



Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole

By Veronica Marie Gregg



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As the foremost white West Indian writer of this century and author of the widely acclaimed novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys (1890-1979) has attracted much critical attention, most often from the perspective of gender analysis. Veronica Gregg extends our critical appreciation of Rhys by analyzing the complex relationship between Rhys's identity and the structures of her fiction, and she reveals the ways in which this relationship is connected to the history of British colonization of the West Indies. Gregg focuses on Rhys as a writer--a Creole woman analyzing the question of identity through literary investigations of race, gender, and colonialism. Arguing that history itself can be a site where different narratives collide and compete, she explores Rhys's rewriting of the historical discourses of the West Indies and of European canonical texts, such as Rhys's treatment of *Jane Eyre* in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Gregg's analysis also reveals the precision with which Rhys crafted her work and her preoccupation with writing as performance.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Very fine study.

Sylvia Wynter, Stanford University"

Gregg . . . provid[es] provocative insights into the work and life of Jean Rhys.

"Choice"

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Review

One of the many strengths of this study is Gregg's thorough archival research into Rhys's unpublished writings, such as her letters, postcards, drafts, and notebooks; Gregg interweaves the insights gained by this research into her analysis of Rhys's evolving West Indian creole identity and uncovers influential cultural and literary theories encoded in Rhys's writings.--*Signs*

Gregg . . . provid[es] provocative insights into the work and life of Jean Rhys.--*Choice*

I have been, increasingly, intellectually scandalized by feminist readings of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which, while rightly celebrating its emancipatory stance with respect to gender, remain blind to the brutal nature of its colonizer-Creole eye, and therefore to its anti-Black racism *cum* classism. Veronica Gregg's very fine study of Jean Rhys's work breaks with this either/or. Its analysis of Rhys's, so to speak, imagining/writing/being Creole groundbreakingly accounts for both sides of the equation.--Sylvia Wynter, Stanford University

From the Back Cover

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