

## HOMELESS WOMEN IN THE ATTIC: ON JANE AND ANTOINETTE

Raíssa R. S. AQUINO

Pós-Graduação em Estudos Literários – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

RESUMO: Em *Jane Eyre*, de Charlotte Brontë, e uma de suas reescrituras, *Vasto Mar de Sargaços*, de Jean Rhys, as duas personagens principais compartilham mais do que um esposo. Antoinette Cosway, em *Vasto Mar de Sargaços*, é apresentada como uma garota traumatizada, muito provavelmente resultante de seu contexto problemático e de uma mãe perturbada. Antoinette revela sérios problemas de identidade e, embora velados, problemas relacionados ao lar parecem estar ligados a esses. Quando ela casa-se com Rochester, seu deslocamento é acentuado pelas suas diferenças. Jane, por outro lado, não sofreu as mesmas dificuldades, embora tenha experimentado estranhamento e deslocamento, bem como o sentimento de falta de um lar causado pela sua situação de pobreza e orfandade. Sua identidade perde-se nalgum lugar do seu passado desconhecido. Assim, ambas compartilham um passado – ou lar – bastante destruído, o que pode ter influenciado seus estados emocionais e levar a certo nível de instabilidade mental. E o que é lar para estas mulheres? O quão importante é para elas sentir-se em casa? A que ponto a falta de um lar definido está relacionado à construção da identidade de Antoinette e Jane? Como elas confrontam suas próprias situações de falta de lar, e seus consequentes problemas de identidade? Objetivando responder a estes questionamentos, analiso o passado de Antoinette e Jane, seus sentimentos, suas reações. Apoio-me em críticas sobre ambas as obras, mas principalmente em *Imaginary Homelands*, de Salman Rushdie, e “*Necessary Journeys*” de Caryl Phillip. Estes textos amparam a importância de jornadas em direção ao lar, jornadas que de alguma forma levam o viajante às suas origens, a fim de formar uma identidade concreta. Neste sentido, meu trabalho propõe uma discussão na relação entre os conceitos de lar e de formação de identidade, e jornadas como parte de um processo para encontrar a sua identidade; tudo isso aplicado a Antoinette, de *Vasto Mar de Sargaços*, e Jane, de *Jane Eyre*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Identidade; *Jane Eyre*; *Vasto Mar de Sargaços*

ABSTRACT: In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and one of its rewritings, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the two main characters share more than a husband. Antoinette Cosway, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is presented as a damaged girl, most likely as a result of her troubled environment and a disturbed mother. Antoinette reveals serious identity issues and, although veiled, home issues seem related to these. As she marries Rochester, her displacement is accentuated by their differences. Jane, on the other hand, has not suffered from the same difficulties, even though she did experience strangeness and displacement, as well as the feeling of homelessness caused by her poor and orphaned circumstance. Her identity is lost somewhere in her unknown past. Thus, both women share a rather ruined background – or home – which may have influenced their emotional status and lead to a certain degree of mental instability. And what is home for these women? How significant is it for them to feel at home? To what extent are the lack of a definite home related to the construction of an identity in Antoinette and Jane? What are their approaches towards their own homelessness, and consequent identity issues? Aiming to answer these questions, I analyze Antoinette's and Jane's backgrounds, feelings, and responses. I rely on criticisms of both works, but mainly on Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* and Caryl Phillip's “*Necessary Journeys*”. These texts support the importance of homeward journeys, and journeys that somehow go towards one's origins, in order to form a concrete identity. In this sense, my work proposes a discussion on the relation between the concept of home and

*the formation of identity, and journeys as part of a process to find one's identity; all this applied to Antoinette, from Wide Sargasso Sea, and Jane, from Jane Eyre.*

KEYWORDS: *Identity; Jane Eyre; Wide Sargasso Sea*

## Introduction

In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and one of its rewritings, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the two main characters share more than a husband and a few minutes in the attic of Thornfield Hall. Antoinette Cosway, from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, known as Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, is presented as a psychologically damaged girl, most likely as a result of her troubled environment, disturbed mother, and ruined childhood as a whole. Antoinette reveals serious identity issues and, although veiled, home issues seem related to these: "What am I doing in this place and who am I?" (RHYS, 1985, p. 568), she says while she is in England. As she marries Rochester, her displacement is accentuated by their differences in origin and manners, since Antoinette is a Creole woman from Jamaica whereas Rochester is a typical Englishman. Rochester's cold and suspicious behavior towards his wife worsens her condition, leading her to madness.

Jane, on the other hand, has not suffered from the same difficulties as Antoinette, even though she did experience strangeness and displacement, as well as the feeling of homelessness, caused by her poor and orphaned condition. Jane's home oscillates, changing in proportion to the attachment she feels for the place she inhabits. Her roots and, consequently, the basis to the construction of her identity, are lost somewhere in her unknown past. Thus, both women share a rather ill-treated background – or sense of home – which may have influenced the construction of their identities and their emotional condition, leading to a certain degree of mental instability. In the case of Antoinette, who already had an innate tendency to mental disorders inherited from her mother, she succumbed to the pressure and went mad. Jane merely lacked reasonableness in her attitudes following the discovery of Antoinette's existence, going back to her "regular" self not long after her outbreak.

Although Rochester plays a very important part in *Jane Eyre*, and shares the narration with Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the reader is not told much about his past, mainly his childhood, and nothing is said concerning his home, his identity, and how he dealt with these issues – if these were issues –, so that he can be analyzed in the same terms Jane and Antoinette are in this work. Therefore, his character is not part of my object of study.

Based on the observation of both women protagonists and their situations, one wonders: what is home for these women? How significant is it for them to feel at home? To what extent is the lack of a definable home related to the construction of identity in Antoinette and Jane? What are their approaches towards their own homelessness, and consequent identity issues? How do they overcome such issues – *if they do*?

Aiming to obtain a better understanding of these two novels, I intend to analyze Antoinette's and Jane's backgrounds, feelings and responses. In their search for a home/identity, I also discuss the two characters' approaches to their homelessness and the results of these approaches. In this sense, my work proposes a debate on the relation between the concept of home and the formation of identity, applied to Antoinette, from *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Jane, from *Jane Eyre*. As this research advances, the significance

of journeys in their stories increases and are regarded as part of the process to find one's identity.

I owe the idea of the title of this article to *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar; its title refers to Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*. In this essay I add to it the acknowledgement of Jane's quick stop in the attic, the meeting with Antoinette, and the appreciation of that moment as crucial to both women's awareness of themselves. That was a key moment to Antoinette, who had her husband's lover thrown at her face once again by the same Mr Rochester. It was difficult for Jane too, who had always behaved amenably. Jane did not behave scandalously in the attic, as her rival did, although she did run away unthinkingly at the following dawn. Thus, the minutes spent in the attic by both women may be compared to what in drama is known as the moment of recognition. Oedipus discovers his horrible crime. Jane finds the explanation for all the supernatural episodes in Thornfield, and realizes her misfortune. Antoinette faces the grayish English girl who is beloved by her husband instead of her colorful self. And so it happens that, although utterly opposite, they look at each other and see themselves.

### **Homelessness and the idea of home: understanding Antoinette and Jane**

Metaphorically speaking, the reader faces two homeless heroines. However, before qualifying them as "homeless", one must understand "home" as their own personal hiding place,<sup>1</sup> where they feel at ease, comfortable, and safe; the one place where they can be themselves. Thus, when we consider all the factors that contribute to make of a person who he or she is, such as language and the environment itself, there is only one place on earth where this person can find it all. Any other place would make him or her act differently, since it would be a different circumstance. Thus, it becomes vital for the externalization of anyone's full identity to be home, where such identity was first formed. While away from home, even if it is not possible to externalize one's full and actual identity, he or she should at least acknowledge such identity for him or herself. Thus, in the process of identity recognition, it becomes important to identify a home to belong to.

Having had troubled childhoods, neither Antoinette nor Jane seem to have had a clear and definable home – in the sense of a comfortable and safe environment in the company of a loving family – whence they could extract their identities.

Antoinette's idea of home focuses on her homeland, which is so well-known and dear to her. Her descriptions of her interaction with the sea, with nature, only reinforce how she is at ease there, contrasting with her attitude at anywhere else, including her honeymoon house and England. Still, she constantly seems to miss something, as if she were not complete, perhaps, because of the absence of a family.

Harold Bloom summarizes Antoinette's circumstance: "Made a near-orphan by the death of her father and the madness of her mother, and near-homeless by the burning of her childhood home, she becomes an object of exploitation through marriage" (2010, p. 225). What sort of identity can result from such dysfunctional environment? Earl McKenzie compares Antoinette with the Sargasso Sea, with its "mass of seaweed surrounded by swirling currents in the Atlantic Ocean" (2009, p. 56), and says the novel's troubled

---

<sup>1</sup> Hiding place is a biblical recurrent term which refers to the room in the temple where God inhabited, that is, God's house. Later on it became a synonym to a home where one can find refuge.

heroine is hanging between England and the West Indies without belonging fully to neither. McKenzie affirms that Antoinette “has sustaining relations with no place and with no one. She is without a strong sense of personal identity” (2009, p. 67), and he quotes from Antoinette’s lines to justify his argument: “I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where I belong and why was I ever born at all” (RHYS, 1985, p. 519). In the end of the day, “Antoinette belongs to no one and belongs nowhere” (2001, p. 317), says Gregory Castle in *Postcolonial Discourses: an Anthology*, agreeing with McKenzie on Antoinette’s sense of not-belonging.

There is a line of reasoning found in *Narrative Mutations: Discourses of Heredity and Caribbean Literature*, by Rudyard J. Alcocer, defending Harold Bloom’s theory of the Anxiety of Influence and that the offspring cannot exist without the parent. That is, whatever it is that *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents, it was first seen in *Jane Eyre*: “the British text has provided a matrix involving race and ethnicity that the Caribbean text would re-interpret” (2005, p. 133) and “*Wide Sargasso Sea* in some respects reenacts a textual hereditary relationship between parent and offspring” (2005, p. 139). As this idea is developed in the book, Alcocer presents the possibility of facing Antoinette’s home/identity issues as having been inherited from Jane in the first place, understanding Jane as the pioneer who transmitted her issues to Antoinette.

As for Jane, orphaned and raised by an unloving aunt and educated in a school ruled by a heartless priest, she herself is unable to identify a home. Most of the time, when questioned about her home she simply replies: “I have none” (BRONTË, 1994, p. 124), or that she is “absolutely without home and friends” (BRONTË, 1994, p. 342). Her statements concerning the existence of such a place in her life sound even bitter: “How people feel when they are returning home from an absence, long or short, I did not know” (BRONTË, 1994, p. 240). While talking to St John, Jane declares: “You . . . cannot at all imagine the craving I have for fraternal and sisterly love. I never had a home” (BRONTË, 1994, p. 383). By home she seems to mean a loving familiar environment. It is not that she completely lacked relatives. As Rochester finds out about her aunt and cousins Reed, who raised her, he confronts her about her saying she never had a home. Still she keeps her word of not having a home, meaning that home is more than family or relatives.

Antoinette’s notion of home differs from Jane’s mainly in the sense that the latter’s changes through the novel, while the former’s remains almost unaltered. When Jane is with her childhood friend Helen Burns, she is convinced the only true home is with God, in Heaven. There, Antoinette eventually agrees with her. But Jane’s answers oscillate according to her situation. At times, when mentioning a home, she refers to the physical places where she has felt comfortable: Thornfield and the cottage. However, her real home, as she makes clear, is with Mr Rochester: “wherever you are is my home – my only home” (BRONTË, 1994, p. 244).

Jane’s lack of a definable home precluded the formation of a definable identity; that is, her not having a home, as she says, directly affects her character, leading to the weak and acquiescent self she demonstrates throughout the novel. Jane has a bendable self, able to accept changes more easily than most people. The change of her own name by Mr Rochester goes unnoticed by her; Mr Rochester would call her Janet sometimes, or angel, elf, witch, sprite, fairy. When meeting the Rivers, Jane introduces herself as Jane Elliot to preserve her identity and not be found by Mr Rochester. She admits it sounds strange, but

she will not use her real name even so. What is strange is that she is not bothered by Mr Rochester's calling her Janet.

The same Mr Rochester, both in *Jane Eyre* and in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, would insist on calling Antoinette "Bertha", although *Jane Eyre*'s reader is not informed about the intended misnaming. Antoinette's nature however, would not consent as silently as Jane: "He never calls me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother's name" (RHYS, 1985, p. 526). Mr Rochester, when asked for the reason why he does so, merely answers that he is particularly fond of it and that he thinks of her as Bertha (RHYS, 1985, p. 540). Sensitive as she is, Antoinette replies later on: " 'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name.' " (RHYS, 1985, p. 548). That is, Antoinette feels her feeble identity threatened to be disguised by Mr Rochester, and she rejects it.

McKenzie argues that Mr Rochester's persistence in changing Antoinette's name – and Jane's as well – evidences how determined to subjugate these women he is. He says: "Few things are more closely linked to a person's sense of self than his or her name" (MCKENZIE, 2009, p. 60). John Thieme comments that this is "an apt image of his violation of her identity and of his appropriation of the right to speak for Caribbean alterity more generally" (2001, p. 78). Thieme adds that it also suggests Mr Rochester's connivance in the metamorphosis of Antoinette into the madwoman in the attic (2001, p. 78).

Bloom, while rethinking Antoinette's relation with Mr Rochester – how she was "sold" to an Englishman, deliberately tormented and renamed by him, taken from her environment and imprisoned in England – concludes: "It is tempting to see the husband and Antoinette as metonymic figures for the 'mother country' and the colony, the metropolis and the subaltern" (2010, p. 225). Delia Konzett, referring to Judith Raiskin's linking Jean Rhys work to Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, says *Wide Sargasso Sea* is intended to accentuate "the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and the complexity of racial, cultural and national identity" (2002, p. 132). Indeed, these are plausible and suitable readings, in accordance with Mr Rochester's attempts to suppress Antoinette.

### **Sharing experiences: Salman Rushdie, Caryl Phillips, and homeward journeys**

Having made clear that our heroines are homeless for lacking a loving and safe environment during childhood, and detainers of traumatized identities, what appears in both plots is the opportunity of traveling, of taking a homeward journey, or at least towards what is supposed to be their homes. It is also important to emphasize that both stories are narrated as if they were the actual writers; therefore, one can remark the similarities of feelings and experiences shared between Antoinette Cosway, *Jane Eyre*, Salman Rushdie and Caryl Phillips. These texts are of completely different genres, for while Jane and Antoinette are fictional characters narrating a fictional story, Rushdie and Phillips are real writers sharing real life experiences through essays. Still, the women's accounts are intended to tell the story of their experiences as well, not minding their truthfulness.

A writer in Rushdie's position – that is, exiles, emigrants, or expatriates – can compose a book from new and unexpected angles, says Rushdie (1991, p. 10), and that is applied to Antoinette and Jane who are also dislocated writers, once they live away from

their homes. Antoinette, either living in the Caribbean or in England, was constantly away from her mother country, whether it was the actual country where she was born or the one which colonized it. Jane's homeland would be with her dead parents or her loving cousins, none of them present in her childhood. Thus, the three of them had a different look of their worlds while compared to writers who are not in the exile-emigrant-expatriate position.

In a very personal account, Rushdie tells his impressions from his trip to his past, to Bombay. From the beginning, a parallel can be drawn between his text and Antoinette's and Jane's narratives. Rushdie would rather invert the idea that "The past is a foreign country", meaning instead that his present is a foreign country (1991, p. 9), just as it happens to our heroines, whose presents are foreign countries likewise. Antoinette's present, that is, her last reports, depict her in England, a foreign country. Just as the country is foreign, she says she is the foreign, the stranger. Her strangeness, she says, made her into someone else to the point that she is no longer recognizable as her old self.

There is a specific episode which portrays how unrecognizable she is: Antoinette, already in Thornfield Hall's attic, looks at her red dress and claims she would have been recognized by her brother if only she were wearing it with its smells. She cannot accept or even acknowledge the distance of time and place, the fact she is the foreign and "the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time" (RUSHDIE, 1991, p. 9). This passage seems to point to the idea that she cannot be recognized because she is not herself anymore, her real self was left back home. Her situation is similar to Rushdie's sense of foreignness in his present. It is an unfamiliar surrounding: an unfamiliar outside and an unfamiliar inside that change them (Antoinette and Rushdie) to the point of acquiring unrecognizable selves.

Such difficulty in recognizing the now Bertha as Antoinette leads her to wonder on the reality of the events. Antoinette does not seem to know real from unreal, or to acknowledge her life in England as the real one either. She is not able to remember the facts that happened to her since she has been living in England, she is not able to notice the course of time; she sees it all as a dream. Antoinette, as Rushdie, compares her life in the "unmentionable country across the border", which is England, with illusions, as an involuntary way to deny reality, to deny the time spent away from home.

As to the feelings concerning the idea of going back home, Jane fears what expects her in her old "home" (Thornfield Hall, Rochester) after living away for a while. Rushdie fears going back to his old home too, and he will not get into the house for he "didn't want to see how they'd ruined the interior" (1991, p. 9). Rushdie and Jane share this fear, except that she faces it, once she wants to move back home, unlike Rushdie.

It is interesting to notice that in the moment the memories of the old home are faced with reality, they are found to be distorted by the effect of time and changes going on both in the home and in themselves. Consequently, Rushdie says it is impossible to recreate the past as it was, once the circumstance will never be same. So we create a fictional past out of unreliable memories, which is what remains: "We will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (RUSHDIE, 1991, p. 10). Jane's memories of Thornfield were inevitably distorted, and her facing an utterly different Thornfield and Rochester as she goes back only emphasizes the unreliability of our memories.

Writers in Rushdie's position, whether they are real or fictional, are "haunted by a sense of loss". That may be one of the reasons that led them to write about their experiences in the first place. Rushdie's novels of memory, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* were stories intended to sound true by the narrator. At the same time, they are all told from the narrator's memories which are not to be trusted. As it was said, memories alter the past, allowing different versions of the same story depending on the teller. Rushdie's narrator in *Midnight's Children* was intentionally made suspect in his narrations, with mistakes and a fragmented version of what happened. Likewise, the reader in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not sure whom to trust. Is Antoinette's version of the facts more reliable than Rochester's? By the end of the novel one can even perceive traces of schizophrenia in Antoinette, leading the reader to rethink all the information he or she was given.

Being a narrative told through memories, Antoinette's discourse is fragmented once no one can recall everything. Rushdie says that "fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols" (1991, p. 12), explaining the presence of particular objects in Antoinette's fragmented discourse that may work as symbols, namely the looking-glass and the dress. The presence of such objects as symbols is expected in a fragmented narrative since the narrator is telling the story from what most marked his or her experience. Thus, the looking-glass and its absence in the attic, the fact that she misses it as some sort of affirmation of her identity, prove it to have been important and symbolic in the narrative. The lack of the looking-glass will not let Antoinette see herself and the changes time caused her. It had always been difficult for Antoinette to identify herself and, without the mirror, she is no longer able to recognize any identity whatsoever.

Jane's story, much more detailed, sounds almost as if she had a flawless memory and it does not seem fragmented. Yet, the fact the story is told by her alone demonstrates the biased information she offers. There are a couple of symbols which can be linked to her identity, namely her gray clothes. Gray is the middle color between the two most opposite colors, black and white. It is as if Jane were just as undecided as her clothes. Her clothes, as her presence, are indifferent to their surroundings, contrasting with Antoinette's colorfulness, which also characterized her as an exotic Caribbean. The decisive factor capable of changing her clothes, turn the tables and render Jane a beginning of an identity starts at her journey away from Rochester, where she finds the Rivers, who came to be her relatives.

The both British and African diaspora writer Caryl Phillips, in his article "Necessary Journeys" (2012), argues for the importance of homeward journeys, and journeys that lead towards someone's origins, in order to form a concrete identity. Phillips starts his article by saying that he had been traveling, taking journeys and encounters that might help him to "better understand the world that surrounded [him]". Phillips explains his reasons to make these journeys, saying: "it had long been clear to me that the full complexity of who I am – my plural self, if you like – was never going to be nourished in a country that seemed to revel in its ability to reduce identity to easily repeatable clichés" and "my own identity was being compromised by the society I was living in". Therefore, the main reason for his journeys is to understand himself. He says travelling is important for it has provided him with means of clarifying his own unique position in the world.

Phillips also refers to Jean Rhys's writings, which were (most of them) about that impulse to migrate that had affected his own parents' lives, and the lives of many of his

family and friends. Another aim for his journeys was to explore and understand such impulse.

Considering Phillips's arguments that traveling helps him understand his identity, Antoinette and Jane also needed traveling, and they did travel. Traveling might not have changed the way people looked at them – a way that reduced them to stereotypes: Antoinette, the exotic Creole; and Jane, the meek orphaned governess – but it did change the way they looked at themselves. Although these were necessary journeys for them both, Antoinette never really meant to leave her country. She had a previous knowledge of a certain kind of England, the same England presented to her fellow countrymen, the England everyone wanted to go to, everyone but her. It is not that she refused to go, she merely sounds indifferent to the idea of going. Antoinette lacked the impulse referred by Phillips, and seems to be going just to please and follow her husband.

In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie says:

It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity. Which seems to me self-evidently true; but I suggest that the writer who is out-of-country and even out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form (1991, p. 12).

For all people, the metaphor of past as a country from which we have emigrated fits to exemplify the distance, the nostalgia. Rushdie proposes that immigrant writers suffer more with this loss, because for them it is not metaphorical. The loss Antoinette experiences from her immigrating to England is such that she locked herself in, and covered herself with a shield of forgetfulness, refusing to accept the reality as in the defense mechanism Denial; that is, she denies the veracity of the events, even the fact she is in England. Antoinette is what Rushdie calls a translated woman for having been born across the world. As something always gets lost in translation, Antoinette lost the little identity she had left, which associated her to the Caribbean. Antoinette took a journey that instead of helping her understand herself, damaged her even more. Ultimately it leads her towards “the eternal home”, as she calls it, for she ends up dead.

Unlike Antoinette, Jane is not a translated woman, mainly because she did not experience any actual border crossing. Also, she lacked any possible kind of home from the beginning, so she did not miss anything, she could not miss something she had never had. Jane's journey, incomparably shorter than Antoinette's, comprehended a three-day distance. It was from Thornfield Hall to St John Rivers's residence. Still, this was a journey that in fact transformed Jane's life and helped her understand her past and, consequently, herself. Thanks to “Providence”, as she says, she was led to find unknown relatives, a mysterious past, and a new identity.

Phillips's proposal was to write about the human heart; he was more interested in it than in discussing “ ‘issues’ – black or otherwise”. Similarly to Phillips's travel writings, the focus in both women's narratives is not their issue with their identity/home either. They are basically telling their stories. The presence of these issues in the texts is a consequence of their presence in the narrators, and it cannot be helped.

Phillips is often asked what would have happened if there had been no migration in the first place; however, most importantly, as he says, what would have happened if he had



not made these journeys? What would become of Antoinette, what would become of Jane, had they not traveled? Would their stories have a closure at all?

## Conclusion

Very wisely, Phillips ends his article with the following insight:

The most dangerous thing that we can do to ourselves is to carelessly accept a label that is offered to us by a not always generous society that seeks to reduce us to little more than one single component of our rich and complex selves. Somewhere between Morocco and Moscow the truth of this struck home, and by the time I returned to Britain I was ready to begin. (2012)

Antoinette and Jane, at first, would accept the labels imposed on them. Although Antoinette did ask Rochester not to call her Bertha, neither she nor Jane really fought against their name change, for example. That, as Phillips says in the previous quotation, is “the most dangerous thing we can do to ourselves”. Nevertheless, after the journey, these women’s self-assurance grew to the point of very bravely facing their fears, in Jane’s case, and for Antoinette, she was brave enough to pursue her happiness, insane as she was, in jumping towards what she believed was real. The awareness of their homes and identities directly influenced the course of their stories, and, as a result, the course of our readings. This research provides *Wide Sargasso Sea* together with *Jane Eyre* a new possible line of interpretation, one that admits the homelessness of the women in the attic, but it also provides them an escape from their condition through journeys.

## References

ALCOCER, Rudyard J. **Narrative mutations:** discourses of heredity and Caribbean literature. New York: Routledge, 2005.

BLOOM, Harold. **Exploration and colonization.** New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010.

BRONTË, Charlotte. **Jane Eyre.** London: Penguin Books, 1994.

CAMPELLO, P.C.S. **Ambiguities of imperialism:** the case of Antoinette Cosway in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Belo Horizonte: Faculdade de Letras, 1999.

CASTLE, Gregory. **Postcolonial discourses:** an Anthology. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001.

CUDJOE, Selwyn Reginald. **Caribbean women writers:** essays from the First International Conference. Wellesley: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

KONZETT, Delia Caparoso. **Ethnic modernisms.** New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

MCKENZIE, Earl. **Philosophy in the West Indian Novel.** Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2009.

PHILLIPS, Caryl. **Necessary Journeys,** 2004. Disponível em: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/dec/11/society2>>. Acesso em: 09 jul. 2012.

RHYS, Jean. **Jean Rhys: the complete novels.** New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1985, p.462-574.

RUBIK, Margarete; METTINGER-SCHARTMANN, Elke. **A breath of fresh Eyre:** intertextual and intermedial reworkings of *Jane Eyre*. New York: Rodopi, 2007.

RUSHDIE, Salman. **Imaginary homelands.** London: Penguin Books, 1991, 9-21.

THIEME, John. **Postcolonial con-texts.** London: Continuum, 2001.