

hello today I'm going to be discussing post-colonialism the Caribbean and Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea so in order for us to and this is a build-up to a discussion on Wide Sargasso Sea we have to understand a little bit about post colonialism both in terms of post-colonial theory and how it might apply to literature post colonialism is a body of thought primarily concerned with and what I'm going to go through here is a variety of slides that describe and outline various tenants of post-colonial theory so this is a body of thought primarily concerned with accounting for the political aesthetic economic historical and social impact of primarily European colonial rule what is colonial rule colonial rule is one country one power moving into another country supplanting various aspects and various institutions of culture and installing their own cultural ideology is cultural philosophies cultural institutions and we're gonna be talking today about the Caribbean even here I've already mentioned European colonial rule but this is something that has taken place throughout history one country in purely coming in and taking over another country and in printing over the native country cultural institutions in history we've been talking primarily about the 18th through the 20th century and we're also going to talk about what it means to be post-colonial here in just a moment the world we inhabit is impossible to know without acknowledging colonialism or colonial history and as we see in this presentation in the Caribbean and places around the world there is a combination a change of trajectory an imprinting hegemony of European colonial rule over other native countries what is post and post colonialism or neo colonialism post means it comes after but we have to think about this term both in terms of well in many different ways in terms of politics and economics in terms of geography it doesn't mean that once an imperial power has left a colony let's say that the colony returns to a place that existed in time before the colonial power came and imprinted itself over that native culture so perhaps in terms of geography that colonial power may have left but in terms of thinking about that culture and the ways with which that culture has been changed that is part of post colonialism and that hasn't laughed and in the native country has it returned to a pre colonial society Caribbean Islands that gained independence in the 20th century and the point here that I want to make is that you will notice that all of these countries gained their independence in the 20th century that this is not something that we're talking about that took place in the 19th or 18th or 17th century that for many of these island nations thinking about themselves as an independent people is a fairly recent phenomenon here this is just the Caribbean islands so this is a process that began in the Caribbean with European contact with Christopher Columbus in 1492 and just to sort of recap some major facts that I've covered in some earlier presentations that within a hundred years of first European contact nearly 90% of all native peoples and the Americas are dead through war and genocide but primarily through disease and this is important because then this made it in many ways easier for European powers to imprint their culture on these colonized peoples and that then facilitated the middle passage and the importation of slaves from Africa which

04:25 then populated the Caribbean in order to 04:28 work on the sugar plantations so post 04:33 colonialism is concerned with forms of 04:35 political and aesthetic representation 04:36 it has been committed to accounting for 04:40 globalization and global modernity yes 04:43 when you have one culture collide or one 04:46 culture introduced or interact with 04:49 another culture both of those cultures 04:52 are changed but what happens to the 04:54 colonial to the to the colonized culture 04:57 what happens to the native country that 05:00 doesn't have the sort of political and 05:02 economic power in post-colonial theory 05:05 economics goes hand-in-hand with 05:08 cultural institutions and cultural 05:11 change post-colonial theory has been 05:14 invested in reimagining politics and 05:17 ethics from underneath imperial power so 05:19 there's a hierarchy of power and we're 05:24 gonna see in just a moment that there is 05:26 really a kind of dichotomy binomial 05:28 dichotomy in terms of the way that we 05:31 look at Western and Eastern powers it 05:34 has been interested in perpetually 05:36 discovering and theorizing new forms of 05:39 human and justice from environmentalism 05:40 to human rights and oftentimes we think 05:43 about the economy with the colonizer and 05:47 the colonized two terms that I'm using 05:49 specifically from Elbert Memon ease the 05:53 colonizer and the colonized in terms of 05:56 indigenous versus the imperial powers 06:00 various so what are we talking about 06:02 here we're talking about the various 06:03 collisions of culture and just because 06:06 that one culture and maybe it's a 06:09 British culture we're talking about 06:10 primarily here goes into India or the 06:13 Caribbean or the French move into Africa 06:16 and their desire is to supplant that 06:20 native culture the colonial culture also 06:24 changes language technology sovereignty 06:28 and law close post-colonial theory is 06:32 interested in how these things change 06:34 language I think is one in particular 06:37 because the ways with which colonized 06:40 powers often then tell their story which 06:43 is what in many ways post-colonial 06:46 theory is about the recovery of lost 06:48 voices those voices often have to 06:52 express themselves not in their native 06:55 language but in the language of the 06:57 colonizing power we will be concerned 07:02 and discuss the construction or 07:05 destruction and reconstruction of 07:07 identities in three terms that often 07:10 come up in post-colonial theory 07:12 pertaining to identity that it is 07:14 doubled hybrid or unstable in terms of 07:20 the doubling of identity and I think 07:23 this term might come from w e-- d de 07:26 juez be do as du bois excuse me the 07:30 souls of black folk when he talks about 07:32 the double consciousness of identity 07:34 that african-americans experience within 07:37 American culture from African roots but 07:40 I think that this term applies also to 07:42 the colonized that in terms of identity 07:45 do they identify with their original 07:48 native culture which may have been one 07:51 or two or more generations behind them 07:54 and they may not even be familiar with 07:56 that or their new identity the identity 08:00 that is imparted to them placed over 08:04 their native identities from the 08:06 colonial powers so we're talking about 08:09 hybrid identities or hybridity to 08:12 express the soul the sort of multivalent 08:15 the multi-faceted complexity of identity 08:19 in colonial and colonized and in the 08:21 colonial and colonized dynamic and so 08:24 what can happen and we're gonna see this 08:26 in Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea 08:29 we often have an identity that is 08:32 unstable one where here a protagonist or 08:36 an individual a subject is uncertain 08:39 about their identity that it shifts may 08:42 be dependent on context there was an 08:45 alteration of historical trajectories so 08:48 a native country in a 08:50 of people maybe on one

particular 08:52 trajectory in history development 08:56 culture technology and the colonial or 09:00 imperial power comes in and that 09:03 historical or that trajectory changes 09:05 significantly we need to think about 09:09 assimilation coercion oppression or 09:12 combination of these things 09:14 it is rare if it happens at all that 09:18 a colonized power that a colonized 09:22 people that a native people just says 09:24 okay come on in here and take over and 09:27 in print your culture and ideology on us 09:31 so there's a coercion and my point at 09:34 the bottom is that there's often 09:35 violence and trauma that are associated 09:38 with this as well the ways with which 09:45 the sort of BI bipolar if you will 09:51 hierarchy the East versus West in a very 09:56 in a very simplified oversimplified way 10:00 that often Westerners think about the 10:03 differences between Western powers and 10:05 the East terms such as the Occidental 10:09 the West versus the Orient or 10:11 Orientalism what do these terms then 10:15 represent in these very sort of neat 10:18 over generalized terms they are code for 10:21 that the West is represented as ordered 10:25 civilized cultured and normal as opposed 10:30 to this and this is part of the ideology 10:31 the justification for what Western 10:35 powers the colonizer has done the East 10:39 is represented by the West so here the 10:41 East does not represent itself the West 10:44 represents the East as having base human 10:48 desires that they are chaotic confused 10:52 illogical mysterious and civilized or 10:57 excuse me uncivilized 10:58 the image that I have over my right 11:01 shoulder here Orientalism 11:03 by Edward Sayid in the late 1970s this 11:07 was one of the early texts that scholars 11:10 point to that discussed the differences 11:14 between East and West and was really one 11:17 of the seminal texts that many scholars 11:19 suggest of post-colonial theory so some 11:24 questions perhaps for us to consider 11:26 when does assimilation become diversity 11:30 and can it become diversity the terms of 11:35 hybridity versus integration you know is 11:39 a society can a society become a melting 11:42 pot or does it become fractured and stay 11:46 fractured and what moments in time what 11:50 moments in history would posit that a 11:53 diverse society becomes fractured or a 11:55 diverse society blends itself together 11:58 in a kind of hybridity can one return to 12:03 a pre colonized period of tribal 12:04 communal regional or national and 12:06 cultural history so is it the fantasy of 12:11 colonized peoples to return to a pre 12:15 colonized state it might be a fantasy 12:18 but is it a possibility and I think for 12:21 the most part the answer is no both 12:23 cultures engaging in this the struggle 12:27 for dominance primarily the 12:30 imperialistic and colonizing power in 12:32 printing culture over a native country 12:35 both of those countries have been 12:38 changed the native country however 12:41 cannot return to a pre colonized state 12:44 so what does that mean what are the 12:47 effects of and on the colonizer and the 12:49 colonized when does the colonizer become 12:51 a native a primary citizen and at the 12:53 end of colonial rule how does the former 12:56 colonialist fit in with Society 12:59 now that question is posed from the 13:03 colonialist perspective which we say 13:07 well the colonialists why are we 13:09 concerned with the colonialist and how 13:11 they might fit into a country that is 13:14 not theirs and I think that is a ver 13:17 appropriate question and something very 13:20 important for us to consider I asked 13:22 that question because I think it's 13:24 important for us to pose it in order to 13:26 understand the position that Antoinette 13:29 has in Wide Sargasso Sea 13:32 so in literature some of the themes that 13:36 we might come across and these are in 13:39 part I think that we can see the 13:41 relationship between post-colonial 13:43 theory

as a theory and how some of those 13:46 how some of the theory enters into the 13:49 literature so topics that we might come 13:51 across in the literature independence 13:53 themes of immigration national identity 13:58 and Allegiance 13:59 childhood resistance primarily to 14:03 colonial powers language how to 14:06 communicate experience in the language 14:08 that is no longer native and a revision 14:11 of history to include the colonized or 14:14 other voices this is a couple of quotes 14:19 here from post-colonial theorists one 14:23 from Hama Baba post-colonial critique 14:26 emerges quote from the colonial 14:29 testimony of third world countries and 14:32 the discourses of minorities within the 14:36 geopolitical divisions of east and west 14:38 north and south they intervene in those 14:41 ideological discourses of modernity that 14:44 attempt to give a hegemonic normality to 14:47 the uneven development and the 14:49 differential often disadvantaged history 14:52 of nations race communities peoples and 14:57 from a text that I mentioned earlier 15:01 from Albert nemenyi quote the 15:03 colonialist does not plan his future in 15:05 terms of the colony for he is there only 15:08 temporarily and invests only what will 15:10 bear fruit in his time the true reason 15:13 the principal reason for most 15:14 efficiencies is that the colonialists 15:17 never planned to transform the colony 15:19 into the image of his household nor to 15:21 remake the colonized in his own image 15:24 many also discusses the kind of 15:28 the quality of person that the native or 15:32 mother country sends to its colonies and 15:35 oftentimes according to many that the 15:38 colonialist is not the best of what the 15:43 native excuse me of what the mother 15:45 country has to offer 15:47 Europe if we take Europe as an example 15:50 they have a kind of class system where 15:55 titles represented where might where one 15:59 might exist and live in society not a 16:03 lot of upward movement always the 16:05 possibility I think of downward movement 16:07 but for the colonialist you could become 16:10 something more than you were and take 16:14 Christopher Columbus as an example 16:17 Christopher Columbus came from a 16:20 background that that did not entitle him 16:23 to lands and titles and all sorts of 16:26 other things 16:26 he became the ultimate colonialist 16:30 bringing European culture and beginning 16:32 a process that took place in the first 16:36 50 years first hundred years that were 16:38 obviously living in today but because of 16:42 Christopher Columbus's success he became 16:45 something more than he would have been 16:47 back in Europe back in Spain or back in 16:50 Italy so Jean Rhys some background some 16:58 background about Jean Rhys I think it's 17:00 important for us to have some 17:03 information about her it helps us 17:07 understand the text a little bit 17:08 although I think reading the text and 17:11 understanding more about the historical 17:13 period might be a little bit more 17:15 fruitful but there's been a lot of 17:16 thinking and writing about Jean Rhys 17:19 particularly because of the various 17:21 spheres of discourse that Jean Rhys sort 17:24 of operates in she was born 1890 and 17:27 died in 1979 she grew up on the island 17:30 of Dominica and perhaps some of you have 17:33 visited Dominica in the Caribbean lots 17:37 of islands to visit in the Caribbean 17:40 very beautiful islands 17:42 but it's important for us to understand 17:44 it's very important colonial history 17:46 Jean rise as you can see from the image 17:49 here was a white woman from a British 17:53 society she was born on Dominica and she 17:58 lived there until about the age of 16 18:00 she was alienated by her background she 18:04 lived most of her life in Europe most of 18:06 her life in Britain but she didn't feel 18:09 that she really belong there and some 18:13 scholars have pointed out that she was 18:15 both a

West Indian writer a European 18:17 modernist and a female writer and part 18:22 of the problem that Jean Rhys had in 18:25 terms of her identity in terms of her 18:28 being a professional in terms of her 18:30 being a writer was that when she 18:31 occupied one particular space 18:34 she felt alienated or was alienated 18:37 because she occupied these other spheres 18:40 of discourse as well so wide Sargasso 18:44 Sea published in 1966 this was her most 18:47 popular novel and I think it's difficult 18:50 in many ways for us to place I'm reading 18:54 Jean Rhys novel here as a post-colonial 18:57 text there's a very strong argument that 19:00 this novel is a modernist text we see 19:03 most most of the action comes through 19:06 the perspective of the characters and so 19:09 it's prejudicial these perceptions are 19:12 biased there's one of the important 19:15 themes of this text is the fracturing of 19:18 identity both important in post-colonial 19:22 theory post-colonial post-colonial 19:24 literature as well as modernist 19:27 literature so this could be read as a 19:30 late modernist text or a post-colonial 19:33 text and to to lend evidence to the sort 19:38 of thinking that this is a modernist 19:40 text that in the 1920s perhaps one of 19:44 the most fruitful periods the fruitful 19:48 decades of literary production you know 19:52 you have a lot of writers working 19:55 in publishing in the 1920s painters 19:58 philosophers Gertrude Stein Ernest 20:00 Hemingway machine Rises with one of the 20:06 expatriates Ford Madox Ford becomes his 20:11 mistress 20:11 so the 1920 is a particularly productive 20:15 period of literary history and so this 20:17 is where Jean Rhys is sort of 20:20 understanding literature so this is the 20:22 tradition that she is coming from so 20:25 she's outside of the main current so 20:27 when she is occupying one particular 20:30 space she as a writer feels alienated 20:33 because she also occupies these other 20:35 spaces as well she could be considered a 20:38 third world writer and a woman in exile 20:42 she writes in her autobiography good 20:45 morning midnight I have no pride no name 20:50 no face no country I don't belong 20:52 anywhere and I think that this quote 20:56 from her autobiography if I did not tell 21:01 you it came from her autobiography we 21:04 could see this spoken by Antoinette or 21:07 one of the other characters and Wide 21:09 Sargasso Sea I also want to bring up 21:12 absence versus loss now this is these 21:16 are definitions that are often used and 21:20 discussed in trauma theory and I think 21:22 it's important for us to consider them 21:25 here as well 21:26 what what is loss loss is something that 21:29 you have had whatever that might be a 21:33 positive experience foundation and 21:36 growing up something parents or whatnot 21:40 that is now gone and so now there's a 21:45 period of grieving there might be a 21:47 traumatic reaction to the loss of what 21:50 that thing or what that person was that 21:53 is no longer there absence is something 21:56 different both I think in terms of Jean 22:00 rise in post-colonial theory and in 22:03 psychoanalytic theory and trauma studies 22:05 absence is something different 22:08 there is a kind of vacuum that is 22:11 created for something that is supposed 22:13 to be there but not that that thing that 22:16 was there is was there now lost but that 22:20 thing is now that thing was not there in 22:25 the first place what is its relationship 22:28 to development of identity okay so it's 22:31 some terms for us to consider so Jean 22:35 Rhys grew up on Dominica a very 22:37 beautiful island in the Eastern 22:40 Caribbean and so you know we go to these 22:44 places at least in the old days some of 22:47 us might have had the opportunity to 22:49 Davitt to visit Dominica and some 22:51 Caribbean islands I highly highly 22:54 suggest when you go visit these places 22:57 if you have the opportunity in the 22:59 future when we

can fly' again to 23:01 consider its history the islands and the 23:04 Caribbean have a very very complicated 23:08 history and are very complicated 23:11 societies today and many of the islands 23:14 and I think Dominica is no different 23:16 than many of the other islands there is 23:18 a great discrepancy between the wealthy 23:22 and the poor and most of the population 23:26 of these islands live with a 23:28 considerable amount of poverty to make 23:32 things infinitely worse these i'm or 23:36 Dominica was devastated by a series of 23:38 hurricanes both in 2015 and in 2017 part 23:44 of the history of Dominica is that it 23:45 was owned by the French from the 1690s 23:47 to the middle of the 18th century and 23:50 then the British took over from 1763 to 23:55 1978 Dominica produced timber coffee but 24:01 like many of the Caribbean islands their 24:03 main staple was sugar cane and because 24:06 of the sugar cane industry both in 24:08 Dominica and in the Caribbean in general 24:11 this facilitated the by some estimates 24:14 15 to 20 million slaves brought over 24:17 from Africa in order to work the plant 24:22 so just for us to consider I mean you 24:26 might have looked at the title the Wide 24:27 Sargasso Sea and this is something that 24:29 you've never heard before 24:31 interestingly enough in a 2018 I'm not 24:36 sure I don't recall exactly what month 24:38 but in 2018 National Geographic did a 24:41 really nice article on the Sargasso Sea 24:44 so the Sargasso Sea is a region of the 24:47 North Atlantic Ocean bounded by four 24:49 currents the Gulf Stream in the West the 24:52 North Atlantic Stream the canary in the 24:55 east in the North Atlantic equatorial 24:58 and you can see in the map you can see 25:00 on the map over my left hand shoulder 25:02 North and South America and Africa and 25:04 Europe that the Sargasso Sea and you can 25:08 see the rotating currents in the 25:10 Atlantic this is a place that exists 25:14 that scholars refer to that scientists 25:17 referred to Jean Rhys what was certainly 25:20 not the first person and what is 25:23 interesting about the Sargasso Sea I 25:26 think for us to consider is that in this 25:30 is the location of the Caribbean the 25:33 Caribbean is located in the currents of 25:37 the Sargasso Sea that in her text 25:40 there's a death exists in a lot of 25:44 different ways the struggle and death of 25:48 identity the real death of various 25:51 characters the Sargasso Sea itself is 25:54 really a kind of Oasis if you will it's 25:59 an enigma of life there are no land 26:03 boundaries here it's characterized by 26:06 brown Sargassum seaweed and often in 26:10 calm blue water there is an incredible 26:14 diversity of marine life and in this 26:21 article in National Geographic and you 26:23 can find this more information about 26:25 this that animals have adapted 26:27 specifically to exist in Sargassum weed 26:31 in terms of their color terms 26:33 their ability to some animals can 26:36 exist on top of the seaweed other 26:38 animals exist just below that there are 26:41 various fish and other aquatic life 26:44 turtles that just exists in the 26:48 Sargassum weed and again this is really 26:51 about life and the stands I think in 26:53 many ways in contrast to some of the 26:56 things that are taking place in gene 26:58 arise novel the Sargasso Sea also houses 27:04 the North Atlantic Garbage Patch and so 27:09 we can see here I think the collision if 27:12 you will between human interaction and 27:16 the natural environment ok well this 27:21 just gives us a kind of background on 27:22 post-colonial theory on post-colonial 27:25 literature and a very brief introduction 27:27 to Jean Rhys and hopefully some context 27:30 that you can begin reading Wide Sargasso 27:32 Sea thank you