

MOTHERHOOD, LOSS, AND DESIRE: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF CARIBBEAN FEMALE CHARACTERS

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Abstract

This article examines representations of motherhood, maternal loss, and desire in two Caribbean women's novels. Through a postcolonial psychoanalytic framework, focusing on Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Autobiography of My Mother*, this study examines how the structural traumas of chattel slavery, colonial displacement, and patriarchal oppression shape the representation of female subjectivity and psychological experience in the selected texts. By synthesizing classical psychoanalytic concepts (Lacanian desire, maternal lack, and mourning/melancholia) with contemporary decolonial trauma theory (2020–2026), we analyze the structural disruption of the maternal bond in the post-plantation landscape. The findings reveal that Caribbean female characters in the selected works navigate a "psycho-maternal matrix" where loss is transformed from an ancestral dead-end into a radical, generative desire only known to them. Through narrative innovation, these authors create a sovereign psychological space that facilitates the healing of fractured maternal lineages and restores ontological autonomy.

Keywords: Postcolonial psychoanalysis, maternal lack, Lacanian desire, Caribbean literature, transgenerational trauma, female subjectivity.

Introduction

The intersection of gender, race, and colonial violence within the Caribbean archipelago has produced a unique psycho-affective landscape for the subaltern female subject. In his pioneering text *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Frantz Fanon illuminates the psychological divisions produced by colonial domination inflicted upon the colonized psyche, yet his foundational analysis largely centres on the experience of the colonized male subject. For the Caribbean woman, the trauma of colonization is doubled; she must navigate both the dehumanizing apparatus of the white colonial structure and the restrictive, violent boundaries of patriarchal domination (Strazzeri, 2024).

Nowhere are these psychological tensions more acute than within the realms of motherhood, loss, and desire. Under the plantation system, the Black female body was systematically and violently exploited, stripped of legal autonomy, and reduced to an economic instrument of reproduction (Morgan, 99). As postcolonial

theorists note, this historical commodification "un-gendered" the enslaved mother and severed the natal bond (Spillers 72–74), establishing a lineage of transgenerational trauma that Caribbean psychoanalytic literature conceptualizes as a structural maternal lack (*le manque maternel*) within the female subconscious (Fletcher Smith 43–48).

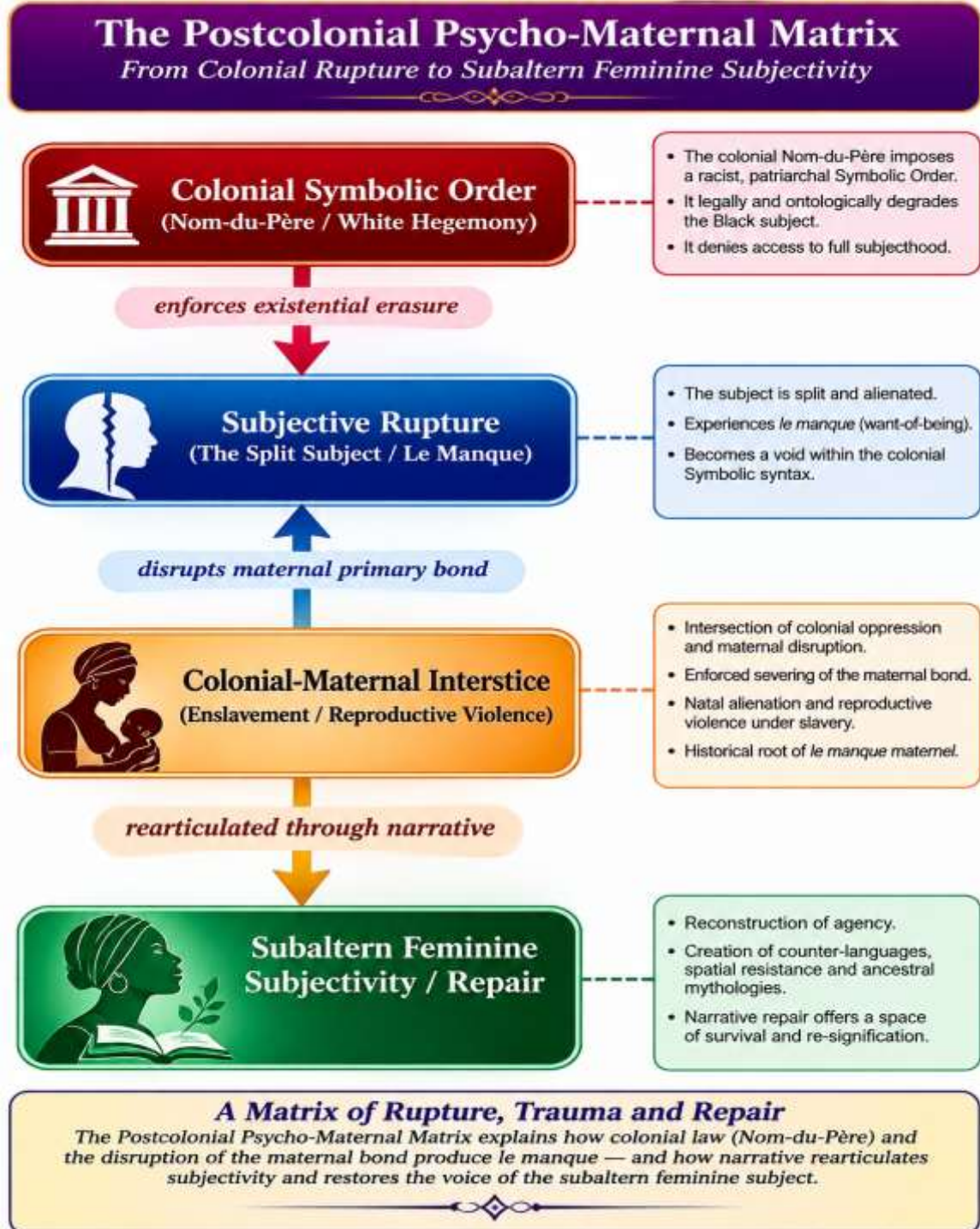
This article applies an integrated postcolonial psychoanalytic lens to examine how contemporary Caribbean female characters process this foundational alienation. By analysing Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière... noire de Salem* (1986) and Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), this study investigates the psychological mechanisms through which female characters confront ancestral loss, dismantle internalized colonial ego-ideals, and reconstruct autonomous desire.

Theoretical Framework: The Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix

To evaluate the interiority of Caribbean female characters, this study merges Lacanian

psychoanalysis with decolonial trauma theory and contemporary frameworks of narrative repair,

constructing a conceptual model termed the Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix.



Lacanian Foundations and Their Limits

In classical Lacanian theory, the emergence of human subjectivity hinges upon the

child's transition from the Imaginary dual-relation with the mother into the Symbolic Order, the domain of language, law, and social structures

regulated by the *Nom-du-Père* (Name of the Father) (Lacan, *Écrits* 276–281). For Lacan, entering the Symbolic requires accepting an irreducible castration and alienation, wherein the subject experiences a structural *manque-à-être* (want-of-being) and is driven by *désir* (desire) perpetually aimed at the lost *objet petit a* (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 103–105).

However, applying Lacan alone to the Caribbean colonial context reveals a critical theoretical limitation. Classical Lacanian theory assumes a normative, functional Symbolic Order capable of granting subjecthood through signifiers of the Law. In the colonial Caribbean, this Symbolic Order is inherently pathological built upon the legal and ontological degradation of the Black subject (Fanon 88–92; Spillers 67). The colonial *Nom-du-Père* does not offer a stable gateway into social language; rather, it enforces a racialized existential erasure, positioning the colonized subject as an absolute void within the Symbolic syntax (Fanon 109–110).

Decolonial Revision: Intersecting the Maternal and Colonial Violence

Decolonial trauma theory revises Lacan by demonstrating that for the subaltern Caribbean woman, the entry into the Symbolic is compounded by historical reproductive violence. Where Lacan posits a symbolic separation from the mother as a necessary condition for language (Lacan, *Écrits* 311–315), the Caribbean plantation system enforced a brutal, physical *severing* of the maternal bond reducing Black female bodies to economic instruments of reproduction (Morgan 69–106) and stripping mothers of legal rights to their offspring (Spillers 72–75).

The Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix bridges these paradigms by introducing the Colonial-Maternal Interstice: a conceptual site where racial-colonial oppression (*Nom-du-Père*) directly intersects with the transgenerational disruption of the primary maternal bond (*le manque maternel*). Rather than treating maternal loss purely as an abstract, universal psychoanalytic stage, the Matrix grounds *le manque* within the historical traumas of enslavement, natal alienation, and patriarchal subjection (Fletcher Smith 43–48).

Structural Mechanics and Analytical Operationalization

The Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix operates across three interconnected axes to analyze literary texts:

- **The Axis of Symbolic Erasure (*Nom-du-Père*):** Examines how colonial, patriarchal language and law attempt to render the subaltern female subject silent, commodified, or insane.
- **The Axis of Maternal Disruption (*Le Manque*):** Identifies how historical and transgenerational trauma manifests in narrative representations of disrupted motherhood, grief, maternal loss, and fractured lineage.
- **The Axis of Narrative Repair (*Re-signification*):** Analyzes how female protagonists construct counter-languages, spatial resistance, or ancestral mythologies to stitch together subjective agency from the ruptures of the Real (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 185; Glissant 112–115).

In textual analysis, this model provides a tripartite diagnostic tool. First, the critic locates where the character's interiority collides with the oppressive Symbolic Order. Second, the critic traces how transgenerational maternal trauma shapes the protagonist's desires and psychological splits. Third, the model evaluates whether the narrative offers formal mechanisms of repair—such as testimony, creolized language, or maternal genealogy to construct an alternative space of survival for the subaltern female subject.

Literature Review: Psychoanalysis, Maternal Trauma, and Narrative Repair in Caribbean Fiction

Psychoanalytic Frameworks and the Caribbean Subject

Postcolonial scholars have long engaged with psychoanalytic paradigms to decode the psychological scarring of imperial rule. Classical formulations by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan privilege a universalized Western subject, mapping psychic development onto bourgeois family structures. In classical Lacanian terms, subjective entry into the Symbolic Order requires

submission to the *Nom-du-Père* (Name of the Father), which regulates language, law, and social prohibition (Lacan, *Écrits* 276–281). However, early postcolonial theorists, led by Frantz Fanon, highlighted the limits of applying Western psychoanalysis to colonized spaces. Fanon demonstrated that colonial oppression imposes a racialized structural split an existential nullification that classical ego psychology cannot account for (*Black Skin, White Masks* 88–92).

Recent literature reflects an ongoing debate over whether Lacanian theory can be rehabilitated for subaltern study or must be discarded entirely as eurocentric. One branch of postcolonial psychoanalysis argues that Lacanian metrics like *désir* and *manque-à-être* are indispensable for mapping subaltern interiority, provided they are re-anchored in colonial history (Sihag 12; Mukherjee 145). Conversely, decolonial critics contend that Lacanian mechanics implicitly reproduce the authority of the patriarchal Lawgiver, obscuring how subaltern subjects forge agency outside Western symbolic structures (Abu Jweid and Fakhruddin 145; Wulandari 359). This study bridges this rift by utilizing Lacan strategically: it employs Lacanian terms to diagnose the pathology of the colonial *Nom-du-Père*, while turning to Caribbean decolonial frameworks to articulate subjective repair.

Reproductive Violence, Plantation Slavery, and Maternal Absence

The intersection of colonial violence and female subjectivity centers on the systemic exploitation of the Black maternal body. Historical research establishes that Caribbean plantation economies transformed Black women's reproductive capacities into financial assets under legal doctrines like *partus sequitur ventrem* (Morgan 69–106). Hortense Spillers famously theorized this historical commodification as an "un-gendering" process that violently severed the natal bond between mother and child (72–75).

Contemporary scholarship builds on Spillers to examine how this historical "natal alienation" persists as transgenerational trauma in Caribbean literature (Fletcher Smith 43–48; Kuju and Ohanma 141). Recent studies

consistently demonstrate that maternal absence in Caribbean fiction is rarely a personal or domestic tragedy; rather, it functions as an allegorical manifestation of colonial displacement. However, while existing scholarship extensively documents maternal absence as a site of historical injury, fewer studies investigate how literary representations transform this structural lack into an active, self-determined desire rather than perpetual melancholia.

Transgenerational Memory, Decolonial Trauma, and Narrative Counter-Archiving

Classical trauma theory, influenced by Caruthian models of unspeakability and literal repetition, often frames extreme trauma as an unrepresentable void that permanently fractures narrative coherence. Postcolonial trauma scholars sharply critique this model, arguing that it pathologizes subaltern subjects into permanent victims and ignores culturally specific mechanisms of resilience.

In Caribbean literary studies, scholars increasingly view narrative fiction as a dynamic laboratory for cognitive and structural repair (Abu Jweid and Fakhruddin 145; Wulandari 359). Where official colonial archives systematically erase or distort the subaltern woman, creative writing functions as an act of epistemic and emotional counter-archiving (Kuju and Ohanma 141). By giving voice to repressed maternal grief, Caribbean writers allow characters to transition from passive melancholia to sovereign agency (Sihag 12; Mukherjee 145). Storytelling thus operates as a decolonial technology that reconstructs broken genealogies.

Critical Scholarship on Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba, sorcière... Noire de Salem*

Literary criticism on Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba, sorcière... Noire de Salem* primarily focuses on themes of historical revisionism, witch trial historiography, and postcolonial feminism. Scholars frequently analyze how Condé resurrects the marginalized, historical figure of Tituba to challenge the puritanical, white-dominated archive of the Salem witch trials (Davis 58–62; Mudimbe-Boyi 76–81).

A significant body of work examines Tituba's relationship with her mother, Abena,

framing her mother's violent colonial execution as the primary catalyst for Tituba's spiritual consciousness and political resistance (Flannigan 302–05; Nesbitt 112–15). Critics also highlight Condé's playful, ironical stance toward historical realism, arguing that her insertion of supernatural ancestral encounters and intertextual subversions functions as a postmodern destabilization of colonial historiography (Manzor-Coats 737–40; Pfaff 35–38). However, psychoanalytic readings of Tituba often prioritize her erotic autonomy or her socio-political rebellion, leaving her engagement with Lacanian desire and maternal loss partially under-examined.

Critical Scholarship on Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*

Scholarship on Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* centers predominantly on the protagonist Xuela's profound alienation, maternal loss, and ruthless refusal of traditional motherhood (Brazier 115–18; Ferguson 162–65). Critics widely read Xuela's motherlessness—dying at the moment of Xuela's birth as a central metaphor for the historical rupture and spatial displacement of the Caribbean subaltern under British colonial rule (Covi 31–34; Timothy 228–31).

Existing studies heavily emphasize Xuela's cold, self-preservational interiority, interpreting her refusal to reproduce as a radical political rejection of colonial continuation and enforced female subjugation (Juhász 68–72; Nasta 140–43). Others analyze her complex relationship with language, noting how Kincaid's spare, hypnotic, and repetitive prose reflects the psychological fragmentation caused by imperial subjugation (Cataliotti 104–08; Simmons 89–92). While these analyses thoroughly account for Xuela's existential nihilism and melancholia, they frequently stop short of exploring how her narrative stance constitutes a psychoanalytic re-signification of loss into self-sovereignty.

Synthesis and Explicit Research Gap

While existing scholarship has extensively examined colonial trauma, female subjectivity, and motherhood in Condé and Kincaid individually, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the systematic interaction between

maternal loss, Lacanian desire, and postcolonial psychological reconstruction across these two seminal texts.

Existing studies generally treat Condé's historical fabulation and Kincaid's poetic nihilism as opposing aesthetic registers. Consequently, they miss how both authors deploy maternal absence to critique the colonial *Nom-du-Père* and reconfigure subaltern interiority. This article fills this explicit gap by applying the Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix in a comparative framework, demonstrating how both narratives move beyond passive melancholia to construct sovereign female desire out of transgenerational maternal loss.

Methodology

Research Design and Corpus

This study employs a qualitative, comparative textual analysis situated within postcolonial feminist literary criticism. The primary corpus comprises two foundational Caribbean novels: Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba, sorcière... Noire de Salem* (1986) and Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996). These texts are selected because they represent distinct linguistic, geographical, and aesthetic traditions within the Caribbean the Francophone and the Anglophone while sharing a central thematic concern: the subaltern female subject navigating transgenerational maternal loss under imperial domination. Both protagonists, Tituba and Xuela, undergo catastrophic maternal separation at birth or early childhood due to colonial violence. Comparing Condé's historical fabulation with Kincaid's poetic nihilism offers a rigorous, cross-tradition framework to examine how subaltern women reconfigure desire, loss, and subjectivity outside the colonial *Nom-du-Père*.

Theoretical Lens and Analytic Framework

The study operationalizes a multi-disciplinary framework termed the Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix, which synthesizes Lacanian psychoanalysis, decolonial trauma theory, and narrative repair. Classical Lacanian theory posits that human entry into the Symbolic Order—the domain of law and language requires submission to the *Nom-du-Père* (Name of the Father) and acceptance of an irreducible *manque-à-être* (want-of-being) (Lacan, *Écrits* 276–281).

However, in the colonial Caribbean, this Symbolic Order is inherently pathological and built upon racialized existential erasure (Fanon 88–92; Spillers 67–70).

The Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix resolves this by operationalizing three analytical components to wit:

1. **The Axis of Symbolic Erasure (*Nom-du-Père*):** Tracks how patriarchal-colonial law and language systematically attempt to silence, commodify, or pathologize the Black female subject.
2. **The Axis of Maternal Disruption (*Le Manque*):** Examines how historical "natal alienation" and reproductive violence transform abstract psychoanalytic loss into a concrete, transgenerational trauma (*le manque maternel*).
3. **The Axis of Narrative Repair (*Re-signification*):** Evaluates how subaltern characters construct counter-archives, spiritual mythologies, and spatial resistance to transform passive melancholia into sovereign desire.

Analytic Procedure

The textual analysis proceeds through a four-step interpretive process:

1. **Targeted Selection:** Identifying key passages within both novels that explicitly address maternal absence, mother-daughter bonds, reproductive control, death, and moments of psychological rupture.
2. **Close Reading and Motif Identification:** Analysing these selected textual units to extract recurring motifs, tropes, and stylistic register shifts (e.g., Kincaid's hypnotic repetitions or Condé's parodic supernaturalism).
3. **Coding via the Matrix:** Mapping textual evidence against the three axes of the Postcolonial Psycho-Maternal Matrix to categorize whether specific character behaviours represent symbolic subjugation, maternal grief, or subjective repair.
4. **Comparative Synthesis:** Interpreting the coded data to evaluate how both narratives

construct paths toward psychological reconstruction, directly addressing the identified research gap.

Criteria for Interpretation

Claims regarding character interiority and narrative strategy are validated through rigorous, evidence-based textual citations. To ensure analytical clarity, the study distinguishes between Lacanian and decolonial readings through specific criteria:

- **Lacanian Readings:** Applied when diagnosing the structural mechanics of the oppressive Symbolic Order, the operation of the patriarchal Law (*Nom-du-Père*), and the character's internal experience of alienation, castration, and *manque* (lack).
- **Decolonial Readings:** Applied when analyzing how the text resists or moves beyond classical Lacanian constraints—specifically identifying culturally grounded, ancestral, or spatial practices that repair subjective fractures without capitulating to the colonial Symbolic Order.

Limitations

As a qualitative comparative study restricted to two primary novels, the findings do not claim to represent the entire spectrum of postcolonial Caribbean literature or subaltern female experience. Additionally, utilizing psychoanalysis even when revised by decolonial theory carries an inherent risk of imposing clinical, individualistic categories onto socio-historical and collective traumas. This study mitigates this limitation by strictly anchoring all psychoanalytic terms in the specific socio-historical realities of plantation slavery and colonial governance.

Textual Analysis: Case Studies in Maternal Loss and Desire

Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière...: The Matrilineal Ghost and Spiritual Desire*

In Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière... noire de Salem* (1986), the psychic trajectory of the protagonist is anchored in a foundational, violent loss. Tituba's life begins with a maternal trauma: her mother, Abena, is raped by a white sailor aboard a slave ship, and later executed for defending herself against the sexual assaults of her

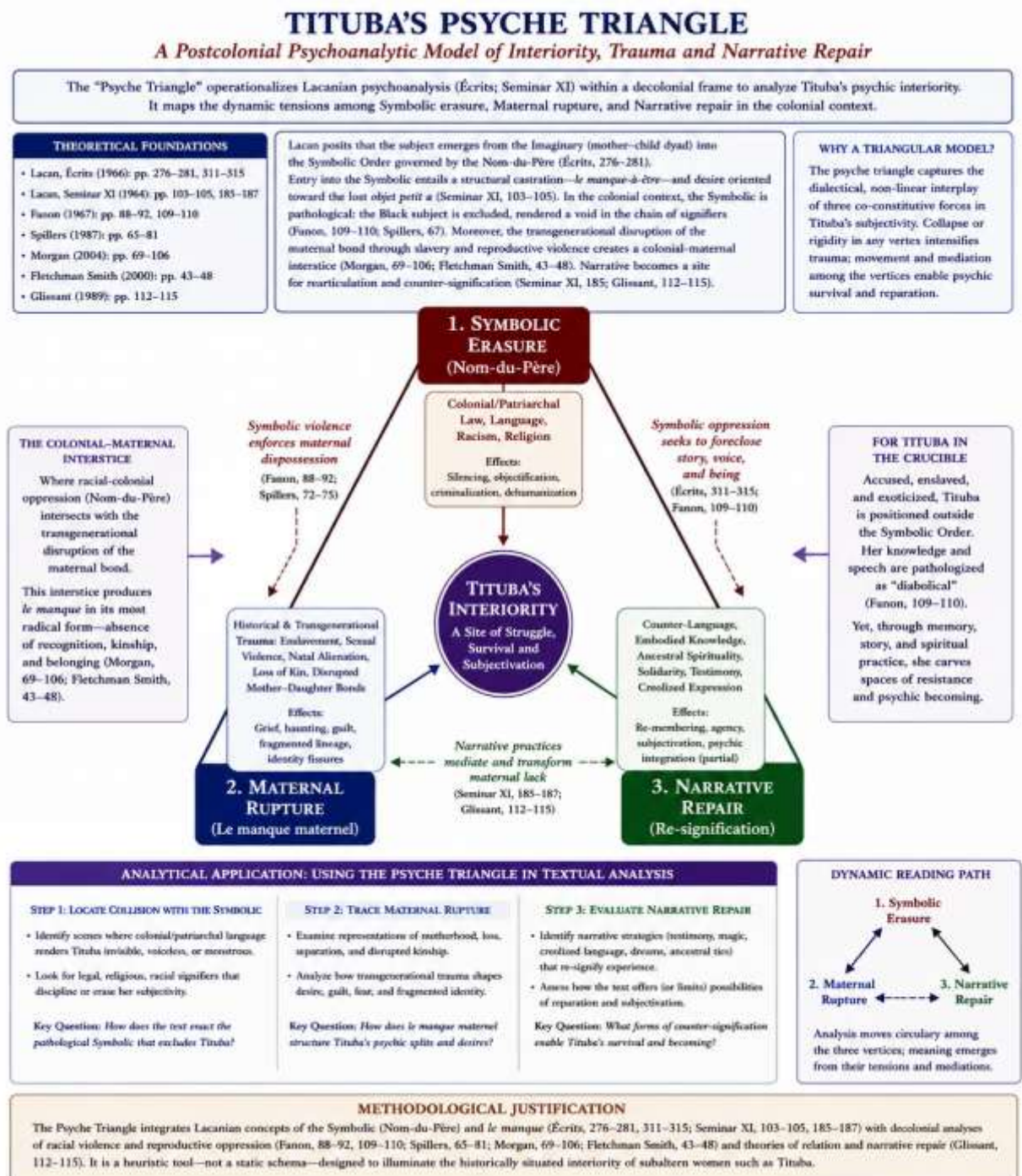
master (Condé 17). Tituba witnesses her mother's hanging as a young child, a horrific rupture that leaves her psychically untethered within the hostile landscape of the plantation state.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, this trauma creates an acute structural lack, capturing the child-ego in a permanent state of maternal bereavement as stated on Lacan (270). Condé textually illustrates this profound sense of abandonment early on, as Tituba laments her isolation on the edges of the plantation: « Ma mère avait été pendue à un arbre de l'allée des flamboyants. Je restais seule, sans un mot d'amour, sans un regard de tendresse » (Condé 17). This primary trauma threatens to freeze Tituba in a melancholic fixation. However, instead of succumbing to a debilitating, paralyzing fixation on the dead object, Tituba bypasses the oppressive colonial Symbolic Order by constructing a unique spiritual and ancestral economy of desire. She is adopted by Man Yaya, an elderly healer who introduces her to the cognitive and medicinal systems of the island. Man Yaya teaches Tituba that death does not equate to absolute erasure: « Les morts ne meurent que si l'on oublie de les célébrer... Ils sont tout autour de nous, attentifs à nos moindres gestes, attendant que nous leur parlions » (Condé 24). Through this spiritual priming, Tituba's unconscious reconfigures the lost mother. Abena and Man Yaya return to her not as haunting, castrating figures of lack, but as active, vocal spirits.

Whenever Tituba faces the threat of psychological assimilation whether under the domestic compression of her lover John Indian or the puritanical terrorism of the Salem judges the maternal ghosts intervene to preserve her psychic boundaries. When Tituba risks losing her identity to satisfy her love for John Indian, the spirit of Abena manifests to sharply re-establish the boundary of the female self: « Tu aimes trop, Tituba ! Tu aimes ce nègre comme si ta vie dépendait de lui... N'oublie jamais que ton corps t'appartient à toi seule » (Condé 38). Tituba's desire is profoundly somatic and relational; she

openly embraces her sexuality, her healing arts, and her connection to the natural world, explicitly rejecting the puritanical framework that associates the Black female body with demonic deviance. Even when subjected to the ultimate isolation of the Salem prison, her connection to the maternal lineage shields her from internalizing the white, patriarchal definition of her identity: « Ils m'appellent sorcière. Ils croient m'insulter, mais pour moi, ce mot ne contient aucune horreur. C'est le nom que me donnaient ceux qui reconnaissaient ma force, celle que j'avais reçue d'Abena et de Man Yaya » (Condé 152). By externalizing her maternal loss through continuous, healing dialogues with her ancestral guides, Tituba achieves an unassailable psychic *marronnage*.

Condé's text demonstrates that reclaiming the maternal voice is a vital prerequisite for processing historical violations and asserting epistemic sovereignty (Ohanma 4). To deepen the analysis of Tituba's psyche, this study employs the "Psyche Triangle" as a heuristic model linking three mutually constitutive dimensions: Symbolic Erasure, Maternal Rupture, and Narrative Repair. The model explains why the interventions of Abena's maternal ghost are central whenever Tituba encounters psychological, patriarchal, or colonial violence. First, the Symbolic-Erasure vertex captures pressures that attempt to silence, discipline, and dispossess Tituba, whether through Puritan authority or the racialized social order. Second, Maternal Rupture represents the trauma of losing Abena, whose violent death leaves a psychic wound that repeatedly resurfaces in moments of danger; after death, Abena becomes an ongoing spiritual guide. Third, Narrative Repair shows how Tituba draws on maternal memory, ancestral spirituality, and storytelling to resist psychic fragmentation and recover agency. Thus, Abena's ghost functions not merely as supernatural presence but as a maternal counter-memory that mediates Tituba's encounters with John Indian's possessiveness and Salem's religious persecution.



Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*: Melancholia and the Refusal of Consent

While Condé presents a narrative of spiritual reclamation, Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996) explores the

colder, more severe dimensions of unmitigated psychic loss. The protagonist, Xuela Claudette Richardson, begins her life in a condition of profound maternal absence: her Carib mother dies at the exact moment Xuela is born. This simultaneous birth and death locks Xuela into an

existential freeze, leaving her to navigate her development completely unshielded from her father a corrupt, aggressively assimilated colonial functionary who embodies the punitive logic of the empire.

Xuela's psychological defense mechanism against this absolute lack is a fierce, uncompromising refusal of consent. Rather than attempting to find a surrogate mother or seeking validation within the colonial school system, she internalizes her dead mother as a permanent, protective silence: "My mother died at the moment I was born, and so for my whole life there was nothing between myself and the eternity of a place that was empty" (Kincaid 3). In classic psychoanalysis, an unresolved loss can lead to melancholia, where the ego swallows the lost object, turning inward with destructive anger. Xuela, however, reconfigures this melancholia into an aggressive weapon of self-preservation. This is vividly illustrated through her relationship with her stepmother, whose domestic threats are neutralized by Xuela's deliberate cultivation of

psychological opacity and emotional detachment: "I grew to love this protection, I grew to love this vehicle of my own survival. I was a small child, but I had the mind of a large, old person who had seen many things and had survived them all" (Kincaid 28). Her refusal to participate in the colonial-patriarchal economy is most radically expressed through her bodily autonomy.

She actively refuses to become a mother herself, viewing the act of childbearing under colonial conditions as the reproduction of more subjugated bodies for the empire's machine. When she realizes she is pregnant, she describes her decision to terminate the pregnancy not as a loss, but as a sovereign, calculated act of political and psychological sabotage: "I would bear no children... I would not give birth to anyone who would serve another; I would not give birth to anyone who would look like me and be treated as if they were a piece of property" (Kincaid 131-132). Below, a diagram of the psychological dimension as faced by Xuela, the female principal character.

Psychoanalytic Dimension	The Imperial/Patriarchal Demand	Xuela's Radical Reconfiguration
The Maternal Ideal	Reproductive Submission: The female subject must accept motherhood to validate her social utility and pass down property/lineage.	The Sovereign Abortion: Xuela chooses to terminate her pregnancies, using abortion which can be interpreted as a refusal of patriarchal reproductive expectations. (77, 81, 96-97)
The Object of Desire	The Colonizer's Validation: Desiring white, middle-class respectability and linguistic assimilation (7, 14).	Narcissistic Auto-Eroticism: (Freud 1914). Directing her desire entirely toward her own skin, celebrating her physical form as an unassailable territory.
The Treatment of Loss	Assimilation/Erasure: Forgetting ancestral violence to comply with the linear, peaceful myths of the metropole.	Aggressive Preservation: Maintaining her mother's absence as a visible, unhealed wound that exposes colonial brutality.

The category of "Reproductive Submission" should not be understood as a

universal condition imposed on all women in colonial societies; rather, it identifies a historically

situated ideological pressure through which female sexuality and reproductive capacity could be organized around kinship, inheritance, social respectability, and the reproduction of colonial society. Historical scholarship on Atlantic slavery demonstrates that reproduction was materially and legally connected to the maintenance of property relations: Jennifer L. Morgan shows that enslaved women's reproductive capacities were appropriated within systems in which children inherited the enslaved status of their mothers, making reproduction central to the economic and racial organization of slavery (Morgan 69–106). Hortense Spillers similarly demonstrates how slavery disrupted Black kinship by transforming the reproductive female body into a site of property and social control (Spillers 65–81). In Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother*, however, Xuela exposes and contests the persistence of such gendered expectations in a later Caribbean colonial society. Her pregnancy while working for the LaBattes and her subsequent abortion become crucial acts of refusal: she rejects the expectation that her body should produce a child for another family and subsequently declares her refusal to become a mother. Thus, "Reproductive Submission" functions analytically

not as a claim that Caribbean women inevitably accepted motherhood, but as a framework for examining the social pressures surrounding reproduction and Xuela's deliberate resistance to them (Kincaid 77–97).

Xuela's early acquisition of Standard English and her awareness of the social power attached to English, education, whiteness, and class reveal an ambivalent engagement with colonial respectability. She appropriates the colonizer's language while later manipulating the language hierarchy to assert autonomy (7, 14).

By exercising complete, absolute ownership over her body, her sexuality, and her reproductive choices, Xuela entirely evades the psychological traps of colonial mimicry. Her desire is completely stripped of any need for external validation; it could be said to be a self-contained energy focused entirely on protecting her personal boundaries. Kincaid's uncompromising narrative style demonstrates that when a subject has been systematically stripped of an ancestral anchor, a radical, defiant refusal of the existing social contract becomes an essential path toward psychological survival (Wulandari 359; Mukherjee 45).

Comparative Synthesis of Psychological Dynamics

The cross-textual evaluation of Condé and Kincaid reveals how different artistic strategies navigate maternal trauma to establish distinct modes of psychological liberation. The table below shows a comparative synthesis of the psychological dynamics in the two works.

Analytical Dimension	Moi, Tituba sorcière... (Maryse Condé)	The Autobiography of My Mother (Jamaica Kincaid)
Manifestation of Maternal Loss	Traumatic Rupture: The sudden, violent loss of the mother witnessed in early childhood; the physical erasure of the maternal anchor by state violence.	Primordial Absence: The absolute absence of the mother from birth; an existential void that leaves the child exposed to colonial structures.
Psychological Defenses & Symptoms	Relational adaptation, externalization of grief, highly collaborative and open psychic structures through ancestral communion.	Emotional detachment, strategic narcissism, calculated cynicism, total somatic insulation against external penetration.

Analytical Dimension	Moi, Tituba sorcière... (Maryse Condé)	The Autobiography of My Mother (Jamaica Kincaid)
The Structure of Desire	Relational & Polyphonic: Focused on community healing, erotic liberation, and continuous, active communion with ancestral spirits.	Autonomous & Defiant: Focused on individual self-ownership, reproductive refusal, and the complete rejection of patriarchal structures.
Mode of Psychological Reconstruction	Reconstitution of Lineage: Transformation of historical pain into spiritual and cultural resilience; a collective psychic survival.	Ontological Security: Survival achieved via absolute refusal of the colonial social contract; a solitary, fortress-like autonomy.

Epistemic Resurgence and Narrative Repair in Modern Critiques

When analysed alongside interdisciplinary advances, these novels are recognized as foundational blueprints for cognitive decolonization. Modern trauma-informed frameworks acknowledge that systemic historical violations disrupt interpersonal connection networks, frequently resulting in deep identity fractures across generations (Jani 1034). Because orthodox Western clinical models regularly isolate the individual from their socio-historical landscape, they struggle to address the deep-seated root causes of postcolonial distress (Hassans 12). Caribbean women's writing directly addresses this limitation through specific structural interventions:

- **The Subversion of the Symbolic Order:** By centering narratives around ancestral spirits (Condé) or radical, somatic isolation (Kincaid), these texts dismantle the universalizing authority of the Eurocentric patriarchal family structure.
- **The Validation of Subaltern Interiority:** By shifting the focus away from public historical events to the deep, complex interior monologues of female characters, these authors correct long-standing historical erasures, achieving profound epistemic justice (Ball; Parashari 103).

- **The Re-Engineering of Genre: Blending autobiography with mythmaking (*biomythography*)** provides a flexible, restorative vocabulary capable of accessing and integrating memories that conventional colonial languages actively suppress (Fletcher 109).

Conclusion

A close psychoanalytic investigation of Caribbean female characters reveals that the experiences of motherhood, loss, and desire are central arenas for the reclamation of subaltern identity. The structural disruptions of the plantation machine left behind a deep legacy of maternal lack, an unvoiced grief that threatened to compromise the psychological autonomy of successive generations.

Through case studies of Condé and Kincaid, this article has shown that Caribbean women's writing does not allow these historical wounds to result in passive, permanent psychological defeat. Whether through the polyphonic, ancestral spiritualism of Tituba or the fierce, auto-erotic refusal of Xuela, these narratives reconfigure maternal loss into a powerful catalyst for sovereign desire.

Ultimately, these texts suggest that true psychological liberation requires absolute self-determination over one's body, memory, and narrative. By transforming historical lack into highly complex, resilient works of art, Caribbean

women writers construct the vital emotional and cognitive architectures necessary to heal transgenerational trauma and secure absolute mental freedom across the archipelago.

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