TRANSGRESSIVE MELANCHOLIA IN JEAN RHYS’S *VOYAGE IN THE DARK*

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In this paper, I wish to explore the political and cultural implications of the melancholia1 and nostalgia of Anna Morgan, the protagonist of Jean Rhys’s novel *Voyage in the Dark*. In particular, I wish to focus on the mimesis of filial or ‘fatherly’ love in the context of heterosexual eroticism, its effects upon Anna’s sense of identity, and ways in which her memories of her real, deceased father and childhood can be understood as interpellative of an imperialist erotic culture. Judith Raiskin, in her essay ‘Jean Rhys: Creole Writing and Strategies of Reading’, has emphasized the importance of Rhys’s recurring father-lover figure in interpreting the Rhysian canon in the service of anti-colonial and feminist politics:

The much noted repetition in Rhys’s fiction of relationship between a younger passive woman and an older, seemingly ‘caring’ man underscores what Rhys saw as the exploitation inherent in sexual and colonial relations when they are legitimised by the ideology of family-like relations. (Raiskin: 1991, 2)

Raiskin is insightful in identifying that heterosexual encounters based on eroticised paternalism function as prominent political metaphors in Rhys’s work. Developing this, I will explore how Anna’s relationship with Walter Jeffries illuminates not only the inherent misogyny of a particular type of incest fantasy, but also the way in which Jeffries as Anna’s ‘father’ derives his authority (and thus to some extent his sexual appeal for Anna) from colonial paradigms of white male privilege.

I will also suggest that Anna’s melancholia in connection with her paternalist lover is significant for two reasons. Firstly, her sadness is often
expressed in an apparent nostalgia for her childhood in Dominica and her biological father. As I will explore, this represents something more complicated than a depressive fixation on a bygone era or a dead parent, for it seems that Anna is able to seditiously decode her child/slave status in Jeffries’s eyes by means of these memories. In particular, Anna identifies with the memory of her biological father because of the late man’s apparently futile efforts to articulate himself against Anglo-imperialist presumptions of innate English superiority. For example, Anna’s hated stepmother (Hester) maladroitly but effectively recasts Morgan’s anti-English sentiments as evidence of his insanity, thus re-deploying the dead man’s words in support of the very culture and values he manifestly despised:

Once [Hester says] he said to me,’ No, I don’t ever want to go back there. It cost me too much last time and I didn’t really enjoy it. I’ve got nobody there who cares a damn about me. The place stinks of hypocrites if you’ve got a nose.’...when he said that I knew he was failing. And such a brilliant man, poor man...a tragedy yes a tragedy. (53).

Anna’s own verbal transgressions are often tokenised or interpreted as nonsensical, sometimes rendering her as an object of fun, sometimes as simply a ‘half potty bastard’ (124). I will revisit this issue—that is, the problematics of articulating transgression in the imperialist culture Rhys delineates—at the conclusion of this paper.

Secondly, I will connect Anna’s melancholia with her intensely self-objectifying tendency, suggesting that Anna’s objectification and commodification by her wealthy, older lover prompts her to cultivate a detached (yet often distressing) image of herself as a white male’s fantasy figure, at the expense of her sense of possessing an integral ‘self’. As a narrative development, Anna’s fragmented sense of identity requires some comment, as the effacement of strongly defined identities or characterisations in Rhys’s protagonists has at times been interpreted as a weakness in the novels. For example, Jane Neide Ashcom
suggests that the lack of explicit consolidation and motivation in Rhys’s characterisations deprives the novels of at least some of their possible significance:

[T]he characters in Rhys’s novels are both sharply observant of the surface elements of life and inevitably frustrated by them...such signs reflect only a partial truth...no deeper or compensating truths are offered...character is known only partially, exposed primarily by action and rarely [by]...revelatory techniques. (Neide Ashcom; 1988; 21)

Conversely, Mary Lou Emery, in *Jean Rhys at World’s End*, suggests that the apparent absence of an overtly defined sense of identity in Rhys’s protagonists might in itself constitute an important theme, in that, as she writes, ‘our North American and European assumptions about personality and character [are questioned]’ (Emery; 1990,105). In agreement with Emery, I would contend that the questions raised in *Voyage in the Dark* are too complex to be convincingly resolved by a triumphing or self-authenticating heroine. Indeed, as I will discuss, the notion of identity itself is tested in the novel, and often seems to emerge as problematically intertwined with oppressive markers of race, class and sexual status.

Criticism of *Voyage in the Dark* has often posited Anna’s memories as highly significant in constructing an aetiology of her ineffable sadness. For example, Deborah Kelly Kloepher, in her book *The Unspeakable Mother*, suggests that Anna Morgan’s memories of her Dominican homeland are expressive of an unconscious wish to subvert masculinist language and re-capture a maternal identity. Deploying Kristevan theories of feminine identity, Kloepher suggests that ‘[what] women seek in [Rhys’s] texts is an “inside”, a semiotic locus or *chora* or “women’s space”’ (Kloepher: 1989, 26). Kloepher theorises that a Rhysian mother might represent such a ‘women’s space’—that is, an alternative to the repressive paternalist culture and language that seems so inimical to Anna’s sense of self.
...the name-of -the father might be seen to bear the same relation to the semiotic of the island as the bible has traditionally born to coloured stained-glass images: the one is the Word; the other is image fused with gaze and light (Kloepher 143)

Contending the importance of the Rhysian mother (figured in the island) depends upon the conspicuousness of this mother’s absence as Kloepher states at the start of her book, ‘the text constitutes itself on the premise of [the mother’s] absence’ (5). Similarly, Paula Le Gallez, in her essay, ‘Anna's Darkness’ (Le Gallez: 1990, 111) provides a reading of *Voyage in the Dark* in which consideration of Anna’s losses, as encoded in her memories, is crucial. Le Gallez’s argument resembles Kloepher’s in that it implies, in the service of a feminist reading, that the novel’s central theme consists in conflicts between Anna’s adult negotiations of paternalist culture, and her memories of an Edenic, maternalist past:

...any positive natural imagery in the text is associated with (Anna’s) youth in Dominica, the days of her innocence and comparative happiness...she will never be able to return to that innocent past...(Le Gallez: 1990, 111)

Both these readings might seem surprising in that Rhys's delineation of Anna’s adult experiences is largely concerned with paternalist privilege and the tribulations inhering in a woman's love and desire for ‘father figures’. Mothers, or rather mother figures, when not absent altogether, tend to be represented in a hostile fashion (Anna’s stepmother Hester, and her landlady, Ethel, being two cases in point). Nonetheless, Kloepher’s and Gallez’s interpretations are persuasive in that they engage with the suggestive prominence of sadness and nostalgia in Anna’s characterisation, as well as Rhys’s elliptical style that seems to hint at thematic dimensions aside from the manifest narrative of Anna’s problematic dealings with older male lovers.

These interpretations of Anna’s melancholia as the consequence of a lost mother or lost homeland can be seen to have important resonances with Freud’s
discussion in the influential paper 'On Mourning and Melancholia' (Freud: 1989, 584-589). Freud defines melancholia as a pathological species of mourning, connoting the ego's refusal to disengage from a lost object and re-attain a sense of possessing an autonomous, unified identity. In Freud's account, melancholia is distinguished from normal mourning by the element of self-opprobrium in the melancholic personality: 'the melancholic displays...an extraordinary diminution in his self regard' (584). Nonetheless, Freud's assertion that melancholia is in many respects similar to mourning is useful for this discussion, inasmuch as Anna, as I have mentioned, is represented as grieving for her dead father. The 'extraordinary diminution of self regard' that Freud refers to is evident in Anna's characterisation throughout the novel, but is especially pronounced in the latter half of the narrative, after her lover, Walter Jeffries, has deserted her. Perhaps seeking to recover some sense of Walter's presence through cultivating similar substitute lovers (in itself depressive behaviour, since Walter is being painfully re-invoked rather than replaced), Anna engages in the self-punishing promiscuity that eventually will result in an ignominious pregnancy, loss of her lodgings, and (at least in Rhys's first draft?) her life. This failure on Anna's part to emotionally disengage from her losses or to develop self-preserving strategies is underscored by her tendency to diminish part of herself as an object. Such self-objectification, it may be seen, is central to Freud's theory of melancholia:

...an object-choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person, had at one time existed; then, owing to a real slight or imagined disappointment, coming from this person, the object-relationship was shattered...but the free ego was not displaced onto the libido; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, it served to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus, the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and it could henceforth be judged as though it were an object, the forsaken object. (586 my emphasis)
Freud's essay does not explicitly differentiate between masculine and feminine depression, but his incidental illustrations of feminine 'lost objects' are always underwritten by the assumption that a woman's identity is irreducibly determined by images projected upon her by masculine eyes—the 'good' woman who accuses herself of being 'worthless' or sexually unchaste, the woman who construes her husband's 'incapability' as a reflection of her own ineptitude (585-6). The pre-eminence of masculine projections in shaping feminine identity is not envisaged in Freud's analysis as anything less than natural and inevitable—'...of (the woman) who is in fact worthless...we too should have nothing good to say' (585). However, it is my contention that the phallocentred theory of identity inhering in these speculations can be used as a point of departure for arguing that Anna's refusal to consolidate or salvage a unitary identity might be a consequence of ideology, rather than pathology.

As Freud suggests, the depressive tendency towards self-defeating behaviour and thoughts—seemingly evinced by Anna's reckless lack of concern for her own welfare as well as her penchant for distressing nostalgia—seems enabled by diminution and objectification of the self. However, while Anna does possess a melancholic capacity for self-objectification, it is always very obvious in Rhys's text that Anna is hardly the only person to 'judge herself as though she were an object'. Her fatherly lovers (beginning with Walter Jeffries, whose relationship with Anna is the main focus of my textual analysis) contribute significantly to Anna's sadness and impoverished sense of identity. This is not only because these men inevitably abandon her, but perhaps more importantly because of the subtle but powerful condition underwriting these relationships: viz, that Anna's sexual and national identity will be deployed on behalf of a masculine sexual fantasy in which ideologies of imperialism and paternalism intersect.

Anna is an expatriate Dominican national working as a chorus girl in Edwardian London. At the time of her meeting with Jeffries, she is nearly
nineteen years old. From the incipience of the relationship, Anna's extreme youth and her vaguely 'exotic' origins are the main source of her interest for Jeffries. Indeed, the first time Walter meets Anna and her friend Maudie (in the company of a man named Jones), he expresses no particular interest in either of the young women, and the meeting seems to be going rather awkwardly, until Anna is able to reveal, upon being asked, that she is only eighteen (Rhys; 1969, 11-12). Jeffries is even more intrigued to discover that Anna is Dominican—or, as her friend Maudie puts it—'born in a hot place...the West Indies or somewhere' (12). It is evident that the specifics of Anna's foreignness are not that important in the application of imperialist stereotypes, for Maudie goes on to explain that '[t]he girls call her the Hottentot. Isn't it a shame?' This might be a reference to Saartje Baartman, the young African (not, as Maudie seems to imply, West Indian) woman exhibited throughout Europe as the 'Hottentot Vénus' between 1810 and 1815, when she died aged twenty-five. Sander Gilman relates some of Baartmann's history in his influential essay 'The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality' (Gilman; 1985, 76-108). Gilman's reading of the Baartman exhibition and other nineteenth century images of black female sexuality is extremely apposite to this discussion, in that he asserts that '...the late nineteenth century perception of the prostitute merged with that of the black' (99). As I will now discuss, there is a significant connection between images of blackness and sexual commodification and servility in *Voyage in the Dark*.

Anna's sexual interaction with Jeffries begins in earnest after she falls ill and summons him to her bedside. At this stage, he plays a fairly innocuous role of a father-rescuer, organising invalid food, medical attention and even superior lodgings for Anna (27-30). Jeffries retains this paternalist manner throughout the relationship, but his kindly fatherly *mien* may be seen to gradually devolve into a rather sadistic patrimonial persona, whose claims upon Anna are informed by assumptions of sexual ownership. Imperial stereotypes of black female 'exoticism', such as infantilism and erotomania, feature prominently as pornographic
refinements of Jeffries’s financial and emotional mastery. He characterises his young lover in accordance with intersected imperialist stereotypes of ‘colour’; Anna is ‘shocking’, ‘a rum little devil’, native to ‘lushness’ and ‘heat’ (Rhys; 46,76). The relationship becomes progressively devoid of any reciprocity of desire and speech, as Anna’s spontaneous, amorous utterances and gestures are resolutely censored and subverted in favour of Jeffries’s voice. He alone establishes the nature and limits of their communications:

‘I said, “I want to be with you. That’s all I want.” “Oh, you’ll soon get sick of me.” He smiled a bit, as if he were sneering at me... (44)

This dismissive and automatic rejection tacitly situates Anna’s raison d’etre as sexual labour and obedience. The menial nature of her role is clarified during the conversation in which he mentions his previous ‘kept women’:

“You’re a perfect darling, but you’re only a baby. You’ll be alright later on... Some people are born knowing their way about... Your predecessor...”

“My predecessor?” I said. “Oh! my predecessor...’ (44)

Notwithstanding the token individuation of Anna as ‘only a baby’, Jeffries is clarifying Anna’s placement in a procession of sexual servants. Anna is immediately reminded of an ‘old slave list’ she stumbled across as a child in Dominica—‘It was in columns—the names and the ages and what they did and then General Remarks... (47). Thus in this instance Anna’s predilection for remembering enables her to decode Jeffries’s aesthetic of sexual servility as resonant of the Anglo-imperial ordering of its slave-caste. The narration of the physical contact Anna has with Jeffries, and the pleasures therein, are underscored by Anna’s identification of herself with the faceless figure of ‘Maillot Boyd’, one of the names she remembers from the slave list:

Maillot Boyd, aged 18. Maillot Boyd, aged 18... But I like it like this. I don’t want it any other way but this. (48)
This reveals Anna's awareness that Jeffries's pleasure in her—and, disturbingly, her pleasure in him—proceeds from the dramatisation of sexual penetration or 'conquest' as an analogue of fetishised racial difference and black slavery. I would like to emphasise that I am not asserting that Anna is oppressed to the same extent or in precisely the same way as a black slave, but rather that her identification with slave-figures in the midst of sexual thrall is an instance of colonialist ideology further stylising the sado-masochistic aesthetic attending the sexual 'conquest' of the father-lover. Anna is not claiming Maillot Boyd's experience for herself, but acknowledging the way in which both herself and her lover have couched their sexual dialogue in terms of a racially predicated slave/master relation. The manner in which she reproaches herself for enjoying her pseudo-blackness in Jeffries's eyes ('but I like it like this') demonstrates her self-consciousness of the pornographic element attending the enactment of these ideological paradigms on a 'personal', 'sexual level. It could be argued that Anna's status as a pseudo-black woman in the eyes of her lover is traceable to not only her nationality, but to her profession. As is well established the usual early twentieth-century European and American perspectives designated chorus work not so much as a career as a sexual vocation, often equating chorus girls with prostitutes, or at least assuming that the chorus girl's sexual morals were 'loose'. Although Anna is neither black nor (at least visibly) 'mixed', it seems that her Dominican nationality combines with her socially-dubious profession to invoke an imperialist stereotype of the non-white woman as hypersexual— as seems implicit in Anna's backstage moniker of the 'Hottentot [Venus]'. This stereotypical articulation of Anna's identity ultimately has the consequence of engendering a sense of dissonance and unreality in Anna's subjective perceptions. Before proceeding to a consideration of how this is evident in Rhys's text, it seems worthwhile to consider Frantz Fanon's account of the effects of colonialist ideology and myth upon black subjectivities. The 'symptoms' of the black subject in an imperialist culture seem to resound with those attributed to melancholics by Freud:
...the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there...
I took myself off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an Object... (Fanon; 1967, 109-112).

The cause of Fanon’s self-splitting in the scenario he describes in Black Skin White Masks seems to be the undesired yet inevitable introjection of multiple simplistic stereotypes ascribed to blackness by his colonisers: ‘I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered...tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships, and above all else, above all: “Sho’ good eatin”.’ (112). He is beleaguered by an awareness of his own physical aspect, burdened in the white gaze with all the stereotypical connotations of ‘negritude’:

Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person consciousness...a slow composition of my self as a body. (110-111)

Anna’s self-gazing, prompted by consciousness of a sexualising masculine gaze, seems identical or nearly identical to the dissociative experiences Fanon describes.. For example, the self-division Anna describes during the first meeting with Jeffries is clearly provoked by her consciousness of being, to use her own expression, ‘sized up’ (Rhys; 12) by the two men:

I hated them both. But when I had a glass of port I began to laugh and after that I couldn’t stop. I watched myself in the glass over the mantlepiece, laughing... (12)

Anna obviously has strong responses and affects, but in the mirror they are overwhelmed by the imperative to watch herself being watched. She might be read as analogous to Fanon’s black subject in that she responds to another’s authoritarian (in her case, paternalist) gaze by ‘taking herself off’ from her own presence. Indeed, as Paula Le Gallez asserts, the role of mirrors and ‘reflections in the narrative is crucial in conveying Anna’s profound disorientation with respect to her identity:’[t]here is about Anna’s mirror-madness an almost Lacanian sense of her own identity as an absence or fiction’ (Le Gallez; 98). Le Gallez is not the only critic of Rhys to place Anna’s ‘mirror madness’ in the context of Lacanian
theory of the ‘mirror phase’. For example, Lori Lawson’s discussion of *The Wide Sargasso Sea* reads Antoinette Mason’s madness as having a ‘sociological, rather than hereditary, origin’ (a somewhat similar position to my own *vis a vis* Anna’s disturbances) with reference to ‘Lacan’s psychology of the “Mirror Stage” and its implications for feminine identity’ (Lawson; 1991, 20). Lawson suggests that Antoinette ‘fails to recognise the alienation inherent in the possession of an image, the necessity of being both subject and object simultaneously...she perceives only the subjective identification of the image without the accompanying recognition that it is, after all, an object outside herself’ (23). In this respect, Lawson’s interpretation of Antoinette’s relationship with mirrors is somewhat different from my reading of Anna’s responses to her reflection; for while Anna, like Antoinette, might be understood as unable to conceive of herself as ‘both subject and object simultaneously’, it seems that Anna’s mirror-gazing is problematised by her over-investing, rather than refusing to acknowledge, the ‘alien’ nature of her reflection. Frequently, Anna seems to fantasise herself as merely an image projected into a picture-world, perhaps recalling Fanon’s ‘third’-person consciousness’. Significantly, these dissociative semi-trances usually prevail upon Anna when she is expected to negotiate sexual situations. For example, after rejecting Jeffries’s initial advances in the rooms he has taken at the ‘Hoffner Hotel and Restaurant’, she seeks refuge from his sullenness and irritation on her own in the strange bedroom:

> Looking at me with his eyes narrow and close together, as if he hated me, as if I wasn’t there; and then he turned away and looked at himself in the glass...I took up my coat...and went into the bedroom. There was a fire but the room was cold. I walked up to the looking-glass and put the lights on over it and stared at myself. It was as if I were looking at somebody else. I stared at myself for a long time...I lay down...the pillow was as cold as ice. I felt as if I had gone out of myself, as if I was in a
...the fire was like a painted fire; no warmth came from it... (Rhys; 20-21)

This somewhat necrotic scenario—the coldness, the 'painted' or ghostly fire that emits no heat, Anna’s sensation of having 'gone out of herself' and her fascination with her apparition in the looking-glass—is interpreted by Le Gallez as having 'disturbing implications...through [Anna’s] response to the sequence of mirrors we gradually see into the epicentre of the work itself, where an idea of nihilism is generated' (Le Gallez; 98). However, I would suggest that Anna’s 'nihilistic' (and melancholically self-objectifying) response to her image in mirrors has, from a feminist perspective, a deep political significance. She is introjecting her sexually objectified status in Jeffries’s eyes. While this perhaps has catastrophic consequences for Anna as a character, I would suggest that in the context of this particular heterosexual scenario, in which a young woman is purchased by an older man, who for all his affectations to paternal beneficence seems able to ‘hate’ the object of his desires when his expectations are frustrated, Anna’s queasy dissonance when faced with her physical aspect emphasizes the oppressiveness of a sexual culture in which the sexual commodification of women is achieved at the expense of admitting female subjectivity as a component of sexual engagement. To re-iterate Fanon, ‘consciousness of the body is a solely negating activity’: as I have demonstrated, Anna’s anxious awareness of her body and its significances for Jeffries prompts her to fantasise herself as a distant spectacle or a lifeless sexualised icon.

The question at this juncture would seem to be: how might this ostensible ‘melancholia’ elicited by the acquisition of an oppressive identity in paternalist and colonialist discourses be interpreted as ‘transgressive’? For Anna’s sexually objectified and racially fetishised status seems to produce its own inbuilt silencing strategy whenever she attempts to transgress her position by articulating, as a subject, her desires and/or dissatisfactions with Jeffries. For example, as previously mentioned, Walter censors her declarations of love; when she attempts to kiss his hand after their first sexual encounter, he rebuffs her, instead
giving her money, explaining that 'It's I who ought to kiss your hand, not you mine'. This renders Anna 'miserable suddenly and utterly lost. 'Why did I do that?' I thought.'(34). She is compelled to feel, among other things, ashamed for having momentarily disrupted, through expressing her own desire, the balance of power that is essential for Jeffries's satisfaction with the relationship. This sensation of being ineluctably excluded from articulating her feelings occasionally prompts Anna to make gestures of desperate speechlessness, such as her violent reaction to being taunted by Jeffries's friends concerning her apparently gauche admission of the circumstances in which she met him:

'She's been giving you away,' Vincent said. 'She's been telling us how it all started. You dirty dog, Walter....' ...He started to laugh....I said, 'Oh, stop laughing at me, I'm sick of it....what's the joke?....They went on laughing... I was smoking, and I put the end of my cigarette down on (Jeffries's hand). I jammed it down hard and held it there, and he snatched his hand away...But they had stopped laughing.(74)

Almost immediately after this incident, Jeffries extricates himself from Anna. In the context of the story, it would seem that Anna's capacity for emotional intensity, initially an exciting spectacle, has assumed more dangerous connotations in Jeffries's mind after she so dramatically (if self-defeatingly) deviates from her previously unquestioned role as purely the object of his desires and entertainments. Yet, whatever disruption of his expectations Anna's gesture may have achieved, Jeffries does not acknowledge her rage to any degree, even in the form of a reprimand. The manner in which Jeffries extricates himself from Anna typifies the terms and conditions of their entire interaction, insofar as it ensures that both her desires and her resentments are impossible to articulate or justify. Jeffries commissions another man to write the letter of rupture on his behalf—a patronising missive in which Anna is addressed as 'my dear infant', instructed to console herself, as a child might, in 'games and books' and 'smelling
the flowers' (79-80) and finally, precluded from complaint by the promise of cash.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, Anna's memories of her biological father are significant because she identifies with the recollection of his attempts to articulate himself against the imperialist status quo of white European privilege. His refusal to re-visit England on the basis of what he perceives to be English hypocrisy is but one example of this. Anna's mnemonic re-construction of her real father provides her with a means of articulating (if only to herself) the psycho-sexual torture of being silenced, commodified and discarded by her Jeffries, the pseudo father. After Jeffries's rejection, she is immediately overwhelmed by superficially unrelated recollections of her biological father, firstly as he consoles her in a moment of childhood terror, and then as he engages in a political discussion with another man:

...that time when he said, 'The Welsh word for grief is hiraeth,' Hiraeth. And that time I was crying about nothing...he hugged me up and then he said, I believe you're going to be like me, you poor little devil...and that time when Mr. Crowe said, 'You don't mean to say you're backing up that damned French monkey,' meaning the Governor, 'I've met some English men,' (my father) said, 'who were monkeys too...'(81)

If Jeffries could be said to represent sexually exploitative 'paternalism' as it is defined in feminist discourses, then Anna's recollection of her real father seems to reactively suggest an alternative version of masculinity — for Anna's memories of her late father are not nebulous melancholic whimsy, but consistently connected with his disavowals of colonial and 'fatherly' privileges. Morgan is reconstructed as emotionally empathic ('you're like me...'), and dignifies her suffering by acknowledging it to be as real as his own, thus eroding the power differential between fathers and daughters that has consistently short-circuited her attempts at a sexual dialogue with Jeffries. In addition, the memory of her father's contempt for English men, especially his characterisation of the white
English male as a ‘monkey’—a slur usually reserved for blacks—implies Anna’s awareness of the ideological burdens residing in Jeffries’s identifications of her sexuality and speech. It is also significant that Anna’s most vivid memory of her ‘good’ father is that he introduced a disappearing language (Welsh) as a point of identification between his daughter and himself. Anna’s invocation of this moment demonstrates her intuition that there is a relationship between language and power, in that the capacity to speak one’s desire is a form of power. Deprived of her franchise on speech by her status as in Jeffries’s gaze as an object of sexual and imperialist fetish, Anna’s powerlessness in the context of this difficult, ideologically burdened relationship was perhaps inevitable.

To conclude, the image of Anna’s lost father retrieves, to some extent, desires and intuitions extrinsic to her position in the language of Jeffries, her sexualised pseudo-father—if only in the sense that the dead father simply symbolises her desire for representation, and distils her intuition that exclusion of gender and racial ‘Others’ from speech is at the core of imperialist and masculine privilege. In this capacity, Rhys’s privileging of Anna’s memories in the narrative of *Voyage in the Dark* could be seen to signify transgressive engagements with colonial and paternalist politics.
NOTES

1. As I am using Freud's essay on depression as a major point of reference in this discussion ('Mourning and Melancholia') I have decided to also use his term—that is, 'melancholia', rather than depression.

2. The length of time since Anna's father's death is not specified in the text, but given that many of her childhood memories feature only her stepmother, Hester, it seems reasonable to assume that the bereavement is not particularly recent.

3. See Mervyn Morris; 1989. In the first draft of Voyage in the Dark, Anna dies at the novel's conclusion. Rhys's publisher suggested that this ending was too gloomy, and urged her to 'give the girl a chance' ((2). While Rhys was not willing to make the alteration, she nonetheless spent 'several gloomy weeks trying to think of two or three paragraphs that wouldn't spoil the book, trying to give the girl a chance' (3). Thus, in the published version of the novel, Anna survives her abortion.

4. See Angela J Latham; 2000,113: 'These women [chorus girls]...were the subject of voluminous conjecture and caricature in the popular press...[t]hey were considered “gold diggers”, “vamps”, unintelligent and generally of weak moral fibre.

5. Fanon's relates his reactions to being identified as Negro by white gazers: 'Dirty nigger!' Or simply, "Look, a Negro!" ... "Mamma, see the Negro! I'm frightened!"...I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, historicity...assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema...'(109-112)
BOOK LIST


