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**Dreams and the Unconscious in Wide Sargasso Sea: A
Psychoanalytic-Feminist Study**

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Dedication:

To my dear and loving parents my mother Amra and my father Mohamed, I love you more than anything in the world

To my beloved sister Israa, my best friend, and unwavering supporter, thank you, and I wish I could do even more for you

To my dear brothers Youcef, Zakaria and Younes , I am grateful for you always.

To my besties Malika and Nawel, your friendship is a light in my life.

I love you all and thank you for everything, you mean more to me than words can ever express.

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List of abbreviation:

Wide Sargasso Sea – dreams – identity – Jean Rhys – psychoanalysis – Freud – trauma.

Abstract:

The present thesis examines the role of dreams and fragmented narration in *Wide Sargasso Sea* from a psychoanalytic-feminist perspective. It investigates how Jean Rhys employs the unconscious as a narrative space through which female subjectivity resists patriarchal and colonial forms of oppression. While previous scholarship has predominantly focused on postcolonial and feminist interpretations of the novel, this study redirects attention towards the psychological significance of dreams as modes of unconscious expression rather than mere manifestations of madness or emotional instability. The methodology combines psychoanalytic theory, feminist narrative criticism, and close textual analysis. The study primarily draws upon Sigmund Freud's theories of dreams, repression, and the unconscious, alongside Jacques Lacan's concepts of the Symbolic Order, the Imaginary, and fragmented identity. This interdisciplinary framework facilitates a deeper exploration of trauma, repression, silence, and psychological resistance within the novel. Through an analysis of recurring dream sequences, fragmented narration, and symbolic imagery, including fire, mirrors, and forests, the thesis demonstrates that dreams function as alternative spaces in which suppressed fears, desires, and conflicts of identity emerge despite social and symbolic constraints. Furthermore, the study reveals that Rochester's narrative authority and his renaming of Antoinette constitute forms of symbolic violence aimed at erasing female subjectivity. Ultimately, the thesis argues that *Wide Sargasso Sea* transforms the unconscious into both a psychological and political site of resistance through which a silenced female identity seeks to reclaim voice, agency, and selfhood.

General introduction:

In modern literature, the unconscious plays a significant role in shaping the ways authors explore psychological conflict, repression, and the impact of social domination on individual identity. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys presents a fragmented narrative shaped by colonial tensions and patriarchal authority. Antoinette Cosway's inner experiences are revealed through memories, silences, and recurring dreams. Rhys does not portray madness as merely an individual psychological condition; rather, she associates psychic instability with experiences of displacement, repression, and the loss of identity. Through dreams and fragmented narration, the novel exposes the hidden emotional realities that shape Antoinette's resistance within oppressive social structures. In this sense, the unconscious becomes a space in which suppressed fears, desires, and forms of resistance emerge despite patriarchal attempts to silence them.

Critical discussions of *Wide Sargasso Sea* have predominantly approached the novel from postcolonial and feminist perspectives. These readings emphasize issues such as racial hybridity, colonial displacement, gender oppression, and the novel's rewriting of *Jane Eyre*. Such analyses have contributed significantly to understanding Antoinette's marginalization within colonial and patriarchal systems. Although many studies acknowledge the psychological dimensions of the novel, dreams are often treated as secondary narrative elements or merely as manifestations of madness and emotional instability. This thesis seeks to redirect critical attention towards a psychoanalytic-feminist interpretation. Rather than viewing dreams as irrational moments detached from the ideological concerns of the narrative, this study examines them as meaningful structures of unconscious expression. By placing dreams at the centre of the analysis, the thesis explores how Rhys employs the unconscious to articulate a female subjectivity that resists symbolic erasure and patriarchal control. Through the integration of psychoanalytic criticism and feminist approaches, the study reveals the deeper psychological mechanisms of repression, trauma, and resistance operating within the novel.

Within the novel, dreams are far more than moments of psychological confusion or narrative interruption; they function as alternative spaces through which Antoinette's repressed fears, desires, and fragmented sense of self find expression. Recurring at crucial moments in the narrative, these dream sequences emerge from unconscious tensions shaped

by colonial displacement, emotional abandonment, and masculine authority. Unable to express herself directly within a society that continually silences her, Antoinette communicates her inner conflicts through symbolic images, fragmented visions, and persistent sensations of fear and pursuit. In this regard, dreams operate as a form of resistance against both Rochester's authority and the colonial symbolic order imposed upon her identity. The novel's fragmented narrative structure further reinforces this psychological instability, as shifting perspectives and disrupted chronology reflect the fractured condition of the protagonist's subjectivity. Through the interaction between dream narration and narrative fragmentation, Rhys transforms the unconscious into a space where suppressed female experiences resist repression and assert their presence.

This study is guided by several questions concerning the relationship between dreams, unconscious expression, and female resistance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. First, how do Antoinette's dreams express repressed female subjectivity within patriarchal and colonial structures? Second, how does Rhys employ psychoanalytic structures to critique patriarchal authority? Finally, how does the novel transform dreams and narrative form into mechanisms of resistance against symbolic power? Through these questions, the study seeks to explore the complex relationship between the unconscious, identity, and feminist resistance throughout the novel.

This thesis adopts a psychoanalytic-feminist approach that combines psychoanalytic theory with feminist narrative criticism in order to examine the psychological and narrative dimensions of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The analysis primarily draws upon the theories of Sigmund Freud concerning dreams, repression, and the unconscious, particularly his theory of dream-work. In addition, the study engages with the psychoanalytic concepts of Jacques Lacan, especially his theories of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. These perspectives provide an important framework for understanding Antoinette's psychological instability, identity crisis, and struggle against oppressive symbolic structures. Furthermore, feminist narrative theory contributes to a deeper examination of voice, silence, and patriarchal authority within the novel, enabling the study to explore how narrative fragmentation and dream narration function as acts of resistance against female erasure. Through this interdisciplinary framework, the thesis aims to demonstrate how Rhys transforms the unconscious into a space of both psychological and feminist resistance.

The thesis is divided into three chapters, in addition to a general introduction and conclusion. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework and reviews the literature relevant to the study. The second chapter examines dreams as expressions of the unconscious through an analysis of trauma, fear, desire, and identity in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The third chapter explores patriarchy, silencing, and psychological resistance, with particular emphasis on the role of dreams in reclaiming female voice and subjectivity. The conclusion summarizes the principal findings of the study and highlights its contribution to psychoanalytic-feminist literary criticism.

CHAPTER ONE:

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction:

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the study and presents the key ideas that will guide the analysis. It draws on psychoanalytic theory and feminist psychoanalysis, which together help us understand identity, trauma, and the silenced female voice in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Important concepts such as Freudian dream-work, Lacan's Imaginary, Symbolic, Real, and the mechanisms of repression are explained alongside feminist perspectives on patriarchy, control, and the ways women's voices are silenced.

The chapter also looks at previous research on the novel, including psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial studies. By exploring these theories and studies, it becomes clear that there is a gap in the research when it comes to examining dreams as a form of psychoanalytic and feminist resistance, a gap that this study aims to fill.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys rewrites the story of Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre*, presenting her as Antoinette Cosway, a creole woman whose identity is influenced by colonial conflicts, racial instability and patriarchal control. Throughout the novel, dreams play a central role in revealing Antoinette's inner thoughts, particularly her fears, desires, and fragmented identity. These dreams are not just symbols or decoration; instead, they function as crucial narrative moments that reveal unconscious conflicts and suppressed experiences. As Antoinette loses her voice in a world dominated by colonialism and patriarchy, her dreams become a new way for her to express herself. Therefore, analyzing dreams in the novel is crucial because they highlight the connections between trauma, identity, and resistance, making them a key site for both psychoanalytic interpretations and feminist critique.

1.1 Critical Review of Previous Studies on *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

Scholarly analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea* has produced a significant amount of critique. Primarily influenced by psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial theories. These perspectives have improved the understanding of the novel's complex themes of identity, authority, and subjectivity. However, despite this depth of criticism, certain narrative dimensions, particularly the sustained functions of dream, remain insufficiently examined.

Psychoanalytic interpretations of the novel have focused on the themes of madness and trauma, particularly related to Antoinette's psychological breakdown. A Lacanian reading, critics interpret her perceived madness as the result of repression, loss, and psychic

fragmentation rather than a biological condition (Lacan, 1966/2006). Rhys's female protagonists are shaped by cultural displacement and imperial control, resulting in a fragmented and unstable identity. Mary Lou Emry points out that Antoinette's marginalized status in colonial and gender contexts subjects them to various forms of social and psychological disruptions that weaken their identities. Instead of showing subjectivity as unified, Rhys depicts it as fragmented and responsive to larger crises of authority and cultural shifts. In this context Antoinette's mental instability can be seen as a result of these overlapping forces of oppression rather than an inherent trait (Emry, 1982, p. 418-430). Such interpretations effectively highlight the unconscious mechanisms shaping her suffering; however, they remain limited to seeing her inner experience as a site of breakdown rather than potential resistance.

Feminist criticism on the other hand has closely examined how the novel shows patriarchal dominance and silences female voices. A major part of this analysis is the idea of the "mad woman in the attic" discussed in *The Mad Woman in The Attic*. Here, female insanity is seen not as a natural condition but as a response to systemic oppression (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). In *Wide sargasso sea*, this concept is conceptualized through Antoinette, whose identity is shaped and limited by patriarchal control, especially through the influence of her husband. Her isolation and inability to speak reflect the broader ways in which women are characterised and limited in male dominated systems. From this perspective, Antoinette's insanity can be understood as a form of suppressed resistance, revealing the conflict between imposed identities and the struggle for self-expression within patriarchal system.

Post colonial criticism places *Wide Sargasso Sea* within the context of colonial history and its lasting cultural impact. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) points out, feminist and postcolonial perspectives often overlap. Both examine systems of oppression and silence, highlighting connections between gender dynamics and imperial authority. This connection is particularly relevant in Rhys's novel, where Antoinette's situation reflects both gender and colonial oppression. As a white creole woman, she has a fragile identity, excluded from both European and Caribbean communities, which deepens her feelings of isolation. In her analysis of literary works including *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that imperial narratives silence and marginalize colonized women, limiting their ability to define their own identities and experiences (Spivak, 1985). In this regard, Antoinette's psychological fragmentation cannot be separated from the cultural displacement produced by colonial power. Consequently, her personal struggle reflects the broader dynamics of gendered and colonial oppression.

Despite the rich body of criticism on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, most existing scholarship has mainly examined Antoinette's dreams through either a psychoanalytic lens or separate postcolonial and feminist perspectives. Critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have emphasized themes of silence, colonial discourse, and the marginalization of women, while psychoanalytic interpretations, based on the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, have focused on dreams as signs of repression, trauma, and the unconscious mind. However, there remains a significant gap in approaches that connect these perspectives to explore dreams not just as signs of psychic fragmentation, but as sustained sites of resistance. More specifically, there has been little focus on how Antoinette's dreams serve as a constant psychoanalytic-feminist strategy. Through her dreams, she negotiates, resists, and symbolically disrupts both patriarchal and colonial systems of control.

1.2. Psychoanalytic theory:

Psychoanalytic theory was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it focuses on the importance of the unconscious mind in shaping human behavior. Freud suggests that dreams are shaped by hidden thoughts and desires that come from early life experiences (Freud, 1900/2010, pp. 586, 587). The unconscious can be seen as a space that contains buried memories, unresolved problems, and feelings that exist beyond conscious awareness. Sigmund Freud describes consciousness as merely the "surface" of the mind, he suggests that deeper mental processes function outside of immediate perception (Freud, 1923/1927, p.19). he also illustrates the relationship between the ego and the id with the image of a rider and horse, where the ego tries to lead the more powerful and instinctive forces of the id (Freud, 1923/1927, p.30). As a result, human behavior is largely influenced by motivations that are not accessible to conscious awareness.

In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud (1900/2010) called dreams the "royal road" to understanding the unconscious (p. 604). And he argues that the actual significance of dreams is not openly displayed. It changes through a process he calls "dream-work." This process turns latent dream-thoughts, which are hidden desires and motivations, into manifest content, the form in which we remember the dream (p. 160). Sigmund Freud further explains the mechanisms of dream-work, illustrating how these hidden thoughts are changed and misrepresented in the manifest content (p. 295). He notes that this change occurs due to an internal censorship system, a "watchman" that ensures that taboo or socially unacceptable desires are expressed in a hidden way (pp. 167/168). The manifest content can be viewed as a symbolic or pictographic transcript, similar to a rebus, which needs

interpretation to reveal the original hidden meaning (p. 295). Ultimately, Sigmund Freud (1900/2010) points out that dream-work operates differently from conscious thought, transforming latent content without evaluating or judging it, as it “does not think, calculate or judge in any way at all; it limits itself to providing things with new form” (p. 510).

1.2.1. Freudian dream-work:

Freud thinks dreams are a special form of thinking that happens in sleep, and is the process of dream work that defines this form of thinking, which is the core of dreaming (p. 510). He proposed that dream work censor the latent content of a dream. This process operates through several mechanisms, most notably condensation, displacement, and symbolism.

Condensation, according to Freud, is a key process in dreaming. In this process, one part of the dream content stands for several deeper dream thoughts that are linked through associations (Freud, 1900/2010, pp. 297-299). This means that one image, figure, or scene in the manifest content can represent several unconscious associations simultaneously. As a result, there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between the manifest and latent content of a dream: a single element may function as an “over-determined” nodal point where multiple meanings converge (Freud, 1900/2010, pp. 300–301).

For Sigmund Freud, displacement in dreams is a way for our minds to shift the emotional or psychological meaning of hidden thoughts onto things in the dream that seem less important or unrelated. In this regard, the dream’s content often diverges from its main ideas, showing images or events that might seem silly, strange, or disconnected from what the dreamer really cares about. Freud (1900/2010) described this process as working together with condensation, which mixes several unconscious ideas into one part of the dream. He also noted that this happens because of the mind's censorship, which helps protect our conscious self from facing troubling or unacceptable thoughts directly (pp. 322-325).

The unconscious mind uses imagery and objects in a dream to symbolize hidden desires, fears, and emotions that a person is not able to put into words (1900/2010, pp. 295, 354, 358). For Freud (1900/2010), dreams are not simply a random collection of images, but a disguised expression of latent thoughts that is consciously inaccessible (p. 160). Psychic censorship prevents these unconscious wishes from being transparent, persuading them to assume altered and indirect forms (p. 167-168). Through symbolism, the dream-work deals with this constraint by turning repressed material into images that can be represented while simultaneously hiding their underlying significance (p. 363). Freud recognized that some of

these images recur in dreams with a regularity that suggests that they have a general unconscious significance. Images such as water, fire, enclosed space, and mirrors recur sufficiently in the dreams of his patients to suggest a general vocabulary of unconscious symbols (Freud, 1900/2010). However, it is also important to note that symbols are not fixed in any absolute sense but are also relative to the individual's personal history and emotional context (Freud, 1900/2010). Consequently, dream symbolism functions as an effective resource for analyzing literature. Writers often use recurring images to express hidden thoughts and feelings (Freud, 1900/2010, pp. 282-283).

What makes Freudian dream-work particularly evocative as a critical framework is precisely how these three mechanisms “condensation, displacement, and symbolism” work together. Rather than expressing repressed material openly, the unconscious routes it through distortion, layering meaning in ways that are simultaneously hidden and retrievable. This is not chaos; it is, as Freud (1900/2010) suggested, a structured process with its own internal logic. For those who study literature, this framework opens a productive line of investigation, shifting attention away from what characters explicitly say toward what their dream lives quietly expose about their inner psyche. Sandbæk (2022) similarly highlights that both psychoanalysis and literary critics are engaged in discovering hidden messages in texts. dreams, fantasies, slips of the tongue, and metaphors reveal the unconscious influences that shape meaning (p. 3).

While Sigmund Freud explains the mechanisms of dream formation through processes such as condensation, symbolic displacement, and later psychoanalytic developments, particularly in the work of Jacques Lacan, shift attention toward the structural and linguistic dimensions of the unconscious.

1.2.2. Lacanian Concepts:

Jacques Lacan is a French post-Freudian psychoanalyst whose work is widely regarded as a reinterpretation of Sigmund Freud's theories through the framework of structural linguistics, particularly influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure. While Freud focused on repression, dreams, and hidden desires, Lacan (1966/2006) shifted the conversation by placing language at the very core of the unconscious (p. 413). In his essay *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious*, Lacan (1966/2006) argues that the unconscious is structured like a language. It goes beyond just words to reveal important patterns within psychic life (p. 413). He also connects Freud's concepts of dream-work “condensation” and “displacement” with

the language tools of metaphor and metonymy, illustrating how the unconscious organizes and hides meaning while bypassing censorship (p. 425). Lacan's theories of human psychology can be explained by his concepts of the imaginary, symbolic, and the real. These three registers function not as isolated domains but as interconnected dimensions that structure human subjectivity and experience. The Imaginary, which is closely linked to images and the development of the ego, becomes especially clear in Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, when a child first identifies with its reflection (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 75). The Symbolic, by contrast, is the realm of language, law, and social structure, it organizes how we communicate, interpret, and exist within society. The real in Jacques Lacan's framework refers to that which resists symbolization and cannot be fully expressed in language, often emerging in moments of trauma (Fink, 1995; Evans, 1996).

The concept of the Imaginary holds a key role in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, especially concerning how the ego forms and how a person initially experiences their identity. It's not just about "imagination" in a simple way; rather, the Imaginary refers to a specific aspect of the mind that revolves around images, illusions, and identification. This is most clearly shown in Lacan's mirror stage theory, where a child sees their reflection and starts to identify with it as a whole and consistent image of themselves (Lacan, 1966/2006).

At this point, the infant, who initially experiences its body as fragmented and uncoordinated, mistakenly takes the reflected image to represent a stable and complete identity, this misrecognition creates what Lacan calls the ego, but this ego is built on an illusion because it relies on an external image rather than something internal and true (Lacan, 1966/2006, pp. 112, 119). In this way, the Imaginary register is closely linked to identification, duality, and rivalry because individuals often connect with others through images and how they see similarities (Evans, 1996).

Moreover, The Imaginary doesn't just appear in early childhood; it continues to influence how people see themselves and others throughout their lives (Lacan, 1966/2006, p.78). It's the realm where appearances matter most, and relationships happen through images, fantasies, and projections instead of through symbols or language. As Bruce Fink points out, the Imaginary involves an ongoing tension between the self and its image, which can lead to feelings of alienation, competition, and misunderstanding (Fink, 1995).

It's important to note that the Imaginary never works on its own; it's always connected with the Symbolic and the Real. While the Imaginary gives a person a sense of unity and

identity, this sense is weak and deceptive, often challenged by language structures (the Symbolic) and the limits of what can be represented (the Real). Thus, the Imaginary should be seen as one part of Lacan's larger model of subjectivity, rather than as an independent realm (Lacan, 1966/2006).

Unlike the Imaginary, which is based on images, the Symbolic refers to the system of language, law, and social order that shapes how human experience is organized. According to Jacques Lacan, subjectivity does not develop outside of language; instead, it arises within a pre-existing set of signifiers that influence how people think, speak, and relate to one another (Lacan, 1966/2006). Influenced by the linguistic model of Ferdinand de Saussure, Lacan points out that meaning is not fixed but produced through differences between signifiers (Evans, 1996, pp. 187, 189). This means the subject becomes part of a symbolic system that already exists and defines their place within it. Lacan calls this system the "big Other", which represents language, social rules, and authority controlling communication and interpretation (Evans, 1996).

One key stage in entering the Symbolic is described through the Name-of-the-Father. This idea revises Freud's Oedipal theory, not referring to the actual father, but to the symbolic role of law and prohibition, especially the taboo against incest. Lacan explains the subject's entry into the Symbolic order using the concept of the Name-of-the-Father, which revises Freud's Oedipal model. Here, the father is not a biological person but a symbolic role connected to law and prohibition, particularly the incest taboo. This role separates the child from the mother and brings the child into the systems of kinship and language (Fink, 1995). In this framework, desire is not merely personal or instinctual; it is influenced by language and shaped through our relationship with the Other. Since language can never fully capture experience, there is always a gap between what one intends to convey and what is actually expressed. Desire arises and persists within this gap (Lacan, 1966/2006). The Symbolic offers the structure that shapes meaning, identity, and social roles, but it also sets boundaries on what can be expressed or understood. Its connection with the Imaginary and the Real reveals the complexity of Lacan's model, where subjectivity is always formed yet never entirely finished.

The Real refers to what exists beyond representation. It is a part of experience that cannot be captured by language or images, which is why it often emerges through trauma, disruption, or intense anxiety. Unlike the Imaginary, which revolves around images and identification, or the Symbolic, which organizes experience through language and social rules, the Real resists symbolization entirely (Lacan, 1966/2006; Fink, 1995). When someone

encounters the Real, it shows the limits of both the Symbolic and the Imaginary. People face experiences that go beyond what language or images can describe, showing that identity and understanding are always incomplete, and no symbolic system can fully cover human experience (Evans, 1996). The Real is closely linked to Lacan's theory of desire. Because desire is shaped by the Symbolic order and revolves around the Other, it never aims at an object that can be fully obtained. In this framework, Lacan introduces the concept of *das Ding*, or the Thing, which does not stand for the object desired itself but rather its cause. This idea points to a deep lack at the core of subjectivity—something essential that makes desire possible but remains unreachable. In his later work, Lacan develops this idea further with the concept of *objet petit a*, which represents the cause of desire. This arises both from the subject's relationship to the Other and from what remains unspoken in the process of symbolization (Fink, 1995). Moreover, the Real is closely connected to the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Imaginary deals with identification and rivalry, while the Symbolic organizes language, laws, and social meanings. The Real serves as the unrepresentable core around which these two operate. This implies that subjectivity is never fully complete but is instead structured by gaps and absences that sustains the subject's ongoing desire (Evans, 1996).

Collectively, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real form an interconnected framework within which Jacques Lacan articulates human subjectivity. The Imaginary offers a sense of coherence by means of identification, whereas the Symbolic organizes meaning through language and social norms. The Real, in contrast, represents a boundary that defies representation. The interaction among these registers highlights the fragmented and dynamic nature of the subject, whose identity is continuously constructed through processes of identification, signification, and desire.

1.2.3. Trauma Theory and Repression:

Psychoanalysis primarily examines how trauma and repression organize the unconscious mind. In Freudian theory, trauma encompasses experiences, whether actual events or psychically constructed, that are so overwhelming they resist full integration into conscious awareness. Repression serves as a key defense mechanism by which these experiences are excluded from consciousness (Freud, 1920/2003). Nevertheless, the repressed content does not vanish; it remains embedded in the unconscious, influencing the individual beneath awareness and appearing indirectly through symptoms, dreams, slips of the tongue, anxiety, and repetitive behaviors. Thus, repression acts not only to shield the ego but also to allow traumatic experiences to persist in shaping identity, memory, and narrative (Freud, 1920/2003).

As Cathy Caruth (1996) argues, trauma involves a temporal delay wherein the impact of the event is not fully apprehended at the time it occurs but resurfaces later in indirect and often disruptive ways. This phenomenon is especially pertinent to literary analysis, where repressed trauma often reappears in fragmented, symbolic, and non-linear narrative forms.

Before we explore the concept of trauma in more depth, it is essential to comprehend the term trauma from a historical perspective. Its roots from the Greek word “τραῦμα (traûma), literally means wound, injury, damage, which indicates that an individual has been injured or damaged (Danese & Baldwin, 2017, p. 518)

By the late 1800s, Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet started to develop the first theory of "trauma". Instead of just linking it to physical injury, they began to see it as a psychological problem that affects both the nerves and psyche. This shift led to the idea of psychological trauma, which Judith Herman explains as being closely connected to helplessness.

During trauma, the victim faces a force that is too much for them to handle, making them feel deeply powerless. If the force comes from nature, we call it a disaster; if from other people, we call it an atrocity. Traumatic experiences overwhelm a person's normal ability to cope with life's demands and often involve threats to life, violence, or brushes with death.

Freud further refines this understanding by explaining trauma as the effect of an external stimulus powerful enough to break through the mind's protective defenses. This “protective shield” normally controls and filters what the mind takes in, but when it fails, too much stimulation floods the mind and disrupts its balance (1920/2003).

Cathy Caruth (1996) defines trauma through her work *Unclaimed Experience* as: “In its general definition, trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.” (p. 91) The reaction to such events often shows up later as uncontrolled, repeated hallucinations and other intrusive symptoms. This delayed and fragmented nature of trauma highlights its close relationship with repression, as traumatic experiences remain unassimilated and reemerge indirectly through repetition, silence, and disruptions in memory.

The connection between trauma and repression continues to be a fundamental issue in psychoanalytic theory, given that traumatic events frequently exceed the individual's capacity for immediate psychological processing. According to Sigmund Freud (1915/1957), repressed

content is excluded from our conscious awareness but not destroyed. Instead, it remains in the unconscious and continues to influence our psychological functioning. This process is linked to the return of repressed material, where such content reappears indirectly through symptoms, memory lapses, and other expressions (pp. 146, 154).

Repression was first introduced by Sigmund Freud as a key part of the unconscious mind. He described it as the way the ego pushes away troubling or unwanted thoughts, feelings, and memories so they don't enter conscious awareness. (Freud, 1915/1957).

For Freud, repression is the main idea in psychoanalysis because it shows how unconscious thoughts can still affect behavior even though they aren't consciously known. Because of this, repressed thoughts often come out in different ways, like through dreams, mistakes in speech, or symptoms of neurosis, which show that there are unresolved conflicts the person isn't fully aware of (1915/1957). In Freud's later research on trauma, this mechanism becomes especially important because repression is connected to the persistence and return of traumatic events.

Repression plays a key role in how the mind deals with trauma. According to Freud, in his work *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, he suggests that intense experiences aren't just forgotten; they are pushed out of conscious awareness through mental defenses. But these experiences don't disappear completely. Instead, they stay in the unconscious and often come back in different ways, like in dreams, recurring behaviors, or psychological symptoms. Freud calls this the "compulsion to repeat," where the person seems to live through the trauma again, as if it's happening now, rather than remembering it from the past (1920/2003). At the same time repressed content is kept out of conscious awareness to prevent discomfort, but it remains in the unconscious and manifests indirectly as symptoms and alternative expressions (Freud, 1915/1957, pp. 147, 154).

Thus, by keeping painful thoughts and wishes at an unconscious level but allowing them to surface indirectly, repression not only organizes the unconscious but also supplies it with a system that enables an exploration of its manifestations in dreams, symptoms, or narrative form.

1.3 Feminist Psychoanalysis and The Female Voice:

The application of feminist theory is essential, as this study aims to raise issues related to women. This part discusses the following points: first, patriarchy as a form of psychic

repression, focusing on silencing, renaming, and control; second, the dynamics of voice, silence in the hysterical narrative.

Feminism, as defined by bell hooks (2000), is a movement aims to end sexism, exploitation, and oppression. It emerged in response to the historical inequalities and injustices that women have faced. Feminist psychoanalysis, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, combines feminist views with psychoanalytic theory. It examines how gender inequality is affected by both social structures and unconscious processes. This approach critiques traditional psychoanalysis within a broader feminist context that seeks to uncover the psychological factors behind oppression. From this perspective, patriarchal systems are seen as internalized influences that shape women's identities through silencing, renaming, and control.

1.3.1 Patriarchy as Psychic Repression:

Women were always considered less human than men. It was believed that they were both physically and mentally weak. Historically, patriarchal ideology has been supported by philosophers; Aristotle, for example, was interpreted by Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker (2005) as saying that females are just females and they are defined by certain lacks in relation to men (p.115). This view led to the social and cultural perception of women as being inherently inferior, which was perpetuated through norms and institutions. Patriarchy can be defined, according to Sylvia Walbey (1990), as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (p.20). She emphasizes that patriarchy should not be interpreted as a result of biological differences or as a condition where every individual man dominates every woman. Instead, it occurs at a structural level. In feminist psychoanalysis, patriarchy is not only an external structure of power but also internalized in the mind through socialization and cultural norms. These expectations become part of the unconscious over time, shaping how women perceive themselves, manage their behavior, and understand their role within society. This process is known as internalization, where external social norms are integrated into one's mindset. By examining the psychological level of internalized gender roles, we can gain a clearer understanding of the ongoing existence of patriarchy. As noted by Nancy Chodorow (1978), early familial interactions are crucial in forming an individual's unconscious, where societal expectations are gradually absorbed and integrated into their self-perception (pp. 9–10). Thus, patriarchal ideologies are not only imposed by external systems but are also reproduced internally, shaping how women perceive themselves and maneuver through their social environments. According to Chodorow (1978),

gendered social structures become part of women's inner lives. They shape how women see themselves. This process leads them to suppress their own needs, take on limiting identities, and change their behavior to fit societal expectations they have internalized (p. 39). As a result, patriarchy operates not only as a societal construct but also as an internal psychological mechanism that shapes subjectivity and reinforces gender inequality.

1.3.1.1 Silencing:

The silencing of women's voices is a significant psychological effect of patriarchy, but it does not always result in direct prohibition; rather, it is often caused by internalized expectations that discourage expression. From a young age, women are taught to control their speech, avoid conflicts, and suppress inappropriate emotions. As a result, these expectations become deeply rooted, leading women to control their own voices even when no external limitations are imposed. As Sandra Bartky (1990) explains, psychological oppression operates through an internal process where people adopt and maintain feelings of inferiority that have been imposed on them. This dominance eventually turns inward (p. 22). Similarly, Michel Foucault (1978) suggests that the things that go unspoken are influenced by social norms that determine who has the right to speak, what can be shared, and in which situations. Therefore, silence should not be seen simply as the opposite of speech, but rather as an essential part of a wider system that controls and orders communication through power (p.27). In this sense, silence is not just a social condition imposed from outside, but also a psychological state that is maintained internally. Thus, silencing can be seen as a form of psychic repression, in which individuals unconsciously limit their own expression to internalized patriarchal norms.

1.3.1.2 Renaming:

If silencing denies women the ability to speak, renaming reshapes what they can be. It is not just about giving something a new name; it is much deeper and more critical. Renaming functions as a mechanism of control over identity, shaping how women are seen and even how they see themselves. As Luce Irigaray (1985) argues, women are historically positioned as "the other" within a symbolic and linguistic framework structured by male norms. Consequently, efforts to express difference are limited by a language that reproduces male-centered structures, thereby restricting the possibility for the "other" to be represented independently or in its own terms (p.139). This process is further clarified by Judith Butler, who asserts that identities arise not from an innate or stable inner essence, but rather as something produced through the repeated performance of socially regulated acts over time. As

this repetition continues, these behaviors seem natural, creating the illusion of a fixed internal identity, even though they are shaped by culture (Butler, 1990, p. 178). Psychoanalytically speaking, this resonates with Jacques Lacan's idea that the subject is fundamentally shaped by the symbolic order, especially through the role of language and signifiers. He shows that a person's identity is not self-created but is determined by their place in a system of meaning that exists before them. In this context, even fictional stories can reveal these underlying structures. They demonstrate how meaning is controlled by symbolic relationships instead of random elements (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 6). In this sense, renaming functions as a form of deep psychic inscription, where externally imposed labels, such as "hysterical," "irrational," or "other" are internalized, shaping both how women are perceived and how they come to perceive themselves. Therefore, renaming not only functions at the level of representation, but also acts as a mechanism of control that structures identity itself, reinforcing the broader patriarchal order.

1.3.1.3 Control:

Patriarchal dominance reveals its most profound instructions not through loud voices or chains, but through the silent architecture of the mind itself. Lacan's idea of the symbolic order shows how patriarchal law serves as a basic principle. It shapes the limits of who we are and restricts what we can express or wish for (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 6). Butler expands on this psychoanalytic perspective by demonstrating that gender identity is shaped by performative actions influenced by discourse. In her words, "gender is not a fact; rather, the multitude of gender generates the concept of gender". (Butler, 1990, p. 178). In this context, control works through repetition: daily acts of following norms make identity feel natural while hiding its constructed nature.

When analyzed together, the acts of silencing, renaming, and controlling illustrate that patriarchy is not just an external system of oppression, but as a deeply internalized structure that influences individual identity as its core. Silencing prevents women from engaging fully in discussions; renaming alerts their identities within restrictive symbolic systems; and control restricts their desires, expressions, and opportunities based on patriarchal standards. Drawing from the thoughts of Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray, and Judith Butler, it becomes clear that these mechanisms are not separate but interconnected processes that sustain patriarchal power at both the social and psychic levels.

1.3.2 Voice, Silence, and the Hysterical Narrative:

The relationship between voice, silence, and the hysterical narrative occupies a central position within feminist psychoanalytic criticism. Feminist theorists have argued that women's experiences are frequently constrained by patriarchal structures that limit their ability to speak and be heard. Consequently, alternative forms of expression emerge through silence, bodily language, fragmentation, and hysterical discourse. Examining these concepts provides a deeper understanding of how female subjectivity negotiates systems of exclusion and control. The following sections discuss voice, silence, and the hysterical narrative as interconnected modes through which women challenge patriarchal authority and articulate suppressed experiences.

1.3.2.1 Voice:

Patriarchy operates through mechanisms such as silencing, renaming, and control, yet it does not completely remove the opportunity for expression. Instead, such repression often results in the emergence of different types of voices that appear in indirect, fragmented, and sometimes disruptive forms. In psychoanalytic theory, this dynamic is strongly linked to the idea of hysteria, a topic initially investigated by Sigmund Freud in *Studies on Hysteria*. He illustrates that repression does not fully remove expression; instead, it shifts it, enabling repressed experiences to surface indirectly and symbolically (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1955, p.7). Expanding on this, Cixous emphasizes the distinctively embodied character of women's expression, claiming that a woman's physical presence plays a crucial role in shaping her language, and giving her voice intensity, vitality, and affective power. Even when discussing theoretical or political topics, women's stories resist linear, objectified frameworks, blending individual experiences with wider historical and social realities. Their expressions carry both significance and emotion, maintaining a resonance that goes beyond traditional discourse and challenges patriarchal limitations (Cixous, 1976). These perspectives demonstrate that women's voices continue to exist despite systemic oppression, indicating that silence under patriarchy is not complete, and that alternative methods of expression, whether through physicality, symptoms, or written word are important for representing personal identity.

1.3.2.2 Silence:

Despite the restrictions imposed by patriarchal standards, women's voices remain present in subtle and often indirect ways. Psychoanalytic theory illustrates that repression does not eliminate desire or expression; instead, it transforms them. Silence does not mean there is no expression. In their work, *Studies on Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer illustrate

that suppressed experiences can reappear in physical or hallucinatory ways, even if they remain unvoiced. This indicates that feelings or thoughts that cannot be spoken still seek other ways to be expressed (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1955, p. 14). Adding to this psychoanalytic viewpoint, Foucault (1978) highlights that silence is not neutral; rather, it is reshaped by power dynamics, revealing the social and cultural contexts that determine who has the right to speak, what might be spoken, and the conditions under which speech occurs. Within a patriarchal society, silence functions both as a consequence of active silencing and as a nuanced mechanism of control, influencing how women can communicate while simultaneously revealing the persistence of desire and agency, even in restrictive conditions.

1.3.2.3 The Hysterical Narrative:

The concept of the hysterical narrative is crucial in feminist psychoanalytic theory, as it reclaims what was historically considered pathological speech and reinterprets it as a significant, though fragmented, form of expression. Early theories in psychoanalysis, especially those proposed by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, interpret hysteria as a condition where persistent physical and psychological symptoms can be linked to earlier traumatic events, even if the individual does not recognize this connection immediately (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1955, p. 4). Classical psychoanalysis often viewed these signs as indications of disorder. Feminist theorists such as Hélène Cixous reinterpret hysteria as a strong form of embodied expression instead of a harmful condition. She believes that what many have called extreme or unreasonable talk is actually a significant way that women communicate through their bodies. Using the figure of Dora, Cixous highlights that this bodily language holds ignored histories and pushes back against patriarchal discourse. In this way, hysterical expression turns into a powerful force that changes silence into a way of resisting and reclaims women's power in language (Cixous, 1976, p. 886).

This narrative also shows how women's voices, often limited by societal and patriarchal norms, emerge indirectly through bodily expression. This transforms obvious silence into a subtle yet powerful form of communication. Additionally, the fragmented, repetitive, and non-linear aspects of hysterical narratives reflect both the unresolved psychological conflicts from trauma and the structural constraints placed on women's speech in a male-dominated symbolic order. Other feminist theorists, such as Luce Irigaray (1985), similarly argue that dominant discourse regularly excludes women's experiences, making other forms of expression, such as the hysterical narrative, crucial for reclaiming agency and expressing feminine subjectivity (p.139).

The relationship between voice, silence, and the fragmented narrative shows how women's experiences, often limited or misrepresented, come through physical expression and disjointed speech. Feminist theorists such as Cixous and Irigaray highlight that these various forms of expression restore agency, transform silence into resistance, and affirm feminine identity in a patriarchal narrative.

In conclusion, the concepts of voice, silence, and the hysterical narrative provide valuable insights into the ways female subjectivity is shaped and constrained within patriarchal structures. While voice functions as a means of self-expression and agency, silence may reflect both oppression and resistance. Likewise, the hysterical narrative emerges as an alternative mode of expression through which suppressed experiences challenge dominant forms of discourse. Together, these perspectives highlight the complex relationship between gender, language, and power, establishing an important foundation for the psychoanalytic-feminist analysis undertaken in this study.

Theoretical and Analytical Framework:

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, focusing specifically on Antoinette's dream sequences. It uses a psychoanalytic-feminist approach that merges classical psychoanalytic theory with feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's work, the analysis explores key processes in dream-work, such as condensation, displacement, and symbolism. This helps understand dreams as expressions of the unconscious, along with sites of repressed desire and trauma. Additionally, the study engages with Jacques Lacan's ideas about the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real to examine the fragmentation of identity and the role of language and desire in shaping the self. The analysis focuses specifically on the three major dream sequences experienced by Antoinette, examining them as interconnected parts that show her psychological and narrative resistance. Through close readings of these dreams, the study analyzes imagery, symbolism, and narrative form. It reveals how they serve not only as expressions of psychological conflict but also as spaces of resistance and alternative discourse. By combining these approaches, the study provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between the unconscious and broader social and political structures. It highlights how Rhys uses dream narratives to challenge and destabilize dominant systems of meaning.

Following this framework, the second chapter looks at the analysis of dreams as expressions of the unconscious in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It examines how Antoinette's dream

sequences reveal hidden desires, fears, and traumas through the use of symbolic imagery and dream-work processes. The chapter also looks at how memory and fragmentation shape her psychic experience. In addition, the chapter briefly discusses Rochester's dreams to highlight the difference between the female and male perspectives. The third chapter then shifts the focus to the relationship between dreams, narrative form, and patriarchal power. It examines narrative fragmentation, silencing, and renaming as tools of symbolic control and how Antoinette's dreams serve as a form of resistance through which she reclaims voice and agency. Together, these chapters demonstrate how dreams move from expressions of inner conflict to active sites of resistance within the novel.

In this regard, dreams are viewed not just as signs of psychological distress, but as active spaces where meaning is made and negotiated. They reveal not only repression and inner conflict, but also subtly challenge the forces that try to silence her. As a result, this research contributes to the existing scholarship by offering a deeper understanding of dreams as active, and changing sites of resistance. It shows that in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, dreams complicate and destabilize the established boundaries. Thus, this study combines psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives to demonstrate the ways in which dreams are a continual and structured form of resistance in the novel.

CHAPTER TWO:

Dreams as the Unconscious Language of the Self

Introduction:

Dreams occupy a central position in psychoanalytic thought as privileged spaces where the unconscious expresses what remains inaccessible to conscious awareness. Through symbolic images and fragmented narratives, they reveal desires, fears, and traumatic experiences that resist direct articulation. In Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, dreams function as a complex psychic language through which hidden conflicts, repressed memories, and struggles over identity emerge. Drawing upon the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, this chapter explores the relationship between dreams, the unconscious, and the construction of the self. It first examines Antoinette's dreams as sites where repressed desires and anxieties are symbolically expressed through recurring images such as fire, forests, and mirrors. It then investigates the connections between trauma, memory, and dream-work, highlighting how personal and colonial wounds return in fragmented and repetitive forms. Finally, it analyzes Rochester's dream-like perceptions as manifestations of the patriarchal unconscious, emphasizing the contrast between male and female modes of experiencing and expressing unconscious conflict. Through these perspectives, the chapter argues that dreams constitute a crucial psychic space in which questions of identity, belonging, trauma, and power are simultaneously revealed and contested.

2.1. Dreams as Sites of Repressed Desire and Fear:

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, dreams serve as a window into Antoinette's unconscious mind, revealing her inner conflicts, desires, and anxieties. The novel uses her dreams to portray a psyche caught between yearning for connection and the persistent threat of erasure, both personal and cultural. Antoinette's dreams are not random or meaningless; instead, they express hidden fears and desires shaped by early experiences, which aligns with Freud's idea that dreams represent disguised wish fulfillment. Recurring images such as fire, mirrors, and the forest emphasize the instability of identity. From a Lacanian perspective, this suggests that identity is fragmented and continually formed rather than fixed. At the same time, these dream images are influenced by the colonial and patriarchal contexts in which the characters live, intensifying their sense of displacement. This chapter, therefore, argues that dreams function as a form of unconscious language through which trauma, fragmented identity, and subtle forms of resistance are expressed.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section explores dreams as expressions of hidden desires and anxiety, focusing on the important dream images of

Antoinette and their symbolic meanings. The second section looks at the links between trauma, memory, and dream-work, highlighting how past traumas appear in fragmented ways. The final section analyzes Rochester's dreams as reflections of the patriarchal unconscious, emphasizing the differences between male and female dream logic in the novel.

In psychoanalytic theory, dreams are understood as important places where the unconscious shows repressed desires and anxieties. As Sigmund Freud argues in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, dreams are not random events; they are structured ideas that express wishes and fears we cannot face directly in our waking life. Through mechanisms such as condensation, symbolism, and displacement, these hidden meanings are transformed into symbols that both hide and reveal deeper psychological conflicts. Thus, dreams serve as a form of indirect communication, allowing repressed feelings to surface in disguised form. This framework is particularly relevant when examining *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where dream imagery becomes a key site for expressing the tension between desire and fear.

Within this psychoanalytic framework, Antoinette's first dream can be read as a symbolic expression of repressed fear and desire. In the dream, Antoinette walks alone in a dark forest, sensing the presence of an unknown person following her, which creates a feeling of fear and vulnerability: "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." (Rhys, 1966, p. 10). This image of pursuit creates a sense of threat and instability, yet it also feels strangely familiar. This suggests that the source of her fear is not just external, and the figure that is pursuing her might reflect repressed conflicts that her mind cannot fully recognize or express. From a Freudian perspective, this character can be interpreted as the return of the repressed, where internal fears and desires are displaced onto an external "Other" in the dream narrative (Freud, 1900/2010). The forest setting reinforces this reading, serving as a symbolic space for the unconscious where the distinctions between self and other become ambiguous. As a result, what appears to be an external threat could also reflect internal psychic conflict, in which desire and anxiety are closely connected. The dream, therefore, creates a tension between attraction and fear, showing Antoinette's fragile and divided self. Instead of bringing clarity or resolution, it deepens her psychological instability. It implies a self that is still developing but already affected by fragmentation and inner conflict.

The setting of the dream becomes more controlled and confined. The shift from the forest to a garden surrounded by walls indicates that Antoinette is becoming more trapped. In

addition, her white dress gets dirty as it drags on the ground, symbolizing a loss of innocence and a weakening sense of identity. The steps she sees ahead suggest that she is approaching an important and unavoidable moment. Overall, the dream reveals that Antoinette is not just scared, but is being pulled into a situation from which she cannot escape. This reflects a growing inner conflict and a sense that her identity is becoming unstable and divided.

Antoinette's dreams reach their most intense point in her dream of fire. Here, fear and loss of control change into action and destruction. In this dream, she moves through the house with purpose, unlike in the earlier dreams, where she is passive and scared. She carries a candle and eventually causes a fire, watching as "the lovely colour spreads so fast" (Rhys, 1966, p. 127), a moment that shows both fascination and emotional release. The fire can be understood as a symbol of destruction, but also as a way for her suppressed emotions to finally be released.

The fire in this dream symbolizes the moment when Antoinette's repressed emotions finally surface strongly and visibly. Sigmund Freud notes in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that dreams often turn inner conflicts into symbolic images (Freud, 1900/2010, p. 366). In this case, the spreading flames represent her anger, pain, and increasing inner tension. The dream also links her current experience with her past, as memories of her childhood and figures like Tia come back to her. This pattern of recurring trauma is reinforced by the racial insult "white cockroach," which was first used against Antoinette by Jamaican children including Tia and later repeated in Amélie's mocking song, "the white cockroach she marry... the white cockroach she buy young man" (Rhys, 1966, p.63). This label captures her social rejection and dehumanizes her, marking her as racially in between and rejected by both communities. The insult does not occur just once but rather as a repeated source of psychological harm. It reappears throughout the story and illustrates how Antoinette's mind constantly revives memories of humiliation within her present feelings and emotions. This connection is clear when she says, "all my life was in it," implying that the fire not only destroys the present but also unites and consumes her past (Rhys, 1966, p. 128). The repeated calling of the name "Bertha" highlights the loss of her true identity, as she is forced into a role that is not hers. Unlike her earlier dreams, where she is either chased or guided, this final dream marks a significant change. Antoinette is no longer passive but acts with clear purpose. Her action should not be seen as a sign of a psychological breakdown but as a form of resistance and a way of reclaiming control over her own life. By setting fire to the house, Antoinette rejects a completely oppressive environment. This moment connects with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

study of Sati in colonial India. There, the widow's act, though seems self-destructive, becomes a complex and debated arena where her agency is both shown and hidden under patriarchal and colonial interpretation. For Spivak, such acts do not show clear resistance. Instead, they reveal the conditions under which subaltern agency can only appear in indirect and uncertain forms (1988). Similarly, Antoinette's act of setting fire is not just a sign of madness. It can also be seen as a final and physical rejection of a colonial and patriarchal system that consistently erased her identity and voice. The dream, in this regard, does not end in simple liberation. It closes with a complex and tragic expression of agency at the edge of representation. Thus, the dream represents a crucial moment of crisis, where her sense of self collapses under the weight of fear, memories, and imposed control.

The images of fire, forest, and mirror do not function as separate symbols; instead, they create an interconnected system that constitutes Antoinette's dream world. The forest, which dominates her initial vision, emerges as a space of uncertainty. Here, orientation collapses, and the distinction between internal and external reality becomes increasingly unstable. It reflects a self already detached from any clear sense of identity, moving within an environment that resists clarity or control. In contrast, the mirror offers a sharper confrontation with identity. Staging a moment of failed perception, where the self cannot fully match its reflected image. Antoinette makes this clear when she reflects, "There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now... The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself... What am I doing in this place and who am I?" (Rhys, 1966, p. 121). This tension recalls the fragmented subject theorized by Jacques Lacan, where identity forms through misrecognition rather than coherence. The image of fire suggests a further escalation, turning hidden instability into a visible crisis. At once destructive and emotionally charged, it signals the surfacing of psychic intensities that exceed repression. Instead of revealing conflict, the flames intensify it, exposing a subject on the edge of disintegration. Together, those repeating images show a path from confusion to fracture and, finally, to total collapse, revealing the progressive decline of Antoinette's mental stability.

In this regard, Antoinette's dreams serve not as isolated episodes but as clear psychic framework where hidden fears and desires are negotiated. The recurring images of fire, the forests and the mirror do not just reflect internal conflict; they show a subject suspended between a desire for belonging and the persistent threat of being erased. Desire in this context, is tied to anxiety, as the research for identity is often undermined by forces that destabilize it. The dreams therefore reveal a self that cannot achieve coherence, influenced by both personal

vulnerability and the broader pressures of colonial and patriarchal systems. As such, they express not only inner fragmentation but also anticipate at the return of unresolved trauma. This dynamic becomes clearer in the processes of memory and dream-work.

2.2 Trauma, Memory, and Dream-Work:

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, dreams function as a symbolic representation of internal struggles and complex psychological processes influenced by Sigmund Freud's dream-work. This refers to how latent content transformed into distorted, manifest imagery. Through mechanisms such as condensation, displacement, and repetition, dreams do not faithfully reproduce past experiences. Instead, they restructure them into fragmented and often disturbing (Freud, 1900/2010). This process is particularly significant when dealing with trauma, which resists a coherent representation and appears instead through indirect, symbolic distortions. Building on this framework, Jacques Lacan interprets trauma as being part of the real, that which cannot be fully articulated within language or symbolized within consciousness (Lacan, 1966/2006). Traumatic experiences show up in dreams as fragmented and often incomprehensible imagery. In the novel, dreams function as sites where unresolved trauma keeps replaying. They do not offer resolution or understanding, but instead highlight the individual's inability in integrating distressing past experiences into a stable sense of self. In this context Antoinette's dreams can be understood as sites where personal and colonial traumas manifest in distorted and displaced forms instead of as clear memories. Her childhood experiences characterized by emotional neglect, racial conflict, and persistent sense of unbelonging, do not reappear as linear recollections, but rather as fragmented and affectively charged images. The incident of Coulibri's burning and the racial hostility she encounters as a "white cockroach", are not remembered directly; instead, they surface in her dreams as chaotic scenes of threat, pursuit, and destruction. The attack on Coulibri itself shows a deep sensory breakdown. As the home's safety collapses into violence and chaos. Antoinette hears a "horrible noise that swelled up, like animals howling, but worse." Smoke was rolling out, and the air was full of the "scent of burned hair." These elements do not create a clear story. Instead, they surface as isolated, excessive impressions that exceed immediate comprehension. The scene of Pierre, barely alive pulled from the fire, makes this connection even more intense. It presents Antoinette with something that is almost too painful to describe. Because of this, the event cannot be absorbed into her conscious memory. It sinks in her unconscious, reappearing in distorted, symbolic forms in her dreams. This distortion represents what Sigmund Freud calls the returns of the repressed in disguised form (Freud, 1900/2010). It also

aligns with Cathy Caruth's argument that trauma is inherently delayed, recurring as a repetitive and unresolved experience (Caruth, 1996). In this context, Antoinette's dreams do not function as acts of recollection. They are involuntary returns of unresolved experiences, where personal suffering connects with the broader historical violence of colonial displacement. This creates a psychic landscape shaped by both history and memory.

Antoinette's dream visions show a deeply fragmented subjectivity that can be understood through Jacques Lacan's concept of *Jouissance*. Rather than offering a clear resolution or emotional relief, her dreams show moments where meaning begins to collapse and the boundaries of the self become unclear. In the forest dream, for instance, she finds her way through a strange and threatening landscape guided by an unknown force, while feeling a growing fear that does not lead to withdrawal. As she confesses, "I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself... this must happen" (Rhys, 1966, p.34). This dream captures a paradoxical submission toward what frightens her. This drive does not show a desire for safety or coherence, but instead a pull towards an overwhelming intensity that goes beyond conscious control. These experiences can be also understood as interactions with what Lacan calls the real, a realm that cannot be symbolized or disrupts the stability of the subject. Here, Antoinette's sense of self loses its unified, continuous form; it becomes fragmented, uncertain, and vulnerable to disintegration. The dream does not turn her past into a clear story; it presents her with something that cannot be fully put into words. This experience goes beyond the Freudian model of wish-fulfillment and relates more to *jouissance*, understood as a painful or overwhelming form of pleasure principle. Rather than resolving psychological tension, this excess intensifies it, connecting the subject to a repetitive confrontation with what unsettles her. This fragmentation is influenced by internal factors and the colonial and cultural dislocation that structures Antoinette's life in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Her inability to define broader struggle for belonging, where racial othering and personal loss intersect. Therefore, the dream becomes a space where psychological and historical forces converge, leading to a sense of identity that lacks unity and resolution. In place of finding wholeness, Antoinette feels stuck in a cycle of repetition and excess, where her search for meaning constantly returns to fragmentation.

Thus, Antoinette's dream world features fragmentation, repetition, and unresolved trauma. This sharply contrasts with the more controlled and externally expressed anxieties that affect Rochester's unconscious in the next section.

2.3 Rochester's Hallucinations and the Patriarchal Unconscious:

Rochester's dream-like perception and experiences shaped by hallucination *In Wide Sargasso Sea* do not provide clear psychological insights. Instead, they highlight moments where the patriarchal and colonial unconscious reveals its anxieties, contradictions and mechanisms of control. In contrast to Antoinette's dreams, which express fragmented forms of desire, trauma, and personal resistance, Rochester's engagement with the unconscious shows distortion, repression, and a strong need to create order. His persistent sense of disorientation in the Caribbean, described as "everything is too much... too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hill too near" (Rhys, 1966, p.39). Reflects not just cultural discomfort but also a deeper crisis of symbolic understanding. His focus on excess is particularly telling that Rochester does not describe the landscape in aesthetic terms; instead, he experiences it as overwhelming, something beyond his ability to contain or define. The bright colors and sensory intensity turn the natural setting into a place of psychological pressure, where too much becomes a source of discomfort. This suggests an encounter with what psychoanalytic theory identifies as the real, which disrupts meaning and cannot be fully expressed in words. Instead of confronting this instability, Rochester responds by protecting himself. He tries to ease his discomfort through narration, naming, and epistemic control. This defensive structure is clear in his relationship with Antoinette, where desire mixes with domination. His declaration "I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but this is not love" (Rhys, 1966, p.57), suggests that his feelings are driven by desire rather than genuine affection. Instead of seeing Antoinette as a person, he turns her into an object of desire and control. Psychoanalytically, this interaction can be interpreted through projection and displacement. Rochester projects his own inner confusion onto Antoinette, so he gradually turns her into a symbol of madness rather than seeing her as a real person. This process culminates when he renames her "Bertha", an act that represents a form of symbolic violence. By forcing an English identity on her, he tries to manage what he experiences as a threatening alterity, transforming the power of language into a way to control her. Naming, in this sense, becomes a way to dominate what he cannot understand. At the same time, Rochester's narrative voice undermines his claim to rational authority. His story is full of fragmentation, contradictions, and becomes more paranoid, especially in his acceptance of Danial Cosway's letter. He accepts it as proof of his suspicions instead of questioning why the letter was written, his perception takes on a dream-like quality, not through clear night visions but through a distorted view of reality shaped by unconscious fear and colonial ideology. This instability does not remain passive; it creates a need for control over his surroundings. Unable to keep a stable sense of self in an unfamiliar setting. Rochester begins to interpret both the Caribbean

environment and Antoinette through fixed and hierarchical distinctions. In doing so, he strengthens his own sense of power and authority. Rochester's perception of Antoinette can be better understood through Edward Said's idea of otherness, as outlined by Said (1978), in *Orientalism*, which explains how colonial thinking shows colonized people as fundamentally different and inferior. Rochester applies this same logic to Antoinette. He does not try to understand Antoinette based on her own identity. Instead, he reduces her to a set of fixed traits: she is irrational, excessive, and mentally unstable. These observations are not impartial; they are stereotypes that are deeply rooted in colonial ideology. This process allows him to see himself as rational and superior, which reinforces the division between himself and others. Therefore, his understanding of Antoinette is not objective but it is shaped by a broader ideological framework that shows cultural and personal difference into something threatening or inferior. In this regard, his sense of authority depends on her construction as the "Other." These classifications serve as psychological stabilizers, helping him regain a sense of control over reality that feels overwhelming and threatening. His narration shows that what appears as rational judgement is in fact a defense against uncertainty, difference, and inner disturbance.

This dynamic also reflects a difference between male and female unconsciousness in the novel. Antoinette's dreams serve as a symbolic way of expressing repressed feelings and experiences, while Rochester's unconscious tries to remove uncertainty and force meanings. His failure to understand Antoinette's dreams shows a deeper patriarchal anxiety about expressions that cannot be easily controlled or explained. This contrast becomes clearer through the politics of naming. Antoinette is forcibly renamed, which limits her identity and symbolically confines her, while Rochester remains unnamed in the novel, he is only called "the husband" or "the man". His lack of proper name does not reduce his authority. Instead, it makes him represent patriarchal and colonial authority in general rather than as a single individual. From psychoanalytic-feminist viewpoint, the female subject is defined by complex language and fragmentation, while the male subject keeps the advantage of being less defined and more powerful. Ultimately, Rhys challenges the traditional binary that connects masculinity with rationality, and femininity with madness. She does this by highlighting the instability in Rochester's own mental state. His dream-like lack of emotional depth and self-reflection; instead, they reveal the limits of a mind shaped by repression and a desire for control. Antoinette's dreams, by contrast, lead to expression and resistance, whereas Rochester's unconscious functions as a closed and defensive system, one that constantly reinforces his need for domination. Through this asymmetry, *Wide Sargasso Sea* reinterprets

the unconscious as a neutral psychological space. It offers the marginalized female voice to resist, while also revealing the fragility and underlying violence of patriarchal and colonial power. This reflects Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's claim that the subaltern cannot truly express themselves within dominant discursive systems (Spivak, 1988). Antoinette's voice, though present, is fragmented and filtered. This is clear in her last narrative in the attic, dream vision of fire shows both her struggle for expression and the limits of her confinement. Even when she speaks, she cannot escape being seen as "mad", revealing how strongly patriarchal and colonial power still control her. Fragmentation in Antoinette's narration becomes clear in how past and present mix. This creates a feeling of dislocation that reflects unresolved trauma. Her childhood memories, especially the destruction of Coulibri and the feeling of abandonment that followed, often emerge abruptly in later moments. There are no clear transitions in the narrative, which shows that these experiences have not been fully integrated into her conscious mind. This is highlighted by her changing perception of reality, she expresses this when she says, "I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all." (Rhys, 1966, p. 64). In this moment memory, identity, and present anxiety integrate into a single unresolved thought.

This chapter has established the theoretical and analytical foundations of the present study through a review of the major psychoanalytic and feminist concepts relevant to *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Drawing on Freud's theories of dreams, repression, and trauma, alongside Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, the chapter has highlighted the importance of the unconscious in shaping identity and subjective experience. It has also demonstrated how feminist psychoanalytic perspectives contribute to understanding the mechanisms of patriarchy, particularly through silencing, renaming, and the regulation of female subjectivity. The review of previous scholarship revealed the richness of psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial readings of the novel while identifying a gap concerning the sustained role of dreams as sites of psychoanalytic-feminist resistance. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study proposes a framework through which dreams can be examined not merely as expressions of trauma and psychological fragmentation, but also as spaces where resistance and self-expression emerge. Building upon this foundation, the following chapter explores Antoinette's dream sequences as manifestations of the unconscious, examining how they reveal repressed desires, fears, trauma, and the ongoing struggle for identity.

CHAPTER THREE:

Patriarchy, Voice, and Psychoanalytic Resistance

Introduction:

This chapter looks at how patriarchal authority operates through language, control of narrative, and symbolic structures in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. It also examines how these elements are challenged through forms of psychological resistance. Building on the previous chapter's discussion of dreams as expression of the unconscious, this chapter shifts the focus to the conditions that matter such indirect forms of expression necessary. Using the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, along with feminist concerns about voice and silencing, this chapter argues that Antoinette marginalization is not only social or colonial but also deeply linguistic. This is evident by her exclusion. The novel's fragmented narrative structure reflects the themes of psychic and symbolic dispossession. Rochester's act of naming and controlling her story shows the violence present in the symbolic order. In turn, Antoinette's dream-narrative create a space to express her suppressed subjectivity. This chapter first explores the novel's narrative form as a psychoanalytic study of fractured identity, it then examines patriarchal silence as a way of symbolic erasure, and finally it discusses dreams as a method of resistance self-recovery.

3.1 Narrative Structure as Psychoanalytic Case Study:

The way *Wide Sargasso Sea* is narrated can be read as a psychoanalytic case study, where the formal fragmentation shows a psychic division, not just an aesthetic device. The gap in Antoinette's narration; sudden shifts in time, memory lapses, and inconsistent transitions between perception and memory, show a person whose experiences do not fit into a single narrative. This reflects what Sigmund Freud theorizes in the interpretation of dreams that our unconscious thoughts do not present themselves directly, in which meaning emerges through distortion, displacement, and fragmentation instead of clear language (Freud, 1900/2010). At the same time, the instability of the narrative "I" resonates with Jacques Lacan's concept of the divided subject. This subject exists within language but is never fully aware of itself. Antoinette's voice is characterized by hesitation, contradictions, and discontinuity, not only points out to individual confusion, but also to the structural difficulty to have a stable identity within a symbolic system that excludes and marginalizes her. Thus, the novel's fragmented narrative should be understood as a textual inscription of a character whose psychological and linguistic coherence has been deeply disrupted. Fragmentation in Antoinette's narration becomes clear in how past and present mix. This creates a feeling of

dislocation that reflects unresolved trauma. Her childhood memories, especially the destruction of Coulibri and the feeling of abandonment that followed, often emerge abruptly in later moments. There are no clear transitions in the narrative, which shows that these experiences have not been fully integrated into her conscious mind. This is highlighted by her changing perception of reality, she expresses this when she says, "I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all." (Rhys, 1966, p. 64). In this moment memory, identity, and present anxiety all merge into a single unresolved thought. Rather than following a simple chronological order, her story unfolds in a more associative way, driven by emotional depth instead of time. This method reflects Sigmund Freud's assertion that repressed material does not emerge in a direct form, but return through fragmented and displaced structures (Freud, 1900/2010). The break in the chronological flow suggests that Antoinette's past is an active psychological force, often interrupting the present and preventing her from forming a stable narrative self. Thus, fragmentation serves not just as a stylistic feature but also as a formal expression of a psyche where memories are unresolved and a unified narrative identity cannot be securely consolidated. The instability of Antoinette's narrative becomes even more evident due to the unreliability of the first-person perspective. Using "I" does not create a consistent or strong sense of self. Although she tells her story in the first person, her narration is marked by doubt, fragmentation, and a longing sense of being lost, which indicates that the narrator does not fully connect with herself. This instability is particularly evident when Antoinette observes, "names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scent..." (Rhys, 1966, p.121). Here, the idea of "Antoinette drifting" highlights a disconnection between the speaking "I" and the identity it aims to represent, suggesting that subjectivity is not fixed but is constantly being undermined by language. What emerges from the narrative voice is not unified and strong "I", but a divided subject whose identity is shaped by language while never fully secured within it. This connects to Jacques Lacan's idea of the divided subject, formed through entry into the symbolic order. In this order, language both helps creates identity and introduces a constitutive lack. In Lacanian theory, the subject is never completely present of itself, it is formed through meanings that constantly exceed and displace it. As a result, Antoinette's narration shifts between assertion and dissolution. This emphasizes that expressing oneself does not guarantee clarity or coherence. The "I" acts more as a stable center of identity, exposing the limitations of language in representing a subject shaped by displacement and marginalization. The shift in narrative perspective from Antoinette to Rochester marks an important shift in authority within the text,

where control over the story becomes linked to patriarchal dominance. What appears as a simple switch between voices gradually reveals a hierarchy, in which Antoinette's immediate experiences are subordinated to his interpretive framework. His voice does not simply follow hers; it changes and re-frames it, turning personal experiences into a topic for analysis and evaluation. This complexity increases when we consider Antoinette's earlier perception of herself: "The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself." (Rhys, 1966, p. 121). A reformulation that reveals a self that is already split, her sense of self exists in an unstable space between feeling recognized and feeling like a stranger. Rochester's narration implies that this internal division is no longer confined to her own perspective but becomes externalized and appropriated, as her unstable state is reinterpreted and fixed in his discourse. Unlike the instability associated with Antoinette's voice, Rochester's narrative consolidates his authority by presenting himself as rational and consistent. However, this apparently clear image hides an underlying anxiety. His attempts to define and contain her show his need to stabilize his own position in an unfamiliar cultural and psychological environment. This perspective shift reflects what Jacques Lacan refers to as the operation of the symbolic order, where identity is shaped by language but is never fully secured. The transition between narrations offers not simply a different perspective but also stages a struggle over interpretative authority, where Rochester's dominant voice redefines Antoinette's fragmentation identity. The perspective of narrative, in this context, acts as a way to control. It shows how power works by redefining, containing, and ultimately erasing the subjectivity of the other.

Antoinette's narrative can be better understood when focused on how she tells it rather than how it is expressed, especially when her language shows signs of emotional pressure. Her narration does not create its stable meaning; instead, they show how fragile identity can be, especially when she tries to assert her sense of self that is already being overwritten. This tension is strongly evident in her insistence: "my name is not Bertha" (Rhys, 1966, p. 89). At first glance, this statement sounds declarative, but its structure is negative, defining the self only through denial. Antoinette does not affirm who she is; she can only express what she is not, which suggests that her sense of self is already fractured. Therefore, the statement does not clarify identity; it reveals its instability, as language circles around a lost or misplaced signifier that cannot be securely named. This form of expression aligns with what Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer discuss in *Studies on Hysteria* about the dynamics of hysterical discourse. In their account, experiences that cannot be fully processed or verbalized are not

simply forgotten; they remain in altered forms and reappear through indirect signs and symptomatic modes of expression. Antoinette's refusal to accept the name "Bertha" can therefore be seen not only as an act of resistance but also as a sign of this unresolved tension. This assertion is less of a definitive claim and more of a trace of a deeper conflict that cannot be directly explained through language. From this perspective, the instability of her speech does not mean her words lack meaning, instead, it reveals a different way of arranging meaning, one that has been shaped by repression. Considered as a whole, the narrative structure of *Wide Sargasso Sea* reveals that the inconsistencies in voice, organization, and perspective are not random or accidental. The fragmented order of events, the changing first-person presence, the shifts of narrative control to Rochester, and the depth of Antoinette's expressive style all suggest a subject whose experiences cannot fit into stable forms of representation. What the novel presents is not simply a story told unevenly, but a consciousness trying to hold itself together in a context that offers no safe space for expression. The text, therefore, invites an interpretation where formal disruptions serve as a means to reflect psychological strain, revealing the difficulties of expressing a coherent identity in situations shaped by domination and exclusion. At the same time, the unequal sharing of narration control signals that power influences the act of expression. It determines whose voice is sustained and whose is displaced. It is this tension between having voice and losing it, that the following section will look more closely at the patriarchal mechanisms that silence voices and exert symbolic dominance.

3.2 Patriarchal Silencing and Symbolic Erasure:

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* patriarchal power reveals itself not only through direct domination but also through deeper symbolic and linguistic mechanisms that influence identity and voice. The denial of female subjectivity works through naming, narration, and language control. Thus, Antoinette is slowly pushed away from her position as a speaking subject. Psychoanalytically, this situation illustrates a form of symbolic violence, in which her identity is altered to fit the dominance of the male Other. The imposition of the name "Bertha" in *Wide Sargasso Sea* marks a crucial moment where patriarchal power asserts itself through language, turning identity into something that can be controlled. This act goes beyond the name itself, it is a performative act that reshapes Antoinette's identity according to Rochester's epistemic perspective. The dialogue, "Not Bertha tonight" she said. "of course, on this of all nights you must be Bertha." "As you wish" (Rhys, 1966, p. 91), reveals the dynamics of this naming process clearly. Antoinette's initial rejection indicates her effort to

keep her nominal and existential identity. However, Rochester's insistence dismisses her insistence, and her later acceptance signals the internalization of this external authority. What is involved here is not simply a name but the right to define oneself, a right that is gradually taken from her. From a psychoanalytic perspective, naming is a key mechanism through which the subject is placed within the symbolic order. Rochester's act of renaming serves as a forced re-inscription, which removes Antoinette from her own position as a speaking subject and reconstructs her within a patriarchal framework. Through this process, identity becomes detached from memory and self-awareness, creating a sense of alienation, where the individual is forced to inhabit a name that signifies her erasure.

Through the symbolic violence of renaming, Rochester's dominance becomes more apparent through his claim over narrative authority. His control over language becomes inseparable from control over reality itself. The novel's shifting perspective undermines Antoinette's narrative voice, allowing Rochester to become the main interpreter and reshaping events according to his rational and patriarchal logic. His statement, "She said she loved this place. This is the last she will see of it." (Rhys, 1966, p. 113), illustrates his control over the narrative. His declaration here immediately overwrites Antoinette's emotional attachment. The abruptness of this sentence not only underscores emotional detachment; it also emphasizes Rochester's authority to dictate how Antoinette's experiences are mediated and understood. Within this framework, she is no longer allowed to act as the authoritative narrator of her own reality; instead, she becomes an object perceived through masculine discourse. Through psychoanalytic perspective, this narrative domination reflects how the paternal Symbolic Order works, which generates and enforces meaning from the external onto the subject. Antoinette's growing silence appears not as passive absence but as the result of a systematic displacement. Her voice becomes fragmented, interrupted, and ultimately subordinate to Rochester's narrative control. However, Rhys implicitly challenges Rochester's authority with Antoinette's assertion, "I will write my name in fire red, Antoinette Mason" (Rhys, 1966, p. 29), this claim reflects the persistence of the resistant against patriarchal erasure, which suggests that patriarchal discourse can never fully erase the subjectivity it aims to contain.

Under Rochester's increasing control, Antoinette's voice does not simply disappear but becomes psychologically fragmented, which reflects Freud's concept of repression within the unconscious mind. Her distressed assertion, "that my mother was mad and infamous woman... and that I am a mad girl too." (Rhys, 1966, p. 85), does not simply repeat an

accusation. Instead, it reflects how her identity has already been shaped by others' opinions. In other words, herself-perception is influenced by how she is described in society. Within Freudian framework, repression does not eliminate traumatic experiences; it forces them to resurface in distorted ways, especially through fragmented language and constant repetition. As a result, Antoinette's speech reflects the fragmentation of identity under patriarchy. This leads to a situation where her sense of self cannot be fully expressed within the Symbolic Order imposed upon her. Her voice, therefore becomes a space of psychological conflict instead of a way to share her thoughts revealing how external silencing fractures the psyche.

What is revealed through Antoinette's progressive dispossession is not only the absence of her voice but the manner in which language and recognition shape identity within a patriarchal system. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, silence is not simply the absence of expression; it functions as a condition where language is controlled, redirected, and defined by external control. Antoinette's experiences suggest that language is not something she fully controls. Instead, it is a system that dictates how she can be represented and understood. Identity, from this standpoint is not stable or separate essence, but it is created through acts of naming and interpretation that shape the individual before a stable sense of self is formed. Therefore, patriarchal authority does not only silences Antoinette; it also shapes the conditions under which her voice can exist, ensuring that whenever she speaks, her voice is marked by fragmentation and limitation. Silence in the novel is consequently not just the opposite of expression; it also acts as one way that expression is organized and controlled.

3.3 Reclaiming Voice Through the Dream-Narrative:

As patriarchal authority undermines Antoinette's voice, *Wide Sargasso Sea* creates an alternative mental space where the marginalized voice communicates through dreams. Throughout the novel, these dreams disrupt the apparent stability of external reality. They reveal repressed fears, desires, and traumatic memories that cannot be expressed in ordinary conversation. The dream sequences work as symbolic spaces where repressed identity resists complete erasure. From a psychoanalytic perspective, dreams are the primary language of the unconscious. They allow forbidden or repressed material returns in hidden and fragmented ways. Thus, Antoinette's dreams are more than private hallucinations; they function as counter-narratives to the patriarchal and colonial discourses that aim to define, silence, and contain identity. In a world that aims to define any authority over her voice, the unconscious becomes the last remaining space in which fragmented identity can still express its presence.

While Antoinette's position in male-dominated becomes more limited, the narrative gradually focuses on her dreams more than external events, where her suppressed experiences take symbolic forms. Because the dominant social systems continually deny her ability to express her own identity, her psychic truths appear indirectly through fragmented images, hidden fears, and sensations that make no logical sense. This becomes particularly evident when Antoinette recalls, "I was walking in the forest. Not alone. Someone who hated me was with me, out of sight." (Rhys, 1966, p. 10). This vision turns the dream into an atmosphere of unseen hostility and psychological threat. Unlike direct confrontation, the invisible force works through ambiguity. This means that the forces around Antoinette cannot be linked to only one single individual; instead, they reflect the broader symbolic framework shaped by patriarchal and colonial oppression. The dream does not simply function as a reminder of fear but also as an unconscious recognition of the oppressive forces that have been already shaping her identity well before her final confinement. Thus, the dream narrative offers an alternative form of expression through which her suppressed anxiety and silenced voice continue to resist being erased. While the first dream mainly exposes Antoinette's unconscious senses of being persecuted and threatened, the second dream reflects a more developed stage in her psychological state. In this vision, fear begins to develop inside, still incomplete, as her awareness of the oppressive forces began to control her life. Unlike ordinary dialogue, which often fails to express her inner suffering, the dream allows suppressed emotions and psychic anxiety to emerge indirectly through symbolic narration. Antoinette recalls that she was walking toward the forest while following an unknown man, she admits that even though she feels "sick with fear," she makes "no effort to save" herself because "this must happen" (Rhys, 1966, p. 34). In this fragment, dream language allows the unconscious to reveal a truth that remains hidden in external reality, in other words, her growing recognition of forces that are gradually pushing her toward psychological and symbolic restriction. As a result, the dream acts not only as a reflection of fear, but also as an alternative form of narration allowing her silenced self to continue to express itself. Here, the unconscious voice of Antoinette begins to introduce experiences that patriarchal authority aims to suppress. The dream itself becomes a counter-narrative to the structures that want to erase her subjectivity.

The final dream marks Antoinette's highest point of her unconscious struggle against being erased, symbolically and psychologically. The dream changes from a space of fear into a form of rebellion and self-reclamation. Unlike her earlier dreams, which represent her anxiety through uncertainty and submission, this last dream has a stronger sense of purpose

and self-awareness. This transformation is clear when Antoinette notes that “the sky was red and all my life was in” (Rhys, 1966, p. 128). This powerful image merges memory, suffering, and her sense of identity, reflecting the collapse of boundaries between her inner thoughts and the external world. This allows her repressed emotions to surface greater force and clarity. At this point, the dream no longer merely reveals hidden fear. It begins to show a fragmented form of agency that resists complete submission. This becomes clear when Antoinette realizes, “now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do” (Rhys, 1966, p. 128). This statement marks a significant shift from passive suffering to symbolic action, as the subconscious changes repression into resistance. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the imagery of fire and destruction do not only signify madness, but instead they represent the return of a silenced self trying to regain control over its own story. Therefore, the final dream serves as Antoinette’s strongest act of resistance against patriarchal authority, allowing her suppressed voice to reassert itself through the language of the unconscious.

Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* challenged the conventional view of madness as an inherent psychological disorder. Instead, the novel presents Antoinette’s psychological collapse as the result of patriarchal and colonial violence that affect female identity. In contrast to Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, who is known as a silent figure confined behind a locked door, Antoinette is finally allowed to speak in her own voice. Through her fragmented narration, recurring dreams, and unstable self-perception, *Wide Sargasso Sea* transforms the character that was historically dismissed as the “mad woman” into a psychologically intelligible subject who can express their own suffering rather than being narrated by others. Rhys thus offers a feminist revision of literature and psychoanalysis by moving madness from being an individual issue to a matter of social and symbolic oppression. In this regard, the novel not only reinterprets Bertha Mason’s character, but also intervenes in the systems that originally silenced her. By giving a voice to the woman which was marginalized in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys disrupts the traditional male-centered lens that has defined female experiences exclusively through masculine authority. Renaming, erasure, and emotional control forced upon Antoinette lead her to psychological damage, which is expressed in her fragmented voice, shifting memories, and dream sequences. The instability of the narrative is thus inseparable from the instability imposed upon the female self. Through this technique, Rhys questions the idea that a coherent identity can exist in systems that consistently deny women linguistically and symbolically. In the novel, dreams function as a crucial narrative device within a psychoanalytic framework because they preserve forms of truth that ordinary

discourse excludes. Although Antoinette's voice is silenced by patriarchal forces within external reality, her unconscious becomes a vital space where her fear, desire, memory, and resistance continue to speak. Therefore, the final dream is seen as more than a sign of psychological breakdown; it represents a moment of self-recognition in which Antoinette reclaims her voice and control over her own life, in doing so, she exposes the effects of patriarchal power. Rhys ultimately transforms the silenced "mad woman" into a speaking subject whose fractured consciousness reveals the psychological consequences of patriarchal power itself.

This chapter has shown that *Wide Sargasso Sea* demonstrates patriarchy as a force that shapes language and identity by silencing, renaming, and psychological domination. Through fragmented narration and changing perspectives, Rhys reveals Antoinette's gradual destruction while also highlighting the instability of patriarchal authority. At the same time, the dream sequences create an alternative space where the repressed voice gradually turns from silence into a powerful act of resistance. Ultimately, Rhys transforms the narrative into a feminist psychoanalytic act that gives depth, agency, and subjectivity to a woman who has historically been seen as mad and absent.

This chapter has examined the complex relationship between dreams, narrative fragmentation, and patriarchal authority in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Through the analysis of silencing, renaming, and symbolic control, it has demonstrated how patriarchal and colonial structures seek to suppress Antoinette's voice and undermine her sense of identity. The chapter has also shown that Rochester's narrative authority functions as a mechanism of symbolic violence through which female subjectivity is marginalised and redefined according to patriarchal expectations. Furthermore, the analysis has revealed that dreams constitute a significant space of psychological resistance within the novel. Through dream narration, fragmented memories, and symbolic imagery, Antoinette articulates experiences that cannot be fully expressed within dominant systems of language and power. Rather than representing mere signs of madness or psychological instability, her dreams emerge as alternative modes of expression through which repressed fears, desires, and conflicts of identity are communicated.

Ultimately, this chapter has argued that Rhys transforms the unconscious into a site of resistance where silenced female subjectivity struggles to reclaim voice, agency, and selfhood. By exposing the limitations of patriarchal authority and challenging imposed identities, *Wide*

Sargasso Sea presents dreams as powerful narrative mechanisms through which psychological and symbolic forms of oppression are confronted and contested.

General Conclusion:

This thesis has examined the function of dreams and fragmented narration in *Wide Sargasso Sea* from a psychoanalytic-feminist perspective in order to demonstrate how the novel transforms the unconscious into a space of resistance against patriarchal and colonial domination. Rather than presenting Antoinette's dreams as signs of madness or psychological instability, the study argued that they express repression, trauma, desire, and the struggle for identity within a symbolic order.

The first chapter uses Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory along with feminist approaches about voice and subjectivity to establish the theoretical framework necessary for reinterpreting dreams beyond traditional psychological readings. It demonstrated that psychoanalytic mechanisms such as dream-work, repression, fragmentation and the unconscious provide important insights into Antoinette's fractured identity and psychological state. The chapter also highlighted the limitations of previous criticism by arguing that dreams are often seen as secondary elements rather than central narrative structures of resistance.

The second chapter explored dreams as expressions of hidden fears, desire, and colonial trauma. By examining recurring themes like fire, mirrors, and forests, the analysis revealed how dreams uncover Antoinette's unconscious conflict between her desire to belong and her fear of erasure. The study also demonstrated that dream sequences function as returns of unresolved trauma and as fragmented attempts to reconstruct identity. In contrast, Rochester's psychological perspective reflected anxieties rooted in patriarchal authority and colonial othering, highlighting the gendered nature of unconscious expression within the novel.

The third chapter explored the connection between narrative structure, patriarchal silencing, and psychological resistance. The fragmented first-person narration reflects the instability of the traumatized subject while also challenging authoritative male discourse. Rochester's renaming of Antoinette and his efforts to control the narrative meaning are seen as forms of symbolic violence aimed at erasing female subjectivity. However, the analysis revealed that dreams become a counter-discourse through which Antoinette reclaims her agency, voice, and psychic autonomy. The final dream vision, therefore, appears not as a descent into madness but as an act of resistance and self-assertion.

Ultimately, this thesis contributes to psychoanalytic and feminist literary criticism by offering a reading of dreams as sustained forms of unconscious resistance in Jean Rhys's narrative. By combining psychoanalysis and feminist criticism, the study redefines the unconscious as both a political and narrative space through which silenced female subjectivity can speak. In this regard, *Wide Sargasso Sea* not only rewrites the story of the "madwoman," but also challenges the structures that attempt to define, silence, and erase female identity.

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