A FOLKLORIC STUDY ON *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

by

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    This study aims to offer an alternative approach to analyze and understand literary texts through folklore. I focused on Jean Rhys's famous novel *Wide Sargasso Sea,* which has often been examined through a postcolonial approach. My thesis suggests that the postcolonial criticisms are limiting to our understanding of the novel; therefore, an alternative way is needed to explore *Wide Sargasso Sea* and evaluate its major themes such as cultural clashes and misconceptions from a different perspective. Folklore has allowed me to explore the novel from a wider spectrum because it provides a deeper understanding of the characters, their identities, places, and dreams in the novel. Folklore not only studies the individuals and their societies, but also goes beyond the stereotypes and generalizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Jean Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890 to a Welsh doctor and a white Creole mother. She moved to England when she was sixteen, where she spent most of her life. Until her death in 1979 Rhys wrote several novels, including *After Leaving Mackenzie* (1931), *Voyage In the Dark* (1934), and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Widely acknowledged as a prequel to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* has been argued among scholars from different perspectives such as feminist, colonial, and postcolonial approaches. Generally, scholars accept that the novel successfully grasps the historical, social, and cultural context of alienation, displacement, and colonization through articulating the "opposites," as M.M Adjarian explains in her essay, "Between and Beyond Boundaries in Wide Sargasso Sea." These opposite elements can be classified as "self and the other," "sanity and insanity," "feminine and masculine," "black and white," "fiction and history". The novel itself is a perfect amalgamation of juxtapositions and a product of a consciousness that is itself a product of a multicultural heritage. In some cases, Rhys was criticized as a writer due to her own cultural dilemma, being a white Creole descendent of Welsh, Irish, and Scottish ancestors. Carine Melkom Mardorossian brings up some of the questions raised by the critics of the postcolonial approach as follows:

> Was Rhys herself governed by the values of the colonizing power she criticizes in her writings? Is *Wide Sargasso Sea* exposing or obscuring the violence of colonialism? Is Rhys critical of or complicit with the colonialist discourse and exploitation? Is she both? Are the black Creoles and ex-Africans merely there as objects whose fate is folded into that of the protagonist? Does the novel's conclusion represent an attempt at community across racial barriers or the recognition of an unbridgeable separation? Because of the fluidity and polyphonic nature of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s narrative style, these questions have received diametrically opposed answers in recent years (82).

Most critics have tried to explain the cultural misunderstandings, social misconceptions, and stereotyped gender issues in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by approaching the novel through a postcolonial

perspective, in which Antoinette has been claimed to represent the colonized, whereas Rochester has signified the colonizer, Great Britain. This is not only due to the gender difference and socially constructed hierarchical position of the female and the male in society, but also because Antoinette, as a Creole woman from Jamaica, marries the civilized British man, Rochester, whose country used to "own" part of the Caribbean as he also "owns" his wife later in the novel. The patriarchal male voice of Rochester dominates the female identity of Antoinette by renaming her as "Bertha," which is a European name, and labeling her as "the lunatic," just because he cannot make sense of the cultural differences. Most postcolonial critics and scholars seem to have interpreted this relationship as a representation of what colonization has done to the colonized nations through the domination of the British male discourse over the female Creole identity.

Considering the embattled relationship, Carine Melkom Mardorossian questions the effect of colonialism on this relationship between Rochester and Antoinette and their alienation due to what they symbolize. For Mardorossian, like most of the postcolonial critics, Rochester with his English background stands for the British dominance and colonialism in the West Indies. Therefore, how he views the West Indian culture is actually a reference to the way the colonizer perceives and looks at the colonized. In this sense, Antoinette is the colonized and her madness stands both for the chaos and the sense of displacement in the Caribbean, and for the historical background of the island, which has lost its original identity because of being colonized. Although Antoinette's madness is depicted as her weakness –hence the weakness of her land and people- it is how she breaks through colonialism. When Antoinette burns the Thornfield Hall, she demolishes the colonialism. It is claimed that her imprisonment is the result of colonialism,

but her rejection of the Anglo name given to her and causing fire at Thornfield Hall is a reference to her freedom, hence the symbolic end of colonialism.

On the other hand, some scholars question the possible reasons behind Antoinette and Rochester's inability to understand each other, their surroundings, and their own personal expectations from life and happiness, which lead their marriage to fall apart in addition to how Antoinette ends up in madness and burning down the Thornfield Mansion. Most scholars interpret the novel through a postcolonial understanding of how cultural identity defines and differentiates the individuals, how hierarchical and patriarchal stereotypes and socially constructed values affect relationships within the concept of race, ethnicity, and gender, and what role broken family relationships play in one's life. Most ideas suggested reflect a postcolonial perspective. Therefore, I believe that a different approach to the issue of the "opposites" in the novel will let me evaluate the novel differently.

As Mardorossian shows, the oppositions in the novel do not necessarily symbolize the power struggle between the colonized and the colonizer, but these contradictory features of the different identities reveal information about each character's cultural and social backgrounds. For instance, after Daniel Cosway sends a letter to Rochester in which he tells him the Cosways have the "madness" and Antoinette was not an exception, Rochester begins to ponder, but he does not show any feelings except for distancing himself from his wife. Thinking back, he says, "How old I was when I learned to hide what I felt? A very small boy. Six, five, even earlier. It was necessary I was told, and that view I have always accepted" (77). Since Rochester was taught to hide his feelings, he fails to understand Antoinette's impulsive reactions, whereas Antoinette doesn't hesitate to show her emotions openly, which results in her complete absence of understanding of Rochester's coldness. These cultural differences prove they both have different

natures, opposite ideas about expressing oneself. Although these ideas reflect the cultural, racial, and national identities of the characters, these differences do not stand for a colonial or racial power struggle. Instead, such characteristics (ethnicity, race, nationality, gender) that define an individual's identity indicate which folk group one belongs to. This sense of belonging to a specific group allows us to see the reasons for misconceptions and confusions among the folks, either between different or within same groups.

As Alan Dundes, a well-known folklorist, defines "the term 'folk' can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (11). Therefore, these common factors should be examined in order to understand the complexities and cultural misconceptions in *Wide Sargasso Sea* because these common elements vary significantly based on cultural, individual, and gender-based expectations and values of each folk group. Adjarian explains that Rochester marries Antoinette for wealth, then "tries to make her more knowable- and thus less threatening" –since he is not familiar with her culture, hence, folk group–, and "coerces his wife to subsume her identity and all the cultural and personal associations that go along with it into one he has constructed for her" because he is being "true to his role as colonizer" (206). Adjarian continues her argument by claiming that Rochester's colonizing actions resemble Christopher Columbus, "the archetypal colonizer-figure of Americas," who came to the New World and took over not only the land, but also its inhabitants.

Although I recognize these criticisms and various interpretations of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, I aim to suggest an alternative approach to the novel using some of the principles of folklore. I acknowledge how colonization might result in broken family relationships, and lack of comprehending differences in cultural values, gender-based and racial understanding of individuals of each other can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings. However,

through a folkloric approach it can be understood that people belong to different folk groups

based on their beliefs, traditions, customs, habits, and expectations, which can illuminate why

Antoinette and Rochester fail to make sense of each other. Lack of a sense of belonging to a

particular folk group would lead an individual to an identity crisis as well as being rejected by

another group where they wish to gain identity. According to *Living Folklore*, a folk group is

made up of people who share the same values, traditions, beliefs, language, knowledge, and even

ethnicity. A folk group is not an official organization; being born to a certain family and growing

up with their teachings is enough for an individual to become a part of a folk group.

> To be a member of a family or any other folk group, no matter how loosely or informally defined, requires special knowledge of its language, behavior, and rules-spoken or unspoken. These types of communication convey and express the group's attitudes, beliefs, values, and worldview to other members of the group and often to outsiders (31). Families also share objects that represent significant relationships, values and traditions (32). Group identity depends not only on shared communication within the group, but also on interaction with other groups, which helps define and reinforce a sense of "groupness"(36).

For example, Antoinette, being a white, Creole woman living in a black majority society in

the English colony of Jamaica after the Britain's Emancipation Act frees colonial slaves, facing

both cultural and racial rejection, struggles to define her own identity and where she belongs.

Without even figuring out which folk group she belongs to, she meets Rochester, the English

man to be her husband shortly, who is also from a completely different folk group with English

values, traditions, customs, beliefs, and most importantly, language. Later in the novel, we

clearly see how different folk groups might fail to make sense of each other when Rochester

begins to call Antoinette "Bertha," which shows how his striving to understand her turns into an

act of familiarizing her with his own culture because clearly, he is a complete stranger to the

Creole culture. "By attempting to imagine Antoinette into the role of a proper English wife, he is

forced to recognize her ultimate inability to conform to the discourses, which constitute the normal within the frame of English upper class subjectivity" (Kendrick 238). Belonging to the English upper class, and knowing nothing about the Caribbean, he finds it easier to just try to adjust her to his own folk group. Also, as Anne Simpson explains, "Rochester is generally possessed by a fear of being overwhelmed – by the lushness of the island, by the customs of the people, by the obeah expressed in Christophine's rituals – and his responses to the terror of the engulfment are impulsive and overbearing" (121). Unfamiliarity with the environment and the culture shows how being an outsider to a folk group might affect one's view of another.

   To be able to study the cultural, social, and gender-based differences within and among folk groups, we need to define what folklore is, and what it involves. Unlike what most people would anticipate, folklore is not only about ancient stories, folk tales, oral or verbal fairy tales, or supernatural occurrences. As Sims and Stephens suggest in their book *Living Folklore,* "Folklore is informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures and our traditions, that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviors and materials. It is also interactive, dynamic process of creating, communicating, and performing as we share that knowledge with other people"(8). They also assert that "Folklore exists in cities, suburbs and rural villages, in families, work groups and dormitories….It involves values, traditions" (2). Considering all these elements that folklore embraces and the new research in literary history and the study of folklore, I plan to attempt to bring these two disciplines (literature and folklore) together. Therefore, I will be able to explore how folk groups form, what it means to belong to a folk group as well as how folklore influences self-identification and cultural identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. By looking at how folk groups interact with each other as well as with others, I can apply these terms to interpret the novel from

a different perspective, which is still not fully explored. Moreover, I will use the social construction theory, which suggests we build our own judgements, in fact,"we socially construct" them from the concepts, values, and experiences that our own groups take for granted, as Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann argue in *The Social Construction of Reality*. If the values that cause cultural misunderstandings and complexities among different folk groups are examined as a product of society, a creation of every folk group, which not only vary from one culture to another, but differ even in the same culture, then we can manage to analyze why Rochester and Antoinette fail to make sense of each other. They are also products of their own folk groups, having different experiences and expectations of the world.

Studying a literary text through folklore might be unusual, and some literary scholars might even think that exploring a novel through folklore is too demanding because of all the details that have to be related to the discipline of folklore. However, as H.R. Ellis Davidson writes, " This is not a matter of dredging our literature to search for nuggets of folklore lurking in the depths, while literary scholars stand aloof from such mundane pursuits, but a new recognition of how knowledge of folklore motifs can help literary scholars and folklorists alike to understand and interpret" (74). Folklore does not aim to analyze the text itself, but what the text reflects through people, places, beliefs, customs, and culture. Alan Dundes acknowledges that "the goal of folklorists is not to understand the text, but to understand people" (Sims 192). Folklore is an alternative approach to understand a literary text from a different perspective and will discover more than the literary terms or symbols; it will explain why certain characters behave differently, how places and nature affect the concept of identity, and what role the characteristics that define identity and culture play in these people's lives.

Because folklore embraces the latest research in literary history and different aspects of cultural studies, bringing these two disciplines (literature and folklore) together will amplify my understanding of the relationship between folklore and identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. My aim is primarily to understand the struggles of the characters and how their individual (mis)conceptions push them apart from each other by studying the text.

In Chapter 1 and 2, I plan to explore the significance of personal differences in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, by exploring how folklore defines identity, and how it deals with "opposites," or "differences" of identity in the novel. Folklore embraces everything that makes an individual unique, but at the same time, unifies these unique individuals by bringing them together through their shared experiences. Folklore "involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving…It's about people and the way people learn. It helps us learn who we are and how to make meaning of the world around us" (Sims and Stephens 2). Therefore, studying folklore in context will reveal the "opposites" in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and show the differences among characters through a perspective that has not been explored in the novel yet.

These cultural and personal clashes between Rochester and Antoinette that result in cracks in their relationship and lack of security and love, may symbolize a hierarchical and colonial relationship; however, I want to explore these oppositions and complexities caused by the multicultural and multiracial identifications, by analyzing how folklore defines the terms "identity" and "folk group," to establish how the sense of "groupness" affects not only the communication within a folk group, but also with other groups. The sense of belonging to a folk group influences one's identity in addition to the values received by the society, family, and self-exploration. Colonial tension between the two cultures (Antoinette as a white Creole and Rochester as the British colonizer) as well as the racial conflicts within the same culture (white

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and black Creoles) can be examined by looking at how folklore grasps the cultural and social diversity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In order to do that, in Chapter 1, I focus on the definitions of "esoteric" and "exoteric" factors, which are the elements in folklore "that stresses a group's sense of its identity in relation to other groups" (Green 236) while discussing what a folk group is and how it relates to Antoinette and Rochester's self and socially constructed identities. In Chapter 2, connected with the term "identity," I discuss gender-based identity, using feminist perspectives on folklore scholarship and apply its values to the theme of identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

In Chapter 3, I focus on sense of nature in relation to self-identification in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Place and environment play a significant role in the novel since the roots of individuals, where they come from, and where they reside define who they are. As Dundes suggests, "A place can be, and often is, an extremely meaningful component of individual identity" (13); therefore, I explored the cultural and personal differences of characters based on place in this chapter. Examining these differences in association with sense of place has given me the opportunity to look at Antoinette and Rochester from a different perspective, in that, instead of accepting the fact that Rochester is from Great Britain and Antoinette is from Jamaica as a representation of colonialism, I explore the significance of their differences based on their homes as a means of their self-identification based on place, hence their different expectations of what a place should look like – as their understanding of a place shows that they belong to different folk groups – . These differences in their expectations enable them from understanding and appreciating each other.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I discuss how dreams function in the novel from two different approaches. One is the concept of "dream-like" that is frequently used to describe a place or an

event that the individuals are not familiar with. Second, I refer to the psychoanalytic approach and interpretation of dreams, their connection with *myths*, which is a term used in different ways by psychoanalysts, and folklorists, as well as some of the features they have similar to fairy tales. Most critics interpreted Antoinette's dreams as an anticipation of the future, however, I think how people interpret dreams is subjective and they are not necessarily a reflection of the future, but a mix of memories of the past and the psychological situation of the dreamer in the present. Adam Kuper's theory of dreams and myths has been very useful for this chapter in addition to Freud and Carl Jung's theories of dream interpretations although their theories might not be widely acknowledged by some folklorists. Also, Sharon Rose Wilson's approach to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the dream-like aspects of certain events and the consecutive dreams Antoinette has allowed me to explore these elements in more depth.

Folklore matters, especially when it is combined with literature because it broadens our understanding and knowledge of literary pieces from a wide range of perspectives. Folklore has allowed me to explore *Wide Sargasso Sea* from a different angle than has been used in the past.

CHAPTER 1 : NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY THROUGH FOLKLORE

> Each person has a distinctive identity 'theme,' like a musical theme with variations. 'Identity refers to the whole pattern of sameness within change which is a human life… There remains a continuing me who is the style that permeates all those changes. (Norman N. Holland 452)

> The distinctive characteristics of a person's character or the character of a group which relate to who they are and what is meaningful to them. Some of the main sources of identity include gender, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnicity, and social class. An important marker of an individual's identity is his or her name, and naming is also important for group identity (Antony Giddens 1020).

"Identity" is a broad and a complicated concept, as the human mind is complex itself, and without considering what different elements an identity is made up of, it is difficult to study the development of characters in a literary work. Therefore, the term "identity" should be studied through a wide spectrum of an individual's cultural background, social status, nationality, ethnicity, and gender. Consequently, scholars and researchers should consider these elements that form people's identities, and avoid focusing on only one aspect of their characteristics, because they might fail to understand the interaction among the characters.

According to the definition provided by Antony Giddens, people's identities begin to develop in their childhood. Family is probably the most crucial part of forming people's identity since they gain their social status, nationality, ethnicity going along with the language, customs, beliefs, and traditions they learn from their first environment before they begin to explore other values they find more appealing to their identity. Starting with the family, the individuals become part of a "group," in which they can express and share similar values. "This is one of the tenets of folklore scholarship: that informal or unofficial shared knowledge is a defining feature of a folk group" (Sims and Stephens 30). This group identity allows individuals to develop their own personal (initial) identities until new interactions with other groups occur, which helps them

redefine and reinforce "a [new] sense of 'groupness'," (36) where they can communicate "esotericly" and/or "exotericly."

The esoteric and exoteric factors play a significant role in understanding groups and their identity because the members of a folk group "base a lot of their folklore (and thus their identity) on presenting themselves to others, or on defining themselves in relation to other groups" (Sims and Stephens 36). As David J. De Levita, in his book *The Concept of Identity,* also asserts the significance of how identity should be defined in relation to others, instead of merely focusing on one individual's personal identification: "… no one has identity on an uninhabited island, one has it only in so far as one is 'with others'" (150). Therefore, "folklore matters" for examining the concept of identity because it does not only examine individuals merely based on identities they have either created for themselves and the identities that they have already been a part of by birth, but how they are perceived and identified in relation to and by others.

According to William Hugh Jansen, "The esoteric applies to what one group thinks of itself and what it supposes others think of it. The exoteric is what one group thinks of another and what it thinks that the other group thinks it thinks"(206-7). Jansen claims that a group might unconsciously obtain esoteric factors. Based on a group's or an individuals's sense of "isolation" and "communication," people might be aware of the exoteric factors held against them, so they can either acknowledge them tolerantly, or reject them (207).

Jansen explains that there are three major factors that "make a group liable to the esoteric-exoteric factor" (209), and the most dominant factor is "isolation."Jansen says: "Many groups are definable simply because they each have their peculiar types of isolation ranging from obvious geographic separation to other not-so-obvious sorts of isolation" (209). Isolation, both an individual's alienation from his or her own group and an individual's sense of estrangement

due to the geographical differences, can be observed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. For instance, Rochester's inability to understand the different features of Antoinette, who has a white Creole woman identity although she lacks a sense of belonging to one specific group because of her inbetweenness, leads him to distance himself from Antoinette and everything else that reminds him of her. When Rochester says, "…I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did" (69), he clearly shows his inability to understand or appreciate the differences because he cannot associate himself with Antoinette's folk group; he cannot share the same feelings or thoughts with her, and because of that, Rochester feels alienated, hence, unfamiliar to his wife and everything around them. On the other hand, Antoinette feels inbetween in her own folk group because of a lack of a sense of belonging. She is isolated from her family, and her society because of racial and cultural differences. She is isolated in herself whereas, Rochester feels isolated because he has moved to a place that is completely alien to him. He has married the girl, who is a part of this alien environment, which makes it even more difficult for him to embrace a sense of belonging or appreciation of the differences.

Rochester is alienated in a different folk group since he has his own esoteric values, lacking the knowledge the West Indians have, which is not even close to his own. As Jansen shows, "Second to isolation as a force subjecting a group to the esoteric-exoteric complex is the possession of a knowledge or training that either is or seems to be peculiar" (210). Lack of knowledge leads Rochester to many misunderstandings and misconceptions about Antoinette and her culture. What is normal to Antoinette is illogical for Rochester, and what Rochester strictly believes in is beyond Antoinette's understanding. Lack of knowledge about a group of people reminds the individuals that they cannot be a part of another folk group unless they understand

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their certain behaviors, beliefs, traditions, and even their language and appearances. As a result of this lack of knowledge, the outsider will perceive the other group members exoterically.

Jansen also adds that the esoteric factor reflects and asserts the sense of belonging of a certain group or members of that group, whether it is intentional or not (207) since the esoteric factor stems from knowledge they share as part of their group identity. This knowledge may not be acknowledged by the members of another folk group as their own knowledge that they attained from their own group will most likely be different from the other. If this knowledge is too "distinctive or distinguishable," as Jansen suggests, then the "occurrence of exoteric folklore about that group " will be greater as well. If the size of the group is smaller, it will not be recognized easily, so members are more likely to preserve their esoteric folklore than a group that is larger and probably more well-known. If the group is larger with more self-confidence, then the group will have weaker esoteric folklore, as Jansen argues. Accordingly, we can see that Rochester belongs to a larger folk group, with a male, British identity, hence, with weaker esoteric folklore. Therefore, he already assumes that wherever he goes, people will have the similar features or customs he and his society has. When he encounters the contrary, he feels insecure and estranged; neither the people nor the natural world is familiar to him in Jamaica. As a result, it is easier for him to apply his own beliefs to Antoinette rather than acknowledge her esoteric values. Exoterically, Rochester cannot and will not accept the differences, so he tries to assert his own esoteric folklore on his wife. On the other hand, Antoinette and her folk group in the West Indies do certainly have distinctive esoteric folklore, but since they are a smaller group, their esoteric folklore is not highly recognized by outsiders no matter how strongly they embrace their own folklore. For Antoinette, Rochester is the male, and he belongs to a folk group she has always heard of, but never been closely in touch with, except for her step-father, so for her, it is

more important to try to apply herself to Rochester's beliefs and likes rather than her own. Antoinette simply accepts Rochester's exoteric values and tries to please him accordingly, but since she is from a smaller group, hence so attached to her esoteric folklore that she refuses to be called Bertha, but Antoinette, her own name, which indicates her individual and national identity.

Both esoteric and exoteric factors might reveal a lot of information about folk groups as well as their members. By examining how a group defines itself, how they presume others think of themselves, and what another group think about themselves as well as what they assume the other group feel about them (since they usually tend to base their understanding of another group on their own esoteric values), one can perceive what their beliefs, customs, expectations of themselves and others, traditions, and life styles. easily. Every member reflects his own knowledge and experiences on others and vice versa. Esoteric and exoteric factors are significant part of folklore because it allows us to understand why people behave in a certain way when they encounter people from another culture. It is more than a colonial or hierarchal relationships; it is the difference in knowledge people learn from their own cultures unofficially and unintentionally.

However, although Antoinette and Rochester are categorized into different folk groups, hence, their identities are analyzed according to the features that separate them into different folk groups, based on their ethnic, cultural, social, racial, and gender, they share some common experiences. Both Antoinette and Rochester have been "outsiders" in their own society and their own family, which brings them together in a way. They both fear the unknown, so they try to survive by creating their own truths. Their different understanding of others as well as their misundertanding of each other and the differences they bring from their own personal, cultural,

and social background do not allow them to realize the similarities they might share. "… There can even be a folklore form which derives its fundemental meaning from its direction towards outsiders, people of different identity" (Bauman qtd in Sims and Stephens, 37). According to this idea, it can be stated that a folk group can be identified by how other groups exoterically view them; in other words, how the members of a particular folk group want to be identified by others. By showing off their certain values, mostly by their appearances or "stereotyped" actions, the members let outsiders recognize them easily. This recognition is a way of communication both within and among the folk groups because the members also esoterically label themselves.

Another significant "contributor to a strong esoteric/exoteric component in a group's folklore is its being privy to knowledge and skills that seem especially arcane or specialized" (Green 236). This "privy knowledge" may not make sense to the members of another folk group because this knowledge is gained by hearsay or personal encounter with members of another folk group, and can be shared merely among the members of that particular group. To illustrate, during Antoinette's childhood, the house she lives in burns down with the parrot they have in it. Antoinette remembers something she has heard in her culture, in which she has learned - unofficially,- by experience. Antoinette says, "I heard someone say something about bad luck and remembered it was very unlucky to kill a parrot, or even to see a parrot die" (Rhys 5). This simple knowledge shows that Antoinette at least belongs to the folk group of Jamaica although she cannot identify herself either with the white, ex-slave owners, or the blacks, ex-slaves.

Antoinette, the main character of the novel, is the daughter of an ex-slave owner father, Alexander Cosway, who eventually drinks himself to death and loses his sugar plantation with the Emancipation Act setting the slaves free, and Annette, a Martinique woman, first widowed, then married to Mr. Mason, a wealthy Englishman, who comes to the West Indies to make

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money. Being a white Creole girl living in a black majority society in the English colony of

Jamaica, Antoinette has to deal with both social and racial rejection, not knowing where she

belongs, or who she really is. Antoinette says, "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated

us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping dogs lie. One day a little girl followed me

singing, 'Go away white cockroach, go away, go away.' I walked fast, but she walked faster.

'White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody want you. Go away' " (Rhys 8). Antoinette's

image of herself is complex because although she is white, she belongs to an ex-slave owner

family. It is hard for her to define herself as part of a particular group. On the other hand, she is

alienated from her own mother, so she gets closer to the black Creole group members, but she is

mostly rejected by them as well. What other people from other groups (black Creoles) think of

her identity usually defines who she is as she in unable to figure out her own identity. Towards

the end of the novel, when Antoinette is mocked by the black house servant, Amelie, who also

sleeps with Rochester, her husband, Antoinette explains what has happened to Christophine and

expresses her inbetweenness, "It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what

they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders.

And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am

and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever scorn at all" (Rhys 76).

Dorothy Noyes's approach to this idea of assuming a folk group "as pre-existing," based on the

"partly socially constructed" characteristics of people, such as race, ethnicity, common interest,

and class shows its risk since we might fall into "the us/them trap, in which 'our' group is always

different from 'their' group" (Sims and Stephens 37). Despite different skin colors and social

status, Antoinette is a Martinique woman just like Christophine, her mother, or the other blacks,

so they have similar beliefs, traditions, common interests, and knowledge of the environment,

but the lack of understanding of differences leads them to perceive each other "as not as good as [they] are" (37).

Antoinette is not only "exiled" from her society, but also from her mother's affection. In the novel, Annette never really mothers Antoinette, so she tries to find the love she needs from Christophine, a black, Martinique woman given to Annette as a wedding gift to work for her as a servant (Rhys 6). Despite the hierarchical difference in their social status, Christophine is the closest thing for Antoinette has to a mother figure. However, she can never replace the love she has hoped to get from her own mother. Antoinette feels she is closer to the black people, but she never really gets accepted by them, which she realizes when she thinks Tia, the daughter of another servant, is her friend until she wounds her. The loss of sense of belonging and love makes it harder for Antoinette to develop a self-identity. Stereotypes of color and social status within Antoinette's own folk group in addition to lack of maternal love make it almost impossible for her to define her own identity. Tia narrates the complexity of multicultural identities and the internalized stereotypes implanted in the minds of the people, including children in the West Indies: "Plenty of white people in Jamaica. Real white people, they got gold money. They didn't look at us; nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger" (Rhys 9). When the members of a folk group accept the negative stereotypes imposed on their cultures, it leads to even more misconceptions because if the members streotype themselves, it is an inevitable action for the outsiders to identify them with the same negative aspects as well. As Dundes suggests, "Sometimes it is the internalization of stereotypes by a minority group which can cause problems in identity… A person can have negative views of his own group…" (*Folklore Matters* 24-5). Both Tia and Antoinette are aware of these stereotypes, although a little confused. When they

switch dresses, Annette doesn't speak to Antoinette for a while because her daughter has worn

the dress of a black girl, who belongs to a lower social status, hence a different folk group and

Antoinette clearly doesn't belong to that group no matter how close she feels herself to the black

people: "She [Annette] is ashamed of me, what Tia said is true" (Rhys 11). Stereotypes define

the folklore identity and group of an individual. Tia's dress definitely doesn't match with

Antoinette's ex-slave owner identity, and the dress as an object signifies the ex-slave group, so

Annette feels shame when she sees her daughter in Tia's dress. As Dundes quotes Zavalloni

(1973:69), " A person can have negative views of his own group, but this does not necessarily

imply self-hatred," and Dundes adds, " If self-hatred is truly a part of personal identity, then the

interrelationship between personal identity and group identity is once again clear-cut. Self-hate

could not arise without input from others" (25). Therefore, it can be concluded that Antoinette's

self-hate does not only stem from her inability to develop an identity, but what others think of

her. Lack of maternal love, rejection from her only friend, Tia, representing the black group

identity, and failing to find love from her husband contribute to her self-hate.

Being a minority member in Jamaica, Rochester's alienation and inability to associate himself

with the culture and the place also result in self-hate. Although Dundes writes that self-hate is

prevelant in the colonized society stereotyped by the colonized, who "accepted the idea that they

have traits attributed to them by their colonizers, for example, that they are lazy, docile,

incompetent, or ugly, or that women see themselves as maternal, intuitive, incapable of abstract

reasoning, etc." (*Folklore Matters* 25) the colonizer can end up hating himself. Folklore

scholarship examines this colonized and the colonizer concept through national and racial

identity, so in this model, Rochester represents the British identity, but clearly, he is a minority in

the West Indies. Therefore, as Rochester himself claims, he is being stereotyped by the West

Indians. He also has his own stereotypical views of the people, belonging to a place and a culture he is not capable of understanding. As a result, he comes to pity and hate himself in a similar way he expects the people of Jamaica to think of himself: "Pity. Is there none for me? Tied to a lunatic for life – a drunken lying lunatic – gone her mother's way" (Rhys 130).

According to *Living Folklore*, "Sometimes, we choose groups that express the identity we want to create for ourselves, rather than find groups that express the identity (or perhaps, identities) we already have" (43). Although people are born to a folk group due to "proximity" or "circumstance," they can come across and pick new groups, which they think express the identity they want to depict to others better than the previous group they had belonged to. Unable to find herself a true identity or a group, Antoinette finds hope in her husband, Rochester, an English man, who unwillingly comes to Jamaica in pursuit of money and to satisfy his father's expectations. Biased from the very beginning, Rochester perceives the people in the West Indies according to his own experiences with them, including his own wife, Antoinette, without even trying to understand their culture. In a similar way, Antoinette has different expectations of him although she has no clue of his own folk group. She only knows he is from England, but Antoinette doesn't know much about it, so she subconsciously streotypes him in her mind, based on her false deeds.

At the time of the wedding ceremony, Rochester makes some observations of his surroundings and comes up with a lot of stereotypical ideas about the people and their actions in his mind. First of all, he claims that he has played the part he was expected to play (55) when he treats Antoinette lovingly as if he cares about her, but then he wonders if anyone realized that he's been pretending: "If I saw an expression of doubt or curiosity it was on a black face not a white one" (55), which shows that he expects more assurance from the white Creoles than the

black ones because he associates himself more closely with them due to the skin colour and stereotyped, racial hierarchy in most societies. Rochester continues to explain what he sees when he looks at the people, his wife, and the atmosphere, trying to read the people's unfamiliar expressions from their faces and judging how they might perceive him as well as how he thinks he has been acting. This paragraph shows the esoteric features of Rochester's self-image in an unfamiliar place while he is also trying to understand what other folks think of his image:

> All slave-owners. All resting in peace. When we came out of the church I took her hand. It was cold as ice in the hot sun. Then I was at a long table in a crowded room. Palm-leaf fans, a mob of servants, the women's head handkerchiefs striped red and yellow, the men's dark faces. The strong taste of punch, the cleaner taste of champagne, my bride in white but I hardly remember what she looked like. Then in another room women dressed in black. Cousin Julia, Cousin Ada, Aunt Line. Thin or fat they all looked alike. Gold ear-rings in pierced ears. Silver bracelets jangling on their wrists… (Do their eyes get smaller as they grow older? Smaller, beadier, more inquisitive?) After that I thought the same expression on all their faces. Curiosity? Pity? Ridicule? But why should they pity me. I who have done so well for myself? (Rhys 55-6).

Rochester is obviously lost in his own mind, struggling to make sense of the traditions, customs, and even the facial expressions of the people, but it is almost impossible for him to understand the differences between the West Indian and his own culture. He does not know what he should expect since he is unsure how these people express their emotions whereas it would be easier for him to read how his own people would show their feelings.

As Tad Tuleja claims," social identity is a patchwork affair, a process of making and remaking not only our 'selves,' but also the communual matrices from which they emerge" (7). Rochester's social identity is not only made up of where he comes from or what skin colour he has, but also how other folks from another group, based on their culture and beliefs define him as. Social identity is not merely about the origins of a culture, but also

the people's interaction with other members of another folk group and how they are perceived by them.

In that sense, it wouldn't be wrong to claim that folklore and identity might closely be related to stereotypes; they can stem from either personal narratives or experiences and how an individual from another culture interprets the others.

> The distinctive, character trait of any identity set – no matter whether the set is based on sex, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation, occupation,etc. – is very probably the subject (or object) of stereotyping. There is self-concept, but also self-stereotype; national character and also national stereotype; ethnic character and ethnic stereotype. Self-stereotype and ethnic/national stereotypes are interrelated, just as personal identity and group identity are (Dundes 22).

As Dundes explains, every characteristic of identity can be stereotyped. Individuals might stereotype themselves in addition to being stereotyped by the other members of another folk group.

Individuals are most likely to identify the other(s) through their first impression of them, which is often gained by looking at their apperances, clothings, facial expressions, and the way they speak. Rochester does not know much about the West Indies, but as a man from a much more different country with almost no experience with living in a foreign country with people who look alien to him, his perception of the people and his view of the "wilderness" of the place are stereotyped based on his own knowledge. He tries to identify himself with the people, especially with his wife, however, Rochester is too overwhelmed by the cultural and racial differences: "She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (Rhys 46).

It is clear that Rochester struggles to familiarize with Antoinette, but he fails to understand her difference, her being from another folk group. What Rochester lacks is an acceptance of the cultural differences; instead, he is forcing himself to see European or English features in Antoinette so that he could relate himself to her. Therefore, it is not surprising that he renames his wife as "Bertha," which is a European name. Names play a significant role in associating oneself with a new place, which will also be examined in the next chapter. Names not only give some ideas about a place to a visitor, mostly self-stereotypes based on what they see, feel, or hear, but also they set up an overview of what the native people from that place could be like. By renaming Antoinette, and criticizing the way she looks, the size of her eyes, or the way she dresses up, Rochester wishes to bring Antoinette to his own folk group, to familiarize her. Although he stays in the West Indies, he is not willing to become a part of that culture, at least, focus on understanding and appreciating the differences between his and Antoinette's culture.

First impressions are not only gained by appearances, but also through personal narratives, as Dundes suggests. "An individual may gain his first impression of a national or ethnic or religious or racial group by hearing traditional jokes or expressions referring to the alleged personality characteristics of that group," which sets up an "overlap between self-stereotype and national stereotype" (23). Therefore, we can conclude that Rochester's stereotypical perception of others not only depend on what he sees or feels about them individually, but also what he has heard from others. Rochester has been asked a couple of times after marrying Antoinette why he has come to this wilderness full with wild and uncivilized people by the native people of the island, which causes him to doubt the culture even more. Also, Rochester receives a letter from Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's step-

brother, about the madness running in their family and how Antoinette would become mad just like her mother, Annette, one day. "He [Rochester] vacillates between interpreting the black Creoles' denials and silences as a sign of ignorance and lack of knowledge (their silence is the truth) or as evidence of their duplicity and underlying sinister intentions (their silences and denials hide the truth)" (Mardorossian 1999:1081). Hearing all the family history full of madness and idiocy reassures "Rochester's pre-established views and the suspicions stimulated by Daniel Cosway's allegations" (1999:1081).

Finally, overwhelmed by the power of narrations, the social and cultural differences he cannot grasp, Rochester not only ends up hating the members of other folk groups in Jamaica, but the place itself since he associates all the unfamiliarities and pecularities to himself: "I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears, their flattery and envy, conceit and deceit. And I hated the place" (136).

Clearly, esoteric and exoteric aspects of a group identity show that an individual's identity cannot be merely based on self-definition, but how other members of the same folk group as well as other groups define the person. Self-identification and being streotypically identified by others result in misconceptions and misunderstandings due to the different values they have. Individuals first identify themselves with their folk group they are born to, but gradually some members might want to redefine their own identities, by either meeting other people that they feel closer to, or by creating a different identity for themselves to fit into a different group. However, this doesn't always work as in Antoinette's case; she can neither conform to the whites nor to the blacks. On the other hand, Rochester also fails to associate himself with his wife and other people in the West Indies. Exploring these relationships through the discipline of folklore proves that these

characters in the novel do not need to stand for a colonial symbol, which reflects how

Rochester has colonized Antoinette as the representative of England colonialism, but they

should be examined individually, considering their folk groups and esoteric-exoteric

values.

CHAPTER 2: FOLKLORE AND GENDER-BASED IDENTITY

> *The word 'identity' is paradoxical in itself, meaning both sameness and distinctiveness, and its contradictions proliferate when it is applied to women (Gardiner 347).*

The complexity of the concept of identity depends on various elements based on what defines people's identities, such as their ethnicity, traditions, language, social and economic status as well as their gender. Although people might belong to the same folk group according to these elements, they differ from one another significantly when it comes to their gender not only because of their biological differences, but also their psychological situations and expectations. Carolyn G. Heilburn clarifies the gender differences in her book, *Reinventing Womanhood*:

> All societies, from the earliest and most primitive to today's, have ceremoniously taken the boy from the female domain and urged his identity as a male, as a responsible unfeminine individual, upon him. The girl undergoes no such ceremony, but she pays for serenity of passage with a lack of selfhood and of the will to autonomy that only the struggle for identity can confer. . . (Heilbrun 104).

Female identity may not undergo such ceremony but, is developed through social and parental expectations of the society, which will be different in each folk group. Mostly, these "socially constructed rules" are imposed on society through male discourse. A woman is expected to follow certain rules to become a proper wife and a mother in the future; if she does not fit into the social rules, she will lose her chance of finding a man to marry and complete her duties as a proper woman in society. As it can be concluded here, a woman can not form a self apart from a man: "A woman is not an adolescent at puberty in our society, because her search for identity does not take place then: rather it is a search for a husband in which she then engages" (Heilbrun 178). Antoinette, who has already failed to find who she is and where she belongs, hopes to find elements that could fully define her identity by marrying Rochester. Her identity is confirmed eventually after their marriage, although it is not what she has initially imagined: first she is

called "Bertha," a European name, then she becomes the mad woman later in the novel, a different identity imposed on her by her husband just like her new name. This labeling or renaming is not only because she is a white Creole woman married to an English man, holding a lower social status, but also she is unable to conform to the social norms of a proper wife expected both from her own people and the Western society. Identity, according to Erikson, cannot merely be formed based on the identity individuals construct for themselves. Identity is both established and developed through social relationships. Therefore, as Erikson explains, society decides how a proper woman and a man should behave, and accordingly, their identities are defined through the way society acknowledges them no matter how the individuals want to reflect themselves based on how they identify themselves. Gardiner interprets Erikson's theory on identity as follows: "The concept includes both a core configuration of personal character and one's consciousness of that configuration" (350). Accordingly, it can be concluded that identity is both self-realization and self-identification of the individuals as well as their consciousness and awareness of the social norms that shape their identities. As Erikson defines, the term identity integrates "constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles" (125). Although Erikson claims that both sexes experience the same process while growing up from childhood to maturity, he also acknowledges the biological and psychological differences between the females and the males. As a result of these differences between sexes, they have different expectations from life, marriage, or love. "Therefore a young woman spends adolescence looking for the man through whom she will fulfill herself, and the maturational stages of identity and intimacy are conflated for her" (Gardiner 350). Antoinette seeks marriage for love, security, and as a way to identify herself with her husband, whereas Rochester agrees to

marry her since he is only after her money, as assigned by his father, and of course, to fulfill his sexual desires.

Antoinette's impulsive reactions do not fit in to Rochester's expectations of a woman. It becomes clear especially after Rochester sleeps with Amelie, the young housekeeper, while Antoinette is in the next room. When Antoinette visits Christophine for comfort, she gives her a bottle of rum, which gets Antoinette drunk. To Rochester, she has already gone beyond the boundaries of a proper female behavior, which is culturally structured and is subjective to the particular society, according to folklorists. Antoinette has already been "othered" by Rochester since she belongs to a society and place he doesn't understand; for Rochester, "she is one of them" (Rhys 137). Rochester gets certain that Antoinette is transforming into a mad woman when her door opens: "When I saw her I was too shocked to speak. Her hair hung uncombed and dull into her eyes which were inflamed and staring, her face was very flushed and looked swollen. Her feet were bare. However when she spoke her voice was low, almost inaudible" (Rhys 114). Rochester's description pictures a hysterical woman acting insane; however, Rochester is the main reason for her uncontrolled actions and sadness. Antoinette is under the influence of alcohol, which might explain why she is so hysterical at the moment, but for Rochester, she is turning into an animal that needs to be subdued.

According to Judith Gardiner's article "On Female Identity and Writing by Women," there are some terms related to a female identity theory that need to be developed in order to clarify the noteworthy differences between genders: "primary identity, gender identity, infantile identification, social role, the identity crisis and self concept," all of which are "components of adult identity that form early in childhood" (353). Gardiner defines primary identity as a "hypothesis about one's permanent essence or way of being," whereas a gender identity is

"knowing to which sex one is socially assigned." Gardiner claims that female infantile identifications are more complex than male ones because of the social roles that are imposed on them both from their own society and the others. When children grow up, they discover the "social roles and group identifications," and how these socially constructed roles (which should differ significantly in different cultures, countries and even among different folk groups) are "highly polarized by gender, with a broader variety of acceptable options available to boys than to girls" (353-4). And when individuals fail to fit into these social norms created by their own folk groups, they become alienated. Moreover, when a person encounters someone from a completely different folk group, which has formed its own social values and roles, the female easily becomes the other, whereas the male can get away with it by asserting his own values on the female as the right and proper one. For instance, Antoinette is *the other* in her own society and even in her family because of her liminality. Then, Rochester comes to Jamaica and he begins to see her as *the other,* although he is himself *the other* in the West Indies as a man from Great Britain. The fact that Rochester is a white male makes him more privileged than the female no matter where she is from.

Another example of Rochester's dominance is that he begins to call Antoinette "Bertha," right after he discovers that her mother was a mad woman as well as some other members of the family, a pattern that indicates to Rochester that Antoinette would be no exception (Rhys 86, 104, 115). Rochester renames her not only to make her sound more familiar to his own group, as mentioned earlier, but also aims to transform Antoinette's Creole identity to an English one, so he will be able to understand and appreciate her better by imposing English values and socially accepted "female role" (according to the English values, not the West Indian) on Antoinette. It is clear that social roles and personal identities usually depend on gender, but it is significant to

realize that these notions of gender and identity can be different. Therefore, the fact that Rochester doesn't approve of Antoinette's passionate and impulsive behaviors as "proper" doesn't mean Antoinette is mad like her mother was, or she is not socially accepted. According to Gardiner, "… being properly female in a society usually involves both doing the sorts of things mother does and being the sort of woman she is" (354). Therefore, society, or the folk group, determines whether a woman is socially acceptable or not, and it depends on the social values of this particular folk group members. When members from different folk groups encounter each other, they are more likely not to understand the different features that are attributed to what some qualities of a proper woman are. As a result, they tend to label each other based on their own values. That's why Antoinette finds Rochester cold since he was taught to hide his feelings in his own culture as a proper behavior whereas; for Rochester, Antoinette is too impulsive, and that, in his mind, is a sign for improper behavior, even madness. Also, Robert Kendrick explains:

> By attempting to imagine Antoinette into the role of a proper English wife, he is forced to recognize her ultimate inability to conform to the discourses, which constitute the normal within the frame of English upper class subjectivity. She is neither English nor a properly Anglicized Creole, and the possibility of madness and alcoholism in her family further distances her from Edward's imagined normal (238).

Rochester is completely unfamiliar with Antoinette's culture; therefore, he can only assume her identity and personality based on English values as well as what he hears from other people. So, it is no surprise that Rochester instantly accepts the idea that Antoinette will become her mother: "the mad woman." Rochester's voice becomes the authority as the male discourse. On the other hand, Antoinette's narration sounds unreliable due to her loss of time and sense of place, especially when she leaves for England with Rochester. She has already had a breakdown since Rochester slept with Amelie in the next room where she could hear them. In addition to that, she

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is now taken away from home, where everything is familiar, to a place about which she has no knowledge.

The social and gender roles in a society have been established by the folk groups according to their own specific beliefs and cultural values. Personal experiences also play a significant role for individuals when they encounter a different environment and people. These rules are not necessarily universal, but local or regional since they vary from one culture to the other:

> Groups defined by gender and/or sexual orientation are appreciated as significant folk groups with their own lore, practices, and types of group-internal and group-external communication… Perceiving gender as a cultural construct has prompted the realization that gender roles and identities are themselves traditional forms of expressive communication, that is they are social, aesthetic accomplishments and forms of folklore in their own rights (Green 407).

As Green explains, culturally or socially constructed rules are a means of communication because these rules define the characteristics of a folk group. Based on these characteristics, group members bond relations and connect in a folk group. Through this collective identification and socially constructed rules such as gender, other folk groups can communicate with each other. These rules might result in miscommunication at times because of the differences between folk groups and the different social rules they have, but even misperception is a way of understanding.

On the other hand, Judith Gardiner suggests that the social norms might vary depending on the type of the community. The prevalently accepted norms in a society might indicate that male figures are more dominant than women or vice versa, although not common. Folklore scholarship examines these differences in societies and show that there are different folk groups even in the same society, such as in Antoinette's. People are grouped based on their race, color, and social and economic situations in Jamaica, and there is no specific indication that shows

males are considered superior to females. However not much welcomed, the white European man seems more in charge, especially once married to a West Indian. He has the right to receive the fortune of the woman and take her away just like in Antoinette's situation. Gardiner defines these gender-oriented norms as follows:

> In a male-dominated society, being a man means not being like a woman. As a result, the behavior considered appropriate to each gender becomes severely restricted and polarized. I have postulated that the primary identities of women remain relational throughout life, and girls form the gender identity that defines them as women easily, securely, and permanently. Since women do not, like men, experience gender as a problem, social attempts to make it a problem for them may cause confusion and anxiety (Gardiner 359).

As Gardiner depicts, there is a clear-cut difference between being a man and a woman. As a result, the social roles that are attained by women and men from their folk groups differ significantly, and women are more likely to go through identity crisis because of the complexities of the female identity.

Antoinette is the "outsider," who "is excluded from the cultural patterns of bonding at the heart of the society, at its centers of power" (Heilbrun 37-8). Heilbrun continues to explain, "Generally speaking, outsiders are convinced of in a context of alternate or excluded cultures. The outsider is expected to have a culture of his or her own that women, as women, patently lack" (42). However, "one does not awaken to the awareness of being a female outsider, unless the condition of 'outsiderness' has, through other means, entered one's consciousness" (39). Therefore, Antoinette fails to find a self-identity by herself because her identity has changed constantly by being redefined and renamed by others. Otherness is not only being excluded from a person or a society, but also it is based on how the idea of otherness has "entered one's consciousness." Mostly, this consciousness is a result of the male discourse and oppression, but "the concept of female identity shows us how female experience is transformed into female

consciousness, often in reaction to male paradigms for female experience" (Gardiner 360). For example, when Rochester tries to change Antoinette's identity by renaming her, based on his own definition of properness, he wants to familiarize with her difference, or otherness, although Antoinette rejects the name, asserting that her name is not Bertha. Still, she easily and gradually grasps the "madness" associated with her identity due to her family past.

Antoinette's madness is first brought up by her step-brother, who also represents the male discourse. Daniel sends a letter to Rochester supposedly to warn him against the madness running in the Cosway family, and Antoinette would be no exception. Rochester, without any doubts, accepts that Antoinette is becoming insane, so he continues to assert madness to her identity, which becomes part of her self in the end. Although imposed by the male discourse, Antoinette embraces her madness, but not the name Bertha, which shows that although the female becomes what the male expects her to be, or at least, she chooses the identity she feels closer to. "Sometimes we choose groups that express the identity we want to create for ourselves, rather than express the identity (or perhaps, identities) we already have. We may seek new groups, or reject groups that we belong to due to proximity or circumstance, in order to express an identity that is closer to our own concept of who we are" (Sims and Stephens 41-3). No matter how much Antoinette's madness has been asserted by Rochester and her family past, she eventually decides to be a part of that folk group, in which she could strip off her responsibilities as a proper woman, and be who she wants to be. She actually becomes what the society has expected her to become, but it unifies her with her family since they have insanity running in their blood, as it has been claimed many times in the novel. Antoinette finally finds where she belongs; although Antoinette has never felt close to her family, she has finally unified with them through insanity.

Heilbrun refers to Virginia Woolf, one of the most well-known feminist writers, to depict the close relationship between a female identity and the concept of otherness. It can be argued that every culture has its own view and expectations of the term "woman," as it is claimed by folklorists, but according to Woolf, the otherness and the outsiderness of the woman never change: "Woolf recognized that women have always been outsiders…she also recognized that women's indispensable first task is to recognize herself as outsider…" (39-40) In that sense, Antoinette has no status as either an insider or an outsider; she is in-between. But when she realizes she is and will always be an outsider no matter where she goes, she puts on the shell of insanity to become, at least, past of her family. However, we need to understand that the self-realization and definition of outsiderness and the role of gender in these concepts can depend on the social construction of the society and the people's interactions with each other as well as others. It is significant to study what gender and sex really mean and signify in different cultures. Folklore scholarship not only examines the sameness but also the differences of individuals, which can be highly influenced by gender and how differently it affects people's perception of others.

According to *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art*, the terms *sex* and *gender* are mostly used to "indicate the aggregate of structural, functional, and behavioral differences that distinguish females and males from each other" (Green 405). On the other hand, folklorists define these terms in a slightly different way:

> …Sex denotes only those physiological and functional features that are direct manifestations of one's genetic endowment… Gender denotes that much larger body of behaviors, roles, and expectations that, although regarded by members of a society as appropriate only for members of one biological sex or the other, vary considerably across cultures and historical periods and hence must be culturally conditioned rather than biologically determined. Though it is common if not universal to make male/female distinction the first and most crucial division among people, this does

not mean that concepts "woman" and "man" are universal categories since what it means to behave appropriately for one's gender may be radically different in different societies (405).

The universal aspect of specific gender roles can be argued and might be found to be different in every society, in every folk group. Still, there might be some common expectations of society from individuals. Rejection by the opposite sex can be considered as one of them. Being rejected by a female can be regarded as a patriarchal failure and shame for a male and his family, whereas the consequences of accepting the male rejection for a female can be harder. Although Rochester and Antoinette come from different folk groups, their reaction to rejection from the opposite sex is challenging as well as a failure that needs to be fixed. When Antoinette changes her mind about marrying Rochester even after everything has been arranged, Rochester says, "I did not relish going back to England in the role of the rejected suitor jilted by this Creole girl. I must certainly know why" (Rhys 56), so he eventually convinces her that he loves her and they need to get married. As a male, he could not handle rejection by a female, not only because he would feel powerless himself, but also he wouldn't want to be looked down upon by his family. Rochester promises her happiness, which is the ultimate expectation of Antoinette from her marriage. However, when Rochester begins to drift away from her and reject being with her, either sexually or spiritually, Antoinette becomes miserable, even advises Christophine to perform an "obeah" to have him fall in love with her again. The male acts upon winning the girl rejecting him, but the female keeps silent, trying to bond with another female for support and advice. When Antoinette explains her that Rochester hates her, Christophine tells her that she needs to "pack up and go" (83), but Antoinette is concerned about what others would think of her if she leaves her husband, which is also a cultural perception of marriage and the difference in male and female in the West Indies:

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'Go, go where? To some strange place where I shall never see him? No, I will not, then everyone, not only the servants, will laugh at me.'
'It's not you they laugh at if you go, they laugh at him.'
…
'When man don't love you, more you try, more he hate you, man like that. If you love them they treat you bad, if you don't love them they are after you night and day bothering your soul case out. I hear about you and your husband,' she said" (Rhys 83-4).

What Christophine tells about men here can be based on both her individual experiences with men and what she has seen or heard or learned so far. It cannot be counted as a fact, but her narrative reveals much about her folk group and their beliefs concerning the opposite sex. She uses her own knowledge to help Antoinette, an act which shows how different folk groups might exchange information and even affect each other, positively or negatively. Being from the same sex can make their understanding of each other easier rather than hearing about men from another man. No matter what, it can be clearly seen how in any event, social expectations affect the way people feel and act; not only Rochester, but also Antoinette is constantly worried about what others would think of them if they make a mistake, or fail to do something that they are expected to do.

As Gardiner writes, "A woman's sense of her gender, her sexuality, and her body may assume a different, perhaps a more prominent, shape in her conception of her self than these factors would for a man" (360). Again, these are culturally established norms, so different folk groups will have different taste in beauty and understanding of sexuality. After their marriage, Rochester overhears what the women discuss in the next room with Antoinette while they are trying to adorn her with perfumes and such. Antoinette says, "Don't put any more scent on my hair. He doesn't like it," and the other woman is perplexed, "The man don't like scent? I never heard that before" (Rhys 57). A woman might be expected to look a certain way, and she might have her

own ways to attract the opposite sex, which will be different in every folk group. However, in this case, Antoinette makes sure to look and smell the way her husband would appreciate, so even if putting perfume on hair is part of her culture, which indicates "proper" woman/wife duties in the West Indies, Antoinette doesn't want any more of it. "Women are encouraged to judge their inner selves through their external physical appearance and to equate the two. At the same time, they are taught to create socially approved images of themselves by manipulating their dress, speech, and behavior" (Gardiner 360). As Gardiner mentions, it is more important for women to be approved by their society and men, so they mostly ignore how they would like to reflect themselves to the others. The concept of a proper woman is determined by the society, mostly by men, not by the women themselves.

According to Thomas A. Green, the concept of gender is most frequently examined through the lens of feminism, in which the woman is suppressed by the male discourse. To a certain extent, this may be taken as a valid approach to interpreting the gender differences, but folklore reminds us that gender is not only about biological, physical, or psychoanalytical differences. Every norm, belief, tradition, custom or expectations in a society vary from one culture to another; "gender identity is variable and changeable" (408), which implies they are also socially constructed:

> To the extent that a gender perspective is allied with feminist theories advocating transcendence of the Cartesian mind/body split, this approach recognizes that a person's sense of self depends upon the experience of living in particular (gendered) body with particular qualities and capabilities – although all 'experience,' even bodily experience, must be seen (from an Althusserian perspective) as ideologically informed and thus culturally constructed (Green 408).

Therefore, the fact that gender identity is constructed through social interaction among the members of the same folk group or with other groups brings a different perspective on Rochester

and Antoinette's relationship in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* As opposed to the common postcolonial approach, Rochester does not hate Antoinette because she represents the weak, oppressed, colonized woman, but it is his inner frustration and lack of understanding of another culture, in addition to his unwilling marriage with her, which pushes him away from Antoinette.

CHAPTER 3 : READING NATURE : SENSE OF PLACE IN *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Nature and sense of nature play a significant role in understanding a culture because the place where individuals are born, raised, or have lived for some time constructs their cultural and national identities, their expectations of other destinations they have never visited, and what meanings they relate to a place based on their personal experiences with the place. "A place has a name and a history, which is an account of the experience located in that position" (Walter 117). An individual can attribute a deep meaning to a place "through the steady accretion of sentiment" or "the quality and intensity of experience" (Tuan 33). A place can evoke so many different emotions in individuals depending on their experiences. People tend to associate places with feelings and events, particularly past events influence a big part of this personal association. People might get attached to places easily as well as get distanced or alienated from them. Individuals try to identify themselves with places most of the time, based on the geographical conditions of the place: "Part of the sentiment which people feel for places derives from the feelings of identification that they form with those places. [They] commonly and casually identify [themselves] in terms of geographical labels" (Ryden 39). For instance, in *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Antoinette identifies herself with the warmth of the sun, the bright colors in nature, whereas Rochester reflects the cold, gloomy, and rainy weather of England in his distanced personality.

The environment that people are born into frames their expectations and definitions of how a place should be, and it develops and influences their identities since certain features of their identities are closely related with their sense of place. However, individuals might adjust themselves to new places as they arrive in different destinations. Visiting or moving to a new place might challenge some people's personal perceptions of what a city or a town should look

like based on their initial definition of a place. It could be a positive experience as well as a negative one. On the other hand, different geographical labels might allow them to adjust themselves to new features unless they prefer to reject them. However they feel about new places, their new experiences and encounters with other elements can easily have them develop a new sense of identity.

Although folklore scholarship explains sense of place as a form of identification, most critics of *Wide Sargasso Sea* interpret the notion of place as a reference to colonialism. According to Alan Dundes, "Most individuals… do define part of their identity with respect to 'place' " (1989, 12). Both Rochester, identified with British colonialism, and Antoinette, associated with a mix of ex-slave owner and the colonized white Creole identity, come from an island. But, as Dundes argues, "it is much more complicated than simply being from a particular state or province" (12). Despite this similarity, their experiences with their own islands and their expectations and perceptions of each others' homelands are significantly different. This difference in experiencing a place isn't because Antoinette and Rochester represent the values of colonialism, but their (self) identification with place (home) is different. As Edward Relph claims, people have their own individual associations with places, especially related to their memories of that place, which constitutes their identities as well as their views of new places. Therefore, when individuals encounter features opposing their expectations, they might feel overwhelmed by the unfamiliarities and differences, which can result in lack of security. Kent C. Ryden explains that when people's self-definitions of places are challenged by differences, they tend to feel threatened, and "This sense of identity may be one of the strongest of the feelings with which we regard places: when our meaningful places are threatened, we feel threatened as well" (Ryden

40). Therefore, when Rochester is unable to make sense of his environment, he is not only frustrated, but afraid of the unknown elements in the West Indian nature.

This sense of fear and feeling threatened by the changes or differences in the environment can also occur even if the individuals are in their homeland, where their initial experiences with nature and definitions of a place are settled. The first reflection of this idea of a place becoming threatening takes place in Coulibri, where Antoinette lives with her disabled brother, Pierre, and her mother, Annette. The first description of their garden resembles the Garden of Eden, which has transformed into wilderness, "Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible – the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell…All Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone to bush" (Rhys 4-5). Antoinette's alienation from her environment in relation to the changes in nature and her self-identification with these changes might indicate how "identity—particularly the female identity—is closely related with nature. For instance, Rosemary M. George states the concept of "home" is usually "embedded in discourses on women. In literature and literary theory, until quite recently, most considerations of the home have occasioned examination of the status of women. The association of home and the female has served to present them as mutual handicaps, mutually disempowering" (19). Therefore, the growing wilderness in the garden Coulibri and the fire in Antoinette's home might imply her gradual disempowerement if we think that the development of the female identity is interwined with the changes in environment. Antoinette's inbetweenness and lack of sense of belonging somewhere, conditions that bring about her slow downfall throughout the novel can be associated with the decadence in her environment.

According to Ryden, "Sense of self becomes inextricably linked to the physical components of a place, or to participation in place-bound ways of life, or to an awareness of the folk history of a region; folklore reveals the ways in which these links are made" (64). Antoinette's awareness of these changes in their garden is an indication of how her identity will also change as her environment changes. As Alan Duff claims, individuals define their identity through folklore; therefore, it is important to explore the close relationship between nature and an individual's cultural and personal identity. When "the physical components" of the place begins to deteriorate, individuals also start to change their identity accordingly as well.

Albert Wendt describes the term *culture* in his essay, "Towards A New Oceania" as follows: "No culture is ever static and can be preserved like a stuffed gorilla in a museum" (12). As time changes, cultural values change as well as an individual's expectations, values, and even personality. Change occurs particularly when members of a folk group begin to interact with other members of another group. Change is inevitable; not only in nature, but in the self. Since the self is related to the environment of the individuals, the change in nature may reflect the change in the self as well. As Dundes suggests, "A place can be, and often is, an extremely meaningful component of individual identity" (13). People are identified based on where they are from; they share the common values, the history, and the traditions of their home. Ryden argues, "For Henry Glassie, place-based identity depends on one's connection with the history, both factual and mythic, that is so central a component of the sense of place" (65). Since place-based identity is closely linked to the history of a place, it can be claimed that the change at Coulibri Estate can stand for the Emancipation Act, when the slaves were freed. This has caused a tension among

different races in the West Indies as well as complications about their self-identification, and their connection with the place. Sense of place, identity, and history intertwine in folklore studies because of the wide spectrum it is involved in.

On the other hand, Rochester, coming to Jamaica from England by himself, naturally feels disoriented, alienated, and frightened since he is not familiar with the place. He comes to Jamaica without having any prior encounter with or knowledge about the place. Being sick with fever for about two weeks also doesn't help him see and explore his environment. In his letter to his father, Rochester says that he finds West Indies very beautiful, but he hasn't been able to fully appreciate it due to his illness. When he is finished with his letter, he says that he thinks that Jamaica is, " A cool and remote place… And I wondered how they got their letters posted" (Rhys 54). Being a newcomer, and since he hasn't explored the place well enough to get around and run simple errands by himself, he feels alienated. "As for my confused impressions they will never be written. There are blanks in my mind that cannot be filled up" (55). Although Rochester tries to appreciate beauty of the nature, he fails to maintain his appreciation. Since everything around him is strange to him, he feels overwhelmed and threatened by these different elements, which gradually leads him to hate everything about the place. These negative feelings are strenghtened by his feelings towards his wife because she belongs to this strangeness; she is part of that nature, which means her identity is related to this place where she was born. The different colours and features of the nature he is not used to from England remind him that Antoinette also cannot live up to his expectations of a woman. " It was all very brightly coloured, very strange, but it meant nothing to me. Nor did she, the girl I was to marry" (Rhys 55). It can be seen that people not only identify themselves with places, but

defines others based on where they live as well. This island does not make sense to Rochester at all. Since Antoinette's identity is closely related to her home, Rochester defines her through his own understanding of the nature. The wilderness is overwhelming, and nothing makes sense to Rochester. As a part of this wilderness, Antoinette does not mean anything to him either.

When Rochester recovers, he marries Antoinette, a complete stranger to him. After their wedding ceremony in Spanish Town, Antoinette takes Rochester to honeymoon in a village in the Winward Islands, where Antoinette's mother Annette has a small estate. This is Rochester's first encounter with this place, so he asks Amelie, one of the servants in the estate, what the name of the village is, only to find out it is "Massacre" (Rhys 45). Rochester immediately tries to make sense of the name, by trying to relate it to a historical event, in which murder is involved. Places involve history, and usually they are named after these historical events. Therefore, Rochester presumes there must have been a massacre in this village before. This clearly shows how his unfamiliarity with place leads him to judge it according to what he might have heard about slavery and what could have happened there in the past to deserve the name "Massacre."

> "And who was massacred here? Slaves?"
> "Oh no." She [Amelie] sounded shocked. "Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now" (45).

According to Ryden, "In the absense of hard experiential information about the landscapes and culture of a place, people rely on positive and negative stereotypes. . . People thus can and do attach meaning to places they've never been to" (55). Lack of historical and cultural knowledge about a place might lead the individual to make sense of nature by his poor judgement, based on what he merely sees or hears, which can be a misconception. As

Hufford explains, "Place names , linked with landscape features encode the shared past, distinguishing members of one group from another… Places and their names are sources of identity and security" (21-2). Most of these local names do not mean anything to outsiders, and when they try to make sense of a place by looking at the name of the place, it might lead them to misconception. " Such names tend to be known only by locals and thus provide insight into the ways in which they see, experience, and interpret their place. They also help consolidate a feeling of local identity, providing a private language which outsiders will probably find impenetrable" (George 78). Taking this phenomenon, it is clear why Rochester instantly connects the name of the village, "Massacre" with a possible bloody history that might have taken place there. This first negative association with the place, needless to say, influences his first perception of the people who live there, including his wife.

Everything Rochester links from nature to Antoinette in Jamaica are merely his "social creations," based on his social identity, formerly constructed values, and his folk group that has different views of how a place should look like, which immediately indicates the nature of the people as well. At least, that's how people mostly reflect on the native people of a place which they are unfamiliar with.

Heinz Lichtenstein, in his book *The Dilemma of Human Identity*, describes the concept of "negative capability," introduced by Keats in relation to human identity and imagination as such: "That is when man is capable of being in uncertainities, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (9). According to Lichtenstein, Leavy expands this concept as follows: " 'Negative capability' then would be the capacity to give free rein to imagination. The disperate, absurd, inchoate, illogical, impossible would not present

stop-signs… All that prevents that from happening is the restraint ordinarily imposed in the face of 'uncertainities, mysteries, doubts' and a need for the security of 'fact and reason…' " (9). Rochester has doubts and uncertainities about Jamaica for sure because it is full of mystery to him. His first encounter with the name of the village, and the stories he hears about Jamaica from others don't allow him to explore the unknown and appreciate the place beyond his own imagination and personal perception.

A sense of place cannot be identified by just physically being there, but also it is "primarily a narrative construction" (Ryden 78). When Rochester goes to talk to the porters in the island before he tried to experience the nature himself, one of the porters says, " This a very wild place – not civilized. Why you come here?" (Rhys 47). The way a native person describes his own land, referring to it as "wild" and "uncivilized," continues to shape Rochester's understanding of the place negatively. Slowly, he begins to feel overwhelmed by the various colors and different natural features of the island he is not familiar with: " I understood why the porter had called it a wild place. Not only wild but menacing. Those hills would close in on you" (Rhys 49). Rochester might feel this way himself since everything is different to him, but clearly he is also influenced by the local narratives he has heard.

It is not the beauty of the place Rochester notices first, but what others tell him about it. Filled with all these negative connotations, he finds the nature overwhelming as well. David Sopher, in his article "The Landscape of Home," expresses, "The landmarks of home are the signs that one is welcome." (147) The word "home" evokes a sense of security, reminding the individuals of their identity, whereas in a new place, the individuals are devoid of the feeling of security, and they feel estranged and detached from who they

are. The strangeness of the place, the bright colors, unfamiliar nature, blended with his poor health and what he hears from the native people have increased his negative capability and reminded him that Jamaica is not Rochester's 'home,' so he neither feels safe nor "welcomed" there. "Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger" (Rhys 49). Clearly, sense of place has a close connection with the sense of identity; Rochester does not only begin to hate the nature itself, but also his wife, whom he closely associates with the wilderness, brightness, highness of the nature. After all, Antoinette is part of that place and its folklore.

Lack of sense of familiarity and the fear of the unknown in nature lead Rochester to deny what he sees because he is incapable of making sense of the different colors, geographical features, and the people themselves in Jamaica. Still, he wants to understand and familiarize with the place desperately. Frustrated with his inability to figure out his surroundings, he is convinced that there is a mystery of the place, something beyond his understanding, "It was a beautiful place –wild, untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it keeps its secret. I'd find myself thinking, ' What I see is nothing – I want what it hides – that is not nothing' " (64). According to Mardorossian, Rochester's perceptions and values are identified as a reflection of the European systems of imperial control through which he thinks and acts. He strives to produce a regulating narrative in order to penetrate and appropriate (through/with Antoinette) the 'untouched' othered place, 'what it hides.' However, "… the fact that what [people] see is frequently distorted or simply wrong is secondary to the evidence they offer that, to most people, no geography is wholly meaningless, no wilderness completely slovenly" (Ryden 55) and it doesn't have to

be related to colonialism. Having a different view of what a place should look like, based on one's cultural and personal identity does not necessarily show that the person belongs to a colonial or a colonized folk group; it is all about the variety of folk groups and differences among them. Rochester realizes that there are some beautiful elements in this place, but he fails to fully appreciate it due to his "negative capacity" and "oral narratives."

Although Rochester feels alienated in this place and wants to know about it more than what he already sees, he doesn't credit Antoinette's explanations. He says, "She was undecided, uncertain about facts – any fact. When I asked her if the snakes we sometimes saw were poisonous, she said, 'Not those. The fer de lance of course, but there are none here,' and added, 'but how can they be sure? Do you think they know?' Then, 'Our snakes are not poisonous. Of course not' "(64). Rochester is completely biased and prejudiced against Antoinette; no matter what she does or says, in his mind, she belongs to this wild environment, uncivilized people, and nothing she says can be logical.

Rochester has married her unwillingly, for the sake of his father and money, so his perception of the place is closely associated with how he sees Antoinette. Antoinette is his wife, yet a stranger to him, and so is the land. Rochester defines the place with his feelings for Antoinette: hatred, ambiguity, uncertainity, insecurity, and bias.

> I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all, I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. She had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it (Rhys 136).

The colors, trees, and mountains might seem overwhelming to him since he is used to English nature, but it is clear that associations and experiences in the place influence an

individual's feelings for the place. It is more than what Rochester sees; his hatred for the place comes from his incompetency, his unwilling marriage with Antoinette, and his hatred for her. She belongs to that island; she is part of that wild, colorful, mystical environment, so Rochester associates everything he sees based on his relationship with her. Ryden explains this negative association with a place by claiming that memories and personal experiences in a particular place influence the individual's feelings for that place:

> People pull events out of the seamless flow of memory and experience and shape them into discrete units and coherent narratives because they understand those events, however hazily, to illustrate certain important aspects of their sense of place – the emotions they feel about their environs, their sense of identity as it is shaped by their interactions with the landscape, the important themes and conflicts they sense in the ongoing history of their place, and so on (115).

According to Ryden, personal experience stories related to a particular landscape also play a significant role in constructing a sense of place to people and give meaning to their environment, providing "a vivid glimpse of the emotional interpretations which people put on the places around them" (86). These stories certainly reflect the "idiosyncratic emotion of the teller," as suggested by Ryden (86). Ryden also emphasizes the folklorist Sandra Stahl's point about the fact that personal narratives have traditional attitudes of the narrator, which gives meaning to the story as well as adds to the understanding of the listener: "As a cultural 'evaluation' of the meaning of a location, then, the local sense of place, even if it is not fully and consciously articulated by the teller, provides the bulk of the significance of the place-based personal experience story. . . Personal experience narratives can demonstrate the emotional component of the local sense of place" (86-7). Therefore, personal narratives reflect the emotional state of the teller, which highly

influences the perception of the listener about the place. The listener's sense of place is

based on the emotional content of the personal experience narratives.

For instance, when Antoinette begins to tell a story about something that happened in

the past to Rochtester, he immediately fears that it is a sad one; he cannot associate any

happiness with this new place; he feels insecure constantly as he doesn't know much about

it except for the stories he hears:

> "We used to come here to get away from the hot weather in June, July and August. I came here three times with my Aunt Cora who is ill. That was after…" she stopped and put her hand up to her head.
> "If this is a sad story, don't tell it to me tonight."
> "It is not sad," she said. "Only some things happen and are there for always even though you forget why or when. It was in that little bedroom" (59-60).

Rochester immediately associates Antoinette's story with sadness and ambiguity because

his sense of place has been initially established through local narratives even before he has

begun to explore the nature himself.

> "So this place is as lonely as it feels?" I asked her.
> "Yes it is lonely. Are you happy here?"
> "Who wouldn't be?"
> "I love it more than anywhere in the world. As if it were a person. More than a person."
> "But you don't know the world," I teased her.
> "No, only here, and Jamaica of course. Coulibri, Spanish Town. I don't know the other islands at all. Is the world more beautiful then?"
> And how to answer that? "It's different," I said.

Antoinette's description of her town, especially her personification of the place, shows

how emotionally and spiritually she is attached to her home, almost they are unified;

Jamaica is part of her identity. She doesn't know the rest of the world; she doesn't really

need to because sense of place and home connote different meanings for everyone,

including the local people. No matter where she goes, her home will remain the most

beautiful place for her. According to Porteous' essay "Home: The Territorial Core,"

"Home provides both the individual and the small primary group known as the family with

all three territorial satisfactions [identity, security, stimulation]. These satisfactions derive

from the control of physical space, and this control is secured by two major means. The

personalization of space is an assertation of identity and a means of ensuring stimulation"

(383). People are identified by their homes, and this self-identification with the place gives

them security. When individuals go to an unfamiliar place, their identities are threatened by

the unknown features of the new place, so they lose the sense of security they have at

home. Their identity and security are stimulated by fear and frustration.

On the other hand, Antoinette has never seen England, so she fails to understand what

Rochester is feeling. Although she is trying to make him feel more comfortable, by

showing him around, and explaining things she thinks he might not be familiar with,

Rochester seeks something familiar, something that could remind him of his own home.

However, Antoinette's unfamiliarity with his feelings of being a stranger in a strange land

enables her to empathize with him:

> 'The earth is red here, do you notice?'
> ' It's red in parts of England too.'
> 'Oh England, England,' she called back mockingly, and the sound went on and on
> like a warning I did not choose to hear' (Rhys 50).

Still, Rochester continues to look for similarities between Jamaica and England. The closest

thing he finds, a house, which is "a large screw pine to the left and to the right what look[s] like

an imitation of an English summer house" in Granbois (50). Shared elements between this

strange land and England can only be an imitation of his own home to him. However, since

Rochester fails to identify himself with his current environment, he tries to find some features

that could remind him of England, his home. He cannot express himself through the wild and

uncivilized nature in Jamaica, so trying to associate the land surrounding him with his homeland helps him assert his own identity without becoming a part of his current surrounding. Due to his insecurity, Rochester searches for shelter in drawing a house that looks like an English house, "… I drew a house surrounded by trees. A large house. I divided the third floor into rooms and in one room I drew a standing woman – a child's scribble, a dot for a head, a larger one for the body, a triangle for a skirt, slanting lines for arms and feet. But it was an English house" (Rhys 129). He cannot identify himself with this place in Jamaica, but he identifies Antoinette by drawing her in this English house as he pictures her in his mind. Although he fails to define his self-identification based on his environment, he shapes his wife according to his own values in a house that is familiar to him.

As George explains, in several instances, the concept of home and identity is related to imprisonment in the novels: "Homes are not about inclusions and wide open arms as much as they are about places carved out of closed doors, closed borders and screening apparatuses" (18). Jamaica is not home to Rochester and England will not be home to Antoinette either. Rochester knows that "her ideas were fixed. About England and about Europe. [He] could not change them and probably nothing would. Reality might disconcert her, bewilder her, hurt her, but it would not be reality. It would be only a mistake, a misfortune, a wrong path taken, her fixed ideas would never change" (Rhys 70). Rochester associates sense of place and home with reality and believes that Antoinette would not change her ideas about his home because she is delusional, coming from a mad ancestory. However, he doesn't see that he feels the same way about her home, even worse; he hates everything about her home: "I would give my eyes never to have seen this abominable place" (127).

Contrary to what Rochester expects, Antoinette's feelings towards England begin to change, at least she hopes that she will change herself. Since sense of location is closely connected with self-identification, and Antoinette has never figured where she belongs to, moving to England with Rochester might help her re-identify herself although she has no clue what England looks like:

> I will be a different person when I live in England and different things will happen to me… England, rosey pink in the geography book map, but on the page opposite the words are closely crowded, heavy looking. Exports, coal, iron, wool. Then Imports and Character of Inhabitants. Names, Essex, Chelmsford on the Chelmer. The Yorkshire and Lincolnshire wolds. Wolds? Does that mean hills?... I must know more than I know already. For I know that house where I will be cold and not belonging… (Rhys 84)

According to Ryden, spending some time in a new place might allow the individual to develop a new identity based on the circumstances:

> Any setting can become a symbol of and element of personal and group identity through sufficient familiarity and propinquity. Through extensive interaction with a place, people may begin to define themselves in terms of their relationship with and residence in that place, to the extent that they cannot really express who they are without inevitably taking into account the setting which surrounds them as well (76).

Antoinette's lack of knowledge about England, though, is complex, especially when Christophine tells her that she doesn't believe such a place exists. Antoinette's hopes to become a different person, trying to adjust herself to her new home are broken and confused by Christophine's own reality, which has to be tangible. When Antoinette wants to know what she thinks of England, Christophine says, "I don't say I don't *believe,* I say I don't *know,* I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it…" (Rhys 84) which contributes to Antoinette's expectations negatively.

In fact, these abstract ideas about England lead her to denial of such a place. When she arrives in Thornfield, she feels completely alienated; nothing looks as she might have pictured in her mind beforehand. Contrary to Rochester's reaction to a different environment, which is filled with hatred, Antoinette's reaction to the unknown features of the house is denial. She rejects being in England; to her, they have gotten lost on the way to England: "…everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it… They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them" (Rhys 144). Her new "home" becomes her imprisonment in the attic with her caretaker, Grace, as opposed to what Antoinette has initially expected, so this failure in expectations in addition to her locked up situation enable her to think rationally and get a sense of location. Outside of that room is not her world: "… I open the door and walk into their world" (144). She only thinks she is in England when Grace Poole takes her out once because what she explores outside matches her constructed values of what a place should look like more, based on where she used to live: "That afternoon we went to England. There was grass and olive-green water and tall trees looking into the water. This, I thought, is England. If I could be here I could be well again…" (Rhys 146). Her hopes for getting better are closely connected with nature as she belongs to a natural environment rather than a closed up, cold house.

Sense of place and home not only reflects the self-identification of a local group or individuals, but also shows how outsiders view the differences based on their initial expectations, where they come from, their personal experiences in the new place, local narratives they hear, and how they interact with the place and the local people. If one fails to read the nature and become familiarized with the place, they fail to identify themselves and the others, which might gradually lead either to denial or hatred. As in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, personal experiences and the expectations not only affect how Rochester and Antoinette feel about a place, but about each

other as well. Sense of place is closely related with self-identification as much as how outsiders identify the others. Depending on each individual's personal experience, one can have various feelings towards the place. In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* there is another perspective on how one can identify a place, resembling the unfamiliarities to "dreams," describing the characteristics of the place as "dream-like." This might be a form of denial of the differences or may depict the difficulty in accepting the differences. This idea of dreams and places will be examined in the next chapter, in addition to how actual dreams Antoinette and Rochester have function.

CHAPTER 4: DREAMS IN *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

> *Sleep! To fall asleep! To feel calm! To be an abstract consciousness that calmly breathes,*
> *without a world, without heavens, without a soul -- a dead sea of emotion reflecting an*
> *absence of stars! (81)*
> *Fernando Pessoa, The Book of Disquietude.*

In this chapter, I will explore how dreams function, and examine different ways to interpret

what dreams mean in *Wide Sargasso Sea* using psychoanalytical definitions as well as some

folkloric aspects as an alternative approach to the traditional understanding of dreams as

premonitions. This study will reveal that folkloric approach and psychoanalytical view of dreams

have common features and even overlap. Although there is a continuous dispute among

academically trained folklorists about whether psychoanalytic approaches can be used as a

theoretical reference in the field of folklore or not, some aspects of psychoanalysis can be

applied to literary analysis to get a deeper understanding of a text only if it is acknowledged that

the symbolic interpretation is subjective; therefore, the meanings of certain symbols in texts,

especially in dreams, are based on and limited to the interpreter's personal view.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* dreams can be categorized and analyzed accordingly in two ways. The

first one is the term "dream-like" associated with sense of place, in which the concept of dream

is used to identify a place that is unfamiliar to the individual, and the second one is dreams that

occur during sleep. To illustrate, dreams are claimed to function as an anticipation of the future

based on Antoinette's series of three dreams as well as a projection of her subconscious based on

Freud's explanation of symbolism in dreams and their interpretations. There is also the term

"dream-like" that defines how Rochester and Antoinette make sense of their environments. The

reality and dreams become ambiguous in some parts of the novel because the term "dream-like"

is used frequently, both by Rochester and Antoinette, as a reference to a place or an event;

unfamiliar aspects of occurrences lead them to construct their own reality, which resembles dreams.

According to Peter L. Berger, "reality is socially constructed" (1), so there is not one reality, but multiple ones based on how individuals perceive the objects around them, and how these objects are identified as reality by them. Especially, if these objects are unfamiliar to the individuals, they will have to create their own reality based on the values gained from their folk groups and their past experiences with similar objects they can associate with. Berger claims that "different objects present themselves to consciousness as constituents of different spheres of reality. . . I am conscious of the world as consisting of multiple realities. As I move from one reality to another, I experience the transition as a kind of shock" (21). There has to be different realities because every individual has his or her own way of interpreting objects or events. Although reality might be thought to be objective, it is subjective, and it depends on the individual's understanding of what's real.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette's and Rochester's realities are created by their own social values, which they have gained from their folk groups and their environments. For Antoinette, England is like a dream; it has to be so since she has never been there, and what she hears about it creates an image in her mind, so her reality of England is based on a constructed one. Therefore, it is clear that oral narratives or personal stories have a significant influence on how an individual might create his or her own reality; the personal reality is not only based on what the person sees, but also hears from other people. Language builds on the person's imagination, and what Antoinette imagines becomes her reality. England exists because there are people who have been there, but since she has not, she can merely imagine it as a dream-like place. On the other hand, although Rochester comes to the West Indies, and begins to live there, his

incomprehension of this new place overwhelms him. As a result, he denies the reality of his

environment; all these colors and natural elements in Jamaica are too much, too bright to be real.

Rochester constructs his own reality, almost delusional, by embracing the dream-like reality.

According to Sylvie Maurel, lack of clarification of the dream and reality creates a serious

problem in identification, and it demolishes all the familiar elements such as "the land" and its

meaning to both Rochester and Antoinette. They both vacillate between realities and dreams.

Maurel explains:

> The comparing element 'like a dream' is moreover applied to two different places,
> England and Antoinette's island, which makes initially separate entities come close,
> as if they were interchangable… In the process –of mapping the unknown- it also
> breaks the limit between 'fiction' (extradiegetic England) and 'reality' (the diegetic
> island), inviting the reader to bridge unbridgeable gaps between normally distinct
> levels. (159)

Antoinette's island becomes a dangerous, insecure, and overwhelming place for Rochester. In

fact, he keeps distancing himself from what he does not comprehend. He prefers to call

everything he sees "unreal", as if it was a dream and he would wake up from it one morning,

instead of accepting the presence of this island as "real". It is easier to deny the reality of the

unknown rather than accepting it as real because if something is unreal, one would not have to

deal with what it entails. Denial saves individuals from confrontation. On the other hand, denial

leads individuals to create their own reality, which is neither a dream, nor somebody else's

reality, but their own. The denial of the truth and the contradictions both Antoinette and

Rochester go through maintain their sense of displacement, alienation, leading them to create

their own separate realities:

> "Is it true", she said, "that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who
> married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a
> cold dark dream sometimes, I want to wake up."

> "Well," I answered annoyed, "that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream."
>
> "But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?"
>
> "And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?"
>
> "More easily," she said, "much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a real dream."
>
> "No, this is unreal and like a dream," I thought. (Rhys 58)

What is unknown or unfamiliar is the dream-like reality, especially if it is really hard to accept the differences between what an individual knows and what he or she doesn't comprehend. Therefore, "this is unreal": a far away island that is said to be cold and Rochester comes from, or this colorful island, the mountains, and the hot weather where Antoinette belongs. They are completely different from one another just like their homelands; they are strangers, so Antoinette creates her own dream-man in her mind based on her own expectations from a husband, whereas Rochester's dream-like view of Antoinette turns into a nightmare-like reality in time. This affects Rochester's perception of reality and acknowledgement of Antoinette as a real woman. In addition, his experiences with nature in Jamaica show that he is almost in a dream state rather than a conscious state of mind:

> I began to walk very quickly, then stopped because the light was different. A green light. I had reached the forest and you cannot mistake the forest. It is hostile. The path was overgrown, but it was impossible to follow it. . . I don't know how long it was before I began to feel chilly. The light had changed and the shadows were long. . . Then I saw a little girl carrying a large basket on her head. I met her eyes and to my astonishment she screamed loudly, threw up her arms and ran. . . I was lost among these enemy trees, so certain of danger that when I heard footsteps and a shout I did not answer. The footsteps and the voice came nearer. Then I shouted back. I did not recognize Baptiste at first. . . (Rhys 78-9).

Dreams blend with reality almost without a clear distinction in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as it can be seen in Rochester's narrative. The dream-like state of the reality is not only seen as Rochester's struggle to make sense of the unfamiliarity, but it is also a reflection of his

everyday experiences in Jamaica, including the influence of oral or written language he

encounters daily and finds it different than his own. Berger, in his book *The Social*

Construction of Reality, asserts that language plays a great role in "transcending the reality

of everyday life" into dreams (40). In that, he claims that interpreting a dream

"linguistically within the order of everyday life" makes it real in terms of the individual's

sense of reality and daily experiences (40). Therefore, the overwhelming atmosphere in

Jamaica and Rochester's fear of the unknown translate into his conscious reality like a

dream mixed with his subconscious dreams he has during sleep. He can only grasp the

unfamiliar through a dream-like reality. Berger also adds:

> Language now constructs immense edifices of symbolic representations that appear
> to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world.
> . . Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted
> from everyday experience, but also of 'bringing back' these symbols and
> appresenting [*sic*] them as objectively real elements in everyday life (40).

Language not only expresses what a dream means to individuals based on their daily

experiences and their own interpretation, but also dreams can be easily triggered by

language. For instance, as opposed to Antoinette's three consecutive dreams, which will be

analyzed later on in this chapter, Rochester has one dream, which is clearly influenced by

what he has read in a book called *The Glittering Coronet of Isles* to learn more about the

West Indies (and the part he's read is on Obeah): "A zombie is a dead person who seems to

be alive or a living person who is dead. A zombie can also be the spirit of a place, usually

malignant but sometimes to be propitiated with sacrifices or offerings of flowers and fruit"

(80). Subsequently, later in the novel, Rochester dreams about being buried alive and he

thinks he has been poisoned; he feels sick and associates his dream with the values of the

West Indian culture, the possibility of being put a spell on, like obeah (106). He is

obviously heavily influenced by the figurative language in the book that is supposed to clarify the unknown features in the West Indies for him since he is not part of this culture, hence the folk group. As opposed to his attempt to understand his wife and other people in this foreign culture, he becomes even more detached as the unknown not only dominates his subconscious reality in his dream, but also his conscious reality.

Dreams can also be interpreted through a psychoanalytical approach, initially introduced by Sigmund Freud. Alan Dundes, in his book *International Folkloristics*, explains that Freud is mostly acknowledged as the founder of psychoanalysis, but his connection to the field of folklore is not widely known. According to some folklorists, as mentioned in *Living Folklore*, "psychoanalysis provides insight into the more symbolic, psychological aspects of folklore that other approaches may not address in as much depth" (191). In addition to this close relationship between psychoanalysis and folklore, Alan Dundes, frequently using the psychoanalytic theory in his studies, shows that Freud has contributed to the field of folklore, especially as a result of his collaboration with David Ernst Oppenheim (1881-1943), a classicist teaching at the Akademisches Gymnasium in Vienna, in a project that deals with how folktales contain dream elements. "It turned out that symbolism of the dreams contained in the folktales was interpreted by the tales themselves and, more important, that the folk interpretation of the symbols correspond to so-called Freudian symbolism. This meant Freudian symbolism was hardly invented by Freud but rather that he simply articulated symbolic equations already known in some sense of folk" (Dundes 1992, 178). However, Freudian symbolism has not been acknowledged as a reliable theory for most folklorists unlike Dundes. According to Gary Alan Fine's article, "Evaluating Psychoanalytic Folklore: Are Freudians Ever Right?" Freudian theory has not been completely "disproven," but it has been claimed to be insufficient and

unsatisfactory (46) because the interpretations are thought to be limited with the interpreter's analyses.

As Dundes also states, Freud has been criticized frequently, and many have accused his symbolism of being "arbitrary, fixed, and universal." However, in his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he explains that several dreams might have similar contents or elements in them, such as the death of a parent, or getting lost in the woods, but their meanings and the way people interpret them will be different because different people make different connections, mostly based on their culture. Dundes acknowledges Freud's claim by asserting that "symbolic systems are undoubtedly culturally relative" (1992, 180). According to Fine's "Evaluating Psychoanalytic Folklore: Are Freudians Ever Right?" interpretations of symbols may reflect the cultural values and anxieties of a society since "the interpretation is grounded in the subconscious" (47), therefore, analyzing the lore's subconscious in a context might reveal what is repressed within the text. Because symbolic (or dream) interpretations are subjective, and what they mean to the individuals vary based on their cultures and personal issues, dreams can neither foretell the future nor have one solid meaning. In that case, it would not be credible to analyze Antoinette's dreams, for instance, merely based on how she interprets them because the way she feels about her dreams will be biased as a result of being a member of West Indian folk group. On the other hand, Rochester could have interpreted Antoinette's dreams according to his own perception of what certain things relate to in his mind. Antoinette may not feel scared by the zombie narrative in the book, in fact, she may not even have had a dream about it since the idea is familiar to her, whereas it is a terrorizing experience for Rochester both in reality and in his dream. His interpretation of his own dream also signifies how being an alien in a completely different folk

group and being affected by the local narrative might result in constant fear in the individual's mind.

Adam Kuper, the author of "A Structural Approach to Dreams," explains that myths, as a means of communication, have a strong connection with dreams. He briefly tells that Freud's ideas about dreams have been disputed often times although these oppositions did not result in effective theoretical approaches; instead, they ended up with "mechanical content analysis, drearily reminiscent of the similar exercises in the field of folk-lore and myth, or to valuable but purely ethnographic accounts of the place of dreams in particular cultures" (645). Myths and folktales reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the target society, and they are unique to the folk group. They are a way of communication due to their purpose although myths and folktales are slightly different from one another. According to C.W Sullivan's definition in *Encyclopedia of Urban Legends,* a myth is a "traditional prose narrative that enables people to discuss preternatural topics" (279). Myths are closely related with belief, experience, and history, so unless an individual is part of a certain folk group sharing similar myths or folktales, he or she will fail to understand them. On the other hand, a folktale is a "traditional fictional story in prose. Fictional folktales, told as entertainment, can be distinguished from myths and legends, which are intended to convey information or at least point of view" (Green 356). Fictional tales tend to educate people as well since they reveal specific cultural and social values of a society "by cautioning against undesirable behavior" (Green 356).

Kuper studies the connection between myths and dreams based on his own definition of myths, but it might get really challenging as there is no one certain definition for myths, legends, or folktales. William Bascom, in his article, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives," stresses that making distinctions between myths, legends, and folktales are challenging due to the variety

of definitions. According to Bascom, folktales are defined as fiction that can be set in any time and any space whereas "myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. . . Myths are the embodiment of dogma; they are usually sacred; and they are often associated with theology or ritual. . ." (4) Bascom explains that folktales, myths, and legends cannot be acknowledged as "universally recognized categories," but they can be used as a means of establishing an understanding of cross cultural beliefs because they are specific to the culture or the society that share same prose narratives. These prose narratives might lose their effect in their own society in time, but for an outsider, they will usually have an impact, leaving the outsider in doubt and curiosity. As Bascom reminds, "myths, legends, and folktales differ in their settings in time and place, in their principal characters and, more importantly, in the beliefs and attitudes associated with them. In addition, they often appear in different social settings . . . under quite different circumstances. They may be told for different purposes and have distinctive functions" (7). Not only do these prose narratives vary according to the culture they belong to, but also who tells them to whom. "A particular plot or tale type would be classed as a myth in one society and as a folktale in another," (8) so some of these prose narratives would be credible for some and merely fiction for others depending on their personal beliefs and traditions.

Rochester, under the influence of both personal and fictional narratives, tries to communicate with the West Indians subconsciously in his dream as he fails to embrace Antoinette's culture in reality. However, unfamiliar with their beliefs and stories, he dreams that he is buried alive, which he interprets as if he is in danger, and he is going to get killed in Jamaica. Based on what Kuper claims, we can conclude that Rochester not only creates his own reality, but his own myths and folk-tales whenever he cannot make sense of his environment. Rochester's dream

based on the native West Indian myth becomes his own legend, hence his own story. Kuper summarizes:

> It has been remarked often enough that dreams are, in a sense, individual myths, and myths collective dreams. This is a view shared not only by many anthropologists and psychologists but also by a number of non-literate (one might almost say, pre-Freudian) peoples; and ethnographic materials tend to give such an identification considerable weight. . . In the modern period, the anthropological study of dreams has been dominated by Freudian theory,' although anthropologists have by and large abandoned Freud's attempt to extend the theory of dreams to the study of myths and folk-tales (e.g., Freud & Oppenheim 1958).

Kuper also claims that his method is different from what Freud has suggested, explaining that "Freud's main concern was with the way in which real-life incidents and the dreamer's waking preoccupations were expressed in dreams. He was concerned, in other words, with the dream elements as transformations of elements of reality" whereas, as Kuper explains, his personal concern is "with the internal structure of the dream, with the transformations that occur within it" (647). Instead, of establishing his approach to dreams on Freudian dream symbolism or interpretation-- based on the unconscious desires of the individual (especially sexual and aggressive desires) that are suppressed in his or her subconscious—Kuper suggests that it would be more effective if he focused more on how dreams function by examining the relation between dreams and myths. In order to do that, Kuper first acknowledges the "three problematic assumptions about the nature of myth and dream" (646). Analyzing these assumptions will show a different perspective on Antoinette's dreams, which have been mostly analyzed as a means of premonition of her future with Rochester. Dreams do not necessarily signify a specific meaning or tell individuals what is going to happen in the future.

Firstly, Kuper explains that "myths are clearly communications, and it may be argued that dreams are too personal to yield to forms of analysis designed to decode messages" (646). Considering that individuals construct their own realities based on their own personal experiences and backgrounds, the meanings of dreams can be complicated as well. How individuals interpret their dreams not only depends on the environment and the cultural values they have attained from the folk group they belong to, but also "transformations of cognitive responses that the individual acquired in the course of his conscious waking life" (Klinger 1971: 75). In this case, Antoinette's dreams can be interpreted as a reflection of her subconscious that has been influenced by the events and thoughts during her "conscious waking life."

Seeing that Antoinette suffers from lack of love not only from her own mother, but also Tia and people of other races, she deals with these negative feelings in her dreams. She describes her first dream as a child the night after Tia calls Antoinette a *white-nigger*: "I dreamed that I was walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight. I could hear heavy footsteps coming closer and though I struggled and screamed I could not move. I woke crying" (Rhys 11). The common belief about dreams is that they foretell the future. However, the person Antoinette feels hates her in her dream is not a reference to future, as opposed to the general assumption about dreams, but rather to her past; the constant feeling of being hated and excluded is placed in her subconscious. Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* challenges the dilemma about the possible anticipation aspect of dreams by asserting that "dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future"

(615). When Antoinette meets Rochester who hates her, she might think subconsciously that her secret wish to go away is fulfilled when Rochester takes her away to England, but this does not mean that this dream she had when she was a child actually showed her the future. It is easy to misinterpret dreams as the past events and the present situation of the individual might overlap in dreams, and the dreamer can take her dream as a sign of future although it may not be merely more than an amalgamation of the past and the present, possibly including the secret desires for the future.

Dorothy Eggan asserts that "In dreams ... a subject can deal with a situation somewhat in terms of his own interpretation of it-as if he were playing chess with himself" (1952: 471). Antoinette has experienced a traumatic past which she never confronted openly, but merely accepted what has happened to her as part of her identity. For example, her exclusion from her mother, and people of other races in her society have sunk in her memories subconsciously. Since she never tried to get over them in real life, it is possible that she might be dealing with these past events in her dreams. And now that she gradually realizes her husband also doesn't want her, these old memories become more dominant in her dreams.

Secondly, Kuper is concerned whether dreams and myths are "modes of coping with problematic aspects of reality" or not (646). According to Klinger (1971: 83): "Dreams, like play and fantasy, are fractionated, unsystematic approaches that work over the dreamer's real concerns, and in the process sometimes yield solutions by generating new combinations of pre-established schemata," however, Kuper doubts that dreams are 'unsystematic.' In fact, he claims that "dialectical rules constrain the way in which dreams resolve problems of reality" (646). As Carl Jung presents:

Dreams, then, convey to us in figurative language—that is, in sensuous, concrete imagery—thoughts, judgements, views, directives, tendencies, which were unconscious either because of repression or through mere lack of realization. Precisely because they are contents of the unconscious, and the dream is a derivative of unconscious processes, it contains a reflection of the unconscious contents. . . which are linked together associatively and are selected by the conscious situation of the moment (34).

Antoinette's second dream after her step-father visits her in the convent school shows that she is struggling with some powerful feelings she cannot deal with in real life, but she constantly thinks of – whether intentionally or not—. However, the meaning of the dream remains mystery to her since there is no resolution to her problems of reality. In the dream, Antoinette has left the house of Coulibri and she is walking to the forest. She is wearing a white long dress and walking with difficulty, "following the man who is with [her]". She continues:

I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself, if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is no wind. 'Here?' He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. . . We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them (Rhys 40).

Although Kuper might disagree, according to Freudian symbolism in dreams, objects such as trees being "long and upstanding" symbolize the male organ (*International Folkloristics* 185), which could be interpreted as the patriarchal society surrounding Antoinette's world. The fact that she is almost dragged to somewhere unknown by a man who hates her in her dreams displays how dominant the male influence is in the society. Freudian interpretation of the male organ does not have to be taken as a sexual connotation then. The representation of the trees and the stone walls in Antoinette's dream can be a clear display of the gender hierarchy in society, considering the male dominance over the female and

how women are silenced and their identity is shaped by the male discourse. When

Antoinette talks about this dream with Christophine, she says she dreamed she was in Hell

(41), which indicates how she feels about these social values in which the man is superior

and she cannot resist it. Freud answers the main question of how to analyze the meaning of

dream-symbols as follows:

> We derive our knowledge from widely different sources: from fairy tales and myths, jokes and witticisms, from folklore, i.e. from what we know of the manners and customs, sayings and songs, of different peoples, and from poetic and colloquial usage of language. Everywhere in these various fields the same symbolism occurs, and in many of them we can understand it without being taught anything about it (*International Folkloristics* 188).

Based on the dream-symbolism theory, there is no right or wrong in trying to make sense

of the elements in her dream because every scholar will examine the meaning of dreams

differently as well as the dreamers themselves. For example, as mentioned earlier, trees

symbolize danger for Rochester as he associates them with the description of an enemy

whereas for Antoinette, the trees she sees in her dream are different from what she knows,

which might seem like an anticipation of her moving to England with Rochester where the

trees are not the same. The stone walls may represent Thornfield, where Antoinette will be

kept like a prisoner by him. However, there can be no certain meaning attributed to what

these elements really stand for.

In his review, "The Interpretation of Dreams and On Dreams by Sigmund Freud," T.G.

Grygier explains that Freud can be counted as creator of the close relationship between

psychoanalysis and anthropology and Grygier quotes what Freud says in his Preface to the

Third Edition published in 1953 – which was reworded and put as a separate chapter called

"Dream Symbolism—Myths and Folklore" in his *On Dreams* separately when published in

2010 -- :

> Dream-symbolism extends far beyond dreams: it is not peculiar to dreams, but
> exercises a similar dominating influence on representation in fairy-tales, myths and
> legends, in jokes and in folklore. It enables us to trace the intimate connexions
> between dreams and these latter productions. We must not suppose that dream-
> symbolism is a creation of the dream-work; it is in all probability a characteristic of
> the unconscious thinking which provides the dream-work with the material for
> condensation, displacement and dramatization (1953: 685).

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the elements found in dreams are not only products

of the dreamer's past events, their present mental situation, or their secret desires of the

future, but can reflect their cultural beliefs and concerns represented through myths and

folktales they might have been exposed to in their dreams. For instance, Sharon Rose

Wilson writes about some of the fairy-tale aspects of the novel in her chapter, "Bluebeard's

Forbidden Room In Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea."* Wilson acknowledges the novel as a

"dark postmodern and postcolonial metafairy tale" (133) due to the common folklore and

fairy-tale elements found not only in the dream-like narratives and experiences of the

characters, but also in their actual dreams throughout the novel. As an example to Freud's

claim about how dreams might hide some fairy-tale aspects, Wilson shows how certain

motifs such as "a forest setting" can be found in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which resembles

Little Red Riding Hood "meeting a threatening 'wolf' in a forest just like Antoinette being

alone with a man who hates her in the forest (138). Considering the moral message fairy-

tales tend to give behind the story, Wilson interprets Antoinette's dream as "forewarning

her, and her readers of her destiny: walking in the forest" is not safe (140) and she should

not have talked to a stranger although it occurs in a dream. Otherwise, she will have to beat

the consequences of her wrong deeds.

As Kuper suggests as his third and last analyses," it may be objected that there is a difference between the 'real dream' and the retailed version, which is a social rather than a psychological fact. The difficulties in the way of establishing such a distinction are manifold, and I would be inclined to argue that 'real' dreams are social facts which exist in the context of language," asserting the fact that he is talking about dreams that are related to each other. Kuper also believes that "the internal structure of the dream" occur with "the transformations," which means the dreamer changes as his or her dreams evolve. This transformation can be clearly seen in Antoinette's last dream not only through how she narrates her dream, but also the way these consecutive dreams gradually transform her from the "silenced" woman to the one who decides to take an action against her captivation and passivity, inspired by what she has dreamt about.

Antoinette's last dream occurs when she is locked up in the attic of Thornfield Hall, transformed to the lunatic woman, Bertha, who is devoid of sense of time and place, as Rochester has implemented on her although Antoinette has maintained her identity as Antoinette by rejecting her new Anglo name. Following her traumatic childhood and marriage with Rochester, stripped off her humanity while kept in the attic like a wild animal, Antoinette completely loses her ability to distinguish the difference between reality and dream. She is inbetween a stage of sleep and sleepwalking, consciously or unconsciously, mostly lingering in the past that is mostly blended in her present:

> That was the third time I had my dream, and it ended. I know now that the flight of steps leads to this room where I lie watching the woman asleep with her head on her arms. In my dream I waited till she began to snore, then I got up, took the keys and let myself out with a candle in my hand. It was easier this time than ever before and I walked as though I were flying (Rhys 149-150).

The dream first begins in the attic where she stays with Grace Poole, her caretaker. It seems like Antoinette is awake and conscious; she gets up when Grace falls asleep and leaves the room with the keys. Then, Antoinette goes on to describe the house, the corridors, the colors she sees, carrying a candle in her hand. When she thinks she has seen a ghost, she drops the candle and watches the tablecloth catch a fire. At this moment, she begins to see people and scenes from her past, resembling the times when their house in Coulibri burnt down when she was a child: "As I ran or perhaps floated or flew I called help me Christophine help me. . ." (151).Continuously, she recognizes Tia and hears the parrot "call as he did when he saw a stranger, *Qui est la? Oui est la?* and the man who hated me was calling too, Bertha! Bertha! " (152). When Antoinette wakes up from the dream, she claims that this dream was a sign, telling her why she is there. She thinks this dream is a reminder for her of her mission. According to Le Gallez, "her act of setting fire to Thornfield Hall may be regarded as having been born of a creative rather than a destructive impulse" (160) because Rochester has already killed her mentally and spiritually. By setting Rochester's prisonlike house on fire, she liberates herself from all patriarchal labels and the enforced English identity that Rochester tries to apply to her by renaming her as Bertha in addition to asserting that she is mad.

In her book, *Trauma and Recovery,* Judith Herman explains how fragmentation in personality may be caused by consecutive traumatic experiences, especially when the individual is made passive against his or her will by being captivated and forced to believe that he or she is mentally sick as in Antoinette's case: "When a person is completely powerless, and any form of resistance is futile, she may go into a state of surrender. The system of self- defense shuts down entirely. The helpless person escapes from her situation

not by action in the real world but rather by altering her state of consciousness" (42). This change in the state of one's mind might "combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle" (43). As a result, the traumatized person, Antoinette, detached from what is real or dream, interprets her dream as a way to escape her both mentally and physically oppressed situation. Returning to her memories in the dream leads her to an unhealthy realization of her own reality, so she feels she has to burn the house although the dream may not be more than a flashback to the fire in her childhood rather than an assigned mission for her.

Antoinette's dream consciousness has enforced the idea that Antoinette is a lunatic like Rochester has claimed. The concept of insanity, constructed by Rochester and applied to Antoinette with a new name, Bertha, and her imprisonment in the attic have led her to become a hysterical woman although she seems sane enough to reject the Anglo name given to her. However, what has actually reinforced the idea that she is insane can be explained differently, by understanding how an individual's dream conscious transitions from sleep to waking life, which is defined as "the hypnagogic state" by Havelock Ellis. "It is thus a condition of mental feebleness and suggestibility doubtless correlated with a condition of irregular brain anaemia" (244), which can result in hallucination or delusion heavily influenced by the dream that is a combination of recollection of the past events and the present psychological condition of the dreamer:

> This psychic process, by which unconscious memories become conscious in dreams, is of considerable interest and importance because it lends itself to many delusions. Not only the ignorant and uncultured, but even well-trained and acute minds, are often so unskilled in mental analysis that they are quite unable to pierce beneath the phenomenon of conscious ignorance to the deeper fact of unconscious memory; they are completely baffled, or else they resort to the wildest hypotheses (226).

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Unable to differentiate memories from dreams or reality, already traumatized and probably

depressed locked up in the attic, Antoinette decides to burn the house, recalling the fire at

Coulibri subconsciously as if it was part of the present, or the future. Her mental state is

not healthy enough to make logical decisions, but her confusion leads her to the "wildest"

conclusion. Although it doesn't show that she is "lunatic," Antoinette's last action is

definitely a sign of hysteria. As Ellis explains:

> In attempting to unravel these, it is probable that, as in explaining the illusion of rapidity, we must always bear in mind the tendency of memory-groups in dreams to fall apart from their waking links of association, so well as the complementary tendency to form associations which in waking life would only be attained by a strained effort. Apperception, with the power it involves of combining and bringing to a focus all the various groups of memories bearing on the point in hand, is defective. The focus of conscious attention is contracted, and there is the curious and significant phenomenon that sleeping consciousness is occasionally unconscious of psychic elements which yet are present just outside it and thrusting imagery into its focus. The imagery becomes conscious, but its relation to the existing focus of consciousness is not consciously perceived. Such a psychic mechanism, as Freud and his disciples have shown, quite commonly appears in hysteria and obsessional neuroses when healthy normal consciousness is degraded to a pathological level resembling that which is normal in dreams (216).

Accordingly, it can be understood that the influence of dreams mixed up with memories in

the waking process can result in misperception and even delusion. What is dreamt becomes

part of the dreamer's conscious reality –and reality is self-constructed and subjective—

hence he or she cannot exactly grasp the truth but the dream reality. The half-waking, even

sleepwalking Antoinette holds on to her dream as a fact and she doesn't even hesitate to act

according to her false perception as a result of "difficulty in distinguishing from the real

facts of life, never feeling sure what had actually happened, and what had been only a

dream" (Ellis 236). Ellis claims that "In disordered cerebral and nervous conditions the

same illusion becomes still more marked. This is notably the case in hysteria. In some

forms of insanity. . . this mistake is sometimes permanent and the dream may become an integral and persistent part of waking life" (237). Considering Antoinette's mental condition, oppressed and locked up by Rochester, away from her home, and traumatized both by her past and present, it is no surprise that she struggles to realize what's real and what's a dream during her waking process. She imagines her own reality and gets lost inbetween her dream and her waking-life reality. Therefore, her illusion leads her to her own logical conclusion of what she needs to do. Dream interpretation is subjective to the individuals, but it is even more complex when the human mind is not stable. Reality becomes more confusing, and the decisions made in this situation are not healthy although they sound right for the dreamer.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how folklore scholarship contributes to our understanding and interpretation of complex issues in literary works, such as the theme of identity presented in literature, and other elements related to identification (ethnicity, race, gender, cultural values). This research is focused on Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which has been examined mostly through a postcolonial approach by scholars and literary critics. The novel has strictly been evaluated as a postcolonial novel, displaying how colonialism has damaged minority groups not only economically, but mentally and spiritually. It has been widely acknowledged that the main characters of the novel symbolize both sides of a colonial relationship: Antoinette is claimed to be the colonized Creole woman, who ends up going insane, and Rochester, representing Great Britain, is the colonizer. This common presentation of the novel, however, limits other alternative approaches to raise new questions to re-evaluate the novel from different perspectives. The integration of folkloric approach in understanding cultural, racial, social, and gender-based differences mentioned in *Wide Sargasso Sea* has led to new research questions as well as a fresh interpretation of the novel, stripped off solid postcolonial assertations.

Despite lack of folkloric resources written on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this research has achieved to bring up questions that have not been considered before. Since folklore has recently begun to be used as an alternative literary device in the literature field in analyzing literary works, it has been a challenging task to find and apply folkloric theories to the novel. However, this research has been a great success in bringing up new ideas that might need to be even further studied, and used to analyze other literary works as well.

First of all, this research has significantly contributed to the theme of identity and cultural differences in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The complexity of concept of identity was that it was limited

to a postcolonial approach. The cultural, social, racial, and gender-based juxtapositions in *Wide Sargasso Sea* were mostly examined based on how colonialism affected individuals and led them to several misunderstandings and misconceptions about both self-identification and identifying others. However, according to folklore scholarship, these cultural clashes stem from the existence of different folk groups, based on their own knowledge, customs, beliefs, traditions, language, and roots. Esoteric and exoteric factors in folklore, mainly introduced by William Hugh Jansen, show that personal misunderstandings and misconceptions arise because of the way folk groups see themselves, in addition to how other folks think of them. These factors not only reflect each folk groups' own values, but also their expectations from other groups. Esoteric and exoteric factors evaluate the interaction among folks whether they belong to the same folk group or not because each member also might have a different view of himself or herself. Instead, individuals might even feel closer, inferior, or superior to another folk group based on their own personal values. Of course, these individuals are highly influenced by all the knowledge they have already attained (intentionally or unintentionally, but absolutely unofficially) from their own folk group.

Gender-based identity is as complex as identifying the national and individual identity. The basic problem that needs to be acknowledged is that the concept of gender is "socially assigned" (353) as Judith Gardiner asserts in her article "On Female Identity and Writing by Women." Therefore, it can be inferred that gender roles might vary from one culture to another, and there is no fixed definition of gender roles. However, these gender roles might get problematic when a female and a male, both of whom belong to a different folk group, encounter because their expectations from the opposite sex will be different. Females and males are assigned to certain roles in different societies; not every society has the same values imposed on people. Most of the

time, the male discourse might overlap the female voice, especially depending on the time period. Considering that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a product of the twentieth century, the assertation of the male discourse can be predominantly seen compared to the female narrative in the novel.

On the other hand, it is obvious that both of Antoinette and Rochester have different expectations from each other as a "proper" husband and wife; their views of the concept of "what's socially appropriate" clash due to their own cultural values and teachings. These cultural differences can be clarified better through a folkloric approach rather than a postcolonial one because folklore scholarship examines cultural differences from a broader spectrum rather than merely labeling the individuals as representatives of either the colonizer or the colonized. In addition, folklore scholarship not only studies societies as a whole, but it also analyzes the individual experiences of the people, which shows that individuals cannot be generalized based on the common values of their groups; even the members of the same folk group might have their own beliefs. People can have different values; people cannot be classified only based on where they come from, what language they speak, what their gender is, or what color their skins are.

Nature has also been mostly used as a reference to a colonial territory through a postcolonial understanding. According to this belief, a place can stand for the nation of the colonized or the colonizer as in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* However, folklore studies the meanings of the names of places, what they represent as well as how people define sense of place, instead of labeling them as the colonized or the colonizer based on their birthplace. According to folklore scholarship, the idea of home and identification are closely related since individuals tend to identify themselves with their homes and their geographical contents. In the same way, they define other people based on the features of the place they come from. When people move to a place which is

unfamiliar to them, they lose sense of security and belonging. Therefore, they may not associate themselves with the unknown geographical features, which also shapes their (mis)understanding of the surrounding culture. This dilemma can lead the individuals to miscommunicate and misunderstand each other. They might even construct their own sense of reality in a similar way they identify others from different cultures. This constructed reality can usually be defined as "dream-like" as it is in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. When people cannot explain an event or perceive what particular elements stand for, they tend to describe them as if they did not exist.

In relation to the "dream-like" theme, this research also examines how dreams in the novel can be evaluated. Most of the prior criticisms have considered dreams in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as an anticipation of the future. However, Freud who has contributed to folklore studies with his psychoanalytical research, shows that dreams are merely a recollection of past events that are interwined with the present mental situation of the dreamer. So, unlike most literary criticisms, dreams are more complicated than merely telling the future. This research also claims that dream interpretations are subjective; so it is almost impossible to assert one certain meaning to dreams. Dreams can be interpreted in various ways based on personal experiences and individual background of the dreamers.

As this research displays, folklore embraces various elements that postcolonial approach cannot grasp. Since the interpretation of *Wide Sargasso Sea* has been limited to the postcolonial explanations for so long, this research has brought up an extensively new view on the novel. The ideas and themes argued in this research will allow scholars and folklorists to evaluate the novel from a different way of understanding. Folklore studies people, nature, dreams, identity, and so many other themes that are prevalant in almost every literature piece. Therefore, examining

literature through a folkloric approach will contribute in many future studies in literature field

and bring a new perspective to them.

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