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# The Marginalised Voices Speak in Prequels, Sequels and Retellings of Select Novels

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**Abstract :** *Marginalisation involves the main idea of non-acceptance in the society due to reasons which the marginalised mostly do not have any control over. It is the society that alienates them and holds them out on the periphery which makes them take drastic actions. In most of the cases, the marginalised have no control over the reason why they are being marginalised. This research is focused on understanding the marginalised. The characters are 'othered' in terms of gender, race and class. The select Prequels, Sequels and Retellings interpret the events of the novel*

*through the eyes of the 'marginalised' character who otherwise has little or rather no voice in the main text, but is dominant in the Prequels, Sequels and Retellings and thus allows us to explore the novel from a different angle. For this research, we have selected the Prequels, Sequels and Retellings of three popular novels namely **Gone with the Wind, Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights.***

*In addition to this, we also try to understand the new themes or twists in plot that appear in them. We imagine and try to understand the 'What-if' scenarios that abound in them. We propose to explore the various new dimensions that the Prequels, Sequels and Retellings present to us and the effect they have on the main novel as well as the readers.*

**Key words:** *prequel, sequel, retelling, marginalised, postcolonial, postmodernism, psychoanalytical, feminism.*

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## Introduction :

Human imaginations know no bounds. It is quite natural for us readers to explore the world of imagination if we find an amazing plot whether it be a novel or a movie. If we consider each character and incident equivalent to a dot, all we need is to **“CONNECT THE DOTS”** and arrive at the story of our lives.

It is said:

**“Don’t believe everything you hear. There are always three sides to a Story**

**YOURS, THEIRS and THE TRUTH.....”**

Similar is the case with story-telling.

A good story is the one that stays with us. The classical novels such as ***Gone with the Wind***, ***Jane Eyre*** and ***Wuthering Heights*** have been greatly loved by readers of all generations. These novels have not only stayed with us but have also excited the minds of both writers and readers to the extent that they have a rich collection of Prequels, Sequels and Retellings to their credit.

**Prequel** is a literary, dramatic or cinematic work whose story precedes that of a previous work by focusing on the events that occur before the original narrative.

**Sequel** is a narrative or a work of literature, film or theatre that continues the story or expands upon some earlier work.

**Retelling** is actually a new envisioning of a story, often an updated version. It involves telling a story over again in a new way.

For this research, we have selected the Prequels, Sequels and Retellings of three popular novels namely ***Gone with the Wind***, ***Jane Eyre*** and ***Wuthering Heights***.

The Sequel and Retelling of ‘*Gone with the Wind*’ we are dealing with in this research are: *Scarlett* by Alexandra Ripley and *The Wind Done*

*Gone* by Alice Randall respectively. Prequel to *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte is *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys. The Prequel and Retelling of *Wuthering Heights* are *H: The Story of Heathcliff’s Journey Back to Wuthering Heights* by Lin Haire Sargeant and *Windward Heights* by Maryse Conde respectively.

Marginalised are the individuals who are alienated by society and branded as the ‘**other**’. They are relegated to the periphery of society. Hence, they remain voiceless and are oppressed by the autocratic rule of society. Many a time their backgrounds remain obscure in the main text. The characters are ‘othered’ in terms of gender, race and class. The Prequels, Sequels and Retellings of Select novels interpret the events of the novel through the eyes of the ‘**marginalised**’ character who otherwise has little or rather no voice in the main text, but is dominant in the Prequels, Sequels and Retellings.

In *Gone with the Wind*, we know nothing about Rhett or even Cynara. The entire spotlight is always on Scarlett irrespective of the morality of her actions. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason is the madwoman because of whom Mr Rochester and Jane could not be married. However, we know nothing of her side of the story. What drove her to madness? In *Wuthering Heights*, the entire story revolves around Heathcliff and Catherine but we have no information about Heathcliff’s background. We do not get a glimpse of his reasoning or his thoughts.

## LITERARY THEORIES APPLIED ON THESE NOVELS

**Postcolonial Theory** : The term ‘Postcolonial’ generally refers to writing about nations/people/cultures that were once colonized by the European powers.

We talk about how the ‘marginalised’, someone who never finds any expression in the

main text finds a **'voice'**, an expression in the Prequels, Sequels and Retellings.

**Postmodernism:** We find unconventional narrative techniques, lack of chronology in the plot, indefinite time sequence, multiple narrators and an organic unity between the unconventional narrative forms and the narrator.

Postmodernism is usually characterised by **'an eclectic approach, [by a liking for] aleatory writing, [and for] parody and pastiche'** (Barry 80)

**Psychoanalytic Criticism :** Psychoanalytic criticism seeks to uncover latent content of a narrative by teasing out fantasies, fears and desires that are presumed to be the informal "subtext" of any work of art. Unconscious is the most powerful aspect of the psyche of any human being. In the application of this theory, we get a clear picture of both the conscious as well as the unconscious mind of the character thereby allowing us a better understanding of the character's mind and the effect of his past memories, emotions and previous experiences.

**"The Unconscious is the part of mind, which is beyond the consciousness. This, unconscious has in spite of its "pushed away" existence, a major role in human lives and actions."**(Nayyar 68)

**Feminism :** Feminist criticism seeks to uncover the ideology of patriarchal society in work of art. This theory helps us to understand the psyche of the woman, who is always doubly marginalized, both by the immediate oppressor as well as the Patriarchal society.

**Scarlett** is the sequel to *Gone With the Wind*. It follows Scarlett in her attempt to win back the love and affection of Rhett Butter. We follow Scarlett from Atlanta to Charleston, where she lives with Rhett's mother, and visits her aunts. She then goes

to Savannah and meets some family members she has never met before. With them, she goes to Ireland to discover her heritage. For the rest of the story, Scarlett struggles with loss, fear, and new discoveries about herself. It takes place over seven years, from the time of Melanie's funeral to Scarlett's daring escape during the Irish Rebellion. Scarlett's dreams finally come true when she realizes what her dreams are.

**"She needed life and action around her after the numbing succession of deaths, and she needed work to do."**(Ripley 18)

**The Wind Done Gone** is the same story, but told from the viewpoint of Cynara, a Mulatto slave on Scarlett's plantation and the daughter of Scarlett's father and Mammy. Sold from the O'Haras, Cynara eventually makes her way back to Atlanta and becomes the mistress of a white businessman. She later leaves him for a black aspiring politician, eventually moving with him to Reconstruction Washington, D.C.

**Wide Sargasso Sea** is the story of the madwoman in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason – or rather the story of Antoinette Cosway, the young Creole heiress from Jamaica, before she became Bertha Mason. Jean Rhys tries to justify Antoinette's behaviour and discover why she became the appalling, beastly madwoman she appears to be in *Jane Eyre*. Rhys tells the story of Antoinette – or Bertha – from a woman's point of view, defending her against the prejudices of the male-centred world, where a woman who does not live according to the standards set for her, is deemed mad.

**H : The story of Heathcliff's journey Back to Wuthering Heights** tries to fill in the three year gap of Heathcliff's absence from the original *Wuthering Heights* and attempts to explain his mysterious acquisition of wealth as well as his adoption of the fine manners of a gentleman. It seeks answers to

the questions which are left out in the main text particularly concerning Heathcliff's parentage and his life before he came to Wuthering Heights.

**Windward Heights** draws a parallel to the emotionally charged story of original *Wuthering Heights* in the island of Guadeloupe and through the lives of these star-crossed lovers and other characters give us a picture of Guadeloupe's blacks, whites, yellows and mixed races struggling in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery. The novel raises the issue of skin colour over and over again. It depicts a very realistic account of the lives of the poor-both whites and blacks in a world where justice seems to be a laughable concept.

#### **Conclusion :**

We have tried to connect the dots as we set out to do in our introduction. If we consider each character and incident equivalent to a dot, all we need do to is to 'CONNECT THE DOTS' and arrive at the conclusion.

The Prequels, Sequels and Retellings alter, add and give new insight into the reading of the original text. They give voice to the marginalised, give psychological insight into the minds of the marginalised. They help the marginalised to reclaim their lost identity and find the missing links as they connect past, present and future. It is the character which becomes important and the plot takes a backseat.

**Dot one- Marginalisation :** Through these novels we find the woman speaking out boldly, loudly about how she has been treated and what she wants. Multiple parallels can be drawn between the women characters like Cynara and Bertha. They both were voiceless in the original text. Their stories were narrated by third person and we never get to see their point of view. In the Prequel and Retelling they were given a voice but still their freedom of speech does not alter their fate. In the end they both were rejected by the society.

#### **"I will write my name in fire red, Antoinette Mason, nee Cosway"(Rhys 38)**

The subsequent texts reveal Heathcliff's background. He is shown to have memories of his life before Mr. Earnshaw found him. It is explained to us how he acquires such gentlemanly behaviour and wealth. We witness how his action is influenced by the thought of Catherine.

**Dot two-Psychology of the marginalised :** Prequels, Sequels and Retellings showcase the psyche of the marginalised which allows us to understand the agony of being voiceless, now that they speak up. Their psychological insights capture their mental turbulence and seem to justify the reasons behind their actions.

#### **"'Oh, how I wish I were white!' he shouted, 'White with blue eyes in my face!' 'White with blond hair on my head!'" (Conde 30)**

We find that Cynara is psychologically disturbed as a bi-racial slave who is unaccepted by her own family. Bertha's isolation exaggerates her mental instability and Heathcliff's obsession with Catherine intensifies his emotions. According to Freud, the repressed desires find expressions in dreams. This is quite visible in Bertha's prophesized, Cynara's wish fulfilment and Heathcliff's obsessive dreams. Role of the unconscious is also dominant. Bertha is not conscious of her violent actions resulting in her lapse of memory, Cynara unconsciously imitates Scarlett and Heathcliff has no consideration for moralistic and social values.

**Dot three- Reclaiming lost identity :** The marginalised voices speak out in order to assert their individuality and reclaim their lost identity. *The Wind Done Gone* changes the form (from third person narrative to diary which is first person narrative), content (the other side of Tara) and even syntax using Negro dialects.

Rhys uses varied narrative voices and this feature is of paramount importance as we analyse the relationship between Antoinette and Rochester, two characters who come from diametrically opposing cultures, and yet who exhibit many biographical parallels.

The use of multiple narrators in *Windward Heights* allow them to represent at one time both their own lives, and their perception of Razye throughout his life's journey.

**Dot four- Connecting past, present and future :** A person is always influenced by the experiences of his past. The marginalised characters speak of their past and relate them to their present. They are haunted by their bitter experiences which ultimately affect their future. Thus we see that the marginalised characters keep moving between their past, present and future. Cynara's memories of her past intrude upon her present life and keep on haunting her. At one time, she even expresses her desire of fusing the past with the present to get rid of the restlessness she was going through. She says

***“And everyday I am more afraid of my past than before” (Randall 27)***

*Bertha's disturbed childhood and the condition of her mother disturbs her throughout the text. Her future seems as bleak as her present and past. Time nowhere is seen to improve her condition. Heathcliff is constantly plagued by his past and continuously faces identity crisis. The lack of knowledge of his past affects his present immensely. But with the passage of time his past is revealed and he becomes emotionally secure in the knowledge of his identity. This has a very positive impact on the conception of his future life.*

*The bitterness or self-centredness of the marginalised is actually the result of being “pushed-away” by the society. We realise that they are just as intelligent (maybe even more) and just*

*as sensitive as others who deliberately push them down. We realise that these characters have great potential which is destroyed because of the branding done by society. Wouldn't Cynara have had a respectable life had her father not sold her? Wouldn't Heathcliff have made a good leader with his analytical mind and fierce devotion to the ones he loved?*

*Wouldn't Bertha have made a very good wife with her keen perspective, sensitivity and understanding?*

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