

Thesis Abstract

This study seeks to take a psychological look at the dependency syndrome in the female psyche in Rhys' *Quartet*, *Voyage In The Dark*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. That is, my intention is to show that the behaviours of Rhys' heroines are learned -- are a direct result of conditioning. In attempting to show that Rhys' heroines exhibit learned behaviours which ensure that they remain dependent, it is at first necessary to look at sexual differences to determine whether these differences are biological in nature or a result of social influences. While research clearly suggests some differences between the sexes have a neurological base, it is nevertheless emphasized that differences in attitudes and behaviours between the sexes depend to a large extent on the way children are reared and the expectations which are attached to the sexes.

Since no study of psychology could possibly be complete without a look at behaviour my next step is to examine behaviour. What is behaviour? Behaviour can be defined as a collective term which includes all that organisms do. Behaviourists too tend to support the belief that environment and learning determine human behaviour. Human behaviour helps to determine the way we perceive the world around us. Human learning and human behaviour are regarded as determined largely by outside influences.

This paper seeks to show that the Rhys' heroines are the products of their environment and that the outside influences which impact upon these women shatter their awareness of and feelings about their own personal and social identities. Since how one feels about one's self adds significance to one's habits, attitudes, and beliefs, it seems obvious that Marya, Anna and Antoinette are doomed to be dependent - to have little self esteem.