolt clearly showed that women were capable enough of taking action against the colonial men who imposed these rules. Primarily, this revolt showed that pre-colonial Nigerian women had more freedom and rights before the British colonial rule, meaning that Colonialism strengthened women suppression and made them even more marginalized, the Subaltern. In discussing the status of women in pre-colonial and post-colonial periods, Stratton also argues that:

“Pre-colonial women had more freedom than their colonized descendants, male domination nonetheless an integral part of the societies they live in. Under Colonialism, African women were subject to interlocking forms of oppression: to the racism of Colonialism and to indigenous and foreign structures of male domination.”⁵⁸

Although the society in which Igbo women lived was patriarchal, it was also quite flexible. Women performed important functions, gathered, participated in trade, organized strikes and the like. Women in the pre-colonial Igbo society were oppressed, but not as much as when the colonizers came. Not only did women become marginalized, but also men who, more than ever, had to fight for their basic human rights just like women.

⁵⁶Daryll Forde, *Justice and Judgment among the Southern Ibo under Colonial Rule*, unpublished paper prepared for Interdisciplinary Colloquium in African Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, pp. 9-13, cited in Van Allen, op. cit., p. 172.

⁵⁷Judith Van Allen, *Aba Riots' or Igbo `Women's War? Ideology, Stratification, and Invisibility of Women*, in: F.C. Steady, ed., *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, Schenkman Publication Co, Cambridge, 1981, p. 60.

⁵⁸Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 7.

4.2 The role of women in *Things Fall Apart*

The role of women in society has changed tremendously over the years. From the submissive status of women to electing the first female president of the country there was a long path. It took a long period of time, a lot of strikes, women activists for human rights, to have the situation that is present today. However, the struggle continues.

The very analysis of the role of women in the *Things Fall Apart* requires careful reading. Only with an attitude free of any prejudice against the colonized or colonizers we can properly understand why and how Achebe presented the role of woman specifically in Igbo society. At first glance the women in TFA may seem to be an oppressed group with little power and this characterization is true to some extent. Achebe, in his first novel, portrays the position of women before colonization, but also gives hints to the changes that happened during the colonization.

The protagonist Okonkwo had three wives. Polygamy was a custom of Igbo people which was justified with the fact that they needed a lot of children to work in the field. Okonkwo first had to accumulate enough wealth in order to marry three times and provide huts, food, and other necessities for each wife and their children:

“Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo’s fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father’s failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title.”⁵⁹

Okonkwo saw his father as cowardly and weak. This made him develop characteristics of a brave, hard-working, but also a violent person. In a village where manliness and bravery were crucial, showing love and fondness towards his wives would make him weak and cowardly. Okonkwo is a tragic hero with a tragic flaw, whose whole life was dominated by the fear of

⁵⁹TFA, op. cit., p. 10.

failure and weakness. Even in his childhood, he was taunted by the other children who called his father *agbala*. This is one of the first hints where Achebe shows to the readers that the weakness and fondness were characteristics ascribed to women, while bravery and sagacity to the men. Through the whole novel, we can see how Okonkwo, in order to distance himself from the past and his father, showed no mercy towards his wives, but even towards the other people. The clearest example in the narrative that showed Okonkwo's obsession with manliness was the killing of Ikemefuna, who was like a son to him. After that act, he started to question himself and felt guilty. "When did you become a shivering old woman... you, who are known in all the nine villages for your valor in war? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed."⁶⁰ For Okonkwo it is a stigma to question oneself or to regret something. That was normal for women. When one of the wives did the smallest thing wrong, she would be beaten, and none would dare to interfere. For example, when Okonkwo asked his senior wife to look after a boy Ikemefuna, and when she asked about the time of his stay with them, he shouted at her and ordered not to ask about what he had said:

"He belongs to the clan : he told her , so look after him.

"Is he staying a long with us, she asked.

"Do what you are told woman ."⁶¹

Instead of a wife, Okonkwo called her woman, meaning that all women need to do what they were told, anything out of that framework was not acceptable. Okonkwo would beat his wives for different reasons. On one occasion, Okonkwo's youngest wife had gone to plait her hair at her friend's house, and therefore she could not return early enough to cook the afternoon meal. Okonkwo was so angry that he had beaten her heavily when she returned. On another occasion, Okonkwo beat his second wife because she had removed some leaves from the banana tree to wrap food. So, when Okonkwo realized that the banana tree was trimmed, he inquired the reason, and upon finding out the reason, he got furious and gave a heavy beating to the second wife and left her and her only daughter weeping. Nobody dared to interfere. On other occasion, during the annual festival, the same wife who was beaten for removing the banana leaves gave some sarcastic remarks about Okonkwo's gun. Okonkwo heard this remark and became furious. "Therefore, he picked up the loaded gun and fired at her wife who was saved by chance."⁶² This clearly shows Okonkwo's inhumane behavior towards his

⁶⁰TFA, op. cit., p. 59-64.

⁶¹TFA, op. cit., p. 18.

⁶²TFA, op. cit., p. 29.

wives. They were not the only ones who Okonkwo regularly beat. His oldest son Nwoye was constantly punished by his father, because he saw in the boy the same weakness which his own father possessed.

However, not all the men in the tribe were like Okonkwo. His friend Obierika was the total opposite. Even though he was wealthy and the man of a title, he was caring and pleasant. Obierika tried to show Okonkwo that manliness does not mean male domination. This is one of the conversations they had:

“It was always said that Ndulue and Ozoemena had one mind,” said Obierika. “I remember when I was a young boy there was a song about them. He could not do anything without telling her.”

“I did not know that,” said Okonkwo. “I thought he was a strong man in his youth.”

“He was indeed,” said Ofoedu.

Okonkwo shook his head doubtfully.

“He led Umuofia to war in those days,” said Obierika.⁶³

There is no evidence that Obierika or the other members of the tribe treated women badly. On many occasions, Obierika, and later, the uncle Uchendu advised Okonkwo to treat his family in a kind and decent manner. When Okonkwo was sent into exile, he went to his mother's land. The special status of the mother created a maxim ‘Mother is Supreme’. Achebe further elaborated this term through the statement of Okonkwo's uncle:

“A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there are sorrow, bitterness, and disaster in life, the man finds refuge in the motherland. Even if the mother has passed away, the refugees are bound to be looked after by the maternal relatives and provided with a suitable shelter to honor the respect of the deceased mother.”⁶⁴

Women had an important role in the upbringing of children. Mother is the one who is full of understanding and who will accept you no matter what you did. This was the first role of women, first to look after their children, then to educate them. A child's failure was considered to be the mother's failure, since she was responsible for child's upbringing. Achebe further clarified this role of women as children's educators, housewives and assistants of their husbands in farming:

⁶³TFA, op. cit., p. 62.

⁶⁴TFA, op. cit., p. 98.

“The women used to successfully play the role of primary educator for their children, their caretaker and also assist their husbands in farming like a good companion and not like a hired labor. As an educator, the wives would teach the children through storytelling. They tell them moral stories to improve their manners and behavior, educate them, socialize with them, raise their curiosity to the social values and relationships and human conditions and human values. Okonkwo’s wives would also do this practice on a regular basis.”⁶⁵

Okonkwo's second wife Ekwefi fulfilled her obligations as all the other women. She had to look after her only daughter Ezinma, to prepare meals for her husband and to work on the field. However, she possessed characteristics which distinguished her from Okonkwo's other two wives. Ekwefi was a village beauty who left her first husband and married Okonkwo according to her own will. This says a lot about her bravery and shows that women, in fact, could make their own decisions. Ekwefi, like the two other wives, was not saved from Okonkwo's anger. She was beaten for every act that was not according to Okonkwo's rules, but that did not stop her to react when she felt that there was the need for that. She was the only wife who dared to knock on Okonkwo's hut. “He knew it must be Ekwefi, of his three wives. Ekwefi was the only one who would have the audacity to bang on his door.”⁶⁶ Despite giving birth to ten children, the only child she had was Enzinma, to whom Okonkwo was fond of, but tried to hide it from the others since showing emotions was a feminine characteristic. As Okonkwo preferred Enzinma, whose character was shaped by her mother, this fact singles out Ekwefi and gives her special role in their hut, as well as in the tribe.

By attributing her the features, which are, by definition, quite masculine as bravery, wisdom, and tenacity, Achebe clearly gave hints that in the tribe there were women who were courageous, however, they were unable to speak up for themselves. “It is true indeed, my dear friend. I cannot yet find a mouth with which to tell the story”.⁶⁷ This sentence was uttered by Ekwefi when one woman asked her about the incident with Okonkwo when he had almost killed her with his gun, only because she had made the remark about guns which never fired. Many small acts of Ekwefi showed her resistance and exemplified characteristics which were typically masculine. When the priestess Chelo came one night to take Enzinma to Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, both Okonkwo and Ekwefi were terrified. That did not stop Ekwefi to follow Chelo, even though she was advised not to do that. “Though ‘terror seized her’, ‘her heart beat violently,’”⁶⁸ as she chased the priest in the dark night. Without thinking

⁶⁵TFA, op. cit., p. 70.

⁶⁶TFA, op. cit., p. 59.

⁶⁷TFA, op. cit., p. 35.

⁶⁸TFA, op. cit., p. 91.

and asking anyone, she ran after the priestess. The warrior-like characteristics show that women could have the strength and boldness of a man, and Ekwefi was an example of that. From the beginning of the novel, she liked things which Okonkwo liked, and were typically masculine, like wrestling. This reveals sportsmanship in her and makes her even more masculine than many men in the tribe are. Enzinma was similar in that regard to her mother. Being shaped by her mother's bravery, boldness, education, and beauty, she was Okonkwo's favorite child. At one point Okonkwo stated: "If Ezinma had been a boy I would have been happier. She has the right spirit."⁶⁹ Again, Achebe gave hints that women can have the right spirit and build their reputation as the other men in the tribe did. Chielo surely had that reputation. She was a pleasant woman, who was friendly and hard working. She was a widow who looked after the two of her children. When not in the service of Agbala, she is just an ordinary woman, but when possessed by Agbala she turns into a different person. Ekwefi and Chielo were good friends. As Achebe further explained their relation and the way Chielo behaved in the ordinary life:

"The only woman with whom they shared with and talked was known as Chielo. She was the main oracle of hills and caves and was the priestess of Agbala. They were so fond of each other that they shared the same place in the market place. Chielo was so fond of Ezinma that she could send her mother some beancakes to take them to her. Hence anyone who would come across Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe that she was the same person who used to prophesy when the spirit of Agbala was upon her."⁷⁰

Ekwefi and Chielo weren't the only women who stood out in Igbo society. What is interesting is the fact that their most important goddess was Ani, another female figure who had an important influence on all Igbo residents. Religious life is one of the most important segments in every society. Persons who are on the religious positions are highly respected. Their word is appreciated and orders obeyed. In the novel, as well, we can see that religion was an integral part of people's life. The way how Ani was described we will see from the next paragraph:

"She was highly respected in the tribe, and nobody, even Okonkwo, dared to act disrespectfully to her. Women had an important role in the religious life of the tribe. The tribe's main Goddess was Ani. Ani is described as a superior part in the life of the people than any other goddess. She was basically observed as the master judge of conduct and morality. Moreover, she was seen to be in great

⁶⁹TFA, op. cit., p. 8.17.

⁷⁰TFA, op. cit., p. 6.17.

connections with the already departed ancestors of the clan whose bodies had already been buried and dedicated to the earth.”⁷¹

With the woman as the main goddess, the power of women was deeply rooted in the tribe. When Okonkwo broke the Peace of Ani, Ezeani immediately proclaimed: “The evil you have one can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish.”⁷² This speaks a lot about the significance of this goddess and the amount of respect the residents had towards her.

Despite the unappreciated treatment of women by Okonkwo, female characters in the novel like Agbala, Chielo, Ekwefi, Enzinma and Ani, show that they were present in the Igbo society and that their presence was more than important. The way the role of woman is presented in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

5.0 *Wide Sargasso Sea* - The historical background

According to Jeffrey Weeks, the society and its structures have a significant influence over the formation of a person.⁷³ The society we live in affects the way we behave and feel. When rejected from society people can feel more aggressive in a way that makes it harder to have contacts with people, friendships and love, which can affect on everyone's confidence, strength and mood. Being unaccepted means constantly seeking a place or a person who will accept us as we are. As Homi K. Bhaba further explained in *The Location of Culture*:

“Images produced also produce other images; fictional subjects based on concrete ones also become the basis for the characterization of “real people”. The common process of identifying, in identity terms, someone as something is necessarily “the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.”⁷⁴

Wide Sargasso Sea is a story about the struggle, replicated through female characters like Antoinette or Christophine who through their lives were trying to find a comfort zone and shelter. The main character in the novel is seeking for the words to express her feelings, acts to show her rage, and love to settle her soul. Perhaps the question that feminist critics should

⁷¹TFA, op. cit., p. 36.

⁷²TFA, op. cit., p. 30.

⁷³Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality*, Routledge, New York, 2016, p.55.

⁷⁴Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics, London, 1994, p. 45.

ask themselves is not: “Is there a woman in this text?” but rather: “Is there a text in this woman?”⁷⁵

5.1 Creolization

Before we start dealing with the way a woman is portrayed in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, it is important to define certain terms, such as the term creolization itself. Mixing cultures actually implies the very process of creolization. In the context of Caribbean, and as Cristina-Georgiana Voicu further elaborates in *Caribbean Cultural Creolization*, the social change that took place in Caribbean, by blending different cultures of colonizers and colonized, was the reason for the creation of identities who were trying to imitate and thereby become part of the stratum of society which in that moment had power, and those were certainly the colonizers:

“Magical mimesis on the colonial frontier points to a basic empowering effect to the imitation function-either through the production of similes by mimicry or by contiguity and contact (a ‘creole continuum’) – by which a copy partakes the power of the original.”⁷⁶

Stereotypes of a different kind were associated with them, especially by the colonizers. “Due to the white colonizers’ inability to fully understand Creole lifestyle and culture, they create harmful stereotypes and rank those of mixed races as inferior to themselves.”⁷⁷ How Antoinetta handled these prejudices, and how the role of the woman in this novel was actually presented, will be seen hereinafter.

5.2 Hybridity

Hybridity is another term important for understanding of the novel itself and the reasons why certain characters from the novel were not accepted in society. One of Homi K. Bhaba’s most influential contributions to postcolonial theory is his notion of hybridity. He further discusses it in his study *The Location of Culture*: “how are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)?”⁷⁸ This notion is used to help readers to understand and interpret what it means to be a migrant, not

⁷⁵ Mary Jacobus, *Is There a Woman in This Text?*, *In Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism*, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1986, p.109.

⁷⁶ Cristina-Georgiana Voicu, *Caribbean Cultural Creolization*, Elsevier Ltd, Vol. 149, Lumen, 2014, p. 999, accessed 24 October, 2019, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814050447>.

⁷⁷ Stephanie Coartney, *Identity Crisis for the Creole Woman: A Search for Self in Wide Sargasso Sea*, McKendree University, Issue 10, 2008, p. 1, accessed 24 October, 2019, <https://www.mckendree.edu/academics/scholars/issue10/coartney.htm>

⁷⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 2.

belonging to one place only, and especially, what it means to be a hybrid. Hybrids live: “border lives’ on the margins of different nations, in-between contrary homelands.”⁷⁹ Being a hybrid means being different. Because of their specific appearance and diversity, such people have a problem to be accepted in society because their appearance and behavior may differ from the majority.

5.3 The role of women in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Historically, women have been fettered in a way that they could not have the same rights as men. This notion is still present nowadays in the contemporary world and that is why we always need to look back, to revise our history and to make females present in it as much as possible. According to Rich, such a revision is nothing but the “act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival”.⁸⁰ As Edward Said further pointed out: “history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silence and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated”.⁸¹ The colonial history of women was harsh. Power was the leader of the dominant discourse regime. It required much more effort for women to become part of it. When female authors like Rhys appeared on the literary scene, the voices of many women were just beginning to be heard.

“When the second husband gave her Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre*, it inspired her to re-tell the story of Jane Eyre through the character of Antoinette. Rhys had initially called the novel *The First Mrs. Rochester* which she later changed to *Wide Sargasso Sea*.”⁸² Rhys invites the reader to re-examine the details of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and fill the gaps in the text from Antoinette Cosway’s point of view. Laura Fish in her article entitled *Book of a Lifetime*:

⁷⁹ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p. 217, cited in Vilja Högström, *Antoinette – A Hybrid Without a Home, Hybridity in Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea*, C-essayEnglish, 2009, p. 5. Accessed 1 September 2019. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:218975/fulltext01.pdf>

⁸⁰ Adrienne Rich, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision*, vol. 34, National Council of Teachers of English, 1972, p.18, accessed 27 April, 2019.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/375215?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

⁸¹ Edward Said, AZQuotes, Wind and Fly LTD, 2019. <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/359974>, accessed 02, September 2019.

⁸² Jean Rhys, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., Encyclopedia.com. Accessed 1 September 2019. <<https://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

Wide Sargasso Sea, by Jean Rhys, praises the way Rhys gave readers the opportunity to hear the other side of the story and said: “there is always another side, always”.⁸³

Wide Sargasso Sea consists of three parts: the first and the third are narrated by Antoinette, and to a smaller extent by Grace Pool, while the second part has been narrated by Rochester, Antoinette's husband. “*Wide Sargasso Sea* takes its name from a part of the Atlantic Ocean, sometimes known as ‘the Doldrums’, that slave ships traversed to reach the Caribbean.”⁸⁴ Conflicts based on racial identity and social status shaped the life of Antoinette and the other characters who struggled to find their place in the world.

The protagonist of the first and second part of the novel is Antoinette Cosway, who from a lively woman, turned into a monster by the male-oriented society. After the ‘Emancipation in Jamaica’ and the end of their involuntary servitude, former slaves could not accept people who had anything with the slave trade and among them was certainly Antoinette whose father was a former slave trader. Nevertheless, as much as she was not accepted by blacks, she was not accepted by whites either. As a Creole, she got excluded from society. When her mother's second husband provided Antoinette with a dowry of thirty thousand pounds, she became a catch for males, who did not care for her and were just power-hungry. This is what connected Antoinette's husband with her and therefore the problems which later arose.

Wide Sargasso Sea opens with the following words: “They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks”.⁸⁵ As a young Creole woman Antoinette was everything but a right woman for a husband who had a different vision of the perfect wife for himself. The hybrid, neither black nor white, can only be a slave in the world of white husband. The man who married her and who had driven her into madness, presented the idea of imperialism and its impact on the Other. His ignorance and carelessness turned Antoinette into Bertha, the Mad Woman in the Attic, the embodiment of all women suffering in post-colonial countries.

⁸³ Laura Fish, *Book Of A Lifetime: Wide Sargasso Sea*, by Jean Rhys, *The Independent*, 2008. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/book-of-a-lifetime-wide-sargasso-sea-by-jean-rhys-876227.html>. Accessed 10 April, 2019.

⁸⁴ *Revising the Caribbean canon: Caribbean women writers take their stories beyond Anglocentric traditions*, The Free Library, Cox, Matthews & Associates, 2007. Accessed 02 September 2019. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Revising+the+Caribbean+canon%3a+Caribbean+women+writers+take+their...-a0167026802>

⁸⁵ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Penguin London, 1968, p. 1. *Wide Sargasso Sea* hereinafter will be referred to as: WSS.

As we said before, after the release of slaves, Antoinette could not be happy in her home, the Coulibri house: "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches".⁸⁶ Since Antoinetta was the daughter of a former slave trader surrounded by blacks, she could never make friends. None of them wanted to be her friend, knowing her father's past. The exception was Tia, who for some unknown reason was Antoinette's friend. The only friend she had in the childhood, the only person Antoinette was fond of, and who at last betrayed her. In the world overwhelmed with hatred Antoinette's desire to communicate was suppressed:

"We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her...when I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it...I looked at her and I saw her face crumble as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass."⁸⁷

The looking glass is mentioned a couple of times throughout the novel, and it is significant since it represents Antoinette's seeking of her own identity. Gilbert and Gubar wrote on this topic in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Women Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, pointing out that women in 'the looking glass' could find everything they didn't have in real life:

"Whenever they are away from the mirror, they become restless and start to lose their voices as in the case of Red Room, where Jane was locked in, and Antoinette's imprisonment in the attic without a mirror".⁸⁸ A person's identity is formed and comes into shape through what psychoanalysts call the "mirror stage."⁸⁹

And as Culler further elaborated regarding this process of identity building:

"A person acquires his identity by how he or she is treated, by the names they are assigned or which are given to them and also by the way a person is positioned in society. The subject can feel divided and lost if messages that are given to him or her clash and contradict each other."⁹⁰

Antoinette in this "mirror stage" felt insecure and helpless. She did not have anyone to look up to on. Love, attention, and friendship, were far away from her. The state of helplessness

⁸⁶WSS, op. cit., p. 10.

⁸⁷WSS, op. cit., p. 27.

⁸⁸ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman In The Attic*, Yale University Press, Second Edition , 2000, p. 362.

⁸⁹Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford UP Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 116, cited in Helena Ryan Sabri, *Conflicts in a Marriage Antoinette and Mr. Rochester in Wide Sargasso Sea*, C-essay English Literature, 2011, p. 10.

⁹⁰Culler, op. cit., p. 119, cited in Sabri, op. cit., p. 10.

continued when she got married to Rochester. Besides the loss of everything in the material sense, she was assigned another name, which clearly marginalized her even further. Rochester's attitude had a tremendous impact on her behavior, as the colonizers discourse shaped the colonized identity, but in a negative sense.

Apart from the looking glass and the question of identity, the subject of Gilbert and Gubar's criticism was the question of female madness presented in the literature of that period. Women were represented either as devils or as angels in the house. If a woman behaved according to the norms determined mainly by men then she was an angel in the house. If that behavior was different from that determined by society then that woman would be excluded considering her insane, that is, a devil in the house. In relation to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Gilbert and Gubar state that: women are creatures and monsters if they “[do not] behave like angels”.⁹¹

Many women, who had been labeled mad were often hospitalized or confined in asylums for various symptoms. These ‘symptoms’ included: being stubborn, talented, wanting to follow dreams, showing anger, showing aggression or hearing voices. Ostracized by society and their husbands, women with such symptoms often stopped eating, became uninterested in sexual activities, and even committed suicide.

Antoinette's deviation from the Victorian society, her skin color and origin, immediately made her a victim of this popular male-oriented European thought. She was considered insane, or psychotic, by her husband, and would be considered as insane, or psychotic, by any other men, firstly because she is a female who was quite stubborn, showed aggression, and stated her opinions, and, secondly, because she was a hybrid. This exemplifies the constant European impact and legacy on non- European people and diverse cultures.

From her childhood, Antoinette struggled to find her proper place in society. This was a difficult task, because, apart from the tensions between the white settlers and black servants, the relationship between Antoinette and her mother drove her to spend most of the time alone, in the lively nature around her Coulibri house. However, she was not left alone to lead a peaceful life, since the race and class tensions between the white settlers and black servants caused the burning of the Coulibri house. The most memorable thing from that event was Tia. After the burning of Antoinette's house, it is not clear whether Tia hit Antoinette in the head

⁹¹Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2000, p. 53.

with the stone, or someone else did it, while they were trying to rescue themselves. It looks like Rhys gave the readers space to make their own judgment about it.

Antoinette's hybridity was unacceptable by both, the white and black people. After that terrible attack she moved away not only from her home and the only 'friend' Tia, but once more realized that her future was not going to be easy. With Antoinette's past overwhelmed with the pain, isolation, and suffering, the narration is shifted in the second part of the novel. The narrator, an Englishman, narrates the second part of it. He became Antoinette's husband, but he was also portrayed as the representative of English Imperialism, which resembled its impact on the Other; in this case, Antoinette who ended up imprisoned in the attic in England.

Many critics wrote that Rhys had not achieved her goal of giving the voice back to *Mad Woman in the Attic*, in this case, Antoinette. Ciolkowski points out that: "In spite of Rhys's celebrated promise to give Brontë's silent madwoman a chance to tell her story---Antoinette persists in replicating many of the basic elements of the English imperial narratives she scorns."⁹² However, she clearly succeeded in giving Antoinette's side of the story which was not present in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. For the first time reader could read about her past, struggles she went through, and her fight for identity.

What will be the focus now is the way Rhys named the characters in the novel, which in some ways deviates from the way Bronte named her characters. As Peter Muste highlights: "Rhys uses several characters from Jane Eyre, but Antoinette/Bertha and The Man/Rochester are the only ones she chooses to re-name. In doing so, she signals that the relationship between these two characters is central to her commentary on Brontë's work".⁹³ The narrator of the second part of the novel and Antoinette's future husband was not named. First, he is "Other" to Antoinette, as Bertha is "Other" to both Jane and Rochester. Peter Muste further explained that: "His namelessness suggests that he is not really a character either – he is the embodiment of the English colonial project, its preoccupation with power, money, and control, and its fear of an unwillingness to try to understand what is foreign to it."⁹⁴ From the beginning, their marriage did not indicate any form of a bright future. The Man was power-hungry, while

⁹²Laura E. Ciolkowski, *Navigating the 'Wide Sargasso Sea': Colonial history, English fiction, and British empire*, Literature Resource Center, 1997, p. 346.

<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-20575591/navigating-the-wide-sargasso-sea-colonial-history>. Accessed 16 April, 2019.

⁹³ Peter Muste, *Authorial Obeah and Naming in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea*, Routledge, London, 2017, p. 2. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00144940.2017.1312247>. Accessed 18 April, 2019.

⁹⁴Muste, op. cit., p. 3.

Antoinette was seeking for the security through the marriage with him although the idea of arranged marriage freaks her out:

“The morning before the wedding Richard Mason burst into my room at the Fraisers’ as I was finishing my first cup of coffee.
“She won’t go through with it!”
“Won’t go through with what?”
“She won’t marry you.”
“But why?”
“She doesn’t say why.”
“She must have some reason. I’ve been arguing with the little fool for an hour.”⁹⁵

Her stepfather and future husband considered Antoinette a little fool because she didn't want to marry an opportunity like him. What does not fit into this situation is that Antoinette was an opportunity because she was the one who was rich at that moment. However, because of the Creole origin her future husband did not take her seriously and had no desire to truly get to know Antoinette and all the qualities she possessed. While Antoinette sought in him a security she never had, her fear of marrying him actually indicated that she still felt that marriage with him had no future. Unfortunately, as a woman, without anyone's support, she had to consent to this marriage and all that followed. As an Englishman, Antoinette’s husband was not prepared for the mix of culture and tradition. He was unable to see the beauty of diversity, he was ignorant of everything non-English:

“You are safe, I'd say. She'd like that — to be told 'you are safe.' Or I'd touch her face gently and touch tears. Tears — nothing! Words — less than nothing. “I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did.”⁹⁶

Everything around him was not real. He felt that he can do whatever he wants since that was not England, it was Jamaica, savage and wild. In the same way, he acted towards his wife: “one afternoon the sight of a dress which she'd left lying on her bedroom floor made me breathless and savage with desire.”⁹⁷ This exemplifies the situation in every colonized country, colonial and post-colonial period, where the colonizers saw the colonized subjects as undeveloped and uneducated savages. The Man wanted a British wife who belonged to him, and over whom he had the power. He felt scared and uneasy because he was displaced from his homeland. On the opposite, Antoinette was in her natural environment, which made him

⁹⁵WSS, op. cit., p. 47.

⁹⁶WSS, op. cit., p. 93.

⁹⁷WSS, op. cit., p. 93.

even more insecure and estranged from his wife. This is clearly shown by Rhys in the novel, where we see the feelings of the husband about Antoinette and nature⁹⁸: “I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know ... Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness”.⁹⁹ Since she was a stranger to her husband, the only person on whom she could rely on was her black servant Christophine. She was the only one who stayed with Antoinette and her mother Annette. As Antoinette recalled, her mother said that they would die if Christophine did not stay with them after the death of her father. Due to the loss of her voice, she runs to Christophine, the only person she believed. Christophine embodied strength, experience, and honesty. She was the one who advised Antoinette to leave her husband. She knew that, in the end, he would destroy her. As a black and uneducated woman and servant, she was far smarter than one could have expected. Rhys gave an example that those women despite their ignorance were wise, strong and independent. “Woman must have spunks to live in this wicked world,” and, “All women, all colors, 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.”¹⁰⁰ However, when Antoinette married Rochester, her wealth became his, which made her even more powerless. In one scene, Antoinette runs to Christophine for an advice on how to make Mr. Rochester pay attention to her and make him love her again. Christophine advises Antoinette to leave Mr. Rochester and start all over again, “You ask me a hard thing, I tell you a hard thing, pack up and go”.¹⁰¹ Antoinette answered: “He will not come after me. And you must understand I am not rich now, I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him...that is the English law”.¹⁰² Rochester did not like Christophine, especially after he realized that his wife and her servant formed an alliance against him. After Antoinette's visit to Christophine, where Christophine made her a ‘love potion’ to make Rochester love her again, he realized that something was wrong: “I woke up in the dark after dreaming that I was buried alive, and when I awoke, the feelings of suffocation persisted.”¹⁰³ For the first time his domination in the marriage was destabilized. This feeling of insecurity terrified him, because he did not want to lose the control over Antoinette. That is why, he tried many times to convince Antoinette that Christophine was bad for her: “Christophine is an evil woman and you know it as well as I do, she won’t stay

⁹⁸Hogstrom, op. cit., p. 112.

⁹⁹WSS, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁰⁰WSS, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁰¹WSS, op. cit., p. 68.

¹⁰²WSS, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁰³WSS, op. cit., p. 87.

here very much longer”.¹⁰⁴ Rochester's total domination resembled the colonizers' attitude towards the colonized, any other option was excluded, especially the interference of the colonial Other, in this case Christophine.

Antoinette, lost in the world, in the middle, between the black and white, trying to adapt to either one, was not sure whether to leave her husband or to stay. She did not belong anywhere, and the only thing which connected her with this man was her money, and the only thing that could make her secure in this harsh world was he. As she said: “And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who am I and where is my country and where do I belong and why was even born at all.”¹⁰⁵ Her husband was full of stereotypes towards everything about her: her family, home, country, and herself. This denotes the position of Creole women in society. They were always in the lower position than their husbands, despite their education, wealth or power.

Christer Petley has pointed out that the main reasons which caused the creation of these stereotypes were colonial planters's 'ostentatious' manners in England and slavery, which was the reason for the appearance of mixed-race children and a universal distaste for the sexual activities of the white planters with the black and mulatto slaves.¹⁰⁶ When Antoinette came to England she found herself at an even greater margin than she was in her own country. The stereotypes she was surrounded by, such as being women with low morals or not being sufficiently educated, made her stay there even more difficult. Then she realized once again that wherever she came, she would never be accepted because just as blacks had reasons to hate her, whites also found theirs.

In the third part of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, England become Antoinette's home and prison. The Part Three emphasizes the voiceless Creole woman under the control of her husband. When they came to England, Antoinette's identity was taken away. The Man changed her name and started to call her Bertha. This happened even earlier in the novel, when Antoinette's husband whenever disappointed by her, whenever reminded of her identity, ascribed to her the stereotyped Creole identity. Giving another name to a person means attributing that person's characteristics to the person to whom we have changed the name, in this case Antoinetta/Bertha. Below we will see one of the first situations in which Antoinette's husband

¹⁰⁴WSS, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁰⁵WSS, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁰⁶Christer Petley, *Home' and 'this Country': Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder*, *Atlantic Studies*, 6, no. 1, London, 2009, p. 47.

called her Bertha, wanting to attribute to her Bertha's physical and psychic characteristics, in short, a stereotypical view of the creole woman during that period. Whenever he called her Bertha instead of Antoinette, he reminded her of her Creole origin, her worthlessness and madness. "Following Antoinette's visit to Christophine, she returns home and lays bare a number of her secrets in an attempt to engage him emotionally. After she finishes, there is the following exchange"¹⁰⁷:

"After a long time I heard her say as if she were talking to herself, 'I have said all I want to say. I have tried to make you understand. But nothing has changed.' She laughed.

'Don't laugh like that Bertha.'

'My name is not Bertha; why do you call me Bertha?'

'Because it is a name I'm particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha.'¹⁰⁸

'Certainly I will, my dear Bertha.'

'Not Bertha tonight,' she said.

'Of course, on this of all nights, you must be Bertha'

'As you wish,' she said.'¹⁰⁹

Antoinette's appearance and behavior were not as of the English women. Chambers remarked, "The white females of the West Indies are generally rather of a more slender form than the European women."¹¹⁰ Chambers also wrote more precisely about their appearance: "Their complexion, which they are peculiarly careful to preserve, is either a pure white or brunette, with but little or none of the bloom of the rose, which, to a stranger, has rather a sickly appearance at first, though that impression gradually wore off."¹¹¹ Antoinette's husband was not used to women like Antoinette. Her behavior, appearance and even laughter were different from the women in England, by whom he, like other colonizers, measured the beauty and 'proper' behavior of a woman. Her husband could not accept the fact that Antoinette was so different from the other English women. Being full of prejudice he had to tame her.

In addition to Bertha, Antoinette was also called by other names. "Daniel, in his letter to Antoinette's husband"¹¹² combining "Antoinette" and "Antoinetta" with "Marionette" and "Marionetta," suggested another facet of the identity he wishes to project onto her; that of a puppet whose actions are dictated by him. When the Man informed Antoinette he had a letter

¹⁰⁷Muste, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁰⁸WSS, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁰⁹WSS, op. cit., p. 82.

¹¹⁰William & Robert Chambers, *Character of West Indian Females, Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, Edinburgh, 1838, p. 24, cited in Chloe Aubra Northrop, *White Creole Women In The British West Indies: From Stereotype To Caricature*, University of North Texas, North Texas, 2010, p. 64.

¹¹¹Chambers, op. cit., p. 208 cited in Northrop op. cit., p. 64.

¹¹²WSS, op. cit., p. 57.

from “a man who calls himself Daniel Conway,” she says: “He has no right to that name. His real name if he has one, is Daniel Boyd.”¹¹³ This again tells that a name can bring great power but also great ruin. Based on your first and last name, people can deduce your origin and how much wealth you have but also discriminate or make you feel less valuable, as Daniel did by calling Antoinette Marionette. In order to defend herself, Antoinette reports to The Man the reasons for her current state, her mother's past, her whole childhood. Talking about her mother's current condition and what led to it made her sad but at the same time very angry. Rochester interprets her rage as madness inherited from her mother. Apart from labeling her as a mad woman, he also made her morally mad. Daniel Cosway's accusations, her sexual behavior in the bedroom, outbursts of anger, her unusual conduct from the typical Victorian woman, made Rochester move with Antoinette to England. This movement for Antoinette was the change of one form of slavery to another. He diagnosed her as insane and imprisoned her in the attic. In the room where she was locked, there was no mirror for her to look at herself. Without her reflection, Antoinette even forgot who she was, and how she used to look like. Without any connection with the outside world, she lost track of time and place, even her identity. In fact, she is completely “voiceless.” No one takes her seriously and no one listens to her. The only person with whom Antoinette had contact was Grace Pool. She was her assigned caretaker at Thornfield Hall, almost a jailor, who was paid excessively well for her discretion. She even takes the short narrative in the third part of the book. As we got a chance to hear Antoinette's side of the story, the same opportunity was given to Grace Pool. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane mistakes Grace for Antoinette. So, she was in a way a double of Antoinette, who in *Wide Sargasso Sea* got a chance to explain why she accepted to spend her time locked in a room, with a lunatic. It was not by mere accident that she took the short time in the narration, to send a strong message as a white servant, and a woman:

“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— MrsEff 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.”¹¹⁴

When Grace Pool asserts that world can be a cruel place for a woman, this emphasizes the fact that no matter the place of your birth, skin color, wealth, if you are a woman, it is the

¹¹³WSS, op. cit., p. 77.

¹¹⁴WSS, op. cit., p. 157.

cruelty that surrounds you, the cruelty by the ones who were supposed to protect them. There was another male figure who failed to protect Antoinette, and that was her stepbrother. Rochester left her with nothing when he made her leave the Caribbean. The only way she had to fight was to write a letter to her stepbrother in which she wrote: “Dear Richard please take me away from this place where I am dying because it so cold and dark”.¹¹⁵ Her brother came to visit her but he couldn't do anything to help her because she was now a married woman. The married woman was ruled by a husband who made decisions for her and further interference by relatives was not allowed. As we can see in the novel: “cannot interfere legally between [Antoinette] and [her] husband”.¹¹⁶ Her stepbrother's attitude makes him another oppressive male figure in the narrative, and, in a desperate response, Antoinette tries to attack him with a knife. It is clear that she no longer wants male figures to rule her life.

In the last moments of her life Antoinette remembered her mother, the Coco parrot, and the fire in their house at Coulibri: “the parrot was called Coco, a green parrot. He didn't talk very well...After Mr. Mason clipped his wings he grew very bad tempered...”¹¹⁷ After marrying Mr. Mason, Annette felt like her wings were cut off, she was no longer well because his attitude towards her was full of disrespect and derision. “You have lived alone far too long, Annette. You imagine enmity which doesn't exist”, he laughs dismissively.¹¹⁸ However, she was not discouraged despite her ‘clipped wings’, and continued to: “speak about going away...Persistently. Angrily.”¹¹⁹ Regardless of the situation Antoinette was in, she still wanted to find a solution that would save her from her husband's prison. Left without anyone, thinking about her life she was reconnecting with the home at Coulibri and when it was set on fire. She decided to do the same with her husband's house, which, like her previous home, was a prison for her and her mother. In doing so, she got rid of that prison and the wings her husband cut were open again: “when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri”.¹²⁰ As Paula Anderson adds about Antoinette's final act: “is no act of despair – but a final aggressive act of assertion, reaffirmation, and self-liberation”.¹²¹ Antoinette's act of self-liberation along with Rhys's power of denying Rochester a name, made Antoinette a tragic heroine, while on the other side, despite his power, Rochester did not have even a name.

¹¹⁵WSS, op. cit., p. 164.

¹¹⁶WSS, op. cit., p. 165.

¹¹⁷WSS, op. cit., p. 41.

¹¹⁸WSS, op. cit. p. 32.

¹¹⁹WSS, op. cit., p. 33.

¹²⁰WSS, op. cit., p. 33.

¹²¹Paula Grace Andreson, *Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea: The Other Side/Both Sides Now*, spec. issue of *Caribbean Quarterly*, 1982, p.60.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00086495.1982.11672003>. Accessed 9 April, 2019.

6.0 RESEARCH ON THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE OF CONRAD, ACHEBE, RHYS, AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN, THEN AND TODAY

6.1 Methodology

This section will present highschool students' opinions about the gender balance in Bosnian society and their view about the role of women in the novel that was presented to them. In this part of the research, the overall of 56 highschool students participated. The data was collected by having three different classes with three groups of students. To each group was presented one novel which included discussion and filling of the questionnaire at the end of the lesson. Before the lesson, students were prepared for it in a way that their regular teachers had informed them about some basic terms regarding post-colonial literature and the novel that we were dealing with in this paper. The survey was taken from *Teaching Things Fall Apart in Wisconsin- A Resource Guide for Educators* and *Secondary solutions- Things Fall Apart*. Students were asked to engage in discussion about the novel, to give their opinions about female characters from the novel and the way the author presented them, the context in which it was written, was it helpful to them, were they able to feel empathic towards the suppressed women all around the world, and whether they notice women harassment in their environment. After the end of the discussion, students were asked to complete the questionnaire that consisted of 10 questions related to the role of women. Each group dealt with a different novel. What connects them are the first five questions from the questionnaire related to their overall opinion about the role of women in the society and their view of different cultures to which women from the novel belonged. In the first five questions, 6-point scale (1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- Somewhat disagree, 4- somewhat agree, 5- Agree, 6- strongly agree) was used. The last five questions were open-ended questions related to the way the women were presented in each novel and the role that was ascribed to them by the author. The survey is available in Appendices no.1 and 2 of this paper.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Countless studies have been done about the role of women in the novels *Things Fall Apart*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In this particular study it was attempted to involve the side of the „Other“, in this case, women who were marginalized and presented the Subaltern of the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial period, and even today. In the first part of the study, critics who reacted against this biological and sexual difference were presented, who recognized negligence of women in literature written by men. As a response, many feminist activists appeared to fight against women's subjection. We defined the patriarchal system with which women all around the world were faced. Gender-based violence reflected the system of social stratification and differentiation based on sex, whereas the tradition and culture determined the role of women as inferior. That position was reflected in the work of Joseph Conrad and his novel *Heart of Darkness*. We provided the reactions of the critics who wrote in response to this novel. Many of them considered it as anti-feminist and Conrad as a misogynist, whereas the other half justified the way Conrad presented Female Subaltern in the novel. Then we focused on the female characters from the novel, and the way Conrad had narrated them to the readers, with the support of many other works which helped us to understand the way he presented them. The civilizing missions of English Imperialism lead to exploitation, devastation, and acculturation of colonized nations. Female characters were not given the voice, making them part of the Subaltern, not the European civilizing mission. The most marginalized was the Female Subaltern, where on both sides of – colonizer and colonized- we have the women who were oppressed, degraded, powerless. Western women lived in their world of illusion in which they nurtured their husband and children and idealized the world around them. On the other side, African women were in a similar position, left alone on the shore, like Kurtz's African mistress, who never spoke even a word. In the next part of the study, we focused on Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe wrote this novel in response to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. For so many years years literature written by the white authors presented the culture and people of the Dark Continent as underdeveloped, helpless, and ineffective. The images of African women as unproductive and useless circled around the world. Only when indigenous African authors appeared, the other side of the story was presented to the readers. We reflected on many critics who wrote in response to Achebe's novel supporting his aim or justifying Conrad's. Many critics view Achebe as the anti-feminist because of women's near-invisibility in the novel, whereas, on the other hand, there were the

other authors who tried to give the voice to African people and criticize the way they were presented to the world. We presented the role of women in pre-colonial Igbo society. When discerning the role of women in *Things Fall Apart* it requires a careful reading of the novel. At first glance, the women in *TFA* may seem to be an oppressed group with little power and this characterization is true to some extent. However, women did have some important roles in society besides housework and farming. Then we focused on Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where Rhys tried to find words for the female experience which was left out of the discourse of patriarchy. As a Creole woman, Antoinette is caught between the English imperialist image of how she should have adopted “the white” part of her being and the black Jamaican identity, becoming an outsider and stranger to everyone. The stereotyping of people based on their skin color is still present and one of the main problems currently happening in the world. Labeling people based on skin color led to Antoinette's final destruction as she could not find her place either among whites or blacks.

Removing women from history has meant depriving them of their true identity. Male-oriented discourse, as presented in these three books, did not allow women to speak up, what placed them at the margin of society, regardless of their skin color, place of living, or wealth. Despite of Rhys's attempt to give the voice back to Antoinette, or Achebe's indications of the importance of women in precolonial Igbo society, or Conrad's Knitting women, the obvious male dominance made out of women puppets who were supposed to act as the angles in the house, nurturers of their husbands, and by that were the Subaltern of society, regardless of their background. Rage was interpreted as madness, every act of rebellion harshly punished by the husbands, which lead to self-destruction and unhappy life of the most female characters from all three books. What makes Rhys different from Conrad and Achebe is her attempt to break the image of a woman as an angel in the house. She gave Antoinette the power to express her anger and feelings, which showed that women do not need to live in these extremes of angel or devil. However, left without support Antoinette, as any other female character from these three books, was unable to fight back. Self-destruction was the only message she could send, to make people realize that racism and patriarchy are destroying lives.

The female characters in *Heart of Darkness* were not given a voice, which could be said to be a deprivation of their humanity. In this sense, Achebe is right in his claim that *Heart of Darkness* celebrates the dehumanization of the African people. However, having in mind the ways these two authors presented the female characters we can say that both of them showed

to their readers the level of dehumanization of women that was present in society back then. When comparing *Things Fall Apart*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, we can say that authors presented female characters as rather mute creatures and angels/devils in the house. The mute creature is Kurtz's African mistress, who as the Other, could not follow Kurtz on his way back to England or Okonkwo's wives, who whenever beaten remained silent and did not dare to say a word against their husband. The rebellion was a sign of madness, any confrontation insanity. However, what connects Conrad and Achebe is that they emphasized the importance of the comfort zone which women were for their husband and children. The comfort zone for Kurtz was his Intended. On the other side, Okonkwo's comfort zone was his mother's land, especially when he was sent into exile. Mother is the supreme person in every person's life, the mother is the one we run to when we are in trouble.

Despite the importance of women in society, and men's awareness of it, in these three books, women were inferior to men. This was especially seen through the way authors, Conrad, Achebe and Rhys, named female characters. The name is connected to a person's identity, and whenever Conrad did not ascribe a name to a female character like The Intended, Aunt, African mistress, Knitting women, he deprived them of their identity. And even though Achebe took a clear stance against Conrad's portrayal of African characters, he did not succeed to give back the voice, to both, men and especially women. He also failed to name Okonkwo's first wife and showed how male-oriented discourse controlled women and suppressed their voice. When Rhys through the character of Rochester ascribed another name to Antoinette - Bertha, it suggested how colonizers wanted to project another, quite a different imposed identity on women. The voice to the women could hardly be given back, and no matter of their importance in society, even today, women all around the world are facing similar problems. Only a few female characters from these three books are considered as the ones who can understand the world around them and state their opinions. Some of them are the Knitting women from *Heart of Darkness*, who worked in Company and knew to what kind of place was Marlow going to. However, they remained silent, what did not make Conrad less misogynist. Another character is Ekwefi from *Things Fall Apart*. Her acts, like leaving her first husband to marry for Okonkwo, or running after Chielo to see what is going to happen with her daughter Enzinma, testify about her bravery and show that women were smart and courageous enough to make their own decisions. Despite the unappreciated treatment by Okonkwo, women like Agbala, Chielo, Ekwefi, Enzinma, show that they were present in the Igbo society and that their presence was more than important. The Igbo women

were on the lower position in hierarchy than men, however, their roles in social, economic and family affairs make the gender balance among the pre-colonial Igbo people more present than in *Heart of Darkness* or *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Another female character who goes out of the ordinary presentation of women in novels is Christophine. Christophine advised Antoinette to leave her husband, telling her several times that a woman should have her own attitude and be able to defend herself. She also told her that men were useless and that she needed to take care of herself more. Christophine embodies the strength, experience, and honesty. Subalternity did not stop her to raise the voice, and even though Rhys wanted to give back the voice to Antoinette, in this sense it is Christophine who is the loudest and the voice of many women who live in a patriarchal society and were the Subaltern of it.

This paper presented a theoretical analysis of the main female characters from the novels, their role in the society, and tried to underline the importance of this topic, even today. The appropriate definitions of some basic terms were duly provided and the works of many critics who wrote in response to these novels presented as complementary to these theoretical assumptions. The most significant implication of this research is that it offered an insight into how the three groups of high school students reacted on these novels and the topic of the role of Female Subaltern in the novels as well as in our society. However, this research did not offer detailed examination, since we need larger groups of students in order to introduce them with the topic, to hear their opinions and to track their interest about these Post-colonial novels and the other. The clear suggestion for any future research is to include a larger number of respondents in order to ensure more valid and more comprehensive results. Another suggestion for further research is to include the concept of „Othering“ in our education. To introduce students with this concept and many others like „Hybridity“, „Subaltern“, and to analyze more thoroughly materials that are used for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence skills in the EFL classroom. This can be done through the novels mentioned above and many others.

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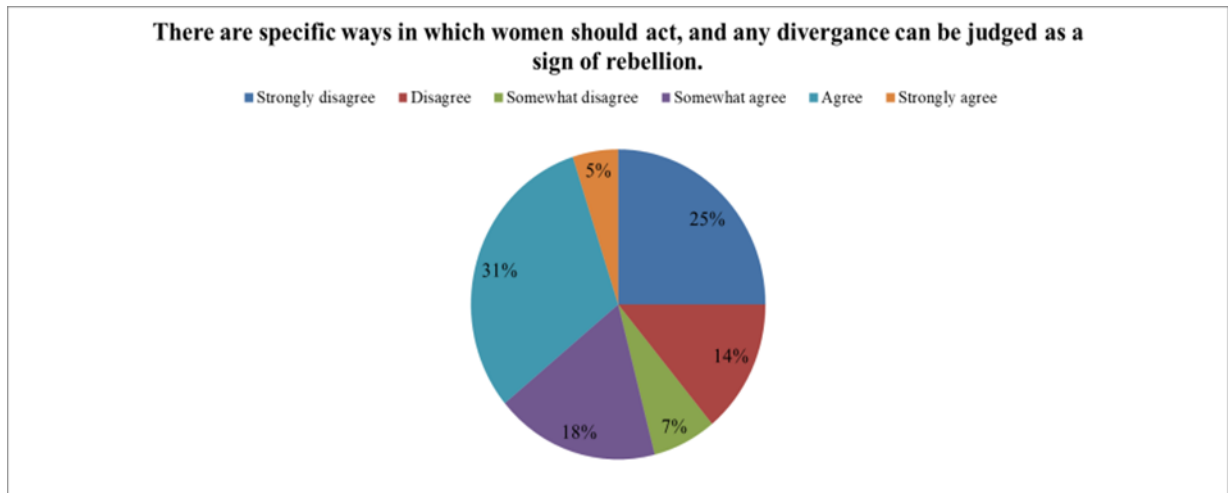
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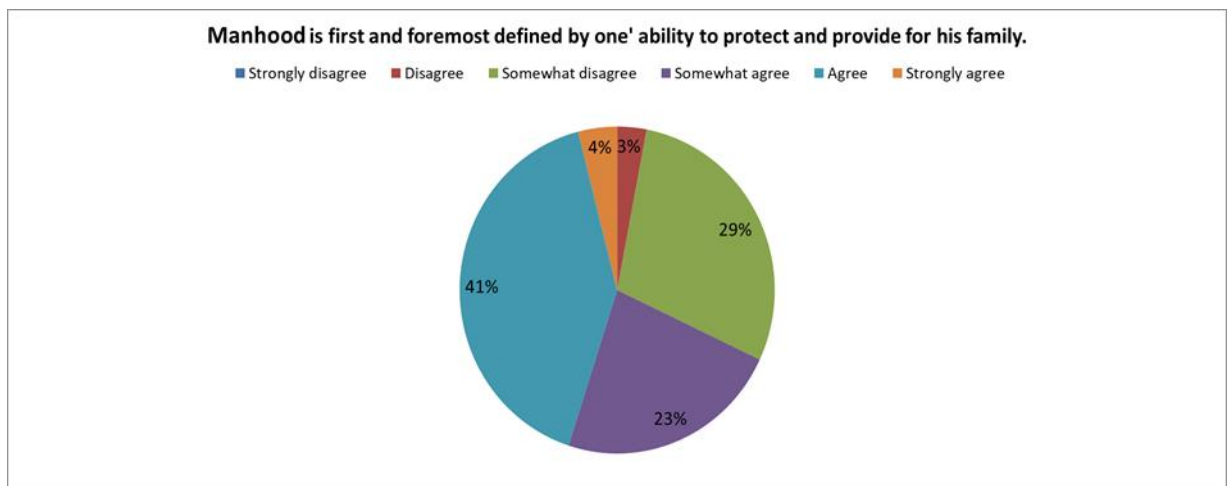
9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1

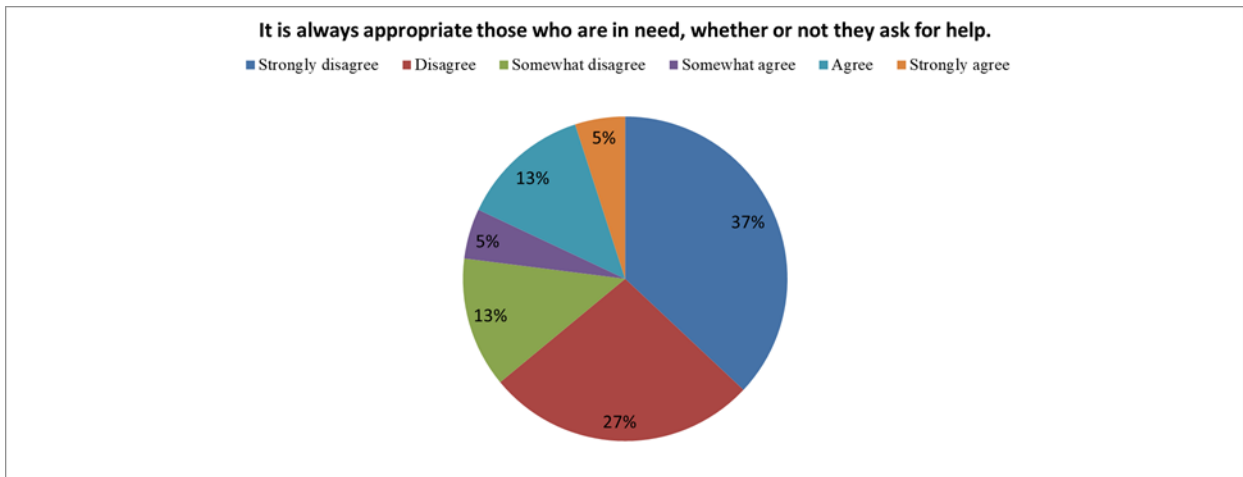
9.1.1. Result analysis



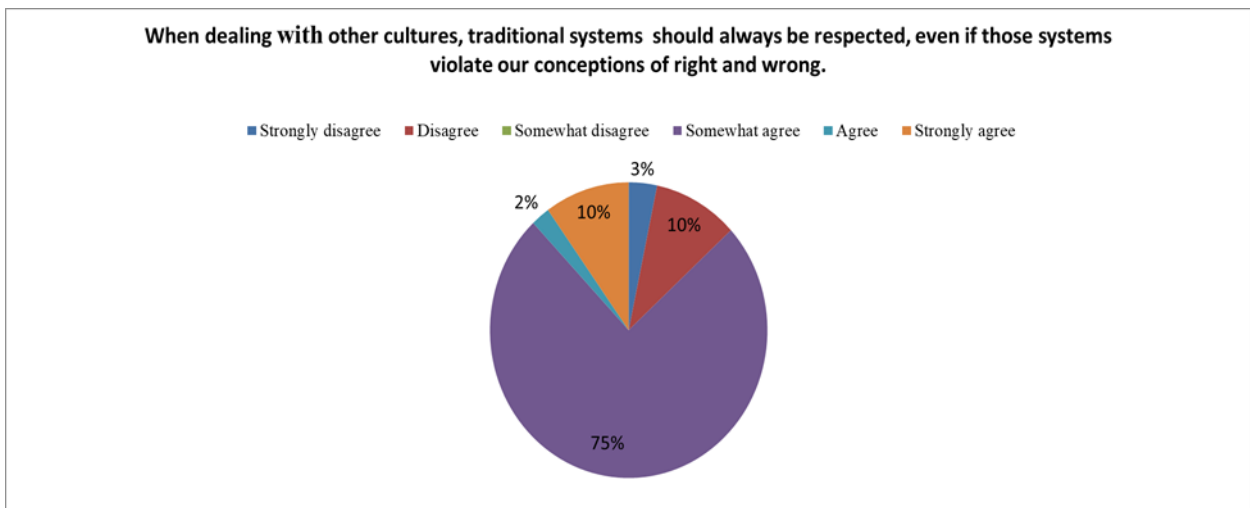
48% of the students agree and somewhat agree that there are specific ways in which women should act, and any divergence can be judged as a sign of rebellion, whereas 38% strongly disagree and disagree with it. A small number of students, 5% strongly agree while 7% somewhat disagree.



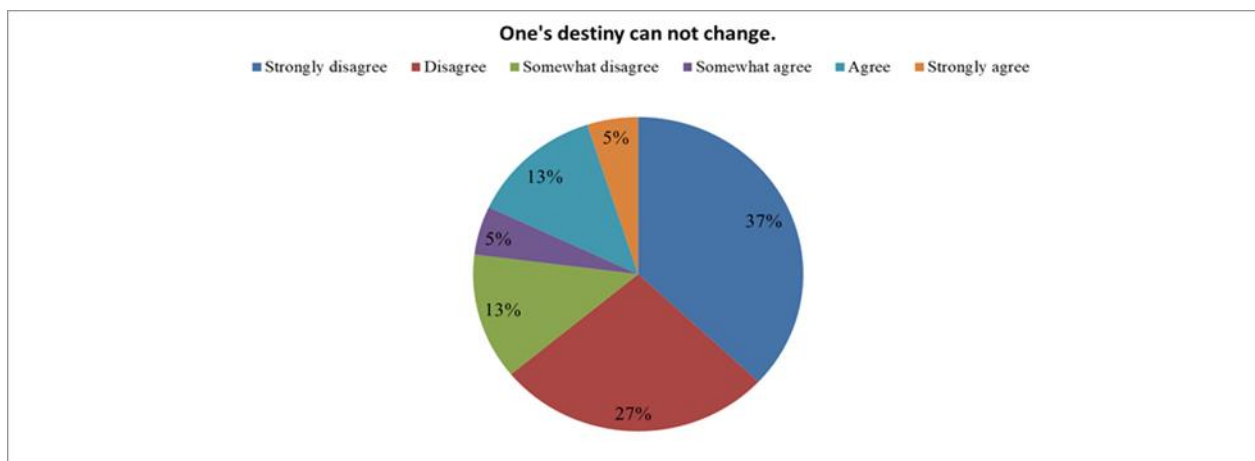
70% of the participants strongly disagree or somewhat disagree with this statement. Only a small percentage of them strongly agree, while 23% somewhat disagree that manhood is first and foremost defined by one's ability to protect and provide for his family.



64% of the students strongly disagree or disagree with this statement, while 18% of them strongly agree or agree that it is always appropriate to help those who are in need, whether or not they ask for help. 13% somewhat disagree, whereas 5% somewhat agree with this statement.



77% of the students somewhat agree or strongly agree that when dealing with other cultures, traditional systems should always be respected, even if those systems violate our conceptions of right and wrong. 9% of them somewhat disagree, whereas 9% disagree with this statement. The small percentage of the students agree or strongly disagree with this statement.



64% of the students strongly disagree or disagree that one's destiny can not change, whereas 13% somewhat disagree with this statement. 13% of the students agree, while the small percentage of them somewhat agree or strongly agree with the statement, 10% of them.

9.1.2. Discussion

Most of the respondents agree that there are specific ways in which women should act, and any divergence can be seen as a sign of rebellion. This shows that we still live in a patriarchal society in which men are superior, while women are in an inferior position. This needs to be a true inspiration for many teachers to work on this topic with their students and raise awareness about the oppressed position of women in our society. The development of students' positive attitudes towards others should be one of the teachers' aims in the EFL classroom. One of the ways to do that is the development of students' intercultural communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity as one of the main aims of teaching English as a foreign language. Learning about other cultures in English language classes helps learners to understand their own culture better. Teachers are the ones who need to address cultural issues in their EFL classrooms. This can be done through the use of videos, songs, articles, games and especially literature. In the particular case of this research, I had the chance to see the students who were opening the new horizons challenged with the literature that was new to them, at the same time dealing with the topics that are common for all human beings. Methods, techniques and activities which promote intercultural education are implemented in the process of learning and teaching English as a foreign language in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Still, implementation of such methods, techniques, and activities mainly depends on individual teachers.

As part of the research, we can conclude that the position of women improved as well, but still, there is a huge gender imbalance. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina moved from this inferior position, however, the oppression is still present in many respects:

“BiH has made progress in promoting gender equality through legal and institutional frameworks. However, women still face obstacles to achieving full political, economic, and social participation. The economic status of BiH women remains low, and women are largely absent from national and local decision-making bodies. In addition, nearly half of BiH women have experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, well above the global average of 35 percent, most likely from their domestic partners. Only 5 percent of BiH victims of gender-based violence turn to institutions for help. Institutions responsible for protecting them lack adequate training or proper referral mechanisms.”¹²²

That is why women in our society first need the support of their environment and then institutions. However, as a result of the study, we can conclude that most of the students disagree with the statement that it is always appropriate to help someone who is in need, whether or not he/she asks for help. Still, the present opinion is that domestic violence is a private thing. The result of that public opinion are women who are insecure to ask for help and endure the harassment. The development of intercultural communicative competences is beneficial for learners in various ways, taking from the other cultures what is good, being aware that certain things in ours are not so good and that they need to be changed is a huge step forward. TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers can play a crucial role not only in identifying but also in helping to transform L2 learners' identities and perhaps encouraging their involvement in classroom participation. At the very least, TESOL teachers can reflect on their own L2 learning experiences as well as their intercultural experiences and identity formation and then revisit their classroom teaching practices with these reflections in mind.¹²³ Research that would offer more detailed examination of individual ICC elements, such as Othering, gender-based violence or intercultural conflicts, should encompass teachers who recognize importance of intercultural approach to language

¹²² Fact Sheet: *Empowering Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, USAID, From The American People, <https://www.usaid.gov/bosnia/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-empowering-women-bosnia-and-herzegovina>, accessed 30 April, 2019.

¹²³ N. Hornberger, and S. Lee McKay, *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol, 2010, p. 35.

teaching and implement methods, activities and skills that promote development of ICC skills in their classroom as well as the inclusion of literature which can be an useful tool of ICC. One's destiny can be changed, for the bad or for the better. When we start to recognize the Other as different and not as inferior, better destinies will surround us. One of the most important links in that respect is education. As Islamovic and Blazevic stated:

“The education systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to be transformed, through the integration of intercultural components in the curricula which has to be unified. With regard to religious, ethnic and cultural diversity that is present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the question of establishing an intercultural, multilingual education model, which develops integration and democratic connectivity, promotes the tolerance, unity and understanding, stands the question of the survival of Bosnian society... It is essential that school systems and other institutions of education and culture, develop forms of work that will prevent exclusion, nationalism, anti-civilization and anti-democratic tendencies, and to promote democratic values, common life and cooperation.”¹²⁴

In conclusion, we can say that students still see males as the superior and providers for the family. Women are oppressed since the government lacks the refferal mechanism to protect them, whereas the environment ignores the domestic violence considering it as a private thing. Any act that is not done according to the rules of patriarchy is considered as a form of rebellion, which indicates that women in Bosnia as well as in the novels discussed above are far from the equality.

56 students participated in this research and the results of this study should not be generalized to other students. Large-scale research that would include a larger number of participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, would have shown more realistic results.

¹²⁴ E. Islamovic, and N. Blazevic, *The Prospects of Intercultural Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Epiphany*, Vol. 7, No.1, 2014, p. 58.

9.2.1. Open-ended questions related to *Things Fall Apart*

One segment of the study consisted of five open-ended questions related particularly to the novel that we were dealing with. The first group of 16 students got questions related to the novel *Things Fall Apart*. Some of the answers are provided below.

Q6: How does Okonkwo's relationship with male and female characters differ? Why?

This was the first open-ended question of the survey. Since most of them read the novel, they gave brief comments about it and provided various answers:

- "He is very abusive towards women and authoritative towards men."
- "I think that the time in which book was written speaks a lot about difference in behaviour between female and male characters. Okonkwo respected only male characters which is the best seen with the fact that his women were often beaten by him."
- "Okonkwo's difficult relationship with his father made him strict and ruthless. He is cruel and abusive towards his wives. He yells at his sons and disrespects the Gods. His treatment of women is the worst, he thinks they are weak and worthless. Ezinma is the only girl he respects, wishing she is the son, because he sees strenght in her."
- "He respects men, while he is very disrespectful towards women. He has insecurities because he doesn't want to end up like his father."
- "There is no respect towards the women, Okonkwo thinks that in order for a man to be considered a man, he must be able to control his women. He allowed wife beating. Women never play a major role in the Igbo tribe as men did. The role of the masculine gender is shown through the main character Okonkwo, and everything he opposes would be considered feminine."
- "Okonkwo is a men who thinks that men are the one who have the 'strong spirit'. Men shouldn't be emotional and sensitive. Women are those who are weaker because of their emotions and he doesn't respect them that much."

Q7: What role do women play in this novel? What is life like for Okonkwo's wives?

Most of the students disagreed with Okonkwo's treatment of women and their role in the Igbo society. However, many of them were suprised with some facts about the roles of women in

pre-colonial Igbo nation, as well with the fact that Okonkwo was an individual who treated bad his wives, while there are no other clues which indicate that the other tribe members treated badly their wives. Students provided different answers:

- "In this novel women play role of a group who don't have any rights and respect of their husbands. Also, this period in history is the time when patriarchy rule played 'game'. Life of Okonkwo's wives was very hard, they have to listen to what is being said to maintain peace in the family."

- "Women are no more than material to make children and to obey the men."

- "Women in Igbo culture are considered weaker than the men, men rule over their families including their wives. Women are relageted to more or less servile position, often living in fear of their husbands. Okonkwo's quick temper, allows him to be agressive at home."

- "Women most often played the role of the housewives in their tribe. They are not seen as strong warriors. Okonkwo's wives are often beaten and live in fear of him. His daughter Enzinma is the only exception because he respects her. Women are not treated as equal to men."

- "Women of the Igbo tribe are terribly mistreated and viewed as weak, they recieve no respect beside their role of a mother. However, we need to be careful in judgement, because Okonkwo is the only one who treats women badly."

Q8: Do you agree with Okonkwo's treatment of women?

- "I don't agree with his treatment of women. I think that both, male and female characters, should be treated in the same way, without any difference."

- "No, I don't, because he thinks that men need to be more respected and he is not aware that men wouldn't even exist without women."

- "Not at all. But I do understand that the way he thinks is because of his tribe. He was raised to believe those things, so the are right to them. He needs to be open-minded and willing to learn from his mistakes because it is not all his fault. There is no other way of thinking for him, and we all believe the same for our opinions."

- "No, women are humans just like men, and by that logic they should have the same tratement as men."

- "I don't agree with Okonkwo's treatment of women, because women is worth as much as men, she deserves love and attention rather than torture."

Q9: Were you a witness of negative treatment of women recently? If yes, how did you react and what is your opinion about it?

- "I have never been a witness of negative treatment of women. I have always been treated in a nice way."

- "There is always some judgement when it comes to women and men. I made no interest in it, because only fools believe women or men are less capable of something."

- "I have witnessed bad treatment of women in many forms. I usually react, but not always. I succeeded in defending the women and addressing the bad treatment."

- "The negative treatment is present all the time. Nothing gender based that I have noticed, except for a backlash ahead of the Captain Marvel premiere, other than that not, because people are mean and negative towards everyone all the time."

- "Yes, I did, I was ofended because men think that they are more intelligent than women."

Q10: Any other particular comment or opinion on the book or its author?

- "I really like the book and I think that is very interesting, because it gives us different perspective about traditional life in Africa."

- "I personally didn't like the book, but I agree that it is good for certain audience."

- "The book is an interesting work, totally new for us. It gives us a new perspective on the life and the other people who have different traditions, culture and opinions."

- "I liked the book, but it was hard to understand."

9.2.2. Discussion

Once we recognize the power of language, we will be the ones who are glorified, or at least with a chance to speak up for ourselves, and make women equal parts of history. As Achebe further elaborated:

There are different forms of dispossession, many, many ways in which people are deprived or subjected to all kinds of victimization—it doesn't have to be colonization. Once you allow yourself to identify with the people in a story, then you might begin to see yourself in that story even if on the surface it's far removed from your situation. This is what I try to tell my students: this is one great thing that literature can do — it can make us identify with situations and people far away. If it does that, it's a miracle. I tell my students, it's not difficult to identify with somebody like yourself, somebody next door who looks like you. What's more difficult is to identify with someone you don't see, who's very far away, who's a different color, who eats a different kind of food. When you begin to do that then literature is really performing its wonders.¹²⁵

Today, more than ever we need to build students empathy towards different. In a world that constantly changes, people migrate for different reasons- job, politics, pleasure, we need to have individuals who are ready to accept that diversity. I was interested in: firstly- how they will react on post-colonial literature and the work of author who is completely unknown to them, secondly- how they will accept the other side of the story that is presented to them, thirdly- do they think that sometimes they are unaware of their stereotyped approach towards something different, fourthly- did this novel changed anything about the world around them, fifthly- what do they think about gender roles and the position of women in *Things Fall Apart*, sixthly- is the gender imbalance still present in our society, seventhly- did they witness women harassment in their environment, and eighthly- did they like the novel. Most of the students noticed Okonkwo's different treatment of women, which had lead them to the conclusion that even today different treatment of women is present. Even though we live on different continents we share the same problems. All the students disagree with women's oppression, meaning that they see men and women as equal. They are strongly against Okonkwo's treatment of women, and most of them added that they would react if they notice women harassment in their environment. This novel made them think how the problems of women all around the world are universal, and how sometimes we are not aware of our stereotyped view of something different or far away. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was a new experience of reading which opened up many topics for discussion.

¹²⁵ News participation, *An African Voice: Chinua Achebe's Interview*, *The Atlantic*, 2018, <https://newsparticipation.com/an-african-voice-chinua-achebes-interview-on-the-atlantic/>, accessed 19 April, 2019.

9.3. Open-ended questions related to *Heart of Darkness*

Five open-ended questions related to the novel *Heart of Darkness*. The open-ended questions were filled by twenty high-school students from Goražde. Some of their answers are provided below.

Q6: How does the description of white and black women differ? Why?

- “Black women were described as savages, dark, ignorant, while the white women were described as total opposites of it.”
- “White women were in the same position as black, they did not have any rights. The only difference is in the description of them. Black women were described as savages, white women as flowers who live in their own world.”
- “I don't like the description of women in this novel. It is so bad to present women like that.”
- “I like the presentation of white women. African mistress is presented as beautiful, but savage. This is because white people always think that they are better than black people.”
- “Women's descriptions are so degrading. I did not like them, but in the past as today we have that kind of presentation of women.”

Q7: What role do women play in this novel?

- “They are housewives, feeding their children and husband, they don't have jobs as males.”
- “Women are mostly at homes, looking after children, preparing meals for the husband.”
- “Women are not involved in any kind of business. They are housewives.”
- “I was so sad because of the way women were presented. They were described as lunatics or persons unable to do anything except the housework.”
- “White women were mostly at home, waiting their husbands to come after the hard work, the same is with black women.”

Q8: Some female characters in the book don't seem to fit the mold according to protagonist's view? Who are they and why they are important to the text?

- "The Knitting women. They are the only women who are aware of the reality of Colonialism. They are important because they present the women who are capable of understanding."

- "The Knitting women, because Marlow was terrified of them. Women were not supposed to terrify anyone, but to give pleasure."

- "The only characters who don't fit the mold according to protagonist's view are the knitting women. They are scary and intelligent. In that period women were not considered as scary or so intelligent."

- "African mistress and Knitting women. The protagonist was scared of them, and in a way felt inferior. That is why he didn't like them."

- "The white Knitting women, and a little bit the women from Africa. Marlow did not like her because she had the rule over Kurtz, because she was a woman that was not understandable for Marlow."

- "Because of the description, I think the Knitting women. They worked, while other women did not."

Q9: What do these descriptions tell you about the role of gender?

- "They tell us about the bad position of women in the past."

- "I felt sorry for African woman, she was left alone, and also for white woman because she lived in illusion. I think that even today the situation is similar."

- "They tell us that men always try to be superior, women need to fight more for their rights."

- "I did not like the descriptions of women like they are crazy or lazy."

- "Women did not have a lot of rights, especially black women. Men think they are more important and intelligent, but they are not."

- "In the past women fought a lot for the rights we have today. I don't like the description of women in Heart of Darkness. I think it tells a lot about bad position of women in the past."

Q10: Were you a witness of negative treatment of women recently? If yes, how did you react and what is your opinion about it?

- “I watched one movie where a girl was negatively treated by her friends and she killed herself. It was based on a true story. After that I always try to be nice to my friends.”
- “No, but if I notice it, I would call the police.”
- “No, but I watch a lot of that on television, I can't believe that someone can hurt a woman, that is so bad.”
- “I watched one documentary about women from Srebrenica during the war. I was so sad and I don't want any woman to go through that experience, women don't deserve that.”
- “No, I did not witness a negative treatment of women, but what I notice is that many guys think they are smarter than us. That is so annoying.”
- “No, but if I see that I would call the police or tell to my parents.”

9.3.1. Discussion

Most of the students agreed that women in *Heart of Darkness* were presented as subordinate to men. A lot of them noticed how the white and black women were described as out of touch, living in their own world of illusions. They found no difference between the white or black women since the author's misogynist attitude towards the women presented them the same. The novel encouraged them to recall different movies or books that they watched or read recently, in which they noticed the negative descriptions of the women. One of the students said that sometimes we listen to the music where we have degrading descriptions of women, and none of us react against that. It is a sad fact that we accept the negative descriptions of women by men.

This was an encouraging part of the lesson since students really wanted to talk about this topic and to elaborate their opinions. When it comes to the role of women in *Heart of Darkness* most of them agreed that women had the minor rules, and so they were surprised with the appearance of Knitting women. That was a little bit more positive description of a woman. As we went through few descriptions from the novel, students noticed that back in the past women were deprived of any rights. When it comes to women harassment, women are not protected, especially in rural areas where they endure domestic violence, or violence at work.

Most of them keep silent because they are raised in the families where is ignominy to talk about this.

This novel was something new for the students since they did not have the opportunity to read or listen about post-colonial literature. Even though it was complex in the beginning, it opened up many topics for discussion and made them connect the role of women from the past with today's.

9.4. Open-ended question related to *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Five open-ended questions related to the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. 20 high-school students had the opportunity to discuss and answer on these questions.

Q6: How do the descriptions of white and black women differ? Why?

- "They had different skin color, because of that black women didn't have the same rights as white women. They were underrated, they were slaves."
- "Black women had no rights in the past, today there is no difference between the black and white women."
- "White women are always described as creatures who live in their own world, without any worries and struggle, and their only job is to take care of their husband and children."
- "Women don't need to cook and clean all the day. They are able to do anything they want."
- "Differences are great and they connect people. Everyone must be equal and have the equal rights. Nowadays and before, women have been discriminated. The truth is that every woman is a flower of this world."

Q7: What role do women play in this novel?

- "Every woman must have the same rights as men. This novel teaches us to be humans, not just people."
- "Women were alone and powerless."
- "In this novel, Antoinette plays a role of a strong woman who wants to change the world, in this case Rochester."

Q8: Some female characters in the book don't seem to fit the mold according to protagonist's view? Who are they and why they are important to the text?

- "We read about the state of women in that period."

- "Annette was a young and beautiful mother of Antoinette. She married two times, and this novel tells us about their sad life."

- "This novel tells us about the state of women in that period."

Q9: What do these descriptions of women tell us about the role of gender?

- "It teaches us that the role of gender is not important, because men and women are equal, and because of that they must have the same rights."

- "They tell us about the discrimination of women."

- "About the women who would stay home and raise the children, if you don't do that you would be considered as a mad person."

- "The role of gender is not important, because men and women are equal."

Q10: Were you a witness of negative treatment of women recently? If yes, how did you react and what is your opinion about it?

- "I saw many documentaries and movies about negative treatments of women. As a woman I think that we should respect first each other, women are sometimes bullied by other women. By men they are bullied sexually, verbally and physically."

- "No, I didn't."

9.4.1. Discussion

The novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* was quite complex for students. Since we had only one class, we focused on the characters of Antoinette, Rochester and Christophine. Most of the students were surprised that Antoinette decided to stay with Rochester despite the deception. They did not agree with Antoinette's attitude towards her husband, because she was wealthy and could live happily without him. That was the point of the lesson when they were introduced with

the term Creole. The most of them were unfamiliar with this term. This opened up a new discussion about Roma people in Goražde. Even though they are not creoles, students connected them with that term. The Roma people do not feel that they belong to the town where they were born. Unaccepted by the other citizens, they are still seeking for security and respect. Wherever they go, they will be judged and mistreated.

These three books have made students realize how the problems of people all around the world are universal, and the more we read about it, we will be able to understand different cultures, even different people from our environment. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart* were a new experience of reading which opened up many topics for discussion.

10. APPENDIX 2

10.1. Students' questionnaire

Source: *Teaching Things Fall Apart in Wisconsin- A Resource Guide for Educators and Secondary solutions- Things Fall Apart*.

Questionnaire

10.1.1. The Role of Women in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat disagree 3	Somewhat agree 4	Agree 5	Strongly agree 6
1. Manhood is first and foremost defined by one's ability to protect and provide for his family.					
2. There are specific ways in which women should act, and any divergence can be judged as a sign of rebellion.					
3. It is always appropriate to help those who are in need, whether or not they ask for help.					
4. When dealing with other cultures, traditional systems should always be respected, even if those systems violate our conceptions of right and wrong.					

5. One's destiny can not change.

Comment briefly! In no more than 5-6 sentences.

6. How do the descriptions of white and black women differ? Why?

7. What role do women play in this novel?

8. Some female characters in the book don't seem to fit the mold according to protagonist's view? Who are they and why are they important to the text?

9. What do these descriptions of women tell us about the role of gender?

10. Were you a witness of negative treatment of women recently? If yes, how did you react and what is your opinion about it?

Thank you for your time and answers provided above!

10.1.2. The role of women in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat disagree 3	Somewhat agree 4	Agree 5	Strongly agree 6
1. Manhood is first and foremost defined by one's ability to protect and provide for his family.					
2. There are specific ways in which women should act, and any divergence can be judged as a sign of rebellion.					
3. It is always appropriate to help those who are in need, whether or not they ask for help.					
4. When dealing with other cultures, traditional systems should always be respected, even if those systems violate our conceptions of right and wrong.					
5. One's destiny cannot change.					

Comment briefly! In no more than 5-6 sentences.

6. How does Okonkwo's relationships with male and female characters differ? Why?

7. What role do women play in this novel? What is life like for Okonkwo's wives?

8. Do you agree with Okonkwo's treatment of women?

9. Were you a witness of negative treatment of women recently? If yes, how did you react and what is your opinion about it?

10. Any other particular comment or opinion on the book or its author?

Thank you for your time and answers provided above!

10.1.3 The role of women in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat disagree 3	Somewhat agree 4	Agree 5	Strongly agree 6
1. Manhood is first and foremost defined by one's ability to protect and provide for his family.					
2. There are specific ways in which women should act, and any divergence can be judged as a sign of rebellion					
3. It is always appropriate to help those who are in need, whether or not they ask for help.					
4. When dealing with other cultures, traditional systems should always be respected, even if those systems violate our conceptions of right and wrong.					
5. One's destiny cannot change.					
<p>Comment briefly! In no more than 5-6 sentences.</p> <p>6. How do the descriptions of white and black women differ? Why?</p>					
7. What role do women play in this novel?					

8. Some female characters in the book don't seem to fit the mold according to protagonist's view? Who are they and why are they important to the text?

9. What do these descriptions of women tell us about the role of gender?

10. Were you a witness of negative treatment of women recently? If yes, how did you react and what is your opinion about it?

Thank you for your time and answers provided above!