



## MODERNİZME GÖNDERMELERLE PARÇALANMIŞ KADIN KİMLİĞİ KAVRAMI: KARANLIKTA YOLCULUK\*

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**Öz-** Yirminci yüzyılda insanlar bir göç dünyasında yaşamak zorunda kaldılar. Philip L. Hammack'e göre modern dünyadaki sınırlar katı değildi ve kimlik bir aynılık ve farklılık meselesiydi.

Jean Rhys, *Karanlıkta Yolculuk* adlı romanında modernist terimlerle sömürge sonrası dünyada Anna Morgan'ın öyküsünü anlatır ve sosyolojik ve kültürel bir kavram olarak kimliğin önemini vurgular. Anna'nın bir kadın olarak kimlik sorunu babası öldükten sonra üvey annesinin etkisiyle vatanı Karayipler'den İngiltere'ye taşınmak zorunda kalışı gerçeğiyle yakından ilgilidir. Romanın baş kahramanı olarak Anna parçalanmış kültürel kimliğiyle merkezden sapmış bir çeşit modernist özne olarak resmedilir. Anna'nın kimliği kültürler arası bir kimlik olarak çeşitli seslerle biçimlenir ve roman boyunca onun arada kalmışlığı yüzünden acı çektiği görülür. Çalışmada modernizme göndermelerle Britanya toplumunda farklı grupların, sosyal ve kültürel arka planların üyeleri olarak farklı kimliklere ve rollere sahip olan modern bireyin kimlik sorunu parçalanmış ve yabancılaşmış kimliklerin ikilemini göstermek amacıyla disiplinler arası yaklaşımla incelendi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler-** Parçalanmış, yabancılaşmış, kimlik, sömürge sonrası, modernizm, kadın, Jean Rhys.

### CONCEPT OF FRAGMENTED FEMALE IDENTITY WITH REFERENCES TO MODERNISM: VOYAGE IN THE DARK

**Abstract-** In the twentieth century people had to live in a world of migration. According to Philip L. Hammack the borders were not solid in the modern world and identity is a matter of sameness and difference adding that the self shows itself to the outer world through identity.

Jean Rhys, in "Voyage in the Dark" tells Anna Morgan's story in a postcolonial world in modernist words and emphasizes the importance of identity as a sociological and cultural concept. Anna's identity problem as a female is very related with the fact that she has to move from her Caribbean home to England after his father's death by the influence of her step-mother. As the protagonist of the novel Anna is portrayed as a kind of de-centered modernist subject with her fragmented cultural identity. Anna's identity is shaped with varied voices as a cross-cultural identity, and it is seen that she suffers from her in-betweenness throughout the novel. In the study, identity problem of the modern individual having multiple identities and roles as being the members of multiple groups and social and cultural backgrounds in British society has been analyzed in order to show the dilemma of the fragmented and alienated identities with references to modernism in a interdisciplinarity perspective.

**Keywords-** Fragmented, alienated, identity, postcolonial, modernism, female, Jean Rhys.

## INTRODUCTION

British-centered postcolonial studies emphasize British superiority, and British colonialism and literature served as a framework of reference. In the end of the 1960s, what is thought to be "English literature" was transformed into "literature produced in the English language" depending on the courage of the colonies to produce their own literature. In this sense, English literature and criticism also shaped the Commonwealth Literature, which includes writings from colonies affiliated to the empire. More, the authors' identities or their origin or differences from each other did not matter in this period; because the common denominator was English literature. The critical application of Commonwealth studies, which focused on traditional humanism in its early stages, focused on characters and highlighted moral authority (Bertens 195-197). Postcolonial theory and criticism emphasized the tension between the metropolitan imperial center and its colonial satellites within the colonial framework despite of the fact that Commonwealth studies had been perceived as a common space between the cultural products of the first colonies and the metropolitan culture in the beginning (Bertens 199). In this sense, the confrontation and mixing of people and cultures with each other has continued since the early modern period and has brought power relations with colonialism, the slave trade, the settlement of whites out of Europe, war, migration to the west and globalization (Wedon 3).

### Female Identity and Modernism

It is a known fact that human differences in Western literature are shaped by binary oppositions. Additionally, dichotomies turn the formation of difference into polar oppositions by confining the inherent and inhomogeneous possibilities of language to binary divisions (Rutherford, et al. 23). In this sense, identity is defined by differences on the one hand and it is the factor that gives the individual a place in the society in which they live and establishes a connection between the society and the individual on the other hand (Woodward 1-2). Such concepts like culture, difference and identity are very related with each other. Cultural differences are decisive in a wide variety of areas such as communication processes, traditional values, behavioral standards, individual and social relationship norms, social structure and hierarchy. People exist in mutual relationships with their social environments, which are sometimes complicated. These become problematized as the source of identity conflicts. However, most groups in the social world are defined in the binary opposition of majority and minority. According to Korostelina, identification among minorities is stronger than between majority groups. Minority groups experience a stronger collective self (Korostelina 134-135).

It is noteworthy that, as identity assumptions suggest, the idea that identity is constructed due to its communication with others is more widely accepted rather than being an extension of a feature originating from creation. In this context, two types of identity models can be mentioned: These are traditional and modern understandings. The traditional view emphasizes that various dynamics such as class, gender, race function simultaneously to produce an identity. The modern identity view, on the other hand, is a formation in which identities are structured, produced and multiplied by overlapping with the influence of various psychological and sociological factors. This process also creates its own crisis formation. Identities are full of contrasts and ambiguities between our own identities and the fragmented identities of others. Persons define themselves to some extent within their own competence. In addition to this, it is observed that determining forces outside the individual transform identity into a labeling activity (Sarup 14).

Stuart Hall identifies three different subjects while conceptualizing identity. These are enlightenment subject, sociological subject and postmodern subject, respectively. The enlightenment subject places the individual's identity at the essentialist center of the self and carries it to the center as a composite subject endowed with the capacities of the mind, and the male identity is in the center. The second subject type is the subject of the modern world whose self is unstable, that is the sociological subject. The existence of this subject occurs in relationships with others. The identity that is in contact with the cultural world outside and the identities of that world acquire new qualities by leaving its hidden essence to change. While adding new features to the existing cultural identities on the one hand, she tries to appropriate herself by internalizing their meanings. Identity acts as an intermediary between the personal and social worlds between what is inside us and what is outside. These variable features produce the postmodern subject that cannot have a fixed, essentialist and continuous identity in any way by the disintegration of the subject that had a fixed identity before (Barker and Willes 223).

Conceptually, Hall's understanding of cultural identity has played an important role in giving a new shape to the world in post-colonial struggles. According to Hall's understanding, the second way of thinking about culture manifests itself as perceiving cultural identity as a matter of being as well as a subject of existence. In this style of thinking, cultural identity belongs to the future as well as to the past. In this sense, cultural identity has a structure that goes beyond space, time, history and culture. More, it is constantly subjected to transformation and it is affected by history, culture and power games even though it has a certain past (Barker and Willes 174-177).

The sociological subject as a production of the modern world refers to the characteristics of the modernism. In literary discourse, it is considered that modernism is depicted as an answer to the scientific and artistic developments of the period including economic and political issues. The problematic issues of modernism showed itself in the art of the period and such fields like music, visual art, philosophy and literature were completely influenced by modernism's main characteristics marked by such themes like tension and unease. The writers and authors of the modernist period all used the same characteristics in their works of art. Furthermore, modernism is very related with the subjects like gender and class as the tokens of sociological subject in the modern world.

According to Karl Marx's philosophy as conveyed by Peter Childs, "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point, however, is to change it". Childs says that it is a kind of warning for the second half of the nineteenth century and the modernist period. So, some important writers of the period tried to change people's taste in their fundamental attitudes to interpret the world (Childs 37). Childs also emphasizes that the term modernism is a "way of referring to the efforts of many individuals across the arts who tried to move away from established modes of representation in formal or political terms" (Childs 133). Hence, it can be said that a reconsideration of the imaginative writing including theme, character, narration, plot, the representation of time and space, imagery and language were the manifestations of modernism in literature.

According to Childs, modernists were interested in issues of subjectivity in relation to social division, gender, history, language, perceptions or misperceptions of reality (Childs, 134). More, it can be added that modernism embraced such items like class, gender, the struggle for knowledge, and the senselessness and alienation of the time:

The movement was a response to an international sense of depression, the helpless feeling held by many at that time that nothing was concrete or reliable anymore. It dealt with the way human personality seemed to change, as Virginia Woolf once stated in 1910, and it embraced disruption and rejection to move beyond the simplistic. Gender issues have always been a topic in society as well as in literature, so naturally gender became a major focus of the modernist movement. Women, their intelligence and their judgment had always been regarded with contempt by a male-oriented society. Women had been seen and treated more as complements to the men in their lives than as individuals or spiritual entities; they were depicted in literature as womanly, weak, dutiful, and stupid. Most authors continued to write with the misguided perception that women were always inferior to men. For centuries, women were defined by men; the world was male-centered and male-dominated. Male philosophers and social theorists were the ones who identified woman with disorder, savagery, chaos, unreason, and the excluded other” (Wrenn, 9).

In this concept, the modernists emerged after the second world war had some characteristics like pessimism, sense of a fragmented society and the representation of an individual having no personal control outside world (Childs, 38).

#### Analysis of the Novel in the Light of Concepts of Identity and Modernism

Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, written in 1934, is about its young female protagonist, Anna Morgan and her semi-tragic descent. Unfortunately, Anna has to move from her Caribbean home to England by a negligent stepmother, after the death of her father. After this, she has to leave school, because she is cut off financially by the stepmother, Hester. Anna tries to support herself as a chorus girl. Later, it is seen that Anna becomes involved with an older man. His name is Walter and he supports her financially. When he leaves her, she is completely helpless.

In Rhys's preference for the title of her novel, a reference is possible to [Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness](#) in terms of European modernity. As a space, England and Dominica are always compared and contrasted through the novel. Anna finds herself both in despair and in the hearth of darkness in England. On the other hand, Anna's sweet home in Dominica is described a place of full of light and innocence in contrast to London's gloomy and grey, cold and suffocating atmosphere. Anna is like an alien in London and she is in a great difficulty in her integration to modern western city life as the representative of her colonial Dominica in the West Indies as a female protagonist of a modernist understanding of character. She seems fragmented between two cultures and sense of belonging. At the beginning of the novel a comparison between England and Dominica is presented and an emphasis on cultural difference is reflected in Anna's words:

It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known. It was almost like being born again. The colours were different, the smells different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself was different. Not just the difference between heat, cold; light, darkness; purple, grey. But a difference in the way I was frightened and the way I was happy. I didn't like England at first. I couldn't get used to the cold.

Sometimes I would shut my eyes and pretend that the heat of the fire, or the bed-clothes drawn up round me, was sun-heat; or I would pretend I was standing outside the house at home, looking down Market Street to the Bay. When there was a breeze the sea was millions of spangles; and on still days it was purple as Tyre and Sidon. Market Street smelt of the wind, but the narrow street smelt of niggers and woodsmoke and salt fishcakes fried in lard. (When the black women seel fishcakes on the savannah they carry them in trays on their heads...) (Rhys 7).

As seen in the paragraph, Anna has a wish to engage with the colonial legacy on the one hand, she wants to assert her own identity and tries to save herself from being absorbed by the colonial power's culture on the other hand as the problematic of a postcolonial situation and migration.

Anna's first love affair in London as chorus girl with Walter makes her a kept woman at the end. She loses her virginity and she accepts to be supported financially by him until she is left by Walter. As a result of this kind of mistreatment and poverty in a foreign country, she becomes a prostitute. She is alienated and miserable not only socially both emotionally in her surrounding in London. She wishes that is just a dream to live in London in poverty whereas she was in peace in her own country before his father's death: "Sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was the dream, but I could never fit them together" (Rhys, 8).

Hence, she is in a chaos in reconciliation her past with her present to get rid of the pressure of sense of estrangement. Due to her colonial origin and her sex, Anna is alienated and subordinated. More, she is also abused and mistreated by men, and this can be perceived as a metaphor for refusal of traditional values as the reflection of modernist perspective in the novel. For Edward Said, as cited in Thacker's work (2003), "the spatial practices of imperialism are projected into aesthetics of modernism because of an awareness that the actual material spaces of empires are threatened" (Thacker 195). Anna as a female identity of postcoloniality is always depicted in the chaos of a comparison of a space referring to Dominica and England in a great contrast. She tries to get used to living there in time: "After a while I got used to England and I liked it alright; I got used to everything except the cold" (Rhys 8). Despite of this utter, she says she has hated being in England for several times.

Thus, Anna appears to hover between inner and outer spaces, and the term 'voyage' is emphasized as a motif symbolizing a change from traditional to the new one as the reflection of modernism. Anna's flashbacks and interior monologues in the novel refer to a kind of comparison between modernity and tradition in this point: "Modernist writing is about living and experiencing new times not in the abstracted location of literary history but in specific spatial histories: rooms, cities, buildings, countries, and landscapes" (Thacker 13). Anna remembers her past days from time to time. Her feelings about England are mixed. She says;

A curtain fell and then I was here...I had read about England ever since I could read -smaller meaner everything is never mind -this is London - hundreds thousands of white people rushing along and the dark houses all alike frowning down one after the other all alike all stuck together -the streets like smooth shut-in ravines and the dark houses frowning down -oh I'm not going to like this place -you'll get used to it Hester kept saying I

expect you feel like a fish out of water but you'll soon get used to it -now don't look like Dying Dick and Solemn Davy as your poor father used to say you'll get used to it..." (Rhys 17).

In this sense, Anna comes to a new place by moving from

Dominica to England. However, she can never occupy anywhere due to her alienation as the characteristic of modern individual. According to Said, as cited by Thacker (2003), "a rendering of the experience of newness that deliberately drew upon fragments and references to previous culture" (Thacker 195) is one of the central responses of modernism to empires. England is described as a modern country with its streets, factories, theatres and industry as the tokens of modernism in the novel:

You were perpetually moving to another place which was perpetually the same. There was always a little gray Street leading to the stage door of the theatre and another little grey street where your lodgings were, and rows of little houses with chimneys like the funnels of dummy steamers and smoke the same colour as the sky; and a grey stone promenade running hard, naked and straight by the side of the grey-green sea, or a Corporation Street or High Street or Duke Street or Lord Street where you walked about and looked at the shops" (Rhys, 9).

Anna is among the blurring lines of the versatile images between her home town and London as the reflection of modernity as a disorientating factor to make the character fragmented, alienated and helpless creature as a female character. Anna's sense of self is externalized rather than internalized throughout the novel with the descriptions of streets, cafes, restaurants and hotel rooms outside. She is unable to identify herself with this world of new and far from her past experiences and culture in Dominica. It can be claimed that hers is a kind of incomplete self and identity due to her position as a postcolonial subject in the hands of the imperial and colonial power in Britain. According to Richard Sennett, as cited in Thacker's work (2003), man speaks to people culturally different and labelled as other in the modern city (Thacker 204). Anna as a female having colonial origin is despised by the white owners of the imperial Britain. She is also abused and discriminated by the males of this new place as a female. Moreover, she becomes a fragmented, corrupted and disoriented person as a female identity, finally.

Representing a female identity in British social structure in the atmosphere of the modern city life, Anna is dominated by the males that she meets. Unfortunately, Anna is a broke girl after her father's death and her step-mother's uncaring behaviors towards her result in her descent from virginity to a position of a prostitute as a chorus girl in Britain. Simone de Beauvoir states that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (Evans 87) refers to a kind of concept of difference. Women differ in males in social life in terms of equality in all fields. Social and cultural differences between men and women constitute inequality and social hierarchy and rising of a patriarchal perspective in the society. Furthermore, females having native origin become double colonized by this way. In Rhys's novel, Anna is the female victim of the society, and she is kept out in the society by the males. She is also used by them for their sexual and social needs unluckily.

In this sense, Rhys as a British novelist having postcolonial characteristics is famous for her female characters' victimization and externalization as the others of the males and privileged ladies of British social structure based on class distinctions:

Rather than looking at herself out of self-absorption, Anna Morgan, the protagonist of

Voyage in the Dark, looks to make contact, to affirm her existence. Typical of the Rhys heroine, Anna looks in the mirror to find out who she is, and what she can expect out of life; because most of Rhys's female characters lack both education and family background that could provide money or status, they must rely on men- husbands or lovers- for money, and their sense of themselves and their chances for security are often defined by what the mirror shows them. As a dancer in a small touring company, Anna can expect to make her subsistence wage only as long as she can please with her body: her face, her legs (Leigh 271).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the portrait of Anna, it is clear that an identity problem is shown through her position of passivity and victimization. In social identity theory, it is known that the self is reflexive. It can categorize, classify, or name itself in different ways as an object during this reflexivity. It is also in relation to other social categories or classifications in this process. This is a kind of self-categorization in social identity theory or identification. Hence, an identity is formed through the self-categorization or identification process. In the comparison process, individuals who are akin to the self, are categorized with the self and are labeled the in-group; individuals who are different from the self are categorized as the out-group (Turner 44-46).

Concerning her alienation, it is clear that Anna is despised by her step mother because her step-mother, Hester has racist attitudes as an English in origin in contrast to Anna. She tries to change Anna's behaviours by contemplating her: "I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and behave like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn't do it. Impossible to get you away from the servants. That awful sing-song voice you ha! Exactly like a nigger you talked -and still do. Exactly like that dreadful girl Francine" (Rhys 65). On the other hand, Anna is despised by her lover, Walter, too. While he flirts with her, he likens her a little devil due to her sense of belonging to her relatives in the West Indies and addresses her as such: "You are a rum little devil, aren't you?" (Rhys 52). Anna explains that she is happy with her origins all the time indeed: "When I was a kid I wanted to be black" (Rhys 52). Hence, it can be deduced that persons who are English in origin are the out-group for Anna because she identifies herself with the black people in the West Indies. Furthermore, Anna shows her self-awareness about her origin. She emphasizes the difference between being a black and a White: "Being black is warm and gay, being White is cold and sad" (Rhys 31). Additionally, she also criticizes England as a place of migration. She says "This is England, and I am in a nice, English room, with all the dirt swept under the bed" (Rhys 31). This cold place and prejudiced people make her alienated, helpless and alone as the tokens of modernism.

In this concept, it seems that Anna belongs to a group of females from lower class and she is different from the rich women. Anna and her friends who are prostitutes are categorized as the out-group by the respectful ladies and males in the British society. Anna is in need of sense of belonging as a female and as an individual and an immigrant. She is tired of being excluded and fragmented by her lovers and other people including Walter and all males and females in her surrounding. Thus, it can be deduced that Anna is the victim of society and the system and she becomes the fragmented female of the modern city. She is felt incomplete by the males who abuse her all the time. She is also excluded culturally because of her race,

ethnic identity and colonial background in the modern world. As a last, Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* shows the postcolonial issues like female identity, race, colour, belonging in a great richness with references to the problematics of modernism like alienation, helplessness, exclusion and modernist techniques like flashback, interior monologue and stream of consciousness.

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, people had to live in a world of migration. According to Philip L. Hammack the borders were not solid in the modern world and people witnessed rapidly changing and moving ideas. Further, man remained subject to identity categorization process both socially and culturally. On the other hand, Hammack says that identity is a matter of sameness and difference adding that the self shows itself to the outer world through identity. It is noteworthy that, as identity assumptions suggest, the idea that identity is constructed due to its communication with others is more widely accepted rather than being an extension of a feature originating from creation. In this context, two types of identity models can be mentioned: These are traditional and modern understandings. The traditional view emphasizes that various dynamics such as class, gender, race function simultaneously to produce an identity. The modern identity view, on the other hand, is a formation in which identities are structured, produced and multiplied by overlapping with the influence of various psychological and sociological factors. This process also creates its own crisis formation. Modern subject tries to be individual and has problematics with his or her individual existence. In this concept, it is noteworthy to consider that the modernists emerged after the second world war had some characteristics like pessimism, sense of a fragmented society and the representation of an individual having no personal control outside world (Childs, 38). Additionally, It is a known fact that human differences in Western literature are shaped by binary oppositions. Additionally, dichotomies turn the formation of difference into polar oppositions by confining the inherent and inhomogeneous possibilities of language to binary divisions (Rutherford, et al. 23). In this sense, identity is defined by differences on the one hand and it is the factor that gives the individual a place in the society in which they live and establishes a connection between the society and the individual on the other hand (Woodward 1-2). Such concepts like culture, difference and identity are very related with each other.

A mid-twentieth century British novelist Jean Rhys, in her second novel called "Voyage in the Dark" tells Anna Morgan's story in modernist words and emphasizes the importance of identity as a sociological and cultural concept. Anna's identity problem as a female is very related with the fact that she has to move from her Caribbean home to England after his father's death by the influence of her step-mother. During her voyage of difficult experiences Anna has a wish to engage with the colonial legacy on the one hand, she wants to assert her own identity and tries to save herself from being absorbed by the colonial power's culture on the other hand as the problematic of a postcolonial situation and migration. Anna's first love affair in London as chorus girl with Walter makes her a kept woman at the end. She loses her virginity and she accepts to be supported financially by him until she is left by Walter. As a result of this kind of mistreatment and poverty in a foreign country, she becomes a prostitute. She is alienated and miserable not only socially both emotionally in her surrounding in London. She wishes that is just a dream to live in London in poverty whereas she was in peace in her own country before his father's death: "Sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was the dream, but I could never fit them together" (Rhys, 8).

As the protagonist of the novel Anna is portrayed as a kind of de-centered modernist subject with her fragmented identity. Anna's identity is shaped with varied voices as a cross-cultural identity, and it is seen that she suffers from her in-betweenness throughout the novel. In the study, identity problem of the modern individual having multiple identities and roles as being the members of multiple groups and social and cultural backgrounds in British society has been analyzed in order to show the dilemma of the fragmented and alienated identities with references to modernism.

**Key words:** Fragmented, alienated, identity, postcolonial, modernism, female, Jean Rhys.