

## Fragments of a Lost Identity

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Here I stand upon a threshold, the beginning of my future and the end of my past, a farewell to my identity in search of a new one. How can I leave the old colonizers I know to face these modern imperialists? Bewildered, I set out as my black skin gleams in a colorless crowd of a different tongue, of a different culture. An internal battle ensues, I question myself, “How do I belong to what is not my own?” tempted to betray my native tongue, to forget my embattled Helen<sup>1</sup> and her then French and English masters and to denounce the Africa that is my very soul, for a sly seducer of capitalist deceits where my culture is as insignificant as the bloody offerings of my black ancestors.

On my quest for knowledge, I have become even more uncertain as I am adrift on this Sargasso Sea<sup>2</sup> being tugged by cultural currents from Europe, North America and the Caribbean, hoping that I do not befall the fate of Mrs. Rochester<sup>3</sup>. This battle between my past and my present is ever-consuming and has led me into an incertitude of my very being and questions my own identity, I am a bastard child of England and France with roots planted in Africa searching for my existence in a Spanish jewel. How can I embrace all four adversaries without turning against myself?

I turn back as I hear distant uttering of a far away land, calling me home, where the soil is rich, and laden with the blood of servitude, where at night the forest comes alive with spirits of

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<sup>1</sup> Helen refers to the island of St. Lucia, which is commonly referred to as the Helen of the West.

<sup>2</sup> Sargasso Sea refers to the region in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by ocean currents; it also refers to the novel “wide Sargasso Sea” by Jean Rhys.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Rochester refers to the “madwoman in the attic”, a character in the novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë.

the past, where my only true inheritance lies in the land of my ancestors. Prying myself away from these masks of colonialism I tear away years of self-loathing and hatred. Naked I trudge, exposed to the world around me, as I follow those familiar echoes leaving behind the burdens that my own culture has inflicted upon me. Adieu to you modern imperialists, I depart to reunite with my old masters! Finally, when paradise is in sight, when I can finally see the birthplace of my origin with its greenery and rugged terrain, another mask is forced upon my face and it seems that home is no longer the cradle of my culture but the birthplace of a lost identity.